

Polling project

The purpose of this project is to critique an interesting poll/survey you find in the world.

Specifics about the poll you are to find:

- o It must be published (on the internet is fine), and you must cite it.
- o You must be able to read all the questions the pollsters asked, in order.
- o And you must be given information about the sampling method the pollsters used (e.g., sample size, registered or likely voters, landlines or cell phones, non-response rate, etc.) This may mean you have to abandon an initially promising poll or survey because you cannot find all the necessary details. While it's acceptable if the information they provide doesn't check every box listed above, the pollsters should have made most of it available.

Analysis of the poll. Answer all of the following questions:

1. Do you think the questions were neutral? Was the poll ordered reasonably? Do you suspect any questionnaire bias?
2. Do you believe respondents would honestly answer the survey? Do you suspect there is any response bias?
3. Was the method for contacting/sampling people sound? Did the pollsters use cell phones and landlines, English and Spanish, etc.? Do you suspect there is any non-response bias or sampling bias?

What is to be turned in:

- A. A brief (1–2 page) paper on your poll/survey answering all three questions above.
- B. Citation for the poll/survey (link o.k.)

Frequently asked questions:

- *Do I have to analyze the whole poll/survey?* Not if it's a really long survey. You can focus on a few of the questions, but you should at least mention that the rest of the survey did not have biased questions.
- *Where can I find good polls/surveys?* Realclearpolitics.com has some good polls about, well, political topics. Google News will yield news stories about polls/surveys, but then you will have to look for the poll or survey itself on the pollster's website. Google Scholar may yield some useful polls/surveys that academic researchers conducted—and sometimes those papers will be free for you to read and have full methods described thoroughly.
- *What if the poll/survey uses a method we have not studied?* There is nothing wrong with that! Evaluate the method for yourself: Does it seem sound? Reasonable? Why or why not? I will grade you on the thoughtfulness of your critique.
- *Do I need to say if the poll result is correct?* No. Tell me what you think of the overall quality. You do not have to worry about whether the poll or survey was “correct” or not.

Rubric

CRITERIA	1 – not yet proficient	2 – borderline proficient	3 – proficient	4 – highly proficient
Article chosen meets criteria: - published - is a research article, not an op/ed, meta-analysis or literature review - of the right type (e.g., not a qualitative study) - is sufficiently detailed to answer questions (i.e., not just an executive summary) - is properly cited	Article chosen fails to meet one of the basic criteria	Article meets basic criteria, except: - is on the borderline of the right type and a wrong type - is on the borderline of being detailed enough	Article meets basic criteria	Article meets basic criteria AND - is widely viewed as a foundational, keystone, or extremely important article in a field OR - is of especially high interest for another reason
Analysis	Student analysis fails to address most of the questions asked in the assignment	Student analysis answers only some of the questions asked in the assignment with sufficient detail and rigorousness	Student analysis answers all the questions asked in the assignment sufficiently and rigorously BUT the analysis is not cohesive	Student analysis answers all the questions asked in the assignment sufficiently and rigorously AND the analysis is cohesive
Writing	Student writing is unclear	Student writing is patchy	Student writing is clear	Student writing is exemplary

