SIGNING PETITIONS - General Target Variable Report (GVR)

1. General Information

The target variable T_PETITION measures respondents' reported acts of signing petitions in the past, or their willingness to sign petitions in the future. The measure is nominal (see Table 1.1). It takes the value 1 whenever respondents report that they did not sign a petition in the past (in the 'yes/no' question). It takes the value 2 when respondents indicate unwillingness to sign a petition in the future ('would not' in the 'yes/would/would not' question). It takes the value 3 when respondents state the willingness to sign a petition in the future ('would' in the 'yes/would/would not' question). Whenever respondents confirm the fact of having signed petitions in the past, T_PETITION takes values 4 (in the 'yes/would/would not' question) and 5 (in the 'yes/no' question).

The target variable T_PETITION is accompanied by three harmonization control variables (see Table 1.1 and Section 3.3) specifying properties of the source items: (a) time span for signing a petition in the past (C_PETITION_YEARS); (b) source item asks about other activities next to signing petitions, e.g., 'Join together with others to draw attention to an issue or sign a petition' in ARB/1 (C_PETITION_EXTENDED); (c) source item specifies the cause of petition e.g., environmental cause in ISSP/1993, ISSP/2000, ISSP/2010 (C_PETITION_ISSUE).

The target variable report for T_PETITION is accompanied by the following Excel documents:

- The Detailed Variable Report (DVR) T_PETITION_DVR_SDR2.xlsx. DVR Excel files in SDR2 systemize all information about source variables that were used for harmonization into a given target variable of the SDR2 database;
- A Crosswalk Table (CWT): T_PETITION_CWT_SDR2.xlsx. CWT Excel files in SDR2 contain details about mapping of source values to target values.

Table 1.1 **SIGNING PETITIONS:** Description of the target, source, and control variables

	Variable description	**Variable name**	**Variable values***
Target variable	Signing petitions and willingness to sign petitions	T_PETITION	1 = No (question type: yes/no) 2 = Would not (question type: yes/would/would not) 3 = Would (question type: yes/would/would not) 4 = Yes (question type: yes/would/would not) 5 = Yes (question type: yes/no)
Source variables			See: T_PETITION_DVR_SDR2.xlsx T_PETITION_CWT_SDR2.xlsx

Control variables	Source item specifies petition cause/concern	C_PETITION_ISSUE	0 = No issue specified 1 = Signing petition on specific issue
	Signing petition: time frame	C_PETITION_YEARS	1 = Last year 2 = Last 2 years 3 = Last 3 years 5 = Last 5 years 10 = Last 10 years 11 = Ever
	Source wording includes other protest forms, in addition to petition	C_PETITION_EXTENDED	0 = Restricted to petition 1 = Petition and other actions

* Missing values are assigned according to the SDR2 missing codes schema, provided in the Appendix.

2. Survey Projects

Source variables that we use for T_PETITION appear in 18 international survey projects: ABS, AMB, ARB, ASES, CB, EB, EQLS, ESS, EVS, ISJP, ISSP, LB, LITS, PA1, PA2, PPE7N, VPCPCE, WVS, 54 waves and 1149 national surveys. The data cover 123 countries and years from 1971 to 2017.

3. General Rules and Procedures

3.1. Source data description

Source items exhibit some variation in terms of answer options and value labels. Some surveys only ask about the fact of signing a petition in the past, providing binary 'yes', 'no' or 'mentioned', 'not mentioned' answer options (e.g., EB/62.2). Other surveys enable respondents to mark whether they signed a petition in the past, or would / might to or would not sign a petition in the future (e.g., LITS/1). Some surveys allow respondents to indicate how many times they signed petitions: 'once', 'more than once' (ARB/1); 'have often done', 'have done once or twice (ASES). We rely on the English language questionnaires and codebooks describing the source survey data.

To construct the target variable T_PETITION, we use two types of source questions:

(1) Questions about the past behavior (i.e., reported fact), which we label as the 'yes/no' question type.

The typical question about signing a petition in the past is: *There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During*

the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? Have you signed a petition? (ESS/1-6).

(2) Questions about the past behavior and future intent (i.e., reported potential), which we label as the 'yes/would/would not' question type.

The typical question about both signing a petition in the past and the willingness to sign a petition in the future is: *Now I'd like you to look at this card. I'm going to read out some different forms of political activity that people can become involved in, and I'd like you to tell me, for each one, whether you have actually done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never, under any circumstances, do it a) Sign a petition* (ASES).

Next to the standard item formulation, some source surveys use a different question wording to collect data on signing petitions. Specifically, source questions differ with regards to: 1) time span, e.g., *In the last **12 months** have you signed any petition?* (AMB/2012); *Here is a list of actions that people sometimes take as citizens. For each of these please tell me whether you, personally, have ever done each of these things in the **past three years**. Join together with others to draw attention to an issue or sign a petition* (ARB/1); 2) specific concern of a petition, e.g., *In the last five years, have you signed a petition about an **environmental issue?*** (ISSP_1993); 3) other political activities mentioned together with signing petitions, e.g., *Got together with others to **raise an issue or sign a petition*** (ABS/2).

3.2. Rules of transformation of source variables into target variable

For ex-post harmonization, we select source variables that refer to respondents' reported fact of signing a petition in the past or a willingness to sign a petition in the future. We do not harmonize measures of approval of signing petitions, so-called sympathy scales for this type of political action, nor measures of how effective respondents consider signing petitions to be.

If respondents did not sign a petition in the past (source questions about actual signing of petitions, which we label 'yes/no' question type) we assign the value 1; if respondents would not sign a petition in the future (source questions that combine information about past activity and information about willingness to sign a petition in the future, which we label 'yes/would/would not' question type) we assign the value 2; if respondents would sign a petition in the future ('yes/would/would not' question type) we assign the value 3; if respondents report that they signed a petition in the past while answer options included also potential behavior ('yes/would/would not' question type) we assign the value 4; if respondents reported that they signed a petition in the past ('yes/no' question type) we assign value 5 (see also Table 1.1).

Missing values and different situations that warrant to be treated as missing data are coded according to the SDR2 missing codes schema, provided in Table A.1 in the Appendix.

3.3. Methodological variables that accompany T_PETITION

The target variable T_PETITION is accompanied by three harmonization control variables (see Table 1.1).

C_PETITION_ISSUE is a nominal variable that indicates whether the source question wording deals with specific cause/concern for signing a petition. This is the case of the three ISSP waves: ISSP/1993, ISSP/2000 and ISSP/2010: *In the last five years, have you signed a petition about an environmental issue?*

C_PETITION_YEARS specifies the time span for signing petitions in the past. It takes the value 1 when source questions ask about signing a petition within the last year / 12 months (e.g., ESS). It takes values 2, 3, 5 or 10 when source questions ask about signing petitions in the last two (e.g., VPCPCE Hungary), three (e.g., ABS/2), five (e.g., ISSP/1993) or ten years (e.g., EB/31), respectively. It takes the value 11 when respondents were asked if they have "ever" signed a petition (e.g., EVS/1-4). Note that no source questions in the datasets we downloaded for harmonization ask about having signed petitions in the last four, seven, eight or nine years.

The majority of source variables that we harmonized into T_PETITION include the time span in the question wording and thus, the harmonization control C_PETITION_YEARS is measured at the level of national surveys. However, in ISSP 2004 and 2014, the time span appears as a response option, not in the question wording: *Not done, never do; Not done, might do; In more distant past done; In the past year done.* Although this is a special case, we take it and code as illustrated in Table 3.3.1, on the individual level (see T_PETITION_CWT_SDR2.xlsx for more details). Thus, C_PETITION_YEARS cannot be used directly as a filtering variable for the "last year" or "ever" time spans. It requires additional recodes, depending if a user would like to select only signed petitions "last year" or is interested in signed petition "ever".

Table 3.3.1. Example of coding C_PETITION_YEARS in special cases when time span is coded at the individual level; more in T_PETITION_CWT_SDR2.xlsx.

C_PETITION_YEARS: Control variable labels	Control values	Source values	Source labels	Target values	T_PETITION SDR target labels
ISSP/2014					
CINAP*	-11 (.k)	9	NA	-2 (.b)	NA*
CINAP*	-11 (.k)	8	DK	-1 (.a)	DK*

„ever"	11	4	Not done, never do	2	Would not (qt: yes/would/would not)
„ever"	11	3	Not done, might do	3	Would (qt: yes/would/would not)
„ever"	11	2	In more distant past done	4	Yes (qt: yes/would/would not)
"last year"	1	1	In the past year done	4	Yes (qt: yes/would/would not)

* Missing values are assigned according to the SDR2 missing codes schema, provided in the Appendix.

C_PETITION_EXTENDED is a dichotomous variable identifying if source questions ask about signing petitions only, or also about other political activities in addition to signing petitions. It takes the value 1 if the source question is on signing petitions and some other form of political activity, e.g., *Join together with others to draw attention to an issue or sign a petition* (ARB/1). If the question asks directly and only about signing petitions, this control variable takes the value 0.

4. Special Cases

- In CB/2013, CB/2015 and EQLS/1-3 the question explicitly asks respondents to include online petitions in addition to other possible petitions. For example: *Over the last 12 months, have you…? Signed a petition, including an e-mail or on-line petition* (EQLS/1-3).
- ISSP/2004 and 2014 contained two answer options: "Have done it in the past year" and "Have done it in the more distant past". We took both options into T_PETITION and created the control variable concerning time frame for past participation C_PETITION_YEARS = 1 and C_PETITION_YEARS = 11 at the individual level (but not survey wave or national survey level). See also Section 3.3.
- WVS/5 and 6 contain a set of two variables on signing petitions:

  First, both WVS/5 and 6 (like all other WVS waves) provide a general question about signing petitions in the past or willingness to sign petitions in the future (without specifying a time frame, which we treat as "ever" C_PETITION_YEARS = 11) variable E025: "Whether you have done any of these things, whether you might do it or would never under any circumstances do it (…): Signing a petition".

  Second, variable E025B in WVS/5 records if a respondent signed a petition during the last year (for Hong Kong only) or during the **last five years** (for all other countries in WVS/5). In WVS/6 it records how often during the **last year** a respondent signed a petition. We code C_PETITION_YEARS = 5 and 1, accordingly.

  We take both variables E025 and E025B to construct the target variable and its accompanying control variables (see T_PETITION_CWT_SDR2.xlsx for details).

Appendix: Codes for missing values in SDR2

In the SDR database v.2 we identify different situations that warrant to be treated as missing data. Table A.1 lists all SDR2 missing value codes:

Table A.1. Codes for missing values in SDR2

SDR tag [a]	SPSS (STATA) codes	Label
		Standardized source codes for missing values
DK	-1 (.a)	Don't know
NA	-2 (.b)	No answer
REF	-3 (.c)	Refusal
DU	-4 (.d)	Don't understand the question
DNR	-5 (.e)	Any combination of DK, NA, REF, DU
INAP	-6 (.f)	Inapplicable
NEC	-7 (.g)	Not elsewhere classified
		SDR created codes for missing values
UNFIT	-8 (.h)	Source value does not fit to target
ERR	-9 (.i)	Errors in source data and undocumented source values
COMBI	-10 (.j)	Different missing codes on multiple sources taken for a target
CINAP	-11 (.k)	For control variables only: inapplicable
INSUF	-12 (.l)	For survey: Insufficiently defined response categories
QNA	-20 (.t)	For survey: Question not available

[a] Abbreviations for the labels corresponding to the SDR2 codes for missing values. These tags are used in the Crosswalk Table (CWT) files (Excel) that accompany documentation of SDR2 target variables.

In exceptional situations when codes for missing data listed in Table A.1 cannot be used, we apply a system missing <null> value.