Hard-to-Reach Energy Users
in the Residential & Commercial Sectors

Behavioural-oriented policy initiatives are rather limited, and often confined to experimental settings and utility-driven programmes. A recent, global review of policy efforts at the national and city level showed a clear focus on technology market development (mostly subsidies) and market failures (particularly, information asymmetries). In fact, policy efforts addressing behavioural anomalies explicitly, are the exception. We believe that there may be a significant percentage of the human population that is currently not engaged or informed by our many efforts to elicit change in their energy-efficient technology uptake and energy consumption. This is even more so the case once you expand from hard-to-reach individuals and groups in the residential, to those in the commercial sector, and across all fuels and energy services, including mobility. This, potentially very large energy user group is the focus of this new international research collaboration.

What is a hard-to-reach energy user?

As there are many different, sometimes conflicting definitions of what constitutes a "hard-to-reach" energy user, we have created this broad working definition to start our research from:

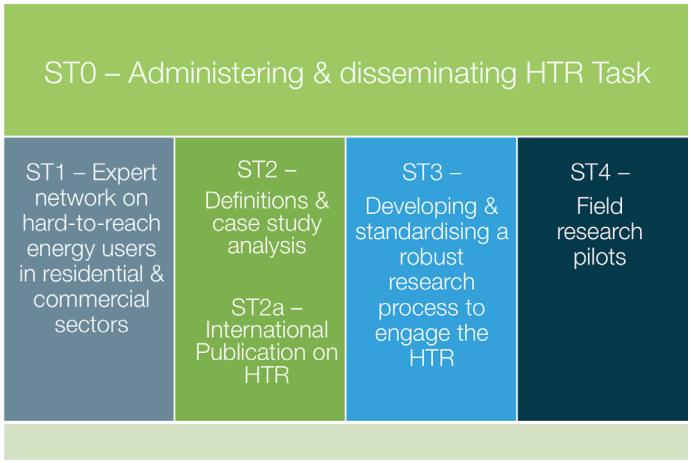
"In this Task, a hard-to-reach energy user is an energy user from the residential and commercial sectors who uses any type of energy or fuel and energy services, including mobility, and who is typically either hard-to-reach physically, underserved, or hard to engage or motivate, for a variety of reasons. These could include lack of access to information, lack of government or industry policies and programmes targeting such user groups, lack of financial means, lack of confidence, vulnerability, or being a new type of user (e.g. new technology owner) who has not yet been identified or engaged by the relevant agency."

Overarching Objectives

This research will provide country participants with the opportunity to learn and share successful approaches how to identify and engage "hard-to-reach" (HTR) energy users. We will facilitate the development of robust social science-based guidance for designing programmes that are tailored to specific HTR audiences. We will help identify effective approaches from existing programmes to increase uptake among specific HTR segments.

The main objective of this research is to undertake wide-ranging empirical research and field pilots on hard-to-reach energy users to allow Behaviour Changers (from government, industry, research, the service and the third sectors) to:

- Partake in a global research collaboration under the umbrella of IEA DSM (**Subtask 0**);
- Engage in, and have access to, an international expert network (**Subtask 1**);
- Define HTR energy users in the residential and commercial sectors, collect & analyse case studies highlighting past and current work to better engage this user group (**Subtask 2**);
- Develop an international publication with participating and interested countries, including those outside the OECD, that attempts to analyse the proportion of HTR energy users and identifies some of the distinct HTR groups and subgroups. This work will be based on the case study analyses and definition work undertaken in Subtask 2, in participating countries (**Subtask 2a**);
- Use and test the tools highlighted in the Task 24 Toolbox for Behaviour Changers, including the See Change Institute Process to align, define, design and deploy better interventions geared at the HTR energy users identified in Subtask 2 (**Subtask 3**);
- Identify and, where possible, undertake voluntary field research pilots to take the theoretical learnings into practice (**Subtask 4**).



Motivation and Null Hypothesis

The motivation for this new work comes from five directions:

1) **To build on IEA DSM Task 24 behaviour change expertise and global expert network** as well as using the many tools that were developed and have successfully informed policy in our participating countries.

2) **To explore the many differing definitions of what constitutes a "Hard-to-Reach"** (and thus motivate and engage) energy user or customer, in the residential and commercial sectors and to assess different approaches and barriers when targeting these users (including potential gender bias and/or socio-economic inequalities).

3) **To test the hypothesis that this underserved user group may entail a large number of energy users** which also means there is a large potential for energy efficiency and conservation improvements.

Our null hypothesis, is as follows:
A significant proportion (>30%) of the population in the residential and commercial sectors currently falls under the category of "hard-to-reach" energy users as defined by this Task.

4) **In addition, this Task will aim at collecting insights into best practice and shared learnings** about what type of interventions have the greatest potential to motivate and engage the HTR, and which were less successful (and why).

5) **To explore opportunities for non-state sector co-funding to develop and test field research pilots** for HTR energy users. These interventions will provide positive financial, energy efficiency and social (including health) outcomes for this user group - as well as macro-economic benefits for their countries, whilst contributing to significant climate change targets, globally.

Outcomes and Impact

By cost- and task-sharing and a lot of expert contributions from in-kind support we are leveraging at least 90 person months of expert time for this 3-year Task. This is based on three participating countries and includes 3 full-time, fully-funded PhD students. With every additional country that joins, we will gain at least 6 additional months of National Expert time.

The main impact expected from this Task is to develop a greater understanding who the HTR energy user group is and how to better engage these users with well-designed and targeted interventions.

Task Duration

June 2019 – May 2022.

Participating Countries

New Zealand
USA
Sweden
UK

Task Publications

All official publications can be found on www.ieadsm.org

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