

Personality Traits And Participation In An Online Access Panel

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Introduction

- Some evidence that personality traits actually affect survey participation behavior, but empirical results appear mixed (presumably because of heterogeneous research designs).
- Rogelberg et al. (2003): Agreeableness and conscientiousness were negatively related to organizational survey participation.
- Marcus & Schütz (2005): Nonrespondents less agreeable and less open to experience self-presentation on personal homepages (compared to respondents); extraversion and openness to experience positively related to participate in a follow-up study.

Introduction (cont.)

- Bosnjak, Marcus & Schütz (in prep.):
Offering participation in a lottery attracted persons with higher scores on openness to experience and neuroticism compared with a no incentive condition. Shorter surveys and those with a highly salient topic led to higher scores on openness to experience and agreeableness.

Research Question

- **Exploring the effect of individual difference measures varying in their degree of abstraction on survey participation behavior patterns.**
- Highly aggregated measures: Big Five.
- Mid-level trait (narrower in scope): Need for Cognition, reflecting the degree of dispositional cognitive curiosity, should be positively related to response.
- Other traits assessed (not elaborated upon in this contribution): Need to Evaluate, Impulsiveness, Reciprocity Norm, and Optimism.

Participation patterns: Definitions

- Starting:
Logged on to the survey
- Complete Response:
All questions were answered.
- Item-Nonresponse:
All questions were displayed, but at least one was not answered.
- Drop-Out:
Survey process was terminated (before reaching the end of the survey).

Method

- N=1217 participants were screened for membership in the online survey panel by agency Puls, Croatia
 - 57% (839) were recruited through Web advertisements
 - 43% (631) through probabilistic RDD or area samples
- The screener included questions on demographic characteristics, Internet use, and personality characteristics, including
 - Big Five traits: 5-item scale by Rammstedt et al, 2004; $r_{tt}=.71-.78$; $r(5\text{-item BF}, 60\text{-item NEO-FFI})=.60 - .80$
 - Need for Cognition: 5 highest loading items from the 18-item scale by Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984

Demographic characteristics of the panel members

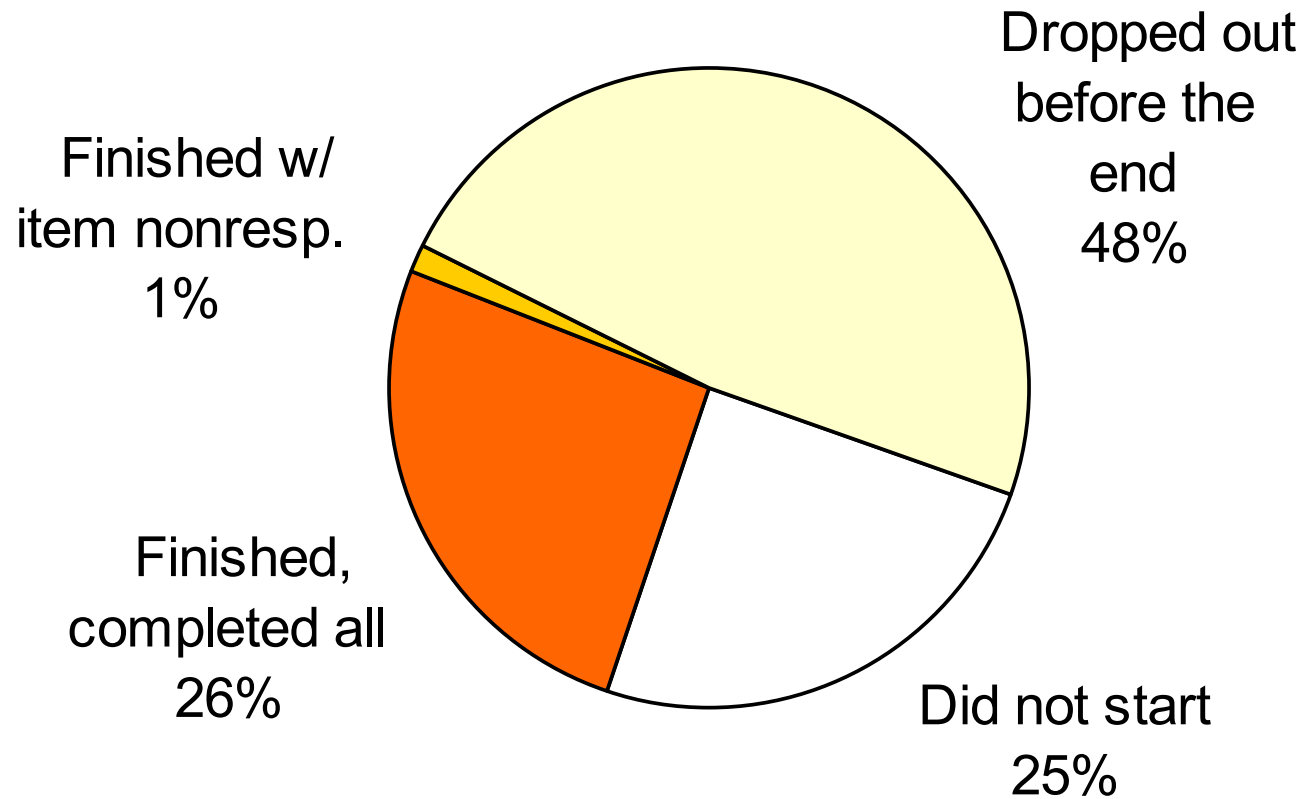
	Recruitment		Total	Sig.
	Through probabilistic field studies	Self recruited through Web ads		
Gender				
Male	56%	54%	55%	$\chi^2(1)=0.48$, n.s.
Female	44%	46%	45%	
Age				
18-29	42%	63%	54%	$\chi^2(2)=74.46$, $p<.01$
30-39	28%	25%	26%	
40+ (max. 69)	30%	12%	20%	
Education				
No college	43%	48%	45%	$\chi^2(1)=2.96$, $p=.09$
College	57%	52%	55%	
Total	100%	100%	100%	

- Self-recruited members younger and somewhat less educated

Method (cont.)

- All members were invited to participate in a short survey 1-2 months later
 - Topic: Internet banking and media use
 - Length: 10-13 questions; median = 3.4 minutes for the longest version
 - No incentives

Internet banking study – participation patterns

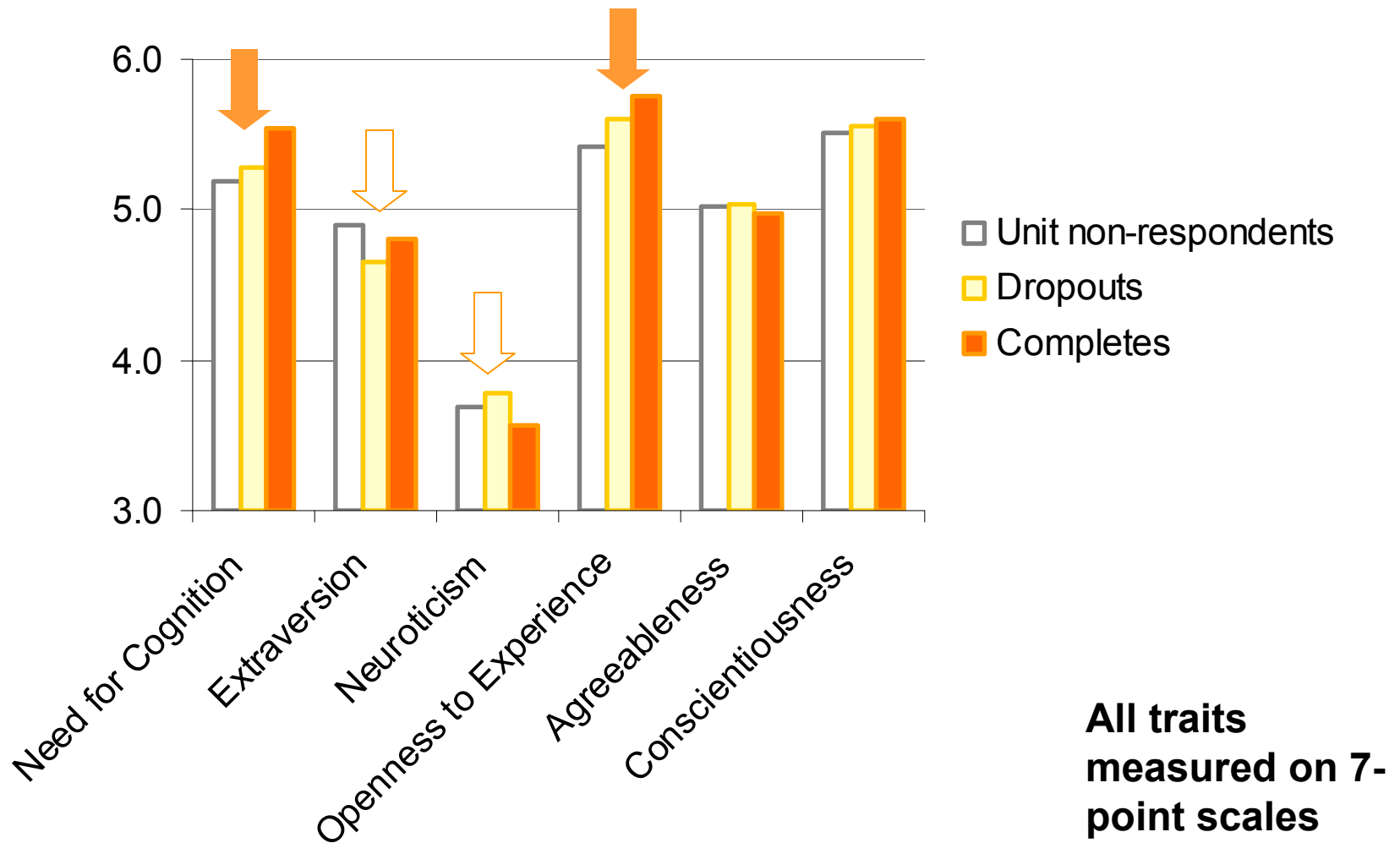


Internet banking study – participation patterns

- No significant differences in participation by recruitment method

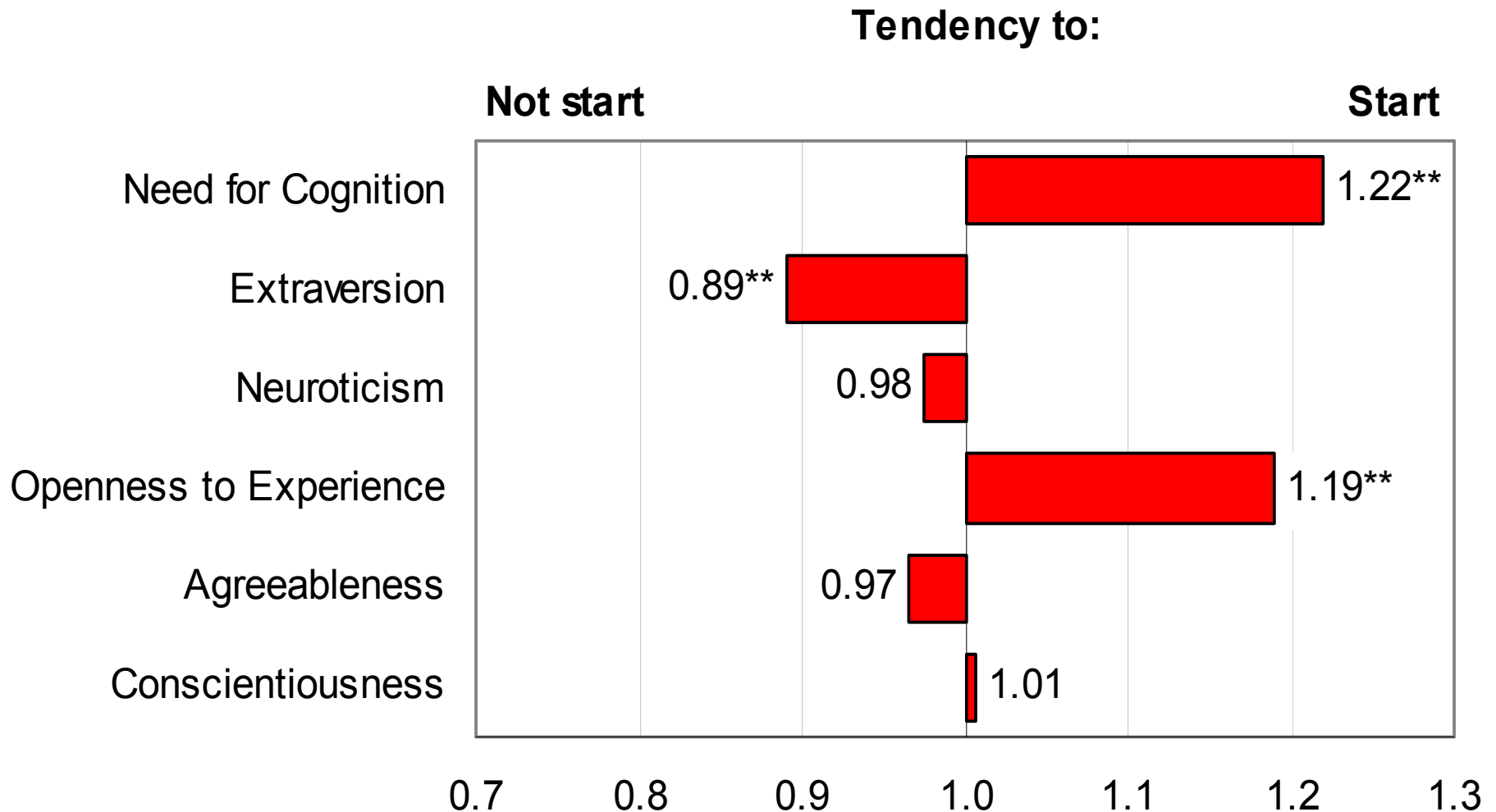
	Recruitment		Total	Sig.
	Through probabilistic field studies	Self recruited through Web ads		
Started	72.9	77.2	75.4	$\chi^2(1)=2.94, p=.09$
Dropped out before the end	26.1	25.5	25.7	$\chi^2(1)=.76, n.s.$
Finished w/ item nonresp.	1.4	1.4	1.4	$\chi^2(1)=.00, n.s.$
Finished, completed all	45.5	50.4	48.3	$\chi^2(1)=.77, n.s.$

Personality traits of the participants



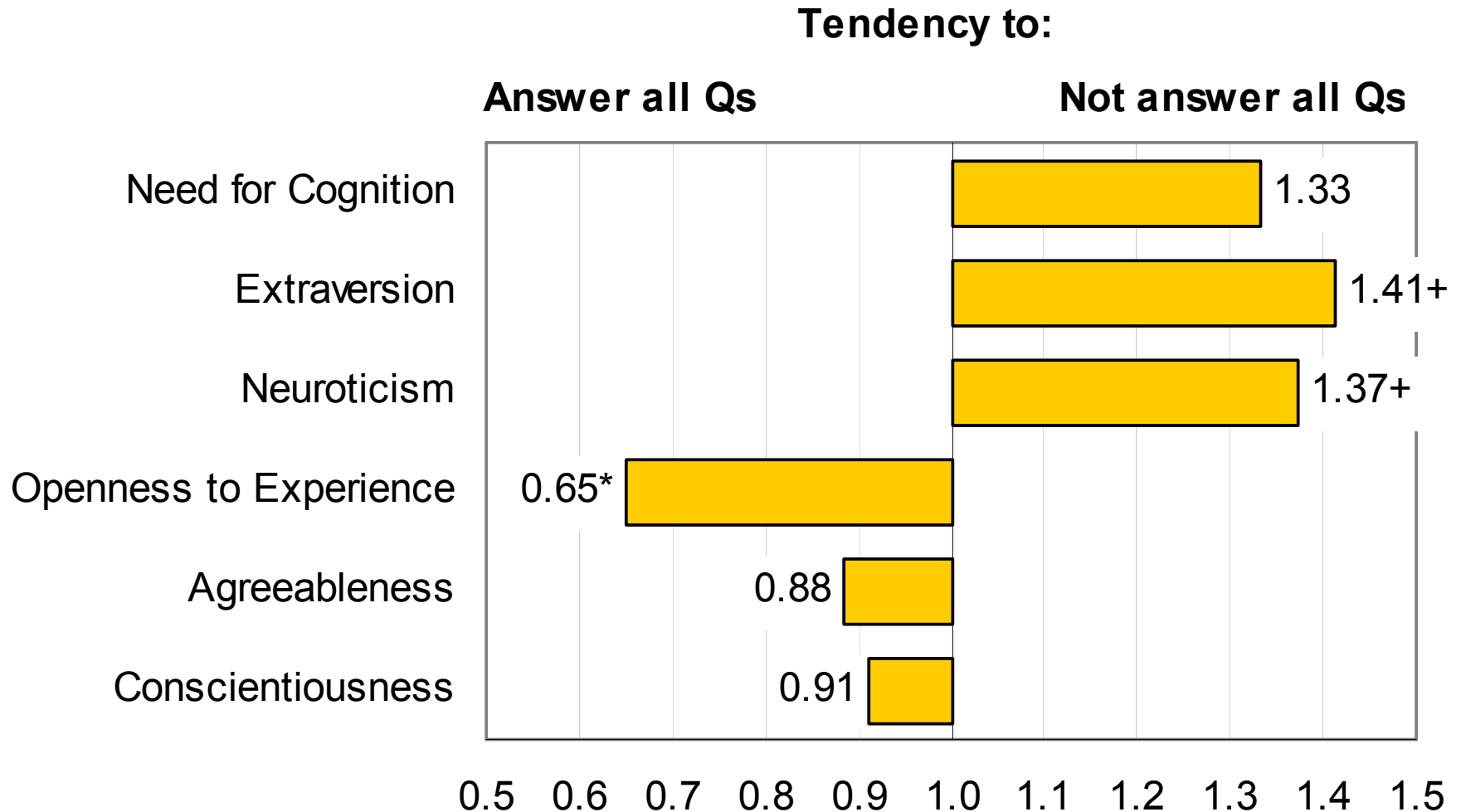
Personality traits of Participants vs. Non-participants

(odds ratios from logistic regression modelina)



Personality traits of Item non-respond. vs. Completes

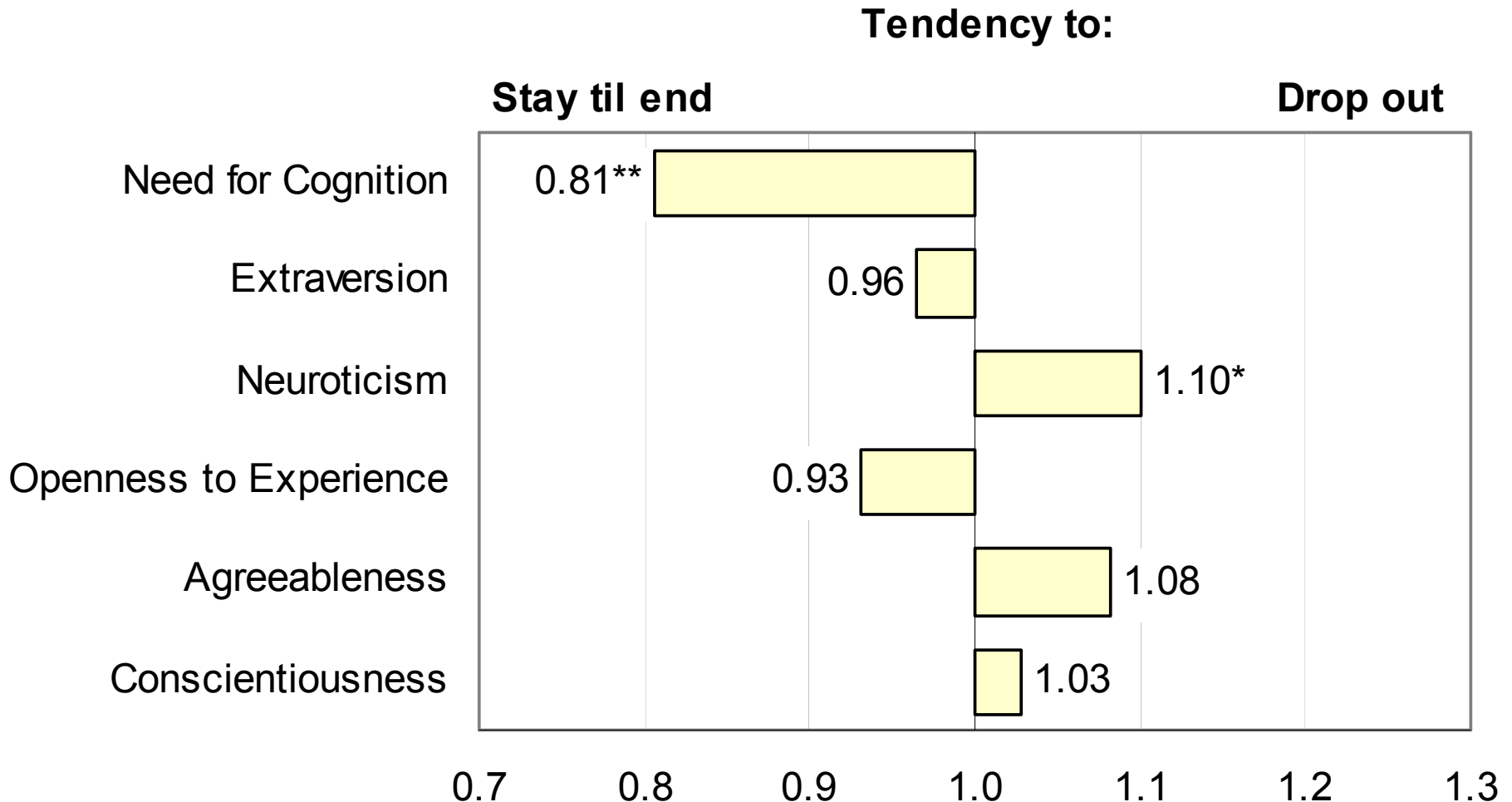
(odds ratios from logistic regression modeling)



Only n=17!

Personality traits of Dropouts vs. Completes

(odds ratios from logistic regression modeling)



Summary of the results

- Personality traits *differentially* affect survey participation patterns:

⇒ Initial cooperation

- Positively related to Need for Cognition and Openness to Experience, but also
- Negatively related to Extraversion

⇒ Item-nonresponse

- Negatively related: Openness to Experience. Positively (!) related to Need for Cognition, Extraversion, Neuroticism.

⇒ Dropping out

- Negatively related to Need for Cognition, but also
- Positively related to Neuroticism – those emotionally unstable have higher tendency for dropout

Summary of the results

- Surprisingly, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness were not significantly related to participation in this study.
- Need to evaluate, Impulsiveness, Reciprocity norm, and Optimism, were also measured in the screener, but had no relationship with the participation patterns

Conclusions

- Higher need for cognition may provide the initial motivation, but does not guarantee complete response
- Later participation and completeness of the response also depends on other personality traits, such as emotional stability
- Participation in online surveys may be guided primarily by intellectual curiosity and less by the desire to help or to be a responsible citizen / survey respondent (as perhaps in classic modes)