

National Elections Database

Version 1.0 – Codebook

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Description

The National Elections Database provides information on the results of presidential and parliamentary elections conducted worldwide since World War II. Version 1.0 of the dataset aggregates information from various data sources to cover 3,985 national elections (including 1,023 presidential elections and 2,962 parliamentary elections) held between 1946 and 2018 across 214 countries and independent territories. This dataset was first built to support the analysis in “Electoral Turnovers” (Marx, Pons and Rollet, 2024).

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1 List of Data Files

Presidential Elections (`presidential_elections.dta`): Provides the subset of the database for presidential elections (1,023 in total).

Parliamentary Elections (`parliamentary_elections.dta`): Provides the subset of the database for parliamentary elections (2,962 in total). Results are provided for unicameral parliaments and for the lower chamber of multicameral parliaments, in both presidential and parliamentary systems.

2 Data Sources

We used the following sources to identify all national elections that took place during our sample period and associate them with results:

- The Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Database (Coppedge et al., 2021);
- The Parliaments and Governments (PARLGOV) Database (Döring and Manow, 2012);
- The Manifesto Project Database (MP) (Volkens et al., 2020);
- Books by Dieter Nohlen and coauthors (Nohlen) (Nohlen et al., 1999, 2001a,b; Nohlen, 2005; Nohlen et al., 2005; Nohlen and Stöver, 2010);
- The Database of Political Institutions (DPI) (Cruz et al., 2018);
- The Global Elections Database (GLOBAL) (Brancati, 2016);
- The Constituency-Level Elections Archive (CLEA) (Kollman et al., 2011);
- Adam Carr’s Election Archive: Psephos (AC) (Carr, 2003);
- The African Elections Database (AED) (Nunley, 2007);
- The European Elections Database (EED) (Budge et al., 2001; Klingemann et al., 2006; Rose and Munro, 2009; Colomer, 2008);
- The Political Database of the Americas (PDA) (Georgetown University, OAS, 2002);
- The Inter-Parliamentary Union PARLINE Database (IPU) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, IPU, 2017);
- The International Foundation for Electoral Systems Election Guide (IFES) (IFES Election Guide, 2017);
- The USA Presidential Elections Database (USA) (National Archives and Records Administration, 2020);
- Wikipedia (when academic sources were lacking).

The Data Appendix of Marx et al. (2024) (Section A) provides additional information on how we extracted data from these sources. We prioritized the most frequently used sources, those with fewer inconsistencies, and those offering broader geographic and time coverage. We further verified the internal consistency of the data within each source.

3 Presidential Elections Database

3.1 Methodological choices

Priority order. We used the following priority order among sources to associate elections with their results:

$$\text{Nohlen} \succ \text{AC} \succ \text{AED} \sim \text{EED} \sim \text{PDA} \sim \text{USA} \succ \text{IFES} \succ \text{Wikipedia}$$

We recovered election dates from a subset of these sources (as well as Wikidata), using the following priority order:

$$\text{V-Dem} \succ \text{Wikipedia} \succ \text{AC} \succ \text{IFES} \succ \text{Wikidata}$$

Definition of the incumbent candidate. The construction of the electoral turnover variable (`electoral_turnover`) relies on identifying the candidate representing the incumbency in each election.

The incumbent is determined as the individual or party that was effectively in power at the time of the election. To account for caretaker governments and transition periods, we adopt a flexible definition: the incumbent is identified as the leader who held executive power for at least 365 days within the two years preceding the election. Similarly, the incumbent party is defined as the party that held executive power for at least 365 days during the same period. We also provide variables for the leader and party in power after the election, defined as those holding executive authority for at least 365 days within the two years following the election.

To account for all cases where the incumbent competes or has a clearly designated successor, the incumbency is considered to be represented by:

1. the incumbent leader, if the leader is personally competing;
2. the candidate of the incumbent party, if the leader is not personally competing;
3. the candidate unambiguously designated as the representative of the ruling government, if neither the incumbent leader nor any candidate from their party are competing.

Indirect elections. In some polities, the president is indirectly elected, usually by the parliament or by an electoral college.

We included indirect presidential elections in our database only when the president was selected by an electoral college that was elected solely to choose the president. Additionally, we required that the electoral rules made precise manipulation of vote shares highly difficult, i.e.:

- We excluded indirect elections where several rounds could take place, as the existence of multiple rounds could facilitate parties building alliances between rounds and manipulating the final result (see, e.g., Granzier et al., 2023).
- We excluded indirect elections where electors were unpledged and where the electoral college counted fewer than 1,000 electors. Note that this does not apply to the U.S. Electoral College, where the 538 electors are pledged.

We obtained information about the electoral rules in each indirect presidential election from Nohlen, Wikipedia, and national constitutions.

These sample restrictions serve two purposes:

1. They rule out elections where manipulation is easy (e.g., when the president is elected by the parliament).
2. This guarantees that our sampling frame is comprehensive: V-Dem systematically records direct presidential elections as well as indirect elections in which “the electoral college [is] elected by the people and has the sole purpose of electing an executive”.

Collective presidencies. We excluded from our database elections that appoint a collective body to the presidency (this is the case, for instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina).

Electoral turnover and margin of victory. An electoral turnover is defined as an electoral defeat of the incumbent candidate or party. For presidential elections, this corresponds to an election in which the incumbent candidate or party fails to secure a plurality of votes.

The electoral turnover variable (`electoral_turnover`) is therefore set to one if the incumbent candidate loses the election.

The margin of victory variable (`margin_victory_opposition`) is equal to the margin of victory of the best ranked challenger, i.e., the difference between this challenger’s and the incumbent’s vote share.

When the election features a runoff, the second round results are used to construct the margin of victory and turnover variables. If the incumbent did not

compete in the second round, the margin of victory variable is undefined. Furthermore, for indirect presidential elections (including U.S. presidential elections), we use electoral college vote shares to compute the margin of victory.

Finally, the margin of victory was not coded for elections where one candidate ran unopposed and elections that were not the last presidential election in the calendar year.

Ranking candidates. Candidates in presidential elections are ranked by their electoral college score (if applicable), then by their score at the second round (if applicable), and finally by their score at the first round.

3.2 Variables

3.2.1 General variables

Variable name	Description
Country	Country in which the election took place
Year	Year of the election
Month	Month of the election—This variable is non-missing only when two elections of the same type occur during a single year. Therefore, Country \times Year \times Month is a proper identifier for each election
Type_Election	Election type (“Presidential”)
Date	Date of the election (in the case of a two-round election, we use the date of the second round)
Source	Identifier of the source of election results

3.2.2 Results variables

The following results are given for each candidate, ordered from 1 to 36.

Variable name	Description
Candidate_i	Name of candidate n°i
Party_i	Party of candidate n°i
Votes1_i	Number of votes for candidate n°i during the first (or only) round
Votes2_i	Number of votes for candidate n°i during the second round
Vote_Share1_i	Vote share for candidate n°i during the first (or only) round
Vote_Share2_i	Vote share for candidate n°i during the second round
E_Votes_i	Number of electoral college votes for candidate n°i
E_Vote_Share_i	Electoral college vote share for candidate n°i

3.2.3 Flag variables

Variable name	Description
flag_two_round	Flags elections with two rounds
flag_not_last	Flags elections which were not the last of their type in a given year
flag_inconsequential	Flags inconsequential elections for reasons other than a coup.
flag_inconsequential_note	Reason why flag_inconsequential is equal to 1 (e.g., election postponed, canceled, etc.)
flag_coup	Flags elections that were shortly followed by a coup or revolution
flag_plebiscite	Flags elections that took the form of a plebiscite or referendum
flag_unopposed	Flags elections in which only one candidate ran
flag_indirect	Flags elections where the president is indirectly elected

3.2.4 Turnover variables

Variable name	Description
incumbent_leader	Incumbent leader
incumbent_party	Incumbent party
leader_after	Leader after the election
party_after	Party after the election
rank_incumbency	Rank of the candidate representing the incumbency
candidate_incumbency	Candidate representing the incumbency
party_candidate_incumbency	Party of the candidate representing the incumbency
rank_opposition	Rank of the candidate representing the opposition
candidate_opposition	Candidate representing the opposition
party_candidate_opposition	Party of the candidate representing the opposition
share_incumbent	Vote share of the candidate representing the incumbency
share_opposition	Vote share of the candidate representing the opposition
margin_victory_opposition	Margin of victory of the opposition
electoral_turnover	Electoral turnover

4 Parliamentary Elections Database

4.1 Methodological choices

Priority order. For the construction of the database, we used the following priority order among sources:

PARLGOV \succ MP \succ Nohlen \succ DPI \succ GLOBAL \succ AC \succ AED \sim PDA \succ IPU
 \succ IFES \succ Wikipedia

We recovered election dates from a subset of these sources (as well as Wikidata), using the following priority order:

V-Dem \succ PARLGOV \succ MP \succ Wikipedia \succ AC \succ IFES \succ Wikidata

Definition of the incumbent party. The incumbent party is defined as the party that won a plurality of seats in the previous parliamentary election. This definition relies on the previous election results because available data do not

consistently track changes in parliamentary composition between national elections, such as those resulting from by-elections.

In the event of a tie in the previous election, we apply the following rule. If the election results in the appointment of a leader (typically the head of government) and that leader is affiliated with one of the tied parties, we designate their party as the incumbent party. Otherwise, the incumbent party is the one that received the most votes. If the incumbent party was a coalition that later split, we identify the incumbent party as the former coalition member with the most seats.

The candidate of the incumbency in parliamentary elections is considered to be:

1. The incumbent party when it participates in the election, or alternatively, the coalition the incumbent party belongs to;
2. The party or coalition clearly designated as the representative of the ruling government, if the incumbent party is not competing.

The definition of the incumbent in an election is based on the results of the previous election. In identifying this election, we exclude inconsequential elections, constitutional assembly elections, and any parliamentary election that was not the last one held in a given calendar year. Additionally, we require that the previous election occurred within the last ten years. For elections where the previous election took place more than a decade earlier or where results are unavailable, we conduct additional background research to identify the incumbent party.

We did not code an incumbent party variable for elections with appointed seats or elections that were not the last of their type in a given year.

Coalitions. In collecting parliamentary election results, we take into account the existence of *ex ante* coalitions, officially formed before the election.

To this aim, we collected systematic evidence to identify coalitions and distinguish those officially formed before the election (i.e., *ex ante* coalitions) from those formed after the election (i.e., *ex post* coalitions), which are endogenous to election results. An example of an *ex ante* coalition is the CDU/CSU coalition in Germany whereas an example of an *ex post* coalition is the Große Koalition in Germany (a coalition of the CDU/CSU alliance with the SPD).

In the dataset, variables corresponding to parties belonging to the same coalition were merged (for example, CDU/CSU is stored as a single party when they are in an *ex ante* coalition), but we keep these variables as separate for the members of *ex post* coalitions. The Data Appendix of Marx et al. (2024) (Section A.4) provides details about how we identified coalitions and classified them as *ex ante* or *ex post*.

Constituent assemblies. We define constituent assemblies as bodies whose sole function is to draft and adopt a new constitution. Assemblies that take on additional roles, such as legislating, electing the president, or managing the budget, are not considered constituent assemblies. V-Dem identifies elections for constituent assemblies based on this definition, and we use this source to flag such elections with the variable `flag_constituent`. Results for constituent assemblies have not been systematically collected.

Appointed seats. In some elections, some seats in parliament are not elected but appointed (usually by the head of state). The results we provide correspond to the elected seats, and we include in our database a flag for elections in which some seats in the parliament were appointed, as well as another variable indicating the number of appointed seats.

Electoral turnover and margin of victory. An electoral turnover is defined as an election in which the incumbent party fails to secure a plurality of seats. The turnover variable (`electoral_turnover`) is undefined in elections where the incumbent and challenger parties obtained exactly the same number of seats.

The margin of victory variable (`margin_victory_opposition`) is equal to the margin of victory of the best ranked opposition party, which is the difference between the seat shares of this party and of the incumbent party.

We did not code the electoral turnover variable for parliamentary elections with appointed seats, as the margin of victory of the incumbent could be manipulated in these cases.

Furthermore, we did not code the margin of victory variable when the only candidates running in an election were independent candidates or when political parties were banned or inexistent. When defining the party representing the opposition and calculating the margin of victory, we exclude independents as we treat each independent MP as a distinct political group.

Ranking parties. In the database, parties are ranked by seat shares, then by vote shares at the second round, and finally by vote shares at the first round.

4.2 Variables

4.2.1 General variables

Variable name	Description
Country	Country in which the election took place
Year	Year of the election
Month	Month of the election—this variable is non-missing only when two elections of the same type occur during a single year. Therefore, Country \times Year \times Month is a proper identifier for each election
Type_Election	Election type (“Parliamentary”)
Date	Date of the election (in case of a two-round election, we only consider the second round)
Source	Identifier of the source of election results
Total_Seats	Total number of seats, including vacant and appointed seats

4.2.2 Results variables

The following results are given for each party, ordered from 1 to 74.

Variable name	Description
Party_i	Name of party or coalition n ^o i
Seats_i	Number of seats gained by party or coalition n ^o i
Seats_Share_i	Share of the seats of parliament won by party or coalition n ^o i

4.2.3 Flag variables

Variable name	Description
flag_two_round	Flags elections with two rounds
flag_constituent	Flags constituent assembly
flag_coup	Flags elections that were shortly followed by a coup or revolution
flag_inconsequential	Flags inconsequential elections for reasons other than a coup
flag_inconsequential_note	Reason why flag_inconsequential is equal to 1 (e.g., election postponed, canceled, etc.)
flag_vacant_seats	Flags elections that left vacant seats in parliament
flag_vacant_seats_nb	Number of vacant seats in parliament
flag_appointed	Flags elections in which some seats were not elected directly (but, instead, were appointed by the government, a foreign government, indirectly elected, reserved for people holding a specific office, or reserved for a special ethnic group)
flag_appointed_nb	Number of seats for which MPs were not elected directly
flag_non_partisan	Flags elections with no parties (i.e., with only independent candidates)

4.2.4 Turnover variables

The following information on the incumbent and opposition party for each election, if available.

Variable name	Description
incumbent_party	Incumbent party
party_incumbency	Representative of the incumbent party
rank_incumbency	Rank of the representative of the incumbent party
share_incumbent	Seat share of the representative of the incumbent party
party_opposition	Main challenger of the incumbent party
rank_opposition	Rank of the main challenger
share_opposition	Seat share of main challenger
margin_victory_opposition	Margin of victory of the opposition
electoral_turnover	Electoral turnover

5 Citation and License Information

How to cite this database:

Marx, B., Pons, V., & Rollet, V. (2024). *National Elections Database (Version 1.0)*. Accessible at www.nationalelectionsdatabase.com.

Bibtex citation:

```
@misc{MarxPonsRollet2025NationalElections,  
author = {Benjamin Marx and Vincent Pons and Vincent Rollet},  
title = {National Elections Database (Version 1.0)},  
year = {2025},  
url = {http://nationalelectionsdatabase.com}}
```

License:

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7 Contact Us

The database is continuously being improved. If you have any suggestions, comments, or issues, please contact the authors via email.

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