

Results of a Push-To-Web Protocol in a Survey of Commercial Buildings

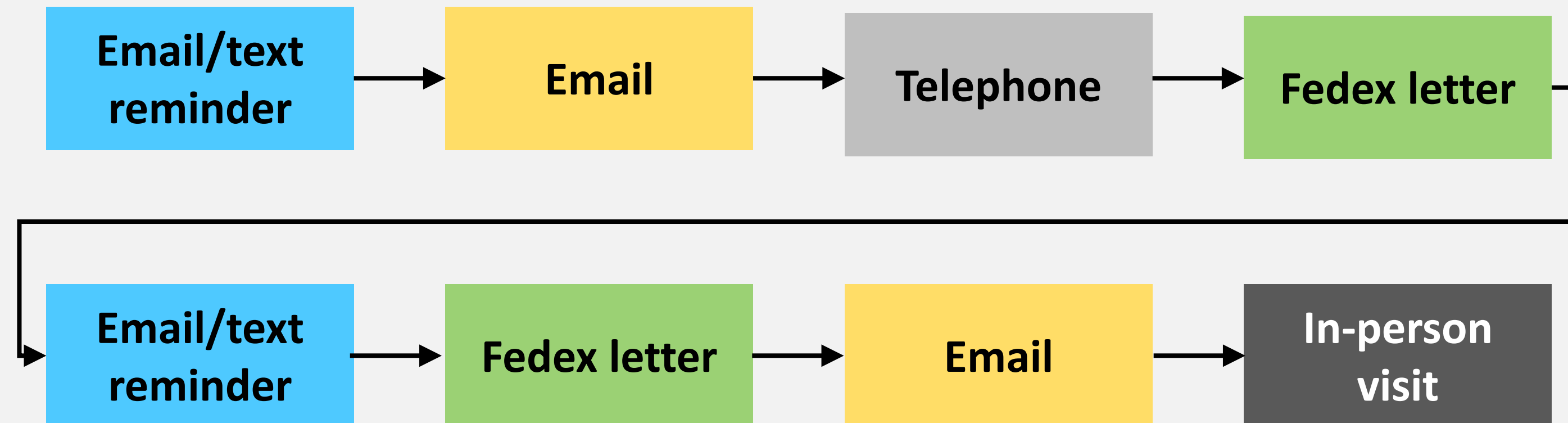
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Background

The Commercial Buildings Energy Consumption Survey (CBECS) is the only independent, statistically representative source of national-level data on the characteristics and energy use of commercial buildings, and extremely diverse population. This multi-mode survey includes in-person, web, and telephone interviews.

Web Push Protocol

Four months into a nine month data collection period, a web push (WP) protocol was implemented for respondents that indicated the web as the preferred survey mode. The web push protocol was used in all newly initiated cases (“new” WP cases), as well previously worked cases that hadn’t been completed (“backlog” WP cases). The protocol included a series of eight contacts:



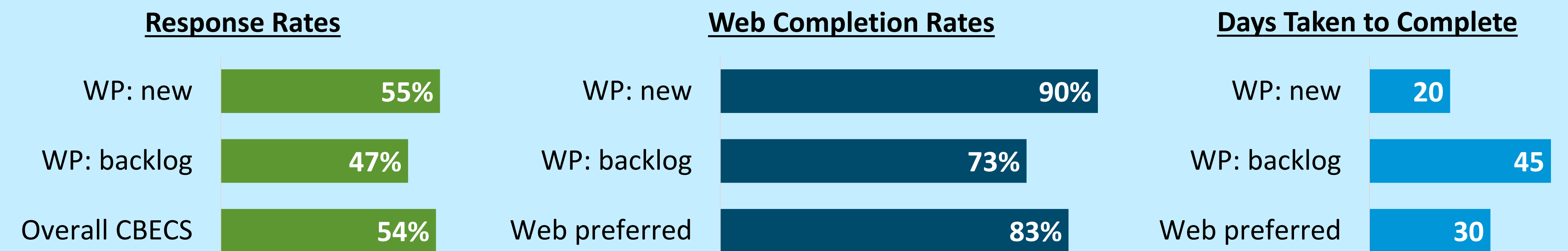
The goals of the web push protocol were to:

- use a more structured and automatic contact protocol to remove the guesswork for interviewers and staff on when to contact respondents
- reduce the number of in-person interviewer visits
- encourage response for buildings with respondents who may have selected web preference as a soft refusal for completing the survey (backlog cases).

Research Questions

- What was the response rate for the web push cases compared to the overall CBECS response rate (given that response propensities are the same)?
- Did we get more web completes (compared to other modes) using web push protocols?
- Did the web push give us faster response time than typical recruitment protocol?
- Did we avoid costly in-person visits by using the web push protocol?

Results



The **response rate for new WP cases was nearly the same** as the overall CBECS response rate; the backlog WP response rate was lower, as they were more likely to be initial refusals. **New WP cases were most likely to complete the CBECS by web.** The **WP protocol did bring in completed surveys faster:** the average number of days between protocol start and response for completed cases in the WP was 20 days for the new cases. That is compared to 30 days for the non-WP cases that expressed web mode preference, and 45 days for backlog cases.

Unfortunately, the **WP cases did not have fewer in-person visits.** New WP cases had a median of 2 in-person contacts, the same as non-WP cases with web mode preference. The backlog WP cases had a median of 3 in-person contacts.

Conclusions

- Without a control group for the WP intervention, difficult to know if response gains among new WP cases was because they were new cases or because WP was superior to interviewers’ protocols.
- A controlled experiment with sequential multi-mode protocols may be worthwhile to test in the future.