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# Do Citizens Trust the Civil Service Differently? Comparing the Determinants of Confidence in Political-Administrative Institutions

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## ABSTRACT

This paper asks whether citizens judge public administration to be trustworthy using different criteria from other political institutions. Using survey data, we estimate ordered logistic and multivariate regressions to compare the determinants of trust in six different political-administrative institutions. Findings show that social trust, political interest, as well as other individual characteristics, have very similar effects on trust regardless of the institution. The evidence shows that people who are older and more educated, interested in politics, and employed in the public sector, are only slightly more likely to make some sort of distinction. Implications for non-discriminant judgement mechanisms are discussed.

## KEYWORDS

Political trust; social trust; political institutions; administrative institutions

## Introduction

Goodsell (2006, p. 623) asserts ‘public administration’s highest purpose to ‘build the public trust that makes democracy possible’. Central to good governance are sound attitudes towards the political and administrative institutions of a given society. Trust in these institutions has been among the leading issues on scholarly agendas in political science and public administration for many decades. It is one of the most important foundations upon which rests the legitimacy and sustainability of a political system. The theory of democracy is based on the most basic premise that citizens of a given polity entrust their sovereignty to a set of institutions that will decide for them and in their best interest. It is why political societies exist and it is what justifies the formulation of all public policies. Political trust is by theoretical standards, as well as by empirical evidence, associated with the happiness and wellbeing in societal life.

This has led many scholars to do research on the predictors of the levels of trust in democratic institutions. If citizen trust can be found to be a prerequisite for good governance, it is a policymaker’s duty to ask what may promote better levels of trust. There are many theoretical and empirical explanations of what should predict trust in government, but in the case of public administration, there is still much potential for comparative public opinion research from an interdisciplinary perspective (Bouckaert, 2001; Bouckaert & van de Walle, 2001;

Bouckaert, van de Walle, & Kampen, 2005; van de Walle, van Roosbroek, & Bouckaert, 2008).

Studies have attempted to refine the understanding of what explains trust in the civil service. One such effort is to ascertain whether the effects of the predictors of trust vary from one institution to another (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Marlowe, 2004). Trust evaluations should work differently across different institutions. This is relevant to our understanding of how one single institution can contribute in its own way to boost trust levels. Each institution can make a difference when the objective is to bridge gaps between governing institutions and the governed. One should expect that citizens differentiate among institutions when making evaluations about their trustworthiness. One should also expect that they do not use the same criteria when judging, as they are separate entities and have different roles to play in society. The civil service is an important go between the government and the people. Knowing how and under what conditions citizens trust civil service may prove fruitful to government reform.

In this paper, we address this issue of the underlying criteria that citizens use to judge the civil service’s trustworthiness against that of other political-administrative institutions. While we address the determinants of trust in the civil service, the purpose is not the estimation of these predictors *per se*. Instead, we are most interested about the criteria citizens use to evaluate the level of trust in the civil service. We aim to

ascertain whether people trust in the civil service in a different way than they do other institutions. In other words, we wish to test the idea of whether or not citizens judge the civil service to be trustworthy in comparison to other institutions using the same criteria. Do they trust differently? We proceed by briefly reviewing the literature on macro-level political trust, focusing on the difference between system-based trust – citizens' evaluation of the performance of the overall political system and the regime – and institution-based trust – directed towards certain political institutions. We then use World Values Survey (Wave 6) data to estimate the determinants of trust in six different political-administrative institutions, namely the: civil service, national government, parliament, political parties, police, and justice system by way of ordered logistic and multivariate regressions. Here, we argue that citizens appear to use similar criteria to evaluate the level of institutions' trustworthiness, and we present new evidence to corroborate this hypothesis. In fact, the evidence suggests that social trust, political interest, as well as other individual characteristics, do not vary in their effect on confidence in these six governmental institutions. Only citizens who are older and more educated, interested in politics, and employed in the public sector, are slightly more likely to make some sort of distinction and differentiate among institutions. These findings raise an important, potentially disturbing question for scholars who are focused on understanding trust in the civil service and political trust in general that we discuss in the final part of the paper.

### Trust in governmental institutions

Political trust has been conceptualized in the literature in many ways and means distinct things in different political and administrative systems. The concept is a complex, ambiguous term (Blind, 2007; Catterberg & Moreno, 2016; Kim, 2005). Notwithstanding the fact that it has been around for many decades, this complexity remains.

Trust implies the belief in ethical values and behavior, such as fairness, equity, and the defense of civic and human rights (Carnevale & Wechsler, 1992). Kim (2005) argues that the concept is affective, cognitive, and behavioral (see also Leach & Sabatier, 2005). Citizens form expectations in regard to promises they wish to see met. In other words, trust means making oneself vulnerable to another in uncertain outcomes (Matthai, 1989) because it involves a kind of risk-taking (Luhmann, 1979; Nyhan, 2000). Political trust is many times confused with the judgment of government performance or a judgment regarding the level of

satisfaction with governmental performance, approval, and the credibility of political leaders (Miller, 1974), as well as its responsiveness to public problems (Miller & Listhaug, 1990).

### The specific case of trust in public administration

Public perceptions of the civil service have become increasingly more popular, as it is the object of a growing body of research, ranging from country case studies to multivariate explanatory models. Rainey (1996, p. 180) in the mid 1990s wrote, "in spite of its importance, public opinion about the civil service has seldom received explicit attention in theories of public administration or in administrative theory generally." This is despite full-fledged reforms having been embarked on. More than 10 years later, the situation has improved somewhat, however, there are still many questions and published theories that remain untested. Rainey's (1996) conceptual framework, for example, remains largely to be explored.

Public administration scholars have long studied the relationship between satisfaction with democracy and bureaucracy. The civil service plays a relevant role in promoting citizen trust and the support of democracy (Ariely, 2013) and should be considered in and of its own accord. This is because it is the central institution of the State (Krane, 2007); it is the political-administrative institution that is best connected to the public. When citizens find that public agencies are operating well, they feel better satisfied. Better institutional performance leads to improved citizen satisfaction; greater satisfaction leads to better evaluations of the civil service and of the government (Ariely, 2013; Bouckaert et al., 2005; Christensen & Laegreid, 2003; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Kim, 2005; Shingler, Van Loon, Alter, & Bridger, 2008; van de Walle & Bouckaert, 2003; van Ryzin, 2007). Having said this, some scholars have enquired about the distinction between trust in these two institutions, i.e., trust in the civil service as it differs from trust in the government and also from that of other political institutions (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005; Marlowe, 2004).

### Deriving a hypothesis: the same underlying criteria for judging trustworthiness?

Marlowe, in his 2004 study, sought to come closer to understanding public administrators' contribution to the improvement of the trust in government. He found that citizens either trusted the whole system or they did not trust any part of it, the civil service included. We find these results intriguing because, for

students of public administration, this means people do not consider this entity as a separate entity. They do not single it out when making considerations about it. And if the civil service has a particular role to play in building trust in the government and bringing the latter institution closer to the people, it is indeed relevant to consider whether or not people differentiate between them. We, therefore, take into consideration Marlowe's findings to conjecture that citizens may not employ different cognitive criteria to distinguish among political institutions in general when thinking about trust. They do not vary in criteria to differentiate enough to between political and administrative institutions; rather they tend to employ criteria that either enables them to trust or to distrust them all. The end result is that they tend to respond to questionnaires in the same way about them. In this way, our hypothesis is as follows,

$H_0$ : Citizens do not trust political institutions differently.

### Data, variables, and model

In order empirically evaluate this argument, we use World Values Survey (Wave 6) for years 2010 through 2012. This is one of the available public opinion surveys with a question item that includes confidence in the civil service. The entire dataset comprises a sample of 60 countries worldwide, including 15 OECD countries: Australia, Chile, Germany, Estonia, Japan, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States.

### Dependent variables

As alluded to above, the specific question used to measure our dependent variable is the degree of confidence in a political-administrative institution, ranging from 1 (no confidence at all) to 4 (a great deal of confidence) (see Appendix for the specific question wording of the variables in this study). We include the six institutions that are available in the dataset, namely the: civil service, national government, parliament, political parties, police, and justice system. Figure 1 shows histograms for these six variables. Visual inspection shows no clear pattern of any differences in confidence across institutions. In fact, they seem quite similar to the naked eye. However, when examining a cross-country analysis of country averages, depicted in Figure 2, we do indeed see significant differences. Considering confidence in the civil service, while Uzbekistan, China, Singapore, and Bahrain appear to have very high averages of

confidence. Peru, Yemen, Slovenia, Argentina, and Mexico show the lowest averages. When we consider confidence in the government, Uzbekistan, Qatar, China, and Azerbaijan exhibit very high trust levels, while quite the opposite is so in the case of Slovenia and Tunisia.

### Explanatory variables

Taking into account the specific limitations in the dataset with regard to the variables that are available, our independent variables were chosen considering the existing literature on the determinants of confidence. We organize these into three broad groups.

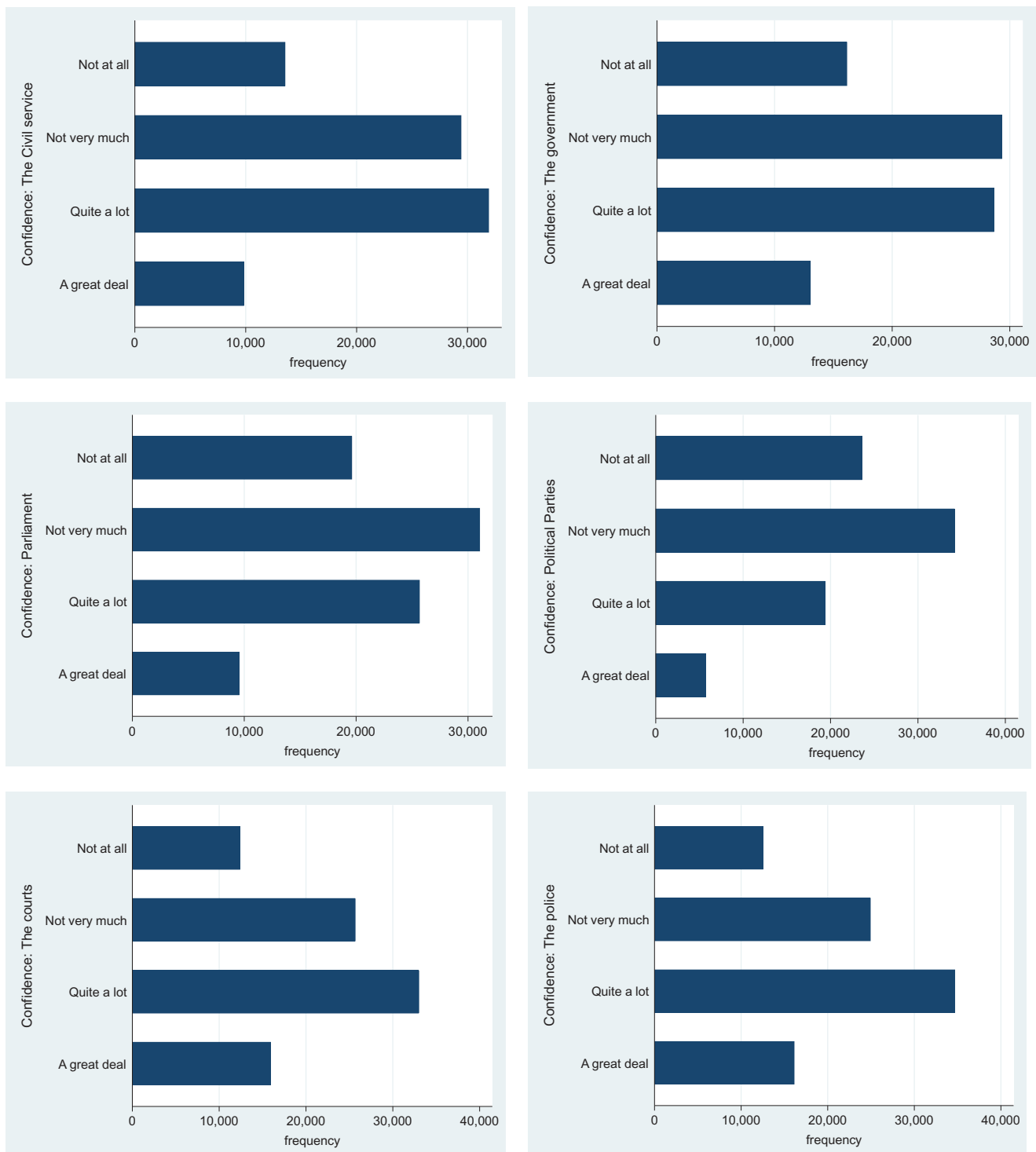
First, we have *citizens' confidence in each other* as members of a social community – social trust. Citizens who are not involved in civic activities tend to view the government and its institutions in more negative terms (Keele, 2007; Newton & Norris, 2000). The literature distinguishes two types of social trust: generalised and particularised trust (Goldfinch, Gauld, & Herbison, 2009). Generalised trust is independent of the groups of people upon which we trust; particularised is the trust we have in groups – religion, race, associations – similar to our own kind. In our analysis, we focus on generalised trust, with the expectation that it is correlated with higher levels of confidence.

Our second set of variables pertains to the *political characteristics of the respondents*. Two variables are inherently political: interest in politics and ideology. The expectation is that, on the one hand, interest in politics and, on the other, leftist ideological self-placement, are associated with greater governmental intervention, thereby enhancing confidence in democratic institutions, including the civil service.

Finally, we include a set of *social and demographic factors*. These include the level of literacy and education, gender, and age, as they considered important determinants of social and political trust (Christensen & Laegreid, 2005). In fact, this set of variables serves as a control for the individual characteristics of the respondents. Additionally, we include a set of *country specific dummies* recommended both for methodological and substantive purposes (Greene, 2011). Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for all of the variables in the model.

### Estimation and findings

As the dependent variables are ordinal, the appropriate estimations are performed using ordered logistic regressions (Greene, 2011). Table 2 shows the results for the entire sample of 60 countries and Table 3 for



**Figure 1.** Histogram of confidence in public institutions.

two subsamples: the OECD sample of 15 countries and the non-OECD sample of remaining countries.

Our findings reveal three main substantive results. One, most variables have significant effects on trust, both in the pooled and in the separate subsamples. Two, most all effects are positive. Three, both findings hold for all of the institutions under analysis. By far, the

greatest magnitudes are in regard to the effect of the variable of public employment, followed by interpersonal trust and then interest in politics. This means, public employees are much more trusting of the civil service than they are of other institutions. Intuitive also is the finding that interest in politics increases political trust, especially in regard to trust in political parties and

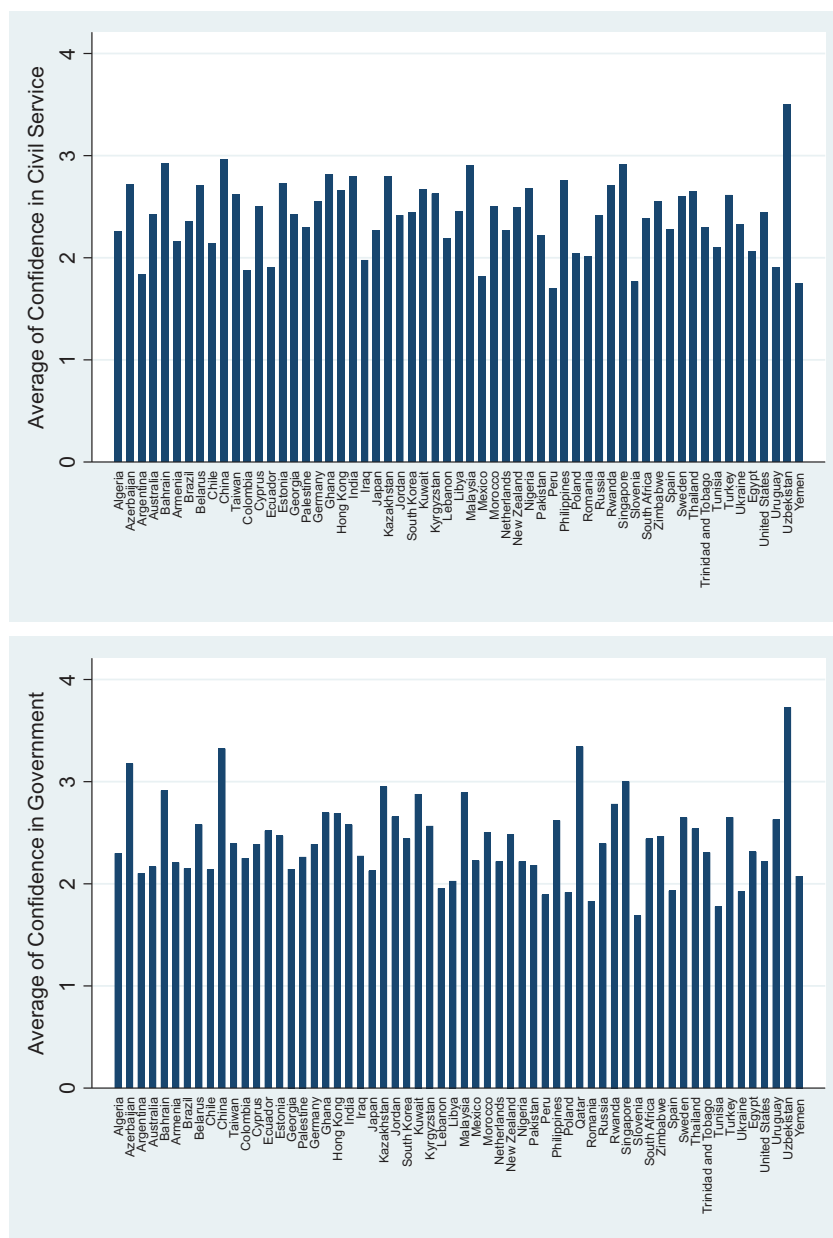


Figure 2. Country average of confidence in the civil service and government.

Table 1. Summary statistics (OECD sample).

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Confidence in Civil Service	84,740	2.4489	.8942	1	4
Confidence in Government	87,209	2.4427	.9574	1	4
Confidence in Parliament	85,903	2.2929	.9415	1	4
Confidence in Political Parties	82,843	2.0864	.8867	1	4
Confidence in Courts	87,051	2.6028	.9438	1	4
Confidence in Police	88,308	2.6164	.9413	1	4
Political Interest	89,371	2.3669	.9682	1	4
Ideology	68,926	5.2584	2.3041	1	10
Interpersonal Trust	87,923	.2506	.4333	0	1
Employment in Government	69,007	.2938	.4555	0	1
Income Level	87,226	4.8734	2.1101	1	10
Gender	90,259	.5193	.4996	0	1
Marital status	90,115	.6362	.4811	0	1
Age	90,167	42.0538	16.4808	16	99
Education	89,513	5.6521	2.4308	1	9

parliament. Although more politically-inclined citizens are more trusting, this seems to be more the case of leftist-leaning citizens, as our results show that that more right-winged citizens trust less. Although, magnitudes do not vary much, these citizens seem to be more most skeptical of political parties and sovereign institutions and least skeptical of the civil service.

As expected, we find that those who tend to trust others also tend to be more trusting of their representatives and authority figures. With respect to the control variables, women tend to trust more. Age also shows a significant positive effect, but the coefficient

**Table 2.** Determinants of confidence (ordered logit estimates of world sample).

Variables	Civil Service	Government	Parliament	Political Parties	Courts	Police
Most people can be trusted	0.256*** (0.0204)	0.348*** (0.0201)	0.319*** (0.0204)	0.338*** (0.0207)	0.294*** (0.0201)	0.290*** (0.0199)
Interest in politics	0.167*** (0.0102)	0.200*** (0.0101)	0.256*** (0.0102)	0.391*** (0.0105)	0.126*** (0.0100)	0.112*** (0.00995)
Ideological scale	-0.0502*** (0.00407)	-0.0720*** (0.00411)	-0.0587*** (0.00404)	-0.0555*** (0.00408)	-0.0477*** (0.00406)	-0.0733*** (0.00404)
Public of employment	0.215*** (0.0206)	0.121*** (0.0200)	0.131*** (0.0203)	0.110*** (0.0206)	0.0960*** (0.0204)	0.129*** (0.0202)
Scale of incomes	0.0354*** (0.00460)	0.0462*** (0.00447)	0.0483*** (0.00455)	0.0523*** (0.00462)	0.0551*** (0.00455)	0.0442*** (0.00452)
Sex	0.0834*** (0.0171)	0.136*** (0.0167)	0.109*** (0.0169)	0.133*** (0.0172)	0.0983*** (0.0168)	0.115*** (0.0168)
Marital status	0.0113 (0.0182)	0.0211 (0.0179)	0.000260 (0.0181)	-0.000576 (0.0184)	0.0154 (0.0180)	0.0581*** (0.0180)
Age	0.00156*** (0.000596)	0.00379*** (0.000587)	0.00128** (0.000593)	0.000702 (0.000601)	-0.00101* (0.000589)	0.00310*** (0.000586)
Educational level attained	-0.00212 (0.00449)	-0.0298*** (0.00434)	-0.0210*** (0.00440)	-0.0476*** (0.00452)	-0.0141*** (0.00440)	-0.0357*** (0.00435)
/cut1	-1.210*** (0.156)	-0.978*** (0.135)	-0.304** (0.139)	-0.0600 (0.145)	-1.464*** (0.130)	-2.014*** (0.149)
/cut2	0.750*** (0.155)	0.834*** (0.135)	1.631*** (0.139)	2.076*** (0.146)	0.295** (0.130)	-0.318** (0.149)
/cut3	3.108*** (0.157)	2.861*** (0.136)	3.791*** (0.141)	4.221*** (0.147)	2.385*** (0.131)	1.847*** (0.149)
Observations	50,231	50,720	50,430	49,997	50,605	50,993
LogLikelihood	-62124	-62124	-62124	-62124	-62124	-62124

Note 1 – Robust standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Note 2 – Country regressions include country dummies not shown in the table but available upon request.

is very close to zero. Seemingly so, is the idea that the more you earn and the more educated you are, the more likely it is that you will regard political institutions to be more trustworthy.

With respect to testing our hypothesis, we saw before by looking at Figure 2 and results of Tables 2 and 3 that there was nothing in the evidence to suggest that people's attitudes toward the civil service are determined by mechanisms that differ from those used to determine attitudes toward other institutions. In other words, the data suggest that individuals' attitudes toward the civil service are not determined by fundamentally different mechanisms than those used to judge other institutions. But in order to fully test this idea, estimating separate regressions alone is not sufficient to produce a convincing statistical test. We need to use a procedure that jointly addresses the models, i.e., a procedure that assumes and tests if the same factors are appropriate in explaining confidence in the different political institutions. One way to do this is to estimate seemingly unrelated regressions (SUR), where the equations are linked only by their disturbance terms (Greene, 2011). Since the same set of independent variables is used for each dependent variable, we use multivariate regression (related to Zellner's SUR). The resulting individual coefficients and standard errors are identical to those that we would get by estimating each equation separately. The difference is that multivariate regression, involving a joint estimator, also estimates the between-equation covariances so that we can test

coefficients across equations (a group of tests that shown in Table 6). Table 4 presents the estimates of the equivalent models using multivariate regressions.

These findings confirm the ordered logit results. These overall results clearly support the hypothesis that the same factors are explaining confidence in the different institutions and that citizens do indeed appear to use the same criteria to evaluate the trustworthiness of political institutions. In Table 5, we can see that, for the same individuals, the correlation of the residuals in the case of trust in civil service and the national government is 0.428. The same occurs for the remaining equations. For this reason, we can reject a null correlation hypothesis. In addition, the Breusch–Pagan test is significant, which means that the residuals of the variables are not independent of each other. Table 6 performs a test for whether the main effects of the whole model and of each variable taken separately differ among or across the six dependent variables. In either case, the results reject the null hypothesis of different results across the political and administrative institutions.

### Discussion: implications for the study in institutional trust

What do these results mean for political trust in the civil service in particular and political trust in general? Why should the similar operationalization of trust judgements be relevant? Two remarks warrant discussion. One is theoretical in nature; the other more

**Table 3. Determinants of confidence (ordered logit estimates of the OECD and non-OECD samples).**

Variables	Civil Service		Government		Parliament		Political Parties		Courts		Police	
	OECD	Non-OECD	OECD	Non-OECD	OECD	Non-OECD	OECD	Non-OECD	OECD	Non-OECD	OECD	Non-OECD
Most people can be trusted	0.473*** (0.0354)	0.157*** (0.0259)	0.524*** (0.0344)	0.264*** (0.0255)	0.556*** (0.0349)	0.206*** (0.0260)	0.479*** (0.0356)	0.290*** (0.0264)	0.491*** (0.0354)	0.205*** (0.0252)	0.413*** (0.0358)	0.248*** (0.0249)
Interest in politics	0.192*** (0.0211)	0.152*** (0.0115)	0.200*** (0.0115)	0.194*** (0.0114)	0.281*** (0.0210)	0.241*** (0.0116)	0.376*** (0.0215)	0.389*** (0.0119)	0.102*** (0.0209)	0.127*** (0.0114)	0.0534** (0.0209)	0.125*** (0.0113)
Ideological scale	-0.0218** (0.00815)	-0.0587*** (0.00467)	-0.0687*** (0.00846)	-0.0732*** (0.00469)	-0.0562*** (0.00816)	-0.0599*** (0.00464)	-0.0446*** (0.00813)	-0.0578*** (0.00471)	-0.0443*** (0.00814)	-0.0489*** (0.00467)	-0.0874*** (0.00822)	-0.0680*** (0.00463)
Sector of employment	0.327*** (0.0385)	0.175*** (0.0248)	0.0763** (0.0369)	0.132*** (0.0241)	0.0870** (0.0372)	0.145*** (0.0245)	0.0502 (0.0375)	0.127*** (0.0250)	0.114*** (0.0379)	0.0840*** (0.0245)	0.196*** (0.0377)	0.105*** (0.0244)
Scale of incomes	0.0409*** (0.00849)	0.0319*** (0.00548)	0.0515*** (0.00851)	0.0428*** (0.00529)	0.0401*** (0.00849)	0.0485*** (0.00542)	0.0404*** (0.00863)	0.0570*** (0.00553)	0.0652*** (0.00869)	0.0506*** (0.00539)	0.0408*** (0.00863)	0.0458*** (0.00536)
Sex	0.115*** (0.0328)	0.0674*** (0.0201)	0.188*** (0.0317)	0.115*** (0.0198)	0.128*** (0.0322)	0.0987*** (0.0200)	0.237*** (0.0329)	0.0944*** (0.0203)	0.175*** (0.0324)	0.0681*** (0.0199)	0.217*** (0.0327)	0.0783*** (0.0198)
Marital status	0.0434 (0.0358)	0.00273 (0.0213)	0.0456 (0.0348)	0.00993 (0.0210)	0.0703** (0.0351)	-0.0234 (0.0213)	0.0640* (0.0358)	-0.0174 (0.0217)	0.0428 (0.0350)	0.00593 (0.0212)	0.124*** (0.0359)	0.0422** (0.0211)
Age	0.00527*** (0.00110)	0.000328 (0.000725)	0.00447*** (0.00107)	0.00384*** (0.000718)	0.00249** (0.00109)	0.000956 (0.000722)	0.00228** (0.00110)	0.000495 (0.000738)	0.000503 (0.00109)	-0.00139* (0.000718)	0.00727*** (0.00110)	0.00186*** (0.000712)
Educational level attained	0.0238*** (0.00918)	-0.0105** (0.00508)	0.0149* (0.00902)	-0.0418*** (0.00491)	0.0288** (0.00909)	-0.0352*** (0.00499)	-0.0366*** (0.00929)	-0.0493*** (0.00513)	0.0211** (0.00922)	-0.0240*** (0.00497)	-0.0259*** (0.00919)	-0.0374*** (0.00489)
/cut1	-0.883*** (0.128)	-1.296*** (0.148)	-0.315** (0.128)	-0.959*** (0.131)	-0.273** (0.127)	-0.363*** (0.135)	0.284** (0.127)	0.0205 (0.139)	-1.739*** (0.132)	-1.493*** (0.127)	-3.046*** (0.136)	-1.920*** (0.141)
/cut2	1.539*** (0.128)	0.501*** (0.148)	1.909*** (0.129)	0.687*** (0.131)	2.098*** (0.128)	1.398*** (0.135)	2.978*** (0.129)	1.930*** (0.140)	0.280** (0.131)	0.193 (0.127)	-1.118*** (0.133)	-0.270* (0.141)
/cut3	4.764*** (0.137)	2.652*** (0.149)	4.481*** (0.136)	2.578*** (0.132)	4.868*** (0.139)	3.416*** (0.136)	5.864*** (0.146)	3.959*** (0.142)	2.903*** (0.135)	2.081*** (0.128)	1.648*** (0.134)	1.648*** (0.141)
Observations	14,479	35,752	14,742	35,978	14,634	35,796	14,679	35,913	14,692	35,913	14,831	36,162
Loglikelihood	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672	-45672

Note 1 – Robust standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\* p < 0.01, \*\* p < 0.05, \* p < 0.1

Note 2 – Country regressions include country dummies not shown in the table but available upon request.



**Table 4.** Multivariate regressions for the determinants of confidence in governmental institutions.

Variables	Civil Service	Government	Parliament	Political Parties	Courts	Police
Most people can be trusted	0.110*** (0.00905)	0.162*** (0.00968)	0.139*** (0.00925)	0.138*** (0.00881)	0.138*** (0.00963)	0.131*** (0.00962)
Interest in politics	0.0718*** (0.00408)	0.0914*** (0.00436)	0.111*** (0.00417)	0.159*** (0.00397)	0.0583*** (0.00434)	0.0525*** (0.00433)
Ideological scale	-0.0207*** (0.00164)	-0.0327*** (0.00176)	-0.0251*** (0.00168)	-0.0235*** (0.00160)	-0.0208*** (0.00175)	-0.0318*** (0.00175)
Public of employment	0.100*** (0.00906)	0.0603*** (0.00969)	0.0629*** (0.00926)	0.0475*** (0.00882)	0.0467*** (0.00964)	0.0563*** (0.00963)
Scale of incomes	0.0154*** (0.00189)	0.0219*** (0.00203)	0.0215*** (0.00193)	0.0212*** (0.00184)	0.0262*** (0.00202)	0.0201*** (0.00201)
Sex	0.0314*** (0.00751)	0.0616*** (0.00804)	0.0455*** (0.00767)	0.0511*** (0.00731)	0.0431*** (0.00800)	0.0531*** (0.00798)
Marital status	0.00811 (0.00796)	0.0136 (0.00852)	-0.00137 (0.00814)	0.000178 (0.00775)	0.0113 (0.00848)	0.0327*** (0.00846)
Age	0.000732*** (0.000263)	0.00168*** (0.000281)	0.000487* (0.000268)	0.000266 (0.000256)	-0.000596** (0.000280)	0.00145*** (0.000279)
Educational level attained	-0.00295 (0.00198)	-0.0168*** (0.00211)	-0.0136*** (0.00202)	-0.0221*** (0.00192)	-0.00886*** (0.00210)	-0.0161*** (0.00210)
Constant	2.126*** (0.0542)	2.116*** (0.0579)	1.814*** (0.0553)	1.709*** (0.0527)	2.375*** (0.0577)	2.547*** (0.0576)
Observations	48,218	48,218	48,218	48,218	48,218	48,218
Parms	62	62	62	62	62	62
RMSE	.8014244	.8573213	.8187286	.7802139	.8531753	.851791
R-squared	0.1481	0.1293	0.1651	0.1567	0.1387	0.1363
F	137.2784	117.1826	156.1473	146.6749	127.1628	124.6044

Note 1 – Standard errors in parentheses; \*\*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*  $p < 0.1$

Note 2 – Country regressions include country dummies not shown in the table but available upon request.

**Table 5.** Correlation matrix of residuals of multivariate regression models.

	Civil Service	Government	Parliament	Political Parties	Courts	Police
Civil Service	1.0000					
Government	0.4283	1.0000				
Parliament	0.5260	0.5802	1.0000			
Political Parties	0.4156	0.5193	0.6030	1.0000		
Courts	0.4019	0.5049	0.4485	0.3821	1.0000	
Police	0.3667	0.4561	0.3963	0.3533	0.5933	1.0000

Breusch-Pagan test of independence:  $\chi^2(15) = 1.61e + 05$ ,  $Pr = 0.0000$

**Table 6.** Test for main effect difference among the dependent variables.

Equation	Denominator	df	F	P > F
Model	48,133	5	209.76	0.0000
Most people can be trusted	48,133	5	5.43	0.0001
Interest in politics	48,133	15	45.21	0.0000
Ideological scale	48,133	45	5.01	0.0000
Public of employment	48,133	5	7.20	0.0000
Scale of incomes	48,133	45	2.45	0.0000
Sex	48,133	5	2.94	0.0117
Marital status	48,133	5	3.43	0.0042
Educational level attained	48,133	30	5.47	0.0000

methodological. Firstly, if judgments operate or are formed in similar ways for the civil service as they are for the government, the police, the courts, and so forth, then that means that it does not make much of a difference which institution is being scrutinized. And unvarying criteria with which citizens deem political and administrative institutions trustworthy is nothing short of disheartening to political scientists and public administration scholars whose interest lie in a particular institution. If this were so, this would mean that students of trust specializing in trust in parliament and how to explain and predict this, for

instance, could just as well study trust in justice or some institutions. And public administration scholars wanting to improve trust in civil service would not really be studying the public management per se. This is especially important for public administration scholars interested in governmental reform because if satisfaction with democracy is a goal, the literature suggests that trusting in the civil service differently can be advantageous. It can be key to turning things around and making government perceptibly more trustworthy in the eyes of the public. For if citizens judge the civil service just as they do the government or parliament (or most any other political institution), its distinctiveness and capacity to make a difference disappears. This is because the civil service interacts more often with the public, regardless of whether or not the public is interested in politics or has lost faith in more political, rather than administrative, institutions. Its capacity to influence citizen trust can be more powerful, and if so, so too can its potential to influence citizens' democratic value and behavior. If we cannot see convincing evidence of differentiating criteria in judging trust in

the civil service in particular, this argument goes out the window. In this paper, we found that citizens were only slightly less skeptical of the civil service than of the remaining institutions. Hence, finding a way to theoretically dissect the concept trust and ascertain how it validly applies to the civil service is imperative.

On a more methodological but related note, is the idea that arriving simply at the same results for political trust across institutions may be interpreted as two different things, and thus deserve further notice. We mentioned above that Marlowe (2004) and Christensen and Laegreid (2005), although having used different data and designs, arrived at similar results where the distinction of trust in the civil service from trust in government is concerned. Our results seem to corroborate both of the aforementioned studies. However, when thinking about what all of this means for public administration scholars and political scientists interested in the performance and political trust nexus, a fine distinction is worthwhile. That is, asking whether citizens: i) use the same underlying criteria to evaluate different institutions; or ii) are able to differentiate among institutions is not the same thing. At first, they seem to be the same questions, but they in fact are different. Let us see how.

Notwithstanding their overall finding of undifferentiated trust among institutions, both articles conclude somewhat different things. One study found an absence of a criteria of distinction, i.e., non-independent evaluations of different institutions; the other found an absence of distinction among institutions. Marlowe (2004, p. 93) concluded that “even though public administrators are relatively detached from the more visible aspects of electoral politics, they appear to be included in citizens’ broad assessment of the ‘governmental system’”. Christensen and Laegreid (2005, p. 857), on the other hand, found that “people’s trust in government is of a general character: a high level of trust in one institution tends to extend to other institutions”. In the first case, much like we argue here, it is not so much the case that citizens do not distinguish among institutions; it is rather that they use the same standards by which to judge them. In the latter case, the implicit argument is not that citizens trust political institutions differently but, rather, that they tend to “bunch” institutions together. They are quite distinct ideas.

All of this implies that with the same estimates, we can arrive at these two theoretically different arguments. This is problematic because methodologically speaking, we would have to find a way to statistically distinguish these two situations. This means that the single-dimension question item used in the past and currently

being used to gauge the level of political trust across political-administrative institutions by several data collecting organizations would have to be rethought so as to tap into the possible dimensions that actually operate in trust judgments across institutions. Trust has to be considered a function of how citizens perceive the different relationships and interrelationships among political institutions. The dataset used here would not serve this purpose at all, nor would any widely available dataset we know of. Therefore, this would imply constructing and validating an appropriate data collection survey with several trust items capturing multiple dimensions among different political institutions.

Having said all of this, it strikes us as important that we further think about how scholars can pragmatic and productively about theorize about citizen trust in institutions within a broader framework, especially in the civil service, given our main research interest in this paper. This paper raises the question if trust operates similarly across different political institutions. We need to better understand the causal direction in the relationship between past performance and process-based values and trust when a citizen makes a trust judgement. We need to make sure that we know if that citizen is aware if he/she is attributing specific characteristics to a particular institution. This means that we also need to better operationalise trust, which has tended to be treated as a one-dimensional concept.

How might we go about thinking about particular theories or frameworks and empirically test them? One particular theoretical framework through which to further test and attempt to unlock the intricacy of the causal processes of the trust function among political-administrative institutions are institutional legitimacy and compliance theories (Bottoms, 2002; Hough, Jackson, Bradford, Myhill, & Quinton, 2010; Jackson et al., 2012; Sunshine & Tyler, 2003; Tyler, 2011). This paper has dealt with political trust as it pertains to and is fundamental to institutional legitimacy. One important – perhaps the foremost important – reason to secure a causal link between political trust and public cooperation in a democracy are the public goods of law and order. These are not simply features provided for by political institutions; they depend on public cooperation; public compliance with the law, with the police, with the court, etc. The most “visible” or obvious representative of these institutions for civilians is a civil service institution where the State’s primal objectives of law and order are concerned: the police. People need to believe in the effectiveness and/or legitimacy of these institutions so as to avoid system breakdown (Tyler, 2011; Tyler & Fagan, 2008).

According to the traditional compliance model, trust leads to legitimacy in the eyes of the public, which, in turn, leads to public cooperation with authoritative institutions. Compliance theories are built on the argument that test processes, as opposed outcomes, in developing trust and, hence, legitimacy and cooperation with institutions. Testing compliance theories, through latent variable factor analyses and structural equation modelling, would not only allow us to see to what extent *process*-based factors as opposed to *outcome*-based factors are relevant in determining trust, but it would allow us to consolidate evidence once on which institutions citizens would comply with the most, hence demonstrating that they differentiate among institutions.

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## Appendix

### Question Wording

#### Confidence

For each one, could you tell me how much confidence you have in them: is it a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence or none at all?

- 1 A great deal
- 2 Quite a lot
- 3 Not very much

4 Not at all

#### ...in Civil Service ...in National Government

##### Ideology

In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking? (Code one number):

Right 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Left

##### Interest in Politics

How interested would you say you are in politics? Are you:

- 4 Very interested
- 3 Somewhat interested
- 2 Not very interested
- 1 Not at all interested

##### Interpersonal Trust

Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people? (Code one answer):

- 2 Most people can be trusted.
- 1 Need to be very careful.

##### Values

Post-Materialistic index 4-item

- 1 Materialist
- 2 Mixed
- 3 Postmaterialist

##### Income Level

On this card is an income scale on which 1 indicates the lowest income group and 10 the highest income group in your country. We would like to know in what group your household is. Please, specify the appropriate number, counting all wages, salaries, pensions and other incomes that come in. (Code one number):

Lowest group Highest group

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

##### Education

What is the highest educational level that you have attained? [NOTE: if respondent indicates to be a student, code highest level s/he expects to complete]:

- 1 No formal education
- 2 Incomplete primary school
- 3 Complete primary school
- 4 Incomplete secondary school: technical/vocational type
- 5 Complete secondary school: technical/vocational type
- 6 Incomplete secondary: university-preparatory type
- 7 Complete secondary: university-preparatory type
- 8 Some university-level education, without degree
- 9 University-level education, with degree

##### Married

Are you currently (read out and code one answer only):

- 1 Married
- 2 Living together as married
- 3 Divorced
- 4 Separated
- 5 Widowed
- 6 Single