

Red carpet or steeplechase: variation and determinants of municipal social assistance implementation strategies in Belgium

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CSB Lunch Seminar

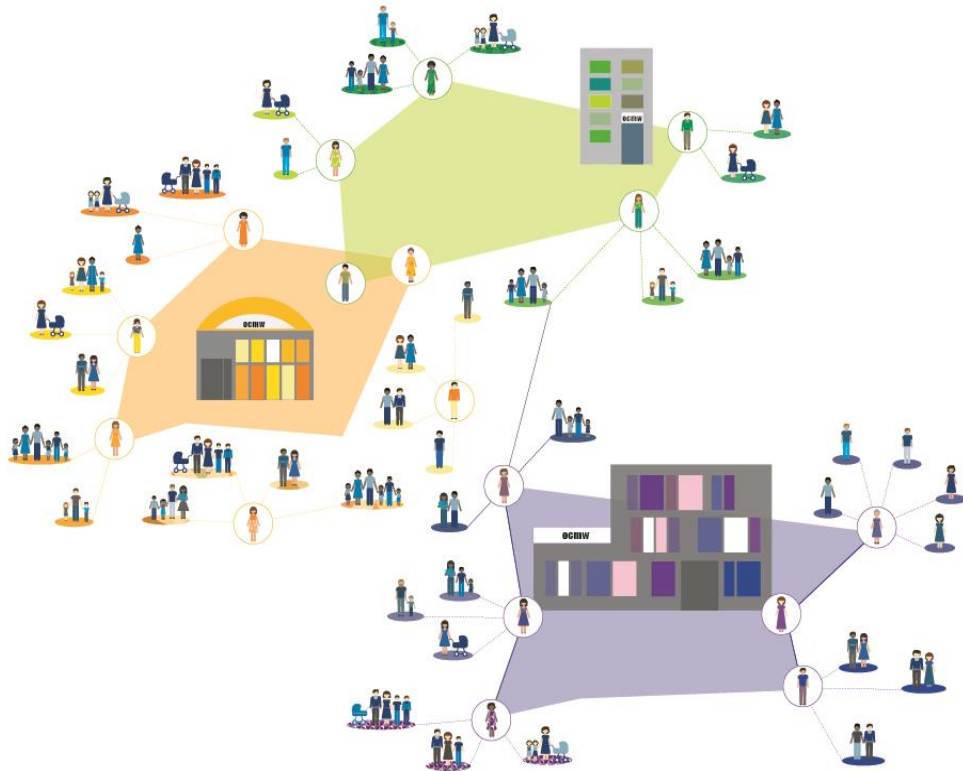
13 March 2020

Research question

- Do local welfare agencies employ consistent implementation strategies that have the potential to reduce NTU?
- Do specific implementation strategies go hand in hand with certain municipal characteristics?

Why look at **local** level social assistance implementation?

+/- 25% of those dropping out during their application procedure, did so because of the interaction with the local welfare agency (SNAP US, Bartlett et al., 2004)



Local level social assistance implementation

- Aims of decentralized policies:
 - Increasing legitimacy of anti-poverty policies (Fording et al., 2007; Kazepov, 2010; Soss et al., 2011)
 - Matching implementation strategies with the local situation (Fording et al., 2007; Kazepov, 2010; Sheely, 2012; Soss, Schram, Vartanian, & O'Brien, 2001; Vandenbroucke, Luigjes, & Lievens, 2016)
- Research has focused on activation and sanctioning at the local level
- Here: implementation strategies that may affect non-take-up

What levers to reduce NTU are there at the local level?

1. Information provision
2. Administrative procedure
3. Accessibility
4. Locus of initiative
5. Trust vs. control

Hypotheses

Strategies in line with local political preferences

- Leftist parties: more attention to NTU prevention
- Right parties: less attention to NTU prevention, in particular
 - Locus of initiative with client (independence and activation, non-paternalistic)

Hypotheses

Strategies that match the local situation

- Demographic
 - Hard-to-reach “big city” target group → more attention to NTU
 - More migrants → more information provision
 - Higher levels of need → more time-saving strategies (e.g. administrative process costs) and less time-intensive personalized strategies (e.g. locus of initiative)
- Economic
 - Higher administrative capacity (size and income) → more standardization

Outline

- Local levers against non-take-up and hypotheses
- **Belgian context**
- Data and method
- Results
- Discussion

The Belgian context

- Federal legislation
 - Benefit level and eligibility criteria
 - Minimum requirements for social investigation
 - Co-financing
- Municipal level
 - Social investigation
 - Interpretation of eligibility criteria (fairness, work willingness)
 - Co-financing

Social investigation



- Max. 30 days from initial request
- By a licensed social worker

- Social report for political board, with recommendation
 - Socio-demographic characteristics of household
 - Available economic means
 - Assessment of work willingness
 - One mandatory home visit
 - Use of KSZ, conversations with clients and supporting documents

Outline

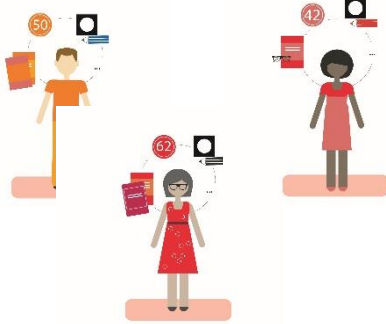
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Data

- Custom-collected survey data on the **application process**, **social investigation** and the **broader organization** of the local welfare agency
- Online survey
 - All Belgian local welfare agencies invited by mail
 - Minimum 1 social worker per agency

Response

Social workers

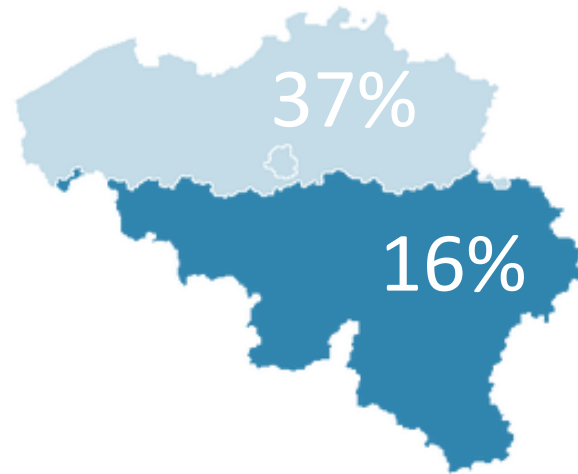
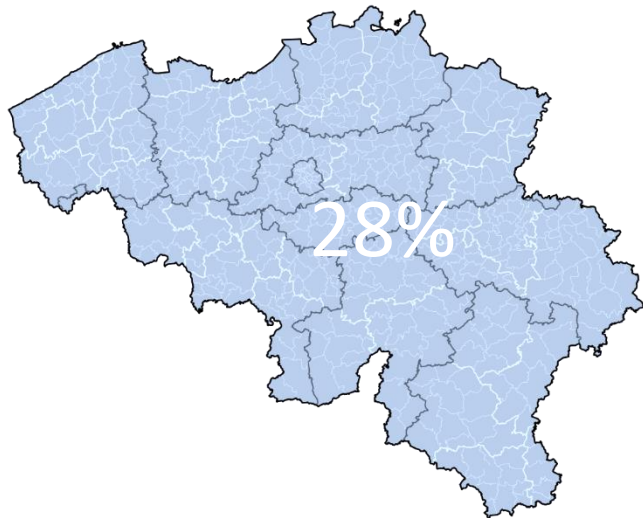


227

Welfare offices



161

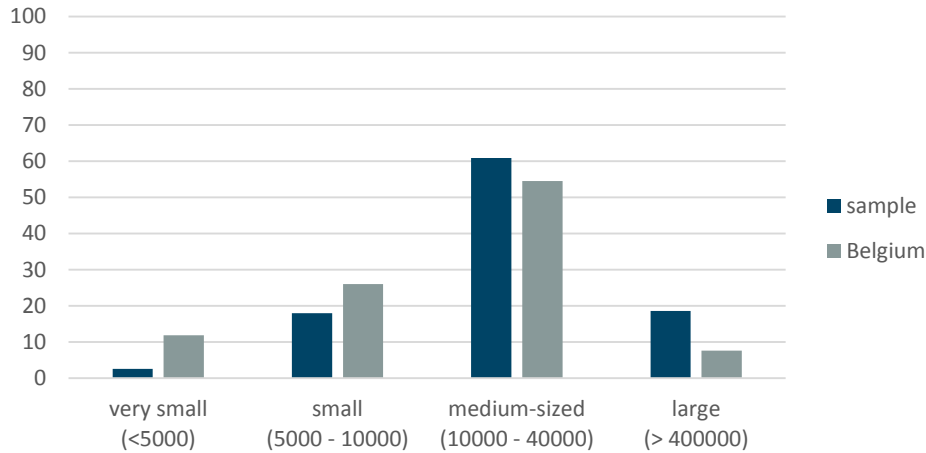


Data limitations

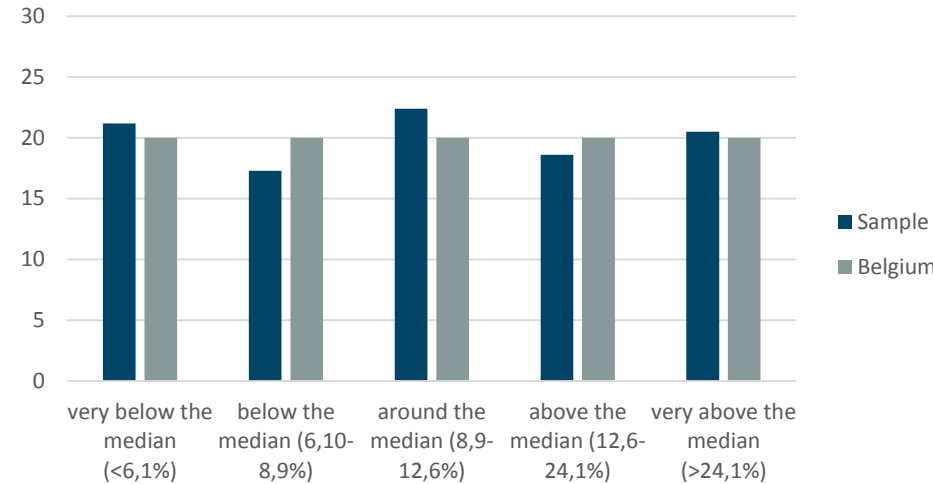
- Only one social worker per local welfare agency
- Data limitations questionnaire
- No representative sample

Sample profile

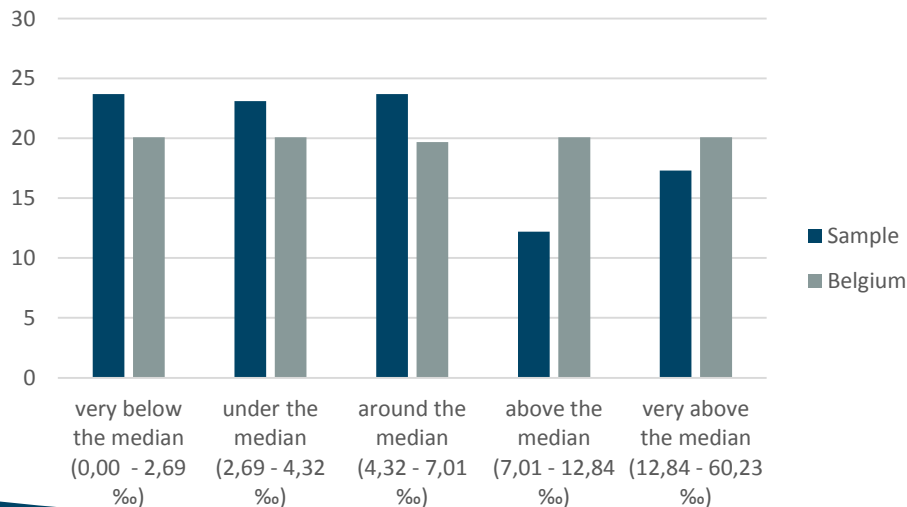
Municipality size



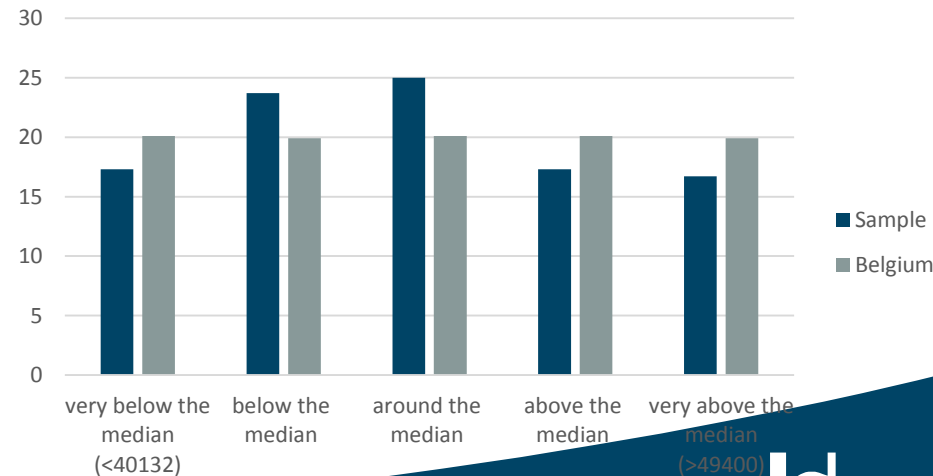
Number of migrants as % of population



Number of SA recipients per 1000 residents



Median income in municipality



Method

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

⇒ Do we find local NTU reducing strategies in Belgian welfare agencies?

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

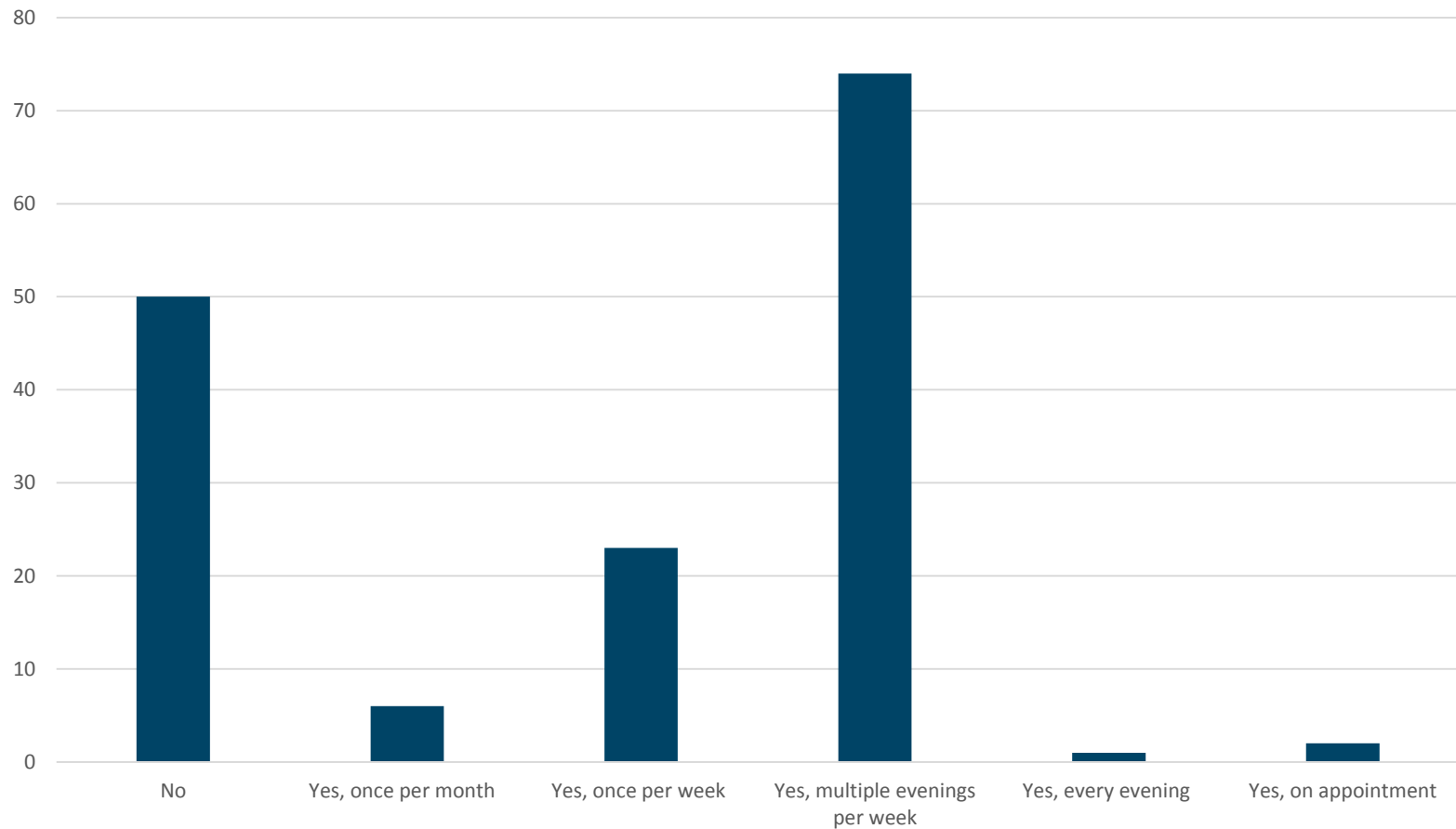
⇒ What explains the use of certain strategies?

Outline

- Local levers against non-take-up and hypotheses
- Belgian context
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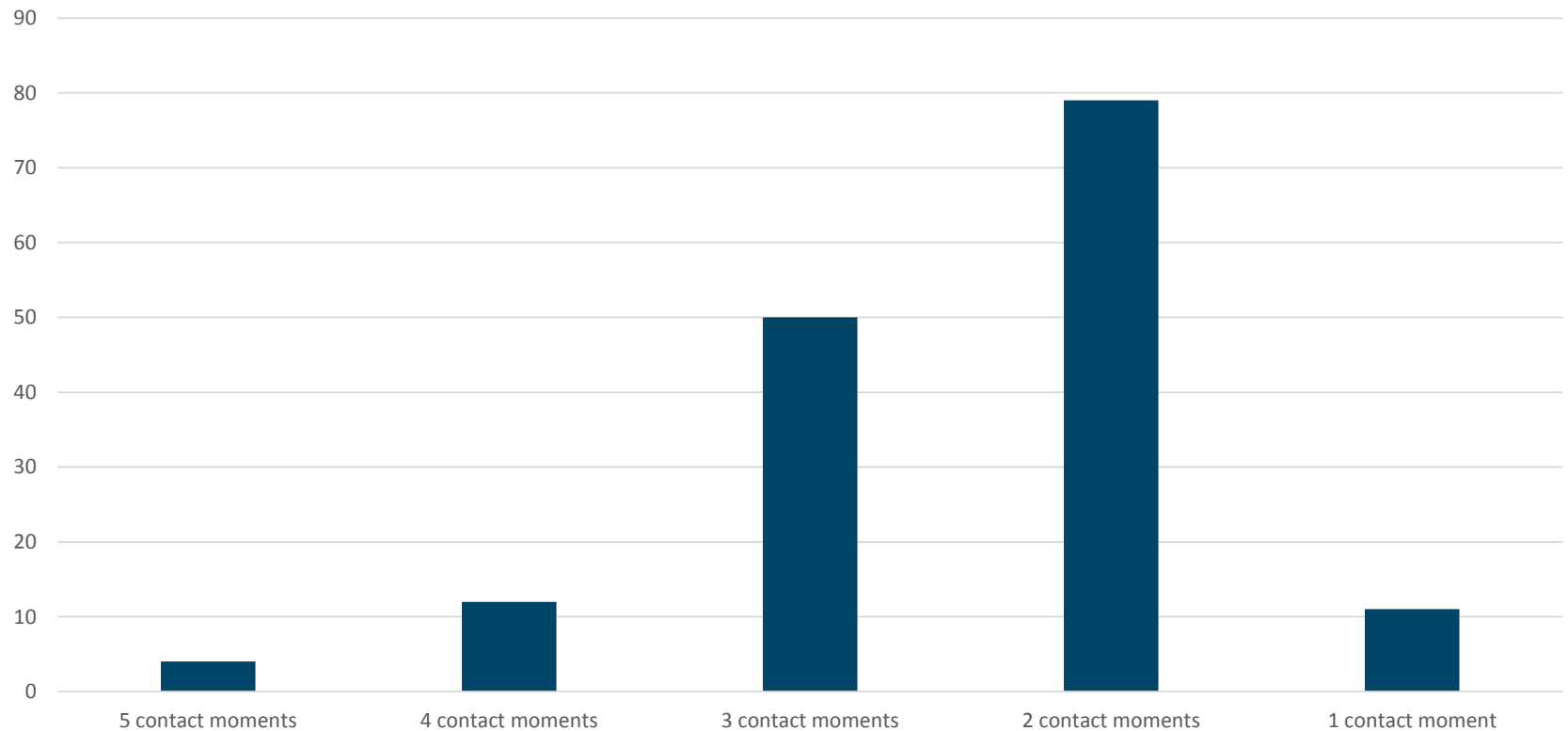
Variation in opening hours

Does the local welfare agency have late opening hours?



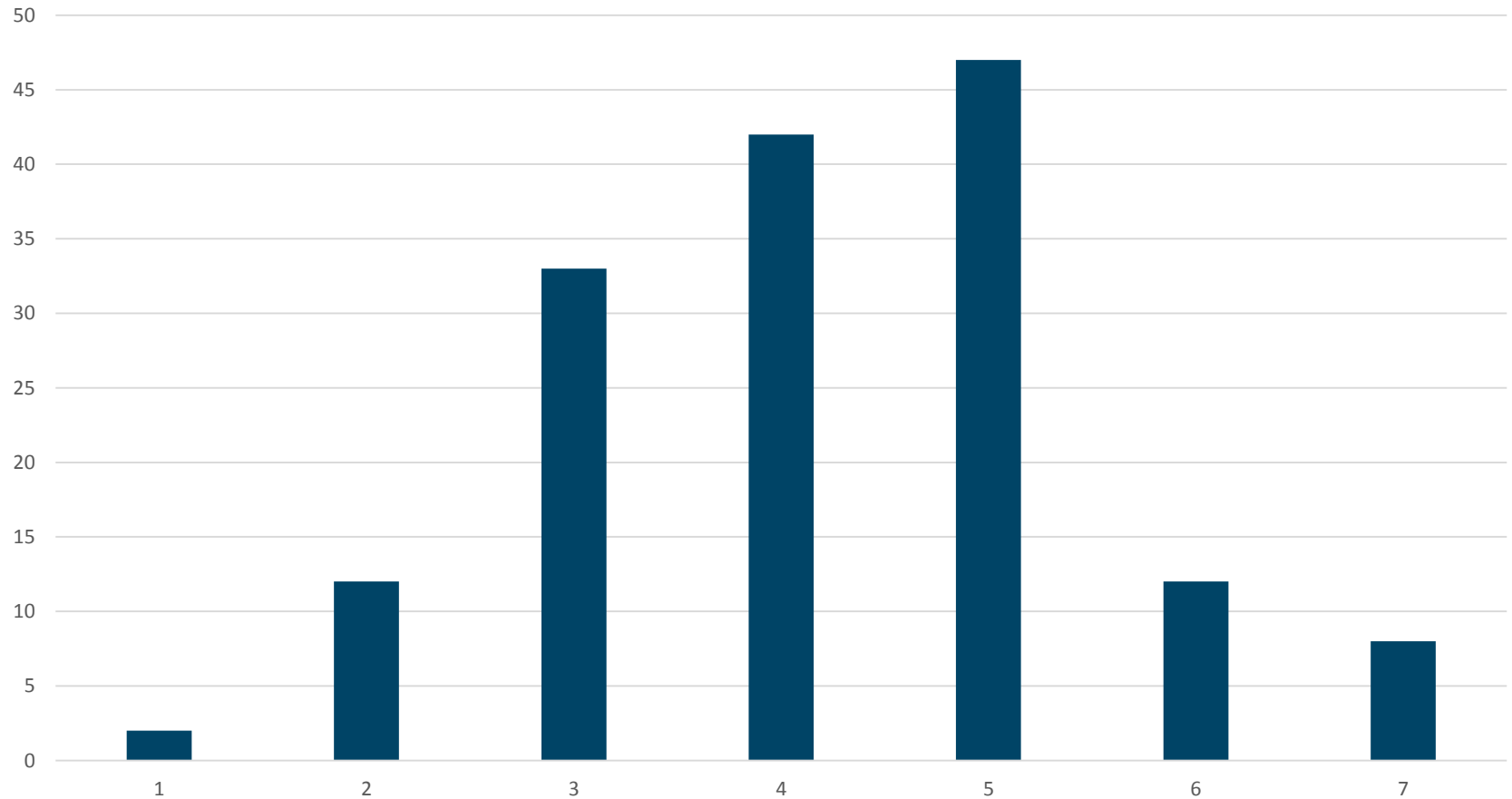
Variation in hassle

How many times will the claimant have to visit the local welfare agency throughout the application procedure?



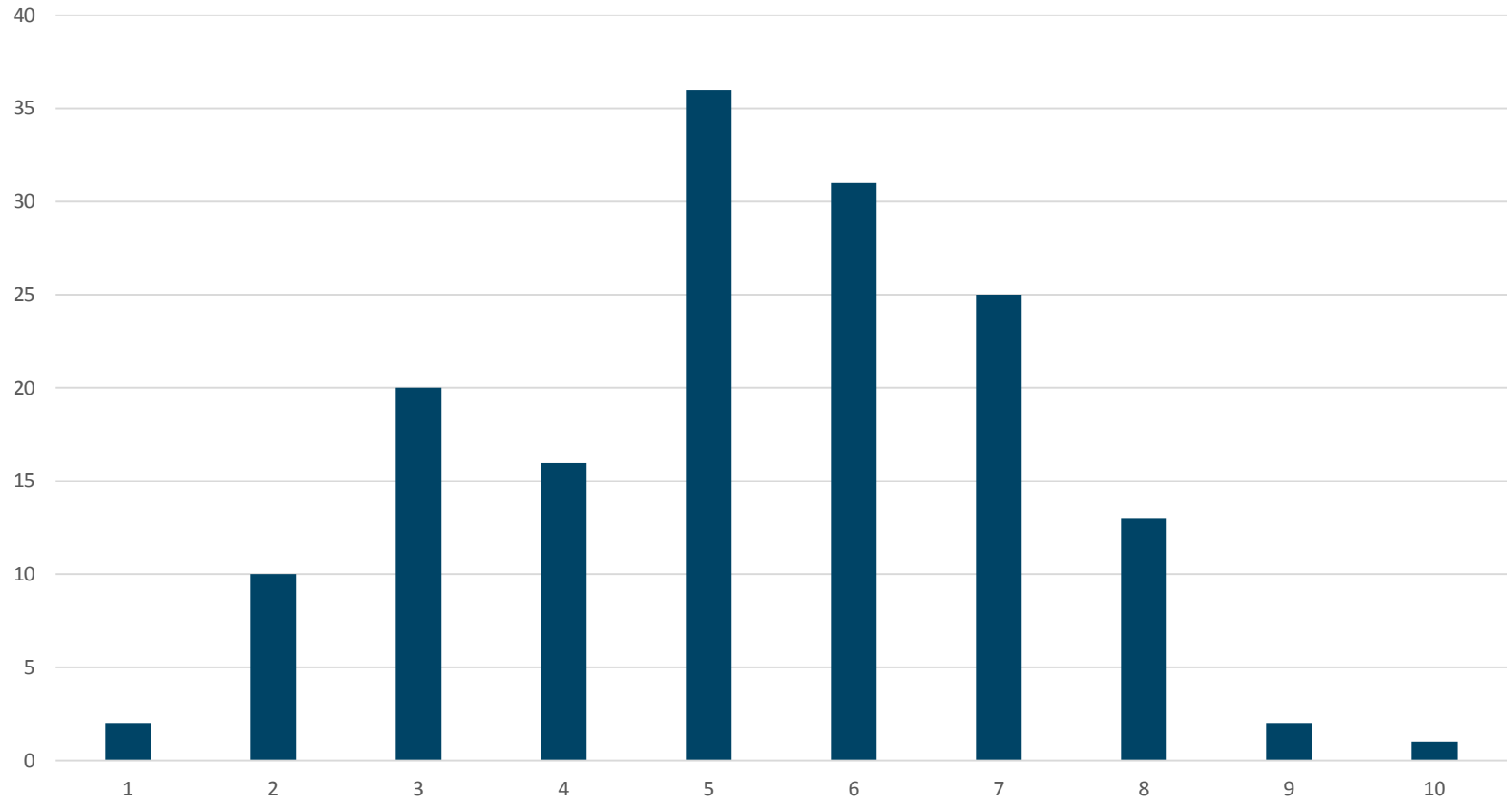
Variation in information provision

How many different channels are used to advertize the opening hours of the local welfare agency?



Variation in information provision

For how many elements of the social investigation does the welfare agency provide standardized documents?



Exploratory factor analysis

Do items cluster together in coherent implementation strategies?

Results: Exploratory factor analysis (n=156)

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Information	0,756	-0,164	-0,075	-0,065	0,007	-0,057
Opening hours	0,498	0,126	0,063	0,163	-0,019	-0,078
Standardized documents	0,379	0,162	0,065	-0,033	0,201	0,011
Missed appointment	-0,068	0,601	0,056	-0,099	-0,171	-0,211
Unexpected event	-0,018	0,514	0,056	-0,067	0,202	-0,129
Repetition	0,196	0,454	0,067	-0,049	-0,246	0,118
Move	-0,025	0,053	0,708	0,103	-0,062	0,249
Referral	0,031	0,063	0,402	0,060	0,038	0,032
Reminder	0,019	0,040	0,323	-0,117	0,009	0,163
Infrastructure	0,185	-0,128	0,189	0,678	-0,036	-0,110
Shared location	-0,121	-0,074	-0,136	0,472	-0,122	-0,043
Late opening	-0,037	0,302	-0,142	0,336	0,184	0,188
Closed door	0,096	-0,053	-0,075	-0,074	0,583	0,053
House visit	-0,056	0,093	0,210	-0,035	0,458	-0,286
Number of visits	-0,029	-0,124	0,352	-0,228	0,028	0,532
Number of documents	-0,148	-0,154	0,170	0,180	-0,063	0,274

Exploratory factor analysis (n=156)

	INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Information	0,756	-0,164	-0,075	-0,065	0,007	-0,057
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Exploratory factor analysis (n=156)

	INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY	TRUST VS. CONTROL	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Information	0,756	-0,164	-0,075	-0,065	0,007	-0,057
Opening hours	0,498	0,126	0,063	0,163	-0,019	-0,078
Standardized documents	0,379	0,162	0,065	-0,033	0,201	0,011
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Exploratory factor analysis (n=156)

	INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY	TRUST VS. CONTROL	LOCUS OF INITIATIVE	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
Information	0,756	-0,164	-0,075	-0,065	0,007	-0,057
Opening hours	0,498	0,126	0,063	0,163	-0,019	-0,078
Standardized documents	0,379	0,162	0,065	-0,033	0,201	0,011
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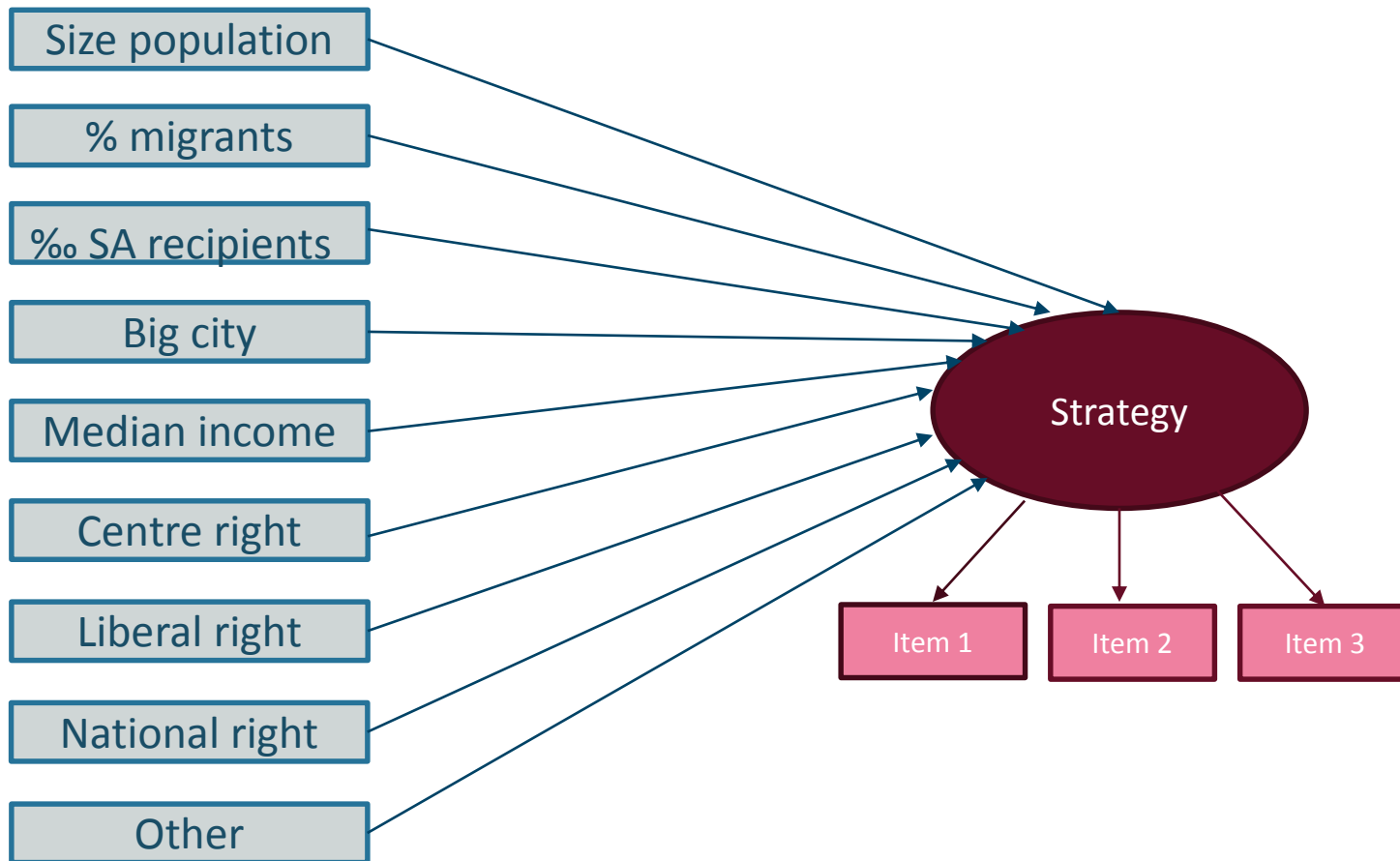
	INFORMATION TRANSPARENCY	TRUST VS. CONTROL	LOCUS OF INITIATIVE	ACCESS- BILITY	Factor 5	Factor 6
Information	0,756	-0,164	-0,075	-0,065	0,007	-0,057
Opening hours	0,498	0,126	0,063	0,163	-0,019	-0,078
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Structural equation model

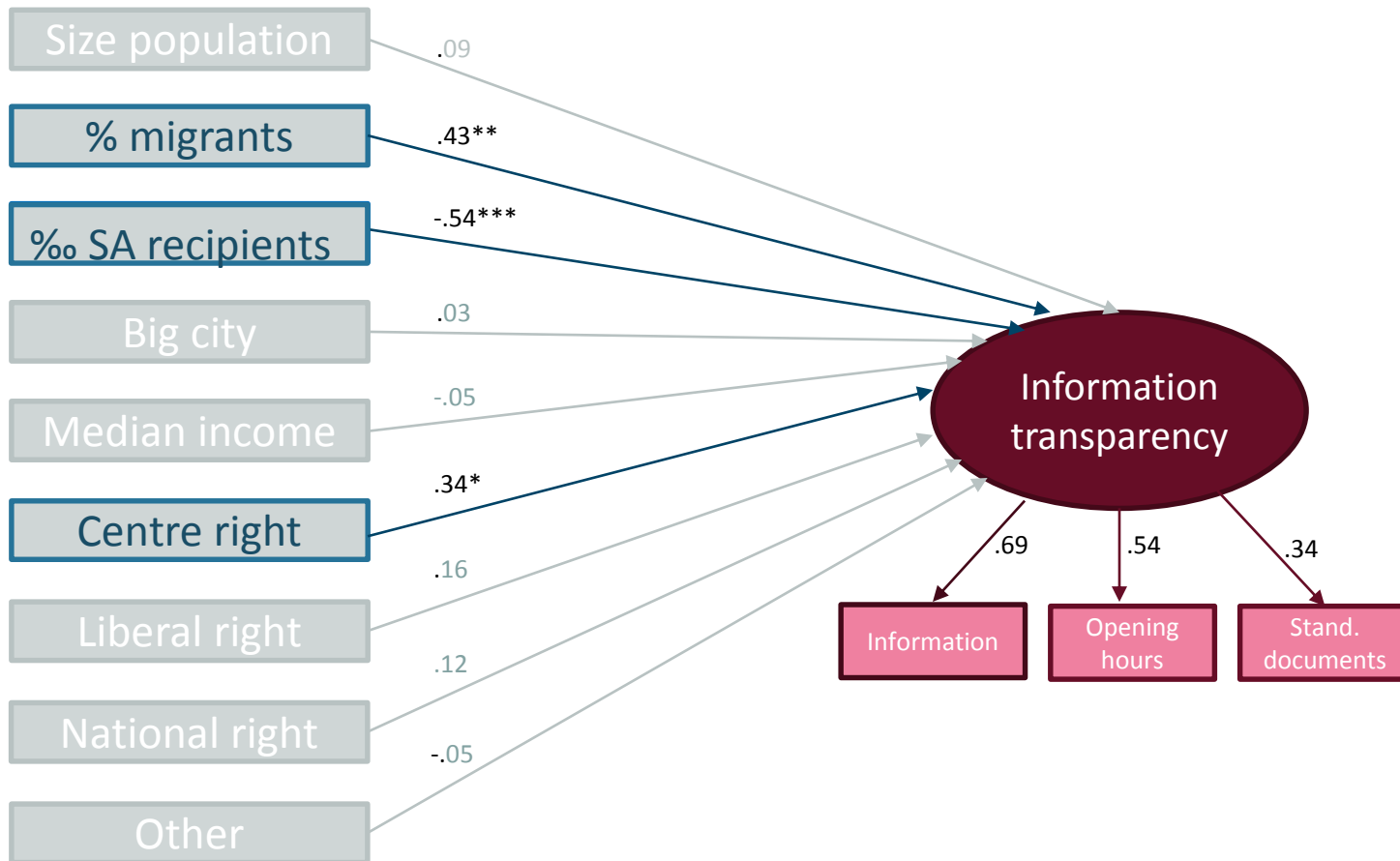
Recap: Hypotheses

		Expected relation	On
Political constellation			
	Leftist parties	Positive	all NTU reducing strategies
	Liberal parties	Negative	Locus of initiative
Demographic			
	Big city	Positive	All NTU reducing strategies
	share of migrants	Positive	information accessibility
	share of social assistance beneficiaries	Negative	Time intensive strategies, such as locus of initiative
Economic			
	income position of municipality	positive	administrative process costs (and more broadly, all strategies)

Structural equation model



SEM: information transparency



SEM

	Latent factor 1	Latent factor 2	Latent factor 3	Latent factor 4
	<u>Information transparency</u>	<u>Trust vs. control</u>	<u>Accessibility</u>	<u>Locus of initiative</u>
Population size	.085 (.530)	.135 (.404)	-.074 (.483)	.061 (.634)
% migrants	.433 (.004)	-.370 (.044)	-.230 (.040)	.250 (.066)
% SA recipients	-.536 (.000)	-.536 (.008)	-.258 (.027)	-.129 (.365)
Big city	.034 (.814)	.011 (.949)	.282 (.011)	.019 (.887)
Median Income	-.047 (.682)	-.266 (.061)	.047 (.592)	.188 (.078)
Political party (ref: socialists)				
Centre right	.335 (.044)	-.117 (.545)	.177 (.162)	-.145 (.345)
Liberal right	.165 (.271)	-.346 (.062)	-.009 (.939)	-.307 (.028)
National right	.120 (.417)	-.286 (.113)	.201 (.078)	-.103 (.455)
Other	-.055 (.693)	-.257 (.129)	-.198 (.064)	-.009 (.943)
Model fit	Chi ² = 25.886 df = 18, p-value = .102, CFI = .986, RMSEA = .053 (.000-0.096)	Chi ² = 21.514, df = 18, p-value = .254, CFI = .993, RMSEA = .035(.000-.083)	Chi ² = 27.366 df = 22, p-value = .198, CFI = .992, RMSEA = .040 (.000-0.082)	Chi ² = 30.403, df = 22, p-value = .109, CFI = .986, RMSEA = .050 (.000-.089)

SEM

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Results: SEM

		Expected relation	On	Accepted?
Political constellation				
	Leftist parties	Positive	all non-take-up reducing strategies	No
	Liberal parties	Negative	locus of initiative	Yes
Demographic				
	Big city	Positive	all NTU reducing strategies	Yes, partly
	share of migrants	Positive	information accessibility	Yes
	share of social assistance beneficiaries	Negative	Time intensive strategies, such as locus of initiative	No
Economic				
	income position of municipality	positive	administrative process costs (and more broadly, all strategies)	Not able to test/No

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Demographic				
	Big city	Positive	all NTU reducing strategies	Yes, partly
	share of migrants	Positive	information accessibility	Yes
		Negative	Accessibility	Yes
		Negative	Trust vs control	Yes
	share of social assistance beneficiaries	Negative	locus of initiative	No
		Negative	trust vs control	Yes
			Accessibility	Yes
			Information transparency	Yes
Economic				
	size of municipality	positive	administrative process costs	Not able to test
	income position of municipality	positive	administrative process costs (and more broadly, all strategies)	Not able to test

In sum

- Substantial variation in organization and practices between Belgian local welfare offices
- Evidence for four coherent strategies at the level of the local welfare agency
 - Information transparency
 - Trust vs. control
 - Accessibility
 - Locus of initiative
- Presence of particular strategy related with municipal characteristics
- Process costs?



Next steps

- Finetune analysis for Flanders
 - Higher response rate
 - Allows for better proxies

- Relate local practices and strategies to local non-take-up rates

Thanks for your attention

Annex

Strategies

1. Information Transparency

1. The number of ways through which **information** on the services of the PCSW are distributed
2. The number of ways through which **opening hours** are advertised
3. The number of elements of the application procedure for which **standardized documents** are available

2. Trust vs. control

1. The consequences of an **unexpected event** during a house visit
2. Whether there are procedural repercussions for people who **miss appointments**
3. Whether or not the social investigation is fully **repeated** when the clients moves from one municipality to another

Strategies

3. Locus of initiative

1. The action the PSCW takes when a social assistance recipient **moves** from one municipality to another
2. Whether other organizations frequently **refer** clients to the PCSW
3. Whether a client gets a **reminder** before an appointment

4. Accessibility

1. The number of **infrastructural** features that facilitate access to less able persons
2. Whether or not the PCSW **shares** its infrastructure with other organisations
3. The frequency of **late openings**