Improving Response Rates for Student Surveys

A *behavioural insights informed approach*
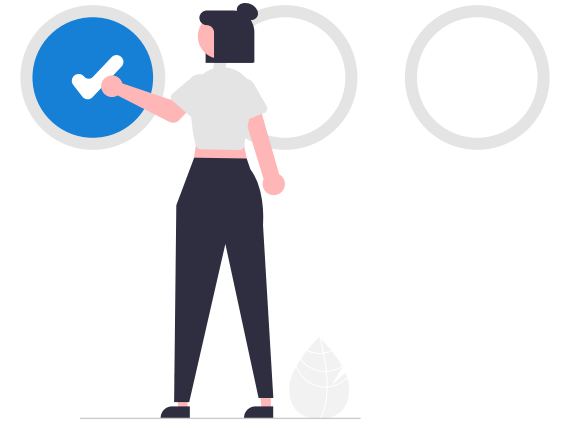
BC Behavioural Insights Group & BC Stats

Background and Objectives

Background

- BC Student Outcomes **collects information** from over 60,000 former B.C. public post-secondary students every year

- Survey **response rates have been dropping** across many sectors including education[1]
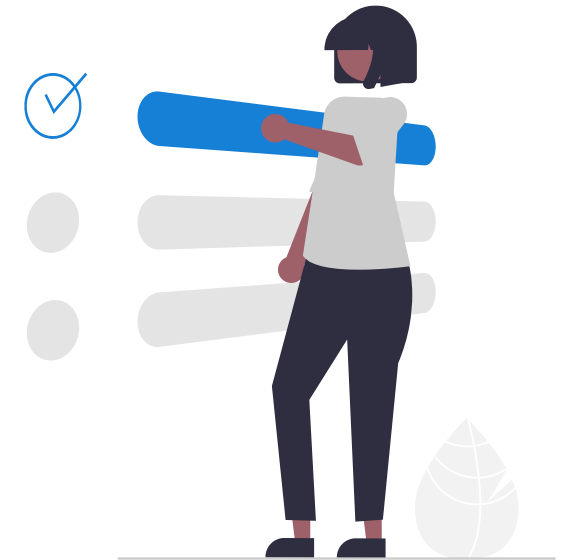
What were we seeking to understand?

- If we apply insights from the behavioural sciences to the survey invitation email, will it result in more responses than the usual email invitation?

Getting to a Solution

❖ Conducted a **literature review** to understand research around effective email and survey invitation design

❖ Designed several **prototypes** to share with key stakeholders

❖ Client, vendor, and BC BIG **worked together** to refine a behaviourally informed email survey invitation

New message

To... John.Doe@bcit.ca

Subject... John Doe, tell us about BCIT!

Dear John Doe,

As a former student of BCIT in the Technology Diploma, we know education is important to you. Now we want to learn from you about your education experience. We depend on your feedback to make improvements to British Columbia's post-secondary education system.

We invite you to take this 10-minute survey to share your experience.

[Start Survey]

Please complete your survey as soon as possible. Thank you in advance for your participation!

If you have any questions about this survey, please contact BC Stats at XXXXXXX@gov.bc.ca or call 1-888-000-9999 or Jane Doe, Director, Technology at BCIT at test@test.ca or 250-555-5555.

Sincerely,

Name
Director of Statistics
BC Stats, BC Data Service
Ministry of Citizens' Services

BRITISH COLUMBIA | BCStats

BC Stats is conducting this survey on behalf of the BCIT, the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, and participating public post-secondary institutions in B.C. This email was sent to you because you attended BCIT. Your feedback will help other students and will also help BCIT, the Ministry, and participating institutions better understand former student experiences and make improvements. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary. Your answers will be kept confidential in accordance with the Statistics Act and will only be used for statistical and research purposes. When survey results are published, your responses will be combined with the responses of others so that you cannot be identified. Visit the BC Student Outcomes Program website to learn more about this research.

BC Stats has contracted Data Collection Vendor to assist with the administration of this survey. For technical issues, contact studentoutcomes@vendor.com or 1-888-444-4444. If you prefer to complete the survey by telephone, call 1-888-444-4444 or access the survey online using your secure access code: ITESTD1022.

Unsubscribe if you are not the intended recipient of this email.

Personalization

Identity

Salience

Urgency

Influential messenger

Brief

Simple

BIG Difference BC 2023

Trial Design

❖ Randomized, controlled trial design with two groups with **balanced characteristics**

❖ Sample size: **16,791**, half received the control email, and half received the redesigned email

❖ Two weeks after the emails were sent, survey completion rates were compared between the two groups to **evaluate the impact** of the treatment email

Findings
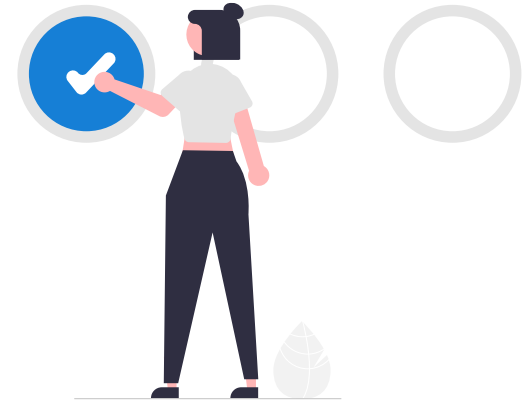
Completed the Entire Survey
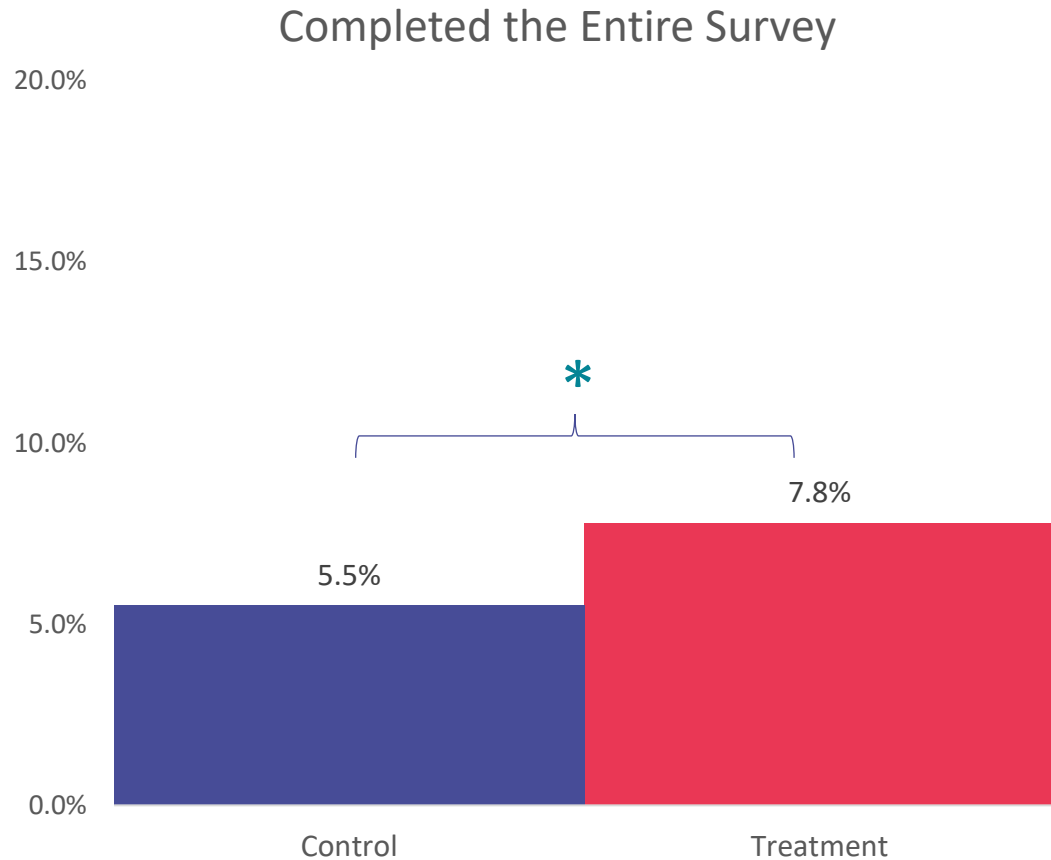
*p<0.001, n: 16,791

- **7.8%** of those who received the new invitation completed the survey, compared to **5.5%** of those who received the old (control) invitation.

- Survey completions were **2.28 percentage points higher** in the group that received the new email invitation (95% CI: 1.52%, 3.03%).

- There was a statistically significant association between the email invitation type and the survey response rate (p<0.001). **This improvement represents an increase of approximately 41% (95% CI: 28%, 64%).**

Limitations

❖ No qualitative user research

❖ Treatment email included all BI interventions

❖ Time not analyzed as variable

Questions?

BIG@gov.bc.ca