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Text interactions on an RDD study using an SMS-enabled outbound number

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Overview

- Background

- Research Questions

- Study Design

- Protocol

- Results

- Conclusions/Limitations

- Next Steps

Background

- The role of mobile devices in survey research has been of increasing focus over the past decade.
  - Random digit dial (RDD) telephone studies increasingly implement dual-frame sample designs, web surveys are mobile optimized
- Research has also explored the use of pre-survey text notifications to improve response rates (Starr, et al., 2015; Dal Grande, et al., 2016).
- Our study explores the value of using an SMS-enabled outbound number in a nationwide telephone health survey to engage sampled respondents that text the outbound number after receiving a telephone call.

Research Questions

1. What proportion of respondents will text the SMS-enabled number?

2. What types of texts are received from sampled respondents?

3. What percentage of respondents will engage with help desk staff?

4. What percentage of respondents that texted completed the survey.
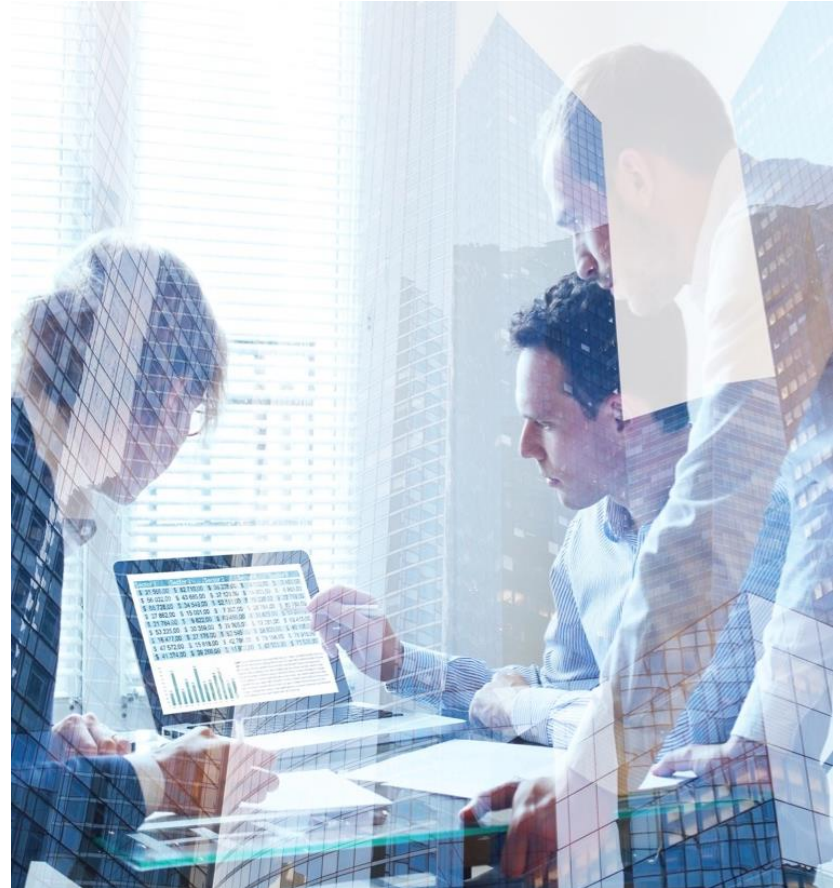
Study Design

- Nationwide RDD health survey of households in the United States
- Targeting 10,000 household completes
- Sample Proportion – 84% Cell / 16% Landline
- Data collection is spread across six waves with each wave lasting six weeks:
  - Wave 1 – September to October 2018
  - Wave 2 – November 2018 to January 2019
  - Wave 3 – January to March 2019
- Outbound SMS-Enabled number
- Text messages are responded to within one business day
- Text protocol was not approved by IRB until after Wave 2; no response text messages were sent to respondents during Waves 1 and 2.

Protocol

- **Request to stop contact**
  - Text responses are not issued, sample record is dispositioned as "refusal".

- **Requests for help**
  - Contacted directly via telephone. Crisis protocol followed if respondent is in crisis.

- **Another language**
  - Response received in non-English language

- **Requests for additional information**
  - Response text includes – thank you; type of study; survey sponsor; duration.
  - One additional follow-up is made after three days of non-response.

- **Other**
  - Response text clarifies who we are and why we are contacting them.

Results

What proportion of respondents will text the SMS-enabled number?

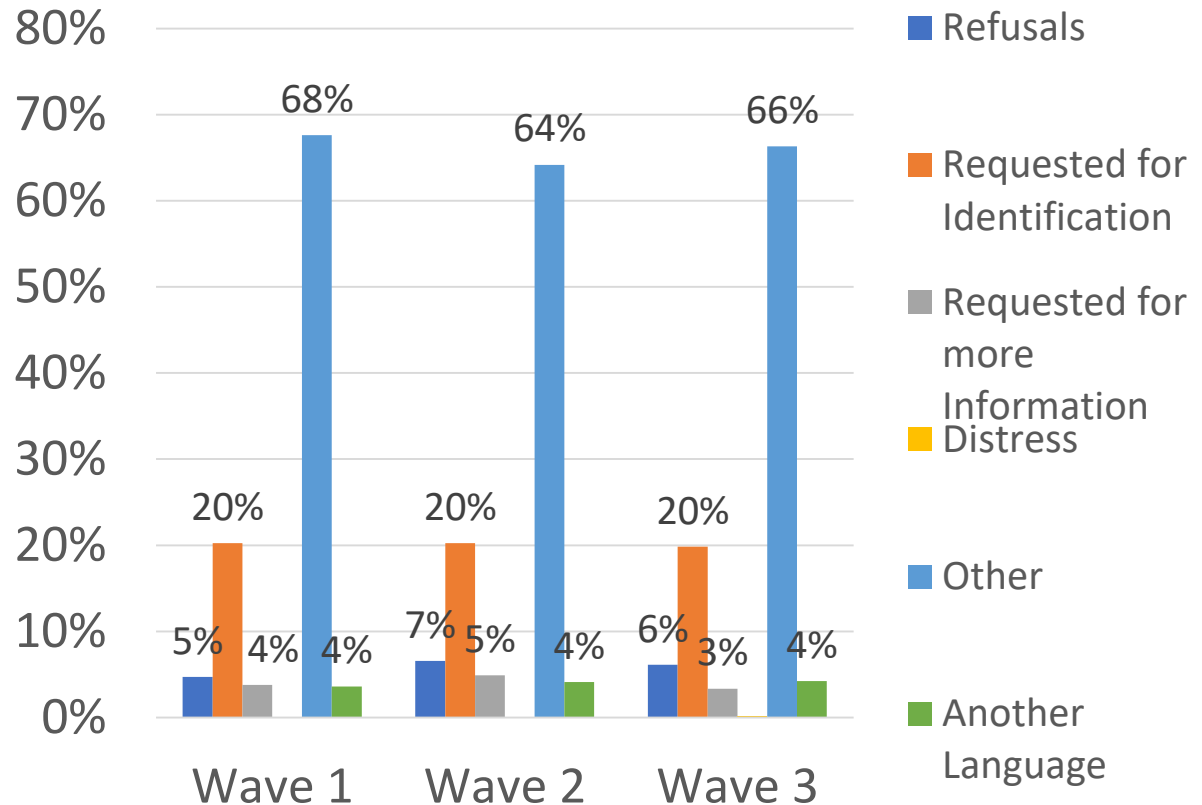| Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
2%	**2%**	**1%**
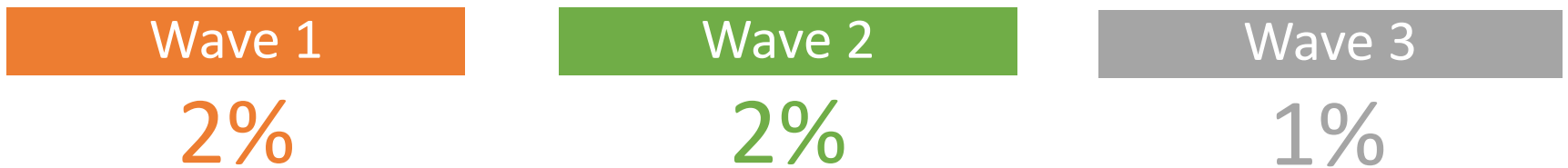
% of sample contacting help desk via text message

Although text messages received are a small proportion of the total sample, percentage of total sample is slightly larger than the percent of calls received via traditional help desk phone lines

Results

What types of texts are received from sampled respondents?

Bar chart showing text types received across Wave 1, Wave 2, and Wave 3.

Category	Wave 1	Wave 2	Wave 3
Refusals	5%	7%	6%
Requested for Identification	20%	20%	20%
Requested for more Information	4%	5%	3%
Other	68%	64%	66%
Another Language	4%	4%	4%

Legend:
- Refusals
- Requested for Identification
- Requested for more Information
- Distress
- Other
- Another Language

*Only one "distress" text was received in Wave 3; no "distress" texts were received in Wave 1 or 2

Results

What percentage of respondents will engage with help desk staff?

What percentage of respondents that texted completed the survey?

	Wave 3
Response	**41%**
Refusal	50%
Requested for Identification	6%
Requested for more Information	4%
Distress	1%
Other	38%
Another Language	2%
Non Response	**59%**

Of those that engaged, 9% completed the survey.

Conclusions/Limitations

Conclusions

- Overall, respondent utilization of the SMS-Enabled line was relatively low, but comparable to traditional telephone help desk activity

- Most responses fell into the "Other" category, with the second most frequent request being for additional information

- Majority of respondents that text messaged did not engage further with the help desk

- Of those that engaged, over half subsequently refused to participate, nine percent completed the survey

- Presents an opportunity to identify respondent preferred language

Limitations

- OMB approval received post-Wave 4; requests to schedule interviews were not included in replies to respondents

- Only initial contacts were assessed for analytic simplicity

Next Steps

- **Requests to schedule interviews added to text protocol**

- **Assess the impact of additional engagements between the respondent and help desk beyond initial – is there an ideal pathway to a complete?**

- **Assess the ability of text messaging to assist in identifying respondent preferred language**

- **Gateway to offering respondent web mode if unwilling to complete via telephone**

Questions?