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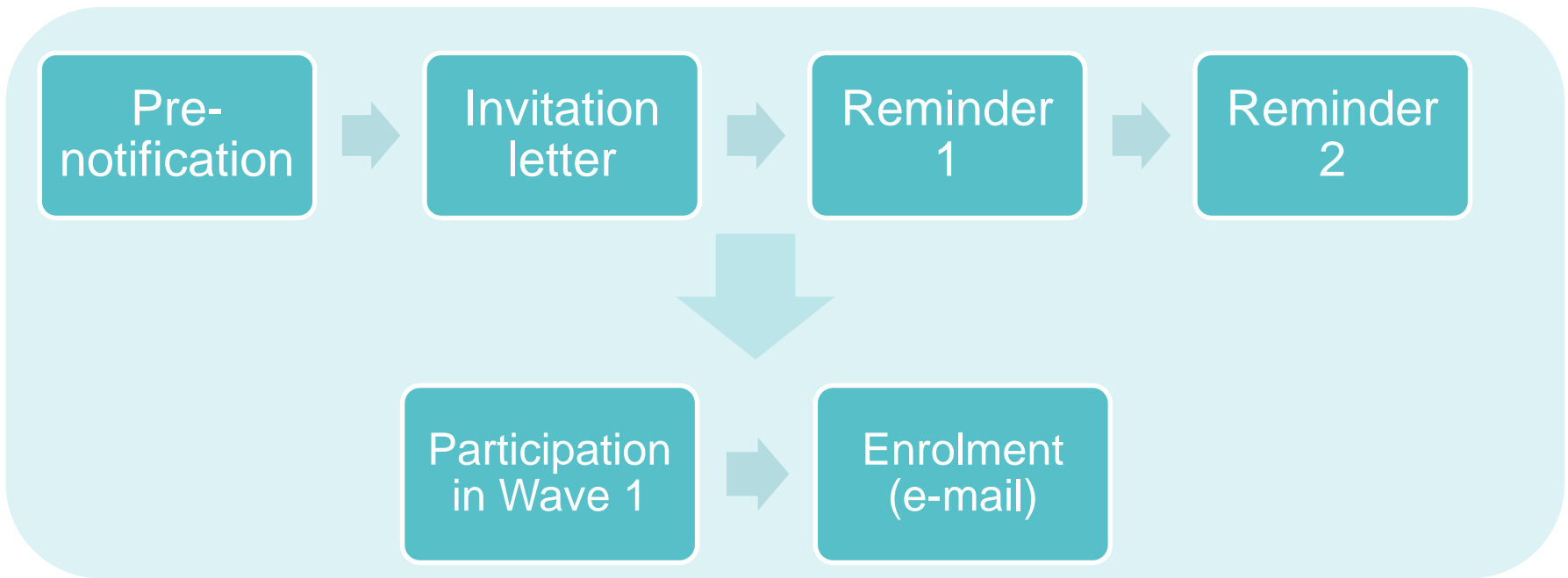
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Effects of contact letters and incentives in offline recruitment to a short-term probability-based online panel survey

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ESRA
Lisbon, 19.7.2017

Swiss Electoral Study (Selects) 2015 Panel Survey

- Short-term panels valuable for electoral research
 - Effects of electoral campaign, causality
 - Web-only → once an email is provided, fieldwork costs are very low
- Three-wave panel survey: before campaign, during campaign, post-election
 - In-house, only contact method possible postal mail
- Rolling cross-section in second wave: crucial to achieve an average of 120 interviews per day during 60 days of the campaign, 100 of whom also participate in W3
- What is the necessary gross sample size?
- How to maximize compliance?
 - Not much applicable literature, no information on the Swiss context



Wave 2 – RCS during campaign

Wave 3 – After elections

Possible Measures to Maximize Compliance

- Letters

- Main question: How to inform about panel component? Possible trade-off
 - Inform clearly: lower RR in W1, more enrollment and less attrition
 - No mention: higher RR in W1, less enrollment and more attrition

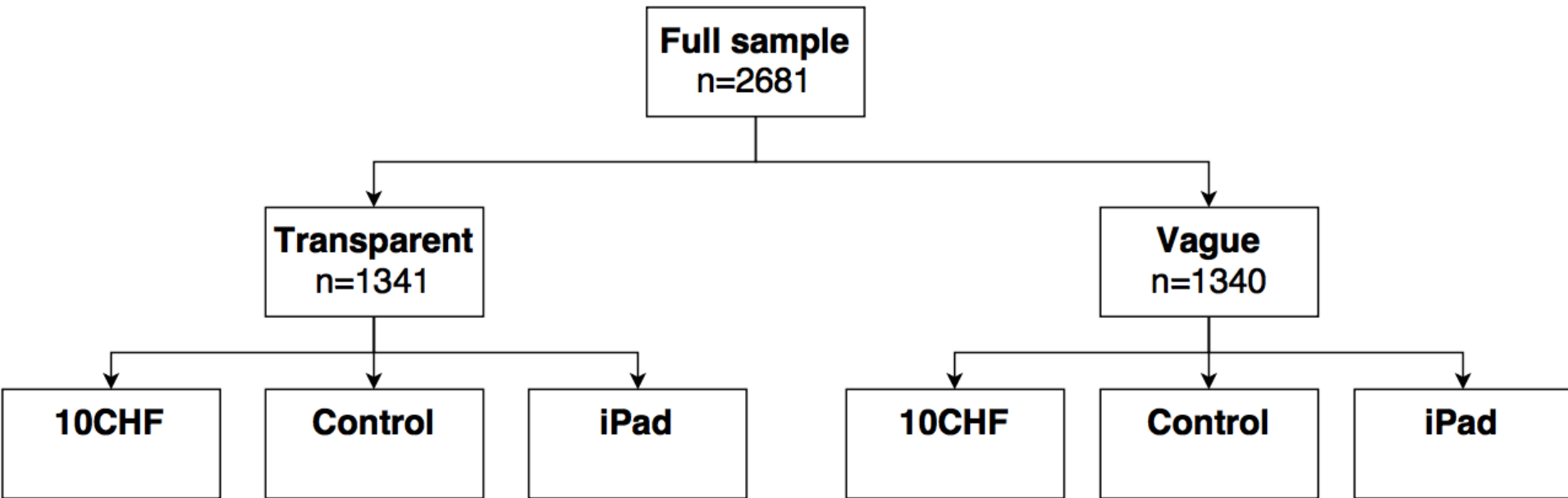
- Incentives

- A 10CHF prepaid incentive in the form of a postal cheque
- To increase enrolment in the panel and reduce attrition, add a conditional incentive for participating in all waves?
 - Another 10CHF
 - Raffle of 5 iPads
- Raffles usually perform worse, but as the incentive would be received almost 6 months later, 10CHF might not be enticing enough

- Questionnaire

- Make the questionnaire short, interesting, easy to fill out on any device

Experimental Design



Letters

- Transparent: “you will be asked to participate in two further surveys”
- Vague: “some respondents might be contacted for a follow-up”

Conditional incentives

- Conditional on participating in all three waves
- Mentioned at the enrollment

Reminders

- Reminders
 - Transparent: « social exchange » (Dillman)
 - 1st reminder: thank you letter, importance of the study, asking for help
 - 2nd reminder: opportunity to give opinion
 - Vague: «nudge»
 - 1st reminder: many people have participated, but not you
 - 2nd reminder: mention of conditional incentive if applicable

[SRPH_MrMrs]
[callName] [officialName]
[residenceAddressLine1]
[residenceStreet] [residenceHouseNumber]
[residenceSwissZipCode] [residenceTown]

Lausanne, [Date]

Teilnahme an der Selects Befragung 2015

Sehr [Greeting] [SRPH_MrMrs] [officialName]

Vor Kurzem haben wir Sie per Post über das wissenschaftliche Wahlforschungsprojekt Selects informiert. Nun möchten wir Sie bitten, an der Befragung teilzunehmen. Ihre Ansichten interessieren uns, unabhängig von politischer Einstellung und selbst wenn Sie, wie viele andere, gar nicht an den Wahlen teilnehmen wollen.

Sie wurden zufällig aus dem Stichprobenregister des Bundesamtes für Statistik ausgewählt und repräsentieren dadurch einen Teil der Schweizer Bevölkerung. Damit das Projekt zuverlässige Ergebnisse liefern kann, sind wir auf die Mitarbeit möglichst aller ausgewählten Schweizerinnen und Schweizer angewiesen.

Als Dank für Ihre wertvolle Unterstützung haben wir diesem Schreiben einen Postcheque von Fr. 10.- beigelegt, den Sie in den nächsten zwei Monaten bei jeder Poststelle einlösen können. Da wir insbesondere den Einfluss der Wahlkampagne untersuchen, werden wir einige Teilnehmende im Verlaufe des Wahljahres mit Folgefragen kontaktieren. Die Beteiligung an der Studie ist natürlich freiwillig und die Teilnahme an dieser Befragung bedeutet nicht, dass Sie allenfalls folgende Fragebögen ausfüllen müssen.


Hier können Sie an der Online-Befragung teilnehmen:

Link: www.selects2015.ch
Persönliches Login: [Passwort]

Die Befragung dauert etwa 15 Minuten. Falls sich Fragen ergeben, können Sie sich gerne unter der Nummer 021 692 46 71 oder der E-Mail-Adresse selects@fors.unil.ch bei uns melden (Mo-Fr 08:00-17:00 Uhr).

Der Zweck dieser Studie ist ausschliesslich wissenschaftlich. Ihre Antworten lassen keine Rückschlüsse auf Ihre Person zu und werden vollständig anonymisiert. Ab März 2016 können Sie bei Interesse erste Ergebnisse auf unserer Internetseite www.selects.ch abrufen.

Herzlichen Dank für Ihre wertvolle Teilnahme!

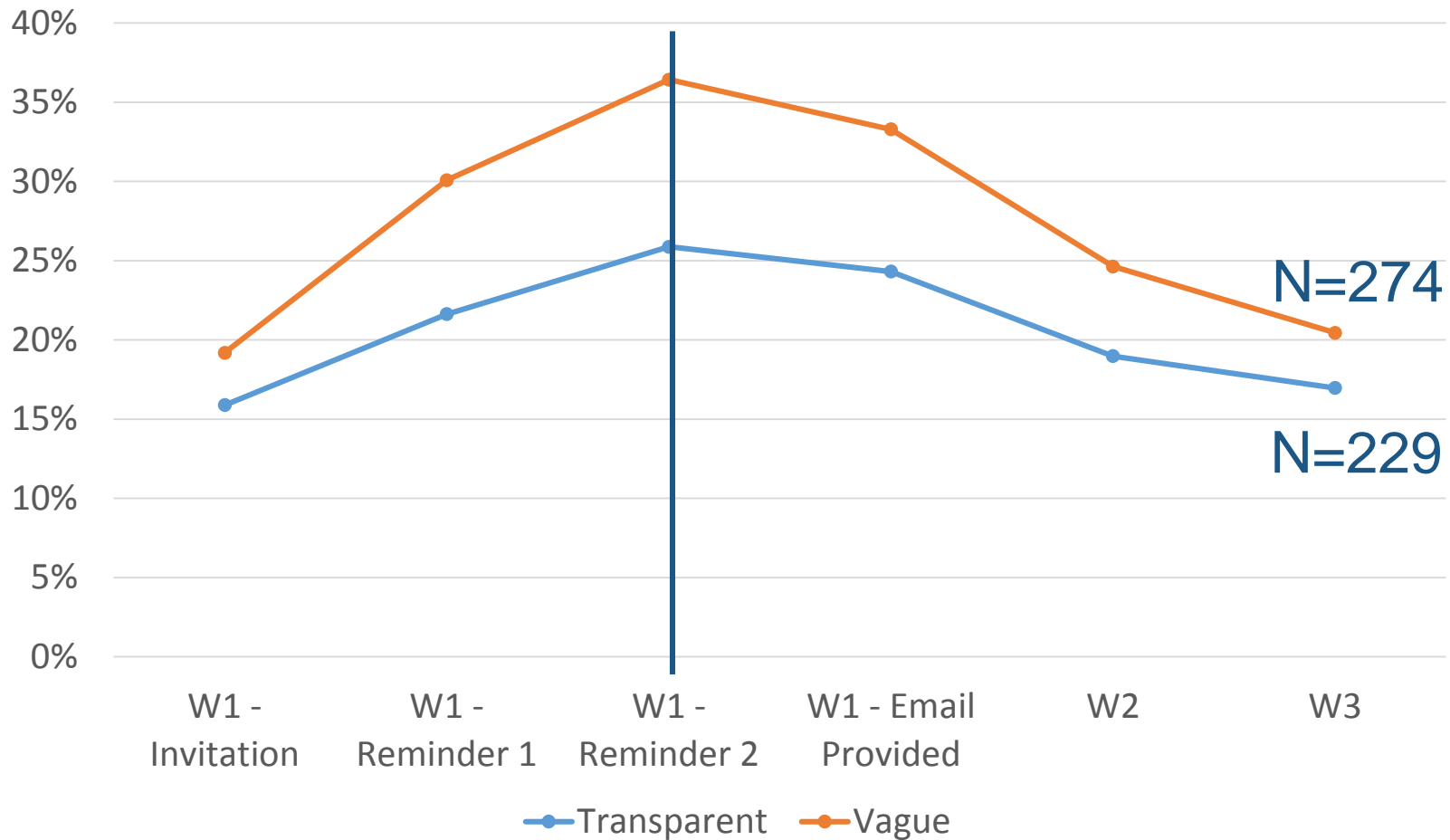


Prof. Dr. Georg Lutz
Projektleiter Selects, FORS/Universität Lausanne

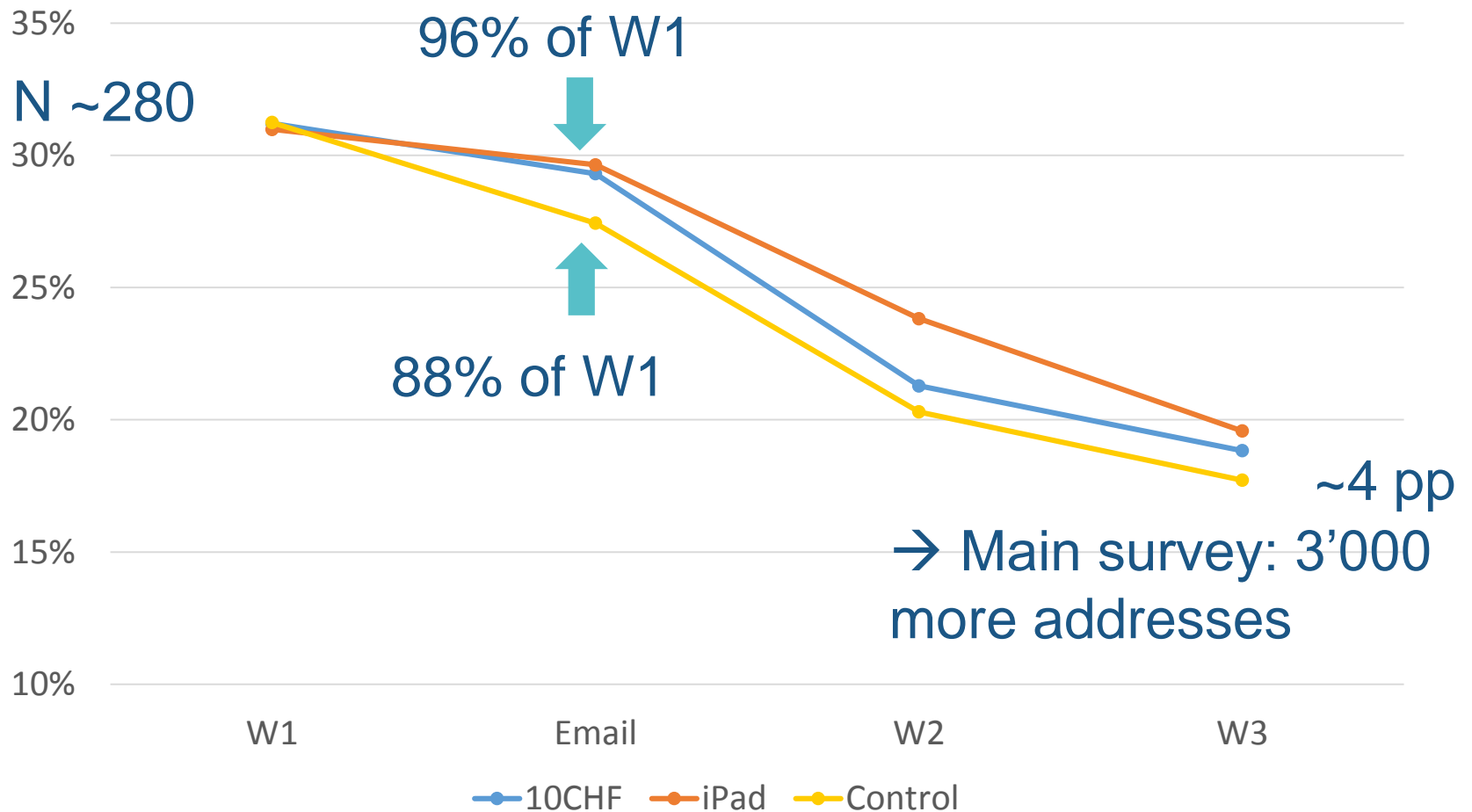
Overview of Results

1. Proportion of gross sample that responded at each stage depending on letters and incentives
2. Effect of letters and incentives on political composition of the sample
 1. Interest in politics
 2. Vote for Swiss People's Party (SVP)
3. Effect of letters and incentives on sociodemographic composition of the sample

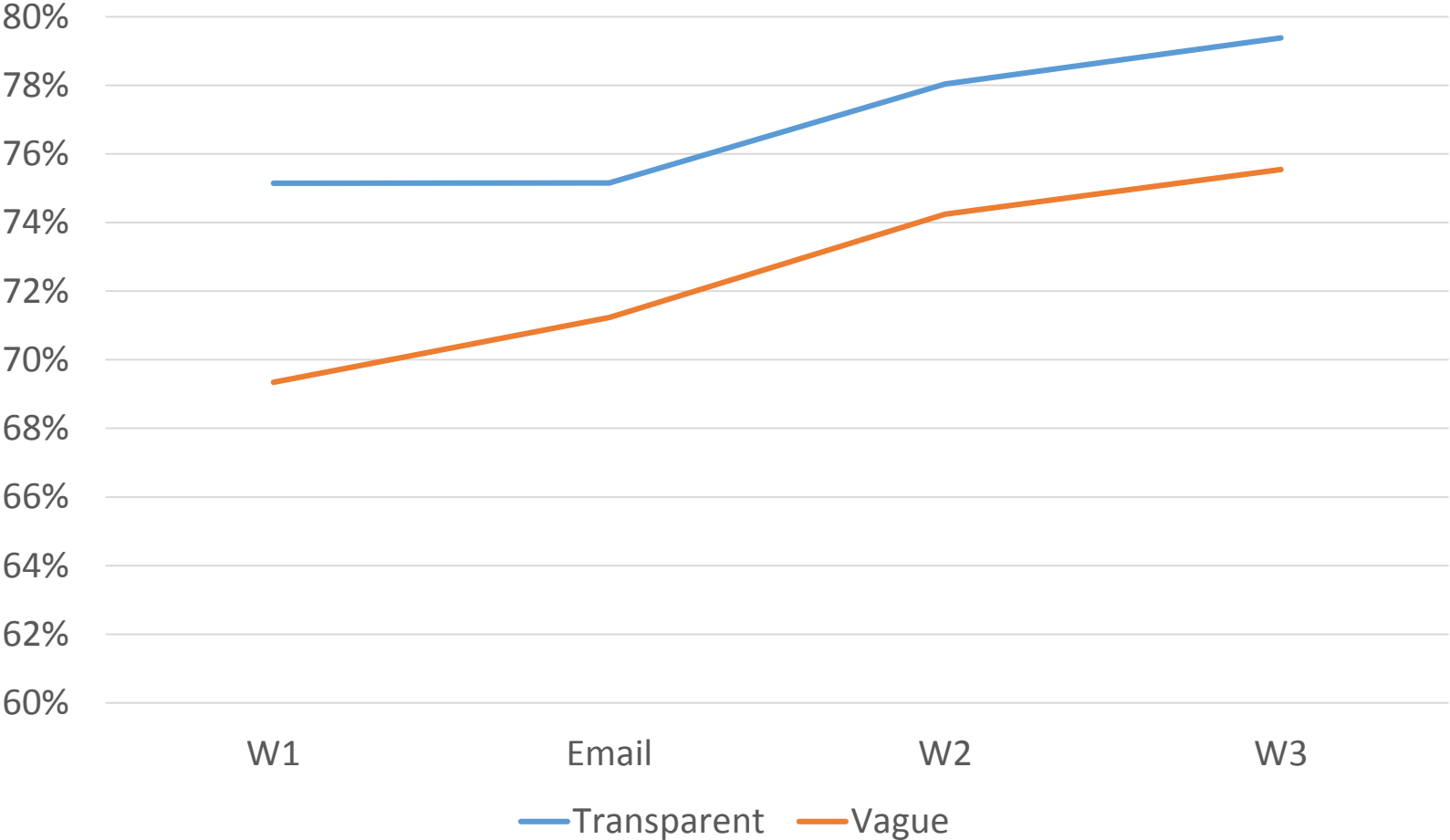
Respondents as % of Gross Sample – Letter Experiment



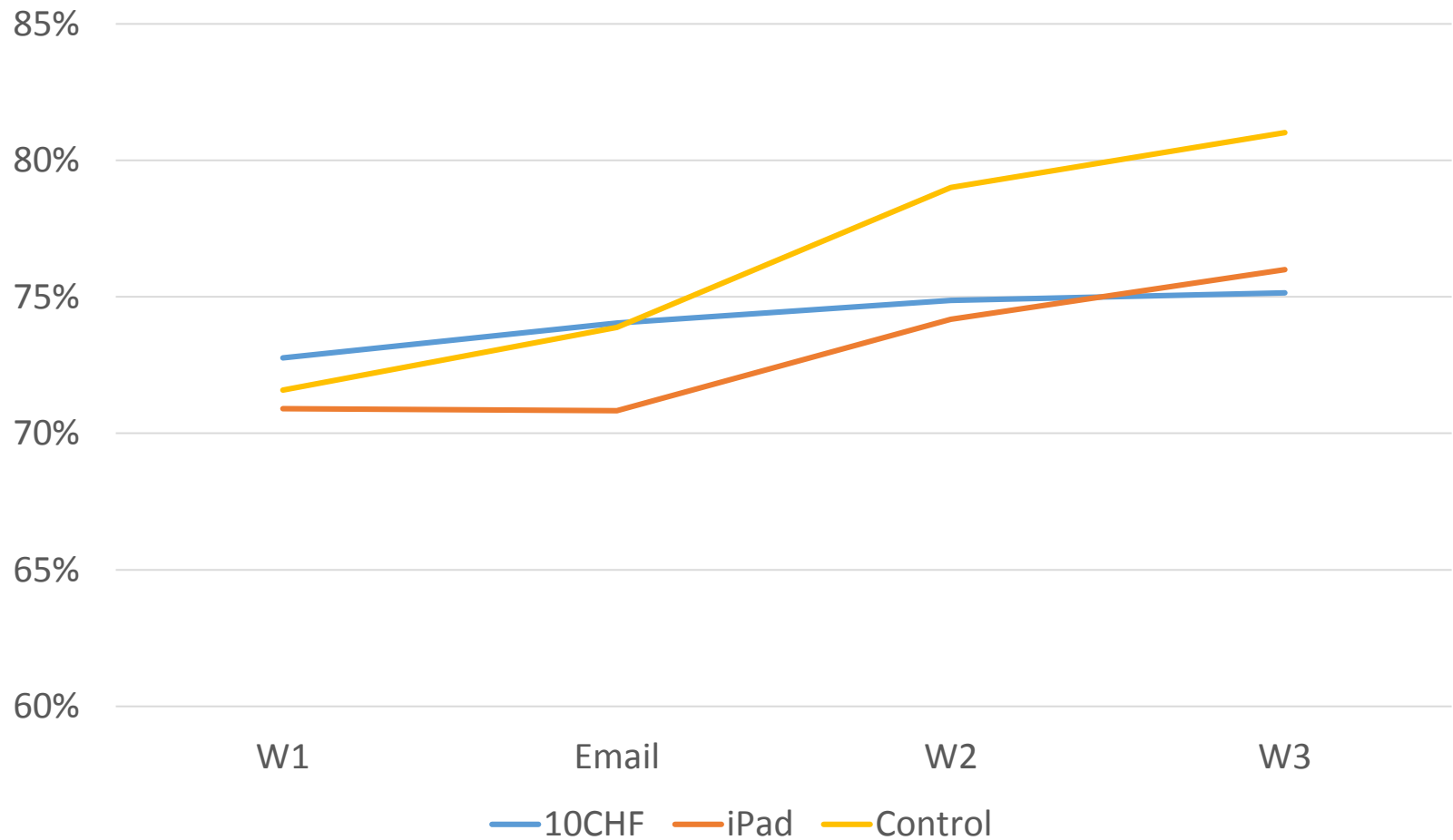
Respondents as % of Gross Sample - Conditional Incentive



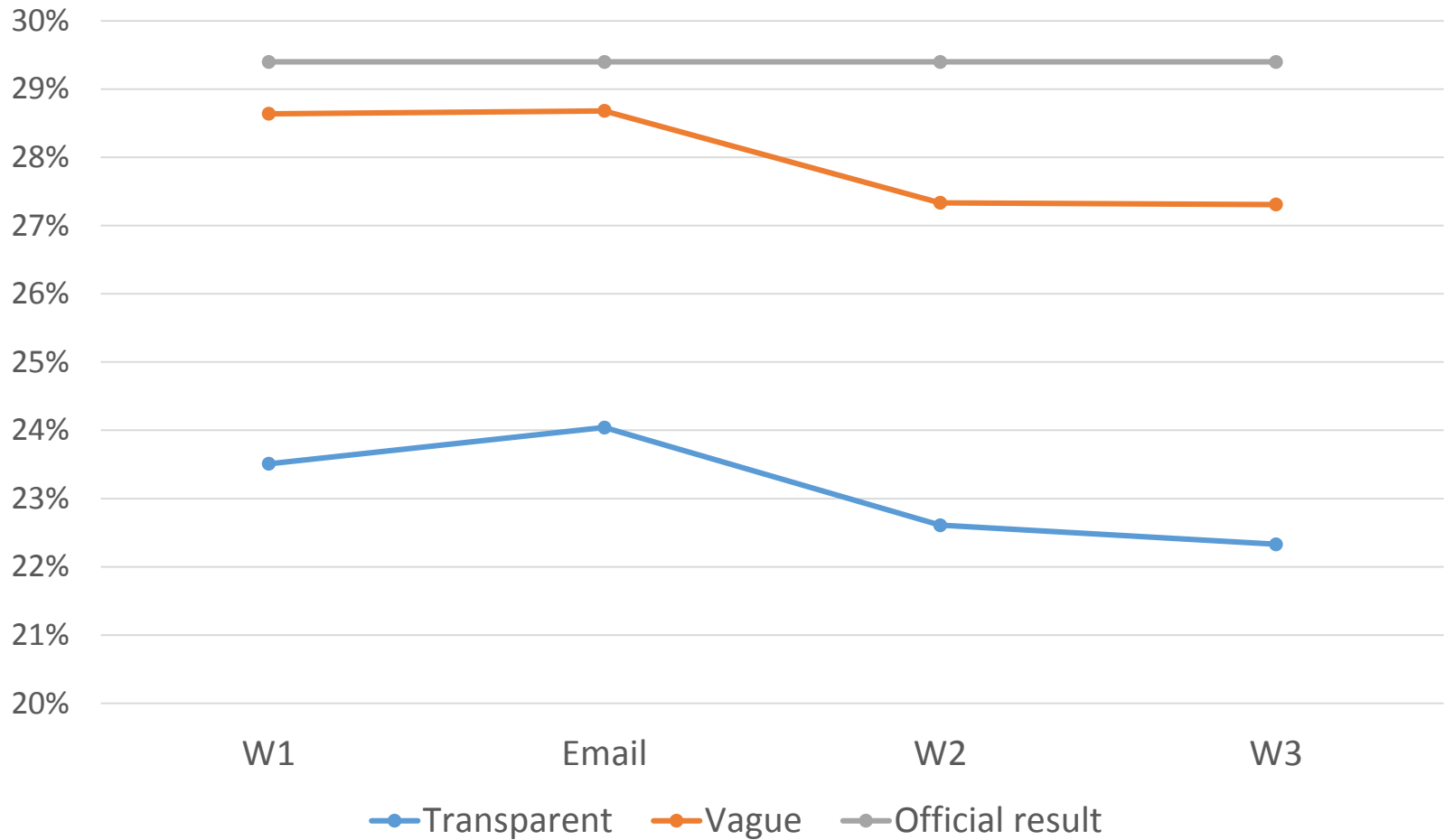
Political Composition: % of Interest in Politics - Letters



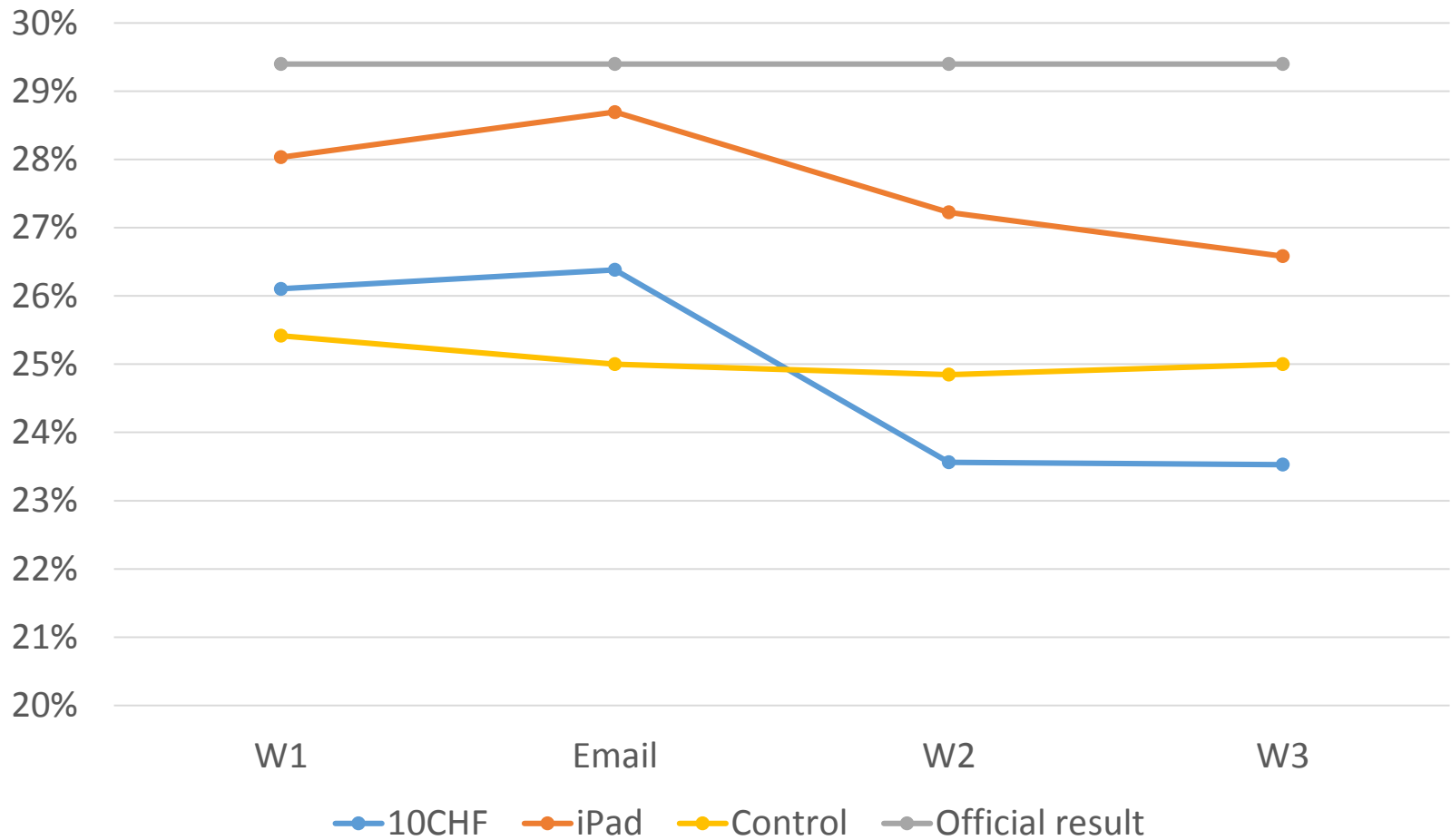
% of Interest in Politics - Incentives



% vote intention for Swiss People's Party (SVP) - Letters



% vote intention for SVP - Incentives

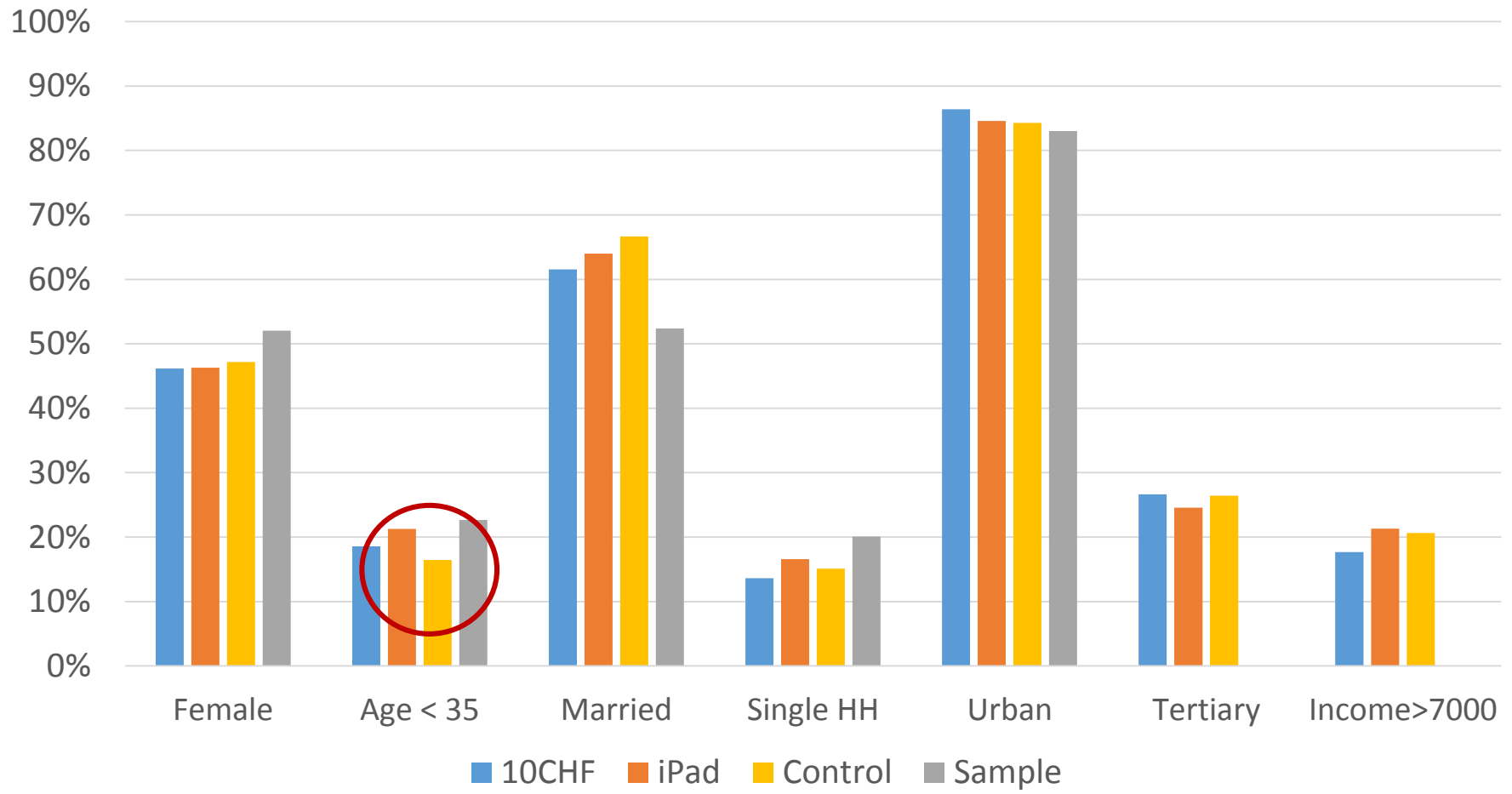


Sociodemographic Composition – Participants in All Three Waves Letters



Sociodemographic Composition – Participants in All Three Waves

Conditional incentives



Conclusions

Letters

- Not put too much emphasis on panel aspect
- “Nudge” approach shows promise
- Mentioning conditional incentive in 2nd reminder didn’t have an effect
- Important for respondents to see we know they haven’t responded
- Better response rates also led to better representativity on political variables

Incentives

- Combined with an unconditional incentive, a raffle for a desirable and valuable item works well
 - Boosting enrolment and reducing attrition
 - Cost-efficient: over 80’000CHF saved compared to 10CHF
- Positive effect on composition for political variables, no negative effect on sociodemographic composition

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Main Survey

- Type of letter used: pre-announcement mentioned panel element, invitation not, “nudge”-type reminders
- Conditional incentive: raffle of 5 iPads
- Result: 6’500 respondents to all 3 waves

- Results compared to vague / iPad group in pilot
 - Identical % of gross sample responded to 3 waves (22%)
 - Political interest very similar
 - Lower proportion of SVP voters
 - Good sociodemographic composition: young and married closer to register information, results usually fall between different experimental groups

Results

Maximizing compliance

- Vague with “nudge” –type reminders results in better RR, even if more attrition after W1
- Conditional incentives added to unconditional incentive help improve final RR
- iPad raffle slightly better and very cost efficient compared to 10CHF (2'500CHF vs. 90'000CHF)
- To achieve same number of respondents to all three waves, 3'000 (10%) more addresses would have been necessary, considerably increasing postage and incentive costs

Sociodemographic composition

- Mostly not strongly affected by type of letter or incentive
- iPad raffle doesn't particularly worsen representativity among any variable, slight improvement in young and single households

Political composition

- Vague condition better at including not politically interested and SVP voters
- Incentives help retain those not interested in politics
- Incentives attract SVP voters at first, but drop out more, iPad shows best results in this respect