

## Utilizing online research subject pools (aka crowdsourcing platforms)

### Most widely used:

1. Amazon’s Mechanical Turk ([MTurk](#); US-based)
2. Prolific Academic ([Prolific](#); UK-based)
3. Crowdfunder
4. ...

### How does it work, in a nutshell:

1. Set-up an account on a crowdsourcing platform
2. Program your study in any web-based platform, e.g., **Qualtrics**
3. Set-up a study in the crowdsourcing platform, which will include a link to your study
4. Collect data

The screenshot displays the Amazon Mechanical Turk interface. At the top, the user is identified as Bastiaan Rutjens, with links for My Account, Sign Out, and Help. The navigation bar includes 'amazonmturk Requester' and options for 'Create', 'Manage', and 'Developer'. The main content area is titled 'Start a New Batch with an Existing Project' and features a table of projects. The table has columns for Project Name, Title, Created, and Last Edited. A project named 'JamieStudy' is highlighted, with a title 'You are invited to participate in a 12-minute study on beliefs and societal attitudes', created on April 2, 2020, and last edited on June 17, 2020. Action buttons for 'Publish Batch', 'Edit', 'Copy', and 'Delete' are visible. Below the table, there are navigation links for 'Results', 'Workers', and 'Qualification Types'. The 'Manage Batches' section provides a summary of batch statuses: 'Batches in progress (0)', 'Batches ready for review (41)', and 'Batches already reviewed (60)'. A pagination control shows 'Previous 1 2 3 4 5 6 Next'. The detailed view for the 'JamieStudy' batch shows 'Created: April 20, 2020', 'Time Elapsed: 14 days', 'Assignments Completed: 275 / 275', and 'Estimated Completion Time: COMPLETE'. A progress bar indicates '100% submitted' and '100% published'.

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Your project was successfully saved.

## Edit Project

This is how your task will look to Mechanical Turk Workers.

1 Enter Properties   2 Design Layout   3 Preview and Finish

You are invited to participate in a 12-minute study on beliefs and societal attitudes

Requester: Bastiaan Rutjens   Reward: \$1.00 per task   Tasks available: 0   Duration: 3 Hours

Qualifications Required: HIT Approval Rate (%) for all Requesters' HITs greater than or equal to 95 , Location is one of CA, US

exercises. If you do withdraw from the study, the materials that you have completed to that point will be deleted and will not be included in the study.

**Instruction**

Agreeing to this document means that you have read and understood the information and that you voluntarily agree to participate. If you agree to participate in the study, please open the link below in a **new window/tab** since this will allow you to easily navigate back to this page. Use right mouse click (or control+click for Apple) to open it in a new tab or window.

[https://uvacommscience.eu.qualtrics.com/fe/form/SV\\_1zZXCfkyanpOEUI](https://uvacommscience.eu.qualtrics.com/fe/form/SV_1zZXCfkyanpOEUI)

At the end of the survey that you'll find at the above mentioned address, you'll be asked to make up a five-digit completion code number and enter it. For us to compensate you, please return to this screen after completing the survey and enter the there chosen code in the box below as well:

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!**

## Difference between MTurk and Prolific:

*MTurk*, like many other crowdsourcing platforms, were not explicitly designed for the scientific community. *MTurk* nowadays is used for many things, including having *Mturkers* work on boring excel sheets or programming tasks. *Prolific* as a dedicated research subject pool is designed solely for academic research.

## Mturk:

- Sample: Slightly more women than men, average age ~31 years, mostly from US. Total pool: ?? (realistic estimates range between 7,000 and 10,000 unique workers)
  - Preselection opportunities, e.g., nationality (only US, only Canada, only India), household income, etc. (see screenshots 1 and 2)
  - “Masterworkers” only (>95% “[HIT](#)” approval)

This is the amount of time you have to reject a Worker's assignment after they submit the assignment.

### Worker requirements

Require that Workers be Masters to do your tasks (Who are Mechanical Turk Masters?)  
 Yes  No

Specify any additional qualifications Workers must meet to work on your tasks:

HIT Approval Rate (%) for all Requesters' HITs: greater than or equal to 95 [Remove](#)

Location: is one of 

- UNITED STATES (US)
- UNITED STATES MINOR OUTL
- ALABAMA (US-AL)
- ALASKA (US-AK)
- ARIZONA (US-AZ)
- ARKANSAS (US-AR)

[Expand](#) | [Remove](#)

-- Select -- [Remove](#)

[\(+\)](#) Add another criterion (up to 2 more)  
(Premium Qualifications incur additional fees, see [Pricing Details](#) to learn more)

Project contains adult content (See details)  
 This project may contain potentially explicit or offensive content, for example, nudity.

Task Visibility (What is task visibility?)  
 Public - All Workers can see and preview my tasks  
 Private - All Workers can see my tasks, but only Workers that meet all Qualification requirements can preview my tasks  
 Hidden - Only Workers that meet my Qualification requirements can see and preview my tasks

[Save](#) [Design Layout](#)

System Qualifications

- HIT Approval Rate (%) for all Requesters' HITs
- Location
- Number of HITs Approved

Premium Qualifications

- Age 18-25
- Age 25-30
- Age 30-35
- Age 35-45
- Age 45-55
- Age 55 or older
- Blogger
- Borrower - Auto Loans
- Borrower - Business Loan
- Borrower - Credit Cards
- Borrower - Home Mortgage
- Borrower - Personal Loan
- Borrower - Student Loan**

-- Select -- [Remove](#)

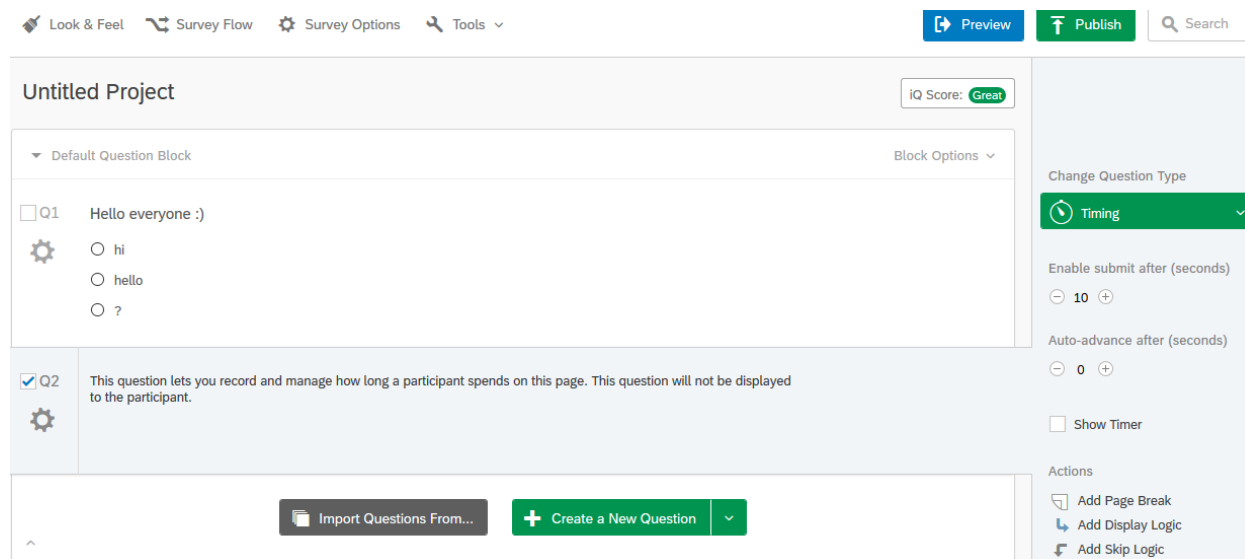
[\(+\)](#) Add another criterion (up to 2 more)  
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[Save](#) [Design Layout](#)

- Cost: a generally accepted hourly wage = between 6 and 9 US dollars
- More info in the MTurk FAQ [here](#)
- Compared to (psychology) students: better gender balance, better age range, more representative of population
- Compared to (psychology) students coming to the lab: less experimental control
- Compared to (psychology) students in your online study: similar pitfalls
  - Reward/incentive = similar
  - Solutions to these pitfalls: similar (more on that below)
  - Recent MTurk issue: [bots?](#)
- Preventing bad data quality (same for online lab research):
  - Timers and delays



- Instruction and attention checks (see [this paper](#))

For example: *“I posted a coding task where I asked Mturkers to code social media posts for their level of support for a policy (1 = strongly against policy, 5 = strongly supports policy). I also had attention checks (“please answer “4” for this item”, and “please leave this item blank. If you accidentally selected a response, please change it to “3””), and an open ended question just asking what kind of car people drove. As suggested in the above article, there are people giving the usual nonsense/irrelevant responses to open ended questions (e.g., “GOOD” “VERY GOOD” “NOTHING”). Sure enough their data was typically junk.”*

- Note: [“Attentive Turkers: MTurk participants perform better on online attention checks than do subject pool participants”](#)
- Generate unique code (e.g., in Qualtrics) in order to receive reward (on MTurk). Rejection of HIT = possible (workers know this)

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**More info on Turker demographics:**

- Huff, C., & Tingley, D. (2015). “Who are these people?” Evaluating the demographic characteristics and political preferences of MTurk survey respondents. *Research & Politics*, 2(3), 2053168015604648.
- Levay, K. E., Freese, J., & Druckman, J. N. (2016). The demographic and political composition of Mechanical Turk samples. *Sage Open*, 6(1), 2158244016636433.