

Data sources for comparative political research

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Embarking on your own research project can be daunting. What data already exists? And what data do I have to collect? Here, you can find my informal and preliminary list of data resources in comparative politics. Some of these data collections are more ambitious than others. Others are more structured. However, they are all sources that you can build on for your own data collection, merging and recoding.

Political parties: preferences, positions and coalitions

Preferences

Marpor: Manifesto Project (formerly Comparative Manifestos Project)

Codes the position of Western Democratic parties according to a slew of different topics. Parties that won at least one seat in Parliament during the national election are covered. The coding is based on the party manifestos. The project also provides manifesto texts themselves.

Coverage: 1945-today

Website: <https://manifesto-project.wzb.eu/>

CHES: Chapel Hill Expert Survey

The Chapel Hill expert surveys estimate party positioning on ideology and policy issues, and international relations for national parties in countries across the world. CHES-Europe covers six waves: 1999, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014, and 2019. The number of countries increased from 14 Western European countries in 1999 to 24 current or prospective EU members in 2006 to 32 countries in 2019. In this time, the number of national parties grew from 143 to 277. The 2019 survey includes all EU member states, plus parties in Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey. Separate surveys were conducted in the Balkan candidate countries. Questions on parties' general position on European integration, several EU policies, general left/right, economic left/right, and social left/right are common to all CHES-Europe surveys. More recent surveys also contain questions on non-EU policy issues, such as immigration, redistribution, decentralization, and environmental policy.

CHES-Latin America, launched in 2020, provides comparable estimates for party positioning on ideology, policy issues, and international relations for 112 national parties in twelve Latin American countries, alongside some region-specific questions. CHES-LA also provides estimates for the position of presidents in these countries.

Coverage: 1999-today

Website: <https://www.chesdata.eu/>

Polidoc: Political documents archive

The Political Documents Archive contains election manifestos, coalition agreements, government declarations and various other documents of political actors from developed democracies. Currently, the archive builds on a stock of more than 3000 political documents from 20 European countries. The aim of the repository is to provide political texts in order to facilitate scholarly research

Coverage: 1980-2018

Website: <http://www.polidoc.net/>

Positions of power

ParlGov

ParlGov is a data infrastructure that contains information for all EU and most OECD democracies (37 countries). The database combines approximately 1700 parties, 1000 elections (9400 results), and 1600 cabinets (3900 parties).

Coverage: 1900-today

Website: <https://www.parlgov.org/>

REPDEM: The Representative Democracy Data Archive

REPDEM presents the comparative data collection efforts undertaken by various research and data infrastructure projects on governments, parliaments, political parties, length of government formation periods, bargain rounds, procedures and mechanisms for intra-coalition governance, and government duration and termination.

They offer a range of open-access datasets (available for free). Data sets cover actual and potential government formations as well as a data set with party-level variables.

The Representative Democracy Data Archive (REPDEM) builds on the European Representative Democracy Archive (ERDDA), but will soon include countries outside of Europe as well.

Coverage: 1945-today

Website: <https://repdem.org/>

Population survey data

Eurobarometer

Eurobarometer is the polling instrument used by the European Commission, the European Parliament and other EU institutions and agencies to monitor regularly the state of public opinion in Europe on issues related to the European Union as well as attitudes on subjects of political or social nature. Eurobarometer provides quality and relevant data for experts in public opinion, researchers, media and the public.

The Eurobarometer project was initiated in 1974 within the European Commission by Jacques-René Rabier, former collaborator of Jean Monnet and Director-general for Information, and was first conceived as a means to “reveal Europeans to themselves”. Since then, it has evolved and expanded significantly with different survey tools. In 2007, the European Parliament started commissioning its own regular series of Eurobarometer surveys, focussing i.a. on topics specific to the European Parliament, including the European elections.

Website: <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/screen/home>

ESS: European Social Survey

The European Social Survey (ESS) is an academically driven cross-national survey that has been conducted across Europe since its establishment in 2001. To date the data covers (at least partially) 40 different countries. Every two years, face-to-face interviews are conducted with newly selected, cross-sectional samples.

Coverage: 2002-today

Website: <https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>

WVS: World Value Survey

The World Values Survey (WVS) is an international research program devoted to the scientific and academic study of social, political, economic, religious and cultural values of people in the world. The project's goal is to assess which impact values stability or change over time has on the social, political and economic development of countries and societies. The project grew out of the European Values Study and was started in 1981 by its Founder and first President (1981-2013) Professor Ronald Inglehart, and since then has been operating in more than 120 world societies. The main research instrument of the project is a representative comparative social survey which is conducted globally every 5 years. Extensive geographical and thematic scope, free availability of survey data and project findings for broad public turned the WVS into one of the most authoritative and widely-used cross-national surveys in the social sciences. At the moment, WVS is the largest non-commercial cross-national empirical time-series investigation of human beliefs and values ever executed.

Coverage: 1981-today

Webiste: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

Country-level institutional features

V-DEM: Varieties of Democracy

V-Dem distinguishes between five high-level principles of democracy: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian, and collects data to measure these principles.

Coverage: Historical; modern

Website: <https://v-dem.net/>

International IDEA: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports democracy worldwide. The organization provides overview over country-level democratic institutional features, including electoral laws/processes, gender quotas, political finance etc. The project offers drop-down menus and tables, but not data sets as such.

Coverage: Varying

Website: <https://www.idea.int/data-tools>

Courts

IUROPA: Court of Justice of the European Union

A multidisciplinary project that offers data on the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU; ECJ).

Coverage: 1954-today

Website: <https://www.iuropa.pol.gu.se/>

European Court for Human Rights: ECtHR judgments and decisions

This dataset includes information about all ECtHR judgments and decisions rendered by June 1, 2016.

Website: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/OBYUO5> ;<https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/H9MQML>

The US Supreme Court Database

The Database offers information on the cases, votes, and justices in the US Supreme Court. It houses 247 pieces of information for each case, roughly broken down into six categories: (1) identification variables (e.g., citations and docket numbers); (2) background variables (e.g., how the Court took jurisdiction, origin and source of the case, the reason the Court agreed to decide it); (3) chronological variables (e.g., the date of decision, term of Court, natural court); (4) substantive variables (e.g., legal provisions, issues, direction of decision); (5) outcome variables (e.g., disposition of the case, winning party, formal alteration of precedent, declaration of unconstitutionality); and (6) voting and opinion variables (e.g., how the individual justices voted, their opinions and interagreements).

Coverage: 1946-today

Website: <http://scdb.wustl.edu/index.php>

European Parliament

The European Parliament's own data portal

Website: <https://data.europarl.europa.eu/en>

Parltrack

The most important feature of Parltrack is the aggregated presentation. Data such as the list of legislative dossiers a MEP took responsibility for or a list of all amendments a MEP authored is not easily available on the EU websites. On Parltrack this data-mined information allows the concerned citizen to assess the topics and positions the representatives are most active with.

Website: <https://parltrack.org/>

COMPELDA

Compelda consolidates information on European Parliament elections into one comprehensive source. It provides information on formal electoral rules as well as national-level and district-level election results for parties and individual politicians (including full candidate lists). The use of existing and new key variables makes it easy to link the data across the different units of observation (country, party, candidate, member of parliament) and join them with external information. Currently, the data cover four elections (1999–2014). Among other aspects, the collection should facilitate research on the European Parliament's allegedly weak electoral connection. In this article, we outline the main features of the datasets, describe patterns of intra-party competition and preference voting and conduct exploratory analyses of individual-level changes in list positions.

Coverage: 1999-2014

Website: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/GNRMTO>

General data portals

Researchers often share their replication data when they publish research. You may find links to these data in their published research. However, they also often use common repositories.

Harvard Dataverse Repository

The Harvard Dataverse Repository is a free data repository open to all researchers from any discipline, both inside and outside of the Harvard community, where you can share, archive, cite, access, and explore research data. Each individual Dataverse collection is a customizable collection of datasets (or a virtual repository) for organizing, managing, and showcasing datasets.

Website: <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/>

EU's own data portal

Website: <https://data.europa.eu/data/datasets>