

Do autonomous people tend to trust political institutions more?**Multi-level evidence across six world regions**

Olga Gulevich^{1*} and Vladislav Krivoshchekov^{2*}

*Indicates both authors contributed equally to this work.

¹Department of Psychology, HSE University, Moscow, Russia

²Department of Psychology, University of Bern, Bern, Switzerland

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this manuscript should be addressed to Vladislav Krivoshchekov, Department of Psychology, University of Bern, Fabrikstrasse 8, 3012 Bern, Switzerland. E-mail: vladislav.krivoshchekov@unibe.ch

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ORCID

Olga Gulevich <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3806-5064>

Vladislav Krivoshchekov <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1213-0884>

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Abstract

The Self-Determination Theory suggests a connection between autonomy supporting vs. controlling interactional style of influential figures, individual autonomy need satisfaction, and attitudes toward these people. Most of the studies that have demonstrated this relationship have been conducted in the proximal social context (family, school, organizations). Only a few studies have examined the role of the distal social context (culture, political system). We aimed to examine the relationship between the political regime, autonomy need satisfaction, and trust in political institutions. To examine the link, we used data from the European Values Study and World Values Survey. The results revealed that higher levels of democracy were positively associated with one's reported autonomy need satisfaction. This satisfaction, in turn, was positively associated with political trust. This relationship is evident in different regions of the world and at different times, but in some cases, it is stronger in democratic countries than in authoritarian ones.

Keywords: political trust, political institutions, Self-Determination Theory, autonomy

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that all people have basic psychological needs, the satisfaction of which allows them to achieve psychological well-being (Van den Broeck et al., 2016; Yu et al., 2018) and has a positive effect on attitudes toward others (Deci et al., 1989; Graça et al., 2013; Kachanoff et al., 2020; La Guardia et al., 2000; Slemp et al., 2018). According to the SDT, the degree of its satisfaction depends both on the individual and on the characteristics of the social context.

The behaviours of the people around are considered as one of the characteristics of the context that either support or prevent a person from the autonomy need satisfaction. The more people around encourage a person's autonomy, the more one's need for autonomy is satisfied and the more positively one relates to these people (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Nevertheless, most of the previous studies examined the role of the proximal social context (parents, teachers, leaders), and paid little attention to the distal social context—the type of culture, political and economic systems.

Our study is first (to our best knowledge) to consider the role of the broad political context. Using data from two separate waves of the European Values Study and one of the World Value Survey for replicability, we examined the relationship between the political regime people live in, their self-reported autonomy need satisfaction, and attitudes toward political institutions. Furthermore, we used multi-level modelling to examine the cross-cultural variability in the association between autonomy need satisfaction and trust in a range of political institutions, namely parliament, government, political parties, the justice system, and the police across 6 world regions.

Social Context, Autonomy Need Satisfaction, and Attitudes toward People

SDT states that people have three basic psychological needs: Autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The need for autonomy describes the need of individuals to experience self-endorsement and ownership of their actions. A key element of autonomy is an opportunity to

make a free choice. Autonomy is determined by the degree to which people perceive their behaviour as being done on their own, of their own free will, and not as a result of coercion from outside forces. This need has a special status because meeting it makes it easier to meet two other basic needs (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

According to the SDT, the degree to which the need for autonomy is satisfied depends on the social context. Proponents of this theory distinguish between proximal and distal contexts. Proximal social context is created by people with whom a person communicates every day. Distal context is the broader social context that includes cultures, economic structures, and political systems. Both proximal and distal social contexts can affect people. Proximal context affects directly, while a distal one affects both directly and indirectly through proximal social context (e.g., parenting, teaching or leadership styles).

SDT postulates that both proximal and distal social contexts can be autonomy-supportive vs. demanding and controlling. Autonomy support includes affordances of choice and encouragement of self-regulation. This style of interaction gives people the opportunity to act in accordance with their desires and values. Demanding and controlling context involves external coercion that limits a person's aspirations. Research has shown that these contexts have different effects on people.

On the one hand, people in an autonomy-supportive environment have a higher autonomy need satisfaction than people in a demanding and controlling context (Bartholomew et al., 2011; Kachanoff et al., 2019). On the other hand, people give a more positive assessment to someone who uses autonomy-supportive practices when interacting with them (Deci et al., 1989; Graça et al., 2013; Kachanoff et al., 2020; La Guardia et al., 2000; Slemp et al., 2018).

Thus, the studies carried out indicate that there is a connection between the characteristics of the social context, the autonomy need satisfaction, and the attitude toward

people around them. Nevertheless, they had several limitations. First, most studies focused on the proximal social context. Second, most research focused on the relationship between the social context (autonomy support vs. demanding and controlling) and the attitudes toward the people who create it. At the same time, the relationship between the social context and the autonomy need satisfaction, and the relationship between the satisfaction of this need and the attitudes toward people around them remain poorly understood.

Our research sheds a light on the relationship between all three described phenomena. First, we use the basic concepts of the SDT to explain how people relate to the distal social context—the political system. We thus illustrate that SDT can be used to explain global social processes. Second, we SDT extend the research to how autonomy support vs. demanding and controlling political context is related to autonomy need satisfaction, and how autonomy need satisfaction is related to attitudes toward political system.

Political Regimes, Autonomy Need Satisfaction, and Political Trust

Contemporary scholars place political regimes on a continuum from democratic to authoritarian. In democracies, civil liberties and political rights are generally protected, elections allow for a regular changeover of leadership, civil society can operate independently of the state, can serve as a watchdog of the state, and can pressure the state for change. At the same time, authoritarian regimes make little pretence of incorporating democratic institutions beyond holding elections, civil liberties and political rights are limited, challenges to executive dominance are suppressed and have almost no impact in autocratic settings (Tripp, 2013).

Thus, democratic political regimes tend to encourage individual autonomy, while authoritarian political regimes tend to discourage it. People living in democratic countries have more freedom of choice in the political domain than residents of authoritarian regimes: they receive more diverse information about political events and have a greater influence on

political decisions. This means that democratic regimes can be viewed as an autonomy-supportive political context and authoritarian regimes as a demanding and controlling political context.

The scarce evidence from the distal social context (the degree to which a social system encourages or restricts in-group autonomy) suggested that the more autonomy-supportive people perceive an existing social system, the more satisfied their need for autonomy is (Kachanoff et al., 2019). In addition, the more autonomy-supportive people considered the existing social system, the more positive attitudes toward this system they reported and the less willing they were to protest the status-quo (Kachanoff et al., 2020).

One of the most well-known indicators of attitude to the system is political trust. Political trust, a basic evaluative and relational orientation toward political actors and institutions with the expectation that they will act in accordance with one's interest and normative disposition, attracts great attention of political researchers (van der Meer & Zmerli, 2017). Previous studies demonstrated that political trust affects the economic and political behaviour of people—taxes paying (Chan et al., 2017; Marien & Hooghe, 2011), political participation (Gabriel, 2017; Hooghe & Marien, 2013) and electoral choice (Bélanger, 2017; Hooghe, 2017).

Scholars distinguish political trust in diffuse trust, one's confidence in the overall political system, and specific trust, confidence in political institutions and incumbents (Bauer & Freitag, 2017). Researchers are especially interested in trust in the state institutions that form an executive branch, a legislative branch, a judicial branch, as well as bureaucracy and the police (Newton et al., 2017; Uslander, 2017). Therefore, hereinafter, under the political trust, we understand the trust in the political institutions operating in the country.

Based on the SDT, we put forward three hypotheses about the relationship between the political regime, autonomy need satisfaction, and trust in political institutions. First, the

more democratic regime (i.e., higher levels of democracy) would be positively associated with the autonomy need satisfaction among the residents of the country (*hypothesis 1*).

Second, the more democratic regime (i.e., higher levels of democracy) would be positively associated with political trust (*hypothesis 2*). Third, autonomy need satisfaction would be positively associated with political trust (*hypothesis 3*).

In addition, we formulated a research question: To what extent is the relationship between autonomy need satisfaction and political trust maintained in different political regimes? This question was formulated due to the following evidence. On the one hand, SDT proponents believe that basic needs have the same impact in different cultural, economic, and political contexts. On the other hand, empirical support for this idea comes from cross-cultural studies with a small number of countries and describes the relationship between autonomy need satisfaction and psychological well-being and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

We aimed to test the robustness of this proposition in a broader context. Therefore, we use two databases—European Values Study (EVS) and World Values Survey (WVS). Although EVS contains data from different European countries, most of the states included in this database are among the countries with a democratic political regime. At the same time, WVS contains country data from different regions of the world, that is the countries with both democratic and authoritarian political regimes. Moreover, EVS and WVS face challenges with data quality and implement different procedures to overcome them (Luijkx et al., 2021). Therefore, in our opinion, the analysis of data from both databases allows us to draw more reliable conclusions.

Method

Datasets

For the present research, we used three datasets, the fourth (EVS 2008) and fifth (EVS 2017) waves of the European Values Study (EVS, 2016, 2020) and the sixth wave of the World Values Survey (WVS 6; Inglehart et al., 2018). Both datasets are openly available on the EVS (<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu>) and WVS (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>) websites. In EVS 2008, data from Azerbaijan was not used due to reliability problems reported on the EVS website, and Northern Ireland was combined with data from Great Britain. Thus, for the analysis, we had representative data from 44, 34, and 53 countries in EVS 2008, 2017, and WVS 6 respectively.

The individual-level main variables including autonomy and political trust were drawn from the datasets. The group-level main variable, including the political regime, was taken from the external data sources to supplement the dataset. Individual-level controlling variables including gender, age, educational level, religiosity, interest in politics, and political orientations, were selected from the previous studies on political trust (Letki, 2017; Listhaug & Jakobsen, 2017; van der Meer, 2017; You, 2017; Zmerli & Newton, 2017). They were drawn from the datasets. All participants residing in the country were assigned the value of the country they belong to for the analysis.

Samples

The dataset included national representative samples of individuals from the countries. The samples consisted of 66281, 56491, and 89382 individuals in the EVS 2008, 2017, and WVS 6 respectively. Respondents' age ranged from 15 to 108, with a mean = 46.8 ($SD = 17.8$), and women comprised 55.6% (44.4% were men) of the sample in EVS 2008. As for EVS 2017, participants' age ranged from 18 to 82 years old, with a mean = 49.66 ($SD = 17.72$), and women comprised 55.3% (44.7% were men) of the sample. In the WVS 6, participants' age ranged from 16 to 102 years old, with a mean = 41.94 ($SD = 16.55$), and women comprised 52.2% (47.8% were men) of the sample.

Individual-level Measures

Autonomy Need Satisfaction

Participants were asked the following question: “Some people feel they have completely free choice and control over their lives, and other people feel that what they do has no real effect on what happens to them. Please use the scale to indicate how much freedom of choice and control you feel you have over the way your life turns out?”. The scale that was used is a 10-point scale from 1 (no freedom) to 10 (a great deal).

Political Trust

Respondents were asked to “look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?”. The institutions that were used in the study are the parliament, political parties, the government, the police, and the justice system. Four response options were inverted so that a higher number indicated greater confidence. Thus, the final scale used in the analysis was from 1 (“none at all”) to 4 (“a great deal”).

Gender and Age

Gender was dichotomously coded (1 = “men”; 2 = “women”). Age was measured as an open-ended quantitative variable.

Education

Educational attainment was measured with the question, “What is the highest educational level that you have attained?” Response options ranged from 1 (“No formal education”) to 9 (“University-level education, with degree”).

Income

Respondents were asked to indicate “...in what group your household is, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other sources of income that come in. Just give the letter of the

group your household falls into, after taxes and other deductions.” Response options ranged from 1 (“A – 1st decile”) to 10 (“J – 10th decile”).

Religiosity

Respondents were asked to indicate “how important in your life: religion” on the scale from 1 (“very important”) to 4 (“not at all important”). For analysis, response options were inverted so that higher importance was indicated by a higher value. Thus, the final scale was from 1 (“not at all important”) to 4 (“very much important”).

Interest in Politics

Respondents were asked to indicate “how interested are you in politics” on a scale from 1 (“very interested”) to 4 (“not at all interested”). For analysis, response options were inverted so that higher interest was indicated by a higher value. Thus, the final scale was from 1 (“not at all interested”) to 4 (“very much interested”).

Political orientations

Respondents were asked “... to indicate their political view” on a scale from 1 (“left”) to 10 (“right”).

Group-level Measure

To assess the level of freedom in the country, the Freedom House Index issued by the US-based Freedom House organisation was used (Freedom House, 2017). The aggregated score (from 0 to 100) is based on 25 indicators and indicates the extent of political and civil liberties in the country. Rankings from the years when data were collected were used in the current study to correspond to the data from EVS and WVS.

This index was chosen due to two reasons. First, compared, for instance, to the Democracy Index, this index is based only on expert evaluations and does not include data from mass polls that measure trust in political institutions, which may bias the estimates.

Second, compared to other indices (e.g., Polity IV), countries' scores distribution was more heterogeneous.

Analytical Strategy

To test the hypothesis, multilevel regression modelling (MLM) with a moderator was conducted. The analysis was conducted in the R environment (R Core Team, 2021). We used the ordinal (Christensen, 2019) package for cumulative link mixed models (CLMM).

Political trust in institutions was not combined into an index due to the measurement invariance issue of political trust. It has been indicated that in different countries the models of political trust might include different indicators and the measurement invariance could be barely stated (Schneider, 2017) and the underlying factors of political trust are different for different political institutions (van der Meer & Ouattara, 2019). All variables but political trust were used as numeric in MLM. Political trust, in its turn, was used as a categorical one. The Akaike information criterion (AIC) was used for model selection. It was considered that the lower AIC was the better the model fitted the data (Cavanaugh & Neath, 2019).

Centring

Following best practices in the multilevel modelling (Bell et al., 2018; Hamaker & Muthén, 2020), all independent variables were group-mean centred (within-cluster). To estimate the within-cluster slope without it being contaminated by the between-cluster slope, autonomy was both group-mean centred and averaged at the country level for all clusters.

Models

Null model. To conduct MLM, it is suggested that characteristics attributed to the country of residence would explain variation in confidence in political institutions, and it was tested using random intercept CLMM (M0) and ordinal logistic regression model. If the AIC value was lower for M0 than for CLMM, it would provide sufficient evidence for MLM, meaning that accounting for variations across countries improves the model.

Random intercepts with fixed and random slopes and individual-level predictors.

The models were specified by adding individual-level variables first. Model 1 (M1) tested the fixed effects of autonomy on political trust. Model 2 (M2) tested random effects of autonomy on political trust controlling for gender, age, educational level, religiosity, interest in politics, and political orientations at the individual level.

Random intercepts with fixed and random slopes and country- and individual-level predictors. Our final models were specified by adding country-level predictor to the models. In addition to the previous model, Model 3 (M3) tested the effect of FH on political trust. In the next step, Model 4 (M4) tested the interaction between autonomy and FH. Model 5 (M5) was similar to model three but used WVS 6 dataset and controlled for world regions. Finally, Model 6 (M6) tested the interaction between autonomy and world regions in the WVS 6 dataset.

Results

First, autonomy was positively related to the political regime in both EVS waves and WVS 6. The more democratic the political regime (higher FH values), the more autonomous people perceived themselves. This relationship was robust after controlling for gender, age, educational level, religiosity, interest in politics, political orientations, and income at the individual level (see Table 1). These results supported hypothesis 1. Second, as indicated in Table 2, all regression models with random intercepts had lower AIC values than cumulative link regression models. This result provided sufficient evidence for the MLM.

Third, we found a significant positive relationship between FH and trust in the police in both EVS waves and FH, trust in the justice system in EVS 2008 (see Table 3), and a negative significant link with trust in the government in WVS 6 (see Table 6) after controlling for gender, age, educational level, religiosity, interest in politics, political

orientations, and income at the individual level. Other relationships were non-significant. These results do not support our hypothesis 2.

Fourth, autonomy was positively related to political trust in all three waves. An increase in individual autonomy demonstrated to raise the odds of confidence in the police, the justice system, parliament, and government in both waves of EVS and WVS 6. This relationship was robust after controlling for gender, age, educational level, religiosity, interest in politics, political orientations at the individual level, and FH and averaged autonomy at the country level. These results provide support for hypothesis 3.

Furthermore, the increase in individual autonomy demonstrated to raise the odds of confidence in political parties. The relationship was evident in the EVS 2017 and WVS 6 after adding individual- and country-level controlling variables. Nevertheless, the relationship between autonomy and confidence in political parties was not significant after adding individual- and country-level controlling variables in EVS 2008. These results provide partial support for hypothesis 3.

We used data from the WVS 6 to examine whether the link holds across different world regions. As evidenced in Table 6, the relationship between individuals' autonomy and political trust was significantly positive in all six world regions with one exception. The link between individual autonomy and trust in the justice system was negative in the Middle East (see Fig. 1). That is, the increase in individual autonomy demonstrated to decrease the odds of confidence in the justice system. These results provide partial support for hypothesis 3.

Fifth, there was significant cross-level interaction between individuals' autonomy and FH in predicting confidence in the police, the justice system, political parties, and government in EVS 2017 (see Table 4), and in predicting confidence in political parties and parliament in EVS 2008 (see Table 5). In countries with higher (vs. lower) levels of democracy (as evaluated by the FH index), the link between individual autonomy and

political trust was stronger (vs. weaker). At the same time, only one interaction between FH and autonomy was significant in the WVS 6 in predicting confidence in government ($b = .0003$, $se = .0001$, $p = .006$).

Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between political regime (i.e., the level of democracy as measured by the Freedom House Index), autonomy need satisfaction, and political trust. Based on the SDT, we predicted that the political regime would be related to the autonomy need satisfaction, and the autonomy need satisfaction and the political regime would be related to political trust. In addition, we posed a research question about the cross-cultural differences in the relationship between autonomy need satisfaction and trust in political institutions. To test the hypothesis and answer the research question, we used data from two waves of the European Values Study and one wave of the World Values Survey.

First, the political regime was positively linked to autonomy need satisfaction: Residents of more democratic countries tend to feel more autonomy than residents of less democratic countries. This pattern was present in both EVS and WVS. We believe democratic political regimes create a more autonomy-supportive social context that supports greater freedom of choice and thus contributes to the satisfaction of the need for autonomy. In general, this evidence supports the proposed influence of the social context on the satisfaction of basic needs and shows that this applies not only to the proximal but also to the distal context.

Second, we did not obtain robust evidence that the political regime is associated with trust in political institutions. A positive relationship between these parameters was evidenced only in four cases out of twelve. At first glance, these results appear to contradict SDT research that has demonstrated that people are more positive toward those

who create a more autonomy-supportive environment for them. At the same time, one might assume this contradiction is related to the specifics of the study. In previous studies, the type of social context was determined by the degree to which the behaviours of parents, teachers, and supervisors gave children, students, and employees freedom of choice and allowed them to act according to their desires and perceptions. Respondents were asked to what extent authoritative people allowed them to act independently, gave them an opportunity to express their opinion about what is happening.

However, the political regime determines not only freedom of choice, but also the variety of information about political institutions. In democratic regimes, people are not only able to act in accordance with their Self, but also receive more critical information about political institutions. These features have the opposite effect on political trust and, as a result, the overall effect of the political regime is non-significant. The positive relationship between democracy and trust in the police and the courts can be explained by the fact that people receive less critical information about the actions of these institutions than about the actions of the parliament, government, and political parties, which are constantly in public. At the same time, the negative relationship between democracy and trust in the government may be associated with a large amount of critical information about it.

Third, autonomy need satisfaction was positively related to the attitudes toward five political institutions, namely parliament, government, parties, the justice system, and the police. Since these institutions reflect different branches of the political system, we can say that the autonomy need satisfaction was positively associated with trust in the political system as a whole. This pattern was evident in both waves of the EVS and one wave of the WVS. In addition, it was present in different world regions and different years. Therefore, we conclude that it is robust over time and political system.

One might assume the positive connection between trust in institutions and autonomy need satisfaction is that both are caused by the same third factor: High-quality and democratic political institutions. That is if one is living in a functioning democracy, one has more reason to trust the institutions. And one has more freedom to make life choices according to one's interests, instead of being oppressed by the authoritarian regime. However, our results did not support this assumption, as they evidenced that while the political regime was consistently associated with autonomy need satisfaction, it was not associated with trust in political institutions

Nevertheless, we should note that, in some cases, this relationship was more pronounced in more democratic than in less democratic regimes. In our opinion, these results can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, it can be assumed that people living in more democratic political regimes feel more involved in the activities of political institutions and, as a result, associate their autonomy with the distal political context to a greater extent than people living in less democratic political regimes. On the other hand, it is also possible that people trust the political regime that corresponds to their psychological characteristics more, in this case, the degree of autonomy need satisfaction. This idea is consistent with the principle of similarity used in psychological research (e.g., person-environment fit that has been found in organizations; Greguras et al., 2014; Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Oh et al., 2014; Verquer et al., 2003). However, these explanations need further verification.

Thus, the study contributes to Social-Determination Theory in two ways. First, most of the studies that have examined the relationship between autonomy need satisfaction and attitudes toward others have been conducted in proximal (family, school, and organisational) contexts, whereas our study is first (to our best knowledge) to focus on the broad political context. Second, ample research conducted within the SDT focused on the relationship

between the autonomy support vs. demanding and controlling interaction style of people or social institutions and attitudes toward them, while our study considered the role of autonomy need satisfaction in this process. We have illustrated that political trust is related not so much to the characteristics of political institutions as to the satisfaction of the need for autonomy that these institutions can provide.

Nevertheless, the study had several methodological limitations. First, the question that we used as an indicator of perceived autonomy need satisfaction included two parts: Freedom of choice and control over one's life. In general, both elements reflect the idea of human independence. Nevertheless, some researchers distinguish between autonomy (i.e., one sees oneself as the source of initiation and regulation of behaviour) and locus of control (i.e., belief that one either does or does not have control over reinforcements). The results obtained did not allow for a clear distinction between these constructs.

Second, based on the SDT, one may assume that the autonomy need satisfaction could serve as a mediator of the link between the political regime and trust in political institutions. However, the data that we used in our study does not allow us to test this hypothesis to a sufficient extent. We believe that empirical research that will consider not the political regime per se, but its perception by people should be conducted in the future. This will allow us to analyse the possible mediation model at the individual level and offer new insights.

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Data availability statement. We used datasets that are openly available on the EVS (<https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu>) and WVS (<https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>) websites.

Conflicts of interest. We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Table 1*Multi-level Regression Models for Autonomy as a Dependent Variable.*

	Autonomy		
	EVS 2017	EVS 2008	WVS 6
Intercept	6.575** (6.15; 7.00)	5.790*** (5.15; 6.43)	6.615*** (6.18; 7.05)
Gender	-.035 (-.08, .01)	-.008 (-.05, .04)	-.095*** (-.13; -.06)
Age	-.007*** (-.01, -.01)	-.005*** (-.01, .00)	.0007 (.00; .00)
Education	.020*** (.04, .03)	.074*** (.06, .09)	.047*** (.04, .05)
Religiosity	-.001 (-.02, .02)	-.001 (-.03, .02)	.070*** (.05; .09)
Interest in politics	.105*** (.08, .13)	.062*** (.04, .09)	.055*** (.04; .07)
Political orientations	.040*** (.03, .05)	.049*** (.04, .06)	.072*** (.06; .08)
Income	.082*** (.07, .09)	.104*** (.09, .12)	.154*** (.15; .16)
FH	.008** (.00, .01)	.012** (.00, .02)	.008* (.00; .01)
<i>N</i>	38425	39726	63836
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.032 / .061	.027 / .081	.043 / .126

Note. FH = Freedom House Index; Marginal R² = the variance explained only by fixed effects, Conditional R² = the variance explained by both fixed effects and random effects.

*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Table 2*AIC Values for the Cumulative Link and Random Intercepts Regression Models*

Confidence in the	EVS 2017			EVS 2008			WVS6		
	CLM	RIM	Δ AIC	CLM	RIM	Δ AIC	CLM	RIM	Δ AIC
Police	132929.56	124938.89	7990.67	159774.75	150818.02	8956.73	230302.52	214565.15	15737.37
Justice System	136895.80	126645.63	10250.2	160417.63	151660.07	8757.56	227662.70	211902.32	15760.38
Parliament	132886.60	123798.79	9087.81	156211.29	147165.43	9045.86	221942.11	202443.73	19498.38
Political Parties	119224.44	113389.85	5834.59	142929.18	137802.56	5126.62	206570.09	189396.97	17173.12
Government	135799.01	126091.72	9707.29	158413.11	150889.54	7523.57	229446.02	212711.52	16734.50

Note. CLM = Cumulative link model; RIM = Random intercepts model; AIC = Akaike

information criterion.

Table 3*Multilevel Cumulative Link Mixed Models in EVS 2017 and EVS 2008*

Variable	EVS 2017					EVS 2008				
	Police	Justice System	Parliament	Political Parties	Government	Police	Justice System	Parliament	Political Parties	Government
Gender	.135*** (.020)	.030 (.019)	.112*** (.020)	.149*** (.021)	.049* (.020)	.109*** (.020)	.061** (.019)	.085*** (.020)	.073*** (.020)	.025 (.019)
Age	.002** (.0006)	-.004*** (.0006)	.003*** (.0006)	-.004*** (.0006)	.004*** (.0006)	.006*** (.0006)	-.0001 (.0006)	.003*** (.0006)	-.002*** (.0006)	.003*** (.0006)
Education	-.0109*** (.003)	.007* (.003)	.015*** (.003)	-.007* (.003)	.002 (.003)	-.073*** (.008)	-.020* (.008)	-.002 (.008)	-.053*** (.008)	-.008 (.008)
Religiosity	.131*** (.011)	.112*** (.011)	.179*** (.011)	.170*** (.011)	.203*** (.011)	.176*** (.011)	.166*** (.011)	.173*** (.011)	.149*** (.011)	.182*** (.011)
Interest in politics	.044*** (.012)	.125*** (.011)	.285*** (.011)	.454*** (.012)	.256*** (.011)	-.002 (.011)	.017 (.011)	.211*** (.011)	.451*** (.012)	.206*** (.011)
Political orientations	.059*** (.004)	.012** (.004)	.053*** (.004)	.035*** (.005)	.088*** (.004)	.051*** (.004)	.039*** (.004)	.061*** (.004)	.037*** (.004)	.104*** (.005)
Income	.012** (.004)	.027*** (.004)	.035*** (.004)	.002 (.004)	.026*** (.004)	.030*** (.006)	.037*** (.006)	.036*** (.006)	.017** (.006)	.032*** (.006)
FH	.013* (.005)	.010 (.006)	.002 (.006)	-.0001 (.005)	-.008 (.006)	.014** (.005)	.010* (.005)	.001 (.005)	-.0002 (.004)	-.007 (.005)
<i>N</i>	38404	37836	38039	37767	38091	39792	39224	39287	39145	39296
Log Likelihood	-41944.86	-43169.11	-41953.84	-38262.40	-42852.54	-45145.46	-46139.25	-44820.71	-41771.05	-45961.39
AIC	83913.72	86362.22	83931.68	76548.79	85729.09	90314.92	92302.50	89665.42	83566.09	91946.77
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.035 / .165	.021 / .205	.034 / .216	.051 / .176	.048 / .211	.039 / .168	.020 / .149	.025 / .170	.048 / .134	.041 / .150

Note. FH = Freedom House Index, AIC = Akaike information criterion. Changes in *N* are due to missing values. Marginal R² = the variance

explained only by fixed effects, Conditional R² = the variance explained by both fixed effects and random effects.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Table 4*Multilevel Cumulative Link Mixed Models in EVS 2017*

Variable	Police		Justice System		Parliament		Political Parties		Government	
	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)
Autonomy (within)	.082*** (.012)	-.088*** (.024)	.091*** (.012)	.017 (.034)	.077*** (.011)	.014 (.036)	.059*** (.012)	-.041 (.035)	.073*** (.014)	-.052 (.043)
Gender	.134*** (.020)	.132*** (.020)	.028 (.020)	.032 (.020)	.108*** (.020)	.108*** (.020)	.148*** (.021)	.151*** (.021)	.046* (.20)	.040* (.020)
Age	.002*** (.001)	.002*** (.001)	-.004*** (.0006)	-.004*** (.0006)	.003*** (.001)	.003*** (.001)	-.004*** (.001)	-.004*** (.0006)	.004*** (.001)	.005*** (.001)
Education	-.012*** (.003)	-.014*** (.003)	.006 (.003)	.006 (.003)	.013*** (.003)	.012*** (.003)	-.009** (.003)	-.009** (.003)	.0002 (.003)	.003 (.003)
Religiosity	.133*** (.011)	.124*** (.011)	.115*** (.011)	.112*** (.011)	.184*** (.011)	.183*** (.011)	.173*** (.011)	.176*** (.011)	.205*** (.011)	.203*** (.011)
Interest in politics	.036*** (.012)	.032** (.012)	.116*** (.016)	.116*** (.011)	.279*** (.012)	.281*** (.012)	.452*** (.012)	.450*** (.012)	.253*** (.012)	.246*** (.012)
Political orientations	.059*** (.004)	.060*** (.004)	.010* (.004)	.009 (.004)	.051*** (.004)	.051*** (.004)	.034*** (.005)	.033*** (.005)	.086*** (.004)	.088*** (.004)
Income	.004 (.004)	.010 (.006)	.020*** (.004)	.021*** (.004)	.027*** (.004)	.028*** (.004)	.004 (.004)	-.004 (.004)	.018*** (.004)	.019*** (.004)
Autonomy (between)	.153 (.012)	.506 (.412)	.601 (.012)	.578 (.474)	.336 (.431)	.216 (.424)	.166 (.381)	.345 (.383)	-.082 (.445)	-.085 (.435)
FH	.001 (.007)	.010 (.006)	-.0005 (.007)	.007 (.007)	-.005 (.006)	.001 (.001)	-.003 (.006)	-.002 (.006)	-.008 (.007)	-.007 (.007)

Autonomy (within):FH		.002*** (.0003)		.001** (.0004)		.001 (.0004)		.001** (.0004)		.002** (.0005)
<i>N</i>	38153	38153	37600	37600	37802	37802	37538	37538	37846	37846
Log Likelihood	-41504.65	-41497.66	-42696.91	-42694.13	-41529.07	-41527.40	-37896.35	-37892.94	-42377.63	-42374.68
AIC	83041.30	83029.32	85425.83	85422.25	83090.13	83088.79	75824.69	75819.89	84787.26	84783.37
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.020 / .173	.055 / .173	.029 / .216	.043 / .223	.043 / .222	.041 / .222	.056 / .183	.058 / .184	.057 / .223	.055 / .219

Note. FH = Freedom House Index, AIC = Akaike information criterion. Changes in *N* are due to missing values. Marginal R² = the variance explained only by fixed effects, Conditional R² = the variance explained by both fixed effects and random effects.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Table 5*Multilevel Cumulative Link Mixed Models in EVS 2008*

Variable	Police		Justice System		Parliament		Political Parties		Government	
	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)	(M3)	(M4)
Autonomy (within)	.056*** (.008)	.006 (.033)	.063*** (.008)	.022 (.032)	.027** (.009)	-.049 (.032)	.006 (.011)	-.078* (.041)	.033*** (.009)	-0.023 (.035)
Gender	.107*** (.019)	.100*** (.020)	.060** (.020)	.056 ** (.020)	.078*** (.019)	.076*** (.019)	.071*** (.019)	.071*** (.019)	.022 (.019)	.023 (.019)
Age	.006*** (.001)	.006*** (.001)	.00003 (.0006)	-.00002 (.0006)	.003*** (.001)	.003*** (.001)	-.002*** (.001)	-.002*** (.001)	.003*** (.0006)	.004*** (.001)
Education	-.076*** (.008)	-.078*** (.008)	-.024** (.008)	-.024** (.008)	-.005 (.008)	-.010 (.008)	-.052*** (.008)	-.052*** (.008)	-.011 (.008)	-.002 (.008)
Religiosity	.178*** (.011)	.181*** (.011)	.164*** (.011)	.164*** (.011)	.173*** (.011)	.174*** (.011)	.149*** (.011)	.149*** (.011)	.181*** (.011)	.158*** (.011)
Interest in politics	-.006 (.012)	-.004 (.012)	.014 (.011)	.015 (.011)	.207*** (.012)	.200*** (.012)	.448*** (.012)	.448*** (.012)	.204*** (.012)	.199*** (.011)
Political orientations	.049*** (.004)	.052*** (.005)	.035*** (.005)	.036*** (.004)	.061*** (.005)	.061*** (.005)	.038*** (.005)	.038*** (.005)	.103*** (.005)	.105*** (.005)
Income	.024*** (.006)	.025*** (.006)	.030*** (.006)	.029*** (.006)	.033*** (.006)	.031*** (.006)	.017** (.006)	.017** (.006)	.028*** (.006)	.023*** (.006)
Autonomy (between)	.345 (.008)	.297 (.195)	.477* (.187)	.494** (.188)	.504* (.205)	.503* (.206)	.491*** (.147)	.489*** (.147)	.489** (.164)	.496** (.153)
FH	.009 (.005)	.011* (.005)	.004 (.004)	.006 (.005)	-.005 (.005)	-.003 (.005)	-.004 (.003)	-.004 (.005)	-.013** (.004)	-0.012** (.004)

Autonomy (within):FH		.001 (.0003)		.0005 (.0004)		.001* (.0003)		.001* (.0004)		.0007 (.0004)
<i>N</i>	39366	39366	38820		38878	38878	38744	38744	38882	38882
Log Likelihood	-44515.01	-44514.46	-45522.34		-44270.06	-44268.31	-41251.24	-41249.14	-45374.29	45377.15
AIC	89062.02	89062.92	91076.69		88572.12	88570.63	82534.49	82532.28	90780.58	90788.30
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.047 / .169	.049 / .169	.036 / .146	.040 / .150	.042 / .168	.041 / .168	.064 / .136	.065 / .136	.060 / .153	.057 / .142

Note. FH = Freedom House Index, AIC = Akaike information criterion. Changes in *N* are due to missing values. Marginal R² = the variance explained only by fixed effects, Conditional R² = the variance explained by both fixed effects and random effects.

p* < .05, *p* < .01, ****p* < .001

Table 6*Multilevel Cumulative Link Mixed Models in WVS 6*

Variable	Police		Justice System		Parliament		Political Parties		Government	
	(M5)	(M6)	(M5)	(M6)	β (SE)		(M5)	(M6)	(M5)	(M6)
Autonomy (within)	.036*** (.004)	.044*** (.009)	.047*** (.004)	.053*** (.009)	.039*** (.004)	.035*** (.009)	.028*** (.004)	—	.045*** (.004)	.044*** (.009)
Gender	.075*** (.015)	.076*** (.015)	.065*** (.015)	.066*** (.015)	.056*** (.015)	.059*** (.015)	.069*** (.015)	—	.101*** (.015)	.102*** (.015)
Age	.003*** (.0005)	.003*** (.0005)	-.001* (.0005)	-.001* (.0005)	.0009 (.0005)	.0009 (.0005)	.0006 (.0005)	—	.003*** (.0005)	.004*** (.0005)
Education	-.029*** (.004)	-.029*** (.004)	-.008* (.004)	-.008* (.004)	-.014*** (.004)	-.014*** (.004)	-.039*** (.004)	—	-.026*** (.004)	-.025*** (.004)
Religiosity	.137*** (.009)	.137*** (.009)	.110*** (.009)	.111*** (.009)	.126*** (.009)	.126*** (.009)	.118*** (.010)	—	.099*** (.009)	.099*** (.009)
Interest in politics	.105*** (.008)	.105*** (.008)	.116*** (.008)	.117*** (.008)	.242*** (.008)	.242*** (.008)	.375*** (.008)	—	.189*** (.008)	.189*** (.008)
Political orientations	.059*** (.003)	.059*** (.003)	.033*** (.003)	.032*** (.003)	.052*** (.003)	.052*** (.003)	.047*** (.003)	—	.064*** (.003)	.064*** (.003)
Income	.048*** (.004)	.048*** (.004)	.054*** (.004)	.053*** (.004)	.053*** (.004)	.053*** (.004)	.058*** (.004)	—	.047*** (.004)	.047*** (.004)
Autonomy (between)	.297 (.168)	.247 (.150)	.313* (.130)	.267 (.138)	.401* (.203)	.307 (.204)	.437* (.189)	—	.541** (.175)	.495** (.167)
FH	.004 (.005)	.003 (.005)	-.005 (.005)	-.005 (.005)	-.009 (.006)	-.009 (.006)	-.008 (.005)	—	-.013* (.005)	-.013** (.005)

Africa	-0.060 (.380)	-.141 (.375)	-.179 (.335)	-.220 (.343)	-.478 (.440)	-.528 (.453)	-.243 (.399)	—	-.192 (.381)	-.22 (.425)
Americas	-1.020*** (.302)	-1.033*** (.305)	-1.169*** (.274)	-1.166*** (.276)	-.860* (.336)	-.849* (.345)	-.693* (.300)	—	-.441 (.293)	-.442 (.347)
Asia	.019 (.310)	-.019 (.312)	.389 (.279)	.375 (.282)	.144 (.349)	.131 (.360)	.345 (.312)	—	.239 (.304)	.225 (.385)
Eurasia	-.099 (.445)	.194 (.437)	-.484 (.387)	-.536 (.397)	.225 (.514)	.137 (.530)	.467 (.468)	—	.402 (.446)	.348 (.482)
Middle East	-.148 (.544)	-.221 (.536)	-.520 (.477)	-.538 (.490)	-1.016 (.624)	-1.095 (.641)	-.694 (.565)	—	-.553 (.541)	-.584 (.580)
Autonomy (within): Africa		-.009 (.012)		.015 (.012)		.014 (.012)		—		.016 (.012)
Autonomy (within): Americas		-.017 (.012)		-.023 (.012)		-.021 (.012)		—		-.003 (.12)
Autonomy (within): Asia		-.012 (.012)		-.015 (.012)		.024 (.012)		—		.003 (.012)
Autonomy (within): Eurasia		.007 (.012)		.006 (.012)		.004 (.013)		—		-.003 (.012)
Autonomy (within): Middle East		-.033 (.023)		-.086*** (.023)		.020 (.024)		—		-.036 (.024)
<i>N</i>	62087	62087	61549	61549	61133	61133	61404		61613	61613
Log Likelihood	-76132.50	-76128.90	-75736.52	-75722.03	-72541.83	-72532.55	-69426.58		-75821.39	-75818.12
AIC	152302.99	152305.80	151511.05	151492.06	145121.65	145113.10	138891.17		151680.78	151684.25
Marginal R ² / Conditional R ²	.062 / .168	.059 / .168	.083 / .171	.082 / .171	.084 / .209	.079 / .210	.103 / .203		.086 / .185	.083 / .184

Note. FH = Freedom House Index, AIC = Akaike information criterion. Changes in *N* are due to missing values. Marginal R² = the variance

explained only by fixed effects, Conditional R² = the variance explained by both fixed effects and random effects.

Model 6 for political parties did not converge.

Europe was used as a reference region in the regression models.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities of confidence in the justice system



