

**JOINT RESEARCH PROJECT: Democracy in crisis? An analysis of various dimensions and sources of support for democracy**

**PAPER 04: Trust in Parliament**

**AUTHORS: Sören Holmberg, Staffan I. Lindberg and Richard Svensson  
University of Gothenburg (Sweden)**

**Acknowledgement:** This joint research project was supported by the Marianne and Marcus Wallenberg Foundation in Sweden. The authors gratefully acknowledge their financial support (MMW2012.0215).

Parliaments are – or should at least be – central decision-making institutions in democratic systems. Parliaments set budgets, decide on policies, and define the legal norms in society, and if people do not have faith in the institution that makes these rules, it is not very likely that people live by them. Hence, trust supposedly lowers all forms of transaction costs associated with governing. Consequently, it is a beneficiary if trust in parliament is high. It will make the democratic system run more efficiently. But it is also a normative good in itself. Any modern form of democracy is necessarily representative in order to solve the problem of how the people should rule over themselves (e.g. Dahl 1989, 277; Sator 1987, 30; Schedler 1999). In that context, parliament is a critical body and if the people do not trust the key institution whereby they can exercise “rule by the people over themselves”, democracy itself is endangered.

Thus, a normative hypothesis – something we hope for – is that trust in parliament should be fairly high in democratic systems. Perhaps not one hundred percent - we do not want blind faith - but quite high in order to yield the good outcome effects.

Furthermore - our normative hypothesis two - trust levels should be reasonably even spread among relevant social and political groups in a society. Women and men, young and old, people with basic education and people with university degrees, supporters of different political parties, people on the left or on the right - they should all have about the same level of trust. Parliament should ideally be a non-partisan level playing field; not perceived as being partial in support of any special political, economic or social groups. Parliaments should in the best of all democratic worlds inspire the same amount of confidence across the whole society.

However, since many parliaments in reality function as the support base of governments – the majority in parliament chooses and sustains the acting government – there is a clear partisan element. And it could be argued that this partisan function is one of the constitutive functions of a parliament, at least in a parliamentary democracy.

Consequently, one could say that legislatures in parliamentary democracies should not be level playing fields. They should instead be partisan and promote the will of the majority that elected them. Even in most presidential systems, the elected president’s party typically holds at least a plurality of seats in the legislature.

According to the last argument, there should be differences in trust in parliament between groups of individuals with varying political affiliations. Supporters of the majority in parliament – the winners in the last election – are expected to feel more and better represented, and as a consequence have a higher trust in the legislature (as well as in the executive branch, the government) compared to citizens who voted for the opposition – the losers in the last election. Thus, our third hypothesis is that there should be some differences in trust in parliament, and in government, between groups in a society, especially between winners and losers of the last election.

Our hypothesis number one is not dependent on how we ideally want parliaments to function in the eyes of the citizens – as a partisan institution or as a level playing field. Overall, and in both cases, trust in parliament should be reasonably high with at least a majority of citizens having confidence in their elected legislature. The two other hypotheses are partly contradicting, however. If we subscribe to the ideal of a parliament as a level playing field, we expect no or minimal group differences in trust. If we, however, have the ideal that parliament should actively be partisan and be the prolonged arm of government, then our expectation is that there will be group differences in trust, particularly between political groups.

### **Trust in Parliament in Democracies and Authoritarian Regimes**

We have tested our three hypotheses on data from some eighty countries participating in World Value Survey (WVS), either in wave five or wave six<sup>1</sup>. To be able to put our results in perspective, we have done our tests not only for trust in parliament, but as well for trust in government and for trust in the police. The two latter represent institutions that we expect to be at two ends of a spectrum with regards to equally-unequally shared levels of trust. Government is included because we expect, both empirically as well as normatively, group differences in trust to be quite distinct. Governments in a democracy should be partisan and primarily carry out the will of the voters who elected them. On the other hand, trust in police ought not be characterized by group differences in trust. The police as an institution should uphold the law in an impartial manner and enjoy high and evenly spread trust in all groups.

---

<sup>1</sup> If a country participated in both waves, we used the results from wave six. WVS wave five covers the years 2005-2009 and wave six the years 2010-2014. Results for 58 of our 77 countries come from wave six.

To measure the level of trust we use the subjective WVS trust measure where respondents are asked to indicate their level of trust in their countries' parliament, government, and police on a four point scale. We have defined the two top answers "A great deal" and "Quite a lot" as our measure of (enough) trust. The other two response alternatives ("Not very much" and "Not at all") clearly indicate a lack of trust. This results in a dichotomous measure.

The outcome of our tests are mixed and to a degree disappointing from a normative democratic standpoint. Looking at the proportion of citizens having that minimum amount of trust in parliament across the 77 countries studied in WVS in wave five and six is not necessarily uplifting (see Table 1).

In most democracies, less than half of the citizens trust parliament. In "new" and "established" democracies the average proportion of citizens with trust in their national parliament is only around 29 and 40 percent, respectively. Among the fifteen established democracies in the sample, only four countries show trust levels over fifty percent. These countries are Sweden (with 64 percent), Norway, Switzerland and Finland. United States has the dubious honor among established democracies to host citizens with the lowest level of trust in parliament (a bare 19 percent). Among the 27 new democracies in the sample, only two (India and Ghana) have a majority of citizens with (enough) trust in the legislature. The other 25 new democracies display levels of trust below the 50 percent mark. At the bottom is Slovenia with six percent and Tunisia with seven percent.

Measuring trust in authoritarian non-democratic regimes entails at least one special problem. People may not feel free to speak their mind when being interviewed about their attitudes. It is not unreasonable to suspect that a given proportion of respondents are afraid of expressing critical views of ruling institutions. Consequently, the validity of trust results from authoritarian countries could be called in question. Hence, we suspect estimates of trust to be inflated in many of these cases. The results for 35 authoritarian nations in Table 1 tend to confirm this intuition. On the average, trust in parliament is higher in authoritarian countries (48 percent) than in democratic countries (40 and 29 percent)<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>2</sup> In a sense, our cutoff point defining trust is arbitrary. However, if we instead talk of having at least some level of trust and include the response alternative "Not very much trust" as indicating at least some trust, almost all countries end up with clear majorities of their citizens having at least some level of trust in their

**Table 1. Trust in Parliament: Percent A Great Deal and Quite a Lot of Trust. WVS Data, Wave 5/Wave 6.**

New Democracies			Authoritarian Regimes		
Rank	Country	Percent	Rank	Country	Percent
1	India	60	1	Vietnam	99
2	Ghana	54	2	Uzbekistan	95
3	Cyprus	48	3	China	87
4	Thailand	47	4	Qatar	86
5	South Africa	45	5	Singapore	74
6	Estonia	42	6	Bahrain	72
7	Uruguay	42	7	Malaysia	69
8	Indonesia	37	8	Kazakhstan	67
9	Georgia	31	9	Rwanda	65
10	Taiwan	30	10	Jordan	64
11	Ecuador	30	11	Azerbaijan	64
12	Moldova	28	12	Philippines	57
13	Trinidad and Tobago	28	13	Mali	57
14	South Korea	27	14	Kyrgyzstan	55
15	Argentina	26	15	Turkey	55
16	Brazil	25	16	Belarus	49
17	Chile	25	17	Kuwait	49
18	Mexico	25	18	Zimbabwe	45
19	Bulgaria	21	19	Iran	42
20	Colombia	21	20	Zambia	41
21	Serbia	21	21	Nigeria	39
22	Hungary	17	22	Morocco	39
23	Romania	16	23	Burkina Faso	39
24	Poland	13	24	Russia	34
25	Peru	12	25	Lebanon	32
26	Tunisia	7	26	Armenia	28
27	Slovenia	6	27	Egypt	28
Average New Democracies:		29	28	Algeria	28
			29	Pakistan	27
			30	Iraq	29
			31	Iraq	22
			32	Ukraine	20
			33	Libya	17
			34	Yemen	12
			35	Guatemala	11
			Average Authoritarian Regimes:		48
<b>Note:</b> Missing data and DK's are not included in the percent calculations. The democratic countries are so designated by Lindberg (2015). The distinction between New and Established Democracies has been done by Sören Holmberg.					
Established Democracies					
Rank	Country	Percent			
1	Sweden	64			
2	Norway	62			
3	Switzerland	57			
4	Finland	56			
5	Germany	42			
6	New Zealand	39			
7	Canada	37			
8	United Kingdom	36			
9	Netherlands	35			
10	Spain	35			
11	France	35			
12	Italy	33			
13	Australia	31			
14	Japan	23			
15	United States	19			
Average Established Democracies:		40			

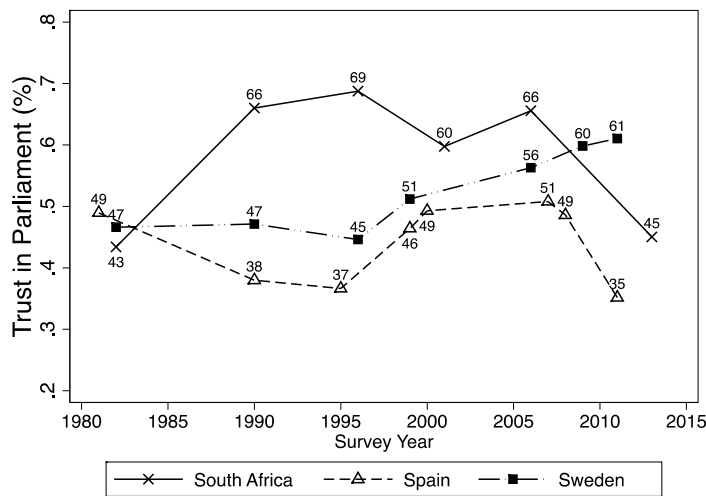
Results like 95 percent in Uzbekistan and 87 percent in China – or 99 percent in Vietnam - are hardly plausible estimates. Yet, we also find results from authoritarian countries that

parliament. Only four countries end up with not having a majority of their citizens with at least some trust in parliament (Peru, Tunisia, Libya and Guatemala). All other nations have majorities of people with at least some confidence in their parliament. The average trust result measured this way for established democracies is 87 percent having at least some level of trust in parliament, for new democracies 65 percent, and for authoritarian regimes 79 percent. Among established democracies Norway and Switzerland top with 96 percent, followed by Sweden and Finland with 94 percent.

are much lower and in those cases more convincing. For example, the figures for trust in parliament in Russia (34 percent), in Egypt (28 percent) and in Pakistan (27 percent) are quite low and has more face validity.

A more general validity problem is whether the WVS trust measure as such, with the simple subjective four point response scale, is a good and valid instrument. One way to ponder that problem is to study how the measure record changes over time. In Figure 1 below we present the changes in WVS/EVS results for trust in parliament in Sweden, South Africa and Spain over the years from 1981 to 2013. The outcome for Sweden with an upturn in trust starting in the late 1990s is not news to people knowledgeable about Swedish politics. We have seen similar increases in different political trust results in other studies, including the Swedish National Election Studies, the SOM Surveys and Swedish Television`s Exit Polls.

**Figure 2. Trust in Parliament in South Africa, Spain and Sweden**



**Comment:** Data from WVS and EVS. Missing data and DK's are not part of the percent results. Weights are used when provided. No weights are available for South Africa 1982, Spain 1999, Sweden 1982, Sweden 1990 and Sweden 1996.

### Differences in Trust Between Social and Political Groups

Results in Table 2 provide some evidence relevant for the second hypothesis. Overall, average differences in trust for legislatures are relatively low between important groups like women and men, different age cohorts and different educational groups. Across the 77 countries, women have slightly higher trust in parliament (0.3 percentage points higher!), although men show higher trust in 37 countries compared to only 34 countries where

women have higher trust. The average absolute differences in trust between men and women is a modest 2.8 points. Among established democracies the outcome is very similar although in this group of countries men are on average somewhat more trusting (1.0 percentage points, absolute difference 3.4 points). The prudent conclusion is that there are no substantively meaningful gender differences when it comes to trust in parliament.

The same is true for education if we look at the full sample of countries. On average, people tend to trust parliament to the same degree regardless of level of education. If we look at the mean differences per country, individuals with low education have higher trust in parliament than those with a university degree in 39 countries, while in 34 countries the result is reversed (and in three countries there is no difference). However, in the established democracies there is a clear average difference. People with higher education trust parliament to a much larger degree than those with a low education (on average 12.2 percentage points higher, absolute difference 14.5). On the other hand, in authoritarian regimes, citizens with only basic education tend to trust parliament more than people with university training.<sup>3</sup>

**Table 2. Aggregate Social Correlates of Trust in Parliament: Differences in Percent A Great Deal and Quite a Lot of Trust Between Societal Groups in 77 Countries.**

	All 77 Countries	Only 15 Established Democracies
<b>Men vs Women</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	-0.3	1.0
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	2.8	3.4
Men Higher Trust	37	11
Women Higher Trust	34	4
Equal Level of Trust	6	0
<b>Old vs Young</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	2.8	1.9
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	5.5	5.9
Old Higher Trust	50	6
Young Higher Trust	25	7
Equal Level of Trust	2	2
<b>High vs Low Education</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	0	12.2
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	8.5	14.5
High Edu. Higher Trust	34	13
Low Edu. Higher Trust	39	2
Equal Level of Trust	4	0

**Comment:** Data from WVS wave five and wave six. Old is 50+ and young 15-29. High education is university studies. Basic education only is defined as Low. Absolute differences are differences disregarding sign.

<sup>3</sup> Observe that the mean absolute difference in trust between high and low educated persons among all countries is 8.5 points, indicating clear differences that however tend to cancel each other out when we compute a mean difference in trust.

Turning to age, the differences in levels of trust between cohorts are small, even if slightly larger than the ones we observe between men and women. Older folks tend to trust parliaments more than young people although the average difference is only 2.8 percentage points. At country-level, we find that older people trust parliament more than the young in 50 countries while in 25 nations the reverse is true.<sup>4</sup>

The overall conclusion when it comes to trust in parliament between important social groups across the 77 countries is that differences tend to be very minor, with one rather important caveat. Among established democracies, university educated citizens tend to be more trusting of their parliament than people with only basic level education, while the reverse is true for autocracies.

Looking at the political variables in Table 3, differences in trust are much more pronounced. Across the 76 countries, individuals with a high interest in politics have a clear tendency to be more trusting of their national parliaments compared to less politically interested citizens. On average, the difference in trust is 8.7 percentage points. In almost all countries (68), individuals with a strong political interest have a higher trust in parliament on average than those with a low interest in politics. Among established democracies, this difference is even more pronounced (14.1 percentage points) and the pattern is the same in all these fifteen democracies. It may seem rather natural that a high level of interest in politics is positively correlated with trust in political institutions, at least in democratic systems. Yet, from a normative standpoint, it is problematic if the legislature is not equally held in the same regard as a critical institution of democracy. Everyone should preferably trust parliament – active and passive citizens alike.

For some reason worthy of a more thorough investigation (not pursued here), people on the ideological right are more trusting of their national parliament than people on the left across most of our 77 studied WVS countries.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Among established democracies, the average difference in trust in parliament between old and young is even less, only 1.9 points. The mean absolute difference is somewhat larger 5.9.

<sup>5</sup> Left-right self-placement was not asked about in all countries. Five of our 77 countries omitted the question.



**Table 3. Political Correlates of Trust in Parliament: Differences in Percent A Great Deal and Quite A Lot of Trust Between Political Groups in Some Eighty Societies.**

	All 77 Countries	Only 15 Established Democracies
<b>High vs Low Political Interest</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	8.7	14.1
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	9.2	14.1
High Interest Higher Trust	68	15
Low Interest Higher Trust	7	0
Equal Level of Trust	2	0
<b>Left vs Right Self Placements</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	-6.7	-3.0
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	11.0	7.4
Left Leaning Higher Trust	20	5
Right Leaning Higher Trust	51	1
Equal Level of Trust	1	9
<b>Winner vs Losers Supporter</b>		
Mean Difference in Trust	11.6	13.8
Mean Absolute Difference in Trust	11.9	13.8
Winners Higher Trust	26	9
Losers Higher Trust	1	0
Equal Level of Trust	1	0

**Comment:** Data from WVS wave five and wave six. Government Supporters sympathize with government parties, opposition supporters sympathize with another (non-government) party. The number of countries is 77/15 in the political interest analysis, 77/15 in the left-right analysis, and 28/9 in the winner-loser analysis.

In 51 countries people on the ideological right trust their parliament more than people on the ideological left. The opposite result is only true in 20 countries. The mean difference is 6.7 percentage points across the full sample (11.0 points absolute difference). For the established democracies, the result is somewhat smaller, with a mean difference of 3.0 percentage points for the right and an absolute difference of 7.4. Whatever the reason for the differences, it is not ideal from a normative point of view. Left-right ideology should not color how people trust their parliament. Maybe it has to do with the fact that more countries are run by right wing governments than by left wing governments. In fact, what we see is to a large extent an impact of who is in power and running the government. People on the left tend to have higher confidence in parliament if the government is left leaning. In countries where a right-wing government is in power, however, people with ideological leanings to the right tend to trust parliament more.

This becomes clearer when we split the differences between “winners” versus “losers”. Scholars have discovered “winner–loser gaps”<sup>6</sup> in citizen evaluations of institutional

<sup>6</sup> The winner–loser gap is also referred to as the winner effect, the majority–minority difference, or the home-team hypothesis (Anderson 2005, 411).

performance; approval of political leaders; support for government policies; satisfaction with and support for democracy; confidence or trust in political institutions; and evaluations of regime responsiveness; as well as in perceptions of citizen efficacy; protest potential; and fairness of elections.<sup>7</sup> In short, elections inevitably produce winners and losers, and winners tend to be happier not only with political outcomes (leaders and policies) but also with political institutions than are the losers—although the existence and size of the gap varies across attitude dimensions and countries (Anderson 2005, 411). As can be seen in Table 3, supporters of parties represented in the ruling government tend to have higher average levels of trust, not only in the government but also in parliament (mean difference 11.6 percentage points among all analyzed countries, 13.8 among established democracies). This is not surprising perhaps given the fact that most countries in this sample have some kind of parliamentarianism, meaning that the government is supported by a majority of the legislators in the elected parliament.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, from the normative vantage point of the ideal of a level playing field, ideally, sympathizers with opposition parties - losers at the polls – should be able to honor and trust their parliament as much as sympathizers of governing parties. According to our results in Table 3, we are not close to that ideal state of things. In all the established democracies surveyed by the WVS, the winners display much higher average levels of trust in parliament than losers. This is most evident in parliamentary democracies such as Spain, Sweden and Norway, and less pronounced in presidential systems such as Finland (sic) and the USA.<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, the normative hypothesis is not supported when it comes to important political groups. In most of our studied countries, including the democratic nations, the

---

<sup>7</sup> For some recent examples, see: Anderson and Lotempio (2002, 387); Anderson and Tverdova (2003, 386); Banducci and Karp (2003, 390); Bratton, Mattes, and Gyimah-Boadi (2005, 333); Craig, Gainous, Martinez, and Kane (2004, 405); Moehler and Lindberg 2009; Nadeau and Blais (1993, 385); and Norris (1999, 164).

<sup>8</sup> The rather close connection between parliament and government is clearly visible if we look at the individual level correlations between trust in the two institutions. Among all interviewed persons in our 77 WVS-countries, the correlation between trust in parliament and government is .68. The same positive correlation is present in all studied countries. In Sweden and the US it is .63 and .68, while it is .55 in Spain and .63 in South Africa. In almost all countries, the correlation is around .55 to .75. However, India is an exception with a correlation of only .21; the result in China is .68.

<sup>9</sup> Persons without any party sympathy, i.e. respondents registered as having no party, not voting or not answering the How to vote question, tend to have really low trust in their national parliament in all the established democracies where the problem can be studied (seven countries). Trust in parliament among party-less people is on average -24.4 points lower than among government supporters., and -12.3 points lower than among opposition voters. People outside the democratic tent are outside for a reason, they do not trust the democratic institutions. Or, since they for some reason are outside the democratic tent, they tend not to trust the institutions inside the tent.

differences in trust in parliament are substantially large and strongly statistically significant<sup>10</sup>. This result, on the other hand, means that our alternative normative hypothesis number three is supported. Parliaments as partisan institutions should to a degree be trusted differently in different political groups, especially so among voters for government parties and voters for opposition parties. And that is what we find strong empirical evidence for.

### **Trust in Parliament Compared to Trust in Government and the Police**

In order to be able to assess and understand our results for trust in parliament, we need to put them in some perspective. One way of doing that is to compare the outcome of our analysis for trust in parliament with the results of identical analyses of trust in an institution that we normatively believe ought to be viewed as partisan, as well as with an institution we think ought to be viewed as impartial. The two institutions we have chosen for this purpose are government and the police, where government is expected to be partisan and the police impartial. Our expectation is that trust in government should be vary to a larger extent across different groups - especially political groups - than trust in parliament. Trust in police, in contrast, ought to differ very little or not at all between social as well as political groups. Consequently, we expect group differences in trusting the police to be smaller than the comparable group differences in trust in parliament.<sup>11</sup>

The results in Table 4 and Table 5 summarize the outcome of our comparisons. The main result is comforting. As expected, trust in government clearly varies much more between political groups than trust in parliament, which in turn varies more across political and ideological camps than trust in police.

---

<sup>10</sup>  $\Pr(|T| > |t|) = 0.0000$ ,  $df = 19,816$

<sup>11</sup> A normative expectation for trust in government in a democracy is that at least a majority of citizens have trust in their chosen government. For the police our normative expectation is that trust is close to maximum levels or at least encompasses a majority of citizens. Given these expectations, the government results are quite disappointing. Among established democracies the mean in trust in government is 41 percent, with only four countries having a majority of its citizens trusting their government (out of 15). The comparable results in new democracies are 39 percent and eight out of 27 countries, and in authoritarian regimes 56 percent and eighteen countries out of 35. As before, the results for the authoritarian countries should be treated with caution. In all likelihood, their trust results are inflated. The result for the police is less disheartening. In established democracies, the mean trust in police is 78 percent with all countries showing majority trust in the police (fifteen out of 15). For new democracies the results are much lower with a mean of 49 percent and only thirteen nations out of 27 having majorities of their citizens trusting the police. As before, trust results tend to be higher in authoritarian regimes with a mean of 57 percent and twenty five countries out of 35 showing majority trust for their police.

**Table 4. Social Group Differences in Trust in Parliament, Government and the Police: All Countries/Only Established Democracies**

	Men-Women	Old-Young	High-Low Edu.
<b>Mean Difference in Trust</b>			
Parliament	-0.3 / +1.0	+2.8 / +1.9	0.0 / +12.2
Government	-1.3 / -0.7	+3.5 / +0.7	-1.2 / +10.1
Police	-2.9 / -4.3	+4.6 / +6.8	-3.2 / +4.0
<b>Mean Absolute Difference in Trust</b>			
Parliament	2.8 / 3.4	5.5 / 5.9	8.5 / 14.5
Government	3.1 / 3.4	6.5 / 6.3	9.5 / 12.3
Police	4.3 / 4.3	6.2 / 8.0	7.5 / 6.3

**Comment:** See Table 2 and Table 3.

**Table 5. Political Group Differences in Trust in Parliament, Government and the Police: All Countries/Only Established Democracies**

	High-Low Pol. Interest	Left-Right	Winner-Loser
<b>Mean Difference in Trust</b>			
Parliament	+8.7 / +14.1	-6.7 / -3.0	+11.6 / +13.8
Government	+7.4 / +9.9	-8.5 / -4.3	+18.6 / +25.6
Police	+3.4 / +2.5	-8.1 / -6.1	+3.4 / +1.3
<b>Mean Absolute Difference in Trust</b>			
Parliament	9.2 / 14.1	11.0 / 7.4	11.9 / 13.8
Government	8.3 / 9.9	15.4 / 17.9	18.7 / 25.6
Police	5.3 / 3.1	10.4 / 6.8	8.4 / 6.4

**Comment:** See Table 2 and Table 3.

This is especially true for the differences in trust between winners and losers in established democracies. People who voted for government parties tend to trust the ruling government much more than people that cast their ballot for an opposition party.<sup>12</sup> This difference is a rather substantial at 25.6 percentage points.<sup>13</sup>

Looking at the differences between social groups, the outcome is less comforting especially when it comes to trust in the police. We were expecting small or no group differences but find that differences in average levels of trust between men and women, as well as between young and old, for the police tend to be larger than the comparable differences for parliament and government. These are not drastic divergences but even so somewhat wider trust-gaps for the police, where we were expecting smaller differences. On average across all countries as well as in established democracies, women and older

<sup>12</sup> We are aware that these figures reflect self-reported data with all the caveats that normally must be attached to such, including over-reporting of turnout, band-wagoning effects, and imperfect memory.

<sup>13</sup> This difference is also noticeable among all countries where government supporters trust government more than opposition supporters with 18.6 percentage points and parliament with a somewhat lower 11.6 points.

people tend to trust the police more than men and younger individuals. People with university education also tend to trust the police more than citizens who have only basic education; but here the difference are clearly smaller than the comparable difference between high and low educated people.<sup>14</sup>

Trust in government, much like trust in parliament, exposes rather small differences between men and women and between old and young. This is as normatively expected. Government could and should be viewed in partisan terms by different political groups, but not necessarily by demographic or social groups. The differences in average levels of trust between educational groups are more problematic. Trust in parliament and trust in government have about the same differentials – on average much higher trust among university-trained persons. However, this “problem” is only present in established democracies. Interestingly, people with low education, not people with high education, and have on average more trust in government and in parliament outside established democracies.

The comparative analysis of trust in parliament, government, and the police has further strengthened the conclusion that our normative hypothesis number two is supported when it comes to demographic variables like gender and age. But it is not supported when it comes to a social variable like education. And when we it comes to political variables results diverge from normative expectations based on hypothesis two even more. Rather, we find that trust in parliament, like trust in government, is colored by political circumstances and ideology and by who rules. According to hypothesis number three that is as it normatively should be.

A last word about our normative hypothesis one that stated that trust in parliament should be high and at least encompass a majority of citizens in a democracy. That is clearly not the case in the 27 new democracies or in the 15 established democracies for which there is

---

<sup>14</sup> Trust in police shows about the same degree of group differences for the political groups as for the social groups. But for the political groups the comparable group differences for parliament and government is much larger. The political group differences in trust for the police are not dramatic but a little disturbing at least when we look at the results for the ideological left-right groups. Police tend to be more trusted on average by people on the right than by people on the left. And that is on average true in all countries as well as in established democracies. Furthermore, police have on average higher trust results among supporters of government than among opposition supporters in the entire group of countries and also in established democracies.

WVS-data from round five or six. Only minorities in most countries trust their parliament. That is clearly not what we normatively expected.

Politics is a trust business. Consequently many democratic parliaments, including many parliaments in established democracies, are in trouble. That is not good for the functioning of representative democracy. Most things would run smoother, faster and more efficient - and to lower transaction costs – if trust in parliament increased. It is also a warning sign for the belief in and willingness to stand up for democracy when a majority of the populations do not have faith in one of representative’s most critical institutions.

### **Multivariate Tests**

To further interrogate the conclusions, we need to analyze to what extent our previous bivariate, country based results, are upheld when we test them at the individual level using a multivariate regression with fixed country effects. The intent here is not to examine any independent effects and a “causal” model. Our modest ambition is to control for confounding factors, potentially hidden relationships, as well detect potentially spurious relationships. The multiple regressions do not directly test differences in trust in parliament between groups, and especially not absolute differences. What we get is controlled effect estimates. Ideally, we expect these estimates to be low if we subscribe to hypothesis number two, and high for at least the political variables if it is hypothesis number three we normatively believe in.

The results in Table 6 report the results for all countries, established, and new democracies. The main result is that hypothesis number two expecting small or no effects for various group variables is clearly questioned. There are protruding effects of the political variables in particular.

We also find that differences with regard to sex, age, and education remain yet the substantive effects are marginal across most specifications (and with regard to age not always statistically significant). In the country based bivariate analysis as well as in the bivariate individual level analysis, gender and age did not exhibit any noteworthy differences in trust in parliament. In the multivariate analyses that is not entirely true anymore.

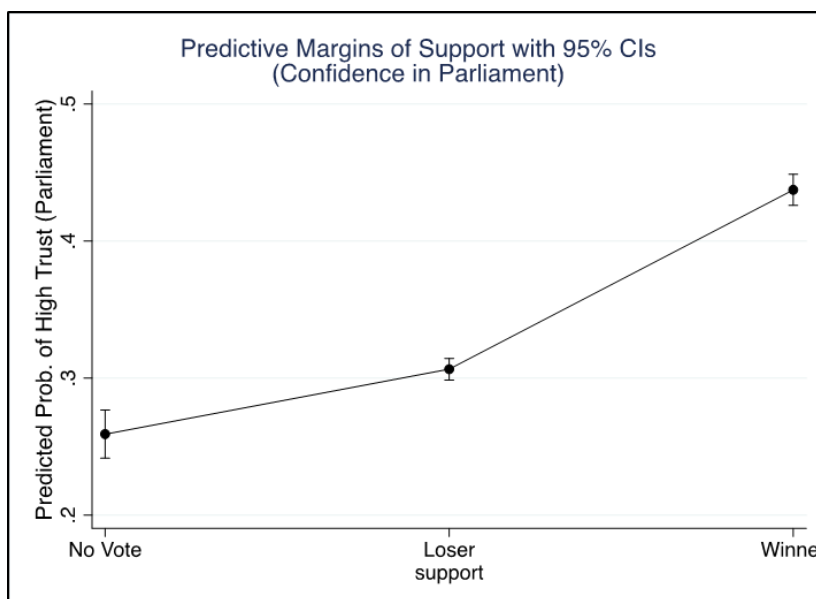
**Table 6: Multivariate tests**

<b>All countries</b>	OLS (no country dummies)		OLS (with country dummies)		Logit (Dummy dependent variable)		Hierarchical (Level of Democracy)	
	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>B</i>	S.E.	<i>B</i>	S.E.
Sex	.016***	(.003)	.014***	(.002)	.089***	(.024)	.015***	(.009)
Age	-.019***	(.004)	-.005	(.004)	-.173***	(.031)	-.021***	(.004)
Education	-.017***	(.004)	-.002	(.004)	-.102**	(.032)	-.018***	(.004)
Political Interest	.119***	(.005)	.102***	(.005)	.729***	(.040)	.120***	(.005)
Left-Right Position	.031***	(.004)	.028***	(.004)	.230***	(.031)	.030***	(.004)
Government Supporter	.165***	(.004)	.118***	(.005)	1.073***	(.036)	.164***	(.005)
Constant	.237***	(.005)	.231***	(.023)	-1.616***	(.043)	.236***	(.016)
Polyarchy: Identity							.000	
sd(_cons)								
sd(Residual)							.074	
	R2	.067	.165		.036			
	lr / Wald $\chi^2$				1 460.1***		2 111.7***	
	N	31 724	31 724		31 724		31 579	
<b>Establ. Democracies</b>								
Sex	.013**	(.005)	.012*	(.005)	.053	(.042)	.013*	(.005)
Age	-.015*	(.007)	.004	(.007)	-.152*	(.059)	-.015*	(.007)
Education	.029***	(.007)	.054***	(.007)	.285***	(.059)	.029***	(.007)
Political Interest	.082***	(.009)	.097***	(.008)	.605***	(.077)	.082***	(.008)
Left-Right Position	-.001	(.006)	.002	(.006)	.022	(.054)	.006	(.006)
Government Supporter	.150***	(.008)	.110***	(.008)	1.216***	(.069)	.150***	(.008)
Constant	.283***	(.009)	.242***	(.012)	-1.649***	(.085)	.289***	(.009)
Polyarchy: Identity							.000	(.000)
sd(_cons)								
sd(Residual)							.059	(.001)
	R2	.056	.148		.036			
	lr / Wald $\chi^2$				486.21***		594.14***	
	N	9 953	9 953		9 953		9 953	
<b>New Democracies</b>								
Sex	.014**	(.004)	.014***	(.004)	.078*	(.036)	.013**	(.004)
Age	-.036***	(.006)	-.006	(.006)	-.265***	(.046)	-.038***	(.006)
Education	-.033***	(.006)	-.015*	(.006)	-.256***	(.048)	-.034***	(.006)
Political Interest	.126***	(.007)	.113***	(.007)	.719***	(.058)	.128***	(.007)
Left-Right Position	.029***	(.006)	.032***	(.006)	.235***	(.047)	.028***	(.006)
Government Supporter	.122***	(.007)	.105***	(.007)	.804***	(.055)	.122***	(.007)
Constant	.248***	(.007)	.165***	(.022)	-1.512***	(.062)	.227***	(.007)
Polyarchy: Identity							.000	(.000)
sd(_cons)								
sd(Residual)							.076	(.001)
	R2	.048	.134		.025			
	lr / Wald $\chi^2$				473.81***		793.80***	
	N	15 446	15 446		15 446		15 446	

Across most of the models, some minor effects are now detectable. The gender effects are not large, but significant. Women are somewhat more trusting of their parliament than men. That is more evident in the controlled test than in the previous bivariate examinations. As for age, the same is true, but with the added twist that the relationship pattern tends to be reversed after the controls are applied. Young people tend to slightly more trust parliament compared to the old. Consistent with our earlier findings, education tends to have an overall negative effect on trust, but in the subset of established democracies the effect is net positive (and significant). Speculating about this pattern, it seems intuitive that in autocracies and new (less developed/good) democracies, education brings increasing awareness of the imperfections of the democratic institutions. Higher levels of education could also be suspected to lead to raising expectations of what such institutions ought to do, hence, to lower levels of appreciation of what is.

The strongest effects among all countries, as well as among established and new democracies, are found for level of political interest and being winners. Everything else being equal, people with strong engagement in politics and those who are supporters of the ruling government tend to have a higher average level of trust of their parliament than people with low interest in politics and supporting the opposition. These are the same results we found earlier which strengthen our conclusions. In particular, the effect of being a winner or a loser is important to note. To illustrate, we have plotted the marginal effects in Figure 2 from the logit model with country dummies, using data from all countries.

**Figure 2: Marginal Effect of Being a Winner on Trust in Parliament (full sample)**





The effects are calculated with all other variables at their means, and illustrate thus the average marginal effect across individuals in the full sample. Everything else being equal, an individual that did not vote/would not disclose has a 26 percent predicted probability of have trust in parliament, while an opposition supporter (loser) has a slightly higher probability at 31 percent. Meanwhile, the predicted probability for a government supporter (winner) is substantially higher at 44 percent. The earlier stated conclusion regarding hypothesis number two is further strengthened by the multivariate analyses. The ideal of a parliament as a level playing field enjoying fairly equal levels of trust among people of all walks of life, is mostly not supported empirically in established democracies especially, but as well among less democratic countries. Parliaments are obviously partisan creatures in the eyes of citizens. Not as much partisan as governments, but nevertheless partisan.

### **Reflections**

We started this inquiry into the empirical foundations of normative hypotheses as novices. We are not political theorists. We have not made any claims to forward a new or sophisticated normative argument. We are scholars used to work with positive theory and to leverage empirical data to bear on claims. We have investigated many angles of descriptive and causal claims in political behavior, democratic theory and democratization. At this point, we found it important to look at another aspect of democracy. A few simple deductions about trust in one key democratic institution, parliament as the institutional embodiment of the people's rule over itself, which should be expected.

We found that people in both new and established democracies harbor lower levels of trust than an intuitive interpretation of normative theory would lead us to expect. We also found that the attitudes of tens of thousands of citizens garnered from across 42 new and old democracies, suggest that levels of average trust in groups of these societies are not as equally distributed, as a simple reading of democratic theory would have us to believe. This is also true for non-democratic systems but we have less to say about that since we are more concerned with the implications of a possible deficit in trust and legitimacy in democracies.

In particular, individuals with a stronger interest in politics, and who are winners by the account of the last election, have statistically significant and substantively relevant higher average levels of trust in parliament as an institution than do other citizens. The latter

seems to us especially potentially problematic in particular for some of the new democracies where majority-dominant parties manages to cling on to power over several elections cycles. If what we find here were generally applicable also over several elections cycles, we would expect the gap between winners and losers to widen and sediment, and potentially sow the seeds of anti-system movements opposed to democracy.

## References

- Anderson, Christopher J., and Andrew J. Lotempio. 2002. "Winning, Losing and Political Trust in America." *British Journal of Political Science* 32(2): 335-51.
- Anderson, Christopher J., and Yuliya V. Tverdova. 2003. "Corruption, Political Allegiances, and Attitudes toward Government in Contemporary Democracies." *American Journal of Political Science* 47(1): 91-109.
- Anderson, Christopher J., Andre Blais, Shaun Bowler, Todd Donovan, and Ola Listhaug. 2005. *Losers' Consent: Elections and Democratic Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Banducci, Susan A., and Jeffrey A. Karp. 2003. "How Elections Change the Way Citizens View the Political System: Campaigns, Media Effects and Electoral Outcomes in Comparative Perspective." *British Journal of Political Science* 33(3): 443-67.
- Bratton, Michael, Robert B. Mattes, and Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi. 2005. *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Craig, Stephen C., Michael D. Martinez, Jason Gainous, and James G. Kane. 2006. "Winners, Losers, and Election Context: Voter Responses to the 2000 Presidential Election." *Political Research Quarterly* 59(4): 579-92.
- Dahl, Robert A. 1989. *Democracy and Its Critics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Lindberg, Staffan I. 2015. "Ordinal Versions of V-Dem's Indices: For Classification, Description, Sequencing Analysis and Other Purposes". Varieties of Democracy Institute: V-Dem Working Paper Series No. 20.
- Moehler, Devra and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2009. "Narrowing the Legitimacy Gap: The Role of Turnovers in Africa's Emerging Democracies" *Journal of Politics* 71(4): 1448-1466.
- Nadeau, Richard, Andre Blais, Neil Nevitte, and Elisabeth Gidengil. 2000. "Elections and Satisfaction with Democracy." Paper read at Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, September 2-5, at Washington D.C.
- Norris, Pippa. 1999. *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sartori, Giovanni. 1987. *The Theory of Democracy Revisited*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.
- Schedler, Andreas. 1999. "Conceptualizing Accountability." In *The Self-Restraining State: Power and Accountability in New Democracies*, ed. Andreas Schedler, Larry Diamond, and Marc F. Plattner. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.