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How to run long web surveys: a real-life experiment with the European Values Study

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How to run long web surveys: a real-life experiment with the European Values Study

General Online Research 2018 Conference, Köln

Track A: Internet Surveys, Mobile Web and Online Research
A4: Increasing Response and Data Quality, 01/Mar/2018: 2:15-3:15, Room 248

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Context and research questions

- In international comparative research, the gold standard still is the face-to-face mode (minimizing problems of coverage and literacy)
- Challenge of keeping a high level of involvement of the countries
- High costs of the face-to-face mode
- World is rapidly changing, the Internet penetration and literacy is rising not only in western countries.

➔ Can the web mode defy the face-to-face gold standard?

➔ How to design a web survey to successfully supplement long FtF surveys?

We have to prepare the future!

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Challenges when turning FtF into web

- Starting point: European Values Study
1 hour survey, concentrated on values and attitudes
fielded face-to-face only so far, every 9 years, by up to 40 countries

- Challenge 1 for web: the LENGTH (feasibility)

- Challenge 2 for mode change: comparability
  - across time
  - across countries

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European Values Study

How the EVS 2017 addresses these challenges

- Half of the sample had to be fielded face-to-face as usual
  The other half could be fielded as web (+paper if evaluated as necessary)
- Same sample frame, but separate random samples
- The web questionnaire could be shortened following a matrix design:

Respondent groups	Target N	Blocks				
		Core	A	B	C	D
RG1	333	X	X	X		
RG2	333	X	X		X	
RG3	333	X	X			X
RG4	333	X		X	X	
RG5	333	X		X		X
RG6	333	X			X	X

- Target number of respondents: 2,000 respondents overall,
  1,000 respondents for each substantive question;
  at least 333 respondents for each binary combination of questions.
- Target duration: 30 minutes
- Main principles for split:
  not pure random, meaningful for respondents, items often analyzed together in same block,
  SD and substantial questions in core, same order as in source questionnaire

The Swiss EVS 2017 experimental design

Gross sample size (N)	Mode	Length	Additional experiment
1400	CAPI	Full length	
6 x 800 = 4800	WEB-paper	Matrix	
		+ FU for respondents	
1000	WEB-paper	Full length, original order (as CAPI)	1/2 announced as short, 1/2 as long
1000	WEB-paper	Full length, alternative order (as matrix group 4 with FU)	1/2 announced as short, 1/2 as long

Announcements:

CAPI ann. as	*1 hour*
Full WEB an. as	*45 minutes*
	25 minutes
Matrix WEB an. as	*25 minutes*
	+ 15 min. for FU

Main research questions:

➔Can the missing data of the matrix be completed with a follow-up survey?

➔Is a 1 hour web survey really unrealistic?

➔Is it better to split up a long questionnaire or to run it in the full length?

➔Does the content of the questionnaire has an effect on break-offs or data quality?

➔Does the length announced has an impact on participation?

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The EVS 2017 experimental design and **main results** (preliminary)

Gross sample size (N)	Mode	Length	additional experiment	Expected RR	Achieved RR
1400	CAPI	Full length		44%	**49.9%**
6 x 800 = 4800	WEB-paper	Matrix		43%	**44.5%**
		+ FU for respondents		26%	**33.5%**
1000	WEB-paper	Full length, original order (as CAPI)	1/2 announced as short, 1/2 as long	30%	**40.9%**
1000	WEB-paper	Full length, alternative order (as matrix group 4 with FU)	1/2 announced as short, 1/2 as long	30%	**44.3%**
			all full announced as short	32%	***44.4%***
			all full announced as long	28%	***40.8%***

Announcements:

CAPI announced as	*1 hour*
Full WEB announced as	*45 minutes*
	25 minutes
Matrix WEB announced as	*25 minutes*
	+ 15 minutes for FU

Share of responses on paper (overall): 28%

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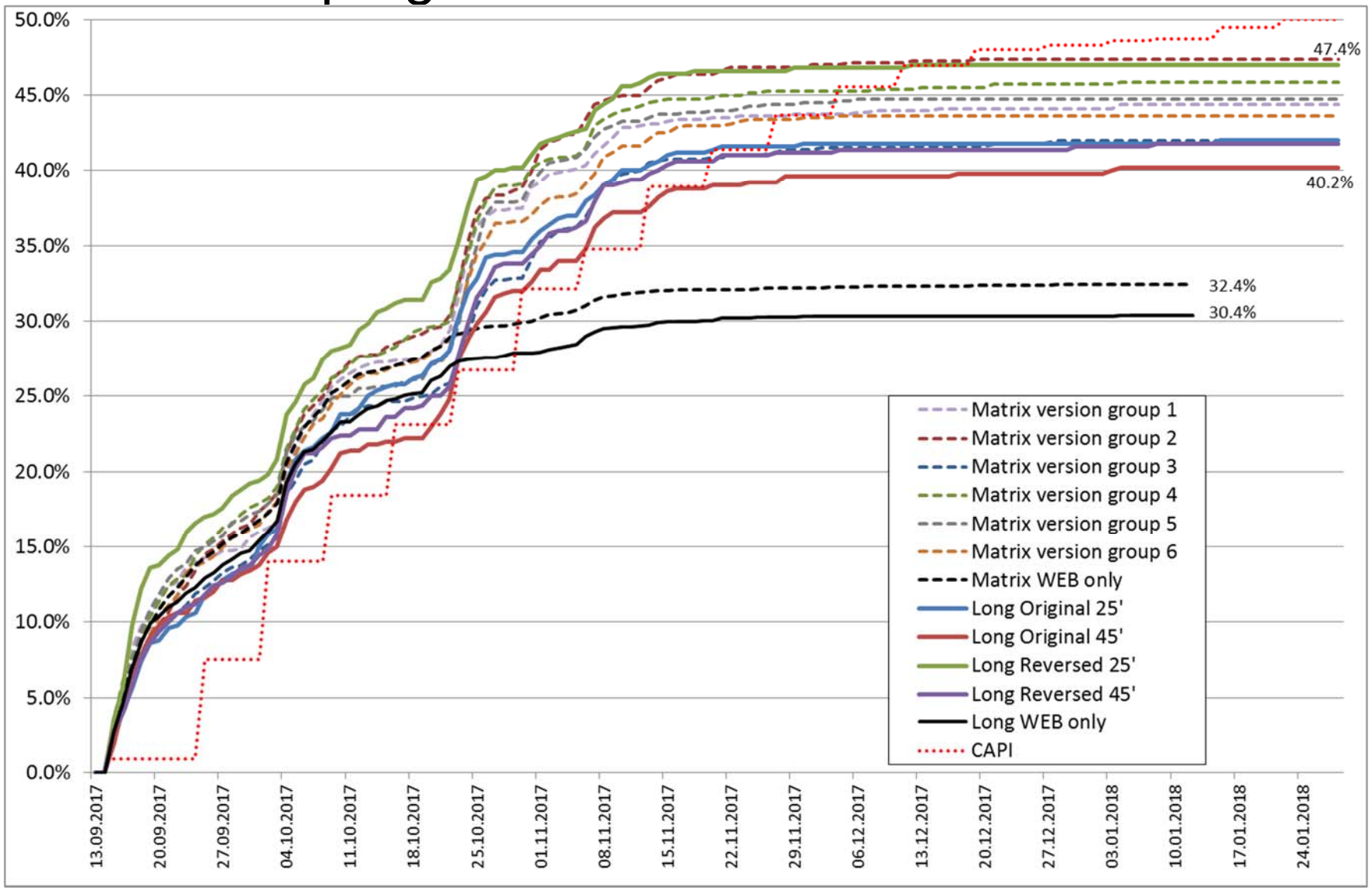
Fieldwork progressions



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Lessons learned

- Good response rates can be achieved with web-paper, even with long surveys (40 minutes, 1 hour)
- The paper reminder contributes largely to the success
- For the response rate, it is better to field a whole 1 hour web-survey, rather than splitting it into two parts
- Beginning with rather unpleasant topics does not seem to lead to massive break-offs or attrition
- The length announced matters only little: 25 minutes is probably already perceived as long
- Response rates vary strongly between the groups, not always following our hypotheses

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What about nonresponse-bias (representativeness)?

- Information from the sampling frame (basic socio-demographics: gender, age, civil status, nationality, residence
- No huge NR-bias detected for socio-demographics
- Some significant differences between web, paper and face-to-face on :
  age, marital status, houshold size, nationality, region

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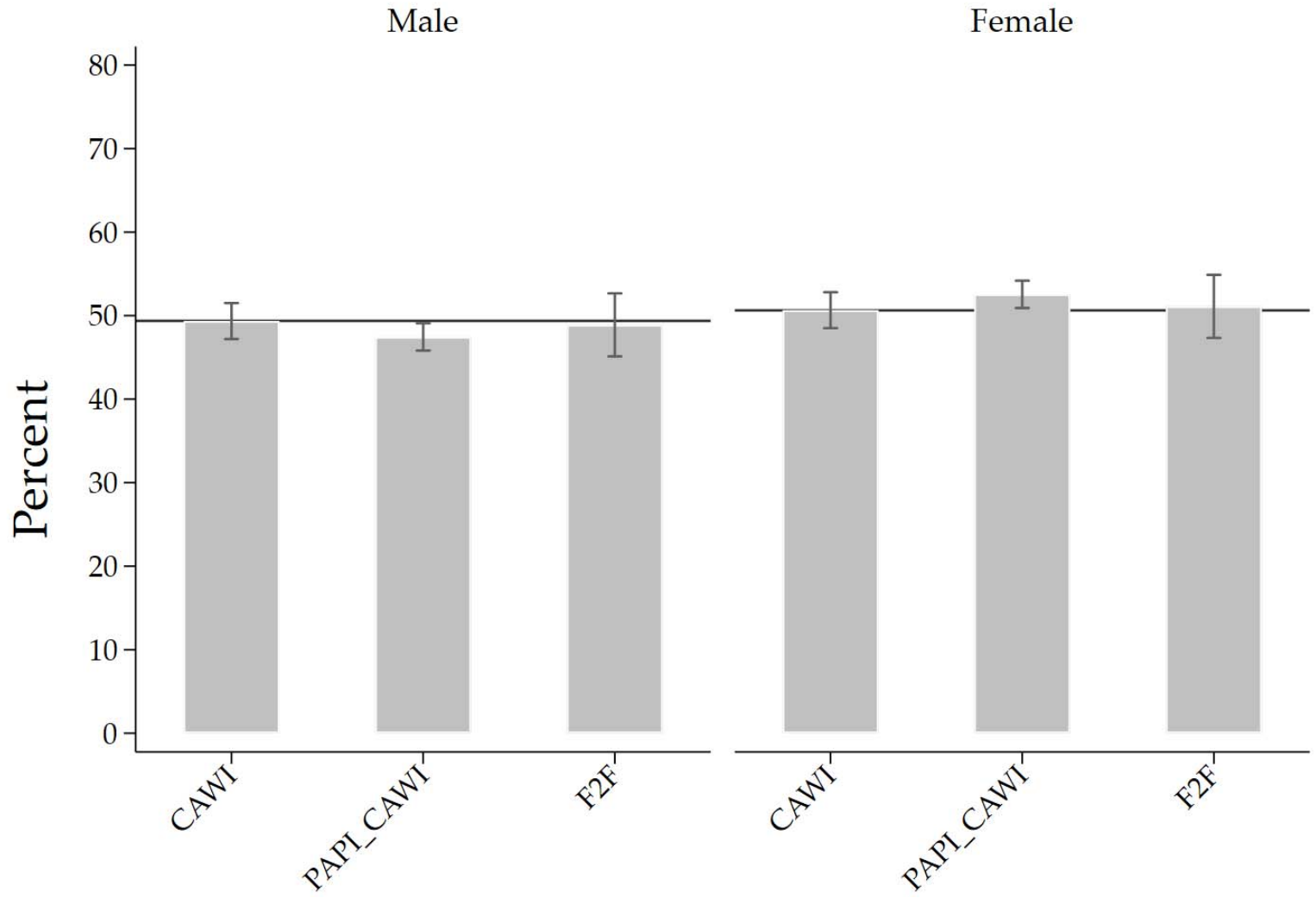
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by gender



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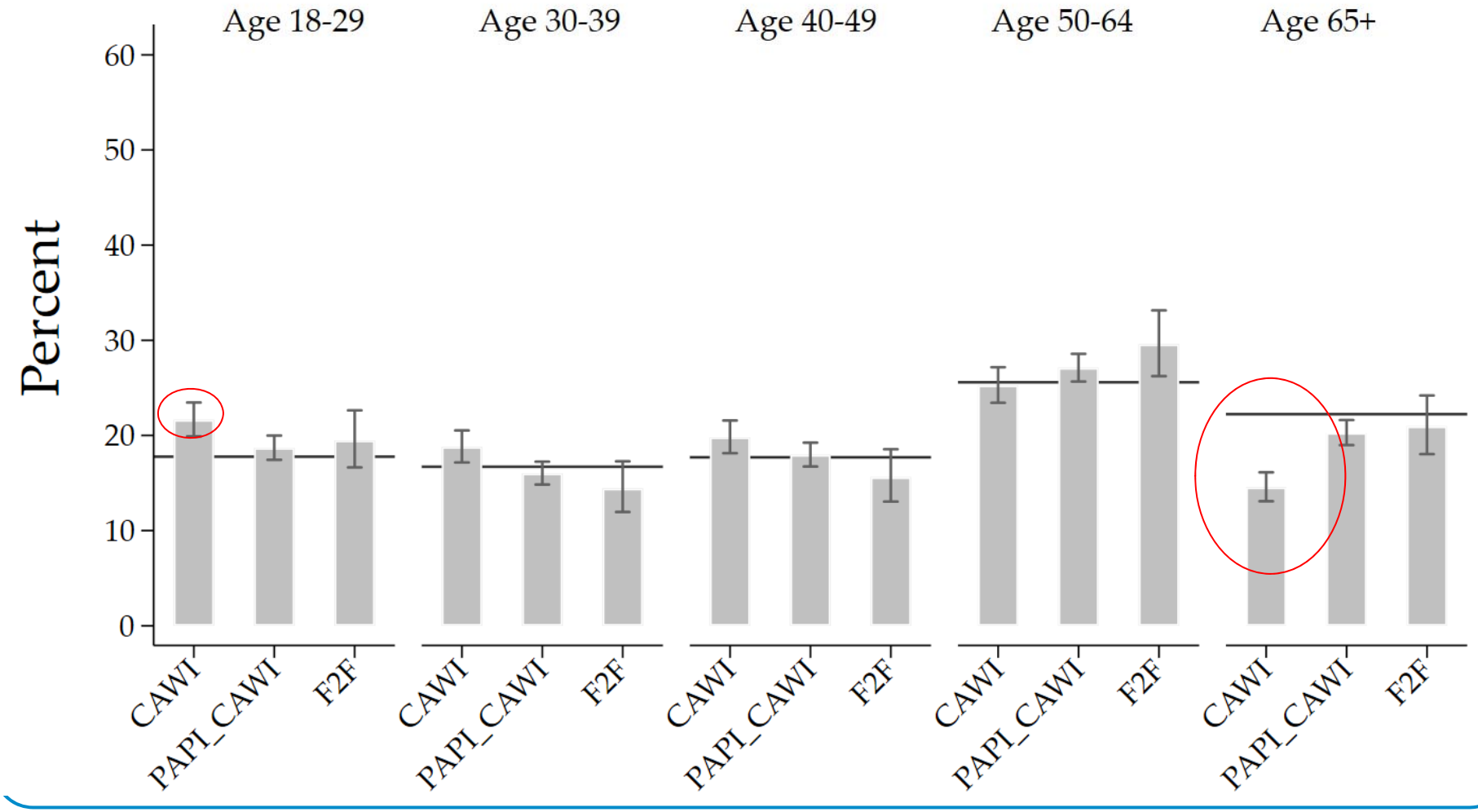
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by age



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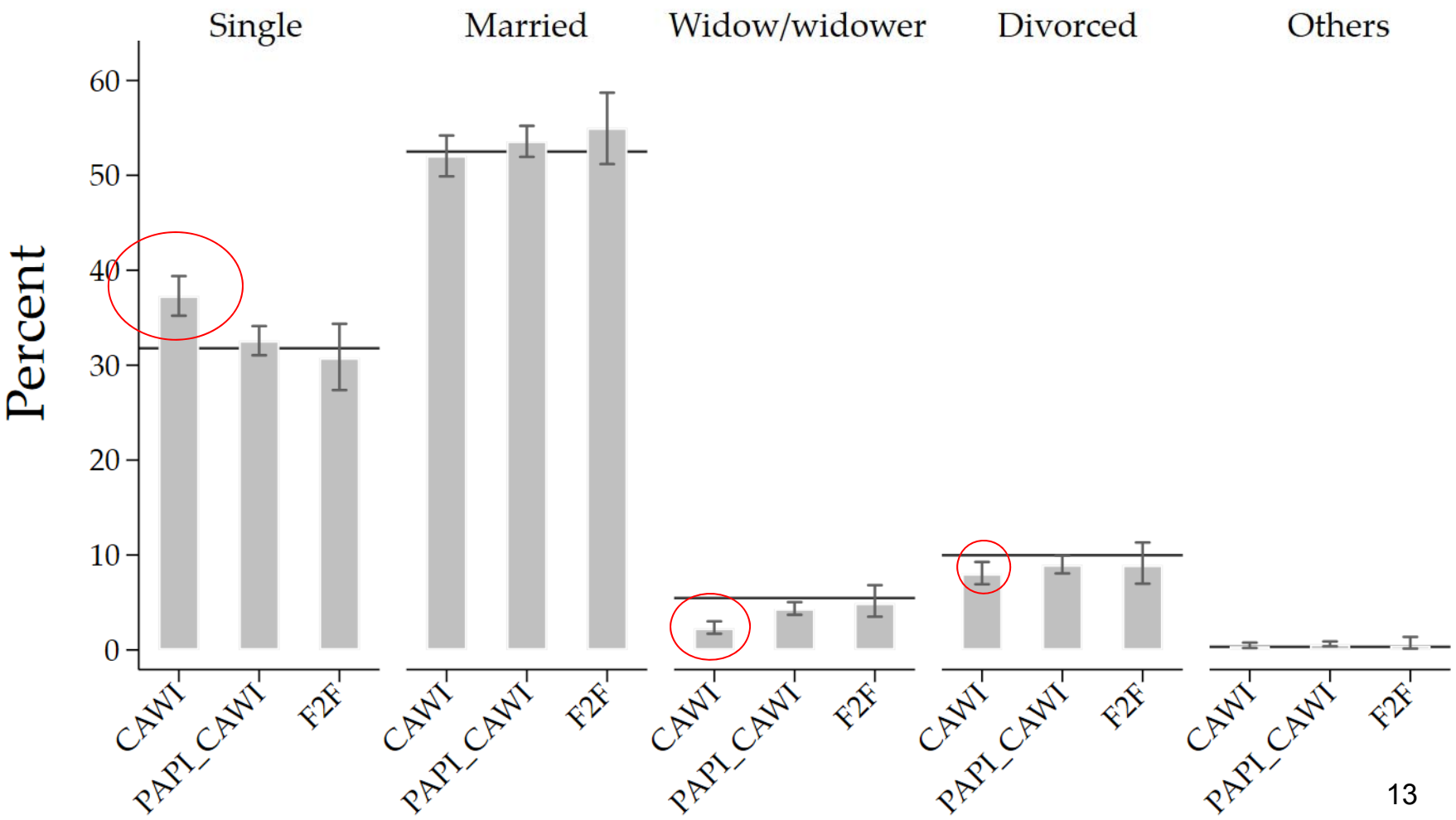
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by marital status



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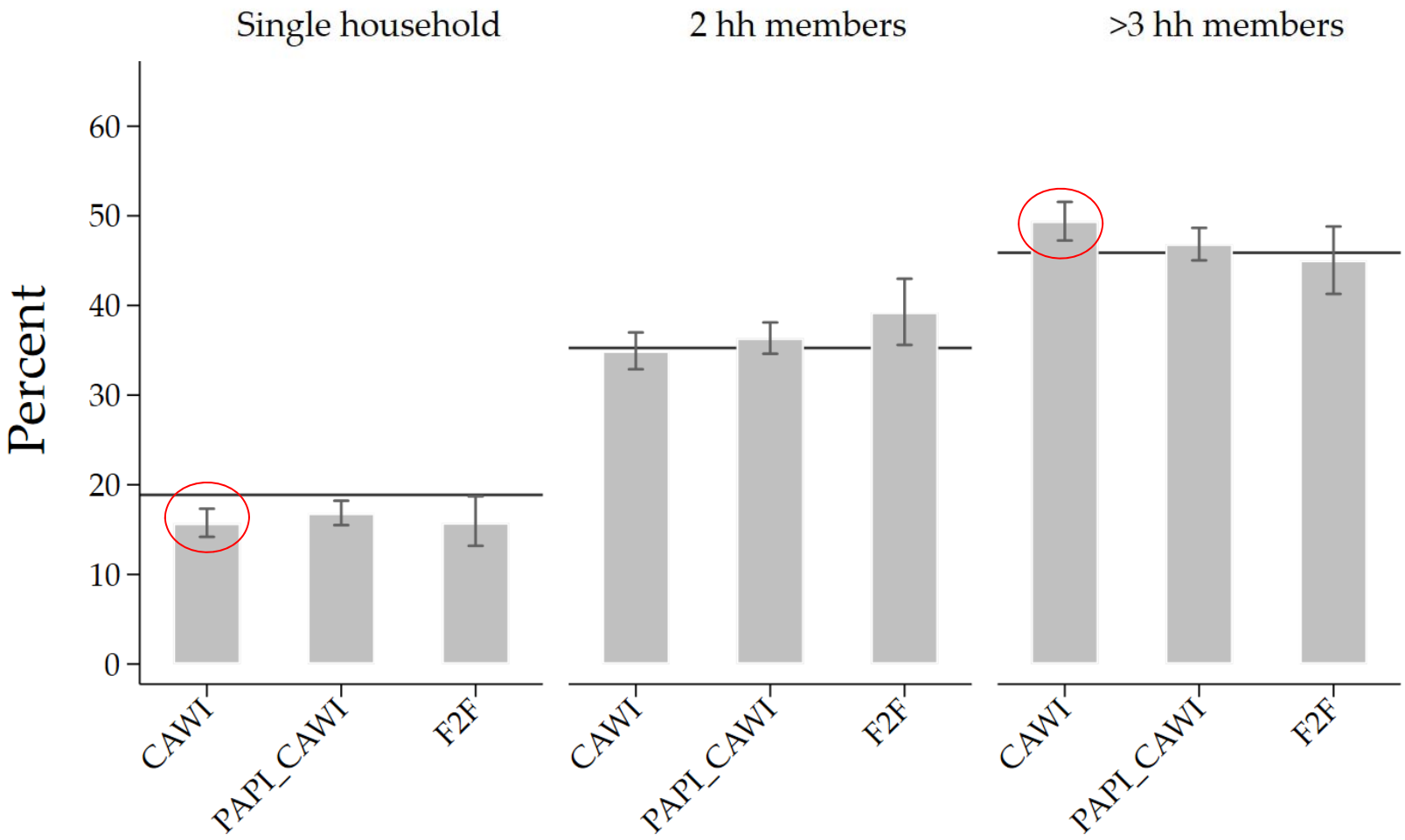
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by household size



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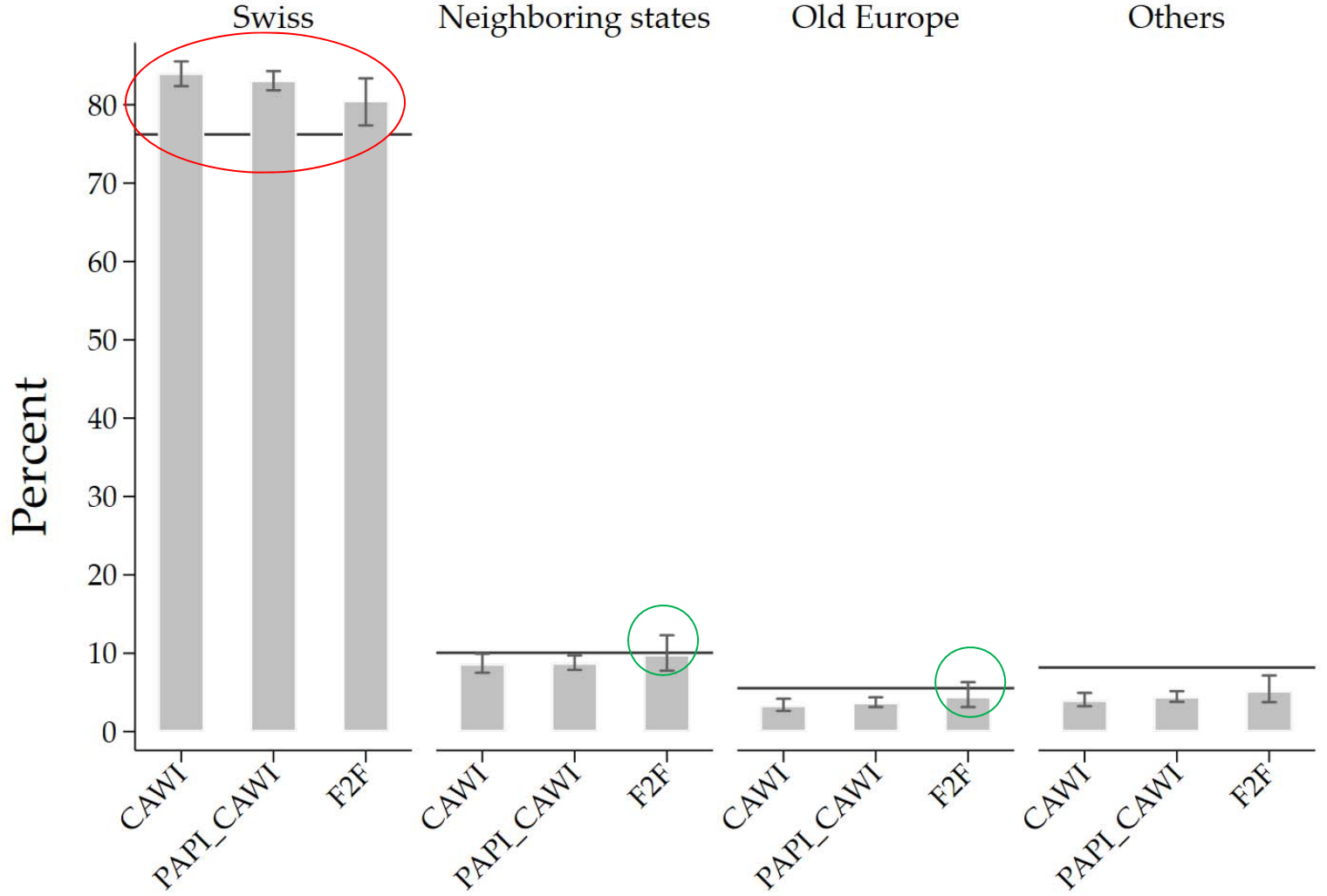
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by nationality



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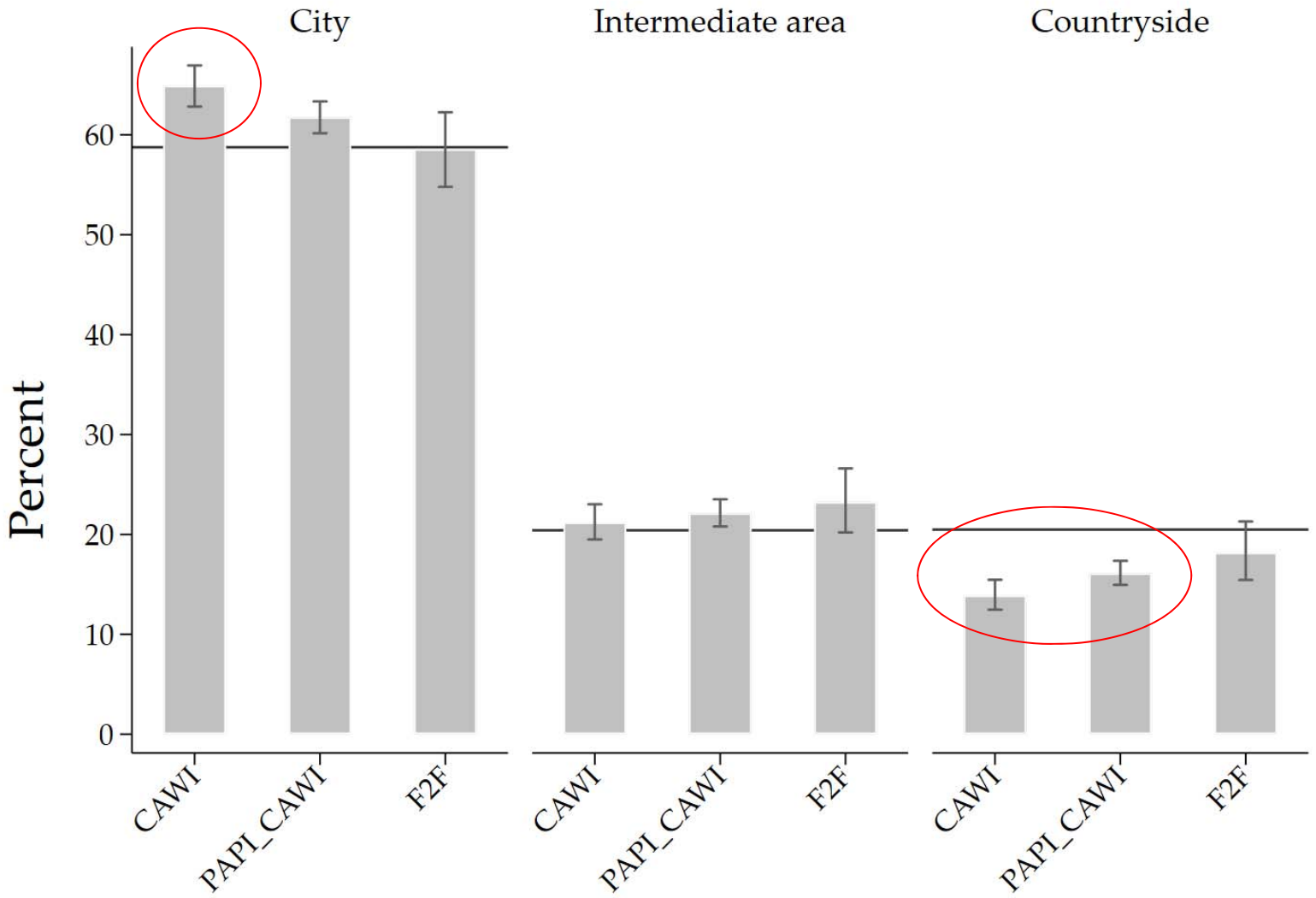
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by region



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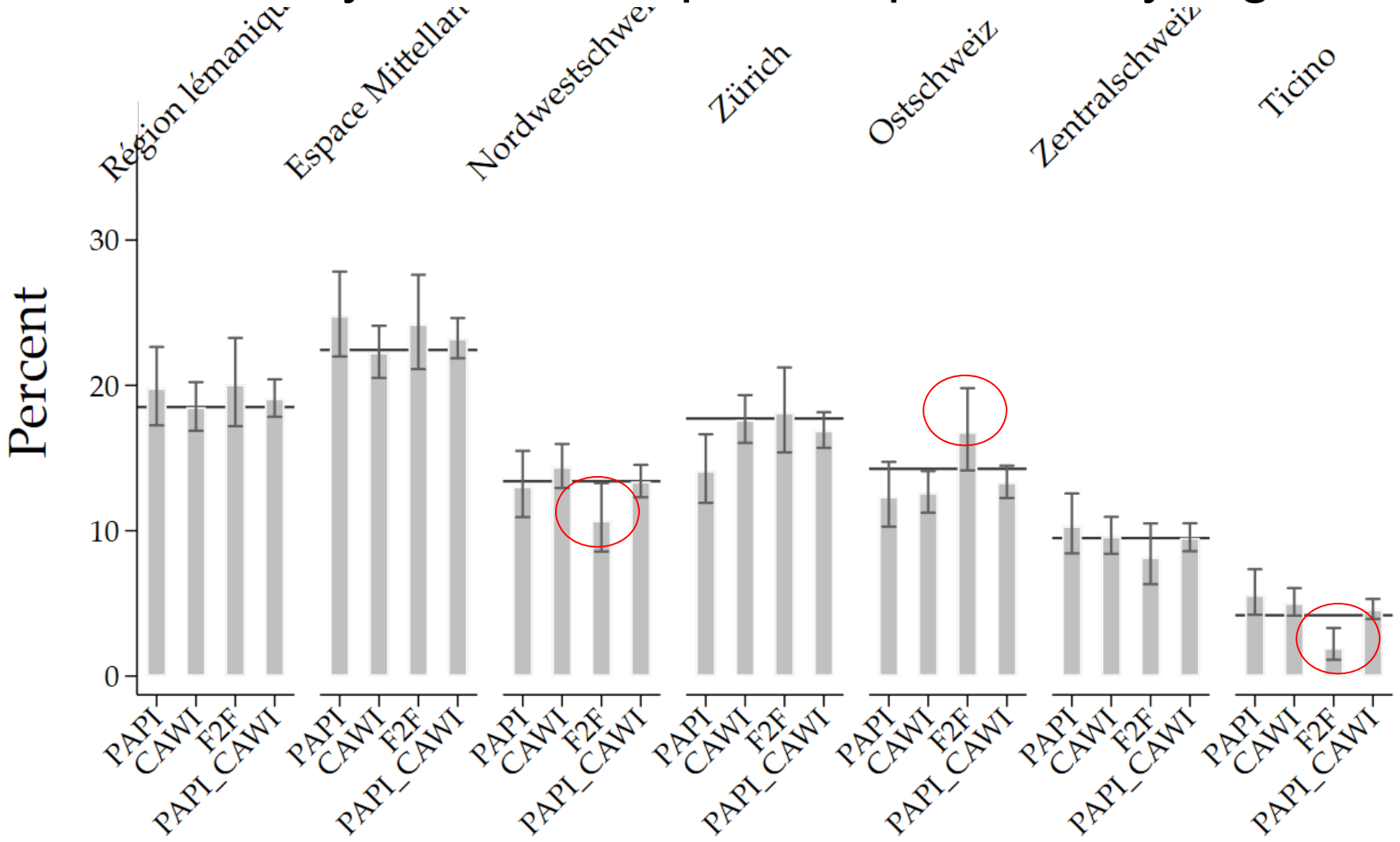
NR-bias by mode: sample composition by region



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Summary on representativeness by mode

- The mix of web and paper is necessary to mitigate some of the biases (age, civil status, household size); results are then similar to face-to-face
- In most of the cases (except for the oldest), our design of web-paper mix results in correct representativeness
- Face-to-face remains better in recruiting non-national respondents, but can have regional problems due to the interviewer teams

- No significant differences in representativeness between the short (matrix) and long web version, when web and paper are considered together (not shown)

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Country overview: response rates

ALL results are PRELIMINARY, either not consolidated yet, either field still running

Country	CH	ICL	DK (still in field)	GER (still in field)	NL (still in field)	FIN
CAPI	48%	41%	52%	27%	43%	
Web Matrix	44%	44%	-	33%	81%	
Web Matrix-FU	34% (77% of resp)	14% (30% of resp)	-	-	68% (84% of resp)	
Web Full length	41%	41%	40%	-	-	
share of paper	28%	2% of FU	?	70%	-	
mode(s)	web+paper (push to web: paper with 2nd reminder)	web+paper (paper only if no Internet at all)	web+paper (push to web: paper with 1st reminder)	web+paper (push to web= 2nd rm VS no push=invt)	web only, LISS-panel	
incentive	8.6€ prepaid + lottery for FU	lottery cond. on response	none	5€ prepaid/ 10€ postpaid		

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Overall conclusion

These experiments show that web-paper can substitute more expensive modes by:

- Achieving good response rates
- Offering correct representativeness through the mix of web and paper
- Being cost efficient

AND they show also that web-paper surveys are feasible even with really long surveys, and not only in Switzerland.

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Specific conclusions

- 1 hour surveys seem to be administrable by web-paper, as well as a 30 minutes survey
- In terms of response rates, it is better to offer a 1 hour survey rather than to split it in two parts
- The length announced has a slight effect, but 25 minutes might already be considered as long, so that the difference is small.
- The content and order of the topics in the questionnaires has not the expected effect: once a Swiss respondent started, he finishes
- The paper part is essential for representativeness. Our ‘push to web’ procedure works well (high share of web and representvss).
- The Swiss results have been partially achieved in other countries (especially the feasibility of long web surveys).

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Next

- Assess data and measurement quality for the different modes (and devices, and question orders)
  - representativeness by single experimental groups
  - substitutions (did the right person answer, or someone else?)
  - drop-outs, item-nonresponse
  - non codable answers, filter errors (esp. for paper)
  - completeness of open answers
  - design effects: i.e. straightlining, primacy, recency effects
  - selection and measurement effects on substantial outcomes
  - accuracy (if external validation possible)
- Compare conclusions between countries
- Explore imputations options for the data missing by design (matrix): country solution + international solution

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THANK YOU!

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