

FLUCTUATIONS OF TRUST IN UKRAINIAN GOVERNMENT: KEY MEASUREMENT AND ASSESSMENT METHODS¹

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A considerable amount of literature has been published on ensuring economic security (Bublyk et al., 2017), national economy de-shadowing (Levchenko et al., 2018), sustainable economic growth (Kendiukhov et al., 2017; Toyin et al., 2020), country' innovative developing (Lyulyov et al., 2017). Several studies emphasized the crucial role of corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, and business ethics towards achieving those objectives (Al-Khonain et al., 2020; Tommaso, 2020; Alkubaisy, 2020; Stavrova, 2020; Huo et al., 2020). While the primary focus of others has been on the public sector (Aljaloudi et al., 2020), government power (Bhandari, 2017), state management (Levchenko et al., 2018), financial decentralization level (Vasylieva et al., 2018), self-government reforms (Aghasiev et al., 2018).

Trust is a fundamental element of social capital – a key contributor to sustaining well-being outcomes, including economic development. Data from several studies suggest that this concept is the foundation upon which public institutions' legitimacy is built and is crucial for maintaining social cohesion (Voronkova et al., 2019; Bappayo et al., 2019; Kaya, 2019; Kasztelnik, 2020; Taliento et al., 2020). It is also crucial for the success of a wide range of public policies that depend on the public's behavioral responses. It has been demonstrated that public trust leads to greater compliance with regulations and the tax system. It is necessary to increase the confidence of investors and consumers. Also, trust is a set of assessments of various processes taking place in society, in the socio-economic sphere, policy, which consists of public satisfaction with the government's activities to perform its functions (Lopez et al., 2020). Moreover, lack of trust compromises citizens' and businesses' willingness to respond to public policies and contribute to a sustainable economic recovery.

Trust in government is a multi-faceted, somewhat ambiguous concept. It covers general and systemic factors, such as the legitimacy accorded to the political-administrative system, but also more specific experiences with the government and its services and the dynamic interaction between the two. Public opinion about

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governmental institutions is quite inconsistent and ambivalent, and it is characterized more by complexity than by consistency. When asked in general and abstract terms, citizens are often skeptical towards the public sector but relatively satisfied with more specific services. It has conclusively been shown that society, in general, wants more service delivery from the public sector.

According to extensive cross-sectional longitudinal studies, over the past 20 years, there has been a gradual decline in the trust level in governments in most countries of the world. Trust is below average across countries. For example, in 2010–2014 among countries with a level of confidence in the national government below the global average were Haiti (5%), EU members Slovenia (7.7%), Poland (16%), Romania (18.3%) and Spain (20.7%), Japan (24.3%), Ukraine (25.6%) and even the USA (32.6%). The group of countries with the highest level of trust in the government is more homogeneous. In most cases, it was formed by countries with rather undemocratic political regimes. The absolute leader in 2010–2014 according to this indicator, Uzbekistan (95.2%) was followed by China (84.6%), Qatar (82.9%), Azerbaijan (77.1%), Malaysia (75.1%) and Kazakhstan (74.8%). In Russia, in the same period the analysis, the level of trust in the government was higher than the average for the sample - 47.4% (Christensen et al., 2020). In this regard, it can be assumed that both high and low levels of trust in the national government are fraught with danger.

Much of the available literature on public trust in national government deals with the question of its measurement and assessment. Some writers (e.g., Porumbescu, 2015; Gabriel, 2017) have attempted to determine the level of political trust in society by the indicator representing the degree of development of civic activity and political participation. The apolitical nature of the population leads to the underdevelopment of citizens' political culture and political consciousness and, consequently, to crisis phenomena in the sphere of public understanding and a decrease in the level of political trust. Among the factors influencing the population's attitude to the authorities are not only professionalism, competence, efficiency, but also the degree of development of feedback between government and the public, taking into account its interests, public opinion, dealing with citizens, openness and transparency authorities (Liuta et al., 2020). Public surveys are one of the most common procedures for determining and measuring trust in the national government. Among many others, the most widely recognized are the World Values Survey, the European Quality of Government Index, the E-Government Development Index, and others. Measures of trust from attitudinal survey questions remain the most common source of data on trust. Given the multidimensional nature of the trust phenomena, a significant problem with the public opinion survey method is that it is impossible to consider unilaterally with only one indicator.

To date, there is no single universal method of measuring this empirical category. This, in turn, leads to the fact that the results obtained by research groups

are incomparable; there are some difficulties in interpreting the results because it is difficult to understand what exactly is hidden behind the percentages in the surveys. Despite a certain conditionality of indicators, their use allows assessing the level of trust in society. Still, it does not explain why this happened, i.e., what led to an increase or decrease in trust level. Nor can such measurements be accurate, as much of what is associated with trust exists in an implicit or relative form, making it impossible for researchers to measure or codify.

In most recent studies, public trust in the national government has been measured in three different ways. Traditionally, the following methods of measuring trust are distinguished: qualitative, experimental and quantitative (sociological).

The qualitative method of measuring trust includes problem identification, hypothesis formulation and consideration of social fact from other points of view. This approach is used in research when interacting with a hard-to-reach or small sample. The experimental method of measuring trust is based on a game approach (TrustGame). The game is a simulated situation in which partners' trust can lead to a higher result (income) than purely selfish behavior. When using the quantitative (sociological) method, data are collected from large groups of respondents and analyzed using statistics to determine the level of interpersonal and institutional trust. When measuring trust, it should not be limited to purely economic indicators, as the basis for trust in political institutions is considered by some scholars through culturological macro-and micro theories. In their research, foreign scholars confirm or refute the hypotheses refer to the added World Values Survey (WVS) or European Values Survey (EVS). These are long-term comparative projects that bring together sociologists worldwide who study public trust or support of the national governments and their impact on social, economic, and cultural lives.

Since the 1970s, World Values Survey has conducted opinion polls in nearly a hundred countries. Six waves (rounds) of public opinion polls were conducted in the period from 1981 to 2014. Ukraine was included in this project in 1996, 2006 and 2011 (World Values Survey named Value orientations of the population) and 1999 (European Values Survey). The last seven wave took place in the period from January 2017 to December 2018. There has been an increasing amount of researchers who use Eurobarometer data in their trust studies in recent years. Qualitative and quantitative research carried out within the European Commission project allows policymakers to provide general information needed to make important decisions and develop European public policy concepts.

Moreover, the level of public trust in national government could be accessed by analyzing the degree of government corruption since corruption prevails where society does not trust public institutions. Since 1995, Transparency International has compiled an annual Corruption Perceptions Index. The survey mentioned above includes information about the Ukrainian government and could indicate distrust in the national government.

Indicators of trust in the government are present in all nationwide studies by the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, the International Federation of Electoral Systems, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, the Razumkov Center, the Democratic Initiatives Foundation, Ukraine sociology service and individual polls conducted by a number sociological centers. To understand the extent to which Ukrainians trust the government when processing databases, average values are calculated, characterizing the level of public trust. Against the background of unresolved issues of transparency and efficiency of the Ukrainian public authorities and institutions, there is a gradual decline in trust, the low level of which is in line with trends in most post-socialist countries. In line with previous studies (Kubakh et al., 2020), this trend could be explained by the economic situation and the government's inability to quickly overcome the harmful consequences of the global financial crisis and national economic crises and policymakers to form governments that can solve most of the related issues.

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