SMS Evaluation Survey – Updated Findings (June 2024)

In April 2024, Cancer Council Queensland conducted a nationwide online survey with 1021 Australians between the ages of 50 and 74 to evaluate five different reminder text messages aimed at encouraging people who have not returned their National Bowel Cancer Screening kit to do so.

MODE, TIMING AND FREQENCY PREFERENCES

Most people (83.4%) reported that they would like to receive a reminder from the NBCSP if they were sent a kit in the mail but had not yet completed and returned it. This proportion was slightly lower at 77.6% for those who had not returned a NBCSP kit in the last two years. When asked to select what type of reminder they would like to receive, 70.5% of participants selected SMS, 34.3% selected email, 20.9% selected a mailed letter, and 13.2% selected a message through their MyGov account. **People aged over 55 years were less likely to report that they would like to receive a reminder** in the form of an SMS (see Figure 1).

When asked specifically about SMS reminders, half of the people surveyed suggested a reminder **SMS should be sent between two and five weeks after the arrival of the kit** (see Figure 1). There were minimal differences in response between people who had and had not previously completed a NBCSP kit. Participant responses suggested that **two SMS reminders** could be the optimal number to send before the majority of recipients would begin to feel annoyed (see Figure 2). These preferences did not vary significantly according to age or by whether they had returned a NBCSP kit in the last two years.

The days and times participants indicated they would prefer to receive an SMS reminder were examined separately for those who worked full time and those who did not. For both groups, **weekdays at midday appeared to be the most popular choice**. Interestingly, Monday mornings were the most commonly selected choice for people working full time (see Figure 3).

Figure 1. Selected modalities of reminder according to age group (multiple responses allowed)
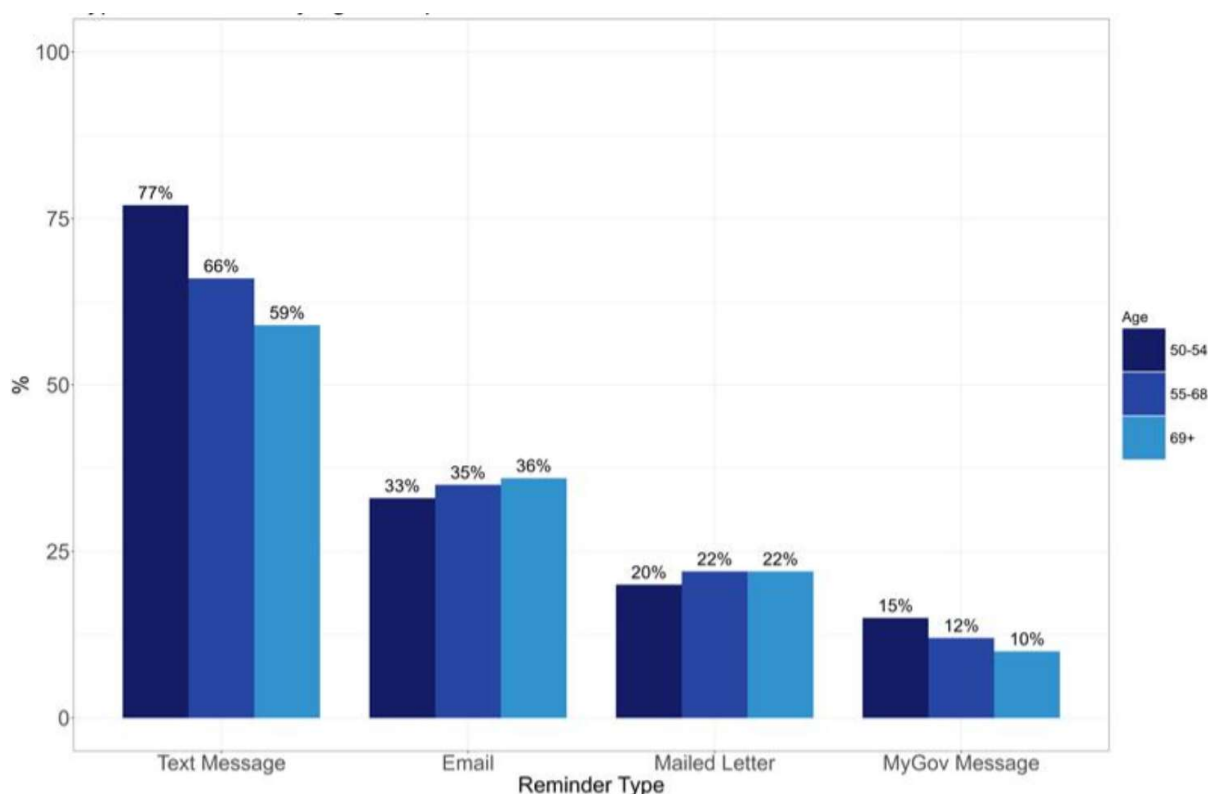
Figure 2. Categorised responses to the question *"How many weeks after the bowel cancer screening kit arrives at your house should the reminder text message be sent?"*
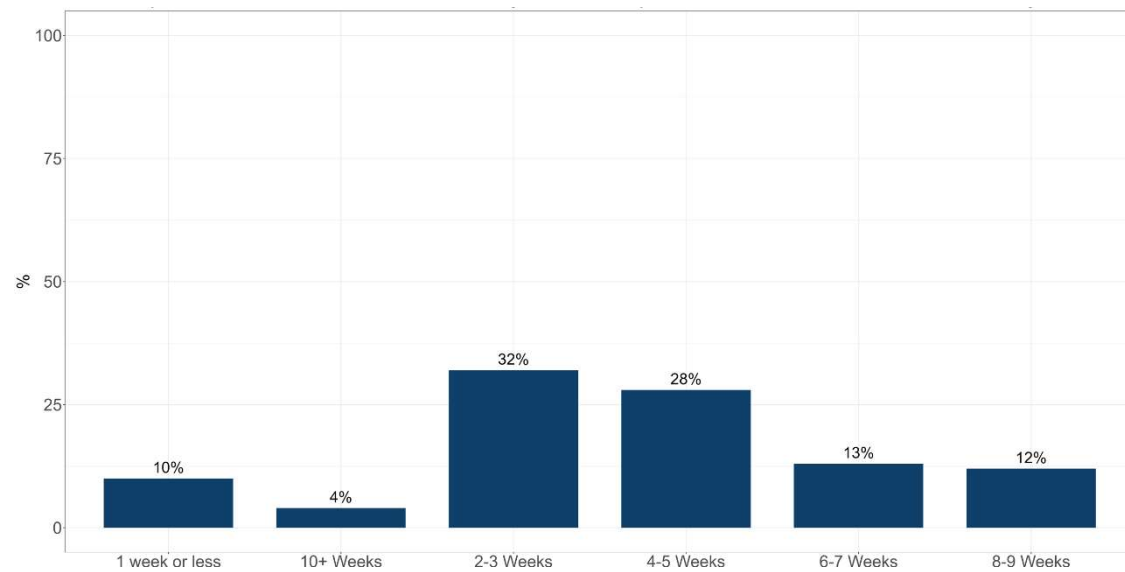

Figure 3. Participant opinions on the amount of reminder SMS that should be sent.
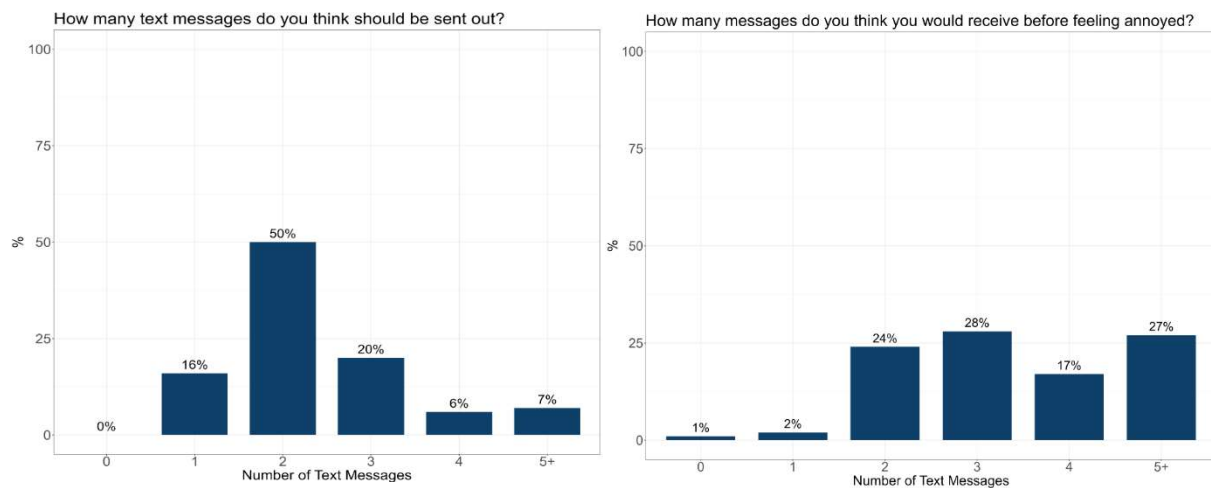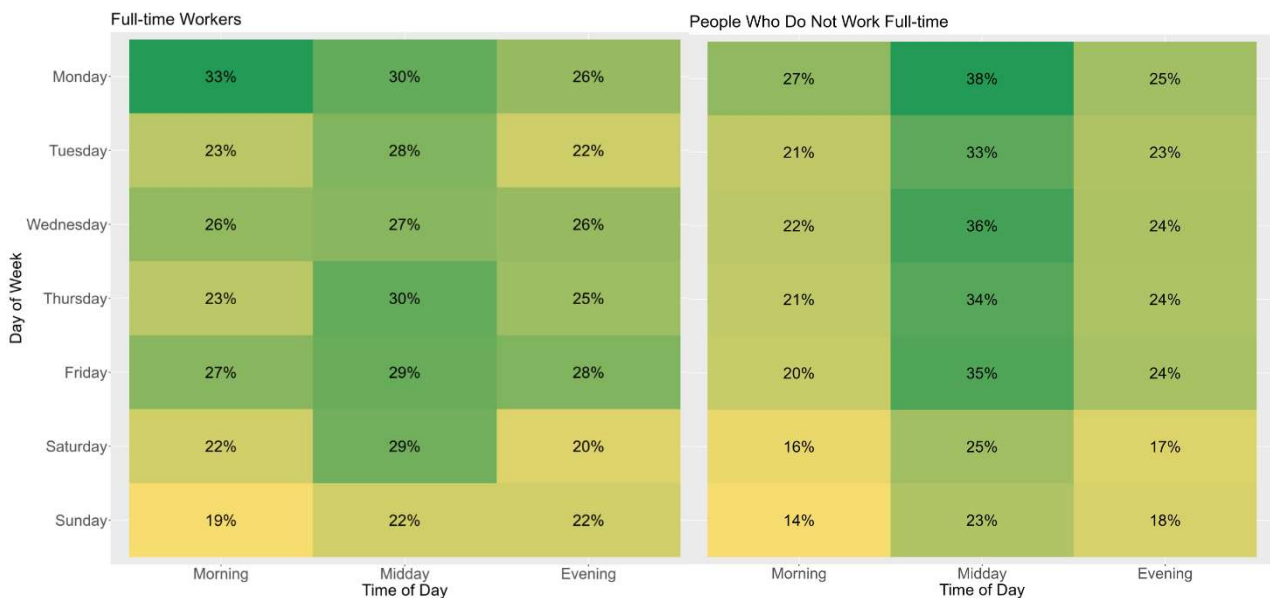

Figure 4. Participant opinions on the best days and times to send reminder SMS.

Based on qualitative data from consumers, scientific evidence, and discussion with the BCSA team, the following messages were created (Table 1):

Table 1: SMS content tested in the survey.

SMS type	SMS wording	%
1. Plain	Hi, this is your reminder to complete your bowel cancer screening kit. To opt out of receiving text reminders, please reply "stop".	74.0%
2. Visible	**Hi, this is your reminder to complete your bowel cancer screening kit. Consider placing your kit somewhere visible, like near your toilet, to help you remember to do it. To opt out of receiving text reminders, please reply "stop".**	**81.4%**
3. Alert	Hi, this is your reminder to complete your bowel cancer screening kit. Consider setting an alert on your phone to do the test at a time that is convenient for you, like the weekend, to help you remember to do it. To opt out of receiving text reminders, please reply "stop".	75.1%
4. GPs	Hi, this is your reminder to complete your bowel cancer screening kit. General practitioners across Australia strongly recommend that you take this simple test. To opt out of receiving text reminders, please reply "stop".	78.8%
5. Instruct	Hi, this is your reminder to complete your bowel cancer screening test. All you need to do is use the kit to take two tiny samples of your poo using the test tubes provided. Detailed instructions came with the kit and can be found on the NBCSP website. To opt out of receiving text reminders, please reply "stop".	78.6%

% percentage of participants who reported SMS would encourage them to return the kit

Survey participants were shown each SMS in a random order and rated them on clarity, usefulness, likelihood of encouraging kit return, and likelihood of being irritated by the message.

As shown in Figure 1, the "**Visible**" message performed the best with consistently significantly higher ratings. Compared to the "Plain" message, the "**Visible**" SMS was associated with a 7.4% increase in participants reporting that the SMS would encourage them to return the kit. The "**GPs**" and "**Instruct**" SMS were also rated significantly higher in encouraging kit return compared to the "Plain" message, however, the **"Instruct" ad "Alert"** messages were rated as significantly **more irritating**.

As shown in Figure 2, compared to people 55 years old and over, there was a tendency for **people between 50 and 54 to be more likely to respond positively to most of the SMS** in terms of their usefulness and the likelihood they would encourage them to complete the kit. This was particularly so for the **"Alert"** and the **"Instruct"** message which were rated lower by older participants.

Participants were also shown one randomly selected SMS and asked to report the actions they thought they would take after receiving this message (e.g., ignore, read, set reminder, talk to GP). As depicted in Figure 3, there were slight variations in the percentage of people reporting each action across each SMS. Of note, participants who saw the **"Visible"** message were more likely than others to report that they would 'place the kit somewhere visible'.

Figure 1. The percentage of people who responded positively to the four questions about each SMS.
Note: The percentages in green represent where the SMS was rated statistically significantly higher than the plain message.
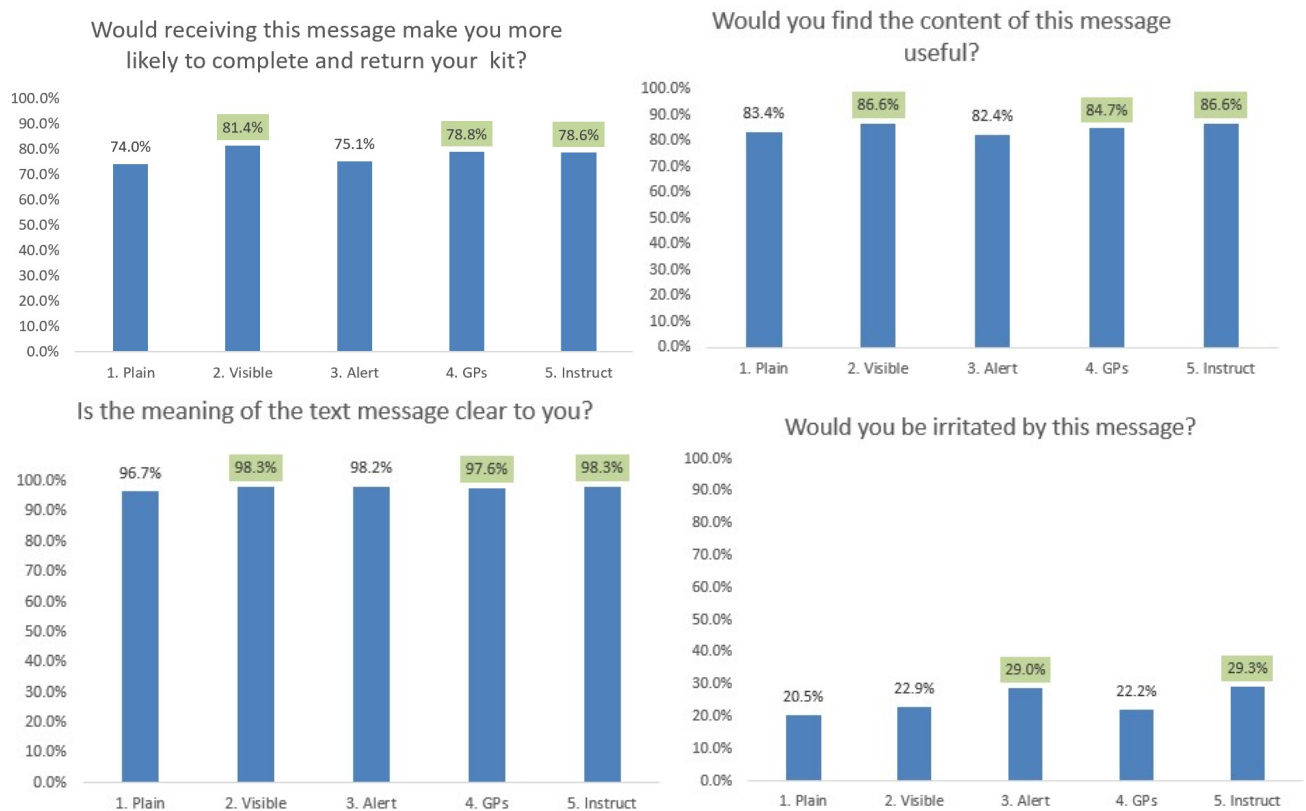

Would receiving this message make you more likely to complete and return your kit?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
	74.0%	81.4%	75.1%	78.8%	78.6%

Would you find the content of this message useful?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
	83.4%	86.6%	82.4%	84.7%	86.6%

Is the meaning of the text message clear to you?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
	96.7%	98.3%	98.2%	97.6%	98.3%

Would you be irritated by this message?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
	20.5%	22.9%	29.0%	22.2%	29.3%

Figure 2. Age differences

Would receiving this message make you more likely to complete and return your kit?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
50 - 54 yrs	75%	84%	79%	80%	82%
55 - 68 yrs	73%	79%	72%	77%	76%
69+ yrs	72%	76%	67%	77%	72%

Would you find the content of this message useful?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
50 - 54 yrs	86%	88%	87%	86%	89%
55 - 68 yrs	80%	85%	80%	83%	85%
69+ yrs	83%	85%	72%	84%	80%

Is the meaning of the text message clear to you?

	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
50 - 54 yrs	96%	98%	98%	97%	98%
55 - 68 yrs	97%	98%	98%	98%	98%
69+ yrs	99%	100%	99%	99%	98%

Would you be irritated by this message?

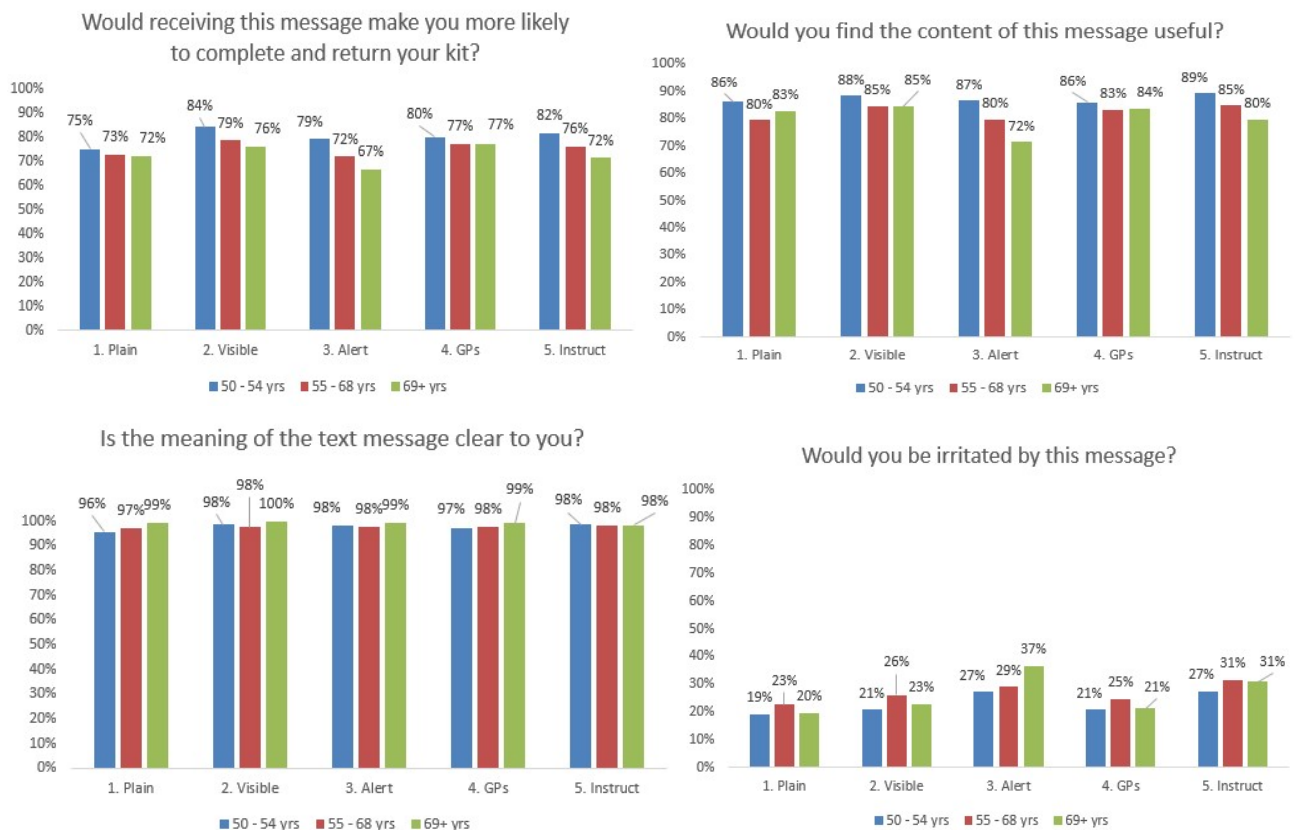|	1. Plain	2. Visible	3. Alert	4. GPs	5. Instruct
50 - 54 yrs	19%	21%	27%	21%	27%
55 - 68 yrs	23%	26%	29%	25%	31%
69+ yrs	20%	23%	37%	21%	31%

Figure 3. Suggested actions taken after reading the SMS.

What would you do upon receiving this message? **(select all that apply)**