Codebook

Jack Blumenau

11/03/2020

The House of Commons Speech Database, 1979 − 2019

Overview

This repository holds links to and explanations of a database of speeches delivered in the UK House of Commons between 3rd May 1979 and 5th November 2019. This data was compiled as an output of ESRC grant number ES/N016297/1, which was for a project entitled "Measuring Political Debate: Responsiveness, Influence, and Rhetoric in Parliamentary Texts".

The dataset consists of speeches made in the UK House of Commons between 1979 and 2019. The full data includes over 2 million individual utterances, and you can download the data as a series of yearly .csv files from UK data services permanent hosting site. The data is available at this page.

Data sources

- Speech data comes from TheyWorkForYou.com as accessed via the twfyR package
- Data on roles that MPs held in government, opposition, and in committee comes from the Members Name Data Platform and the Parliamentary Data Platform as accessed via the pdpy package
- Data on election results comes from www.electoralcalculus.co.uk

Codebook

Each file in the data include all speeches made in the House of Commons in the space of a calandar year. In each file, the following variables are included:

Variable Name	Description
person_id	The MP's unique identifier (corresponds to IDs used in TheyWorkForYou)
mnis_person_id	An alternative MP identifier (corresponds to IDs used in the Members Name Information Service)
member_id	A unique identifier for each MP's term in parliament (may be multiple member_ids for each person_id)
name	Name of the MP
constituency	Constituency of the MP
entered_house	Date on which the MP entered the House of Commons
left_house	Date on which the MP left the House of Commons
date_of_birth	Birthday of the MP
age_years	Age of the MP in years
gender	Gender of the MP
days_in_house	Number of days that the MP had been an MP at the time of giving the speech
party	Party of the MP
party_short	Party of the MP (recoded)
government_party_mp	Indicator for whether the MP was a member of a current governing party
epobject_id	Unique identifier for speech
section_id	Debate identifier
subsection_id	Sub-debate identifier
hpos	Position in debate of speech

Variable Name	Description
`hdate`	Date of speech
`body`	Text of speech
`parent`	Title of debate
`question_time`	Indicator for whether the debate is a Question Time session
`n_words`	Number of words in speech
`government_role_X`	Whether the MP currently holds a government role (and whether the role requires attending cabinet/is paid or unpaid). MPs sometimes hold more than one role, hence the indexing.
`attends_cabinet`	Indicator for whether an MP currently holds a government role that requires them to attend cabinet
`government_ministerial_position_X`	Name of the government role held by the MP indicated in `government_role_X`.
`holds_government_position`	Indicator for whether an MP currently holds any government role
`opposition_role_X`	Whether the MP currently holds an opposition role (and whether the role requires attending shadow cabinet/is paid or unpaid). MPs sometimes hold more than one role, hence the indexing
`opposition_ministerial_position_X`	Name of the opposition role held by the MP indicated in `opposition_role_X`.
`holds_opposition_position`	Indicator for whether an MP currently holds any opposition role
`committee_name_X`	Name of the committee (if any) on which the MP currently serves. MPs sometimes hold more than one committee position, hence the indexing.
`committee_type_X`	Type of committee indicated in `committee_name_X`
`has_committee_assignment`	Indicator for whether an MP currently holds any committee assignment
`committee_chair_nameX`	Name of the committee (if any) on which the MP is currently Chair. MPs sometimes Chair more than one committee, hence the indexing.
`committee_chair_type_X`	Type of the committee indicated in `committee_chair_nameX`
`is_committee_chair`	Indicator for whether the MP is currently Chair of a committee
`speaker_role`	The type of speaker role held by an MP (if any)
`is_speaker`	Indicator for whether the MP currently holds one of the Speaker or Deputy Speaker roles in the Commons
`votes_XXX`	The number of votes won by the relevant party at the last election in the relevant MP's constituency (does not include by-election results)
`pct_XXX`	The percentage of the vote won by the relevant party at the last election in the relevant MP's constituency (does not include by-election results)