

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES)

The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems (CSES) is a collaborative program of research among election study teams from around the world. Participating countries include a common module of survey questions in their post-election studies. The resulting data are deposited along with voting, demographic, district and macro variables. The studies are then merged into a single, free, public dataset for use in comparative study and cross-level analysis.

The entity that has organized the survey and is responsible for data collection – as well as key data on the entity's membership, governance arrangements, source of funding etc.

The CSES survey is organized by a [CSES Planning Committee](#), whose members are from all over the world and include leading scholars of electoral politics. Some members are exchanged for each module. The CSES Planning Committee meets regularly to coordinate the research agenda, study design, and questionnaire. The design is implemented in each country by their foremost social scientists.

The CSES also has a secretariat which is in cooperation between the Center for Political Studies and GESIS with support from the American National Science Foundation, Germany Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the University of Michigan, and governments of several German Länder.

The CSES has been funded by the International Committee for Research into Elections and Representative Democracy (ICORE) and the American National Science Foundation.

A historical sketch of the initiation and origin of the survey

The formal beginnings of CSES can be traced back to the International Committee for Research into Elections and Representative Democracy (ICORE). ICORE was founded at the end of the 1980s, its founding fathers being the study directors of some of the older national election studies in Europe. From the outset ICORE's purpose was to enhance further opportunities for comparative research into (European) electoral behaviour. Its first priority was to create a European Elections Database archiving all the national election studies and documenting them in English at the Eurolab of the Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung in Cologne. This database facilitated publication of *The European Voter* (2005), edited by Jacques Thomassen. In 1994 the American National Election Studies became a member of ICORE. Its principal investigator, Steven Rosenstone, brought in the idea to develop a comparative programme of election studies. In the same year ICORE organized the first conference on CSES in Berlin with a steering committee

composed of Jacques Thomassen (chair of ICORE), Steven Rosenstone, Hans-Dieter Klingemann and John Curtice. This first conference produced a general agreement on a set of principles, processes and standards that would guide the project. A planning committee was identified and three months later the American National Election Study hosted a planning meeting in Ann Arbor for the committee to make proposals on the content of the questionnaire that would become Module 1.

<http://www.gesis.org/das-institut/kompetenzzentren/european-data-laboratory/data-resources/icore/>

Internet links to the website of the responsible organization

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

The frequency or repetitions of the survey. Possible explanation of this.

Module 1: 1996-2001

Module 2: 2001-2006

Module 3: 2006-2011

Module 4: 2011-2016

f) A description of the survey's content, i.e. both focused rotational and / or core modules of the survey

The CSES is composed of three parts.

First, a common module of public opinion survey questions is included in each participant country's post-election study. These "micro" level data include vote choice, candidate and party evaluations, current and retrospective economic evaluations, evaluation of the electoral system itself, in addition to standardized sociodemographic measures.

Second, district level data are reported for each respondent, such as electoral returns, turnout, and the number of candidates. Third, system level data: Aggregate electoral returns, electoral rules and formulas, and regime characteristics. This enhances the possibility of doing multi-level analyses.

The focuses for each module are:

Module 1:

- The impact of electoral institutions on citizens political cognition and behaviour
- The nature of political and social cleavages and alignments
- The evaluation of democratic institutions and processes

Module 2:

- Vote choice
- Satisfactions with the performance of democracy

Module 3

- The meaningfulness of electoral choices: the contingency of decisions on available choices

Module 4

- Distributional politics and social protection
- Mobilization
- Political Knowledge

An outline of the type of sample and the main data collection methods used

The CSES is added to national post-election studies in each collaborating country and thus the samples vary. The universe is defined as the population in each country which are of voting age.

The interviews are conducted in person, by telephone or by mail-back questionnaires – this varies between countries.

An account of the availability of the data to researchers, restrictions on access, etc.

The data may be downloaded at no cost from their website upon registration.

Questionnaires, English version

[Module 1 Questionnaire](#)

[Module 2 Questionnaire](#)

[Module 3 Questionnaire](#)

[Module 4 Questionnaire](#)

The countries included in the different rounds

In the first module, around thirty countries were represented. Now the number is approximately 50. For details for each module, please refer to the following links:

[Module 1](#)

[Module 2](#)

[Module 3](#)

Cumulative file of the various rounds

There is no cumulative file.

Publications based on the data

[List of publications and results of the CSES.](#)

Analytical summary...

Sources

Unless otherwise noted, all information is extracted from the website of the CSES.

Ashley Grosse and Andrew Appleton (2009), 'Big Social Science' in Comparative Politics: The history of the comparative study of electoral systems. In: Hans-Dieter Klingemann (ed.), The Comparative Study of Electoral Systems. Oxford: Oxford University Press.