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Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

# The Breakdown of Trust in Society

**#TCDtrustinsociety**

**Hosted by:**

**The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy**

February 21, 2019



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# Knowledge, Implicit Bias and Bad Motivations

Understanding the Breakdown of Trust in Society

**Dr Lizzy Ventham**

**Department of Philosophy**

**Trinity College Dublin**

# SCEPTICISM

- For a long time people have got caught up in doubt about what the world is really like.
- We question other people, the external world, even our own bodies.

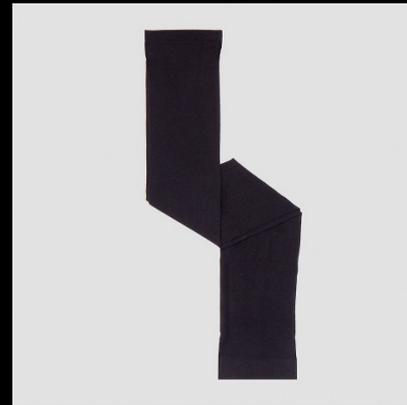
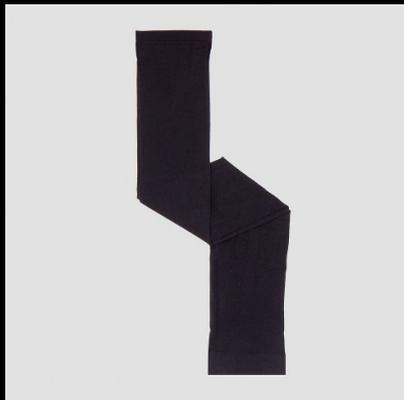


# SCEPTICISM

- But one of the things we've tended to be the most certain about is our own minds.
- "I think, therefore I am!" (Descartes)
- Maybe we shouldn't even be certain of that!
- And not just for abstract reasons of scepticism.

# CONFABULATION

- We're really bad at knowing things about ourselves.



(Study by Nisbett and Wilson 1977)

# IMPLICIT BIASES

We also have a lot of implicit biases

“Implicit bias” is a term of art referring to relatively unconscious and relatively automatic features of prejudiced judgment and social behavior.

(Brownstein, Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy entry on ‘Implicit Bias’)

There’s a lot of evidence for implicit bias. One example (of many) is a test called the IAT – Implicit Associations Test

Female  
or  
Family

Male  
or  
Career

Michelle

Male  
or  
Family

Female  
or  
Career

Michelle

Male  
or  
Career

Female  
or  
Family

Business

Male  
or  
Family

Female  
or  
Career

Business

# IMPLICIT BIAS

“The stronger one’s associations of good with white faces and bad with black faces on the black-white IAT, the more likely one is to perpetrate hiring discrimination (Bertrand et al. 2005); to “shoot” unarmed black men in a computer simulation than unarmed white men (Correll et al. 2002; Glaser & Knowles 2008;) and to diagnose white patients described in case vignettes with coronary artery disease and prescribe thrombolysis for them compared to black patients described as having equivalent symptoms and electrocardiogram results (Green et al. 2007).” (Brownstein – SEP)

Implicit biases still affect members of the targeted groups.

# TRUST

- What does this have to do with trusting others?
- So far this is a pretty pessimistic talk!



# TRUST

- In short, it seems like understanding our own flaws is going to be an important step in understanding other people.
- And that, itself, seems like an important step towards re-establishing trust.

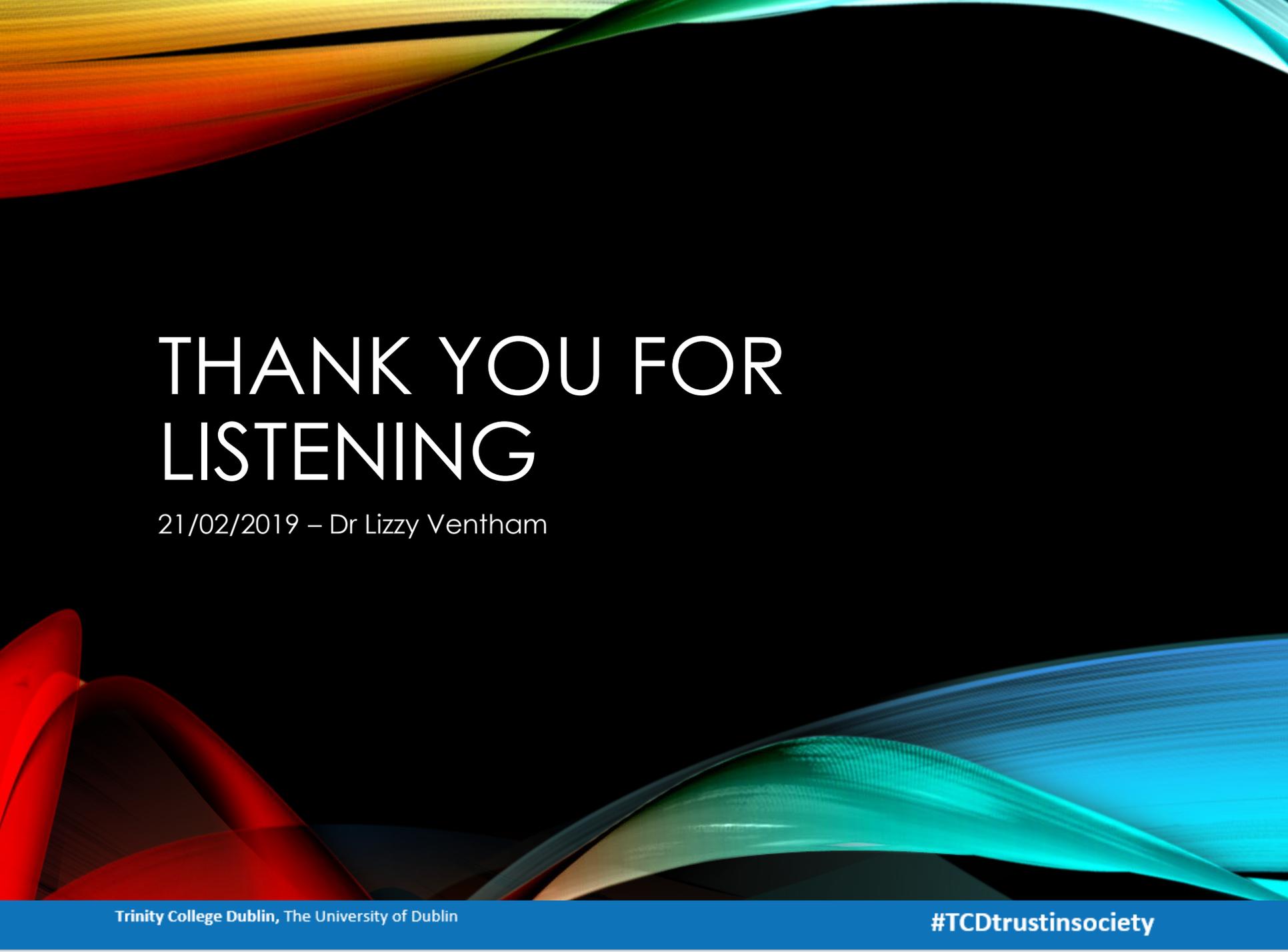
# TRUST

- More specifically, it seems like it can help us to understand why, in other people, there can seem to be a conflict between their intentions and their actions.
- This is something we're all vulnerable to – having good intentions, but acting in bad ways, and for the wrong reasons.
- Hopefully, understanding phenomena like confabulation and implicit bias can help us to see that, on many occasions, people who do what we think of as wrong can still have genuinely good intentions. Our opponents can be well-meaning.

# TRUST

- But is this still a bit bleak? Is there anything we can actually do about these problems?
- Well, yes. At least, we can take steps to fix our own biases.
- Knowing about them doesn't make them go away, but it does help.
- We can't change other people, but we can do our best for ourselves.





# THANK YOU FOR LISTENING

21/02/2019 – Dr Lizzy Ventham



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# Trust, Institutions & Health

**Richard Layte**

**Department of Sociology**

**Trinity College Dublin**



# People can do amazing things When they Cooperate....



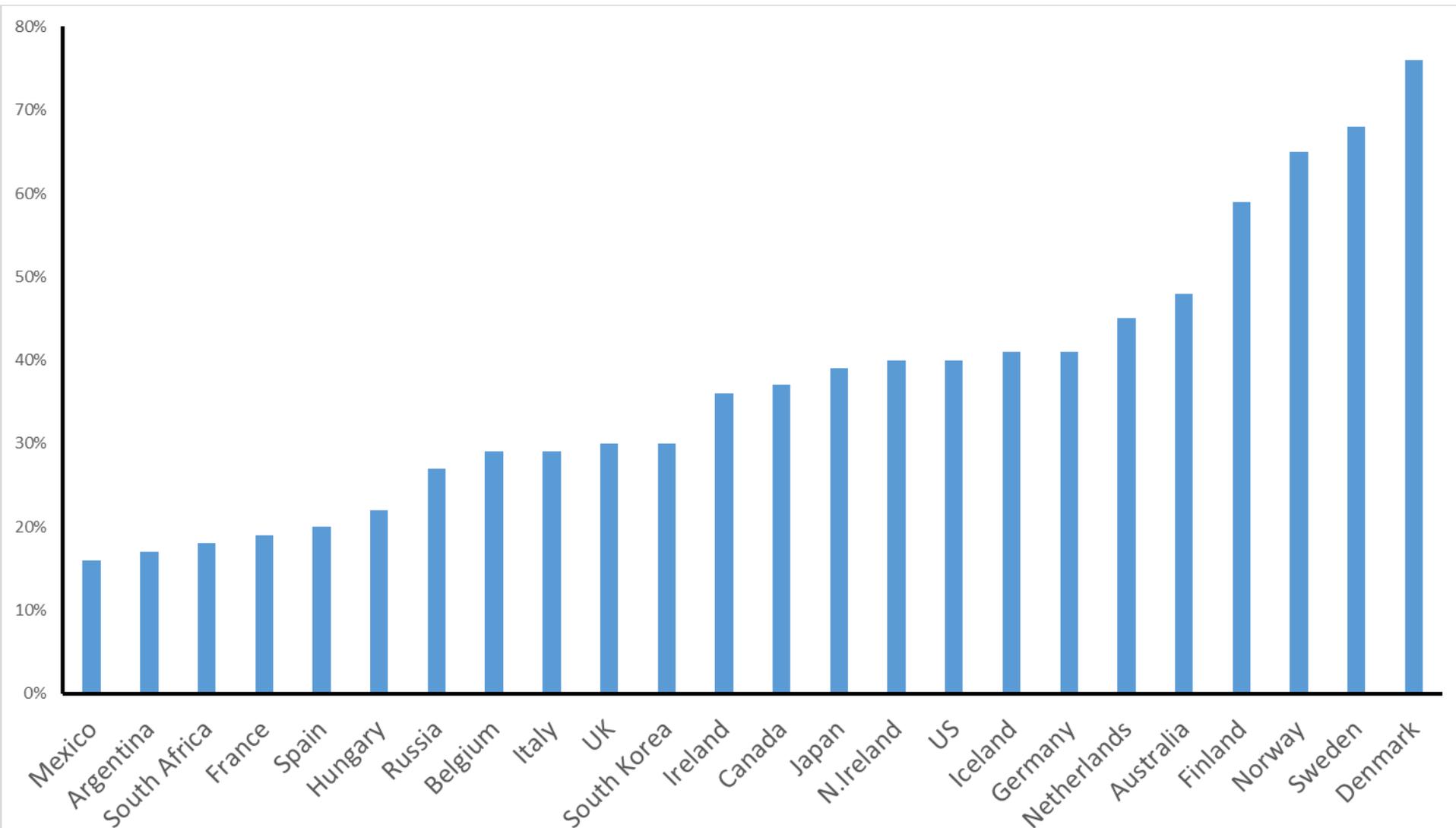
# Generalised Trust

The sense that others in your society have a stake in society and will not seek to exploit you

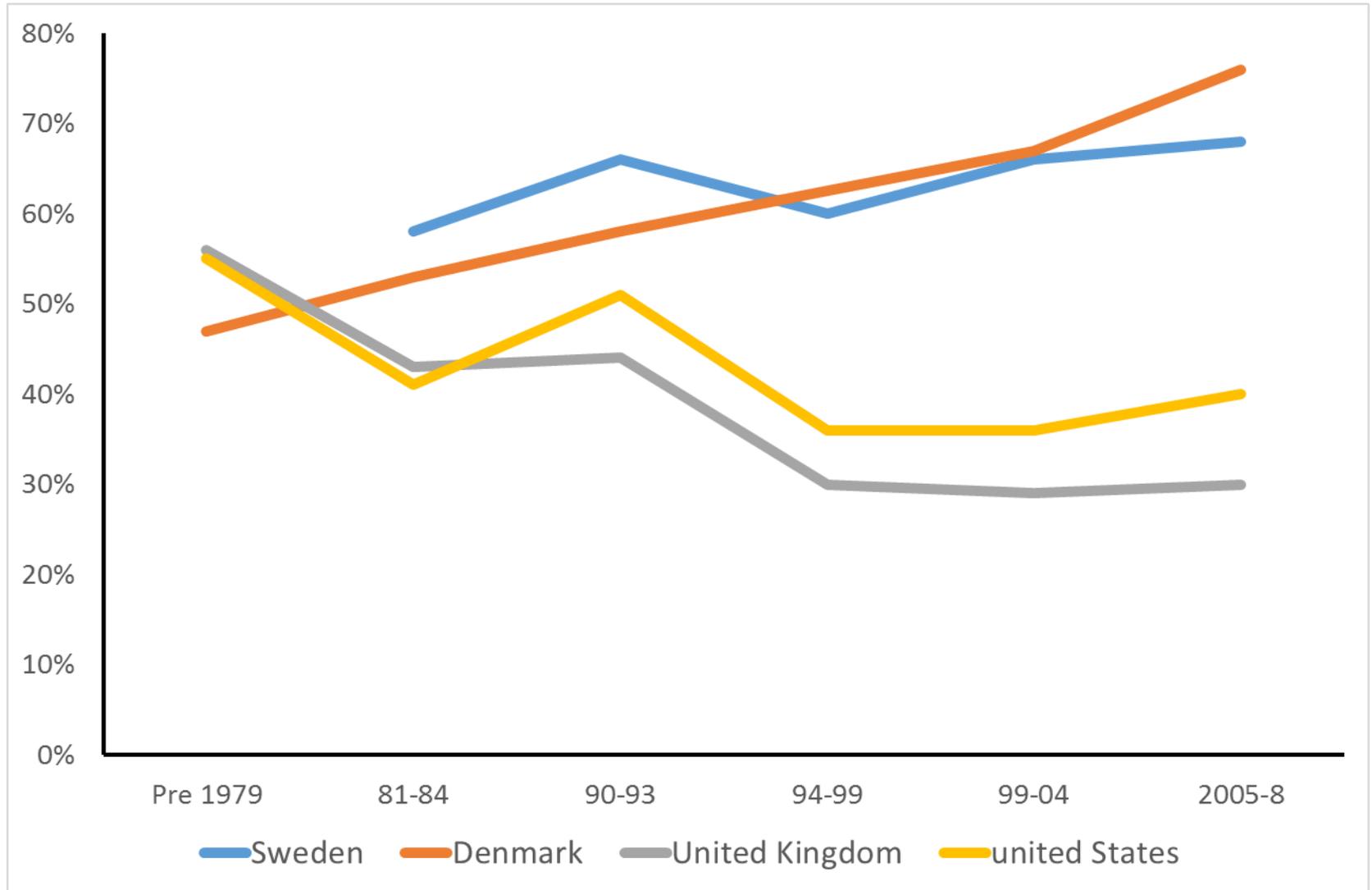
“Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?”

World Values Survey Trust Question

# % Population Agreeing that “Most People Can be Trusted” WVS 2009



# Trust Trends in Four Selected Countries



# Income Inequality?



Income inequality creates 'status anxiety' which leads to less trust and worse health and life expectancy

## The Spirit Level



Why Equality  
is Better for Everyone

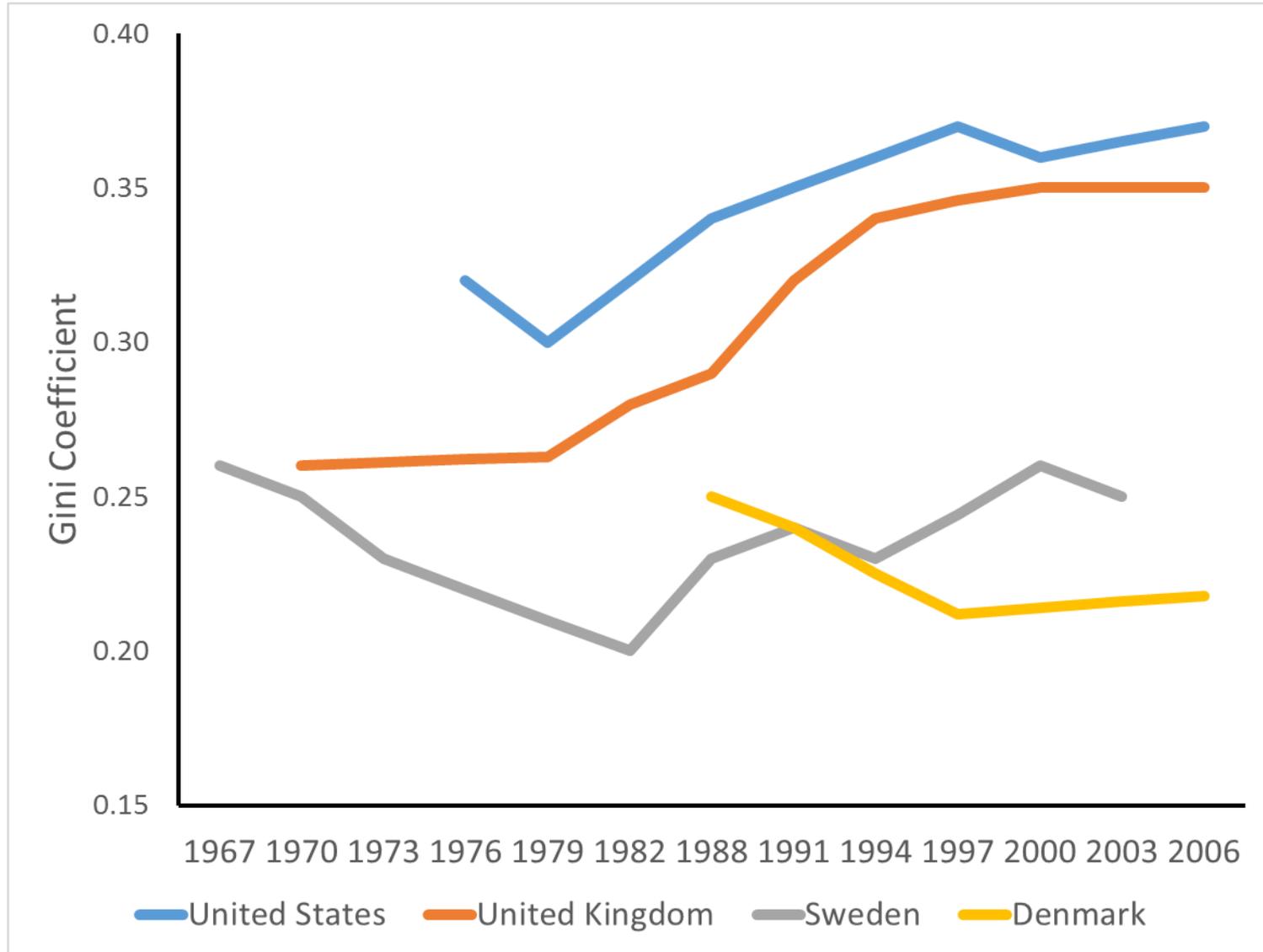
Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

'A big idea, big enough to change political thinking'  
*Sunday Times*

'The evidence is hard to dispute'  
*Economist*



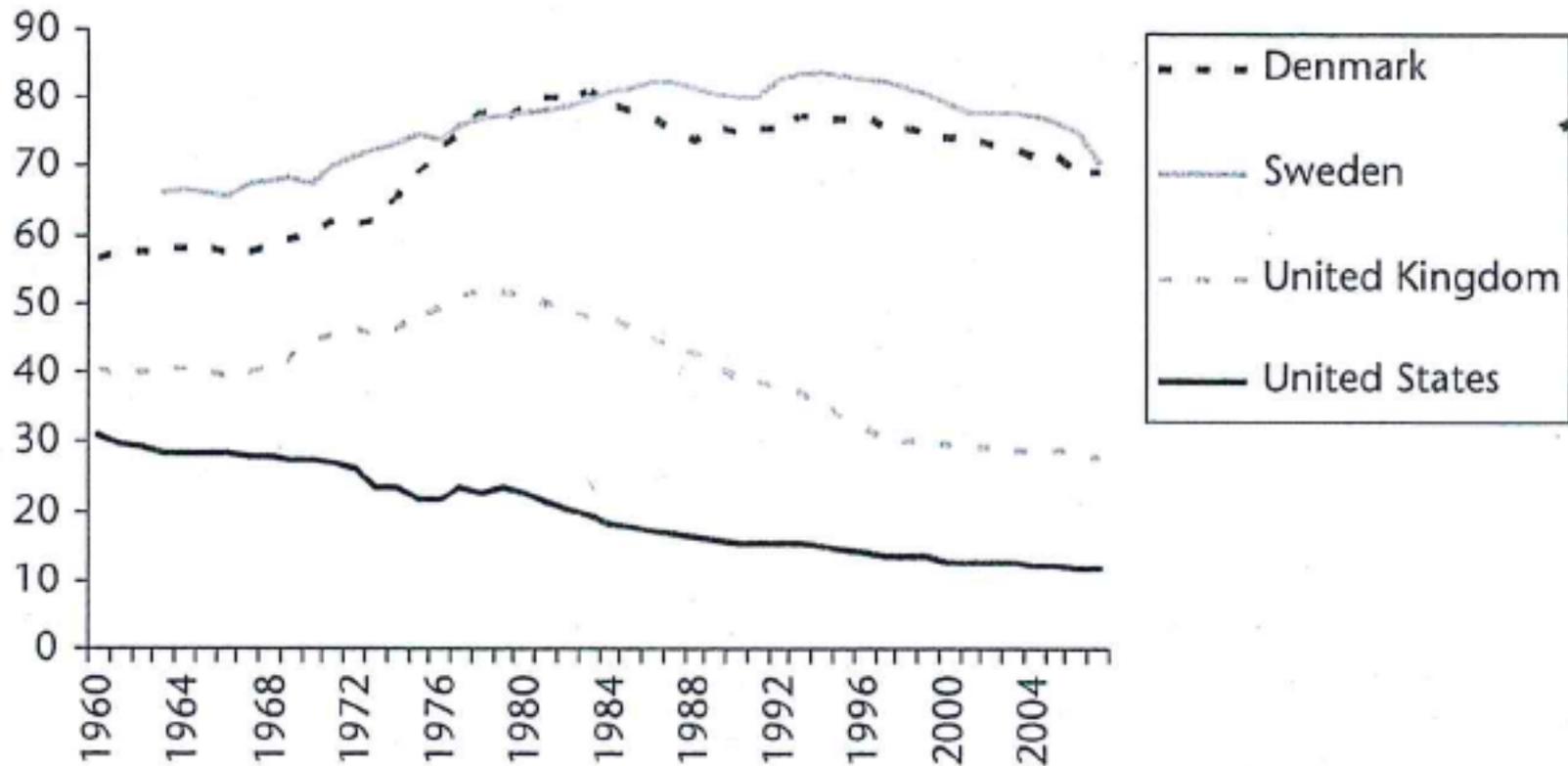
# Income Inequality?



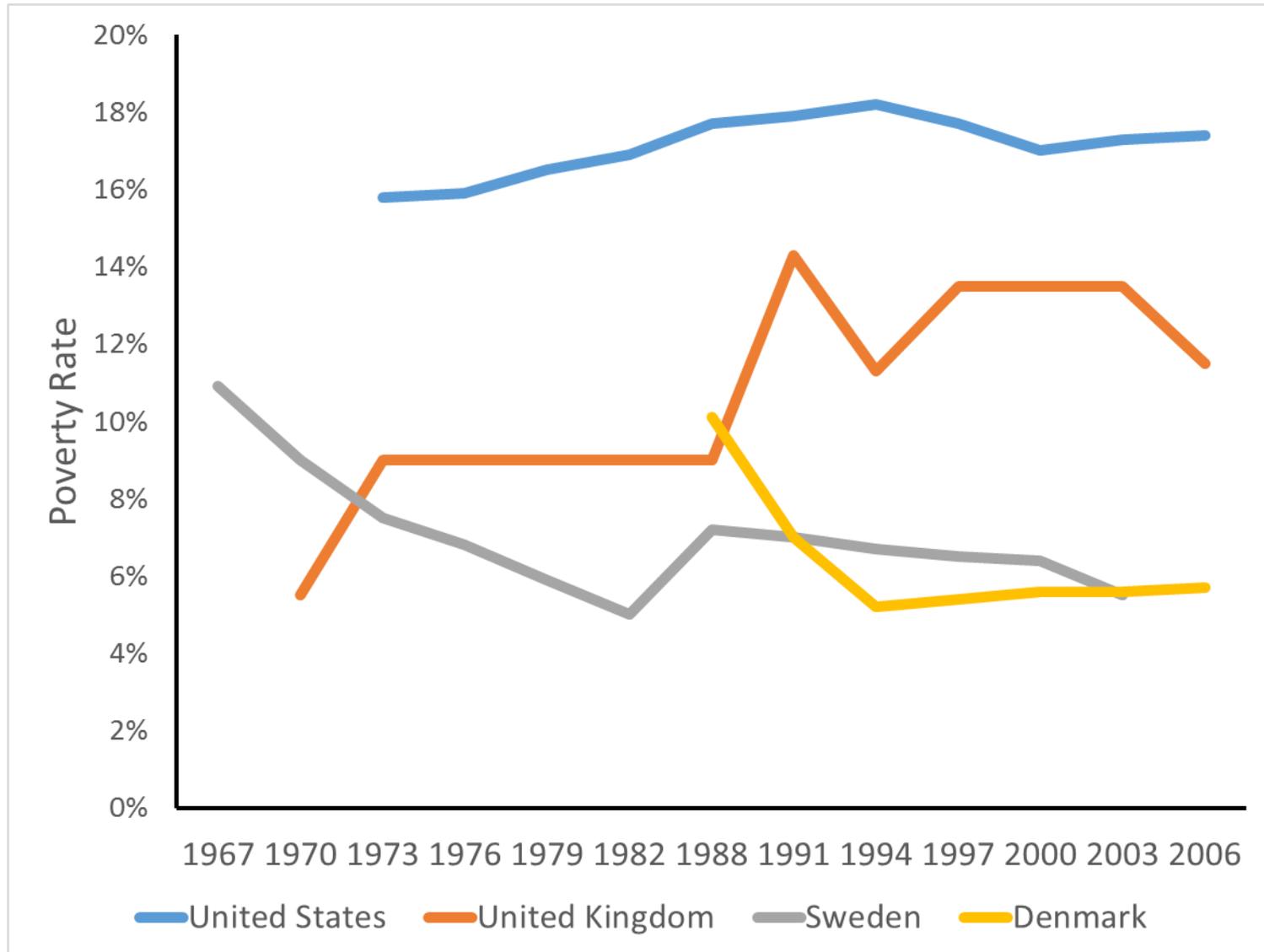
# Five Drivers

- Deindustrialisation
- Unemployment
- Increased migration & heterogeneity
- Increased competition for low skilled jobs
- Increasing divorce and separation
- Deregulation and marketisation

# Policy Choices: Union Density



# Policy Choices: Poverty Rates



**FREE ROSES**  
**SUNDAY EXPRESS**  
**FREE SUMMER BULBS** £20  
**FREE RIBENA**  
**MANSIONS FOR SCROUNGERS**

**TOP DAILY EXPRESS**  
 How dim can you get? Now the EU bans the 60w bulb  
**25% OFF** MASSIVE FLOORING MADNESS  
**4M SCROUNGING FAMILIES IN BRITAIN**

**DAILY EXPRESS**  
**WIN £3,000** IN MARKS & SPENCER VOUCHERS  
 Now the obese face a 'fat tax' if they won't lose weight  
**FURY OVER £28BN BILL FOR WORKSHY**

**Daily Mail**  
 Tough new benefits test weeds out workshy - and could save taxpayer £800m every year!  
**75% OF INCAPACITY CLAIMANTS ARE FIT TO WORK**

**Daily Mail**  
**WILL YOU FIND £50** INSIDE TOMORROW'S DAILY MAIL?  
 WE'RE GIVING AWAY FREE CASH INSIDE THE PAPER!  
**DISABLED BENEFIT? JUST FILL IN A FORM**

**DAILY EXPRESS**  
 Now Colin Firth's King's Speech is up for 12 Oscars  
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GET RACHEL WOOD'S BESTSELLER 'A PLACE OF SECURITY' FOR JUST £1

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Britain at War DVD

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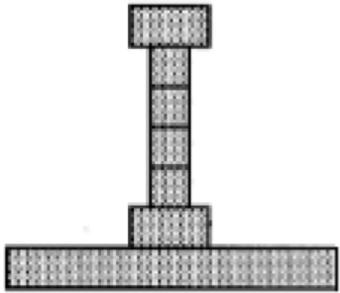
Benefit cheats are taking us to the cleaners



Sky TV's

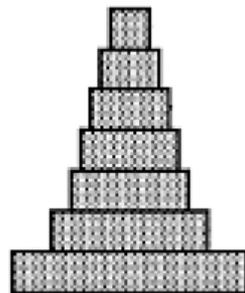
# Images of Society

Q14. These five diagrams show different types of society. Please read the descriptions and look at the diagrams and decide which you think best describes <country> ..



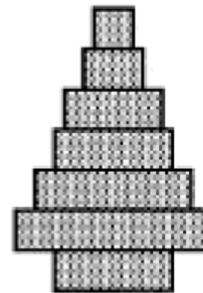
**Type A**

A small elite at the top, very few people in the middle and the great mass of people at the bottom.



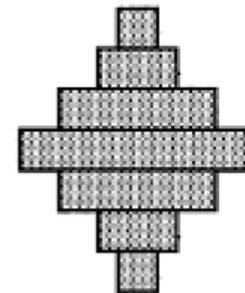
**Type B**

A society like a pyramid with a small elite at the top, more people in the middle, and most at the bottom.



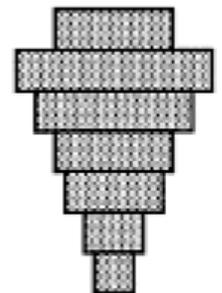
**Type C**

A pyramid except that just a few people are at the bottom.



**Type D**

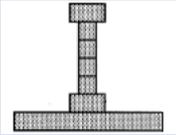
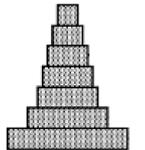
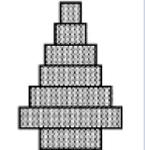
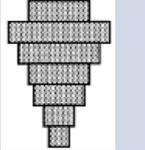
A society with most people in the middle.



**Type E**

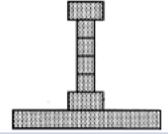
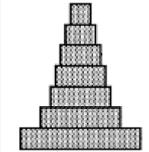
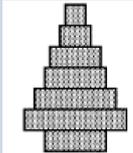
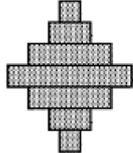
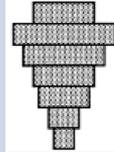
Many people near the top, and only a few near the bottom.

# Perceptions of the Ideal Society

	US	UK	SE	DK
	3%	1%	1%	0%
	9%	7%	3%	2%
	13%	17%	12%	8%
	49%	60%	52%	60%
	26%	15%	32%	30%
	100	100	100	100

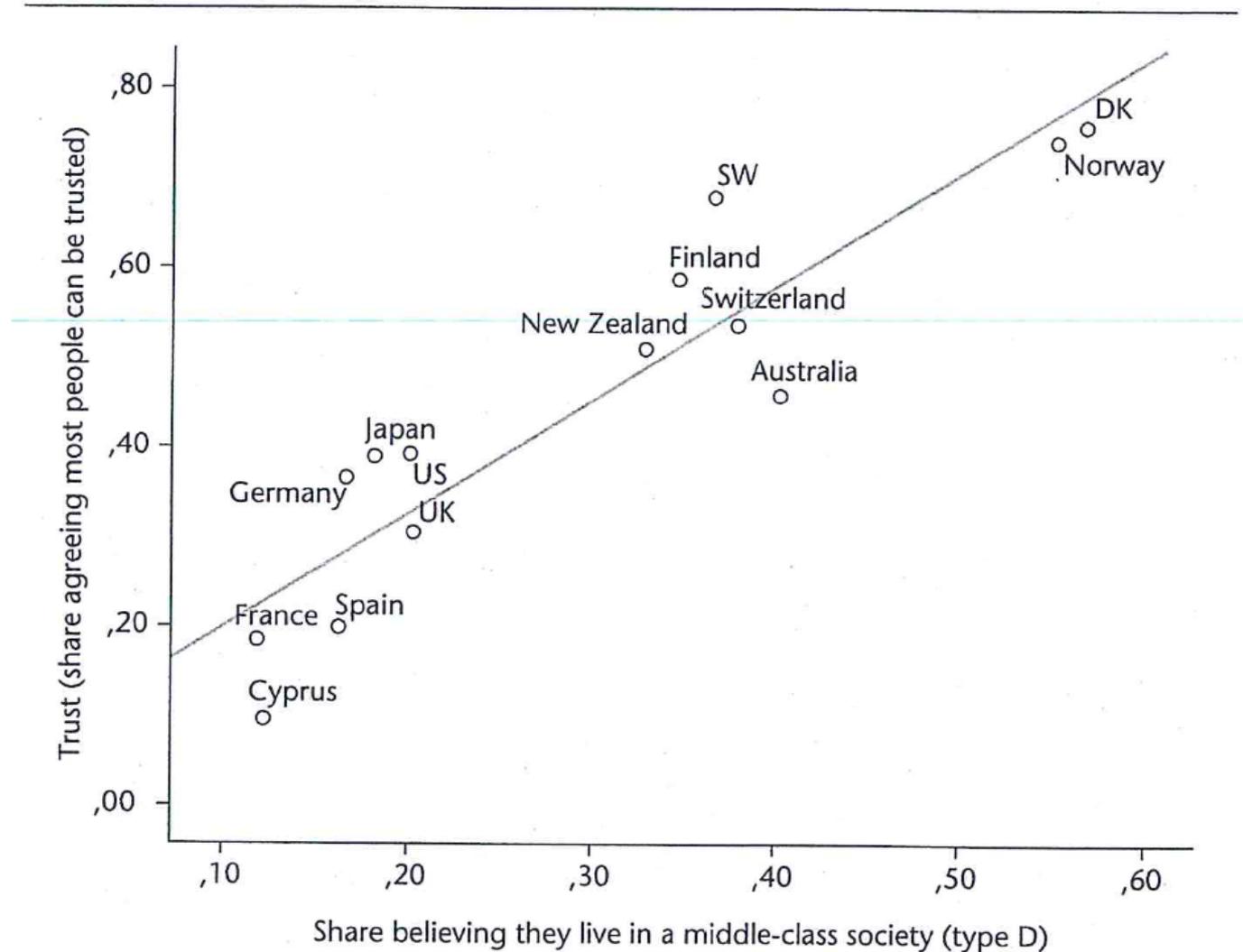
**“Middle Class Society”**

# Perceptions of Current Society

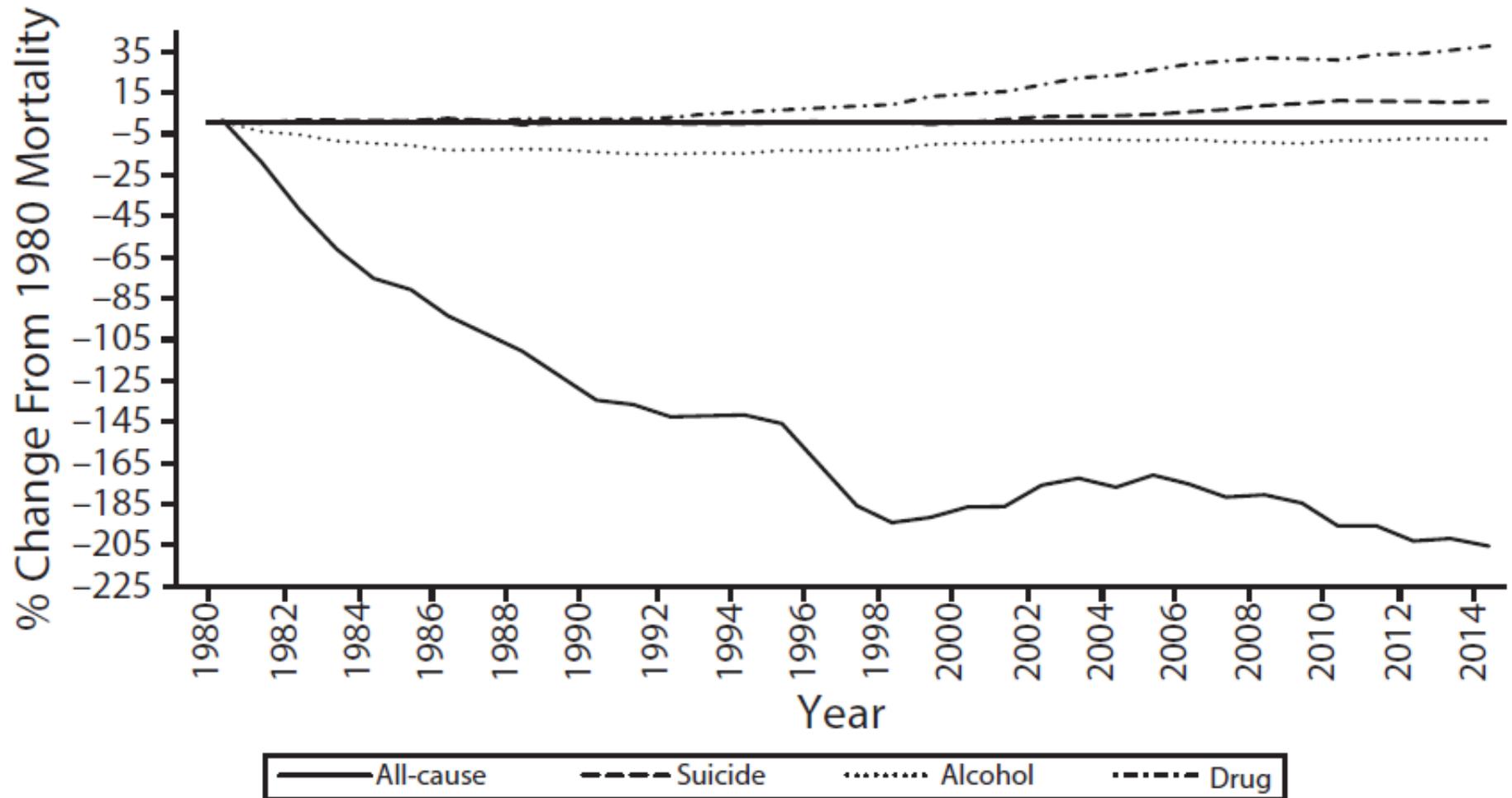
	US	UK	SE	DK
	17%	15%	7%	2%
	40%	40%	23%	10%
	15%	19%	29%	25%
	27%	19%	37%	57%
	3%	3%	2%	3%
	100	100	100	100

**“Middle Class Society”**

# Perception of Living in a Middle Class Society and Trust (2006-2009)



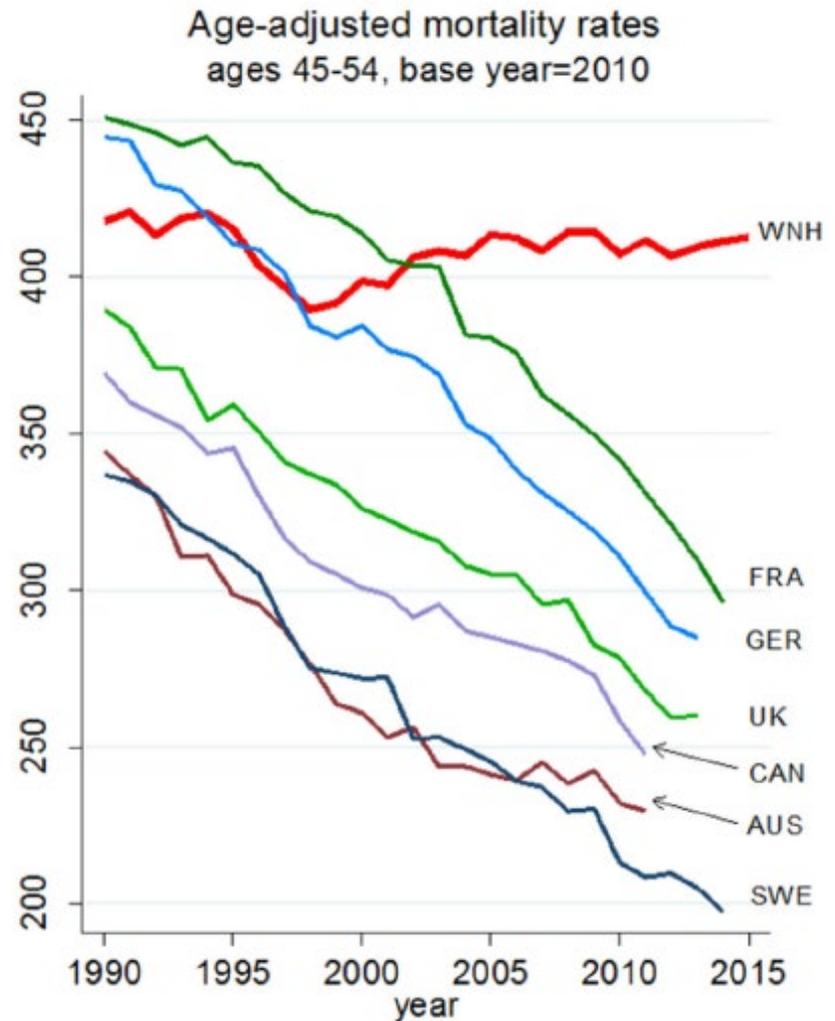
# Deaths of Despair?



Muennig, P. et al (2018) America's Declining Well-Being, Health and Life Expectancy: Not Just a White Problem, American Journal of Public Health, 108(12), pp1626–1631.

# Deaths of Despair?

Anne Case & Angus Deaton (2017)  
Mortality and Morbidity in the 21<sup>st</sup>  
Century, Brookings Papers on  
Economic Activity, pp397–476.





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# Media Bias and Political Consensus

**Gaia Narciso**

**Department of Economics**

**Trinity College Dublin**

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

**Does exposure to slanted information affect voting behaviour?**

- ✓ “Fox News effect” in the US
- ✓ Independent TV channel in Russia

Are slants in information effective in the long run?

Why do individuals not account for systematic slants over time?

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ **Long-lived slant** towards former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi in political information on Italian TV.
- ✓ For ten years within the period 1994 to 2011, **Berlusconi controlled six out of seven national channels**, due to his dual role as a media tycoon and prime minister.
- ✓ Contrary to the US and Russia, **Italian voters knew** that Berlusconi owned the major commercial TV network since the early eighties.

# A natural experiment

- ✓ Switch from analog to digital TV, mandated by the EU, between 2008 and 2012.
- ✓ At the deadlines, old analog signals were switched off and only digital signals kept on airing.

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ Digital TV improved transmission efficiency and increased the number of **free national channels tenfold**.
- ✓ Most digital channels were aired by **new media** companies, which had no ties to Berlusconi.
- ✓ We exploit **variation in viewers' exposure to Berlusconi bias** using deadlines to switch to digital TV from 2008 to 2012.

# Switch to digital TV and viewing habits

- ✓ After switching to digital TV, **many Italian households changed their viewing habits.**
- ✓ From June 2008 to June 2011, the share of viewers of old channels dropped from 86% to 66%.
- ✓ Over the same period, viewers of new channels increased from 3% to 24%.

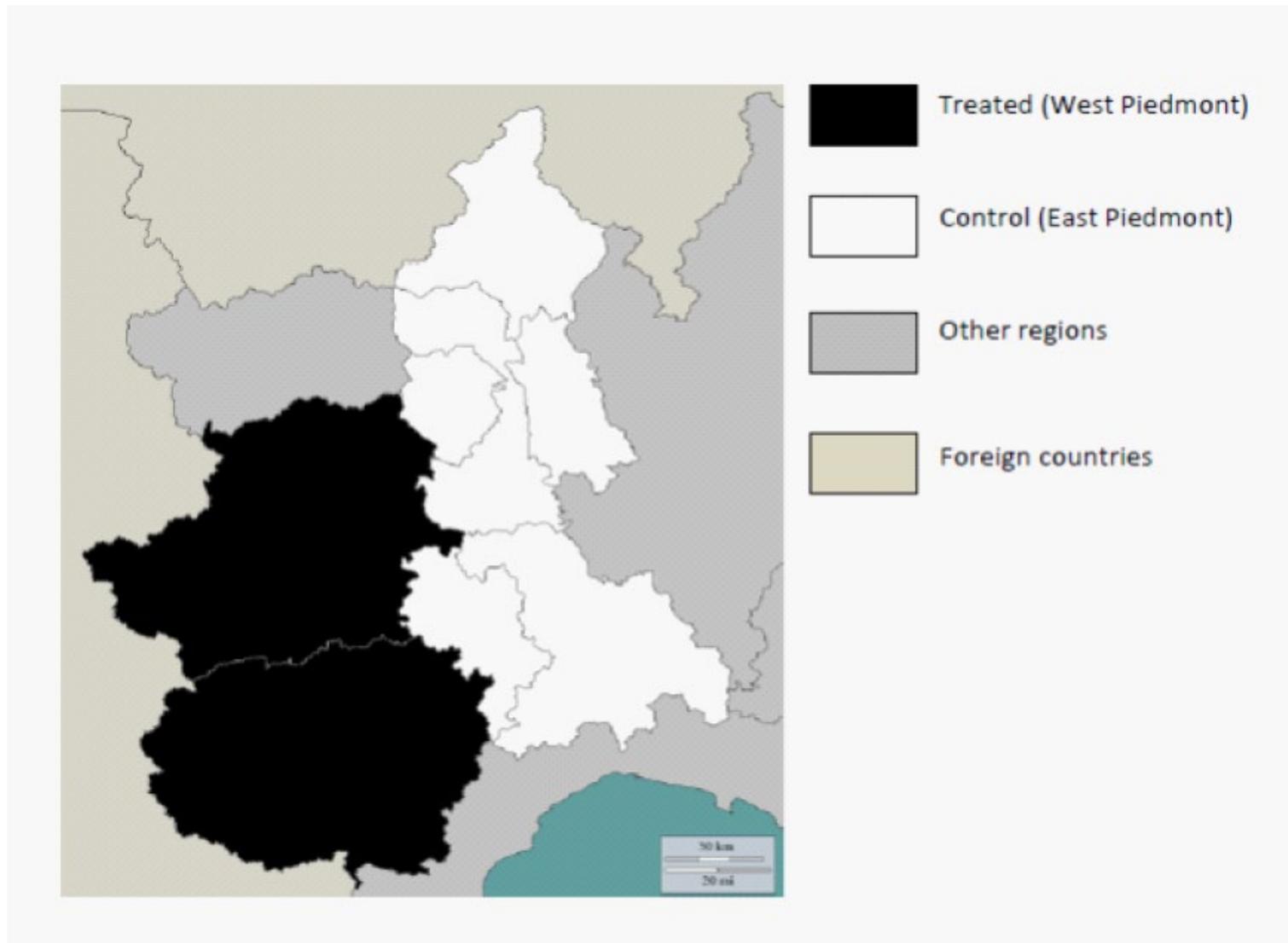
# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ **Did the switch affect voting behavior?**
- ✓ March 2010 regional elections were the first which took place during the switch-off process.
- ✓ We look at Piedmont, a region where western towns switched to digital TV in autumn 2009, while eastern towns switched in autumn 2010.

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ **Compare** the electoral outcome of **Berlusconi's party** between municipalities that were exposed to the new digital channels and those where the digital switch-off had not taken place yet.
- ✓ In order to make the comparison more credible, we compare **municipalities close to the switch-off geographical boundary**.
- ✓ These municipalities are **only a few kilometres apart**, and they differ only in terms of access to the new television technology.

# Natural Experiment



# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ **Did the switch affect voting behavior?**
- ✓ The switch caused a drop in Berlusconi coalition vote share by 5.5 to 7.5 percentage points.
- ✓ We estimate that at least 20% of digital users changed their voting behaviour after the switch-off to digital TV.
- ✓ The effect was **stronger** in towns with **older** and **less educated** voters.
- ✓ Moving to digital TV affected voting via **turnout**.

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ **Were voters more informed?**
- ✓ After the switch, viewers sorted out of news programs on slanted channels and into new, **all-entertainment digital channels.**

# Media Bias and Political Consensus

- ✓ Our results imply that policies should be implemented to help individuals, and the most vulnerable demographics in particular, **filter out biases** in information over time.
- ✓ In our setting, **persuasion survived over time** even if all Italians were aware that Berlusconi controlled most TV channels.
- ✓ Mandating disclosure of conflicts of interest is therefore not a sufficient provision.



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# Trust in Institutions in Eastern Europe

**Emanuel Coman**

**Department of Political Science**

**Trinity College Dublin**

# Why Trust in Institutions?

**Trust in political institutions is important for quality of democracy especially in young democracies**

- Democratic regimes cannot rely on coercion (Bianco 1994)
- Trust allows governments to postpone short-term constituency concerns for national long term interests
- Trust → Quality of democracy → Trust (Gamson 1968)

**Excessive trust can be harmful**

- In new democracies that is usually not the case

# Why Eastern Europe?

Bloomberg

Politics

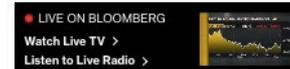
## Hungary Becomes First 'Partly Free' EU Nation in Democracy Gauge

By [Zoltan Simon](#)

February 5, 2019, 2:48 PM GMT



Viktor Orban Photographer: Roni Rekomaa/Bloomberg



# Why Eastern Europe?

**The former communist states started with low levels of institutional trust compared to Western Europe (Mishler&Rose 1997)**

**BUT...**

- Years of democracy should enhance trust
- EU membership should strengthen institutions

**Has the difference in trust between East and West diminished?**

**Over-time changes are difficult to test**

# The Eurobarometer Trend

**Asked since 2004 regular questions about trust in various institutions**

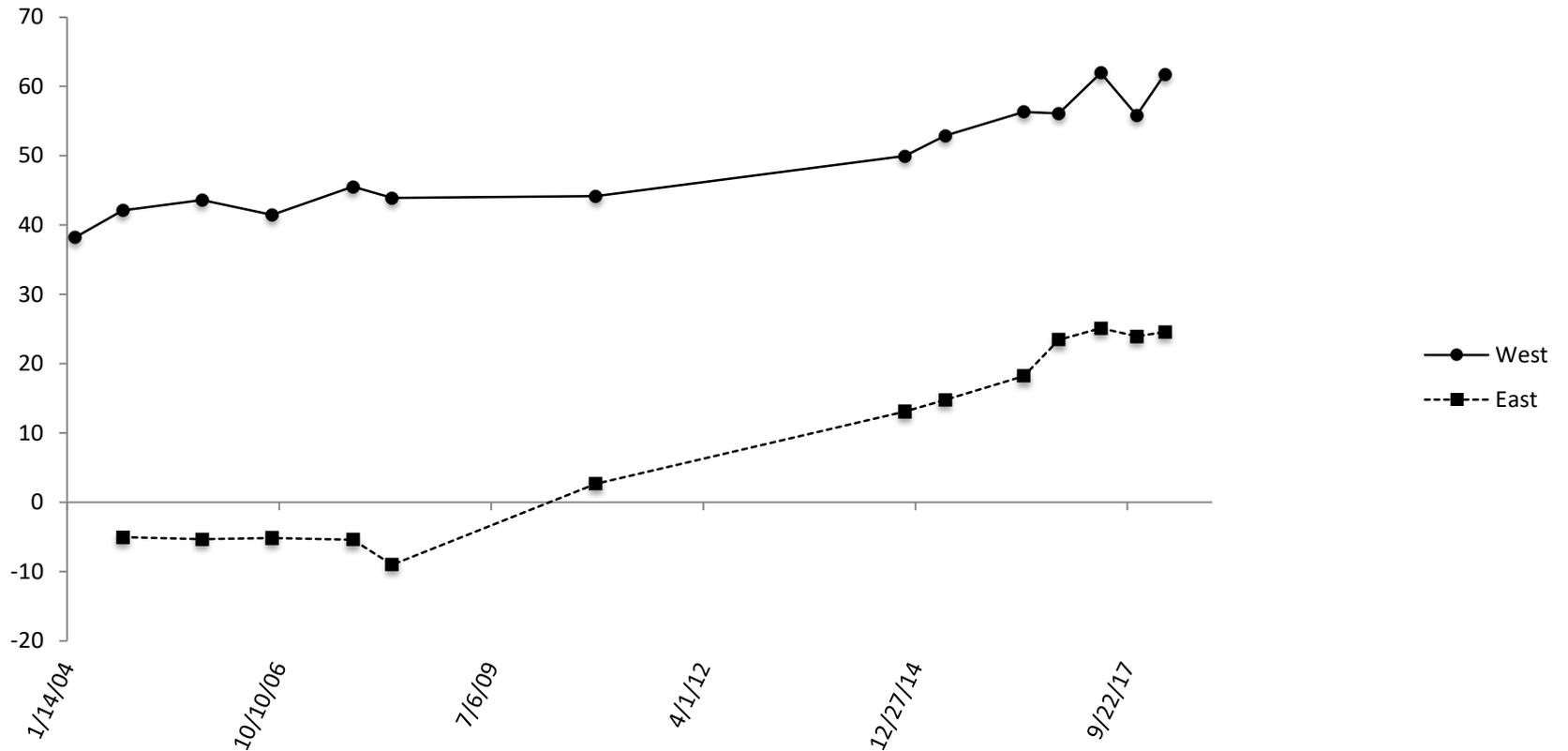
**I averaged the the absolute levels of trust for all Eastern and Western EU members**

— %tend to trust-%tend not to trust

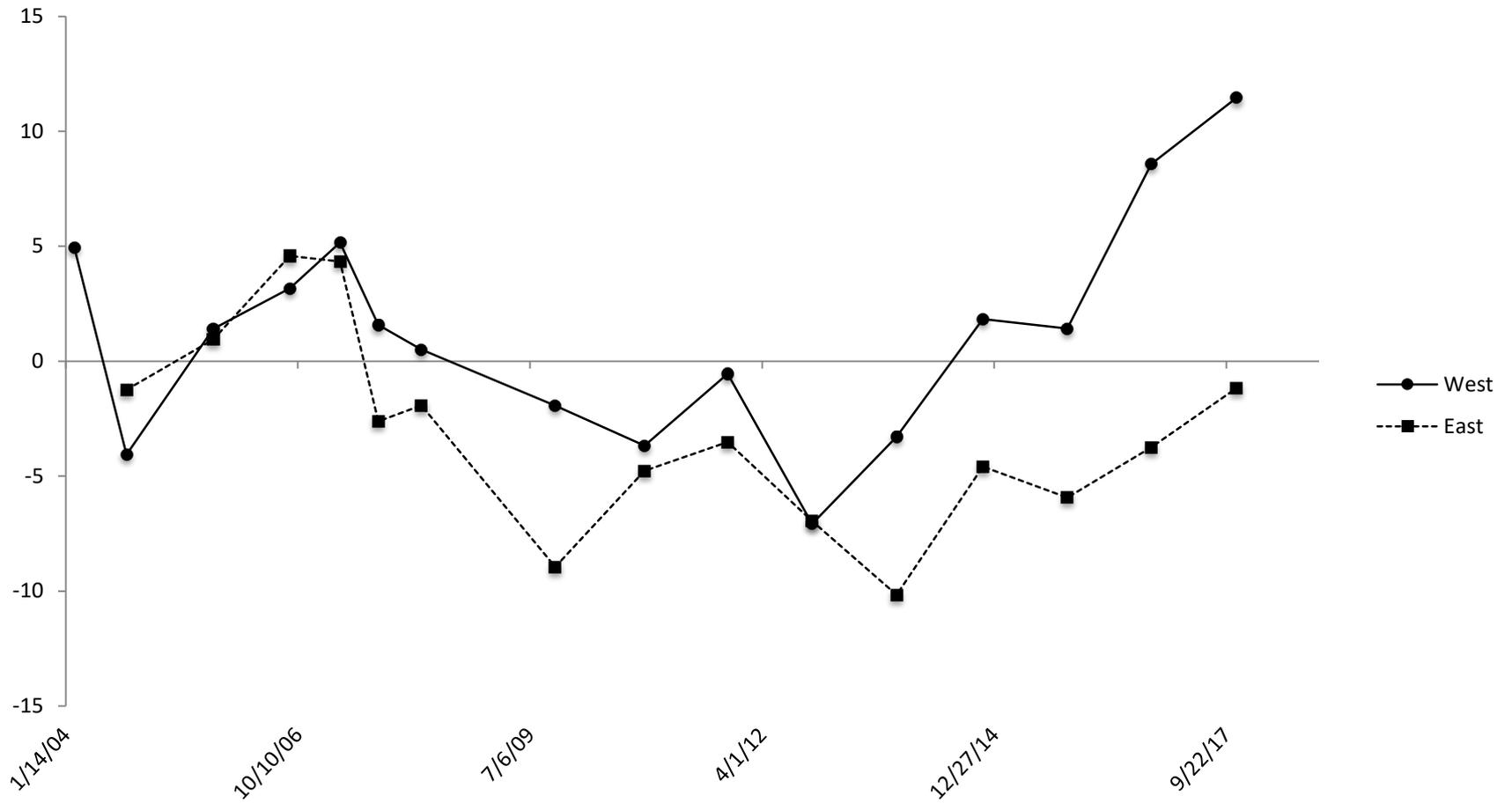
**Has the gap from the 1990s narrowed?**

**Institutions to watch: Police, Press, Parties, Justice System, Army, Parliament, Government, Religious Institutions**

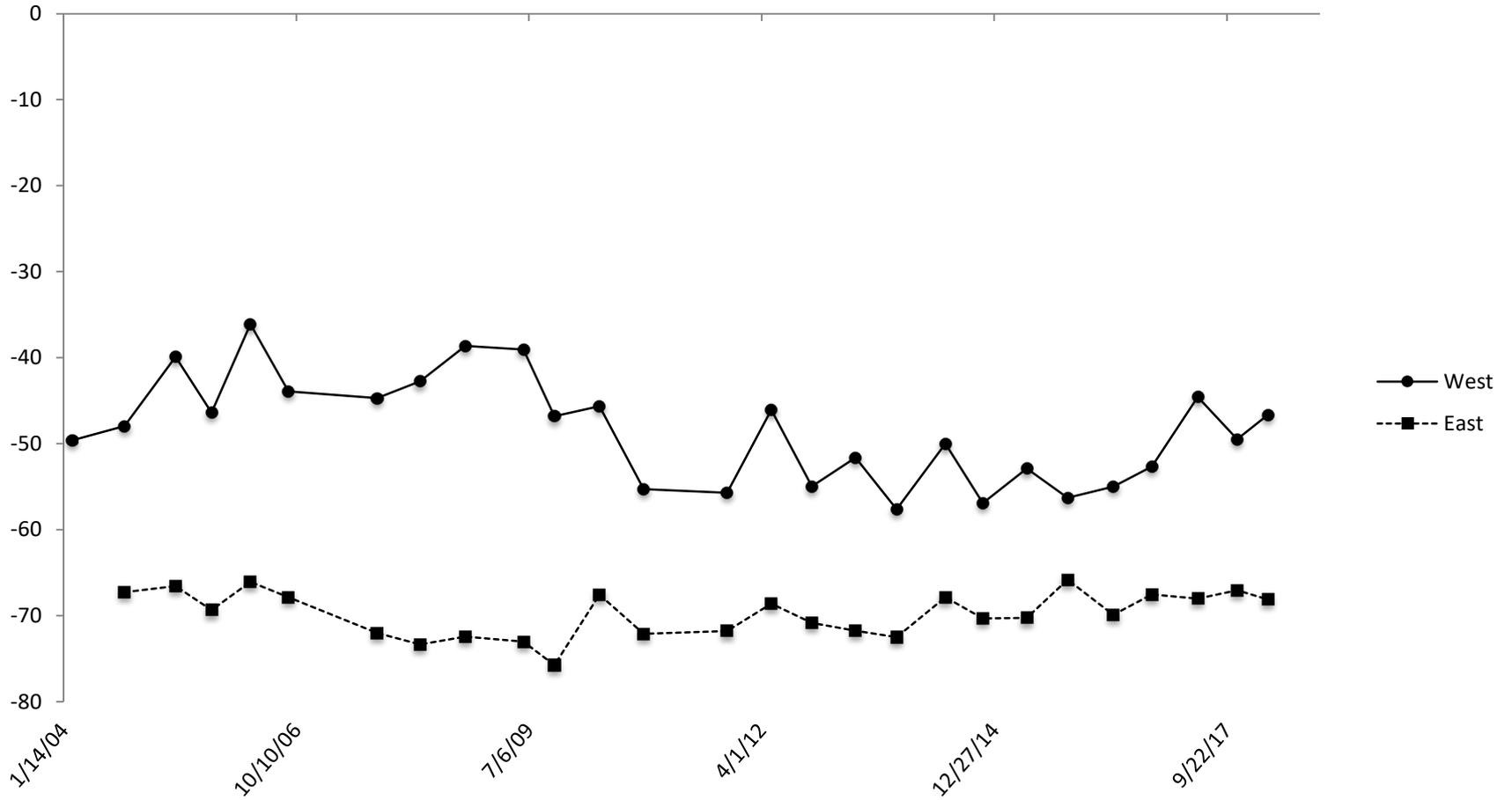
# The Police



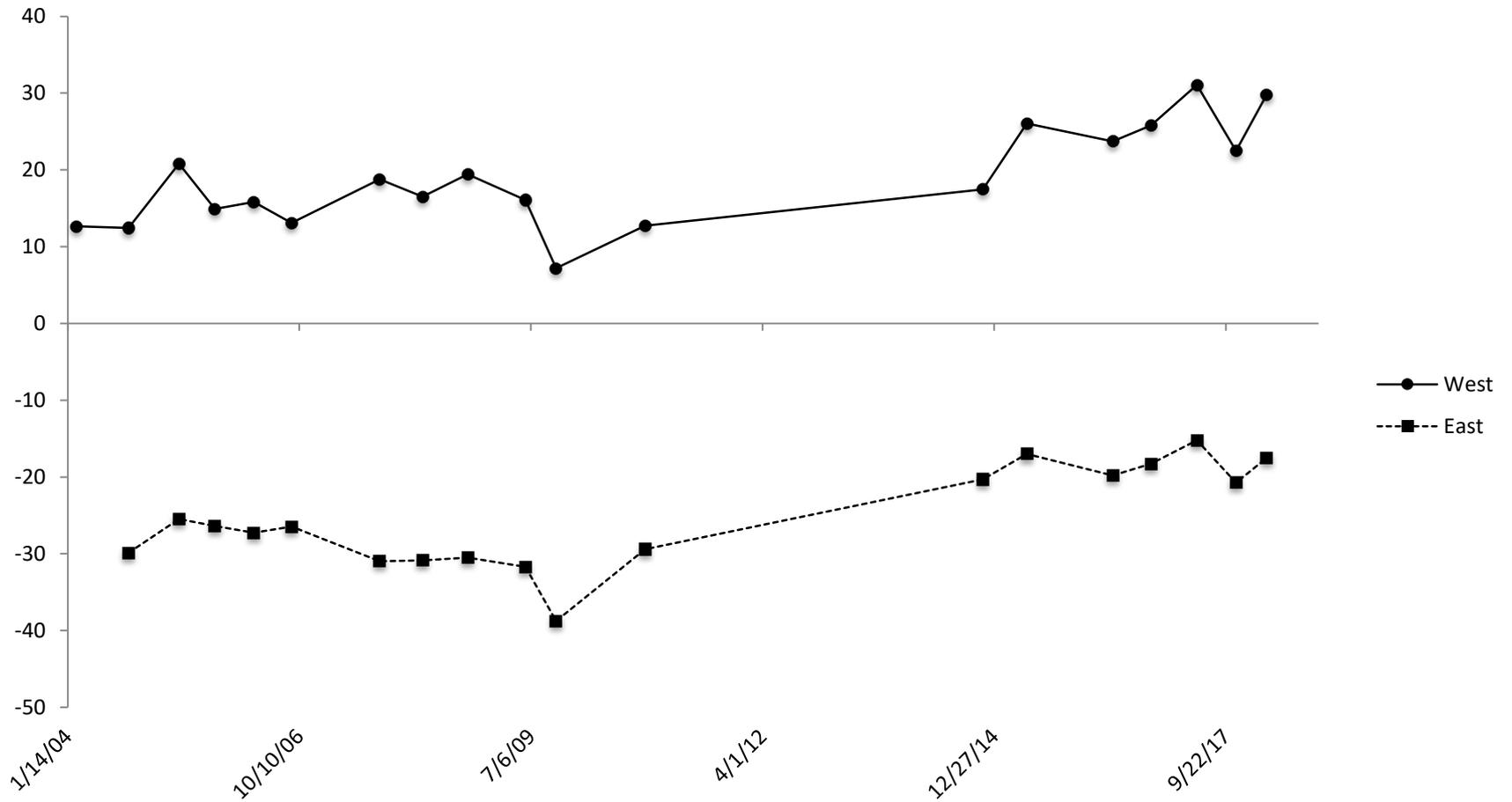
# The Press



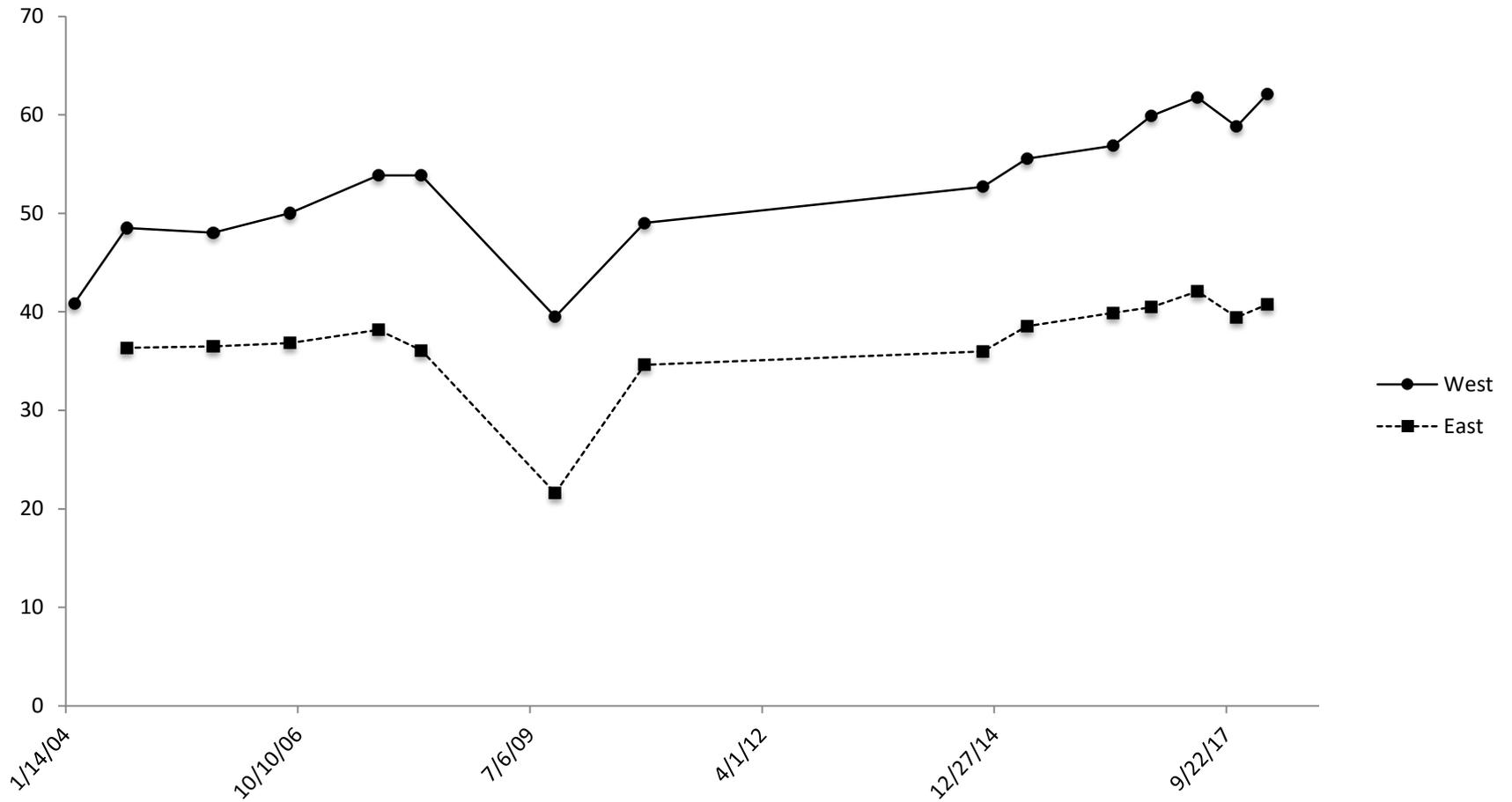
# Political Parties



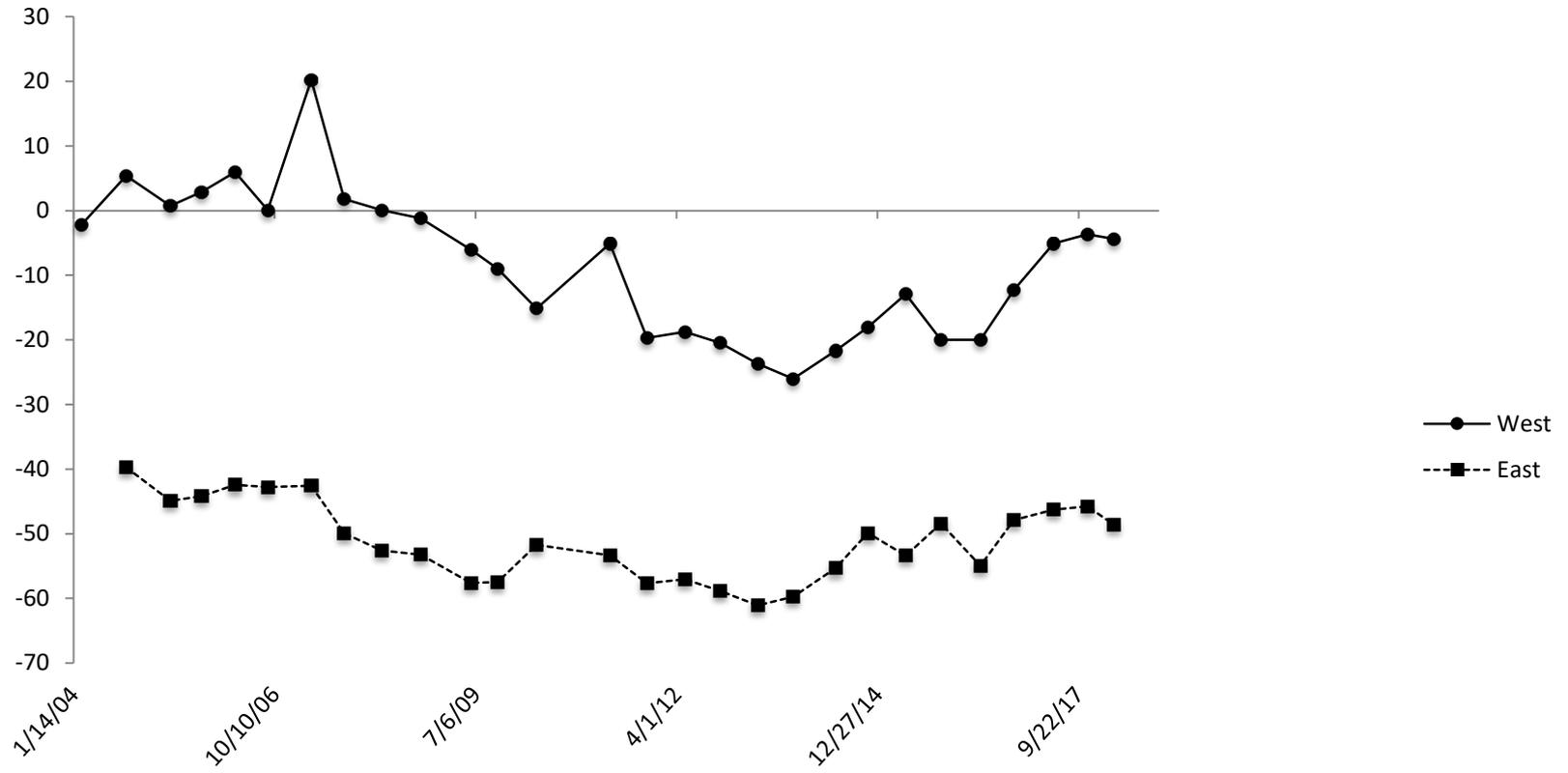
# Justice System



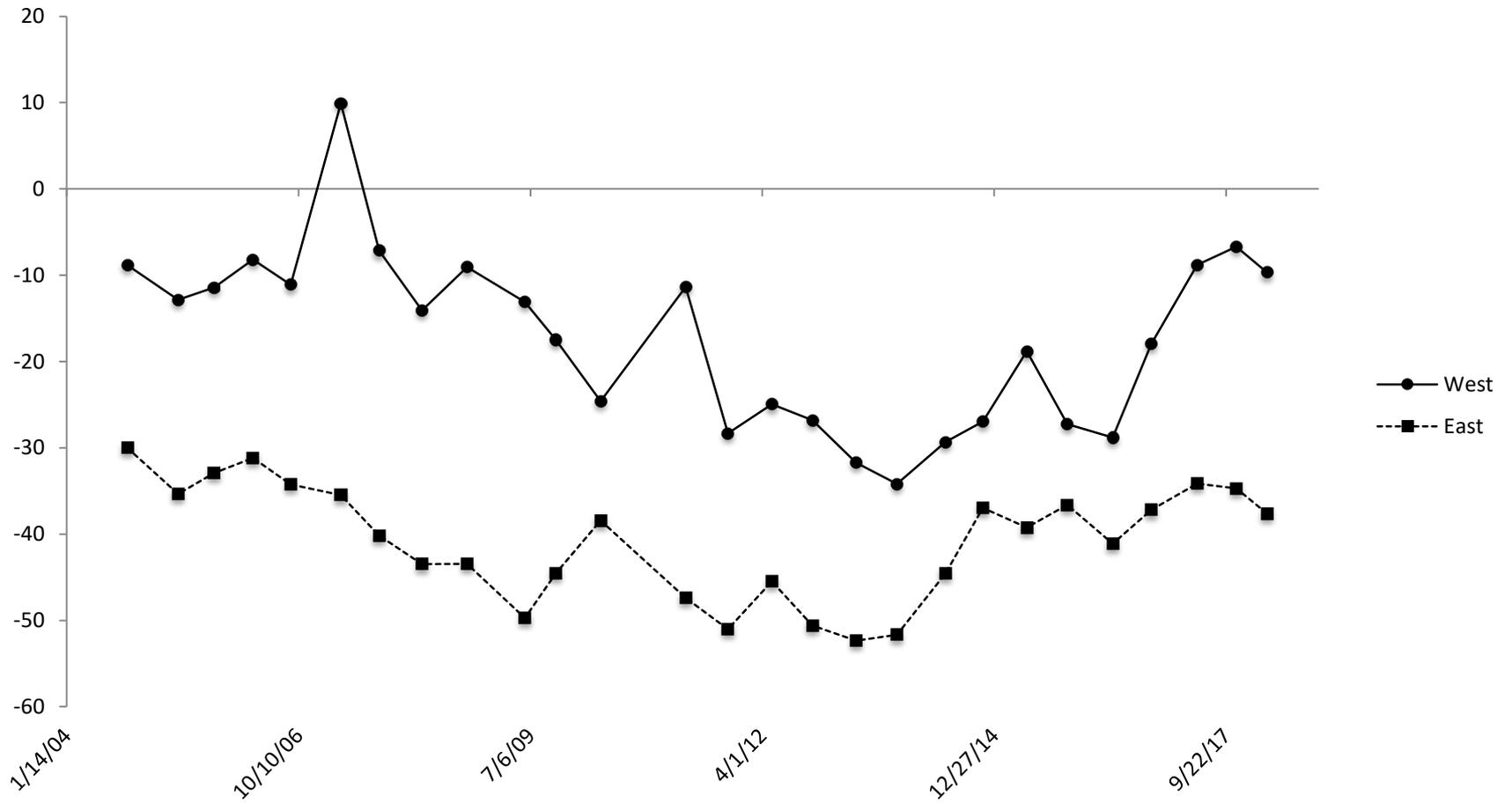
# The Army



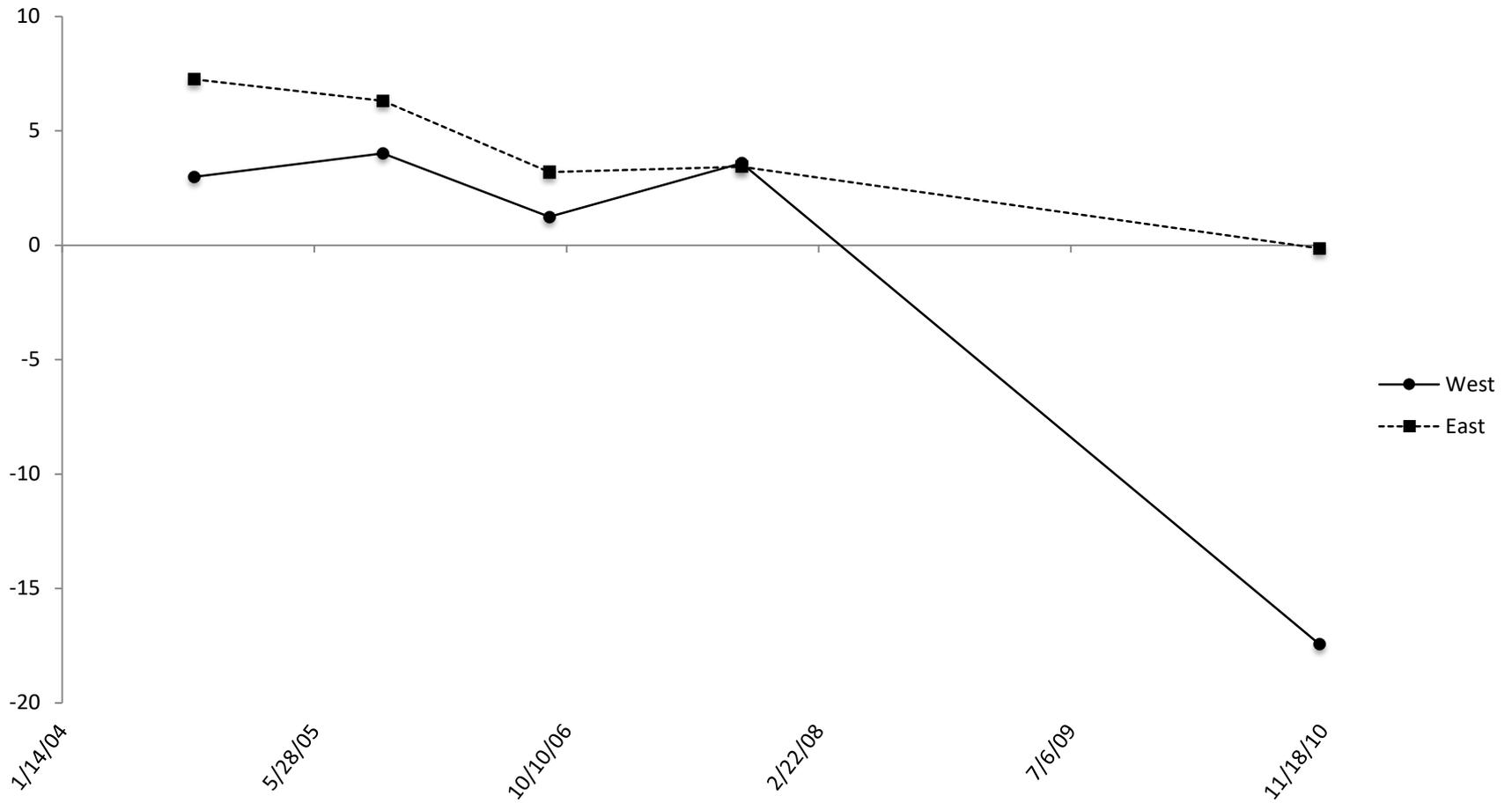
# The Parliament



# The Government



# Religious Institutions



# Conclusions

**Differences in trust seem to be here to stay**

**Some problematic differences: Justice, Government, Parliament**

- Separation of power



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[www.tcd.ie/ssp](http://www.tcd.ie/ssp)

