



Survey Research Operations

Survey Research Center

Institute for Social Research

Health and Retirement Study: Innovative Incentives

International Field Directors Conference

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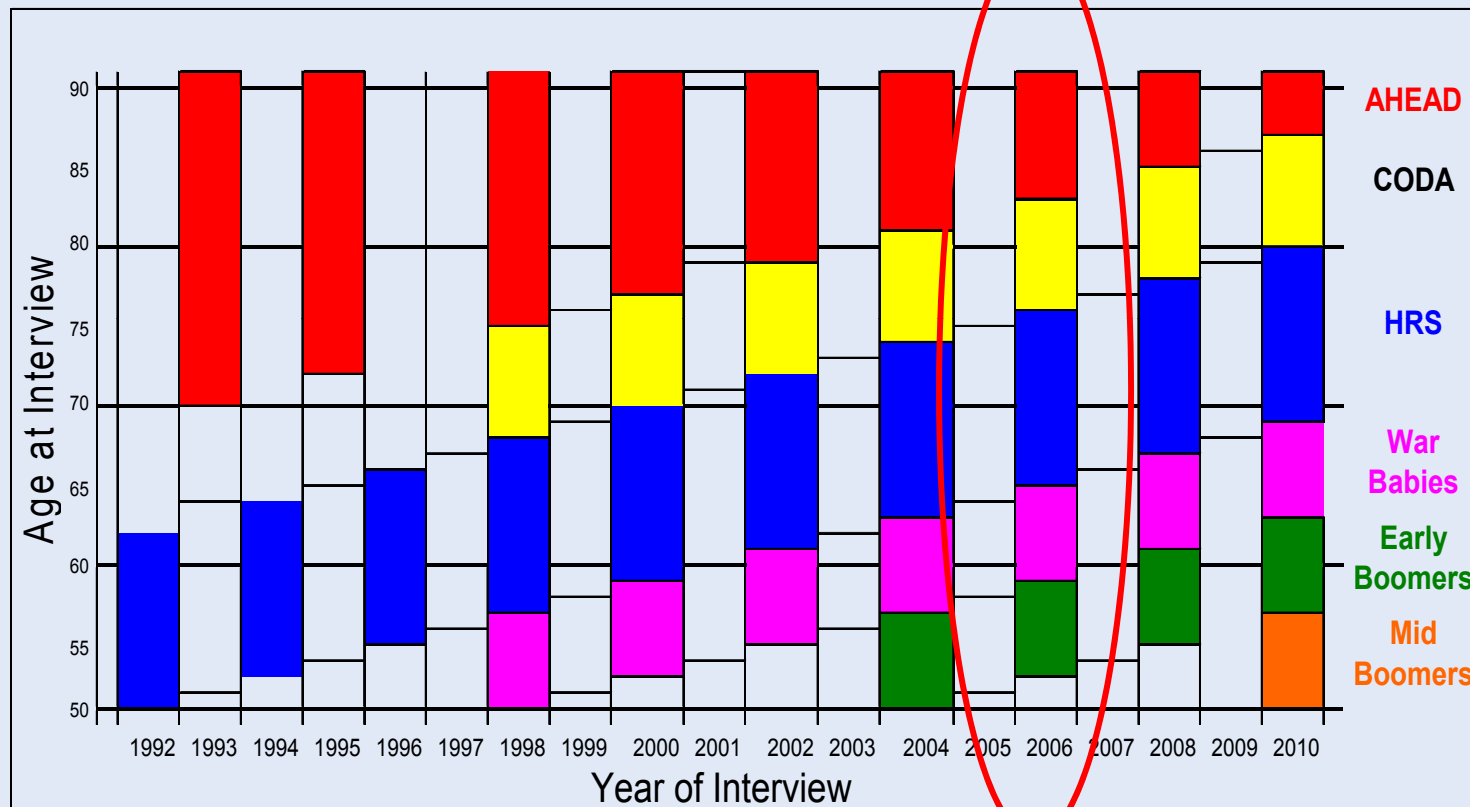
University of Michigan

Health and Retirement Study

- **Nationally representative longitudinal study following 22,250 adults over the age of 50**
- **Five age cohorts**
- **Panel study since 1992**
- **Main Interview every two years**
- **Several ancillary studies**



Age Cohorts



Interview- 2006

- **CATI or CAPI IWs (39% of these with Physical Measures)**
- **5% in Spanish**
- **SSA, pension, Medicare, leave-behind questionnaire**
- **Average Interview length 106 min**
- **2006 overall response rates: IW 88%, PM 94%, Saliva 83% Blood 80%**
- **10% in tracking/tracing, found 95%, IWed 85%**



Attrition

- **Concern in panel studies**
 - **Rodgers**
 - **SIPP**
 - **Census**
 - **NLS-Y**
- **Various experiments implemented (HRS- 2000, 2006)**



Attrition

- **HRS take pro-active approach with both interviewers and respondents to develop ways to get excellent response rates and also retain the sample over time**



Interviewers

- **Special Training: addressing respondent concerns**
- **Emphasis on tailoring responses**
- **Tools and techniques for averting refusals, retaining participation**
- **Communications: conference calls, weekly updates and special workshops**
- **Production bonus for difficult cases**



Respondents- Maintain rapport

- **Monetary Incentive \$40**
 - additional for other components
- **Letters, newsletters, brochures, updates**
- **Strategic assignment of interviewers**
- **Accommodations for interview**



New approach: 2006

- **2006- Mid-study workshop: included training and brain-storming how to work with more difficult cases that remained: more calls, resistance, no contact, prior refusals (previous waves), certain cohorts**
- **Formalize non-monetary incentive for R's, expand options for younger cohorts and males. Items under \$5**
- **Beginning October keep track what is given, when and to whom**



Tracking Non-Monetary Incentive

- **Sample size- 5433 outstanding lines during this time period**
- **Interviewers utilized new incentive where they thought applicable, not a controlled experiment**
- **830 people received non-monetary incentives**



Types of incentives

- **Plants**
- **Mugs**
- **Lunch-Bags**
- **Calculator**
- **OTHER**
 - **UM Pens**
 - **HRS Magnets**
 - **Newsletters, etc.**

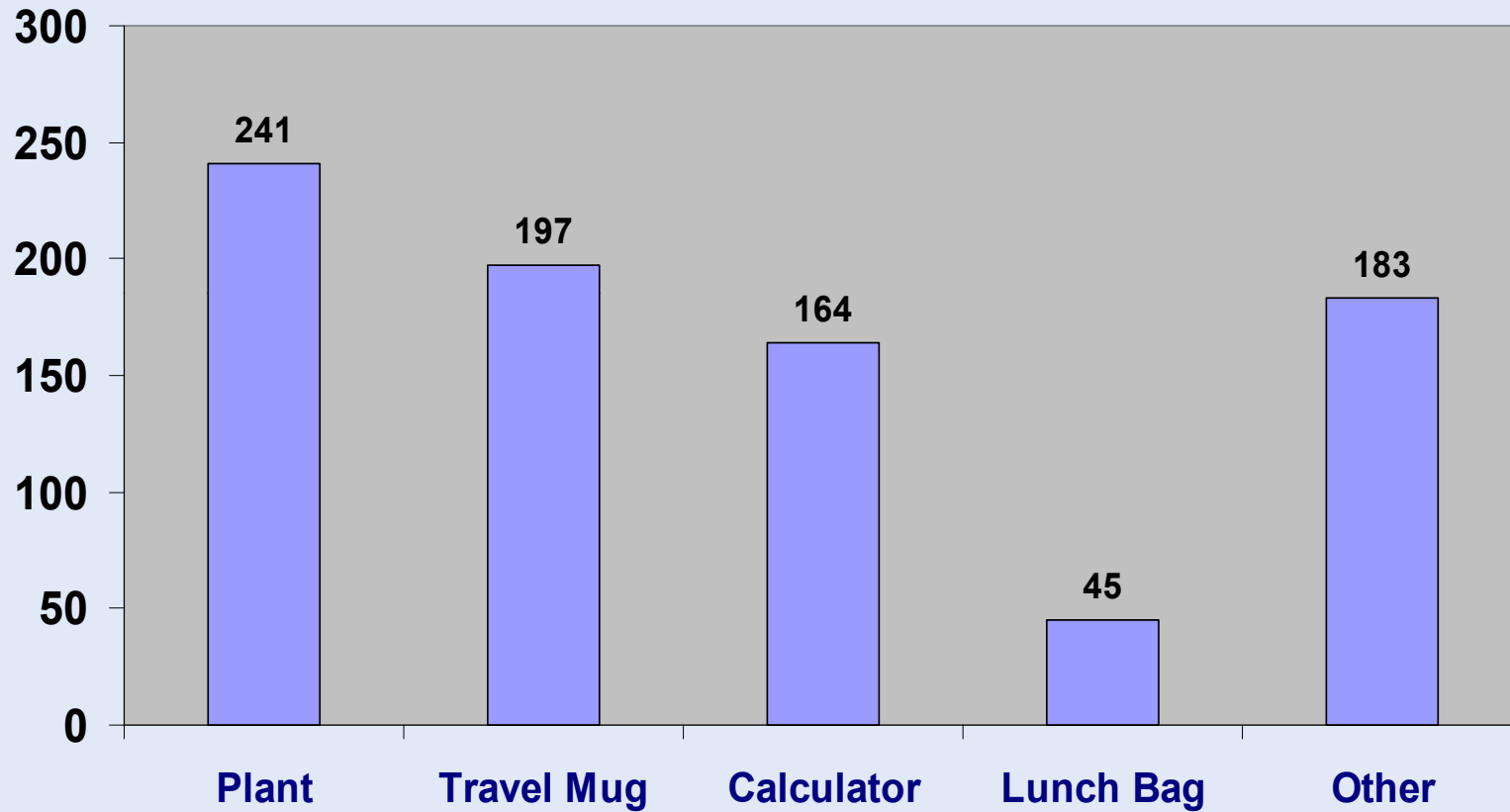


How Were These Used?

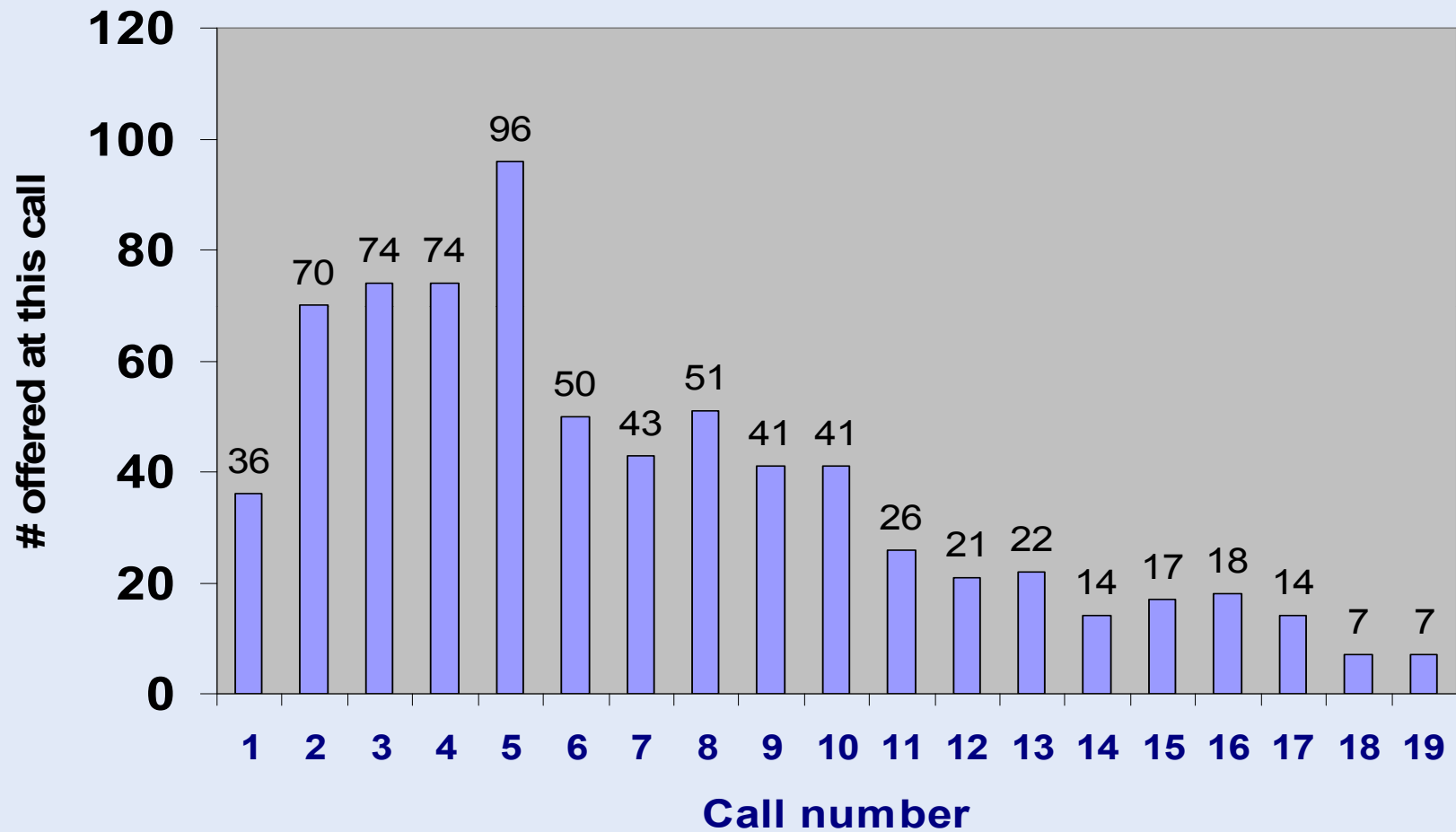
- **At which contact offered?**
- **Likelihood to complete rating?**
- **Ever resistant?**
- **Resistance level?**
- **Previous waves cooperation?**



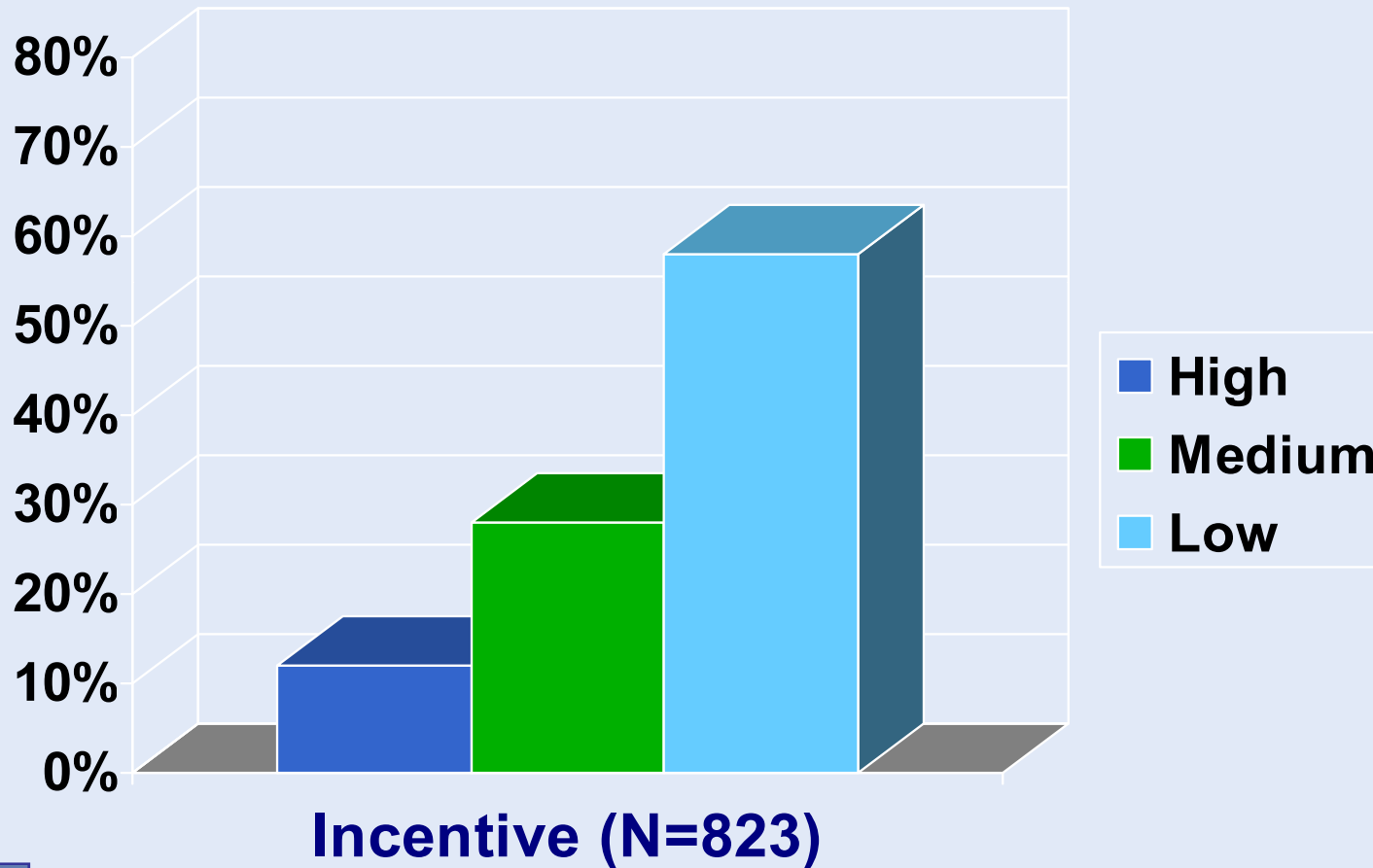
Incentives Offered



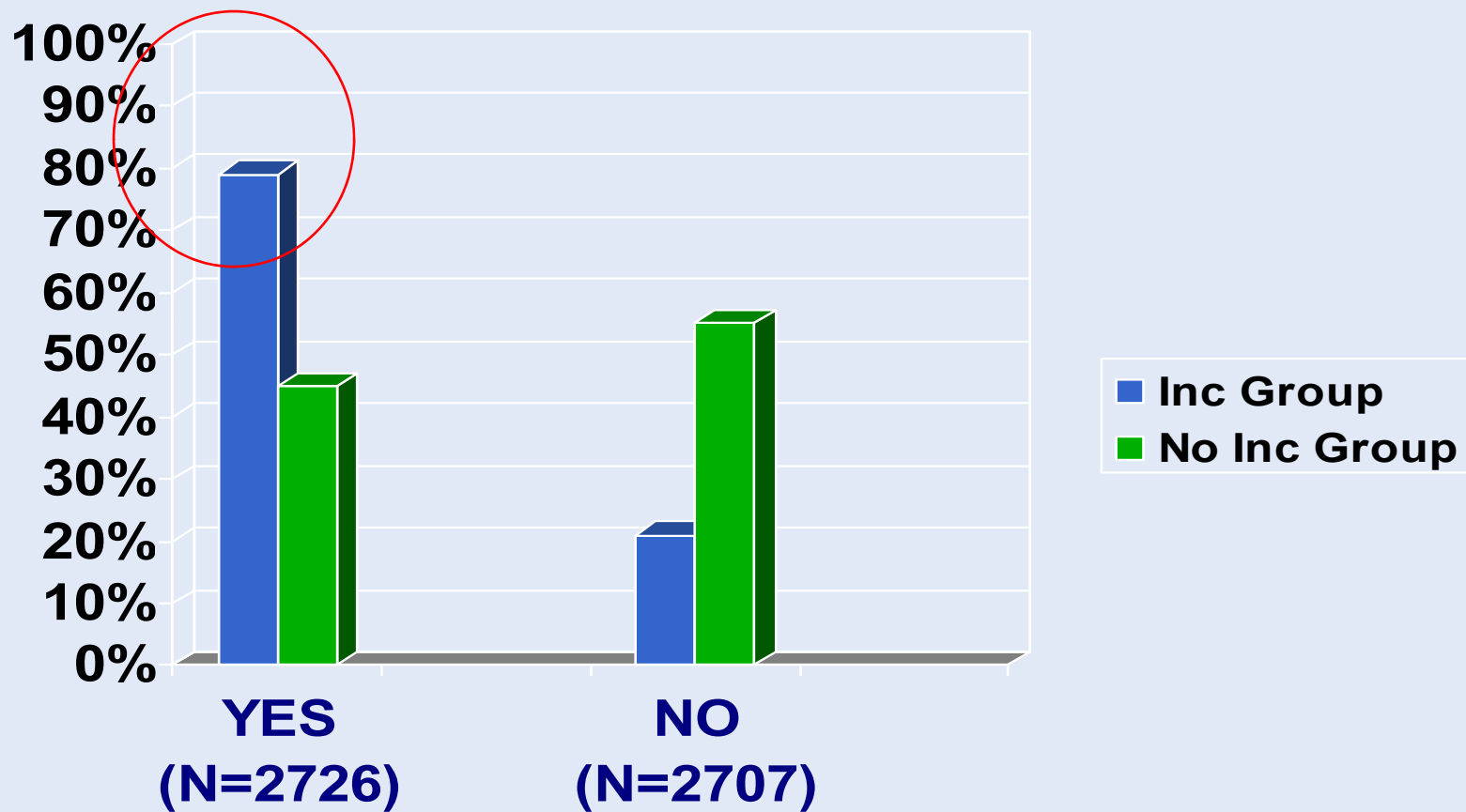
When offered



Use of Incentives and Likelihood of Completing Interview (Interviewer ranked)



Ever Resistant

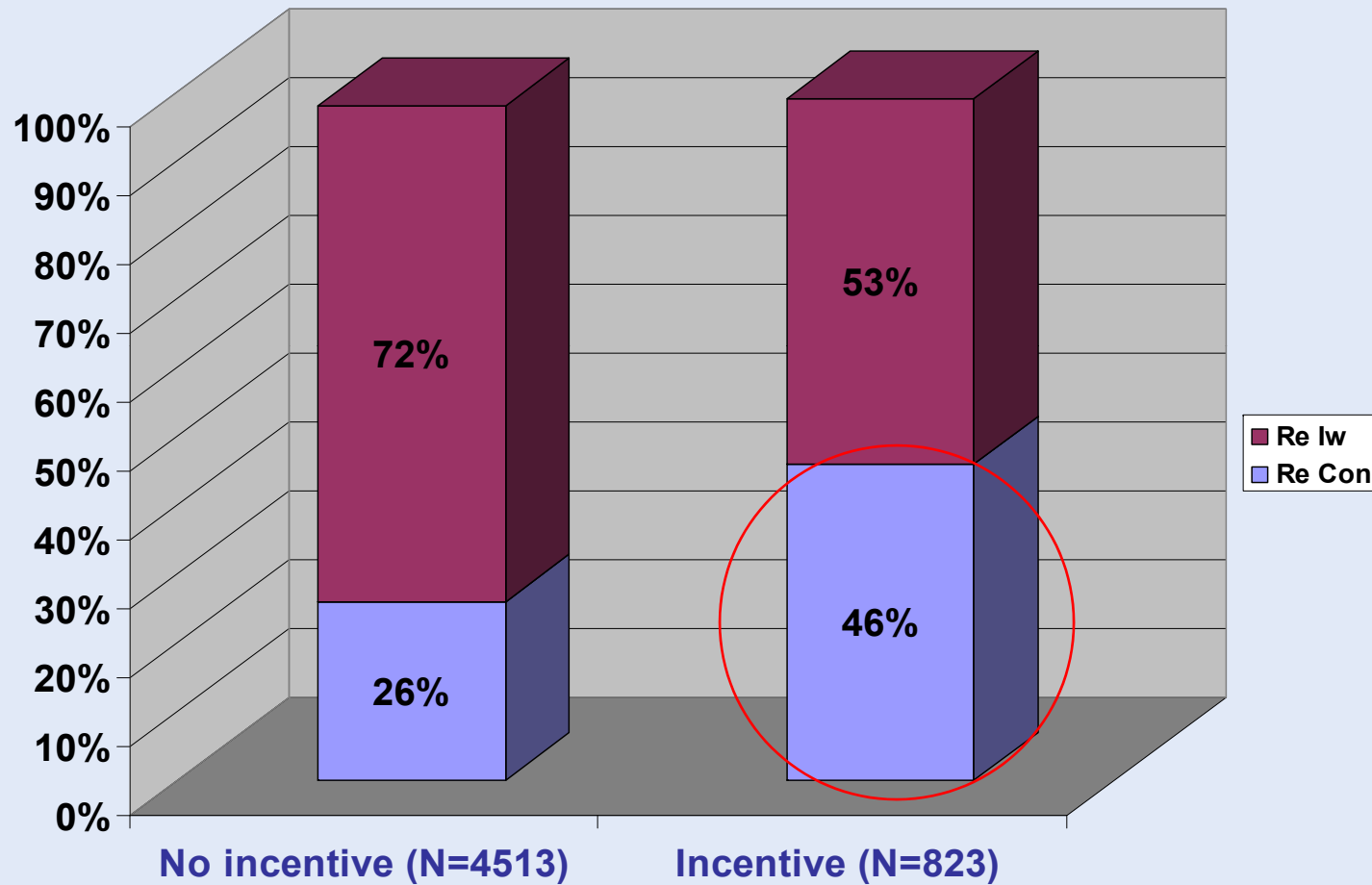


Type of Sample Remaining

- **Re-interview (those interviewed previous wave)**
 - **N= 3757**
 - **Expect 95% RR**
- **Re-Contact (those eligible previous wave but did not participate)**
 - **N= 1579**
 - **Expect 40% RR**



Interview Type



Re-Contact Interviews

- **Historically more difficult and RR much lower than Re-interviews**
- **2006 wave not meeting Re-Contact goal**
- **Other monetary experiment underway for end-game. Offer of \$100 to call in**
- **This was one more tool to use- lower cost**



2006 Results

	Goal	Actual
Re-Iw	95.0%	94.6%
Re-Con	40.0% (28.3%)	31.8%
New Spouse	73.8%	83.7%
Post-Exit	94.3%	93.6%

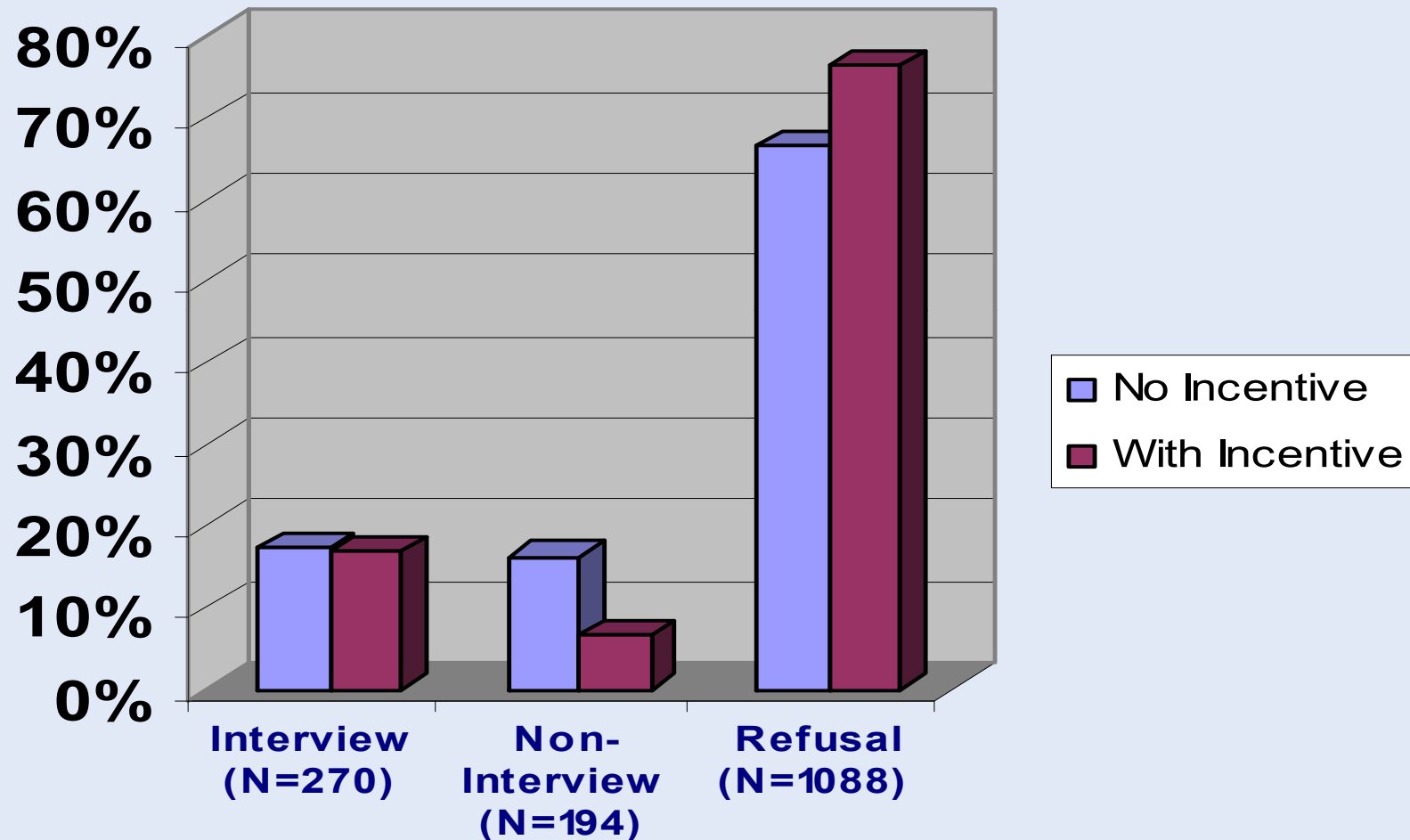


Summary and Observations

- **Not a controlled experiment so careful about making conclusions**
- **Most non-monetary incentives were offered to hardest groups-**
 - **High proportion were Re-Contacts**
 - **High proportion had lowest probability to complete ratings**
 - **High proportion had resistance flags**

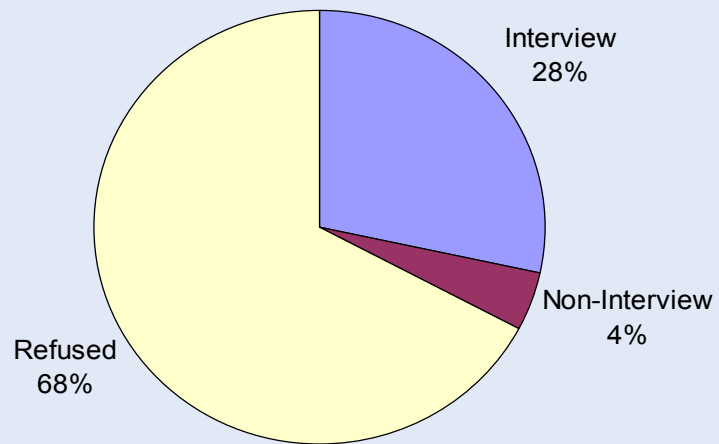


Re-Contact Final Outcomes

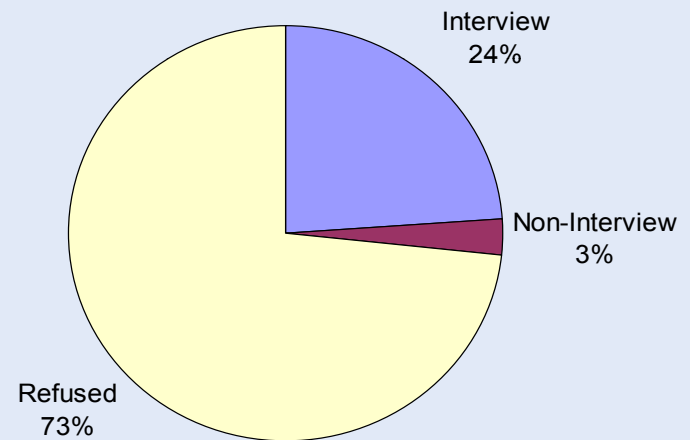


Ever Resistant- No Incentive and Incentive Final Outcome

No incentive



Incentive



Questions about Non-monetary incentives

- Do they help or hurt response rates?
- Will they help with panel retention?
- Do they give interviewers more confidence to re-approach hardest cases?



Stories from the Field Staff

- **Bringing flowers helped gain entrance to locked facility!**
- **R with Alzheimer's wanted to show interviewer the violet that she brought two years before!**
- **Helped break the ice to show up at door with gift-**



Interviewer experiences

- **When first R complained of length left a mug for the second R who was grateful and scheduled the interview**
- **Some elderly didn't want more "stuff"**
- **Since dealing with resistant cases did get rebuffed often despite these non-monetary incentives**
- **Good way to offer condolences when learn of death in R's family, arriving with a plant**



Considerations

- **Lower cost alternative to many monetary incentives**
- **Not an experiment, but could be adapted**
- **More analysis of re-contact cases**
 - **When was last participation?**
 - **How many attempts?**



Looking Ahead

- **Re-contact cases again are a challenge but important to the study (how they differ from those who do participate)**
- **Continue to develop strategies. What approach works and with what type of case?**

