

Ipsos MORI: The Millennium Cohort Study

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Ipsos MORI is one of the largest market research organisations in the UK, carrying out research for public and private organisations. Ipsos is situated in over 80 countries worldwide and I was fortunate enough to be based in their London HQ. Within the organisation, I worked in a small team within the Probability Survey Unit where we focussed on the Millennium Cohort Study's 7th wave (MSC7) for our client; the Centre of Longitudinal Studies (CLS).

The Study

The study itself is outstanding. It is a multi-million pound project that started in 2000. It was the first cohort study to include all four UK countries, and the most recent of Britain's world-renowned national longitudinal birth cohort studies. The resulting data-set is one of the largest of its kind in the UK. MCS follows the lives of more than 19,000 children born in the millennium. The field of enquiry includes: parenting, childcare, education, behaviour, activities, employment, income, cognitive and physical measurements. It not only researches the cohort members, but takes information from the entire household, informing policy decisions. The findings of the study so far have been not only of national, but of international importance. MCS is now at its 7th wave of interviews where the cohort have reached the age of 17. There are numerous different levels of interview for each cohort member, resulting in an approximate 1.5 hour household interview.

My Role

My role within the study was of mainly script checking. This entailed the checking of hundreds of questions and the routing of these to ensure that each participant was asked the correct interview version and that the routing matched up to their previous answers. This required my cooperation with both the scripting team at Ipsos and the client as I consequently acted as the middle man between these two teams. There are 9 elements of the electronic interview to be carried out by the interviewer in each household, and so each stage had to be tested thoroughly by myself, CLS and the scripting team. Acting as the middle man, I had to accept changes from CLS, input those changes onto the scripts and then come to agreements with the scripting team as to how to incorporate these changes.

Below is an example of the script checking process.

BACS
{ASK IF HAS SCOTTISH BACCALAUREATE: BACC=3}
SCOTTISH BACCALAUREATE

Which type of Scottish Baccalaureate did you study?

1. Languages
2. Science
3. Expressive Arts
4. Social Sciences
5. Don't know

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125	1-Aug	DJ	BACS	Please amend routing to BACC=3	GW 2-Aug

CHILD OF THE NEW CENTURY BACS 00000

Which type of Scottish Baccalaureate did you study?

Languages

Science

Expressive Arts

Social Sciences

Don't know

Skills

Excel

• This was the first barrier I encountered as I prepared for my internship with SPSS training, however when I arrived, I learnt that I would not be using that programme. Instead I worked with Excel every day to structure scripting changes and for complex organisational techniques. However, I found having to jump straight into it was quickest way to learn.

Scripting/routing

• I had to rapidly develop my understanding of complex routing. As MCS is a longitudinal study, so many pieces of data needed to be fed forward from previous waves of interviews as it is not

ethical to ask cohort members some things twice, for example if a parent of theirs has died. This is a very simple example, however there were some routing errors that took days to fix.

Confidence

• From day one I was working within a team of professionals who had been working on MCS for years. I was fortunate enough to learn so much from them and be treated as one of their own team members.

Multitask

• Every day I was given jobs by various members of the team and so multitasking was essential. From this I also cemented my attention to detail as each task that needed completion had to be of the highest of standards for the study.

Conclusion

Overall, my time at Ipsos has been an invaluable experience where I have been fortunate enough to develop my skills and confidence in a working environment in a team of professionals. I managed to achieve success by demonstrating my willingness to take on any task within the team. They saw that I wanted to gain everything they had on offer to learn.