MATH 171-03

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Survey of Political Parties

A survey is the most popular way to discover information about a population without having to ask millions of individuals. It can tell a researcher or a curious individual who exists within the population, and what that population thinks about specific ideas and beliefs. Often, surveys are conducted within universities, to determine what kinds of people attend their schools. For example, in the beginning of the semester, a survey was conducted within each of the MATH 171 classes, resulting in 300 responses to questions regarding affiliation with religion, political leaning, and political party. This essay will focus on the results of the political party section, and how these results may represent the students who attend Longwood University.

The population is the general body of people being surveyed. The population data brings in data from everyone of interest in a survey. For example, the individuals in our population are the students who took the survey at the beginning of the semester, to gain general information. The sample data focuses on data from some of those individuals in the population. This information will often focus on something specific, such as political party affiliation. The individuals in our sample are those from the population who identify as a part of the democrat, green, libertarian, republican or other parties. This data is qualitative data, as it is identifying individuals in categories, based on specific qualities, without a number definition. This sample is also observational as no group of people can be experimented on to determine what political party they affiliate with.

To determine the frequency at which each political party was mentioned, a random sample was generated through excel. All 300 political parties were typed in their own cells in the same column. On same row, but different column, “=Rand()” was typed in, and after clicking enter, the cell should receive a random number. This process must be repeated until all 300 rows of had a corresponding number. After doing that process, the entire second column must be highlighted, press CTRL+C and go to the paste option to find and click “paste value.” Highlight all the data from both of the columns and go to the data tab, where you will find and click “Sort.” After clicking “sort”, input “random” in the sort by option and press okay. After doing all the steps, choose the first 50 samples.

As this sample was taken from a survey given to 300 students in MATH 171 classes, broad range of backgrounds and identities that could effect political party affiliation. The university is small enough that this sample is big enough to represent the population of the school, especially when taking into account that a variety of majors and minors have MATH 171 as a prerequisite for other classes. Therefore, this sample is likely representative of all students at Longwood. However, this sample may not be representative of all college students in Virginia, the United States, or the world. The samples size is too small to say that it represents all of Virginia, and only one university was involved in the survey. Schools may sometimes have a student body that generally leans more towards the right or left, and this must be taken into account. Different cities, towns and even counties of Virginia also have a specific majority political party in the area, which can possibly help determine which party a college or university nearby may identify with. This sample is not representative of the United States for these same reasons. Different states have different lifestyles, viewpoints, and beliefs, which may determine or influence what college students experience in that state. This sample is also not representative of the world. The sample size is so small, it is impossible to account for all of the diversity that exists in the world.

Although the results may not be applicable to the world outside of Longwood University, it is still valuable information to know about the school and the people who study within. Surveys are among the most convenient ways to learn about people and the societies we create.