

Introduction and Methods Guide

PST 315: Methods of Policy Analysis and Presentation

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Your **Introduction** is where you will provide more details about your client's organization and how your report will support their agency and mission. The first sentence in your Introduction section should be identical to the first sentence in your [Executive Summary](#).

Within your Introduction section, you should include information about your client's organization from the [Organizational Assessment](#). This can include the agency mission, services they provide in the community, or any other relevant information about who they are as an organization. Then you should explain in a few sentences what your report will be used for.

Your **Methods** section will be made up of two main parts: how data were collected, and quality of the data. Within each part, there will be subsections covering different topics important for your client and reader to understand about the data.

How data were collected

Instrument design. This section is where you will explain how the survey or data was created. In this section, you will include details of who helped in the creation of the survey or data as well as any platforms used to facilitate the survey or data (for example, Google Forms).

Data collection method. This section provides information about timing of the survey (open date, close date, any reminders), who sent out the survey, and how and who recorded results. For data projects, this section will provide information about how your client collected this data, when the data was collected, and how you recorded the data.

Target population and sample. This section will include exact numbers (if possible) for your target population, sampling frame, and sample. Additionally, if applicable, record a response rate here.

Quality of the data

Representativeness. This section will explain any threats your project experienced with representativeness. As a reminder, when thinking about representativeness, ask yourself: “How well does the sample reflect the target population?” Some (but not all) potential threats to representativeness could be a small sample, selection bias, or non-random selection.

Accuracy. This section will describe any potential accuracy threats your project experienced. As a reminder, when thinking about accuracy, ask yourself: “Does the data reflect reality?” You can never be certain your data is 100% accurate. Some potential accuracy threats to survey projects are respondents having motivated bias, respondents not understanding questions or unclear questions, or mistakes in transferring and recording data. Some potential accuracy threats to data projects are mistakes in recording, incomplete or messy records, and biased record keepers.

About these examples

The example pages below use **sample data**. Skills Win Coaching Organization is a real Syracuse University program, but the project, author, and numbers shown are invented for teaching purposes and are not actual SWCO results.

Example introduction page

INTRODUCTION

This study reports the results of a student satisfaction survey for participants in the site sessions run by the Skills Win Coaching Organization (SWCO). SWCO is a Syracuse University program whose mission is to enhance the professional skills of youth in the City of Syracuse, paving the way for career and personal success. Each semester, SWCO delivers a series of skill development sessions, known as site sessions, at partner high schools and community organizations across the city.

The survey was created in collaboration with the SWCO program director. It was designed to help SWCO understand how students experience the site sessions, which parts of the sessions students find most valuable, and where students believe the program could improve. The results of this survey and report will be used by SWCO to plan session content for future semesters and to guide how coaches are trained and assigned to sites.

Example methods page

METHODS

How Data Were Collected

Instrument Design: The survey used in this study was designed by Jordan Alvarez, a Syracuse University student in the Policy Studies Community Link Project, in collaboration with the SWCO program director. The survey was created using an online survey platform.

Data Collection Method: The survey link was distributed to students by their site coaches at the close of each site session. Students accessed the survey by scanning a QR code displayed at the end of the session. Responses were recorded automatically by the survey platform and later exported for analysis.

Target Population and Sample: The target population includes all 460 students who attended at least one site session during the semester. The survey was distributed to the 430 students present on the day of the survey, making the sampling frame 430 students. The sample consists of 214 respondents, yielding a 50% response rate.

Quality of the Data

Representativeness: Representativeness may have been affected by the fact that the survey was distributed only to students present on a single day. Students who attended sessions earlier in the semester but were absent on the survey day had no opportunity to respond, and attendance was not evenly distributed across the three sites.

Accuracy: Because the survey was distributed in the final minutes of each session, some students may have rushed their answers. Students also completed the survey in the presence of their coaches, which may have encouraged more positive responses than students would have given anonymously.