

Experiments with non-email contact strategies in a UK probability-based online panel survey

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Digital, Culture
Media & Sport



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Background to the web panel



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Taking Part survey & web panel

- Probability sample of English adults (16+) and youths (11-15) interviewed face-to-face
 - Topics: culture, leisure, heritage, arts and sporting activities
 - All respondents with internet access invited to join web panel
- Face-to-face fieldwork and web panel recruitment continuous
 - Invitation & reminder emails to web panel surveys based on date of face-to-face interview
 - Respondents at different points of the web panel journey at any one time
- Web panel members invited to complete a new survey every 90 days
 - 15-minute device-agnostic surveys
 - Conditional incentives: £5 to register online then £2.50 per survey



Recruitment & panel composition

- Goals of web panel recruitment:
 - maximise the number of panellists
 - represent English population as much as possible
- Statistically significant differences on key characteristics between adult web panel members and the population:
 - over represent women, white people and higher socio-economic groups
 - over represent middle aged (55-64) and under represent oldest (80+) and youngest (16-24) age groups
 - over represent those engaging with the arts, visiting a heritage sites, visiting a museum & using a public library

Web panellists' activity

- All surveys
 - After 1 full year on the web panel, 45.5% have done all 4 surveys
 - After 2 full years on the web panel, 40.1% have done all 8 surveys
- Any surveys
 - 82.6% (year 1) and 79.0% (year 2) have completed at least 1 survey
- "Sleepers"
 - Those who joined the web panel, but did not complete any quarterly surveys OR
 - Those who have not completed the last 2-4 consecutive surveys
 - 36.0% of panel sleeping

Current contact strategy

- Email only - invitation, reminder 1 (5 days after invitation) and reminder 2 (10 days after invitation)
- Reviewed literature and contact strategies adopted by other web panels – combination of contact modes at different stages is desirable
- Decided to run a telephone reminder experiment to try to re-activate sleepers

Telephone reminder experiment – set-up



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Aims of telephone reminder experiment

- Aim 1: to encourage adult “sleepers” to resume participation in web panel surveys
- Aim 2: Collect data from the “sleepers”
 - explore whether received our emails to date
 - collect their main reason for ceasing participation

Research questions

1. How effective is a telephone call for reaching sleepers?
2. How many sleepers ask to leave the web panel during the call?
3. Are the sleepers receiving our emails?
4. Why do sleepers stop responding to our emails?
5. What impact does our call have on web panel attrition?
6. What impact does our call have on web panel bias?

Sample

- Adults who have joined the web panel - with an email address and telephone number
- Exclude those who have not completed the last 5+ consecutive surveys
- Stratified by number of days 'asleep' and cohort year
- All eligible adult sleepers selected (N=1,076)
 - randomly assigned to treatment or control (N = 538 per group)

Fieldwork

- 16 January – 12 February 2019
 - 28 days
- 277 out of 538 in treatment group (51.5%) successfully contacted
- 131 interviewed

Telephone reminder experiment – results from interview



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Research Q1: How effective is a telephone call for reaching sleepers?

- Not that effective – telephone has limited potential
- Could only contact half of all sleepers (51.5%)
- Interviewed 24.3% of sleeper sample
 - limited potential to convert some sleepers to active web panellists
- Almost all telephone numbers mobile (93.4%)
 - less likely to answer the phone to an unknown number?

Research Q2: How many sleepers ask to leave the web panel during the call?

- Telephone reminder is not counter-productive
- Only 9.0% of those contacted asked to leave the web panel during the call
- Much lower than proportion interviewed (24.3%)

Research Q3: Are the sleepers receiving our emails?

- Yes – the sleepers get our emails, they just don't respond!
- 87.0% said they were receiving our emails
- 9.9% said they were not receiving our emails - but confirmed that their email address was correct
- 3.1% said they were not receiving our emails - because their email address was incorrect
 - All of these web panellists agreed to provide a new email address

Research Q4: Why do sleepers stop responding to our emails?

- For a variety of reasons – but issue is which ones
- “Circumstantial” reasons – we could do something about
- Other reasons – we cannot

Reason	Result
Too busy	26.4%
Did not see/get emails	25.5%
Personal reasons	18.2%
'Forgot'/'too lazy'/'can't be bothered'	10.0%

Telephone reminder trial – impact of experiment



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Research Q5: What impact does our call have on web panel attrition?

- Did respondents resume participation after the intervention?
- The intervention had a significant, positive impact - 6.9 percentage point increase in resumption rates after the intervention

	Control group	Treatment group	Impact
Did resume at all	13.0%	19.9%	+6.9pp

Base: 1076 (538 treatment + 538 control)

(Research Q5) Does the next survey invitation email prompt resumption?

- The telephone reminder has a significant impact on:
 - proportion resuming before next email
 - proportion resuming after next email

	Control group	Treatment group	Impact
Did resume at all	13.0%	19.9%	+6.9pp
Resumed before next email	0.6%	3.2%	+2.6pp
Resumed after next email	12.5%	16.7%	+4.2pp

Base: 1076 (538 treatment + 538 control)

(Research Q5) Do people just catch up or complete future surveys after the intervention?

- Telephone reminder has a significant impact on participation
- Key objective – future surveys – 5.2pp difference (significant)

	Control group	Treatment group	Impact
Did resume at all	13.0%	19.9%	+6.9pp
Did any future surveys	12.8%	18.0%	+5.2pp
Caught up with previous surveys only	0.2%	1.9%	+1.7pp

Base: 1076 (538 treatment + 538 control)

(Research Q5) How committed are people longer-term after our call?

- Telephone reminder has a significant impact on commitment of people who resume – 4.3pp difference for those who resume and do all asked to do

	Control group	Treatment group	Impact
Did resume at all	13.0%	19.9%	+6.9pp
Did everything asked to do	7.2%	11.5%	+4.3pp

Base: 1076 (538 treatment + 538 control)

Research Q6: What impact does our call have on web panel bias?

- To assess the impact of the telephone reminder on bias we looked at:

Profile of the population (England)

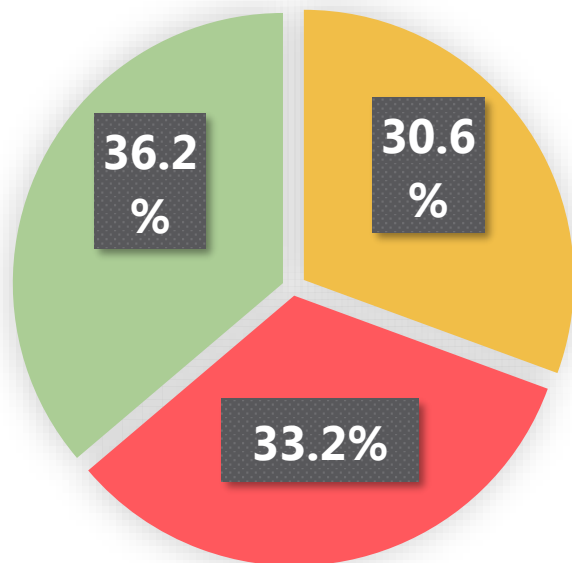
Profile of those agreeing to join web panel

Profile of those interviewed who resumed

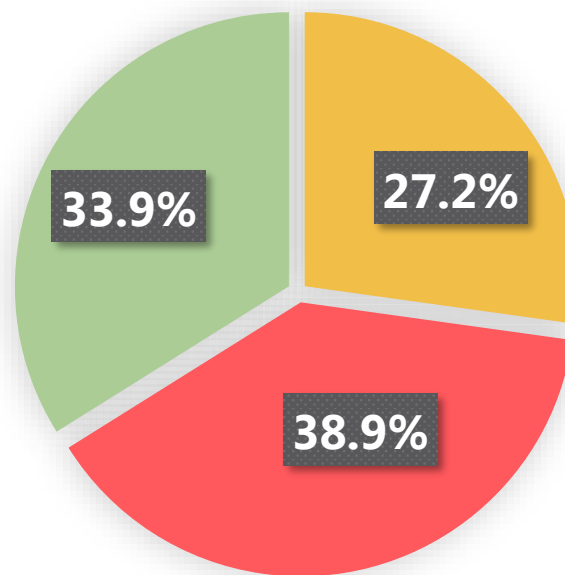
Age

- Mixed impact

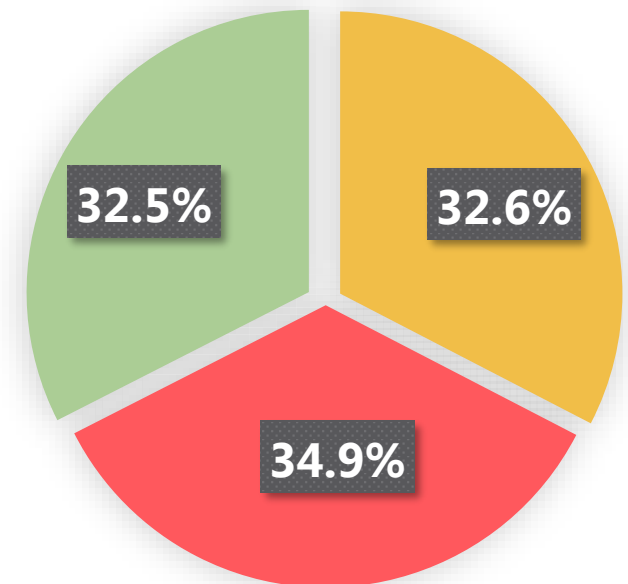
Population



Panel



Interviewed and resumed

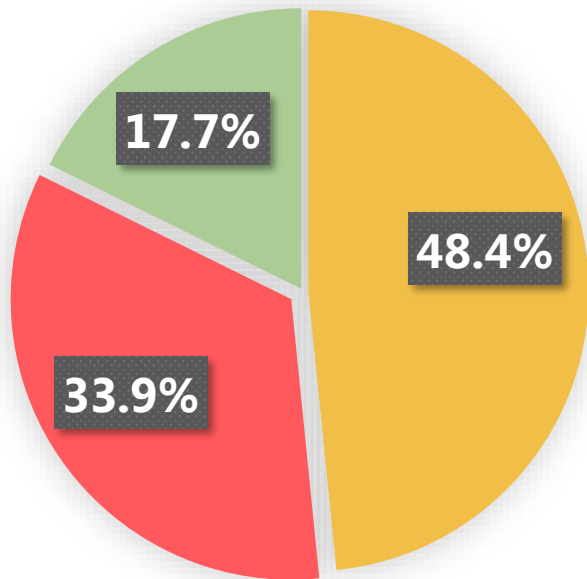


■ 16-34 ■ 35-54 ■ 55+

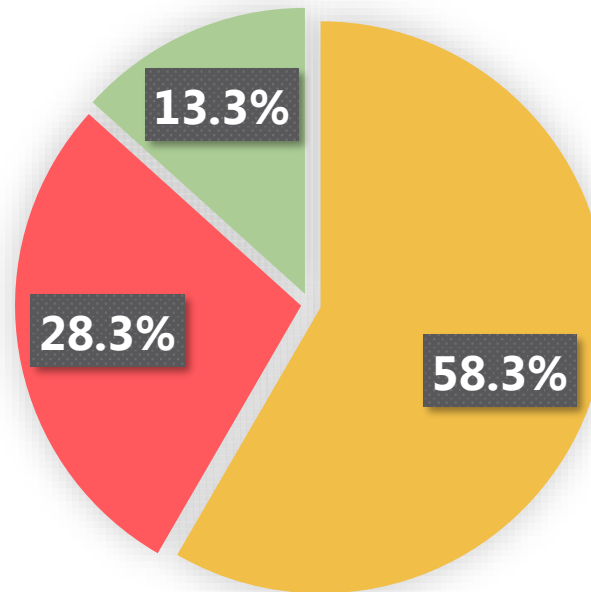
Socio-economic group

- Negative impact

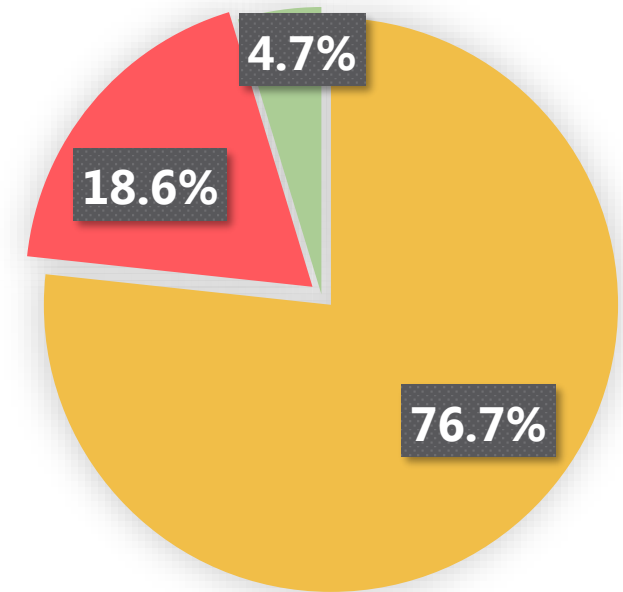
Population



Panel



Interviewed and resumed



■ Upper ■ Lower ■ Not classified

Participation in activities

- Mixed impact
- Compared to those agreeing to join the web panel those who resumed participation are:

Less likely to visit
a museum, gallery
or library

More likely to be
male

More likely to
engage with the
arts

Reflections and next steps



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Reflections

- Using telephone reminder in combination with email slightly beneficial to web panel:
 - increases response to past and future surveys
 - provides information about sleepers
- But:
 - a few use it as a means to leave the web panel
 - impact on attrition can only be modest
 - impact on commitment of panel members fairly small
 - mixed impact on web panel composition
 - costly process – telephone interviewers and researcher time

Next steps

- Explore cost per unit impact of telephone trial
- Analyse the results of the SMS reminder experiment
- Write up results of these two experiments
- Discuss results with DCMS and co-funders

Questions?

Thank you!

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