3-30-2016

Public Confidence in Government: Public Service Motivation and Political Ideology

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Public Confidence in Government: Public Service Motivation and Political Ideology

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I. Background
Confidence in the executive branch of the federal government
- Confidence in government has declined from 28% to 12% over the last 12 years (Fig. 1).
- According to the 2014 General Social Survey (GSS), 44% Americans have “hardly any confidence,” 44% have “only some confidence,” and 12% have “a great of confidence” in the Executive Branch of Government (Fig. 2).

Lack of trust
- leads to excessive micromanagement and excessive dependence on rules.
- hinders informal relationships.
- flexibility and discretion become clearly constrained.

II. Research Question and Hypotheses
Research question
- What explains public confidence in the executive branch of the federal government?

Hypotheses
- H1: Government employees have more confidence in the executive branch of the government than their counterparts in the private sector.
- H2: Democrats have more confidence in the executive branch of the government than Republicans or Independents.

III. Data and Research Methods
Data source
- The General Social Survey (GSS), 2014.

Dependent variable
- As far as the people running the Executive Branch of the Federal Government are concerned, would you say you have 1. Hardly any confidence, 2. Only some confidence, or 3. A great deal of confidence in them?

Key independent variables
- Government employees (Fig. 3).
- Democrats (Fig. 4).

Methods
- Cross-tabulation.
- Ordinal logistic regression.

IV. Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>Odds ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Government employee</td>
<td>0.32**</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>1.07**</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>-0.112</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-0.307</td>
<td>0.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious attendance</td>
<td>-0.023</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold 1</td>
<td>-0.785**</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold 2</td>
<td>1.623***</td>
<td>5.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>1.163</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model χ²</td>
<td>185.96**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Log Likelihood</td>
<td>-1.984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo - R² (McKelvey &amp; Zavoina)</td>
<td>0.517</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>χ² test of proportional odds</td>
<td>17.22**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V. Conclusion and Implication
- Government employees are more likely to express confidence in executive branch leaders. In other words, government employees support the very institutions they work for.
- Democrats are more likely to express confidence in executive branch leaders given the White House was controlled by the Democratic Party in 2014.
- This study shows that executive leaders are seen as partisan leaders who have strong influence on forming attitudes toward government.

VI. Future Research
- Analyze confidence in other branches of government, i.e. Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court.

VII. References
- Houston, D.J., & L.H. Harding (2013), Public Integrity. 16(1): 53-76.

VIII. Acknowledgements
- We would like to thank Tina Gasnarez, Damini Handa (Office of Sponsored Programs), and John Nicklin (Studio M) for their invaluable support in preparing this poster.

Fig. 1. Responses to the survey question, “As far as the people running the Executive Branch of the Government are concerned, would you say you have ‘A Great Deal of Confidence’ in them?” 2002-2014.

Fig. 2. Responses to the survey question about “Confidence in leaders of the Executive Branch of Government,” 2014.

Fig. 3. Confidence in the executive branch by type of employment.

Fig. 4. Confidence in the executive branch by party affiliation.