

A very large proportion of residential and commercial energy users are hard-to-reach for one reason or another; this Task examines ways of overcoming their barriers by following good process when designing, implementing and evaluating various engagement strategies aimed at clearly-identified and characterised subsets of these audiences.

Our Building Blocks of Behaviour Change research process (Karlin et al, 2021) has guided us well through four years of the Hard-to-Reach (HTR) Task: In 2022/23, we focused on the *Design Phase* of behavioural programmes targeting the hard-to-reach via 19 case study analyses in 8 countries. These were further analysed in a methodology review (Karlin et al, 2022) and cross-country case study comparison (Mundaca et al, under review). Finally, we undertook several field research pilots under the *Deploy Phase*, including with commercial building operators (Rotmann & Karlin, 2021), SMBs (Uplight, 2022), the MUSH sector (Uplight, 2022), high-tech / high-income energy users (Uplight 2021, 2023), extremely vulnerable and marginalised residential energy users (Rotmann & Cowan, 2022), and those living in hidden hardship (Rotmann, in preparation).

Our research has uncovered more complex issues rather than simple solutions, but we have also identified some clear insights:

- ▶ Between 2/3 and 3/4 of energy users can be regarded as HTR. These energy users are HTR for very different reasons, and have very different barriers, needs and motivations.
- ▶ Our current methods and approaches to engaging those HTR energy users are often (culturally) inappropriate. We need to do better to sub-segment audiences, clearly identify target behaviours, and co-design tailored engagement strategies to reach different HTR audiences.
- ▶ In the residential sector, the most common assumption about HTR energy users is that they are low-income households. However, we have found that we need to differentiate further between high-income / high-consuming energy users, the “squeezed middle” (medium to high-income households, who have no property assets), and marginalised / vulnerable energy users (often low-income but with compounding and intersecting vulnerabilities).



- › Among these different groups, which are all HTR for different reasons, are further sub-segments (e.g. between marginalised / forgotten; stigmatised / ostracised; and criminalised / illegalised vulnerable groups), which commonly intersect. These intersectionalities and sometimes conflicting mandates and barriers make engaging these groups exceedingly complex.
- › The single-most successful way of engaging the most vulnerable and HTR energy users is using trusted community and frontline providers to help identify, recruit and engage them. However, most of these providers are also very HTR - unless trusted relationships have already been established and nurtured.
- › In the non-residential sector, we have found that the only energy users who are well-researched and understood are those working in office buildings and settings.
- › Utilities largely focus their energy efficiency programmes on residential and large commercial & industrial (C&I) customer segments, which means that 99% of Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are largely underserved.
- › Another underserved non-residential sector is the largely public, complex and diverse municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals (MUSH) segment. These sectors also require tailored energy behaviour training.

## Major achievements during 2022/23

**FIELD PILOTS:** The HTR Task has attracted over €500,000 in co-funding for field research pilots in Canada, the US and Aotearoa New Zealand. These field pilots, which often involved qualitative research with residential and commercial HTR energy users, have shown that our research process is highly-useful, and that we need to adjust aspects to be more culturally-appropriate, especially when dealing with highly-marginalised audiences.

**PUBLICATIONS & DISSEMINATION:** The HTR Task has finally published its massive literature review as an eBook and co-authored two scientific papers, which are currently under revision. We continue to be asked to present at global energy, behaviour and equity conferences, including the IEA Energy Efficiency Working Party's special workshop in September 2022.

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