Where Senior High School Graduates Went: A Tracer Study of One Division's SY 2023–2024 Completers

A basic research proposal · Basic Education Research Fund 2025

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A sample with invented data, for teaching: nash.com.ph/blog

Introduction and rationale: where do our graduates go?

83%

of the respondents of DepEd's tracer study of SY 2017–2018 graduates were in higher education

DM 028, s. 2023, item 5.a

59.3%

of the earliest SHS graduates were in college in the 2019 Annual Poverty Indicators Survey

Abrigo & Orbeta (2023), p. 2

2,148

Grade 12 completers of SY 2023–2024 in our six public senior high schools: the first full K to 12 cohort

School records; DM 028, s. 2023, item 5

Schools ask graduating learners which exit they will take, but no one in our division has asked them, a year later, what they did. A tracer study of respondents alone can overstate college going if graduates in college answer more readily.

Literature review: what we know about SHS graduates

DepEd (2019), DO 21

The K to 12 program prepares graduates for four exits: employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, and higher education (para. 24).

OUOPS (2023), CGP guidelines

Every school gives graduating learners an exit tracking survey at least two weeks before graduation: intentions, not outcomes (Sec. V.F).

DepEd (2023), DM 028

The national tracer study of SY 2017–2018 graduates: nearly 83% in higher education, about 10% employed, 1% in business, among respondents (item 5.a).

Abrigo & Orbeta (2023)

In the 2019 APIS, 65.9% of the earliest SHS graduates attended school (59.3% college), 20.1% only worked, 14.1% neither (p. 2).

Literature review: reaching graduates, and those not reached

Schomburg (2016)

Survey graduates one to two years after graduation; contact them at least three times; response below 30% is common (pp. 30, 48).

Groves & Peytcheva (2008)

Across 59 studies, the response rate alone is a poor predictor of nonresponse bias; it depends on who answers (p. 174).

Hansen & Hurwitz (1946)

Follow up a random subsample of nonrespondents intensively, and let each stand for the nonrespondents it was drawn from (p. 517).

Kalton & Flores-Cervantes (2003)

Cell weights and raking adjust respondents to the frame, assuming respondents in a cell represent its nonrespondents (pp. 85–86).

Four questions, four null hypotheses

1. Where were our SY 2023–2024 completers in the week of September 1 to 7, 2025: higher education, employment, entrepreneurship, middle-level skills development, or none, overall and by strand?
2. How closely did their pathways match their strands, and the exit they named before graduation?
3. Which school records (strand, general average, sex, 4Ps, intended exit, school) predict the pathway?
4. How do those who answer differ from those who do not, and how far do weighting and a follow-up change the estimates?

Null hypotheses (α = .05)

- H01: The pathway does not differ by strand group, other records held constant.
- H02: The Grade 12 general average is not associated with the pathway.
- H03: The exit named before graduation is not associated with the pathway.
- H04: The pathway does not differ by the wave in which a graduate answers.

What the study covers, and what it cannot show

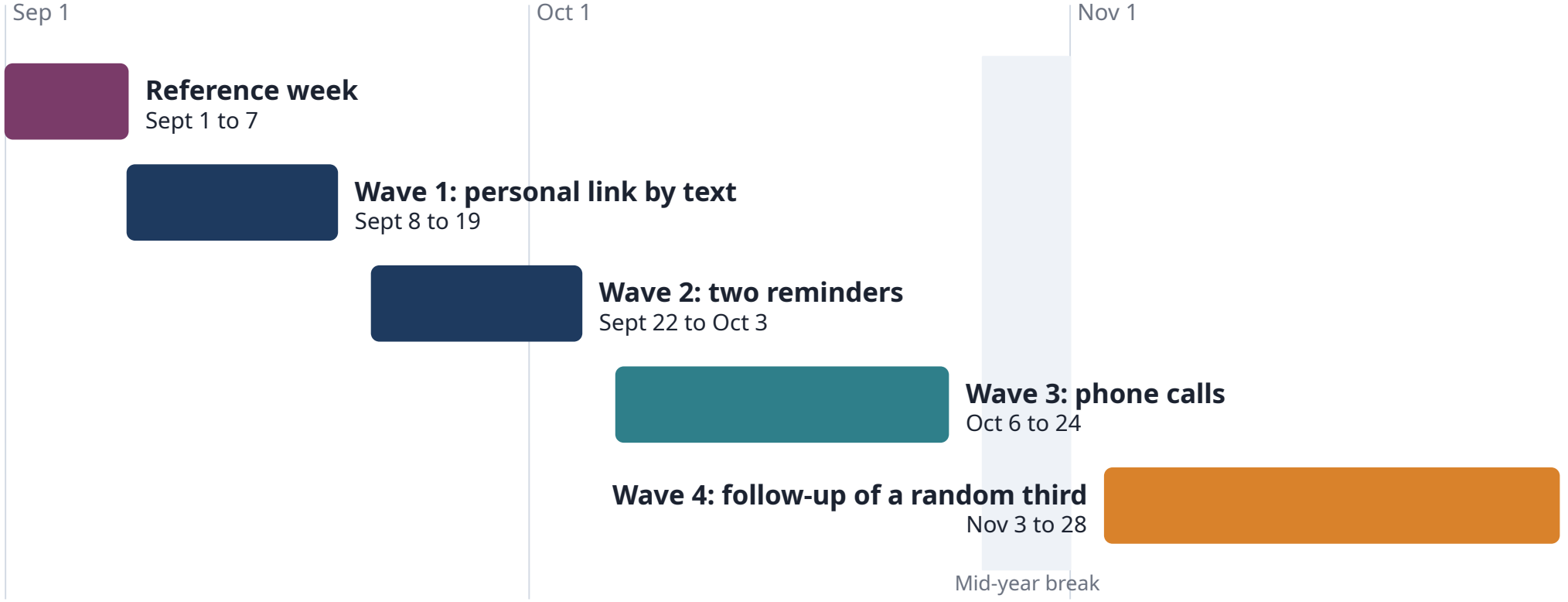
Scope

All 2,148 Grade 12 completers of SY 2023–2024 of the division's six public senior high schools; their main activity in one reference week, September 1 to 7, 2025; their school records.

Limitations

Self-reported activity; online and phone answers may differ; weighting assumes respondents in a cell represent its nonrespondents; graduates who decline are not pursued; one week's activity only.

Research design: one reference week, four waves



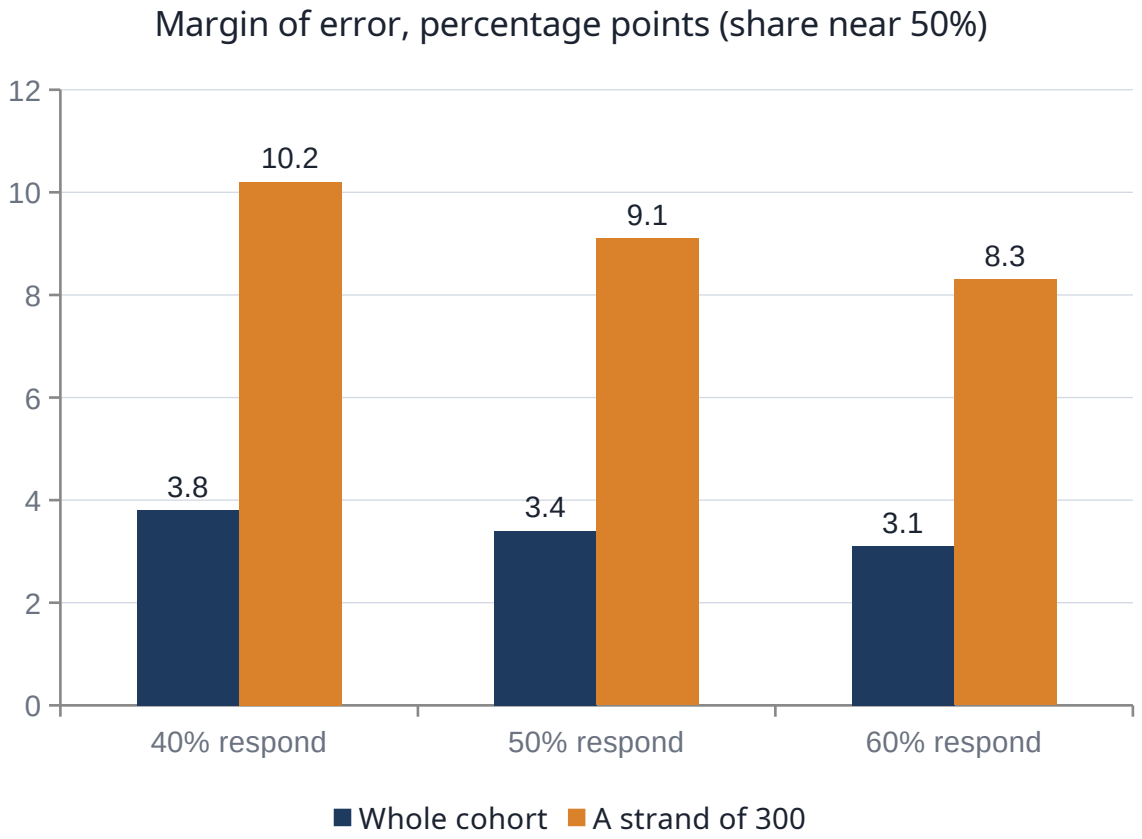
Every answer describes the same week, so early and late answers can be compared. A random third of those not reached when the first phase closes, October 31, is followed up and weighted to stand for all of them.

Sampling: everyone in the frame, then a random third

2,148 completers in the frame, from School Form 10 and each school's list: no sampling in phase 1

~50% expected response after three contacts, the middle of the 30% to 60% tracer studies report

1 in 3 of those not reached by October 31 drawn at random for the follow-up, about 300 graduates



Margin for a share near 50%, design effect 1.3 from weighting; no finite population correction.

Data collection: a short questionnaire and the schools' records

The questionnaire

Online form, nine parts: consent; the reference week's activities (six questions on study, training, work, job search); college, training or work details; the reason for none; a look back. A short form for phone and visits.

School records

From School Form 10, the enrollment record and the exit survey: strand, sex, age, Grade 12 general average, 4Ps, NC II, the exit named before graduation, and a contact number.

Coding

College programs into 11 field groups and training courses into five sectors, by two researchers separately; a crosswalk of each strand to the fields it prepares for.

Data collection: validity, reliability, schedule

Review

A guidance counselor, an SHS supervisor and a statistician read the questions against the research questions.

Pretest

Twelve graduates of SY 2022–2023, outside the frame, answer aloud; unclear questions are rewritten.

Re-ask

Sixty online respondents answer Part C again two weeks later; agreement and kappa.

Frame built July 14 to August 8, 2025. Reference week September 1 to 7. Waves: text-message links September 8, reminders from September 22, calls October 6 to 24, follow-up November 3 to 28.

Ethical issues: consent, privacy, no pressure, review

Consent

Every graduate is 18 or older. The form opens with a privacy notice and asks for consent; by phone, the caller reads it and records the answer (NPC Circular No. 2023-04).

Privacy

Codes, not names; keys stay in each school; results only as group counts; nonrespondents' records used only in counts (NPC Circular No. 2023-04, Sec. 16).

No pressure

Declining changes nothing in a graduate's records. A graduate who declines is not contacted again. Family members are told only that the school is trying to reach the graduate.

Approval

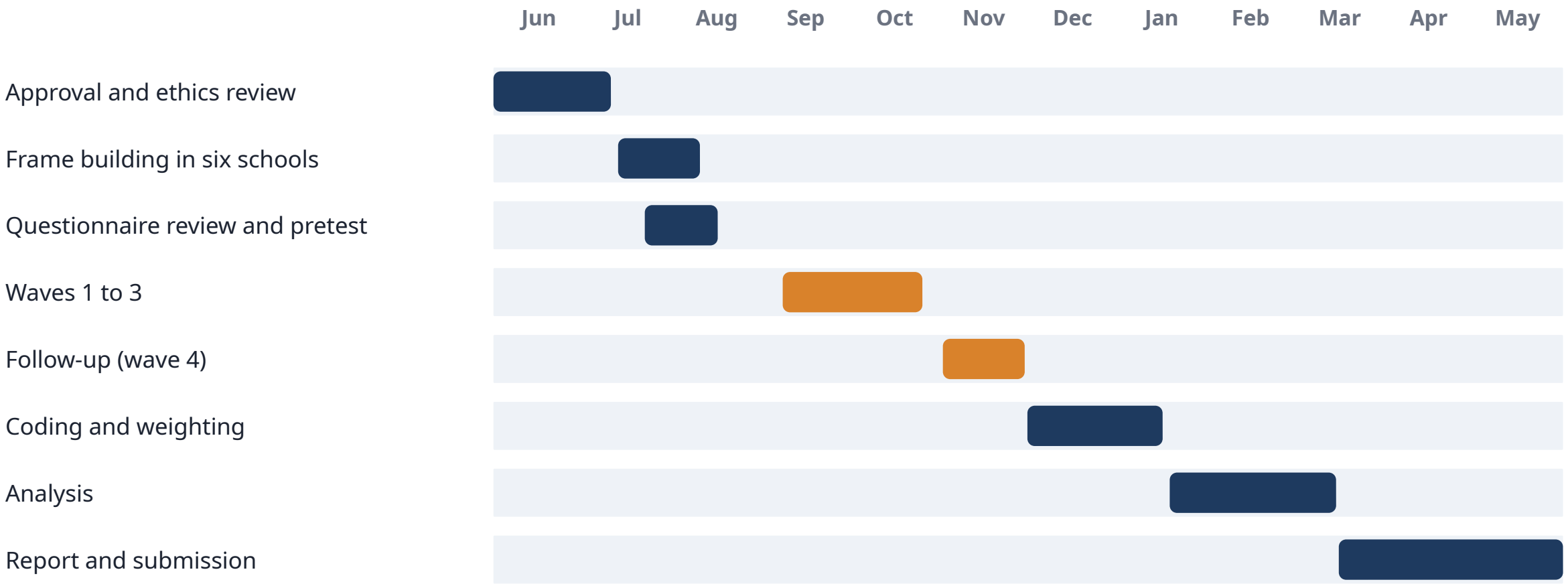
Schools Division Superintendent's approval; review by a research ethics committee before any contact.

Plan for data analysis: the response first, then the pathways

Q4 first	AAPOR dispositions and Response Rates 1 and 2; respondents against the frame; pathway by wave (chi-square); cell, raked and two-phase weights.
Q1	Each pathway's share, weighted, with linearization standard errors and Wilson intervals at the effective sample size; by strand.
Q2	Strand-field match in college; work relatedness; intended exit against pathway, Cohen's kappa.
Q3	Multinomial logistic regression of the pathway on the records: relative risk ratios, likelihood-ratio tests, average marginal effects.

Free software: the online form on the division's DepEd account; Python (statsmodels) and Excel for the analysis.

Timetable: June 2025 to May 2026



Orange: the field work. June to December are of 2025; January to May, of 2026.

Cost estimates: PhP 30,000 in eligible items

Particulars	Category	Amount (PhP)
Prepaid load for text messages and calls (12 callers)	Communication	12,000.00
Transportation for follow-up visits and tracing	Transportation	9,800.00
Snacks for frame building and coding sessions	Food	3,600.00
Policy brief printing (80 copies)	Dissemination	2,400.00
Folders, envelopes, encrypted flash drive	Supplies	1,200.00
Short forms and privacy notice cards	Reproduction	1,000.00
Total		**30,000.00**

Not charged to the grant

- No equipment or software: the form and the analysis use free tools
- No honoraria for callers or a statistician
- Tranches 40%, 40%, 20% (DO 16, s. 2017)

Dissemination and advocacy: who needs the findings

School heads and SHS coordinators

Division conference and a two-page policy brief: strand offerings, contact records

Career advocates and guidance designates

CGP orientation: reaching learners who name no exit, and 4Ps learners

Grade 12 advisers

LAC sessions: updating contact numbers before graduation; repeating the study

Researchers in the region

Regional research congress and the division's research journal

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Thank you

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