About

This is a dataset of Australian aid program project performance scores. It is based on data released by DFAT (Australia's foreign ministry, which manages most Australian aid work).

The dataset is associated with paper - Wood & Howes, Forthcoming, "The impact of independence on reported aid performance", World Development.

Questions? Email terence.wood@anu.edu.au

Variables

Variable: id

About: A unique ID for each performance appraisal score.

Variable: source

About: The source of the data. Data were provided to us at two different times from DFAT. This distinguishes which batch of data the observation comes from.

Variable: year

About: The year of the report that generated the project performance data. Note that this is the financial year (Australian financial year). So 2018 means the 2017/18 Fyr.

Variable: pn

About: This is DFAT's project code for the project. Each project has its own code.

Variable: pnencode

About: This is a project number, which is simply the project code encoded from a string to a number in Stata.

Variable: region

About: The geographical region the project was/is in.

Variable: pacific

About: Identifies if the project was in the Pacific or not.

Variable: country

About: The country the project was in. Note that some projects are regional or global projects.

Variable: iso3

About: The ISO3 code of the country the project was in (if the project was a country focused project rather than a regional or global project).

Variable: name

About: The project's name (as named by DFAT).

Variable: reporttype

About: The type of report the performance appraisal came from. The variable shows if report is an ongoing report (an appraisal of an ongoing project), a completed report (an appraisal of a report from a recently completed project), or a report for a humanitarian emergency project. Humanitarian emergency projects are assessed through a different process and, as such, were excluded from our analysis.

Variable: humanitarian

About: This variable indicates whether the project was a humanitarian emergency project or a normal project. Note that humanitarian projects are reviewed through a different process from normal projects.

Variable: finalreport

About: This variable distinguishes performance scores taken from reports produced upon the closing of a project and performance scores taken from reports produced while projects were ongoing. Humanitarian emergency projects are coded as missing for this variable.

Variable: treated

About: This binary captures whether the project assessment that the performance score came from was reviewed by an independent non-DFAT source. In practice this captures all final reports from 2019 onwards. Humanitarian reports coded as missing.

Variable: post2018

About: This variable simply distinguishes whether the appraisal producing the performance score was after 2018 or not. This does not reflect appraisal type or treatment in any way.

Variable: covid

About: This variable distinguishes if the report generating the performance score was produced during the Covid years (2021 and 2022) or earlier.

Variable: start

About: This was the date the project started as reported by DFAT.

Variable: startyear

About: Year project started.

Variable: end

About: This was the date the project ended or is planned to end as reported by DFAT.

Variable: endyear

About: The year the project ended or in which DFAT states it will end.

Variable: duration

About: This is the planned project duration in days.

Variable: earlyclose

About: If the project's scheduled end has become earlier in the current year's data than it was in the first year that the project was reported on the project is coded as having closed early.

Variable: lnbudget

About: The natural log of the project's overall budget (in AUD).

Variable: sector

About: The sector the project is in. Note that sectors are the sectors DFAT uses in its own internal reporting.

Variable: effectiveness

About: How effective a project is scored as being in its performance appraisal. Scored on a 1-6 scale. 6 is the best possible score.

Variable: efficiency

About: How efficient a project is scored as being in its performance appraisal. 1-6 scale. 6 is the best possible score.

Variable: ee

About: Mean of effectiveness and efficiency for the project in this appraisal.

Variable: sateft

About: Coded as 1 if project scores 4 or higher on effectiveness. The cutoff of 4 reflects DFAT's own cutoff for satisfactory effectiveness.

Variable: satefy

About: Coded as 1 if project scores 4 or higher on efficiency. The cutoff of 4 reflects DFAT's own cutoff for satisfactory performance.

Variable: any_issue

About: This variable indicates whether any data issues have been identified for this observation. These issues are not broad issues that suggest a project score should always be abandoned. The identified issues were typically issues that would affect analysis of projects when the analysis involves intertemporal comparisons within a project (for example project fixed effects regressions which contrast a project's final appraisal score with the score from its most recent ongoing appraisal). Issues identified were typically projects that had a final appraisal, but which then had more recent ongoing appraisals (presumably because they had been continued) or projects which changed status to or from humanitarian emergency projects.