



WORKING PAPER 2013-01-ccr

Preliminary version: January 2013

Updated version: September 2016



## GOVERNMENTS AND LEGISLATIVE PRODUCTION IN FRANCE: THE DATABASE (1959-2012)



Nicolas GAVOILLE

*Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Latvia -*

*Centre Condorcet for Political Economy, CREM-CNRS,*

*Université de Rennes1, France*



CONDORCET CENTER FOR POLITICAL ECONOMY  
UNIVERSITY OF RENNES 1 – CREM-CNRS

[www.condorcet-center.fr](http://www.condorcet-center.fr)

# Government members and legislative production in France: a database (1959-2012)

Nicolas Gavoille\*

Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Latvia  
Condorcet Center, University Rennes 1, France

September 9, 2016

## Abstract

*This article introduces a new dataset focusing on the characteristics of the government members as well as on the legislative production in France, from the early months of the Vth Republic in January 1959 to the end of the XIII<sup>th</sup> legislature in March 2012. It is composed of two distinct parts. The first part provides detailed characteristics of each government member, such as age, diploma and period in office. The second part aggregates these characteristics at the government level and contains a large amount of variables covering several aspects of the legislative production, classified into three different groups: political constraints, institutional variables and legislative production. Most of the variables are observed at a monthly rate.*

**Keywords:** Economic theory of legislation, Quality of politicians, Political legislation cycle.

**JEL Classification:** Y10, H69, D72.

---

\*Stockholm School of Economics in Riga, Strelnieku iela 4, LV-1010. E-mail: nicolas.gavoille@sseriga.edu.

# 1 Introduction

The analysis of policy makers' personal characteristics receives a growing interest (Besley et al., 2011; Galasso and Nannicini, 2011 among many others). Datasets providing information about characteristics of policy makers together with the institutional and political context, however, is a very scarce resource. This present database aims at partially filling the void concerning France at the national level of government.

Covering the period between the beginning of the first legislature of the  $V^{th}$  Republic in January 1959 and the end of the  $XIII^{th}$  legislature in March 2012, the present database is composed of two parts. The first part provides personal characteristics of all the members of the successive governments at the individual level. It takes the shape of a panel dataset: the characteristics of a minister are provided for all the successive months he/she has been in office. The second part is a time series that aggregates these characteristics at the government level. It enables studying the evolution of the government characteristics over more than 50 years on a monthly basis, providing 639 periods over the full sample. We add to these aggregates many variables describing the political context, but also the number of each type of legislative act enacted per month. In France, roughly 90% of the laws voted in the Parliament are originated by the government, which also enjoys an important discretionary power to produce decrees. It supplies to the researchers in political economy original data that were not available previously, as most of them have been constructed *ex nihilo*.

The French case is an ideal ground to implement empirical work for several reasons. The main point is the institutional continuity. Except a few constitutional changes, the institutional framework remains stable since December 1958 and the creation of the  $V^{th}$  Constitution, thus providing a large amount of data. Moreover, the unique mix of presidentialism and parliamentarism offers specific features, as the so-called *cohabitation*, which could be exploited in many ways. And last but not least, a high heterogeneity of political contexts occurred during these 54 years, including events such as the political and social crisis of 1968, the death of President Pompidou in 1974 or the entry in the government of communist ministers in 1981.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the first part of the dataset, which provides information about government members at the individual level. Section 3 successively describes the four categories of variables of the second part of the dataset, which provides aggregate data about the governments. Section 4 provides further details about the data sources, and Section 5 concludes. The list of the variables is available in the appendix.

## 2 Personal characteristics of government members

The first part of the dataset provides detailed characteristics of all the government members of the French Republic between 1958 and 2012. The dataset contains highly detailed information

concerning the ministers. By minister, we refer here to its extended definition, encompassing the ‘Premier Ministre’, ‘ministre d’Etat’, ‘ministre’, ‘ministre délégué’ (delegated minister) and ‘secrétaire d’Etat’ (State secretary). The reason is that the President of the Republic directly nominates all these ministers. This part takes the shape of a panel data structure. Each minister is an individual for which we provide information at a monthly rate. For instance, André Malraux has continuously held a portfolio in the successive governments from the beginning of the  $V^{th}$  Republic in December 1958 to June 1969, for a total of 127 months. The data set thus contains 127 observations for André Malraux.

The first variable is *SEX*. It is a dummy variable taking the value 1 if the minister is a woman. The second variable, *BIRTH*, gives the year of birth of the individual. It is followed by *AGE*, which is simply computed as the difference between the actual year and the birth year. The next six variables are dummies providing information about the education of the ministers. *NO\_DIPLOMA* takes the value 1 if the minister did not complete high school. The variable *BAC* indicates ministers who completed high school but did not pursue their studies, at the opposite of those for whom *SUP* takes the value 1. This variable indicates ministers who obtained a university diploma other than a PhD or graduated from ENA. For the former, the variable *DOC* takes the value 1 if the minister completed a PhD. Those who graduated from ENA, the prestigious administration school, are characterized by a value of 1 in the column labeled *ENA*. Finally, ministers who completed political studies other than ENA take the value 1 for the variable *POLITICAL\_STUDIES*.

The next set of variables encompasses variables related to the political career of the minister. *GOV* indicates the government in which the minister is a member at this period. The value 1 indicates the first government of the  $V^{th}$  Republic, 34 the last government under President Nicolas Sarkozy. The variable *PARTY* indicates the acronym of the party to which the minister belongs. The full list of acronyms is provided at the end of the Appendix. The next variable, *EXP*, indicates the months of experience of the individual as a minister of the  $V^{th}$  Republic. Those who already gained a ministerial experience under the previous Republic take the value 1 in the column labeled *MINISTER\_4*. The variable *EXP\_4* indicates the number of years they served under this Republic. Besides the experience as minister, the dataset also encompasses the experience of the minister as a deputy (*EXP\_DEPUTY*) and as a senator (*EXP\_SENATOR*), computed in year. The variable *MAYOR* indicates whether the minister holds simultaneously a municipal mandate. If this is the case, the variable *EXP\_MAYOR* indicates the number of years since the beginning of this charge. Last, *CITY\_SIZE* provides the approximate size of the municipality under responsibility of the individual.

### 3 Aggregate data

The second part of the dataset is shaped as a time series covering the January 1959-March 2012 period. It provides three sets of variables: variables related to (i) the institutional and political

context; (ii) the composition of the government and (iii) the legislative production.

### 3.1 Institutional and political variables

The first category of variables aims at describing the institutional and political context and their evolution over the years. As the President of the Republic holds the major role in the French political life, a categorical variable (*PRESIDENT*) indicates the period of presidency of the six successive presidents who took turn between 1958 and 2012, namely Charles De Gaulle (1959-1969), Georges Pompidou (1969-1974), Valéry Giscard d’Estaing (1974-1981), François Mitterrand (1981-1995), Jacques Chirac (1995-2007) and finally Nicolas Sarkozy (2007-2012). Before 2002, the president was elected for seven years. Since the reelection of Jacques Chirac in 2002, this length has been downshifted to five years. The variable *LEGI* shows the 13 legislatures that took place in the National Assembly. The natural length of a legislature is 5 years, but according to the Constitution the president has the power to dissolve the Assembly, provoking an early call of the legislative elections. This happened 5 times over the 54 years covered by the dataset. Similarly, two indicators introduce the successive governments. Officially, 34 different governments took place between 1958 and 2012. However, *GOV1* goes up to 27. This difference is explained by the fact that often, a government is nominated by the president just in the in-between presidential and legislative election, and is confirmed after the legislative election. This ‘one-month stand’ government is included in the following government. For instance, François Fillon was nominated Prime Minister following the election of Nicolas Sarkozy in May 2007, composing government Fillon I. Less than one month later, after the legislative election, the Prime Minister announced the composition of the government Fillon 2. The variable *GOV2* lists all the different prime ministers, thus reaching a value of 17. As an illustration, the three governments lead by Fillon between 2007 and 2012 are counted as one for this variable.

*LEFT* takes the value 1 for leftist governments. A very specific feature of the French institutional context is the possibility to have a two-headed executive power, in which the president and the government are not from the same political side: the extensively studied *cohabitation*. It comes from the fact that originally, the legislative and presidential elections were not held simultaneously. To take into account this particularity the variable *COHAB* takes the value 1 during the three different periods in which such situation occurred. The following variables are useful to capture the leeway enjoyed by the government. The first variable of this set is *COALITION*, which denotes the share of seats in the National Assembly supporting the government. Alternatively, *SEATSPREM* only takes into account the share of deputies affiliated to the party of the Prime Minister. An index measuring the degree of homogeneity of the government coalition is introduced with *HG*. It is computed as a standard Herfindahl index of the seats supporting the government in the National Assembly. Similarly, *HO* measures the degree of homogeneity of the opposition using the same method. Following Lagona and Padovano (2008), these two indicators are used to create a third variable *HT*, computed as follows:

$$HT = HG \times (1 - HO),$$

$$\text{where } HG = \sum_{g=1}^G f_g^2 \text{ and } HO = \sum_{o=1}^O f_o^2,$$

with  $f_g$  and  $f_o$  the relative frequencies of the number of the seats respectively held by the government and the opposition coalition in the National Assembly. This index ranges from 0 to 1; a value close to 1 indicates a high homogeneity of the governing coalition that faces an extremely heterogeneous opposition.

Finally, three contextual variables are included in the dataset: GDP growth and unemployment. GDP displays the GDP growth for each quarter since April 1960. Unemployment is introduced with two variables: *UNEMPLOY1* and *UNEMPLOY2*. The former is reported for every quarter since January 1968. The latter is more precise, as it shows the unemployment rate at a monthly frequency, but the series only starts in January 1983.

### 3.2 Composition of the government

The variables of this subsection provide information about the composition of the governments. *NMIN* indicates the total number of ministers. Even if the composition remains quite stable over the lifetime of a government, the Prime Minister may sometimes proceed to a marginal change in the composition of the government, called *remaniement*. These reshuffles are taken into account thanks to the monthly count. All the variables concerning government characteristics are computed when a change in *NMIN* occurs. A battery of 33 variables represents the number of ministers provided by each political party. For instance, in January 1959, the government was composed of fourteen UNR ministers, two UDSR, five CNIP, five MRP, two SFIO and two ministers without official party. The large number of political parties over the period can be partially explained by the fact that the parties are denominated according to their official title contemporaneously to the government. In parallel, the history of the political parties through the years of the sample is long and complex: parties merge and split at a high pace (see for instance Chevallier et al., 2012 for an overview). The list of all the parties taken into account is provided at the end of this appendix.

The aggregate personal characteristics of the government members are described through a set of specific variables built upon the individual data described previously in section 2. *WOMEN* indicates the number of women participating to the government. Similarly, *PREVIOUS\_GOUV* displays the number of present ministers who hold this role in the (direct) previous government. Thus, it makes possible to compute a turn-over indicator. The literature on the quality of politicians usually considers three factors constituting the human capital: the past experience in local government, education and previous market income. Unfortunately, availability of the latter is not even thinkable in France. But with some obstinacy, information about the two formers can be obtained. *MEAN\_AGE*, as its name states, expresses the average age of the government members, while *MEDIAN\_AGE* and *AGE\_SD* respectively indicate the median age and the standard deviation. To be precise, *MEAN\_AGE* is computed only considering the year of birth, and not the

exact date during the year. In other words, the database considers that everybody was born the 1st of January. Following the same structure, *EXP\_MEAN\_DEP*, *EXP\_MEDIAN\_DEP* and *EXP\_SD\_DEP* put the emphasis on the experience gained by the ministers as deputies at the National Assembly before their governmental function. These variables are expressed in years. In parallel, *EXP\_MEAN\_SEN*, *EXP\_MEDIAN\_SEN* and *EXP\_SD\_SEN* are computed exactly in the same way, but focusing of the experience in the upper room, the *Sénat*. A lot of ministers served in previous government; *EXP\_MIN5* thus indicates the average experience (in years) of the government members as former ministers during the  $V^{th}$  Republic. *EXP\_MIN\_1ST* gives the individual experience of the Prime Minister. Finally, *NB\_MINISTER4* shows the number of ministers who participated to a government under the  $IV^{th}$  Constitution (1946-1958).

The dataset includes some variables providing information about schooling of the government members. They are classified into six items. *NB\_NO\_DIPLOMA* shows the count of ministers who did not obtain a high school diploma. This situation occurs more often during the first governments, as a consequence of the  $II^{nd}$  World War. *NB\_BAC* counts the ministers who passed the *Baccalauréat* which is the final exam in high school, and then stopped their studies. In the same manner, *NB\_SUP* takes into account the ministers who obtained a university diploma (except PhD), and *NB\_DOC* those who completed doctoral studies. The variable *NB\_ENA* shows how many *énarques* were parts of each government. In the same kind of idea, *NB\_POLITICAL\_STUDIES* indicates the number of ministers who studied politics in university (except ENA).

## 4 Production of legislation

The production of legislation can be considered as the output of the government. To become effective, any policy decision needs to take the form of a legislative act, which is redistributive by nature according to the economic theory of legislation (Stigler, 1971; Tollison, 1988). The database includes a monthly count of the four types of legislation existing in France: laws, ‘ordonnances’, decrees and ‘arrêtés’. *LAW* shows the total number of laws that have been promulgated and published in the official journal. There exists a particular kind of laws, namely ‘ordonnance’, which consists in a delegation of power from the Parliament to the government. The latter directly writes the laws, and submits it straightforwardly to the vote of the Parliament, without following the track of a standard bill. This kind of laws is introduced with *ORDO*. Next, *DEC* shows the number of decrees that is officially published for each month. The decrees need to be signed by the Prime Minister or the President. Finally, *ARR* lists all the ‘arrêtés’ (ministerial orders) that are published each month. Contrary to the decrees, this type of legislation is at the discretion of the minister, who does not need any countersignature.

The production of legislation is set up by the pace of the parliamentary sessions. To take it into account, two variables are introduced. First, *ORDINARY* is a binary variable taking the value 1

when an ordinary session is held during the month. Second, *EXTRA* is another dummy variable equal to 1 if the National Assembly ran a so-called extraordinary session. Before 1995, a year was composed of two ordinary sessions, in spring and in autumn, with extraordinary sessions held when needed. A reform in 1995 modified this schedule, and created a unique session running from October to June, still with the possibility to call for an extraordinary session when the topicality asks for it. Thus, the variable *REFORM* takes the value 1 after October 1995. It is worth mentioning that in a few cases, the number of voted laws is positive, while there was not any session occurring during the month. It simply comes from the fact that before being published, a law needs to be signed by the President within two weeks, thus introducing a possible (short) delay.

## 5 Sources and Data Collection

Most of the variables included in this dataset have never been gathered before. Data about general information on the governments, such as the composition or length of each government, have been gathered on the Parliament websites ([www.assemblee-nationale.fr](http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr) and [www.senat.fr](http://www.senat.fr)). The former also provided the data used to compute the political bargaining variables and the length of the parliamentary sessions. Personal characteristics have been collected using various issues of Who's Who in France, ministers' biography and autobiographies and Wikipedia. Macroeconomic data come from the OCDE website ([www.ocde.org](http://www.ocde.org)). Finally, data about the legislative output were collected on [www.legifrance.fr](http://www.legifrance.fr), an official website dedicated to legislative resources.

## 6 Conclusion

This database aims at providing a comprehensive overview of the French governments and its political as well as institutional context over the  $V^{th}$  Republic, from its birth to the end of the  $XII^{th}$  legislature in 2012. Such data collection has no equivalent concerning the French case, and provides to researchers in political economics or political science a new playground. The extremely simple architecture of the database makes easy the development of various potential extensions. For instance, a very useful extension would be a decomposition of the count of legislation by topic, in the vein of the work of the Comparative Agendas Project (<http://www.comparativeagendas.info>).



## References

- Besley, T., Montalvo, J., Reynal-Querol, M., 2011. Do educated leaders matter? *Economic Journal* 121, 205–227.
- Chevallier, J. J., Carcassonne, G., Duhamel, O., 2012. *Histoire de la Ve République: 1958-2012*. Dalloz.
- Galasso, V., Nannicini, T., 2011. Competing on good politicians. *American Political Science Review* 105 (1), 79–99.
- Lagona, F., Padovano, F., 2008. The political legislation cycle. *Public Choice* 134 (3-4), 201–229.
- Stigler, G. J., 1971. The theory of economic regulation. *The Bell journal of economics and management science* 1 (2), 3–21.
- Tollison, R. D., 1988. Public choice and legislation. *Virginia Law Review* 74 (2), 339–371.

## Appendix: List of variables

| Individual characteristics |                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| SEX                        | =1 if woman                                                                                                   |
| BIRTH                      | Year of birth                                                                                                 |
| AGE                        | Difference between year and year of birth                                                                     |
| NO_DIPLOMA                 | =1 if no diploma                                                                                              |
| BAC                        | =1 if high school completed                                                                                   |
| SUP                        | =1 if university diploma                                                                                      |
| DOC                        | =1 if phd                                                                                                     |
| ENA                        | =1 if graduated from ENA                                                                                      |
| EXP                        | Number of years as minister during the Vth republic                                                           |
| MINISTER_4                 | =1 if minister under the Ivth Republic                                                                        |
| EXP_4                      | Number of years as minister under the Vith Republic                                                           |
| EXP_DEPUTY                 | Number of years as deputy                                                                                     |
| EXP_SENATOR                | Number of years as senator                                                                                    |
| MAYOR                      | =1 if mayor                                                                                                   |
| EXP_MAYOR                  | Number of years as mayor                                                                                      |
| CITY_SIZE                  | Number of inhabitants of the city                                                                             |
| Aggregate data             |                                                                                                               |
| PRESIDENT                  | Name of the President of the Republic                                                                         |
| LEGI                       | Index of the Legislature (from 1 to 13)                                                                       |
| GOV1                       | Index of the government (from 1 to 27)                                                                        |
| GOV2                       | Index of government (from 1 to 17)                                                                            |
| LEFT                       | =1 if left-wing government                                                                                    |
| COHAB                      | =1 if period of cohabitation                                                                                  |
| COALITION                  | Share of seats supporting the government in the National Assembly                                             |
| SEATSPREM                  | Share of seats of the Prime Minister's party in the Natonal Assembly                                          |
| HG                         | Herfindahl index of the government coalition in the National Assembly                                         |
| HO                         | Herfindahl index of the opposition in the National Assembly                                                   |
| HT                         | Measure of relative homogeneity of the government coalition<br>versus the opposition in the National Assembly |
| GDP                        | Quarterly GDP growth                                                                                          |
| UNEMPLOY1                  | Quarterly unemployment rate                                                                                   |
| UNEMPLOY2                  | Monthly unemployment rate                                                                                     |
| NMIN                       | Number of ministers composing the government                                                                  |
| WOMEN                      | Number of women in the in the government                                                                      |
| PREVIOUS_GOUV              | Number of ministers already ministers in the previous government                                              |

|                      |                                                                             |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MEAN_AGE             | Mean age of the government members                                          |
| MEDIAN_AGE           | Median age of the government members                                        |
| AGE_SD               | Standard deviation of the age of the government members                     |
| EXP_MEAN_DEP         | Mean experience of the government members                                   |
| EXP_MEDIAN_DEP       | Median experience of the government members                                 |
| EXP_SD_DEP           | Standard deviation of the experience of the government members              |
| EXP_MIN5             | Mean experience as minister of the government members                       |
| EXP_MIN_1ST          | Experience of the Prime Minister as minister                                |
| NB_MINISTER4         | Number of ministers in the government<br>who served during the IVh Republic |
| NB_NO_DIPLOMA        | Number of ministers without diploma                                         |
| NB_BAC               | Number of ministers with a high school diploma                              |
| NB_SUP               | Number of ministers with a university degree                                |
| NB_DOC               | Number of ministers with a PhD                                              |
| NB_ENA               | Number of ministers graduated from ENA                                      |
| NB_POLITICAL_STUDIES | Number of ministers with a political studies background                     |
| LAW                  | Number of laws published in the Journal Officiel                            |
| ORDO                 | Number of ordonnances published in the Journal Officiel                     |
| DEC                  | Number of decrees published in the Journal Officiel                         |
| ARR                  | Number of decrees published in the Journal Officiel                         |
| ORDINARY             | =1 if ordinary session                                                      |
| EXTRA                | =1 if extraordinary session                                                 |
| REFORM               | =1 after the reform of the parliamentary session (October 1995)             |

---

Parties

---

|       |                                                       |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| CDP   | Centre Démocratie et Progrès                          |
| CDS   | Centre des Démocrates Sociaux                         |
| CNIP  | Centre National des Indépendants et Paysans           |
| FNRI  | Fédération Nationale des Républicains et Indépendents |
| FT    | Front Travailiste                                     |
| LGM   | La Gauche Moderne                                     |
| MD    | Mouvement des Démocrates                              |
| MDC   | Mouvement des Citoyens                                |
| MODEM | Mouvement Démocrate                                   |
| MR    | Mouvement Réformateur                                 |
| MRG   | Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche                      |
| MRP   | Mouvement Républicain Populaire                       |
| MSL   | Mouvement des Sociaux-Libéraux                        |
| NC    | Nouveau Centre                                        |
| PCF   | Parti Communiste Français                             |

|          |                                                                 |
|----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| PSU      | Pari Socialiste Unifié                                          |
| PS       | Parti Socialiste                                                |
| RADICAUX | Radicaux                                                        |
| RI       | Républicains Indépendents                                       |
| RPR      | Rassemblement Pour la République                                |
| SE       | Sans Étiquette (without party)                                  |
| SFIO     | Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière                  |
| UDF      | Union pour la Démocratie Française                              |
| UDR      | Union des Démocrates pour la République                         |
| UDSR     | Union Démocratique et Socialiste de la Résistance               |
| UDT      | Union Démocratique du Travail                                   |
| UNR      | Union pour la Nouvelle République                               |
| UNR-UDT  | Union pour la Nouvelle République-Union Démocratique du Travail |
| UDV      | Union des Démocrates pour la Ve                                 |
| UMP      | Union pour un Mouvement Populaire                               |
| Vert     | Les Verts                                                       |

---