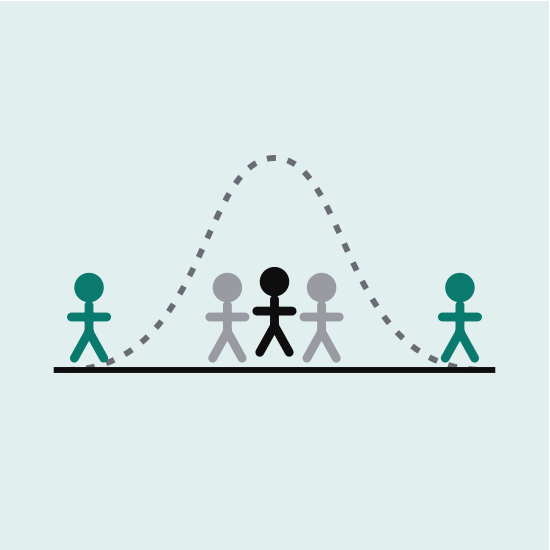
Method

Extremes and mainstreams

Researching with both typical people in the audience and people at its extremes, to discover needs and uses the average user doesn't show.



In Spanish
Usuarios extremos

Origin
IDEO practice, documented in IDEO.org (2015)

Output
Needs, unexpected uses, and workarounds people invent, beyond the average user

What it's for

It keeps the design from forgetting those who need it most and those who use it in ways nobody imagined.

Key elements

Both ends of the spectrum
Choose people who vary in what matters, such as age or household size.

The extremes teach
Their tricks and homemade solutions open up new ideas.

The middle too
Talk with typical people so you don't design only for the rare cases.

How it's done

1 

Define the axes along which the audience varies.

2 

Talk with people at the extremes and in the middle.

3 

Compare their needs and their workarounds.

Applications in design

When to use it

When choosing whom to interview or observe at the start of a project.

Avoid

Turning the extremes into a curiosity; they are also people you design for.

Don't fall for it

Take care with people who are usually left out of these conversations: explain why their input matters.

Connections

Used by

- Inclusive design
- Social design

Related to

- In-depth interview
- Personas

Authors and works

2015	**IDEO.org**	Includes it as "extremes and mainstreams" in its human-centered design guide, with the idea that what works for an extreme user usually works for everyone else too.
2018	**Kat Holmes**	Argues for designing with the people who are left out so the result works for more people.

Sources

Original sources

- Holmes, K. (2018). Mismatch: How inclusion shapes design. MIT Press.

Secondary sources

- IDEO.org (2015). The field guide to human-centered design. IDEO.org.

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