

Politics project: using a survey to explore attitudes towards immigration

Politics project offers second year politics students the opportunity to investigate a topic that interests them and to develop intellectual independence in preparation for their final year dissertation.

ESSTED worked with the convenor of this course unit to develop the quantitative element within the taught part of the course. The basis of this collaboration was a small student led survey designed to introduce students to survey research and quantitative methods.

Student led survey

The taught element of the course unit gets students to propose and conduct a survey examining a topic of their choice. Choosing attitudes towards immigration, the students worked as a class to write the questionnaire and recruit respondents using social media and e-mail. We then analysed the data to produce outputs for class discussion.

Investigating question wording and framing

The success of the collaboration came from the decision by student to incorporate survey experiments.

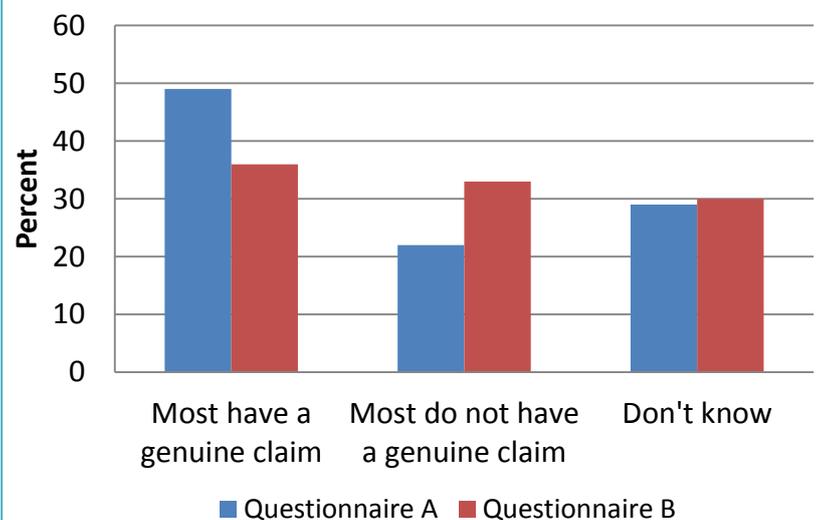
Respondents were randomly assigned to versions of the questionnaire with some variations in the wording of questionnaire items. For example, in one version an item refers to immigrants from Poland and in the other immigrants from Pakistan.

The questionnaires were put online and we gave students a link to one version at random to recruit participants.

Results support substantive and methodological discussion

The survey results formed the basis of an interesting session on interpreting data. For example, in Figure 1, we can see that perceptions of asylum seekers vary depending on whether the question was framed with contextual details about the widely discussed asylum seeker Malala, from Pakistan.

Figure 1 Framing the debate about asylum



Questionnaire A

Some of the people seeking refuge in Britain have a clear and strong case to be here, like the Pakistani girls, Malala, who got shot in the head by the Taliban for going to school. Some people argue however that not all of the applicants are genuine.

Do you think that most people coming to Britain seeking asylum are genuine refugees from wars and prosecution?

Questionnaire B

Do you think that most people coming to Britain seeking asylum are genuine refugees from wars and prosecution?

Course Aims and Objectives

This course unit provides students with an opportunity to investigate in depth a topic that interests them and that is related to one of their second or first year POLITICS course units. The research project is intended to help students to develop intellectual independence and therefore to prepare them for their final year dissertation.

Learning outcomes

A student will study a chosen topic in depth, learn to define a researchable topic, learn to decide upon appropriate sources, deploy the scholarly apparatus of Bibliography and referencing, develop a sustained argument, critically evaluate arguments and evidence, and demonstrate analytic skills and intellectual independence.

The student led element and thought-provoking results incentive students to engage with the data, offering substantial content for class discussion around:

- substantive topics such as attitudes towards immigration, public opinion and political debate
- methodological issues linked to the measuring attitudes and survey research

Resources

- Student designed questionnaire (Word Document)
- Results from the survey (PowerPoint)

About this resource

'Politics project: using a survey to explore attitudes towards immigration' was developed by the ESSTED team in collaboration with Maria Sobolewska the convenor of the Politics project at the University of Manchester.

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