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# The Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research: A Resource for the Social Scientist

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*Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research*

In the late 1950s, as social science researchers began to collect and analyze quantitative data, a group of political scientists realized the need for an organization that would further this research by maintaining machine-readable data for redissemination and by providing a training center in empirical research. As a direct result of these efforts, the Inter-university Consortium for Political Research (ICPR), forerunner to the present Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR), was formed in 1962. The ICPR was housed at The University of Michigan. Today the ICPSR remains there at the Institute for Social Research in the Center for Political Studies.

The ICPSR is supported by the merged financial resources of more than 245 academic institutions that are presently members. Each member pays an annual membership fee that entitles it to services provided by the ICPSR. Requests at member institutions are coordinated through an Official Representative (OR). ORs serve as the liaison between their local users and the ICPSR. Data are also available to users at nonmember institutions at a charge. Data are generally written onto magnetic tape at technical specifications and in data formats that are compatible with the user's installation.

Over the years, the ICPSR has archived machine-readable data files on social phenomena, both contemporary and historical, and made them conveniently and eco-

nomically available to users all over the world. The current *Guide to Resources and Services*<sup>1</sup> lists 17 broad subject areas for which there are data in the holdings. Included are census enumerations; community and urban studies; conflict, aggression, violence, and wars; economic behavior and attitudes; education; elites and leadership; environment and natural resources; governmental structures, policies and capabilities; health care and health facilities; instructional packages; international systems; legal systems; legislative and deliberative bodies; mass political behavior and attitudes; organizational behavior; social indicators; and social institutions and behavior. There are more than 800 different data collections and more than 12,000 discreet files in the holdings.

Specific data collections in the holdings include census of population and housing data for the United States, 1790–1980; basic county-level election returns for the United States, 1788–1980; United States Congressional voting records, 1788–1981; surveys of consumer attitudes and behavior; quality of employment surveys; quality of American life surveys; national election studies for Germany, France, Canada, The Netherlands, Japan, the United States, Ireland, Australia, and Great Britain; Euro-barometers; World Handbook of Political and Social Indicators; health surveys; teaching modules and national crime surveys. Although most of the data collections are studies that were done once, a number

represent ongoing series. A few of the data collections are described here in more detail.

The American National Election Studies are a rich collection of 16 national surveys that started in 1948 with the most recent survey done for the 1980 election. Carried out first by the Survey Research Center and later by the Center for Political Studies at the Institute for Social Research at The University of Michigan, these surveys have probed respondents' expectations about the outcome of the election; issue positions; perceptions of economic, ethnic and religious group political orientation; assessments of major problems facing the country; sources of political information; self-reported assessments of financial situations and class identity. Also included are measures of political efficacy and trust in government as well as demographics. Post-election questions focus on actual voting behavior and awareness of, and participation in, the campaign.

The Panel Study of Income Dynamics is an ongoing study that began in 1968 in an attempt to better understand the determinants of family income and its changes. Heads of the same families have been interviewed each year since 1968 as have heads of families containing members who were part of an original sample household and later started their own households. Panel losses over the years have been offset by the addition of the newly formed families, bringing the present family sample size to more than 6000. The most recent year for which data are available is 1980. Currently there are almost 7000 variables that cover a variety of subjects including detailed income information, employment, financial status, and travel to work.

Also in the ICPSR holdings is the General Social Survey collection with data available for 1972-1978 and 1980 (there was no survey done in 1979). Conducted by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC), the surveys cover items viewed by the NORC staff and an advisory panel of sociologists as of interest to academic sociologists. The project replicates items from survey to survey to

enable researchers to study American society over time. The surveys cover such areas of interest to social scientists as the family, social control, socioeconomic status, civil liberties, attitudes and race relations.

The National Crime Surveys were designed to obtain detailed information about crime, its victims, and its consequences. The data were collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the Bureau of Justice Statistics. Data were collected for samples in selected cities as well as on the national level. Interviews were administered to different samples from 1972 through 1975 in 26 American cities. Data were also collected using a national sample of households, with rotating subsamples reinterviewed at 6-month intervals. The data in the ICPSR holdings for the national sample run from 1973 through 1979. Additional data in the ongoing national survey are archived as they become available.

Data collections that concentrate on health care and health care facilities have been added to the holdings over the past couple of years. The Health Interview Surveys, conducted by the U.S. Bureau of the Census for the National Center for Health Statistics, involve the continuous sampling and interviewing of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population of the United States in order to collect information on the economic, social, and demographic aspects of illness, disability, and medical services. Currently surveys for 1970, 1975, and 1977 are available from the ICPSR. Mortality Detail Files from 1972 through 1977, containing information on all deaths registered on individual death certificates in the United States, are also available. These files include information about place of death, place of residence, age, race, and underlying cause of death.

Among recent additions to the holdings is a collection of surveys done by the University of Southern California School of Medicine focusing on medical practice. Conducted from 1976 through 1978, these national surveys looked at doctors' practices in 24 medical and surgical speciality areas. Log-diaries were kept

for 1 week by the samples of physicians in each of the 24 specialities. These records produced detailed information about each physician's practice, each patient seen by the doctor during the sample week, and each consultation over the telephone by the doctor with a patient. Three data files for each of the specialities were produced from the log-diaries: physician summary file, patient encounter file, and telephone encounter file.

The ICPSR has made arrangements to acquire data tapes produced from the 1980 Census and will make these available, as they are released, on a cost-effective basis.<sup>2</sup> Included will be the Summary Tape Files (STFs) containing aggregated data for geographic areas such as city blocks, minor civil divisions, and Census tracts; and the Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS), which will contain data for individuals. The Census Software Package (CENSPAC) has been acquired and is available. As of August 1981 the "reapportionment" P.L. 94-171 files were the only

data released by the Bureau of the Census; they are available through the ICPSR. All data files and software will be made available to individuals at ICPSR member institutions, as well as to others, on request.

Persons interested in obtaining further information about the ICPSR or any data in the holdings should contact the ICPSR staff. Inquiries should be addressed to the ICPSR at P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

## NOTES

1. The *Guide to Resources and Services*, which is a publication describing the ICPSR and its activities, can be ordered from ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.
2. Those wanting more information about obtaining 1980 Census tapes should write to '80 Census, ICPSR, P.O. Box 1248, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.