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Please Mr. Postman! The effect of face-to-face first contact on panel recruitment

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Introduction & Background

- Reducing non response: a key challenge for recruiting probabilistic samples
- Usual scheme of the recruitment process
 - Information letter
 - Recruitment attempt (face-to-face, phone, etc.)
- First contact with sampled individuals and its importance for their commitment to the panel
 - Effect of a letter vs. no letter (Leeuw et al., 2007; Nápoles-Springer et al., 2004)
 - Effect of a letter > effect of incentives (Rao et al., 2010)
 - However, its content matters little (Scherpenzeel & Toepoel 2012)
- Hypothesis : foot-in-the-door-like effect (Burger, 1999; Freedman & Frazer, 1966)

Methods

- Field data from ELIPSS panel refreshment
- Recruiting with a traditional postal service provider and a survey institute
 - Stages taken in charge by the postal service provider ($n = 4,995$)
 - Postmen handing in information letter personally – two attempts. Possible outcomes:
 - **Success** ($n = 2,587$)
 - **Absence** (*the letter left in the mailbox on the second attempt*) ($n = 1,321$)
 - **Refusal** ($n = 180$)
 - **Failure to deliver** (*the person moved out, impossible to identify the address, inaccessible, etc.*) ($n = 907$)

Methods

- Postmen attempting to recruit panelists – two attempts. Possible outcomes:
 - **Success** ($n = 242$)
 - **Failure** (*refusal, absence*)
- Contact data to be reused by the survey institute that take in charge subsequent stages of recruitment process

Service Provider	Recruitment Stage	Month	Week
<i>Post Office</i>	1	<i>January 2020</i>	1
			2
	2		3
			4
<i>Survey Institute</i>

Results

- Testing the effects of handing in information letter personally vs. leaving it in the mailbox on the recruitment result (success or failure)
 - Logistic regression controlling for socio-demographics
 - Excluding cases of failure to deliver and refusal of the information letter ($n = 3,800$)

	OR	95% CI	$p <$
Information letter left in the mailbox vs. handed in personally	1.41	[1.2, 1.67]	.0001
Tenant vs. owner	1.27	[1.03, 1.57]	.04
Small vs. medium/big surface	1.13	[1.02, 1.26]	.03
Less than 35 vs. 35-65 years old	1.22	[1.01, 1.48]	.05
Occupying the dwelling since at most 16 vs. more than 16 years	1.17	[1.05, 1.3]	.004

Results

- Exploring circumstances when delivering the letter fails or when the targeted person refuses the letter to the postman vs. accepts it
 - Multinomial regression controlling for socio-demographics
 - Excluding cases when the letter was left in the mailbox ($n = 3,573$)

Results

	Failure to deliver			Refusal		
	OR	95% CI	$p <$	OR	95% CI	$p <$
Flat vs. house	0.78	[0.7, 0.88]	.0001	1.01	[0.8, 1.27]	.93 <i>n. s.</i>
Tenant vs. owner	0.71	[0.64, 0.8]	.0001	0.94	[0.75, 1.18]	.59 <i>n. s.</i>
Small vs. medium/big surface	0.89	[0.82, 0.96]	.004	1.04	[0.92, 1.18]	.52 <i>n. s.</i>
At most 65 vs. at least 66 years old	0.86	[0.79, 0.93]	.0001	1.59	[1.35, 1.87]	.0001
Less than 35 vs. 35-65 years old	0.79	[0.71, 0.87]	.0001	1.62	[1.13, 2.31]	.0009
Occupying the dwelling since at most 16 vs. more than 16 years	0.87	[0.77, 0.98]	.03	0.98	[0.79, 1.21]	.84 <i>n. s.</i>
Occupying the dwelling since at most 6 vs. 7-16 years	0.81	[0.77, 0.87]	.0001	0.91	[0.81, 1.02]	.11 <i>n. s.</i>
Children under 12 vs. at least 12 years old	0.78	[0.72, 0.86]	.0001	1.35	[1.07, 1.7]	.02

Conclusions

- Handing in information personally by a postman effectively enhances the chances of recruitment success
- Factors associated with social stability are positively associated with the chances to distribute information letters and therefore to recruit
- Elderly living with younger people more likely to refuse the information letter
- Study limitations
 - Not an experimental design
 - Messy data
 - Some important information not controlled for
- Future studies : is it really a “postman effect”?