

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

Converting hard-to-reach respondents through text messaging

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Background

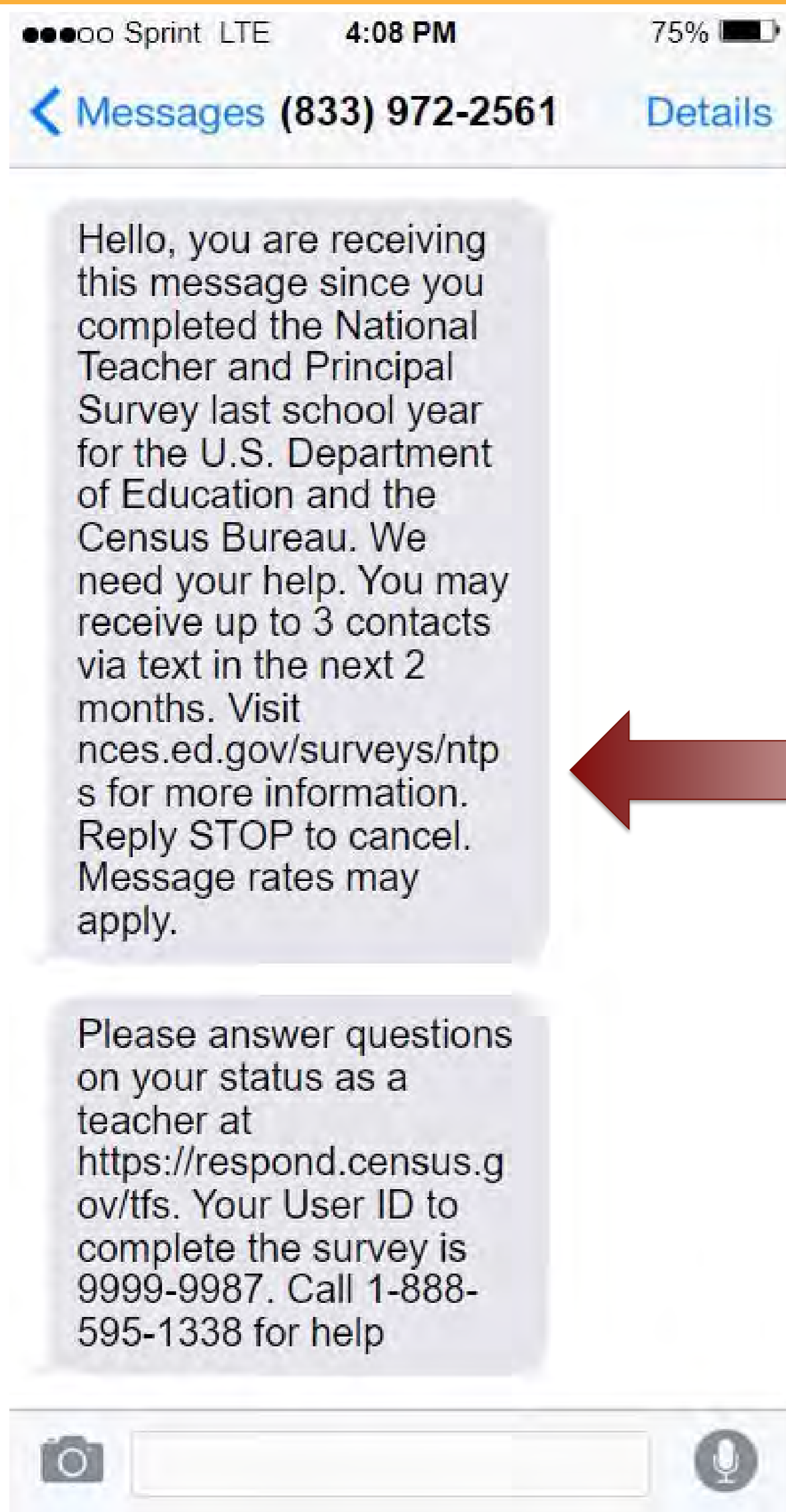
- “Hard-to-reach” individuals may be difficult to identify, sample, contact, or **persuade**
- For a longitudinal survey, can we persuade participants to respond by:
 - Changing the contact mode?
 - Offering a new response mode?
 - Reducing survey length?
- Can we replace mailed questionnaires with text-to-web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

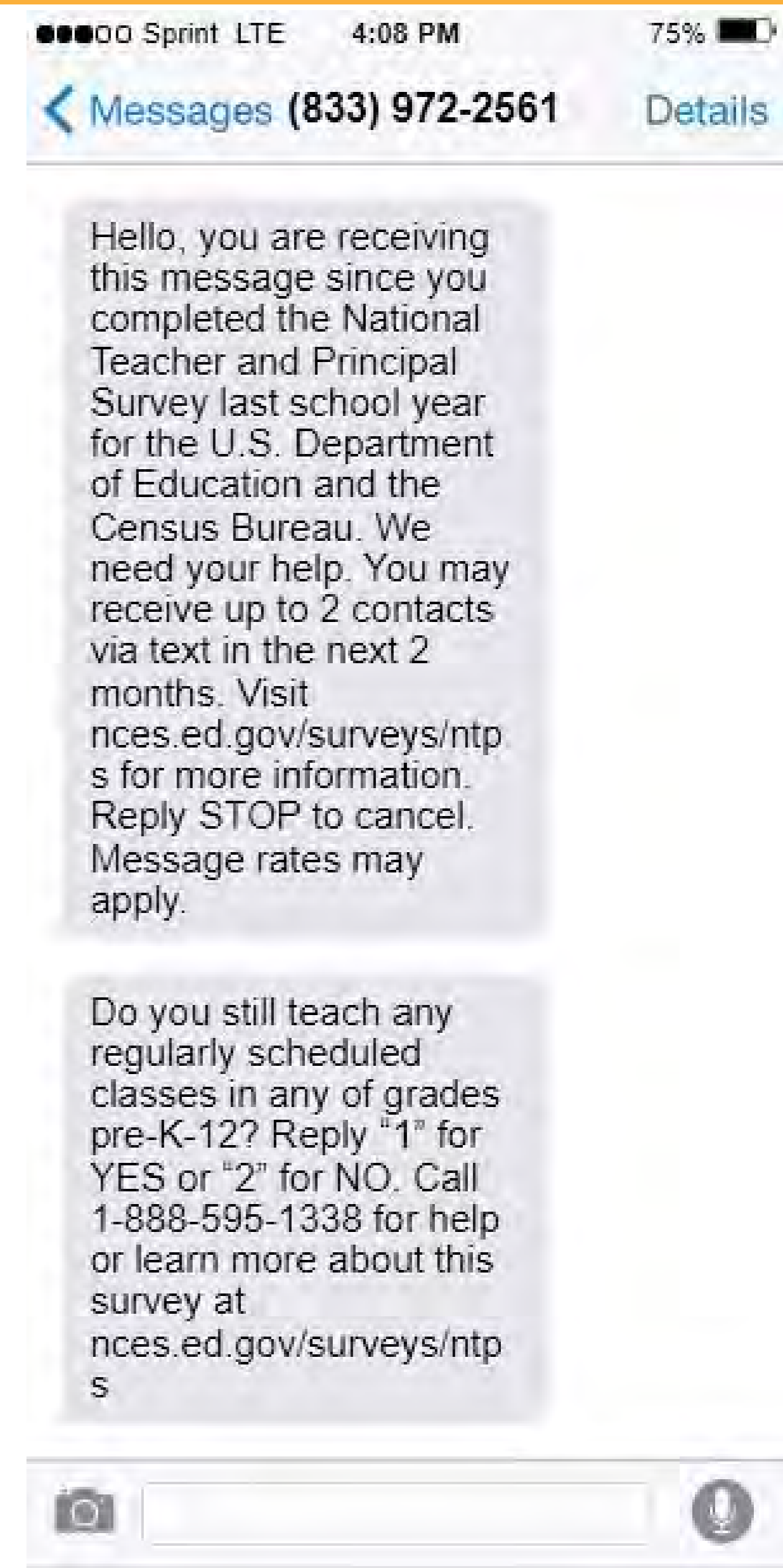


Methods

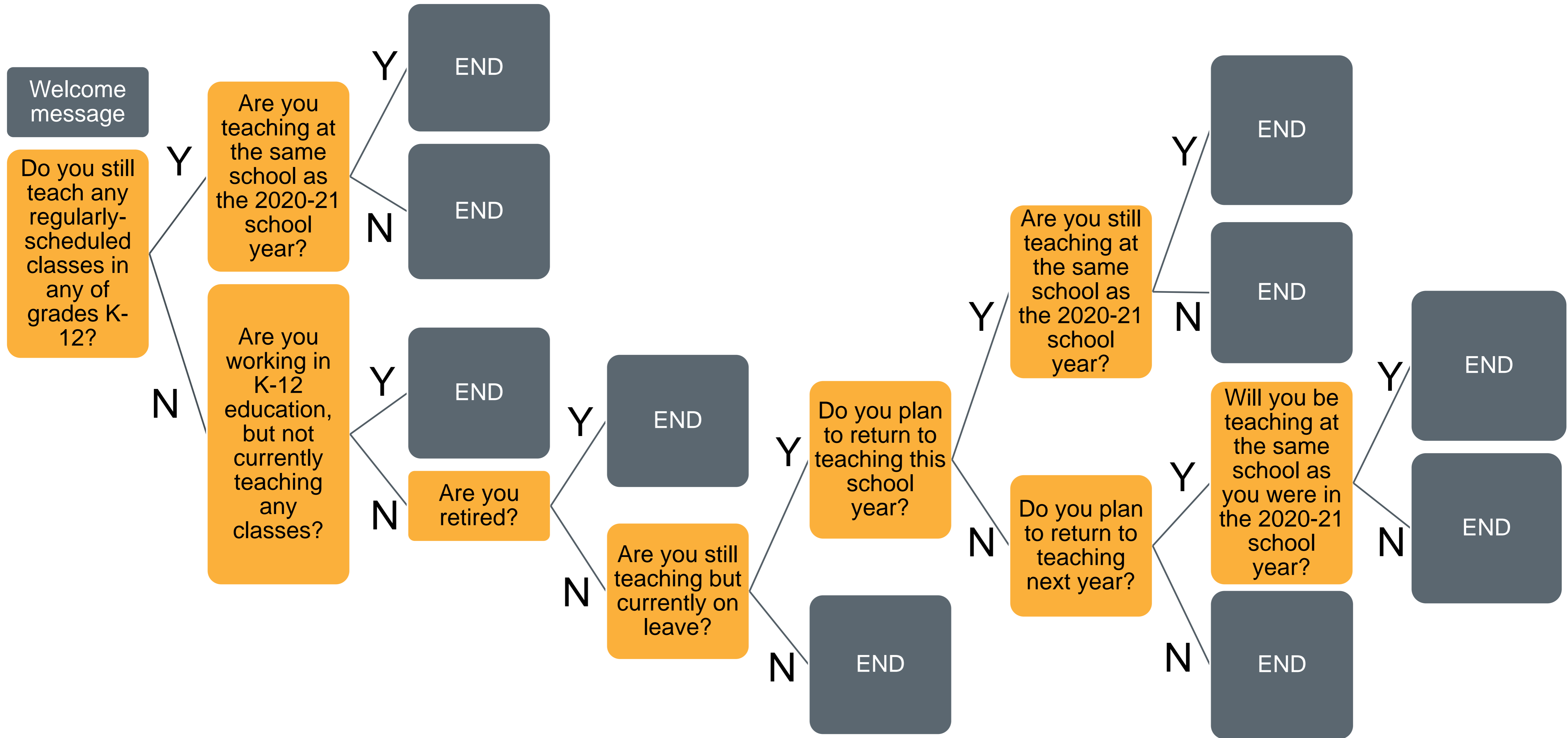
Teachers who provided cell phone number and consent assigned to three groups during the primary data collection period (about n=1,000 per group):

- 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



Text questions



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

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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/>