

Overall, women in STEM identified very limited options for additional support.

The inability to work uninterrupted was one of the most significant challenges.

Connecting digitally, normalized through COVID-19, enabled a child with dyslexia to receive specialized online tutoring.



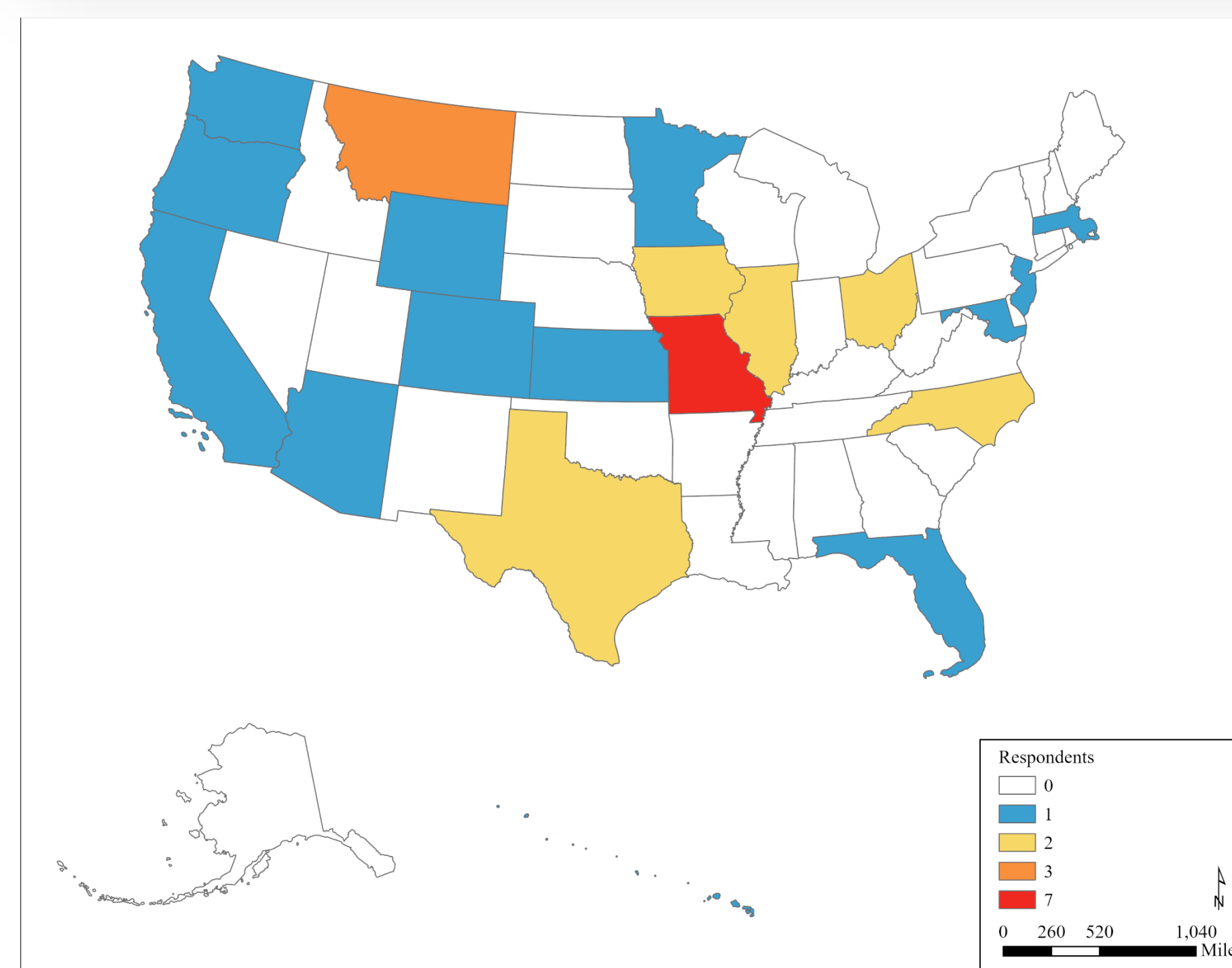
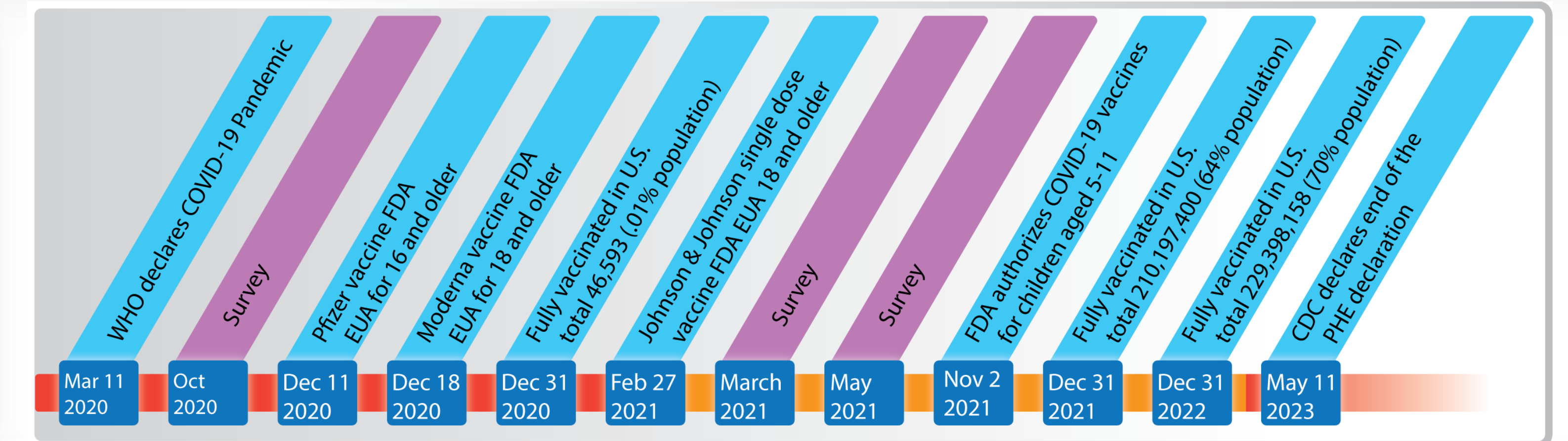
The Impact of Children's School Format on Women Professionals in STEM

With many school closures during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) resulting in long-term changes (more than just a month) to child education format (e.g., online, hybrid), many women, including those in science, technology, and mathematics (STEM) fields, took on increasingly greater home and childcare responsibilities. This exacerbated the challenges that women in STEM already face. This research project captured experiences of women in STEM navigating various school formats during the COVID-19 at the time, not a retrospective.

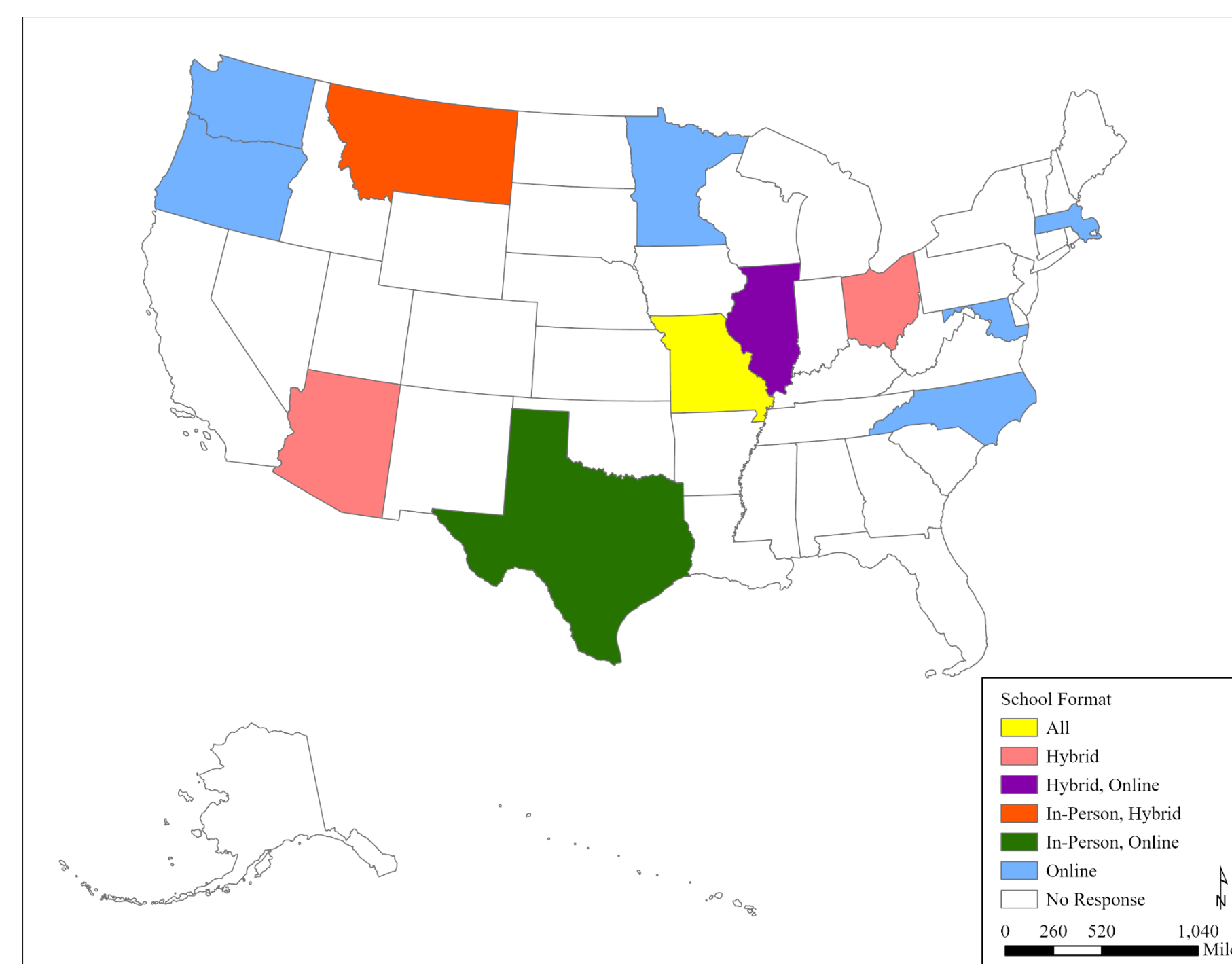
Three online surveys were conducted:

1. October of 2020 (46 respondents)
2. March of 2021 (10 respondents)
3. May of 2021 (3 respondents)

Participants were invited via the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), the American Planning Association (APA), Facebook, and LinkedIn.



State of Survey Respondents



School Format of Survey Respondents

Findings:

1. The hybrid school format was the most challenging, followed by online and in-person.
 - ❖ Women in STEM with children attending in-person school identified few impacts, instead remarking on the impacts felt during initial lockdowns.
2. Women in STEM with elementary school-aged children seemed to report the most significant impacts.
3. The authors anticipated oscillation between school formats (e.g., hybrid to in-person), but at least one survey respondent seemed to describe an excessive variation of school format.

“Currently, it does not impact my job. However, during lockdown, when my son stayed at home for 2.5 months, it was nearly impossible to work.”

“Your survey was not designed in a way that covers all possible scenarios and responses. So, I could not answer all the questions. For example, my daughter’s school format had changed multiple times and I wasn’t sure for which period I have to respond to the questions.”

Recommendations:

- Should an event like COVID-19 ever present itself again, our government, our administrators, our teachers, and our parents should work together to find a balanced approach.
- If the United States is serious about increasing the representation of women in STEM, it should invest in sustainable, consistent, high-quality childcare and public education.

