

## Particularism around the World

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This article presents a new data set on electoral systems and outlines its potential uses in research on the links between electoral systems and economic outcomes. The data measure the extent to which politicians can advance their careers by appealing to narrow geographic constituencies on the one hand or party constituencies on the other.

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Electoral systems have long been viewed as mechanisms that enforce politicians' accountability. There has been less systematic focus, however, on differences in the entities to whom these elected representatives are accountable. The data set outlined in this article begins to quantify the varying incentives that electoral systems around the world create. In particular, the variables in the data set indicate the extent to which the electoral process creates incentives for politicians to cater to narrow constituencies.

The data set is useful for several areas of political economy. Differences in the effective arbiters of policymakers' careers may influence how different interest groups can affect policymaking. In systems where politicians' careers are determined by the wills (and whims) of their constituencies, interest groups must channel their demands through district-level politics. In systems where candidates' futures are determined by party favors, interest groups may gain more influence by appealing to the party leaders who oversee politicians.

The ways in which politicians further their careers are also likely to influence their policymaking priorities. For example, the strength of their connections to

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electoral districts can have important policy consequences.<sup>1</sup> In addition, differences in politicians' incentives to appeal to narrow geographic constituencies or to party policies may explain cross-country differences in the division of public spending between broad and targeted programs (Lizzeri and Persico 2001). Milesi-Ferreti and others (2002), for example, find that party-oriented governments tend to have higher transfers and lower shares of public goods in government spending (see also Persson and Tabellini 2002).

Finally, the incentives that are the focus of this article affect policymaking in legislatures. Systems where each politician is attentive to narrow interests are likely to foster gridlock in legislatures. At the same time, party-centered systems may lack the institutional channels for competing views to be expressed and resolved in sustainable policies. Particularistic systems build incentives for legislators to gather information on the preferences of their constituencies and may also generate competition among legislators to serve constituents better. The importance of constituency approval, on the other hand, might motivate legislators to claim credit and so complicate policymaking. Several studies have found that the middle ranges of particularistic incentives—countries in which legislators must balance the demands of their constituents and their parties—are linked to better policy outcomes, including faster recovery from crisis (Gaviria and others 2000), easier economic reform (Shugart 2001), and higher-quality institutions (Panizza 2001).

The data set presented in this article is a useful complement to existing data on political institutions. It expands on the measures of incentives for particularism provided in the Database of Political Institutions compiled by Beck and others (2001). Although that database includes broad characteristics of electoral systems, this article draws on theoretical work by Carey and Shugart (1995) to add more specific indicators of the strength of incentives for attention to narrow constituencies. In addition, detailed separate data are provided for rules that affect the incentives of candidates for upper and lower chambers of legislatures, a level of disaggregation useful for researchers interested in policy areas in which one house dominates the other.

The data described in this article can also be used to further differentiate among democracies as identified in broader data sets such as the Polity IV data set.<sup>2</sup> Though Polity IV includes indicators on the general competitiveness of political systems and the process for selecting executives, the data presented here provide a far more nuanced view of the cross-country variations in the incentives facing legislators.

1. The data are best suited for measuring incentives to cater to geographically concentrated special interests, because these are most likely to coincide with electoral districts. The current data set does not consider the equally interesting question of the strength of incentives to curry favor with narrow interest groups that are geographically dispersed.

2. The data set can be obtained online at [www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/index.htm#data](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/polity/index.htm#data).

## I. THE DATA SET

The data set has a panel structure and covers a maximum of 158 countries from 1978 to 2001. The panel structure of the data can be useful for analysts of electoral reform, institutional change, and comparative institutions. Whereas much of the literature on the determinants of electoral change is drawn from individual country experiences, this data set provides a dependent variable for testing some of these theories across countries.

The main sources of data are the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) *Chronicle of Parliamentary Elections and Developments* (various years) and online Parline database.<sup>3</sup> The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) *Handbook of Electoral System Design* (1997) and the Parlamento Latinoamericano *Manual de los partidos políticos de America Latina* (1997) were also consulted when IPU information was incomplete. District magnitude data from the IPU were supplemented by table 3.2 in Cox (1997).

The data set covers countries with varying degrees of civil liberties and political rights. Needless to say, electoral systems are less relevant for policy outcomes in dictatorships than in democratic regimes (for instance, one could argue that it does not make much sense to measure electoral incentives in Latin America or Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1980s). Furthermore, even in formally democratic countries, corruption, interest group pressures, and other factors may—in tandem with the need to get votes—influence legislators' behavior. Electoral pressures are a subset, though an important one, of the incentives facing legislators. Readers can define the level of autocracy at which legislators' incentives become irrelevant for policy outcomes.<sup>4</sup> The data set includes an indicator variable for one-party states.

The data set can be downloaded in Stata and Excel formats from [www.stanford.edu/~jseddon](http://www.stanford.edu/~jseddon). The next section discusses the rationale behind the coding of the variables, and the Excel workbook includes more detailed notes on classifications of more complicated electoral systems. Appendix tables A-1 and A-2 list the files available on the Internet and the variables in the data set.

## II. DESCRIPTION OF VARIABLES

The collection of the data on electoral formulas was guided by Carey and Shugart's (1995) theoretical work on the incentives that different electoral formulas create to cultivate a personal vote, as well as by Shugart's (2001) work on the links between economic and electoral reforms. The four key character-

3. Current information on electoral systems is available online at [www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp](http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinesearch.asp).

4. Data on democracy are available from the Polity IV data set, available online at [www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/polity/#data](http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/polity/#data).

istics of electoral systems proposed by Carey and Shugart and recorded (with some modifications to their framework) in this data set are:

- *Ballot*—party and citizen control over candidates’ access to and location on ballots;
- *Pool*—extent to which candidates can draw on their parties’ reputations to win elections;
- *Vote*—number and specificity of votes; and
- *District magnitude*.<sup>5</sup>

The various dimensions of particularism are positively correlated but not identical: the correlation between the *Ballot* and *Pool* indicators is 0.60, between *Ballot* and *Vote* 0.74, and between *Pool* and *Vote* 0.63.

As in Carey and Shugart, the electoral system indicators described here range from zero (for systems where politicians’ careers depend most on party fortunes) to two (for the most particularistic systems, where candidates must focus on narrow geographic constituencies).<sup>6</sup> In addition, the data set includes the proportion of legislators from a national constituency (*PropN*). As noted, separate indicators are reported for upper and lower houses in bicameral systems, but researchers can easily create a composite country value of the variables by averaging the values of the two houses or assigning other weights based on the houses’ importance in policymaking.

*Ballot* describes the relative strengths of parties and citizens in shaping candidates’ access to ballots and influencing their chances of being elected.<sup>7</sup> Electoral systems in which parties control candidates’ positions on ballots give parties the most control over entry into politics. These systems, generally known as closed list electoral systems, are coded as zero. Politicians in these systems have a strong incentive to cater to parties rather than constituents to be chosen and placed in a viable spot near the top of the list.

Systems are coded as one if parties exert strong influence over which candidates are on the ballot but do not control the order in which candidates appear. Open list systems, in which voters can rank candidates on a party-selected list, are in this category. Systems in which independent candidates are legal but there are high formal or informal barriers to getting one’s name on the ballot are also in this category. Politicians in this group must balance efforts

5. No version of Carey and Shugart’s index of particularism is reported here because that index is simply a summation of *Ballot*, *Pool*, and *Vote*. It is not clear that summation is an appropriate way to capture the degree of particularism in a country, and this index is at best an ordinal measure of particularism. Weights derived from principal component analysis might be more appealing for researchers seeking a summary statistic for a country, but this article avoids that kind of distillation of what is already a reduction of complex laws to a few simple measures.

6. It is important to remember that the implications for policy outcomes of a “party-centered system” are difficult to discern without further knowledge about how parties affect policymaking.

7. Although *Ballot* is similar to the variable *CL* in Beck and others (2001), a finer classification is used here.

to please the party with efforts to attract constituent support. Systems with low independent candidacy requirements and plurality thresholds (as opposed to a stricter absolute majority requirement) offer voters more influence over the selection of candidates and are coded as two. Candidates in this group focus exclusively on gaining support among their constituents, and there is little need to gain party favor.

Both formal and informal entry barriers were considered when distinguishing between codes of one and two. The assessment of formal barriers is based on legal restrictions, such as mandatory party membership, whereas the assessment of informal barriers is based on the history of successful independent candidates in supplementing scarce information on party nomination procedures.<sup>8</sup> Political entrepreneurs will have little incentive to adhere to party rules if they can easily bypass them.

The main departure from the classification scheme proposed by Carey and Shugart (1995) was in coding single-member districts. Carey and Shugart see all single-member districts as closed-party lists of one for smaller districts and code them all as zero. We differentiate between single-member districts based on their context to avoid overemphasizing the role of parties (as opposed to voters) in selecting candidates. Candidates' popularity with voters in such districts is likely to be more important in gaining access to a list of one than a list of several. Thus, single-member districts are coded as zero in countries for which the majority of other districts are multimember closed-list proportional or where there was a single-party system (as in Bulgaria from 1981–89, Mali, or Sierra Leone). Other single-member districts were assigned a value of one, indicating that parties retain some control over ballots but voters can influence party choices in countries where closed lists do not predominate. The data set includes a dummy variable for single-party legislatures.

*Pool* measures the extent to which candidates can ride their parties' reputations to electoral success. In systems where votes are pooled across candidates, the electoral success of the party determines individuals' careers. Candidates thus have little incentive to build personal bases of support. Candidates who receive no spillover votes from party colleagues, on the other hand, will compete harder to create personal support bases. Here this variable is seen from the candidate's perspective, with consideration given to whether candidates for national office can expect to benefit from electoral support for other candidates in their party, possibly in other districts.

8. The history of independent candidatures is an imperfect indicator of entry barriers because it is an outcome variable and is not based on the same kinds of institutional data as other variables. But casual knowledge of electoral politics suggests that relatively unobservable factors (such as campaign financing, social pressure, and restrictions on advertising) can impede independent candidates as much as (if not more than) formal requirements for running for office. The United States, for example, has relatively low formal barriers to independent candidacy, but the costs of running a campaign and restrictions on fundraising make party affiliation a near necessity. It is important to recognize these kinds of barriers in some way. Cases where outcome variables have been used are highlighted.

Systems that pool votes across all candidates in a party are coded as zero. Candidates in these settings attain seats in the legislature if their party attracts votes, regardless of the level of personal support they attract from voters. Systems where votes are pooled across a subset of the party are coded as one. The group among which votes are shared is smaller, increasing the reward for attracting personal support. Electoral systems where voters can direct support to individual candidates are coded as two. Candidates have a greater incentive to attract personal support because their colleagues' popularity will not earn them any votes.

The coding of the *Pool* variable used here diverges substantially from that in Carey and Shugart (1995). Carey and Shugart define *Pool* according to whether votes for a candidate contribute to the probability of others in his or her party winning seats in that electoral district. This difference in coding is most obvious in the case of single-member districts. Carey and Shugart classify most single-member districts as having a *Pool* code equal to zero because each candidate is presented as a list of one, and votes for the candidate are thus pooled across the entire list. Our definition, in contrast, causes candidates in single-member districts to receive codes of two on the *Pool* scale because they do not receive additional electoral support if other candidates from their party are successful in other districts. We feel that the code of two more accurately reflects the incentives facing candidates in single-member districts. Again, single-party states where candidates often stand for election as local representatives of a party are an exception to this rule and are coded as zero.

*Vote* measures limitations on the number of candidates that voters can support. Legislators have a stronger incentive to please their constituencies if the number of votes is limited and they must convince voters to choose only them. They will have little incentive to cater to their home constituency if they cannot attract votes individually but only as a party member.

As in Carey and Shugart (1995), the values range from zero for a single vote for a party to one for multiple votes across candidates (who may or may not be from the same party) to two for a single vote for a single candidate. Electoral systems where voters cast two votes—one for a local candidate and another for a national candidate—are coded as one. Multiple votes may also be spread over time, as in systems where there are multiple rounds of elections to narrow the field of candidates. While systems with open primary elections are counted as having multiple votes, systems with rare tie-breaking runoffs are not. Candidates in the latter systems do not regularly expect to have to expand their audiences after the first round. Single-member districts are still coded as two (again in contrast to Carey and Shugart) except in single-party states, because people are voting for a candidate. This coding is consistent with the method used to code *Ballot* (see above).

*District magnitude* may also affect how legislators build their personal reputations. Larger districts are likely to increase the need for legislators to internalize the consequences of redistributive policies. It is harder to find policies that do not create both losers and winners in larger districts, and particularistic dis-

tributive policies targeted to a narrow constituency are less likely to be successful in attracting votes (Lancaster 1986). But larger districts also increase the intensity of competition between candidates and the need for candidates to differentiate themselves from others (Cox 1990). Because it is difficult to determine a priori which effect dominates, this variable is included without predictions about its effect on policymaking or policy outcomes.<sup>9</sup>

As noted, the coding of single-member districts is perhaps the most significant departure from the framework outlined in Carey and Shugart (1995) for the variables *Ballot*, *Pool*, and *Vote*. An indicator variable is included to show the proportion of single-member districts (*smd*), and such districts are noted in the background file so that users who prefer to interpret single-member districts as closed lists of one can change the coding accordingly.

Finally, a variable is included for the proportion of legislators from national constituencies in each house (*PropN*). This variable can be seen as a broad summary measure of incentives to cater to narrow constituencies. *PropN* summarizes incentives for all legislators in a country, both elected and appointed, because it is based only on the identity of who selects each candidate rather than the process used to select them. Candidates appointed by national leaders are considered to be from national constituencies, and candidates indirectly elected by provincial legislators or appointed by subnational councils are considered to have nonnational constituencies. These politicians' loyalties to a geographically defined support base are not clear.

### III. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

This section presents some brief descriptive statistics of the averages of the main variables over time (table 1) and of the broadest measure, *PropN*, by region (table 2). Although the values for individual countries can change markedly with electoral reforms, the averages of the variables for the lower or only house and the upper house (H2) are fairly stable over time. There is little evidence of an overall trend toward more or less personalistic incentives in electoral systems. The number of observations changes over time, particularly in the 1980s, as more countries move to at least nominal use of electoral systems.

One interesting point from table 1 is that upper houses (H2) tend to be more party-centered than lower or only houses. The averages for *Ballot* and *Pool* tend to be slightly lower, indicating more party control over access to ballots and stronger incentives to free ride on a party's reputation rather than seek personal support. But the most marked difference between upper and lower or only houses is that upper houses tend to have a larger proportion of representatives from national constituencies.

9. Carey and Shugart (1995) hypothesize that the incentive to cultivate a personal reputation increases with district magnitude in candidate-centered systems and decreases with district magnitude in closed-list systems, in which parties determine who is on the ballot and what position they are in.



TABLE 1. Averages of the Main Variables, 1978–2001

Year	No. of observations <sup>a</sup>	No. of observations (H2)	<i>Ballot</i>	<i>Ballot</i> (H2)	<i>Pool</i>	<i>Pool</i> (H2)	<i>Vote</i>	<i>Vote</i> (H2)	District magnitude	District magnitude (H2)	<i>PropN</i>	<i>PropN</i> (H2)
1978	59	16	0.77	0.69	0.92	1.00	1.06	1.13	12.95	6.10	0.13	0.34
1979	75	16	0.78	0.69	1.01	1.00	1.06	1.13	15.11	12.93	0.14	0.39
1980	88	18	0.75	0.67	1.03	0.96	1.01	1.06	17.62	16.07	0.16	0.40
1981	92	18	0.77	0.67	1.09	0.96	1.02	1.06	17.30	16.78	0.16	0.42
1982	91	18	0.77	0.67	1.08	0.96	1.02	1.06	14.73	16.78	0.15	0.42
1983	101	21	0.74	0.57	1.03	1.01	0.99	1.10	14.08	14.38	0.14	0.39
1984	112	24	0.72	0.63	1.03	1.09	1.00	1.13	13.41	13.78	0.14	0.42
1985	113	24	0.78	0.71	1.07	1.01	1.07	1.08	13.37	14.19	0.14	0.42
1986	113	24	0.78	0.71	1.07	1.01	1.07	1.13	12.56	14.63	0.13	0.44
1987	120	24	0.78	0.75	1.07	1.01	1.09	1.13	13.60	14.63	0.13	0.43
1988	117	22	0.77	0.65	1.08	0.92	1.09	1.09	13.87	15.07	0.12	0.45
1989	124	24	0.76	0.62	1.07	0.93	1.05	1.04	13.06	13.22	0.12	0.43
1990	122	25	0.78	0.63	1.06	0.89	1.11	1.08	11.98	12.96	0.11	0.39
1991	118	27	0.77	0.66	1.05	0.90	1.10	1.11	11.22	11.79	0.11	0.38
1992	131	29	0.79	0.71	1.05	0.97	1.13	1.24	10.93	11.05	0.10	0.38
1993	143	30	0.81	0.71	1.06	0.94	1.15	1.20	10.08	11.33	0.10	0.40
1994	146	29	0.79	0.69	1.04	0.88	1.14	1.08	10.22	12.42	0.09	0.41
1995	153	29	0.80	0.69	1.05	0.88	1.13	1.08	11.26	12.64	0.11	0.42
1996	156	28	0.79	0.68	1.07	0.84	1.16	1.09	11.33	12.70	0.11	0.42
1997	158	29	0.78	0.69	1.05	0.95	1.14	1.12	11.57	12.43	0.12	0.40
1998	154	29	0.78	0.69	1.05	0.95	1.13	1.12	11.86	11.73	0.12	0.42
1999	155	30	0.78	0.70	1.05	0.99	1.15	1.15	11.90	11.49	0.12	0.42
2000	155	30	0.78	0.70	1.05	1.12	1.15	1.21	11.65	11.60	0.12	0.43
2001	154	30	0.78	0.70	1.06	1.12	1.16	1.21	11.77	11.60	0.12	0.41

*Note:* Unspecified data cover lower houses of the legislature or countries with only one house. Data marked with H2 cover upper houses of the legislature.

<sup>a</sup>The number of observations for *Ballot*, *Pool*, and *Vote* occasionally vary for a given year because it was not always possible to find all the information needed for each variable. The data in this column are the number of countries with observations for all three variables in each year.

*Source:* Authors' calculations.



TABLE 2. Average Proportion of Legislators (*PropN*) from National Constituencies by Region, 1980, 1990, and 2000

Region	1980	1990	2000
High income	0.143	0.140	0.168
Latin America and Caribbean	0.227	0.241	0.254
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.223	0.214	0.178
East Asia	0.361	0.121	0.132
South Asia	0.013	0.052	0.079
Middle East and North Africa	0.200	0.192	0.118
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	—	0.041	0.220

*Note:* Data are for countries with bicameral legislatures. Regions and income groups are defined using World Bank classifications. Countries classified as high income are not included in their respective regions.

*Source:* Authors' calculations.

In table 2, one caveat to keep in mind is that having a national constituency need not mean that a candidate was elected; he or she may have been appointed by a national leader.<sup>10</sup> Latin American and Sub-Saharan Africa stand out as having the highest proportions of legislators from national constituencies, whereas South Asian countries tend to have the most representatives from smaller constituencies. Eastern Europe and Central Asia's average proportion of legislators from national constituencies has increased as many transition economies have adopted proportional electoral systems with at least some seats from national pools. The average proportion from national constituencies has also increased among high-income countries. This trend appears to be the result of the increasingly common practice of allocating seats after elections to ensure a distribution of seats that is more proportional to the number of votes that parties have received.

It is important to remember, however, that the impact of these electoral incentives relative to corruption, interest group pressures, and other nonelectoral determinants of politicians' careers vary across countries. Although these descriptive statistics highlight rough differences across regions and some trends over time, the overall averages mask nontrivial changes in countries' electoral systems and important differences across countries with similar scores on individual variables. It is important to consider the country-specific information in the data set documentation as well as the various control variables mentioned in section II.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

There is growing consensus that political institutions play an important role in shaping a country's economic policies. Empirical work on this subject, however,

10. The country notes accompanying the data in the Excel spreadsheet and the indicator variable for proportion of directly elected legislators should help researchers distinguish between these cases.

has been hampered by a lack of detailed data for a large set of countries over time. This article helps narrow that gap by operationalizing an intuitively appealing theoretical framework for measuring legislators' incentives. It is a complement to larger data sets such as Polity IV and the Database of Political Institutions developed by Beck and others (2001), because it provides a more nuanced way of differentiating between democracies. Although the data set described in this article is far from being a complete inventory of how electoral systems affect political incentives, it may be useful in providing the tools to test some of the relationships between institutions and economic outcomes that have been highlighted in the theoretical literature.

## APPENDIX

TABLE A-1. Files Available in the Data Set

File name	Format and content
Public2001.dta	State data set with full panel of data
Public2001.xls	Excel workbook
Electoral Data	Spreadsheet of coded values
Country Notes	Notes on country-specific ambiguities in coding
Coding	Notes on general coding decisions

Source: [www.stanford.edu/~jseddon](http://www.stanford.edu/~jseddon).

TABLE A-2. Names and Descriptions of Variables in the Data Set

Variable name	Description
COUNTRY	Country name
SHCODE	Country code
BICAMERAL	Dummy variable, 1 if bicameral system
YEAR	Year
ONEPARTY	Dummy variable, 1 if single-party system
BALLOT	Party control over access to and position on ballot, lower/only house
BALLOT2	Party control over access to and position on ballot, upper house
POOL	Sharing of votes among candidates of the same party, lower/only house
POOL2	Sharing of votes among candidates of the same party, upper house
VOTE	Candidate- or party-specific voting, lower/only house
VOTE2	Candidate- or party-specific voting, upper house
CINDEX	Proportion of legislators included in the index, lower/only house
CINDEX2	Proportion of legislators included in the index, upper house
DM	District magnitude, lower/only house
DM2	District magnitude, upper house
SMD	Proportion of legislators from single-member districts, lower/only house
SMD2	Proportion of legislators from single-member districts, upper house
PROPN	Proportion of legislators from national constituencies, lower/only house
PROPN2	Proportion of legislators from national constituencies, upper house

Source: [www.stanford.edu/~jseddon](http://www.stanford.edu/~jseddon).

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