

## **Title**

Refusal conversion in the Swiss Household Panel: its effects on estimates of change

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## **Abstract**

In the survey world of decreasing response rates, refusal conversion is a widely used strategy to increase participation. Although often employed, not a lot is known about its effects, especially in longitudinal surveys. Studies so far focused mainly on cross-sectional surveys and the effects that refusal conversion has on participation rates and non-response bias. Focus was similar in few studies that examined the effects of refusal conversion in longitudinal surveys. Despite the fact that longitudinal surveys are created with the specific aim of measuring change over time, no study tackled the relationship between refusal conversion and estimates of change. From several studies that examined the relationship between change over time and participation patterns, we know that those who change more are more likely to drop out from panel surveys. However, we do not know if refusal conversion is successful in terms of bringing back these individuals. The present examined longitudinal effects of refusal conversion on measures of change over time, using twelve waves of the Swiss Household Panel (SHP; 2005-2016). The focus is on measures of change in civil status, employment, income, self-reported health, life satisfaction, satisfaction with finances, interest in politics and general trust in people. For each of these variables, we calculated the one-year, three-year and five-year prospective change and compared if individuals who entered in the SHP from the refusal conversion phase differ from individuals who participated during the regular fieldwork. We ran separate regression analyses for all three change periods for each of the survey estimates with change as the dependent variable and refusal conversion status as the independent variable, while clustering different time points in individuals. We found that individuals who entered in the SHP from the refusal conversion phase changed more in terms of life satisfaction, satisfaction with finances, interest in politics, and general trust in people for all the three time intervals and in terms of civil status and self-reported health for one-year and three-year intervals. No significant effects were recorded for change in employment status and income. We argue that using the method of refusal conversion is beneficial for the Swiss Household Panel in terms of including more dynamic individuals.