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Outline

1. Definitions and Descriptions
2. Implications and Correlations
3. Key Takeaways
4. Appendix
What is Trust?

Trust: the expectation that others will act in ways that are beneficial - or at least not detrimental - to us [1][2][4]

Institutional Trust

- Captures vertical interactions between individuals and a superior entity and relates to how citizens perceive the legitimacy, fairness, and efficiency of institutions and governments

Interpersonal Trust

- Captures the horizontal interactions occurring across and between individuals and refers to the extent to which a person believes other individuals have their interests at heart
Operationalisation

World Value Survey data: cross-national time-series dataset

**Interpersonal Trust**

Binary variable: *Would you say that most people can be trusted or do you need to be very careful in dealing with people?*
- Trust measured as average of responses

**Institutional Trust**

4-scale variable: *How much confidence you have in the government: a great deal of confidence, quite a lot of confidence, not very much confidence, or none at all?*
- Trust measured either as average of responses or as percentage of respondents who express confidence in government
Institutional Trust

Trust in national governments, national parliaments, and the United Nations has been in global decline over the last two decades.

Figure: Average institutional trust, WVS (1999-2022)
Institutional Trust

Meanwhile, the percentage of respondents who do not at all trust the government has been rising, especially since the mid-2000s.

**Figure:** Percentage non-trusting of government, WVS (1990-2022)
Institutional Trust

Across high-, mid-, and low- income states, low income countries have experienced the sharpest decline in institutional trust

Figure: Percentage trusting of government by income group, WVS (1990-2022)
Institutional Trust

A generational divide also appears to exist, with younger respondents generally less trusting of government than older respondents.

Figure: Percentage trusting of government by age, WVS (1990-2022)
Interpersonal trust has also been in decline, although less sharply than institutional forms of trust.

**Figure:** Average interpersonal trust, WVS (1999-2022)
Interpersonal Trust

High-income states are most trusting of one another, while low income countries again have experienced the sharpest decline in trust over time.

Figure: Average interpersonal trust by income group, WVS (1990-2022)
Interpersonal Trust

A generational gap also exists in interpersonal trust, with younger respondents again exhibiting less trust than older respondents.

Figure: Average interpersonal trust by age, WVS (1990-2022)
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Implications

**Interpersonal and institutional trust are mutually reinforcing [4][3]**

- Those with high levels of interpersonal trust are more likely to become politically involved and increase their trust in institutions
- Conditions of high institutional trust cultivate opportunities for greater interpersonal trust building
- Declining trust across either dimension can therefore have serious social, economic, and political impacts
Correlations: Inequality

At the national level, as interpersonal trust declines, social inequality tends to increase (higher GINI score)

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust (WVS, 2017-2022) and GINI coefficient (World Bank, 2006-2022)
Correlations: Political Participation

Higher interpersonal trust is slightly correlated with greater political expression and mobilization (demonstrations, strikes, rallies, etc.)

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust (WVS, 2017-2022) and Mass Mobilization Frequency (V-DEM, 2022)
Correlations: Job Security

Countries where respondents feel more confident about job security are also those with higher levels of interpersonal trust

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust and Average Worry About Losing One’s Job (WVS, 2017-2022)
Correlations: Political Stability

Similarly, countries with higher levels of interpersonal trust are also those with the greatest levels of political stability.

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust (WVS, 2017-2022) and Political Stability and Absence of Violence Estimate (WGI, 2022)
Correlations: Corruption

States with more interpersonal trust are also those with less corruption (higher CPI score)

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust (WVS, 2017-2022) and Corruption Perception Index (2023)
Correlations: Media Transparency

The role of media as a mediating factor is important, as more trusting societies tend to have greater media transparency and openness.

Figure: Average Interpersonal Trust (WVS, 2017-2022) and Lack of Media Transparency (V-DEM, 2022)
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Key Messages

- Social trust has declined over the last two decades worldwide, especially in developing countries in Latin America and Africa.
- Interpersonal trust has been more resilient than institutional trust, especially within high-income countries.
- A strong generational gap exists: younger people are overall less trusting than older generations.
- Economic vulnerability and uncertainties, uneven progress in poverty reduction, shifts in the nature of work, and changes in the media landscape have contributed to declining trust.
- Changes in trust shape civic and political participation, affect perceptions about the effectiveness and transparency of institutions, and impact political instability and socio-political polarization.
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Figure: Percentage trusting of president and evaluation of government use of taxes (Afrobarometer, 2019-2021)
Figure: Percentage trusting of president and evaluation of government water and sanitation services (Afrobarometer, 2019-2021)
Figure: Percentage trusting of president and evaluation of government efforts toward living standard of poor (Afrobarometer, 2019-2021)
Figure: Percentage trusting of president/prime minister and evaluation of personal economic situation (LAPOP, 2023)
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