

[Abortion Attitudes Paper Title]*

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Examining the Source Data on Abortion Attitudes

National and cross-national surveys have often included questions about abortion over the past half-century, but the resulting data are both sparse, that is, unavailable for many countries and years, and incomparable, generated by many different survey items. In all, we identified 35 such survey items that were asked in no fewer than five country-years in countries surveyed at least twice; these items were drawn from 294 different survey datasets.¹ Together, the survey items in the source data were asked in 120 different countries in at least two time points over 58 years, from 1962 to 2020, yielding a total of 2,132 country-year-item observations. Observations for every year in each country surveyed would number 6,960, and a complete set of country-year-items would encompass 243,600 observations. Viewed from this complete-data perspective, the available data can be seen to be very, very sparse. From a more optimistic standpoint, we note there are 965 country-years in which we have at least *some* information about the public gender egalitarianism of the population, that is, some 35% of the 2,739 country-years spanned by the data we collected. But there can be no denying that the many different survey items employed renders these data incomparable and difficult to use together.

Consider the most frequently asked item in the data we collected, which asks respondents whether they think abortion “can always be justified, never be justified, or something in between,” using a ten-point scale. Employed by the Asia Barometer, the European Values Survey, the Latinobarómetro, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Values Survey, this

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¹The complete list of survey items on abortion is included in the Appendix.

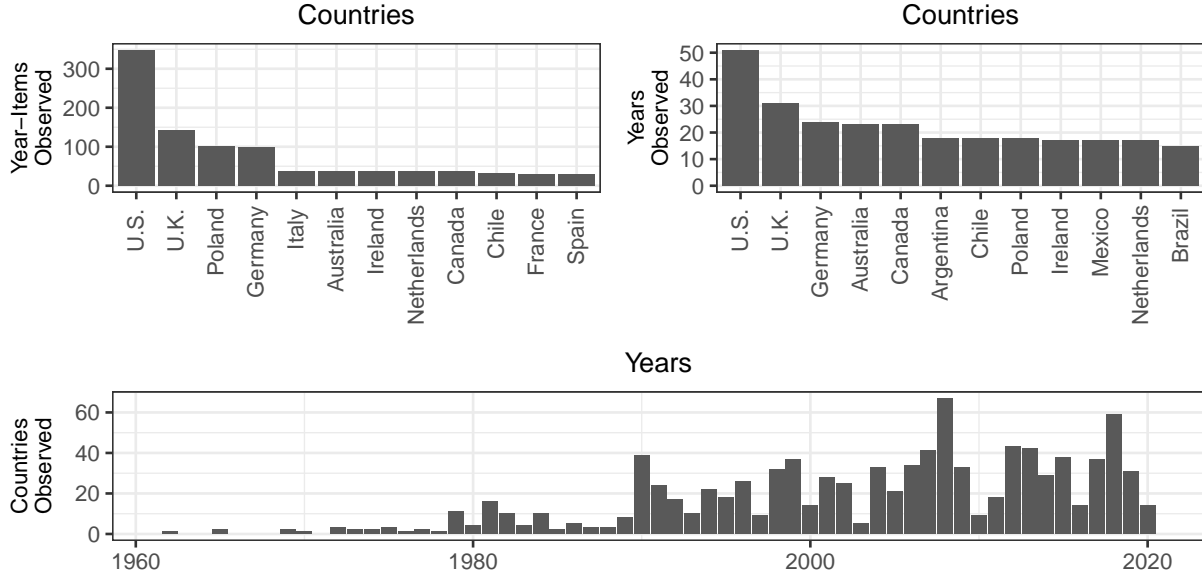


Figure 1: Countries and Years with the Most Observations in the Abortion Attitudes Source Data

question was asked in a total of 525 different country-years. That this constitutes only 19% of the country-years spanned by our data—and remember, this is the *most common* survey item—again underscores just how sparse and incomparable the available public opinion data is on this topic.

The upper left panel of Figure 1 shows the dozen countries with the highest count of country-year-item observations. The United States, with 348 observations, is far and away the best represented country in the source data, followed by United Kingdom, Poland, Germany, and Italy. At the other end of the spectrum, twelve countries—Algeria, Andorra, Bangladesh, Belize, Cambodia, Guyana, Mali, Senegal, Suriname, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Zambia—have only the minimum two observations required to be included in the source dataset at all. The upper right panel shows the twelve countries with the most years observed; this group is similar, but with Argentina, Mexico, and Brazil joining the list and Italy, France, and Spain dropping off. The bottom panel counts the countries observed in each year and reveals just how few relevant survey items were asked before 1990. Country coverage reached its peak in 2008, when surveys in 67 countries included items on abortion. In the next section, we describe how we are able to make use of all of this sparse and incomparable survey data to generate estimates of public opinion that are comparable across countries and years using a latent variable model.

Abortion: Global Status and Attitudes

[Literature review]

What Alters Abortion Attitudes: Alternative Explanations

1. Institutionalization: abortion attitudes is led by the legalization of abortion.

Controls

1. Culturalism: abortion attitudes is changed with the advance of socioeconomic and post-materialism development (gender egalitarianism)
2. Ideology: abortion attitudes is driven by dominated political ideology, conservative, liberal, socialism, etc.
3. Inequality: riches always have ways to abort if they want, but they are also benefited by cheap labors mainly from poor kids. (Ref. religion-inequality)

Empirical Research

Data and Methods

Explanatory and outcome variables

- DCPO abortion data
- Abortion laws around the world

Controls

- Post-materialist stages (MrsP?)
- Ideological trend (any data?)
- Inequality (SWIID)

Research Design

1. Great data
2. Congruence of public opinion and policy

3. Individual time-series: adoption makes a difference to opinion (RD)

- abortion attitude (lag) -> legalization: abortion legalized by judicial ruling -> as if random

Results

Summary and Discussion