

Statistics Project—Studying Controversial Topics in Statistics

Officials in the school of Mathematics, Science, and Engineering at Southwestern College have cautioned against using controversial topics in the statistics class. One of the teachers has suggested that using controversial topics is what fires up student interest. This study addresses the question—"what are acceptable topics for a statistics project at Southwestern College?"

The survey questions should work equally well for students, teachers, administrators, or ordinary citizens. The intent of the survey is to address the question of what are acceptable/unacceptable topics for the statistics class to study. Besides general questions about privacy, academic freedom, offensive topics, etc, be sure to get opinions regarding specific topics that may be susceptible to objections. If it is possible to categorize these topics please do so.

Remember to take care with your sampling design as there may be a strong difference of opinion between the various groups. Non-response bias is a potential threat to the validity of this study. Your survey administrators should have a statement signed by your teacher that this is an authorized survey and that individual results will be kept confidential.

At a minimum have your survey consider the acceptability of the following topics:

Is there a Correlation of Global Warming Concerns with Political Affiliation?

Are Biology Teachers Less Religious than Other Teachers/Citizens.

Are Teacher Unions Good or Bad for Teachers/Education.

Who is More Electable an Atheist or a Mormon?

Should Religion be Discussed in a Biology Class?

Should Religion be Studied in an Anthropology Class?

Extra credit:

A. There is a prevailing opinion that SWC may be more intolerant than UCSD. Test this hypothesis by duplicating your study for a hypothetical statistics class at UCSD.

B. As background to this study, find the answer to the complimentary question—"what are illegal topics for a statistics project at Southwestern College?" This may be difficult to discover. You may be able to get a lead on this question by asking the Academic Senate President and/or the Faculty Union President. Be sure that your answer includes citable references.

Report Writing Cautions: Be sure you thoroughly describe the experiment/study to the reader. Remember you are writing this report for the general reader not specifically for your teacher. Try to address any objections that the reader might bring up. Your report should be in a prose format. Be sure to use complete sentences, proper grammar, correct spelling, understandable statements, etc. Clarity of your concepts and presentation is important. If your English composition skills are not so good then make sure that someone in your group with good composition skills goes through your document carefully. If you have extensive tables and graphs consider putting them in an appendix.