Increasing Survey Completion in the Canadian Armed Forces

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Background

- Greater representation in survey data leads to more informed policy.
- One theory that may offer insight regarding how to encourage greater survey response rates is Dual Processing Theory (Evans & Stanovich, 2013).

Objective

- Do Type 1 (heuristic) and Type 2 (elaboration) messages increase completion in a Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) survey?

Methods

- In this randomized control trial, 1,496 participants were randomly assigned to one of three message conditions (Type 1, Type 2, control).
- Type 1 messages used heuristic mechanisms such as deadlines, prompts, and social influences to invite compliance.
- Type 2 messages used elaboration mechanisms such as salience framing, questioning, and autonomy support to invite reflection.

Results

- Compared to those who received the control condition invitation (12.9% completion rate), people who received the Type 1 message invitation were more likely to complete the survey (20.8% completion rate; OR = 1.76, 95% CI [1.26, 2.48]).
- There was no significant difference in completion between those who received the Type 2 message condition (17% completion rate) and those who received the control condition (OR = 1.42, 95% CI [1.00, 2.01]). Receiving Type 1 messages was no more effective at eliciting survey completion than receiving Type 2 messages (OR = 1.24, 95% CI [0.91, 1.71]).

Conclusion

- Within the CAF, using Type 1 messages in survey invitations could elicit greater survey completion rates.
- Given the importance of representative results, evidence-based decisions, and the potential for policy change, a small increase in survey completion is important and meaningful.

Reference

Evans, J. S. B., & Stanovich, K. E. (2013). Dual-process theories of higher cognition: Advancing the debate. *Perspectives on psychological science*, 8(3), 223-241.

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