State Legislative Aggregate Ideology Data

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1 Introduction

The Shor-McCarty state legislative aggregate ideology data is being released as part of the publication of Shor and McCarty (2011), and is the exact data set used to generate the published results. These are based on individual-level ideal point estimates described fully in that article. Estimates are all in NPAT common ideological space to facilitate explicit comparisons across time and between states.

The newest version of the data and codebook can always be found on Boris Shor's IQSS Dataverse page, at http://dvn.iq.harvard.edu/dvn/dv/bshor.

Ideology and polarization estimates are measured at the chamber level. Not all state-years have measurements, due to the ragged availability of state legislative roll call data. Luckily, the authors are actively working on additional data, and will be releasing updated data sets over time.

We generated bootstrapped error estimates for our scores at both individual and aggregate levels. At the individual level, we take advantage of the simulations that underlie the Bayesian IRT model to get a sense of the estimation uncertainty of legislator ideology in roll call space. We then simulate a large number of state-specific mapping coefficients for each state. Then, for each simulation of the legislator's ideal point, we randomly draw (with replacement) one set of mapping coefficients, predicting an NPAT score each time. The standard deviation of the simulations is our bootstrapped error estimate. At the aggregate level, we simulate quantities of interest using the individual common space scores and their bootstrapped errors. For example, in each simulation, we calculate a chamber median. Iterating over a large number of simulations, we take the standard deviation of the simulated medians as our measure of aggregate uncertainty.

2 Codebook

`st`
State abbreviation

`alpha`
State code, alphabetical order

`fips`
State FIPS code

`icpsr`
State ICPSR code

`year`
Chronological Year

`*diffs`
Difference in party medians, by chamber

`*distance`
Average distance between any two members, by chamber. This is an alternative, party-free, measure of polarization.

`*_dem_sd`
Democratic party heterogeneity, by chamber

`*_rep_sd`
Republican party heterogeneity, by chamber

`*_chamber_sd`
Whole chamber heterogeneity, by chamber

`*_dem`
Democratic party median, by chamber

`*_dem_error`
Democratic party median error estimate, by chamber

`*_rep`
Republican party median, by chamber

`*_dem_error`

Republican party median error estimate, by chamber

`*_chamber`
Whole chamber median, by chamber

`*_chamber_error`
Whole chamber median error estimate, by chamber

References

Shor, Boris and Nolan McCarty. 2011. "The Ideological Mapping of American Legislatures." *American Political Science Review* 105(3):530–551.