

## The Comparative Study of electoral Systems (CSES)

General link to the CSES web page: <http://www.umich.edu/~cses/>

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems project is a collaborative project between national election studies across the world. By asking a common module of questions immediately after a general election in each participating country and at the same time collecting information about the electoral systems and institutional structures of those countries, it facilitates the analysis of the impact of electoral and political institutions on voters' behaviour and attitudes. It is particularly interested in explaining two phenomena:

- vote choice: how are voters' choices affected by the institutional context within which those choices are made?
- satisfaction with the performance of democracy: how do citizens respond to varying institutional forms of democracy?

Its research design enables us to examine three important types of question:

1. What is the impact of institutional structures on vote choice and satisfaction with democracy? For example, does satisfaction with democracy vary systematically between presidential and parliamentary systems?
2. What is the impact of the characteristics of individuals on vote choice and satisfaction with democracy? For example, how far is vote choice a reflection of social class position or religious identity?
3. To what extent and in what ways is the impact of the characteristics of individuals on vote choice and satisfaction with democracy contingent upon institutional structures. For example, the relationship between party preference and vote may be weaker under electoral systems that provide incentives to vote strategically; or voters may be more likely to judge the government on the basis of its past performance in office under presidential or single party systems.

Fieldwork for the first module of the study began in 1996 and was completed at the end of 1999. The second module will be administered between 2000 and 2003. This second module will consist of a mixture of new items designed to fulfill the theoretical aims outlined in this document together with some items that also appeared in the first module. As further modules are conducted in future this latter feature will permit the comparative analysis of change over time.

## THEORETICAL FOCUS OF MODULE ONE

### Guiding Principles

1. The power of the study design rests on its ability to make theoretical and substantive advances in our understanding of how variation in the institutional arrangements that govern the conduct of elections affect the nature and quality of democratic choice. Through comparative analysis, where citizens are observed in different settings, the impact of institutions can be established. We have given priority to concepts that help us understand the impact that macro-level properties of the political system have on political evaluations, turnout, and electoral choice.
2. The timing of the data collection (in the weeks following national elections) provides a unique opportunity to study the nature and quality of electoral choice in ways not possible through existing data or through other cross-national projects that collect their data outside of the context of national elections. Our recommendations try to exploit this opportunity.
3. The power of this project lies not only in its ability to tackle new questions, but in its capacity to shed new light on longstanding and important debates about electoral behavior.
4. We acknowledge that other projects are also collecting cross-national survey data (such as the ISSP and the World Values Survey) and see little reason to spend the scarce 10 minutes of questionnaire time replicating those efforts.
5. The questionnaire module should cover a small number of themes well rather than many topics thinly. We selected items that will serve multiple research purposes. We recognize the inherent tension here, but have tried to strike a delicate balance between items that will help test specific theoretical propositions and those that will support a variety of inquiries.
6. We have given priority to substantive and theoretical questions that can be addressed within the constraints of a cross-sectional study design.
7. We have tried to formulate recommendations that are feasible for collaborators to implement.

With these principles in mind, we recommend that the initial round of collaboration in the Comparative Study of Electoral Systems focus on three general themes: the impact of electoral institutions on citizens political cognition and behavior (parliamentary versus presidential systems of government; the electoral rules that govern the casting and counting of ballots; and political parties); the nature of political and social cleavages and alignments; and the evaluation of democratic institutions and processes.

## THEORETICAL FOCUS OF MODULE TWO

The key theoretical question to be addressed by the second module is the contrast between the view that elections are a mechanism to hold government accountable and the view that they are a means to ensure that citizens' views and interests are properly represented in the democratic process. It is intended to explore how far this contrast and its embodiment in institutional structures influences vote choice and satisfaction with democracy. Further details are provided below:

1. Competitive elections are essential to the existence of a modern liberal democracy. Political parties and candidates compete with each other both by stressing different conceptions of what the policy priorities of government should be and by arguing for different solutions to particular problems. The proper functioning of that competitive process is essential if voters' dissatisfaction with the policies of the government of the day is not to become distrust and alienation from the democratic system itself.
2. However, there is serious disagreement amongst scholars about what form of competitive process is most desirable in a democracy. One approach suggests that the most important function of an election is to allow voters to determine the political colour of their government. The other argues that elections should produce a legislature that is a representative microcosm of the division of political opinion amongst the electorate.
3. According to the first view voters are most likely to feel integrated into their democracy if they can vote to replace the incumbent government with an alternative administration in the event that they feel dissatisfied with the current government's performance. In short, the key requirement of an election is that it should hold the government accountable, thereby giving a justification for the disproportionalities commonly generated by plurality electoral systems.
4. According to the alternative view voters are more likely to feel integrated into their democracy if they feel their particular views are properly represented in the legislature. This, it is suggested, gives them a feeling that they have a stake in their democracy because their interests are represented. According to this view it is desirable for election outcomes to be largely proportional to votes cast.
5. There is considerable evidence that in some democracies at least, there has been a decline in the degree to which voters feel integrated into their political system. Party identification has declined. It is often argued that the processes of modernisation and globalisation both

undermine loyalty to the state and makes it appear less capable of providing citizens with what they want. In particular, it is suggested that voters' expectations of government are rising at a time when the capacity of national governments to deliver policy outcomes is in decline. Some theorists suggest this means that there need to be radical changes in the way in which democracies ascertain and reflect the views of their citizens, moving away from traditional models of representative democracy.

6. This suggests a need to examine the conditions under which citizens are more or less likely to feel engaged with their political system. In particular, is there any evidence that citizens living in countries with single party governments, typically elected under plurality rule, or those living in presidential systems, are any more or less likely to feel satisfied with the workings of their political system than those living in countries with coalition governments responsible to legislatures elected by some form of proportional representation. Does the pattern of satisfaction vary? If so, under what conditions?
7. One important question is whether voters' perceptions of elections do or do not fit the expectations of theory. Is it the case that voters who live in countries with single party majoritarian governments are more likely to believe than those living under multi-party proportional systems that elections in their country either should or do hold their governments accountable? Does the opposite pattern hold so far as representation is concerned?
8. A second important question is then how voters' perceptions of the degree of accountability and representation afforded by their political system are linked to their levels of satisfaction with democracy. Clearly if a high proportion of voters believe that that their system does provide both a high degree of representation and accountability, we can anticipate that they will be satisfied with their democracy. But the implication of the above discussion is that in practice there is a trade-off between the two - and that there is no agreement about which should have the higher priority. The module will explore whether there is any systematic evidence that levels of satisfaction with democracy are systematically higher or lower in countries that either may objectively be classified as or subjectively are thought to have political systems that emphasise representation rather than accountability.
9. In practice there are a variety of reasons to believe that the answer to this question will be contingent on a variety of other factors. One possibility is that voters' expectations, that is the relative priority they give to accountability or representation may matter. These expectations may in turn be shaped by the cleavage structure of a society. A society with

two evenly sized groups organised around a single cleavage may be satisfied by a high degree of accountability and low representation. The opposite pattern may be felt desirable in societies with many highly divisive cleavages. Equally, those citizens whose party is nearly always in office may have very different views from those whose party is rarely or ever in government.

10. Equally, we might anticipate that voters' degree of satisfaction may be influenced by how long their country has been democratic, by how far it is believed to have been capable of delivering desirable policy outcomes, and by voters' own characteristics such as their educational background. We may find that in some circumstances voters feel that their political system delivers neither accountability nor representation. Indeed we might discover that all forms of democracy are unable to deliver what their citizens want in the face of the process of globalisation.
11. Dissatisfaction with the working of a political system may take a variety of forms. At one level it may simply take the form of unhappiness at the apparent inability of a political system to solve some of the country's policy problems. At another, it may take the form of discontent with the political system itself.
12. The consequences of dissatisfaction with democracy may vary. For example, voters may decide not to vote. If they do vote, they may decide to vote for anti-system, nationalist or new parties. Or they may decide to engage in unconventional protest. On the other hand dissatisfaction may lead voters to call for improvements to their political system, such as referendums or constitutional reform; rather than becoming disengaged from the political system or democracy they become more involved in an attempt to improve it.

### **THEORETICAL FOCUS OF MODULE THREE**

The problem of an absence of choice in the elections has become more salient in many political systems. There are three arguments to support this claim.

The first argument is that traditional social cleavages no longer structure electoral choices as strongly as they used to, a finding that is common to almost all electoral systems. And new social divisions (or old divisions in new democracies) are not sufficiently salient to be able to add meaning to electoral choices. As social cleavages weaken, the parties that traditionally represented them become less clearly differentiated (Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000).

Second, because many advanced societies are becoming more homogenous, the differences between parties have declined. As parties have become more responsive to voters' demands, meaningful choices are more difficult for them to provide, as voters move to the centre and parties follow them. However, it is not obvious that centripetal competition is the characteristic pattern everywhere. In a broader perspective, there is probably as much reason to anticipate an alienated median voter as there is reason to predict dissatisfied voters at the border of some ideological or policy continuum due to centripetal competition.

And a third reason for declining electoral choices is the "professionalisation" of political campaigns (Farrell and Schmitt-Beck, 2002). Because of the central role assigned to the electronic media and political marketing techniques, modern political campaigning tends to downgrade the choice set offered to the electorate, away from distinct issues and policies stances that may polarize the electorate, and towards less divisive sentiments and images .

The evaluation of political choice sets can provide a handle for the analysis of these questions. They can be defined both in terms of voter's perceptions and evaluations, and in terms of the macro-characteristics of parties and party systems. By focusing on these choice sets, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of the causes and consequences of a possible mismatch between political demand and supply for electoral behaviour both with regard to the "why-" and the "how-question".

The first two waves of the CSES have concentrated on the performance of democracy and on accountability and representation, respectively. We propose to focus CSES III on the electoral choice set that voters are confronted with in an election. While we know a lot about why and how citizens vote, we know less about how both dimensions of voting are affected by the kind of choices that are available to the electorate. How electoral motivations and decisions vary with the choice set is a basis for module III of CSES. While the idea behind this proposal is simple, the relevance of the question is obvious - both from a normative and from a theoretical perspective.

From a normative perspective, it deals with the central concern whether and to what degree different supply patterns allow meaningful choices to be made in an election, and thereby make democracy work. Since CSES confines itself to competitive electoral systems, the answer to this question is obviously not a matter of Yes or No but a matter of More or Less. Using Dahl's distinction between inclusiveness and contestation, we can rephrase our question and ask to what degree political systems provide contest and how integrative their electoral competition structure is. An answer to these questions informs the evaluation of a democracy. More importantly, for electoral research the question is to which degree this affects motivations and choices.

From a theoretical perspective, answers to the question to which degree (the limit of) the choice sets affect electoral motivations and decisions will help to refine our models of electoral choice. How does the rationality of voters change when the choice set does not allow for a choice that is compatible with preferences? Should our models of voting behaviour and the resulting vote functions be regarded as conditional upon the available choice set in the wider institutional and social context?

## PAÍSES PARTICIPANTES

Module 1	Module 2
Australia (1996)	Albania (2005)
Belarus (2001)	Australia (2004)
Belgium-Flanders (1999)	Belgium (2003)
Belgium-Walloon (1999)	Brazil (2002)
Canada (1997)	Bulgaria (2001)
Chile (1999)	Canada (2004)
Czech Republic (1996)	Chile (2005)
Denmark (1998)	Czech Republic (2002)
Germany (1998)	Denmark (2001)
Great Britain (1997)	Finland (2003)
Hong Kong (1998)	France (2002)
Hong Kong (2000)	Germany (2002) -1st (telephone study)
Hungary (1998)	Germany (2002) -2nd (mail-back study)
Iceland (1999)	Great Britain (2005)
Israel (1996)	Hong Kong (2004)
Japan (1996)	Hungary (2002)
Korea (2000)	Iceland (2003)
Lithuania (1997)	Ireland (2002)
Mexico (1997)	Israel (2003)
Mexico (2000)	Italy (2006)
Netherlands (1998)	Japan (2004)
New Zealand (1996)	Korea (2004)
Norway (1997)	Kyrgyzstan (2005)
Peru (2000)	Mexico (2003)
Peru (2001)	Netherlands (2002)
Poland (1997)	New Zealand (2002)
Portugal (2002)	Norway (2001)
Romania (1996)	Peru (2006)
Russia (1999)	Philippines (2004)
Russia (2000)	Poland (2001)
Slovenia (1996)	Portugal (2002)
Spain (1996)	Portugal (2005)
Spain (2000)	Romania (2004)
Sweden (1998)	Russia (2004)
Switzerland (1999)	Slovenia (2004)
Taiwan (1996)	Spain (2004)
Thailand (2001)	Sweden (2002)
Ukraine (1998)	Switzerland (2003)
United States (1996)	Taiwan (2001)
	Taiwan (2004)
	United States (2004)



## APPENDIX. MODULE 1, MODULE 2 AND MODULE 3. COMPARISON

Module I (1996-2001)	Module II (2002-2006)	Module III (2006-2011)
<i>Performance of the system</i>	<i>Representation and Accountability</i>	<i>Representation and Accountability</i>
Satisfaction with democracy	Satisfaction with democracy	Satisfaction with democracy
Whom to vote for makes a difference	Whom to vote for makes a difference	Whom to vote for makes a difference
Who is in power makes a difference	Who is in power makes a difference	Who is in power makes a difference
Contact with parliamentarians/politicians	Being contacted by a candidate	
	Activity: contacted politician	
Necessity of political parties		
Responsiveness of representatives		
Fair elections		
Actual and passed economic performance		
Openness of political articulation		
	Activity: persuasion of others	
	Activity: candidate support	
	Being contacted by a candidate	
	Most important issue	Most important issue egocentric
		Most important issue sociotropic
		Party/candidate competence egocentric problem
		Party/candidate competence sociotropic problem
	Perception of government performance on that issue	
	Generalized perception of government performance	Generalized perception of government performance
	Democracy best form of government	
	Performance of the party voted for preceding the last election	
	Do elections guarantee representation	
	Do any party represent well and if yes, which	Is there a party that represents respondent's views and if yes, which

Module I (1996-2001)	Module II (2002-2006)	Module III (2006-2011)
	Do any leader represent well and if yes, who	Is there a leader that represents respondent's views and if yes, which
	Activity: taken part in march/demonstration	
	Activity: working together with other people	
	Respect of human rights in COUNTRY	
	Existence of corruption	
		Campaign involvement
		Consider voting for others
		Others respondent would never vote for

<i>Measures of preferences and voting behavior</i>	<i>Measures of preferences and voting behavior</i>	<i>Measures of preferences and voting behavior</i>
Party identification/closeness to a party	Party identification/closeness to a party	Party identification/closeness to a party
Party like-dislike scales	Party like-dislike scales	Party like-dislike scales
Left-right self placement	Left-right self placement	Left-right self placement
Left-right party placement	Left-right party placement	Left-right party/leader placement
Voting behavior last election	Voting behavior last election	Voting behavior last election
Candidate recognition		
Leaders like-dislike scales		Leaders like-dislike scales
	Voting behavior preceding the last election	Voting behavior preceding the last election

<i>Background Measures</i>	<i>Background Measures</i>	<i>Background Measures</i>
Political information measures	Political information measures	Political information measures
Electoral district	Electoral district	Electoral district
Age	Age	Age
Sex	Sex	Sex
Education	Education	Education
Marital status	Marital status	Marital status
Union membership respondent	Union membership respondent	Union membership household
Union membership household	Union membership household	Union membership household
	Membership business association	Membership business association
	Membership farmer's association	Membership farmer's association
	Membership professional association	Membership professional association
Current employment status	Current employment status	Current employment status
Main occupation respondent	Main occupation respondent	Main occupation respondent
Socioeconomic status respondent	Socioeconomic status respondent	Socioeconomic status respondent
Private or public employment	Private or public employment	Private or public employment
Industrial sector of employment	Industrial sector of employment	Industrial sector of employment
Main occupation partner	Main occupation partner	Main occupation partner
Socioeconomic status partner	Socioeconomic status partner	Socioeconomic status partner
Private or public employment partner	Private or public employment partner	Private or public employment partner
Industrial sector of employment partner	Industrial sector of employment partner	Industrial sector of employment partner
Household income	Household income	Household income
No. of people in household	No. of people in household	No. of people in household
No. of children < 18	No. of children < 18	No. of children < 18
Church attendance	Church attendance	Church attendance
Religiosity	Religiosity	Religiosity
Religious denomination	Religious denomination	Religious denomination
Language spoken at home	Language spoken at home	Language spoken at home
Race of respondent	Race of respondent	Race of respondent
Ethnicity of respondent	Ethnicity of respondent	Ethnicity of respondent
Rural/urban residence	Rural/urban residence	Rural/urban residence