



$$(a+b)^2 = a^2 + b^2 + 2ab$$

HOW DO I FIND DATA?

Ask 4 key questions

Select a topic and work toward defining your research question. When working on data-based projects, it's helpful to ask four key questions:



What?



Who?



Where?



When?

Political polarization



For example, to investigate the topic of political polarization, you need to make a few decisions. What kind of polarization are you investigating?

Are you interested in polarization of the general public, polarization in selected red and blue states, or polarization in Congress?

Who collects the data you need?



Some candidates include government agencies, academic researchers, businesses, non-profits, and intergovernmental or non-governmental organizations.

What time period will you investigate?



You may be interested in finding out how long polarization has been an issue or you may want to look at a shorter period of time.

What time period will you investigate?



"When" can be tricky. It takes time to collect and publish data, so in some cases, the most current datasets can be several years old. Also, datasets gathered this year may not have been collected 10, 20, or 50 years ago. Investigate the datasets available in earlier years before proceeding.

What about geography?



Is there a geographic component to your research project? Are you looking for national, regional, state, or local data?



- RESEARCH
- GET HELP
- SERVICES
- NEWS & EVENTS
- ABOUT
- SUPPORT THE LIBRARY

Scholar OneSearch Search Help | Browse | Advanced

Search books, articles, videos, more... Library Catalogs + Articles 



The Library's discipline-based Research Guides provide a good starting point for identifying resources.

Political Science: Data/Statistics/Polls

- Home
- Research Basics
- Articles and News
- Data/Statistics/Polls**
- International Affairs
- GIS and Data Visualization [↗](#)
- Federal Government Information
- Country Information
- Citing, Writing, Dissertations
- Courses ▾

Key Data and Polling Resources

[Data Providers \(U.S. focus\)](#)[Data Mapping Resources](#)[Data at NU](#)[International Data](#)[Polling](#)

- [iPoll \(Roper Center\)](#)
Database of the Roper Center at Cornell University. Provides data from national opinion polls, 1935 to present.
- [Eurobarometer \(European Commission\)](#)
Issues polling 1973 to present.
- [Global Barometers Survey](#)
- [Pew Global Attitudes and Trends](#)
- [World Public Opinion \(University of Maryland\)](#)

Many Library Research Guides provide access to data and statistical resources. To start our investigation of political polarization in the U.S. population, we'll check the Data, Statistics, and Polls tab on the Political Science Guide.

Look in scholarly articles



The screenshot shows the EBSCOhost search interface. On the left is the EBSCOhost logo. The main search area has a header that says "Searching: Specific Databases, Show all | Choose Databases by Subject". Below this are three search rows. The first row has a text input field containing "political polarization", a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Field (option...)", and a dark blue "Search" button. The second row has a dropdown menu with "AND", a text input field containing "data or polling" (highlighted with a yellow border), a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Field (option...)", and a plus sign button. The third row has a dropdown menu with "AND", an empty text input field, a dropdown menu labeled "Select a Field (option...)", and a minus sign button. At the bottom of the search area are three links: "Basic Search", "Advanced Search", and "Search History".

Scholarly articles often contain reference to datasets and polls. In this library database search for materials on political polarization, we've added two terms data and polling to find scholarly articles with this type of content.

Note that we've typed data or polling to indicate that we're interested in articles on polarization with data or polling or both.

Look in scholarly articles

organizations. I continue in this tradition and investigate the changes in the emergent interorganizational structure, with a specific focus on patterns of political polarization. I use the General Social Survey's consistent information about associational participation in 16 different types of organizations over a time period of 30 years, from 1974–1994 and in 2004. The survey question is asked as follows.

In this example, a scholarly article on political polarization references the General Social Survey, a recurring survey produced by the National Opinion Research Center .

Identify datasets from tables and charts

Table 404. Democratic and Republican Percentages of Two-Party Presidential Vote by Selected Characteristics of Voters: 2004 and 2008

[In percent. Covers citizens of voting age living in private housing units in the contiguous United States. Percentages for Democratic Presidential vote are computed by subtracting the percentage Republican vote from 100 percent; third-party or independent votes are not included as valid data. Data are from the National Election Studies and are based on a sample and subject to sampling variability; for details, see source]

Characteristic	2004		2008		Characteristic	2004		2008	
	Demo- cratic	Republi- can	Demo- cratic	Republi- can		Demo- cratic	Republi- can	Demo- cratic	Republi- can
Total ¹	50	50	55	45	Race:				
					White	42	58	44	56
					Black	90	10	99	1
Year of birth:					Education:				
1975 or later	66	34	65	35	Less than high school...	69	31	72	28
1959 to 1974	45	55	56	44	High school diploma/ equivalent	46	54	57	43
1943 to 1958	44	56	54	46	Some college, no degree	47	53	53	47
1927 to 1942	51	49	41	59	College	50	50	51	49
1911 to 1926	52	48	52	48	Union household	64	36	60	40
1895 to 1910	--	--	--	--	Nonunion household	46	54	54	46
Sex:									
Male	46	54	52	48					
Female	53	47	57	43					

-- Represents zero. ¹ Includes other characteristics, not shown separately.
 Source: American National Election Studies, <<http://www.electionstudies.org/>>.

In this example taken from the Statistical Abstract of the United States, we're directed to the American National Election Studies for additional detail.

Identify datasets through data archives

- ICPSR (Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research)
- Data.gov
- National Science Foundation Data
- Centers for Disease Control
- National Archive of Data on Arts and Culture
- United Nations Data



$$(a+b)^2 = a^2 + b^2 + 2ab$$

ASK A LIBRARIAN

library.northeastern.edu/ask