

The Electoral Utility Package (version 25-01-2005)

by Cees van der Eijk

Since 1989 the voter survey components of all European Election Studies contain a set of so-called electoral utility items. They derive from a question that is asked for each of a series of parties in a political system, and which invite the respondent to indicate how likely it is that (s)he will ever vote for that party.

This set of variables provides a large number of analytical possibilities with respect to the analysis of party choice, of turnout, of the basis of support for each of the parties (including small parties), of electoral competition, and each of these topics particularly in a comparative perspective.

The conceptual and analytical frameworks on which these questions are based have been published in a large number of places. In order to facilitate the dissemination thereof in the EES network, I have put this package together. This document introduces the various materials in it.

Analysis of party choice

Three files are included in this package that are of immediate relevance for the (comparative) analysis of party choice:

- ***Rethinking.doc*** – a Word-file containing a recent article
- ***Making a stacked data-file.ppt*** – a powerpoint presentation
- ***Stacking example.sav*** – a SPSS data-file used as an example in the presentation

The ***Rethinking*** document contains the most recent and most comprehensive overview of the conceptual position of the utility variables and of their use in the analysis of party choice. It is an article that will be published in the course of 2005 in the journal ***Electoral Studies***. It elaborates how utility data are to be used, and it explains its superiority over what is often seen as the optimal method for analyzing party choice in multi-party systems: multinomial logit or conditional logit methods of analysis. Moreover, it contains a good list of references to publications that analyze electoral utility data.

A second useful introduction, taken from the context of economic voting, can be found in a forthcoming book on that topic by van der Brug, van der Eijk & Franklin (to be published by Cambridge University Press). If you are interested, have a look at the first 2 chapters of this book. You can find them on Mark Franklin's website:

<http://shakti.trincoll.edu/~mfrankli/> (see link in section on professional activities).

Part of the analytical procedure of analyzing utility data consists of rearranging them in a so-called stacked data-file on which subsequent analyses are performed. This element of the procedure is discussed in more detail in a powerpoint presentation that was made for the EES2004 Data Confrontation Seminar of January 2005. The example in this presentation utilizes the ***stacking example.sav*** SPSS data-set. This example data-file may be of help to gain practical experience with the construction of a stacked data-file.

Analysis of electoral participation

No files are included in this package. Relevant examples of how to use utility data in the analysis of electoral participation can be found in the following publications (see references in the ***Rethinking*** manuscript, that is included in this package):

Oppenhuis, E.V. 1995

Franklin, M.N., C. van der Eijk & E.V. Oppenhuis 1996

Schmitt, H. & C. van der Eijk 2002.

[See Hermann Schmitt's homepage http://www.hfjs.de/Homepage_e.html, go to downloads, see downloadable papers for 2002 (in English and in German)].

Analysis of potential electorates and of electoral competition

No files are included in this package. Relevant examples of how to use utility data in the analysis of electoral competition and potential electorates can be found in the following publications:

Marsh, M. 2005. Stability and Change in Structure of Electoral Competition 1989-2002. In: Diane Payne, John Garry and Niamh Hardiman eds., *Facing Change in a New Ireland: An Analysis of Irish Social and Political Attitudes*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

[This can be downloaded from Michael Marsh's web site:

http://www.tcd.ie/Political_Science/Staff/Michael.Marsh, follow the link to Irish election study].

Eijk, C. van der & E.V. Oppenhuis 1991. European Parties' Performance in Electoral Competition, *European Journal of Political Research* 19:55-80.

Many of the analyses of party competition and potential electorates require a rather elaborate and complex set of data-manipulation statements. In order to facilitate this kind of analysis, Cees van der Eijk and Michael Marsh have embarked on the production of analysis-tools that take the drudgery out of this work. At this stage, a beta-version of a STATA-routine is available, which is included in this package; it is named *utilstat*, and consists of 2 files that are here included:

- *Utilstat.ado*
- *Utilstat.hlp*

Put them into the stata sub-folder of ado files, sub-sub folder base, sub sub subfolder U.

Analyzing the support base of political parties

No files are included in this package. Relevant examples of how to use utility data in the analysis of the support base of political parties are:

Brug, W. van der & M. Fennema 2003. Protest or Mainstream? How the European anti-immigrant parties have developed into two separate groups by 1999. *European Journal of Political Research* 42:55-76.

Brug, W. van der, M. Fennema, & J. Tillie 2000. Anti-immigrant Parties in Europe: Ideological or Protest Vote. *European Journal of Political Research* 37: 77-102.

This package will be regularly updated.

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