

Analysis of non- response in the ESS

State of play, state of the art
and some guidelines for improvement

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A perennial problem – what's new?

Non-response study (HBS, EU-SILC, LFS, SBS) to conduct an:

- 1. Assessment of the state of play in the ESS*
- 2. Inventory of the state of the art*
- ... and*
- 3. provide some guidance.*

This provides the structure for today's presentation – which focuses on the state of play (1).

1A. ESS state of play: Qualitative overview

Basis: questionnaire to ESS NSIs; methodology reports.

Methods to reduce non-response (before data collection) :

- *Introductory/reminder letter*
- *Multiple contact attempts*
- *Interviewer training (interviewer handbook)*
- *Compulsory participation (e.g. LFS)*
- *Substitution (e.g. HBS)*

(Rarely used:)

- *Incentives*

Non-response treatment (after data collection)

- ***Unit non-response:***

- *Total: Weighting, calibration, imputation*
- *Partial (more than one unit of analysis): Imputation, exclusion of entire case*

- ***Item non-response***

- *SBS: Imputation from administrative registers and other sources (mean imputation...)*
- *Otherwise: Imputation (hot-deck, cold-deck ...), heterogeneous situation across countries/surveys*

Non-response reporting

*Well-defined in regulations for EU-SILC, LFS and SBS
– but different for each survey...*

- *EU-SILC: three indicators based on combinations of*
 - (i) **the address contact rate R_a**
 - (ii) **the household response rate R_a**
 - (iii) **the individual response rate R_p** .
- *LFS: one global response rate (normally at household level), decomposed by reason into:*
 - (i) **refusals**
 - (ii) **non-contacts**
 - (iii) **other reasons**
- ***SBS: weighted unit non-response information***
- *HBS: complicated situation (non-response for parts of the survey; issues with recording of substitution)*

1B. ESS state of play – quantitative overview

Basis: Reported non-response for the four surveys

Findings:

- **Increase over time**
 - **LFS**: ~ 0.45 % units per year refusals rate, ~ 0.42 u.p.y. other causes rate
 - **HBS**: ~ 1.23 % u. p. y. non-response rate before substitution
 - No trend observed for **EU-SILC** or **SBS**
- **Mode effects**: hard to disentangle

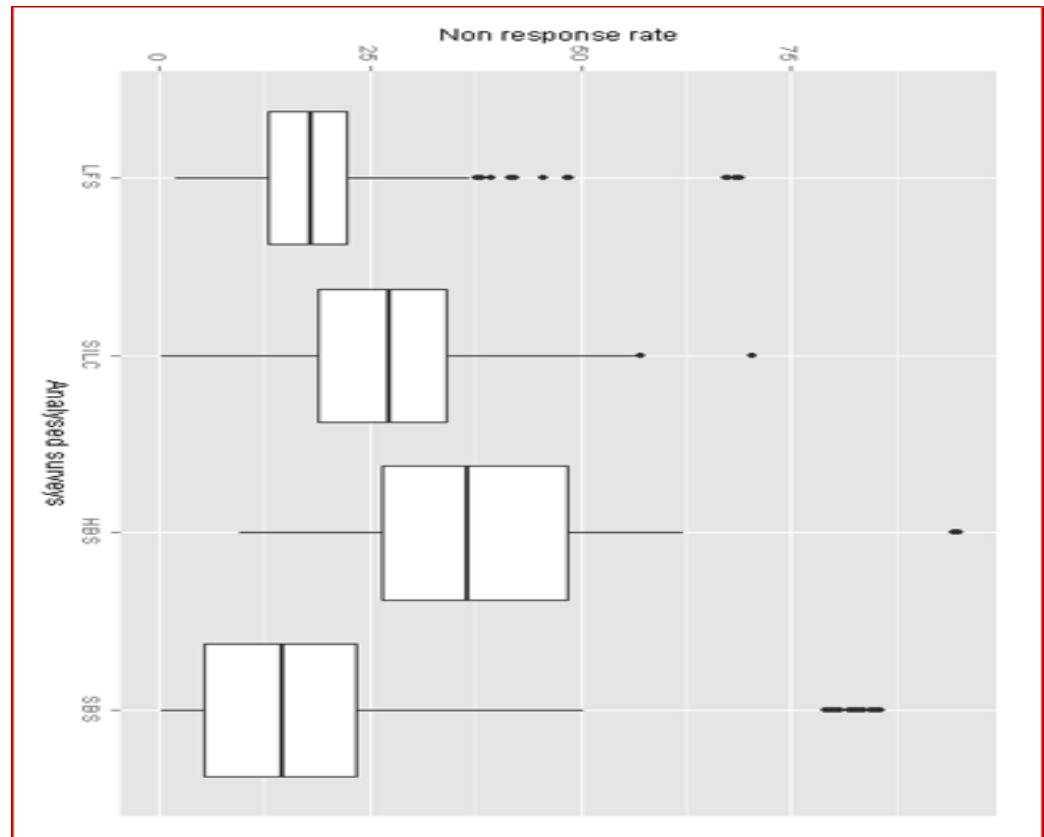
Complex surveys have lower response rates

LFS (total non-response rate)

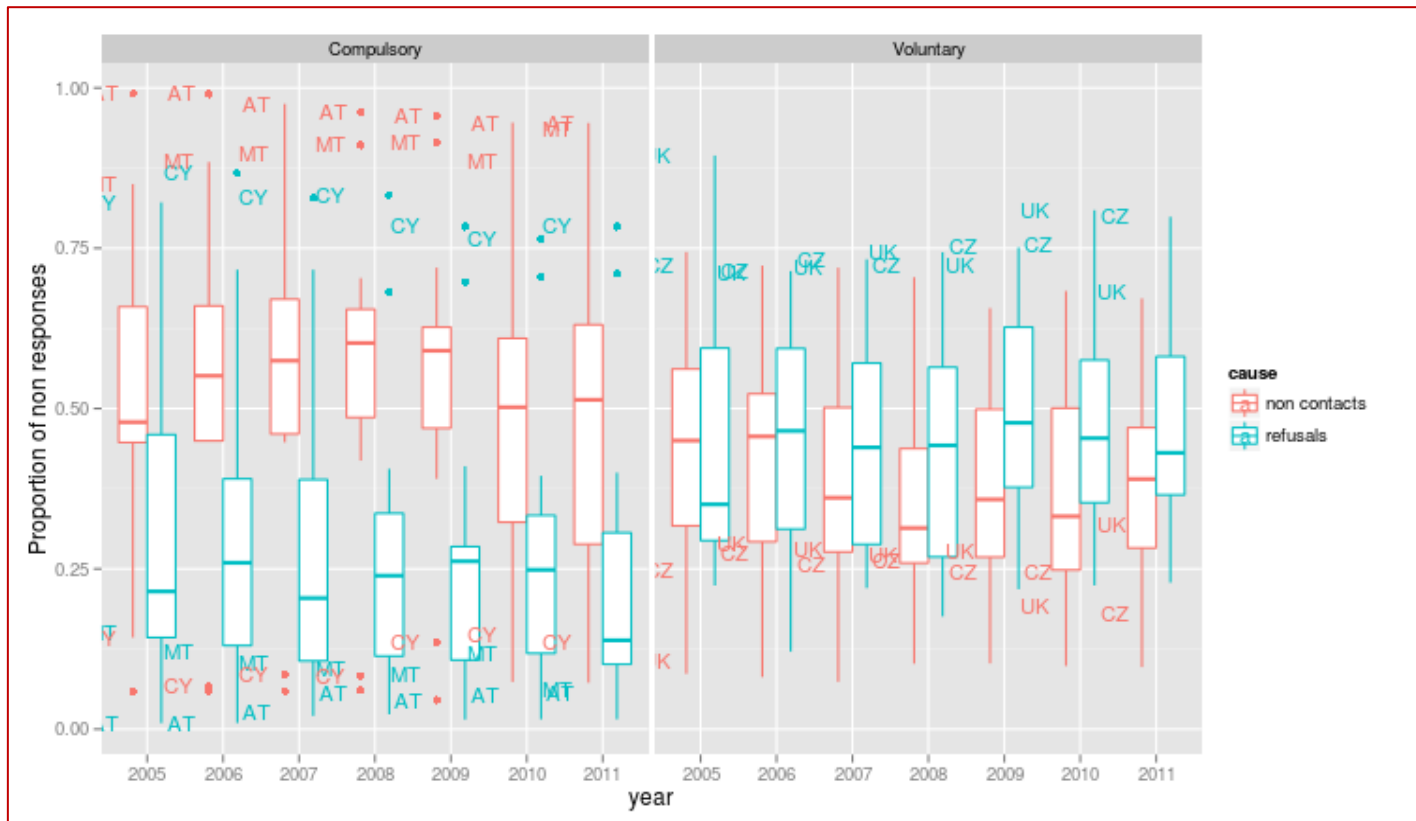
EU-SILC (total non-response rate in the new sample)

HBS (total non-response rate before substitution)

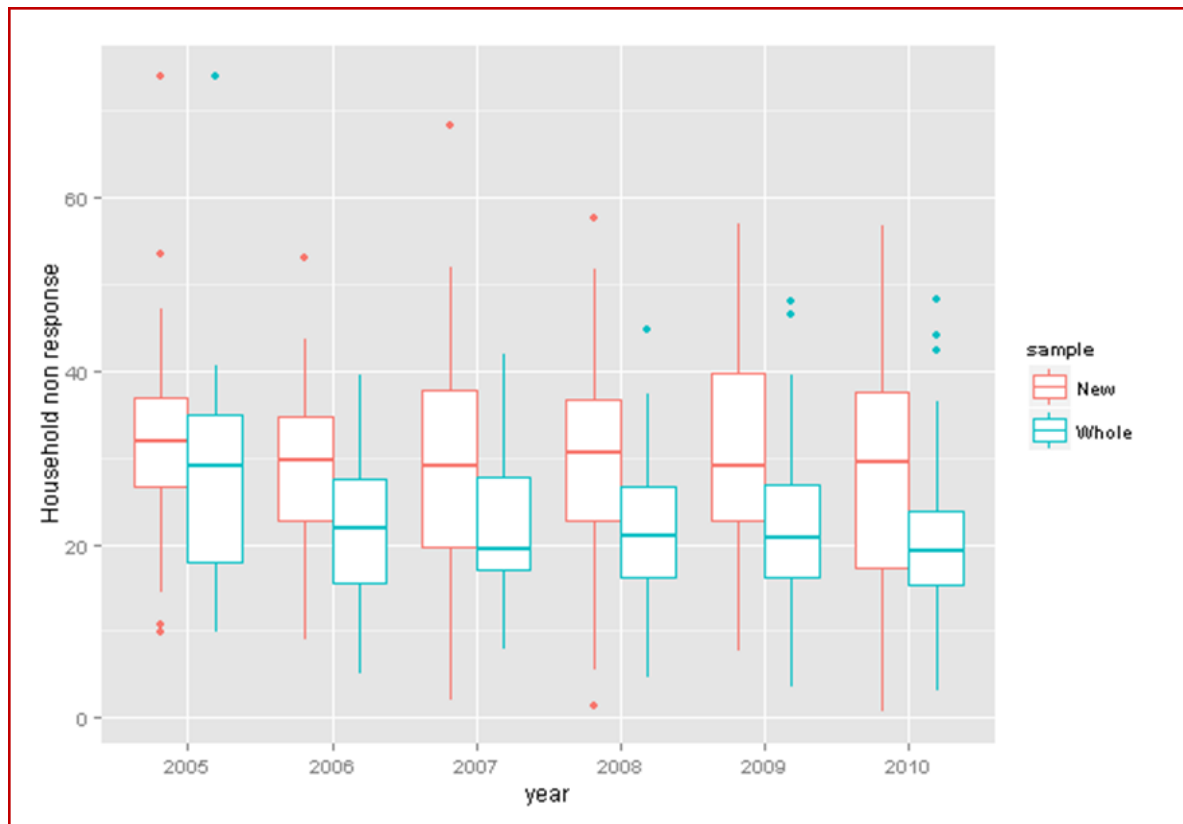
SBS (Overall non-response rate)



Compulsory participation reduces the refusal rate (LFS example)



EU-SILC: non-response for new units higher than for the whole sample



2. Overview of the state of the art

Literature inventory, covering:

- *Basic issues*
- *Prevention*
- *Treatment*
- *Evaluation/reporting*

3. Recommendations

Non-response prevention

- *Mixed mode*
(Experimental evaluation needed.
WPs 22, 23 and 24 laudable in this regard!)
- *Use of administrative data*
- *Increased number of contact attempts*
- *(Rendering participation compulsory...)*

3. Recommendations (*cont.*)

Non-response treatment

- *Strive for converging practice of **calibration** (Same set of variables meaningful – unnecessary conditioning on white noise?)*
- *Use of **administrative data** (again!) (Unique identifier)*
- *Heterogeneous **imputation** practices (No clear path; discussion a first step)*

3. Recommendations (*cont.*)

Evaluation of non-response

- *Cross-country harmonisation needed.*
(EU-SILC presented as a good example)
- *(Cross-survey harmonisation restricted by directives...)*

4. Conclusions

- Rich material (for four surveys):
 - **Qualitative overview across the ESS**
 - **Quantitative side-to-side comparison across ESS**
- Few actionable findings so far