

Faith and Trust: Religion's Impact on Political Trust

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Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between religiosity and an individual's trust in political institutions. It tests Alexis de Tocqueville's long-standing idea that religion plays a substantial role in political trust as an integral role of civil society. This study uses survey data with over 13,000 responses in eight countries to test whether religious involvement and specific religious denominations affect individuals' political trust in their governmental institutions. Comparing responses about religious involvement and identities regarding levels of political trust tests whether there are statistically significant odds of increasing political trust. The wide range of countries, religious populations, cultures, and histories tested allows this study to investigate beyond the primarily protestant Christian democracy of the United States examined in most current literature to see if religiosity plays a role in fostering political trust.

Keywords: *religion, trust, confidence, political trust, institutional trust*

Religion is a fundamental part of culture, history, and life worldwide. It shapes morals, beliefs, and values. Religion, or lack thereof, can be a significant part of someone's identity. Many religions promote community and ideals of respect and camaraderie. It has been argued that one's religion affects one's view of their government. Tocqueville (1956) argues that religion is a fundamental aspect of civil society in America, and it is this civil society which allows American democracy to flourish. Civil society and its role in promoting political trust are vital to a democratic political institution's prosperity. Those with lower levels of political trust have been shown to engage in higher levels of system-challenging political behavior, potentially degrading the systems over time (Hooghe & Marien, 2013). As an integral aspect of civil society, religious participation can create community and nurture political trust.

Nearly 200 years after Tocqueville's insights arrived on the scene, however, religious participation is declining in many parts of the world, especially in largely democratic countries such as the United States (Inglehart, 2020). There is also research suggesting that political trust in democracies is on the decline (van der Meer, 2017). This stirs questions of religion's impact on political trust. How does religiosity affect trust in political institutions in an era when religion plays a lesser role in people's lives? Does religion play a necessary role in civil society by supporting democratic political institutions?

Answering these questions requires explicitly investigating how religious participation affects political trust in the government. Tocqueville observed religion's impact in a predominantly protestant Christian democracy of the 19th century, but it is necessary to examine whether religion's effect holds up in other settings. These questions require analyzing the interactions between religious participation and other factors in promoting political trust in democracies around the globe.

Political Trust and Religion

Political trust is the foundation for democratic government, and low political trust puts democratic authority at risk. Political trust can be defined as "citizens' assessments of the core institutions of the polity" and an evaluation of the government's trustworthiness, credibility, competence, transparency, and fairness (Zmerli, 2014). Essentially, political trust is the confidence one has in government institutions. It is more than satisfac-

tion; it is a measure of one's belief that the government is just and will serve its citizens to the best of its ability. Political trust is vital to a healthy democracy, as people who are more trusting tend to act more in accordance with the law and increase trust and cooperation among civil society (Zmerli et al., 2007). This cooperation allows the government to allocate its resources to other areas in order to support the citizenry state (Putnam et al., 1992), leading to a higher functioning and more stable government. There are two significant influences on political trust: the government's actions and the social capital of civil society. The first approach—top-down—argues that the political institution's performance in providing for its citizens plays a significant role in fostering political trust (Mishler & Rose, 2005). The bottom-up approach argues that political trust will decline without a robust civil society that builds social capital (Mishler & Rose, 2005; Newton & Norris, 2000). Democratic regimes ask citizens to allow others to participate largely on their behalf. In order to be sustainable, this action requires some level of trust among others. As elected officials are members of the same communities as their constituents, people who do not trust their communities can struggle to trust their government. This trust for others can come from civil society and supports Tocqueville's claims that civil society is vital to the success of a democracy. Because religious communities are a part of civil society, they could play a role in one's level of political trust.

Religion impacts many aspects of one's life and culture. It shapes beliefs, daily practices, and values. Two approaches explain religion's effect on political trust. The first approach argues that the community-building nature of religion increases one's tendency to trust political institutions. Wuthnow (2002) and Smidt (1999) reason that the widespread civil associations that come from religious participation promote political trust in the government. The second approach reasons that, due to some religions' unique factors compared to other civil institutions, religiosity can decrease political trust among practitioners. Authors such as Uslaner (2002) and Welch et al. (2004) argue that decreased political trust is due to the limited community associations and societal trust religion creates. Other authors, such as Poppe (2004) and Niu et al. (2016), argue that trust and faith in a religious doctrine can overcrowd the political doctrine and therefore decrease the tendency to trust the government. These approaches both recog-

nize religion's value in political trust but vary in their conception of religion's overall effect. The approach that argues religious participation promotes political trust is the most compelling because it acknowledges the important role religions have played in building community and civic associations across history and regimes to promote trust in political institutions.

The first approach believes that religiosity increases political trust in the government. The argument begins with Tocqueville's claim that religion provides the basis for civil associations and that societal trust would diminish without these civil associations. Civil associations build civil society, which connects us to our neighbors. Religions play a role in creating societal trust and social capital (Daniels & Von Der Ruhr, 2010). Civil society is the foundation of both societal and political trust. Putnam argues that "faith communities in which people worship together are arguably the single most important repository of social capital" (2000, p. 66). Religion provides spaces for people to gather, exchange ideas, and promote others' needs (Stid, 2018). Religious communities can be a place where people step beyond their independence and learn to care about others. Religious involvement can be viewed as a social resource as it promotes voluntary association and builds interpersonal networks (Wuthnow, 2002). The voluntary associations between community members expand one's capacity to care. This societal trust is the key to political trust in the government. Religion even plays a vital role in the way people perceive human nature and their connections to others inside and outside the religious affiliation (Smidt, 1999). It shows the extent of humanity in all persons. When someone can empathize with others, it promotes trust despite potential faults. This selflessness improves the lives of others and motivates people to care beyond themselves. Religious belief and involvement have been shown to instill pro-democratic ideas and strengthen social capital (Bloom & Arikan, 2013). Religious participation encourages people to trust their community, which can increase their trust in the government.

The other approach—that religious participation can decrease trust in government institutions—has two denominations. The first recognizes the value of religion in creating community but argues that religions do not promote community outside their own beliefs due to their nature. Because religions are mainly voluntary organizations, the majority of the participants end up surrounding themselves with like-minded

people, decreasing the trust of those outside their social circle (Uslaner, 2002). Although there are differences in values and beliefs between people within a religion, practitioners still use the same teachings to build their values. Welch et al. (2004) suggest that religious denominations promote intense bonding within the group, leading to an "us versus them" mentality and less trust in those outside the religion.

Some religions may have beliefs that intensify the differences between themselves and outsiders, decreasing social capital and trust (Hempel et al., 2012). An "us versus them" mentality works against promoting trust in political institutions. The idea is that religious participation promotes trust in one's community but then degrades trust outside those in one's comfort zone, overall decreasing political trust.

The second denomination argues that political trust depends on religious agreement with the current regime. Religiosity will limit one's trust in the government if the doctrine and regime have conflicting values (Poppe, 2004). The cognitive dissonance with these competing ideas decreases trust in political institutions. Regardless of whether someone practices a religion, the trust in government is determined by their religious doctrine and the government's beliefs. Religious authority can overshadow faith in secular authority, creating a tension between the two that degrades political trust (Niu et al., 2016). Because faith in a religious doctrine can be held in higher regard than political doctrine, religious participation constantly threatens to undermine government authority and trust.

Theory and Hypothesis

All these approaches agree that religiosity impacts the trust one has in political institutions, yet they differ in opinion on its effect. Authors Smidt (1999), Wuthnow (2002), and (Putnam, 2000) show that religiosity is a foundational element of civil society and supports political trust by building social capital. Uslaner (2002), Welch et al. (2004), and (Hempel et al., 2012) claim that religious participation limits associations by keeping them to like-minded individuals, which decreases social capital and degrades political trust. Poppe (2004) and Niu et al. (2014) argue that religious doctrine can trump political philosophy and therefore will undermine political trust. Although there is evidence to show that religious communities are becoming more inclusive and

tolerant as religious doctrines change to reflect the dominant social beliefs, which should in turn increase social capital and political trust (Putnam et al., 2012), most of these studies are limited to the United States or Europe and do not include a wide range of religions and cultures. This limits the scope for drawing valid inferences outside of those cases. Therefore, I propose investigating this issue on a larger scale with greater variation in cases.

There are many aspects of religion that increase social capital. Religion provides spaces for others to exchange ideas, learn, and care for others, and religious participation builds civil associations and creates a sense of community. It is expected that people who are members of a religious community are more trusting than those who do not belong to a religious community.

H1: Identifying as a member of a religious institution increases the odds of one possessing higher levels of political trust.

There is a consensus in the literature that argues that the more active someone is within their religious community, the more societal trust they will have. Participation in religious organizations creates norms and values that can generate trust among members and non-members (Mencken et al., 2009). Exposure to these ideas would positively affect societal trust and social capital, meaning that the level of involvement dictates in part the level of political trust.

H2: The more involved someone is in their religious organization, the higher the odds of one possessing elevated levels of political trust.

In the aforementioned approach to religion's effect on political trust, there is the idea that there may be varying levels of political trust between religions (Dingemans & Van Ingen, 2015). This is due to each religion's specific beliefs and what it teaches its followers. While religious doctrine at large may teach people empathy and build connections among others, not every religion is the same. Therefore, it is expected:

H3: Religious affiliation can determine the odds of possessing higher levels of political trust.

Data and Methods

Data

To investigate the relationship between religious involvement and political trust, I used version 3.0 of the World Values Survey (WVS) wave 7 data. Wave 7 was conducted between 2017 to 2021, with the version consisting of responses from 57 of the 65 countries surveyed from 2017 to 2020.¹ Between 1000-4100 people were surveyed (using random sampling) in each country. Most surveys were conducted using face-to-face interviews as the data collection mode. WVS covers all residents of a country over the age of 18, not just citizens. The survey asks questions covering life, family, politics, religion, and society (Haerpfer et al., 2022).

Case selection

The WVS conducts research in countries all around the world, ranging across all kinds of political regimes. Because my question is about the particular effects of civil society in supporting political institutions in democratic environments, and in order to minimize variation across national environments as much as possible, I selected cases only from long-standing democracies—countries that had been considered either electoral or liberal democracies constantly since 1975, using analysis from Roser & Herre (2013).² This decision ensured there were multiple generations since the regime was considered authoritarian, which could impact one's trust in political institutions. Of the 57 countries published in version 3 of WVS wave 7, eight fit these criteria: Australia, Canada, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Japan, New Zealand, and the United States. See Appendix A for additional information on the cases selected.

1 "The wave was officially closed on December 31, 2021, with a few surveys being delayed due to the corona-pandemic and still remaining in the first quarter of 2022. We expect that the very final version of the dataset featuring up to 65 surveys will be released in April 2022" Haerpfer et al. (2022).

2 "In electoral democracies, citizens have the right to participate in meaningful, free and fair, and multi-party elections. In liberal democracies, citizens have further individual and minority rights, are equal before the law, and the actions of the executive are constrained by the legislative and the courts" (Roser & Herre, 2013). Roser & Herre (2013) used data from Boix et al. (2013), Lüthmann et al (2018), and Coppedge et al. (2022) to determine the level of democracy in each country.

Independent variables

Religious Involvement indicates whether individuals consider themselves to be members of a religious organization and to what extent they are involved in that community. Respondents were asked whether they were an active member, an inactive member, or not a member of a church or religious organization. Respondents were then classified into three groups: (0) Don't Belong, (1) Inactive Member, and (2) Active Member. The variable has then been recoded to (1) Active Member, (2) Inactive Member, and (3) Don't Belong, so the logistic regression represents the change in trust of political institutions as religious involvement increases.

Religious Affiliation shows if respondents belong to a major religious affiliation. Respondents were asked to indicate what religious affiliation they belonged to and were then coded into ten groups: (0) Do not belong to a denomination, (1) Roman Catholic, (2) Protestant, (3) Orthodox (Russian/Greek/etc.), (4) Jew, (5) Muslim, (6) Hindu, (7) Buddhist, (8) Other Christian (Evangelical/Pentecostal/Free church/etc.), and (9) Other. Response (0) was recoded into a new variable where (10) Do not belong to a denomination, and responses 1-9 remained the same. This is so that each religious affiliation's odds of trust can be compared to no religion and other religious affiliation in a logistic regression. See Appendix B for information on how the independent variables were collected.

Dependent variables

Political Trust is often measured by asking about one's confidence in the government. WVS asks respondents to rate their level of confidence in their national government. Responses were then coded into four groups (1) A great deal, (2) Quite a lot, (3) Not very much, and (4) Not at all. See Appendix B for additional context on the collection of the dependent variable.

Control variables

To account for each country's unique political atmosphere and the potential variance in political trust due to domestic political environments, *Country* was used to distinguish between the eight countries studied: (AUS) Australia, (CAN) Canada, (CYP) Cyprus, (DEU) Germany, (GRC) Greece, (JPN) Ja-

pan, (NZL) New Zealand, and (USA) United States. Of the countries surveyed, only Canada's took place during the COVID-19 pandemic, so isolating each country accounts for any potential effect the pandemic response may have had on political trust. Additionally, National Pride accounts for any potential influences on political trust from an ethnic or cultural tie to one's country. Respondents were asked to rate their sense of national pride. Their answers were coded into four groups: (1) Very proud, (2) Quite proud, (3) Not very proud, (4) Not at all proud, and (5) I am not [nationality]. It was then recoded into (1) Very proud, (2) Quite proud, (3) Not very proud, (4) I am not [nationality], and (5) Not at all proud, so the logistic regression represents the change as national pride increases and shows whether not being of that nationality makes a difference in one's tendency to trust political institutions.

Several socioeconomic characteristics act as an important control, affecting both religiosity and political trust. Age is a continuous measure based on the year of birth. Education measures the highest education the respondent attained. They were coded into three groups: (3) Higher [Short-cycle tertiary education, Bachelor or equivalent, Masters equivalent, Doctoral or equivalent], (2) Middle [Upper secondary education, Post-secondary non-tertiary education], and (1) Lower [Early childhood education/no education, Primary Education, Lower Secondary Education]. For Income, WVS asked respondents to self-identify their income on a scale of 1-10, with 1 indicating the lowest income group and 10 representing the highest income group in their country. Their responses were then coded into ten groups, one for each step on the scale. The variable was then recoded into three groups: (1) High [steps 8-10], (2) Medium [steps 4-7], and (3) Low [steps 1-3]. Both Education and Income are coded, so the logistic regression shows the effect on Political Trust as they increase. See Appendix B for additional information on the collection of the control variables and Appendix C for the frequency statistics of the variables.

Analytic strategy

Because my dependent variable is categorical and has more than two categories, I used a multinomial logistic regression to estimate my models.³ Model 1 tested Religious Involvement and Political Trust and tested H1 and H2. Model 2 used Religious Affiliation as the independent variable against Political Trust and tested H3. The multinomial logistic regression represented the likelihood of having a great deal of confidence (trust) in the government.

Results

Model 1

Table 1 represents the results from Model 1, where religious involvement is the independent variable with political trust as the dependent variable. This shows that when all other variables are held constant, both those who consider themselves active or inactive members of a religious organization are significantly more likely to possess some level of political trust compared to no trust than those who do not belong to religious organizations (H1). Compared to non-members, active and inactive members of religious organizations have an increased likelihood of greater political trust. The likelihood of possessing higher rates of political trust also increases as religious involvement increases (H2). Across active, inactive, and non-members of a religious organization, active members have the greatest likelihood for political trust when compared to *none at all*. Both active and inactive membership have a monotonic relationship with political trust; as religious membership involvement increases, the likelihood of possessing a higher level of political trust increases. In every level of political trust, active members possess higher levels compared to inactive and non-members.

Table 1 also shows the odds ratios of each country's level of political trust compared to the United States. All countries, except for Greece, show significant higher odds of trusting political institutions when compared to the United States and no trust. National pride shows significant increases in the likelihood of political trust

among those with higher levels of national pride. Those who identified as not a nationality of the country tested were the most likely to possess high levels of political trust compared to those with no national pride. Age was not significant in determining any level of political trust. Education only has a significant increase in likelihood for quite a lot of political trust for those with higher education when compared to levels of no trust. An increase in income shows to have a significant increase in the likelihood of high political trust compared to no political trust. These variables show they have the potential to impact one's likelihood of possessing a high level of political trust.

³ An ordinal regression was not used because the data does not have proportional odds and failed the parallel lines test. Therefore, a less restrictive model, like the multinomial logistic regression, was needed.

Table 1: Odds Ratios from the Multinomial Logistic Regression of Political Trust on Religious Involvement (N=13234)

Variable	Political Trust ^a		
	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much
Age	0.998	1.001	0.998
AUS	0.731*	1.771***	2.286***
CAN	2.074***	3.778***	2.133***
CYP	1.991***	1.674***	1.441***
DEU	1.602**	5.216***	2.944***
GRC	0.106***	0.288***	0.542***
JPN	2.321***	7.367***	4.192***
NZL	3.366***	6.129***	3.751***
USA	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
National Pride: Very proud	7.475***	9.240***	3.814***
National Pride: Quite proud	2.100**	5.643***	3.730***
National Pride: Not very proud	0.371**	1.076	1.270*
I am not [nationality]	4.239***	8.077***	4.030***
National Pride: Not at all proud	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Religious Involvement: Active Member	2.288***	1.767***	1.372***
Religious Involvement: Inactive Member	1.862***	1.453***	1.221**
Do not belong to a Religious Org	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Education: Higher	1.218	1.517***	1.076
Education: Middle	0.807	1.121	0.994
Education: Low	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Income: High	2.603***	1.904***	1.383**
Income: Middle	1.394**	1.537***	1.255***
Income: Low	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Intercept	-3.245***	-2.815***	-1.042**
<i>Note:</i> *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001			
<i>Source:</i> (Haerpfer et al., 2022)			
a. The reference category is: None at all.			
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.			

Model 2

Model 2 focuses on religious affiliation as the independent variable against political trust. Table 2 presents the results of Model 2. It shows that when all other variables are held constant, religious affiliation can determine levels of political trust in certain religions. Roman Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus all have a significantly increased likelihood of higher levels of

political trust than *none at all* when compared to those that do not belong to a denomination, but the significance levels off at not very much political trust. This shows that these denominations tend only to influence an individual to have a relatively greater political trust than *not very much* and *none at all*.

Table 2: Odds Ratios from the Multinomial Logistic Regression of Political Trust on Religious Affiliation (N=13183)

Variable	Political Trust _a		
	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much
Age	0.99	1.001	0.997
AUS	0.679**	1.660***	2.190***
CAN	1.594***	3.336***	2.011***
CYP	0.829	1.022	1.019
DEU	1.284	4.603***	2.780***
GRC	0.089***	0.216***	0.403***
JPN	1.497	6.274***	4.073***
NZL	2.646***	5.628***	3.448***
USA	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
National Pride: Very proud	8.343***	9.041***	3.857***
National Pride: Quite proud	2.296**	5.418***	3.734**
National Pride: Not very proud	0.374**	1.031	1.269*
I am not [nationality]	3.742**	7.618***	4.059***
National Pride: Not at all proud	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Education: Higher	1.048	1.460***	1.048
Education: Middle	0.760*	1.115	0.760
Education: Low	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Religious Affiliation: Roman Catholic	1.526***	1.301***	1.118*
Religious Affiliation: Protestant	1.488**	1.525***	1.183*
Religious Affiliation: Orthodox	0.816	1.221	1.266
Religious Affiliation: Jewish	1.105	1.022	1.021
Religious Affiliation: Muslim	5.644***	2.408***	1.504**
Religious Affiliation: Hindu	4.436**	2.474**	1.099
Religious Affiliation: Buddhist	2.160**	1.423*	0.937
Religious Affiliation: Other Christian	1.209	1.320**	1.190
Religious Affiliation: Other	1.708*	0.93	0.812
Do not belong to a denomination	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Income: High	2.676***	1.870***	1.387**
Income: Middle	1.459**	1.533***	1.459***
Income: Low	0 _b	0 _b	0 _b
Intercept	-3.095***	-2.633***	-0.949***
Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.001			
Source: (Haerpfer et al., 2022)			
a. The reference category is: None at all.			
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.			

Other Christians only experience an increased likelihood of quite a lot of political trust than no trust compared to those who do not belong to a denomination. Buddhists only experience a significant increase in odds of possessing a great deal of political trust compared to those who do not belong to a denomination. Jews, Orthodox, and Other denominations saw no significant change in odds of possessing any level of political trust compared to those who do not belong to a denomination. On the other hand, Muslims experience a significantly increased likelihood of possessing political trust at every level compared to those who do not belong to a religious denomination. Muslims also see an increase in the odds of possessing political trust as the level of trust increases compared to no trust. The results support the idea that religious affiliation can affect the likelihood of possessing political trust (H3).

The results of the control variables saw slight changes from Model 1. For most of the variables, the significance and direction of odds did not change. Education saw an increase in the significance in the odds ratios of those with middle education levels. Compared to those with low education levels, those with a middle education level are less likely to possess a great deal of political trust and more likely to possess quite a lot of political trust. Age is still not significant in determining any level of political trust.

The effects of national pride and income remained largely the same. Greece continued to show a decrease in the odds of political trust compared to none at all when compared to the United States. Cyprus has become insignificant in all levels of political trust compared to none when compared to the United States. Australia sees a slight decrease in the odds of possessing a great deal of political trust rather than none at all when compared to the United States, though levels of quite a lot and not very much still show a significant increase than the United States. All other countries see significant increased odds of political trust compared to the United States.

Discussion and Conclusions

The results show that religiosity is an important factor in determining political trust for both independent variables. The results from Model 1 support previous studies that show that religious involvement increases political trust (Daniels & Von Der Ruhr, 2010; Putnam, 2000, p. 66). Additionally, the results support the

claim that as religious involvement increases, so does the likelihood of possessing political trust (Mencken et al., 2009). The more involved someone was in their religious community, the higher their levels of political trust; this finding supports the idea that religious participation promotes positive community relations and trust (Wuthnow, 2002; Stid, 2018; Smidt, 1999).

The results from Model 2 support the previous studies that say differences in political trust can be attributed to variations in religious affiliation (Dingemans & Van Ingen, 2015; Uslaner, 2002). The results were mixed, as the overall effect of a religious affiliation varied from increased likelihood to no significant difference in odds of political trust compared to those that do not belong to a religious affiliation. Religions like Orthodox Christianity and Judaism showed no significant difference compared to those not belonging to a religious affiliation. In contrast, Muslims showed increased likelihood in all levels of political trust compared to none at all. This result indicates that religious affiliations affect political trust. This could be explained by differences in religious doctrine, practices, and/or religious culture. Some of the highest odds of increased political trust were in minority religions in these countries, like Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist. These higher trust odds could be attributed to the increased levels of associations as practitioners band together to find community, which could demonstrate how religious involvement fosters community connections as described by Wuthnow (2002), Stid (2018), and Smidt (1999). More testing can be done to investigate the causes behind the variation of religious affiliation on the impact on political trust. Additionally, the results of minority religious do not support the ideas of Uslaner (2002), Welch et al. (2004), and Hempel et al. (2012) or Poppe (2004) and Niu et al. (2014), as practitioners were more likely to possess higher levels of political trust despite possible differences in community values and religious and political doctrines. More testing can be done to investigate the causes behind the variation of religious affiliation on the impact on political trust.

The results of Model 1 show that while higher religious involvement showed an increased likelihood of possessing higher levels of political trust, it was not the largest increase. Higher odds of political trust can be found in levels of national pride and within countries. While active or inactive membership in a religious organization explains some increase in political trust, it is not the whole explanation. These results are in line

with Dingemans & Van Ingen (2015), who found that the difference in levels of political trust can be attributed to country differences, not just religious involvement. Similar to Model 1, Model 2 shows much higher odds of possessing a more political trust when looking at national pride and country. This reflects the unique national environments that influence political trust. Religious affiliation plays a role in increasing political trust, more so than others, but it is not the only influence. In short, many factors affect political trust, including religiosity.

This research supports the approach that religious participation increases one's political trust (Daniels & Von Der Ruhr, 2010; Stid, 2018; Wuthnow, 2002; Smidt, 1999). Tocqueville first claimed that religion was the foundation of civil society and therefore was a major source of political trust. This statement implies that the more someone is involved in their religious community, the more political trust they will possess. Unlike previous studies, this research went beyond the confines of the United States and Europe to study the potential effect of religion on political trust and found that religious involvement can support democracies across the world. It showed that political trust may be a product of religiosity not just in the United States but in other stable democracies as well. While this research found that religious participation increases political trust, other influences were also present. Beyond religious affiliation, individual national political environments play a prominent role in shaping political trust. A country's political climate strongly influences political trust and shows that the top-down approach may hold more weight than initially thought (Mishler & Rose, 2005). While the decline in religiosity may contribute to the decline in political trust, it most likely is not the most influential factor. This is a new territory to explore when determining if political trust relies heavily on institutional function and performance, on civil society and organizations (like religion), or a combination of the two. Further research is also needed on what causes the differences in political trust levels in religious affiliations and whether there are specific factors that foster political trust. Religion plays a role in creating an environment that supports democratic political institutions by creating an environment for political trust to flourish.

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Appendix A

Country	Sample	Fieldwork Period	Mode	Languages Fielded
Australia	1813	06-04-2018 - 06-08-2018	Mail/Post	English
Canada	4018	02-10-2020 - 19-10-2020	CAWI	English, French
Cyprus	1000	13-05-2019 – 04-06-2019	PAPI	Greek, Turkish
Germany	1528	25-10-2017 - 31-03-2018	CAPI	German
Greece	1200	08-09-2017 - 16-10-2017	PAPI	Greek
Japan	1353	05-09-2019 - 26-09-2019	Mail/Post	Japanese
New Zealand	1057	04-07-2019 - 21-02-2020	Mail/Post	English
United States	2596	28-04-2017 - 31-05-2017	CAWI/CATI	English

Appendix A: Country cases included from WVS-7 (2017-2022) dataset V3.0 (Haerper et al., 2022).

Appendix B

Master Survey Questionnaire for Variables Tested (Haerper et al., 2022).

The general coding for missing codes is as follows (do not read them and code only if the respondent mentions them):	
-1 Don't know	-3 Not applicable (filter)
-2 No answer/refused	-5 Missing; Not applicable for other reasons

Independent Variables:

Religious Involvement: Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations. For each organization, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization? (Read out and code one answer for each organization):

Q94	Active Member	Inactive Member	Don't Belong
Church or religious organization	2	1	0

Religious Denomination: Do you belong to a religion or religious denomination? If yes, which one? (Code answer due to the list below. Code 0, if the respondent answers "no denomination.")

Q289

No	do not belong to a denomination	0
Yes	Roman Catholic	1
	Protestant	2
	Orthodox (Russian/Greek/etc.)	3
	Jew	4

Dependent Variable:

Political Trust: I am going to name a number of organizations. 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? (Read out and code one answer for each):

Q71	A great deal	Quite a lot	Not very much	None at all
The Government	1	2	3	4

Control Variables:

National Pride: How proud are you to be [country’s nationality]? (Read out and code one answer):

Q254

1 Very proud	3 Not very proud	5 I am not [country’s nationality] (do not read out!)
2 Quite proud	4 Not at all proud	

Education: What is the highest educational level that you, your spouse, your mother and your father have attained?
*[Interviewer: code for each person separately. The table below uses codes ISCED-2011 – International Standard Classification for Education used by the UN and UNESCO. Your supervisor will provide you with a national-adapted list of codes. If the respondent has no spouse, no father or no mother, code “-3” = not applicable
 Note, ‘completed’ = diploma or certificate]*

Q275	Respondent
Early childhood education (ISCED 0) / no education	0
Primary education (ISCED 1)	1
Lower secondary education (ISCED 2)	2
Upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	3
Post-secondary non-tertiary education (ISCED 4)	4
Short-cycle tertiary education (ISCED 5)	5
Bachelor or equivalent (ISCED 6)	6
Master or equivalent (ISCED 7)	7
Doctoral or equivalent (ISCED 8)	8

Age: This means you are _____ years old (write in age in two digits). (Q262)

Income: 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):

Q288

Lowest Group										Highest Group
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

Appendix C

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Independent Variables		
Religious Involvement	14441.00	100.00
Active Member	2260.00	18.10
Inactive Member	2443.00	16.90
Do not belong	9378.00	64.90
Religious Denomination	14304.00	100.00
Roman Catholic	1482.00	10.40
Protestant	2637.00	18.40
Orthodox (Russian/Greek/etc.)	1734.00	11.90
Jew	141.00	1.00
Muslim	712.00	5.00
Hindu	85.00	0.60
Buddhist	499.00	3.50
Other Christian (Evangelical/Pentecostal/Free Church/etc.)	930.00	6.50
Other	280.00	2.00
Do not Belong to a denomination	5804.00	40.60
Dependent Variable		
Political Trust	14237.00	100.00
A Great Deal	851.00	6.00
Quite a Lot	4728.00	33.20
Not Very Much	5828.00	40.90
None at All	2830.00	19.90
Cases		
Country	14565.00	100.00
AUS	1813.00	12.40
CAN	4018.00	27.60
CYP	1000.00	6.90
DEU	1528.00	10.50
GRC	1200.00	8.20
JPN	1353.00	9.30
NZL	1057.00	7.30
USA	2596.00	17.80

Appendix C: Frequency Statistics of Independent, Dependent, and Cases from WVS-7 (2017-2022) dataset V3.0 (Haerpfer et al., 2022).