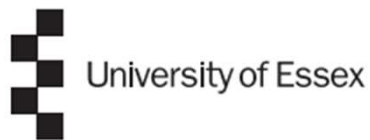# Foot-in-the-door or door-in-the-face? A survey experiment on multiple requests for consent to data linkage

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Annette Jäckle (University of Essex)

Part of a larger research project:

Funded by
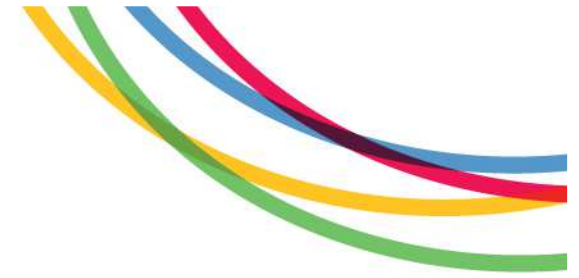
Part of a larger research project:

Funded by

"Understanding and improving data linkage consent in surveys"

https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/projects/understanding-and-improving-data-linkage-consent-in-surveys

HOW BEST TO ASK FOR CONSENT?

Previous Research:
What's known?

Not much! Most research is on single consent…

Here we know that consent rates differ hugely between different surveys and different types of administrative data: range from 19-96.5%!

(see overview of studies in Sakshaug, Couper, Ofstedal, Weir 2012)

Previous Research
on multiple consent

Qualitative study on how to present consent requests

(Thornby, Calderwood, Kotecha, Beninger & Gaia 2018)

Anecdotal evidence from qualitative interviews

- Variables that increased consent rates:

   trust, sensitivity, perceived benefits, assurances, "nothing to hide", time frame: past

- Separate questions were preferred over 'catch all'-items

- Invested cognitive effort decreased over consent sequence

Survey experiment on order effects

(Weiß, Beuthner, Silber, Keusch, Menold & Schröder 2019)

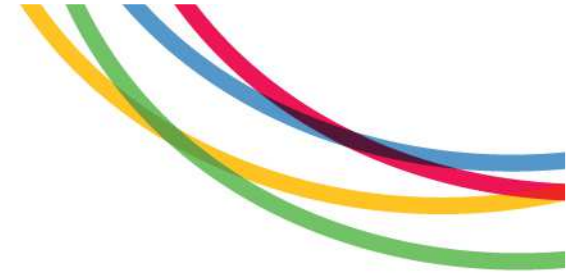- higher consent rates in first consent request (irrespective of topic)

Research Questions
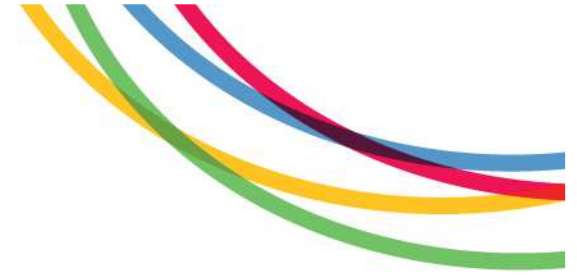
Focus on multiple consents:

- Does the **order** matter?

- Does the **format** (page sequencing) matter?

- How can we explain what we find?

    → fatigue, foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face

Data

- Online access panel (PopulusLive)
  - Data collection in May-June 2018 all over Britain
  - Quotas based on sex, age, highest educational qualification
  - Analyses today: N=3099

- Consent request to link to 5 administrative records:
  - Income/tax (HMRC)
  - Pensions and Benefits (DWP)
  - Energy consumption (BEIS)
  - Education (Department for Education (and Skills) /Education Analytical Services)
  - Health (NHS)

Experimental Set-up
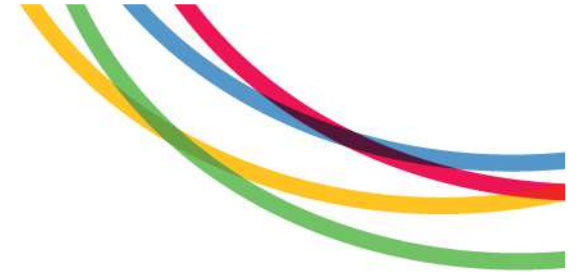
- Everyone was asked 5 consent domains

- 2 orders:
    - forwards ("HMRC first"): *HMRC – DWP – BEIS – EDUC - NHS*
    - backwards ("NHS first") : *NHS – EDUC – BEIS – DWP – HMRC*

- 3 formats:
    - Sequence of pages (with one response per domain)
    - Same page (with one response per domain)
    - Single request (with one joint request covering all 5 domains)

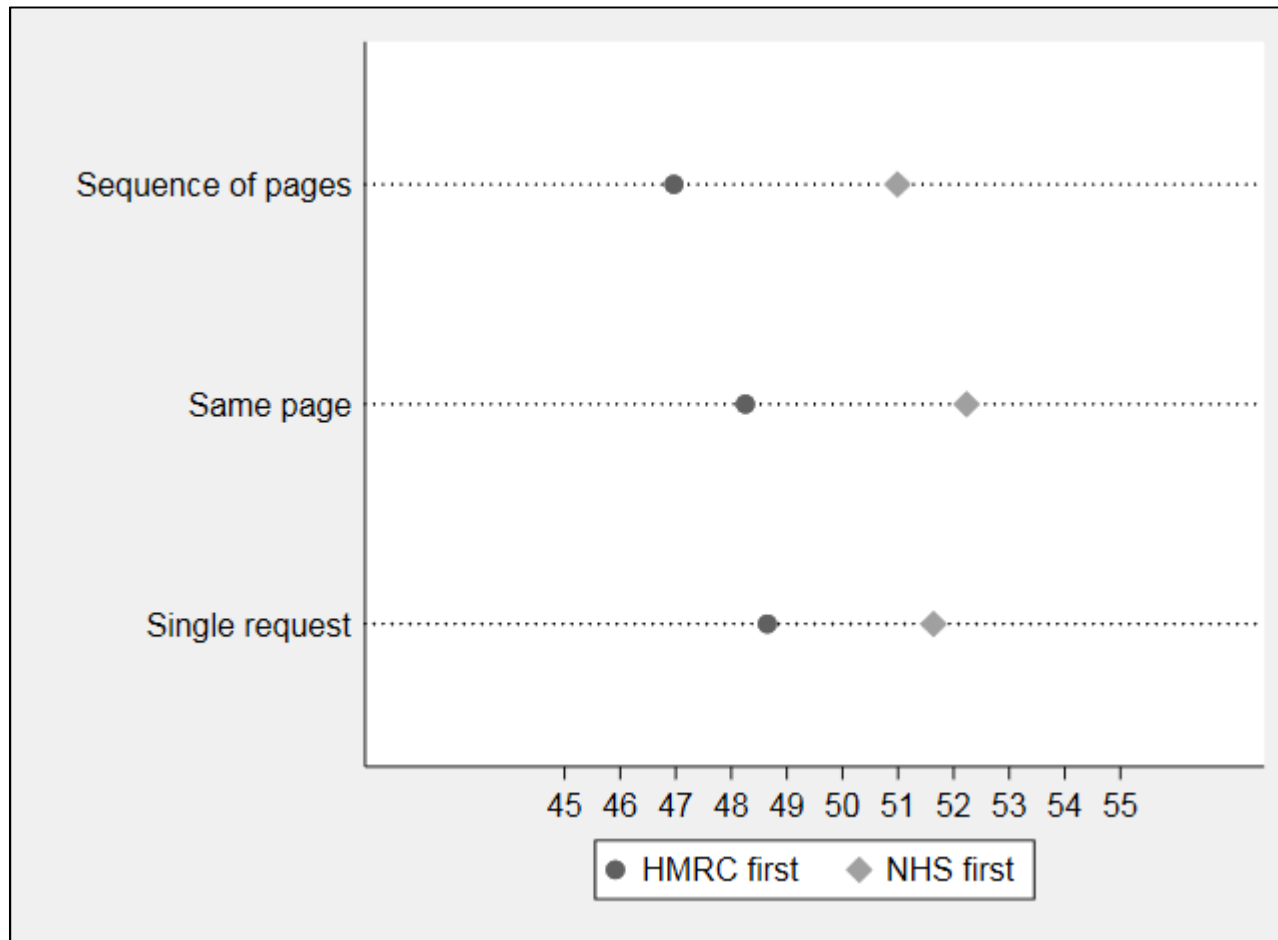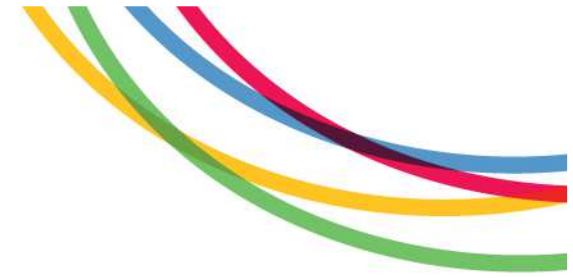→ 6 experimental conditions with 511-521 respondents each
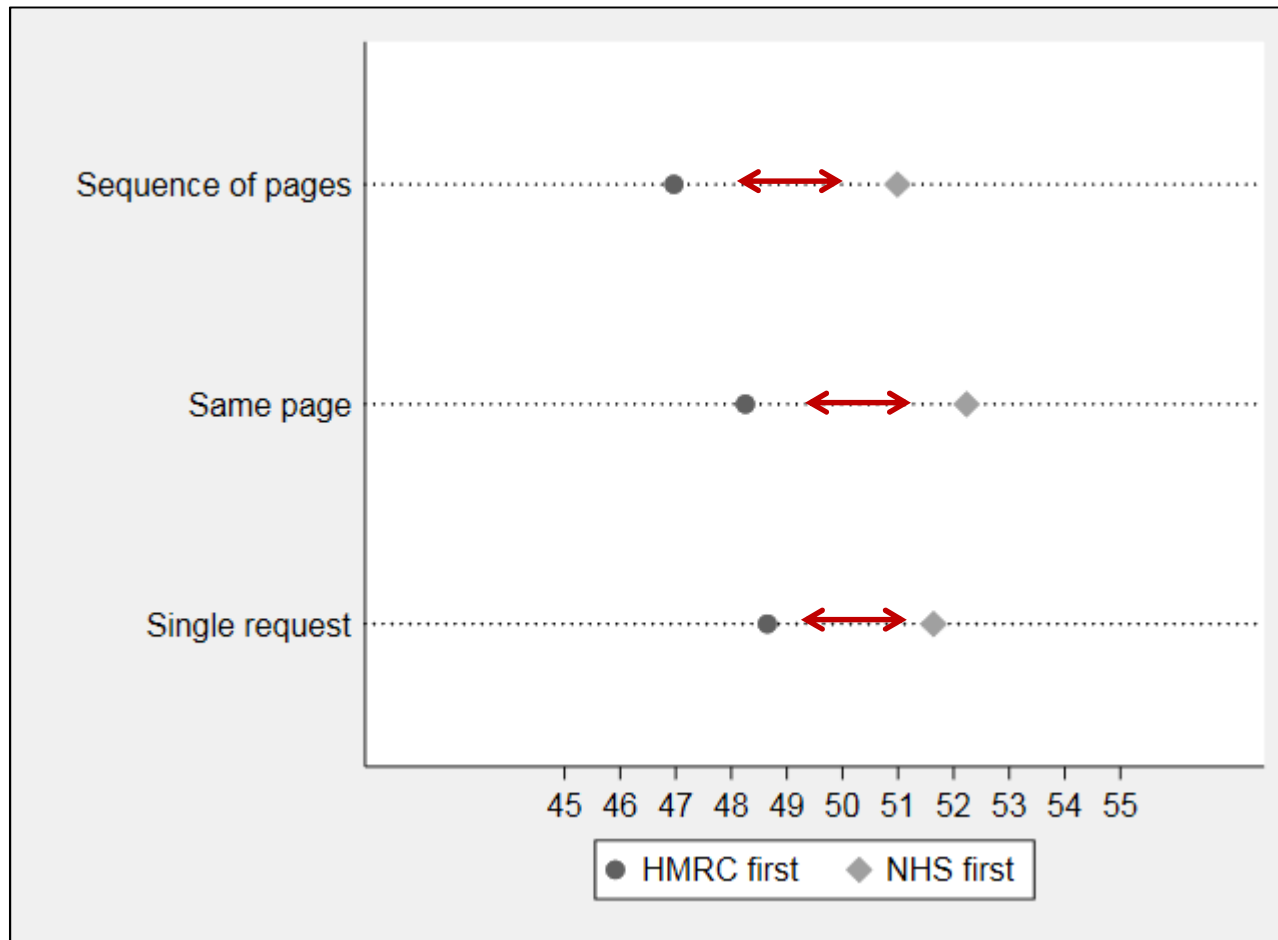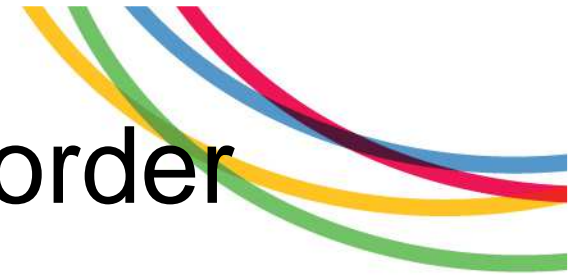
Outcomes

Effects of order and format on:

    a) average consent rates

    b) share of respondents who said YES or NO to all 5 requests

    c) individual consents (fatigue, foot-in-the-door, door-in-the-face?)
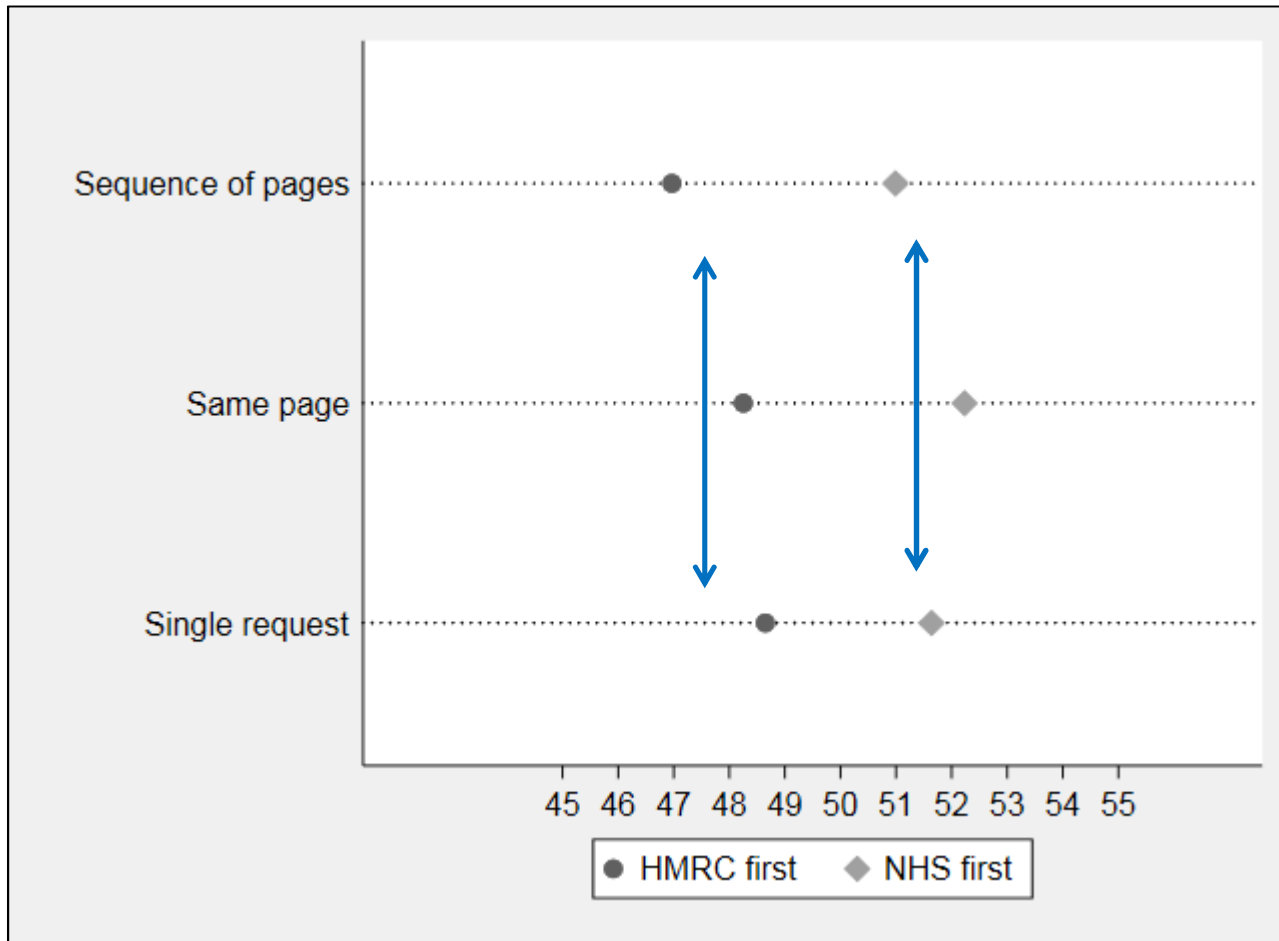
Results
a) average consent rates

a) average consent rates: order

order effect
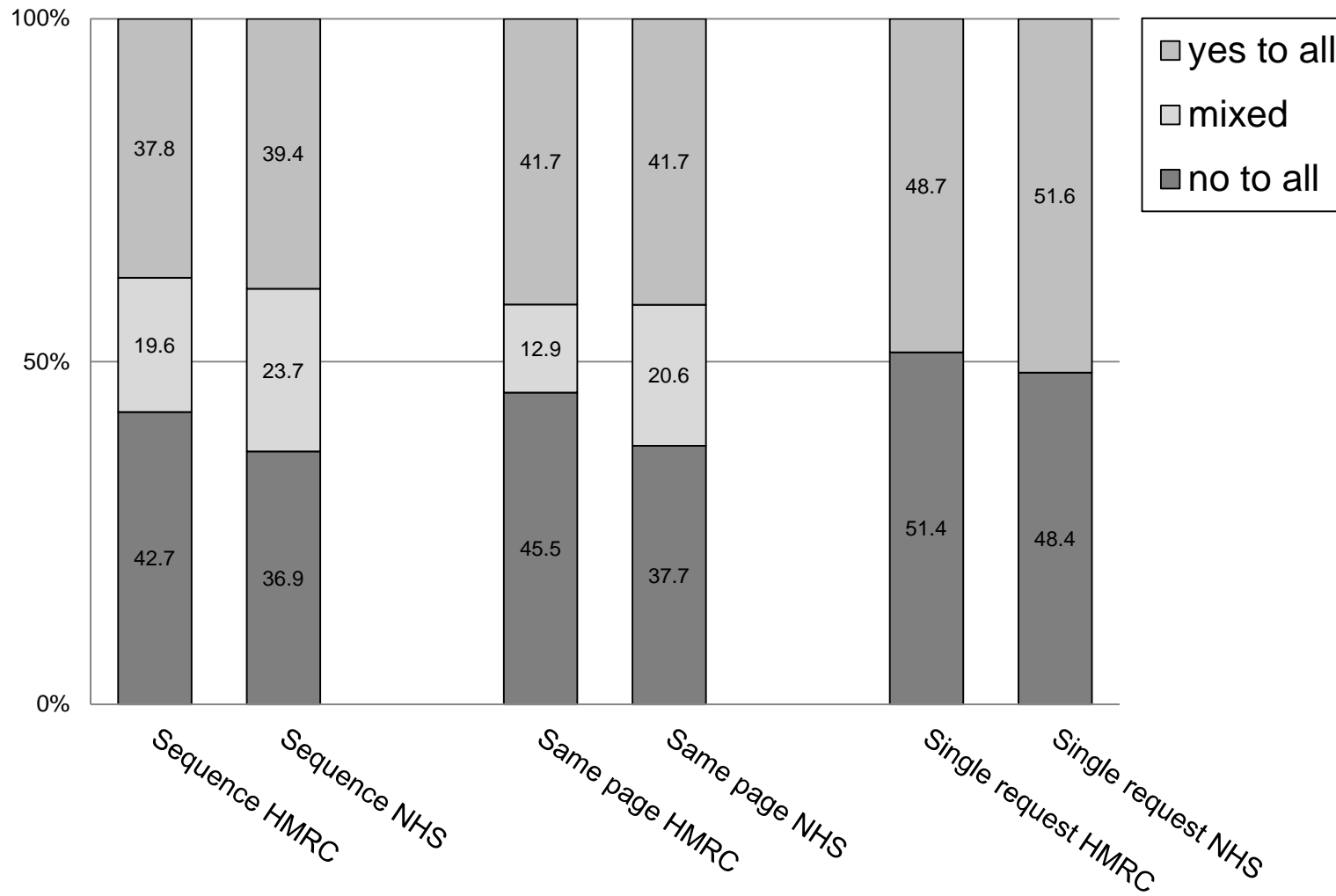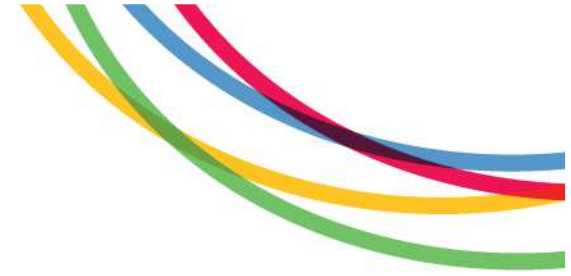
logit regression controlling for format **p=0.036**

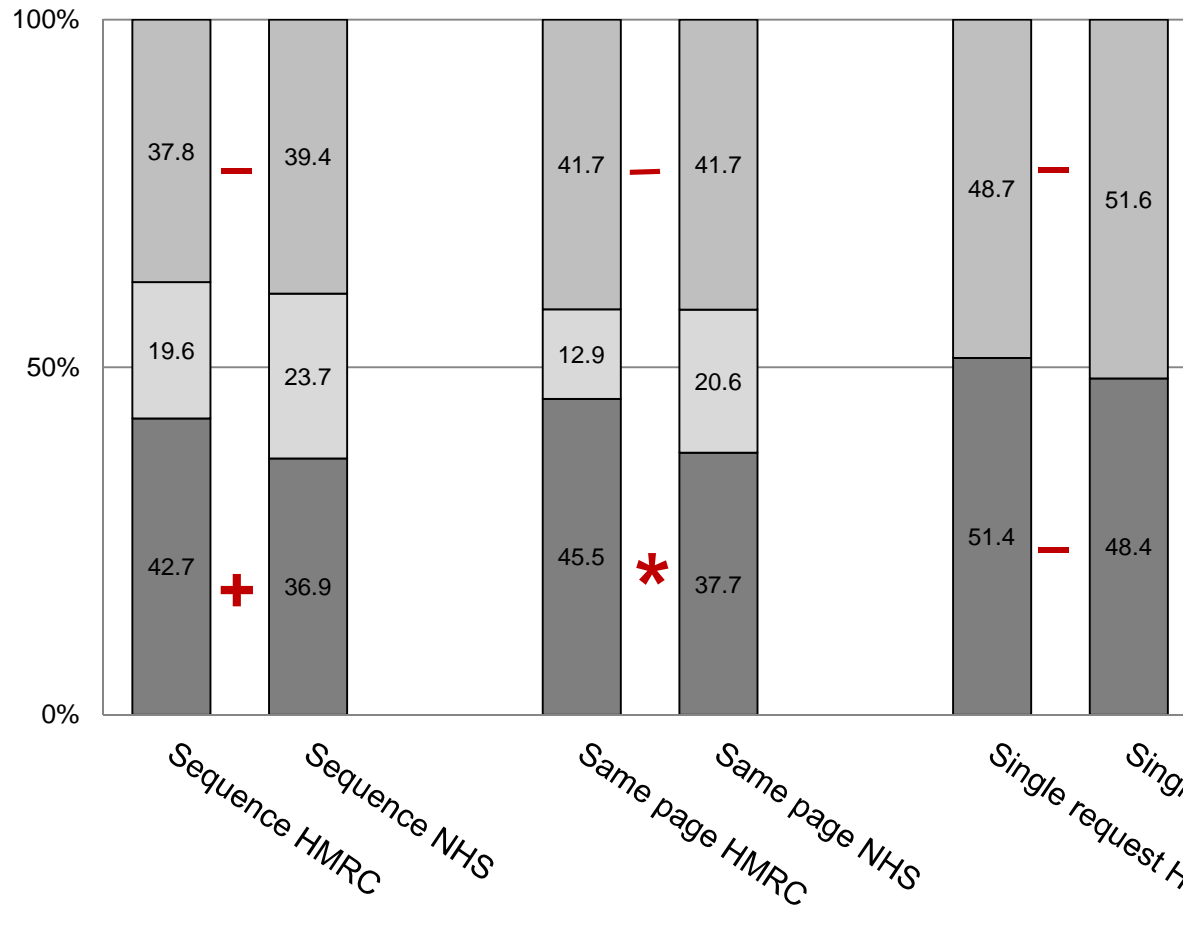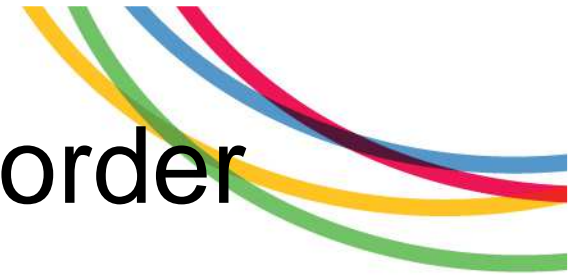# a) average consent rates: format

format effect

logit regression controlling for format
p=0.79 (joint test)

b) yes / no to all requests

b) yes / no to all requests: order

order effect
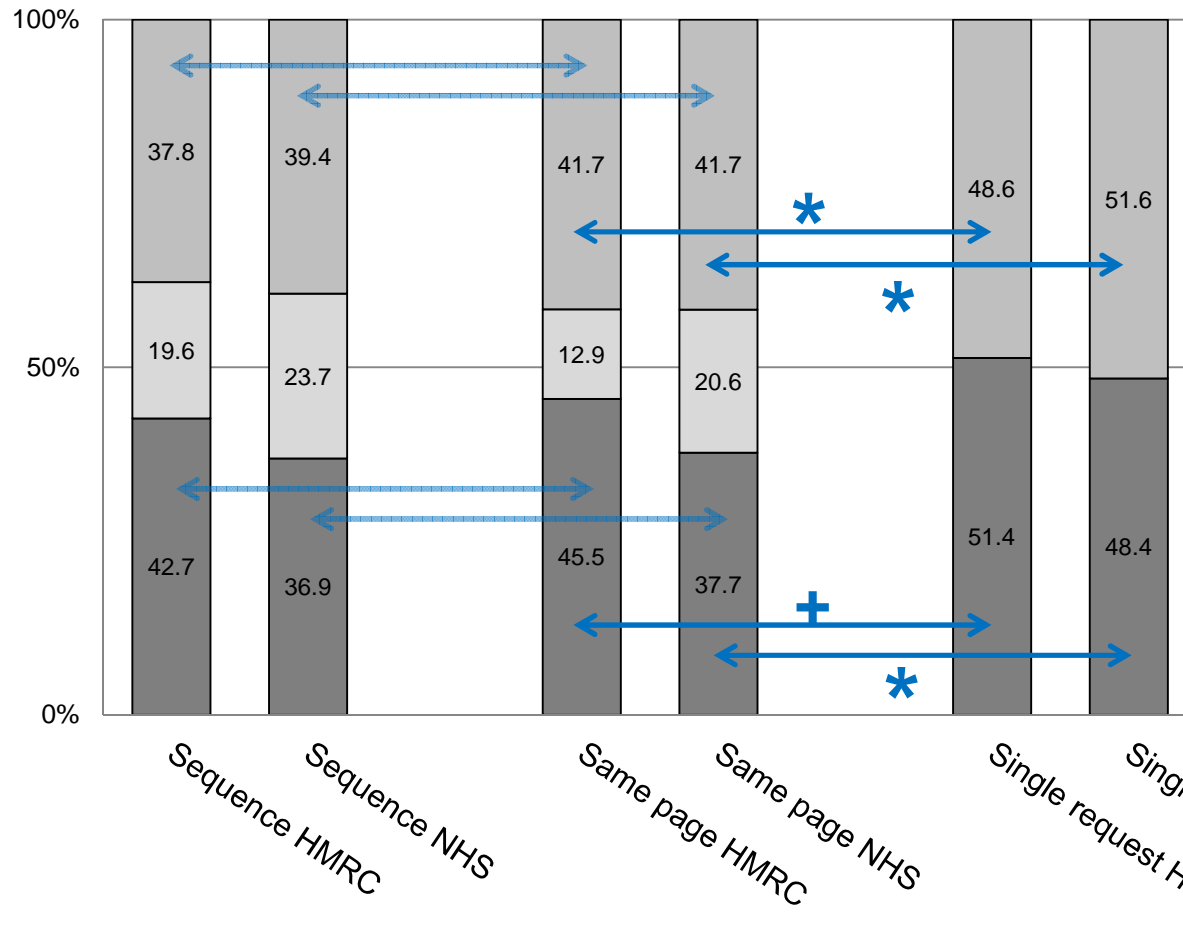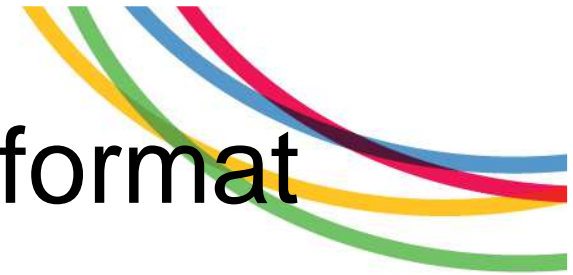
yes-to-all
no order effect

no-to-all
significant order effect
within sequence of pages
and same page
p<.10 (prtests)

+ p<.10

* p<.05

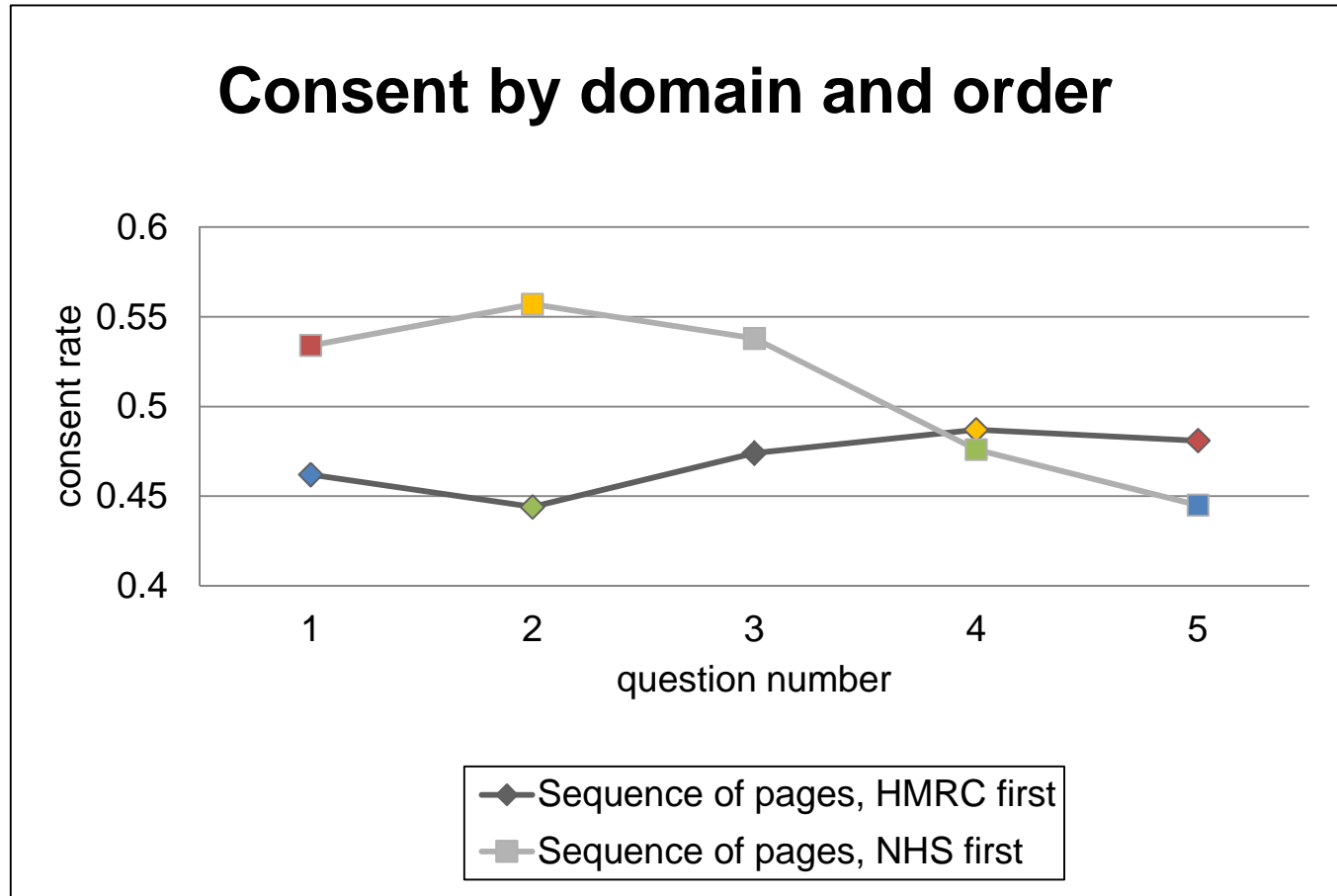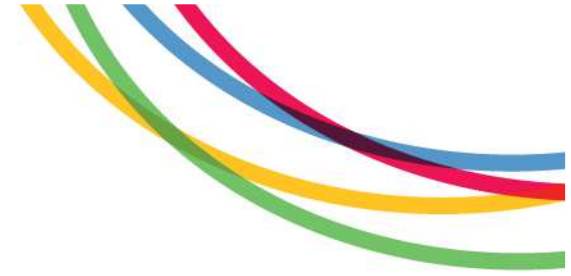# b) yes / no to all requests: format

format effect

no differences between
sequence of pages
and same page

**%yes-to-all and no-to-all
significantly higher
in single request**
(compared to same page and
sequence of pages)

c) individual consents

Consent by domain and order

Same consent domain
is marked
in same colour:

NHS
EDUC
BEIS
DWP
HMRC

c) individual consents

Consent by domain and order
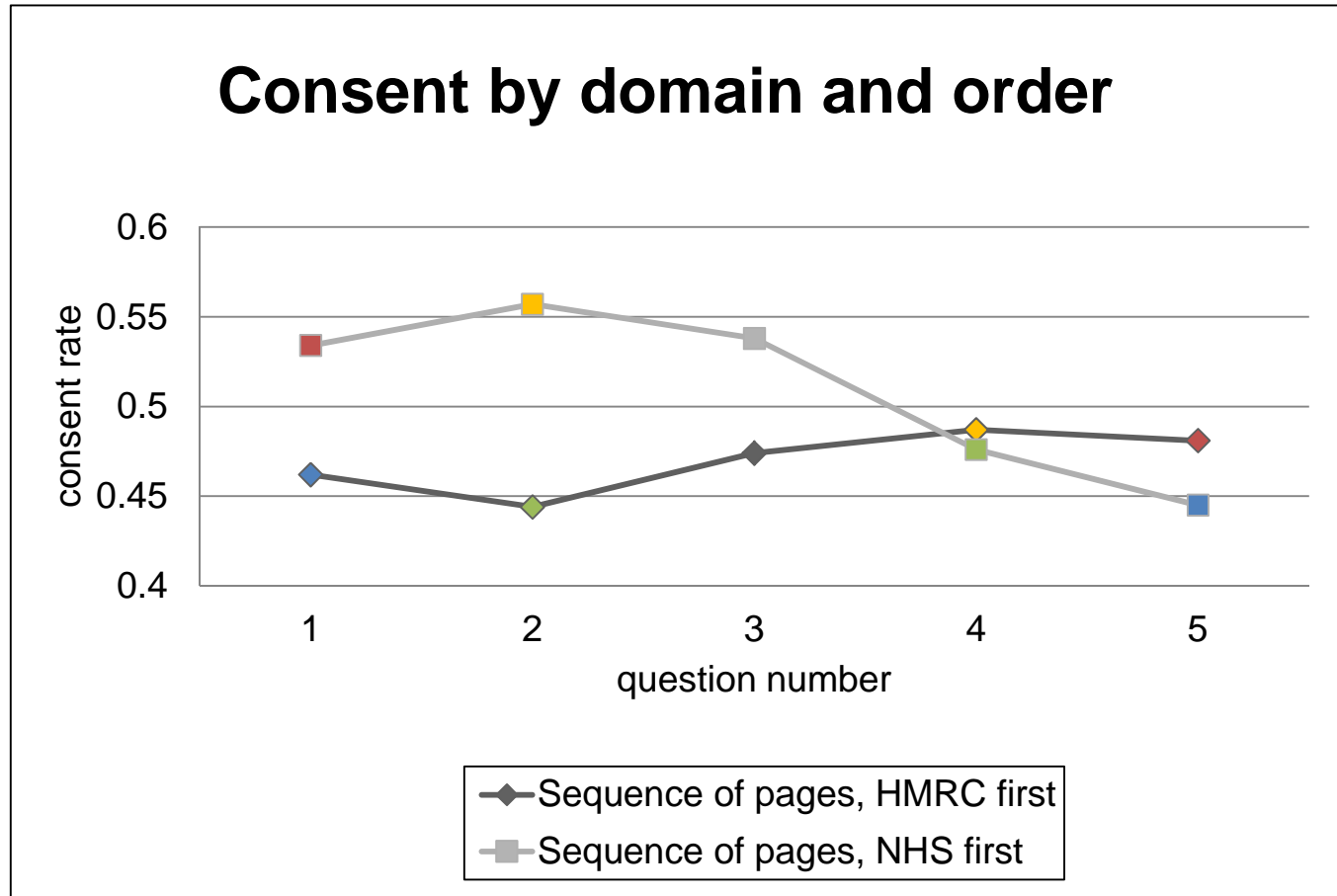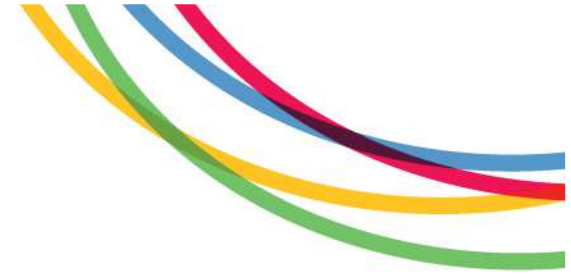
Significance tests

- <u>sequence of pages:</u>
  (same domain in
  HMRC vs NHS first)

  NHS p=.09
  EDUC p=.02
  BEIS p=.04
  DWP p=.31
  HMRC p=.58

c) individual consents

Consent by domain, order and format
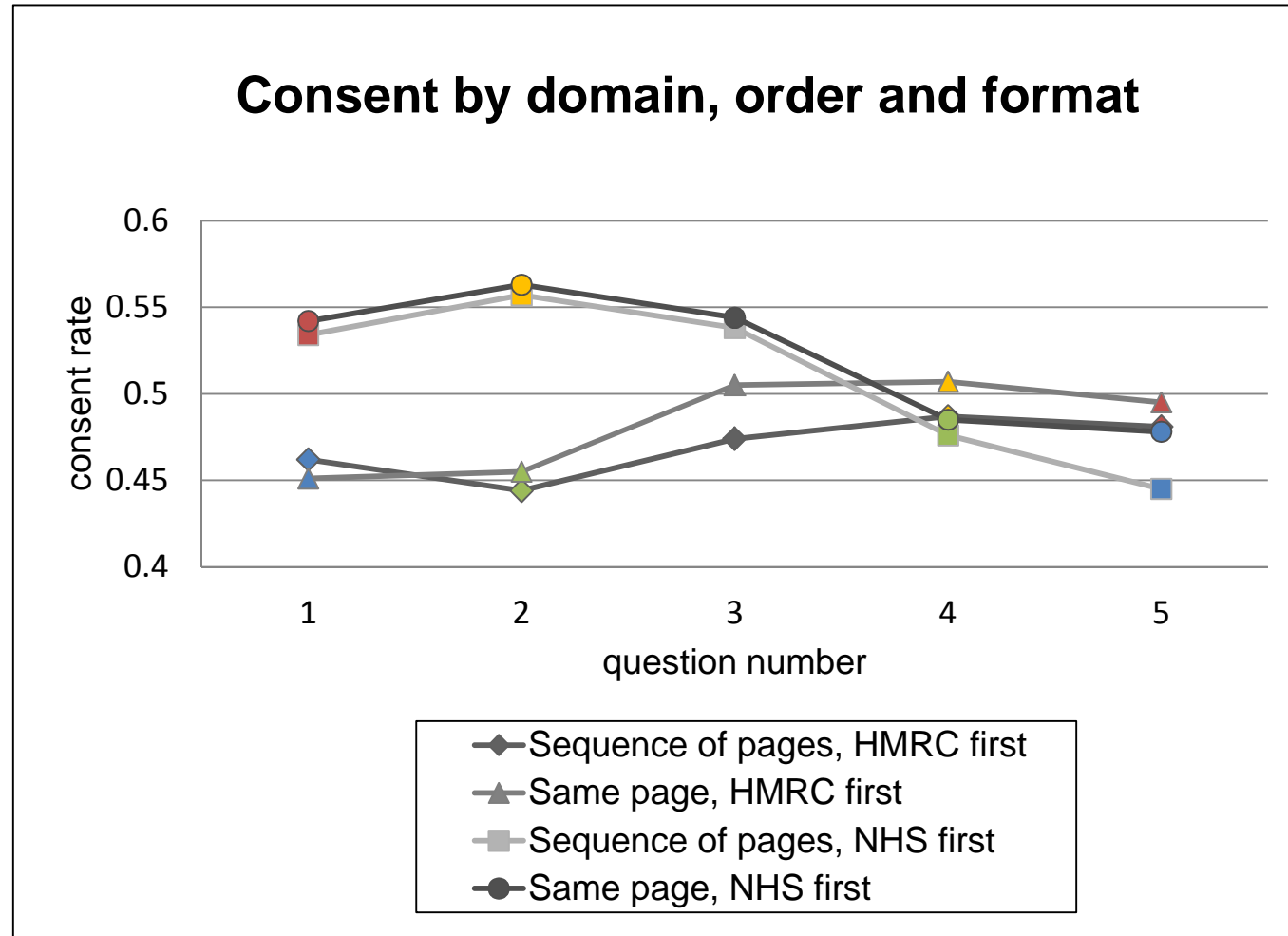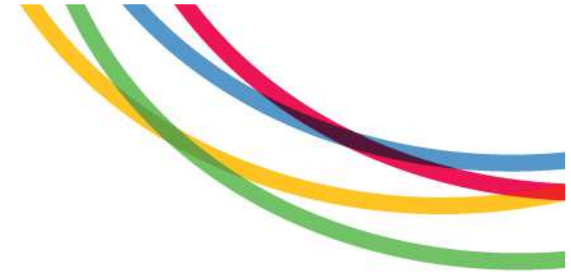
Same page format shows similar patterns as sequence of pages

Significance tests
- <u>same page:</u>
  (same domain in HMRC vs NHS first) same tendencies but not/less significant

Potential explanations
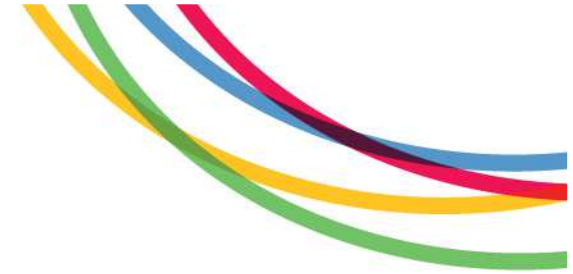
Which hypothesis is consistent with this pattern?

- ## Fatigue? NO

decline of consent rate irrespective of order

- ## Foot-in-the-Door? YES

small initial request, high consent rates later

- ## Door-in-the-Face? NO

large initial request, high consent rates later

Consent by domain, order and format

Potential explanations

Can this pattern be explained by

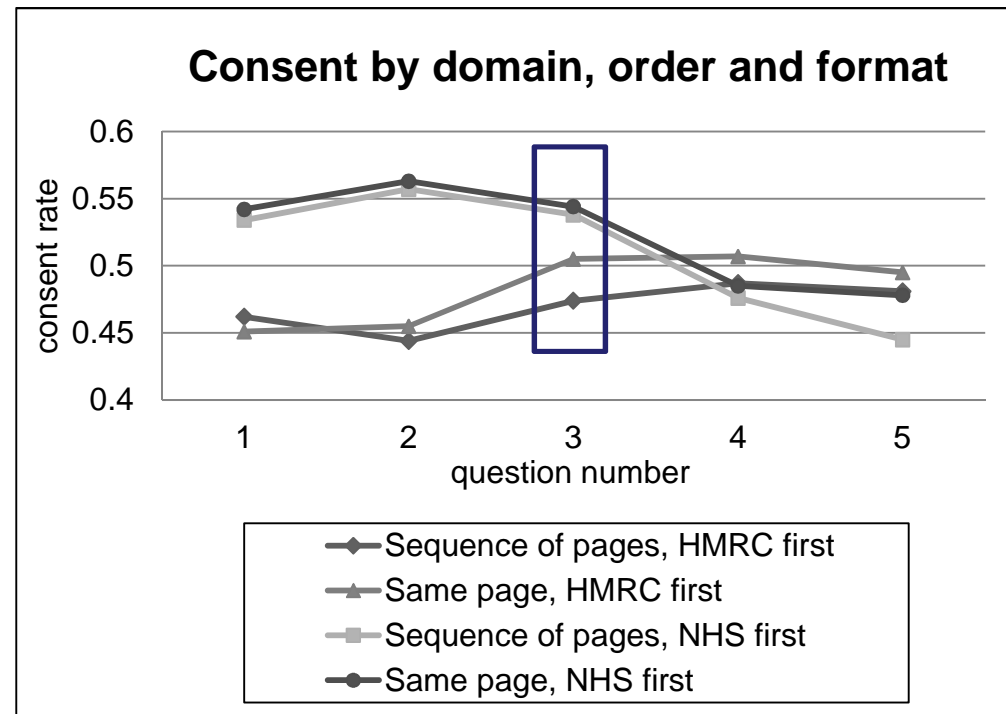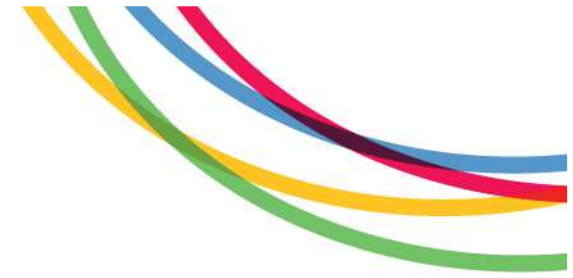- sensitivity of the consent request?

- trust in the organisation that holds the data?

Sensitivity and trust by linkage domain (means)

linkage domain	sensitivity (1 not sensitive – 4 highly sensitive)	trust (1 do not trust at all – 4 trust a lot)
HMRC	3.2	2.9
DWP	3.1	2.8
BEIS	2.3	-
EDUC	2.3	-
NHS	3.4	3.1

→ The pattern we see is better explained by trust than by sensitivity.

Potential explanations
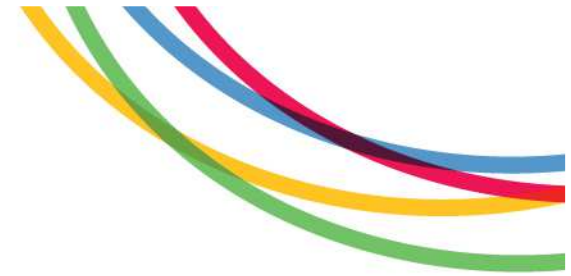
Consent by domain, order and relative trust in NHS/HMRC
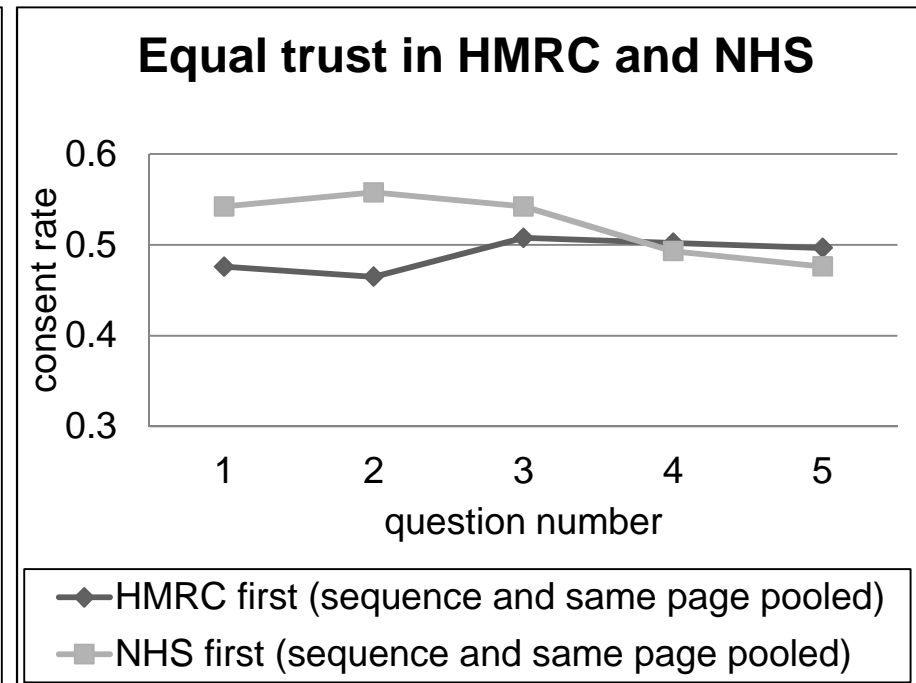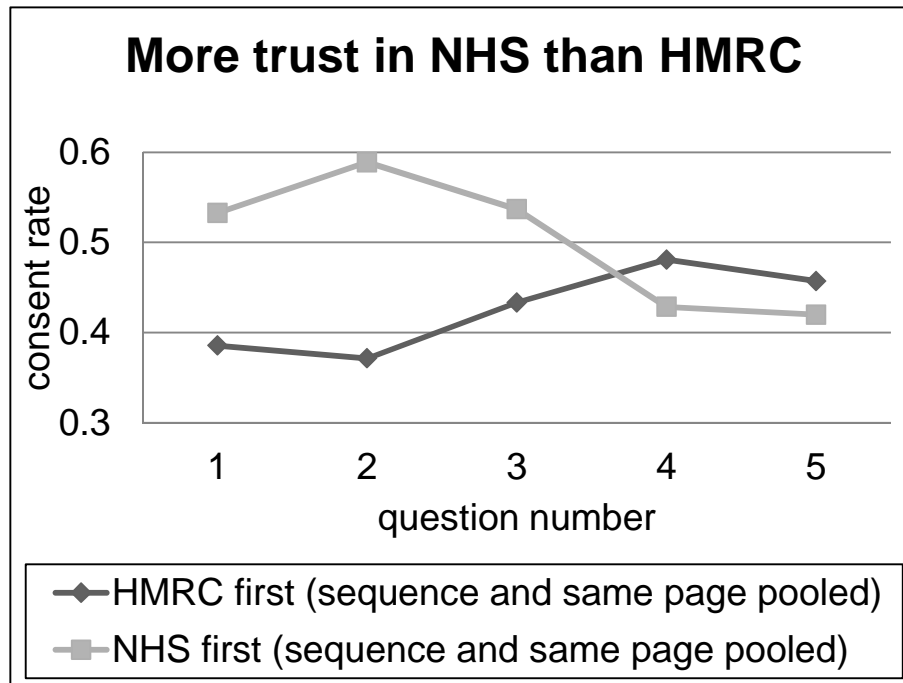
→ Maybe there is something else than trust.

Conclusions

order

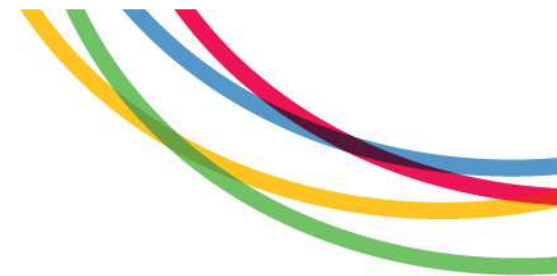- To maximise average consent rates…
- To maximise individual consents to each domain…
- To minimise share of no-to-all…

→place most trustworthy organisation first.

format

- To maximise share of yes-to-all, ask all consents in one request.
- To minimise share of no-to-all, ask consent domains separately.

Related questions we are working on

- Does format affect respondents process consent requests cognitively?

- What determines the stability of the decision over time?
  - → wave 2 with online access panel

- Why are respondents less likely to consent in web than face-to-face?
  - → CAWI and CAPI interviews from IP11

- Why are some interviewers better at getting consent than others?
  - → behaviour coding with recordings from IP11

https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/projects/understanding-and-improving-data-linkage-consent-in-surveys
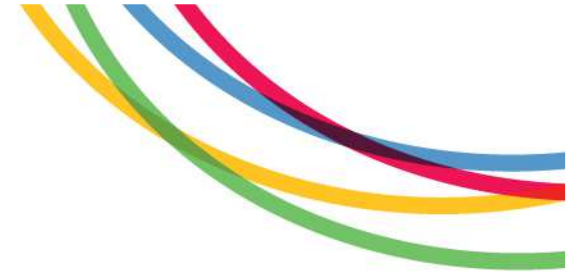
Thank you for listening!

https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/projects/
understanding-and-improving-data-linkage-consent-in-surveys

References

- Joseph W. Sakshaug, Mick P. Couper, Mary Beth Ofstedal, and David R.Weir (2012): Linking Survey and Administrative Records: Mechanisms of Consent. *Sociological Methods & Research 41(4):* 535–569.

- Marie Thornby, Lisa Calderwood, Mehul Kotecha, Kelsey Beninger, and Alessandra Gaia (2018): Collecting Multiple Data Linkage Consents in a Mixed-mode Survey: Evidence from a large-scale longitudinal study in the UK *Survey Methods: Insights from the Field. Retrieved from* https://surveyinsights.org/?p=9734.

- Weiß, Bernd, Christoph Beuthner, Henning Silber, Florian Keusch, Natalja Menold, and Jette Schröder. 2019. Consenting to Data Linkage: The Role of Data Domain, Framing, Device, Incentives, and Respondent Characteristics. Presentation at *Mobile Apps and Sensors in Surveys (University of Mannheim and Utrecht University)*.