

# Contents

## 1 Description

1

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One goal of social science is description– describing the social world.

What are things we want to describe in political science?

- Unemployment rate, GDP
- Voter turnout, vote share for a party in an election
- Percentage of women in the labor force
- Inequality over time
- Poverty rates over time
- What else?

Why description? How is this useful?

- Identify tendencies
- Identify patterns or trends
- Identify relationships between two or more factors
- Help us generalize from anecdotes, what is common vs. uncommon?
- Diagnose demand, needs, potential problems, likely outcomes
- Detect anomalies

How do we go about doing the work?

- Start with a question (e.g., How is the economy doing?)
- Find outcome data relevant to that question (e.g., GDP)
- Find multiple units to compare (e.g., over time or across space) \*\* Multiple years of data (e.g., Compare U.S., from 1900 to 2020) \*\* Multiple countries from one year (e.g., Compare U.S. to Germany to other countries)
- Summarize the data to help answer the question

Example: What is the direction of the country?