

Is democracy a guarantee of liberty ?

Author: Lucile Lapray

Date: November 30, 2023

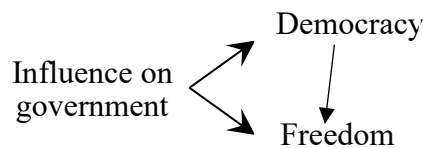
1. Introduction

Freedom is an essential principle of democracy (according to the *United Nations*) so both should be correlated. However, the individual's influence within the political system may have an effect on both people's impression on how democratically the country is being governed and their perception of how free to make their own choices they are.

Is individual freedom dependent on the political system in place and the individual's power of intervention in it ?

If it were the case, we should observe that :

- **Prediction 1 :** *The more you feel like you have a say in what the government does, the more you consider your country to be democratic.*
- **Prediction 2 :** *The more democratic you feel your country is and the more influence you have, the freer you feel.*

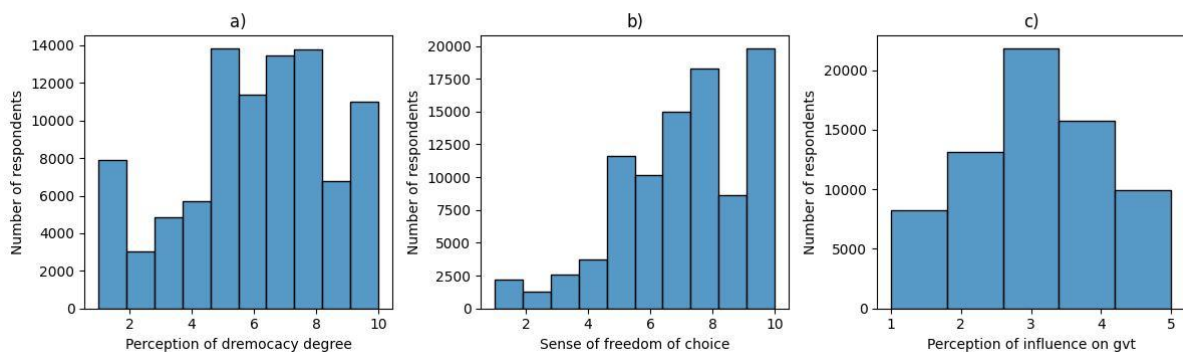


2. Data

The data set used is a questionnaire survey from the Wave 7 (2017 to 2020) of the World Value Survey, a global research project created by Ronald Inglehart in 1981 and led by an international network of social scientists.

I am using 3 questions that deal with the feeling of being governed democratically, with attention, and the feeling of being free to run your own life.

Figure 1

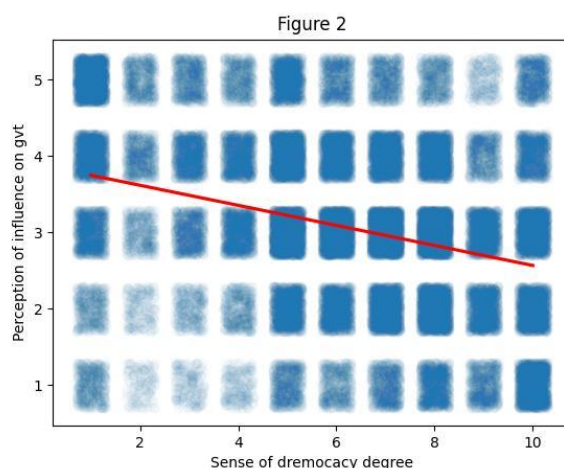


3. Methods

To test predictions 1 we performed a simple linear regression, and graphed a scatter plot with jitter for clarity, predicting power over decisions with democracy. For prediction 2, we performed a multi-linear regression freedom of choice with democracy and influence.

4. Results

People saying their country is democratic also state that they feel rather listened to by their government when it comes to taking decisions (see *Fig. 2*, $B_1 = -0.6514$, *because* : *very democratic* = 10 (10/10) and *consulted* = 1 (1/5)) which is really significant but doesn't explain the variation ($t_1 = -79.339$ $p_1 = 0.000$, $R^2_1 = 0.085$). Moreover, people feel slightly freer when they rate their country as highly democratic and when they feel like they have a say in politics ($B_2 = 0.0881$ and $B_3 = -0.0528$, once again with the "consulted" scale upside down) and if both are significant, it doesn't seem to variate much ($p_2 = 0.000$ and $p_3 = 0.000$, $R^2_2 = 0.014$).



5. Conclusion

We can see that with the studied data - that's to say the data of people who had responded on the ordinal scale for the three questions - that people who are feeling like a country is governed democratically also feel listened and partly influential over their government's decisions. The results also indicate that **people's sense of freedom of choice goes higher as the two variables mentioned before increase.**

In that way, democracy and consultation can be vectors of freedom. However, the results aren't enough to prove a causality. A hypothesis could be that richer countries value democracy more, and their inhabitants being richer, their freedom wouldn't be restricted by a lack of money.

6. References

United Nations: <https://www.un.org/fr/>

Data set: World Value Survey, Wave 7: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>