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

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