

The impact of displaying cash via window envelope during mail contact when recruiting to a probability-based panel

CIPHER 2022 Conference

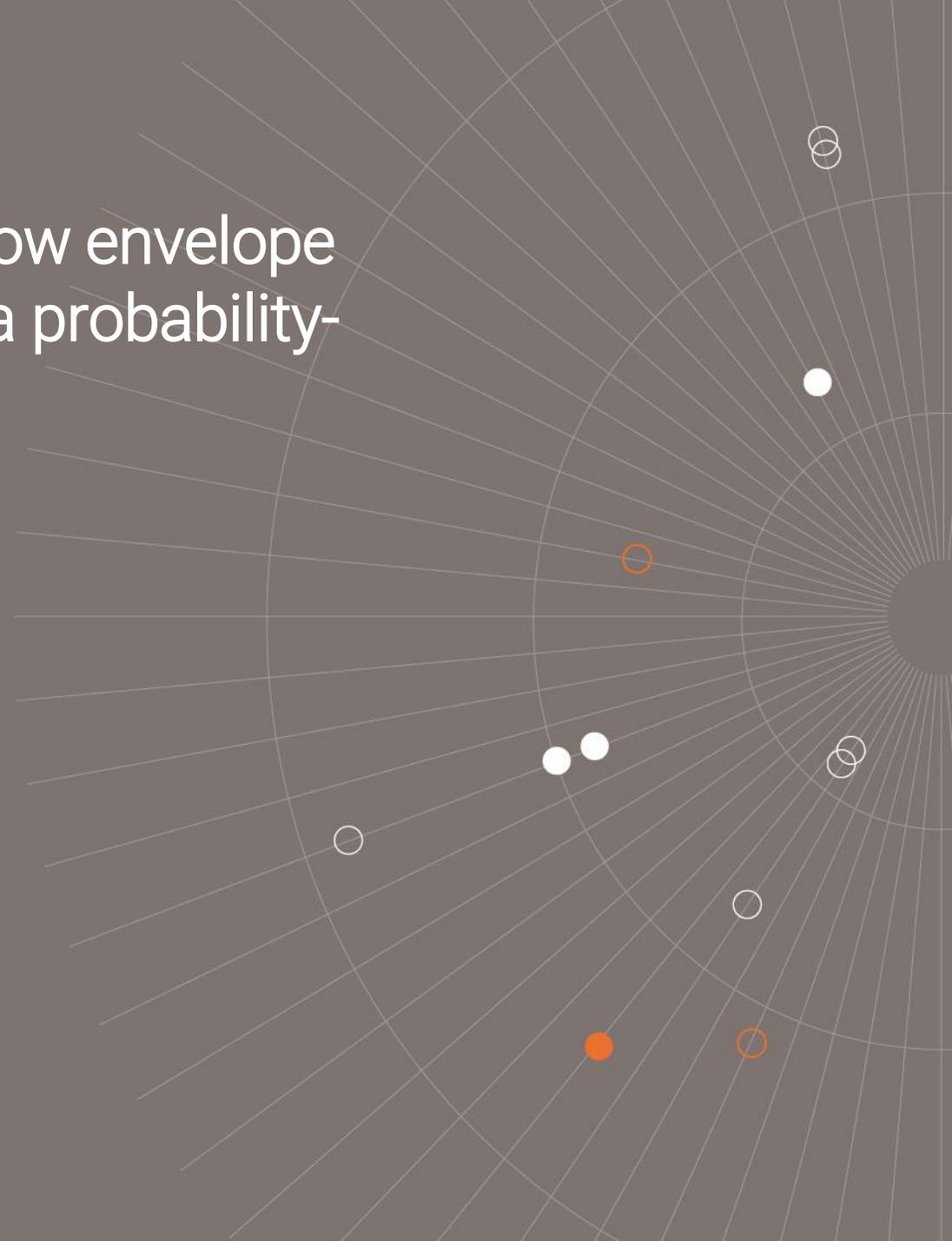
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- Pre-completion cash incentives, offered during mail contact, have been consistently shown to increase response rates in surveys.
 - The value of pre-completion cash incentives diminishes if a portion of the sample considers the envelope to be junk mail and discards without opening.
- There is a myriad of literature related to the impact of various mailing contact strategies on survey response, including recent studies that explore displaying cash incentives via a window (*Debell et. al, 2019; Sherr and Wells, 2021*).
- The visible cash aims to separate survey invitation mailing from junk mail and encourage sampled individuals/households to open the envelope.

Study objective: To improve both overall recruitment yield and recruitment rate among hard to reach/hard to retain panelists by experimenting with different interventions during panel recruitment.

Research Questions:

- Is displaying cash via window envelope during mail contact increase recruitment rates in a probability-based panel?
- Will various window envelope placement options (front vs. back) and window sizes (OR small vs. large) impact the efficacy of displaying cash via window?
- Do various incentive amounts (Two \$1 bill vs. one \$2 bill vs. one \$5 bill) and incentive placement strategies (showing number vs. image/face) impact the efficacy of displaying cash via window?
- What are the optimal strategies for sample members who are more reluctant to respond?
- What about potential mail theft and what to do to eliminate it?

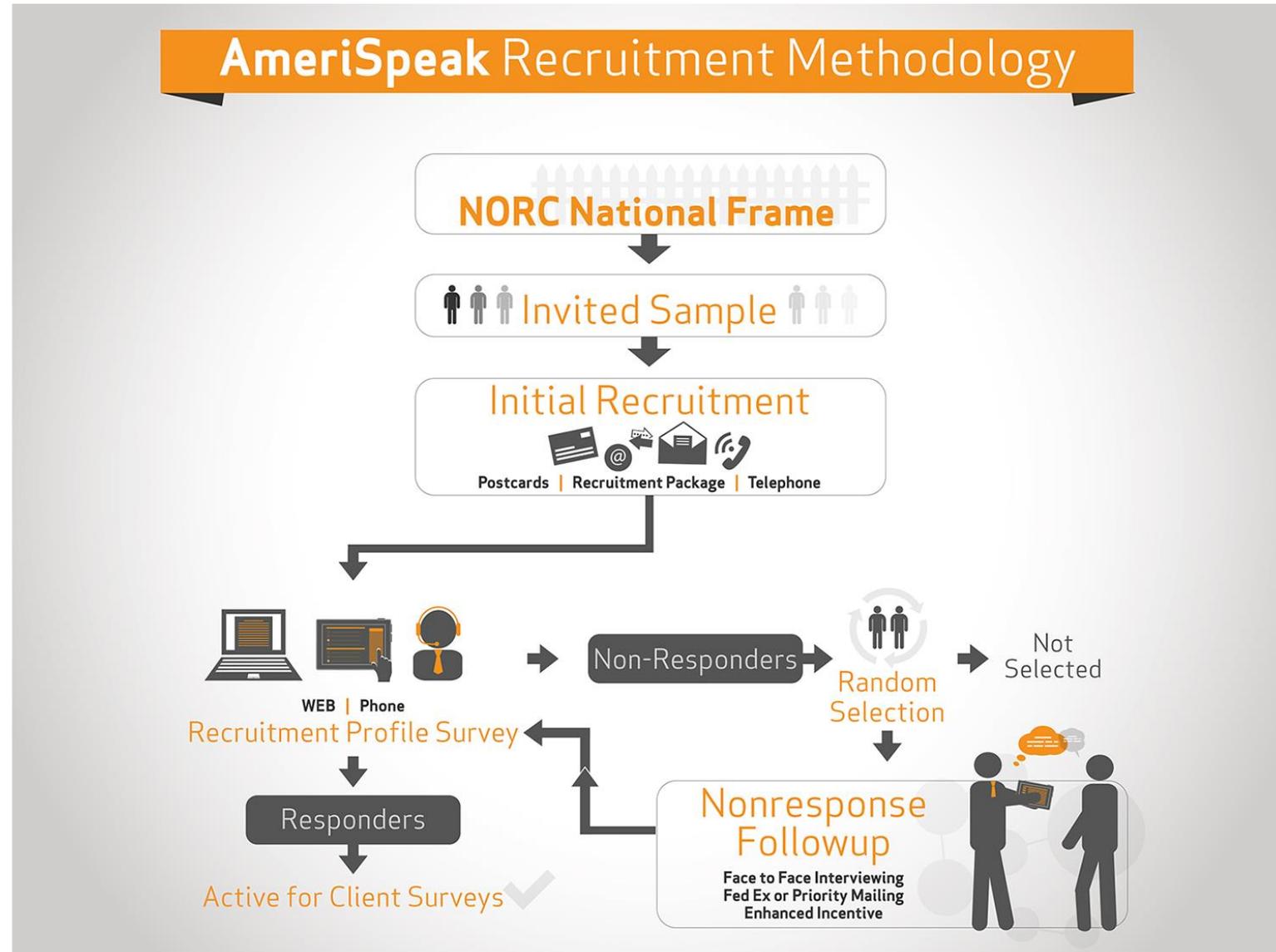
Data & Methods

Initial Recruitment

- Pre-notification postcard
- +5 days, 9 x 12 recruitment packet w/ **pre-incentive**, study brochure, and privacy policy
- +11 days, reminder postcard
- +18 days, reminder postcard
- Call-ins allowed throughout
- +25 days, call-outs to matched telephones

NRFU Recruitment

- Federal Express study brochure and enhanced pre-incentive
- In-person recruitment



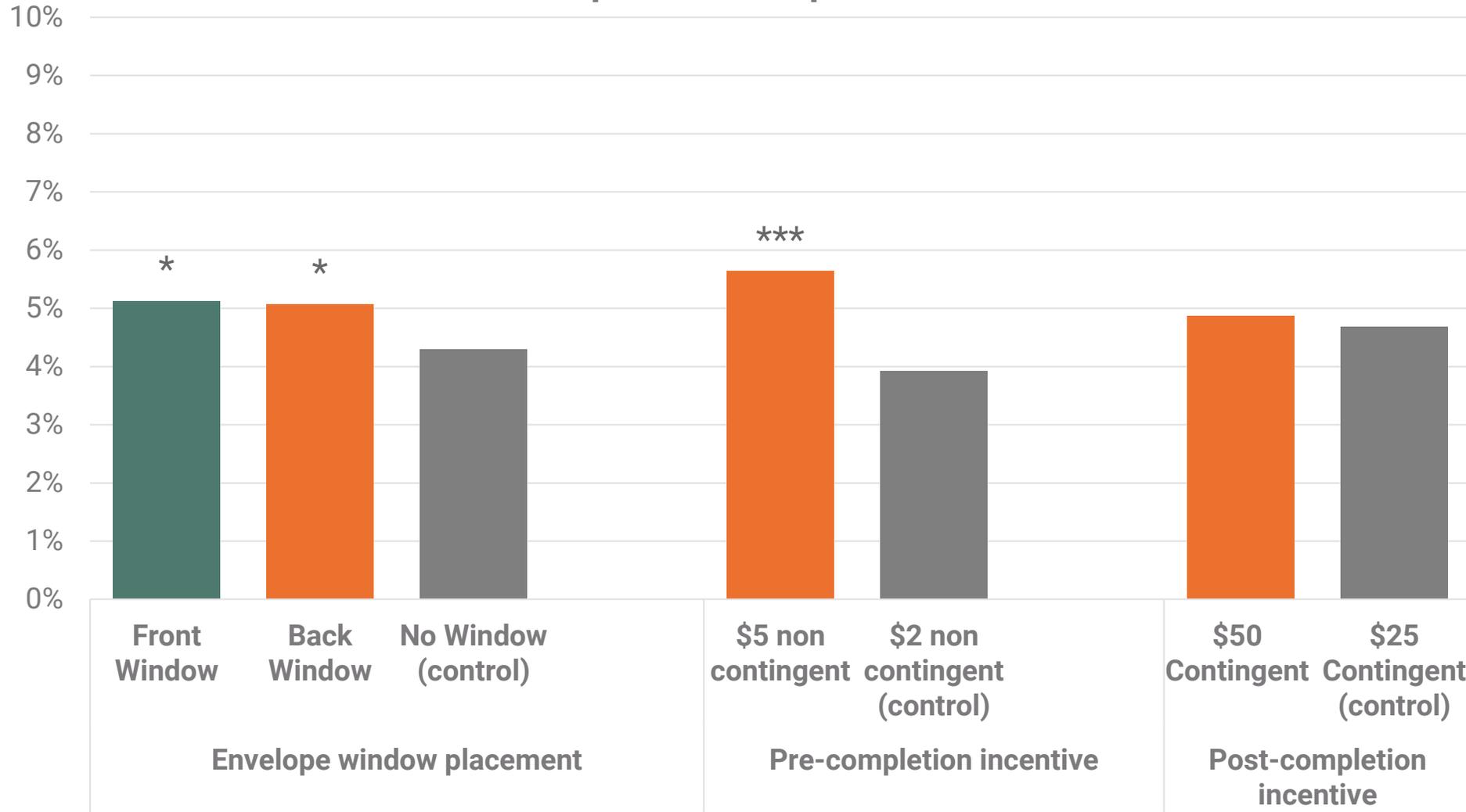
Prior to 2021: \$2 non-contingent and \$25 (\$20 + \$5 early bird) contingent incentives.

During the 2021: Randomized experiments in sequential mailing replicates (followed an iterative approach when designing each subsequent replicate):

- Envelope window placement and design options
 - Front vs. back vs. no window
 - Medium vs. small window
- Incentive amounts
 - Pre-completion incentive amount (two \$1 bill vs. one \$2 bill vs. one \$5 bill)
 - Post-completion incentive amount (\$25 vs. \$50)
- Cash placement
 - Making the amount vs. the images/faces on dollar bills visible

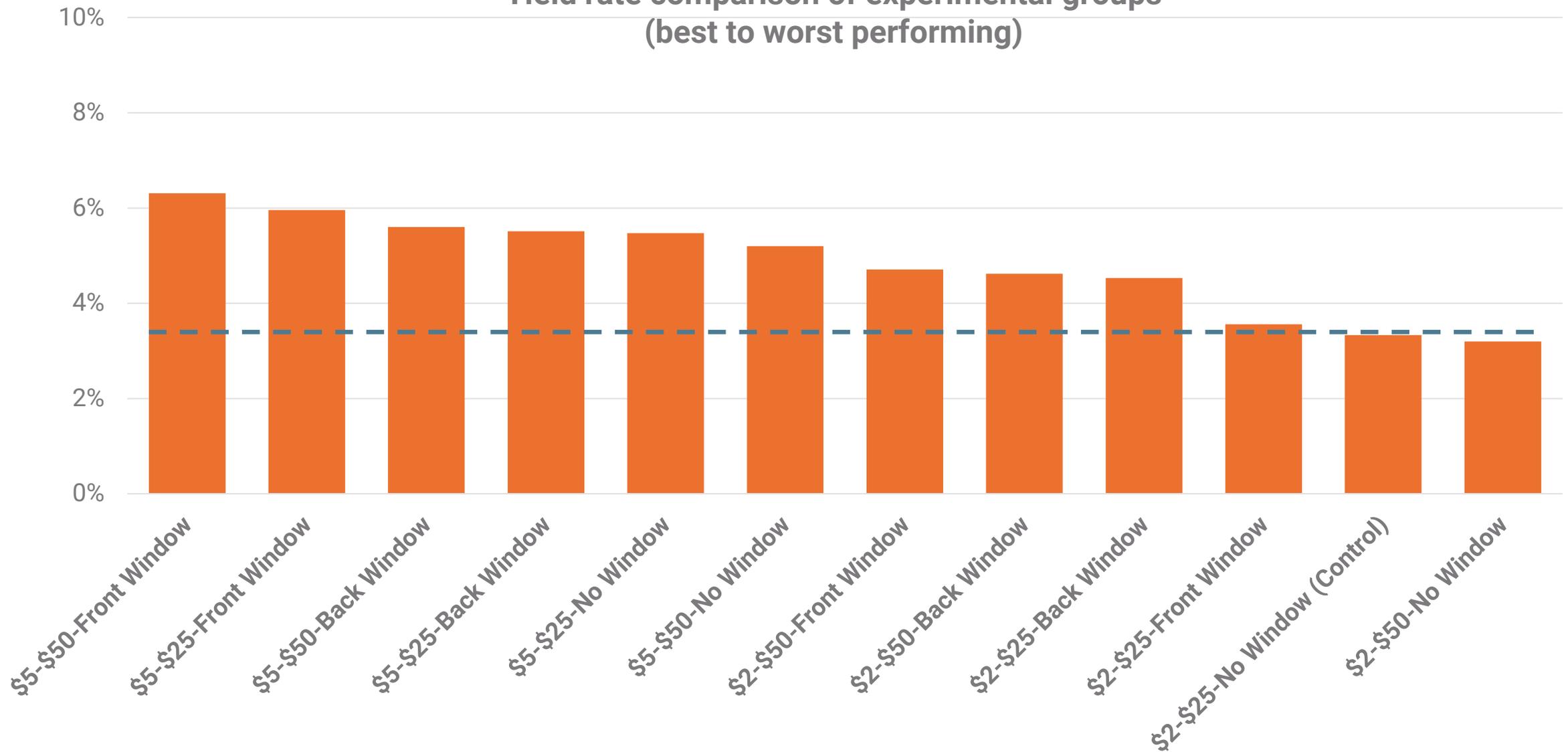
Results

Yield rate comparison of experiment conditions

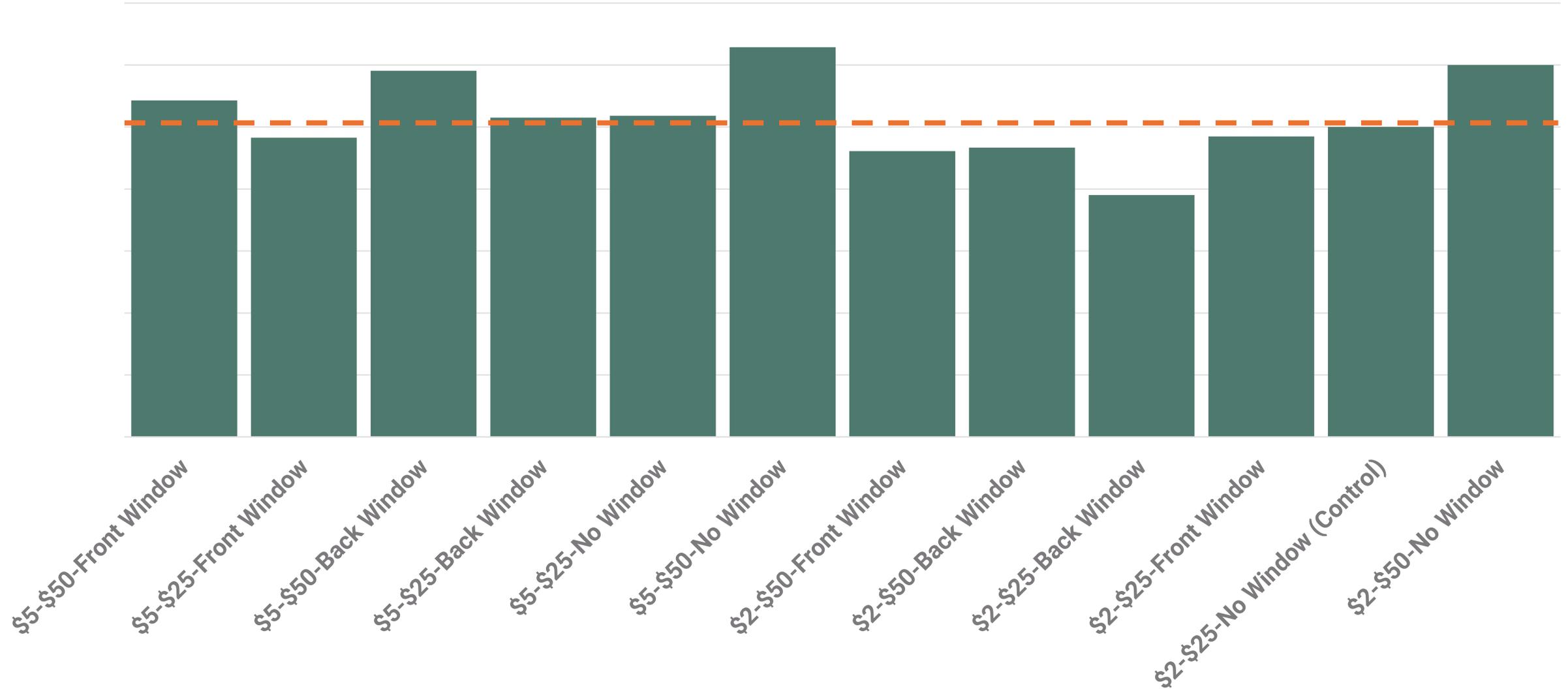


A recruitment mailing using front window envelope to make cash incentive visible is 1.20 times more likely to convert a sample household member to a panelist than a mailing using windowless envelope.

Yield rate comparison of experimental groups (best to worst performing)



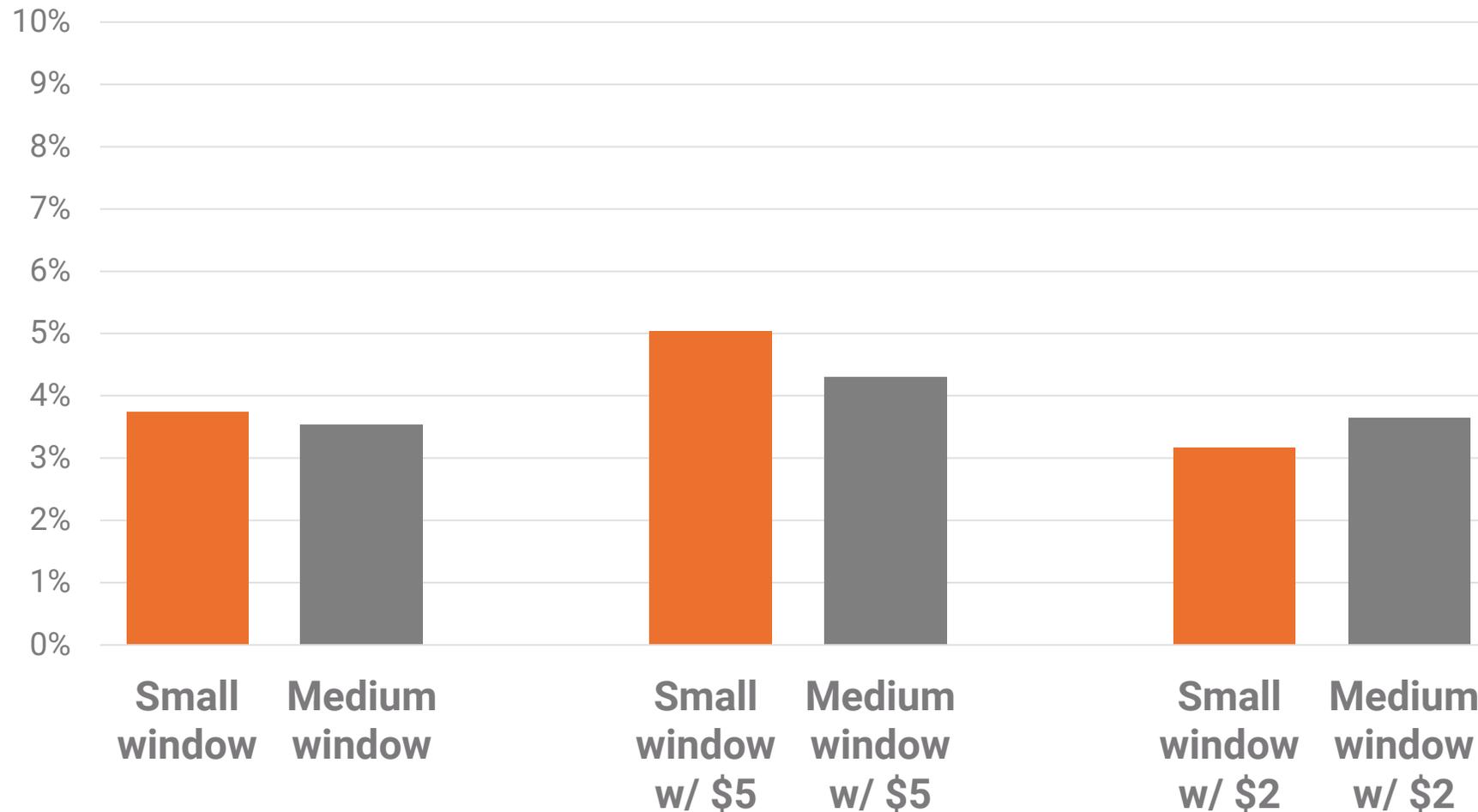
Cost ratio per recruited HHs
(ordered by highest to lowest yield rate)



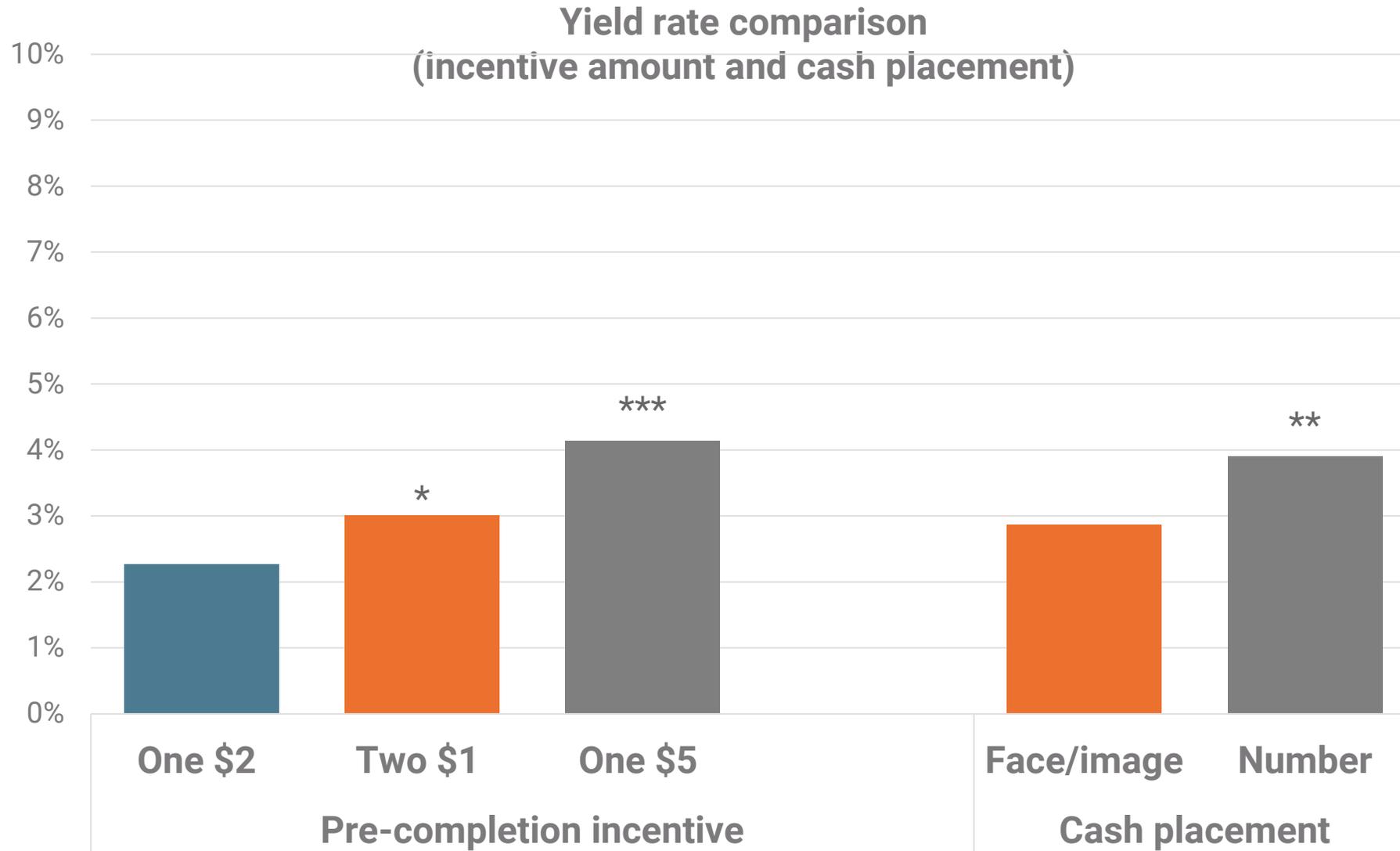
What about sample members who are hard to reach and more reluctant to respond?

- Window envelope showing cash increased yield rates more among **Hispanic, younger (18-24), and 50 and older** panelists, as well panelists **with children in their households**.
- The increase in non-contingent incentive was the most effective among panelists who have **less than high school degrees, Hispanic** panelists, and panelists who are **50 and older**.
- The increase in contingent incentive was the most effective among sampled **African-American and Spanish-speaking households**.
- The increase in contingent incentive did not improve the yield rates among the majority of **hard-to-reach and reluctant to participate groups**.
 - Accordingly, in the subsequent mail replicates (MR2-5) we have re-tested the effectiveness of the increase in contingent incentive from \$25 to \$50 among African American and Spanish-speaking sampled households, while keeping the contingent incentive \$25 among all other sampled households.

Yield rate comparison (incentive amount by window size)

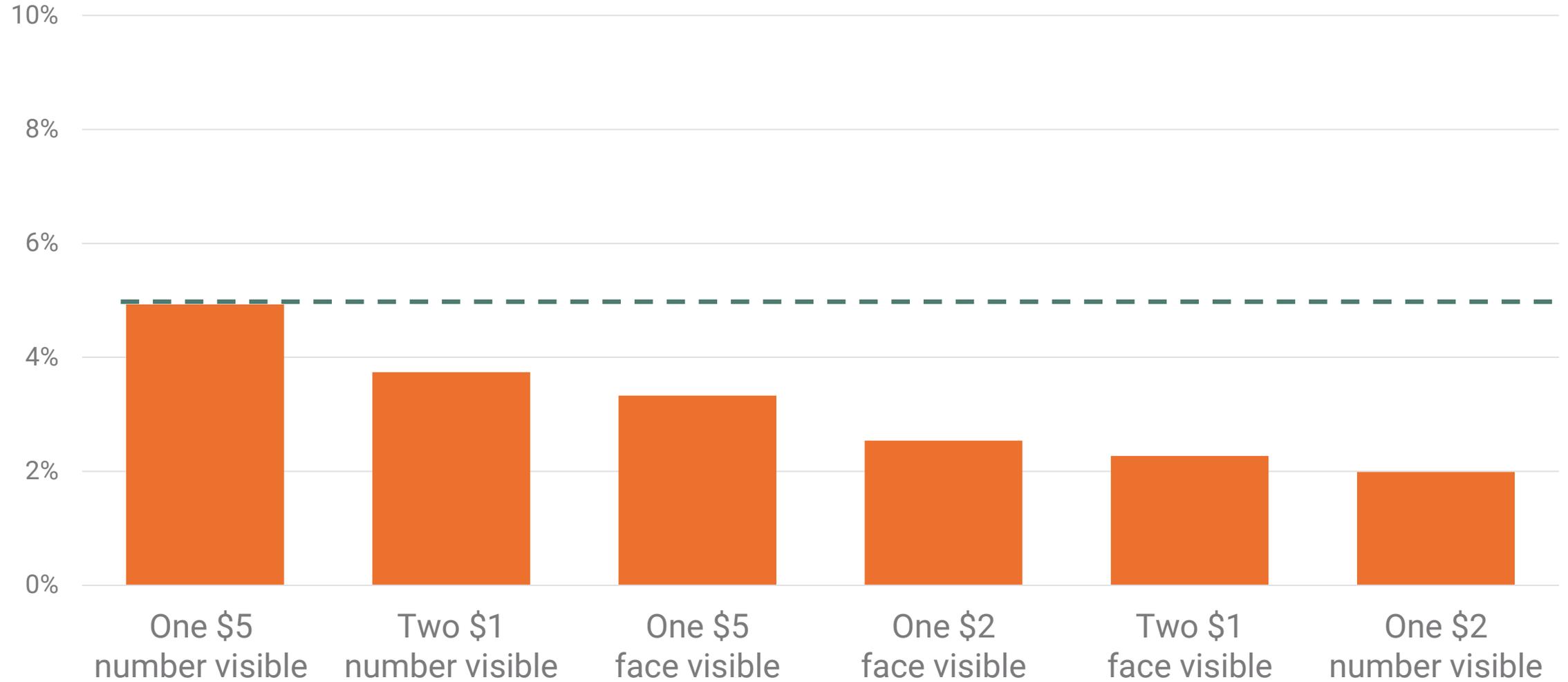


Mailing window size (which increases the visibility of the cash) does not have a significant impact on recruitment yield rates.



A mailing sent with the numeric side showing through the window is 1.39 times more likely to convert a sample household to a panelist as compared to a mailing sent with the face/image showing through the window.

Yield rate comparison for incentive amount by cash placement (best to worst performing)





Conclusion & Discussion

- Results indicate significant improvement in recruitment response rates when cash is displayed through a window during mail contact.
- \$5 front window with lower post incentive amount group had the lowest cost per complete/recruit.
- Mailing window size, which increases the visibility of the cash, does not have a significant impact on recruitment yield rates.
- A mailing sent with the numeric side showing through the window is significantly more likely to convert a sample household to a panelist as compared to a mailing sent with the face/image showing through the window.
- What about potential mail theft?
 - USPS's Track & Trace service to track the recruitment mailings.
- The results from this study will shed light on future panel recruitment strategies as well as whether, and in what ways, tailoring recruitment materials to varying subgroups may impact panel composition and retention.

Thank you.

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