

## **Abstract**

Individuals living in densely populated regions are likely to face higher levels of social competition, and therefore higher need to build and demonstrate competitiveness. Using a large-scale sample from the European Social Survey ( $N = 46,234$ ), the current study examined whether social success is valued more in densely populated regions. Across twenty-eight nations, we found that population density related to an increased importance placed on achievement and demonstrating one's ability. These effects remained robust when relevant demographic (age, gender, education) and socio-ecological (GDP per capita, urbanization rate, life expectancy) variables were accounted for. We found similar patterns when examining the above association at NUTS 1 regional level. The present findings suggest that individuals' ability and achievement matter more in highly competitive, densely populated areas.