Targeted letters in longitudinal surveys

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Background

▸ Invitation letters are related to motivation to respond to surveys and to respond accurately, completely and timely.

▸ A possible way to improve motivation consists in interventions on initial letters

Focus

▸ Study the effects of targeted initial letters → different versions of the letter sent to different subgroups of the sample

▸ These letters are expected to motivate sample members

▸ Results of an experiment in a longitudinal panel

Lynn (POQ, forthcoming)

- Targeted letter has potential to improve response rate

- It improves response rates for people who had not responded at the previous wave

- For those who has joined the panel more recently

Research questions

RQ.1 Effect on non-contact/refusal rates?

RQ.2 Effect on sample composition/non-response bias?

Outline

- Understanding Society Innovation Panel

- The experiment

- Results

Understanding Society Innovation Panel

- Probability-based longitudinal panel
- Started in 2008
- Initial sample approximately of 1500 households
- Target population: population aged 16 or over resident in Great Britain
- Purpose: to enable methodological development and testing
- Mode: f2f and mixed-mode (web+f2f+tel)
- Wave 4: Refreshment sample
- Topics: housing, economic activity, health, income, political attitudes, and several other topics

The experiment

- Randomized experiment carried out on IP6 (2013)
- Sample randomly allocated to two groups: One group received targeted initial letter, the other group received standard letter
- Data for the analysis: 2733 sample persons aged 16 or over issued to the field at wave 6

Wave 6 outcome		
Full response	1993	72.9
Non-contact	162	5.9
Refusal	406	14.9
Other	172	6.3
Experiment group		
Targeted letter	1387	50.8
Standard letter	1346	49.2

WS Advances in Adaptive and responsive survey design
Manchester, 10th November, 2015

The experiment

▸ Sample members in the treatment group received different versions of the letter

| Group	Definition	n.
Employment-busy	Employed for at least 39 hours per week, or employed for 30 to 38 hours with a commute of	223
With children	Responsible for at least one child under 15 living in the same HH at the time of most recent interview	173
Young	Aged 16 to 29 at the time of wave 5	175
London	Resident in London or south east England at the time of most recent interview	185
Pensionable	Of pensionable age at the time of wave 5 (60 or over form women; 65 or over for men)	219
Remainder	None of the above	414

▸ Each version of the letter mentions reasons why the survey is particularly important for the respective subgroup.

Effects on response rates (RQ1)

- Multinomial logistic regression – predicted probabilities

Full response

Non-contact

Refusal
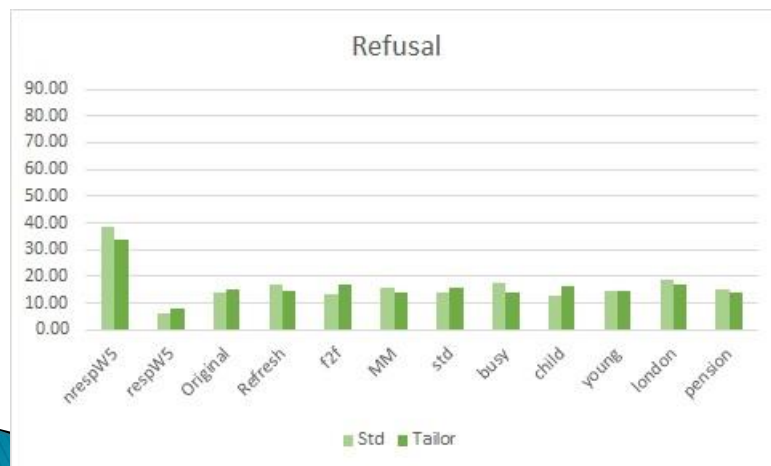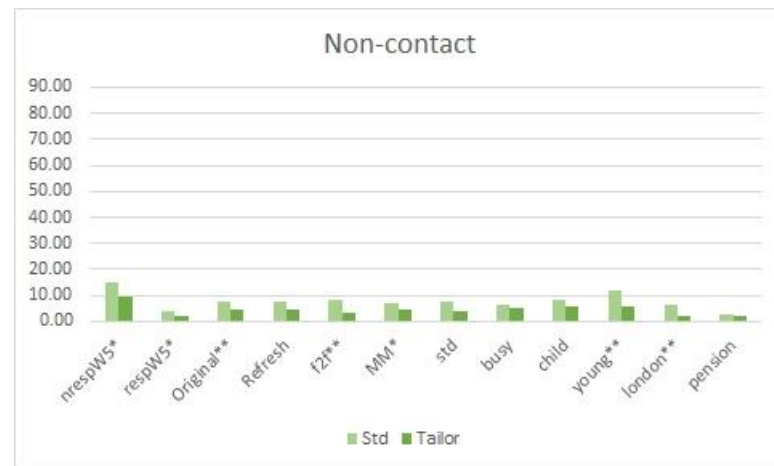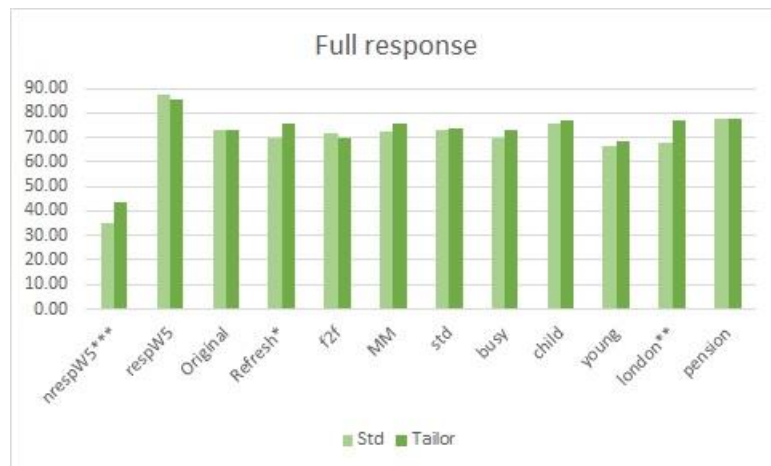
- Effects due to decrease in non-contact rates

Effects on composition (RQ2)

Variable	Standard	Targeted	p-value
Gender			
Male	44.2	46.1	0.39
Female	55.8	53.9	
Age			
16-25	11.3	13.8	0.04
26-40	19.9	18.4	
41-55	25.6	29.9	
56-65	18.4	18.2	
66+	23.7	19.8	
Ethnic group			
White British	90.7	90.5	0.91
Other	9.3	9.5	
Urban/Rural			
Rural	25	23.4	0.41
Urban	75	76.6	

▸ Statistical significant difference for age distribution

Effects on composition (RQ2)

Variable	Standard	Targeted	p-value
HH size			
1	15.7	15.2	0.07
2	38.1	33.8	
>2	46.2	51.1	
N. Children			
0	75.9	75.6	0.84
1	10.1	9.7	
>1	13.9	14.7	
Marital status (legal)			
Single and never married	26.6	27	0.8
Relationship	54.9	53.5	
Separated/Divorced/Widowed	18.5	19.5	

▸ Statistical significant difference for HH size distribution

Results – representativity (RQ2)

Overall R-indicators not different

(based on gender, age, time in the sample, Hhsize, n. children, marital status, ethnic group, urbanization)

	R-indicator	CI
Standard	0.92	(0.88, 0.95)
Targeted	0.940	(0.87, 0.98)

Summing up

- Targeted initial letter has the potential to increase response rates, especially by reducing non-contact rates

- effects vary sample subgroups

- effects on sample composition

Further work

➤ In IP9 experiment related to timing of contact on the base of response time in previous waves

The END!

Thank you for your attention!