The Role of Interviewer Observations in Obtaining Representative Data in Repeated Cross-National Studies

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Key concepts and motivation

- Cross-national comparisons assume comparability/equivalence of survey data
  - Differential survey errors
- Response rates vs non-response errors
- Adaptive/responsive survey designs
  - Not used in cross-national surveys presently, but could they be?

Interviewer observations

- Paradata: variables recorded in the process of survey data collection
- Interviewer observations
  - Measurement error
  - Task difficulty, training
  - Missing data

N4. In the immediate vicinity, how much litter and rubbish is there?
(compare the amount to the pictures in your interviewer manual)

○	1.	A very large amount
○	2.	A large amount
○	3.	A small amount
○	4.	None or almost none

N5. In the immediate vicinity, how much vandalism and graffiti is there?
(compare the amount to the pictures in your interviewer manual)

○	1.	A very large amount
○	2.	A large amount
○	3.	A small amount
○	4.	None or almost none

Research questions

- RQ 1: Can interviewer observations be used to produce useful indicators of representativeness in cross-national surveys?

- RQ 2: Are there differences in R-indicators and partial indicators between countries and across time?

- RQ 3: Are higher response rates indicative of higher R-indicators?

Data and Methods

- European Social Survey (ESS) Contact Form Data – rounds 1-9. Country-round combinations analysed
- R-indicators
  - Variance of subgroup response rates
  - Maximum value of 1 = no non-representativeness
  - Partial R-indicators (Pu) for predictors
- Multilevel models fitted to see if survey characteristics predict R-indicators

What is analysed?

- Interviewer observations only (180 country-rounds)
  - Multi-unit building / other type of house
  - Presence / absence of undesirable neighbourhood characteristics (bad physical condition, litter, vandalism)
- Demographic variables only (34)
  - Age and gender
  - Rounds 6-9, individuals sampled
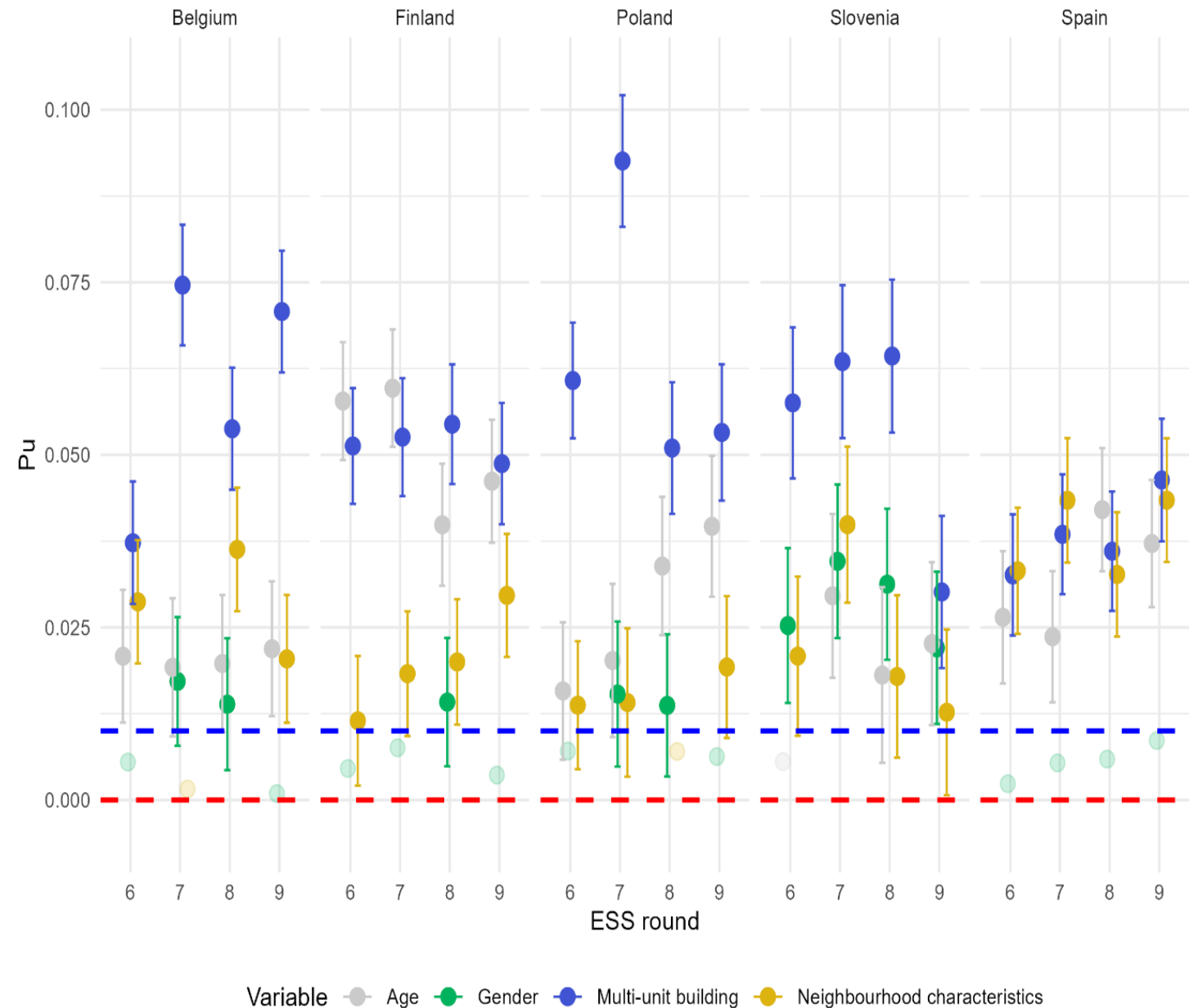- Full model (34) - both interviewer observations and demographic variables

Results

- Using only interviewer observations
    - Significant in 172 of 180 country-rounds
- Average R-indicator is high (0.89)
- Little variation across countries and over time
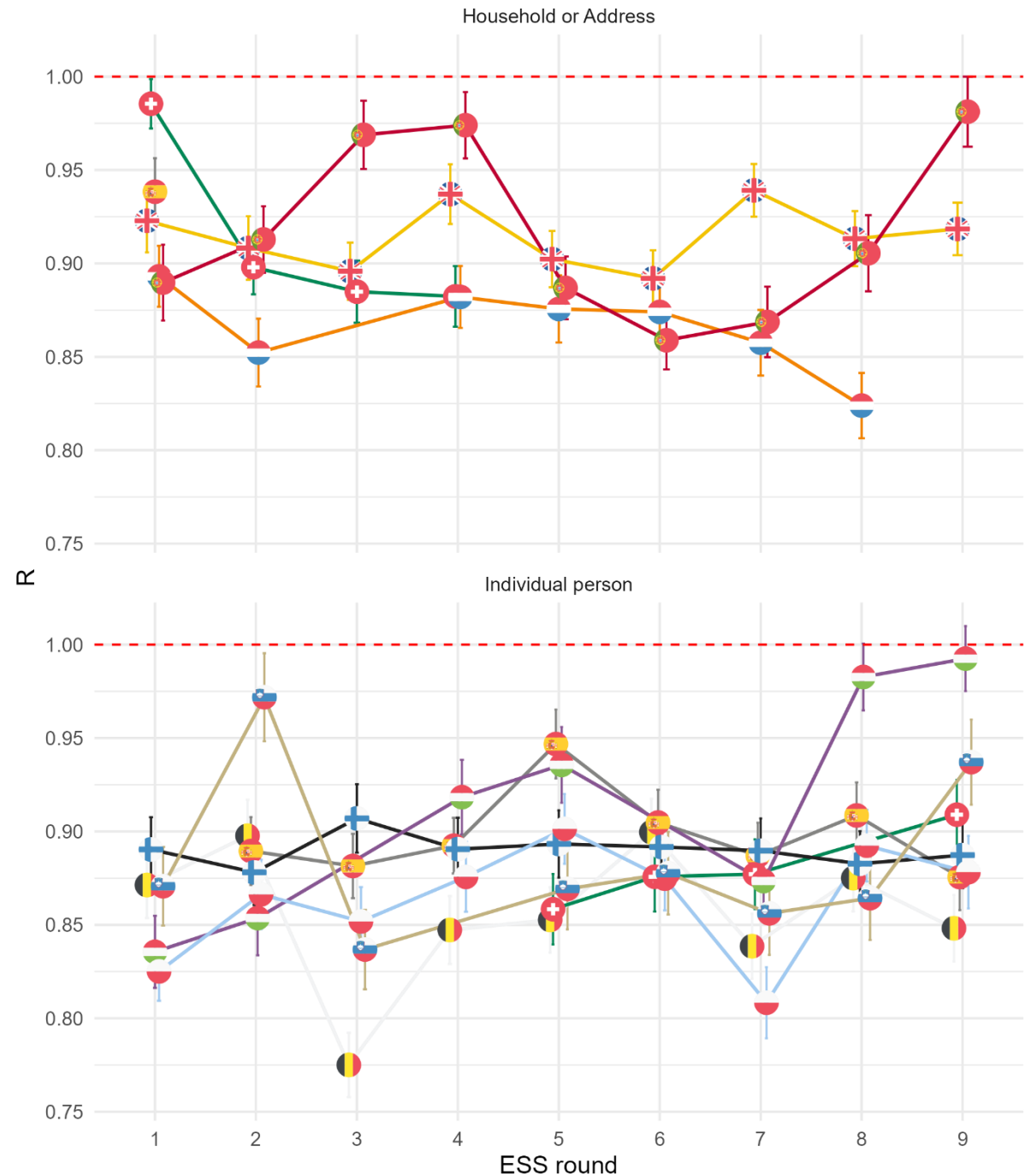
Partial R (full model)

- Interviewer observations indicative of more non-response than demographic variables

- Interviewer observations consistently produce significant partial indicators

What predicts R-indicators?

- Multilevel model (conditional change)
- Not predicted by:
  - Country
  - Time (ESS round)
  - Response rates
- More variation within countries over time than between them

Discussion

- Interviewer observations are useful – they consistently identify non-representativeness
  - Stable R-indicators between countries and over time
  - Increases the comparability of survey data
- Not predicted by response rates, allows pursuit of alternative goals – Adaptive survey designs?
- Should they be used in survey weights?
  - Higher partials than the variables currently used in weights
  - But we have to explore their relationship with survey variables