Trust in Civil Servants:
A Cross-National Dataset for Public Policy Research, 1986–2022

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Abstract

Trust in civil servants is essential for effective governance, enabling policy implementation, public service delivery, and compliance. However, the lack of comparable cross-national data on trust in bureaucracy has limited our ability to systematically examine these relationships. To address this gap, we develop the Trust in Civil Servants (TCS) dataset using an advanced latent-variable modeling technique, using 132 national and cross-national surveys from 98 countries (1986-2022). Our measures reveal variations in trust both within and between countries. We find that economic performance and public security enhance trust in the short term, whereas government quality and effectiveness have more enduring, long-term impacts on trust in civil service. The TCS dataset opens new avenues for examining connections between trust, governance quality, and complex policy challenges across different contexts.

Keywords: political trust, latent variable model, public administration, governance

Authors

- Yuehong Cassandra Tai, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7303-7443, Assistant Research Professor, Center for Social Data Analytics, Pennsylvania State University, yhcasstai@psu.edu
- Frederick Solt, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3154-6132, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Iowa, frederick-solt@uiowa.edu

Declaration of conflicting interest

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Data availability

The code used to generate the dataset and conduct validation test are openly available at: https://github.com/fsolt/dcpo_trust_bureaucracy.