

## The relationship between trust and political participation: Effects of institutionalized and non-institutionalized political participation on trust in parliaments\*

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**Abstract.** This study makes use of quantitative research methodology. The hypotheses researched in this paper are tested with individual-level data from the European Social Survey. Two binary logistic regression models are used to test the two research hypotheses. The models use measures of high parliament trust in one case and low parliament trust in other as their dependent variables. Independent variables are indexes of different means of political participation as well as social class including education, income group, trust in others and the demographic variables: age, gender and residence (rural or urban). While institutionalized forms of political participation increase chances of having high trust in the parliament, non-institutionalized forms have no significant effect on the odds of having low trust in the parliament.

**Keywords:** trust, voting, political, participation, parliament

### Introduction

How does political participation influence trust? Can participation in politics through different means lead to low or high political trust? Are certain political activities affirming the power of the political elite, while others challenge it? This article examines and tests theoretical explanations of the relationship of political trust and political participation to answer those questions. More specifically, it is studied how institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation can increase the likelihood of a given citizen to have either high or low trust in the country's parliament. Even though standard research in sociology usually examines the reverse relationship - how trust affects politi-

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cal participation - there are no strict philosophical concerns which would make studying the opposite effects irrelevant. It is possible for political participation in itself to cause differences in trust levels, as well as trust to cause differences in political participation. There is no one set philosophically correct way to look at the issue, so studying the problem from different angles has the potential to produce new insights or enrich the knowledge on the ones which are already present.

Trust is a reoccurring theme in social and political discussions throughout the centuries. Thinkers have hypothesized about trust since at least the time of Confucius, who considered it to be a vital for societies and governments along with food and weapons. In recent years, however, the topic of trust has gathered popularity among academics and other scientists. The importance of trust is outlined by many researchers who suggest that high trust, both political and social, is related to social and financial equality, economic development, democratic stability, belief in democracy and also approval of how democracy functions in any given country (Inglehart 1997: 188; Knack, Keefer 1997; Keele 2007). A well-functioning democracy promotes trust, and it is in itself founded on trust, both between citizens and in social and political institutions. The absence of trust is an indicator of a crisis in the development of democratic processes in a society (Boyadjieva 2009). Ways to rise low levels of trust in different groups of society are also theorized about and studied (Newton 2014; Eder, Katsanidou 2014). It is evident that the trust of the citizens is essential for the proper operation and longevity of power structures.

Various forms of political participation have been linked to trust - voting, party membership, protesting, etc. - all appear to be related to different trust patterns among the people who participate in those activities. For example, few authors have suggested a connection between what they refer to as 'political disenchantment' and declining levels of trust in political organizations and politicians (Dalton 2004). What they found is that low levels of trust are likely to result in low political participation in mostly terms of low turnout rates on voting occasions. However, voting appears to become a less popular form of participation than what it used to be. Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) argue and supply empirical evidence that 'non-conventional' forms of political participation (protesting, boycotting, petitioning, etc.) have risen in popularity in the past few decades, while 'conventional' means of participation such as voting and party membership are in decline. According to the authors, this is due to the 'elite challenging' nature of the 'non-conventional' forms of participation which became attractive for people from many modern democracies. But can there be empirical proof that some forms of political participation are essentially 'elite-challenging' while others are 'elite-affirming'? This is what this research article focuses on. It studies how participation in various political activities increases or decreases parliament trust levels.

The issue is investigated in this paper through analysis of quantitative individual-level data from the European Social Survey 2018 (ESS 2018). Two hypotheses are derived and tested with two binary logistic regression models designed for this study. Precisely, what is investigated is the correlation between high and low parliament trust and different forms of political participation.

The basic prediction to be tested is that citizens who participate through conventional means have higher chances of having high trust, while citizens who participate through non-conventional means have higher chances of having low trust. The demographic factors of age, education, income group, gender and place of residence, which are theorized to be potentially influential to political trust and participation scores, are controlled for in the models, to investigate the relationship between the dependent variable and the main explanatory variables with greater precision. Also to increase precision only countries from the European Union are considered. Even though social trust is briefly discussed in this paper, the analysis focuses on the political aspects of trust. Also, what Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) referred to in their work as ‘conventional’ and ‘non-conventional’ political participation will be in this paper referred to as ‘institutionalized’ and ‘non-institutionalized’ participation.

What is innovative in this paper is that unlike other papers which studied political participation and trust in the European Union (Hooghe, Kern 2013; Eder, Katsanidou 2014), trust is not a predictor variable for participation in the statistical models, but rather the dependent variable. Other papers have focused on how having different levels of trust influences the chances of a person to engage in different types of political activities, while this paper focuses on how political participation through different means may increase one’s chances of having low or high parliament trust. The models are organized in this fashion in order to give an overview of how political participation through different means in itself produces increased or decreased chances of having trust.

The next section is a review of theoretical literature and previous research conducted in the sphere of political participation and political trust. The two concepts are discussed in separate fragments, followed by a fragment dedicated to the research hypotheses. Next is a section about how the research is designed in which more detail is provided about the dataset, the variables and the statistical models. The fourth section presents the results of the analyses, and the last section gives a summary of the article with some thoughts in conclusion.

### **Defining trust and political participation**

The concept of trust appears to be multi-faced and vague as different authors use different concrete definitions and vocabulary within the frame of their research. However, authors generally agree that trust is a crucial element of a functioning society and democracy (Keele 2007; Newton 2001; Boyadjieva 2009). This article will follow the model of Eder and Katsanidou (2014, 86) and use the definition of trust given by Delhey and Newton (2005, 311) who see it as “the belief that others will not deliberately or knowingly do us harm, if they can avoid it, and will look after our interest, if this is possible”.

Newton (2001) discusses different forms of trust. He distinguishes two types of trust: trust in well-known peers, strangers and groups of people, which he refers to as social trust, and political trust, which is the “basic evaluative or affective orientation towards a government”. The current research is more focused on the political features of trust and not as much on its social ones. This is be-

cause the aim is to investigate the relationship between trust in political institutions and various politically motivated activities. Still, it is of importance to note that the division cannot be concrete because politics inevitably have its basis in society, and thus political and social trust are inevitably interrelated.

Political trust seems to be related to various forms of political opinions and behaviours. Hetherington's (1999) research shows that people who do not trust their government have higher chances of voting for political parties opposed to the ones currently in power. Distrust has been also linked to lower interest in politics, lower civic participation, criminality and support for inappropriate behaviours such as using public transport without paying fare and illegal parking (Uslaner 2002). Political trust is also theorized to be very relevant to voting patterns. A core aspect of a contemporary democratic state are elections free of corruption that enable citizens to select their legislators for the period of the coming mandate. The legislators then are given the task to lead the state in a way that best benefits the citizens. If voters are unhappy with the performance of the representatives, the power can be given to someone else in the next elections. Following this notion, elections do not only serve to choose legislative personnel, but can also serve to hold the political elite accountable for their performance. The system of democracy functions through this reward and punishment procedures, and trust in those is the core of political trust. For the politicians in power, decreasing support points toward difficulties in the process of governing as citizens would be less eager to follow the political lead. As willingness to collaborate declines, the politicians are even less capable of achieving what they promised, which would in turn decrease trust even further. This loop of causation may result in "consequences short of government collapse" (Chanley, Rudolph, Rahn 2000, 239).

Verba, Nie, and Kim (1987) define political participation as behaviour intended to affect the choice of political personnel and/or policies. However, this definition ignores passive forms of participation, efforts to change or maintain the structures of power, behaviour outside the sphere of government, behaviour organized by the parliament, civil insubordination and political violence, and unintended political consequences (Conge 1988). This paper needs a more comprehensive definition of political participation which includes less traditional political activity. Thus, political participation in this research is understood as the activities performed by private citizens in an effort to impact political discourse, both directly or indirectly (Brady 1999). By this characterization various actions can be considered political participation - from voting, party membership and petitioning to protesting, volunteering and participating in boycotts of products. Because of this reason few sub-classifications of the primary concept of political participation have been identified by theorists. Early research in the field is only considering voting on elections and doings related to political campaigning (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, McPhee 1954). Later, political participation has expanded to include various other activities which have no direct link to the setting of party politics, and also activities within the community in which citizens participate such as volunteering (Almond, Verba 1963). Division is also being made between campaign and non-campaign political participation (Dahl 1975). Burt (2002) notes that all of those conventional ways of participating are performed through institutionalized means. With time the range of actions

under the umbrella of political participation has widened to include ‘unconventional’ forms of participation such as protesting (Barnes et al. 1979). Those are performed by citizens through non-institutionalized means and often serve to question institutional power. The distinction between institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation as first suggested and evaluated by Barnes et al. (1979) appears to be of importance to contemporary research.

### *Hypotheses*

As derived from the works of Inglehart and Catterberg (2002) institutionalized forms of participation can be ‘elite affirming’ while non-institutionalized can be seen as ‘elite challenging’. Institutionalized participation then should be related to high levels of trust, while non-institutionalized participation should be related to low levels of trust. Traditional means of political participation are said to demonstrate trust in the operation of the system of a democracy and the functioning of key political organizations such as parliaments. Frustration with the state of democracy, which is usually expressed through non-institutionalized means such as protesting, is expressed in low levels of trust in the governments, parliaments and in the political elite (Dalton 2004). Following the discussed theories and research on political trust and political participation, this study articulates two hypotheses to be tested. Those are articulated as follows:

*Hypothesis 1:* Political participation through institutionalized means (voting, party membership) increases the likelihood of having high trust in the parliament.

*Hypothesis 2:* Political participation through non-institutionalized means (petitioning, protesting, etc.) increases the likelihood of having low trust in the parliament.

### **Research methods**

Following the standard of previous research in the sphere of trust and political participation in Europe (Boyadjieva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2014; Boyadjieva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2015; Bieri, Stoilova 2014; Hooghe, Kern 2013; Eder, Katsanidou 2014), this research is using the European Social Survey 2018 as a source of data with which to test the before mentioned hypotheses. In particular the integrated dataset file for Round 9 which can be downloaded for free from the official ESS website (ESS9 2018). The final sample includes respondents from three post-communist European countries - Bulgaria, Czech Republic and Hungary (Table 1). This selection only includes those countries in an attempt to obtain a more precise sample which will also control for cultural and macro-economic differences among Europeans.

#### *Dependant variable: Trust in parliament*

Trust in a country’s parliament is a key indicator of general political trust and should function well as a measure of political trust for the purposes of this research. Two models are used to test the studied hypotheses, each with its own dependant variable. Both of those are constructed in a similar manner but intended to

examine high levels of trust in the first model and low levels of trust in the second model. The variables are derived from question B2 from the ESS9 (2018). The original variable from the question is a scale from 0 to 10 in which low values represent low trust and high values represent high trust. The dependent variable in the first model is a binary measure of high trust in parliament. The original variable is recoded into a new variable in which cases with answers '7', '8', '9', and '10' are given a value of '0', and cases with answers in the range of '0' to '6' are given a value of '1'. The value ranges are decided as such because the range of '7' to '10' is the highest possible on the given eleven-point scale - those are the categories that supposedly reflect the highest level of parliament trust. Lower scores, on the other hand, are likely to reflect more neutral and lower levels of parliament trust. So value of '0' represents high level of political trust, and value of '1' represents all other cases (or in other words, not high parliament trust). The dependent variable for the second model is constructed very much as the one for the first model, except that this time it is intended to measure low levels of parliament trust. Again the original variable is used to create a new variable. Cases of answers '0', '1', '2', '3' are given a value of '0', and all other cases are given a value of '1'.

*Independent variables: Institutionalized participation,  
non-institutionalized participation*

As noted in the literature review there are different types of political participation. This study attempts to distinguish between institutionalized participation and non-institutionalized participation to investigate how different forms of participation influence trust. The construction of the variables is informed by the previously discussed theory as well as the operationalizations of the concepts by previous researchers in the field (Conge 1988; Brady 1999).

There is no single variable representing either forms of participation, but rather a set of variables to add up to each. Institutionalized participation will be measured in terms of voting and party membership. People who voted in the last national election or worked for a political party are in this sense considered to have had institutionalized political participation. The variables are not merged, but rather examined separately to consider how specific types of participation increase or decrease the likelihood of having low or high trust in the parliament.

The two variables that represent institutionalized participation are derived from questions B9 and B12 from the ESS. The first one is a question in which the participants are asked whether they voted in the last national election. The original variable is recoded to exclude cases of the original category '3 - Not eligible to vote' as to make the comparison between people who voted and did not vote only. The variable derived from question B12 measures whether a given participant worked in a political party or an action group in the last year. Asked this way the question also captures in its 'Yes' category people who might not be members of a political party but did voluntary or other paid work for the party. Both variables aim to reflect more traditional forms of political participation. Those two variables serve as indexes for institutionalized political participation in the analysis.

Non-institutionalized political participation will be measured in terms of four variables derived from questions from section B. Again as with the measures institutionalized participation those are yes or no questions, but this time those are meant to count different forms of less traditional forms of political participation - petitioning, protesting writing to a politician, etc. Being in the yes category in any of those variables would then signify some non-institutionalized political participation. Variables are accounted for separately in the analysis and then discussed in terms of the wider construction of non-institutionalized political participation that they represent.

Control variables are also included, as previous research suggests there are other important social factors when considering issues of trust. Those are as follows: education, income group and the demographic variables, age, gender and place of residence. Education is of crucial importance when measuring social status, and there is evidence that those have an effect on levels of trust. Research results also show that there is a negative correlation between the levels of educational inequalities and the level of trust of people who have obtained higher education. Thus, the higher the inequalities in access to higher education in a given country, the lower the level of trust among higher education graduates (Boyadjieva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2014). Further, citizens with higher education tend to have a greater positive relative impact on institutional trust in the case of countries with high levels of institutional trust among people with no higher education, than in countries with corresponding lower levels (Boyadjieva, Ilieva-Trichkova 2015). Gender, trust in other people, income group and place of residence are also demonstrating relevance to political trust levels (Bieri, Stoilova 2014).

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Values</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Marginal %</b>
<b>Country</b>			
<i>Hungary</i>	0.0	1459	26.72
<i>Czech Republic</i>	1.0	2134	39.08
<i>Bulgaria</i>	2.0	1867	34.19
<b>Income Group (Self-assessed)</b>			
<i>Living comfortably on present income</i>	0.0	554	10.15
<i>Coping on present income</i>	1.0	2477	45.37
<i>Difficult on present income</i>	2.0	1549	28.37
<i>Very difficult on present income</i>	3.0	880	16.12
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>			
<i>Advanced vocational or above</i>	0.0	1460	26.74
<i>Upper tier upper secondary</i>	1.0	2047	37.49
<i>Lower tier upper secondary</i>	2.0	1094	20.04
<i>Lower secondary or lower</i>	3.0	859	15.73

**Table 1** (continued)

<b>Age</b>			
50+	0.0	3149	57.67
36-49	1.0	1330	24.36
26-35	2.0	653	11.96
18-25	3.0	328	6.01
<b>Trust in People</b>			
<i>Low</i>	0.0	2031	37.20
<i>Average</i>	1.0	2190	40.11
<i>High</i>	2.0	1239	22.69
<b>Domicil</b>			
<i>A big city or suburbs and outskirts of a big city</i>	0.0	1967	36.03
<i>Town or small city</i>	1.0	1717	31.45
<i>Country village or home in countryside</i>	2.0	1776	32.53
<b>Gender</b>			
<i>Male</i>	0.0	2367	43.35
<i>Female</i>	1.0	3093	56.65
<b>Worked for Political Party</b>			
<i>Worked</i>	0.0	103	1.89
<i>Did not Work</i>	1.0	5357	98.11
<b>Voted in Last Election</b>			
<i>Voted</i>	0.0	3969	72.69
<i>Did not Vote</i>	1.0	1491	27.31
<b>Contacted Politician</b>			
<i>Contacted</i>	0.0	424	7.77
<i>Did not Contact</i>	1.0	5036	92.23
<b>Worn a Badge</b>			
<i>Worn</i>	0.0	206	3.77
<i>Did not Wear</i>	1.0	5254	96.23
<b>Signed a Petition</b>			
<i>Signed</i>	0.0	586	10.73
<i>Did not Sign</i>	1.0	4874	89.27
<b>Participated in Public Demonstration</b>			
<i>Participated</i>	0.0	298	5.46
<i>Did not Participate</i>	1.0	5162	94.54
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	5460	100

## Results

The tables in the output present the results from the two Binary Logistic Regression models of the individual-level contributing factors to high and low political trust, as well as model summaries. The parameter estimates are reported in the 'Exp(B)' column as odds ratios, and as is standard when reporting odds ratios, standard errors are not estimated. The 2-tailed Pearson statistical significance for each correlation in the 'Sig.' column. The two models use different dependent variables to examine the variations on the likelihood of people to be in the high trust or low trust category respectively. The first model (Table 2) is designed to test Hypothesis 1 and the second model (Table 3) is designed to test Hypothesis 2.

To investigate the effects of institutionalized political participation, we look at the odds ratios for the variables that represent this construction in the model - voting and work for a political party. Following Hypothesis 1 one would expect that people who voted in the last national election and/or worked for a political party or organization will have higher likelihood of having high parliament trust in comparison to the people who did not.

**Table 2.** Effects of institutionalized political participation on trust in parliaments

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
<b>Country</b>		
<i>Bulgaria</i>	0	REF.
<i>Hungary</i>	0	0.198
<i>Czech Republic</i>	0	0.287
<b>Trust in People</b>		
<i>High</i>	0	REF.
<i>Low</i>	0	4.338
<i>Average</i>	0	2.449
<b>Voted in Last Election</b>		
<i>Did not Vote</i>		REF.
<i>Voted</i>	0	0.58
<b>Worked for Political Party</b>		
<i>Did not Work</i>		REF.
<i>Worked</i>	0.04	0.603
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Female</i>		REF.
<i>Male</i>	0.641	1.038

**Table 2** (continued)

<b>Age</b>		
50+	0,476	REF.
18-25	0.448	0.88
26-35	0.436	0.872
36-49	0.799	1.051
<b>Domicil</b>		
<i>Country village or home in countryside</i>	0.002	REF.
<i>A big city or suburbs and outskirts of a big city</i>	0.004	1.334
<i>Town or small city</i>	0.696	0.964
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
<i>Lower secondary or lower</i>	0.004	REF.
<i>Advanced vocational or above</i>	0.005	1.507
<i>Upper tier upper secondary</i>	0.002	1.523
<i>Lower tier upper secondary</i>	0.001	1.636
<b>Income Group (Self-assessed)</b>		
<i>Very difficult on present income</i>	0	REF.
<i>Living comfortably on present income</i>	0.568	0.896
<i>Coping on present income</i>	0.098	0.77
<i>Difficult on present income</i>	0.262	1.202

First, we look at the Table 2 for the row for the variable ‘Voted in the last national election’ to study the effects of the voting patterns. There appears to be a highly significant correlation between voting and the trust variable. The odds ratio suggests that people who voted in the last national election are 0.58 times more likely to have high parliament trust as compared to the people who did not, while all other variables in the model are maintained constant. This can be interpreted to mean that if a participant who did not vote previously, does vote on the next national election this would increase one’s chances of having high trust in the parliament by approximately 58%.

Second, we investigate the effects of political party work. The 2-tailed Pearson significance score again marks high level of statistical significance (0.04). The estimated odds ratio suggests that people who worked in a political party or an action group in the last 12 months have higher chances of having high political trust - odds ratio of 0.603. This result means that people who have not done work for a political organization in the last 12 months, do participate in such activities this would increase their chances of having high political trust by approximately 60%.

The variables which are decided to be indexes for non-institutionalized political participation are: signed a petition in the last 12 months, contacted a politician in the last 12 months and participated in a public demonstration in

the last 12 months. Hypothesis 2 suggests that participants who did participated through any of those non-institutionalized means would have higher odds of having low trust in their country's parliament. The odds ratios for those variables in Model 2 must be considered to find empirical proof.

**Table 3.** Effects of non-institutionalized political participation on trust in parliaments

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>Exp(B)</b>
<b>Country</b>		
<i>Bulgaria</i>	0	REF.
<i>Hungary</i>	0	3.134
<i>Czech Republic</i>	0	2.341
<b>Trust in People</b>		
<i>High</i>	0	REF.
<i>Low</i>	0	0.27
<i>Average</i>	0	0.618
<b>Contacted Politician</b>		
<i>Did not Contact</i>		REF.
<i>Contacted</i>	0.747	1.038
<b>Worn a Badge</b>		
<i>Did not wear</i>		REF.
<i>Worn</i>	0.265	0.83
<b>Signed a Petition</b>		
<i>Did not sign</i>		REF.
<i>Signed</i>	0.429	1.092
<b>Participated in Public Demonstration</b>		
<i>Did not participate</i>		REF.
<i>Participated</i>	0.603	1.077
<b>Gender</b>		
<i>Female</i>		REF.
<i>Male</i>	0.819	1.014
<b>Age</b>		
<i>50+</i>	0.028	REF.
<i>18-25</i>	0.003	0.681
<i>26-35</i>	0.005	0.68
<i>36-49</i>	0.007	0,668
<b>Domicil</b>		
<i>Country village or home in countryside</i>	0.124	REF.

**Table 3** (continued)

<i>A big city or suburbs and outskirts of a big city</i>	0.078	0.878
<i>Town or small city</i>	0.981	0.998
<b>Highest Level of Education</b>		
<i>Lower secondary or lower</i>	0.279	REF.
<i>Advanced vocational or above</i>	0.498	0.931
<i>Upper tier upper secondary</i>	0.346	0.914
<i>Lower tier upper secondary</i>	0.064	0.817
<b>Income Group (Self-assessed)</b>		
<i>Very difficult on present income</i>	0	REF.
<i>Living comfortably on present income</i>	0.132	1.222
<i>Coping on present income</i>	0	1.406
<i>Difficult on present income</i>	0.581	1.055

None of the variables measuring non-institutionalized political participation appear to have a statistically significant relationship to low levels of trust in the parliament. In this model, some of the included control variables seem to have higher statistical significance and therefore show influence on the chances of having low trust in the parliament. Control variables of high significance in the model are: Country, Trust in People, Age and Income Group. There is no empirical evidence to suggest that any of the studied non-institutionalized forms of political participation increases the odds of having low trust in the parliament. This can be considered an indication that in this case there is a reverse causality here - low trust levels are the cause of this participation and not the opposite, which makes sound logical sense in this case.

### **Discussion and conclusion**

Finkel (1985) points out that “while our knowledge of the causal determinants of individual-level political participation is vast, our knowledge of the individual-level consequences of such activity is clearly deficient. Although such questions lie at the centre of normative controversies in contemporary democratic thought, little empirical work has been done to discern whether participation in fact changes or affects the individual in any way”. This article attempted to produce some scientific insights and contribute with its findings to the solution of this problem of lacking knowledge. This is done by researching whether there are individual-level consequences of political participation in terms of political trust. Two different types of political participation and their implied effects on trust are taken into consideration - institutionalized and non-institutionalized. To be precise, this paper tests if institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of political participation can increase the likelihood of a single person to have either high or low political trust.

Two hypotheses were constructed based on the literature. The first one is that participation through institutionalized means increases the chances of having high trust in the parliament, and the second one is that participation through non-institutionalized means increases the chances of having low trust in the parliament. Those were tested through analysis of two binary logistic regression models. What was found for institutionalized participation is that participants who voted in the last national election are more likely to have high trust in the parliament as compared to the people who did not. Also, participants who worked in a political party or an action group in the last 12 months have increased chances of having high trust in the parliament. This confirms Hypothesis 1. As for non-institutionalized forms of participation none of the observed activities appear to be related to higher chances of having low trust in the parliament on the model. Some of the control variables in the model are of higher importance to lower trust in parliament levels than any of the indexes used to measure non-institutionalized political participation. Those findings reject Hypothesis 2. However, further research into various non-institutionalized forms of participation and trust can provide better insight into the subject. The findings of this paper are generally in line with the theoretical notions of Newton (1999) and Inglehart and Catterberg (2002), which consider some forms of political participation to be elite-affirming while others elite-challenging.

In the future, similar research about political trust and different forms of political participation can be improved in several ways. One is that political trust can be operationalized better in the statistical models. This more precise operationalization would not only measure trust in a country's parliament, but also trust in other key political institutions such as political parties, courts, the police and possibly even international political institutions like the European Union and the United Nations. The measures of trust in those different institutions would then add up to an index of political trust. Constructed this way, the variable will reflect political trust more comprehensively. Another improvement can be additional control variables for social capital. Social capital is theorized to be influential for political trust but is overlooked in this paper due to lack of appropriate variables in the dataset with which to measure it. Controlling better for social capital in the models can potentially alter the exact values of the estimated odds ratios.

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