

Comparing the Quality and Cost Effectiveness of Facebook, Craigslist, and In-person Recruitment Methods for Longitudinal Panels

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About the NYC DOHMH Tobacco Cessation Study

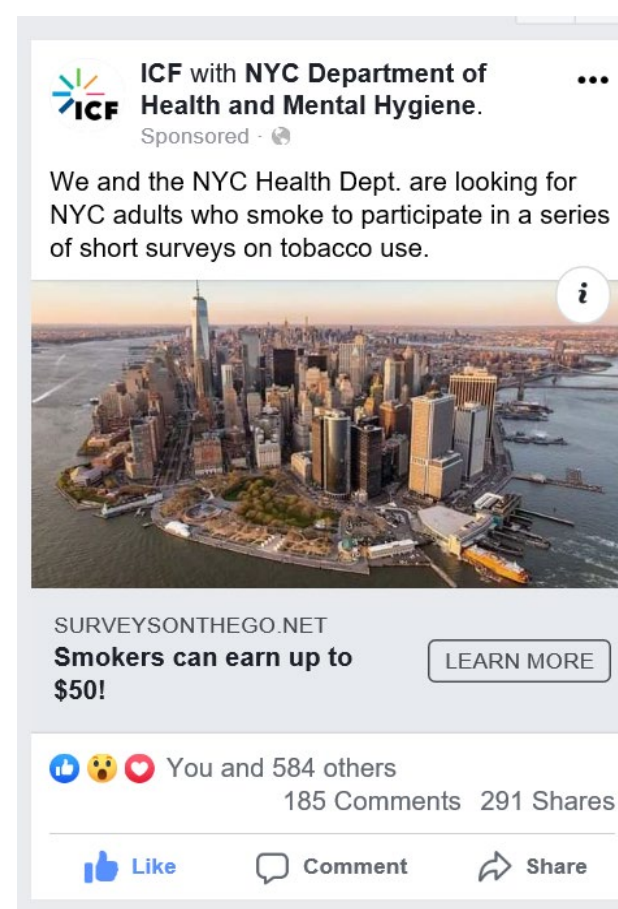
Since 2019, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYC DOHMH) and ICF have conducted three waves of a longitudinal survey to measure the impact of tobacco cessation programming on the smoking cessation behaviors of adults in NYC. The NYC Tobacco Cessation Panel Survey study includes a baseline survey and three waves of follow-up surveys administered over one year. Along with surveying existing nonprobability panel members, ICF explored alternative methods of panel recruitment for this study, including in-person, social media (Facebook), and online marketplaces (Craigslist) that alternate recruitment strategies were necessary because this mode alone could not provide sufficient eligible sample (adults who smoke).

Sampling and Recruitment Approach

The survey targeted current smokers living in NYC and was fielding in English and Spanish. The final survey goal was 500 longitudinal completes (respondents who completed the baseline and the three follow up surveys).

We integrated the use of multiple recruitment methods in order to participants in the study, including:

- MFour Panel.** We partnered with MFour, a mobile panel provider, for this study. Current MFour panel members received an invitation to complete the survey as well as follow-up surveys.
- In-person intercept.** ICF interviewers were positioned outside of establishments where they were likely intercept smokers (bars, convenience stores). Interviewers invited passerby to participate in survey. Surveys were administered by the interviewer on respondents' personal devices using the MFour Surveys on the Go platform.
- Facebook Advertisement.** Facebook ads have been successfully used to recruit smokers to complete surveys. Facebook's advertisement platform allowed ICF to specifically target key demographics in NYC and use include key word parameters to target smokers, such as "cigarette", "tobacco", "smoking", "nicotine." A web link was included in the advertisement to drive interested participants to the survey.
- Craigslist Advertisement.** Craigslist advertisements were placed in all NYC boroughs. The ads indicated that NYC is looking for smokers to participate in a study and that they may receive an incentive if they are selected to participate, with a promise of additional incentives if they participate in the three follow-up surveys as well. A link to a Survey screener was included in the ad.



Research Objectives

Longitudinal surveys are valuable for assessing the impact of a program or intervention over time, such as public health campaign effectiveness. However, collecting longitudinal data presents numerous challenges, including the cost of recruiting and retaining panel members. ICF evaluated advantages and disadvantages of each recruitment method by comparing panel retention, demographic coverage, and cost-effectiveness. Areas of inquiry included:

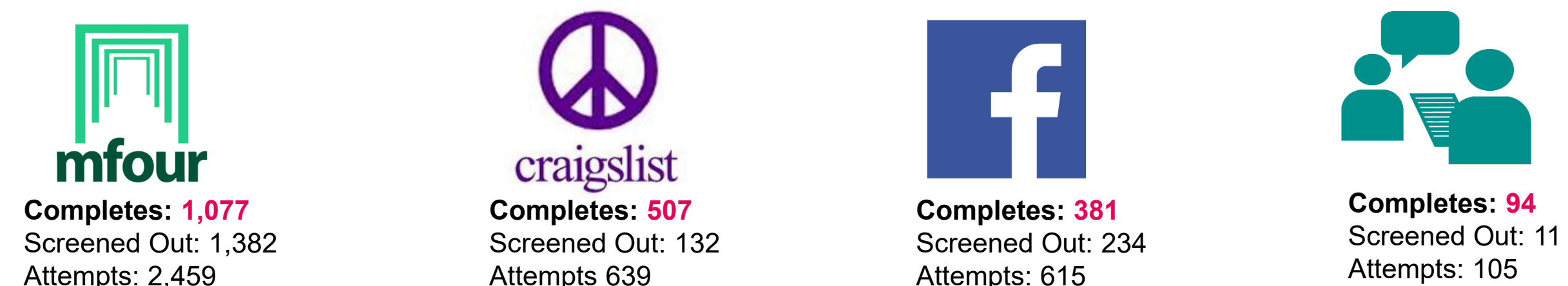
- Evaluation of the quality and cost effectiveness of existing panelists, In-Person, Facebook, and Craigslist recruitment modes.
- Evaluation of the demographics by each recruitment mode.
- Evaluation of the retention of each recruitment mode.

Timeline



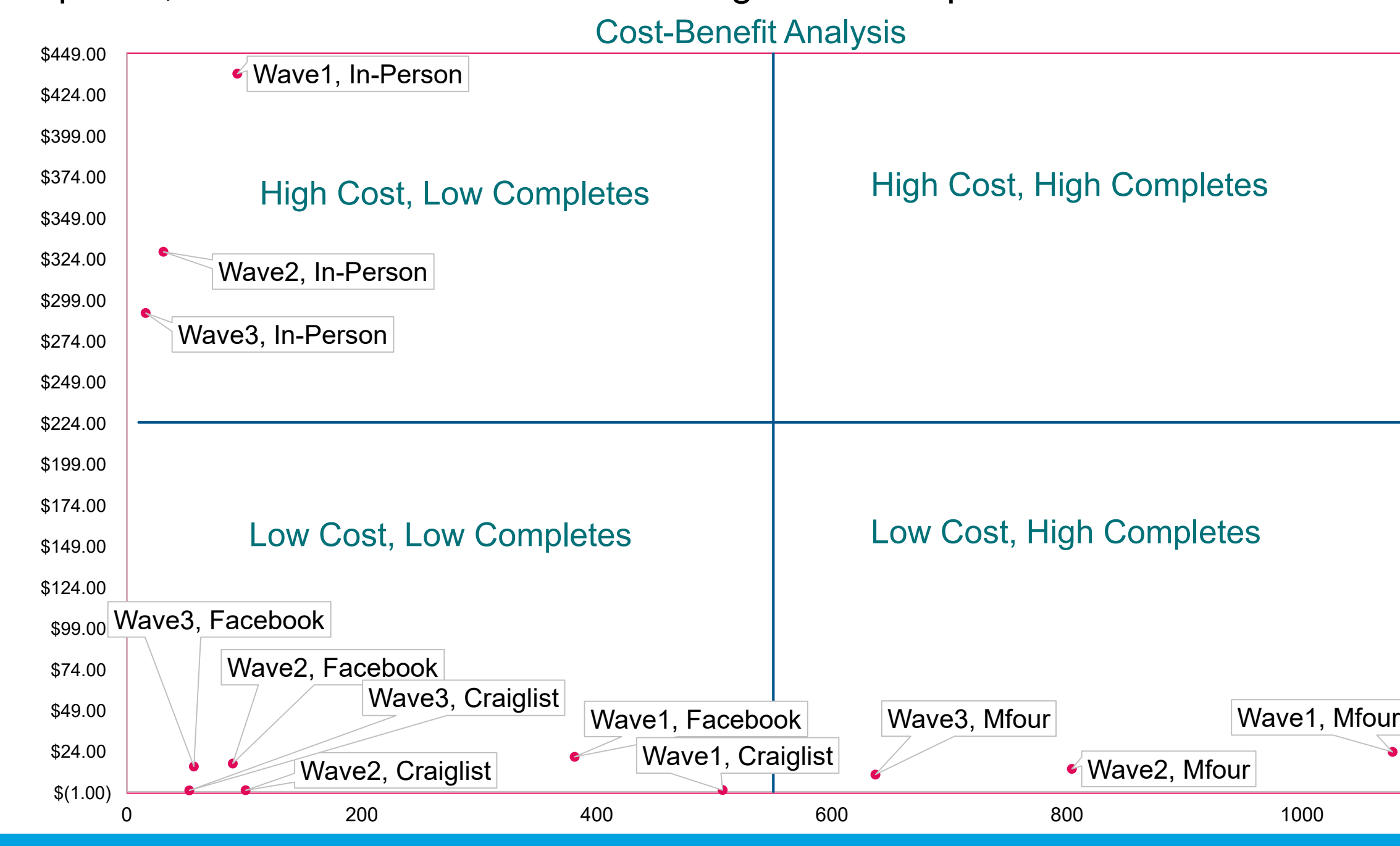
Baseline

Recruits by Mode



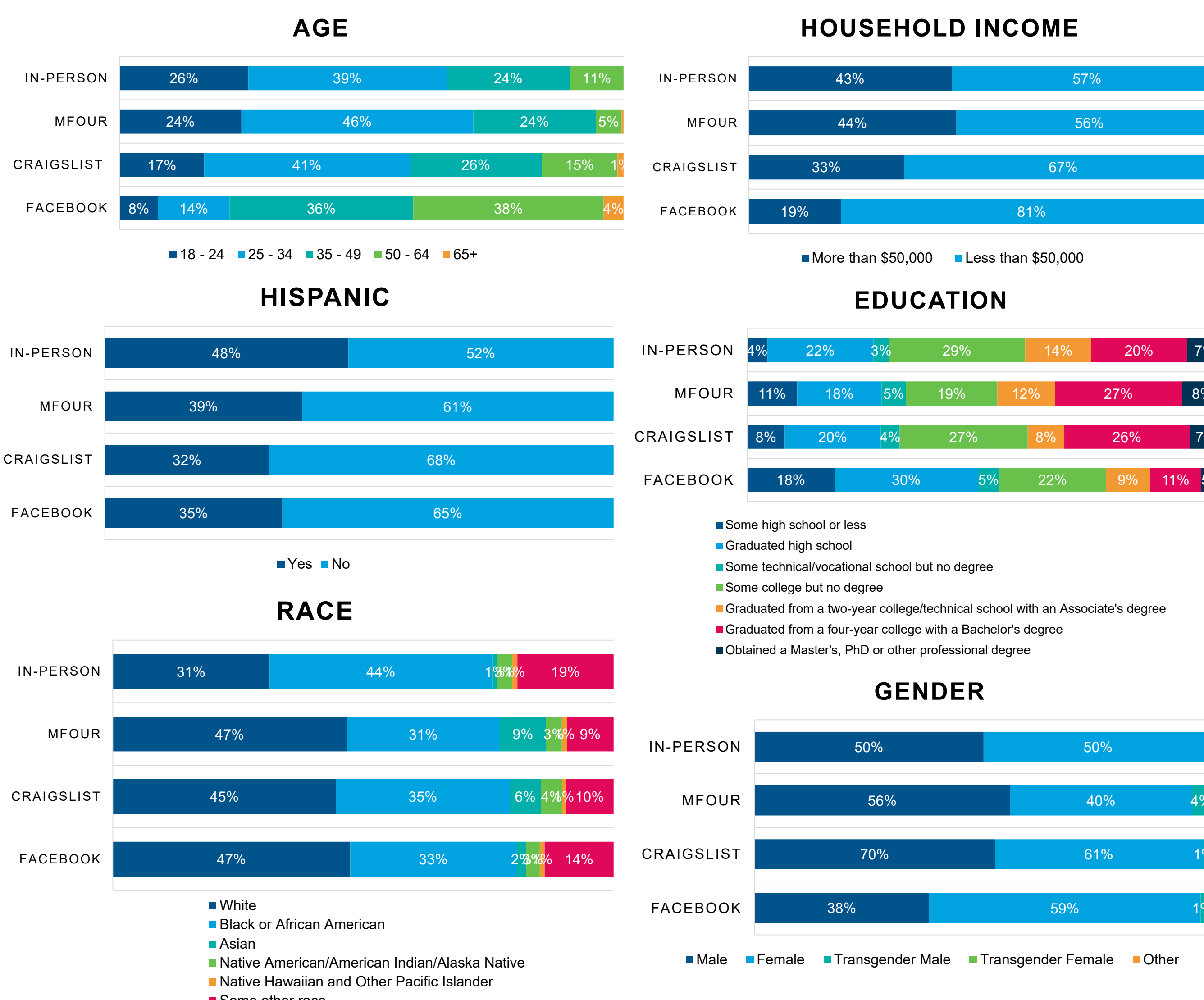
Cost Comparison

- Existing panelist recruits were the most cost-effective method across all waves (ranging from \$24.20 to \$10.35 per complete).
- Craigslist, the second most cost-effective mode, and resulted in the cheapest cost per complete (average \$0.85), at first yielded more completes than Facebook in Wave 1 by 126 completes, but in Wave 3 had a closer margin of 4 completes.



Demographics

- Facebook skewed older compared to the other recruitment modes, which all had the majority of completes falling within 18-34 age range.
- At least 97% of respondents completed the survey in English.
- More males responded via MFour and Craigslist, except for Facebook where the majority were female, and In-person.

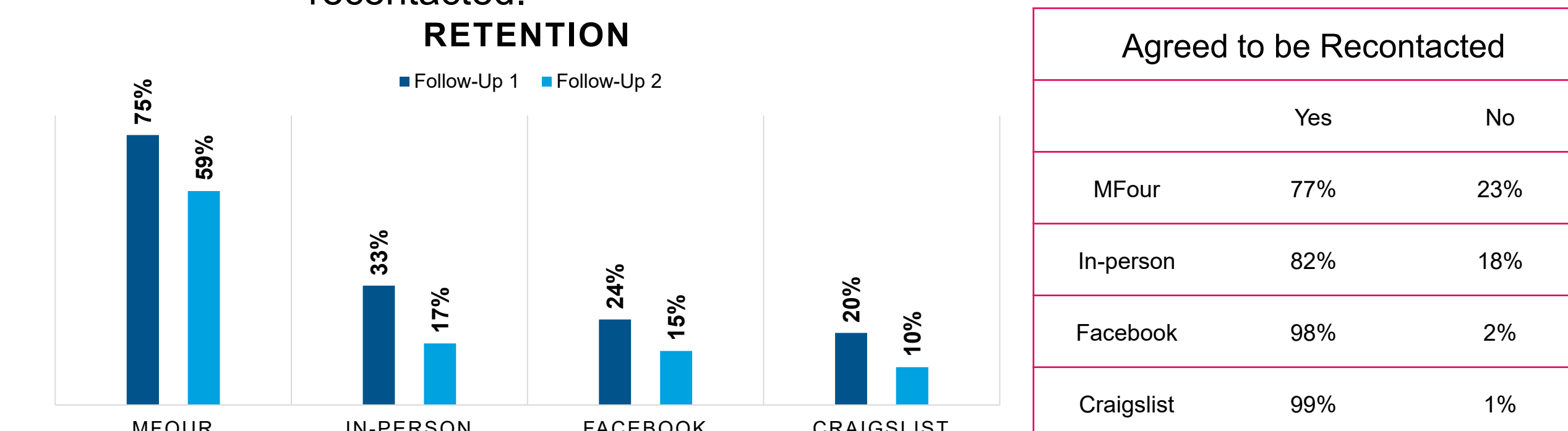


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Retention

- Existing panelist recruits had the greatest retention across both follow-up surveys (Wave 2 and Wave 3), whereas Craigslist recruits had 10% retained by the second follow-up survey (Wave3).
- However, Craigslist respondents had the greatest agreeability with being recontacted.



	Agreed to be Recontacted	
	Yes	No
MFour	77%	23%
In-person	82%	18%
Facebook	98%	2%
Craigslist	99%	1%

Challenges and Barriers

- Time.** Although the existing panelist completes occurred sooner in the fielding period, there is a limited pool of sample to survey. Extending the reach and audience of the survey is time-intensive.
- Posting Requirements.** Facebook and Craigslist have posting restrictions in order to be considered a valid advertisement. For example, Craigslist only allows advertisement postings every 48 hours.
- Creative.** As previously noted, each platform captures the attention of a different audience. Therefore, knowing what to post where without being flagged by regulating site authorities can pose a challenge.
- Experience.** This was our first time experimenting with a social media platform and were unknowing of the ways to optimize on the platform, such as how to curate ideal audiences using key words.

Future Considerations

- In-Person Surveying** is costly and time-intensive for a non-probability survey.
- Instagram.** In addition to Facebook advertisements, expand the audience by also posting on Instagram to reach a younger population.
- Variation.** Generate multiple creatives for advertisements to circulate on a continuous basis throughout the fielding process.
- Planning.** Build in time to evaluate productivity of each mode within the fielding schedule to gauge campaign effectiveness.
- Low-Incidence Population.** The harder to reach the target population, consider multiple recruitment modes to save on time.

