

# The Bad Science Reporting Effect

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## *The Chronicle of Higher Education:*

The press coverage of the so-called “QWERTY effect” in early March left me somewhat worried that it is so easy to publish bad science, but absolutely appalled at the state of science reporting.

The alleged effect is that average scores on reported positivity or happiness associations are slightly higher for words having more letters from the right-hand side of the keyboard.

By late on March 8, Mark Liberman at Language Log had re-examined the relevant statistics, noting that the effect is extremely weak. It could explain about a 10th of one percent of the variance in positive vs. negative affective judgments about words, if it existed.

He then replicated the effect on a new data set. “It’s comforting,” he says, “to see apparent confirmation ... in an independently-collected data set, with a similar adjusted multiple  $r^2$  of 0.0013. At least, it’s comforting until we recognize that the source of this data was a random number generator.”

Read the whole story: [The Chronicle of Higher Education](#)