

You didn't answer our survey, but what about this text?

Converting hard-to-reach respondents through text messaging

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Background

- “Hard-to-reach” individuals may be difficult to identify, sample, contact, or **persuade**
- For a longitudinal survey, can we persuade participants to respond by:
 - Changing the contact mode?
 - Offering a new response mode?
 - Reducing survey length?
- Can we replace mailed questionnaires with text-to-web links OR an abbreviated text message survey?

Teacher Follow-up Survey (TFS) to the National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS)

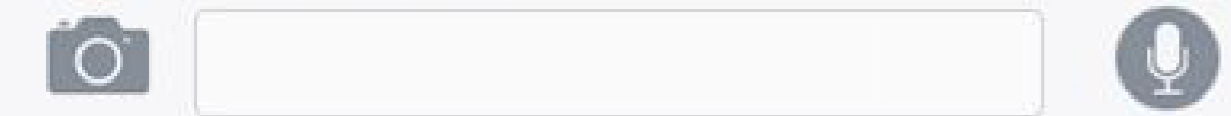
- TFS is a **longitudinal follow-up** (1 year later) with public and private school K-12 teachers who completed the baseline NTPS survey during the previous school year
- Approximately 20 minutes to complete the TFS
(and 40 minutes to complete the NTPS)
- NTPS collects personal and work **contact information** during base year
 - Respondents asked to provide home mailing address, e-mail address, and cellphone number in the baseline survey, as well as affirmative consent to receive follow-up communication by text message

Data collection strategy

1/13/22-4/18/22	6 e-mailed web survey invitations, 3 mailed web survey invitations, 1 mailed paper survey. Experiment starts later in April		
Time period	Control	Text-to-web	Text questions
4/26/22-4/28/22	2 nd mailed paper survey	Welcome text with link to survey	Welcome text with SMS survey questions
5/2/22		Reminder e-mail	
5/9/22- 6/3/22		CATI collection	
5/17/22-5/19/22	3 rd mail paper survey	Texted link to web survey	Texted SMS survey questions
5/23/22		Reminder e-mail	
5/31/22	End of experimental treatments; beginning of “last ditch” strategies		
6/1/22	Welcome text with link to survey		
6/6/22		Texted SMS survey questions	
6/9/22		Reminder e-mail	

Hello, you are receiving this message since you completed the National Teacher and Principal Survey last school year for the U.S. Department of Education and the Census Bureau. We need your help. You may receive up to 3 contacts via text in the next 2 months. Visit nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntp for more information. Reply STOP to cancel. Message rates may apply.

Please answer questions on your status as a teacher at <https://respond.census.gov/tfs>. Your User ID to complete the survey is 9999-9987. Call 1-888-595-1338 for help



Methods

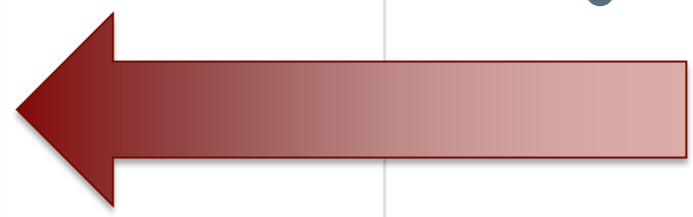
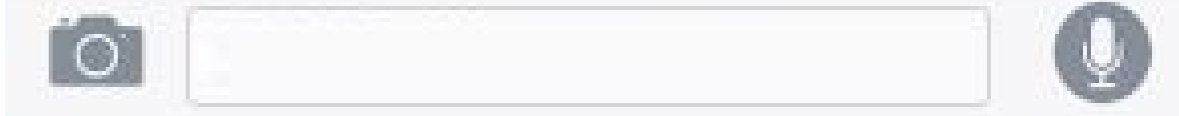
Teachers who provided cell phone number and consent assigned to three groups during the primary data collection period (about n=1,000 per group):

- Control: no text reminders
- Text-to-web: received text message with web survey link in place of later mail reminders
- Text questions: received text message survey questions in place of later mail reminders

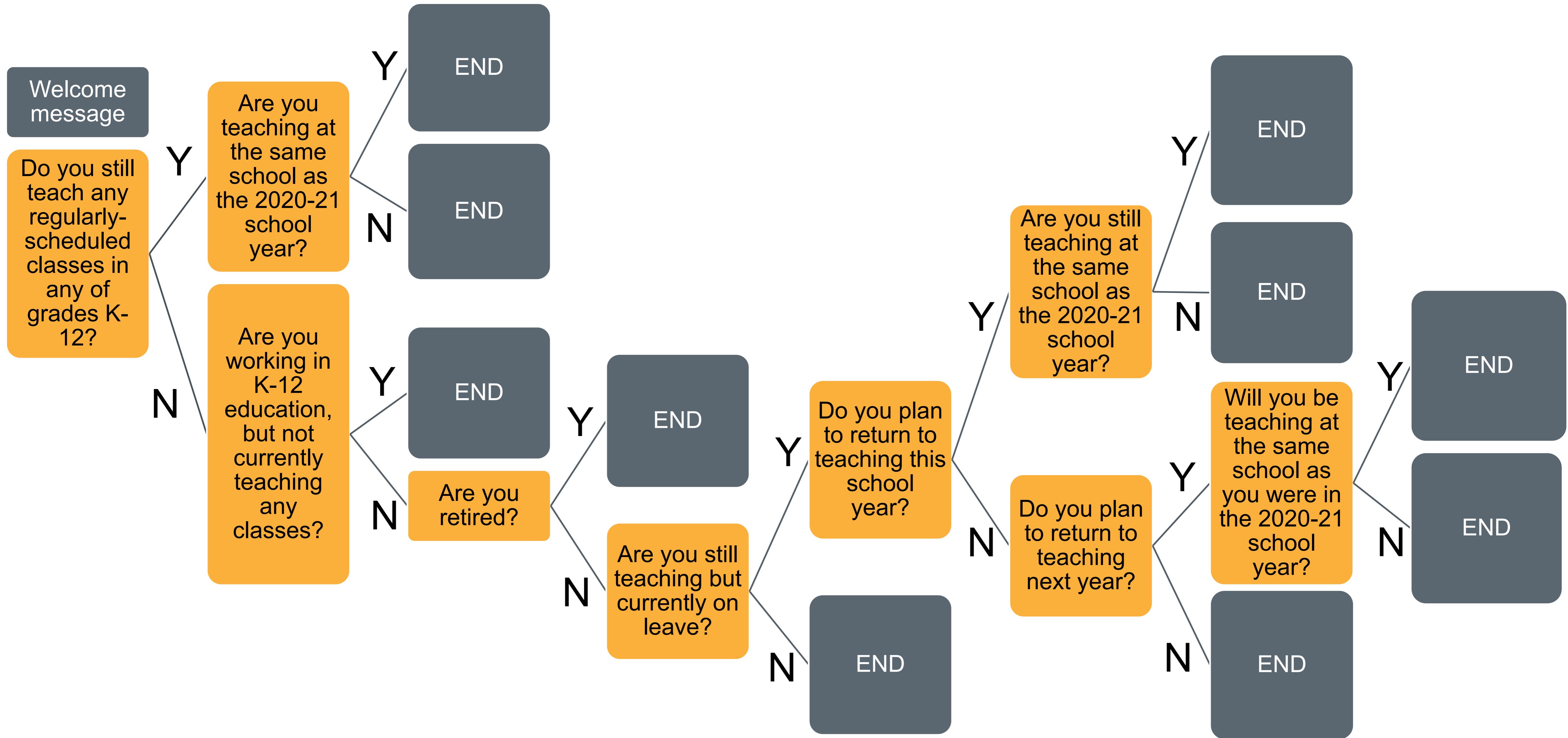
In the final stage of data collection, Control and Text-to-web nonrespondents received “last ditch” text message communication

Hello, you are receiving this message since you completed the National Teacher and Principal Survey last school year for the U.S. Department of Education and the Census Bureau. We need your help. You may receive up to 2 contacts via text in the next 2 months. Visit nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntp for more information. Reply STOP to cancel. Message rates may apply.

Do you still teach any regularly scheduled classes in any of grades pre-K-12? Reply “1” for YES or “2” for NO. Call 1-888-595-1338 for help or learn more about this survey at nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntp



Text questions



For hard-to-reach individuals, can we replace a mailed paper questionnaire with text messages?

Data collection strategy

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Replacing mailed questionnaires with text-to-web contacts **did not affect** response rates, nor did replacing mailed questionnaires with a separate text message survey.

	Control	Text-to-web	Text questions
Response rate: Full survey (s.e.)	32.1 (4.21)	30.2 (3.74)	30.7 (4.51)

Interactive text messages increased engagement, but did not convert individuals to respondents (nor did they divert them from the full-length survey).

	Control	Text-to-web	Text questions
Response rate: Full survey OR text questions (s.e.)	32.1 (4.21)	30.2 (3.74)	52.6 *~ (4.63)

Among nonrespondents as of 3/31/22, response rates as of 5/31/22 * Significant difference from Control group with $\alpha = .05$ ~ Significant difference from Text-to-web group with $\alpha = .05$

Data collection strategy

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Our conclusion was similar when looking at the start of data collection through the end of the experimental treatments:

There was **no difference** in survey response rates at the end of the experimental treatment, even when we replaced a survey invitation with a contact that didn't include an invitation. We had **higher interaction rates** (i.e., responded to full survey OR abbreviated texted survey) when texted questions replaced a paper questionnaire or texted web link.

	Control	Text-to-web	Text questions
Response rate: Full survey (s.e.)	84.6 (2.05)	82.6 (2.16)	83.5 (2.73)
Response rate: Full survey OR text questions (s.e.)	84.6 (2.05)	82.6 (2.16)	88.6 *~ (2.30)

Response rates as of 5/31/22 * Significant difference from Control group with $\alpha = .05$ ~ Significant difference from Text-to-web group with $\alpha = .05$

For the *hardest-to-reach* individuals, can we engage them with text messages?

Data collection strategy

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For the hardest-to-reach individuals (after 14 contacts + CATI), texting questions that, when answered, don't qualify as a completed survey, **still increased survey response rates**

	Control [got text link & text questions]	Text-to-web [got text questions]	Text questions [got no more texts]
Response rate: Full survey (s.e.)	24.8 (5.01)	14.2 * (5.12)	4.7 *~ (2.01)

The interaction rate (survey + questions) was **highest** when text questions were sent early

	Control [got text link & text questions]	Text-to-web [got text questions]	Text questions [got no more texts]
Response rate: Full survey OR text questions (s.e.)	29.3 (5.12)	24.4 (5.29)	45.6*~ (6.26)

Among nonrespondents as of 5/31/22, response rates as of 7/12/22 * Significant difference from Control group with $\alpha = .05$ ~ Significant difference from Text-to-web group with $\alpha = .05$

Data collection strategy

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Looking at the FULL data collection:

Response rates were **highest** for the group that had the **most contacts**.

However, we had **higher interaction rates** (i.e., responded to full survey or abbreviated texted survey) when texted questions replaced texted web links (even with **fewer total contacts**).

	Control	Text-to-web	Text questions
Response rate: Full survey (s.e.)	87.2 (1.68)	83.6* (1.82)	84.0* (2.22)
Response rate: Full survey OR text questions (s.e.)	87.9 (1.71)	85.2 (1.78)	89.1~ (1.76)

Response rates as of 7/12/22 * Significant difference from Control group with $\alpha = .05$ ~ Significant difference from Text-to-web group with $\alpha = .05$

Discussion

IN SUMMARY

- For hard-to-persuade individuals, we found that replacing mailed questionnaires with texted links OR abbreviated text questions did not help or hurt survey response rates
- Texting questions increased *engagement* when sent before the final stages of data collection

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Who answers texted questions but not a longer web survey?
 - Could a follow-up or integrated text-to-web link convert them to respondents?
 - Would they complete a series of text question surveys instead of a single web survey?
- Are mobile web completes preferable to paper questionnaires? To web surveys completed on a computer?

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<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ntps/>