We compare to what extent using up to three unsubscription rates in web panels.

**BACKGROUND**

- Many surveys today are challenged by falling response rates and difficulties in recruiting panel members
- Survey practitioners sometimes send additional reminders to achieve higher response rates
- There is widespread agreement that several reminders and follow-up contacts yield higher response rates
- Less knowledge about when the effects of reminders are saturated, in particular for web surveys
- Possibility that (too) many reminders may cause respondents to drop out from panels, i.e. result in an increase in unsubscription rates

**RESEARCH QUESTION**

How do reminders affect participation and unsubscription rates in web panels?

**WHAT WE DO**

We compare to what extent using up to three reminders affect click rate, participation rate, completion rate and unsubscription rate.

**METHOD & DATA**

- Experimental set-up with 10,000 respondents
- 4 groups with 2,500 respondents in each subsample
- Using the Citizen Panel, a non-commercial web panel, run by the Laboratory of Opinion Research at the University of Gothenburg
- Opt-in sample
- Older, men, well-educated, and politically interested are overrepresented in the sample
- No incentives were used
- Field period of 3 weeks, 11th of May to 1st of June, 2015
- Mean survey duration 15 minutes (excluding outliers)

**Table 1. Experimental design and field work**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of reminders</th>
<th>Dates of reminders</th>
<th>Sent emails</th>
<th>Bounces</th>
<th>Delivered emails (net sample size)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>20/5</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18/5, 25/5</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>2446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>15/5, 20/5, 25/5</td>
<td>2506</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2429</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**RESULTS**

- Sending one to two reminders significantly increase the click rate, by 11.4 and 3.7 percentage points respectively. A third reminder increases the click rate with 2.1 percentage points, but this increase is not statistically significant
- Each reminder yield a statistically significant increase in participation rate, by 11.2, 4.0 and 2.6 percentage points respectively
- Although every additional reminder increases the completion rate, the increase is small, around 1 percentage point per reminder, and not significant
- A negative consequence of additional reminders is that it increases the number of respondents that permanently unsubscribes from the panel. The effect is more pronounced after the third reminder, where 2.5 percentage points of the respondents chose to unsubscribe from the panel

**DEFINITIONS**

- Click rate = percent of net sample who click on the link to the web survey
- Participation rate = percent of net sample who finishes the entire web survey
- Completion rate = percent of respondents who start taking the survey that finish the entire survey
- Unsubscription rate = percent respondents who permanently withdraw from further panel participation

**CONCLUSIONS**

- Reminders increase both 1) click rates, 2) participation rates, and 3) completion rates in the survey, thus yielding more complete data and fewer survey breakoffs.
- While sending several reminders have positive effects on participation- and completion rates, it seems to have a negative side-effect in making more respondents leave the panel.
- This suggests that survey practitioners have to make a trade-off between increasing participation rates and keeping members to stay in the panel.

**Information & Contact**

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For more information, please visit LORE website [www.lore.gu.se](http://www.lore.gu.se) or send us an email at info@lore.gu.se.