



HOPE Briefing Sheet 5

How can policies enable households to contribute to the 1.5°C goal?

Findings on current consumption-related policies and recommendations for future policies



Households control up to 70% of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, when emissions of goods and services are attributed to those who consume them. This offers huge potential to reduce GHG emissions by targeting household consumption and their lifestyles. Furthermore, climate friendly lifestyles promote population health. But existing policies are not sufficient to realize households' mitigation potential and meet the 1.5°C goal under the Paris Agreement. HOPE finds a mismatch between the roles and responsibilities implied in a majority of consumption-related mitigation policies and households' perceptions of roles, responsibility and capabilities to act. They often need more political support to realize their mitigation potential. A better mix of market-based and command-and-control style policies can help households lead climate friendlier lifestyles.

Current policies are dominated by market-based approaches that individualise responsibility

There is a mismatch between the roles and responsibilities conveyed by many climate policies targeting household consumption and households' perceptions of who is responsible and able to mitigate climate change.

We investigated households' preferences for reducing GHG emissions in four cities in France, Germany, Norway, and Sweden. Similar to other studies on consumption-related mitigation, we found that people often accept individual responsibility. But they also ask for government action to create consumption changes because existing policies seldom address the consumption areas with large, untapped mitigation potential.

We show that the dominant market-based policy approach in the consumption area individualises responsibility for mitigation. This is particularly apparent for two large sources of GHG emissions: air travel and diet. Both are characterised by minimal policy attention, which is almost entirely market-based. Significant shares of command-and-control policies are present in the high mitigation potential areas of housing and private car.

Market-based policies individualise responsibility: What can I afford? What information do I have? Command-and-control policies give answers to questions: What are we allowed to do?

Taking advantage of consumption-related mitigation potential might require challenging our notion and treatment of individuals as consumers since it is difficult for individuals to take necessary mitigation action without carefully designed government intervention. These findings are important since behavioural interventions have trended towards measures for voluntary behavioural change, rather than changing the context of behaviour, although peoples' preferences often depend on context and presentation of choice.

Governments already intervene with command-and-control measures in several high mitigation potential areas, indicating flexibility and space to be taken advantage of in the design of more ambitious mitigation policies targeting consumption. These are spaces for realising household decarbonisation rather than merely discussing it.

Households felt that individuals, industry, & governments shared responsibility and called for bold political action

"I want political leadership with visions and high goals."
(Swedish participant)

"Everyone for themselves [is responsible]. But also governments. They have to enforce measures against people who don't want to. And countries together, it doesn't help if one country acts and the one next to it pollutes."
(German participant)

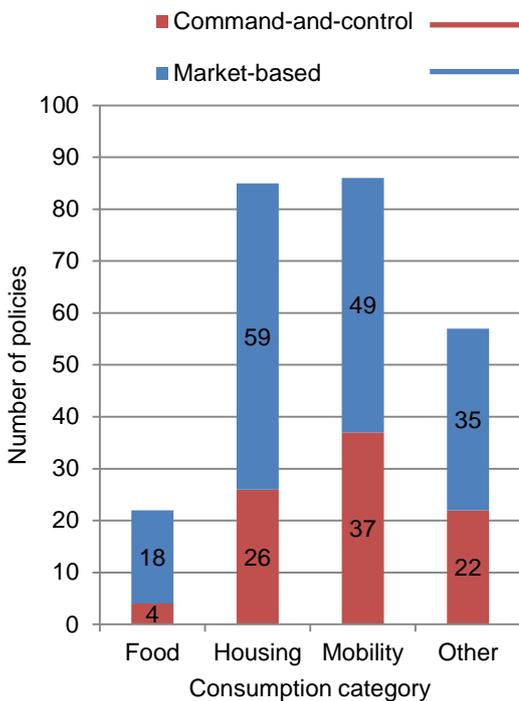
"An average person doesn't have the capacity to stay updated on things [...] you can't depend on an average citizen to be so updated. And then the choices just aren't there. Governments have to take much more responsibility."
(Norwegian participant)

"Industry and politicians [...] are responsible, not just to say 'consumption must stop'. [...] The societal model must be changed, or at least production. [...] And not at the expense of the poorest countries [...]. Wouldn't they have the right to pollute?"
(French participant)

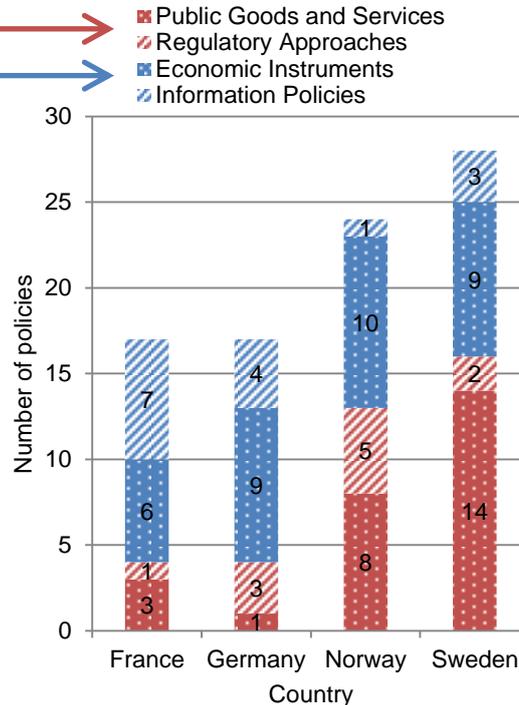


Illustrations of policy analysis on current command-and-control and marked-based policies

Graph 1: Aggregated policy mix for all consumption categories



Graph 2: Policy mix for Mobility in all countries by IPCC categories



Graphs 1 and 2 show the disparity of current demand-side policies. Red indicates a command-and-control style (public goods and services, regulatory approaches), blue a market-based style (economic instruments and information policies). Graph 1 shows the policies aggregated for all countries, split up into our four consumption sectors: *Food and Recycling, Housing, Mobility, and Other Consumption*. Graph 2 further highlights differences in how governments in our four countries apply these approaches the sector *Mobility*. France and Germany confer more responsibility on the individual than Norway and Sweden.

HOPE stakeholders found mobility to be a crucial issue – Health was seen as a co-benefit, but less important than other things for working with households

The HOPE project included regular stakeholder meetings with representatives from administrations, non-governmental organisations, and elected officials from the local, regional, and national level. Ideas were exchanged and first findings were presented to this policy advisory board (PAB).

The discussions during the PAB showed that the main disagreement among professionals is what to focus on to support households. Setting priorities for projects and planning can differ from city to city. The sector that most stakeholders saw as crucial was *Mobility*. Discussions in France and Germany focused on private cars. In Norway and Sweden, domestic flights were a hot topic.

Many PAB-members highlighted that not all households have the same ability to mitigate. Social inequality plays an important role. Richer households were often seen as a bigger source of GHG emissions because of their tendency to consume more (e.g. travel more for holidays, drive larger cars).

Health was often seen as important for households' decision making, but not as crucial as financial savings or moral considerations. While stakeholder considered health to be a true co-benefit, they rarely used it as an argument on its own in the communication with households. As our findings show that the health argument does influence household decisions we recommend stakeholders to explicitly make use of the health argument.





Funded by



Summary of policy relevant HOPE results

Households are willing to contribute to the 1.5°C goal – but voluntary household action alone is unlikely to lead to sufficient reductions of greenhouse gas emissions

1. Households are willing to implement mitigation actions voluntarily, that lead to a carbon footprint reduction of 25 %.
2. The greater the CO₂ reduction potential of mitigation actions, the smaller households' willingness to implement them. Households prefer moderate lifestyle changes although rationally they are not the most effective in terms of financial, climate and health gains.
3. Mitigation actions with the highest willingness for implementation are moderate *Food & Recycling* actions. Such actions are low-hanging fruits, but only addressed to a limited degree in current climate policies.
4. *Mobility* is the sector with most emissions, but also the one where it is most difficult for households to mitigate. Households would be ready to change some private car use, if decent alternatives were provided. There is little willingness to change flying habits under current conditions. Households are not willing to reduce mobility as such due to necessities and values in modern society.
5. Financial considerations are not the main drivers of household mitigation choices. Financial incentives can be attractive for some high-investment actions. Other instruments are needed for actions, which provide financial savings, but still are unpopular.
6. Climate-friendly lifestyles would on average lead to financial savings for our participants. But instead of making decisions purely based on economic reasons, households consider factors from a complex reality – including personal values and habits, as well as structural factors such as renting or owning their home.
7. Information about the health co-benefits of mitigation actions increases households' willingness to implement them, an effect most apparent in the sectors *Food & Recycling* and *Housing*.
8. Households are prepared to reduce GHG emissions, provided that their efforts are connected to collective climate action that matters. Current policies individualise responsibility, so that a sense of collective action is lacking.
9. Current climate policies in the four high-income countries are largely market-based and aimed at improving product efficiency or changing patterns of consumption. Households are open to a policy mix with command-and-control and market-based policies.
10. Household preferences for mitigation do not differ significantly between the four countries and households call for international action. Thus, there is potential for developing stronger European policies for consumption-related GHG emissions.

For more details see Moberg, K.R., Aall, C., Dorner, F., Reimerson, E., Ceron, J.-P., Sköld, B., Sovacool, B.K., & Piana, V. (2018). Mobility, food, and housing: Responsibility, individual consumption, and demand-side policies in European deep decarbonisation pathways. Energy Efficiency.

Contact and Further Details

Germany: Rainer Sauerborn, rainer.sauerborn@urz.uni-heidelberg.de
France: Ghislain Dubois, dubois.ghislain@tec-conseil.com
Norway: Carlo Aall, caa@vestforsk.no
Sweden: Maria Nilsson, maria.nilsson@umu.se

For more information, visit our website www.hope-project.net

