

MEASURING ELECTORAL INTEGRITY A NEW DATASET

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Executive Summary

To provide a more systematic and comprehensive source of independent evidence about the integrity of elections, the Electoral Integrity Project launched a new pilot study in early 2013 seeking to provide an authoritative and rigorous assessment of the quality of national elections held around the world. The Electoral Integrity Project is a team of scholars at the University of Sydney and Harvard University, led by Professor Pippa Norris, in conjunction with an international advisory board and many partner organizations in the international community. To gather evidence for the pilot study, the project developed an expert survey of Perceptions of Electoral Integrity (PEI), in conjunction with Professor Jørgen Elklit (Aarhus University) and Professor Andrew Reynolds (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill). The method of pooling expert knowledge has been used for years by natural scientists—for example to assess the environmental risks of building nuclear plants. Expert surveys are also used in other attempts to monitor difficult and controversial issues where other sources of comparative evidence are lacking (e.g. the Perception of Corruption Index developed by Transparency International).

Determining when, where and why elections succeed or fail is a matter of growing concern for the international community; however, to date scholars and practitioners have been hindered by lack of reliable, credible, and consistent evidence that could be used to compare the quality of elections around the world. This presentation helps fill this gap and presents the first results of the EIP pilot study including the twenty countries that held elections in June-December 2012. These data facilitate the comparison of electoral quality using an overall standardized 100-point PEI index for each contest. The results can also be examined in more fine-grained detail on eleven dimensions of electoral integrity—including forty-nine separate items. The preliminary results suggest that the PEI index demonstrates high levels of external validity, internal validity, and legitimacy. I conclude that, when triangulated with other evidence, the PEI can address many research issues such as how best to classify electoral autocracies and other mixed regimes. It should also prove useful for policymakers concerned with evaluating what works to strengthen electoral integrity.

This paper is presented by Richard W. Frank and coauthored with Pippa Norris and Ferran Martínez i Coma. It is forthcoming from *Journal of Democracy* (October 2013) with the title “Assessing the Quality of Elections.” The data used in this presentation are available for download on the Electoral Integrity Project’s website.