

SMS Survey Recruitment Methods: Assessing a Decade of SMS Research Using the Gallup Panel

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Gallup Panel

1

Nationally representative, probability-based multi-mode panel of approximately 100,000 U.S. adults who agree to participate in surveys.

2

Panelists are recruited via ABS and RDD frames.

3

Panelists can be surveyed by web, mail, telephone or SMS.

4

For most projects, a stratified sample is selected from the frame of panel members.

Continued Emergence of Smartphone Use

- Cellphone/smartphone ownership continues to emerge in the U.S., 92% of the U.S. public owns a smartphone, compared to 68% in 2015.¹
- Gallup Panelists preferences are changing: 58% of all surveys completed by Gallup Panel members are completed on a mobile device.

¹ Pew Research Center, 2024



Potential Benefits: SMS Invitations

- Taken in tandem with a common methodological concern –that email survey invites may never be opened by potential respondents– SMS messaging could prove useful in recruiting respondents, both into our panel and surveys, that may not otherwise see the recruitment email.



Gallup Panel: Then and Now

- **2016**

- **8%:** panelists consented to receiving SMS/MMS
- Consenting to SMS was more likely among:
 - **Older** panelists
 - **White** panelists
 - **College** graduates
- Panelists who were consented to receiving SMS were also more likely to be “High Responders”

- **2025**

- **62%:** panelists consented to receiving SMS/MMS
- Consenting to SMS is more likely among:
 - **Younger** panelists
 - **Black** and **Hispanic** panelists
 - New members (< 1 year)
- Are our panelists still more likely to be “high responders”?

Research Questions

- Is SMS effective in recruiting new panel members?
 - Panelist Recruitment
 - SMS used as a **pre-note**
- Is SMS effective in getting more responses out of our panel members?
 - Panelist Survey Invitation
 - SMS used as an **initial** reminder
 - Panelist Re-Engagement
 - SMS used as a **final** reminder
- Are SMS-consenters high-responders?



Panel Recruitment Experiment: Impact of Pre-Notification SMS and MMS

- **Fielded: Summer 2024**
- Dialed 54,504 pre-paid cell phone owners.
- Test the effectiveness of SMS and MMS pre-notifications, respondents were randomly split into three groups
 - Call Only (no pre-note)
 - SMS Prenote
 - MMS + SMS Prenote

Hello! This is Gallup, and we have an exciting opportunity to join our panel and get paid to share your opinions with us! We will be calling you later today from this phone number.

Reply STOP to opt out.

Helping people be heard
for more than 80 years

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Panel Recruitment Experiment: SMS/MMS as a Warning

- Response rates were lower for both the SMS and MMS groups (0.8%) compared to the non-SMS/MMS group (1.1%).
 - Interview **non-contact** rates were higher among the SMS/MMS group.
 - Interview **refusal** rates were higher among the non-SMS/MMS group.
- No significant demographic differences in response rates emerged across conditions.
- Cost per panel recruit was **11.5% higher** when using SMS/MMS.



SMS Survey Invitation Experiment: Impact of Survey Invitation SMS

- Fielded: October 2024
- As a part of a larger engagement effort, we invited 83,678 Gallup Panel members to complete a survey focusing on crime and politics.
 - Of the invited sample, 43,332 Gallup Panel members had previously consented to receive SMS notification from Gallup.
- To test the effectiveness of SMS survey invitations above that of email survey recruitment, we randomly sent an SMS survey invitation message to 18,159 Gallup Panelists who had previously agreed to receive SMS messages.

Thank you for being a Gallup Panel member. You're invited to the Current Events Survey. Click below to complete it today!

https://gallupinc.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5ciUleQhiFdWLnU?Q_CHL=email&Q_DL=EMD_3dq35rEaxyH1fw1_5ciUleQhiFdWLn-U_CGC_MhVcUTLJxdAvCVB&g_=g&SMS_COMP_YN=Y

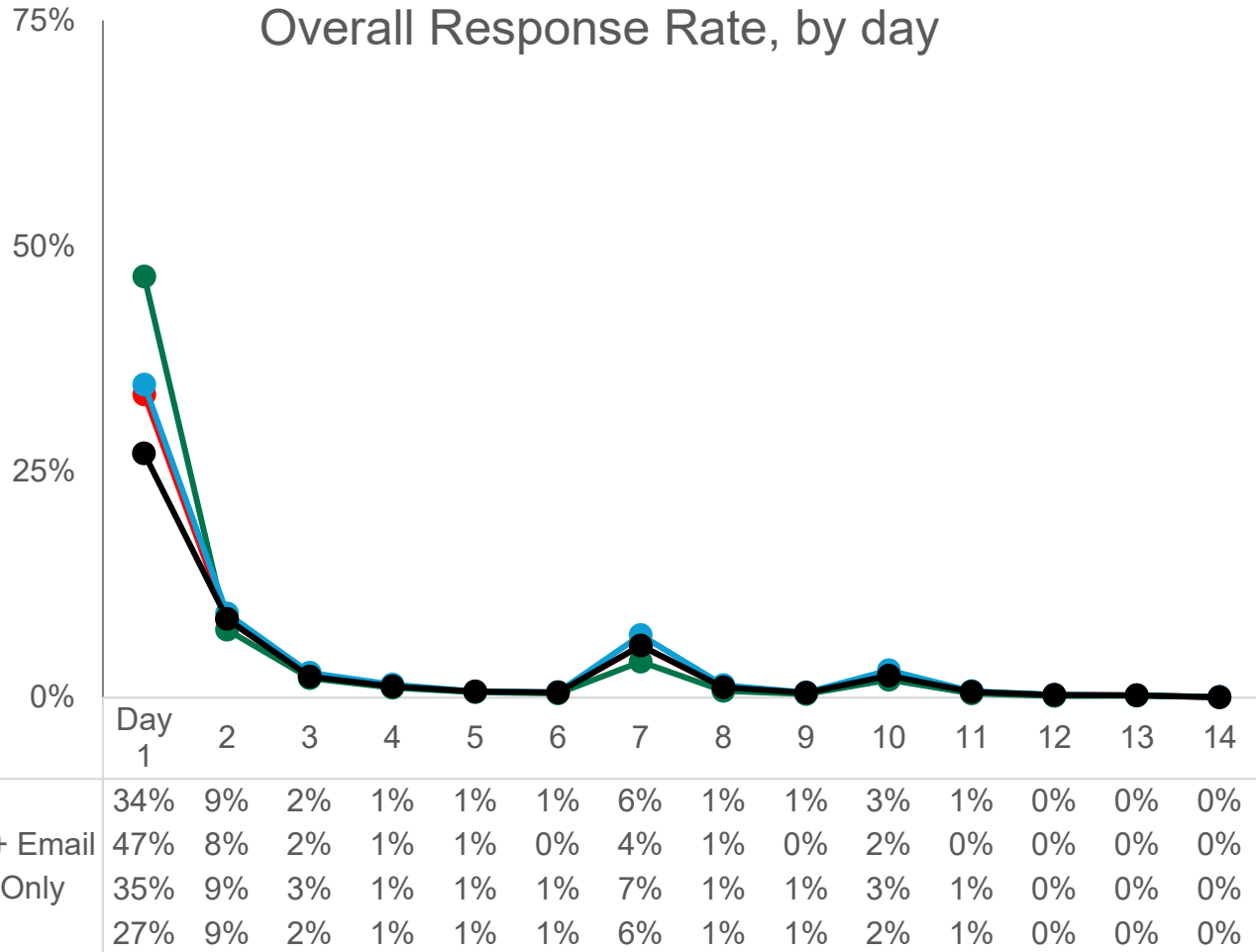
Reply STOP to opt-out

SMS Survey Invitation Experiment: Sample Information

Condition	Total Respondents	SMS Sent	Failed Sends	Opt-Outs		Completions	Completion Rate
SMS Consent: SMS + Email	18,159	13,926	56	243		12,073	66% ^a
SMS Consent: Email Only	25,173	-	-	-		15,793	63% ^a
No SMS Consent	40,346	-	-	-		20,834	52% ^b
Overall	83,678	13,926	56	243		48,700	58%

SMS Survey Invitation Experiment: Overall Response Rates Over Time

- Nearly half (47%) of respondents who received an SMS invitation responded to the survey on the day of release.
- Other than initial responses, responses rates were similar for SMS consenters, regardless if they received an SMS or not.
- Compared to the non-SMS groups, the SMS groups demonstrated increased response rates across most major demographic groups



Evidence from Re-Engagement Effort: Impact of an SMS Final Reminder

- Fielded: Fall 2024
- As a part of a Gallup Panel ongoing effort to re-engage non-active panelists, panelists who do not participate in surveys for any 6-month span, before retiring the panelist. To increase responses and thus increase the nonactive panelists retained, we added an SMS-contact as our final survey reminder.
- We sent an SMS to 3,658 Gallup panelists who had previously consented to receiving SMS,



Your opinion is important! To continue being part of the Gallup Panel, please complete this survey and receive a \$5 reward.

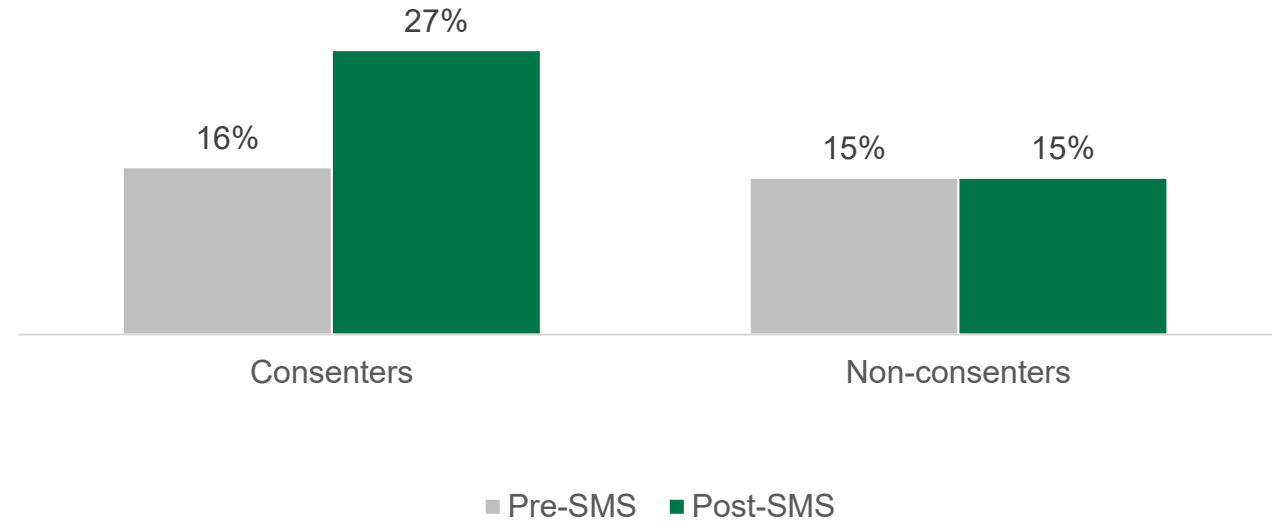
<https://ql.tc/b/sLw3WmBu>

To prevent messages like this, reply STOP

Evidence from Re-Engagement Effort: Impact of an SMS Final Reminder

- 25% of all responses were through the SMS link
- No demographic differences emerged between those who completed via the email vs. the SMS link.
- Overall, the SMS final reminder led to an **increase in retained panelists**.
- This data is still be analyzed.

Overall Response rate, by group



General Findings

- **Panel recruitment**
 - Both **SMS and MMS prenotes** were **ineffective** in increasing response rates, with **non-contact** being higher for both SMS and MMS groups.
- **Survey Invitation**
 - **SMS survey invitations** were **effective** in increasing response rates across all tested demographic groups.
- **Panel retention**
- **SMS final reminders** were **effective** in increasing the number of retained panelists
 - Response rates were consistent across demographic groups.
 - SMS consenters responded at high rates in both the survey recruitment and retention research, indicating that SMS consenters could be “high responders,” in line with past research



Future Directions

- Currently analyzing data from research using non-probability samples (AAPOR 2025)
- Currently planning and conducting additional research surrounding the following:
 - Timing of SMS (e.g., prenotes, invitation, reminders)
 - Content of SMS
 - SMS with short vs. long link
 - SMS with vs. without link
 - Varying motivational elements of SMS (e.g., call-to-actions)
- Long-term impact of SMS strategies on panel engagement



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