



2025 SMS Marketing Stats & 2026 Best Practices

What We Learned From Sending 1 Billion Texts

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Introduction

The State of SMS Marketing in 2025

SMS marketing has exploded in recent years, and that's for one simple reason:

Text messaging drives powerful results that other channels simply can't match.

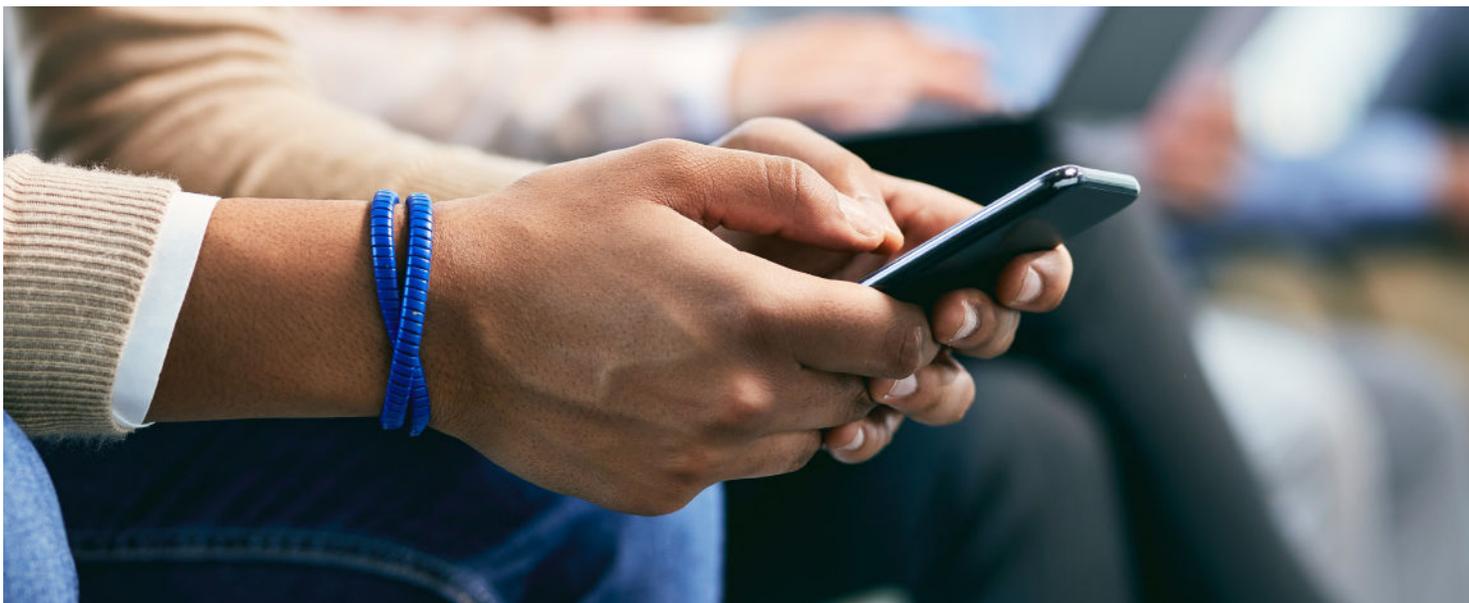
In fact, about 96% of marketers attribute revenue increases to their text messaging strategies, according to [data from G2](#) — likely because it's one of the few ways you can still reach your audience *immediately* (and on a device that's rarely ever out of arm's reach).

And while text messaging has existed for decades, its dominance as a marketing channel only continues to grow, with no signs of slowing.

[One report](#) estimates that the A2P SMS (Application-to-Person Short Message Service) industry is slated to exceed \$93 billion by 2031. In other words, adoption is growing, and if you aren't leveraging this tech, you could be missing a tremendous opportunity to reach your audience — and losing market share to competitors who have already successfully woven SMS into their efforts.

After enabling organizations to send more than **one billion texts** through our platform, we've learned what it takes to stand out in contacts' text inboxes, and which practices drive the fastest ROI.

To equip you with the insights you need to boost SMS marketing success in the year ahead, we assessed 50 million messages sent by our customers — including marketing promotions, reminders, support messages, and alerts — between March and June 2025.



Here's what you should know:

1. Recipients are highly receptive to receiving messages from brands.

Today, people don't just expect texts from businesses — they welcome them. When we analyzed brands' texts, we found that 94% of messages had a neutral-to-positive sentiment.

2. Brands favor weekday morning sends.

According to our data, 11 a.m. ET on Tuesday is the most popular time to send messages. Sending outside this time could help reduce competition and boost engage

3. Opt-outs are more likely when a brand initiates a conversation at night.

The highest number of unsubscribes came from conversations that began at 9 p.m. ET, suggesting that many people prefer not to be disturbed later in the evening.

4. Brands are committed to concise communication.

Of messages sent by brands, the average length is 153 characters — just shy of the 160-character limit imposed by SMS before your SMS gateway splits messages into multiple segments.

5. Some areas are particularly receptive to receiving SMS messages.

Alberta, Canada, had the highest response rate of any area code (31%), while Portland, Oregon, had the highest percentage of messages with a neutral-to-positive sentiment (98%).

In this guide, we're delving deeper into these insights and other findings from millions of sends across multiple industries. We're also sharing best practices based on our learnings to help you level up your SMS performance for 2026.

Consumers Welcome SMS

Exploring the Growing Comfort with Text Marketing

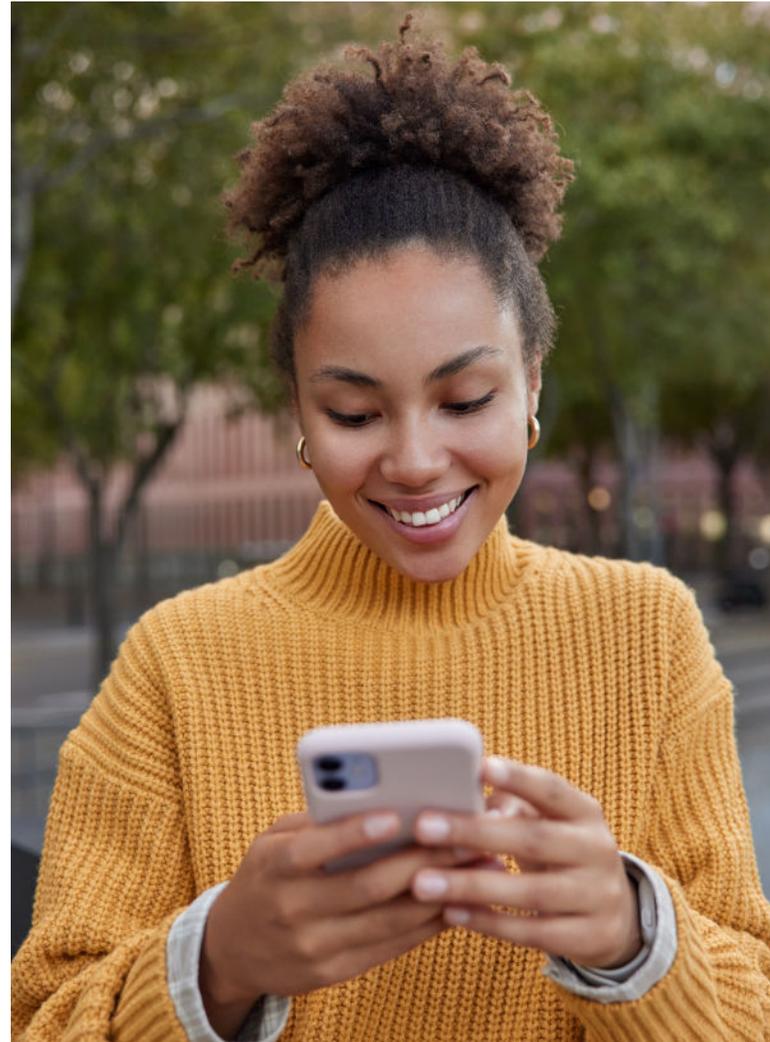
As email inboxes become increasingly crowded and ever-shifting social media algorithms make it nearly impossible to consistently stand out online, organizations are seeking more reliable methods of connecting directly with their audiences. At the same time, consumers are seeking easier ways to communicate with their favorite brands — and SMS makes it possible.

Today, 75% of consumers chose SMS as their preferred channel for promotional content, according to data shared by [Emarsys](#), and 91% said they'd opt in to SMS communications from a brand if it improved their experience.

So, it wasn't surprising to find that the overwhelming majority of messages were positive or neutral (94%), while only 6% were negative. Furthermore, we know that about 80% of negative responses are opt-outs — and, if you remove opt-outs from the equation, less than 1% of responses have a negative sentiment.

Less than 1% of responses have a negative sentiment.

Additionally, audiences are also less likely to opt out of SMS messaging. Over the course of a 7-day conversation with a brand, 87% of recipients did not opt out — which is likely due, at least in part, to the fact that texting gives audiences a direct, easy, and fast connection with organizations. It's a lower-lift interaction than a phone call, and, when brands leverage software like TrueDialog that streamlines replies, it's significantly faster than waiting for a response to an email. (Which, in many cases, can take days.)



Key Takeaway:

If you've been apprehensive about launching an SMS program because you're worried your contacts won't be receptive, it's time to stop stressing and start texting (with consent, of course).

Timing Matters

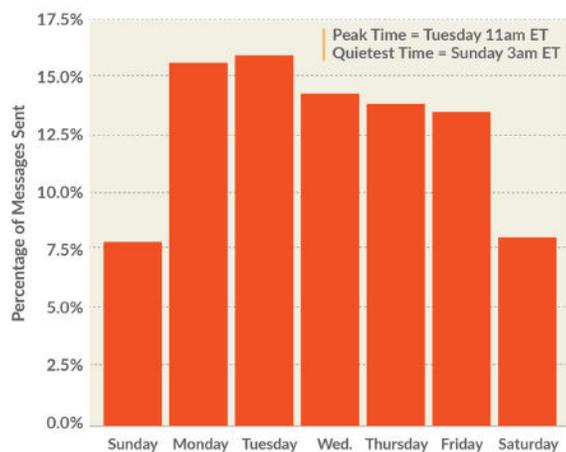
Tracking When the Most (and Fewest) Sends Happen

One of the most popular questions brands ask when they first launch an SMS marketing program is, “When is the best time to send messages?”

The real answer is that it depends on your audience, the type of message you’re sending, and your goals. But when we analyzed send data, we discovered a few commonalities.

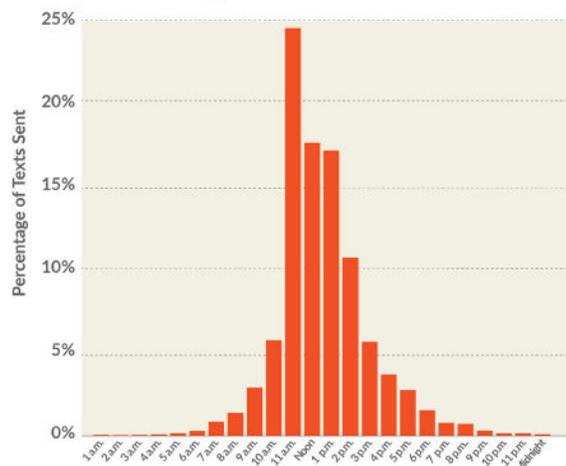
For example, most brands favor weekdays, particularly Tuesday, followed by Monday and Wednesday.

Most Popular Days to Send a Text



Additionally, brands overwhelmingly opt for late-morning and early-afternoon deliveries, and send the most messages at 11 a.m. ET (followed by noon and 1 p.m. ET).

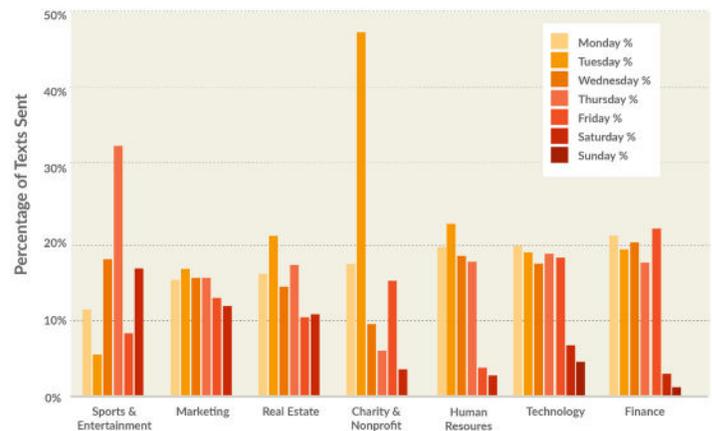
Most Popular Times to Send a Text



When we break down send times by industry, we found that marketing organizations evenly distribute their texting throughout the week. Meanwhile, in the sports and entertainment world, message volume skyrockets on Thursdays (perhaps in anticipation of big weekend events), though we saw fewer messages sent on game days.

The charity and nonprofit sector’s activity peaked considerably on Tuesdays, slowed mid-week, and saw a small spike on Saturdays. And, in human resources, message volume also jumped on Tuesdays – potentially because it’s a sweet spot for getting professionals’ attention. (This is when most people are past the “Monday fog” but haven’t yet hit the mid-week slump.)

Most Popular Days to Send a Text (By Industry)



We also noted that most industries steer clear of weekend sends, with Saturday and Sunday showing the lowest number of sends. Finance, HR, and tech organizations, in particular, tend to avoid weekend sends – likely because, in these industries, most business activity occurs between Monday and Friday.

Additionally, our data shows that organizations send the fewest messages at 8 a.m. and 7 p.m. ET – likely because these times are close to when many regions’ quiet hours end and begin, respectively.

A Quick Primer on Quiet Hours

SMS gives your brand the power to connect with your audience 24/7. But just because you can send a message at any time doesn't mean that you should.

After all, disrupting your contacts with a promotional text in the middle of the night isn't just disrespectful, it's also unlikely to garner the same engagement or response rate you'll enjoy at a more active time of day. Plus, there's a good chance you'll violate industry regulations, leading to fines and other penalties.

This is precisely why it's crucial you adhere to **quiet hours** (i.e., times when you don't send promotional marketing messages).

The Telephone Consumer Protection Act (TCPA) prohibits sending marketing texts after 9 p.m. or before 8 a.m. Additionally, some states, like Florida and Oklahoma, have more restrictive sending windows.

To play it safe across all time zones, only send promotional messages between 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. ET.

(Note that most quiet hours regulations exclude messages a customer has specifically requested, or non-marketing transactional messages, such as shipping notifications or appointment reminders.)

Pro Tip

If you want to stand out, consider sending at a time when other brands are less likely to send (and thus you're less likely to compete with other SMS marketing campaigns). For example, between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. PT // 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. ET. And, depending on your industry, scheduling campaigns for Thursdays could help you stand out from the noise.

Night Owls Beware

Most Unsubscribes Happen in the Evening

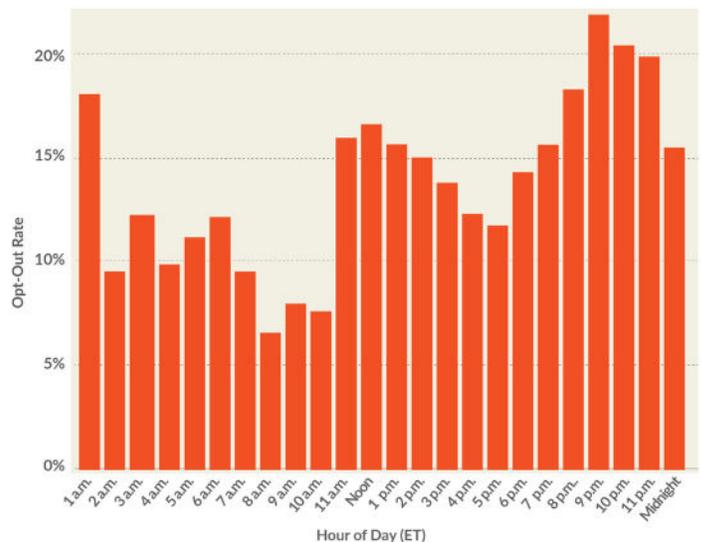
As with email, a certain number of unsubscribes is inevitable. While most people rank SMS as their preferred channel, there’s always a chance that a handful of contacts will change their minds. The goal is to keep that number low by doing everything you can to keep your texts engaging and relevant — and sending them at the right time.

According to our data, when people do unsubscribe, they’re more likely to do so in the evening hours — more specifically, at 6 p.m. PT // 9 p.m. ET, which saw a 22.5% unsubscribe rate.

Of course, that’s not surprising. This is when most people are unwinding, spending time with their loved ones, and getting ready for bed. Even if it’s within safe sending times, an evening text could be seen as disruptive and drive more people to cease text communications with your brand.

Conversely, people are less likely to unsubscribe in the afternoon. Our analysis found that the lowest number of unsubscribes occurred between 1 p.m. - 3 p.m. PT // 4 p.m. and 5 p.m. ET, when people with traditional working hours are wrapping up their workday.. People may be more receptive to messages during this “winding down” time of day.

Opt-Out Rate by Hour of Day



When we evaluated messages sent outside of safe sending times, we found that the number of unsubscribes peaked at 3 a.m. PT // 6 a.m. ET, but dropped to the lowest rate at 5 a.m. PT// 8 a.m ET. This suggests that, much like nighttime texts, early morning sends could be disruptive. But by 5 a.m. PT// 8 a.m ET, when many people are just rising and beginning their day or starting their commute, contacts may be more receptive to receiving a text.

Key Takeaway

Avoid scheduling sends for peak unsubscribe times and aim to reach your audience when they’re most likely to engage. However, remember that the right time can vary by audience. For example, while mid-morning might be the best time to reach a professional with a 9-to-5 role, it may not be the best time to engage college students who may keep less traditional hours.

Message Length

Brands are Maxing Out Character Counts (But Skipping Emojis)

As brands with successful text marketing programs know, brevity is an art form. SMS protocol only allows users 160 characters to get their message across before splitting it into multiple segments — and since carriers bill by each segment, sending longer texts can rapidly increase campaign costs.

In other words, it's important to make every word count. And according to our data, most organizations are indeed doing just that.

The average sent message tops out at 153 characters, showing that brands are eager to make use of every

letter while also working to remain concise. Staying within the character limit is a smart way to ensure your messages are easy to consume and your campaign costs don't spiral beyond your budget.

The average sent message tops out at 153 characters.

Understanding SMS Character Counts and Segments

SMS has a size limit of 140 bytes of data per message. When you use GSM-7 encoding (the standard for most English characters), 140 bytes equates to about 160 characters. If your message exceeds 160 characters, your SMS gateway will split the message into multiple segments. Then, it will encode each segment with metadata to ensure carriers can seamlessly reassemble the message through a process called concatenation.

The problem is that this process isn't infallible, and if the message encounters delivery issues or problems with the metadata, the segments may be delayed or delivered out of order. Additionally, there's an additional cost for each segment — so, the longer the text, the more you'll have to pay to get your messages to your recipients.

Of course, 160 characters isn't always enough — sometimes you need more text to convey all the information you want to share. In those cases, it's crucial that you work with a reliable texting platform. For example, TrueDialog has direct carrier connections, which help ensure faster, more reliable delivery and a significantly lower chance of message failure.

When we broke the data down by short and long code, we discovered that short code messages tend to be longer (with an average of 159 characters) while long code messages tend to top out at 143 characters.

Short Code messages average 159 characters.

Long Code messages average 143 characters.

Of course, despite the additional requirements and six-week vetting process required to obtain a short code, it's still worth the extra effort to enjoy faster throughput compared with long code messages, among other benefits.

And speaking of short code vs. long code, when we evaluated our data by industry, we found that services, retail, and construction and manufacturing organizations sent the highest number of long code messages. In contrast, real estate, higher education, and finance sent the most short code messages.

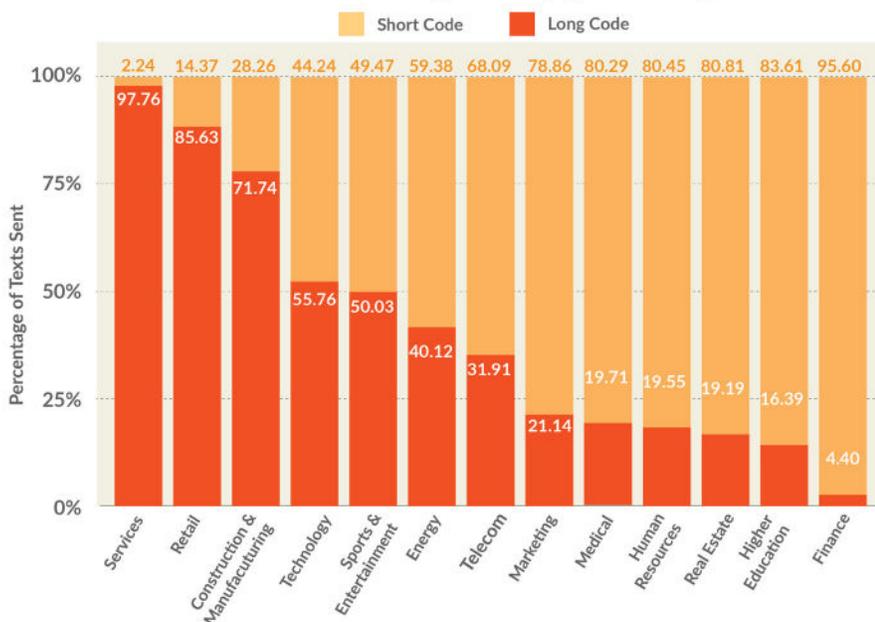
Once again, this wasn't too surprising, given that brands typically leverage long codes for more personal one-to-one messaging and reserve short codes for more transactional types of messages. We assume colleges and universities, financial institutions, and real estate firms are sending more alerts and notification-

Interestingly, while brands are clearly striving to make the most of their available space, only 2% of all messages we analyzed included emojis. This is a massive area of opportunity — especially since emoji use increases both opens and engagement rates, according to [Helios](#).

Only 2% of all messages we analyzed included emojis.

That said, we also understand why some brands may be hesitant. In SMS, including an emoji forces the message to use Unicode encoding (UCS-2) instead of the default (GSM-7 encoding), which also changes the message character limit. While a standard SMS can hold 160 characters, a message sent using Unicode encoding is limited to just 70 characters per segment.

Short vs. Long Code (By Industry)



Bottom line?

If you're sending a short message, consider adding an emoji for an engagement boost. Otherwise, it may not be worth giving up the character count.

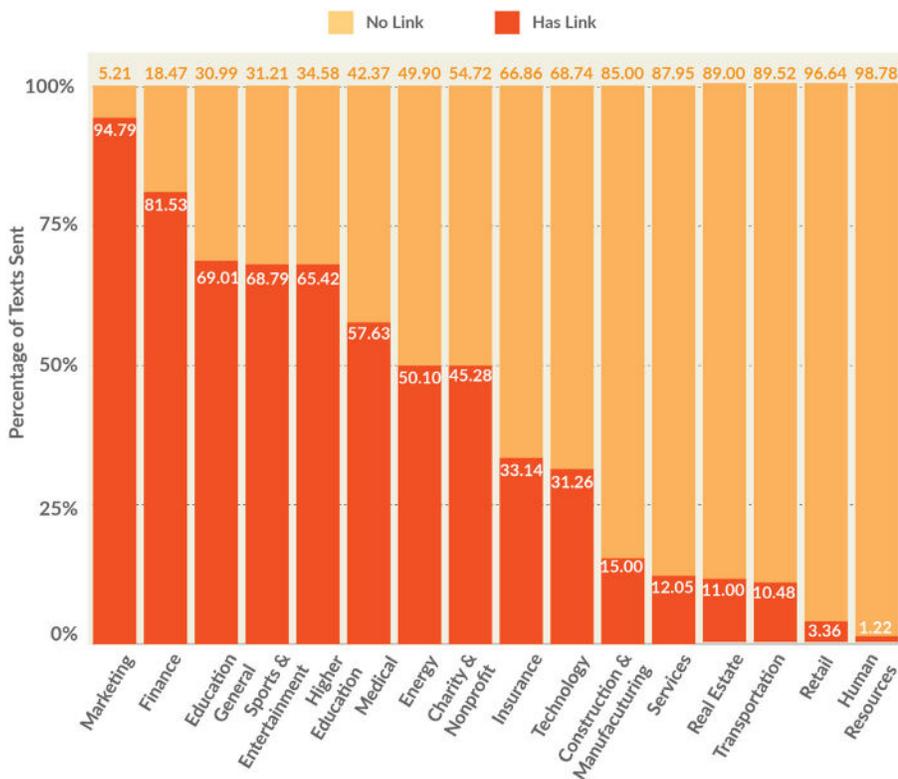
However, while brands may not be as keen on emojis, they are using links. We found that a whopping 64% of all messages included links (and 79% of short code messages).

When we broke the data down by industry, we found that marketing, finance, and education were the most likely to include links, while retail, transportation, and human resources were the least likely.

Key Takeaway

To keep up with your competition, aim to pack as much into 160 characters as possible. And, when sending short and snappy texts, consider including an emoji (or two) to help increase your engagement rates.

Link Usage in Text Messages (By Industry)



Then, when we look at response rates by industry, insurance, HR, and construction and manufacturing have the highest, while finance, marketing, and transportation have the lowest percentage of responses.

Regional Behavior

Breaking Down the Happiest and Most Responsive Area Codes

Although we saw largely positive sentiments and healthy response rates across all messages we analyzed, a few locales stood out above the rest. Naturally, we'd like to shine a spotlight on the regions currently leading the pack. So, without further ado, we present our awards for the happiest and most responsive area codes.

The Most Positive Texters Award goes to Oregon. Two Oregon area codes appear in the top five most positive. Honorable mention goes to Minnesota, which also boasts two ultra-positive area codes, and Virginia, which rounds out our leaderboard of the happiest texters.

Most Positive Area Codes 😊

- 503 (Oregon) – 63%
- 320 (Minnesota) – 61%
- 971 (Oregon) – 61%
- 507 (Minnesota) – 60%
- 804 (Virginia) – 60%

The Most Responsive Texters Award goes to Canada.

Turns out those quips about Canadian friendliness ring true, eh?

Additionally, congratulations to our runner-up, New York. The Empire State landed two highly responsive area codes on the leaderboard.

Highest Response Rates 💬

- 780 (Alberta, Canada) – 31%
- 845 (New York, USA) – 21%
- 905 (Toronto, Canada) – 21%
- 416 (Toronto, Canada) – 12%
- 585 (New York, USA) – 11%

And the Award goes to...



Most Positive Texters Award



Most Responsive Texters Award

Wrap Up

Best Practices for 2026

Have you ever counted the number of times you check your phone notifications? If you're like most users, it's likely over 100 times per day. Our mobile devices have become lifelines, connecting us to our family, friends, work, school, and more.

Plus, with fickle social media algorithms, overcrowded email inboxes, and consumers' fading interest in communicating with brands via voice calls, text messaging has become the best way to rapidly engage with your audience. In fact, it's one of the only ways to connect directly with your contacts and build genuine, meaningful, loyalty-boosting relationships. (Which is why it regularly generates an unbelievable 7000% ROI – a return of \$71 for every \$1 spent, [according to recent data.](#))

So, what can you do to start generating these super-sized results and cultivate better connections with your audience?



Here are a few actionable steps you and your team can take today to yield better engagement and ROI in the year ahead:

1. Build your list (even if you don't have a platform).

Still shopping for the ideal SMS platform? Even if you haven't chosen software to manage your texting program, it's still a good idea to begin building your subscriber database. (This way, you can hit the ground running as soon as you select and integrate your new platform.)

One of the best ways to build a list is by adding an opt-in form to your website. However, just be sure you use appropriate opt-in language, including your business name, relevant disclaimers, opt-out instructions, and details about message type and frequency. For example:

By checking this box, I agree to receive texts from [YOUR COMPANY NAME] at this mobile phone number. Standard message and data rates may apply. Text "STOP" to unsubscribe at any time, or text "HELP" to be connected with our customer support team. By subscribing, I agree to receive promotional messages. [YOUR COMPANY NAME] will send an average of 2 - 3 texts per week.

It's also helpful to include a link to your privacy policy and company terms of service, so your contacts have full transparency into your processes before they subscribe.

Already have a platform? Use our [SMS Grader](#) to see how your solution stacks up to TrueDialog.

2. Get familiar with RCS

Even though cellular networks began rolling out Rich Communication Services (RCS) in 2017, adoption of this more modern communication protocol has grown exponentially in 2025 — and we expect it to become the global standard in the years ahead.

Unlike SMS, RCS uses the internet to send and deliver texts, which is similar to how WhatsApp or iMessage functions. This enables brands to send rich media, like high-resolution images and videos, and leverage more interactive features (like typing indicators and read receipts). Businesses that use RCS can also create branded chat experiences that include their brand colors and logo in the message window.

To succeed with RCS, you need to leverage an enterprise texting platform that supports the new protocol. Additionally, since some older phones and smaller carriers do not support RCS, you need a provider that will convert RCS messages to SMS.

For example, TrueDialog has a built-in safety net to ensure contacts who can receive RCS messages enjoy the rich media experience, without excluding messages to subscribers who don't have an RCS-compatible carrier or device.

3. Schedule your sends wisely.

Be thoughtful about timing when you schedule your campaigns, and aim to send messages when you're most likely to stand out — but also when your audience is most likely to engage and least likely to opt out. (And always beware of quiet hours.)

Our data shows that most brands are sending at 11 a.m. and tend to favor Tuesdays, though these trends vary by industry. Additionally, unsubscribes peaked at 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., but slowed during mid-morning and late afternoon.

While having this data can be helpful, determining the best time for your brand can take some trial and error. Be sure to track performance metrics — such as engagement rate, opens, and opt-outs — and optimize your sends accordingly.

4. Make the most of every message.

While 160 characters may not seem like much, you'd be surprised how much power you can pack into just a sentence or two. Aim to be as concise as possible and choose your words wisely.

Simultaneously, when you're sending shorter messages, consider adding an emoji or two to help increase opens and improve engagement. (Just make sure the emojis you use align with the tone of your message.)

5. Don't wait to get started.

The data is clear: SMS marketing is growing, and recipients are highly receptive to text messages from brands. If you haven't yet launched an SMS marketing program (or expanded to SMS-based customer support), you're missing a massive opportunity to reach your audience — and potentially losing out to competitors taking advantage of SMS.

To get your program up and running fast, choose a mass texting platform explicitly designed for your unique needs and market.

For example, TrueDialog offers advanced features, modern functionality, and high-level security infrastructure to support enterprise-sized organizations in highly regulated and high-profile industries such as higher education, sports and entertainment, B2B tech, and finance.

With direct carrier connections, 99.9% uptime, a suite of premium features, compliance support, and AI-powered tools like TrueDelivery® to help you avoid deliverability issues — plus short and long code registration assistance so you can get your program up and running fast — TrueDialog has helped thousands of organizations like yours lead the pack.

There's no doubt that SMS is the future of direct marketing and customer relationship building. Armed with these insights and the right platform, you'll have everything you need to make 2026 your most successful year yet.



About TrueDialog

TrueDialog is the enterprise SMS platform transforming how organizations connect with customers through text-messaging—today’s most engaging and responsive channel. Through superior features, industry-leading security, and direct carrier connections, the platform delivers enterprise-grade reliability while reducing messaging costs by up to 75%. TrueDialog is trusted by thousands of brands, including Coca-Cola, Hilton, Kansas City Chiefs, Northern Tool, SubjectWell, and Tulane University. TrueDialog combines powerful capabilities with simplified implementation. Based in Austin, Texas, TrueDialog helps organizations build stronger relationships through reliable, cost-efficient messaging. To learn more, visit www.truedialog.com.

About Data317

Data317 is an Indiana-based data science and AI firm that helps organizations surface unmet opportunities and develop automation systems that turn data into measurable outcomes. Rooted in applied science and disciplined execution, the firm’s portfolio spans hundreds of large-scale analytics and AI projects across industries that improve operational efficiency, drive new growth, and deliver measurable results.

Methodology & Approach

This analysis was conducted using a dataset provided and labeled by TrueDialog, comprising approximately 50 million anonymized messages sent between March and June 2025. Each record included message text, timestamps, sender identifiers, channel type, and other related fields, providing a structured basis for large-scale statistical analysis.

The data were standardized and processed to ensure internal consistency, and then analyzed using both quantitative and linguistic methods to evaluate message timing, composition, sentiment, and engagement dynamics. All analyses adhered to established and proven standards for data cleaning, aggregation, sampling, and validation to ensure reliability of the findings.

Ready to see TrueDialog in action?

Discover how our next-generation SMS platform can help you outperform the competition.

[Request a Demo](#)