

How the Order of Response Options in a Running Tally Can Affect Online Survey Estimates

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Running Tallies

- Running tally items are used with a series of number boxes that sum to 100%, 24 hours, etc.
- In online surveys, the cumulative total can be displayed on screen and updated as numbers are successively entered (feature that is unique to this mode)

- Example:

Of the television that you watch on a typical weekday, what percentage do you watch during the following time periods?

Morning (12 midnight to 12 noon)

Afternoon (12 noon to 6 PM)

Evening (6 PM to 12 midnight)

Total

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |

Order of Response Options in a Running Tally

- Conrad et al (2009, 2010) investigated how this type of item, which provides the respondent with instant feedback, can improve data quality
- We hypothesize that for time allocation, the order of presentation of time categories could make a difference in the distribution of reported time spent
- We expect primary effects with the first-presented time category having a higher allocation of time than the later-presented options

KnowledgePanel Experiment

- Sample of online adult panelists from KnowledgePanel
- Brief survey fielded in August 2010
- Respondents provided running tallies of the percentage of TV they watch during the morning, afternoon, and evening (separately for weekdays and weekends)
- 2 constant sum items, order of items was rotated
- 2,098 completes (66% completion rate)

Survey Question

Of the television that you watch on a typical weekday, what percentage do you watch during the following time periods?

Please type a whole number in each box below. Please make sure your total equals 100%.

Morning (12 midnight to 12 noon)

Afternoon (12 noon to 6 PM)

Evening (6 PM to 12 midnight)

Total

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |
| <input type="text"/> | % |

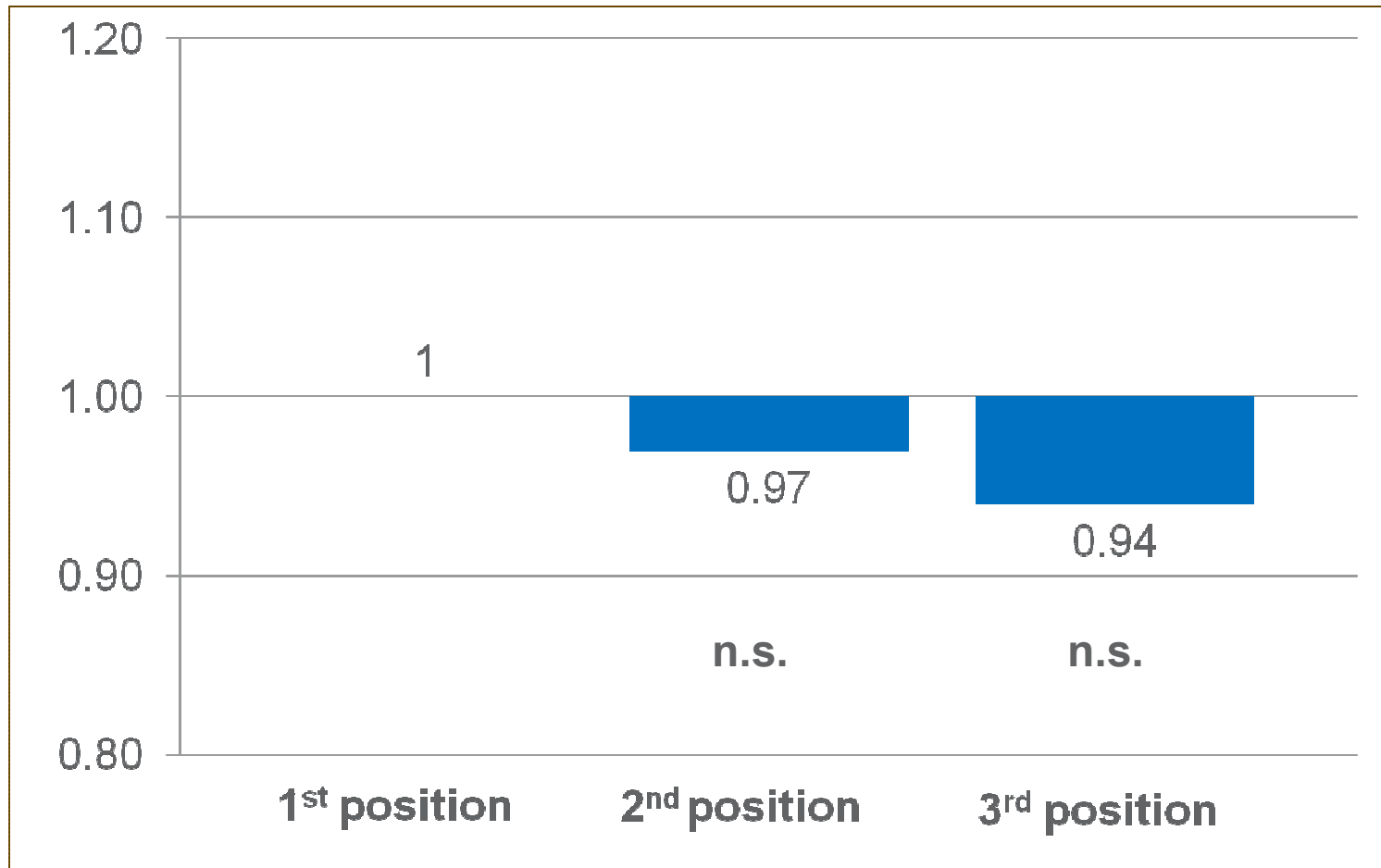
Results by Time of Day

| | Weekday | Weekend Day |
|----------------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Morning (12 midnight to 12 noon) | 14.2% | 14.5% |
| Afternoon (12 noon to 6 PM) | 18.7% | 23.5% |
| Evening (6 PM to 12 midnight) | 67.2% | 62.0% |
| Total | 100% | 100% |

Results by Position

| | Weekday | Weekend Day |
|------------|---------|-------------|
| Position 1 | 34.6% | 33.7% |
| Position 2 | 33.1% | 33.7% |
| Position 3 | 32.3% | 32.5% |

Effect of position change



Summary

- Primacy effects were observed, however differences by position are small and are not statistically significant
- Similar results in another running tally experiment
 - 524 KnowledgePanel respondents
 - January 2011
 - Time spent on 11 types of activities during the past 24 hours
 - Differences in time allocations by position not statistically significant
- Very little existing research on running tallies. We welcome additional research.

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