
The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)

*Making Electoral Research
Global and Comparative*

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What to expect today?

1. CSES: Project Overview.
2. Overview of Designing a CSES Module.
3. CSES: Summary of Methodological Principles and Our Data Products.
4. CSES: Documentation.

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CSES: Project Overview



The Origins of the CSES

- The project was founded in 1994.
- Objectives:
 - To promote international collaboration among national election studies.
 - Micro-macro design, to study variations in electoral systems (and other political institutions).
 - Foremost a comparative project, but with growth over time now has a trend component too.

Rationale for the CSES

- **There are wide variations across countries on...**
 - Electoral rules.
 - Presidential or parliamentary system.
 - Federalism vs. unitary government.
 - Lines of political conflict
 - ...and more.
- *How do these variations impact individual attitudes and behaviours, especially in regards to voting and turnout?*

The CSES Project: Summary

- A CSES Module is a 10–15-minute respondent questionnaire with a specific substantive theme.
- The CSES Module is included in high-quality national post-election surveys around the world.
- A new theme and questionnaire every 5 years.
- The data from all polities are merged into a single dataset along with administrative, demographic, district, and macro variables.

Coverage and Scope Overview

- 57 polities have participated in CSES.
- 40 polities have run at least three modules of CSES. 23 states have run the CSES five times or more.
- CSES has data on 216 elections over a 25-year time span.
- CSES has data on over 600 parties and political leaders.

Funding and Support

- Hub of the project = CSES Secretariat:
 - Housed in the United States & Germany.
 - Funded by the American National Science Foundation, GESIS Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences, and the University of Michigan.
- Data Collections in each country:
 - Collaborators fund their own election studies.
 - CSES offers letters of support, text for proposals, ideas, and networking opportunities.
 - Bottom-up approach organization.

Organization and Governance

- Collaborators
- Secretariat
- Planning Committee
- Users

- **Collaborators** = National election study co-ordinators who field CSES. Meets in a Plenary every few years.
- **Secretariat** = Hub of the project.
- **Planning Committee (PC)** = oversees the Secretariat and develops the study. Elected at Plenary every 5-years.

The CSES Secretariat

- Creates data products by cleaning and harmonizing data for comparative use.
- Collects and collates district, macro & contextual data.
- Assists collaborators in implementation of CSES in their national study.
- Supports pre-testing of CSES modules.
- Performs extensive data quality control checks (i.e., Harmonizing CSES data for comparative use & ensuring study standards are met).
- Supports CSES Planning Committee in development of CSES.
- Assists Users.
- Promotes CSES and communicates with user community.
- Monitors use of CSES data products & Maintains the CSES website.

Data Availability

- Public access and free of charge.
- No special proprietary/embargoed access!
- Download from CSES website:

www.cses.org

- Also redistributed by many third parties.
- Data available in the following pre-prepared formats:
 - SPSS
 - STATA
 - R
 - CSV
 - SAS

Contact or learn more about CSES



www.cses.org



cses@umich.edu



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparative_Study_of_Electoral_Systems .



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Journal articles using CSES have appeared in...

American Journal of Political Science

American Political Science Review

British Journal of Political Science

Comparative Political Studies

East Asia: An International Quarterly

Electoral Studies

European Journal of Political Research

Global Environmental Politics

International Journal of Public Opinion Research

International Political Science Review

Journal of Elections, Public Opinion, and Parties
(JEPOP)

Japanese Journal of Political Science

Journal of Politics

Party Politics

Political Analysis

Political Behavior

Political Research Quarterly

Political Studies

Presidential Studies Quarterly

Problems of Post-Communism

PS: Political Science & Politics

Public Opinion Pros

Scandinavian Political Studies

South European Society &
Politics

West European Politics

World Politics

Due to CSES we know...

- Globalization increases electoral fairness *Birch 2016*
- Inequality undermines public goods provision *Baldwin & Huber 2010*
- The wealthy turnout to vote more when the public wants – and the state can deliver redistribution *Kasara and Suryanarayan 2015*
- Public attachment to political parties facilitates political representation *Dalton, Farrell, and McAllister, 2011*
- Corruption and human rights abuses decrease the importance attached by voters to the economy *Singer 2011*
- Political polarization increases political engagement *Lupu 2014*
- Ideologically distinct options make it easier for citizens to vote according to their interests *Lau et al. 2013*
- People vote less on economy when multi-level governance makes it harder to identify who governs *Anderson 2006*

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Overview of Designing a CSES Module



CSES Design Process: Survey Questionnaire Approach & Theme Selection

- **Survey questionnaire:** ex-ante input harmonization (Wolf et al., 2016) → same survey questions posed to respondents no matter the state.
- Initially, each CSES Module considered independent of the Module that preceded it. Now, there are “Core” questions and “Module” questions.
- Multiple years of effort to design a questionnaire. Planning Committee (PC) designs and oversees the process.
- Transparent approach: Open call to users via mailing list inviting ideas for thematic focus. Consideration by the PC who then selects a theme. Theme has to have cross-national applicability.

CSES Design Process in brief: Development of a Module I

Designing the questionnaire:

- Having decided on a theme, PC breaks into several subcommittees:
 - Theme and Module Specific Questions
 - Core Questions
 - Demographics, District, and Macro Data
 - Methods
- Subcommittees present two reports to PC – one preliminary for initial feedback and one final report with recommendations incorporating feedback. The final report is eventually presented to the Plenary (after pre-testing).
- After hours of discussion/debate, PC signs off on the draft module questionnaire for pre-testing.

CSES Design Process in brief: Development of a Module II

Pretesting:

- In several countries, ideally in full election study.
- Pre-test reports devised by Secretariat and local collaborators for review by PC and Plenary.

Finalization:

- Final Subcommittee reports and Pretest results presented to Plenary.
- Plenary adopts (or makes suggested changes) to Module.
- Module finalized and available for fielding.

Collection, Checking, & Data availability:

- Collaborators raise funds locally & include the module in their polity's post-election survey. Data collection runs for 5-years.
- Deposit data with CSES Secretariat. Data checks and harmonization occur.
- Interim releases of data by the CSES Secretariat. Full Release anticipated 2-years after the end of data collection.

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CSES:

Summary of Methodological
Principles & Our Data
Products



Summary of Chief Methodological Principles

Surveys appearing in CSES required to meet a set of criteria including:

- National sample from all age-eligible citizens.
- Random sampling procedures at all stages.
- Detailed documentation of sampling procedures – discussed in design report made public to users.
- Minimum of 1,000 interviews – if fewer needs PC approval.
- Collaborators asked to make every effort to achieve a high response rate.
- *Mode*: Face-to-face preferred but mixed studies becoming more plentiful.
- Interview Timing:
 - Survey questionnaire must be fielded post-election and as soon as possible after the election.
 - From Module 5 must be completed within six months unless local circumstances necessitate – needs PC approval.

CSES Data Products

As of May 2022, CSES has six published data products, with a seventh in the offing.

- **CSES Module 1:** System Performance.
- **CSES Module 2:** Accountability and Representation.
- **CSES Module 3:** Electoral Choices.
- **CSES Module 4:** Distributional Politics & Social Protection (subtheme of Mobilization).
- **CSES Module 5:** Democracy Divided? People, Politicians, and the Politics of Populism.
- **CSES Integrated Module Dataset (IMD):** A combined and harmonized dataset incorporating M1-M4.
- **CSES Module 6:** Representative Democracy under Pressure.

CSES Data and Dataset Structure

- Six Types of Data in CSES:
 - Administrative (variables always begin with followed by “1”)
 - Demographic (variables always begin with a letter followed by “2”)
 - Module/Survey (variables always begin with a letter followed by “3”)
 - District Data (variables always begin with a letter followed by “4”)
 - Macro Data (variables always begin with a letter followed by “5”)
 - Bridging with IMD (variables always begin with a letter followed by “6”)
- All CSES variable names begin with an alphabetical letter indicating the Module
(E.g.: A = Module 1; B = Module 2 etc...)

List of Countries by Module

Countries in the study [\[edit \]](#)

	Module 1	Module 2	Module 3	Module 4	Module 5
Albania		2005			
Argentina				2015	
Australia	1996	2004	2007	2013	2019
Austria			2008	2013	2017
Belarus	2001		2008		
Belgium	1999, 1999 ^[3]	2003			2019, 2019 ^[3]
Brazil		2002	2006, 2010	2014	2018
Bulgaria		2001		2014	
Canada	1997	2004	2008	2011, 2015	2019
Chile	1999	2005	2009		2017
Costa Rica					2018
Croatia			2007		
Czech Republic	1996	2002	2006, 2010	2013	
Denmark	1998	2001	2007		2019
Estonia			2011		
Finland		2003	2007, 2011	2015	2019
France		2002	2007	2012	2017
Germany	1998	2002, 2002 ^[4]	2005, 2009	2013	2017
Great Britain	1997	2005		2015	2017
Greece			2009	2012, 2015	2015
Hong Kong	1998, 2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Hungary	1998	2002			2018
Iceland	1999	2003	2007, 2009	2013	2016, 2017

Full list available on
CSES website

<http://www.cses.org/electionstudies.htm>

CSES Wikipedia
English page

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comparative_Study_of_Electoral_Systems

Administrative variables in CSES

- These variables capture respondent, election study, and country level identifiers as well as information about the fielding of the survey and weights.
- Polity identifiers:
 - Verbatim Name of Polity
 - UN Polity Code
 - CSES Polity Code
- Election Study/Yr identifiers
- Respondent identifiers
- Weights:
 - Sample
 - Demographic
 - Political
- Mode of Interview
- Date of Interview
- Days interview conducted post-election
- Interviewer Gender
- Election Date
- Election Type
- DOI of dataset

Demographics in CSES

- The CSES objective with demographics is not standardization of the way collaborators ask the questions.
- It is up to the collaborators to what extent they ask specific demographic variables and its their choice how, although CSES recommends how.
- CSES opts for standardization to common comparative scheme (*ex-post harmonization*, Wolf et al. 2016) – sometimes an established (e.g., ISCED). Other times one used by CSES. Similar approach adopted by ISSP.
- Responsibility of CSES Secretariat to harmonize these variables.
- Examples: Age, Gender, Marital Status, Income.

CSES Data: Core questions

All CSES modules have the following information:

- R Turnout.
- R Vote Choice.
- R Partisanship.
- R Like-Dislike of Main Parties in election (0-10 scale).
- R Placement of Main Parties on L-R scale in election (0-10 scale).
- R Satisfaction with Democracy.
- R Political Efficacy:
 - Whose in power makes a difference.
 - Who people vote for makes a difference.

Module/Survey variables in CSES

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RELEVANT TO THESE MODULES

CSES Module 1: *System Performance*

1996-2001: 39 elections; 33 polities; N = 62,409; V = 304.

- Economic perceptions.
- Do Parties care what people think?
- Are Parties necessary for democracy?
- Contacted elected official?

CSES Module 2: *Accountability and Representation*

2001-2006: 41 elections; 39 polities; N = 64,256; V = 434.

- How widespread is corruption?
- Democracy is better than any form of government?
- How well are voters views represented in elections?
- Most important issue for R.
- Political/Campaign participation.

Module/Survey variables in CSES

CSES Module 3: *Electoral Choices*

2006-2011: 50 elections; 41 polities; N = 80,163; V = 448.

- Most important issue for R: Egocentric.
- Most important issue for R: Sociotropic.
- Party/ leader that best represents R's views.
- Difference of choice options: big, minor or none between parties/candidates?
- How closely did you follow election campaign?

CSES Module 4: *Distributional Politics and Social Protection*

2011-2016: 45 elections; 39 polities; N = 75,558; V = 484.

- Economic perceptions.
- Government action on reducing income differences.
- Asset ownership (Patrimonial voting)
- R's attitudes on spending priorities
- Campaign mobilization by political parties

Module/Survey variables in CSES

CSES Module 5: *Politics of Populism*

2016-2021: 41 elections; 36 polities; N = 76,123; V = 554 (up to now).

- R's attitudes towards outgroups (4-questions).
- R's perceptions of importance of national identity (4-questions).
- R's attitudes to elites (7-questions).

CSES Integrated Module Dataset (IMD):

1996-2016: 174 elections; 55 polities; N = 281,083; V = 389.

- Launched in December 2018. Now: In third iteration.
- Combined and Integrated Data File incorporating Module 1 to Module 4 CSES data in one dataset.
- Data on 600+ parties and leaders – 174 elections.
- Next version of IMD available post completion of Full Release of M5.

District Data in CSES

- Novel component
- These variables capture information on the respondent's electoral district.
- Sometimes district is also referred to Constituency, Division, Riding, or Electorate.

Examples:

- Number of seats contested in district.
- Number of candidates/party lists in district.
- % of vote in district for the main 6-9 parties.
- % Turnout in district.

Macro Data in CSES I

- CSES a pioneer in the macro data field.
- Macro data component of CSES has grown with each successive module as specific macro data we collect is influenced by the theme of the module.

Data available in all published products:

I: Data on party systems & political parties

- Information about the six main parties (Parties A-F) and supplementary parties (Parties G-I)
 - Election results, Ideological family, Left-right position

II: Data on the specific election

- Turnout.
- The most salient factors/issues (as per the collaborators judgement).
- Electoral Alliances.

Macro Data in CSES II

III: Data on electoral institutions

- Election type: Head of State/Government.
- Electoral formula: PR, FPTP, or mixed?
- Compulsory voting.
- Electoral thresholds.
- Open or closed lists?

From CSES Module 3, more aggregate level measures added:

- Freedom House & Polity IV indices
- Population in year of election and two preceding years
- Human Development Index
- Economic performance indicators, Corruption Perception Index
- Effective number of parties measures
- Government expenditures on health and military.

Derivative Variables & Data Bridging

Derivative Variables:

- Variables pre-coded by the CSES Secretariat that are derived from an original variable in CSES.
- Examples:
 - Turnout and vote switcher.
 - Vote choice for incumbent government.
 - Vote choice for leftist/centre/rightist actors.
- They can be found by searching for "DERIVATIVE VARIABLE".

Data Bridging:

- Data bridging enables users to link CSES data products themselves with other common data sources (e.g., MARPOR/CMP; ParlGov Database; V-Dem).
- CSES data includes standard identifiers at the polity, year, and party level used by other projects to facilitate the merging of CSES data.
- They can be found by searching for "BRIDGING IDENTIFIER".

More information



CSES website

www.cses.org

See variable table for more information



CSES Codebooks
Very detailed!



Email the Secretariat

cses@umich.edu



Data on German elections in CSES

- Every German election since 1998 included in CSES:
 - 1998 (M1)
 - 2002 (M2)
 - 2005 (M3)
 - 2009 (M3)
 - 2013 (M4)
 - 2017 (M5)
 - 2021 (M5)
- CSES provides a unified data set to study German voting behavior over such a long period of time → advantageous as GLES only formalized since 2009 contest.

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CSES: Documentation



CSES philosophy: Transparency

- **Our philosophy of transparency and providing as much detail as possible to the analyst → More is better to allow the practitioner(s) decide.**
- Documentation is your friend.
- Documentation notes anything we know of that has a possible impact on quality, comparability, or analytical outcomes → Much larger codebooks.
- CSES provides extensive documentation:
 - Large Codebooks
 - Original Source documents

Notice something odd?

Documentation is your friend

- **VARIABLE NOTES** provide information on the rationale of a variable as well as source information for that variable. It also details the polity's for which no data for that particular variable are available.
- **ELECTION STUDY NOTES** are a unique dimension of CSES. They refer to case-specific information regarding a particular study. Their purpose is to provide users with more detailed information on the case or explain essential deviations specific to cases from CSES conventions.
- If something seems odd, search for **VARIABLE NOTES** or **ELECTION STUDY NOTES** in Codebook.

Notice something odd?

Documentation is your friend

- Source documents for each study also publicly available from CSES Module page.
- **Original language questionnaires** in each polity.
- **Design Report:**
Provides all information on the implementation of each individual election study. Report includes:
 - Fieldwork dates.
 - Mode of interview.
 - Sampling procedures.
 - Response and refusal rates.
 - Weights.
- **Macro Report:**
Provides contextual and country level information on election and country in question. Completed by national collaborator.

The Secretariat is here to help



cses@umich.edu



Contact or learn more about CSES



www.cses.org



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