DO PUBLIC OFFICIALS TRUST CITIZENS?
Draft paper for the IIAS Study Group on Trust and Public Attitudes Workshop, Seoul, 11-12 December 2012

Rough draft – 5 December

Steven Van de Walle
vandewalle@fsw.eur.nl
Department of Public Administration
Erasmus University Rotterdam
P.O. Box 1738
3000 DR Rotterdam
The Netherlands

Lihi Lahat
lahat_l@mail.sapir.ac.il
Department of Public Administration & Public Policy
Sapir College
M. P. Hof Ashkelon, 79165
Israel
DO PUBLIC OFFICIALS TRUST CITIZENS?

Abstract

Mutual trust between citizens and government officials can lead to high compliance, lower transaction costs, less red tape and willingness to collaborate. Citizens’ trust in government and government officials has received a great deal of attention. The other side, however, far less. In this paper we analyse whether public officials trust the citizens they serve? We do so by using survey data to compare public sector workers to non-public sector workers. We apply multilevel statistics on a dataset with 25 countries and over 30,000 respondents to assess whether general trust is higher or lower amongst public sector workers.

Keywords: trust, general trust, public officials European Social Survey

DO PUBLIC OFFICIALS TRUST CITIZENS?

Introduction

The question of how public organizations can best serve their citizens is an ongoing discussion. In the Weberian model, legal-rational authority serves as the legitimizing cornerstone for the activities of public officials (Meier and Hill 2005, Yang 2005). In the last three decades, New Public Management (NPM) reforms led public sector organizations to focus on performance management, contractual relationships and markets. Thus, public officials based their legitimization on managerial skills and performance. Beginning in the late 1990s, criticism about the NPM facilitated a shift to Post-NPM, emphasizing trends such as governance, collaboration, partnership, network and trust (Osborne 2010, Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). Trust is seen as a building block to facilitate the collaborative relationships that are fundamental in today's public sector organizations. In this approach, public officials derive their legitimacy from the ability to foster collaboration and partnership.

Traditional public officials or bureaucrats are, in Max Weber’s words, supposed to work ‘Sine ira et studio’ – without anger and fondness. Yet, some kind of prejudice generally influences public officials’ decisions. Indeed, officials in government agencies ‘occasionally expressed considerable hostility towards clients’ (Francis/Stone, 1956: 41). In his classic work among officials in welfare bureaucracies, Peter Blau described the transformation of newcomers to such organisations, and the reality shock to their initial idealism:
‘There are two things you learn on this job, particularly if it is your first job. First, you become less idealistic. You realize that people are not always honest—that you cannot always accept what they say.’ (Blau 1960: 347).

King and Stivers (1998), in their book ‘Government is us’, lament ‘or every citizen cry against the bureaucracy, there is a matching administrative response that disparages a lazy, apathetic, and uncommitted citizenry’ (p. 49).

Recent scholarship has devoted considerable attention to the trust gap between citizens and public services, and has thereby focused on the perspective of citizens (James 2009; Kim, 2010; Van de Walle et al., 2008; Van de Walle, 2009; Van Ryzin, 2011). The other side of this gap, however, has received far less attention: Do public officials trust the citizens they serve?

Why does this matter?

A move to trust-based steering instruments

Through the way how government offices are organised - the extensive monitoring and information systems it employs and the wide range of enforcement and control mechanisms available to government – it seems apparent that public officials generally distrust citizens (see also, King/Stivers, 1998). Especially low-trust public officials may be inclined towards control-and surveillance based policies and behaviours, whereas trusting official may be more likely to engage and interact.

We do however see important changes in this control-trust nexus. This is best visible in the use of new steering, regulation and inspection mechanisms based on mutual trust (Groeneveld/Van de Walle, 2011). Faced with the excessive red tape and high legal bills associated with low-trust mechanisms, many governments are moving to a more horizontal approach to regulation (Burgemeestre et al., 2010; Sakurai 2002). This includes system-wide enforcement mechanisms which are based on trust and collaboration between citizens (companies) and government. Such systems emphasise the role of cooperation and trust (Ayres/Braithwaite, 1994). Such a shift requires that public officials are open to such changes, and are actually willing to grant citizens a certain level of trust.

Public sector organisations are increasingly moving to trust-based modes of working. New steering instruments such as partnership working, integrated governance or whole-of-
government all require a great deal of trust between organisations, between government and third parties, and between government and citizens. At the interface between government and citizen, control-based relations are being replaced by horizontal collaboration where past performance and certificates become increasingly important. As a result, strict legal frameworks become the last resort rather than the standard operating procedure. The assumption behind these changes is that they will enable better collaboration and better results. All this fits in a wider trend in public sector management from process-based to outcome-oriented management, with a focus on creating public value (Groeneveld & Van de Walle, 2011; Moore, 1995; Greve, 2008). Trust-based collaboration is therefore featuring prominently in debates on New Public Governance, network governance, and similar post-NPM debates (see e.g. Milward & Provan, 2000; Osborne, 2010).

These new ways of working require public officials and civil servants to have at least a certain level of trust in citizens and other third parties. For some officials, this attitude may stand in sharp contrast to the attitudes and behaviours they have been socialised into.

A trusting attitude of public officials towards citizens may help reduce frustrations about bureaucratic treatment, and thus foster voluntary collaboration. This reduces transaction costs. One of the main rationales of the move to trust- and system based collaboration in interactions between government and companies is the reduction of red tape and transaction costs. Such red tape is seen to be particularly burdensome in the case of companies or citizens where no infringements have been found for decades yet are subjected to the same compliance requirements and the same level of compulsory reporting than others.

At the same time, however, distrust in citizen-government relations remains necessary in order to combat fraud, or to sustain a critical attitude towards established procedures and ways of working. A proper assessment of trust, its determinants and its effects is thus necessary to be able to establish the optimal balance between trust and control. Asking experienced public officials may be a good way of finding this balance.

Trust and government performance

A variety of studies in sociology, political science and policy science relate social capital and trust to government output, economic success, democratic involvement and so forth. Thus, the effect of trust and social capital on state intervention policies and government output has been demonstrated in numerous studies and disciplines (Putnam 1993, Fukuyama 1995, Knack and Keefer 1997, La Porta et al. 1997, Braithwaite and Levi 1998, Knack 2000, Farrel 2009).
Moreover, trust has been identified as an important feature in understanding cultural differences between countries (La Porta et al. 1997, Peters 2009). Peters (2009) explains: "The importance of trust and distrust in a political culture for the growth of administrative power is that the lack of social trust removes the possibility, or at least the probability, of informal and self-regulative activities in society. In more trusting societies, these types of activities can be used to supplement the activities of government in regulating relationships with society." (Peters 2009, p.60).

In line with Peters' (2009) observation, La Porta et al. (1997), in a comparison of 40 countries, found that high levels of trust in society positively affect various performance indicators of government. Among the indicators that they examined in their study: efficiency of the judiciary, corruption, bureaucratic quality, tax compliance, civic participation, infrastructure quality, the adequacy of the education system, inflation and others. Although La Porta et al. studied the general trust in those countries and not public sector employees' trust, we can hypothesize that countries in which the public sector employees have greater trust in society will show better administrative capacity. Different definitions for state capacity exist (Grindle and Hilderbrand 1995, Grindle 1996, La Porta et al. 1997, Polidano 2000) Due to our interest in public sector organizations, we will focus on a narrower definition of administrative capacity – the capacity of public sector organizations "...to perform appropriate tasks effectively, efficiently and sustainably" (Grindel and Hilderbrand 1995, p. 445).

At the individual level, public employees' trust in citizens influences their decision-making, can contribute to their ability to be more responsive to citizens' needs and to cooperate with the public (Kääriäinen and Sirén 2012, Yang 2005). In public administration research, public trust has received considerable attention. Research by e.g. Van de Walle and Bouckaert (2003), Van de Walle et al. (2008), or Christensen and Lægreid (2005) focused on the public's trust in government and government institutions and explore aspects of public legitimization of government. Still other research has looked at the effects of trust in collaborative networks on governance outcomes (Klijn, Edelenbos and Steijn 2010).

An additional stream arises from the literature of Human Resource Management (HRM), which focuses on trust in the workplace. This approach applies intra-organizational research to understand trust among the employees of public sector organizations (Zeffane and Connell 2003, Berg 2005, Battaglio and Condrey 2009). Some of the studies found that job position/tenure did not have an effect on different measurements of trust (Gould-Williams 2003, Luo 2005). By contrast, Helliwell, Huang and Putnam (2009) found that employees
Public official’s trust

with job characteristics such as: less conflicting demands, diversity of tasks, more time to perform tasks and more emphasis on decision-making, have a correlation with trust in the workplace. Due to differences in knowledge, interaction with service users and growing awareness of the importance and influence of "street-level bureaucrats" (Wildavsky 1972, Nachmias 1985, Smith and Lipsky 1993), we would like to question whether differences between public sector managers and other employees exist vis-à-vis their trust in society.

Levels of trust, as detected in different populations are determined by a range of variables. Variables suggested in the literature to explain trust, include: gender (Hall 1999, Luo 2005, Yang 2005) education, age, social class (Hall 1999, Luo 2005) religiosity (La Porta et. al 1997) etc. These will be included in this study.

Trust and compliance

Mark Peel describes how delivering public services based on distrust and control, and a ‘heavy-handed insistence on following rules’ (2003:316) creates even more distrust and a reluctance to engage with government. When government is perceived to distrust citizens, it will experience a reluctance to collaborate or to comply (with e.g. the law, tax officials etc.), and transaction costs will increase (Fukuyama, 1995).

Reducing distrust between the parties (not just of citizens in officials but also the other way round), has been cited as a factor stimulating voluntary compliance (Murphy 2004). ‘Treating clients with respect appears to beget reciprocity. Distrust tends to evoke resistance, evasion and dishonesty’ (Cook et al. 2005: 161) – a finding also common in street-level bureaucracy research focusing on interactions between citizens and welfare office officials (Lipsky 1980).

In their relations with citizens, public officials can display more coercive or more collaborative behaviours. This topic has received considerable attention in general public administration (Vigoda, 2002; Bryer, 2009), in research on street-level bureaucracy (Ricucci, 2005), and especially in research among various inspectors looking at their enforcement styles (Mascini/van Wijk, 2009; May/Winter, 1999; 2000; Kelman, 1981). This research has for instance focused on value dilemmas resulting from a deviation from social norms toward economic norms (Ariely 2008; Jordan 2008). Furthermore, researchers indicate that defining regulations and laws, particularly those that are inflexible and do not have appropriate mechanisms and methods of communication that enable changes and space in which to act, damage the chances of establishing shared behaviors and the development of social norms and trust (Ayres & Braithwaite 1992; Ostrom 2000; Braithwaite 2002; Dery 2002). They especially reduce the intraorganizational elements of trust and may hinder efficiency and
professional pride (Berg 2005). These factors have essential roles in providing social services. Collaboration and trust thus appear to be essential elements for the operation of inspection services.

Another area where prosocial values of public officials have received considerable attention is the literature on public officials’ motivation. The literature on PSM assumes differences between public and private employees. The former are generally seen as more altruistic and prosocial (see e.g. Perry and Hondeghem, 2008). Yet, at the same time, this literature tends to concentrate empirically on public employees only, rather than comparing this group to other groups, but there are exceptions (see e.g. Kjeldsen, 2012). While the literature on the motivation of public servants tends to assume that public officials are more altruistic than the general population, experimental research has shown that pro-social behaviours among public officials tend to decrease when tenure increases (Buurman et al., 2009). Similar findings have been reported based on research among, e.g., recently recruited teachers (De Cooman et al., 2009) or police officers (Van Maanen, 1975).

Officials’ trust in citizens—what do we know?

There has been a lot of research on how citizens view bureaucrats (Nachmias & Roosenbloom, 1978; Van de Walle, 2007), yet very little on how bureaucrats view citizens. Some exceptions include Melkers and Thomas’s (1998) research of public officials’ perceptions of citizens’ views or research by Berman among city managers and city administrative officers revealed that officials believe that citizens don’t trust them and that citizens think government does not understand citizens’ needs (Berman, 1997). Related research has concentrated on public officials’ and elites’ perceptions of citizens’ competence, commitment and reliability to participate in policy-making and service delivery (e.g. Aberbach et al., 1978; Alkadry, 2003; Greene, 1982; Åström Granberg, 2007). Still other work has looked at the degree of responsiveness of public organisations (Yang & Pandey, 2007; Vigoda, 2002).

Issues such as elites’ trust in citizens have mainly received theoretical or essayistic attention (Offe, 1999; Blome, 2011), and have tended to show that many elites consider citizens as ill-informed and self-centred. Popular fiction is full of examples of public officials displaying deep distrust or even contempt towards citizens. Looking at officials’ trust in citizens in a direct and empirical way is a fairly recent phenomenon, though, and limited to a small group of researchers (see e.g. the work by Yang at Florida State University; by Wu among Chinese
Public official’s trust

officials; and ongoing work by the Vigoda team at Haifa University). Other than a number of more general ethnographic studies in the 1960s, surprisingly little research has been done on this topic. Furthermore, all of the existing work concentrates on a single country. Pioneering work by Kaifeng Yang at Florida State University (2003, 2005, 2006) built a model to explain public officials trust in citizens. Using a survey of 320 public officials (Yang, 2005) he found that a propensity to trust is –not surprisingly– an important predictor of officials’ trust in citizens; as was prior experience. Other factors that were found to relate to lower trust in citizens included a procedural orientation to one’s work, and a perception that government bashing is high. In another study Yang looked at the effect of officials’ trust in citizens on their propensity to involve citizens in decision making (Yang, 2006). Yang and Callahan (2007) surveyed chief administrative officers of American counties and municipalities to explain why certain officials valued citizen involvement in public decisions, and found citizen constraints – including a perceived lack of expertise on the part of citizens - as important impediments to greater involvement. Other studies, limited in scope, have been done among Chinese officials (Wu/Yang, 2011), and Swiss tax authorities (Feld/Frey, 2002). Neither explored motives nor determinants of trust. Other work compared police officers’ trust to the trust of other respondents in 22 countries (Kääriäinen and Sirén 2012).

Data
This paper uses data obtained from the European Social Survey. The ESS is an academically-driven multi-country survey. It employs random probability sampling, a minimum target response rate of 70% and rigorous translation protocols. The surveys are based on face-to-face interviews, on a variety of topics. In the 2008/09 round N= 56,752. It includes 28 countries, including most EU countries, as well as Norway, Israel, Switzerland, Russian Federation, Turkey, and the Ukraine.

Operationalisation and descriptive statistics
Distilling who works for government and who doesn’t is notoriously difficult when using existing survey material. Surveys such as the ESS use ISCO88 occupation codes to register the type of work people do, such as ‘armed forces’, ‘statisticians’ or ‘social work professionals’, but these codes in many cases do not allow to allocate respondents to the public or the private sector. In addition, there are many respondents whose employment falls in between (e.g. non-profits delivering public goods), and there are considerable country differences in how important sectors such as education or health are organised. NACE classifications have similar problems: they classify people into broad sectors, only some of which allow for allocating respondents to the public or private sector.
Exceptionally, the European Social Survey in 2008-09 contains a question which asked respondents to indicate which sector they work for. Such a self-assessment has its drawbacks in international comparative research, but does allow the researcher to work with a fairly straightforward categorization. The question was phrased as follows: “Which of the types of organization on this card do/did you work for?”

- Central or local government
- Other public sector (such as education and health)
- A state-owned enterprise
- A private firm
- Self-employed
- Other

For the analysis, we filter out all missing cases, as well as cases where this question is not applicable (respondents who do not work, or have never had a paid job), and all cases where respondents are aged under 18 or over 65. We also exclude Bulgaria, Slovakia and Cyprus, because certain key variables are missing. This leaves us with 34,171 respondents in 25 countries. Findings are shown in the figure below.

Figure 1: Respondent’s sector of employment (self-indicated)
This figure already clearly demonstrates the complexity of a cross-national analysis. In some countries, such as Denmark, a massive number of respondents (29.9%) indicate they work for central or local government. In contrast, only a small number indicate they work for other public sector organizations. This is probably due to the way that health and education are organized in this country. Some countries, mainly central- and eastern European countries have a large number of respondents working in state-owned enterprises, whereas this number is very small in countries such as the UK or Switzerland. In countries such as Greece or Turkey, the number of self-employed respondents is quite high. This is probably related to the number of agricultural smallholdings. The number of respondents working in central or local government is suspiciously small in some countries, such as Slovakia, Finland or Greece, which sheds some doubt on the quality of the fieldwork, despite the ESS being among the best social surveys currently existing. Another major qualification is that this categorization is based on self-identification as a public or private sector worker.

These data patterns suggest it makes sense to focus the analysis on aggregated groups rather than on each of the six groups separately. In this article, we work with two different public/private distinctions, one which amalgamates ‘central/local government’ and ‘other public sector’, and another one which also adds ‘state-owned enterprises’ to the ‘public’ groups.

Table 1: public/private employment variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public/private employment variable 1</th>
<th>Public/private employment variable 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central or local government</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other public sector (such as education and health)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A state owned enterprise</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A private firm</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trust

The word trust can incorporate many meanings. For the purposes of this study, we will embrace Francis Fukuyama's definition: “Trust is the expectation that arises within a community, of regular, honest and cooperative behavior, based on commonly shared norms on the part of other members of that community.” (Fukuyama 1995: 26). The interest in trust is not new (Wildavsky 1972, Nachmias 1985), especially since the 1990s, studies of trust have been the center of attention, primarily due to the increasing awareness of the concept of social capital. General trust in one's community is one of the elements that play an important part in the existence of social capital (Coleman 1989, Putnam 1993, 1995, Fukuyama 1995).
Trust is measured using three items which are frequently used to measure general or interpersonal trust: ‘would you say that most people can be trusted, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?’; ‘do you think that most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance, or would they try to be fair?’; and ‘Would you say that most of the time people try to be helpful or that they are mostly looking out for themselves?’. Respondents were asked to place themselves on a 0-10 scale in between the two answering options. Results are shown in the figure. Items one and three were reverse coded. Overall, respondents tended to think that most people try to be fair, yes they are more sceptical about other people’s willingness to be helpful, and they also often though one has to be careful when dealing with others.

Figure 2: General trust, ESS 2008/2009, all countries (N=34,171).

The three items load on a single factor, as shown in the table, and thus measure a shared underlying concept. It was therefore decided to create a general trust index, by summing the three items, and subsequently diving the score by three to get a 0-10 score.

Table 2: Principal Component Analysis of general trust items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most people can be trusted or you can’t be too careful (reverse)</td>
<td>.852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people try to take advantage of you, or try to be fair</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of the time people helpful or mostly looking out for themselves (reverse)</td>
<td>.817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial eigenvalue</td>
<td>2.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extraction sums of squared loadings</td>
<td>2.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative %</td>
<td>71.201</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are public and non-public workers different? Analysis

In a first step of the analysis, we simply look at differences between public and private sector workers. When looking at the entire sample, ignoring country (clustering) effects, it is found that levels of general trust are significantly higher among public sector workers, both when using the first public/private employment variable (ANOVA, $F_{1,33776} = 423.90; p<.000$), and when using the second one (ANOVA, $F_{1,33776} = 101.36; p<.000$). In the latter case, means for the two groups are more similar, yet still different. The figure shows how this trust differs between both groups in each country individually.

Figure 3: Mean general trust, public and private sector employees (variable 1)

Figure 4: Mean general trust, public and private sector employees (variable 2)
The difference between groups may be due to other factors however, such as difference in age, sex, or education. In addition, this simple analysis does not take clustering effects into account. The respondents are located in 25 countries. For this reason, our main analysis will use multilevel multivariate techniques, where we will test for other factors, and for country-level effects.

A number of variables are added to the model: age, age squared to test for curvilinear relations, household income (within-country deciles), years of fulltime education completed, and political left-right self-identification.

**A first test – with country dummies**

We test two models for general trust. One with the first public/private employment variable, the other with second one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3: Linear regressions for general trust</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working for public or private, where public is central, local and other public sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>working for public or private, where public is central, local, other public sector and state owned enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender dummy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of respondent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of full-time education completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement on left right scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main finding emerging from this analysis is that public sector workers have a higher trust, also when controlling for other variables. The effect is present for both public/private employment variables. The effect size is slightly smaller when using the second variable. This is not surprising since the public group is larger and more diverse when using the second variable. Other relevant findings are that female respondents are more trusting, as well as higher educated ones. A final relevant finding is that there are substantial differences between countries. This suggests that a multilevel model would make sense.

### A multilevel model

We now estimate two preliminary multilevel models using HLM, each with a different variable for public/private employment, as indicated earlier. Independent variables are grand mean centred where appropriate (Hox, 2010). Cases with missing values have been deleted (see also the section on operationalization). This leaves us with 29,413 units at level 1, and 25 at level 2 (countries). We first run an intercept-only model to check whether multilevel statistics are appropriate. This is the case when there is not just variance in opinions within countries, but also variance between countries. This would mean there are clustering effects, and that respondents residing in the same country are more similar to each other than to respondents in other countries. The technique also allows us to add variables to explain variance between countries. In the intercept-only model, we find a significant chi square ($\chi^2 = 8047.36$, df = 24, p <0.001). An interclass correlation of 0.2332 shows that 23.32% of the total variance is located at the country level.
We now proceed with a basic model with level 1 variables only.

**Table 4: Multilevel model for general trust (1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t-ratio</th>
<th>Approx. df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.969973</td>
<td>0.182132</td>
<td>27.288</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for public or private, where public is central, local and other public sector</td>
<td>0.179931</td>
<td>0.02535</td>
<td>7.098</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender dummy</td>
<td>0.081708</td>
<td>0.020725</td>
<td>3.942</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of full-time education completed</td>
<td>0.064148</td>
<td>0.002961</td>
<td>21.668</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of respondent</td>
<td>0.007206</td>
<td>0.005547</td>
<td>1.299</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-0.000032</td>
<td>0.000065</td>
<td>-0.492</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement on left right scale</td>
<td>0.007808</td>
<td>0.004755</td>
<td>1.642</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5: Multilevel model for general trust (2)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard error</th>
<th>t-ratio</th>
<th>Approx. df</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.973088</td>
<td>0.183291</td>
<td>27.132</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working for public or private, where public is central, local, other public sector and state owned enterprise</td>
<td>0.100982</td>
<td>0.02535</td>
<td>7.098</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender dummy</td>
<td>0.092941</td>
<td>0.020682</td>
<td>4.494</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of full-time education completed</td>
<td>0.065949</td>
<td>0.002952</td>
<td>22.337</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of respondent</td>
<td>0.007964</td>
<td>0.005547</td>
<td>1.435</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age squared</td>
<td>-0.000039</td>
<td>0.000065</td>
<td>-0.603</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement on left right scale</td>
<td>0.007304</td>
<td>0.004755</td>
<td>1.642</td>
<td>29382</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings are very similar to those found in the models with country dummies. People working for the public sector have a higher trust in other people, as do women and higher educated respondents. Again, coefficients are stronger in the first model than they are in the second. The first model explains 12.9% of level 1 variance, and 2% of country-level variance. The second one explains 11.9% of level 1 variance. This means that this set of individual variables explain only about 9% of total variance in trust.

In a next step, not yet included in this model, we want to add country-level variables to find explanations for the country-level variance. Possible explanations will be an index of "perceived government success" (ESS B25, B26, B 27, B28, B29), or alternative indicators to measure administrative outcomes. Particular attention could go to country-levels of trust in meta-trust institutions such as courts or the police, i.e. those public institutions that make interpersonal trust possible.

We also want to have a closer look at differences between public and private employees in individual countries.
Discussion and conclusion

This paper presents a preliminary analysis on data for 25 countries to establish whether public officials’ trust in other people (general trust) is different from that of non-public sector employees. Findings indicate that this is indeed the case, yet the difference tends to be rather minimal. There remains a great deal of unexplained variance in general trust, both at the individual level and at the country level. This will be further explored in later papers.

References


Public official’s trust


Public official’s trust


