

JUDGEIT II: A Program for Evaluating Electoral Systems and Redistricting Plans¹

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¹Available from <http://GKing.Harvard.edu/judgeit>.

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1 Introduction

JudgeIt II brings the analytical routines of the original version of JudgeIt to the R Project for Statistical Computing, while also greatly simplifying its interface and control system.¹ The methods implemented in this software were developed in Gelman and King (1990*b,a*, 1994*b,a*); King and Gelman (1991); Gelman, Katz and King. (2004).

JudgeIt allows a user to construct a model of a two-party election system over multiple election cycles, derive quantities of interest about the system through statistical estimation and simulation, and produce output summary statistics and graphical plots of those quantities. Some of the quantities of interest are based on partisan symmetry as a standard of fairness in legislative redistricting, such as *partisan bias* as the deviation from fairness and *electoral responsiveness* which indexes how party control of legislative seats responds to changes in a party's success at the polls even in a fair system. (A uniform consensus has existed in the academic literature since at least King and Browning (1987) on partisan symmetry as a standard for fairness, and even the U.S. Supreme Court now appears to agree; see ?.) JudgeIt will also estimate and graph seats-votes curves, make specific vote and seat predictions for individual districts, and calculate numerous other relevant statistics.

The program can evaluate electoral systems in three general situations:

1. When an election already has taken place,
2. When an election has not been held yet but a new redistricting plan (or plans) has been proposed or implemented, and
3. When you wish to assess what an election would have been like if held under certain specified counterfactual conditions (such as if no minority districts had been drawn, or term limitations had prevented incumbents from running for reelection).

For bias, responsiveness, seats-votes curves, and virtually every other estimate, JudgeIt provides quantitative estimates of uncertainty (i.e., standard errors or confidence intervals). This is recognized as essential by social scientists and even the Supreme Court (see *Castaneda v. Partida*, 430 U.S. 482, 1977, and *Hazelwood School District v. United States*, 433 U.S. 299, 1977).

2 Installation Instructions and Requirements

As this version of JudgeIt has been built as a package for the mathematical software R, it is necessary to install this software before beginning.

The latest version of R is available for free from <http://www.r-project.org>. After installation, retrieve the JudgeIt package through the following command:

```
> install.packages("JudgeIt", repos = "http://gking.harvard.edu")
```

To use the commands within, type

```
> library(JudgeIt)
```

JudgeIt requires the R package `mvtnorm` to function properly, and will load it automatically when needed.

3 Usage Overview

JudgeIt can conduct three types of analyses:

1. Evaluation, wherein the information gathered from one year's elections is applied to itself. This is done to suggest the underlying structure of an electoral system.

¹The original version of JudgeIt, written by Gary King and Andrew Gelman in versions available for DOS and in the language Gauss, is still available at <http://gking.harvard.edu/judgeit/judgeitI>.

2. Prediction, which takes a set of observed covariates and predicts the outcome of an election. This can be done with or without the previous election's results and covariates included.
3. Counterfactual analysis, which estimates the results if the election had been run under different circumstances (i.e. with different predictors.)

The JudgeIt interface requires only **one** command to perform analyses, called `judgeit`. The standard auxiliary functions `summary`, `print` and `plot` have been adapted to display the object that results.

Two steps are required to perform a JudgeIt analysis: election data must be loaded into a JudgeIt object, and the routine for analysis must be specified along with its required options.

4 Formatting Data Sets

JudgeIt requires each election to be reported in a `data.frame`. This is natural if your data is in a comma-separated or tab-delimited file, since operations like

```
data <- read.csv("ohio.csv")
data2 <- read.table("cali98.txt")
```

will automatically put these tables into the data frame format. It is important to make sure that each variable is labeled before using it in `JudgeIt`, either by making the first line of the data file contain variable names, or by assigning them afterwards. For example:

```
data <- read.csv("ohio.csv",header=FALSE)
colnames(data) <- c("district","vote","inc")
```

Since most JudgeIt analyses will involve a series of consecutive elections, `JudgeIt` accepts such a series as an object of type `list`. Suppose we have three elections, say Ohio's State Legislature in 1992, 1994 and 1996, and that each election is stored in a data frame as above. To integrate the separate data frames, use the command `elections <- list(oh1992,oh1994,oh1996)` which will create an object named "elections". Each year's election data *must* use the same variable names, so that JudgeIt can recognize the same quantity across different elections.

5 Included Data Sets

JudgeIt comes with data set ICSPR 6311, coded as `house6311`, containing the results for the U.S. House of Representatives from 1896 through 1992. It is formatted as a list of 49 data frames, each named for their election year, and containing six vectors:

- `STATE`, a numerical ICPSR state code for the state containing the district;
- `DIST`, a numerical indicator for the number of the district within the state;
- `INC`, an incumbency indicator, -1 for Republican and 1 for Democrat;
- `VOTE`, the share of the vote received by the Democratic candidate;
- `TURNOUT`, the number of votes for the two candidates combined, and
- `DELSOUTH`, an indicator for whether the district is located in the South.

6 Step 1: Create a JudgeIt object

Now that there is an object containing the elections we wish to analyze, we can load this object into JudgeIt. To do this:

```
judg.obj <-
  judgeit(modelform=vote ~ predictor1 + predictor2 + modfun(vote),
    data=elections, voteform=cbind(turnout,eligible)~seats, ...) }
```

where the ellipsis "`...`" represents other possible commands used by the R command `model.frame`.

Model Formula

The model formula, `modelform`, specifies the system's outcome variable — the *proportion* of the two-party vote received by the candidate for a specified party — and any desired predictors, such as incumbency status. The predictor names must be the same as the variable names within the data list (referred to here as `elections`.)

Functions can also be applied to the variables within the formula. For example, if we wish to create an indicator for whether a win is decisive (for example, the winner more than triples the opponent's votes), we first create such a function, `modfun <- function(arg) -1*(arg<0.25)+1*(arg>0.75)`, and then use it in the formula. For example, with data set `house6311` this formula works: `modelform=VOTE INC+modfun(VOTE)`.

Voter Formula

We use the voter formula, `voteform`, to indicate the *number* of actual voters (or the turnout), the number of eligible voters, and/or the number of seats each district elects to the main assembly. If this is omitted, the number of seats is assumed to be one per district and the turnout is assumed to be equal in all districts.

For example,

- `voteform=cbind(turnout,eligible) seats` specifies all three quantities.
- `voteform=cbind(turnout,eligible) 1` specifies turnout and eligible voters, and one seat per district.
- `voteform=turnout 1` specifies turnout. The number of eligible voters is ignored, and seats are specified at one per district.
- `voteform= 1` is the default and so is unnecessary.

6.1 Other Options

6.1.1 Selecting a data subset

For example, the data set `house6311` contains an indicator `DELSOUTH`, which is 1 if a district is located in the south and 0 otherwise. To perform analyses on non-southern districts only, initialize a `JudgeIt` object with the expression

```
judgeit(...,subset=DELSOUTH==0,...,data=house6311)
```

6.1.2 Automatic Use of Previous Year's Results

The results of a previous year's election is often among the best predictors of a current contest, and they are included by default. To exclude these lags, include the option `use.last.votes=F` in your `JudgeIt` statement.

6.1.3 Redistricting

At some point during a state's existence, the electoral map is redrawn to adjust for changes in the demographics of the districts. Specifying whether the districts in one election are identical to the previous one are vital to an accurate representation of the system.

By default, `JudgeIt` assumes that if two consecutive years have the same number of districts in the map, then no redistricting has taken place.

To set a redistricting occurrence manually, `JudgeIt` accepts as an option `same.districts`, which indicates whether the previous election used the same districting plan. In many states in the American system, the easiest way to do this is to have a variable specifying the election years and note whether the year ends in 2 (`year %% 10 == 2`). For other situations, you will need to add a specially coded variable to the data frame and set `same.districts` to it.

6.1.4 Uncontested Districts

JudgeIt includes several routines to deal with uncontested districts. By default Judgeit assumes that a vote share below 0.05 or above 0.95 indicates an uncontested district and are imputed; these levels can be changes using the options `uncons.low` and `uncons.high`.

The option `uncons.method` indicates which method is to be used to deal with districts tagged as uncontested:

- `"default"`, which replaces uncontested values with assumed vote totals specified by `uncons.low.new` and `uncons.high.new` (default values are 25% and 75%);
- `"impute"`, which uses the behaviour of contested districts to estimate unknown vote shares,
- `"remove"`, which simply eliminates uncontested districts from the analysis, or
- `"nochange"` which leaves the vote variable as entered.

6.1.5 Withholding Preliminary Analysis

By default, the routine `judgeit` conducts a preliminary analysis in order to determine estimates of several properties of the electoral system. These include the fraction of the variability which can be considered systematic (the quantity `lambda`), the standard error for each vote estimate (`sigma`), and the coefficients for each predictor in the linear model.

To withhold this analysis from the initial loading of data into a `judgeit` object, postponing it until a quantity of interest is desired, the option `prelim=F` can be specified.

6.1.6 Simulation Parameters

JudgeIt analyzes election systems by simulating a number of hypothetical draws of the election of interest, and computing quantities of interest from these simulations. Two options control the depth and breadth to which these simulations are conducted: `simnum` and `simdepth`, which are the number of election simulations, and the number of systematic error simulations per election simulation, respectively. The default setting for these parameters is 100; it is not typically necessary to change these settings.

6.1.7 Applying District Weights: Some Count More than Others

Districts may have different influence than others when determining the parameters of a system. To reflect this, we can assign a `weight` parameter to command `judgeit`:

- `weight=constant` (default) in which all districts have equal weight;
- `weight=actvotes`, corresponding to the two-party votes cast in each district;
- `weight=elgvotes`, corresponding to the total number of eligible voters in each district, or
- `weight=seats`, the number of seats in each district.

7 Step 2: Conduct Analyses

Once an election system has been loaded into a JudgeIt object, quantities of interest can be simulated. There are three types of analyses than can be performed:

7.1 Evaluation

The default setting of JudgeIt for analysis, evaluation mode examines an election under the actual conditions that took place. Under these conditions, the systematic error component in simulation (the amount estimated by the parameter λ) is identical, and total error estimates are therefore smaller.

By default, all substantive outputs from `judgeit` use evaluation mode. For example, using a previously created JudgeIt object `judgeit.object`, we can obtain a seats-votes curve using the command

```
plot(judgeit(routine="seats",judgeit.object=judgeit.object))
```

7.2 Prediction

Prediction takes the information gleaned from one election and uses it to forecast the results of a new election. In this case, since the systematic error component is inestimable, both error components will be generated.

To enable predictive mode, add the option `predict=T` to a `judgeit` analysis command. To specify new predictors for this election, add the option `new.predictors` to specify the new conditions.

7.3 Counterfactual Evaluation

This option supposes what might have happened if an election were rerun under different circumstances. The systematic error component is once again held constant to reflect that this is the same “voting apparatus” as was used originally.

To enable a counterfactual analysis, specify new predictors by adding the option `new.predictors`.

7.4 Using new.predictors to recode data

In order to recode the data for counterfactual analysis or prediction, the option `new.predictors` must be added to a `JudgeIt` analysis command.

As an example, suppose we wish to find out what were happened if term limits were imposed and no incumbent could run for re-election, and that the incumbency indicator is labelled `INC`. The option

```
new.predictor=list('INC',0)
```

would instruct each routine to use this counterfactual data.

Suppose it came to pass that, instead, a group of representatives were forced to resign shortly before the election. If the new incumbency indicators are stored in a variable `new.incs`,

```
new.predictor=list('INC',new.incs)
```

would make that substitution. Make sure, however, that the substitution variable has the same number of districts as the model for that year; to confirm this, run the command `summary(JudgeIt.object,year)`.

7.5 distreport: Examine the estimation

The output of this routine is a reckoning of each district, including the observed and hypothetical vote shares, the standard deviation of the hypothetical estimate, and the probability that a voter in this district would be able to change the outcome of the entire election by reversing their vote.

7.6 seats: Given a vote share, determine the seat share

This is the basic tool used to determine the conversion between seats and votes in this electoral system.

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='seats', JudgeIt.object=j.ob)` will produce estimations and errors for the fraction of seats received using the default options: in particular, in the final election in the system, at various values between 0.45 and 0.55.

Example: The command `JudgeIt(routine='seats', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, voterange=c(0.1,0.9))` will now produce estimates over a much wider vote range. Note that the farther we get from the actual outcome, the less reliable the model will become.

7.6.1 Plotting a seats-votes curve

If the output in a `JudgeIt` object was produced by `seats`, the `plot()` command will recognize this and produce a seats-votes curve.

7.7 prob: Given a vote share, determine the probability of an electoral win

As above, but replace “seats” with “likelihood of a majority for party 1”.

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='prob', JudgeIt.object=j.ob)` will produce estimations and errors for the fraction of seats received using the default options: in particular, in the final election in the system, at various values between 0.45 and 0.55.

Example: The command `JudgeIt(routine='prob', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, voterange=c(0.1,0.9))` will now produce estimates over a much wider vote range. Note that the farther we get from the actual outcome, the less reliable the model will become.

7.8 winprob: Given a vote share or deviation, determine the probability that the seat share is within a particular margin

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='winprob', JudgeIt.object=j.ob)` does the default: For the vote as it is, what is the probability that the seat share will be between the default range of 0.45 to 0.55?

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='winprob', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, voteorshift='shift', voteshares=)` determines what the probability is that the seat share will be between the default range of 0.45 to 0.55, given that the resulting vote share was 5 points lower than actually experienced.

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='winprob', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, voterange=c(0,0.5), voteorshift='v)` determines what the probability is that the seat share will be below 50 percent, given that the resulting vote share was 50 percent for each party.

7.9 svsum: Determine partisan bias and responsiveness

The title says it all. The output is a 4-by-2 table containing the estimates and errors for four quantities: Partisan bias at an even vote, both instantaneous and averaged over a 10-point swing, and responsiveness at the midpoint and the observed vote percentage.

Example: `JudgeIt(routine='svsum', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, year=which(elecyears==1976))` will output those properties for the election held in 1976. (This assumes there is a variable called `elecyears` which encodes the calendar years of each election.)

7.10 winvote: Given a seat share, determine the total vote share required to attain it

The reverse procedure of `seats`. **Example:** `JudgeIt(routine='winvote', JudgeIt.object=j.ob, winvote=0)` outputs the expected vote percentage needed to get 70% of the seats.

7.11 voting.power: Determine the power that distinct groups have in changing an election result

This option is currently not supported. Stay tuned.

8 Further JudgeIt output options

8.1 Plotting output to file

JudgeIt outputs can be printed to a PNG graphics file by giving a file name in the plot command, like so:

```
plot(jud.obj,filename='drewnfile'),  
producing the file drewnfile.png.
```

8.2 System summaries

Using the command `summary()` on a JudgeIt object will give one of two results. Without a year given, the output will be the number of years, as well as the values of model parameters λ and σ if a preliminary analysis has been run.

With a year given, a report of the vote outcomes, predictors, seats and populations will be the output.

9 Accessing Raw JudgeIt.object Data

All data are stored in an object of class `JudgeIt`. If desired, the user can access each component within. Here is a list of components and their attributes:

- `covars` is a list of data frames comprising the predictors for each election in the system. So `JudgeIt.object$covars[[25]]` is a data frame with the covariates from the 25th election.
- `voteshare` is a list of vectors comprising the vote shares for each election in the system. So `JudgeIt.object$voteshare[[25]]` is a vector of the results of the 25th election.
- `actvotes`, `elgvotes`, `seatsper` are lists of vectors comprising the actual turnout, the number of eligible voters, and the seats per district in the system for each election.
- `fullrow` is a list of vectors containing those rows whose primary elements (covariates, vote shares, eligible and actual voters and seats) contain complete data.
- `uncL`, `uncLR`, `uncU`, `uncUR` are the uncontested election detection thresholds and imputations as listed above.
- `svEvar` is the value of `Evar` as given above.
- `sims`, `simd` are the depths of simulation conducted by JudgeIt as given above.
- `weight` is the option selected by the user to indicate what weights should be used in the linear model, as described above.
- `distweights` is a list of the actual values of these weights.
- `covarsnew` is a list of data frames of counterfactual or future predictors as manipulated by the option `new.predictors`. They are identical in dimension to `covars`.
- `same.dists` is a vector indicating whether the previous election's district map is identical to the current one, as described above.
- `output` contains the output of the last analytical routine, and is displayed with the command `print(JudgeIt.object)`.

- `outputyear,outputclass` indicate the year and type of the last analysis conducted. These are used mainly in `plot(JudgeIt.object)`.
- `beta,vc` are the estimates given by the linear model for the system for the coefficients of the covariates and their covariance matrix.
- `sigma,lambda,sind,lind` are, respectively, the mean and year-by-year estimates of the standard error and systematic error fraction of the system.
- `years` is a vector of the names of each election variable in the inputted data frame list. In the case of `house6311`, this is a vector of the election years between 1896 and 1992.

10 References

Andrew Gelman, Gary King. "A Unified Method of Evaluating Electoral Systems and Redistricting Plans". *American Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 38, No. 2, May 1994, Pp. 514-54

Andrew Gelman, Gary King. *JudgeIt: A Program for Evaluating Electoral Systems and Redistricting Plans*.

A Several demos

After loading the `JudgeIt` library, you may run these commands to check that it's in working order.

In addition, the demonstrations `seatsdemo`, `probdemo`, `distreportdemo` and `svsumdemo` are available through the command `demo`.

```
data(house6311)
#columns: STATE,DIST,INC,VOTE,TURNOUT,DELSOUTH

#operators:
unc <- function(inp) -1*(inp<0.05)+1*(inp>0.95)

j.ob <- JudgeIt(modelform=VOTE~unc(VOTE)+INC,data=house6311,
               use.last.votes=T,subset=DELSOUTH==0)

summary(j.ob)
summary(j.ob,which(years==1942))

years <- seq (1896,1992,by=2)

j.ob <- JudgeIt(routine="distreport",JudgeIt.object=j.ob,year=which(years==1962),new.predictors=
j.ob

#seats-votes curve
j.ob <- JudgeIt(routine="seats",jud=j.ob,year=which(years==1986),voterange=c(0.2,0.8))
plot(j.ob)
```

References

Gelman, Andrew and Gary King. 1990a. "Estimating Incumbency Advantage Without Bias." *American Journal of Political Science* 34(4, November):1142-1164. <http://gking.harvard.edu/files/abs/inc-abs.shtml>.

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