

**Implementing fuel poverty policy:
the challenge of identification of fuel poor households**

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Abstract

The identification of fuel poor households is an important step of fuel poverty policies. Its aim is to ensure that beneficiaries of policies will be those households who need it most. But this is not an easy task because fuel poverty has several dimensions: low incomes, poor housing conditions, inefficient heating equipments, and high fuel costs. In general, identification of fuel poor households cannot be done by using existing “ready to use” databases. Therefore, finding who is actually fuel poor requires some effort. A proper identification requires a definition of identification criteria and a design of identification processes, which is often done at a local level.

The question of identification has not received much attention in the literature. In the UK for example, fuel poverty measures do not target specifically the fuel poor and they often rely on self-referral. Boardman (2010) has highlighted the actual inefficiencies of this kind of method, because (a) many fuel poor households do not benefit from policies because they do not meet the eligibility criteria or because they are not asking for assistance, and (b) many non-fuel poor households benefit from policies that are targeted at households groups that are much larger than simply the fuel poor.

In France, the approach of the programme “Habiter Mieux” but also of several local initiatives is different. Here the idea is to develop methods of proactive identification of households in fuel poverty. We analyse how these programme and initiatives result in the development of new identification methods.

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