

TESTING ROMA DISCRIMINATION IN STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY: A TELEPHONE AUDIT OF MUNICIPAL SOCIAL SERVICES

Remigijus Civinskas

*Vytautas Magnus University,
K. Donelaičio str. 58, 44248, Kaunas, Lithuania*

Jaroslav Dvorak

*Klaipeda University,
Herkaus Manto str. 84, 92294 Klaipėda, Lithuania*

<https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.25.3.45753>

Abstract. *The article aims to assess how the telephone audit method aligns with the theoretical approach of street-level bureaucracy and what possibilities and limitations it offers in investigating potential indirect discrimination against Roma in the field of municipal social services. The empirical study is based on a mixed methodological approach. A telephone audit was conducted, during which a request for urgent social assistance was submitted on behalf of a Roma woman using to a standardized scenario. A total of 31 calls were made to 18 Lithuanian municipal administrations and social service administration units. The audit data were supplemented by interviews with four Roma mediators and one Roma NGO representative. Since there was no control condition in the study, the results do not allow for a causal isolation of the effect of ethnic identity from other possible factors. In summary, it can be stated that the telephone audit is a suitable, but not an independent, tool for investigating mechanisms of indirect discrimination in the context of close bureaucracy. It allows for the description of verification behavior under real conditions, which declarative methods certainly failed to achieve, but the identification conditions that are established based on ethnic discrimination must be controlled. The current study has revealed the limitations of the application of experimental auditing. This method reliably records how an employee responded to a standardized decision but does not in itself explain why a particular decision was chosen.*

Keywords: *ethnic discrimination, municipal social services, Roma, street-level bureaucracy, telephone audit.*

Reikšminiai žodžiai: *artimoji biurokratija, etninė diskriminacija, romai, savivaldybių socialinės paslaugos, telefoninis auditas.*

Introduction

Over the past decade, the experimental method has become an increasingly important part of behavioral research in public administration and public policy. These methods aim not only to examine the attitudes or behaviors of public sector employees and/or citizens, but also to establish causal relationships between specific institutional, situational or customer-related factors and administrative decisions. The development of experimental methods is visible in laboratory and survey-based experiments, quasi-experimental studies and field experiments (James et al. 2017; Li and Van Ryzin 2017; Hansen and Tummers 2020; Hylkema and Grimmelikhuijsen 2026). However, the methodological prevalence of experiments

does not answer the question of whether these methods are always compatible with the theoretical approaches that underlie public policy implementation research.

This issue is relevant in street-level bureaucracy (SLB) research. For a long time, SLB research has been dominated by qualitative and interpretive methods, such as ethnographic observation, interviews, and organizational case studies. These methods have allowed us to uncover the discretion of street-level bureaucrats, their coping strategies, professional identities, and the impact of institutional context on decisions. Later, quantitative, mixed-method, and experimental approaches have been applied in the field (Kekez 2019; Schott and Van Kleef 2019; Van Engen 2019; Rowe 2025). Experimental research has strengthened the ability to assess the impact of specific client characteristics, information, or situational stimuli on bureaucrats' decisions.

Experimental methods are particularly valuable for examining potential discrimination in public service delivery. Discriminatory behavior does not always manifest itself in an overt refusal to provide a service or in a direct negative attitude. It can manifest itself in subtle ways, i.e., in a shorter and less informative response, additional requirements, shifting responsibility to another institution, formal referral without explaining further actions, or insufficient assessment of the client's needs. In SLB studies, these behaviors are explained by staff discretion, lack of resources, categorisation of clients, rejection of "problem clients", gatekeeping and shifting the administrative burden to service recipients (Dubois 2016; Raaphorst and Groeneveld 2019; Herd and Moynihan 2022; Döring and Jilke 2023).

Audit research provides an opportunity to observe such behaviors in real-life service settings. Standardized telephone calls, electronic inquiries, or other forms of correspondence allow for recording employees' responses, completeness of information, speed of response, tone of voice, and effectiveness of proposed solutions. However, the audit method has significant limitations. Ethnic or social identity signals may not be equally recognizable, the study usually covers only the first stage of interaction, and ethical considerations may prevent all subjects from being informed in advance about the study (Gaddis 2018; Beasley and Lahey 2024). In addition, an audit can show how an employee responded to a standardized situation, but it does not necessarily explain why a specific solution was chosen and how it was influenced by organizational rules, resource allocation, or the local institutional context.

Thus, the scientific problem raised in the article arises from the tension between the experimental method and the explanatory aims of SLB theory. Experimental design is well suited to capturing specific behaviors, reactions, and differences, but the SLB theory seeks to explain broader mechanisms of SLBs' discretion, institutional constraints, client categorization, and problem-solving. As a result, it is not sufficiently clear what theoretical interpretations can be made based on audit data alone and in which cases it is necessary to supplement these data with qualitative contextual analysis. The article raises the research question: what can a telephone audit reveal about possible mechanisms of indirect discrimination in the first-contact interactions of Roma clients with municipal social service workers, and what explanatory limits of this method are highlighted by SLB theory?

It is noteworthy that the experimental methods are rarely used in Lithuanian public administration and public policy research and has not been used in Lithuanian SLB research to date. Experimental studies conducted by Lithuanian researchers have mostly been implemented outside Lithuania (Galdikienė et al. 2024; Galdikienė et al. 2026) or in other research areas, such as energy and climate policy (Asmare et al. 2021) or the evaluation of environmental social advertisements (Poškus et al. 2018). To our knowledge, no study has applied an audit as form of field experiment to test how Lithuanian municipal employees treat representatives of ethnic minorities or other groups at risk of discrimination during the first contact.

The novelty of the article lies in three aspects. First, the application of experimental methods is assessed not only from the point of view of technical validity criteria, but also by analyzing the compatibility of the method with the theoretical assumptions of SLB. Second, the telephone audit method is examined. Third, the methodological issue is examined through an empirical analysis of the first contact of Roma clients with municipal administration and social service employees.

The object of the study is the methodological suitability of telephone audit method for investigating possible mechanisms of indirect discrimination in the first-contact interactions of Roma clients with municipal administrations and social service employees. The aim of the article is to assess how the telephone audit method fits with the theoretical approach of SLB and what possibilities and limitations this method has in investigating possible indirect discrimination against Roma in the field of municipal social services.

The study pursues three objectives:

1. to examine the development and role of experimental methods in SLB research and identify the main methodological challenges associated with applying audit designs.
2. to analyze the interactions between the Roma callers and street-level employees recorded during the telephone audit, focusing on the completeness of information, tone, helpfulness, needs assessment, administrative requirements, and referral practices.
3. to assess what the audit data reveal about the patterns of potentially unequal treatment, gatekeeping, and administrative burden, and to interpret these findings in light of interviews with four Roma mediators and one NGO representative.

A telephone audit was conducted, during which a request for urgent social assistance was submitted on behalf of a Roma woman according to a standardized scenario. A total of 31 calls were made to 18 Lithuanian municipal administrations and social service administration departments. The audit was supplemented by interviews with four Roma mediators and a representative of a Roma NGO.

An Experimental Turn in Street-Level Bureaucracy Research

Fron Ethnography to Experimentation in Street-Level Bureaucracy Research

As already discussed, the shift from ethnographic (and, more broadly, qualitative) research method to quantitative research and experiments has occurred in the field of SLB research relatively recently. Indeed, this reflects not only the methodological choices of individual scholars, but also a new direction of theoretical development, with greater attention to the effects of SLB discretion and street-level decisions (Pivoras and Gončiarova 2017; Van Engen 2019; Hansen and Tummers 2020; Civinskas et al. 2021; Cohen et al. 2026; Edri-Peer and Cohen 2026). The latter issue also includes the topic of bureaucratic discrimination (its mechanisms and effects, SLB attitudes and biases) (Jilke et al. 2018; Olsen et al. 2022). In principle, this method has been useful in examining the causal relationship in SLB in real frontline situations.

The field of SLB research has been marked by the contributions of Dutch scholars in the use of field experiments and other quantitative methods. Lars Tummers laid the conceptual foundations (he created the behaviorist school of SLB, which is called the psychological perspective of SLB), and his collaborators, including Sebastian Jilke, Nadine Van Engen, Nadine Raaphorst and others (Van Engen 2017; Hansen and Tummers 2020; Grimmeliikhuijsen et al. 2017; Van Dooren & Jilke, 2024; Döring and Jilke, 2023; Raaphorst et al. 2024; Szydłowski et al. 2026). It is important to note that researchers not only applied this method in dozens of studies, but also became methodologists and led specialized laboratories reflecting on the application of the method (e.g. S. Jilke founded a specialized laboratory (Lab for Experimental and Behavioral Public Administration, L-EBPA) with Greg Van Ryzin at Rutgers University) (James et al. 2017; Jilke and Van Ryzin 2017). The publications discussed and other evidence indicate that the experiment has established itself as a widely used method in the field of SLB research. It allows for the examination of broader causal relationship and micro-level behaviors and the development of research in a unique way.

Applying the experimental method within the theoretical approach of street-level bureaucracy

One can ask how SLB researchers have used the experimental method and what studies they chose. After analyzing the most relevant studies, they can be divided into several groups according to the object/focus of the research: 1) multi-attribute/conjoint survey experiments and organizational intervention experiments; 2) field experiments (correspondence audits). Regarding the first group, it can be noted that

several groups of researchers have examined how SLBs evaluate clients and which clients they prefer (Jilke and Tummers, 2018; Andersen and Guul 2019). More precisely, this group of experiments is distinguished by the fact that it studies the decision mechanisms of SLBs, and not just the final behavior in a real service provision situation. Researchers have presented respondents with hypothetical client profiles, or choice tasks in which client characteristics, workload, or organizational conditions are systematically varied. SLB theory has been used to explain the mechanisms of client categorization and worthiness as applied in practice (employees decide who is worthy of exceptional help, attentiveness, etc.) (Jilke and Tummers 2018). The mechanisms of working conditions and coping with problems in interactions with clients have also been examined (Andersen and Guul 2019). Overall, these studies have allowed researchers to identify causal mechanisms, for example, directly manipulating SLB working conditions and resources and explaining how this affects client processing. However, it should be noted that such studies are few, and researchers working in the field of SLB research are more inclined to use the experimental method for researching real situations.

Correspondence and audit field experiments are among the most commonly used methods. These studies observe the actual response of SLBs to standardized requests. Most often, researchers have studied SLB discretion in client service/processing in relation to service availability and the functioning of gatekeeping and other mechanisms (Grohs et al. 2016; Olsen et al. 2022; Van Dooren and Jilke, 2024; Pfaff et al. 2021; Bell and Jilke 2024; Szydlowski et al. 2026). The main topic of these studies is racial, ethnic, or religious discrimination as well as positive bureaucratic interactions. Researchers are also interested in how discrimination works. More extensive research focuses on the operation of subtle mechanisms of client discrimination (gatekeeping, administrative burden imposed on clients, cream skimming). It is noteworthy that audits are applied as a test of causal mechanism or intervention, determining whether the cream-skimming mechanism is operating, whether higher client service costs encourage discrimination, etc. (Jilke et al. 2018; Pfaff et al. 2021). It is noteworthy that the methodologically strongest are those experimental designs in which the theoretical mechanism is directly manipulated, for example, information about the client's expected success or the costs of processing a request. The causal interpretation is weaker when the effect of the theoretical mechanism is not directly tested but only inferred based on the type of sector or organization. It is noteworthy that the previously discussed correspondence audits (electronic inquiries) were often national (applied in the USA, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany) and involved large sample, covering up to 45,000 principals of public K-12 schools (Pfaff et al. 2021; Van Dooren and Jilke 2024).

The advantage of correspondence and audit studies is that they allow us to observe not the declared behavior of SLB, but their real reaction to a standardized client request in a typical service environment. In this way, it is possible to determine whether different client groups (based on signals related to identity, needs or situation) change the likelihood of a response, completeness of information, additional requirements, etc. However, the strength of causal interpretation in these studies depends on the experimental design. When only the client group identity signal is manipulated, the effect of this signal on the employee's behavior can be identified, but it is not yet revealed why the effect occurred, i.e. the underlying causal mechanism is not fully explained. A stronger test of mechanism is provided by studies that simultaneously directly manipulate information about individual client success, implied service costs, employee workload or available resources to them. In this case, it is possible to more reasonably assess the role of statistical discrimination, "cream skimming" or problem-solving mechanisms (James et al. 2017).

Application of Field Experiments in Discrimination Research

Research on discrimination in SLB has expanded the theoretical analysis from the general concept of SLB discretion to the specific micro-level mechanisms by which clients are categorized, assessed and prioritized. Such unequal treatment of clients is explained not only by conscious biases, but also by the interaction of workload, limited resources, lack of information and social categorization (Raaphorst and

Groeneveld 2019). From a categorization perspective, decisions are influenced by broader cultural notions of worthiness, trustworthiness and the “normal client”, so similar situations may be assessed differently according to the client’s social or ethnic identity. Andersen and Guul’s (2019) experiments show that high workload can create conditions for de facto discrimination, while additional resources and changes in work organization reduce it. Thus, discrimination can manifest itself in subtle ways: through stricter interpretation of rules, additional requirements, limited needs assessment or a formal response that does not provide effective assistance.

The advantage of field experiments, especially correspondence audits, is the possibility of examining these mechanisms in a real service provision environment, observing actual, rather than self-reported, behavior. Standardized queries allow for controlled variation of signals of client identity, needs, expected outcomes, or service costs, and for comparison of only the likelihood of a response, but also the completeness of the information provided, additional requirements, tone of communication, and actual access to the service. Van Dooren and Jilke’s (2024) study also shows that audits can be used to assess null outcomes and the importance of organizational context. However, the role of organizational-level incentive structures was inferred from the characteristics of the sector, rather than directly manipulated. Thus, its causal interpretation is weaker than in other studies (e.g. Pfaff et al. 2021; Bell and Jilke 2024). In general, multidimensional analysis of audit data allows us to distinguish formal responsiveness from effective assistance and to empirically operationalize the mechanisms of gatekeeping, administrative burden, selective prioritization, and the quality of bureaucratic interaction.

Methodological and Practical Limitations of Field Experiments and Audits

Field experiments and correspondence audits are characterized by high levels of behavioral realism, but their validity is not self-evident. Audits typically capture a brief episode of first contact, such as a response to an electronic request, rather than the entire multi-stage process of receiving a service, and therefore cannot show whether discrimination increases, decreases, or takes a different form at later stages. Their external validity is also limited to the specific names used, query formulations, and situations. Beasley and Lahey (2024) call this the problem of template bias: a set of stimuli that is too narrow may not reflect the real diversity of clients and situations. Internal validity is threatened by the fact that effects may operate not only through the theoretically predicted mechanism, but also through overlapping experimental conditions, and the response of one institution or employee may affect other participants. Field studies are also more prone to data loss, non-compliance with the experimental condition, and difficulties in selecting participating organizations, which limit the transferability of results to other sectors or countries (Hansen and Tummers 2020). From a practical point of view, such studies are expensive, require partnerships with organizations, careful pilot testing, and offer less researcher control than laboratory experiments. Audits also raise issues of informed consent and the use of public employees’ time, especially when tens of thousands of dummy requests are sent out in order to achieve high statistical power (Hansen and Tummers 2020). Finally, the quality of the experimental public administration literature is limited by the still insufficient application of preregistration, manipulation checks, statistical power calculations, and replications (Hylkema and Grimmelikhuijsen 2026).

In summary, the experimental approach has helped SLB research move from general statements of discretion and problem-solving to specific mechanisms by which clients are categorized, prioritized, or faced with additional administrative burdens. Field experiments and audits are particularly valuable for establishing causal effects when appropriate control conditions are incorporated, as they allow researchers to study actual, rather than self-reported, employee behavior in real service delivery settings (Hansen and Tummers 2020). However, strong identification of specific effects should not be equated with a comprehensive explanation of SLB activities. Narrow standardized interactions often do not reveal how professional identity, organizational culture, leadership practices, local service offerings, legal regulation, and previous employee-client relationships shape the decisions. Thus, experiments should be treated as one

of the complementary tools for SLB research, rather than as a universal methodological direction. Their results should be combined with interviews, observation, analysis of institutional documents, and comparative studies that link micro-level behavior with organizational and institutional contexts (Van Engen 2019; Valentinavičiū et al. 2022).

Design and Implementation of Empirical Research

Empirical setting, audit scenario, and sample

The empirical field of the study consists of the first-contact service provision to the population in Lithuanian municipal administrations and subordinate institutions (operating under the “in-house” model), mainly related to the accessibility of social services. Municipalities administer social support, organize and/or coordinate social services, but first-contact functions can be distributed among general municipal reception offices (one-stop or customer service centers), social support departments, neighbourhoods and social service institutions established by municipalities (Burbulytė-Tsiskarishvili et al. 2018; Dvorak 2021; Baranauskienė et al. 2025). The employees of these units usually do not make the final decision on the provision of a social service, but clarify the problem, provide information, explain the requirements, accept or help the client submit an application and refer the client to the competent department or other institution. Therefore, they act as “gatekeepers” of access to services: their decisions determine whether the client will receive actual assistance or face an additional administrative burden.

During the audit, general municipal contact points and departments administering social services were contacted. The request related to urgent temporary accommodation assistance, access to a crisis center and information about social housing registration procedures. This case was chosen because it required not only formal provision of information, but also an assessment of the client's needs, effective referral and the use of employee discretion. The sample of the study consisted of 18 municipalities. First, municipalities with larger Roma communities were selected, and later the sample was supplemented with municipalities with smaller or very small Roma communities. A total of 31 audit calls were made.

This study did not include a parallel control condition and therefore did not use an otherwise similar caller who did not present as Roma. This choice limited the possibility of assessing whether the responses observed in the study were specifically related to the Roma ethnicity of the caller or to other features of the request and service context. Therefore, the audit was designed to examine how municipal employees responded to a standardized request submitted by a Roma client and to assess the methodological possibilities and limitations of telephone audits in the context of SLB, rather than to assess the causal effect of Roma ethnicity on employee responses.

Roma Access to Public Services: Research Context

Roma are one of the groups most affected by discrimination in Lithuanian society. Their situation is affected not only by social exclusion, but also by historically formed anti-Roma sentiment, manifested in negative attitudes, stereotypical associations of Roma with crime, unreliability, or unwillingness to work. In the field of public services, discrimination can manifest itself in the form of ignoring, derogatory comments, stigmatization, insufficient information, referral between institutions or taking advantage of the client's illiteracy. Such experiences are most often recorded in the fields of social services, healthcare and education (Labanauskas 2019; Kontvainė 2020; Dvorak and Civinskas, 2025). According to the 2021 census, 2,251 people of Roma ethnicity lived in Lithuania, making up about 0.08 percent of the country's population. About 78 percent of Roma lived in cities. The largest community was concentrated in Vilnius, but larger Roma populations also found in Kaunas, Panevėžys, Šiauliai, Jonava and some district municipalities (Stumbrys 2022). The Lithuanian Roma community is not homogeneous. It is noteworthy that it consists of several Roma groups: Lithuanian Roma (litovska roma, a group with a higher social status), Kotliari, who arrived from Moldova after the war, as well as smaller Lotfitka, Lovari and Fluki groups (Si-

moniukštytė et al. 2022). They differ in dialects, religious traditions, customs, social ties, and status. These groups have caste-like features and are relatively socially closed, which has implications for the socialization of Roma and the availability of services.

The high need for social services among Roma is driven by low employment, material deprivation, unfavorable housing conditions, poorer health and dependence on social assistance. Accessibility of services is limited by illiteracy (which reached 40-50% among older Roma), low administrative and digital literacy, distrust of institutions, previous experiences of discrimination, and fear of revealing that one does not understand procedures. The development of electronic services does not reduce, but rather increases, the administrative burden for some Roma. These problems are addressed through Roma inclusion plans, targeted education and social integration projects, including project “Local Roma platforms – a path towards cooperation with municipalities” (Department of National Minorities 2025). The Roma mediators working within this project prepare documents, understand procedures, communicate with institutions and strengthen clients’ ability to use public services independently.

Telephone audit design, procedure and operationalization of results

The study used a standardized single-condition telephone audit designed to observe initial interactions between a Roma client and municipal and social service employees. The telephone channel was chosen because it allows researchers to capture the spontaneous reaction of the employee, the nature of the questions, the tone of the conversation, the completeness of the information, and the effectiveness of the referral. Similar to correspondence audits, a standardized request was submitted to all units. However, a telephone audit, unlike e-mail surveys, involves dynamic interaction, in which the employee can ask additional questions, interrupt the client, change the tone, or offer an alternative solution to the problem.

The calls were conducted on August 6 and 20, 2025. Romani female actresses were selected based on their age, their use of Lithuanian and Russian, their accent, and their ability to perform a standardized role. During the calls, the researchers monitored adherence to the script, recorded interactions, and used agreed-upon cues to end the conversation. The data were analyzed in terms of clarity and completeness of information, warmth of tone, helpfulness, depth of needs assessment, administrative requirements, referral effectiveness, and signs of gatekeeping. Public service audits assess not only the response, but also the quality of information, informal acceptance signals, and the learning and compliance costs (Adman and Jansson, 2017; Jilke et al. 2018; Olsen et al. 2022).

Compound Experimental Condition: Signals of Ethnic Identity and Social Vulnerability

The telephone audit used a single composite exposure condition that included signaling ethnic identity and indicators of social vulnerability. The caller introduced herself as a Roma woman and directly stated her ethnic identity by using the words “Roma” and “Gypsy”. Thus, ethnic origin was signaled not only by name, accent, or speaking style, but also by self-identification as Roma community. This reduced the risk that the employee would not recognize the indicator, but could have increased the likelihood of socially desirable behavior.

In the standardized scenario, the applicant was presented as a single mother separated from her spouse, temporarily lacking adequate housing and financial resources. She and her children were staying with acquaintances but had to move out urgently. Additional vulnerability was signaled by the disability of one of the children and the absence of a declared place of residence in the municipality. The main request was to explain how to obtain temporary accommodation or emergency assistance “here and now” and what further steps should be taken. The scenario was developed by two researchers, and its realism was checked by three Roma mediators, a representative of a Roma NGO and the women who conducted the calls.

Methodologically, this is a compound, non-isolated exposure condition. Therefore, the observed reactions of the employees cannot be attributed solely to ethnic identity, as they could have been influenced by the housing crisis, motherhood, child’s disability, undeclared residence, speaking style, or a combination

of these characteristics. In telephone audits, voice, name, language, and social class signals can overlap, so studies usually apply separate control conditions or pre-test the recognizability of the signals. For example, in Kugelmass’s (2016) telephone field experiment, psychotherapists received standardized voice messages in which the race, class, and gender characteristics of the prospective clients were systematically varied.

Qualitative Interviews and Their Purpose

The telephone audit data were supplemented by five interviews with four Roma mediators and one representative of an NGO (see Table 1). The purpose of the interviews was not to re-evaluate the reactions of the staff, but to place them in a broader institutional and legal administrative context. The informants helped to explain the distribution of competences, the practical application of territorial affiliation, place-of-residence declaration, and document submission requirements, as well as the impact of illiteracy, administrative literacy and distrust of institutions on access to services. The interview material was used to triangulate the audit results and interpret possible mechanisms of gatekeeping and administrative burden.

Roma mediators and an NGO representative were selected through purposive sampling. They are not considered SLBs, as they do not make binding decisions on entitlement to a service, allocate public resources, or determine the final conditions of service provision. Their role is to mediate between Roma clients and institutions, explain procedures, assist with documents, accompany clients, and reduce barriers to intercultural communication. Their neutrality is understood as procedural impartiality and the maintenance of trust between the community and the institution.

Table 1. *Qualitative Interview Informants*

Informant	Role of Informant
IRT1	NGO representative working with the Roma target group, 2025.08.05; Duration 45 min. Contact.
IRT2	Roma mediator, city municipality, 2025.08.07. Duration 60 min. By phone.
IRT3	Roma mediator, 2 rural municipalities, 2025.08.08, Duration 70 min. By phone.
IRT4	Roma mediator, rural municipality, 2025.08.08, Duration 45 min. By phone.
IRT5	Roma mediator, city municipality, 2025.09.15. Duration 37 min. By phone.

Informant Specialist Performing Mediation in the Field of Services

Research Ethics

Audit studies are based on non-disclosure of information, as informing employees in advance would change their behavior and eliminate the possibility of observing service practices. In this study, ethical risks were reduced in accordance with the principles of proportionality, respect for the person, data protection and harm minimization. Calls were designed so that they did not take up a disproportionate amount of employees’ time, did not disrupt the activities of the institutions and did not occupy service spaces intended for real customers. No formal requests were made, no accommodation was booked and no procedures were initiated that would have created administrative consequences.

No personally identifiable data was collected from employees. In the analysis, employees, municipalities and institutions were anonymized or coded, and the results were presented in aggregate form. The focus of the study is on general behavioral trends, rather than an assessment of a specific employee or institution (Adman and Jansson, 2017).

Additional protection was provided to the Roma women who conducted the study. They provided written informed consent, were informed about the procedure and potential emotional risks, and could withdraw from the study at any time. There were breaks between calls, and the researchers checked on the participants’ well-being. These measures were important because the standardized scenario simulated a

complex social crisis, and negative or stigmatizing reactions from the staff could have caused emotional distress. Such measures are important for the participants, as they themselves belong to the vulnerable group being studied, and are in line with good practice in field experiments with Roma groups (Mikula and Montag 2022; Scharle and Erős 2022).

A key methodological caveat is the absence of a matched control condition involving a non-Roma applicant. This limits the study's ability to isolate the effect of Roma identity and to make comparative claim about discriminatory treatment, as it possible in matched audit designs employed by Grohs et al. (2016) or Adman and Jansson (2017).

Results of Empirical Research

First-contact interactions: between active assistance and gatekeeping

Real interactions between a Roma woman and employees of municipal administrations, social support units and social service administration institutions were analyzed. In the standardized scenario, the applicant was presented as a separated mother, temporarily without adequate housing, raising two children, one of whom has a disability. She asked for explanations on how to urgently obtain temporary accommodation, access to a crisis center and information on social housing registration. The applicant had not declared her place of residence in the municipality to which she applied.

In none of the 31 calls did the municipal administration employee refuse to talk because of the applicant's ethnicity, use openly derogatory or stigmatizing formulations, and did not create obstacles due to the use of language. Some employees switched to Russian or repeated explanations more slowly. The overall assessment of the nature of interaction, the "friendliness" of service, was average ($M = 2.45$; $SD = 1.15$; $N = 31$), as was the assessment of proposals for solving the problem and instructions for further actions ($M = 2.52$; $SD = 1.02$; $N = 29$). Analytically more informative than the average is the relatively large standard deviation, which shows that the same standardized situation ended in a specific action plan in some municipalities, and in others with a formal termination of the interaction.

The overall picture of the audit results is mixed. Some employees responded benevolently, listened to the request, clarified the current place of residence, the situation of the children and the possibility of coming to the institution. Several employees provided specific phone numbers, explained further actions and checked whether the caller understood the information. Employees of four municipalities later called back or sent messages, urging them to contact the specified unit. Such interactions indicate an active engagement with the client's problem, when the employee seeks to bring the client closer to actual assistance. However, such cases were not dominant and stood out from the general context of interactions.

In many calls, a pattern of behavior was observed, which can be described as formal distancing or gatekeeping. Employees emphasized long waiting lists for social housing, the requirement to declare the place of residence, the limited competence of the municipality, or the need to apply to another institution. In some cases, these circumstances were raised before the urgency of the situation and the needs of the children had been clarified. In other interviews, employees stated that the municipality does not provide such assistance, cannot help a person whose place of residence is declared outside its territory, or that the applicant must return to her previous place of residence. Thus, referral was not always accompanied by a specific contact, a sequence of actions, or an employee's effort to verify whether assistance would be provided by another institution.

These data allow us to distinguish between a formal response and effective assistance. An employee may properly indicate the boundaries of competence or a procedural rule, but for a client who does not have housing, money and sufficient administrative literacy, such a response may create additional learning, compliance and psychological costs. Potentially unequal treatment does not necessarily manifest itself in an outright refusal to respond. It may operate through less detailed information, additional requirements, or the responsibility transferred to the client for independently finding a competent institution (Jilke et al.

2018; Olsen et al. 2022). Some interviews recorded moralizing assessments of the client, questions about why she had not arranged documents earlier or how she had lived with her children until then. Such a reaction can be understood as an expression of power asymmetry through which the client is assigned the status of a “problem mother”, close to the institutional identity labeling described by Dubois (2016).

Qualitative Evidence of Administrative Burden, Distrust and Referral Between Institutions

The obtained data show that audit data alone do not allow us to determine whether the disengagement of staff was caused by the client's ethnic identity, lack of housing, limited access to social services, territorial dependency rules, staff workload or the complexity of request. Therefore, the results of the telephone audit were supplemented by interviews with four Roma mediators and one representative of an NGO. These informants are not considered SLBs, as they do not make binding decisions on the provision of services. Their role is to help Roma understand procedures, prepare documents, communicate with institutions and maintain trust. The interviews were not used as independent evidence of discrimination, but to contextualize the behaviors recorded during the audit and explain their possible mechanisms.

Qualitative interviews revealed that interactions between Roma and institutions take place in a broader context of suspicion and previous experiences of discrimination. Informants spoke about distrust, derogatory undertones, non-verbal reactions and preconceived association of Roma with unreliability or criminality (Interview with IRT2; IRT3). As a result, some Roma approach institutions expecting a negative response. This circumstance is important in explaining why even a neutral or formally polite referral from an employee can be perceived as another episode of rejection. At the same time, the interviews showed that the telephone channel can reduce reactions based on visual recognition of ethnic/racial identity (Interview with IRT5; IRT4). A person who speaks Lithuanian fluently over the phone may be less stereotyped than during face-to-face contact, when the employee sees their appearance, clothing and social signals. Consequently, a telephone audit may underestimate the extent of discrimination occurring in face-to-face interactions.

Another contextual factor is illiteracy among some Roma and low digital and administrative literacy. Interviews highlighted that electronic services are not a viable alternative for many older or less educated Roma (Interview with IRT1; IRT4; IRT3). Some clients avoid disclosing that they cannot read a document, fill in an electronic form, or understand an administrative concept. Due to shame and distrust, they are less likely to ask additional questions, and if they do not receive a clear answer, they may stop the service process altogether. Therefore, the requirement to fill in an electronic application or contact another institution, which is formally applied equally to everyone, creates an unequal burden for different client groups. Such conditions may contribute to indirect discrimination not only through the attitude of the employee, but also through the interaction of a formally neutral procedure with the unequal abilities of clients (Döring and Jilke 2023).

The qualitative interviews explained the mechanism of “referral” between institutions recorded during the audit. The research informants called this practice “footballing”/“football game”, in which the client is referred elsewhere, but no one takes responsibility for whether their problem will be resolved (Interview with IRT2; IRT3). One informant noted that people try to “send the client somewhere, just so they don’t get involved”, and over time the client starts to lower expectations and avoid objections, so as not to receive a final refusal (Interview with IRT2). Thus, the qualitative data show not only the administrative fact of referral, but also its psychological impact, i.e., the client may take the blame, refuse to ask for help and withdraw from the process of receiving the service. Formal communication may function as an effective gatekeeping filter, although the rules are not directly violated.

The Role of Roma Mediation and the Interpretive Limits of the Telephone Audit

Roma mediators revealed that their involvement can change the interaction between an SLB and a vulnerable client. Mediators explain administrative language, help fill out documents, translate information

into Romani or Russian, and accompany the client to the institution (interview with IRT1; IRT5). The mediator emphasized that Roma distrust of social institutions is passed down from generation to generation, and her participation makes the Roma feel safer, because the mediator “represents both sides” and helps to avoid the fear of being deceived or misunderstood (Interview with IRT5). However, mediators themselves sometimes face institutional distrust, denial of the scale of the problem or control of information. Thus, mediation does not open all institutional “gates”, but it increases the likelihood that a complex request will be heard and referred to a competent employee.

The telephone audit revealed the initial interaction, but could not establish that the observed responses were caused by the client’s Roma ethnicity. The study did not have an analogous control condition with an otherwise similar applicant who did not present as Roma, and the exposure condition included not only Roma identity, but also a housing crisis, motherhood, a child disability, financial vulnerability, and an undeclared place of residence. Therefore, the reactions of the staff cannot be unambiguously attributed to the ethnic origin of the client. However, the audit revealed recurring gatekeeping behaviors: superficial needs assessment, jurisdictional filtering, transfer of responsibility to another institution, formal referrals and signs of labeling as a “problem client”. Qualitative interviews do not establish the causality of these behaviors, but show how they interact with Roma administrative literacy, previous experiences of discrimination, distrust and the peculiarities of local service organization. Thus, the mixed approach allows us to speak cautiously not of definitively established discrimination, but of possible mechanisms of indirect discrimination that hinder Roma clients’ access to social assistance at point of first contact.

Discussion and Conclusions

The aim of this article was to assess how the telephone audit method fits within the theoretical approach of SLB and what possibilities and limitations it offers for investigating possible indirect discrimination against Roma in the field of municipal social services. The development of the experimental method and its place in the field of SLB research were first discussed. A standardized single-condition telephone audit was then conducted, comprising 31 calls to 18 municipal administrations and units responsible for administering social services. The audit data were supplemented with five interviews: four with Roma mediators and one with a representative of a non-governmental organization working with the Roma community.

The discussion is divided into the main analytical aspects of the study: the empirical patterns observed in first-contact interactions, the methodological possibilities and limitations of telephone auditing, and the implications of the findings for SLB theory.

First - contact interactions and gatekeeping in municipal social services. The study did not reveal any overt and systematic practices of rejecting a Roma client in social services and first contact services. Some employees adapted to the applicant’s language difficulties, provided specific contacts, checked whether the information was understood, and contacted again later by phone or in writing. At the same time, repeated distancing behaviors were recorded, i.e. formally ending the interview before the urgency of the situation had been clarified, applying the jurisdictional selection criterion, referring without a specific sequence of actions, and individual moralizing assessments of the client. These behaviors formally complied with the applicable rules, but may nevertheless be relevant to the analysis of indirect discrimination, since a neutrally formulated requirement may impose different costs on different clients (Jilke et al. 2018; Olsen et al. 2022). Interview material showed that for Roma clients, such “access costs” are higher due to illiteracy, limited administrative and digital literacy, and experiences of discrimination. Furthermore, re-referral is experienced as a send-off, lowering expectations and encouraging withdrawal from the service delivery process.

What the telephone audit can and cannot reveal in SLB research. The empirical study also demonstrated important limitations of the audit design used in this research. This method reliably captures how

an employee responded to a standardized situation but does not in itself explain why a particular decision was made. SLB theory seeks to explain the discretion of frontline workers, coping strategies, customer categorization, and the impact of organizational conditions and behaviors that remain beyond the brief first contact. Since the study did not include a comparable control condition with a non-Roma applicant, the audit results do not allow for causal and statistical identification of discriminatory behavior, as is done in paired design audit studies (Grohs et al. 2016; Adman and Jansson, 2017; Olsen et al. 2022). An ambiguous or null result is not a methodological failure, as audits are also used to assess such results and the significance of the organizational context (Van Dooren and Jilke 2024).

Implications for SLB theory and the role of communication channels. From the perspective of developing the SLB theory, the study allows us to formulate three statements. First, front-line employees actually act as gatekeepers, since it depends on them whether the request will even enter the formal procedure. Second, the findings suggest that potential mechanisms of indirect discrimination at this level may operate through the interaction between formally neutral procedures and clients' unequal administrative literacy, supplemented by less frequent but pronounced episodes of identity marking (Döring and Jilke 2023; Dubois 2016). Third, the communication channel should be treated not only as a data collection technique, but also as a theoretically significant variable. Interview data suggest that telephone interactions reduce stereotyping based on visual attributes, and therefore telephone audits may even underestimate the extent of discrimination manifested in contact interactions.

Implications for future experimental research in SLB. The findings also point to several implications for the design of future audit research in the area of SLB. If the goal is to identify a causal relationship between ethnicity or another client characteristic, audit research should include an appropriate control condition and ensure comparability of other request characteristics. Particular attention should also be paid to how the client's identity is presented during telephone conversations, as some characteristics visible in person may be less obvious over the phone. Standardized scenarios should distinguish the characteristic under study from other aspects of vulnerability that may independently influence employee responses. Finally, combining audit data with qualitative evidence can help explain the organizational and client-level mechanisms underlying the behavior observed during standardized interactions.

A telephone audit is a suitable, but not a stand-alone, tool for examining possible mechanisms of indirect discrimination. It allows researchers to identify and describe gatekeeping behaviors in real-world conditions; however, without a control condition, it does not allow them to attribute these behaviors specifically to ethnicity. The current study did not find evidence of overt rejection in the first-contact interactions examined, but existing procedural and organizational filters may place a greater burden on highly vulnerable clients. The accessibility of services would be more effectively increased not only by declaring non-discrimination provisions, but also by restructuring first-contact procedures and reducing the burden on clients of navigating between institutions independently.

Data Availability Statement

The data used to support the findings of this research are available from the corresponding authors upon request.

References

1. Adman, P.; Jansson, H. 2017. "A Field Experiment on Ethnic Discrimination among Local Swedish Public Officials", *Local Government Studies* 43(1): 44–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03003930.2016.1244052>
2. Andersen, S. C.; Guul, T. S. 2019. "Reducing Minority Discrimination at the Front Line-Combined Survey and Field Experimental Evidence", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 29(3): 429–444. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muy083>
3. Asmare, F.; Jaraitė, J.; Kazukauskas, A. 2021. "The Effect of Descriptive Information Provision on

- Electricity Consumption: Experimental Evidence from Lithuania”, *Energy Economics* 104, 105687: 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eneco.2021.105687>
4. Baranauskienė, V.; Bučaitė-Vilkė, J.; Lazauskienė, A.; Dryžaitė, I. 2025. “Lietuvos savivaldybių tarybų narių darbotvarkės prioritetai: regioniniai skirtumai ir miesto-kaimo dichotomija”, *Public Policy and Administration* 24(1): 24-40. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.24.1.40467>
 5. Beasley, R. A.; Lahey, J. 2024. “Correspondence Audit Studies in Public Administration: A Systematic Review with Commentary”, *Journal of Behavioral Public Administration* 6: 1-30. <https://doi.org/10.30636/jbpa.71.345>
 6. Bell, E.; Jilke, S. 2024. “Racial Discrimination and Administrative Burden in Access to Public Services”, *Scientific Reports* 14(1), 1071. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-50936-1>
 7. Burbulytė-Tsiskarishvili, G.; Dvorak, J.; Žernytė, A. 2018. “Savivaldybių funkcijų ir galių kaita Lietuvoje 1994-2016 metais”, *Viešojoji politika ir administravimas* 17(3): 399-420. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.17.3.21955>
 8. Civinskas, R.; Dvorak, J.; Šumskas, G. 2021. “Beyond the Front-Line: The Coping Strategies and Discretion of Lithuanian Street-Level Bureaucracy during COVID-19”, *Corvinus Journal of Sociology and Social Policy* 12(1): 3-28. <https://doi.org/10.14267/CJSSP.2021.1.1>
 9. Cohen, N.; Davidovitz, M.; Lotta, G.; Lazebnik, T. 2026. “Trust and Street-Level Bureaucrats’ Readiness for Emergencies”, *International Public Management Journal* 29(1): 105-119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2025.2510632>
 10. Döring, M.; Jilke, S. 2023. “Cream-Skimming at the Frontline: The Role of Administrative Literacy”, *Public Administration* 101(4): 1569-1586. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12900>
 11. Dubois, V. 2016. *The Bureaucrat and the Poor: Encounters in French Welfare Offices*. Routledge.
 12. Dvorak, J. 2021. “Response of the Lithuanian Municipalities to the First Wave of COVID-19”, *Baltic Region* 13(1): 70-88. <https://doi.org/10.5922/2079-8555-2021-1-4>
 13. Dvorak, J.; Civinskas, R. 2025. “Ensuring Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination in the Provision of Social Services in Lithuania: Between Professional Empathy and Municipal Policy Standards”, *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences* 21(76): 45-65. <https://doi.org/10.24193/tras.76E.4>
 14. Gaddis, S. M. 2018. “An Introduction to Audit Studies in the Social Sciences”, in *Audit Studies: Behind the Scenes with Theory, Method, and Nuance*, 3-44. Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-71153-9_1
 15. Galdikienė, L.; Jaraitė, J.; Kajackaitė, A. 2024. “Effects of Cooperative and Uncooperative Narratives on Trust during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Experimental Evidence”, *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics* 112, 102246. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socce.2024.102246>
 16. Galdikienė, L.; Jaraitė, J.; Kajackaitė, A. 2026. “Pluralistic Ignorance and Climate Policies: Information Provision Experiment”, *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization* 247, 107601: 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2026.107601>
 17. Gomes, R. C.; Tavares, G. M.; Mirapalheta, G. 2026. “Experiments in Public Administration Research: Contributions, Challenges, and the Road Ahead”, *Public Management Review*: 1-33. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2653078>
 18. Grimmelikhuijsen, S.; Jilke, S.; Olsen, A. L.; Tummers, L. 2017. “Behavioral Public Administration: Combining Insights from Public Administration and Psychology”, *Public Administration Review* 77(1): 45-56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12609>
 19. Grohs, S.; Adam, C.; Knill, C. 2016. “Are Some Citizens More Equal than Others? Evidence from a Field Experiment”, *Public Administration Review* 76(1): 155-164. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.12439>
 20. Edri-Peer, O.; Cohen, N. 2026. “Street-Level Bureaucrats’ Cognitive Coping during Public Service Delivery: A Systematic Literature Review”, *Public Management Review*: 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2620549>
 21. Hansen, J. A.; Tummers, L. 2020. “A Systematic Review of Field Experiments in Public Administration”, *Public Administration Review* 80(6): 921-931. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13181>
 22. Hensel, D.; Liegat, M. C.; Vogel, D.; Vogel, R. 2026. “Prioritizing Along Prototypes: Implicit Citizenship Theories in Decision-Making at the Frontline”, *Public Administration* 104(1): 160-174. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.70006>
 23. Hylkema, R.; Grimmelikhuijsen, S. 2026. “Recent Developments in Experimental Public Administration: A Systematic Literature Review of Lab, Survey, and Field Experiments”, *International Public Management Journal*: 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2026.2641529>

24. James, O.; Jilke, S.; Van Ryzin, G. G. 2017. "Introduction: Experiments in Public Management Research", in O. James; S. R. Jilke; G. G. Van Ryzin (eds.), *Experiments in Public Management Research: Challenges and Contributions*, 3-19. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316676912.002>
25. Jilke, S.; Tummers, L. G. 2018. "Which Clients Are Deserving of Help? A Theoretical Model and Experimental Test", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28(2): 226-238. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muy002>
26. Jilke, S.; Van Dooren, W.; Rys, S. 2018. "Discrimination and Administrative Burden in Public Service Markets: Does a Public-Private Difference Exist?", *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 28(3): 423-439. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muy009>
27. Jilke, S.; Van Ryzin, G. G. 2017. "Survey Experiments for Public Management Research", in O. James; S. R. Jilke; G. G. Van Ryzin (eds.), *Experiments in Public Management Research: Challenges and Contributions*, 117-138. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316676912.007>
28. Kekez, A. 2019. "Qualitative Data Analysis in Implementation and Street-Level Bureaucracy Research", in P. Hupe (ed.), *Research Handbook on Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Ground Floor of Government in Context*, 317-335. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786437631.00032>
29. Kontvainė, V. 2020. Romų tautybės asmenų padėtis 2020 m. Vilnius: Diversity Development Group. https://tmde.lrv.lt/uploads/tmde/documents/files/Romų%20padėtis%202020_TYRIMO%20ATASKAITA_galutinė%20%28002%29.pdf
30. Kugelmass, H. 2016. "'Sorry, I'm Not Accepting New Patients': An Audit Study of Access to Mental Health Care", *Journal of Health and Social Behavior* 57(2): 168-183. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022146516647098>
31. Labanauskas, L. 2019. Neapykantos nusikaltimų pažeidžiamų bendruomenių kokybinio tyrimo ataskaita. Vilnius: Lietuvos Respublikos vidaus reikalų ministerija. <https://vrm.lrv.lt/uploads/vrm/documents/files/Pa%C5%BEEid%C5%BEEiam%C5%B3%20bendruomeni%C5%B3%20kokybinio%20tyrimo%20ataskaita.pdf>
32. Li, H.; Van Ryzin, G. G. 2017. "A Systematic Review of Experimental Studies in Public Management Journals", in O. James; S. R. Jilke; G. G. Van Ryzin (eds.), *Experiments in Public Management Research: Challenges and Contributions*, 20-36. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781316676912.003>
33. Mikula, Š.; Montag, J. 2022. Roma and Bureaucrats: A Field Experiment in the Czech Republic. MUNI ECON Working Paper No. 2022-01. Brno: Masaryk University. https://doi.org/10.5817/WP_MUNI_ECON_2022-01
34. Olsen, A. L.; Kyhse-Andersen, J. H.; Moynihan, D. 2022. "The Unequal Distribution of Opportunity: A National Audit Study of Bureaucratic Discrimination in Primary School Access", *American Journal of Political Science* 66(3): 587-603. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12584>
35. Pfaff, S.; Crabtree, C.; Kern, H. L.; Holbein, J. B. 2021. "Do Street-Level Bureaucrats Discriminate Based on Religion? A Large-Scale Correspondence Experiment among American Public School Principals", *Public Administration Review* 81(2): 244-259. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13235>
36. Pivoras, S.; Gončiarova, N. 2017. "Professional Discretion of Civil Servants in Serving the Customers of Public Employment Intermediation Agency: The Case of Lithuanian Labour Exchange", *Public Policy and Administration* 16(3): 424-438. <https://doi.org/10.5755/j01.ppaa.16.3.19340>
37. Poškus, M. S.; Pilkauskaitė Valickienė, R.; Kuzinas, A. 2018. "Making the Right Decision: Subjective Evaluation of Pro-Environmental Public Service Announcements", *Public Policy and Administration* 17(4): 619-633. <https://doi.org/10.13165/VPA-18-17-4-09>
38. Raaphorst, N.; Ashikali, T.; Groeneveld, S. 2025. "Active Representation and Equal Treatment: The Influence of Bureaucrats' Social Background on Discrimination", *Social Policy & Administration* 59(1): 20-36. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.13033>
39. Raaphorst, N.; Groeneveld, S. 2019. "Discrimination and Representation in Street-Level Bureaucracies", in P. Hupe (ed.), *Research Handbook on Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Ground Floor of Government in Context*, 116-127. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786437631.00018>
40. Rowe, M. 2025. *Researching Street-Level Bureaucracy: Bringing Out the Interpretive Dimensions*. Abingdon: Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003292845>

41. Scharle, Á.; Erős, H. 2022. Report on Using Discrimination Testing to Measure Discrimination against the Roma in Public Services. Budapest: Central European University, Democracy Institute. Žiūrėta 2026 m. rugpjūčio 6 d. <https://democracyinstitute.ceu.edu/sites/default/files/project/532/attachment/adinps-discrimination-report-final-en.pdf>
42. Schott, C.; Van Kleef, D. 2019. "Mixed-Methods Designs in Street-Level Bureaucracy Research", in P. Hupe (ed.), Research Handbook on Street-Level Bureaucracy: The Ground Floor of Government in Context, 294-303. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786437631.00030>
43. Simoniukštytė, A.; Michailovskis, G.; Avin, A. 2022. "Istorinis ir kultūrinis Lietuvos romų kontekstas", in A. Avin; K. Kozhanov; G. Michailovskis (sud.), Lietuvos romų sakytinės istorijos archyvas = Litovskone romengoro rakirib-nytko archivo, 57-71. Vilnius: Romų visuomenės centras.
44. Stumbrys, D. 2022. Lietuvos romų socialinis demografinis portretas: ką atskleidžia 2021 metų gyventojų surašymas? Vilnius: Lietuvos socialinių mokslų centro Sociologijos institutas.
45. Szydłowski, G.; De Boer, N.; Tummers, L. 2026. "Positive Public Sector Stereotypes and Their Impact on Public Service Delivery: An Audit Experiment", Behavioural Public Policy 10(2): 400-437. <https://doi.org/10.1017/bpp.2024.27>
46. Tautinių mažumų departamentas prie Lietuvos Respublikos Vyriausybės. 2025. "Projektas "Vietinės romų platformos - kelias link bendradarbiavimo su savivaldybėmis"". Žiūrėta 2026 m. rugpjūčio 6 d. <https://tmde.lrv.lt/lt/veiklos-sritys-1/es-parama/projektas-vietines-romu-platfomos-kelias-link-bendradarbiavimo-su-savivaldybemis/>
47. Valentinavičius, V.; Morkevičius, V.; Žvaliauskas, G.; Briedienė, M. 2022. "Appeals to Human Rights in the Context of Managing the COVID-19 Pandemic: Analysis of Government Hours in the Lithuanian Parliament in 2020-2021", Politologija 105(1): 92-132. <https://doi.org/10.15388/Polit.2022.105.3>
48. Van Dooren, W.; Jilke, S. 2024. "No Evidence for Ethnic Discrimination in the Nonprofit Sector: An Audit Study of Access to Nursing Homes", International Public Management Journal 27(1): 2-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2022.2051650>
49. Van Engen, N. 2019. "Quantitative Street-Level Bureaucracy Research", in Research Handbook on Street-Level Bureaucracy, 304-316. Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781786437631.00031>
50. Van Engen, N.; Steijn, B.; Tummers, L. 2019. "Do Consistent Government Policies Lead to Greater Meaningfulness and Legitimacy on the Front Line?", Public Administration 97(1): 97-115. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12570>

Remigijus Civinskas, Jaroslav Dvorak

ROMŲ DISKRIMINACIJOS TYRIMAS ARTIMOJOJE BIUROKRATIJOJE: TELEFONINIS AUDITAS SAVIVALDYBIŲ SOCIALINIŲ PASLAUGŲ SRITYJE

Anotacija. Straipsnio tikslas yra įvertinti, kaip telefoninio audito metodas dera su artimosios biurokratijos teorine prieiga ir kokiais galimybėmis bei ribotumais jis turi tiriant galimą netiesioginę romų diskriminacijos savivaldybių socialinių paslaugų srityje. Empirinis tyrimas grindžiamas mišriąja metodologine prieiga. Atliktas telefoninis auditas, kurio metu pagal standartizuotą scenarijų romų tautybės moters vardu buvo pateiktas skubios socialinės pagalbos prašymas. Iš viso atliktas 31 skambutis į 18 Lietuvos savivaldybių administracijų ir socialinių paslaugų administruojančių padalinių. Audito duomenys papildyti interviu su keturiomis romų tarpininkėmis ir viena romų NVO atstove. Kadangi tyrime nebuvo kontrolinės sąlygos, rezultatai neleidžia priežastinių požiūriu izoliuoti etninės tapatybės poveikio nuo kitų galimų veiksnių. Apibendrinant galima teigti, kad telefoninis auditas yra tinkamas, bet ne savarankiška priemonė netiesioginės diskriminacijos mechanizmams tirti artimosios biurokratijos kontekste. Jis realiomis sąlygomis leidžia ir aprašyti tikrinimo elgseną, kurių deklaratyviais metodais tikrai nepavyko, tačiau turi būti kontroliuojamos identifikavimo sąlygos, kurios yra nustatytos diskriminacijos etniniu pagrindu. Esamas tyrimas atskleidė eksperimentinio audito taikymo ribotumus. Šis metodas patikimai fiksuoja, kaip darbuotojas reaguavo į standartizuotą sprendimą, tačiau savaime nepaaiškina, kodėl buvo pasirinktas būtent toks sprendimas.

Remigijus Civinskas, associate professor at Dept. of Public Administration, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania
email: Remigijus.civinskas@vdu.lt

Jaroslav Dvorak, professor at Dept. of Public Administration and Political Sciences, Klaipeda University, Klaipeda, Lithuania
e-mail: Jaroslav.dvorak@ku.lt

Remigijus Civinskas, Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto Viešojo administravimo katedros docentas, Kaunas, Lietuva
El. paštas: Remigijus.civinskas@vdu.lt

Jaroslav Dvorak, Klaipėdos universiteto Viešojo administravimo ir politikos mokslų katedros profesorius, Klaipėda, Lietuva
El. paštas: Jaroslav.dvorak@ku.lt

