

# Residential Energy Efficiency Initiatives in Quebec: an Energy Justice Crisis?

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## Rationale

Energy poverty occurs when households cannot afford enough energy services, such as heating, cooling, lighting and powering appliances to meet their needs and maintain healthy indoor temperature.<sup>1</sup> Based on the measure used, between 9% to 16% of households in Quebec experience energy poverty.<sup>2</sup>

Energy poverty is influenced by: lower household incomes, the energy efficiency of housing, and the price of energy

- low-income households living in inadequately insulated buildings are the most at risk of experiencing energy poverty.<sup>1,2</sup>

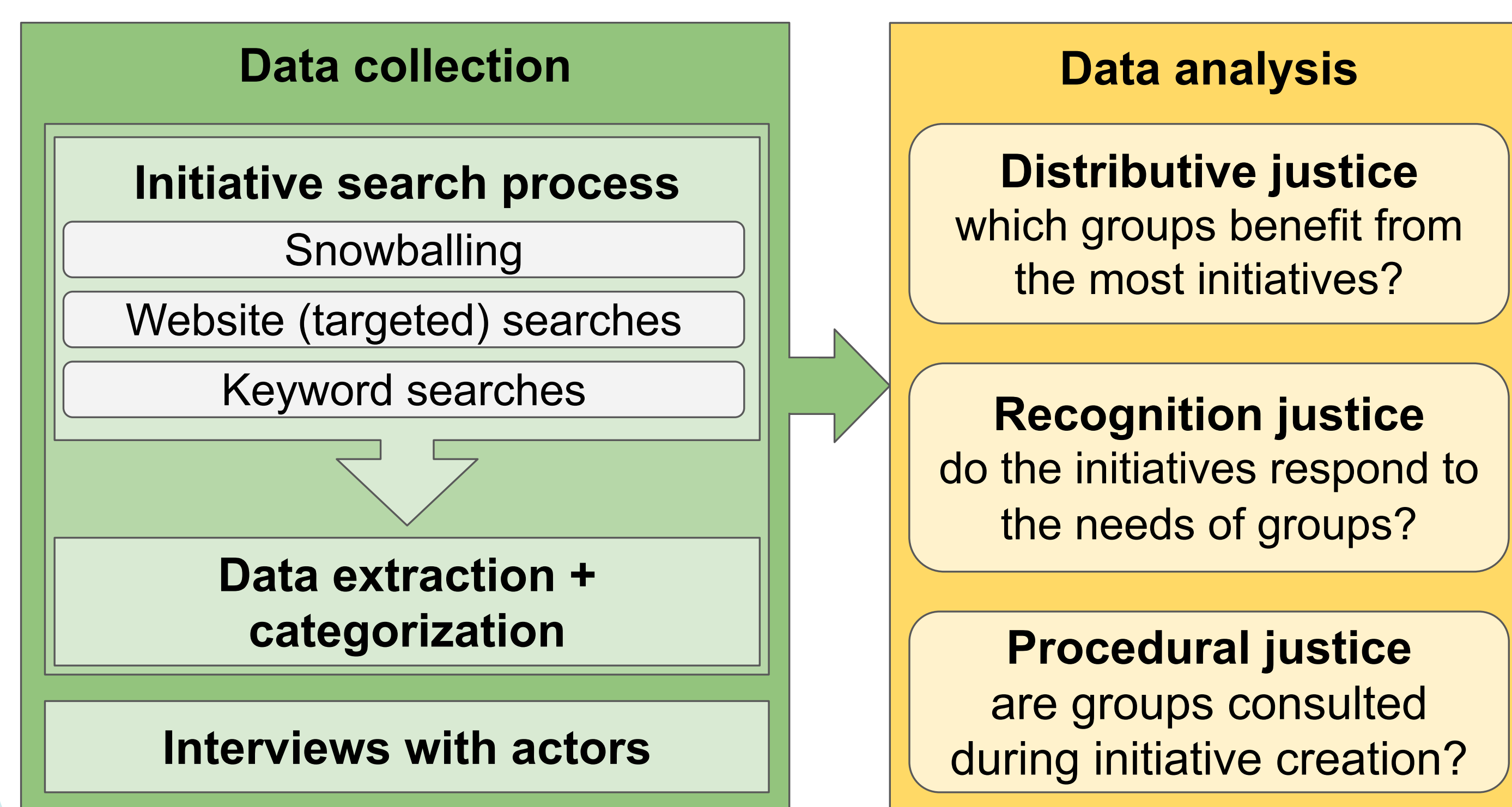
Initiatives targeting energy efficiency in the residential sector can help tackle energy poverty.

## Research objectives

- Assess the scope of residential energy efficiency initiatives implemented in Quebec.
- Evaluate whether there are inequalities in their distribution using the energy justice lens.

## Methods

- Inventory and characterization of residential energy efficiency initiatives in Quebec.<sup>3</sup>
  - An initiative = any policy, program or strategy designed to increase residential energy efficiency.
- Interviews with actors in the housing & energy sectors.
- Analysis of initiatives using the three principles of energy justice.<sup>4,5</sup>



## Results: A total of 56 residential energy efficiency initiatives were inventoried

Homeowners, landlords and construction companies	Tenants and low-income groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>67% of inventoried initiatives</li> <li>most common type of initiatives: subsidies for retrofit renovations and new energy efficient installations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>33% of inventoried initiatives</li> <li>most common type of initiatives: efficiency advice, equipment and energy bill support</li> </ul>

### Financial reasons behind initiative creation:

« on évalue le potentiel que ça [les programmes d'efficacité énergétique] peut donner en termes d'économie (...) parce qu'il faut s'assurer qu'ils conviennent encore au marché, puis que ça soit encore applicable à nos clients. » - Participant 5

« le Conseil du Trésor, c'est lui qui décide si oui ou non le programme peut être mis en place suite à des recommandations » - Participant 2

### But there are exceptions:

« quand on est avec les ménages à faible revenu, on passe outre ces tests économiques là. (...) on se soucie beaucoup moins de la rentabilité, on est plus dans une mission sociale. » - Participant 1

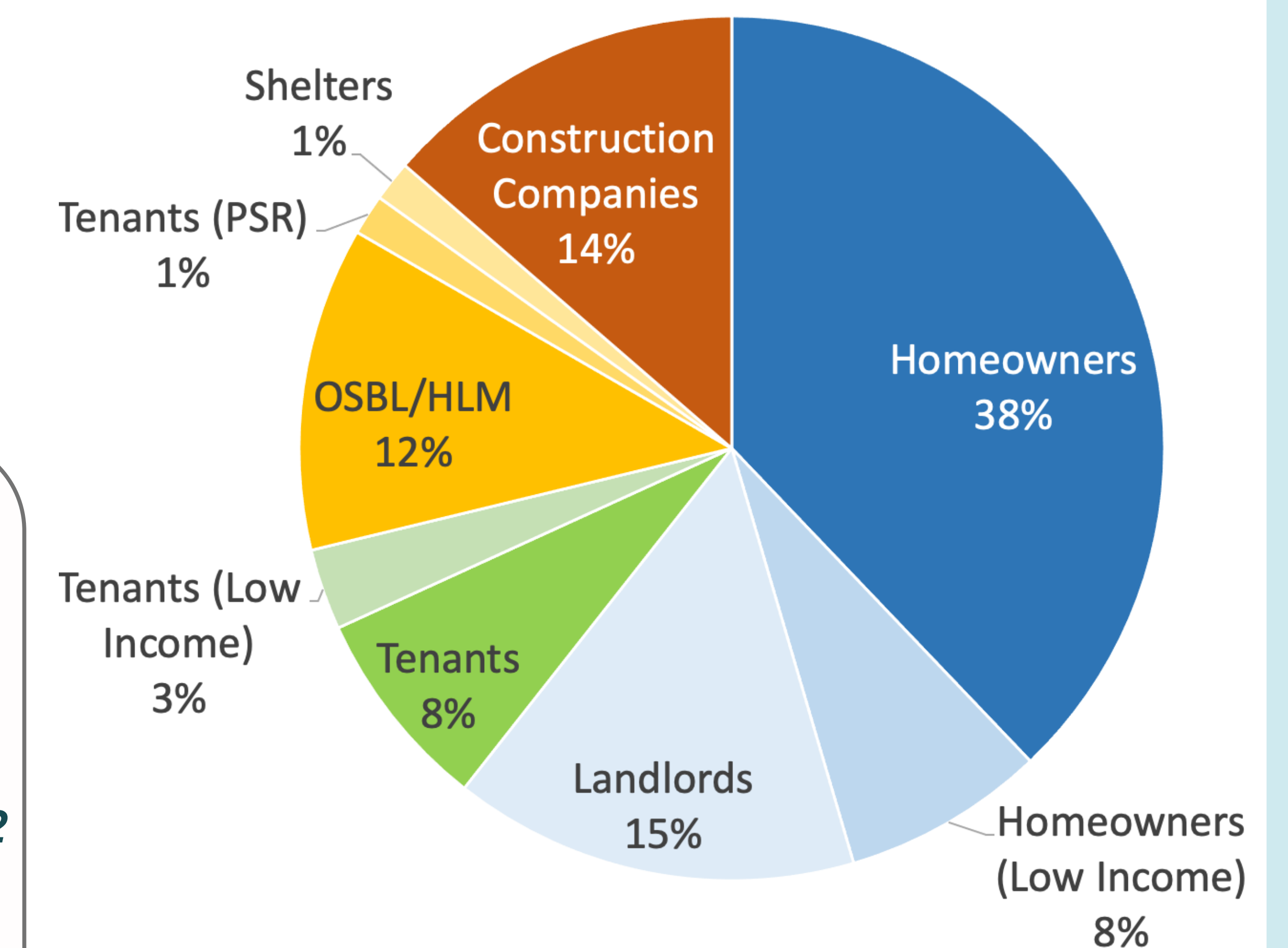


Figure 1: Distribution of energy efficiency initiatives in Quebec based on target audience groups

	Subsidy	Equipment	Advice	Efficiency Policy	Payment Plan	Reduced Rates	Certification	Total (target audience)
Homeowners	21	3	2	0	0	1	0	27
Homeowners (Low Income)	3	1	1	0	1	0	0	6
Landlords	9	1	1	0	0	0	0	11
Tenants	1	3	1	0	0	1	0	6
Tenants (Low Income)	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	3
OSBL/HLM	6	1	0	2	0	0	0	9
Tenants (PSR)	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Shelters	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Construction Companies	8	0	0	1	0	0	1	10
<b>Share of type relative to group total:</b>								
low								
high								
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	

## Discussion and conclusion

- Homeowners receive more support from energy efficiency initiatives, and the kind of support they receive is more beneficial to improve dwelling energy efficiency, lower energy bills, and increase comfort.
- Few initiatives target or adequately support those who might benefit the most from improvements in residential energy efficiency, such as tenants and lower-income households.
- More can be done for residential energy efficiency initiatives in Quebec to meet the principles of energy justice:
  - Providing more initiatives to marginalized and lower-income groups;
  - Tailoring initiatives to help these groups mitigate energy poverty in holistic ways;
  - Including these groups during the initiative creation and evaluation processes.

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