

The Impact of Survey Communications on Response Rates

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Introduction

- **Past research has shown that the design and presentation of survey communications can affect survey response rates**
- **Much of this work has focused on mailed prenotifications and invitations**
- **Less research has focused on design decisions in email communications and the impact on response rates to web surveys**

Introduction

- **This study builds on findings from our previous research – Falcone, Thomas, and Mack (2012) – which looked at invitation length and location of web survey consent button on the survey landing page**

Background: Previous Experiment



- In the previous study, respondents were randomly assigned to one of four groups:
 - **Short email** & **consent at top** of landing page
 - **Short email** & **consent at bottom** of landing page
 - **Long email** & **consent at top** of landing page
 - **Long email** & **consent at bottom** of landing page

Background: Previous Experiment



■ Results:

- No difference in survey link click rate between long and short emails
- No difference in consent button clicks between those with button at top and those with button at bottom of landing page
- Those with *long survey invitation email* and the *button at the top of the landing page* were significantly more likely to complete survey than other three groups.

Web Survey URL – Top or Bottom?

- **Guidance on location of web survey URL supports putting the link near the top of email communication to avoid the need for scrolling (Couper, 2008).**
- **Findings from our past study supported putting link at top of landing page.**
- **However, 2012 study by Kaplowitz, Lupi, Couper, and Thorp found higher response rates from faculty and students who received email with link at bottom, no difference among staff.**

Maybe Long Emails Aren't So Bad

- **Guidance on the length of emails typically supports keeping them short and to the point (Dillman, Smyth, and Christian, 2009).**
- **However, our previous study found that those with the long email invitation were more likely to complete the survey.**
- **And the 2012 study by Kaplowitz, Lupi, Couper, and Thorp found higher response rates for faculty and staff sent longer invitations, no difference among students.**

Can We Eliminate Landing Page?

- **Given some evidence of positive, or at least no detrimental, impact of long emails on response rates, we wondered can the language that we typically include on the landing page be moved from the landing page to the email?**
- **If we can eliminate the landing page, respondents only have to decide once to participate, rather than twice by:**
 - 1) clicking link in email, and then**
 - 2) clicking consent on landing page**

What's on the Landing Page?

- **Federally sponsored surveys:**
 - **Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Standards and Guidelines for Statistical Surveys** requires that researchers notify respondents of a number of factors, including the OMB control number
 - **In addition, Human Subjects Protection and Internal Review Boards (IRB) require voluntary consent language**

- **In this study, we look at:**
 - **Email length:**
 - **Does the length of an email invitation or reminder, short with a landing page versus long without a landing page, affect response rates?**
 - **Web survey URL location:**
 - **Does the location of the web survey URL, at the top or bottom of an email invitation or reminder, affect response rates?**

- Respondents were randomly assigned to one of four groups:
 - **Short email** & **URL at top of email** directed to web survey landing page
 - **Short email** & **URL at bottom of email** directed to web survey landing page
 - **Long email** & **URL at top of email** directed to first page of survey questions
 - **Long email** & **URL at bottom of email** directed to first page of survey questions

Long Email, Survey Link at Top



You have been selected to participate in an important web-based survey on your experiences with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Disaster Technical Assistance Center (DTAC).

Please read the information below. To complete the survey, please click on the following link or copy and paste it into your web browser:

<https://spss.icfsurveys.com/mrIWeb/mrIWeb.dll?I.Project=SAMHSACSS&ID=100004BL>

SAMHSA DTAC supports SAMHSA's efforts to prepare states, territories, and local entities to deliver effective behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) responses to disasters.

The purpose of this survey is to assess users' satisfaction with SAMHSA DTAC to ensure high quality customer service and improve future services that SAMHSA DTAC may provide. This survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

You have been asked to complete this survey because you have either requested technical assistance from SAMHSA DTAC in the past 12 months or you are subscribed to one of SAMHSA DTAC's e-communications (*The Bulletin* or *The Dialogue*). The survey asks questions about your experiences and satisfaction with SAMHSA DTAC technical assistance, the SAMHSA DTAC website, and SAMHSA DTAC e-communications.

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You can decide whether or not to take the survey and which questions to answer if you decide to take the survey. If you choose to participate in the survey, any information you provide will be treated as confidential and all information collected will be reported only at an aggregate level.

If you have any technical difficulties or questions about the survey, please call the survey helpline toll-free at 1-866-657-2798 or send an email to DTACSurvey@icfi.com.

For any questions about SAMHSA's research on this topic, please contact Nikki Bellamy, Ph.D., SAMHSA DTAC Project Officer, by phone at 240-276-2418 or by email at nikki.bellamy@samhsa.hhs.gov.

OMB No. 0930-0325

Expiration Date: 06/30/14

Public Burden Statement: An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. The OMB control number for this project is 0930-xxxx. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average .25 hours per client per year, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to SAMHSA Reports Clearance Officer, 1 Choke Cherry Road, Room 7-1044, Rockville, Maryland, 20857.

Long Email, Survey Link at Top



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Short Email, Survey Link at Top



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SAMHSA DTAC wants to hear your thoughts about their services so that they can ensure they provide you with high quality customer service and improve their services in the future.

We're inviting you to participate in this SAMHSADTAC customer satisfaction survey because you have either requested technical assistance from SAMHSA DTAC in the past or you are subscribed to one of SAMHSA DTAC's e-communications (the *Bulletin* or *The Dialogue*). This survey takes about 15 minutes to complete.

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Please complete this important survey today!

Thank you,
SAMHSA DTAC

Short Email, Survey Link at Top



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Please complete this important survey today!

Thank you,
SAMHSA DTAC

Survey Landing Page

- **LONG EMAIL:**
Skipped this page
- **SHORT EMAIL:**
Viewed this page
after clicking the web
survey URL in the
email

SAMHSA DTAC CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Please read the information below. If you are willing to take this short survey, please click on the "I Agree" button below in order to begin the survey.

I Agree

SAMHSA DTAC was established by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Federal Government. SAMHSA DTAC supports SAMHSA's efforts to prepare states, territories, and local entities to deliver effective behavioral health (mental health and substance abuse) responses to disasters.

The purpose of this survey is to assess users' level of satisfaction with SAMHSA DTAC in order to ensure quality customer service and improve future services SAMHSA DTAC provides. The SAMHSA DTAC research team is conducting this survey for use by SAMHSA DTAC to improve its services.

You have been asked to complete this survey because you have either requested technical assistance from SAMHSA DTAC in the past or you are subscribed to one of SAMHSA DTAC's e-communications (e.g., *The Bulletin*, *The Dialogue*). The survey asks questions about your experiences and satisfaction with DTAC technical assistance, the DTAC website, and DTAC e-communications.

Voluntary consent →

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First Page of the Survey

- **LONG EMAIL:**
Viewed this page directly after clicking the web survey URL in the email
- **SHORT EMAIL:**
Viewed this page after clicking “I agree” button on the landing page

FAMILIARITY AND EXPERIENCE WITH SAMHSA DTAC

Thank you for taking the time to share your experiences with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Technical Assistance Center.

You may navigate backwards and forwards through the survey questions using the buttons near the bottom of the screen (please do not use the forward and backwards buttons in your Internet browser). If you have any questions as you're completing this survey, please call the survey helpline toll-free at 1-866-657-2798 or send an email to DTAC@icfsurveys.com.

Before taking this survey, were you aware that SAMHSA DTAC has...?

	Yes	No
Answers to questions regarding disaster behavioral health preparedness and response issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guidance on disaster behavioral health funding mechanisms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance finding mental health and substance abuse peers and experts in the disaster behavioral health field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
SAMHSA DTAC resource collections (a library of over 1,500 tip sheets, publications, studies, and articles created by Federal agencies, grantees, nongovernmental organizations, and academia)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Onsite consultation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The SAMHSA Disaster Behavioral Health Information Series (DBHIS) (contains installments and toolkits pertinent to disaster behavioral health, and targets specific populations, specific types of disaster, and other topics related to all-hazards disaster behavioral health preparedness and response)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The SAMHSA DTAC Web site	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

4%
Percentage Complete

Previous

Next

Current Experiment

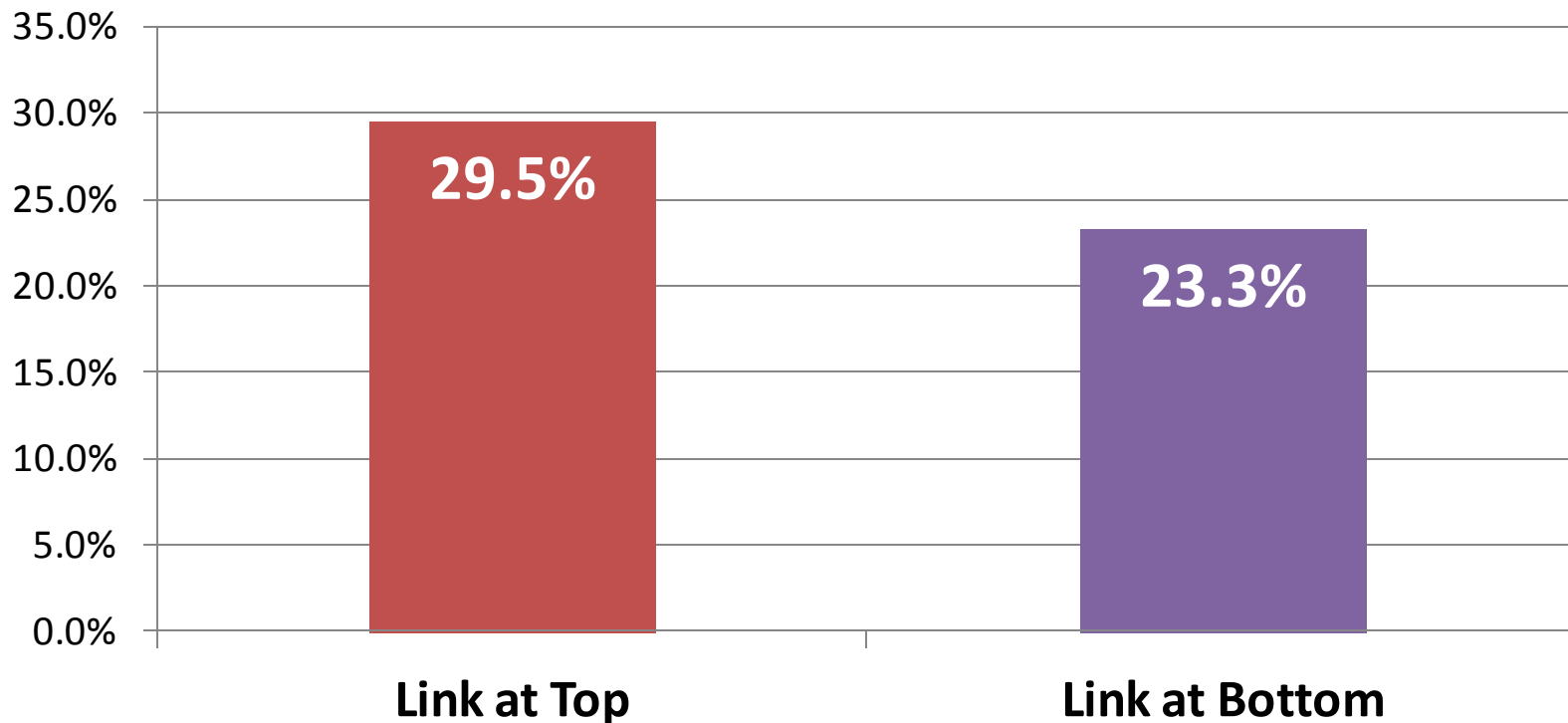
- **Data from the 2013 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Disaster Technical Assistance Center (SAMHSA DTAC) Customer Satisfaction Survey**
- **Administered to a coordinators and providers of disaster behavioral health services**
- **345 customers invited to complete the survey**
- **Survey contained 32 questions, included skip logic**
- **Fielded for 7 weeks, respondents sent a pre-notification, invitation, and 4 reminders**

Clicks into Survey by Link Location



- A larger percentage of those with the URL at top of the email began the survey, however, the difference was not statistically significant

Percent Clicked into Survey

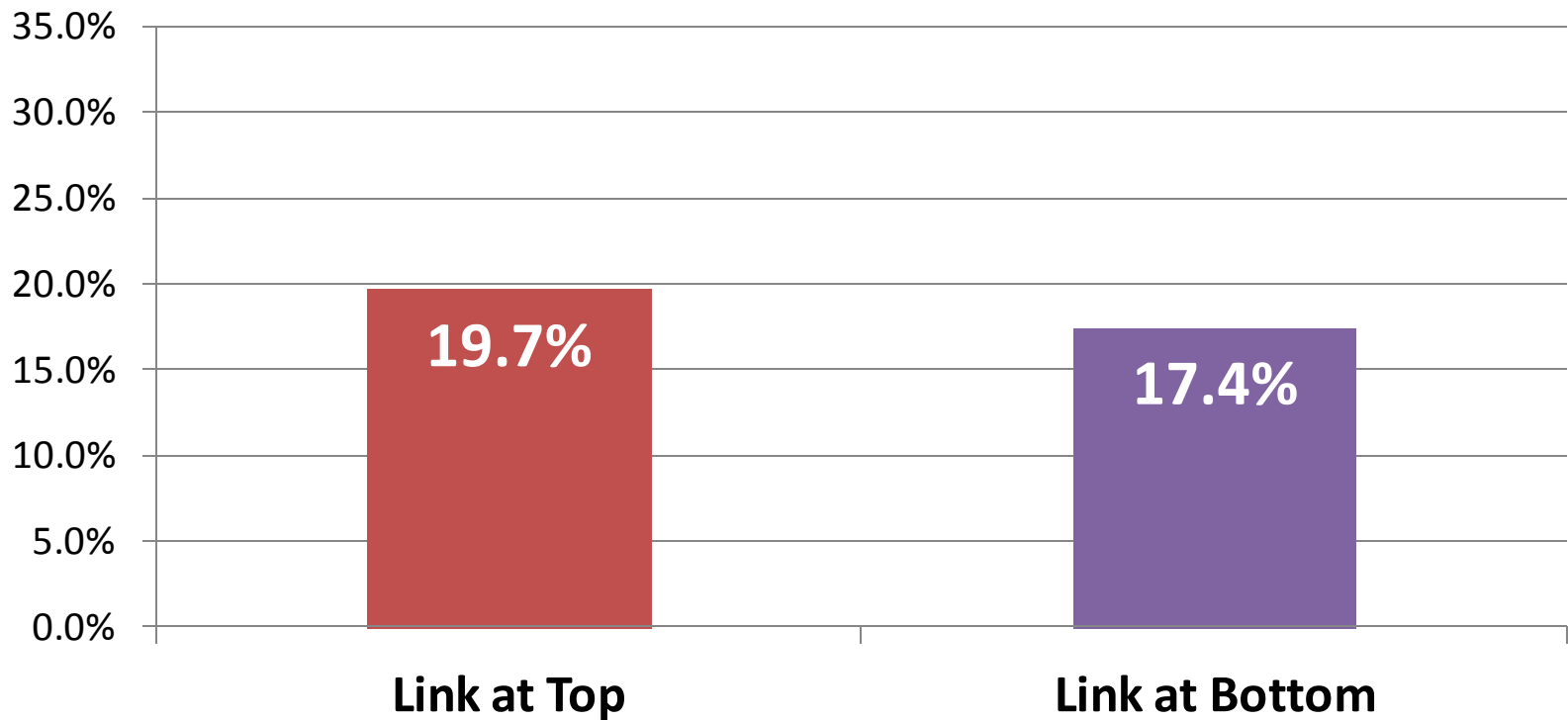


Response Rate by Link Location



- No difference in response rate by location of URL at top or bottom of email

Percent Completed Survey

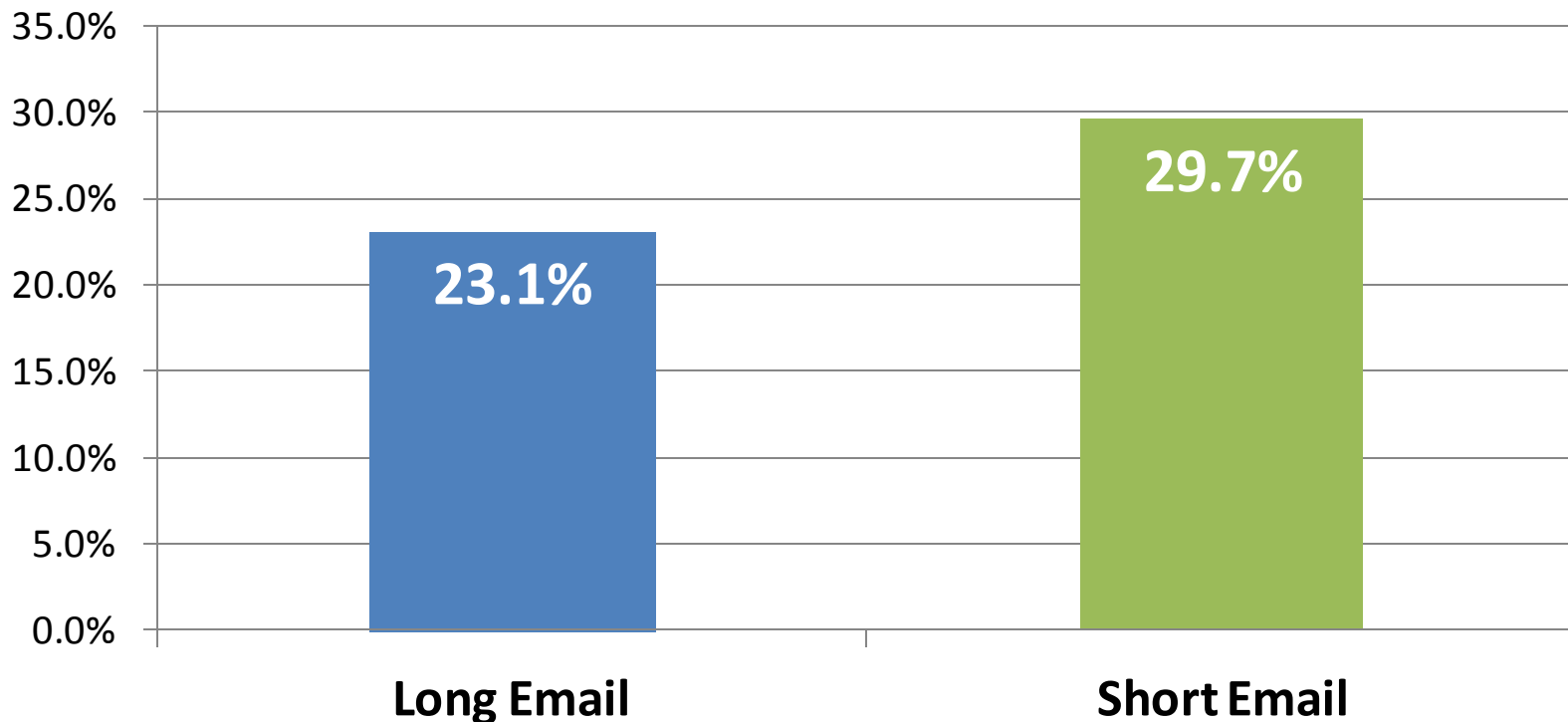


Clicks into Survey by Email Length



- Larger percentage of those who received the short email and saw the landing page began the survey, however the difference was not statistically significant

Percent Clicked into Survey

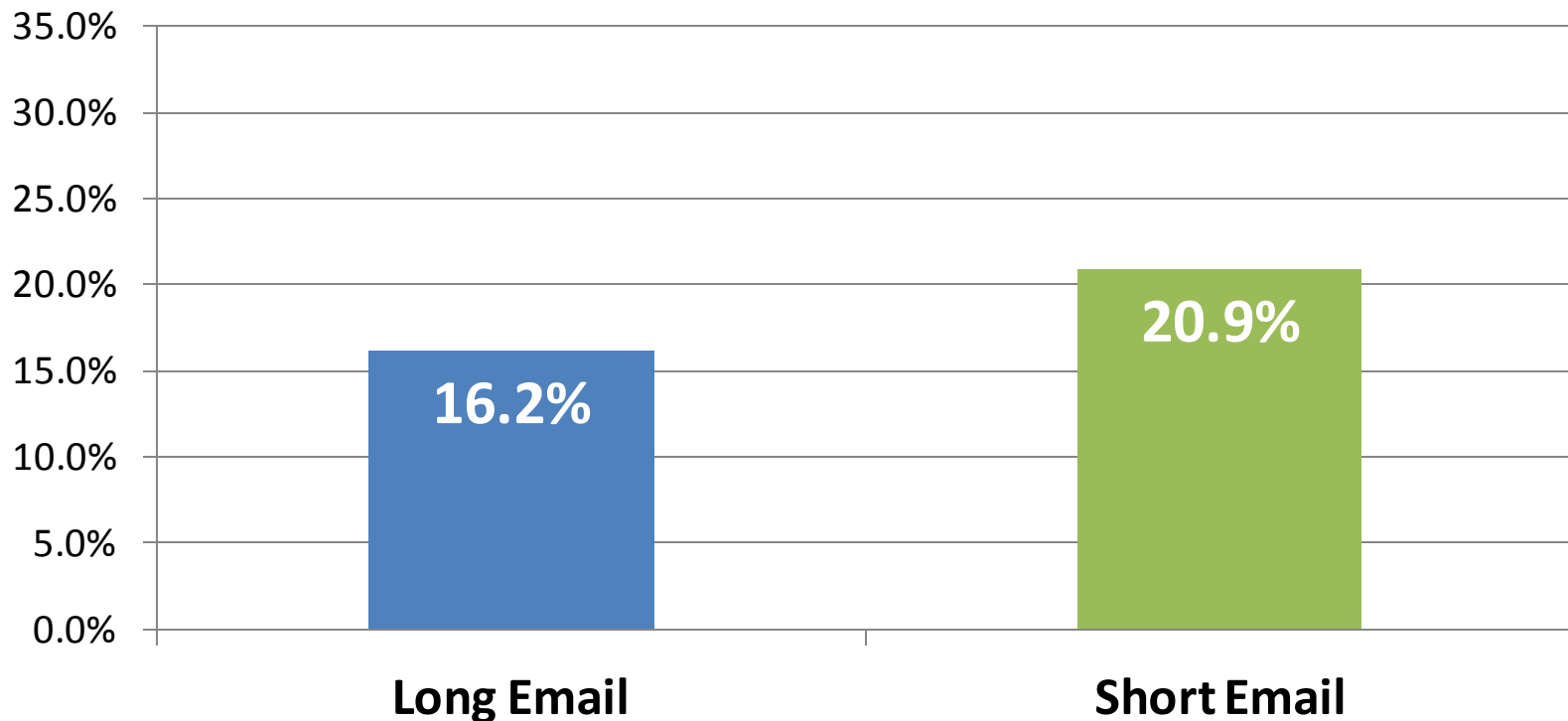


Response Rate by Email Length



- **Difference in response rate by email length not statistically significant**

Percent Completed Survey



Discussion and Next Steps



- **The direction of differences in response rates did not confirm prior research which supported the long email**
- **Findings for locating web survey URL at top was consistent with our prior research, not consistent with Kaplowitz et al. 2012 study**
- **However, differences were not statistically significant**

Discussion and Next Steps



- **Failure to replicate past research could be due to sample size, population, study topic**
- **More research testing the impact of the design of email communications on survey response rates is needed: with a larger sample size, different populations, different topics to better inform communication protocols**

Thank you!

For further information contact:

Amy Falcone

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