

# National Elections Database

## Version 2.0 – Codebook

Benjamin Marx

Vincent Pons

Vincent Rollet

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### Description

The National Elections Database provides information on the results of presidential and parliamentary elections conducted worldwide since 1789. Version 2.0 of the dataset aggregates information from various data sources to cover 6,309 national elections (including 1,409 presidential elections and 4,900 parliamentary elections) held between 1789 and 2023 across 212 countries and independent territories. Version 1.0 of this dataset was built to support the analysis in “Electoral Turnovers” (Marx, Pons and Rollet, 2024).

#### **Benjamin Marx**

Email: [bmarx@bu.edu](mailto:bmarx@bu.edu)

Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/bmarx/home>

Boston University

#### **Vincent Pons**

Email: [vpons@hbs.edu](mailto:vpons@hbs.edu)

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

Harvard Business School

#### **Vincent Rollet**

Email: [vrollet@mit.edu](mailto:vrollet@mit.edu)

Website: <https://www.vincent-rollet.com>

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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## 1 List of Data Files

**Presidential Elections** (`presidential_elections.dta`): Provides the subset of the database for presidential elections (1,409 in total).

**Parliamentary Elections** (`parliamentary_elections.dta`): Provides the subset of the database for parliamentary elections (4,900 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:

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

**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).

**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 39.

| 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 and country codes

| Variable name             | Description  |
|---------------------------|--|
| flag_two_round            | Flags elections with two rounds  |
| 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                                |
| country_abb               | Three-letter country code  |
| country_cow               | Correlates of War country code   |

## 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

**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.

**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 <sup>o</sup> i                                 |
| seats_i       | Number of seats gained by party or coalition n <sup>o</sup> i               |
| seats_share_i | Share of the seats of parliament won by party or coalition n <sup>o</sup> i |



### 4.2.3 Flag variables and country codes

| Variable name             | Description   |
|---------------------------|---|
| flag_constituent          | Flags constituent assembly  |
| 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_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)  |
| country_abb               | Three-letter country code   |
| country_cow               | Correlates of War country code  |

## 5 Citation and License Information

**How to cite this database:** Marx, B., Pons, V., & Rollet, V. (2025). *National Elections Database (Version 2.0)*. Accessible at [www.nationalelectionsdatabase.com](http://www.nationalelectionsdatabase.com).

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author = {Benjamin Marx and Vincent Pons and Vincent Rollet},  
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```

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## 7 Versions of the database

- **Version 1.0:** Dataset of presidential and parliamentary elections held worldwide between 1946 and 2018, used to support the analysis in Marx et al. (2024).
- **Version 2.0:**
  - Expansion of the time coverage of the database to 1789–2023.
  - Inclusion of COW country codes and country abbreviations.
  - Improvements in data quality.
  - Version 2.0 does not include some of the variables related to the analysis in Marx et al. (2024), such as whether the election was associated with an electoral turnover. These variables can be found in version 1.0 of the database.

## 8 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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