

Trust and Corruption Perceptions in Russia



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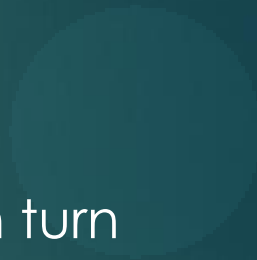
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- ▶ Russia is widely regarded as a society in which there is low interpersonal trust and high levels of corruption. Using a survey of 2003 Russians conducted by the Levada Analytical Center for a grant from the Research Council of Norway (NORRUSS) to the research foundation Fafo, I examine trust and corruption perceptions in Russia.
 - ▶ Our survey was conducted by the Levada Analytical Center in Moscow from August 12 to September 2, 2014. The survey was a nationwide sample of 2003 conducted through face-to-face interviews in respondents' homes. The 2010 national census was used to draw the sample. People doing military service, who were imprisoned, who lived in remote areas of the far north or the far east, residents of rural settlements of fewer than 50 inhabitants, and homeless people were excluded. The primary sampling units were urban settlements and rural regions.



Theoretical Foundations


- ▶ For trust, my work examines what I call “moralistic trust,” or generalized trust.
- ▶ Generalized trust is trust in strangers, especially people who are different from ourselves. Cannot come from interaction with people we know. We learn it early in life, from our parents, and it is largely stable throughout our life. It does not depend upon our experiences and it does not refer to any person or group.
- ▶ It is measured by the “standard” question: Generally speaking, do you believe that most people can be trusted or can’t you be too careful in dealing with people?
- ▶ Generalized trust stands in contrast to particularized trust, which is only trust in your own in-group, and strategic trust, which is based upon experience. It is based upon experience with specific people for specific experiences.



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- ▶ The key determinant of generalized trust is the level of economic inequality in a society. At the individual level, the most important factors shaping generalized trust are measures of optimism—especially for the long-term future.
 - ▶ Economic inequality leads people to reject the notion of a common fate with people who are different from yourself. It also leads people to be less optimistic about the future .
 - ▶ My earlier work has shown that religious people generally have higher in-group trust than out-group trust. Exposure to different cultures should also increase generalized trust.



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- ▶ I also consider trust in government. My earlier work has shown that there is at best a weak relationship between trust in government and generalized trust.
 - ▶ For Russia, distrust of others does not lead people to have little faith in government. In earlier work, I and others have shown that trust in government reflects approval of political leaders, a perception that the economy is strong, and the belief that governing institutions are fair and not corrupt.


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- ▶ My work shows that there is a link between trust and perceptions of corruption (we can't measure corruption directly). This the “inequality trap”:
 - ▶ inequality → low trust → corruption → more inequality
 - ▶ High inequality leads to low trust in out-groups and high trust in in-groups, which leads to clientelism—and more corruption, which in turn leads to more inequality.



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- ▶ In most surveys, only 25-30 percent of Russians believe that “most people can be trusted.” Communism made it very risky to trust anyone beyond a small circle. So the typical Russian response to a question about trust is:
 - ▶ "doveryai no proveryai": trust, but verify.
 - ▶ This sort of trust is *not* generalized trust, which does not depend upon experience or verification.
 - ▶ Nevertheless, our survey found 51 percent agreeing that “most people can be trusted.”

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- ▶ Our survey did not have questions about inequality or optimism. But I did get measures of inequality for oblasts from Sergei Guriev of Sciences Po and added them as contextual variables.
 - ▶ I also constructed a measure of the “radius of trust,” which reflects both in-group and out-groups. It is a simple summary measure of the 12 trust measures for people/groups, including the generalized trust question. Other groups are the family, neighbors, supervisors, people in your church, co-workers, people in your clubs, people you meet on the street, other Russians in Russia, other Russians outside Russia, Muslims, and gays. It thus measures how extensive one’s “trust network” is. The higher the score on the 0-12 scale, the wider is a person’s scope of trust. Almost two-thirds of respondents have scores of six or lower, so the radius measure does not present a picture of Russians as strong trusters, especially of out-groups. Only a small share of Russians have extensive “trust” networks: Just 13 percent have scores of 10 or more, while almost 20 percent trust have scores of zero or 1.

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- ▶ The statistical analysis shows:
 - ▶ Neither inequality nor change in inequality leads to generalized trust in Russia.
 - ▶ People who see more corruption than 5 years ago are less likely to trust others .
 - ▶ While there are no measures of optimism in this survey, we did ask whether people saw their living standard above or below that of average Russians. People who see themselves as advantaged (and likely more optimistic) are substantially more likely to trust others. This variable has the strongest effect of any.
 - ▶ People who have lived abroad—and thus became familiar with other cultures—are also more likely to trust others. So are older people.



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- ▶ For the radius of trust:
 - ▶ If people see religion as important, they are much more likely to have low scores on the radius of trust.
 - ▶ Living abroad leads to higher scores on the radius measure.
 - ▶ These are the two strongest predictors of the radius of trust. People's sense of in-group identification thus seem to be the most important factors for the radius of trust.
 - ▶ Perceptions of corruption and living standard also matter, but no other variables do. Inequality and change in inequality are also not significant.
 - ▶ The lack of effect of inequality is puzzling and may reflect the fact that we don't have perceptual measures of inequality.

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- ▶ Russians have a high level of trust in government: 63 percent say that they trust the government in Moscow to do the right thing all the time or most of the time.
 - ▶ By far the most important factor shaping trust in government is trust in the President. Russians have a great deal of faith in Vladimir Putin: 78 percent in our survey trust the President. Some recent stories in the American press indicate that trust in Putin does not seem to vary with economic conditions. Economic conditions by themselves do not shape trust in government in our data.



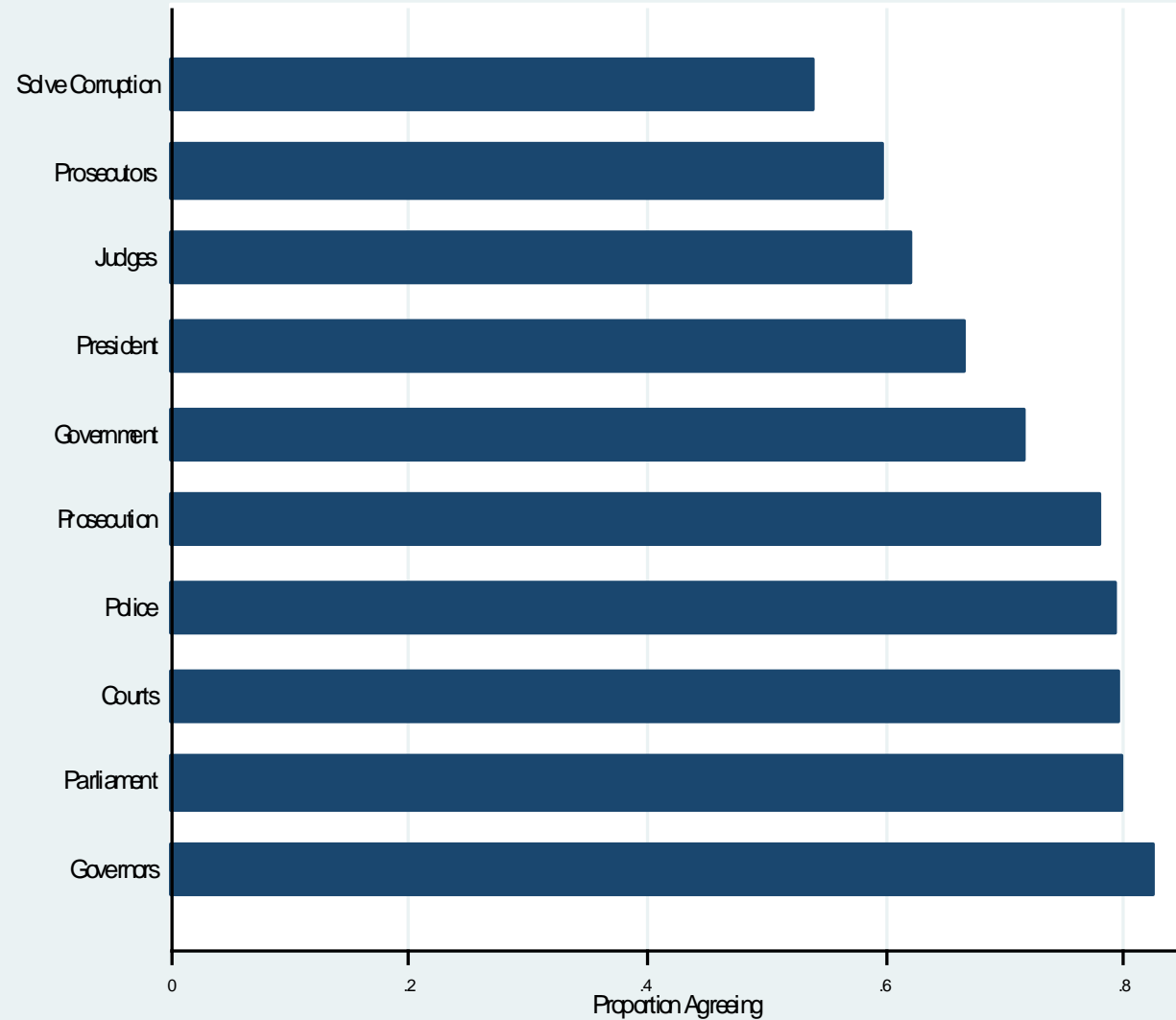
► The clarity of laws and ensuring that laws are enforced also lead to greater trust in government. Fifty-two percent believe that officials make clear laws, but only 41 percent say that laws are generally enforced. Ledeneva argues that “The whole economy operates in the mode of ‘legal nihilism,’ so that everyone is bound to disregard at least some laws. Anyone can be framed and found in violation of rules.” People who say that officials make clear laws and that officials ensure that laws are enforced are more likely to trust government.



► We do find that inequality leads to less trust in the legal system—and this makes sense since many people believe that the legal system is biased against ordinary people and favors the rich.

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- ▶ Perceptions of corruption are widespread among Russians. While more than half of Russians believe that it is possible to “solve corruption,” more than 60 percent believe that all state institutions are corrupt.
 - ▶ The police, courts, parliament, and local governors are viewed as the most corrupt: 80 percent or more believe that these institutions are corrupt.



Perceptions of Corruption in Russia



Proportions Agreeing






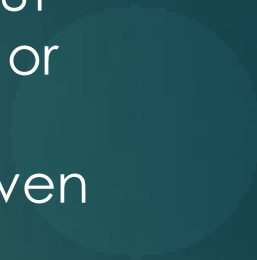
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- ▶ There are at best modest correlations between perceptions of corruption and trust in people or trust in government.
 - ▶ The first column below is for generalized trust, the second is for the radius of trust, and the third is for trust in government.



More corrupt than Soviet	.041	.051	.124
More corrupt than 5 years ago	.010	.141	.044
Minorities more corrupt	.004	-.090	-.039
Most police corrupt	-.071	-.069	-.053
Most prosecutors corrupt	-.089	-.081	-.101
Most judges corrupt	-.047	-.058	-.222
President corrupt	-.008	.024	-.136
Government corrupt	-.051	.008	-.124
Parliament corrupt	-.041	-.023	-.043
Prosecution corrupt	-.006	-.076	-.048
Courts corrupt	-.023	-.063	-.030
Police corrupt	.012	-.052	.026
Can solve corruption	.063	.083	.158

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- ▶ Perceptions of greater corruption are modestly correlated with trust in government. So is the belief that corruption can be solved— and especially the belief that judges are corrupt.
 - ▶ Otherwise, trust in people and the radius of trust have weak correlations with measures of corruption. The only exception—and it is not strong—is for the belief that there is more corruption than five years ago. *But this correlation is in the wrong direction.*

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- ▶ I did not find any relationship between inequality and corruption. In one estimation, the change in the Gini index from 1993 to 2010 seemed significant but the coefficient is in the wrong direction.
 - ▶ For grand corruption: I did find a negative relationship between generalized trust and the belief that grand corruption is widespread. If people have made small “bribe” payments they are also more likely to say that there is lot of grand corruption as well. The acceptability of small bribes did not lead people to say that there is less grand corruption.

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- ▶ Finally, people who trust others are less likely to say that corruption has increased since the Soviet era .
 - ▶ If people see small gifts as acceptable, they are also more likely to say that corruption has increased.
 - ▶ Having an adequate income also leads people to be less likely to say that corruption has increased. Poor people think that corruption has gotten worse—perhaps because they are less able to avoid it.
 - ▶ Older people are also more likely to say that corruption has increased.
 - ▶ So do people who have a European (rather than Russia) identity. Identifying with Europe makes people more critical of Russian corruption. But they are only 17 percent of the sample.

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- ▶ Overall, there is at best modest support for the inequality trap argument in this survey.
 - ▶ Russia is thus a society where people have limited trust and growing inequality. People perceive widespread corruption, but there is limited evidence that they link such views to either trust or inequality. Nor is there much support for a linkage between contemporary levels of corruption and the inequality trap—or even historic levels of corruption (in Soviet times). Russians overwhelmingly see less corruption now than five years ago, despite evidence to the contrary.

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- ▶ Russians who see their identity as “only Russian” are less likely to see an inequality trap—less likely to see increased corruption and more likely to trust the President.
 - ▶ For the great majority of Russians, there is less coherence in their views of corruption. At least in this realm, Russia remains, in the words of Winston Churchill “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma.”

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<https://lcsr.hse.ru/en/seminar2016>

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