## Appendices

**Appendix 1 - recruitment strategies and exclusion criteria**

We made efforts to target the entire social assistance population, and to avoid selection bias by missing for instance people with low literacy. The experiment had two starting moments: 1 December 2017 and 1 April 2018. 307 were randomized after applying in the first wave, 81 in the second. Recruitment took place in August and September 2017 (for the first wave) and January / February 2018) for the second wave.

We used a variety of recruitment tools, taking into account that not everybody on social assistance is able to read and / or is skilled in using computers and other digital devices. We used:

* Personal letters to people on social assistance;
* Advertisement in newsletters of the municipality and social services;
* An animation movie (shown at municipal locations in waiting rooms and shared through websites and social media);
* Advertisement on Facebook;
* Posters and flyers at several locations;
* Personal contact at the Social Service center, at days that most people on social assistance were expected to show up;
* Information gatherings in several parts of the city;
* Advertisements in local media;
* Mentioning the experiment in regular contacts between people on social assistance and social service employees.

Not everybody was eligible, there were a number of exclusion criteria. Excluded were:

* People below 27 at the start of the experiment;
* People who would reach retirement age during the experiment;
* People with an (officially recognized) work disability;
* Refugees who already were accepted in the country, but hadn’t finished their obligatory integration course;
* People already in a going re-integration scheme, in which *e.g.* they had obligations to a third party (employer) or formal arrangements were made;

People who did not speak the Dutch language weren’t formally excluded, but since recruitment and the coached group were in Dutch, for practical purpose they mostly were (though some nevertheless applied and were not excluded from the experiment).

**Appendix 2 – ethical research with human subjects and consent**

For this study we conducted a social experiment with human subjects. We did everything to make sure the experiment and study were conducted ethically, complying with all relevant standards.

* All subjects gave active informed consent, for which the form can be found below.[[1]](#footnote-1) Participants were informed about the goal of the study, the duration, the number of interviews they were expected to partake in, that other (administrative) data might be linked with the survey data, the fact that they could end their participation at any moment without negative consequences, and a guarantee that their data would be treated with utmost confidentiality, whereby all publications would be fully anonymous and untraceable to individual participants.
* In addition to the fact that participation was voluntary, participants could end their participation at any moment they deemed fitting, and were informed thereof.
* The overall hypothesis was that both treatments would be preferable (from the participants point of view) compared to the regular social assistance regime, so that it is unlikely that participants suffer from overall negative consequences during the experiment.
* The experiment has been approved by both the local and the national government, and supervised by the Dutch scientific advisory council ZonMW, which promotes and subsidizes health research and care innovation. This experiment falls under the experimentation and innovation clause of the Participation Act (article 83). Explicit permission was given by the Ministry of Social Affairs on November 3rd, 2017 (reference number 2017-0000172924). ZonMW participated through an academic guidance committee that gave feedback on the experiment while it was ongoing. They furthermore advised the Ministry of Social Affairs about permitting the experiment to start (reference number 2017t141 2|ZONMW).

*The informed consent:*



**Appendix 3 – about the treatments and care as usual (control)**

Care as usual in the Dutch Social Assistance system is recorded in the Participation Act (‘Participatiewet’). It is based on a workfare approach: people on social assistance are expected to leave it as soon as possible, and any job (or combination of jobs) is considered better than receiving social assistance. The person’s own preferences are not taken into account.

This approach comes with a large number of obligations regarding re-integration. Social Assistance recipients are required to fulfil re-integration obligations set by social services (*e.g.* apply for a certain number of jobs per week; accept any job; commute 3 hours/day or move to another house if required for a job opportunity; make sure that the way they dress, present and take personal care of themselves do not interfere with the opportunity to get a job; et cetera.) If recipients want to do volunteer work, they have to get permission from social services, because that might interfere with searching for a job. And if people on social assistance work part-time, their allowance is reduced by the amount of money they make. The major exception is that if recipients earn additional income in the first six months, they are allowed to keep 25% of that without their allowance being reduced, up to a maximum of ~€200,- per months.

In addition, people on social assistance are to comply to a set of obligations related to the legality of them being on social assistance. This requires them to inform the municipality on every part of their life that might influence their eligibility for social assistance, like living together with somebody, or receiving any income (whatever the source, including a heritage, selling personal items second hand, or being brought groceries by family).

The treatments are, as stated in the paper, based on an approach that gives recipients more autonomy, takes trust in their capacities and intention as a starting point more, and allows them to keep more money from part-time or temporary work to facilitate steps forward. This extra income was part of both experimental treatments: the maximum per month stayed ~€200,- but that was prolonged for the entire duration of the experiment (maximum 25 months) instead of 6 months. Moreover, they were allowed to keep 50% of earned income, instead of 25%. Also, for both treatments the regular re-integration obligations (such as applying for a certain number of jobs) were set aside.

The most important difference between the two treatments is in that participants in the exempted group could freely choose their own path towards re-integration. They could do whatever they wanted, and any and all contact with re-integration services was voluntary and on their own initiative. There was no government control on the activities in this respect. Participants in the coached group could also choose their own path, but they got tailor made support for this, mainly through (on average) monthly group coaching sessions. Participation in the group coaching was the only obligation regarding re-integration, but still not control focused. Participants set their own goal, whether it was work (full-time or part-time), volunteering work, or entrepreneurship, and were offered support in obtaining those goals.

**Appendix 4 – qualitative data: sources & interview guides**

***Table*** *- interviews with professionals who had contact with a large number of (potential) participants*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Role interviewee(s)** | **Number** | **Date** | **Main focus** |
| Recruiters (civil servants of the municipality) | 3 individual interviews | August and September 2017 | Establishing whether selection bias took place (who participates and why) |
| Coaches of the coached treatment (civil servants of the regional re-integration service) | 1 focus group with 3 coaches | June 2018 | Their experiences with the coached group, implementation of the treatment and their observations about the participants |
| Contact person social service Nijmegen for participants in experiment | 1 individual interview | April 2019 | Because the rules and regulations for participants of the experiment were different, a few employers (customer managers) were designated to be familiar with these rules, and all questions from participants came to these people. This was the first contact person, majority of questions came from people in the exempted group. |
| Interviewers who did the survey fieldwork | 2 focus groups with 5-10 people[[2]](#footnote-2) | January 2018 and February 2019 (after field work was completed) | Interviewers talked with often dozens participants, mostly in their own house (the interviews were face to face), for about an hour on average. This means interviewers have the opportunity to have a good impression on how the experiment affects the participants. |

**Interview guide**

Below is an example of the interview guide we used. This was used when interviewing the three municipal civil servants who did the recruitment, and thus spoke with a large number of potential participants. The other interview guides can be requested from the authors. The interview guide is in Dutch, since the interviews were, but for those who are not proficient in the language the main topics in the summary are translated in brackets.

**Semi-gestructureerde vragenlijst interviews wervers stadswinkel**

DOEL INTERVIEW (goal interview)

Welke factoren hebben een rol gespeeld in wie zich wel en niet opgegeven hebben voor de proef met de bijstand? (Het genereren van mechanismen.)

TOPICS (topics)

Motivatie mee te doen (motivation for participating)

Financieel (financial)

Regeldruk (administrative burden)

Kans uitstroom (opportunity to leave social assistance)

Motivatie niet mee te doen (motivation for not participating)

Wantrouwen (distrust)

Vertrouwen eigen kunnen / geen effect verwacht (self-confidence / trust in effectivity)

Inbreuk privacy/controle (privacy)

Taalvaardigheid (language skills)

Reacties inhoud proef (reactions on the experiment)

Reacties bij niet in doelgroep (reactions for those not elligible to participate)

Reacties random indeling (reactions on randomization)

VOORAF (before interview)

-consentformulier (consent)

-opnamecheck (check recording equipment)

INTERVIEW GUIDE

|  |
| --- |
| **Intro** |
| Voorstellen  Doel: -- Achtergrond informatie voor de proef met de bijstand  -- Interview wordt gebruikt in onderzoek, maar altijd **geanonimiseerde:**  functie, niet naam. (Naam = vertrouwlijk)  -- ervaring + perspectief; geen foute antwoorden; onduidelijk dan aangeven.  -- Doorvragen: graag veel informatie willen en details  Heeft u nog vragen? |

|  |
| --- |
| **Onderwerp 1: Setting**  **Algemeen** |
| Vraag 1:  Zou je me eerste wat feitelijk informatie kunnen geven; wanneer je werving in de Stadswinkel gedaan hebt, voor hoe lang, hoeveel mensen je hebt aangesproken, de opstelling, dat soort dingen.  Folders en materiaal  Alleen  Aantal gesprekken; totaal aantal mensen voorbij kwamen  Vraag 2:  Hoe heeft u de dag ervaren?  Deed met persoon (houding)  Verloop over de dag  Verwachting vooraf |
| **Notities** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Onderwerp 2: Motivaties**  **Algemeen** |
| Vraag 3:  Als U zo terugdenkt aan de gesprekken, wat waren dan de motivaties van mensen om mee te doen of een folder mee te nemen?  Uitgesproken of impliciet  Wat meer en minder / ook als maar 1 persoon noemde interessant  Opening richting mensen (argumenten voor)  Op welke manier proberen over te halen  Potentiele antwoorden  Financieel  Regeldruk  Uitstroom  Vraag 4:  Wat kreeg u terug waarom mensen geen interesse hadden?  Verschillen mensen langer of niet gesproken  Impressies wat meespeelde  Verrassende antwoorden  compleet  Hoe ze werver leken te zien  Potentiele antwoorden  Wantrouwen  Vertrouwen eigen kunnen / geen effect verwacht  Inbreuk privacy/controle  Taalvaardigheid |
| **Notities** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Onderwerp 3: Beeld van Proef**  **Algemeen** |
| Vraag 5:  Over welke onderdelen van de inhoud en opzet van de proef hoe U onder andere gesproken en wat vonden de mensen die u sprak daarvan?  Indeling in groepen  Voorkeur groep  Sollicitatieplicht  Bijverdienen  In welke woorden / waar had men moeite mee  Vraag 6:  Waren er ook mensen die eigenlijk wel mee wilden doen maar buiten doelgroep vielen en hoe reageerden ze?  Voorkomen  Waarom meedoen  Waarom uitvallen |
| **Notities** |

|  |
| --- |
| **Afsluiting** |
| Vraag 7:  Zijn er zaken opgevallen die we niet besproken hebben of andere punten die u wilt delen?  Slot: Danken  Op de hoogte van resultaten? (Duurt wel even) |

**Appendix 5 - Analytical strategy used for the qualitative data**

As mentioned in the paper, we used hybrid iterative coding (e.g. Vennix, 2011) to analyze the data. Closed coding, in the sense that we studied the data looking specifically for mentions of sociodemographic subgroups as well as participation activities as operationalized in this paper: volunteering, informal care, schooling and setting up as a self-employed. And we used open coding, in the sense that we did not know beforehand which socio-demographic subgroups would turn up in the data.

We studied all the sources in detail, systematically read the texts line by line, coding all text segments about activities included in our dependent variable, and then read the texts once more coding all parts about how different subgroups related to the experiment (giving each such subgroup a code of its own). We not only coded the literal words (e.g. ‘self-employed’) but also any synonyms and descriptions of the concepts we were looking for (e.g. ‘entrepreneur’, ‘start working for myself’). This resulted in a selection of the data that dealt with both our outcomes of interest, as well as specific socio-demographic subgroups. In-depth reading this selection once more, we distilled new theoretical mechanisms and formulated hypotheses.

**Appendix 6 – study flow diagram**

Actual

Participants   
(n=339)

~8,000-8,500 individuals on social assistance

~2,500 not eligible

559 voluntarily applied

~6,000 target group

380 randomized (at the start of experiment)\*

Coached treatment:

128

Exempted treatment: 130

Control group:

130

179 not eligible

122 started experiment

114 started experiment

103 started experiment

93 baseline survey

104 baseline survey

114 baseline survey

56 end survey

46 end survey

61 end survey

***\*****At a later point a few extra participants joined, who were denied participation by the municipality, who objected against that decision and won the appeal.*

**Appendix 7 – Robustness check: attrition**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Table*** *– Mean scores on core variables at T=0* | | |
| **Variable** | **Present at T=0** | **Present at T=0 and T=2** |
| Group (%) |  |  |
| *Exempted* | 37 | 37 |
| *Coached* | 32 | 28 |
| *Control* | 32 | 34 |
| Social and economic activities (hours a week) | 6.6 | 8.3 |
| *Starting own business* | 2.0 | 0.4 |
| *Informal care* | 1.8 | 3.1 |
| *Volunteering* | 2.4 | 4.4 |
| *Schooling* | 0.9 | 0.4 |
| Older than 49 (%) | 62 | 60 |
| Single parent (%) | 23 | 25 |
| Mental Health Index (0-100) | 61 | 57 |
| Self-rated health | 3.3 | 3.6 |
| Education (%) |  |  |
| *Lower education* | 11 | 10 |
| *Lower middle education* | 11 | 12 |
| *Higher middle education* | 40 | 36 |
| *Tertiary education* | 38 | 42 |
| Country of birth: Dutch (%) | 74 | 75 |
|  |  |  |
| *N* | 289 | 163 |
| *Source*: Surveys experiment Participation Act Nijmegen (October/November 2017, February/March 2018, November/December 2018, September/August 2019); Register data Nijmegen municipal administration (December 2017, April 2018). | | |

To assess the degree to which attrition was selective we compare the sample on which we based the analyses in the manuscript with the larger sample including respondent who did participate in the first wave survey but were not present in wave three (and could thus not be included in our analyses). We compare their scores on the variables included in the models.

In brief the participation dropping out were as likely to be in the exempted group but a bit more likely to be in the coached group at the start, while being overall less active in the socio-economic activities we focus on. Moreover, those focusing on schooling and starting a business where somewhat less likely to remain, whereas those doing voluntary work and information care where more likely to remain. This suggests that the treatment work particularly for those who engage in activities with a more social than economic focus. That participants in the coached group people dropped out more *and* those already engaging with more economic oriented activities might indicate that those who found work dropped out somewhat more, but this is inference not fact. As such some crowding out might underly our results: the increase in societal activities is at odds with more economic activities. However, as showed elsewhere in the manuscript, we do not find strong evidence of this when we assess it more concretely in terms of working hours and seeking work. Moreover, the differences reported here are fairly limited (e.g. a 2 percentage points difference for the treatment groups), so it is unlikely to explain our results entirely.

Similarly on the demographic variables differences exist but are relatively small. Moreover, they are often in opposite directions, i.e. it are not the more marginalized groups that drop out consistently more. Young people and single parents were a bit less likely to drop out. For lower (middle) education no clear difference was found, while higher middle were less likely to remain than higher educated. And finally, those with lower mental health and – contrarily - those with higher self-reported health remained more.

Attrition might have influenced the results, but given this comparison it is unlikely that this happened in predominantly one direction or to a strong degree. In other words, we expect the reported results to hold by and large for the full set of participants we started with, at least in terms of direction.

**Appendix 8 – Questions about the dependent variable**

The following questions were asked from participants in the questionnaire about the dependent variable used in this study:

How many hours per week do you spent on the following activities? In the case the situation does not apply, you can answer 0 hours.

“I am preparing setting up as self-employed”

“I provide informal care (I help or tare care for a family member or good friend)”

“I’m volunteering”

“I’m following an educational program or training”

**Appendix 9 – Robustness check: 5 categories**

In the tables below, the analysis done in this paper are repeated with a different dependent variable. We recoded the amount of hours per week participants spent on non-work activities (which was not normally distributed due to a relative high number of participants who spend hours on the activities we study neither at the beginning nor at the end of the experiment) into 5 categories, running from -2 to 2. This variable does show an approximate normal distribution. The recoded variable was as follows: a difference between baseline and end survey of -11 or fewer hours per week spent on these activities was labelled ‘-2’; between the -10.5 and -0.5 was labelled ‘-1’; 0 was labelled ‘0’; +0.5 and +10.5 was labelled ‘1’; and +11 and higher was labelled ‘2’.

***Table*** *- Changes in social and economic activities in the Nijmegen experiment, regressions with baseline score as control variable*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Change after 2 years*** | |
|  | B | P-value |
| Group |  |  |
| *Control* | Ref |  |
| *Exempted* | 0.27 | 0.21 |
| *Coached* | 0.36 | 0.11 |
| Baseline self-rated health value | -0.03 | <0.01 |
| Intercept | 0.08 | 0.60 |

N = 163; R = 0.31; scale between -2 and 2.

***Table*** *- Social and economic activities in the Nijmegen experiment (moderations)*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Activities*** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | ***Model 1*** | ***Model 2*** | ***Model 3*** | ***Model 4*** | ***Model 5*** | ***Model 6*** |
| Group |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| *Control* | Ref | Ref | Ref | Ref | Ref | Ref |
| *Exempted* | 0.08 (0.81) | 0.65 (0.36) | 0.74 (0.09)\* | 0.47 (0.58) | 1.70 (0.02)\*\* | 0.25 (0.34) |
| *Coached* | 0.57 (0.13) | -0.19 (0.82) | 0.95 (0.03)\*\* | 0.97 (0.23) | 0.52 (0.51) | 0.23 (0.44) |
| Baseline value activities | -0.03 (0.00) | -0.03 (0.00) | -0.03 (0.00) | -0.03 (0.00) | -0.03 (0.00) | -0.03 (0.00) |
| ***Age (ref=50+)*** | 0.18 (0.54) |  |  |  |  |  |
| *\*exempted* | 0.40 (0.34) |  |  |  |  |  |
| *\*coached* | -0.34 (0.47) |  |  |  |  |  |
| ***Education*** |  | 0.04 (0.83) |  |  |  |  |
| *\*exempted* |  | -0.13 (0.56) |  |  |  |  |
| *\*coached* |  | 0.17 (0.49) |  |  |  |  |
| ***Country***  ***(ref=migrant)*** |  |  | 0.36 (0.31) |  |  |  |
| *\*exempted* |  |  | -0.61 (0.11) |  |  |  |
| *\*coached* |  |  | -0.81 (0.11) |  |  |  |
| ***Self-reported health*** |  |  |  | -0.05 (0.76) |  |  |
| *\*exempted* |  |  |  | -0.06 (0.79) |  |  |
| *\*coached* |  |  |  | -0.19 (0.40) |  |  |
| ***Mental health*** |  |  |  |  | 0.00 (0.84) |  |
| *\*exempted* |  |  |  |  | -0.02 (0.06)\* |  |
| *\*coached* |  |  |  |  | -0.00 (0.82) |  |
| ***Having Children (ref=no)*** |  |  |  |  |  | -0.16 (0.62) |
| *\*exempted* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.05 (0.91) |
| *\*coached* |  |  |  |  |  | 0.32 (0.49) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Intercept | -0.03 | -0.04 | -0.20 | 0.27 | -0.04 | 0.14 |
| R | 0.32 | 0.33 | 0.34 | 0.34 | 0.37 | 0.32 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

Values shown are the B and (in brackets) the p-value

**Appendix 10 – Correlation SEA between work and time spend job-searching**

To check if the increase in SEA is driven by a reduction in time spend job-searching or in employment, we analysed the correlation between these in the table below. In the case of a significant negative correlation, it would be safe to assume extra SEA crowd out time job-searching or employment. Given that the correlations are both positive and insignificant, this does not seem the case.

***Table*** *– Correlation between social and economic activities and job-searching / employment*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Job-search | Job-search and employment |
| SEA - Pearson correlation with: | 0.065 | 0.037 |
| *p-value* | 0.45 | 0.79 |
| N=164 | N=136 | N=54 |

1. It carries the logo of the Municipality of Nijmegen, since the municipality was in charge of data collection and is the owner of the data. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Due illness, the second focus group was lead not by one of us, the researchers, but another employer from the company who did the fieldwork (surveying). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)