RESEARCH ARTICLE

Trust in Civil Services as an Institution

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Abstract

This paper contemplates the state of drift in the public's feeling and trust in the civil services that have authority over them using the World Values Survey data from 1981 to 2013. This study will show that the trust in the civil service as an institution has changed over time and over geographic region. Citizens trust civil servants when the feel they get a good return on the payment that they invest in government through the tax structure and compliance. While contributions per person vary, the outcomes can still be measured and experienced. News of corruption and hypocrisy creates a perception of inferior performance. The purpose of the civil service is to preserve the quality of life of citizens. This is carried out through processes that achieve outcomes from administrative agencies that help citizens to follow rules, cooperate in the provision of the collective good, and respond appropriately in emergencies. By leveraging the World Values Survey data, the study shows trends in trust in civil services across generations and geographies.

1 | INTRODUCTION

When citizens trust the civil servants that have authority over them they will pay for the processes that achieve outcomes from administrative agencies that help citizens to follow rules, they will cooperate in the provision of the collective good, and they will respond appropriately in emergencies (1). The issue is that in some cases the trend indicates that trust in civil services is on the wane. The objective of this paper is to review the results of a longitudinal global study that characterizes the drift in trust in civil services over time.

The definition of civil services varies but could include any employee position created under the authority of the constitution or public law of a country. Sometimes referred to as the organized Public Sector, these civil servants are a part of the permanent professional branches of a government's administration, excluding military and judicial branches and

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elected politicians. Citizens sacrifice their resources for the value proposition that this aspect of government provides.

The payment that citizens make for government entities may be financial but also may include the sacrifice of freedoms depending on the situation. However, certain rights are inalienable regardless of the situation. All the efforts of civil servants should be targeted to preserve the quality of life of citizens and minimize harm in case of a calamity. To make up for perceived shortfalls in service excellence, governments have initiated 'performance movements' through legislation that were meant to improve and restore the public's trust in civil servants, however, when citizens conclude that actions taken are self-serving trust is broken. These reform initiatives are launched with significant fanfare but little evaluation of their effectiveness. It is more about optics than substance. As an example, a perception of mistrust was the catalyst for legislation in the U.S. and Europe. This legislation assumes that the civil service can produce outcomes that matter to citizens (2), (3) . It is these outcomes, which if acceptable to the public, create trust in civil servants.

This topic is significant as the civil service part of the government is typically the most significant and largest part of modern government. It is this arm that touches citizen's ordinary lives. When there is a lack of trust in civil servants there is a reduced likelihood that compliance will follow. Administrative rules and procedures may be non-value producing although a cost is associated with them. Further to this, citizens will decide to be less engaged in the coproduction of vital public services (4). Government for and by the people is expected to deliver valuable and beneficial outcomes to citizens through consistent fairness and the absence of corruption. Citizens look at the processes used and decide if they are fair or not with the associated impact on trust. Process is a critical factor in the formation of trust judgements.

This paper posits that trust comes from outcomes that are the result of process. The explanation of this suggestion starts with an explanation of trust, then a discussion about outcomes, followed by a

discussion about the process used to achieve desirable outcomes. Lastly, there is a discussion of the budget that is used to fund the outcomes. This is how the introduction to this paper is ordered. The introduction is followed by the results of the World Values Survey across six waves on this topic. The surveys show the trends in trust in civil servants. The paper then has a conclusion. The flow of the content is represented by the drawing below. The premise of this paper is that the public funds a budget that is spent on and through processes resulting in desirable outcomes that inspire trust. For the cost, does the public get a return on the sacrifice they give to civil servants? Let us start with the end in mind by discussing trust first.

FIGURE 1: Process Flow for thetrust in civil servants.

Trust is a sociological reality (5) that is not only a sociological event within a person but is systemic between social institutions by being both irreducible and multidimensional. Furthermore, a sociological perspective suggests that ongoing collective dyads experience trust in a social system. Social relationships depend on trust that when absent experience chaos and fear which increases situational complexity. Conversely, trust motivates loyalty and produces simplicity. In fact, the value of trusted information is that it produces rational action rather than confusion, or random action. This is because causal relationships within the information become predictable. Trust can replace rational prediction to reduce complexity. The myriad of required contingencies in a chaotic environment can paralyzes action and nullify prediction. This is because distrust requires a course of action based on suspicion, monitoring, and safeguards. Similar actions must be taken when confronted by the unknown. If a source of information does not make the unknown known in a rational way, trust is withdrawn, especially if this is the expected function of the source. The emotional bond between the consumer of information and the provider is betrayed when emotional investments

have been made that do not return value. A typical reaction to this betrayal may be characterized as emotional indignation. The violation of trust brings severe emotional pain to all stakeholders when information that is relied on fails to be correct.

Beyond the cognitive, or rational aspect of trust, and the emotional aspect of trust is the behavioral aspect of trust. This is where routines are changed. Behaviors are modified to avoid the betrayal in the relationship that causes cognitive dissonance and emotional pain. When the cognitive process is omitted blind faith or fixed hope remain. Those who omit the cognitive process experience greater emotional pain from betrayal. On the other hand, an elevated level of rationality together with an elevated level of emotionality produces ideological trust. The betrayal of trust comes when these institutions, in this case the civil servants, cannot be relied upon or when they do not keep their promises, even if they are implied. As trust is the foundation of relations between individuals and institutions, betrayal collapses the relationship. Declining trust in the civil services is undesirable which could potentially lead to national instability. Instability is therefor an outcome as illustrated by Figure 1. Outcomes will be discussed next, and then process and budget. Outcomes are tangible results that create trus.

2 | OUTCOMES

The expected outcomes are that civil services preserve and enhance the quality of life of citizens. An International civil service Effectiveness (InCiSE) Index was created by InCiSE@instituteforgovernment.org.uk to measure not only the effectiveness of civil services but also performance improvement. This 100-page peer-reviewed report on civil service performance was a collaborative project between the Blavatnik School of Government and the Institute for Government and is supported by the U.K. Civil Service. Literature tends to be oriented around the scope of government responsibilities rather than outcomes of government in the interest of those who are paying for it. Citizens will exchange their resources for a benefit. According to the InCiSE index outcomes include

attributes and services. Some desirable attributes include integrity, openness, capability, inclusiveness, engagement, and innovation. This is not a complete set, and the attributes would vary depending on the expectations of citizens. The services in the index include policy making, fiscal and financial, regulations, risk/crisis management, procurement, human resources, information technology, finance, tax administration, social security administration, and digital services. Some citizens are proponents of limited government while others expect much more from the government. Consequently, the list of services within the scope of government responsibility can be large or small depending on the culture and the constitution of the country. Now on to the World Values Survey.

The question from the survey about civil services was: "Tell me how much confidence you have in civil servants." Some inferences can be deduced from the answers. Is performance-based information used to make decisions? Is there a link between the attributes and the outcomes? To what extent are citizens satisfied with the how the civil servants in their country serve the people who pay for them? To some extent, results can be linked to funding, even so, the results need to be valuable in the eyes of the citizenry that are paying for it. The data in this study will expose this perception over generations and over a significant period of time. The options given were 'a great deal,' 'quite a lot,' 'not very much,' 'none at all', and no answer. The study investigated the attitudes of each generation by cultural group. All six waves (Wave 1 - 1981-1986, Wave 2 – 1990-1994, Wave 3 – 1995-1998, Wave 4 – 1999-2004, Wave 5 – 2005-2009, Wave 6 – 2010-2016) were used to ascertain the change in attitudes from 1981-2016. Now on to the next step in the flow, process.

3 | PROCESS

Process includes the methods used to achieve outcomes. The attributes that describe civil servants contributes to their perception and how well they execute within the processes they use. For example, to some extent 'red tape' and overly complicated processes used to achieve results are a frustration to

citizens who must follow them in order to achieve outcomes they desire from the civil service. Many citizens wish that processes were more business-like, where businesses are challenged to be streamlined and efficient and civil services do not appear to be. A focus on a needlessly complicated process may be the emphasis rather than achieving outcomes. Some legislation has been put in place in an attempt to reduce process complexity, however citizens feel that the government systems are overly and needlessly complex. The measurement of government success is not how well they follow a complex process but how efficient the process is in providing to citizens the services that they want. Even so, there is the expectation that government processes are fair. This includes a lack of favoritism, the distribution of benefits according to need, responsiveness to needs when they arise, and an amount of transparency that mitigates corruption (1). In some cases, outcomes are subservient to process as trust is en-hanced when outcomes are undesirable but perceived to be fair. Budget supports outcomes that produce trust. Now on to a discussion about budget.

4 | BUDGET

Resources are critical to the achievement of desired outcomes from the civil service. Performance-based budgeting relates to what the government can achieve with taxpayer money in terms of perceived value by voters. Some measures can be taken including decentralization, strengthening competitive pressures, transforming workforce structure, changing budget practices and procedures, scaling, leveraging using performance information in the budgeting process, and introducing results-oriented approaches to budgeting and management (6) .

Public spending efficiency requires corresponding measures of the value of public service outputs as determined by citizens who pay for them. These outputs are reliant on inputs which relate to performance measures and feedback on which action should be taken. Support to the private sector can include valuable government services as well as tax reductions. The government should help companies and taxpayers achieve their goals with minimal effort. Some

drivers for efficiency within the government can include e-government services, coordination with non-profits, privatization of services, use of contractors, functional decentralization (agencification), talent motivation, and specialized agencies. Economies of scale can produce lower costs but at the same time it increases the size of government as more services are added to spread the labor over the work available (6) . In the event that citizens are unhappy with the return on their investment in government there will be dissatisfaction and distrust.

5 | EFFECT OF SERVICE DISSATISFACTION ON TRUST

Are people satisfied with civil services? Is there a correlation between this satisfaction and trust? Why are we seeing the current trends in trust of civil services? How does the perception of disservice effect trust in different generations? These are critical questions that are discussed in this paper. First, we need to be clear about the efficacy of civil services and the impact that disservice has on trust. Distrust can come from personal experience or ideological differences. What is disservice? Many citizens are looking for specific support around a need. When this support is not afforded and the need resolved, a dissatisfaction begins to breed and grow. A specific need may relate to the availability of food for a small family, with one income where that income has discontinued. The specific need may be food for the family. The extent to which that need is met relates to satisfaction in the civil services. The family may not evaluate civil services broadly due to a specific need.

Another aspect of trust relates to distantiation. The perceived distance that civil services is away from those who need help is a factor in satisfaction. Civil servants that separate themselves from the specific need may be perceived as lazy, out of touch, incompetent, or dishonest. On the other hand, the civil servant that immerses themselves in the problems is viewed as being interested, engaged, and a leader for the cause. A Japanese term, *gemba*, is often used to describe the workplace. Leaders are encouraged to work in the *gemba*. The separation of Civil Servants

from the people that need them exacerbates the situation as citizens continue to not follow guidance and rules, or cooperate in the distribution or provision of collective goods, and do not respond appropriately in emergencies. This is often seen in natural disasters.

6 | DATA

Variations in trust are explained in this study in terms of people's dissatisfaction with public services that are specific to a need. Demographic factors and trends over time for this trust will be discussed using the World Values Survey data. The results were drawn from groups during waves of studies. Each wave is released separately, however, in this longitudinal study the trends within religious groups are seen over multiple waves. This unique view allows for much greater visibility into the trends over time.

The World Values Survey is the world's only major longitudinal cultural study using nearly 100 countries encompassing about 90 percent of the global population using the same questions to all. The study uses 400,000 respondents and covers major demographic variation including all genders, age groups, and income levels. The World Values Survey strives to help researchers and policy makers better understand regional and global attitudes on religion, equality, gender, politics, and well-being. The World Values Survey also avoids grouping results in pre-distinguished categories such as cultural dimensions which allows for better analysis of the data. To help interpret the data an example is discussed.

Anyone can object to the amount of attention they are getting from the civil services that thy need most. Long term specific servicing where needs are met can solidify the satisfaction that is perceived. If the civil service is acting in a way that is perceived to be right it is hard to criticize them even if they are not doing a decent job. To illustrate, if FEMA is handing out water bottles to hurricane victims it is hard to criticize them for not doing it fast enough as they are doing the right thing. Similarly, if FEMA sets up a temporary hospital to treat COVID 19 patients and no one comes, they did the right thing, because

the hospital could have been needed based on the information they received. FEMA can be trusted to quickly put a hospital together. Doing things, the right way may also be superseded by doing the right things. A legitimacy crisis may result if the civil service is not able to show that they are effectively doing the right things. Trust may be extended to the system of civil services but may exclude specific leaders.

This distrust in leaders may be fueled by a lack of personal achievement or a lack of communication skills. People may be fooled by charisma that lacks accomplishment. On the other hand, people may be encouraged when their new leader is attached to certain symbols or artifacts that have mutual value. A leader who goes fishing may attract credibility from likeminded acquaintances. Conversely, negativity around a symbol can be attributed to someone even if they do not associate themselves with it. A person's personal experience creates an interest in certain factors being present when an evaluation is about to happen. Accessibility and service levels might be of interest when a mother calls Animal Services to remove a bear from the neighborhood; both quickly and humanely. Even a friendly communication from a civil servant can increase the satisfaction levels of taxpayers. But, if the bear is not removed the friendliness of the animal expert may not cover the lack of results expected by citizens (3) . The experience of the citizen is the factor that influences the trustworthiness perception of civil servants. On the other hand, if the civil servant had a good process and failed, grace may be extended (1) . She tried, but she could not catch the bear. Even if the Public Sector delivered and reported measurable results, a skeptical citizenry may not be satisfied with them.

President Clinton launched the National Performance Review (NPR) and the U.S. Congress passed the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) in 1993 to emphasize outcomes for the purpose of restoring trust of the American people in their government. The preamble to the GPRA law states that the purpose was to "improve the confidence of the American people in the capability of the Federal Government, by systematically holding Federal agencies accountable for achieving

program results" (GPRA Sec. 2(b)(1)). In the preface to the Report of the NPR, Vice President Gore (1993) wrote:

The National Performance Review can reduce the deficit further, but it is not just about cutting spending. It is also about closing the trust deficit: proving to the American people that their tax dollars will be treated with respect for the arduous work that earned them. We are taking action to put America's house in order.

A few years later the Obama administration doubled the deficit of all presidents before him in just eight years. Clearly the process did not achieve what the rhetoric promised. The process, with its administrative burden and red tape, is the problem. If the process is perceived to be fair, respectful, and honest, is it really credible if the burden to pay for it is put on later generations? Taxpayers look at how civil servants function. When they see waste they notice, as it is not tolerated where they work. The tolerance for waste in civil services breeds distrust. A citizen may not be inclined to sacrifice in a crisis when the trust in their relationship with civil servants is not strong. Citizens are looking for good outcomes from vital public services (4) .

The process of getting work done for citizens is of interest. If civil servants are not engaged in these activities, trust is lost. When a citizen disengages at their for-profit workplace, they lose their job. It is the expectation of citizens that civil servants tackle and solve problems that if unresolved would reduce their security, productivity, or liberty. Biased and self-serving public sector employees increase the cynicism. Any evidence of corruption breaks the relationship between citizens who must obey the laws and the civil servants who often enforce the laws.

The 2006 ISSP, including nearly 50,000 people in 33 participating nations, asked participants to indicate whether or not they thought that civil servants, higher level non-political government paid officials, were engaged in activities that were best for their country. The results showed that 3% agreed and 16% disagreed that most civil servants can be trusted to do what is best for the country. The balance of the participants evenly showed that they agreed, neither,

nor disagreed. When the data was distributed by country the highest values were for Denmark and the lowest were for Japan as shown in the figure below.
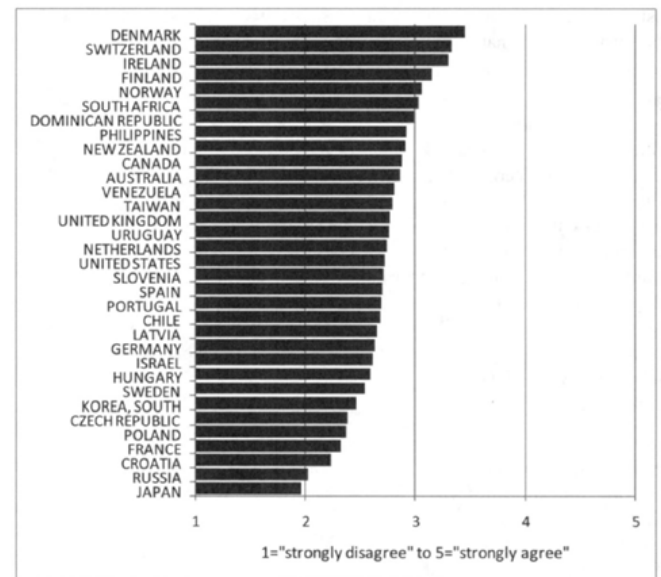

FIGURE 2: ISSP mean results for the question, ``Most CivilServants can be trusted to do what is best for the country."

The variables that describe citizen expectations may be most strongly correlated by political culture and demographics. An example of a variable is 'engagement'. A citizen may be more satisfied with civil services if they are actively involved in understanding how the system works. An understanding of the challenges of the civil servants can influence the tendency to be condescending about performance. Norms and values that are shared create a sense of connection to what civil servants accomplish (7). A biased and corrupt media may not follow or cover these accomplishments ensuring that the right citizens will understand what happened. The media is a phenomenon that has appeared as a very expedient way to criticize someone instantly. However, participating in the success of civil servants (volunteering to distribute food to the homeless) brings a whole new level of interest between the parties' involved, hence the growing mistrust in the media (8).'Demographics' is a variable that may predict the disposition of opinions about the performance of a function. For example, generational differences may promote a different sense of

efficiency. Additionally, according to (7) the level of education that a person has correlates to a more positive view of government. These people may be demographically divided. Newer generations may have higher levels of education. They under-stand more about how civil servants are organized and how they function. This informed perception enhances the positive viewpoints of a more educated generation. Knowledge may also create a more critical perception of government where clear alternatives are visible but not chosen. An informed citizen is more aware of poor decision making from civil servants. Gender variables may also come into play. Some studies show that females support the public sector more than men (9). Women have become more dependent on the public sector for their (2) employment with unemployment being a big driver for trust in the government (10). This may influence their willingness to be critical of their employer. Increases in taxes to pay for the public sector garners unfavorable re-sponses, especially when waste is exposed. Another demographic variable of interest is age. As citizens get older, they are less capable of performing the tasks that the public sector can perform for them. An example of this might be snow removal from the sidewalk in front of someone's town home. Now on to the method used for the study.

7 | METHOD

To explore the trends across a significant time frame, data from the World Values Survey was used in this study. The results were drawn from groups during waves of studies. Each wave is released separately, however, in this longitudinal study the trends within religious groups are seen over multiple waves. This unique view allows for much greater visibility into the trends over time. The World Values Survey is the world's only major longitudinal cultural study using nearly 100 countries encompassing about 90 percent of the global population utilizing the same questions to all. The study uses 400,000 respondents and covers the major demographic variation including all genders, age groups, and income levels. The World Values Survey strives to help researchers and

policy makers better understand regional and global attitudes on religion, equality, gender, politics, and well-being. The World Values Survey also avoids grouping results in pre-distinguished categories such as cultural dimensions which allows for better analysis of the data. Several key aspects of the study are now explained. This paper utilizes the raw data from the WVS using the question, "How much do you trust the civil services as an institution?" This paper utilized the data associated with this question over six waves from over 80 different countries representing over 90% of the world's cultures.

The WVS data set is collected by hundreds of researchers around the world. The questioner is given between 800 and 2000 randomly chosen individuals depending on the size of the country. The individuals in the survey are always chosen at random for each wave and are not necessarily the same individuals in each wave. All surveys are delivered orally as to ensure that the respondent understood the question correctly and to ensure the respondent provides a valid answer.

Longitudinal aspect. Culture changes slowly, often generationally necessitating using data that spans decades. The World Values Survey has been conducted six times since 1981 with a seventh wave commencing between and 2017-2019. Consequently, the data used in this study covers the first six waves of the World Values Survey from $1981 - 2014$ encompassing 33 years of data. Wave seven was not completed as of the writing of this paper.

Groups. The World Values Survey offers a breadth and depth of research data allowing researchers to look at groups by age and by region. To help organize the data, we organized the age groups of the participants into generations. We investigated the attitudes of countries regarding trust in the civil services across five generations including Turn of the Century, Silent, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial. Furthermore, we explored the data by looking at each generation's attitudes and comparing them to their cultural similarities. We grouped each generation by cultural similarities using Ingleheart-Welzel's cultural map in which Baltic, English Speaking, Catholic Europe, North America, Orthodox, and Protestant Europe groups are shown

in Figure 3 below.

The data on each group was compiled by wave (Figures 4-9). During each wave a transformational comparative analysis was completed to investigate the trends of each generational group compared to each cultural group for one time series. This allowed us to discern if any meaningful trends emerged that illustrated how generational attitudes changed between different cultural groups.

The World Values Survey offers a breadth and depth of research data allowing a look at groups by age and by region. The survey investigated the attitudes of countries across five generations including Turn of the Century, Silent, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennial. Furthermore, the data is grouped by generation and country into Ingleheart-Welzel's cultural map. Each generation was grouped by Baltic, English Speaking, Catholic Europe, North America, Orthodox, and Protestant Europe groups as shown in Figure 3 below.
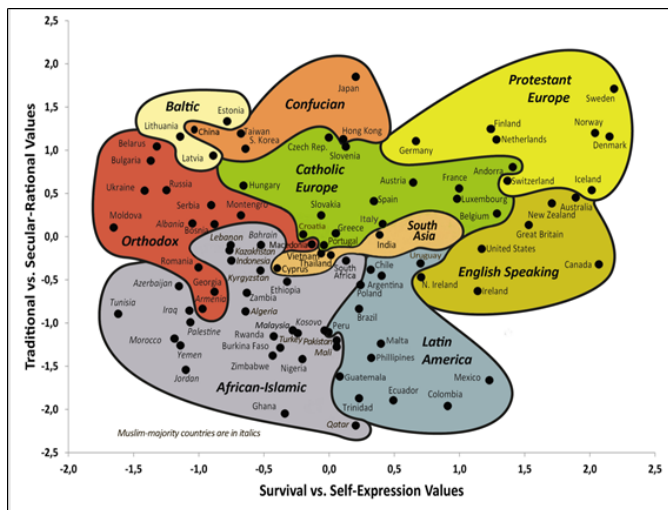
Wave 1 – (1981-1984)

FIGURE 3: Ingleheart-Welzel's cultural map (Retriev edfrom:http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSC ontents.jsp?CMSID=Findings) World Values Survey Results

In each wave data was collected regarding the percent of citizens questioned that had confidence in the civil servants that had authority over them. For each region and generation, the value was plotted. In the figures that follow there is trend information for each wave of the World Values Survey. The

results show trends in perception by generation for each wave. The group that answered the question is differentiated by color. Each wave is separated by a number of years as previously indicated. The iterative survey results show a longitudinal trend with regard to the question asked.
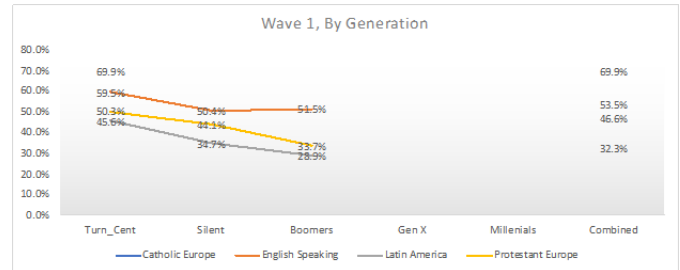
Wave 1 (1981-1984)

FIGURE 4: Wave 1, by generation

In the first wave the overall global consensus of Christian based cultures is a declining trust in civil service professionals. The younger the generation, the more distrust. This is particularly true in Latin American areas where unethical behavior can be high. Interestingly Protestant Europe saw the same decline (unknown as to why). English Speaking also saw a decline but only between the oldest generations. There was an improvement between the Silent and Boomer generation. Information for this wave for Gen X and Millennials was not made available at the time of the survey.
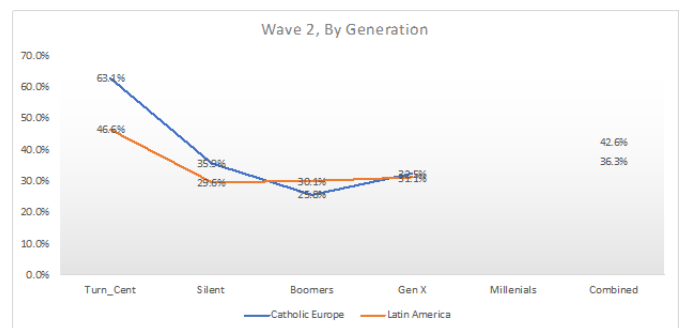
Wave 2 (1990-1994)

FIGURE 5: Wave 2, by generation.

In Wave 2, the precipitous drop between the first two generations is even worse than it was in Wave 1 in Latin America, however, there is a slight rise between the Silent Boomer and Boomer-GenX generations. Regardless the trust is still quite low overall.

Wave 2 shows the first data on Catholic Europe and it too follows the same patterns as Latin America and Protestant Europe did in Wave 1. However, between Boomers and Gen X the rust rises to the same level as in Latin American areas.
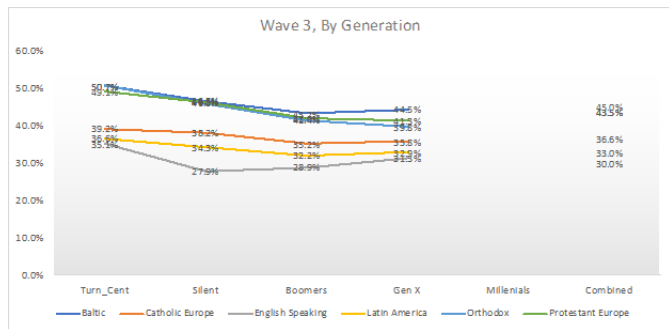
Wave 3 (1995-1998)

FIGURE 6: Wave 3, by generation.

In Wave three the same general pattern appears as seen in the other waves overall. All areas but English speaking see a decline in trust however at a lower rate between Turn of the Century-Silent and between Silent-Boomer generations. The drop is less precipitous due to the Turn of the Century generation having lower levels of trust than in other waves. English speaking regions continue to be the outlier. Between the Boomer and Gen X generations there seems to be more or less even opinions on the civil service.
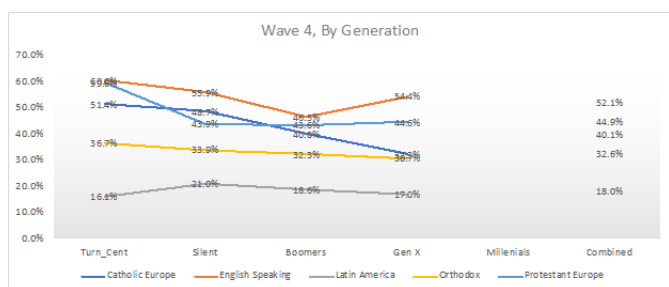
Wave 4 (1999-2004)

FIGURE 7: Wave 4, by generation.

Wave 4 brings more of the same patterns as the other waves however the key difference being that English-speaking regions are now also showing a decline while Latin America has stabilized and even risen slightly. The data is still more or less flat between the Boomer and Gen X generations overall with the notable rise in English speaking countries and notable continuing decline in Protestant Europe.
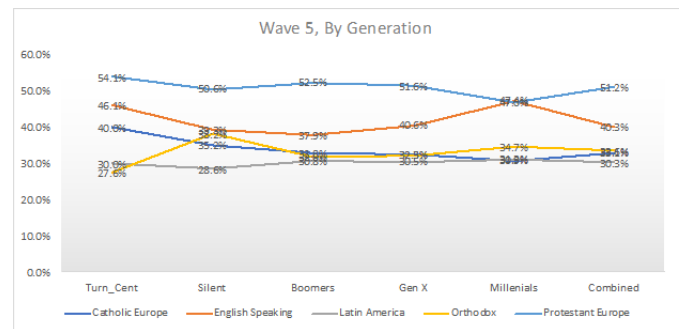
Wave 5 (2005-2009)

FIGURE 8: Wave 5, by generation.

Wave 5 brings the addition of the millennial generation to the data. The same trends seem to be showing with the exception of the precipitous drop of the Orthodox Turn of the Century generation dropping dramatically between Waves 4 and 5. Overall the first three generations see a notable drop then the opinions flatten out which is continued by the millennial generation.
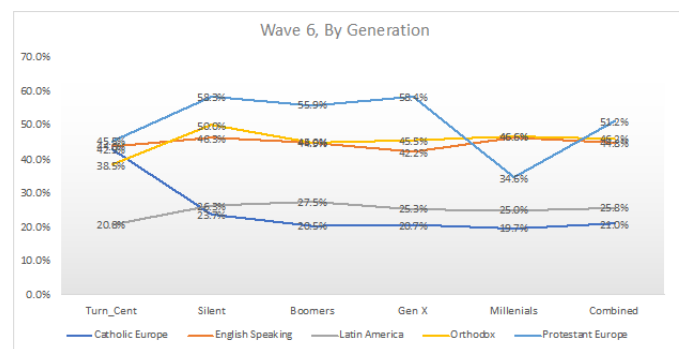
Wave 6 (2010-2016)

FIGURE 9: Wave 6, by generation.

Wave 6 offers an interesting change for the Turn of the Century generation. For many regions trust with this group dropped dramatically making the graph look different, but in reality, the data is clear that the remaining generations continue the trends as before overall. The notable exception is the Millennial generation for Protestant Europe. Note that the Turn of the Century generation had deteriorating trust in civil service over the waves. The other generations were relatively stable between waves.

8 | CONCLUSION

This study has shown first that people's trust in government is of a general nature, with some differentiating features. Variations in trust between the different institutions are relatively small, but trust is highest in the parliament and lowest in politicians, while there is a strong inter-correlation between trust in the different institutions. People with an elevated level of trust in one institution also tend to trust the other institutions, while distrust in one is related to distrust in others. In other words, trust in government shows a cumulative pattern, and trust relations are more supplementary than alternative. Second, there is a connection between people's satisfaction with public services and their trust in government. This finding is in accordance with broad Norwegian studies of trust in local government (11). People who are satisfied with the treatment they receive from the public health service and from the employment and social services generally have a higher level of trust in public institutions than citizens who are not satisfied with their treatment.

The finding that people with experience of being employed by social services have less trust in government than people without such experience, however, this is not significant when we control for other factors. This implies that positive or negative experiences with different public services are more important for variations in trust than whether one has any experience at all. Simply being a consumer of specific public services is less important for people's level of trust in governmental institutions than their degree of satisfaction with them. We also find some support for the assumption that experience of and satisfaction with universal benefits enhances the level of trust more than experience of and satisfaction with selective benefits. Institutions' function and performance influence people's trust in them. Third, trust in governmental institutions also varies significantly with political and cultural factors. Citizens who are integrated, involved, and engaged in the political system have a significantly higher level of trust in most governmental institutions than people who are less integrated, involved, and engaged. Outsiders and people who are politically distant, in an ideological sense, from public institutions have less trust in those institutions. The same is true for political-cultural factors when institutions and citizens are loosely integrated. Fourth, for the population as a whole social position and demographic factors have an influence on levels of trust in governmental institutions. People employed in the public sector have more trust in government than people without such affiliation, and people with higher education have more trust than less educated people. This effect is, however, not significant for people with experience of the three specific public sector services. Age also has an effect; whereby older people have more trust in governmental institutions than younger people. Fifth, and most important, the political-cultural variables have the strongest overall effect on variation in people's trust in government. This indicates that integration, involvement and engagement in the political system and the political administrative culture is more important for trust in governmental institutions than those institutions' function and their performance and also more important than social or demographic factors.

The strong effect of general satisfaction with democracy shows that passive political integration and satisfaction may be as important for trust as more active political participation, such as party membership. Variation in trust levels can be explained more by political factors than by social factors. An alternative regression, removing the dominant political-cultural variable —satisfaction with democracy — shows that this main picture can be changed more in the direction of the increasing importance of satisfaction variables. Returning to the main picture, it would appear that variation in people's trust in government institutions can be traced to a somewhat larger degree to factors affecting diffuse support for the political system (such as political-cultural variables) than to factors affecting specific support (such as performance or satisfaction with specific benefits). Long-term general identities are more important than short-term specific experiences. This should be seen in the context of the Norwegian public sector, which has an elevated level of performance.

If citizens take superior performance for granted, performance might not serve as the main criterion for judgement of or trust in government institutions

(7). In a high-context culture like Nor-way, people are more likely to rely on an intuitive understanding of how democracy works and less likely to be influenced by individual experience than in low-context, individualistic societies (12). What is more, if people tend to see government as an amorphous entity, it is difficult to trace trust back to individual experience of specific services. If citizens do not make a clear distinction between the different institutions, and so it becomes difficult to determine the effect of specific government services (7). The argument is compounded by the complexity of causality. Our assumption is that satisfaction and political engagement leads to trust, but it could also be that more trusting attitudes lead to a better perception of service delivery, and to higher political participation and involvement, a conundrum that cannot be easily be solved by using survey data (13). Bearing this in mind, the narrow criterion of performance, as expressed through satisfaction with specific public services does, nonetheless, have an impact on people's over-all trust in public sector institutions, but this effect is significantly weaker than the effect of political-cultural factors, particularly satisfaction with democracy. Therefore, our hypothesis is critical.

Hypothesis: A declining trust in the civil service as an institution is undesirable.

Trust in the civil service increases the quality of life of citizens who need to feel satisfied that their sacrifice of money and time is worth it. Regime performance and positive attitudes towards how democracy works within the national setting seem to further the trust in government, but so does engagement. This analysis indicates that political institutions' ability to integrate citizens in political life is relatively more important for understanding variations in trust in government institutions than either the public sector's ability to solve problems and to satisfy people's needs or the differences between democratic groups in society. Citizens' general level of involvement, identity and belief in politics and democracy enhances their trust in government, the cabinet, the civil service, local councils, political parties, and politicians. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that trust is a multi-dimensional concept and there is no one-factor explanation for variations in people's

trust in governmental institutions. One implication of this analysis is that the causal relations are contested, complex and multi-faceted. Citizens' trust in government institutions seems to be a complex mix of general images, ideology and stereotypes, the actual performance of specific public services, and demographic variables. To gain a better understanding of the variation in citizens' trust in government one needs to take a more comparative approach, focusing on changes over time, between different institutions and between different countries. Certainly, there are many research opportunities around this subject.

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