

Q-Step Internship: Political and Social Research team at YouGov

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Through the Q-Step internship programme I worked with the Political and Social Research Team at YouGov in London. YouGov is the most quoted research company in the UK. Its online panel of over 400,000 members allows the company to analyse trends in public opinion, and gives them the ability to access particular groups that are normally difficult to reach through conventional surveys.

Objectives

As an intern I worked on a number of projects, including:

- The Political team's Daily Poll.
 - This consisted of questions either for internal use (ie: the YouGov website) or for the company's clients.
 - Each poll would generally take a respondent 10-15 minutes to complete.
 - We processed the data mainly using SPSS Statistics, and then produced excel spread-sheets for user-friendly analysis and interpretation.
- I gathered demographic data for use in future projects.
 - I personally gathered the necessary regional demographic data needed for predicting the election of the Greater Manchester Mayor.
- YouGov's clients ranged from large corporations, media organisations, and charities, to Think Tanks and individual university academics.

Software used:

- Gryphon
 - The in-house scripting software that we used to construct surveys.
- SPSS Statistics
 - This was used to process the raw data, and would also allow us to initially analyse our findings.

Internship outcomes:

- Much of the data we produced was confidential and for the client's use. However most is available online, either from the client publishing it themselves, or via the YouGov website.
- I contributed my own data-driven article for the YouGov website, on the topic of the English football team's manager.
- I contributed to projects that were used by a number of high profile media organisations (including The Times and Good Morning Britain).

Methodology

- YouGov gathers its public opinion data online using Active Sampling.
 - Active Sampling means that restrictions are put in place, so that only those contacted are able to participate.
 - This enables YouGov to select respondents based upon their demographics, thus enabling the company to gain representative samples of the public or a specific group.
 - The Daily Poll would normally have at least 1,500 respondents to represent the British public.
- YouGov weights their data by age, gender, social class, region, party identity and the readership of individual newspapers.
 - The targets for the weighted data are gathered primarily from:
 - The census
 - Large scale random probability surveys (For example: the British Election Study)
 - The results of the 2015 general election
 - The Official ONS population estimates.
 - I joined the team immediately after the EU Referendum, and so the company had begun weighting their data based on how people voted in the referendum also.
- Whilst YouGov uses online surveys, Active Sampling and weighting data means that their results are representative of the entire country – not just those with Internet access.

- RIM Weighting Tool
 - This was used in combination with SPSS to weight the data.
- Excel
 - This was mainly used for formatting the data and presenting it to clients. It was also used for data tracking purposes, which is a particular strength YouGov has as an organisation.

Personal Outcomes:

- Tangible quantitative skills that I was able to put into practice during my internship.
- Valuable experience to put on my CV, that I feel confident discussing at length.
- Now able to begin to use a quantitative approach to my dissertation
- My placement was also particularly special because it gave me a unique insight in the unfolding political turmoil that emerged post-EU Referendum.