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Citizen Perceptions of Public Policy Success: A Cross-National Analysis

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**Citizen Perceptions of Public Policy Success: A
Cross-National Analysis (with Andrew L.
Morelock)**

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Citizen Perceptions of Public Policy Success: A Cross-National Analysis



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

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Research Questions

- Across countries, what attitudes do citizens hold about governmental performance?
- What individual-level and country-level attributes correlate with perceptions of governmental performance across countries?

Explanations of Citizen Perceptions of Governmental Performance

Individual-level:

- **Socio-cultural explanations**
 - Perceptions of governmental performance are the product of socialization and social experiences
- **Socio-psychological explanations**
 - Perceptions of governmental performance are the result of personality traits
- **Attitude towards government**
 - Perceptions of governmental performance are influenced by diffuse support for government

Explanations of Citizens Perceptions of Governmental Performance (cont'd)

Country-level:

- **Economic conditions**
 - Stronger economic conditions lead to higher levels of perceived performance
- **Quality of government**
 - Higher levels of procedural fairness, professionalism, and integrity lead to higher levels of perceived performance
- **Inequality**
 - Higher levels of economic inequality lead to lower levels of perceived performance

Data and Methods

- International Social Survey Program (ISSP) 2006: “Role of Government IV”
 - Samples drawn from 21 North American and European nations
- Model citizen perceptions of government performance using multi-level (or hierarchical linear) regression
- Dependent variable
 - Index of Governmental Policy Success

Dependent Variable

“How successful do you think the government in [Country] is nowadays in each of the following areas: 1) Provide health care for the sick? 2) Provide living standard for old? 3) Dealing with threats to security? 4) Controlling crime? 5) Fighting unemployment? and 6) Protecting the environment?”

- 1) Very unsuccessful
- 2) Quite unsuccessful
- 3) Neither successful nor unsuccessful
- 4) Quite successful
- 5) Very successful

Individual-level Correlates

- Socio-cultural
 - Age
 - Male
 - Education high
 - Education low
 - Government employee
 - Left political party
 - Right political party
 - In-party affiliation

Individual-level Correlates (cont'd)

- Socio-psychological
 - Interpersonal trust
 - Internal political efficacy
 - External political efficacy
- Attitude towards government
 - Low corruption among politicians

Country-level Correlates

- Economic indicators
 - GDP per capita (World Bank)
 - Unemployment (World Bank)
 - Inflation (World Bank)
- Quality of government
 - Government effectiveness (World Bank)
 - Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International)
- Inequality
 - GINI index (Solt 2009)

Findings. Figure 1. Mean of the Governmental Policy Success Index by Country

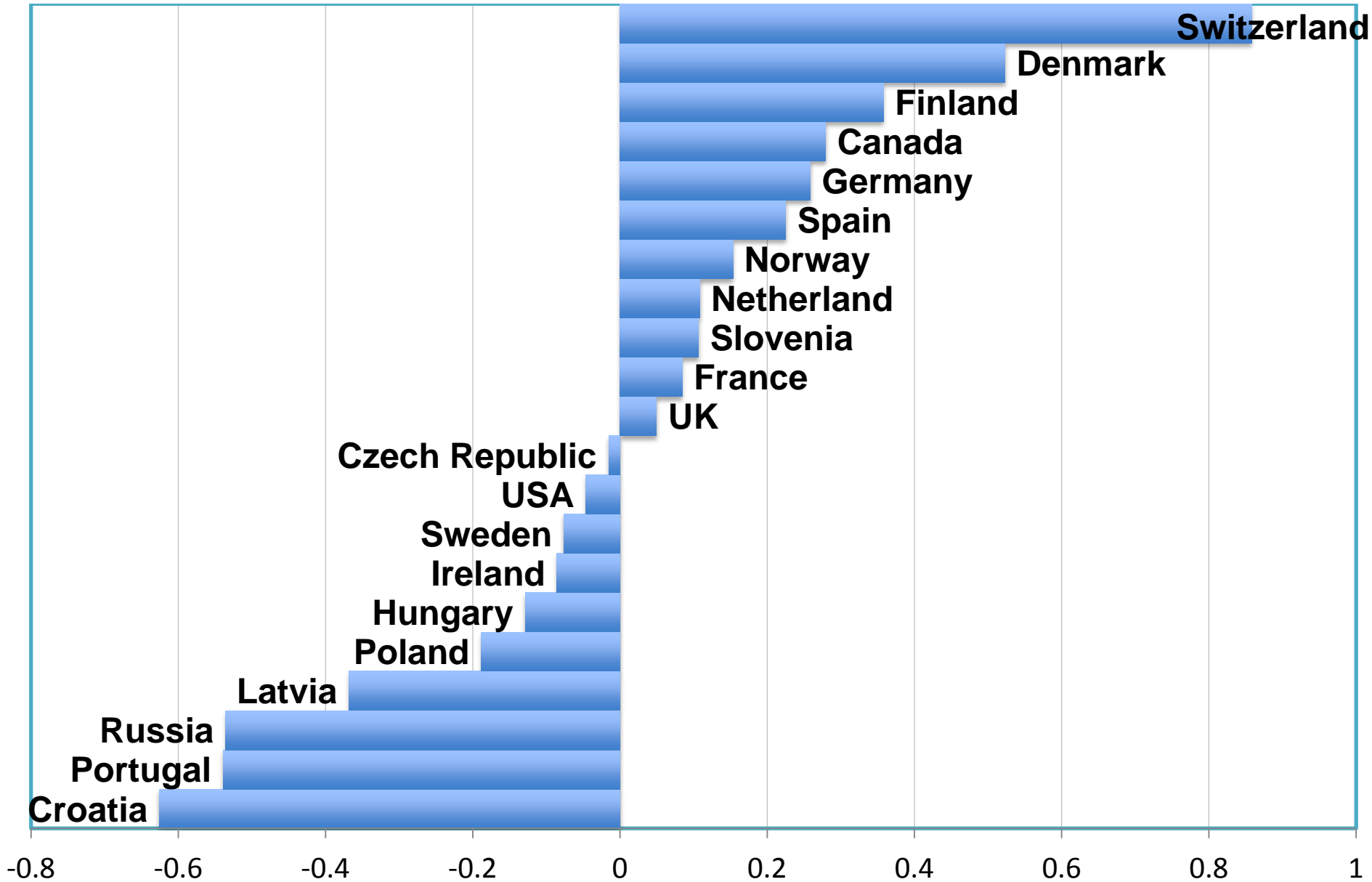


Table 1. Multilevel Regression Model: Governmental Policy Success Index

Individual-level correlates	Coefficient	Standard errors
Socio-cultural		
Age	-0.0014*	0.0008
Male	0.0707***	0.0128
Education low	0.0102	0.0158
Education high	0.0471***	0.0178
Government employee	0.0050	0.0158
Left political party affiliation	-0.0771**	0.0281
Right political party affiliation	-0.0308	0.0361
In-party affiliation	0.2318***	0.0303
Socio-psychological		
Interpersonal trust	0.0340**	0.0035
Internal political efficacy	-0.0041	0.0061
External political efficacy	0.0745***	0.0072
Attitude towards government		
Low corruption among politicians	0.2860***	0.0255
* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$		

Table 2. Multilevel Regression Model: Governmental Policy Success Index

Country-level correlates	Coefficient	Standard Errors
Inflation	- 0.0248*	0.0132
Government effectiveness	0.2053***	0.0631
GINI index	- 0.0032	0.0093
Constant	- 0.1435***	0.0544
Likelihood function	- 17,121.65	
Level-1 N	14,968	
Level-2 N	21	

* $p \leq 0.10$; ** $p \leq 0.05$; *** $p \leq 0.01$

Summary

- The findings indicate the utility of cross-national research on this topic
- People's attitudes toward governmental policy success are preconditioned by their background, personality traits, political attitudes, and perception of government as a whole
- Across country variation is largely a function of the quality of public institutions in a country and to a lesser extent prevailing economic conditions

Thank you!

