

There is a lot of interest in how we use gas and electricity – and how much it is costing us. Researchers want to see **how much energy we use**, and how the **type of housing we have affects what we use**. Other researchers are interested in **how changes in energy prices affect how much we use**, and whether they impact the cost of living.

While we can ask about how much you spend on energy, and when you use it, it can sometimes be easier to get this information from the meters that you already have in your house that measure energy use.

**This leaflet explains more about this.
Please take a moment to read it.**



What if I change my mind?

If you wish to withdraw your permission at any point in the future, please write to:

FREEPOST RRXX-KEKJ-JGKS
Understanding Society
University of Essex
Wivenhoe Park
Colchester, CO4 3SQ

stating: "I < your name>, currently living at < your address and postcode> am a participant on Understanding Society and I wish to withdraw my permission for information from my smart meter to be added to my survey data." Please sign and date your letter.

If you have any questions or concerns, just call our Freephone number

 **0800 252 853** or write to us.

For more information, visit: www.understanding-society.ac.uk/participants

What if I have concerns about the way the study was carried out?

Please contact Michaela Benzeval, the Director of Understanding Society

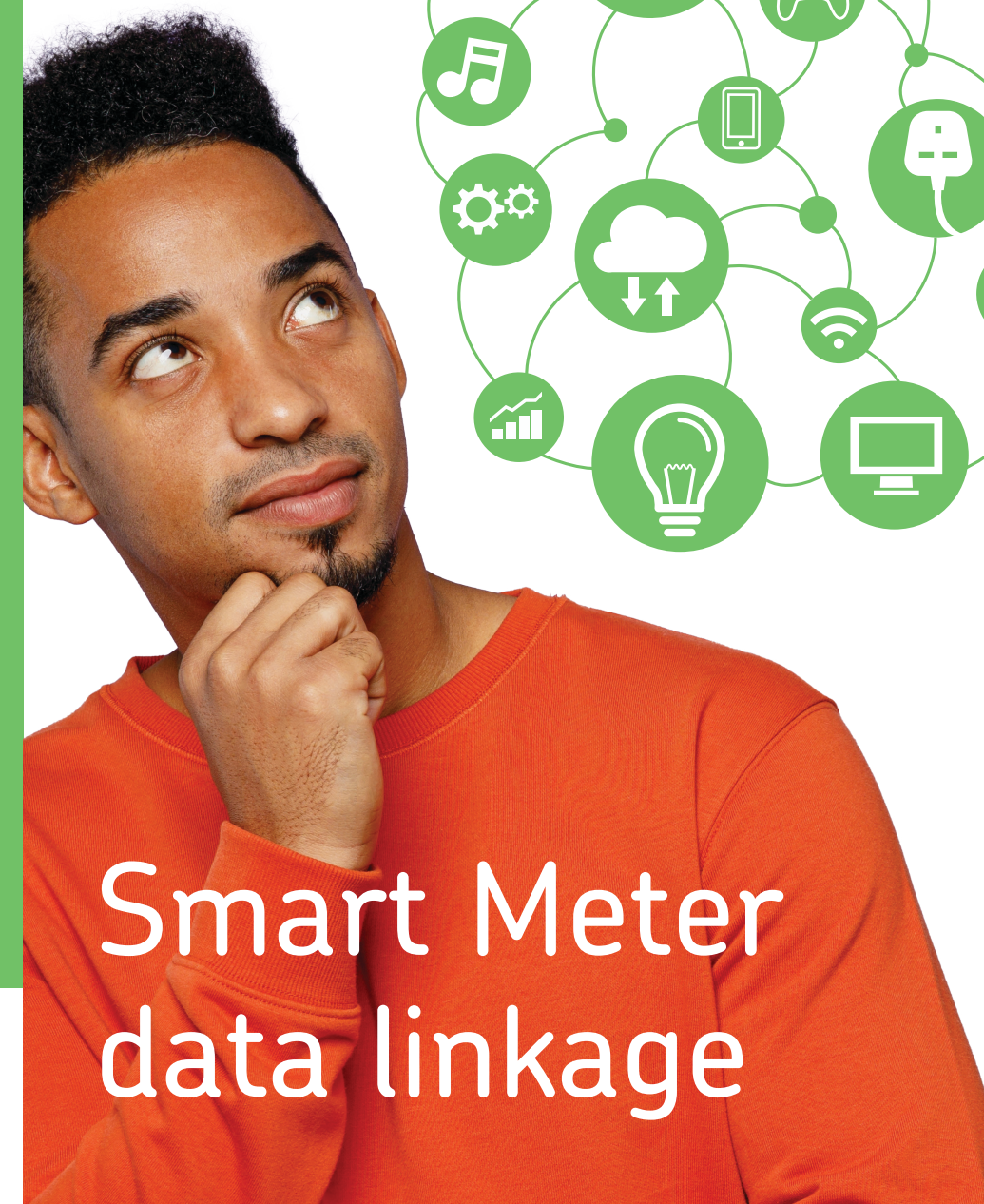
 **01206 873983**  mbenzeval@essex.ac.uk

Paul Clarke, the Research Director of ISER

 **01206 873760**  pclarke@essex.ac.uk

Mantalea Sotiriadou, the Research Governance and Planning Manager at the University of Essex

 ms21994@essex.ac.uk



Smart Meter data linkage



What information would be added?

If you have a smart meter installed, we would like your permission to access the information held on the meter.

This is half-hourly electricity and gas use, the energy tariff that you are on, and whether there are any devices attached to your meter, such as an in-home display. We would like to link the information for your address to your survey answers to enable valuable research on the energy use of different types of households.

If you do not want us to access the information from your smart meter, we would still like to find out who has a smart meter in their home, and who does not. If you are willing to let us find this out, we will send your address to UCL, and they will use that to find out if you have a smart meter. They will give us the information on whether a smart meter is active at your address, but they will not access any of the information from the smart meter.

Who will use it?

Like your survey responses, the additional information would be used by academic and social policy researchers for non-commercial statistical analysis. The linked data would only be made available to researchers under restricted access arrangements which make sure the information is used responsibly and safely. Names and addresses are never included in the results and no individual can be identified from the research.



My permission – what does it cover?

Information can only be accessed with your permission. To access the information on your smart meter, we would need to send your name and address to researchers at University College London (UCL). The researchers at UCL are accredited under the Smart Energy Code, which governs access to smart meter data in Great Britain. They will use your address to check whether you have a smart meter installed. Your name will be used as a record of consent, so UCL can demonstrate that they have accessed the smart meter information with your permission.

With your permission, UCL will access the past twelve months of information held on your smart meter. If you have moved into the address within the last year, they will only go back to the date that you moved in. The information from your smart meter will be securely transferred to ISER at the University of Essex. Your name and address will be removed from the data and it will be anonymous.

Like the answers you have given us in the survey, the information from other sources will be treated in confidence and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your current or future dealings with your energy providers won't change.

How long does my consent last?

We would like to add information relating to your present, past and future energy use. We will contact you after twelve months to remind you that you have given us your consent to collect information from your smart meter, and **you are free to withdraw your consent at any time.** If you do choose to withdraw your consent, we will no longer link your information to your survey responses, but we will retain data which has been previously linked if you have given us permission.

Do I have to give permission?

No, this part of the study, like the rest of Understanding Society, is completely voluntary.

What are the benefits of giving permission?

Adding this information collected by your smart meter to your survey responses will help us to get a **better picture of energy use** throughout the day and across different types of households.

Are there any risks involved in giving permission?

There are **no risks** associated with adding information about your energy use at your address to your survey responses.



What about data security?

Your survey answers and energy use records will be anonymised and will only be used for research and statistics. We are extremely security conscious and all of our systems are password protected and only accessed by a small number of authorised staff. The information we need to exchange with UCL will be sent via secure transfer systems. We implement the most up-to-date data security protocols and procedures. **Your personal details will be secure at all times.**



Where can I find out more about how my information is used?

You can find out more about how we use your information at www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/participants/smart-meter-records.



Has the study been reviewed and approved by an Ethics Committee?

Yes. Before any research like this can be done it is looked at carefully by an Ethics Committee. In this case, the study has been approved by University of Essex Ethics Sub-Committee 1, ETH2324-1225.

