

REDISCOVERING THE CIVIC AND ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES IN PUBLIC POLICY

Policy Briefings Number 1

Title: How to Get Those Recycling Boxes Out: A Randomised Controlled Trial of a Door to Door Recycling Service

Brief Description of the Project:

- A randomised controlled trial (RCT) in partnership with EMERGE, a social enterprise organisation which delivers a weekly kerbside recycling service in Trafford. This is the first RCT to examine the impact of a recycling canvassing campaign over time.
- Recycling participation rates for 6580 households were measured by observing bin set out rates over a three week period.
- Half of the streets in the area were randomly assigned to be canvassed. Half of the streets were placed in a control group and received no special attention.
- All households in the canvass group were visited by canvassers who were trained to promote and encourage recycling.
- Recycling participation rates for all households were measured after the canvassing campaign and then again three months later to see if the intervention had been effective in raising participation rates.

Key Findings:

- Recycling rates overall were lower in the more deprived areas
- A door-to-door canvassing campaign can raise recycling in the short term by 5 percentage points, compared to a control group, an effect size of 10% although the effect drops to 2% three months later.

- The canvassing campaign was more successful in the poorer areas than it was in the less deprived areas.
- The canvassing campaign was particularly successful in areas with a large ethnic minority population.
- Canvassing had less impact on streets where recycling rates were already very high
- The canvassing campaign cost £24.06 for each additional household that started recycling.

Policy Relevance and Implications:

- A canvassing campaign can successfully raise participation in a kerbside recycling scheme by 10%.
- The effect is still there three months later, but is reduced to 4%. This might suggest that canvassing and other promotional campaigns be repeated regularly to reinforce the recycling message.
- Canvassing campaigns are likely to be most successful if targeted in:
 - streets with low baseline recycling rates, or
 - relatively deprived areas, or
 - areas of high population transience

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