

# Survey Invitations and Response Behavior: “Project Timely UK”

September 2006



# Project Timely

## Abstract

There are many factors that affect the quality of online research studies, and the invitation process is one of the factors that have a major impact on survey outcomes and response rates. This research study shows how the timing of survey invitations influences respondents' participation in online surveys. Depending upon the time when the survey invitation emails are sent, some invitations may work better than others. In this study, we demonstrate the impact of sending out survey invitations at different times on response rates in online surveys.

## Introduction

In the last few years, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of Internet users globally. In the meantime, the number of market research companies using the online data collection method has increased thanks to the numerous advantages it presents. However, rapid and cost effective online studies require high levels of respondent cooperation and response rates.

Since there are many factors that have an impact on response rates of online surveys, such as incentives, survey length, invitation, etc., researchers can influence response rates in a survey study up to a certain level.

This study explores the impact of the timing of survey invitations on survey response rates. The specific objective of this research study is to understand how response rates differ if survey invitations are sent at different times of the day and/or on different days of the week.

## Method and Data

The study involves the comparison of the data collected from 12 different groups of Lightspeed Research panelists, and a number of analyses to see if there are any differences in each dataset in terms of trends in response rates.

A sample of 7,440 Lightspeed Research panelists was selected and divided into 12 groups (620 each). While the questionnaire taken by each group was identical, the invitation process differed. Survey invitation emails were sent to each group at 8:30am, 11:30am, 2:30pm and 5:30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday as shown in the table below. The survey was in the field for 6 days for each of the 12 groups.

## Survey Invitations

Day	Date	Time
Monday	20 <sup>th</sup> Feb	8.30am
		11.30am
		2.30pm
		5.30pm
Wednesday	22 <sup>nd</sup> Feb	8.30am
		11.30am
		2.30pm
		5.30pm
Friday	24 <sup>th</sup> Feb	8.30am
		11.30am
	17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	5.30pm

Data analysis and comparisons were conducted to find out how the response across groups differs within various time frames. In addition to the comparison of the 12 different groups, results were also analyzed by:

- the 3 days invitations were sent (i.e. Monday batches combined vs Wednesday batches combined vs Friday batches combined),
- the different times invitations were sent (i.e. 8:30am batches combined vs 5:30pm batches combined),
- first 24 hours vs the whole study,
- age (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54 and 55-65),
- gender, and
- SEG (higher and lower).

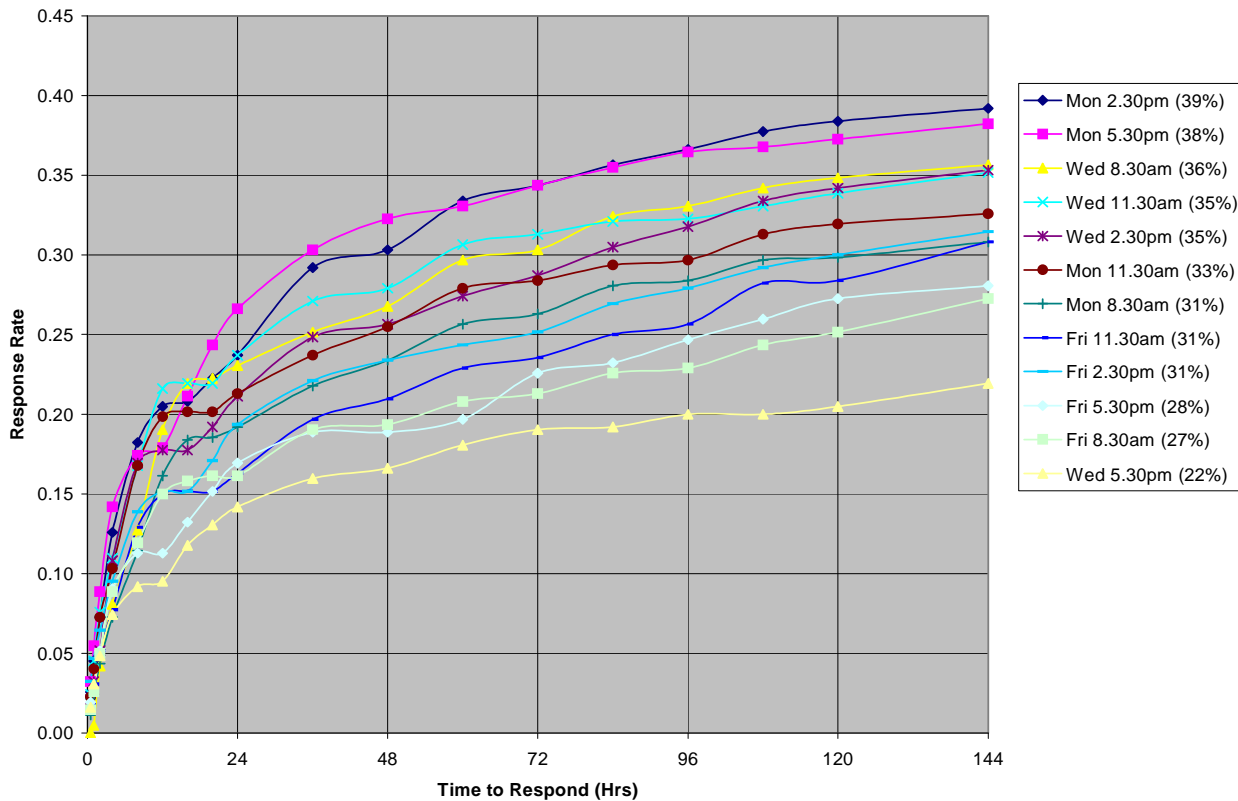
# Results

## Overall Results

Total response rate of the survey is 32% at the end of day 6. While 11% of the respondents responded the survey in the first hour after the invitations were sent, 18% responded in 2 hours, 52% in 12 hours, and 75% in 2 days.

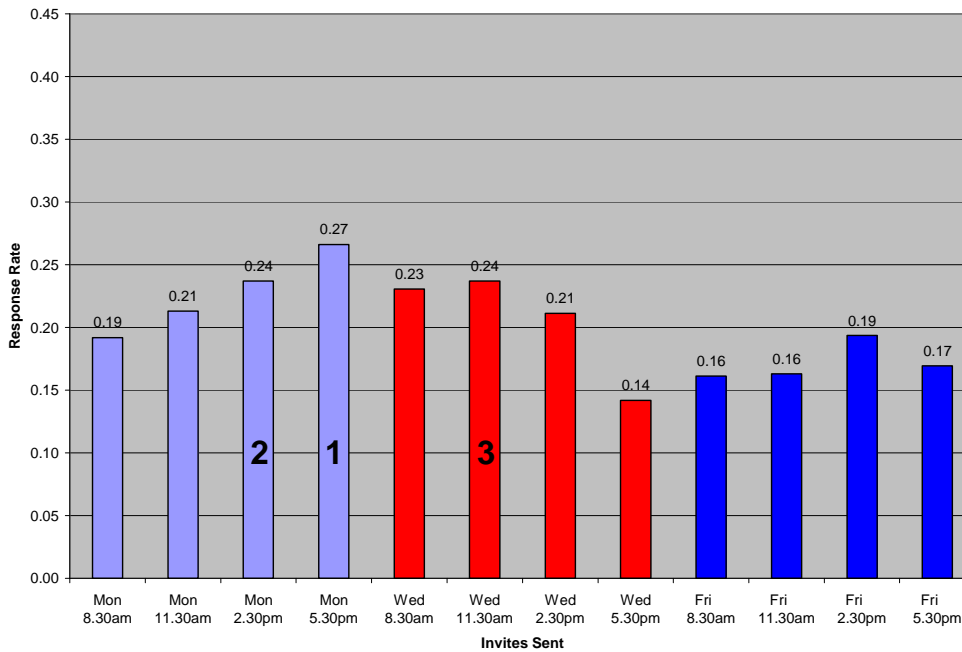
As a result, Monday 2.30pm batch had the highest response rate (39%) followed by Monday 5.30pm (38%) and Wednesday 8.30am (36%).

**Response Rates vs Time to Respond**

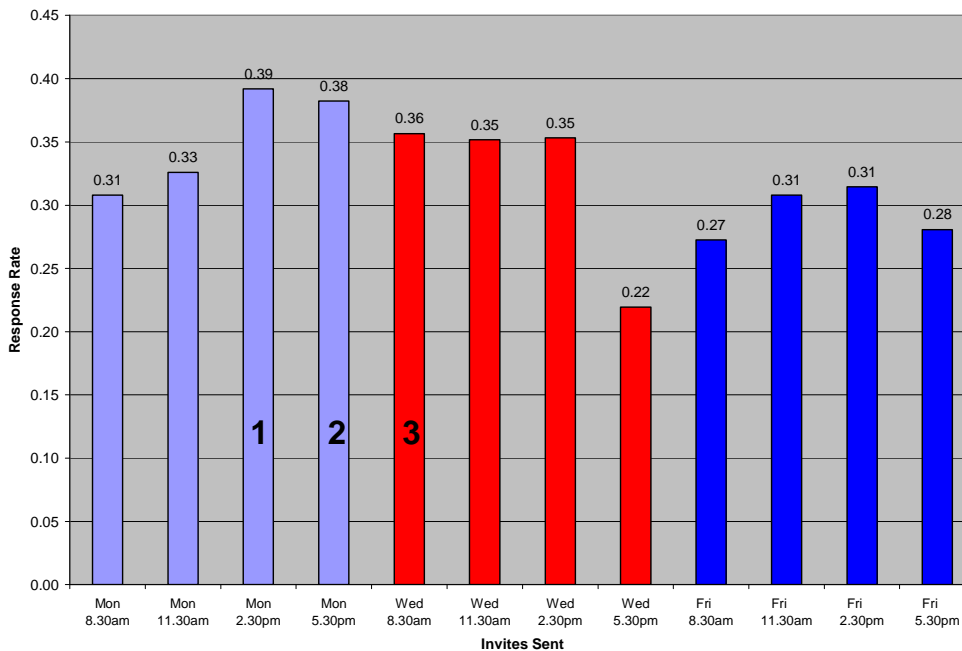


At the end of the first 24 hours, Monday 5.30pm batch had the highest response rate (27%) followed by Monday 2.30pm and Wednesday 11.30 (24%), ranking slightly different from the final ranking at the end of the study.

### Response Rates – First 24 Hours



### Response Rates – Total

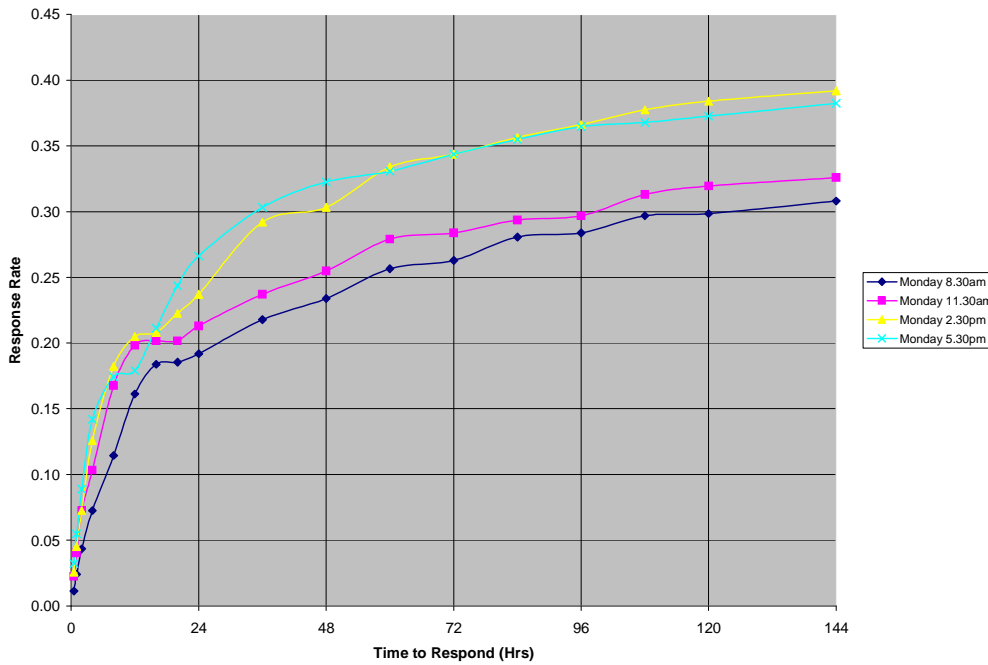


All the batches invited on the same day was combined (8:30am, 11:30am, 2:30pm and 5:30pm) and compared against each other. Monday batches combined yielded the highest response rate (35%) followed by Wednesday (32%) and Friday (29%).

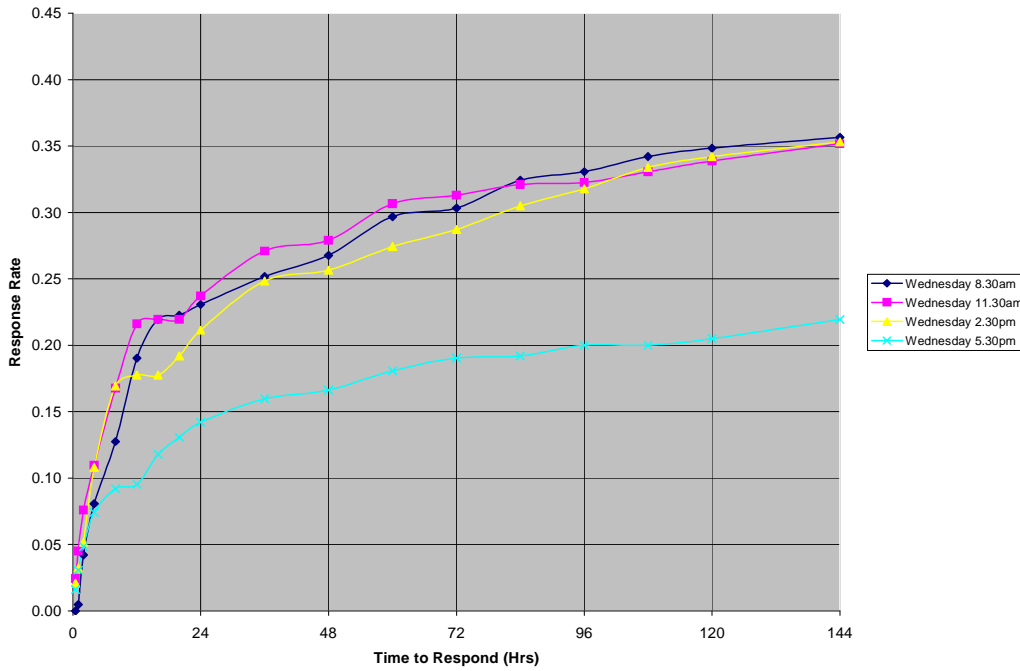
## Results by Day

The four different batches within the same day were compared to each other. 2:30pm and 5:30pm batches resulted in the highest response rates on Monday. There wasn't much difference among 8:30am, 11:30am and 2:30pm batches on Wednesday, but the 5:30pm batch had much lower response rate. While Friday batches combined yielded the lowest response rate, the response rates of the 4 batches on Friday didn't differ so much from each other.

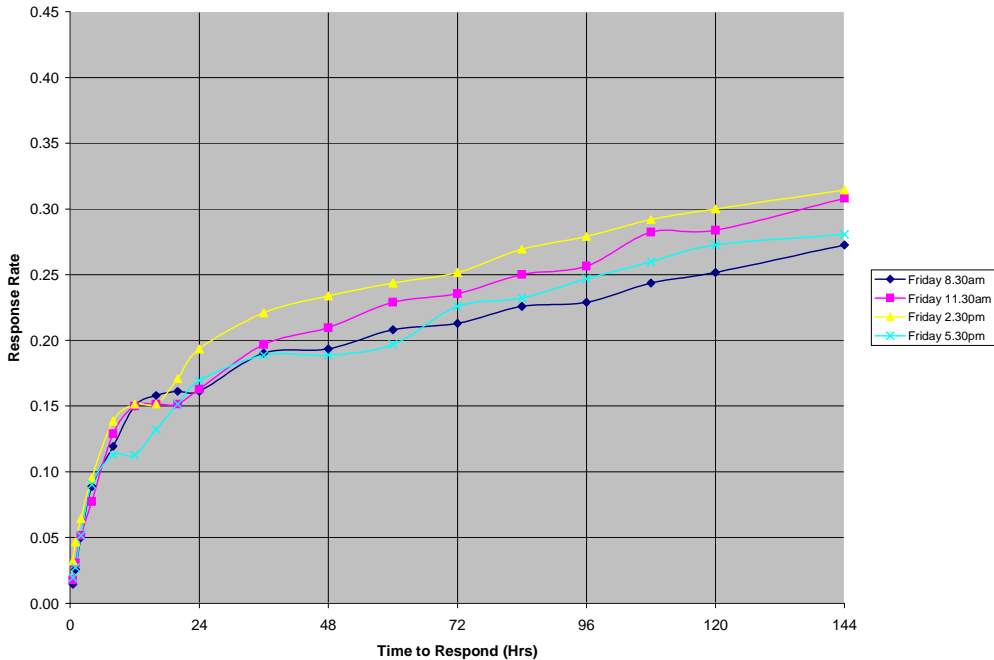
### Response Rates – Monday



### Response Rates – Wednesday



### Response Rates – Friday



## Results by time invitations were sent within the day

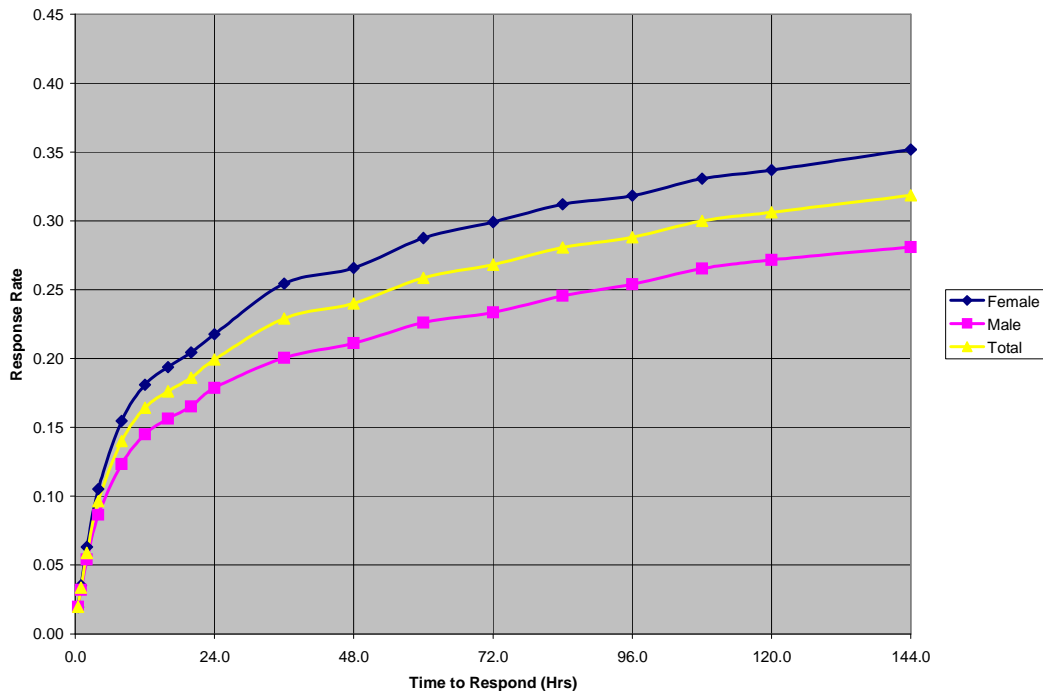
- Monday 8.30pm vs Wednesday 8.30pm vs Friday 8.30pm

- Wednesday 8.30am has the highest response rate at the end of day 6 (36%). In the first 12 hours (by 8.30pm) Wednesday 8.30am has the highest response rate (19%), followed closely by Monday 8.30pm vs Friday 8.30pm.
- Monday 5.30pm vs Wednesday 5.30pm vs Friday 5.30pm.
- Monday 5.30pm has the highest response rate at the end of day 6 (38%). In the first 8 hours (by 1:30am) Monday 5.30pm has the highest response rate (17%), followed by Friday 5:30 (12%) and Wednesday 5:30 (10%).

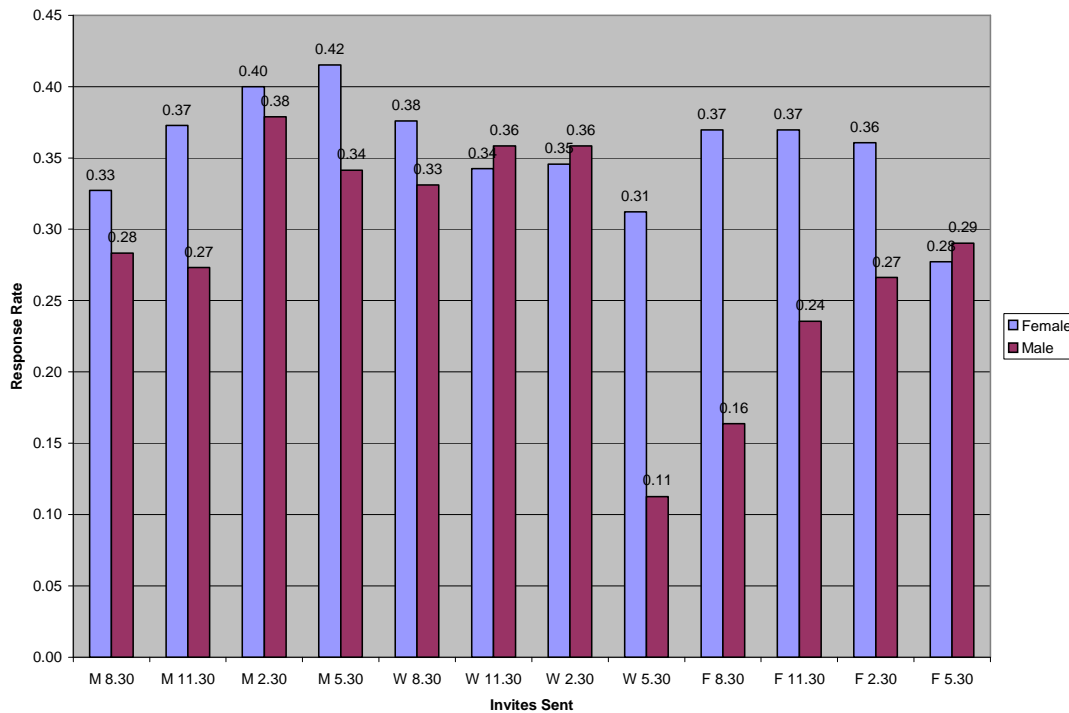
## Results by Gender

At the end of the study, females turned out to be better responders to the survey. Response rate for females were 35% against 28% for males. Within the first 24 hours, females were at 22% response and men were at 18%. The only time that the response was the same for males and females was within the first 30 minutes. From that point onwards, a gap opened up between the response rates of female and male respondents.

**Response Rates by Gender**



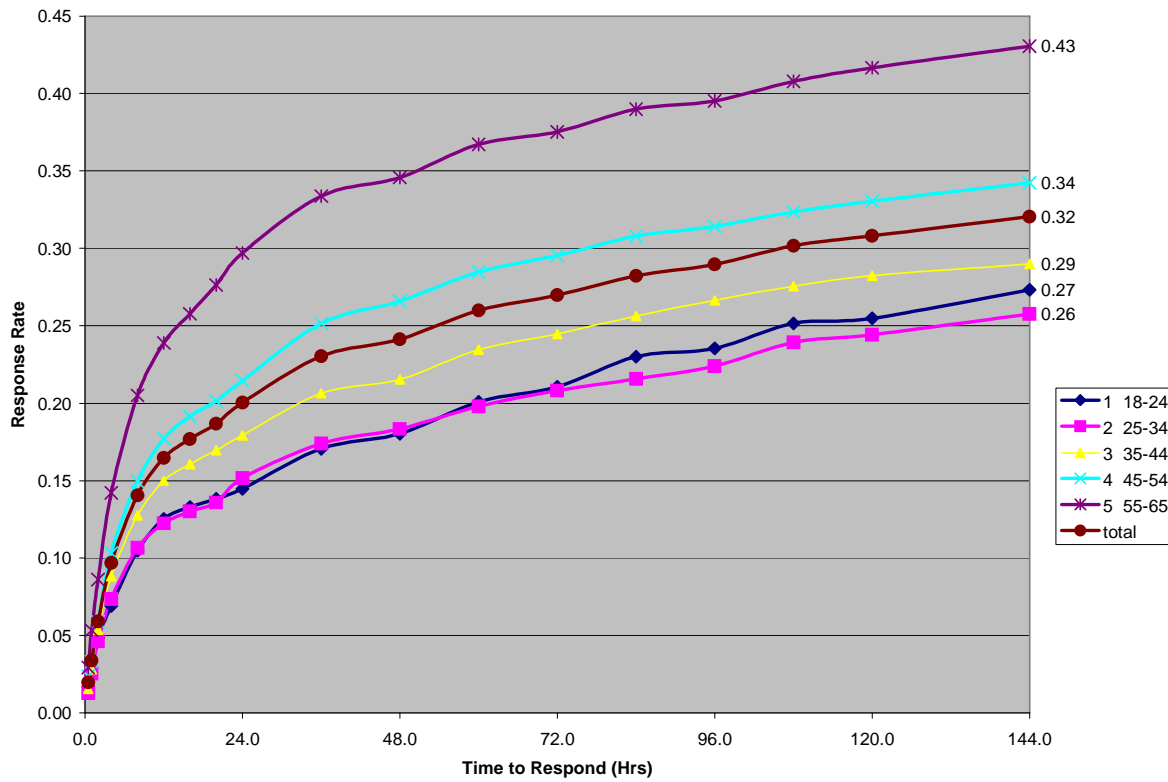
## Response Rates by Gender/Batch



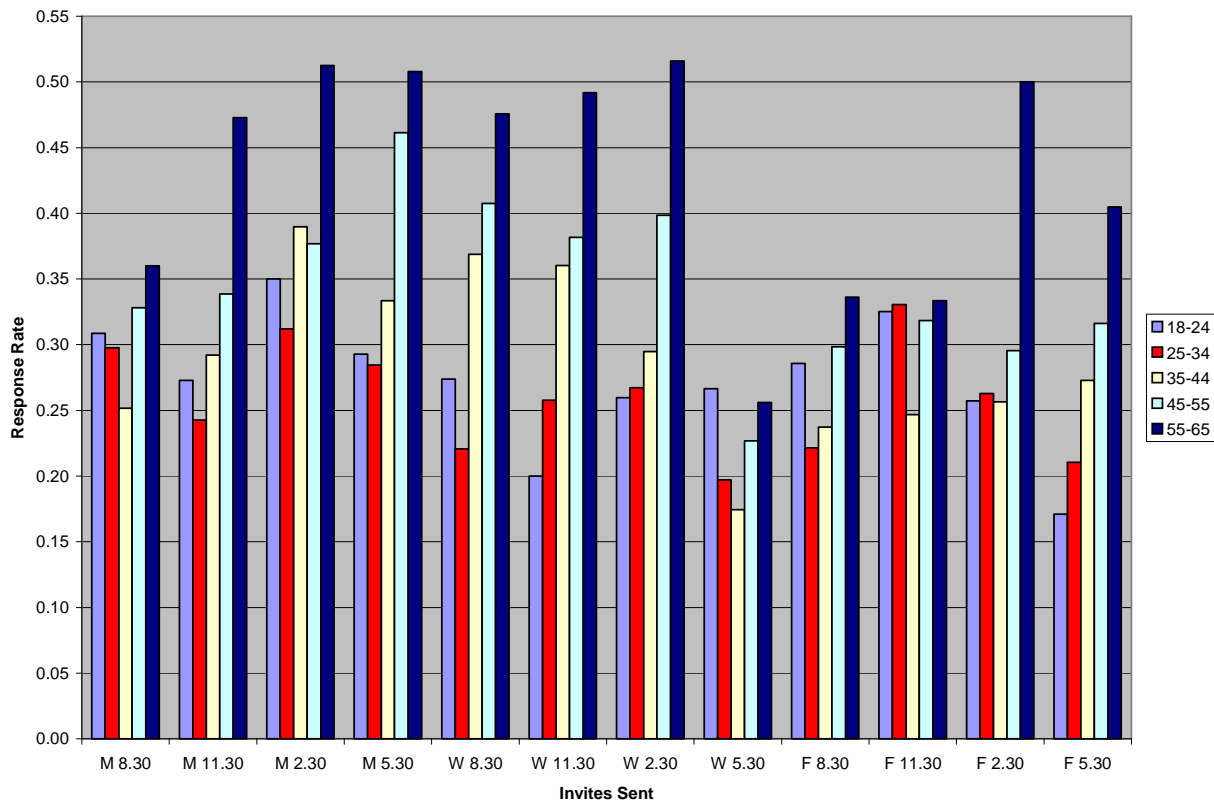
## Results by Age

55-65 year olds are the best responders both within the first 24 hours (30%) and within the full 6 days (43%). The worst response rates come from the 18-24 and 25-34 year olds. Within the first 24 hours 18-24 year olds (14%) exhibit the lowest response (14%) closely followed by 25-34 year olds (15%). Over 6 days, 18-24 and 25-34 year olds are still the worst responders but this time 18-24 year olds are marginally ahead of the 25-34 group by 1%.

### Response Rates by Age



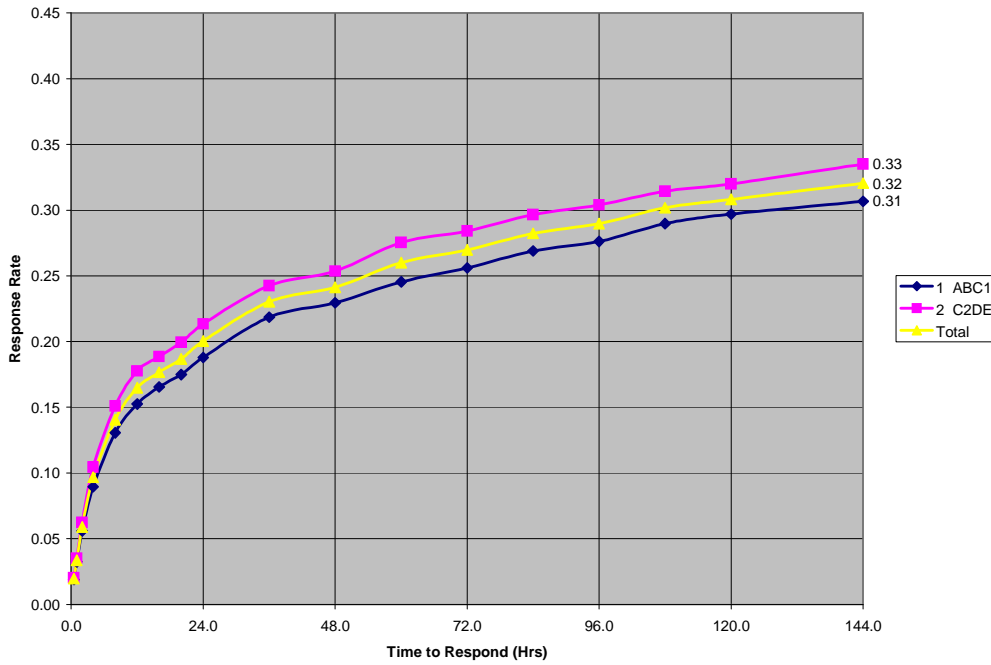
### Response Rates by Age/Batch



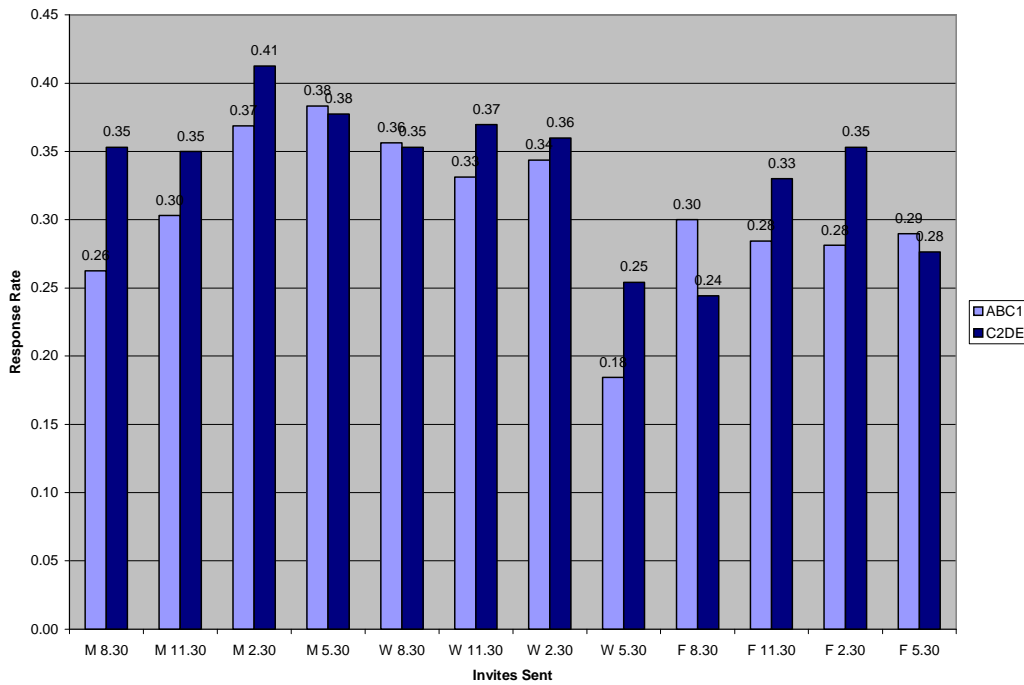
### Results by SEG

Respondents in the C2DE group are slightly better responders than those in the ABC1 group. Over the first 24 hours C2DEs had a response rate of 21% compared to 19% for the ABC1s. At the end of the study, C2DEs resulted in 33% response rate against 31% for ABC1s.

### Response Rates by SEG



### Response Rates by SEG/Batch



# Conclusions and Discussions

This research study explored the role of survey invitations on respondents' participation in online surveys. Invitations to an online survey were sent to 12 different groups of respondents at different times of the week (i.e. 8:30am, 11:30am, 2:30pm and 5:30pm on Monday, Wednesday and Friday). Response rates of each group were compared and results were analyzed by age, gender, and SEG. The results demonstrated a number of differences in response behavior.

- Overall, people are more responsive to survey invitations they receive on Monday.
- Survey invitations sent Monday afternoon (2:30pm and 5:30pm) resulted in the highest response rates.
- The first 3 batches on Wednesday (except 5:30pm) yielded the third highest response rate.
- However, Monday morning and Friday batches yielded the lowest response rates.
- Monday 5:30 batch had the highest response rate at the end of the first 24 hours.
- Among morning batches (8:30am), Wednesday had the highest response rate. Among evening batches (5:30pm), Monday resulted in the best response from panelists.
- In this study, female panelists were better responders than males (35% against 28%).
- 55-65 year olds are much more willing to participate in online surveys than all the other age groups.
- The worst response rates come from the 18-24 and 25-34 year olds. Both of these age groups are more likely to take surveys on Monday rather than the other days.
- There was only a slight difference in response rates between SEGs, but C2DEs were slightly better responders than ABC1s.

This research study showed that response rate can be influenced by the day and time panelists were invited to the research. Especially for projects with short fieldwork length, it is critical to carefully consider the effects of the day and time of the week that invitations are sent. Moreover, one should also keep in mind that different demographic groups show different response behavior, and these differences may have an influence on the representation of these groups when conducting online surveys with a short fieldwork length.

## About Lightspeed Research Poll

Lightspeed Research online poll rapidly gathers opinions about topical issues and delivers reliable results in as little as 24 hours. More information on this survey and the Lightspeed Research online poll is available at [www.lightspeedresearch.com](http://www.lightspeedresearch.com), or email us at [info@lightspeedresearch.com](mailto:info@lightspeedresearch.com).

## About Lightspeed Research

Lightspeed Research is a trusted quality online market research solutions provider delivering rapid, reliable research results through global online panels. Through its network of proprietary panels and accredited panel partners, Lightspeed Research can provide access to household members across 34 countries in Europe, North America and Asia-Pacific.

Lightspeed Research's proprietary panels are recruited and maintained to ensure quality and representative sampling to support studies that range in scope and complexity across most industry sectors. Lightspeed Research operates specialty panels covering healthcare, financial services, automotive, B2B, telecommunications, family and more. The company also provides custom panel solutions for clients, building customized panels to address specific client needs.

Through Lightspeed Research, clients can reach both low-incidence and large samples cost-effectively, access extensive background information, and find their target audience through unique screening capabilities.

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