

The trust divide: How COVID-19 exposes the impact of inequality on citizens confidence in government?

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The generational divide in trust and confidence



—Do big disruptive events bring about generational divide in trust?

- Pretty relevant in this time

—The young formative years – crisis or disaster more likely to affect the younger generation than the older one

- E.g. studies on sensitive age: Lau and Redlawsk (2008); Borghans et al. (2008); Sears and Funk (1999)
- E.g. Generational shocks: Roth and Wohlfart (2018); Alison et al (2018); Giuliano and Spilimbergo (2014); Dinas (2013); Schuman and Corning (2012); Erikson and Stoker (2011); Osborne et al (2011)
- E.g. attitudes and beliefs as a function of age and period-specific shocks: Bartels and Jackman (2013); Lauterbach and De Vries (2020)



Example: Does corruption bring about lower trust among the younger generation?



"We [M5S] are the ones who are saving Italy's democracy right now. [...] When we will enter the parliament, we will bring down the old system. Not because we are enjoying it, but because the system is rotten."



"Hillary Clinton may be the most corrupt person ever to seek the presidency of the United States (...) This is a conspiracy against you, the American people, and we cannot let this happen or continue"



"What is at stake is not democracy, What is at stake is corruption, it is the groups that do not want to leave because they live there, they live sucking on the tits of the state"

- **Let's consider a very real corruption scandal: The “Clean Hands” scandal in Italy**
- **A political earthquake**
- **23% of Italian deputies were charged with corruption. Deputies charged in 19 out of 23 regions. Shifted the political landscape in Italy**
- **Look at the cohort of first-time voters just after the scandal broke: the cohort born in 1975 – 1976**
- **Use data from TrustLab project run by the OECD. Collected nationally representative estimates of trust and political beliefs**
- **Use Italian sample, n = 1458**
- **Analysis is run 25 years after the Clean Hands scandal**



- The main result of this study is that the young cohort of first time voters back in 1992/94, even today exert significantly lower trust

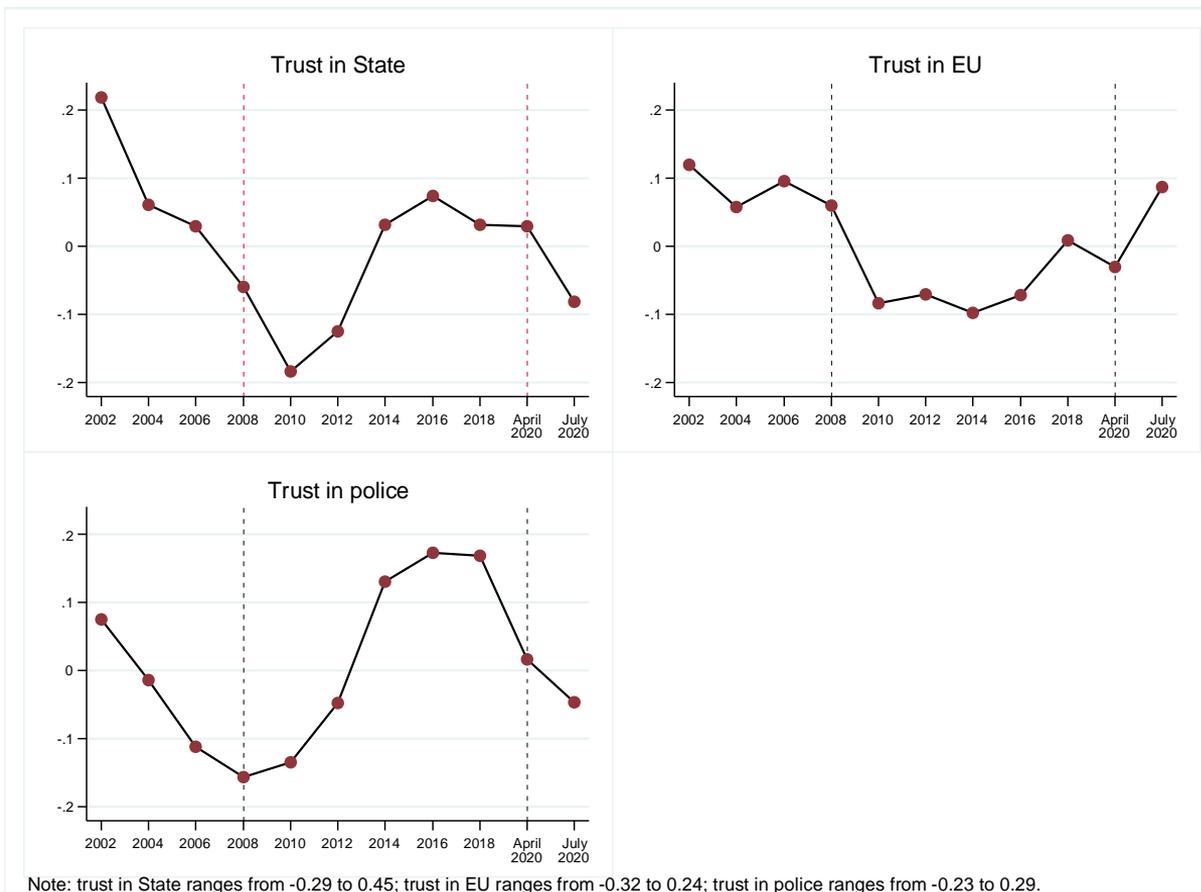
	Parl.	Gov.	Civ. Serv.
1975/76	-0.490*** (0.113)	-0.835*** (0.144)	-0.425*** (0.115)
Contr.	YES	YES	YES
Prov. FE	YES	YES	YES
Obs.	1,438	1,437	1,435
R^2	0.105	0.111	0.154



—Whereas there is evidence that certain disruptive events can bring about change in trust, what about the economic recession of 2008 and the COVID-19?

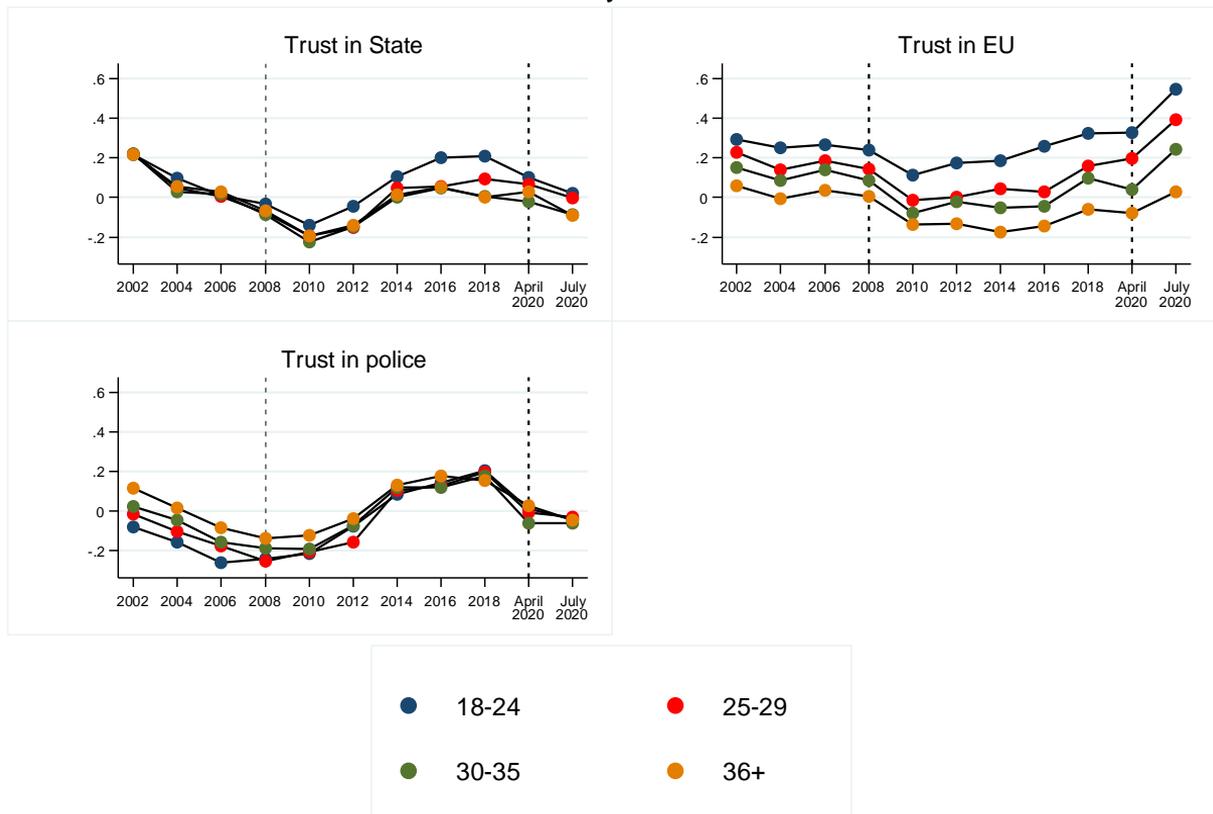


— Raw data from ESS and Eurofound (samples in April and July 2020 – respectively)

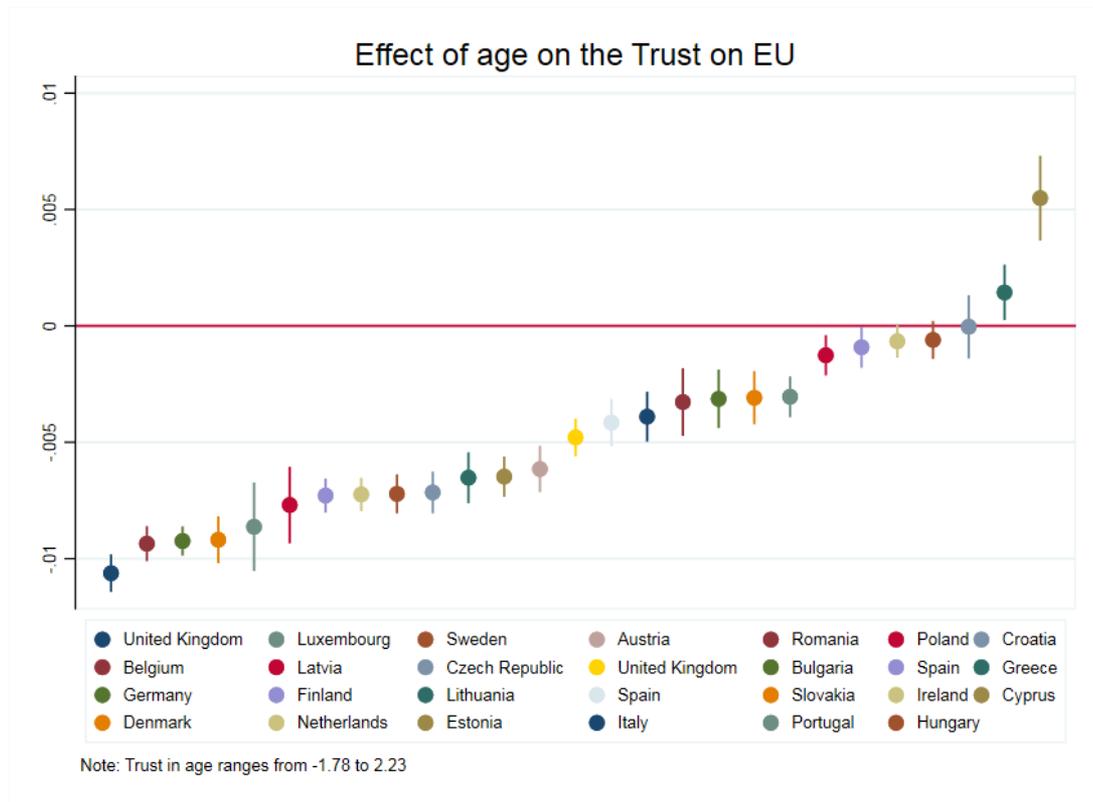


—The fact of the matter is that young people tend to exert higher trust to supra-national institutions, and often, also their national institutions.

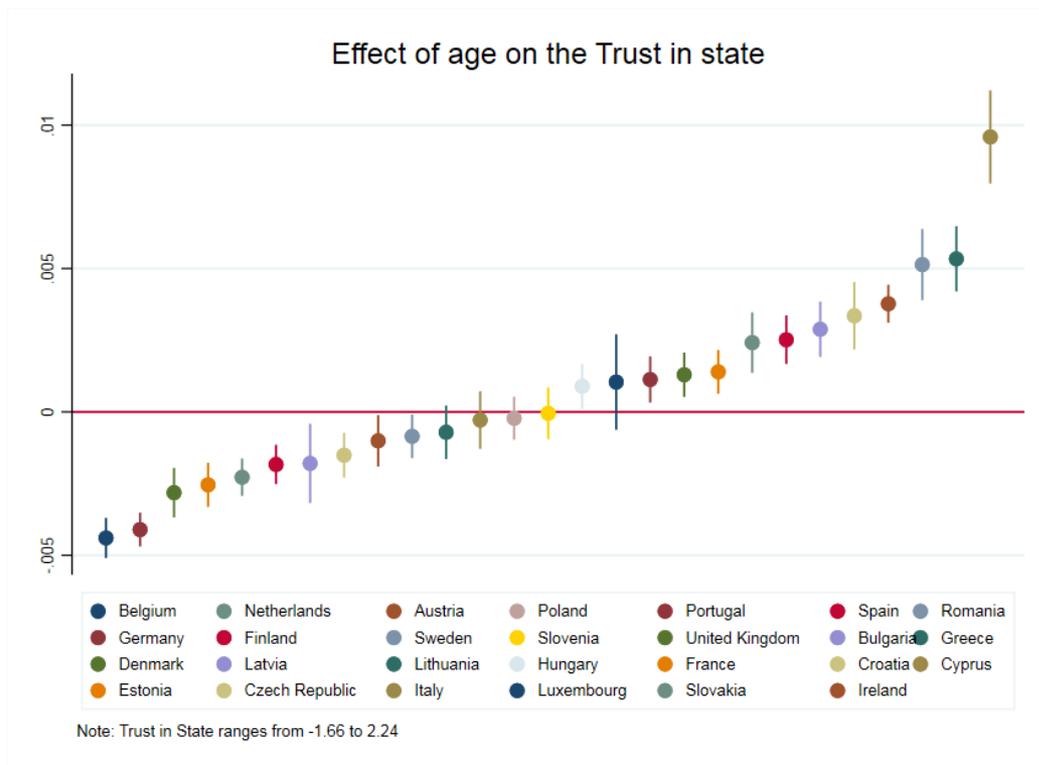
Trust by cohort



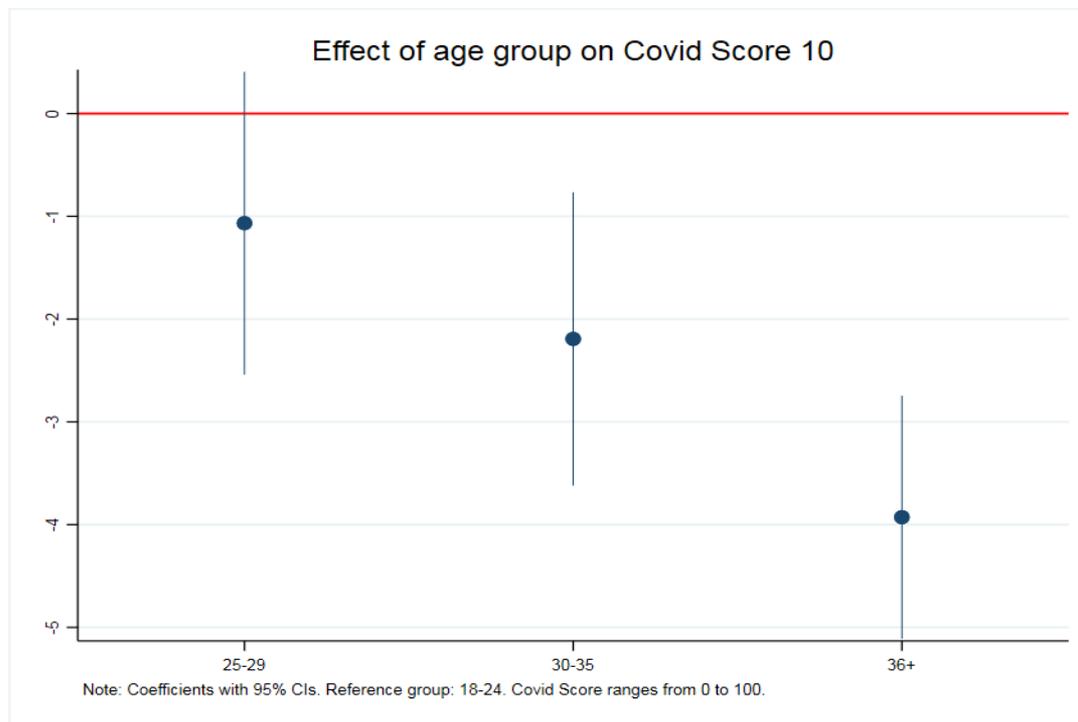
The relationship between age and trust to the EU - by country



The relationship between age and trust towards the state - by country

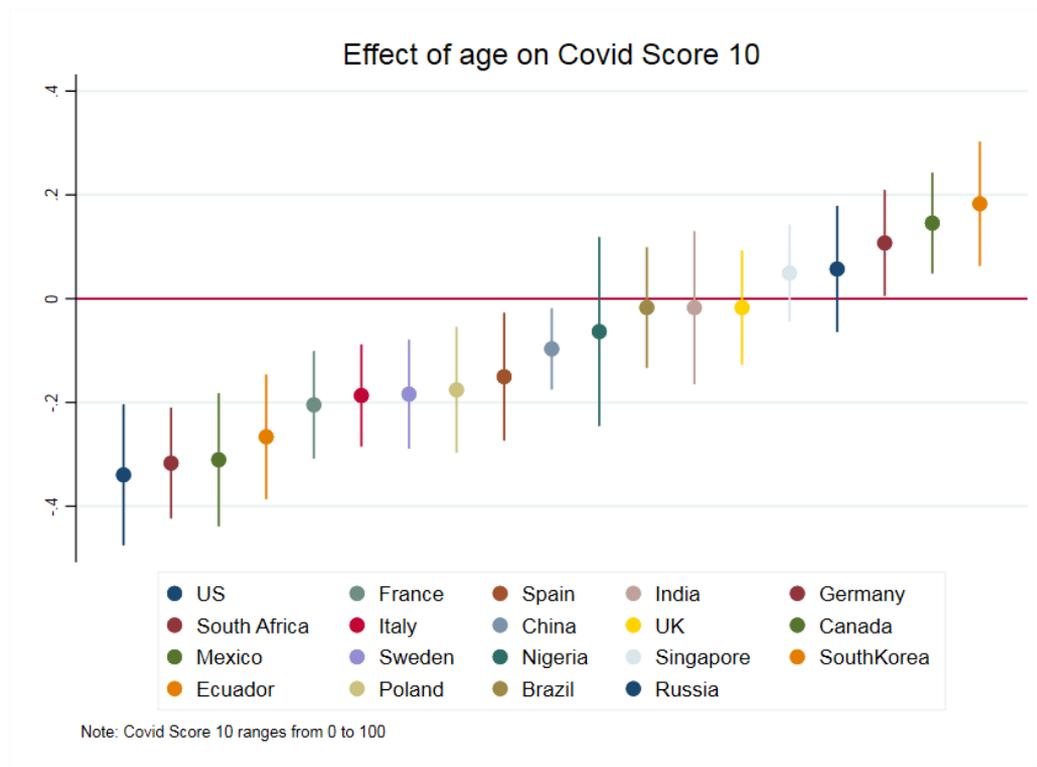


- Findings from the COVID-SCORE-10 data (Data provided by Lazarus et al 2020 Plos One)
- Do young people perceive governments actions differently from other age groups?

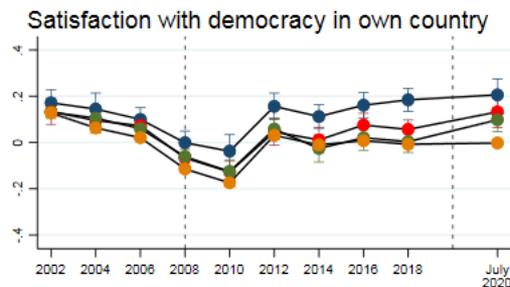
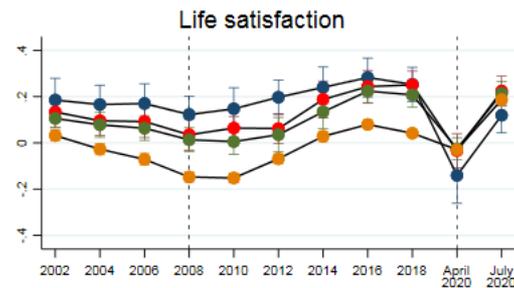
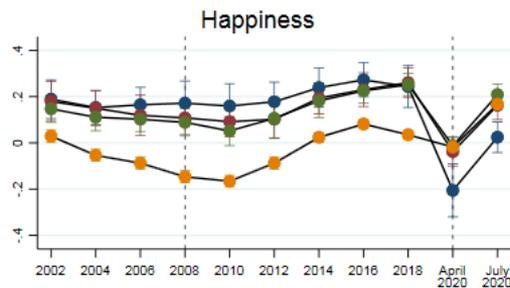


Country differences In perceptions of how governments have dealt with the COVID-19

(Own calculations from COVID-SCORE-10)



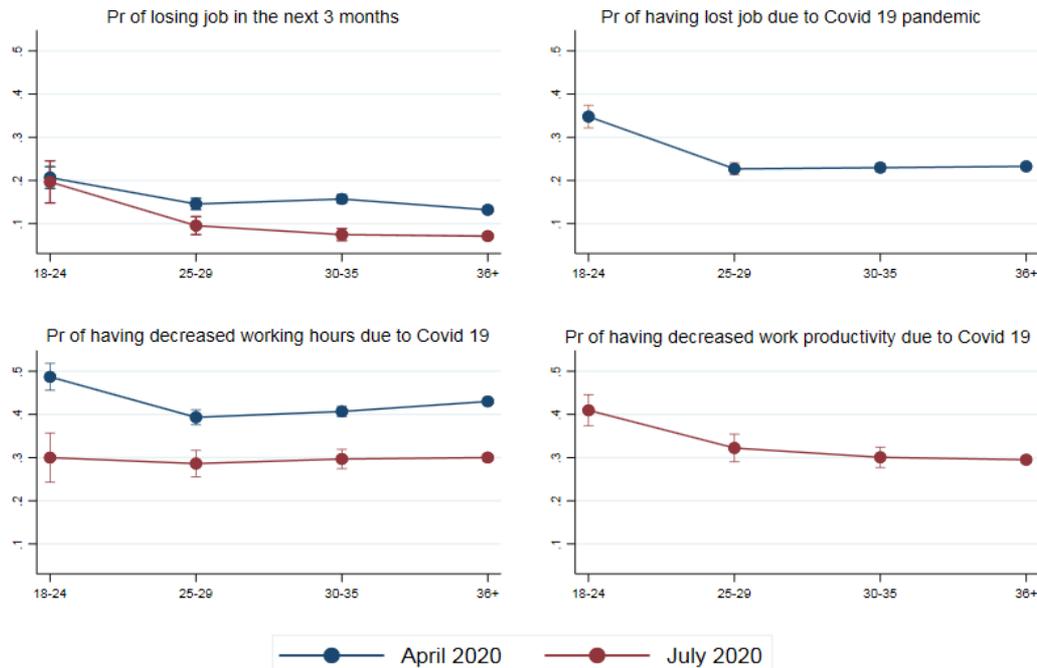
- Bottom line: young people show higher trust to the EU, and often to the nation state too. Question is, are they disadvantaged in any other way? (Coefficients from regressions of merged ESS and Eurofound data)



Predictive margins with 95% CIs

Happiness ranges from -3.56 to 1.62, Life satisfaction ranges from -2.98 to 1.63, Democracy ranges from -2.03 to 1.98

Youth disadvantage from COVID-19 pandemic. Estimates from Eurofound data, rounds undertaken in April and July 2020



Note: Predictive margins with 95% CIs

Indicator variables of: 1- Very likely & Rather likely to lose job; 2 - Lost job temporarily or permanently; 3&4 - Decreased a lot or a little

- In general, young adults exert high trust to supra-national organizations, such as the EU
- In many countries, they also exert high trust to the nations-state – but with more variation
- Young adults perceive the way governments have handled the COVID-19 more favourable than older people – perhaps not surprising as the older population has suffered badly
 - But important differences across countries
- Despite their general high level of trust – they do suffer disproportionately from the COVID pandemic