

NatCen

Social Research that works for society

**Developing
Britain's first*
random-
probability
research panel**





What is the NatCen Panel?

- A research panel of c.4,000 adults 18+
- Offers a representative sample of people living in Britain
- Run a 10-15 minute survey every 1-2 months
- Open to be used by anyone for social research
- Aims to provide a high-quality alternative to non-probability surveys when robust data is important, but face-to-face fieldwork is too slow or expensive



Context (1)

- Continued pressure from funders for faster & cheaper surveys
- ‘Gold-standard’ approaches of F2F interviewing can be too slow or expensive for certain types of projects
- But there are questions over quality of current alternatives



Context (2)

- In 2015, approached by Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Wanted to explore attitudes of people living in poverty
- Required a reliable quantitative understanding in cost-effective & quick timeframe
- Commissioned us to conduct a feasibility study into developing a random-probability panel

Supported by





Our approach (1)



Stratified random sample



British Social Attitudes interviewer

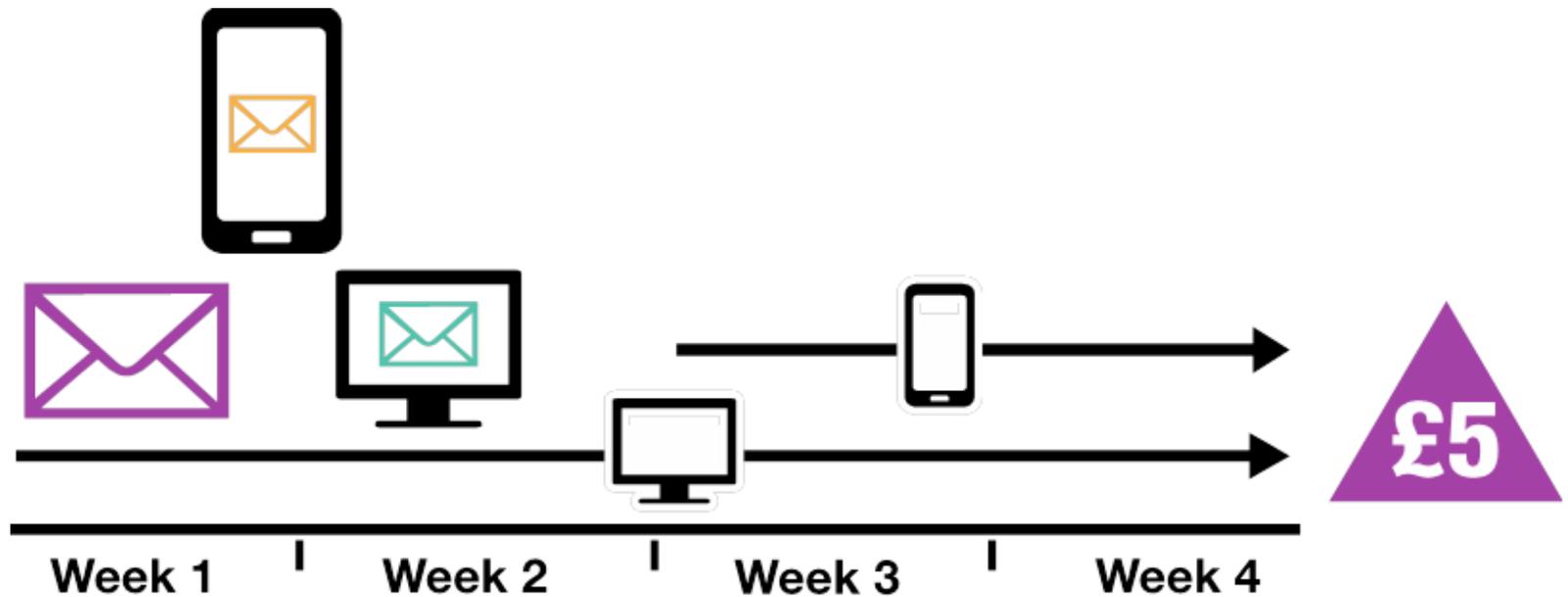


Ongoing engagement

Step 1 – Recruitment through BSA fieldwork



Our approach (2)



Step 2 – Sequential mixed-mode fieldwork



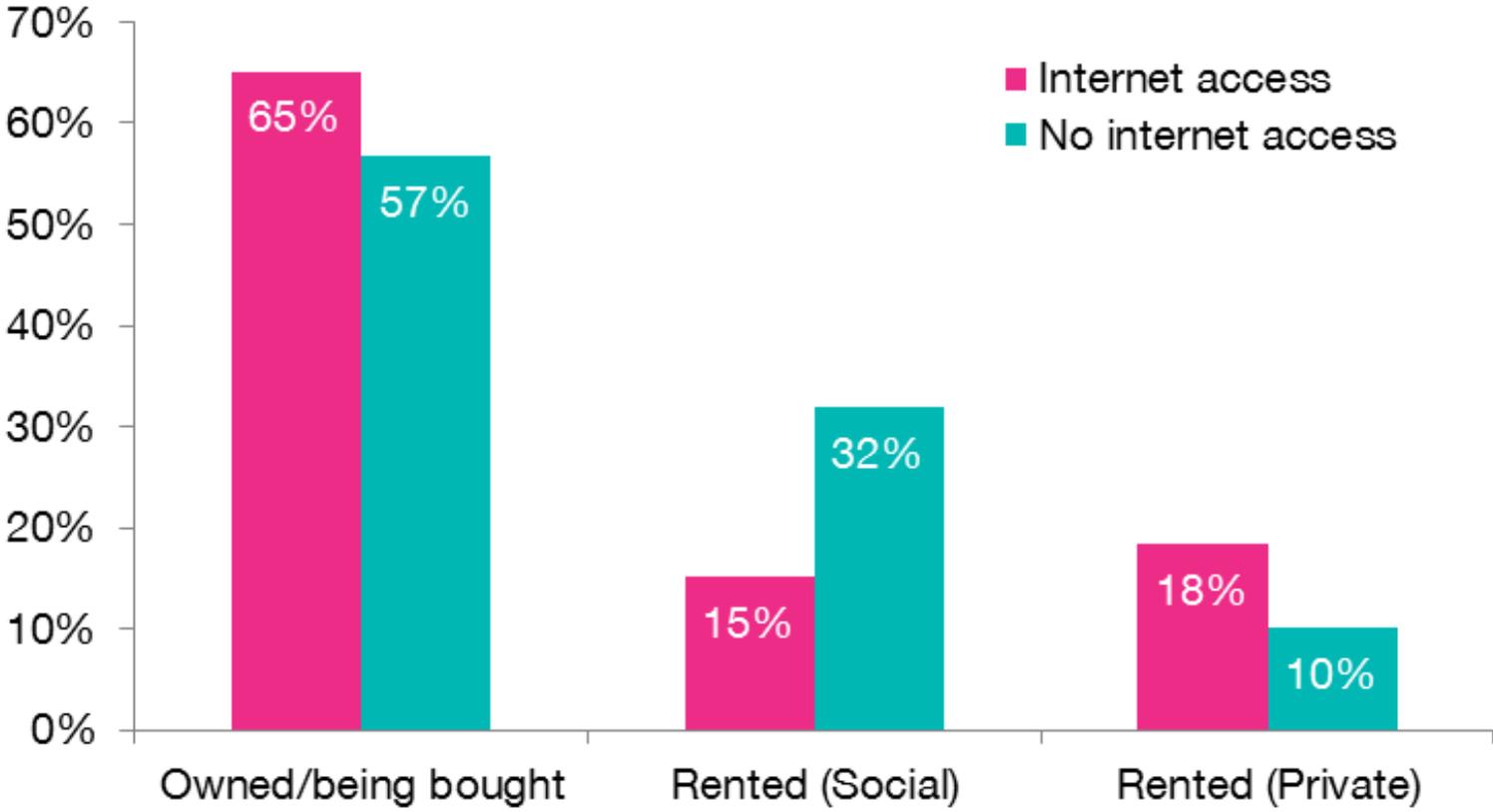
Why is this important?

The goal of these features is to improve the quality of the sample, and therefore the validity of results

- 'Self-selecting' sample is different to the population
- 14% have not been online in the past 3 months, and they are different to those who have
- 'Early responders' are different to people who are 'hard to reach'
- Probability approach allows for statistical testing – confidence intervals & are differences significant?



Impact on Tenure – Online vs Offline





Impact on Tenure – No. of calls

	One call	One or two calls	...	Up to 9 calls	Final weighted estimate
Owned/being bought	59%	63%	...	64%	64%
<i>Distance from final estimate</i>	-5%	-1%	...	0%	-
Rented (Social)	22%	22%	...	19%	18%
<i>Distance from final estimate</i>	5%	4%	...	2%	-
Rented (Private)	17%	14%	...	16%	17%
<i>Distance from final estimate</i>	0%	-3%	...	-2%	-



An example...

	Election result	YouGov (BES)	BSA estimate	Panel estimate (EU survey)
Did not vote	34%	9%	30%	28%
Conservative	38%	35%	40%	38%
Labour	31%	34%	34%	33%
UK Independence Party (UKIP)	13%	10%	9%	10%
Liberal Democrat	8%	10%	7%	8%
Green Party	4%	4%	4%	6%
Other	6%	7%	6%	6%

Outcomes from feasibility study (1)



We successfully recruited a panel of 2,783 BSA participants, and it is feasible to survey them at regular intervals, in a cost-effective and timely manner, while maintaining a good quality sample.

Outcomes from feasibility study (2)



We also ran a number of experiments to inform the fieldwork approach

- Recruiting for further research vs. to join a panel
- Impact of 'micro-incentives' & vouchers
- Timing & mode of reminders
- Impact of telephone interviewing
- Impact of telephone chasing
- Set-up & development of systems/processes
- Feasibility of fast turnaround 'polls'



Where are we now?

- A research panel of c.4,000 adults 18+
- Offers a representative sample of people living in Britain
- Currently running our fourth wave
- Aims to provide a high-quality alternative to non-probability surveys when robust data is important, but face-to-face fieldwork is too slow or expensive
- Continuing to run methodological experiments to develop and improve