

BACKGROUND

Recruitment of participants in health surveys is recognized as the most challenging step of fieldwork. This work presents preliminary results of recruitment in the first Portuguese National Health Examination Survey (INSEF) comparing participants and non participants.

INSEF is a cross-sectional prevalence study targeting 4200 individuals aged 25-74 years, living in Portugal for more than 12 months, non-institutionalized and able to follow an interview in Portuguese (eligibility criteria).

The survey encompasses three components:



Fieldwork is performed between February and December 2015 in 49 collection sites. Results regarding the first 9 collection sites are presented.

METHODS

Selected individuals received an invitation letter and later were contacted by phone to schedule the appointment. Individuals were then classified in participants, refusals and unresolved. Participation rates were calculated according to European Health Examination Survey guidelines (1).

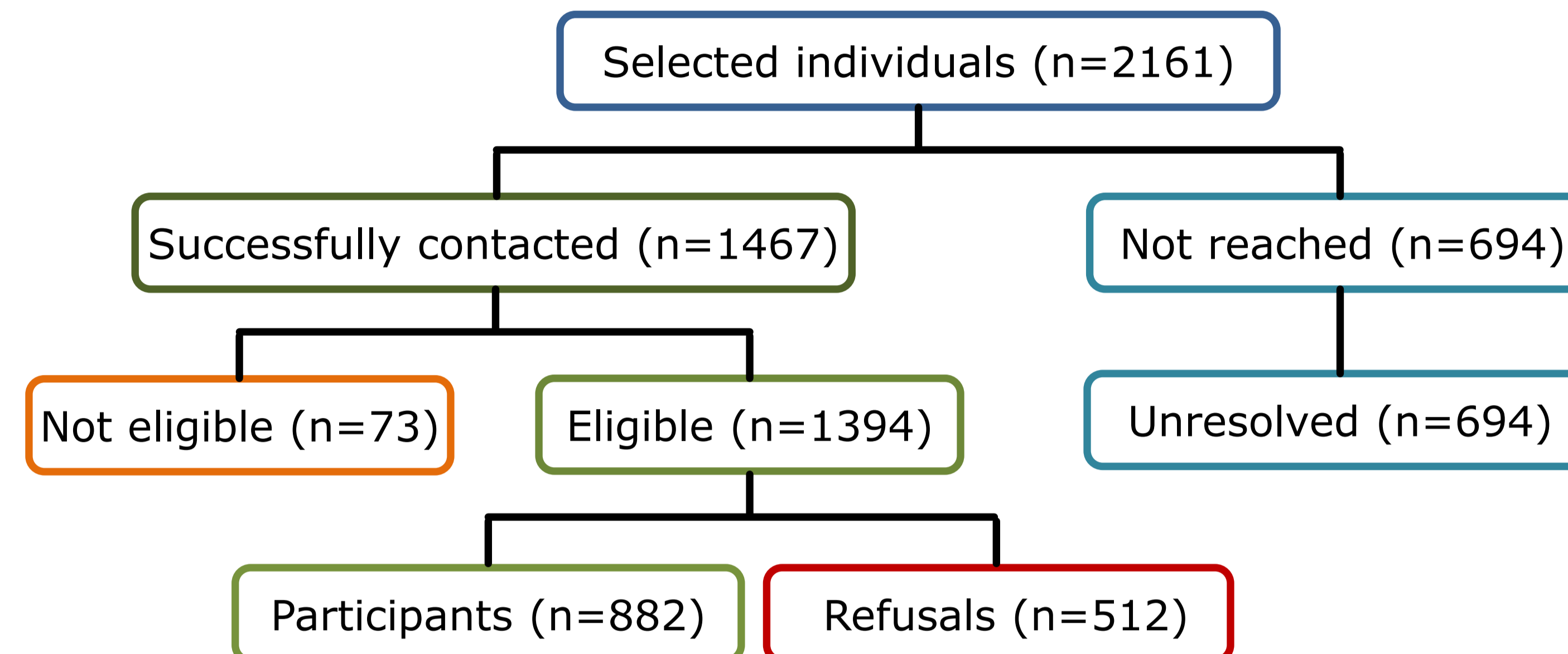
$$\text{Participation rate} = \frac{\text{number of participants}}{\text{number of eligible AND unresolved}}$$

Reasons for refusals were recorded and non participant's characteristics analyzed. Chi-square and Fisher exact tests were used to compare participants and non participants regarding age, sex, education level, marital status, smoking, use of medication and of healthcare services.

(1) Tolonen H (Ed.) EHES Manual. Part A. Planning and preparation of the survey. National Institute for Health and Welfare, 2013, Directions 2013_001. URL: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-245-842-1>.

RESULTS

1467 of the 2161 selected individuals were successfully contacted.



Overall participation rate was 42% (n=882), ranging between 27-54% by collection site (CS).

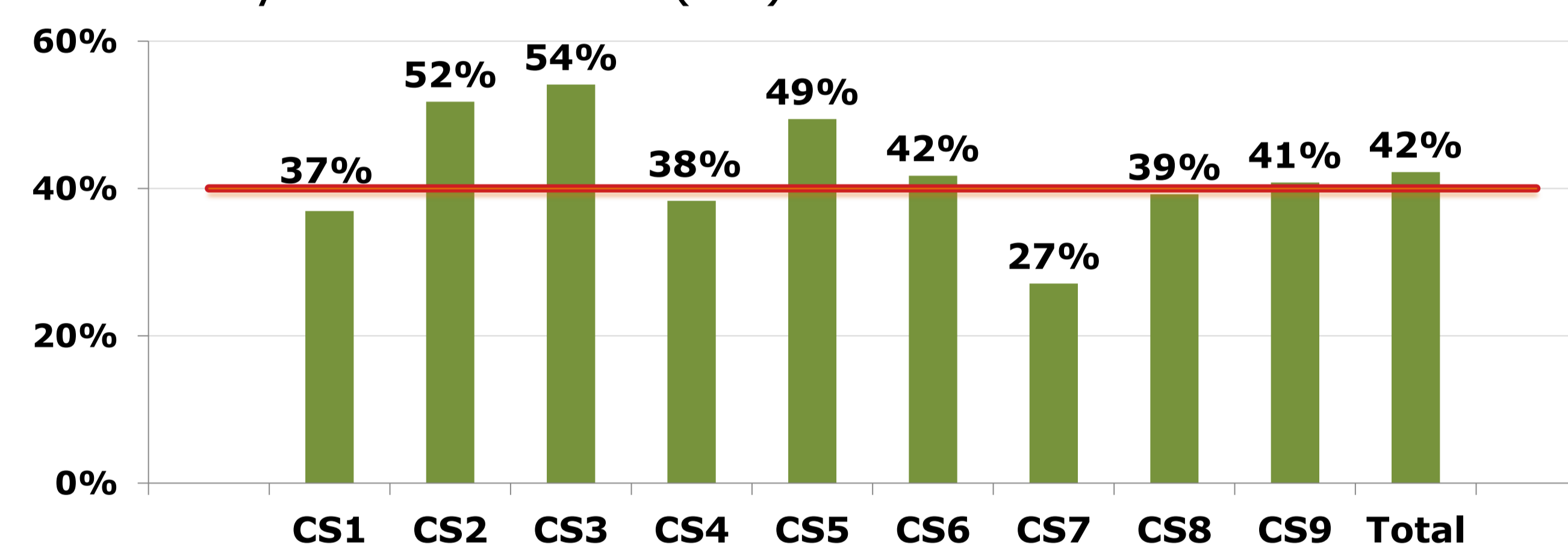


Figure 1. Participation rate by collection site

Non participants

49% of the 512 refusals accepted to respond to a short questionnaire for non participants. The main reasons for non participation were due to lack of time (27.6%) and professional reasons (22.4%).

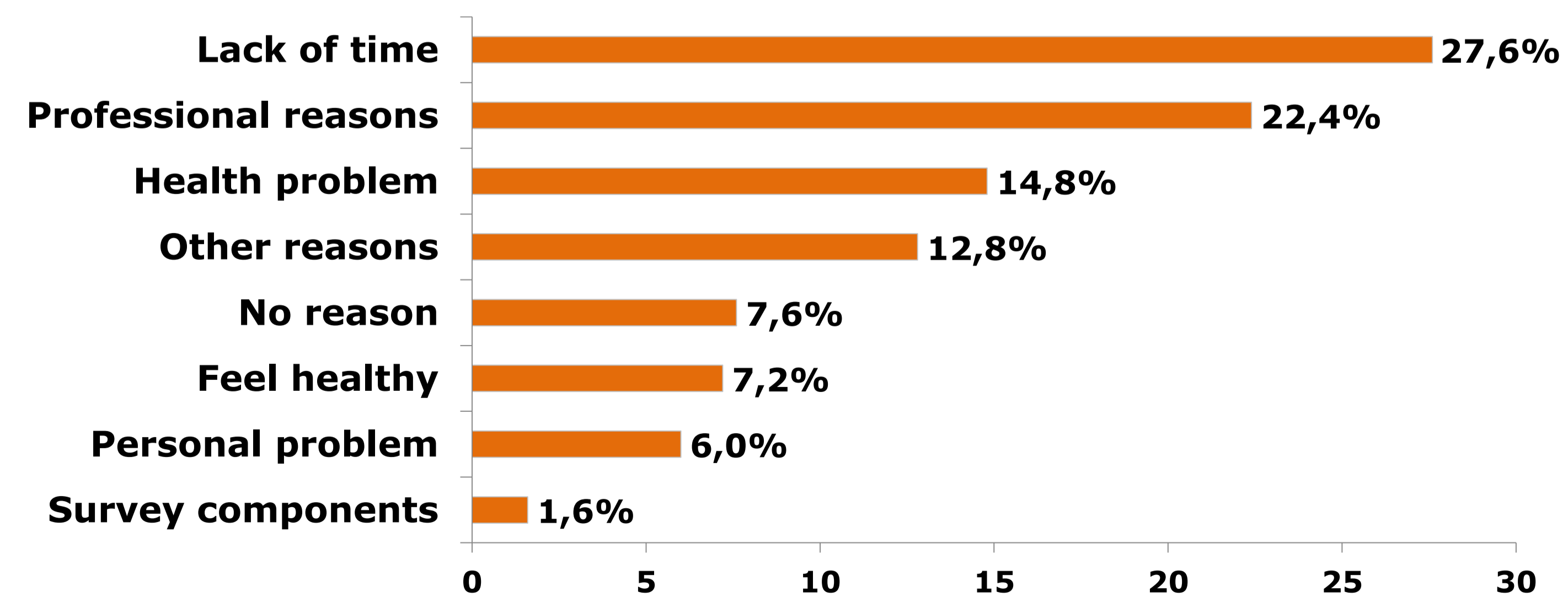


Figure 2. Reasons for non participation

No significant differences were found between participants and non participants for the majority of the analysed variables.

Participants were found to be more frequent users of medication (p<0.001) and to have between 45-54 years old (p=0.023).

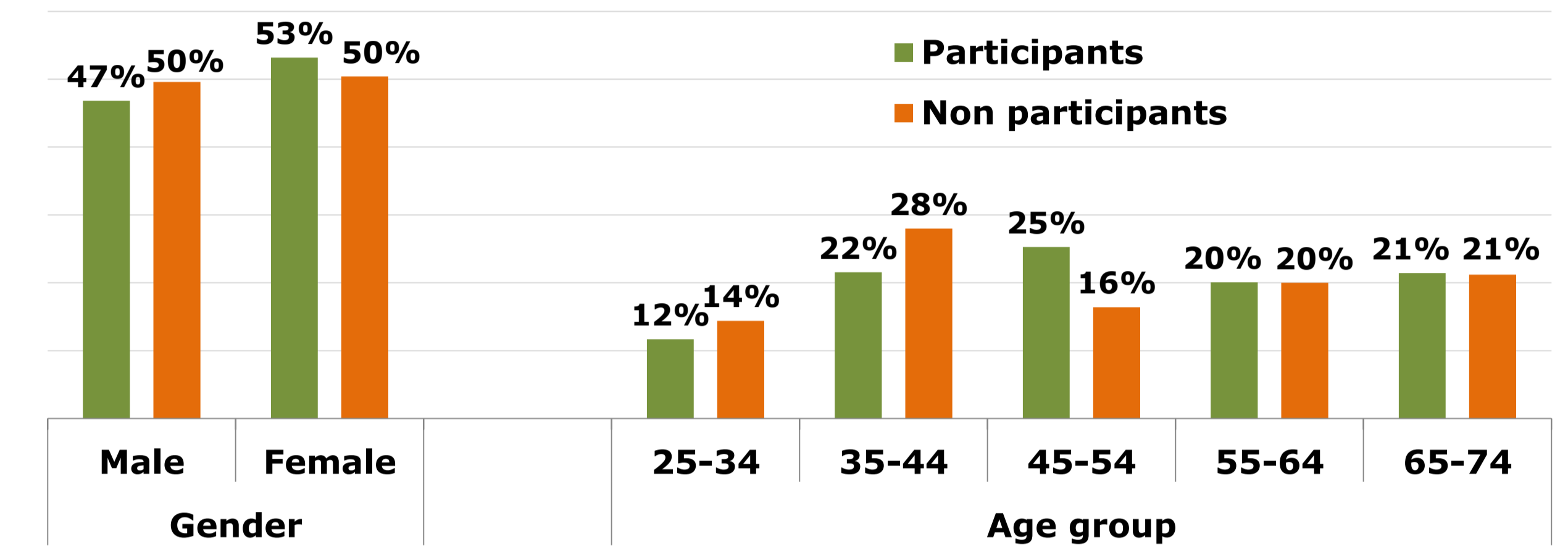


Figure 3. Comparison of gender and age group between participants and non participants

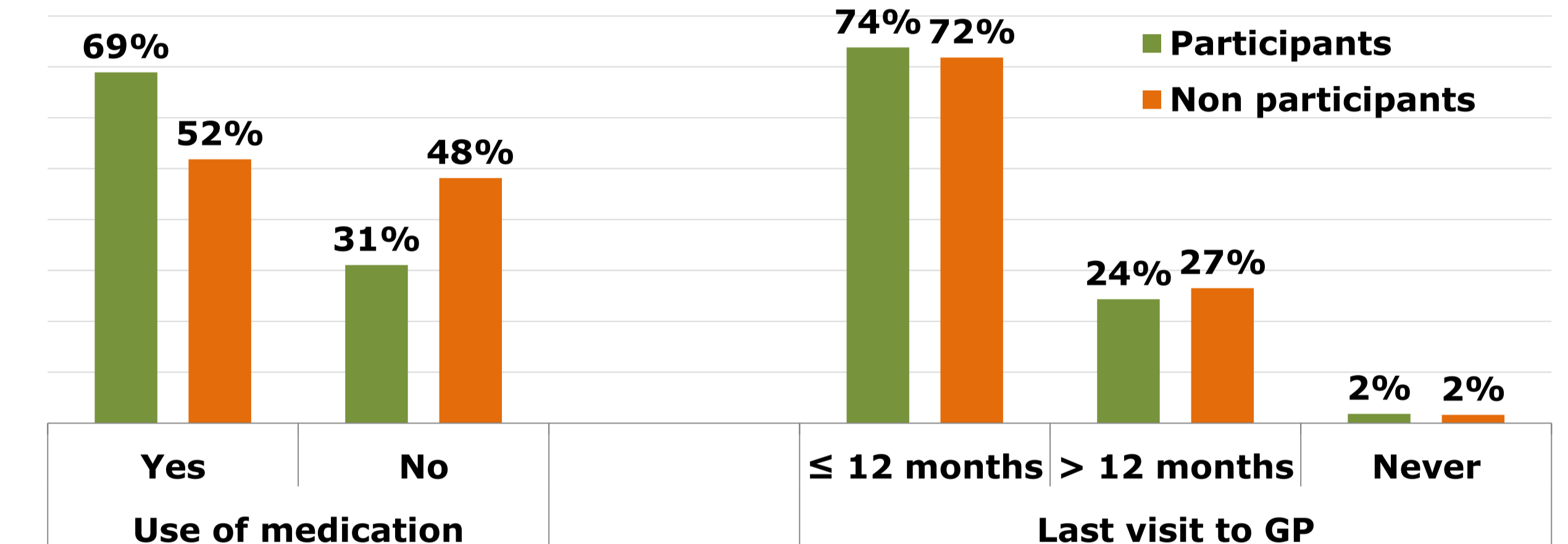


Figure 4. Comparison of medication use and last visit to GP between participants and non participants

CONCLUSIONS

- To date the planned participation rate of 40% was successfully achieved at national level.
- Results obtained showed the need to implement strategies to engage in participation specific target groups.
- To mitigate selection bias adjustment of sampling weights for non response should be done.
- Adequate strategies to improve response rate and minimize dropouts are essential to avoid recruitment bias.
- A strict control of the contact, cooperation and participation rates in each collection site is essential for the success of the overall recruitment process.

FUNDING

The Portuguese National Health Examination Survey is developed as a part of the project "Improvement of epidemiological health information to support public health decision and management in Portugal. Towards reduced inequalities, improved health, and bilateral cooperation", that benefits from a 1.500.000€ Grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA Grants.