

# The Implications of Offering Questionnaires in Multiple Languages

---

**Sebastian Lundmark, Ph.D.** The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg

**Cornelia Andersson, M.S.** The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg

**Björn Rönnerstrand, Ph.D.** The SOM Institute, University of Gothenburg

**Frida Sandelin, M.S.** RISE, Sweden

Working paper 1:



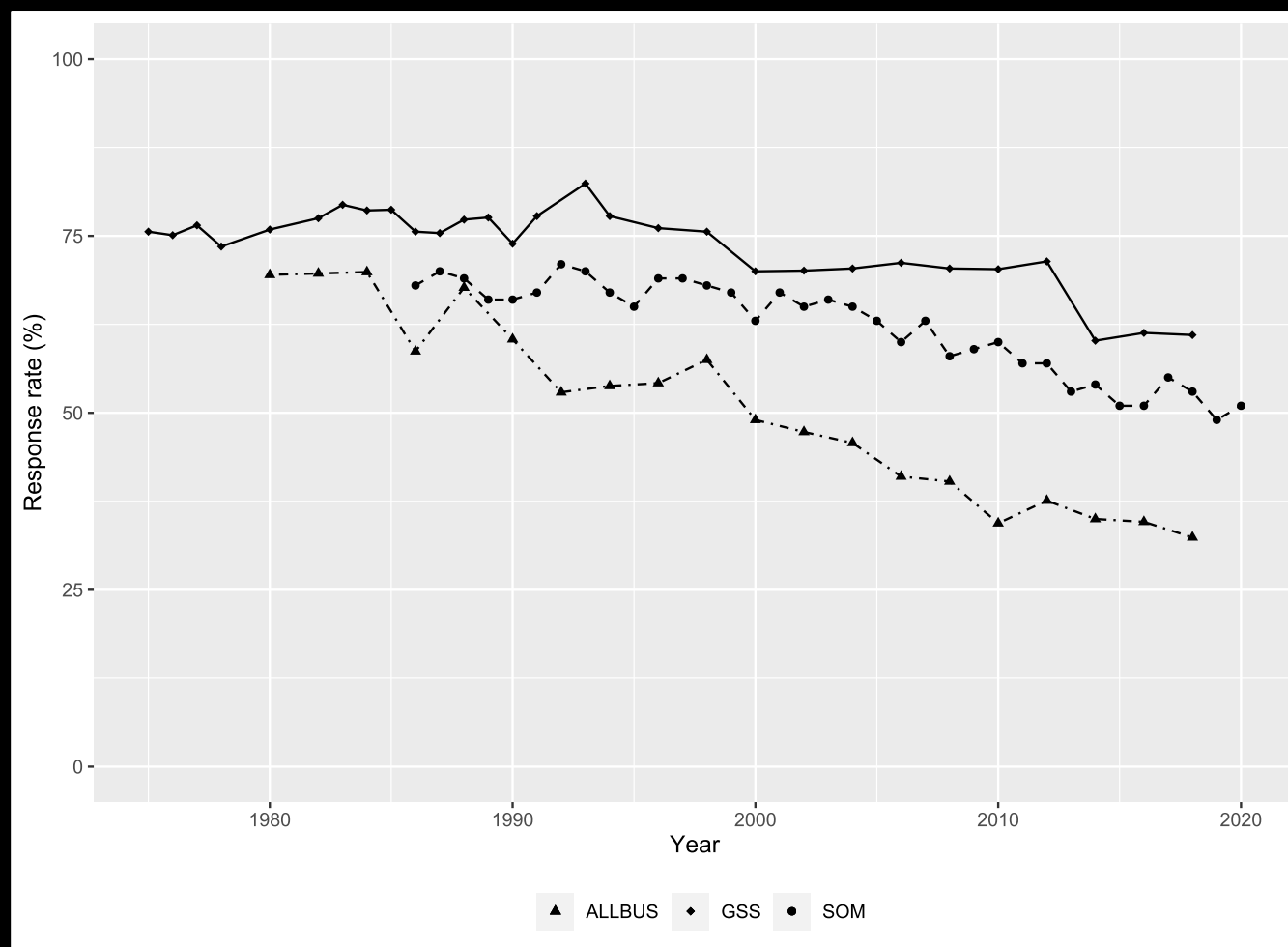
Working paper 2:



European Survey Research Association 2025 Conference

Session: Best practices for multilingual surveys

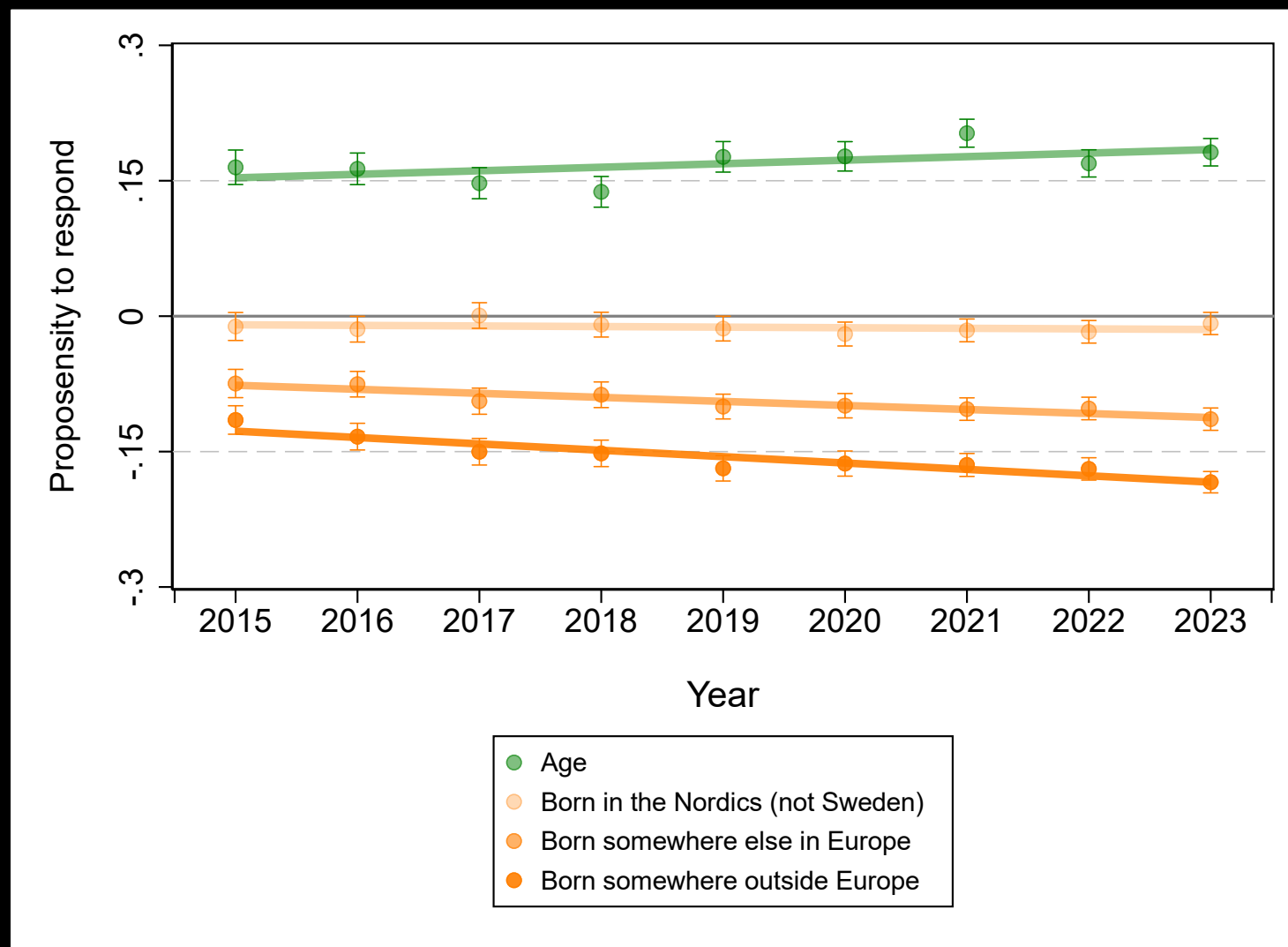
# Decreased response rates internationally



*Note.* Response rates reported in GSS (U.S.), ALLBUS (Germany), and the SOM Institute (Sweden)

# Sweden: Nonresponse have increased more rapidly for immigrants

(Lundmark & Backström, 2025)



# Decreasing the threshold for participation:

## Translating questionnaires

Can response propensities be increased by offering the questionnaire in more languages than the majority language?

# Decreasing the threshold for participation:

## Translating questionnaires

Can response propensities be increased by offering the questionnaire in more languages than the majority language?

Proportion of foreign-born individuals in Sweden doubled between 2000 and 2021:  
From 12% to 20%.

# Decreasing the threshold for participation:

## Translating questionnaires

Can response propensities be increased by offering the questionnaire in more languages than the majority language?

Proportion of foreign-born individuals in Sweden doubled between 2000 and 2021:  
From 12% to 20%.

**City of Gothenburg:** 500,000 inhabitants, where 30% are foreign-born.

# Study 1: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period

# Study 1: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period

## **Experiment:**

- 6,908 randomly assigned to be able to complete the questionnaire in one of 12 languages

- 2,092 randomly assigned to Swedish only

- One A4 FAQ in 12 languages with a link to the translated questionnaire in each physical mailing



# Study 1: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period

## Experiment:

6,908 randomly assigned to be able to complete the questionnaire in one of 12 languages

2,092 randomly assigned to Swedish only

One A4 FAQ in 12 languages with a link to the translated questionnaire in each physical mailing

Genom att svara på frågorna i undersökningen får du chans att reflektera över saker som du kanske inte alltid tänker på. Kom ihåg att det inte finns några rätt eller fel, och att alla svar är lika mycket värda. Enkäten tar ungefär en halvtimme att fylla i.

**Som tack för din medverkan får du en trisslott skickad till dig med posten. För att svara på enkäten, följ instruktionerna längst ner på sidan. Enkäten kan besvaras på ytterligare elva språk utöver svenska. Om du inte vill besvara enkäten på internet kommer en pappersenkät inom ett par veckor.**

Resultaten från undersökningen används i forskning inom många olika ämnen, och i vissa fall även som grund för politiska beslut. SOM-institutet har sedan 80-talet legat i framkant inom opinionsforskning och bidragit till den svenska samhällsdebatten.

Waxa adiga lagu doortay inaad ka qayb qaadato baaritaanka ka socota ee Machadka SOM, ee Jaamacadda Göteborg. Waa baaritaan cilmi-baaris ah oo ku saabsan bulshadeena iyo qiyamkeena ama waxa aan qiimayno. Foomka su'aalaha waxa lagaga jawaabayaa adigoo gala leenka waxaad ku geleysaa lambarka isku dhafan ee falaarta hoose. Haddii aad rabto inaad warqad kaga jawaabto, nagala soo xiriir 031-786 00 00 ama svar@som.gu.se. Si laguugu mahadnaqo ka qayb qaadashadaada, waxa guriga laguugu soo dirayaa kaarka Espresso House oo qiimahiiisu yahay 100 karoon oo boosta kuugu imanaya. Ka qayb qaadashadu waa mid gebi ahaanba ikhtiyaari ah. Macluumaad dheeraad ah ayaa laga helayaa halkan:  
[gu.se/som-institutet/somaliska](http://gu.se/som-institutet/somaliska)

شما برای اشتراک در یک نظرسنجی از طرف انستیتوت اس او ام دانشگاه یوتیبری انتخاب شده اید. این یک تحقیقات علمی در مورد جامعه و ارزشهای ما میباشد. برای جواب دادن به سوالات نظرسنجی، شما باید به لینک یا پیوند بروید و بوسیله ترکیب اعداد نان در پهلوی غیر، داخل شوید. اگر میخواهید در فورمه کاغذی به سوالات جواب بدهید، به تلفون 031-786 00 00 یا [sva@som.gu.se](mailto:sva@som.gu.se) تماس بگیرید. به عنوان تشکر از اشتراک نان، یک کارت تخفیف اسپرسو هوز Espresso House معادل ۱۰۰ کرون بوسیله پوسته به منزل نان ارسال میگردد. اشتراک ورزیدن کاملاً داوطلبانه میباشد. معلومات بیشتر در اینجا وجود دارد:  
[gu.se/som-institutet/dari](http://gu.se/som-institutet/dari)

[gu.se/som/svara](http://gu.se/som/svara)



# Study 1: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period

## Experiment:

6,908 randomly assigned to be able to complete the questionnaire in one of 12 languages

2,092 randomly assigned to Swedish only

One A4 FAQ in 12 languages with a link to the translated questionnaire in each physical mailing

Genom att svara på frågorna i undersökningen får du chans att reflektera över saker som du kanske inte alltid tänker på. Kom ihåg att det inte finns några rätt eller fel, och att alla svar är lika mycket värda. Enkäten tar ungefär en halvtimme att fylla i.

**Som tack för din medverkan får du en trisslott skickad till dig med posten. För att svara på enkäten, följ instruktionerna längst ner på sidan. Enkäten kan besvaras på ytterligare elva språk utöver svenska. Om du inte vill besvara enkäten på internet kommer en pappersenkät inom ett par veckor.**

Resultaten från undersökningen används i forskning inom många olika ämnen, och i vissa fall även som grund för politiska beslut. SOM-institutet har sedan 80-talet legat i framkant inom opinionsforskning och bidragit till den svenska samhällsdebatten.

Waxa adiga lagu doortay inaad ka qayb qaadato baaritaanka ka socota ee Machadka SOM, ee Jaamacadda Göteborg. Waa baaritaan cilmi-baaris ah oo ku saabsan bulshadeena iyo qiyamkeena ama waxa aan qiimayno. Foomka su'aalaha waxa lagaga jawaabayaa adigoo gala leenka waxaad ku geleysaa lambarka isku dhafan ee falaarta hoose. Haddii aad rabto inaad warqad kaga jawaabto, nagala soo xiriir 031-786 00 00 ama svar@som.gu.se. Si laguugu mahadnaqo ka qayb qaadashadaada, waxa guriga laguugu soo dirayaa kaarka Espresso House oo qiimahisu yahay 100 karoon oo boosta kuugu imanaya. Ka qayb qaadashadu waa mid gebi ahaanba ikhtiyaari ah. Macluumaad dheeraad ah ayaa laga helayaa halkan:  
[gu.se/som-institutet/somaliska](http://gu.se/som-institutet/somaliska)

شما برای اشتراک در یک نظرسنجی از طرف انستیتوت اس او ام دانشگاه یوتیپوری انتخاب شده اید. این یک تحقیقات علمی در مورد جامعه و ارزشهای ما میباشد. برای جواب دادن به سوالات نظرسنجی، شما باید به لینک یا پیوند بروید و بوسیله ترکیب اعداد نان در پهلوی غیر، داخل شوید. اگر میخواهید در فورمه کاغذی به سوالات جواب بدهید، به تلفون 031-786 00 00 یا [svar@som.gu.se](mailto:svar@som.gu.se) تماس بگیرید. به عنوان تشکر از اشتراک نان، یک کارت تخفیف اسپرسو هوز Espresso House معادل ۱۰۰ کرون بوسیله پوسته به منزل نان ارسال میگردد. اشتراک ورزیدن کاملاً داوطلبانه میباشد. معلومات بیشتر در اینجا وجود دارد:  
[gu.se/som-institutet/dari](http://gu.se/som-institutet/dari)

[gu.se/som/svara](http://gu.se/som/svara)



The first screen of the online questionnaire prompted which language to use



The choices of languages were based on which countries the citizens of Gothenburg were born in, which languages are spoken in those countries and what the response rate was in previous questionnaires

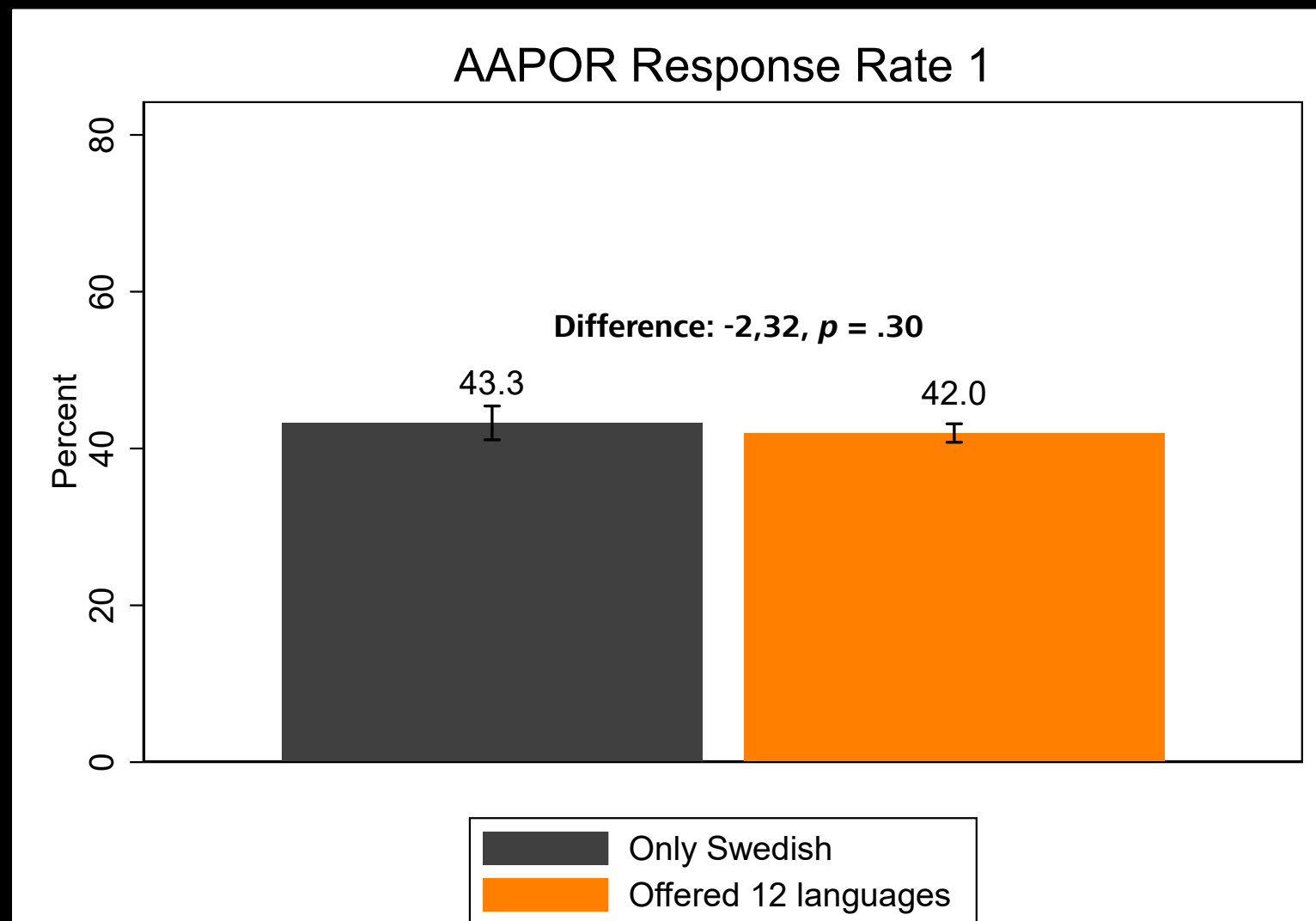
## 12 languages

1. Swedish
2. English
3. Persian
4. Dari
5. Arabic
6. Kurmanji
7. Sorani
8. Somali
9. Bosnian/Serbian/Croatian
10. Polish
11. Turkish
12. Tigrinya

# Study 1 - Results



# Response Rates (AAPOR RR1)

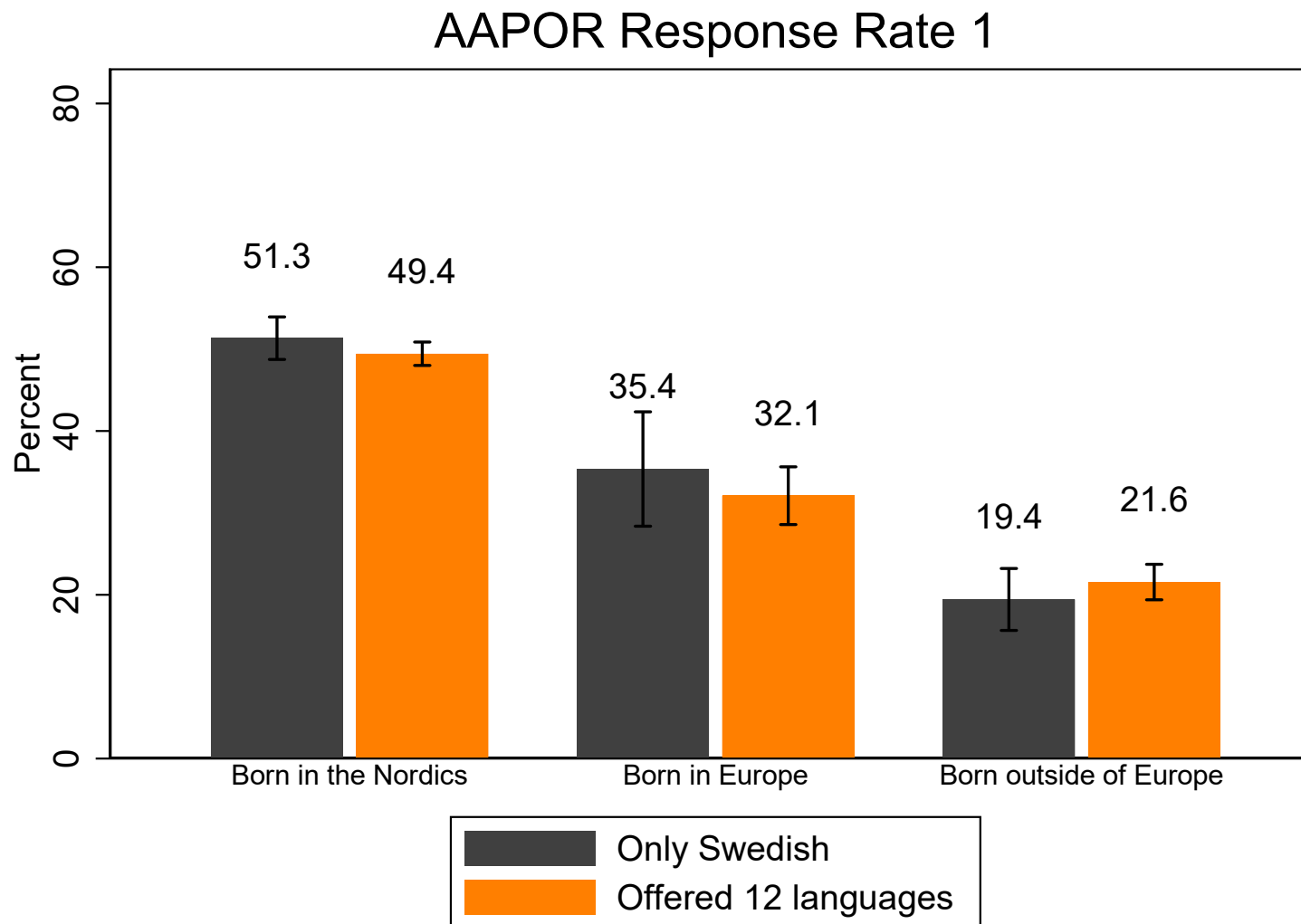


# What languages did respondents choose?

Language picked	Observations	Country of birth with frequency of more than 0
English	104	Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Philippines, France, Ghana, Greece, India, Iran, Italy, Japan, Canada, China, Kosovo, México, Montenegro, Nigeria, Macedonia, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Somalia, Spain, UK, South Africa, South Korea, Syria, Czech Republic, Turkey, Germany, Uganda, Ukraine, USA
Arabic	37	Egypt, Eritrea, United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia
Persian	14	Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran
Polish	9	Poland
Bosnian/Serb/Croat	6	Bosnia-Herzegovina, Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Serbia, Serbia-Montenegro
Turkish	4	Turkiye
Somali	3	Somalia
Sorani	3	Iraq
Dari	0	
Kurmanji	0	
Tigrinya	0	
<b>Total</b>	<b>180 (2.6 %)</b>	



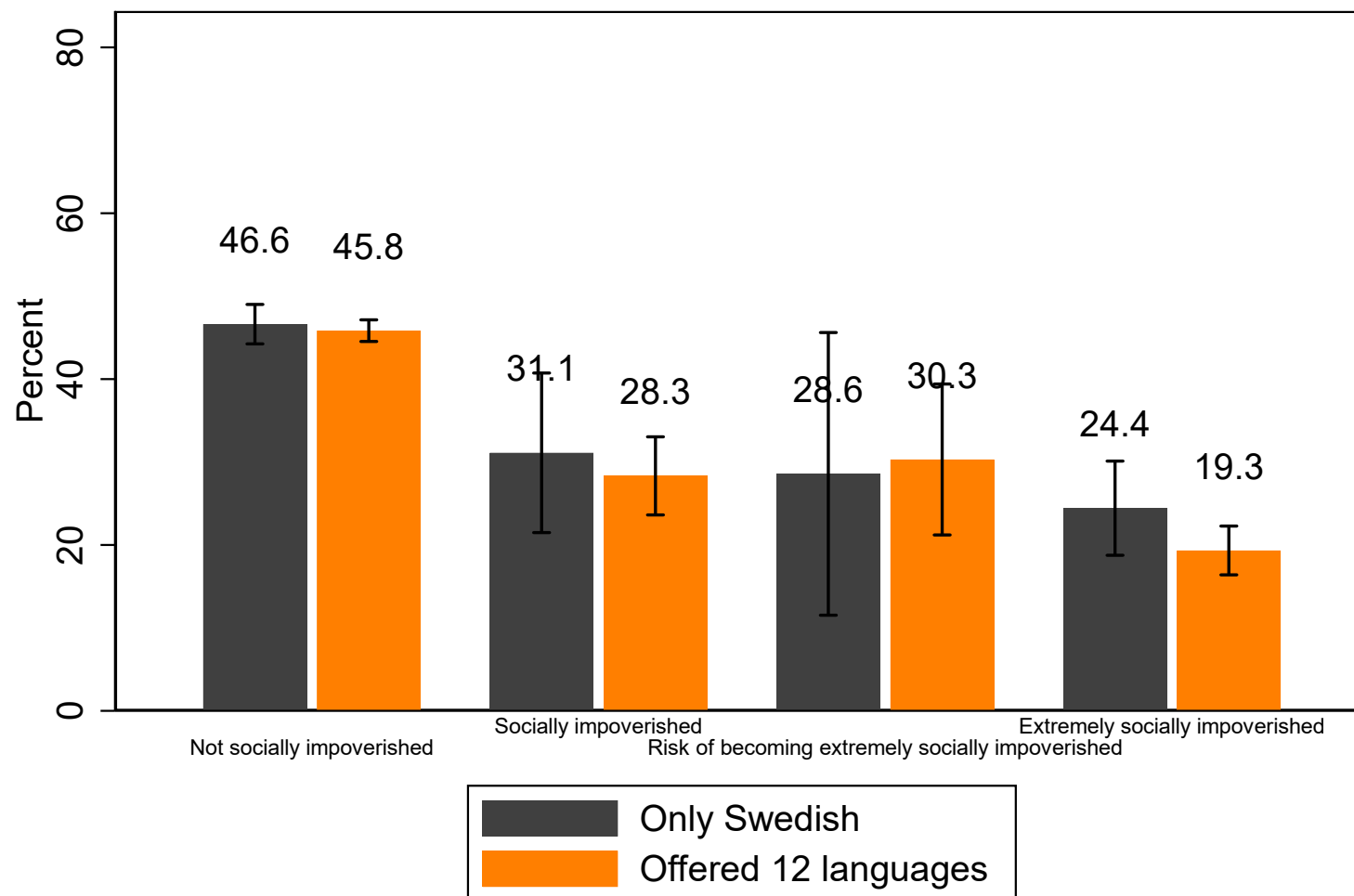
# Country of Birth





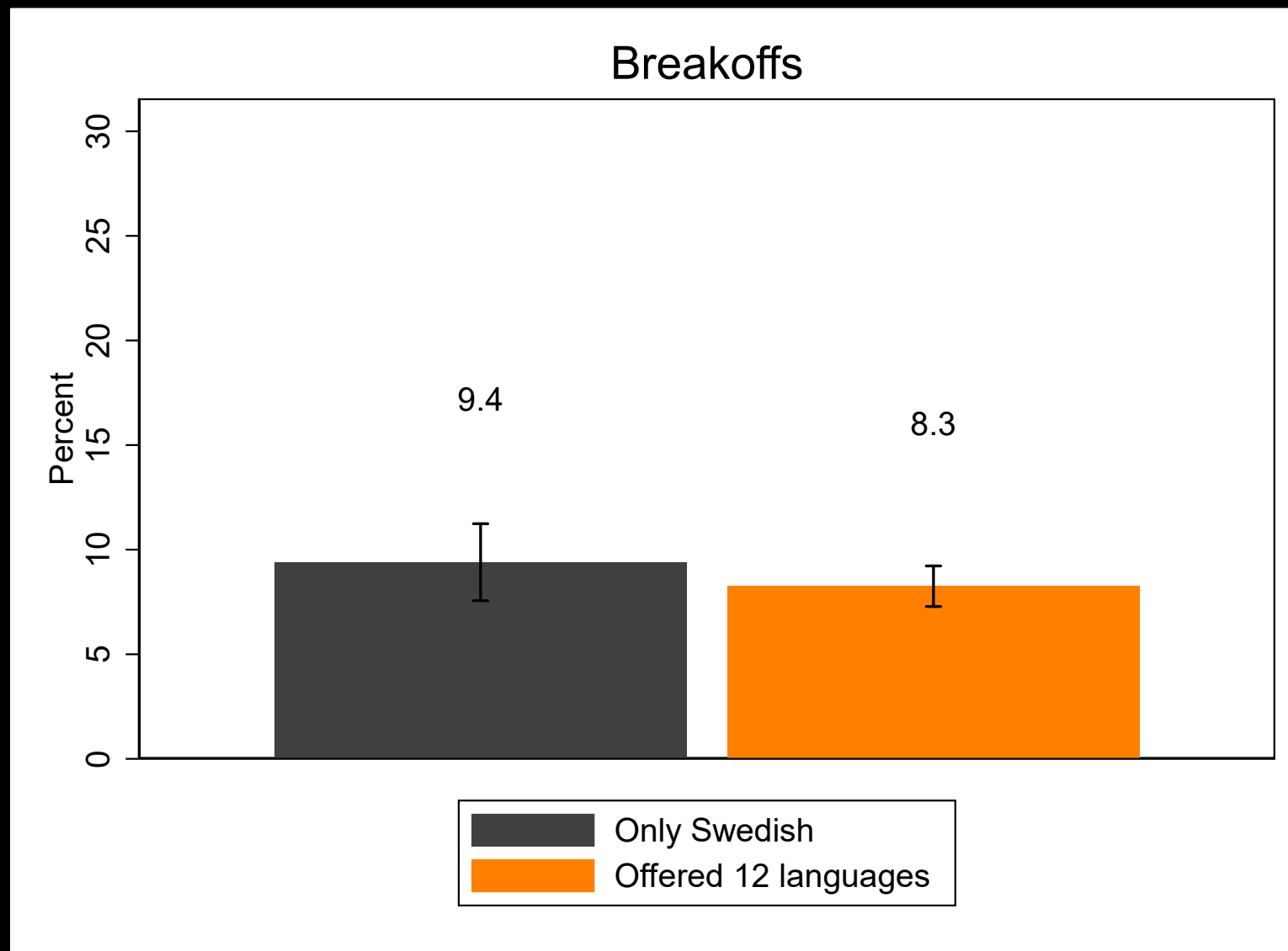
# Socially impoverished neighborhood

AAPOR Response Rate 1





# Started but did not complete the questionnaire



# Nonresponse bias

Experiment groups	<i>R indicators</i>
Twelve languages offered	0.70
Only Swedish offered	0.64



## Study 2

**Fewer languages offered:  
Swedish, English, and Arabic**

## Study 2

**Fewer languages: Swedish, English, and Arabic**

**And, all mailings and texts included translated text**

# Study 2: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period.

# Study 2: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period.

## **Experiment:**

**Born in Sweden:** 2 out of 9 randomly assigned to get the option of translated questionnaires

**Not born in Sweden:** 7 out of 9 randomly assigned to get the option of translated questionnaire

# Study 2: Procedure

Mixed mode (paper-and-pencil and online)

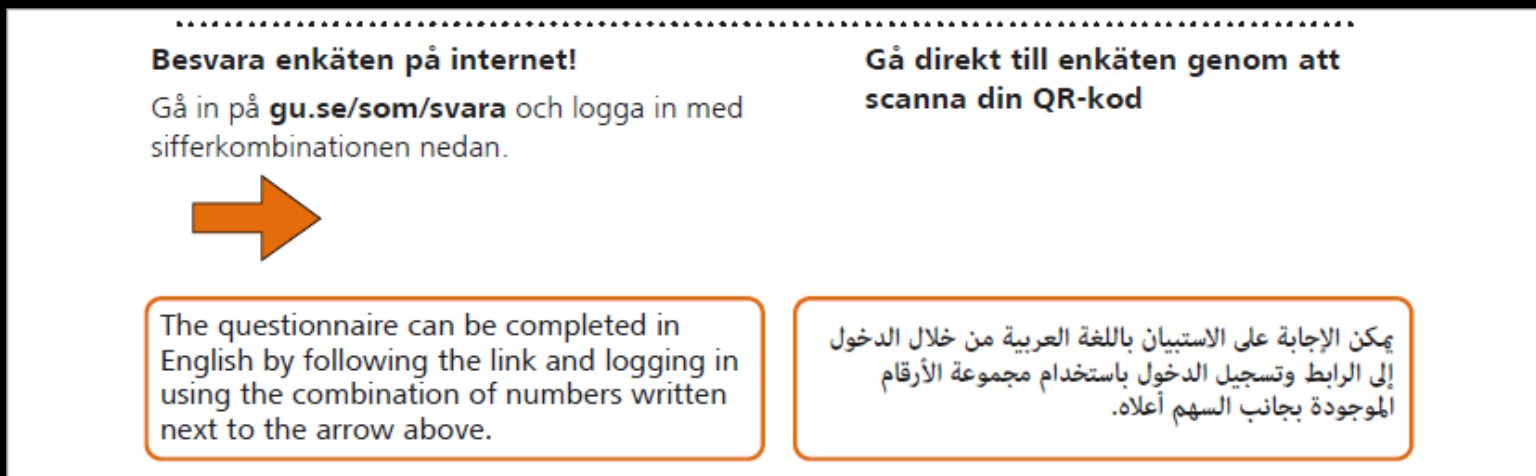
Prenotification, 30 SEK lottery incentive, five mailed invitations, four SMS, 100 days field period.

## Experiment:

**Born in Sweden:** 2 out of 9 randomly assigned to get the option of translated questionnaires

**Not born in Sweden:** 7 out of 9 randomly assigned to get the option of translated questionnaire

All information described in English and Arabic on how to access the questionnaire



The screenshot shows a white rectangular box with a black border. At the top, there are two columns of text. The left column is in Swedish and the right column is in Arabic. Below the Swedish text is a large orange arrow pointing right. Below the arrow is a rounded rectangular box containing English text. Below the Arabic text is another rounded rectangular box containing Arabic text.

**Besvara enkäten på internet!**  
Gå in på [gu.se/som/svara](https://gu.se/som/svara) och logga in med sifferkombinationen nedan.

**Gå direkt till enkäten genom att scanna din QR-kod**

The questionnaire can be completed in English by following the link and logging in using the combination of numbers written next to the arrow above.

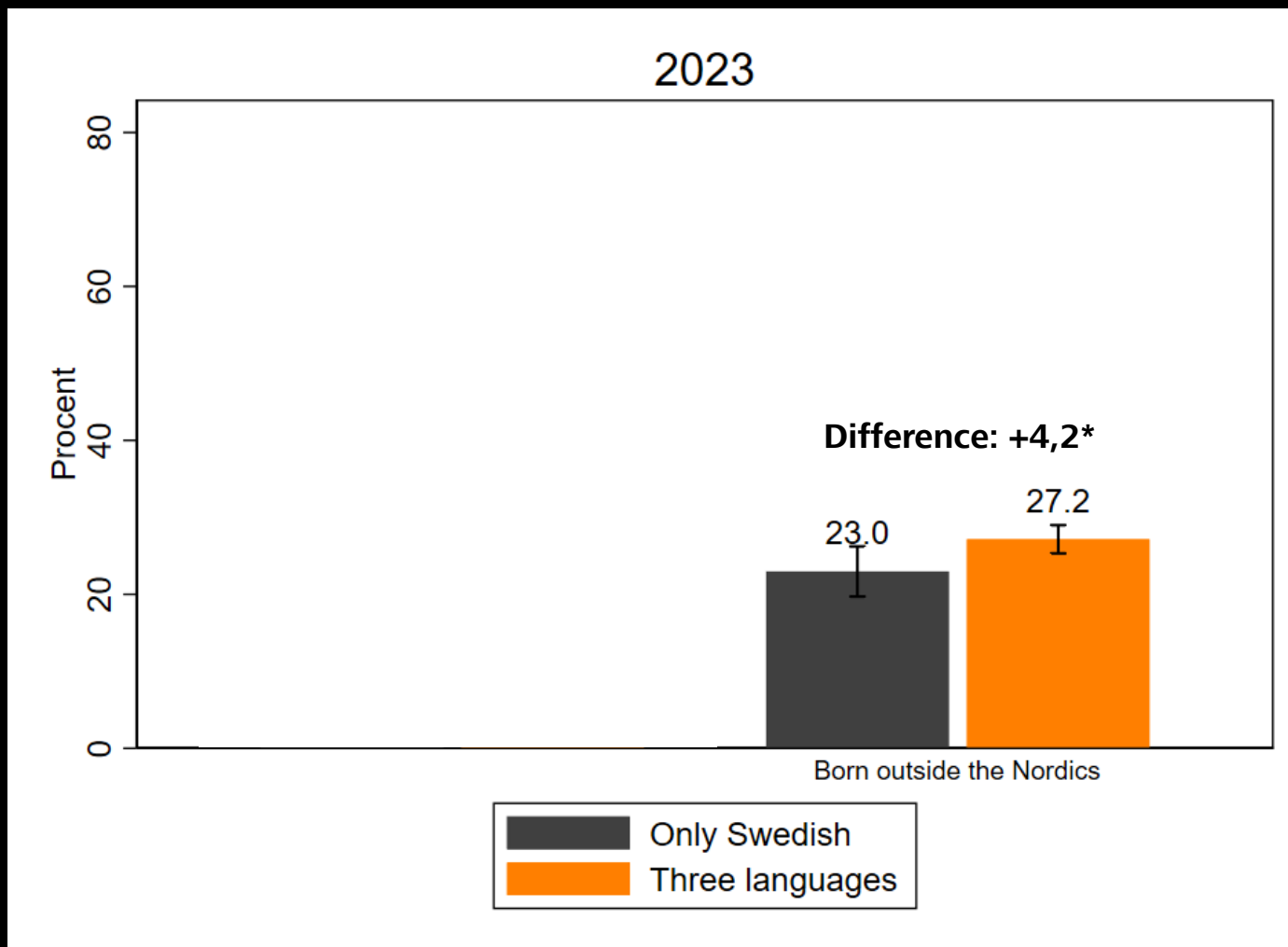
يمكن الإجابة على الاستبيان باللغة العربية من خلال الدخول إلى الرابط وتسجيل الدخول باستخدام مجموعة الأرقام الموجودة بجانب السهم أعلاه.

The first screen of the online questionnaire prompted which language to use.

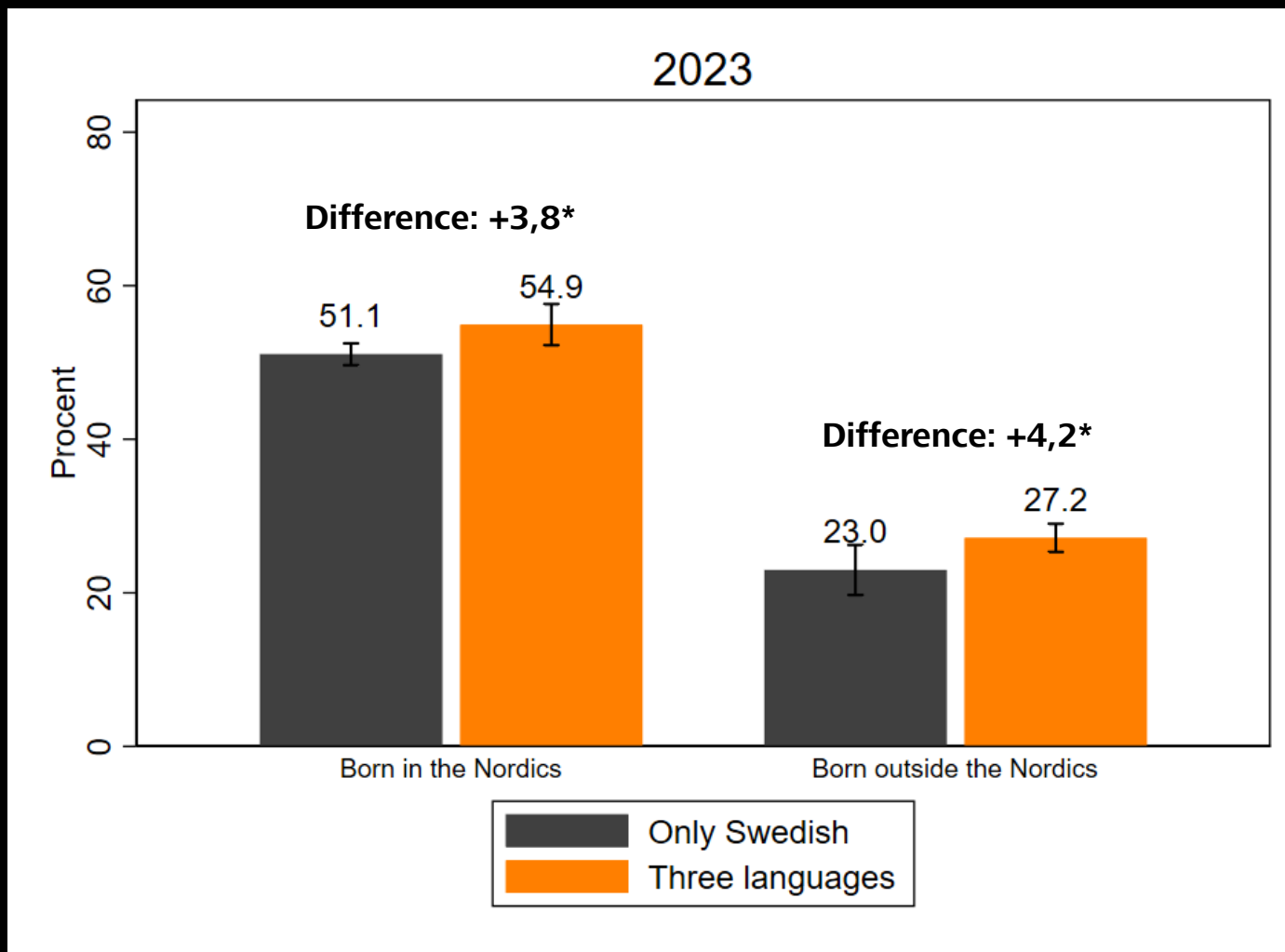
# Study 2 - Results



## Study 2: Response Rates (RR1)



## Study 2: Response Rates (RR1)



## Study 2: Chosen languages (completed questionnaires only)

Language	Antal	Country of birth (frequency greater than 0)
English	86	India (16), Brazil (7), China (5), Turkiye (4), France (4), Iran (4), Italy (4), Poland (4), Greece (3), Great Britain (3), Germany (3), Phillipines (2), Ethiopia (2), Lithuania (2), Mexico (2), The Netherlands (2), Spain (2), Australia (1), Bangladesh (1), Colombia (1), Japan (1), Canada (1), Croatia (1), Northern Macedonia (1), Nigeria (1), Pakistan (1), Portugal (1), Russia (1), Switzerland (1), Serbia (1), South Africa (1), Syria (1), USA (1), Venezuela (1)
Arabic	13	Iraq (5), Syria (4), Eritrea (1), Lebanon (1), Libya (1), Saudi Arabia (1)

## Study 2: Nonresponse bias


Experiment groups	<i>R indicators</i>
Three languages offered	0.71
Only Swedish offered	0.70



What differed more than the fewer languages in 2022 and 2023?

# What differed more than the fewer languages in 2022 and 2023?

First screen of questionnaire 2022



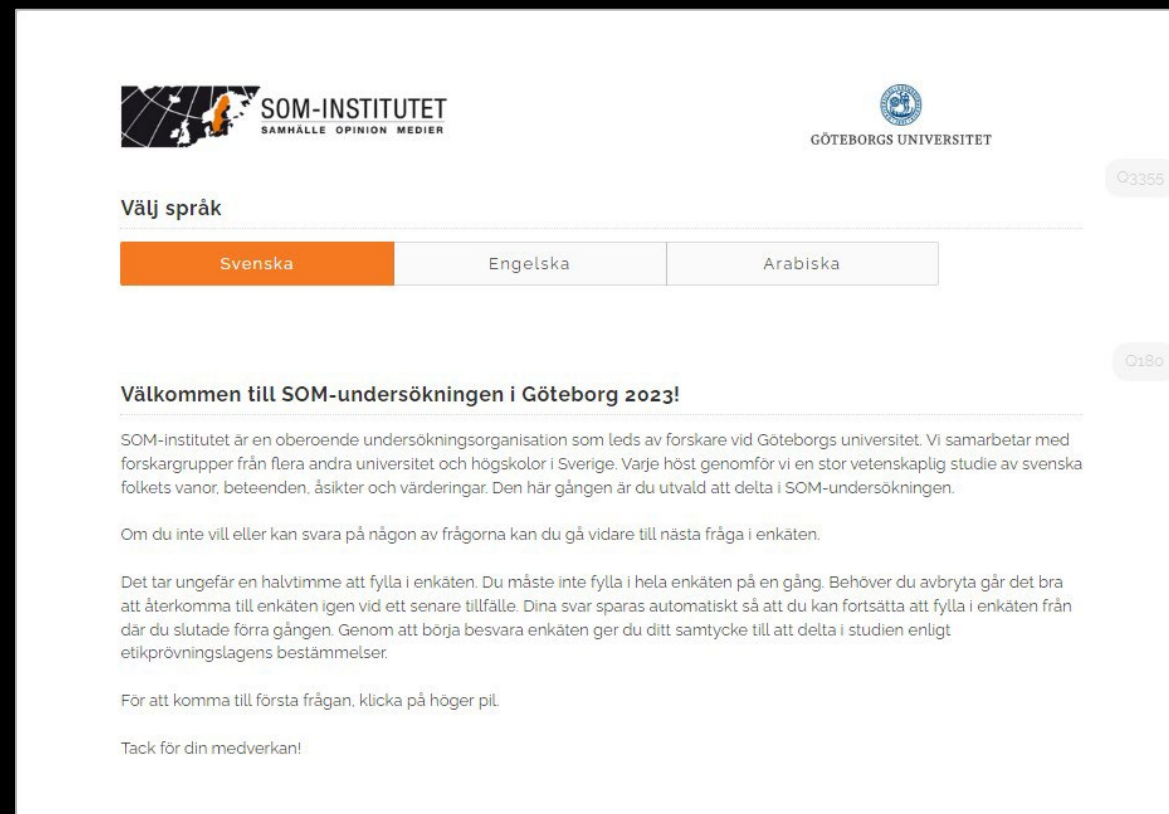
**SOM-INSTITUTET**  
SAMHÄLLE OPINION MEDIER

**GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET**

Välj språk

Svenska
Engelska
Arabiska
Bosniska-kroatiska-serbiska
Dari
Kurmanji
Persiska
Polska
Somaliska
Sorani
Tigrinja
Turkiska

First screen of questionnaire 2023



**SOM-INSTITUTET**  
SAMHÄLLE OPINION MEDIER

**GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET**

Välj språk

Svenska	Engelska	Arabiska
---------	----------	----------

**Välkommen till SOM-undersökningen i Göteborg 2023!**

SOM-institutet är en oberoende undersökningsorganisation som leds av forskare vid Göteborgs universitet. Vi samarbetar med forskargrupper från flera andra universitet och högskolor i Sverige. Varje höst genomför vi en stor vetenskaplig studie av svenska folkets vanor, beteenden, åsikter och värderingar. Den här gången är du utvald att delta i SOM-undersökningen.

Om du inte vill eller kan svara på någon av frågorna kan du gå vidare till nästa fråga i enkäten.

Det tar ungefär en halvtimme att fylla i enkäten. Du måste inte fylla i hela enkäten på en gång. Behöver du avbryta går det bra att återkomma till enkäten igen vid ett senare tillfälle. Dina svar sparas automatiskt så att du kan fortsätta att fylla i enkäten från där du slutade förra gången. Genom att börja besvara enkäten ger du ditt samtycke till att delta i studien enligt etikprövningslagens bestämmelser.

För att komma till första frågan, klicka på höger pil.

Tack för din medverkan!



## Study 3

# Direct Replication of Study 2

## Study 3 – Results

Of course it will replicate, right?





**SOM INSTITUTE**  
SOCIETY OPINION MEDIA

**It did not!**

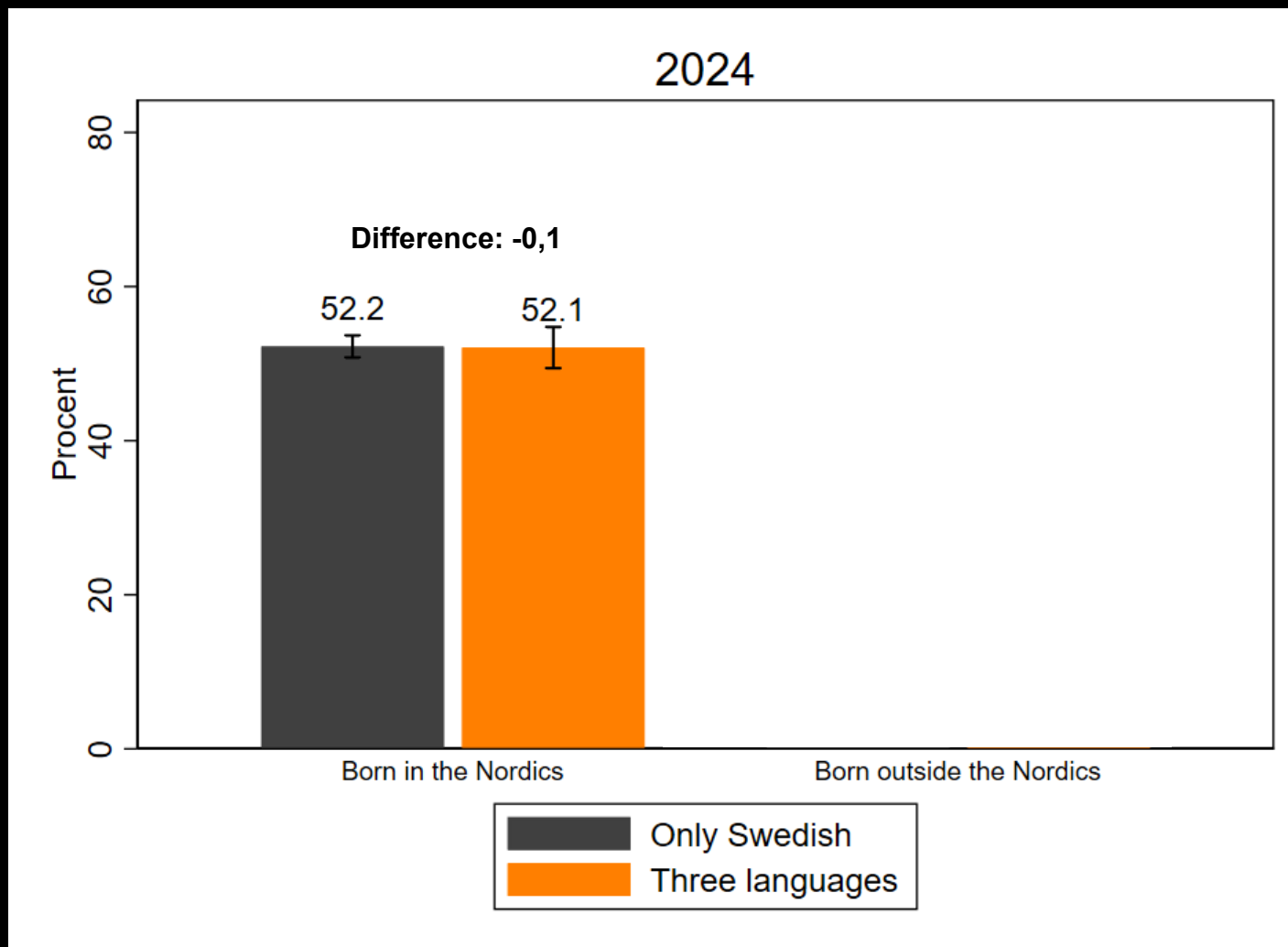


UNIVERSITY OF  
GOTHENBURG



# It did not!

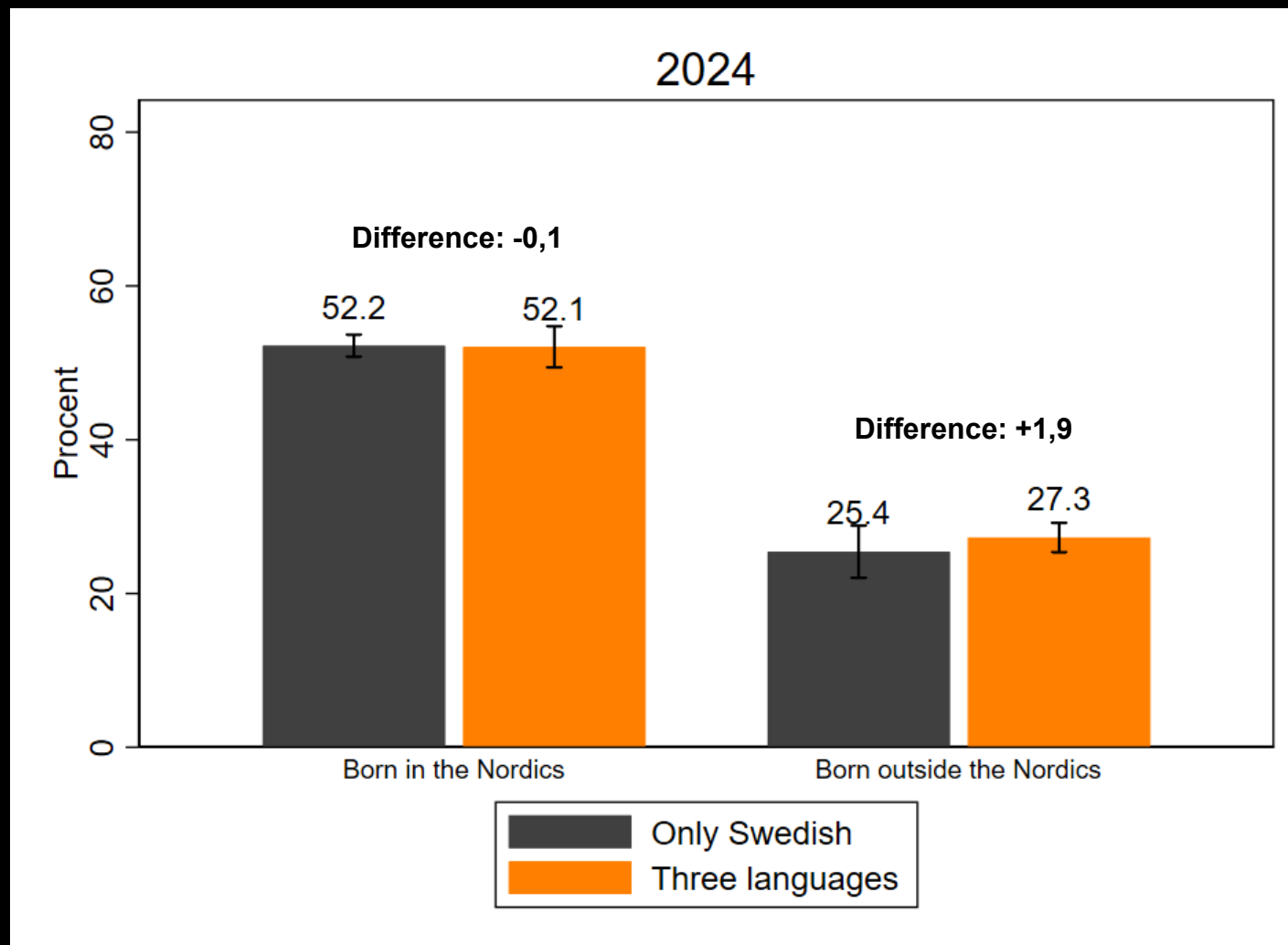
## Study 3: Response Rates (RR1)





# It did not!

## Study 3: Response Rates (RR1)



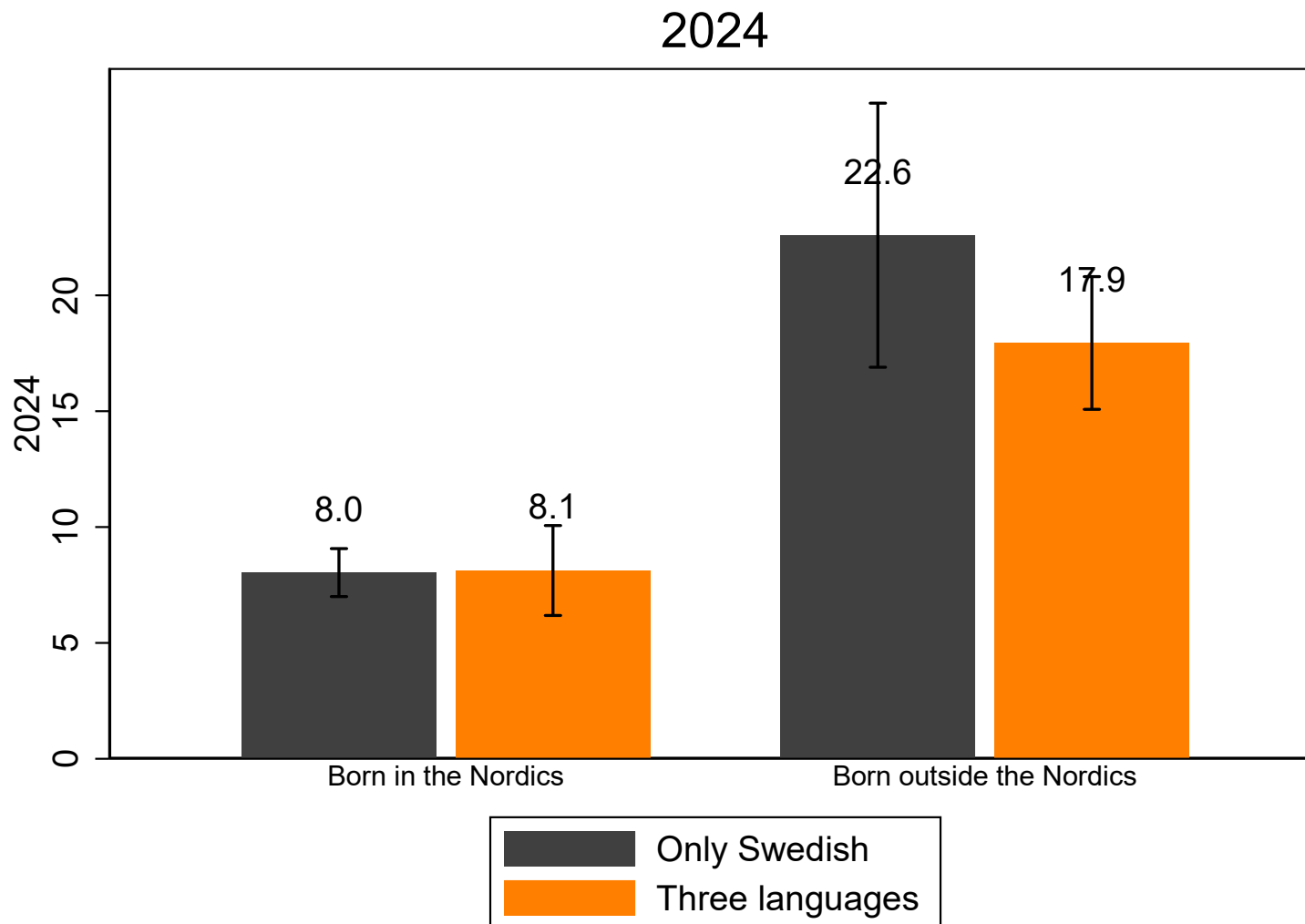
## Study 3: Chosen languages (completed questionnaires only)

Language	Antal	Country of birth (frequency greater than 0)
English	86	India (12), Germany (9), China (7), Brazil (6), Great Britain (5), Iran (4), Bangladesh (3), Greece (3), Pakistan (3), USA (3), France (2), Malaysia (2), Mexico (2), Portugal (2), Spain (2), Ukraine (2), Belarus (1), Belgium (1), Bulgaria (1), Ethiopia (1), Indonesia (1), Italy (1), Lithuania (1), The Netherlands (1), North Macedonia (1), Peru (1), Poland (1), Russia (1), Romania (1), Switzerland (1), Sri Lanka (1), Sweden (1), South Yemen (1), Trinidad & Tobago (1), Uganda (1), Uzbekistan (1), Vietnam (1)
Arabic	13	Syria (21), Iraq (7), Morocco (2), United Arab Emirates (1), Sudan (1), The West Bank (1)

# Study 3: Nonresponse bias

Experiment groups	<i>R indicators</i>
Three languages offered	0.70
Only Swedish offered	0.70

# Study 3: Started but did not complete the questionnaire





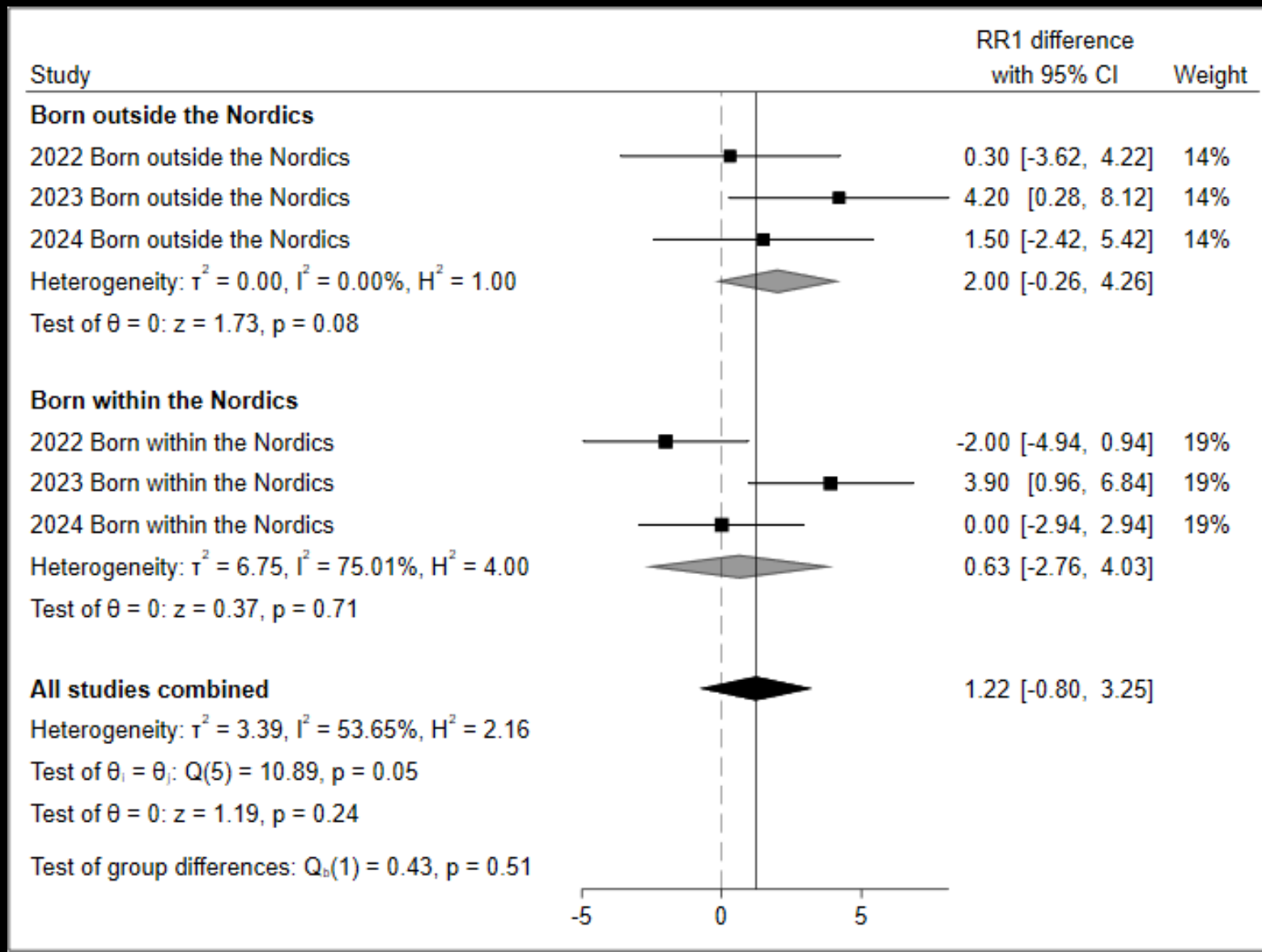
**SOM INSTITUTE**  
SOCIETY OPINION MEDIA



# Meta-analytic Regression



# Meta-analytic Regression





# Conclusions

Translating the invitation materials and the paper-and-pencil and online questionnaires does not increase response rates in Swedish mixed-mode surveys.

Translating surveys does not decrease nonresponse bias in Swedish mixed-mode surveys.

Perhaps decreasing language proficiency thresholds requires other thresholds to also be lowered before translation can increase response propensities?

**European Survey Research Association**  
July 14 – 18, Utrecht, The Netherlands  
2025

**The Implications of Offering  
Questionnaires  
in Multiple Languages**

Working paper 1:



Sebastian Lundmark  
Cornelia Andersson  
Björn Rönnerstrand  
Frida Sandelin

**Contact: [sebastian.lundmark@som.gu.se](mailto:sebastian.lundmark@som.gu.se)**

Working paper 2:



# Resources

## Notes on Survey Methodology at the SOM Institute:

<https://www.gu.se/en/som-institute/publications/research-on-survey-methodology>

## Preregistrations for the three studies:

Study 1: [https://osf.io/p6vky/?view\\_only=135f12e530cd4600b33074a24e9e3366](https://osf.io/p6vky/?view_only=135f12e530cd4600b33074a24e9e3366)

Study 2: [https://osf.io/gv4d3/?view\\_only=e0352ebf269d43d9ae48603212c6a4ec](https://osf.io/gv4d3/?view_only=e0352ebf269d43d9ae48603212c6a4ec)

Study 3: [https://osf.io/79b8z/?view\\_only=ab4f2079f0314f5c91cb367eeeb863fd](https://osf.io/79b8z/?view_only=ab4f2079f0314f5c91cb367eeeb863fd)