

LORE methodological note

2019:2

Recruitment to the Citizen Panel. Reminder by postcard or text message

Klara Wärnlöf Bové

The SOM-Institute

ABSTRACT

This methodological note analyzes the propensity to sign up for the Citizen panel depending on different modes of recruitment, postal invitations with reminders by post or by text messages. The result of the experiment shows that the recruitment rate among those who were reminded to sign up by text message is significantly higher than among those reminded to sign up to the panel by a second postcard.

Introduction

This study examines the effects using text messages as a complement to postal invitations in the recruitment process to the Swedish Citizen Panel. The Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORE) conducted the recruitment. A random sample of individuals aged 17 to 34 years from the Swedish national population register were invited to sign up to the Citizen Panel, an online panel at the University of Gothenburg. The first invitation to join the panel was sent out through a mailed invitation postcard. The target group was young due to the underlying need to recruit young participants to the Citizen Panel. Using text message as additional means of contacting the sample was chosen for two reasons. Firstly text messaging is expected to reach a complementary group of the sample and secondly reminding by text message is expected to be a cheaper way of recruitment compared to traditional post card reminders. The use of text messages as a reminder therefor has the potential to reduce sample bias since it is expected to partly reach a group of different composition than those contacted by postcards only. Further, they also have the potential to do so to a smaller cost.

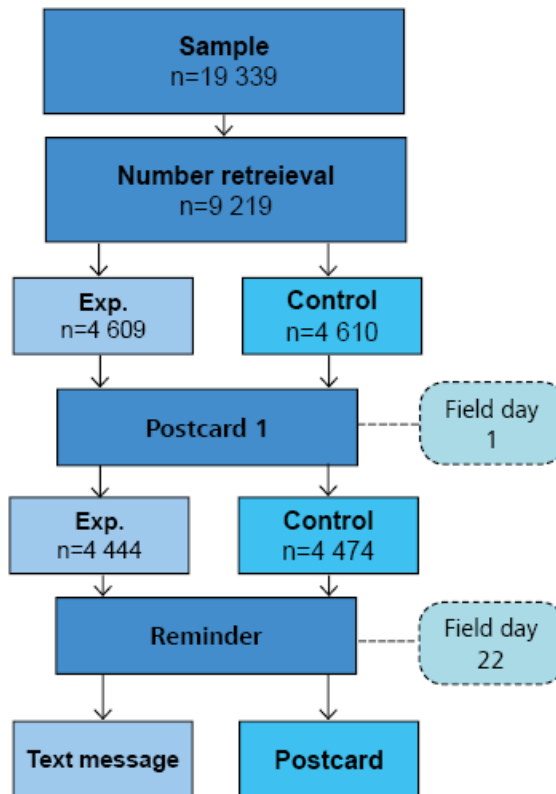
The experiment was carried out on a partial sample ($n=9\,219$) out of the total ($n=19\,339$). The partial sample consisted of those to whom a cell phone number was found in the phone retrieval process. The sample potentially deviates from a random sample of the population aged 17 to 34 years due to limited (47.7 %) cellphone number retrieval.

Three weeks after the initial postal invitation was sent out, those who had not yet signed up to join the online panel were sent a reminder by an additional postcard or a text message reminding them to do so. Therein lays the experiment. Half the group received a postal reminder and the other half received a reminder in form of a text message with equivalent information.

Experimental design

In figure 1 the experimental setup is presented. The sample of those for whom cellphone numbers were obtained were randomized into two equally sized groups ($n=4\,610/n=4\,609$). Both groups received a recruitment postcard with information about the web panel on field day 1. By starting the recruitment by sending out a postcard, it allowed us to convey a lot of information at once. In addition to information about the panel, the postcard included information about how to sign up and how to contact LORE if they had any questions or concerns about the invite (see appendix 1). The two groups were treated equally until field day 22. On field day 22 those in the control group who had not already signed up, had their 1st postcard returned to sender or declined participation ($n=4\,474$) received a second postcard with similar information as the first but framed as a reminder. Those in the experiment group who had not already signed up or declined participation received a text message instead of a second postcard ($n=4\,444$). At the time of differentiation of the subsamples, the recruitment rate did not significantly differ between the two groups. The text message referred to the first postcard that was sent out. Additionally, the text message contained signup information, a link to the recruitment survey and full contact information in similar manners as the reminder postcard.

Figure 1. Experimental design



Results

Figure 2 presents the cumulative inflow of recruits over 45 field days. The effect of the reminder text message is immediate compared to the postcard reminder. This is most probably due to the inconsistency of the postal service. The very first detectable effect of the postal reminder is delayed one day compared with the calculated day of arrival. During the 1st week after the first effects of reminder the inflow of recruits are stabilized between the two groups.

Figure 2. Recruitment rate, cumulative inflow

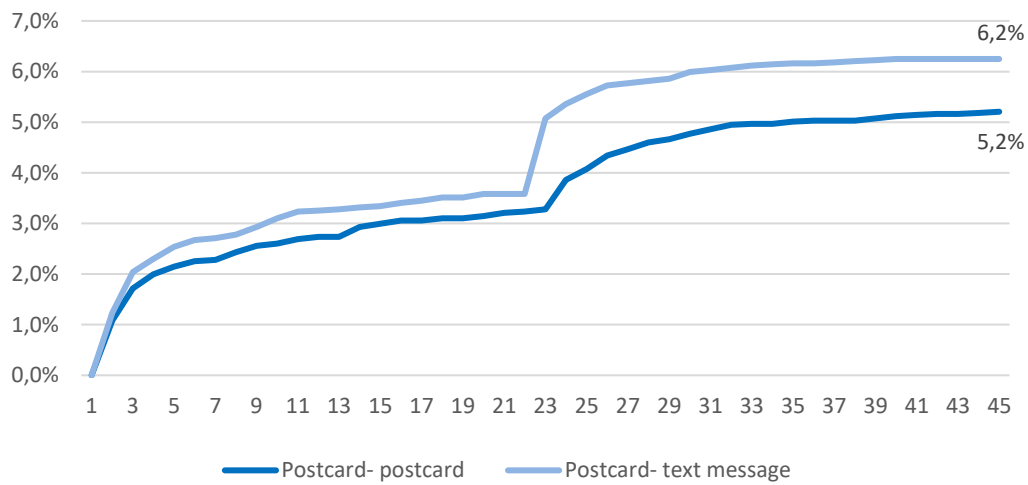


Table 1 presents the results of a two-sided t-test. Using a text message reminder rather than a second postcard results in a significant higher recruitment rate. The recruitment rate in the group receiving a reminder by text message was one percentage point higher than among those receiving a reminder by postcard after 45 field days ($t=2.154$, $p=0.032$). When the samples were divided in age cohorts, no significant differences between the control group and the experimental group were detected. However, based on the consistently higher recruitment rate among those in the experiment group, especially within the youngest age cohort, I advise to further analyze any differences between the age groups.

Table 1. Recruitment rate, postcard and text message reminders after 45 field days (percent)

	Postcard- postcard	Postcard- text message	Δ	t	p	n
Recruitment rate (17-34 years)	5.2	6.2	+1.0	2.154	0.032	9 219
17-22	3.7	5.5	+1.8	1.763	0.078	1 618
23-28	4.6	5.3	+0.7	1.012	0.312	3 984
29-34	6.4	7.5	+1.1	1.239	0.218	3 617

Summary

The use of combined means of contact to recruit participants to the Citizen Panel in the age span of 17 to 34 years among those with a cellphone number resulted in a significantly higher recruitment rate (+1 %). However, due to the aim to include the roughly the same

amount of information to the potential recruit through the text message as through the postcard reminder the cost of the reminder by text messages was not much less than that of reminding by postcard. In addition, the phone number retrieval comes with an additional cost on top of the retrieval of postal addresses from the Swedish national population register. Even so, the cost of reminding with a text message ended up being lower and the recruitment rate statistically significantly higher.

Appendix 1

Frontpage: "What's your opinion?"



Backside: "Your opinion is needed for research on democracy and public opinion"



Hej!

Du har blivit slumpmässigt utvald till att delta i Göteborgs universitets Medborgarpanel. Genom att vara med kan du bidra till kunskapen om människors åsikter om samhällsutvecklingen och om aktuella frågor och problem.

Att delta i Medborgarpanelen innebär att du två till fyra gånger per år får en webbenkät skickad till din e-post med frågor om samhälle, politik och viktiga problem idag. Varje undersökning tar ca 5-10 minuter att besvara och genomförs av forskare vid Göteborgs universitet.

Dina åsikter är lika viktiga oavsett vem du är eller hur intresserad av samhällsfrågor du är. Det är viktigt att du som har blivit utvald deltar för att våra undersökningar ska spegla Sveriges befolkning. Vi hoppas därför att just du vill ställa upp.

Anmäl dig genom att skriva in följande länk i adressraden på din webbläsare:

www.medborgarpanelen.gu.se/vykort

Använd ditt användarnamn och lösenord för att logga in.

Användarnamn:
Lösenord:

Med vänliga hälsningar
Johan Martinsson, fil. dr.
info@medborgarpanelen.gu.se
Tel: 031-786 30 60 (vardagar kl 15.00-16.00)

Din åsikt behövs till forskning
om demokrati och opinion

Returadress:
Statsvetenskapliga institutionen
Göteborgs universitet
Box 711, 405 30 Göteborg

The Laboratory of Opinion Research (LORE) is an academic web survey center located at the Department of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg. LORE was established in 2010 as part of an initiative to strengthen multidisciplinary research on opinion and democracy. The objective of the Laboratory of Opinion Research is to facilitate for social scientists to conduct web survey experiments, collect panel data, and to contribute to methodological development. For more information, please contact us at:

info@lore.gu.se