



The Netherlands Institute for Social
Research



Q2010 Training Courses

Cross-national surveys

Interviewers



Interviewer tasks

Interviewers recruit respondents (flexible)

Interviewers conduct the interview (highly standardized)

Interviewers keep the call records (boring)

Three different types of activities



Interviewer issues

Type of interviewer

- Age, gender, ethnic group
- Similar to respondent

Experience

- Experienced better
- Know what should be done 😊

Position

- Free-lancer
- Staff

Payment structure

- Per hour
- Per interview



Interviewer issues

Training

- General
- Specific surveys

Motivation, interests, restraints

Attitudes and tactics

Workload

Working times

Other assignments



Interviewer tactics

Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (JOS, 1999)

Tailoring introduction

- grasp the doorstep situation
- adapt introduction
- adapt your introduction (modify to suit social and cultural class)
- do not follow set of fixed rules, adapt to situation

Competent introduction

- mention Statistics Netherlands almost at once
- start by identifying yourself
- mention introductory letter
- be flexible in making appointments for interviews
- know a short introduction by heart
- ask if this is the right time (make an appointment if not, do not pressurize)



Interviewer tactics

Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (JOS, 1999)

Respondent centered

- be honest (e.g., about duration, questions)
- react flexibly to the situation
- respect the respondent
- dress appropriately for neighbourhood

Knowledge

- know what you are talking about
- be positive about survey, make clear that YOU believe in the survey



Interviewer tactics

Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (JOS, 1999)

Projecting positive image

- be friendly
- remain friendly
- raise trust
- be likeable
- project self-confidence
- make a relaxed impression
- be/remain YOURSELF
- project that YOU enjoy doing your job
- use intuition, feeling and humour in approach

Public relations

- Statistics Netherlands should pay more attention to public relations and positive image
- refer to topics in the news or in society that are of importance at the moment and can be connected with the topic of the survey



Interviewer tactics

Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (JOS, 1999)

Personality

- have perseverance
- have self-confidence (start every interaction from the perspective that the person you contact will be cooperative)
- preponderate

Maintain communication, realize interview after appointment

- reassure hesitating respondents: mention that if they do not want to answer a specific question that is OK with you
- having made an appointment, leave card with date and time, and your phone number
- after appointment, note down phone number of respondent (can be used to remind respondent, check date, etc)



Interviewer tactics

Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (JOS, 1999)

Maintain communication, tactics on first contact

- Statistics Netherlands should give interviewers more opportunities for flexible appointments
- for first contact leave papers, bag, and laptop in car
- give them a choice (no coercion)
- first contact everyone just for an appointment (between 5 and 7 p.m.)



Map of interviewer tactics

192

Journal of Official Statistics

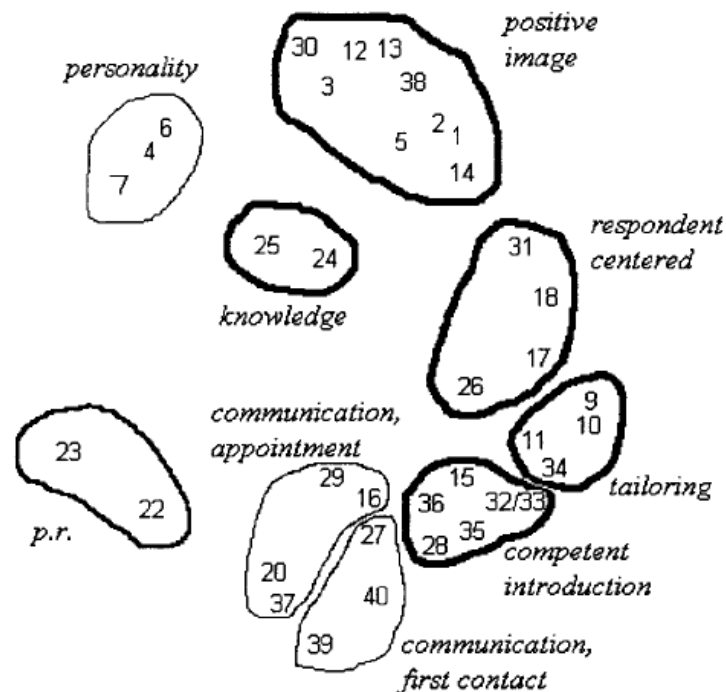


Fig. 1. Numbered point map with cluster border overlay. Large printed numbers correspond with the cluster numbering in Table 2, small numbers with the statement numbers in Table 1. The higher the cluster, the higher the effectiveness rating by the interviewers



Relationship with actual response rates Dutch LFS

High response rates

- Personality
- Positive image

Somewhat higher response rates

- Effective public relations
- Tailor introduction

Low response rates

- Competent introduction



Conclusions Snijkers, Hox and De Leeuw (1999)

When we compare the answers of the more effective and successful interviewers with those who attain a lower response rate, a clear pattern emerges. The effective interviewers emphasize the importance of a combination of basic rules (identify yourself, mention agency almost at once) with more advanced tactics (tailoring, adapting introduction). Above all, they believe in themselves and emphasize the importance of social skills and self-confidence.

Those who obtain a lower response rate do not rate the "basic rules" as important, and neither do they attach much importance to efficient tailoring and self-confidence. They are most respondent-oriented and try to please the respondent. They emphasize the effectiveness of being flexible in making appointments, asking respondents whether it is convenient and the right time, and being always strictly honest about the duration of the interview.



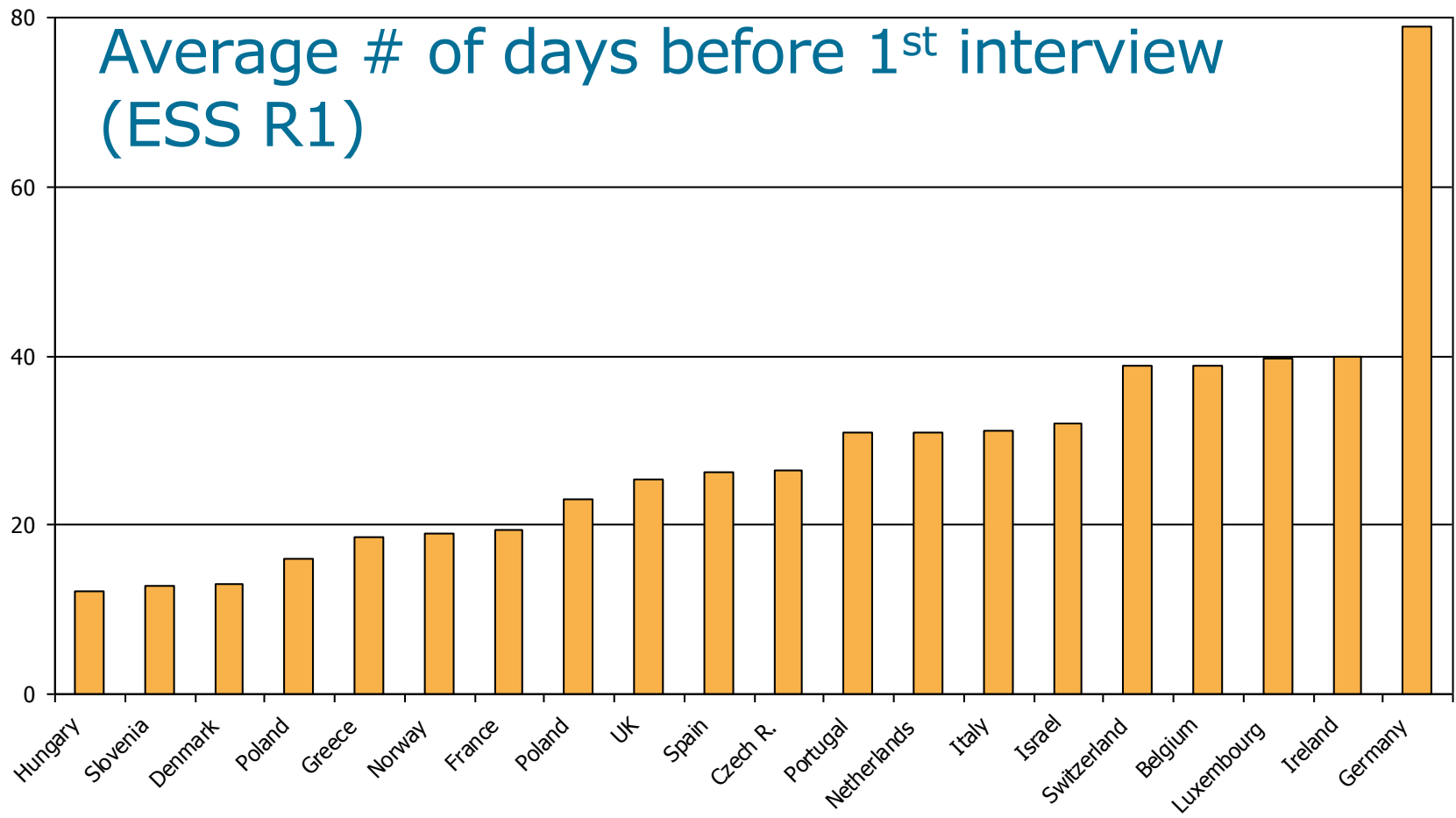
Interviewers and data quality



Interviewers in the ESS

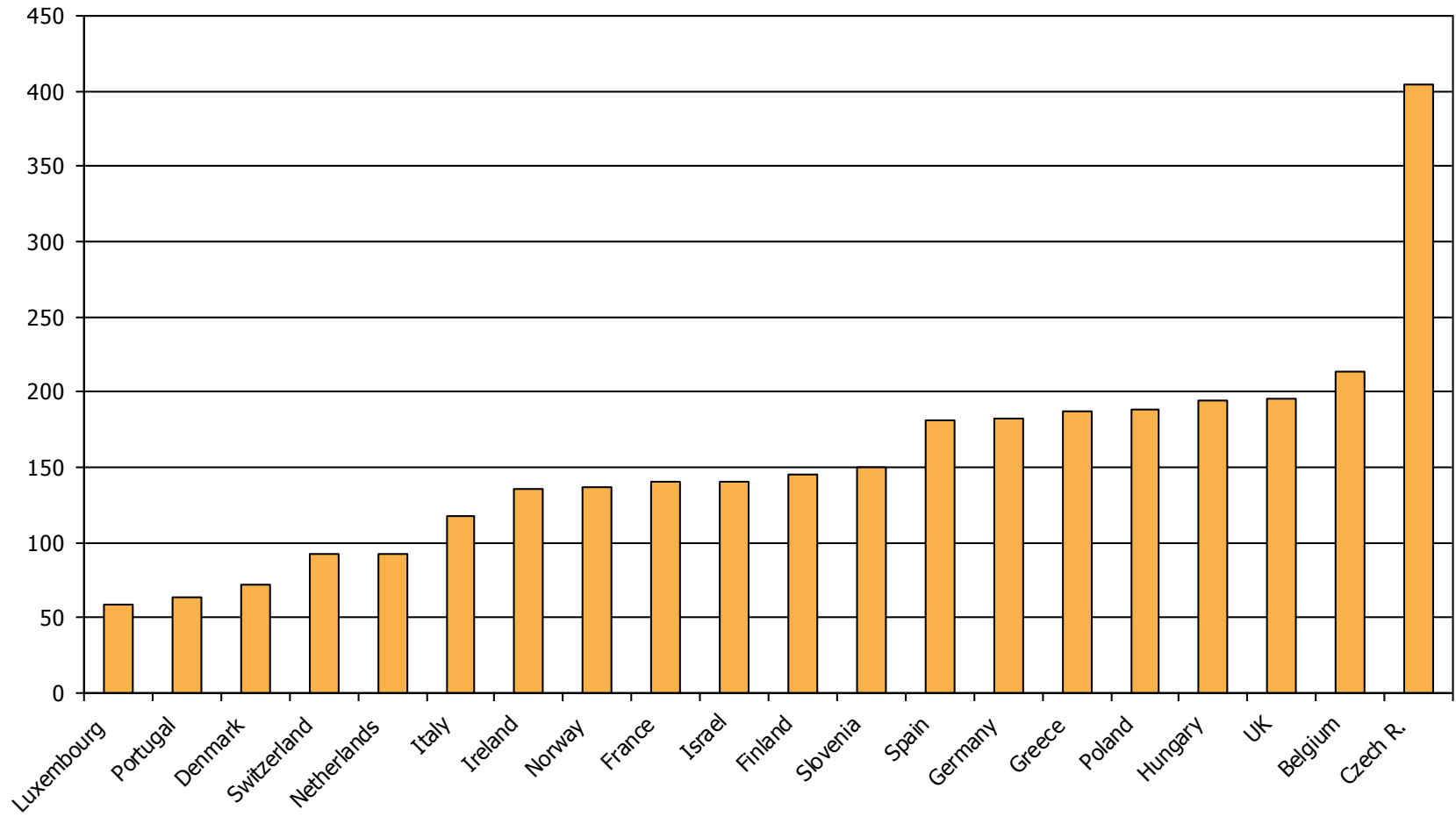
Number and start (Koch and Blohm)

Interviewer related variance (Philippons and Loosveldt)





Number of interviewers (ESS R1)





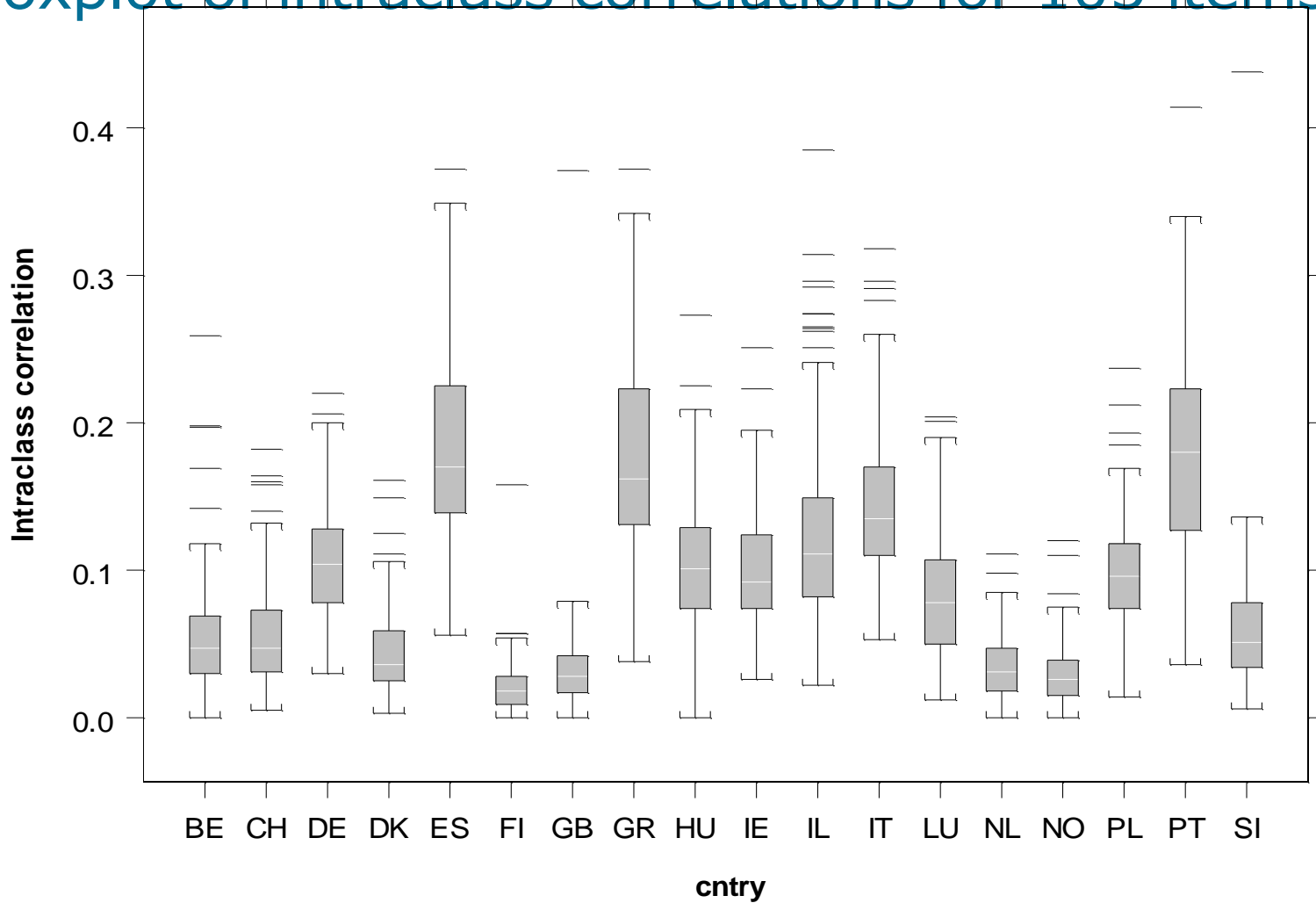
Interviewer variation

Intraclass correlation

- Sampling
 - Interviewers
 - (Not interpenetrated design)
-
- Interviewers as clusters

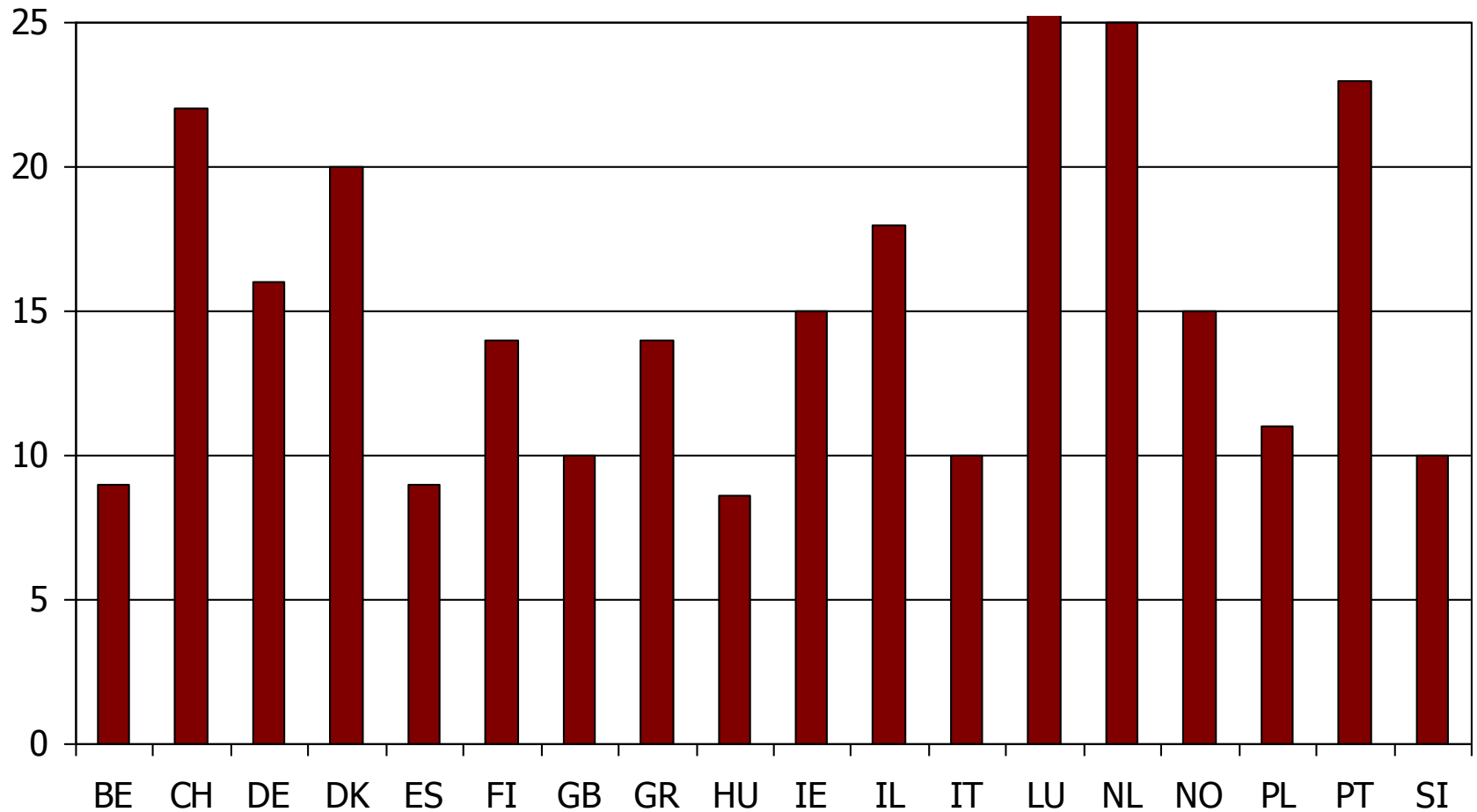


Boxplot of intraclass correlations for 105 items



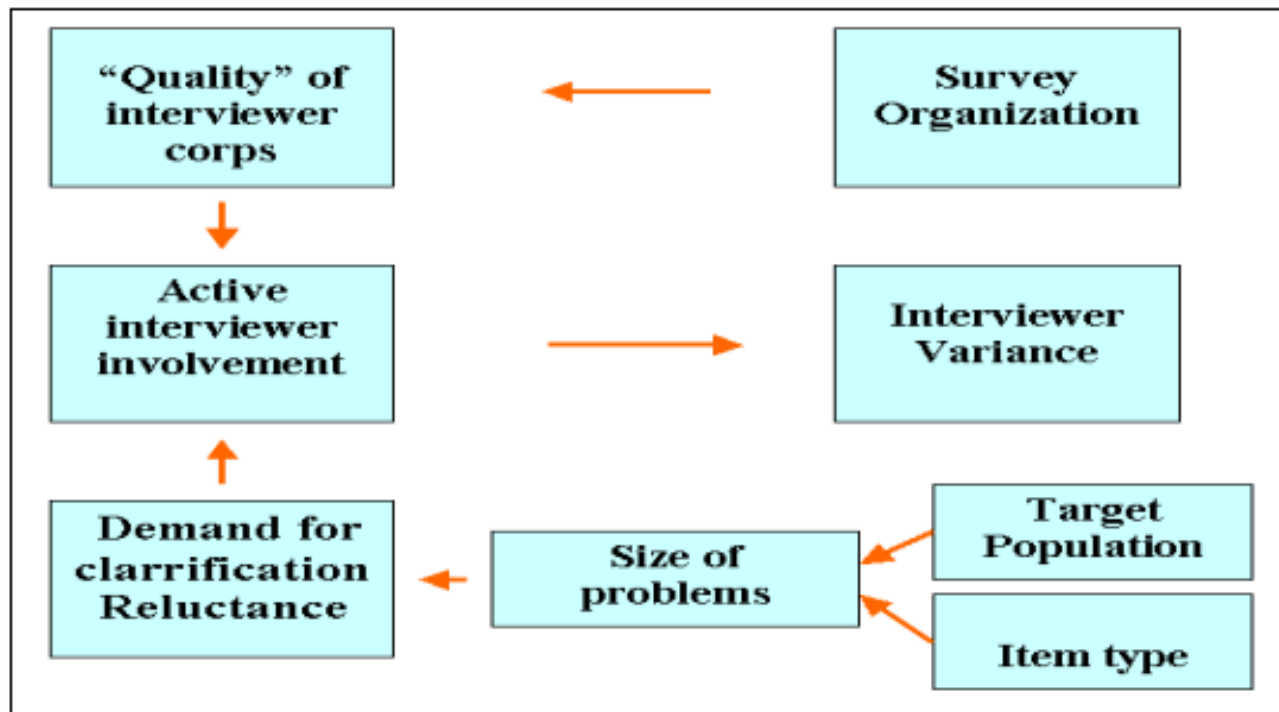


Average # of interviews per interviewer





Theoretical framework for interviewer effects





Interviewer reports

How often did the respondent answer the questions to the best of his ability?

How often did the respondent understand the questions?

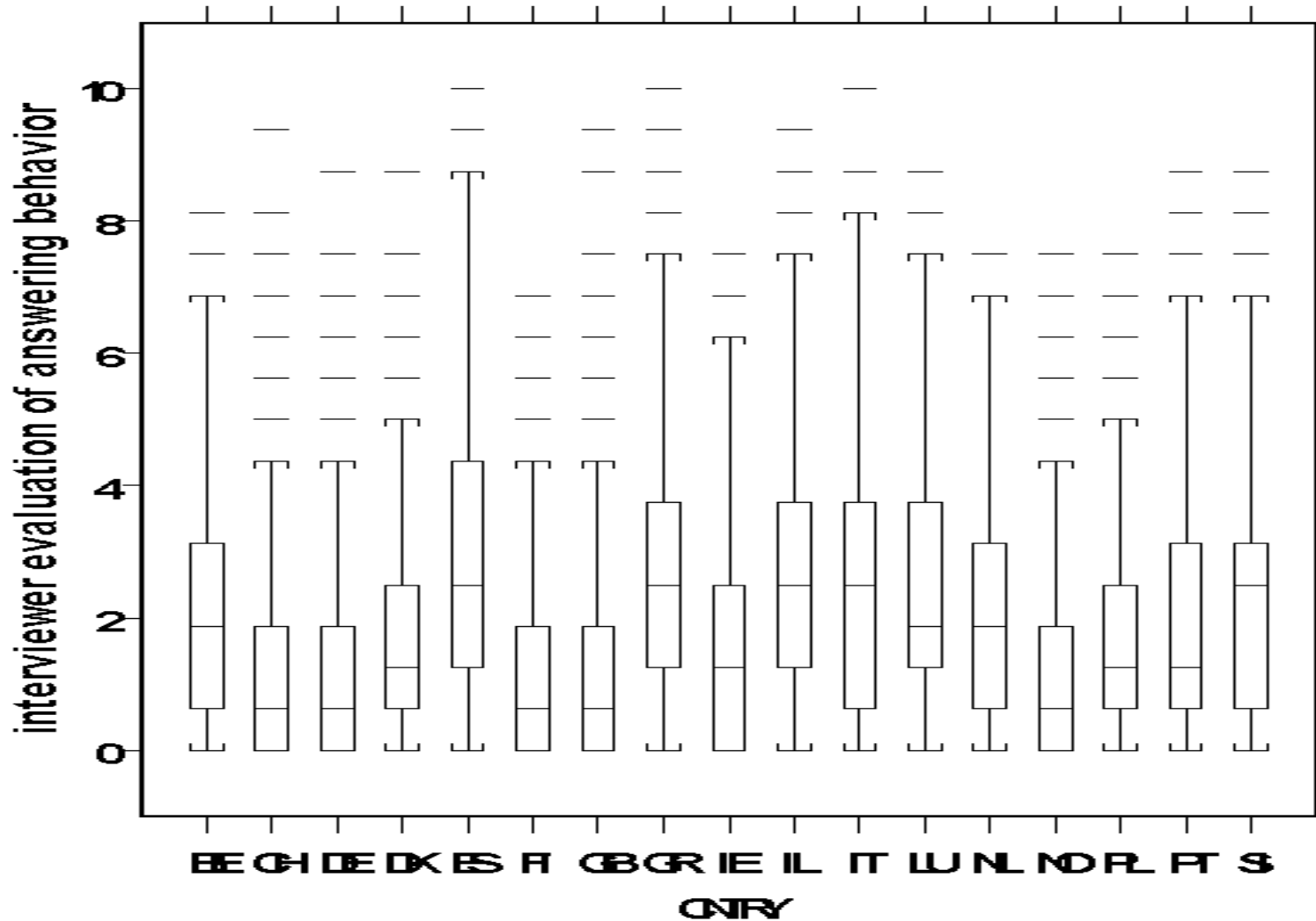
How often did the respondent ask for clarification?

How often was the respondent reluctant to answer the questions?

never, almost never, now and then, often or very often

One scale of respondent' difficulty

Boxplots of scores on overall interviewer evaluation of problematic respondent behavior

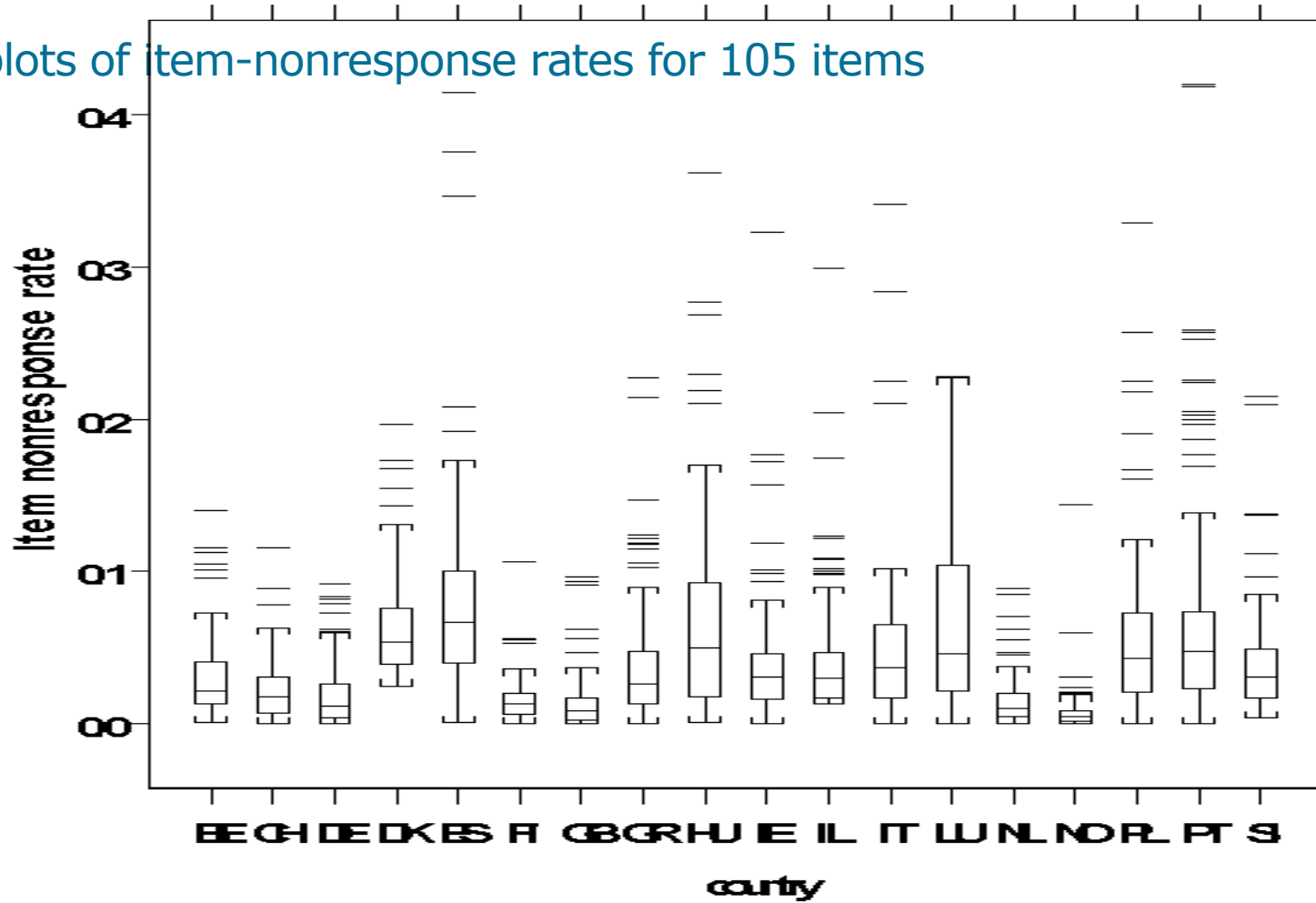


Pearson correlation between country averages of the ICCs and interviewer evaluation variables

	rho
Overall interviewer evaluation variable?	0.64
How often was respondent reluctant to answer?	0.75
How often did respondent understand questions?	0.41
How often did respondent ask for clarification?	0.57
How often did respondent answer to the best of his ability?	0.52



Boxplots of item-nonresponse rates for 105 items





Conclusions Philippens and Loosveldt

Design effects not only related to sampling design

Importance of interviewer training

Questions might not be equally suitable in all countries



Conclusion

Interviewers are the foot soldiers that do the work and determine the quality of a survey

If there is interviewer variance within countries, you might wonder about the interviewer variance between countries



Trade-off: assignment size and data quality

Small number of interviewers,
large assignments

- Extensive training
- Select best interviewers
- Experience with survey

- More travel
- Larger interviewer effects

Large number of interviewers,
small assignments

- Limited training
- Varied quality interviewers
- Little experience with survey

- Less travel
- Smaller interviewer effects



Trade-off: nonresponse and data quality

High response rate

- Convert reluctant respondents:
- Not interested, no opinion, don't know

Poorer data quality

- Not interested, no opinion, don't know
- Satisficing
- Meaningful answer
- (Couper, 1997)

Low response rate

- Only people how are interested in the topic and like answering questionnaires

Better data quality

- Few don't knows indicator of high data quality?