

Comparative Study of Electoral Systems Macro-Level Data

=====

Part I: Data Pertinent to the Election at which the Module was Administered

1. Variable number/name in the dataset that identifies the primary electoral district for each respondent.

V114

2. Names and party affiliation of cabinet-level ministers serving at the time of the dissolution of the most recent government.

Name of Cabinet Member, Office Held (All: Australian Labor Party)  
(\*Senator)

Paul Keating	Prime Minister
Kim Beazley	Minister for Finance & Deputy Prime Minister
*Gareth Evans	Minister for Foreign Affairs & Leader of Government in the Senate
*Robert McMullan	Minister for Trade
*Robert Ray	Minister for Defence & Deputy Leader of the Government in the Senate
Ralph Willis	Treasurer
Brian Howe	Minister for Housing and Regional Development
*Peter Cook	Minister for Industry, Science and Technology
*Nick Bolkus	Minister for Immigration and Ethnic Affairs
Simon Crean	Minister for Employment, Education and Training
*Robert Collins	Minister for Primary Industries and Energy
Peter Baldwin	Minister for Social Security
Laurence Brereton	Minister for Industrial Relations & Minister for Transport
Michael Lavarch	Attorney-General
Michael Lee	Minister for Communications and the Arts and Minister for Tourism
*John Faulkner	Minister for the Environment, Sport and Territories
Carmen Lawrence	Minister for Human Services and Health

3. Political Parties (active during the election at which the module was administered).

Name of Political Party, Year Founded, Ideological Family Party is Closest to, International Organization Party Belongs to (if any)

Australian Labor Party (ALP), 1901, Social Democratic Parties, Socialist International.

Liberal Party of Australia (Liberal), 1944, Conservative (Right Liberal) Parties, International Democratic Union.

(Note: The Liberal Party's ideological lineage extends back to 1909. The original Liberal Party, a 'fusion' of non-Labor parties existed from 1909 to 1917. In 1917, the party reformed as the Nationalist Party after the Labor Prime Minister and a number of his supporters joined with the Liberals after resigning from the Labor Party. In 1931, the party reformed as the United Australia Party (UAP), after again absorbing Labor government defectors. It was out of the UAP, and a number of other non-Labor organisations, that the modern Liberal

Party was created in 1944.)

National Party of Australia (National), 1920, Agrarian (Regional) Parties.

(Originally named the Australian Country Party, this sectional, rural based party changed its name to the National Country Party in 1975 and to the National Party in 1982.)

Australian Democrats (Democrats), 1977, Left Liberal Parties.

Australian Greens (Greens), 1992, Ecology Parties, The Greens

(See Ian McAllister, Malcolm Mackerras, Carolyn Brown Boldiston, "Australian Political Facts", 2nd Edition, Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia, 1997, pp. 39-64; and Dean Jaensch, "The Politics of Australia", Melbourne: MacMillan Education Australia, 1997, pp. 198-334.)

4. (a) Parties' position in left-right scale (in 1996)

Party Name	LEFT (0) - RIGHT (10)
1. Australian Labor Party	(4.5)
2. Liberal Party	(5.5)
3. National Party	(6.5)
4. Australian Democrats	(4.0)
5. Greens	(3.5)

5. In your view, what are the five most salient factors that affected the outcome of the election (e.g. major scandals; economic events; the presence of an "independent actor;" specific issues)?

(The following discussion relies heavily on the comprehensive analysis of the 1996 election found in Clive Bean, Marian Simms, Scott Bennett and John Warhurst, "The Politics of Retribution: The 1996 Federal Election", Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1997.)

#### Background

After five successive Federal election wins and thirteen years in government, the ALP (led by the Prime Minister, Paul Keating) lost 31 seats, and government, at the 2 March 1996 Federal election for the 148 seat House of Representatives. The Liberal and National Parties (led by the Liberal Leader of the Opposition, John Howard) gained 27 and 2 seats, respectively (independents gained 3), giving the new coalition government 94 seats (Liberal 76 and Nationals 18), a majority of 44 seats over the ALP.

(At the concurrent half-Senate election for 40 of the 76 Senate seats, Labor also performed poorly. It won two seats (of six) in each state (and one in each of the Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory), with a net loss of one seat, but suffered an overall first preference swing against it of 7.3%. The coalition won three seats in each state, and one seat in each Territory, with a net gain of one seat. The Australian Democrats won a seat in each of five states, and the Greens won one seat in Tasmania. Overall, the coalition was left two seats short of a majority in the Senate.)

Although many observers had expected the government to lose the election (from February 1995 the opinion polls had consistently shown the ALP trailing the Liberal-National parties), most were surprised by the magnitude of the swing to the coalition parties. Labor had also been

expected to lose the previous federal election in 1993, and since then there had been a reduction in unemployment and inflation, and the economy had grown. By these measures, the government had performed better in the lead-up to the 1996 election than it had in 1993.

During the 1980s and early 1990s, however, the Labor government's "mainstream" economic reform policies (e.g., the deregulation of the financial market, the removal of trade barriers, and the selling off of public utilities) had served to destabilise the class-based support of the parties. By 1993, many of Labor's working, and lower-middle, class supporters believed their living standards had declined as a result of the "economic rationalist" reforms introduced by successive Labor governments. (See Ian McAllister and Clive Bean, "Long-term Electoral Trends and the 1996 Election", in Bean, et al, pp. 173-189.)

In addition, Keating, who had been federal treasurer since 1983 and was viewed as Labor's leading proponent of economic reform, had become leader of the ALP and Prime Minister in late 1991 by defeating the popular incumbent, Bob Hawke, in contentious circumstances, after an extended and bitter leadership struggle. Keating's aggressive approach to policy advocacy and parliamentary debate appealed to advocates of firm economic and policy management but offended those less receptive to his (abrasive) style of leadership. Apparently convinced that his government had ensured Australia's competitiveness in the new "global economy", Keating appeared to focus more on the (so-called) "big picture" issues, such as those associated with Australia becoming a republic, strengthening Australia's cultural, as well as trade, relationships with Asia, and legislating for indigenous land rights. Moreover, he and his government appeared more responsive to the concerns (of perceived) "single issue" groups (e.g. "environmentalists", "feminists", "ethnic groups", "Aborigines", the "Homeless") than to those of "ordinary workers".

In late 1991, the coalition (under its then leader, John Hewson) produced a comprehensive package of detailed ("New Right") policies that would have extended the economic reforms initiated by Labor in the areas of health care, industrial relations and taxation. In particular, and most contentiously, the coalition proposed to introduce a value-added, or goods and services, tax (GST) of 15% if elected to government at the 1993 election.

Labor thus had a long lead-time before the election to focus debate on the specific issues raised by the coalition's package, particularly the regressive aspects of the GST, rather than its own economic management record. Despite trailing the coalition in the opinion polls for most of 1992, Labor was able to win (back) the support of voters who were frightened by the prospect of paying a GST.

After losing the "unlosable" 1993 election, the coalition changed leaders twice before the 1996 election, both changes occurring after brief periods of Labor resurgence in the opinion polls: in mid-1994 when Alexander Downer replaced John Hewson as Liberal leader and in early 1995 when John Howard replaced Downer. Thereafter, until the election, Labor trailed the coalition in the polls by 7-10%. As well, during 1995 Labor suffered reversals in the states of Queensland and New South Wales: in the former, Labor lost 20 seats at the state election, in the latter, a Labor government was elected with a narrow majority (but quickly proved unpopular).

At the 1996 Federal election:

"The campaigns of the major parties were undoubtedly influenced by their judgements of the 1993 Labor victory. For Paul Keating it was a vote of confidence in himself and his 'big picture'. For the Liberal Party it was evidence that it was a mistake for an opposition to present itself as a

big target and out of the mainstream of opinion. Keating chose to run on his leadership, his record in office and his vision for the future even though his style of leadership was controversial, his record was vulnerable, and his vision had not captured the attention of middle Australia. He persevered with this campaign even when some advisers were counselling against it and when events had undermined it." (John Warhurst, "Promises and Personalities: The House of Representatives Election in 1996", in Bean, et al, p.9)

The following (related) factors affecting the outcome of the 1996 election are listed in (roughly) descending order of importance.

(1) Labor had "run its course"

-- After 13 years in government, Labor had become "tired" and had "lost touch" with the electorate; voters wanted a change to a more "caring" and "responsive" government.

-- The 1996 election outcome was, according to one pundit, "the general election of March 1993 delayed by three years" (Mackerras, Bean et al, p.207).

(2) Keating as Leader

-- Keating made leadership an issue, but as leader polarised voters. He was perceived as a strong and competent leader, but one who was arrogant and lacking in compassion and credibility.

-- Howard, on the other hand, was viewed more positively overall, and especially as being more credible (honest and moral). (See Clive Bean and Ian McAllister, "Short-term Influences on Voting Behaviour in the 1996 Election", in Bean et al, pp. 190-206.)

(3) Issue convergence

-- The coalition did not repeat its mistake of 1993; its policies were not presented in detail (the GST was abandoned) and policy differences were blurred.

-- Nevertheless, taxation, health, industrial relations and immigration were issues of importance to voters, with health being the only issue winning support for Labor.

(4) State/regional differences

-- Labor had an overall swing against it (in first preference votes) of 6.1%. However, in the two states with recent, unpopular Labor governments, it lost 13 seats in New South Wales (with a swing against it of 8.7%) and 11 seats in Queensland (with a swing against it of 7.3%). In Victoria, on the other hand, where a (conservative) coalition held government, Labor lost only one seat (with a swing against it of 3.6%).

-- Of the 23 rural electorates it won in 1993, Labor retained only 5 at the 1996 election.

(5) Low salience campaign

-- Commentators characterised the campaign as being "dull"; both sides emphasised their competence in policy management and leadership capabilities. The Keating-Howard television debates did not produce a clear winner.

-- In contrast to 1993, Labor was unable to win back support during the campaign; the coalition parties never lost their lead in the opinion

polls.

6. Electoral Alliances

a) Were electoral alliances permitted during the election campaign?

Yes

b) (If yes) Did any electoral alliances form?

Yes

c) (If yes to b) List the party alliances that formed:

Name of Alliance	Parties in the Alliance
The Coalition	Liberal Party and National Party

The National Party (then known as the Country Party) and the Liberal Party (as its precursor the Nationalist Party) first formed an electoral alliance in the early 1920s, and have remained since then in coalition (both in government and opposition) except for brief periods in 1973-74 and part of 1987. When in government, the coalition arrangement is for the Liberal Party leader to be Prime Minister and the National Party Leader to be Deputy Prime Minister, with ministerial portfolios allocated proportionally.

The Liberal-National Party electoral alliance benefits from the use of preferential voting (the alternative vote) for the House of Representatives. When both non-Labor parties contest an electorate, the second preferences of each party's supporters are directed to the other party through the parties' respective "How to Vote" cards. When only one of the parties contests an electorate, its candidate generally receives the first preferences of supporters of the party not standing. In rural, marginal Labor seats, both parties will typically stand candidates to maximise the anti-Labor vote.

At the 1996 election for the House of Representatives, the National Party contested 32 (mainly rural) electorates: 12 (of 50) in New South Wales, 13 (of 27) in Queensland, 4 (of 37) in Victoria, 2 (of 14) in Western Australia, and 1 (of 5) in Tasmania, and won 18 seats. The Liberal Party contested only 17 of these seats, winning 10.

7. (If a presidential election was held concurrently with the legislative elections) List presidential candidates

Not applicable.

8. If the national team plans to collect aggregate election returns (or constituency-level returns) please include these returns with the study materials provided when the data are archived.

Both aggregate and constituency-level returns are provided (and may also be accessed electronically at: <http://www.aec.gov.au/>)

Part II: Data on Electoral Institutions

(Note: the discussion below refers to elections for the House of Representatives. Details for the conduct of Senate, as well as for House of Representatives, elections may be found in the "Commonwealth Electoral

Act 1918", which is provided (and may also be accessed electronically at: [http:// www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol\\_act/cea1918233/](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/cea1918233/)).

Australia's lower-house electoral system is "majoritarian", in that it employs compulsory preferential voting (i.e. the alternative vote) for the 148 single-member districts in its House of Representatives elections. Because enrolment (registration) and voting is compulsory, turnout is high (96.2% of enrolled voters turned out for the 1996 election).

Candidates are (randomly) listed on the ballot, along with their party label (if any, otherwise they are labelled as "independent"), and voters are required to rank the candidates in order of their preference by numbering squares next to each candidate's name. Ballots that do not indicate a complete preference order are declared "informal" (and are not counted), and at the 1996 election only 3.2% of those voting cast such informal ballots. (Since 1984, however, a voter may cast a "formal" ballot by indicating a unique first preference and by assigning (duplicate) numbers to the remaining candidates, or by leaving one square blank.)

Under preferential voting, a candidate must win an absolute majority (50% + 1) of the votes to be elected. If no candidate receives that majority after an examination of the first preferences, the candidate receiving the fewest first preferences is eliminated, and votes cast for the candidate are transferred to each voter's next (second) preferred candidate. Where it is required that additional candidates be eliminated, a voter's third or lower preference will be counted). This procedure is repeated until one candidate has an absolute majority.

At the 1996 election, just under 40% of seats had preferences distributed (the average over the past twelve elections is 34.7%); just under 5% of seats had a candidate elected who did not have a plurality of the first preference votes (the average over the past twelve elections is 6.2%).

It is worth emphasising that preferential voting has encouraged the Liberal and National Parties to "link up" by allowing each party to direct (through the use of "how to vote" cards) its supporters' first preferences to its own candidates and their second preferences to candidates of the other party.

(For a discussion of the development of Australia's electoral law, see G.S. Reid and Martyn Forrest, "Australia's Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1988", Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1989, pp. 84-131; for a current compendium of facts about the Australian election system, see McAllister et al, "Australian Political Facts", pp. 65-115; for a recent, extended discussion, see Jaensch, "The Politics of Australia", pp. 361-412; and for the Australian electoral system in comparative context, see Arend Lijphart, "Electoral Systems and Party Systems", Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, passim.)

### Part III: Data on Regime Type

(Note: a copy of Australia's constitution is provided.)

#### I.) Questions regarding the Head of State.

Queen Elizabeth II is the "symbolic" head of state of Australia; however, the Governor-General, who is appointed by the Queen (on the recommendation of the Prime Minister) is the constitutional head of state.

Although the Australian constitution gives considerable legislative and executive power to the Governor-General (e.g. to dissolve parliament or refuse its laws, dismiss ministers, and as commander in chief of the armed

forces), by convention he acts on the advice of the Prime Minister.

As Crisp, writing in 1974, put it: "While in the early years of the Commonwealth the Governor-General was sometimes able to exercise a little actual discretion in the performance of certain of [his formal] functions, the line of evolution of the party system and the line of evolution of the British Commonwealth (through the decisions of the 1926 and 1930 Imperial Conferences, the passage of the Statute of Westminster in 1931 and Australia's adoption of the material sections of it in 1942) have converged to strip away most of the substance of his prerogative and discretionary powers, in practice almost to vanishing point. Today his principal powers are exercised and functions performed, probably without exception, on the advice of his ministers" (L.F. Crisp, "Australian National Government", Melbourne: Longman, 1974, p. 399).

However, the constitutional crisis of 1975, when the Governor-General, ignoring convention and exercising his formal executive power, dismissed a Labor government with a majority of seats in the House of Representatives, served to focus attention on the discrepancy between the written constitution and long accepted parliamentary convention.

(For a concise, perceptive account of the crisis, see Leon Epstein "The Australian Political System", in Howard Penniman (edit), "Australia at the Polls: the National Elections of 1975", Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1977, pp. 1-47.)

## II.) Questions about the Head of Government.

### 1) Who is the Head of Government?

Prime Minister

### 2) If the Head of Government is a prime minister, how is the prime minister selected?

By convention, the Prime Minister is the leader of the party with a majority of seats in the House of Representatives; he and other ministers are formally "commissioned" by the Governor-General under Section 64 of the Constitution.

### 3) If there is a prime minister, what authorities does the prime minister have over the composition of the cabinet? [Check all that apply.]

Names ministers and assigns portfolios alone  
Dismisses ministers and reassigns portfolios at own discretion

### 4) If there is a prime minister, what authorities does the prime minister have over the policy making process? [Check all that apply.]

Chairs cabinet meetings  
Determines schedule of issues to be considered by the legislature  
Determines which alternatives will be voted on by the legislature,  
and in which order  
Refers legislative proposals to party or legislative committees  
Calls votes of confidence in government

## III.) By what method(s) can cabinet members, or the entire cabinet, be dismissed? [Check all that apply.]

By the head of state  
By the prime minister alone

By convention, the Prime Minister appoints/dismisses cabinet members, and

would resign, along with his government, if he/she no longer had the (majority) support of the House of Representatives. Were the Governor-General to arbitrarily exercise his formal powers of dismissal, he would, as he did in 1975, dismiss the government (i.e. all cabinet members including the Prime Minister) and dissolve parliament (i.e. the House and the Senate).

IV.) Can the legislature be dissolved prior to regularly scheduled elections?

Yes

1) If yes, by what method?

By the head of state alone

By the prime minister alone

By majority vote of the legislature

By some combination of the above, acting in concert (Explain)

By convention, the House may be dissolved (at any point prior to its constitutional limit of three years) by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister.

2) If yes, are there restrictions on when and how the legislature can be dissolved? [Check all that apply.]

See 1) above.