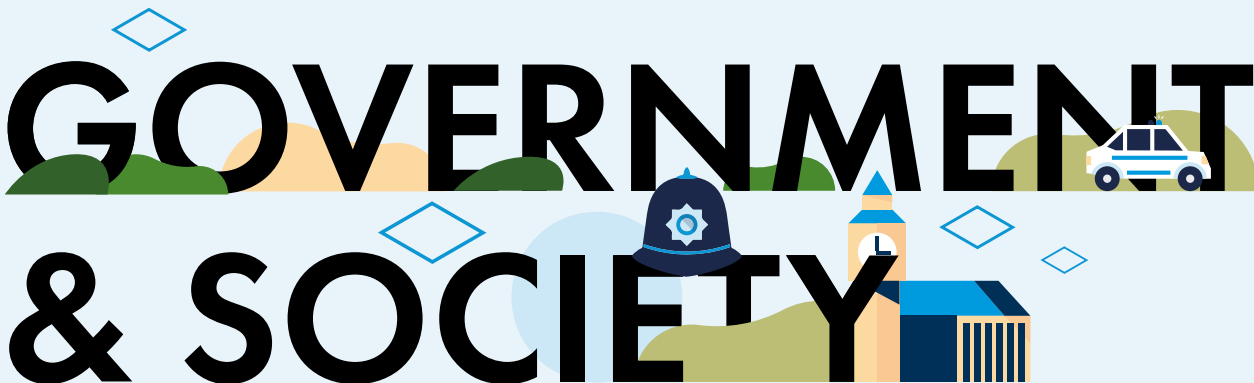




THE
BEHAVIOURAL
INSIGHTS
TEAM

GOVERNMENT & SOCIETY



**BIT Review
2021-22**



Projects



EMEA

<u>Britain Connects</u>	03
<u>Centre for Homeless Impact</u>	06
<u>UK census</u>	08



APAC

<u>Help for migrant domestic workers</u>	11
<u>Increasing court attendance in New Zealand</u>	14



Americas

<u>Economic mobility</u>	16
<u>Reducing speeding in San Francisco</u>	19
<u>Safe and fuel-efficient truck driving</u>	22



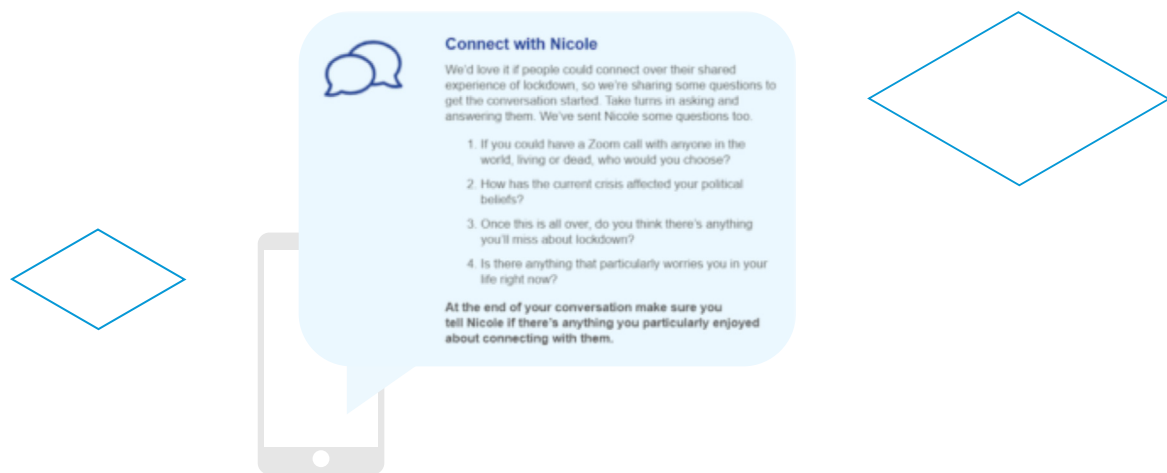
Britain Connects

Political polarisation has become a powerful force of division in the UK. A 2018 Survey in the British Journal of Political Science found fewer than half of Labour and Conservative voters said they were willing to talk about politics with someone from the other side, and around 75% wouldn't be happy for their child to marry someone from the opposite political side.

When political views become political identities, we see people who agree with us in a positive light (intelligent, selfless and open minded), and people who disagree with us as the opposite. Researchers have found that when people disagree politically, they disregard each others' expertise in unrelated domains – even when it loses them money.

It's perhaps unsurprising, then, that cohesive societies, in which people trust one another and feel a shared sense of identity, have been found to be happier and wealthier.

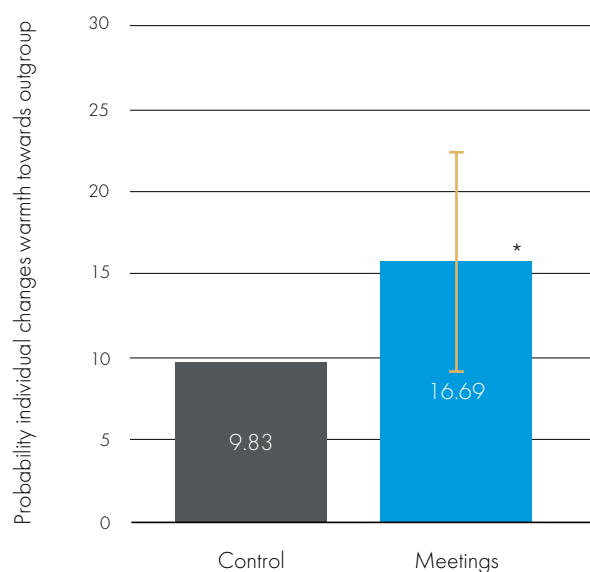
Many initially hailed the pandemic as a unique opportunity to rebuild social cohesion – to bring neighbourhoods closer together and reignite a sense of trust in community. However UK survey data from June 2020 shows that people's trust towards their neighbours and community was even lower than in previous years, with deprived areas particularly affected during the pandemic.



In 2018 Britain Connects, a partnership between BIT, Reach publishing and Unbound Philanthropy was launched, to see if a simple conversation could begin to reduce political polarisation.

Members of the public were given the opportunity to have a conversation with their political 'opposite'. The timing of the first UK pandemic lockdown meant that participants met via a video call.

To help people connect in a mutually enjoyable way, all participants were given extra information about one another and in some instances conversation prompts based on the psychology of reducing conflict and fostering liking.

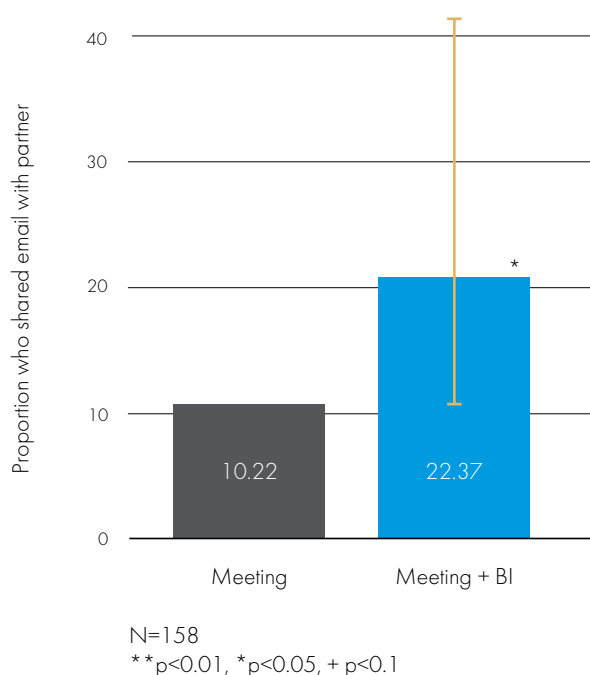


N=623

**p<0.01, *p<0.05, +p<0.1

The impact of the connections was measured through a randomised control trial in June 2020. This analysis found:

- People who had the meetings felt warmer towards their political opposite, compared with people who hadn't yet met.
- The conversation prompts helped people get along – people who received them were more likely to share their contact details after the meeting, than people who met without these prompts.



- The meetings had no impact on other metrics of polarisation, such as social trust, willingness to form friendships with the political outgroup or engage with information they disagree with.

And despite actively signing up for the project, some people were still resistant to actually meeting their political opposite and asked to pull out once they saw the reality of their match's views.

This resistance towards meeting people we dislike is one of the greatest challenges to bringing people together in practice. The more prejudice people hold, the greater the barrier to engaging in intergroup contact.

Academics and policymakers seeking to apply intergroup contact in practice should ensure they break down people's barriers to engagement – particularly for those who have the highest levels of prejudice to begin with, for example using further upstream interventions to encourage people to participate in the first place.



Centre for Homeless Impact

In 2019 the Centre for Homelessness Impact (CHI) commissioned BIT to identify ways to increase the willingness of UK landlords to rent to people receiving housing benefits.

The need to establish effective ways to encourage and ensure private landlords let properties to those receiving Universal Credit (UC) (which replaced most previous benefits for housing) became even more apparent during the pandemic the number of Britons claiming UC almost doubled, from 2.7 million in March 2020 to 4.9 million by November that year.

BIT ran two online randomised control trials between July and November 2020 with nearly 2,700 landlords selected in partnership with the National Residential Landlords Association.

The first trial looked at whether providing extra information would encourage landlords to rent to people receiving UC. All landlords participating were shown a scenario in which a prospective tenant was applying for a one bedroom property. The rent was equal to the housing benefit payment that the prospective tenant was receiving, so there should not have been any concerns about the tenant's ability to pay.

Additional information accompanying the application included either a budget planner from the tenant, evidence of completion of a tenancy skills programme, or details about the circumstances in which housing benefits can be transferred directly to the landlord through the UC Alternative Payments Arrangements scheme.

None of these interventions significantly increased landlord willingness to rent to a person receiving UC.

The second trial tested whether offering incentives to landlords would have an impact on their willingness to rent. The incentives tested were an upfront cash payment of £1000, a rent guarantee, a deposit bond, and a dedicated landlord liaison officer from the local authority.

These incentives were chosen because they're quite commonly offered by local authorities across England. Out of the four tested, providing cash upfront and providing a rent guarantee were the most effective, however even in these cases, landlords were not very inclined to accept the offers.

Across both trials, average willingness of landlords to rent to someone receiving UC never went above 'neutral' suggesting that larger policy-focused changes will be needed to help people receiving UC find a private rented home. These two online experiments fill an important gap in research on this topic. We are not aware of previous behavioural experiments with landlords in the UK and this policy area has been historically understudied because of difficulties in reaching this group.

Obviously we always hope that the solutions we develop will be effective, but establishing when things don't work is also a very useful outcome. It prevents ineffective policies being rolled out, and can also help identify where governments or local authorities are spending money on things that are not having an impact (or maybe even having a detrimental effect). That's why we think it's important to share these examples, alongside trials that have had clearer positive results. receiving UC find a private rented home.





UK census

The [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) plays a vital role in British life. Without ONS statistics, government and local authorities would not be able to calculate or understand inflation, immigration, or employment reliably, nor could the government design and

Statistics determine how public funds are allocated and spent in communities, and inform countless decisions in our personal lives, from whether and where to go to university to when and where to buy a house. They also help us build a picture of how our population compares internationally.

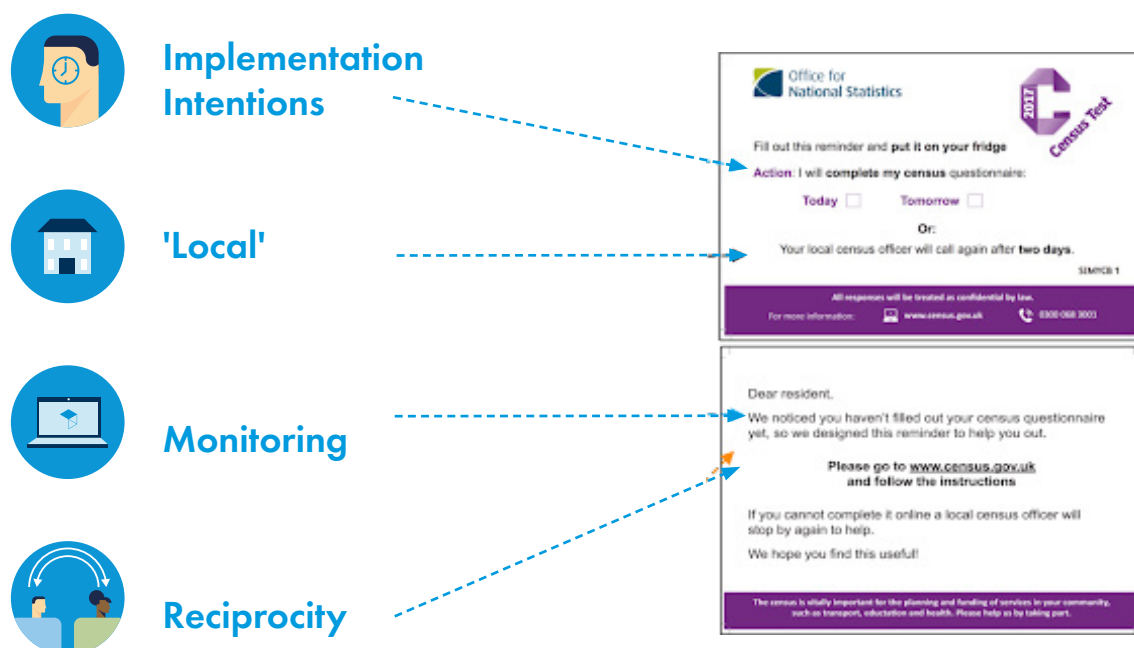
Much of this information comes from Britain's census, the once-every-ten-years survey of all UK households. Conducting the census is one of the largest public facing activities of the UK Government, and households that don't complete it quickly can drive up the cost. Thousands of field workers are hired to follow up on each household that hasn't responded. Every visit that can be avoided saves money.

BIT worked with the ONS to run a series of RCTs testing strategies to improve the speed and quality of data collection. In one trial, we aimed to maximise Census Test response rates among persistent nonresponders. These individuals typically receive a follow up visit by a member of the census field force.



BIT designed two new versions of a calling card to test against an existing calling card designed by ONS. Both BIT versions used implementation intentions and prompts, in addition to other behavioural insights, to encourage recipients to remember and plan for completing the census.

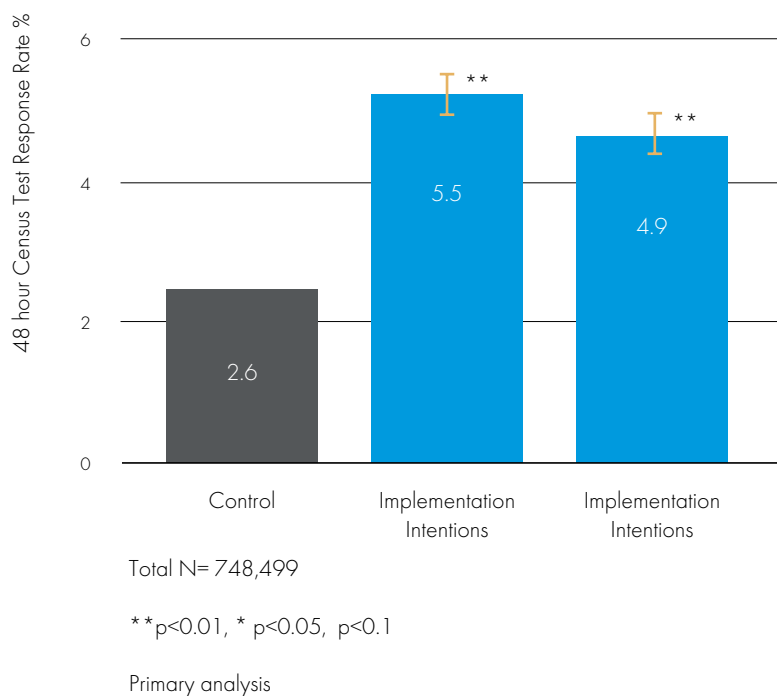
First version (Intervention #1)



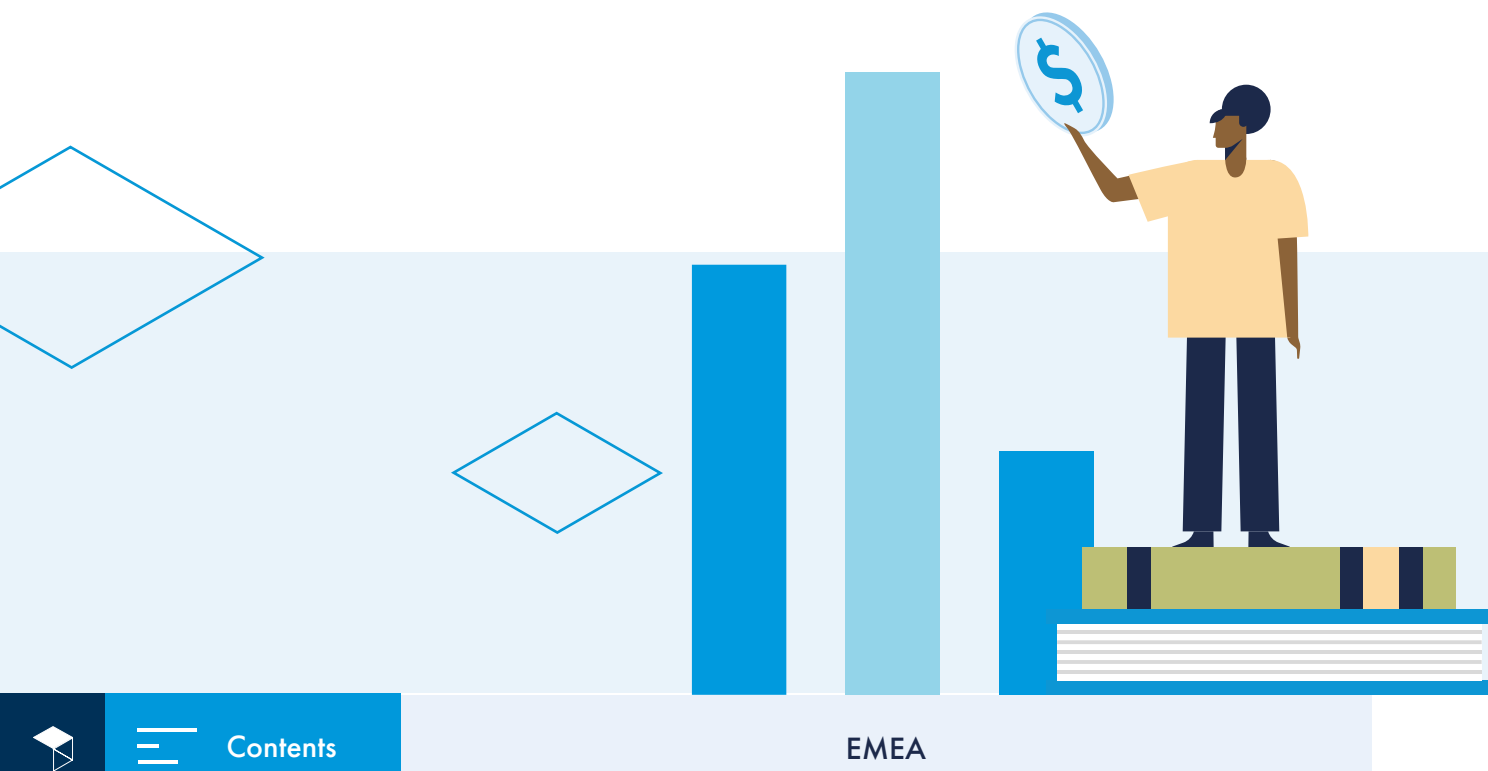
During the course of our exploratory work, field workers told us that they often personalised materials left at households, which they felt was very effective. We tested this in our second version of the card by incorporating similar behavioural insights as in our first version, and leaving a space for field workers to sign their name and add personalised language.

We found that both versions outperformed the control group, doubling the rate of response within 48 hours. However, the personalised card did not outperform the non-personalised redesigned card.

Figure 1. The effect of each calling card on the likelihood of a household to complete the Census within the next 48 hours.



These results strongly suggest that increasing the use of behavioural insights in ONS





Help for migrant domestic workers

There are an estimated 11.5 million migrant domestic workers working for households around the world, according to [estimates by the International Labour Organisation \(ILO\)](#). In Singapore, over 245,000 migrant domestic workers live in their employers' homes and do the cleaning, cooking, caregiving and more.

Incidents of abuse and harassment at work are [difficult to catch even when they happen in public places such as an office](#). When one lives with their employer, as migrant domestic workers do in Singapore, the risk that abuse goes undetected is compounded, and it is often not addressed until quite late. While there are measures in place to guard against abuse, [including compulsory medical check-ups and house visits](#), empowering migrant domestic workers to seek help in case of abuse is of utmost importance.

We partnered with two non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the [Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics](#) (HOME) and [Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training](#) to understand the types of help-seeking behaviours migrant domestic workers take, as well as the barriers and enablers to those behaviours.

What we found

Migrant domestic workers utilise various channels to seek help, ranging from the informal (eg, asking friends or family for advice) to more formal measures (eg, NGOs, employment agencies, Ministry of Manpower, and police). In an ideal world, we might imagine that migrant domestic workers seek help from informal channels for small problems, and escalate their help-seeking as issues become more severe.

In reality, we found that migrant domestic workers mostly sought help through informal channels, and they only accessed more formal channels when encouraged by informal contacts (eg, their friends prompted them to approach an NGO for help) or when they were desperate (eg, they called the police when they did not know what else to do).

There were several barriers stopping migrant domestic workers from accessing more formal support, including practical constraints, social barriers, and uncertainty aversion. On the other hand, we found that social support was a huge facilitator to encouraging migrant domestic workers to seek help.

The intervention

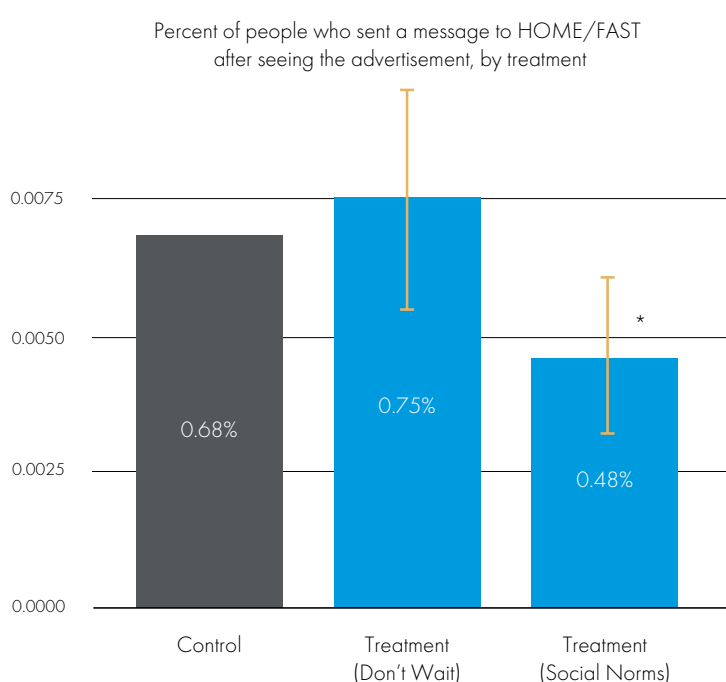
We designed and tested two different Facebook ads encouraging migrant domestic workers to seek help via a hotline in case they were experiencing difficulties or were in need of advice. One message leveraged social norms ('Everyone asks for advice sometimes') and another prompted people to call earlier ('Don't wait until it's too late').



Each ad was translated into five languages commonly used by migrant domestic workers in Singapore (Bahasa Indonesia, Tagalog, Burmese, Hindi, and Tamil) and ran an RCT testing them with a total of 45,000 Facebook users, targeting females in Singapore based on their age and language.

Our findings were unexpected: Users who saw the social norms message were less likely to message the NGO or click on the ad.

Figure 1. Percent of people who sent a message to the NGO's Facebook page after seeing the advertisement



We were surprised by these findings because we had seen in fieldwork that social support was the strongest facilitator for help-seeking. Some reasons why the social norms message might not have worked could be: (i) the message may not have been urgent enough for people to click on the 'Send Message' button; (ii) "everyone" asking for advice might have been too broad, causing users to identify less with the social norm of asking for advice; (iii) having specific prompts (eg, call Organisation X when Y event happens) is an important precursor to seeking help, so "[asking] for advice sometimes" is not specific enough for people to take action. Despite these results, the importance of social support in our fieldwork leads us to recommend not giving up on social norm messaging entirely, but rather tweaking it in ways that could make it more effective.

Although the "don't wait" and control messages performed similarly in terms of clicks and messages, we would recommend scaling the "don't wait" message because it led to more discussion in the comments section. Such discussion could encourage migrant domestic workers to support each other in the community.

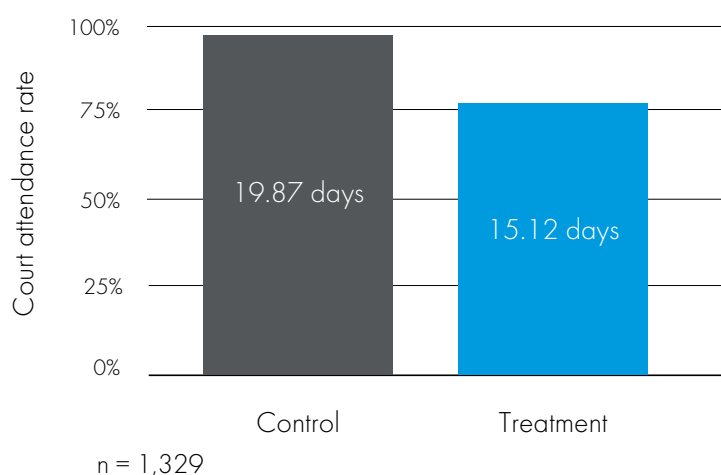


Increasing court attendance in New Zealand

Behavioural science has shown that many things can be done to encourage people to attend appointments. Simple calls to action, planning prompts and text message reminders have all been used by BIT to help people get to where they need to be. BIT's [early work in Australia](#) helped domestic abuse defendants understand and remember what they have to do when they have a court appointment using clearer court orders and text message reminders.

Building on this body of work, in 2020 BIT partnered with the Evidence Based Policing Centre of the New Zealand Police to create a new police bail notice by removing unnecessary legal jargon, putting the most important information at the top of the notice, and reducing the reading age of the language used from 12- to 9-years-old.

Six police stations throughout New Zealand tested the new notice with a randomised control trial (RCT) which found an increase in court attendance by 4 percentage points, from 84% to 88%, from the redesigned forms. If this effect was scaled nationwide would mean around 1,600 more defendants attending court each year.

Figure 1. Effect on the court attendance rate

The forms were designed to really focus on ensuring that people knew that they had to attend court. The target of this intervention is to make the call to action clear and memorable. However, we know that there are many other potential reasons why people may not attend court. For this reason, the BIT team also ran some follow up qualitative work in partnership with Behavioural Science Aotearoa to further understand the factors at play. This comprised interviewing seven defendants and surveying 89 custody staff.

This process uncovered three common reasons for non-attendance - transport barriers, childcare and waiting times.

Fortunately, there are ways to overcome these barriers. The next step in boosting court attendance may be to build community support, and/or change how staff interact with defendants. Tapping into community support could help with transport, childcare and other barriers. BIT's fieldwork also suggests that improving the interactions between staff and defendants could increase trust in the system, whether at arrest, while in custody, or at court.





Economic mobility

From April 2019 to October 2021, BIT partnered with nine US cities with support from Bloomberg Philanthropies' [What Works Cities \(WWC\) Economic Mobility Initiative](#). In [this innovative cohort](#), cities were convened to advance the shared goal of accelerating economic mobility.

Each city worked with BIT and other WWC technical assistance partners to design and test interventions to address economic mobility challenges and pilot promising solutions to help improve the lives of their residents. We took city project teams through the process of identifying high-priority policy areas, researching evidence-based strategies, co-creating interventions, maintaining the city's momentum through implementation, and helping evaluate the results.

Here's a sample of our work from each of the nine cities:

Lansing, MI

- **Bridging postsecondary education opportunities in Lansing, MI.** With many different providers and requirements, students couldn't easily access the wide range of postsecondary education programmes available to them. We created the BOLD Lansing partnership to bring all of these services together and facilitated a key collaboration between two partners, Lansing Promise and the Financial Empowerment Center. They developed a pilot programme offering financial skills building to high school and college students. Outreach included personalised message reminders and savings incentives

to encourage uptake of the programme. Participants made progress on their goals and programme partners now have a model to create new, integrated pilots in the future.

Cincinnati, OH

- **Standing up a workforce consulting programme in Cincinnati, OH.** The Workforce Innovation Center built a consulting practice to help local companies identify workforce issues and adopt inclusive practices to solve them. We supported the Center by co-creating consulting tools and developing a library of evidence-based practices to customise client recommendations. In the pilot, fifteen businesses received consulting services and are now collectively implementing more than 73 new policies. Building on these results, the Center is exploring scaling across the region.

Tulsa, OK

- **Connecting disconnected young people to workforce training in Tulsa, OK.** We partnered with Tulsa Community WorkAdvance to test ideas to increase enrollment in NextUp, a new, evidence-based sectoral training programme to help disconnected young people find jobs. Our evaluation found promising retention across NextUp's stages, with more than two-thirds of participants completing the full training. NextUp is planning to scale what worked and iterate on initial challenges.

Newark, NJ

- **Increasing affordable housing with a behaviourally-informed letter in Newark, NJ.** We worked with the Newark mayor's office to design a behaviourally-informed letter to landlords prompting them to register with the Office of Rent Control (which would, in turn make more affordable housing apartments available). The mailer resulted in 1,900 new units on the market for low-income families.

New Orleans, LA

- **Helping students gain skills for high-growth careers in New Orleans, LA.** We partnered with YouthForce NOLA, an internship programme for high schoolers on two interventions: creating guides for supervisors to enhance internship quality and making behaviourally-informed changes to the programme's enrollment process. 83% of supervisors used the guides to better support their interns' experiences and the revised enrollment process meaningfully reduced the burden of documentation on students.

Racine, WI

- **Improving an education programme through evaluation in Racine, WI.** We partnered with YWCA Southeast Wisconsin to evaluate recruitment and enrollment initiatives for their evidence-based High School Equivalency Degree programme. Our data analysis identified the programme's largest points of drop off during enrollment. To address this, we proposed a peer referral programme as well as concrete strategies to improve conversion rates between the initial touchpoint with students and the subsequent orientation. With these strategies in hand, the programme is on track to meet its enrollment goals.

Rochester, NY

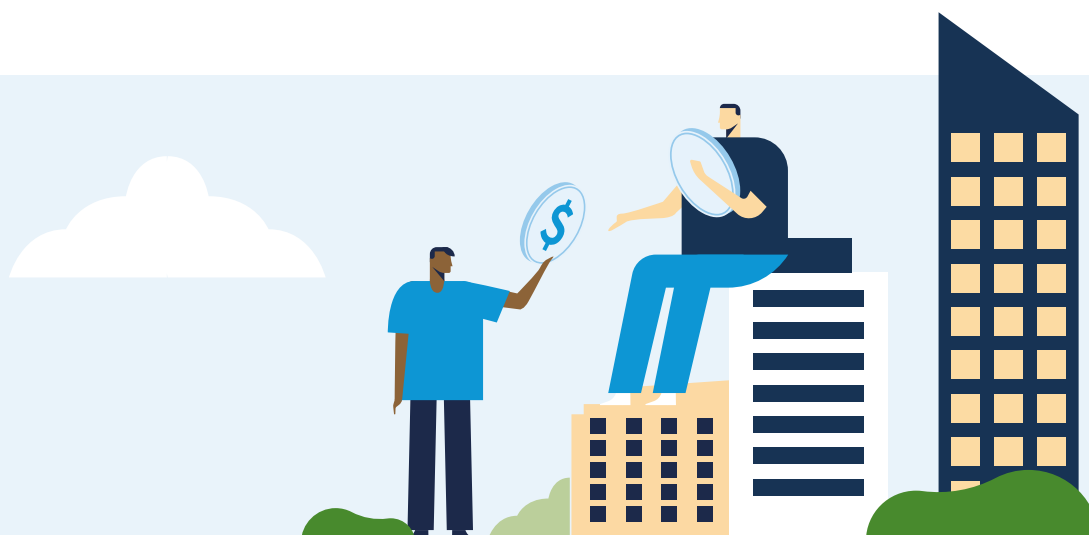
- **Helping households save more in Rochester, NY.** We worked with a local nonprofit to evaluate two new programmes: ROCyourRefund (RYR), a savings programme for residents eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit, and Seeds for Savings, which gave participants up to \$500 in a savings match and access to financial counselling. Our evaluation showed that RYR benefitted from a match incentive and 80% of survey respondents credited Seeds for Savings with helping them save more than usual. With sustainable funding and our recommendations, these programmes are set up to scale successfully.

Detroit, MI

- **Piloting a financial services programme in Detroit, MI.** BIT and the Housing and Revitalization Department partnered with the city's Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) to create and implement a pilot programme to connect people living in affordable housing to the FEC's free financial services. Due to the pandemic, we focused on flyers as our outreach intervention, which showed limited success in increasing FEC attendance. However, our evaluation offered several new ideas to refine and test communications based on residents' goals.

Dayton, OH

- **Creating a fairer start for the next generation in Dayton, OH.** BIT partnered with Preschool Promise, a local nonprofit, to ensure children have access to high-quality preschool education, with a focus on Black, Hispanic, and Appalachian children. We developed six interventions to enhance attendance, engagement, and enrollment. One intervention, a weekly SMS campaign, increased the use of virtual learning tools by more than 50% and led to consistent use of the platform over time. With all of our results, the city has a clearer plan in place to close the racial gap in preschool outcomes.
- See here to for more info on how we increased programme uptake across the Economic Mobility Initiative Cities: [Increasing Program Uptake: Practical ways that behavioural science can reduce barriers](#)
- For more detail on the projects in each of the nine cities, please click on the memo for the city of interest: Lansing, Tulsa, Cincinnati, Newark, New Orleans, Racine, Rochester, Detroit, Dayton.





Reducing speeding in San Francisco

Pedestrian safety is a growing concern. Over the past decade in the US, car crash death rates for [pedestrians and cyclists rose 36% and 50%](#) respectively, even as death rates fell for drivers and passengers. Larger cars, distracted drivers, and infrastructure built to

Deaths are unequally distributed as well. Older adults, people of colour, and pedestrians in low-income communities are [disproportionately represented in fatal crashes](#).

The city of San Francisco sought to make rapid gains in pedestrian safety under its Vision Zero plan, with a focus on left-hand turns. In 2019, 38% of the city's traffic deaths were caused when drivers made left turns and didn't see the person in the crosswalk.

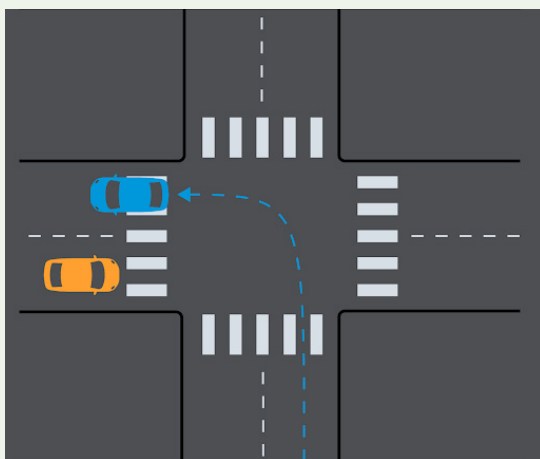
In 2019, we partnered with the San Francisco Metropolitan Transit Authority (SFMTA) to design and carry out a pilot study that would leverage behavioural science in addressing dangerous left-hand turns.

Unsafe left turns are a behavioural issue

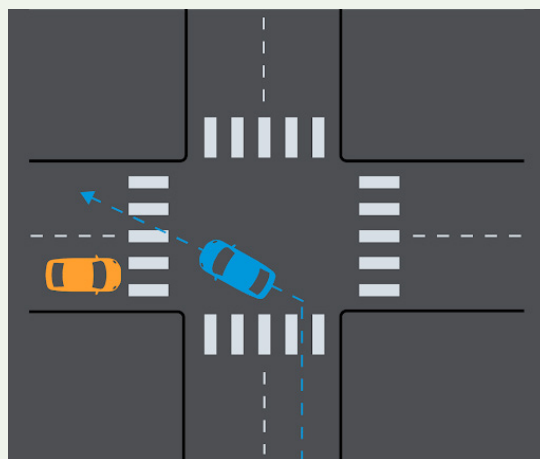
Left turns can be stressful. Drivers have to process a lot of information quickly—oncoming traffic, changing signals, cyclists, pedestrians, and more. With this information in hand, our team interviewed stakeholders and observed dangerous intersections in San Francisco. We identified several driver behaviours that make left turns unsafe.

To name a few:

- **Cutting the corner:** initiating turns too early and traversing crosswalks diagonally, which increases exposure to pedestrians
- **Speeding:** maintaining already high speeds or only slowing down slightly for the turn
- **Shooting the gap:** accelerating significantly to turn through a brief gap in oncoming traffic, leaving little time to watch for pedestrians and cyclists



We observed drivers making left turns early, cutting through the crosswalk diagonally and increasing the risk of hitting a pedestrian.



A safe left turn is made at a 90 degree angle with minimal exposure to pedestrians in the crosswalk. We designed interventions to encourage this behaviour.

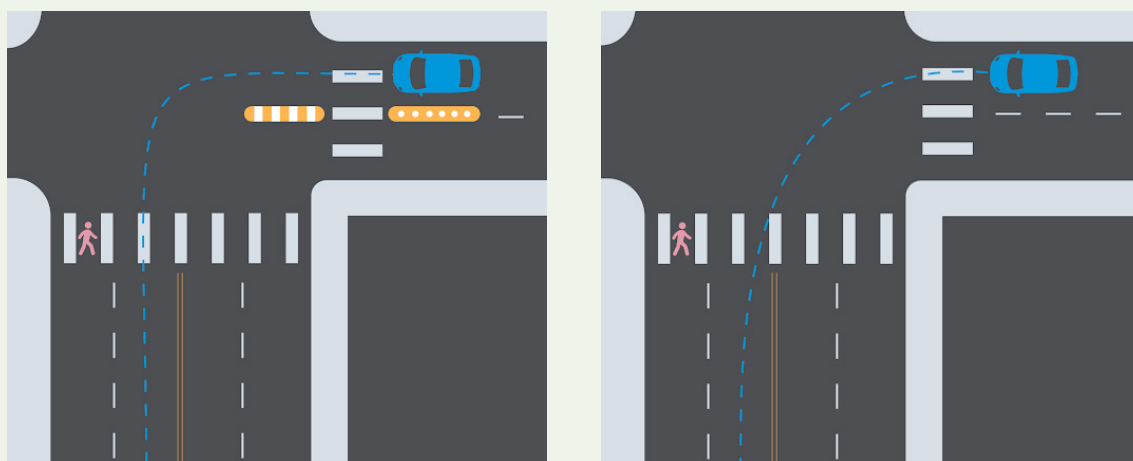
Designing a rigorous study to show causality

We pursued simple physical interventions with the goal to reduce speeds and guide drivers to safety in the moment. While educational messages may be forgotten during times of stress, physical changes give drivers immediate sensory feedback—even if they are distracted or are experiencing cognitive overload. Our interventions used relatively low-cost materials that were already at the city's disposal: rubber speed bumps, enhanced centerlines, and slow turn wedges. (See [our blog post](#) for images of materials)

To evaluate the impact of these interventions on road safety, we used vehicle speeds as an outcome measure, which [we know is tied to pedestrian safety](#).

SFMTA identified 11 high priority left-turn locations, based on crash rates, and had the physical interventions installed in seven of them, leaving four control intersections.

Because of the variety of factors that influence driver behaviour, like weather, time of day, or even the grade of the street, we designed a difference-in-difference study which measured speeds before and after interventions were installed. We compared the change in speeds between intersections that received the new interventions and those that did not. This quasi-experimental design controlled for variables that were hard to measure (eg, how “complex” the left turn is) or were unforeseen (eg, such as dramatic differences in traffic caused by the COVID-19 pandemic). Having both a comparison group and the pre- and post- speed levels gave us confidence that we could isolate the effect of the interventions



Before (left) and after (right) installing one of our treatment designs—waist-high delineator posts and rubber speed bumps

Left turn speeds were measured three times over the course of a year, starting in Spring 2020 before the treatments were installed. Speeds fell by a statistically significant 1.7 mph (roughly a 17% reduction) amount in the intervention group. This speed reduction shrank slightly but remained statistically significant when we followed up for our third round of data collection six months later.

Backed by these findings, SFMTA is working to expand left-turn calming treatments to dozens of new intersections by 2024.



Safe and fuel-efficient truck driving

In 2018, medium- and heavy-duty US trucks consumed 43.6 billion gallons of fuel. In the same year, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency, transportation was the highest producer of US greenhouse gas emissions, a trend largely driven by trucks. Trucking is also a risky occupation—it is the seventh deadliest occupation in the US according to official figures, after occupations such as fishing and hunting, logging and piloting aircraft.

In June 2020, BIT partnered with LinkeDrive, an industry leader in truck driver performance management, to identify ways to use behavioural insights to help truckers drive more safely and fuel-efficiently, while also improving their experience on the road.

The project involved BIT reviewing relevant literature and speaking to truck drivers and fleet managers across the country to identify ways to improve LinkeDrive's existing solutions.



While LinkeDrive's tools already incorporate effective strategies such as feedback and peer comparison, a number of potential improvements were identified. For example, improving LinkeDrive's leaderboards by:

- Allowing drivers to compare themselves to similar peers, such as drivers with the same type of truck, similar loads, or comparable routes.
- Creating several leaderboard tiers could increase the motivation of drivers near the 'cut-offs' between tiers.
- Integrating social features that would allow drivers from the same company to react to, and comment on, each others' performances to enhance the sense of competition among drivers.
- See Figure 1 below for a mock-up of BIT's recommended leaderboard.

And improving feedback for drivers by:

- Simplifying performance reports to highlight key information related to behaviour change and remove unnecessary data (see Figure 2 below).
- Personalising coaching messages with drivers' names and providing additional details on the behaviours that will help drivers improve their performance.

We are now looking for opportunities to test these ideas with LinkeDrive in the field.

Figure 1. BIT mock-up of a behaviourally-informed leaderboard

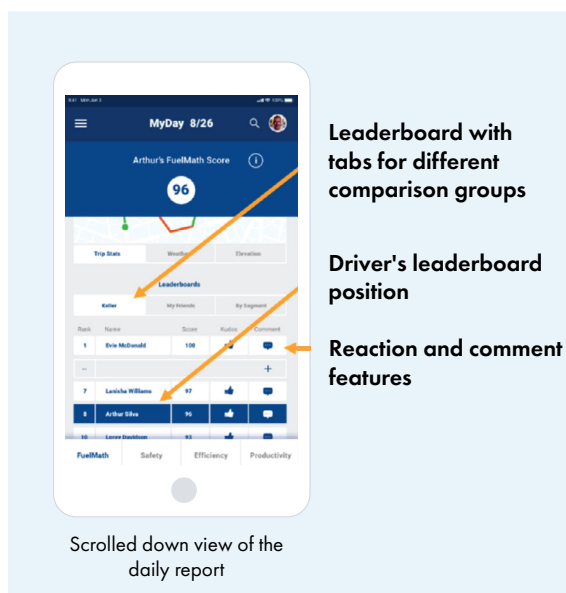
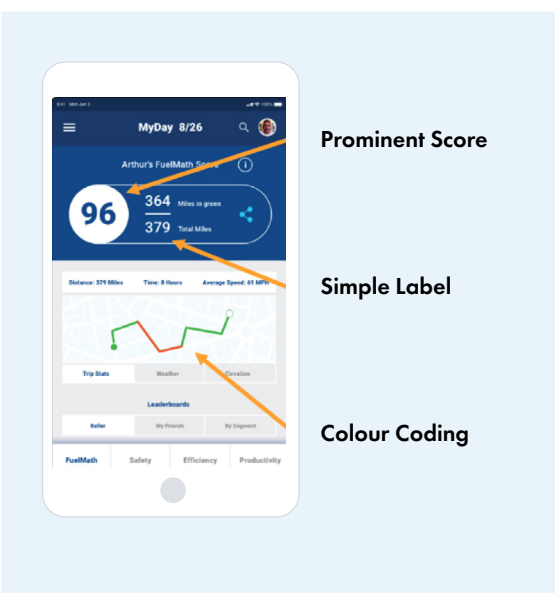


Figure 2. BIT mock-up of a simplified end-of-day report



You might also be interested in...

Education

Young people and online ethics

Technology has fundamentally changed the way young people grow, learn and interact.

Every decision to pick up a mobile phone, post an image, reach out to a friend, or 'pile on' when someone has posted a controversial statement, can have huge and long-lasting consequences. How we help young people navigate through these choices to become socially conscious...**see more**

[View](#)

International Development

Women's economic empowerment in Japan

Despite recent progress towards improving women's economic empowerment, gender differences in wages and career prospects continue to exist in Japan. The wage gap between men and women is approximately 74%, which is largely attributed by the Japanese Government to differences in advancement, occupation and length of tenure...**see more**

[View](#)[Contents](#)