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ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL TRUST
FORMATION BETWEEN UKRAINE
AND RUSSIA**

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Making a Difference through Similarities: A Comparative Analysis of Social Trust Formation
between Ukraine and Russia

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Abstract

This study uses a comparative perspective to analyse social trust in Ukraine and Russia. Drawing upon the assumption that the two countries share many similarities, I focus on exploring the degree to which their trust formation processes resemble each other. I demonstrate that the modes of trusting behaviour differ significantly between both societies. I argue that these differences can be explained by the recent gap between Ukraine and Russia in their political and social systems. Special attention is paid to the impact of the war in the east of Ukraine on intensifying the divergence in how trust is built and preserved among individuals. The findings are used to question the pervasive effects of cultural similarities with Russia on the Ukrainian population's behavioural values and preferences.

KEYWORDS: Ukraine, culture, social trust, conflict, WVS.

Making a Difference through Similarities: A Comparative Analysis of Social Trust Formation between Ukraine and Russia

Russian President Vladimir Putin declared numerous times that Ukrainians and Russians are one people. According to him, the long existence of Ukraine as a part of Russia ensured “the common faith and cultural traditions” and “linguistic affinity,” nullifying the possibility that Ukraine could have developed its own cultural or national identity. Even if many scholars take this narrative as Russia’s political game of “pretending that Ukraine does not exist’ (Düben, 2020), the majority of them agree that the two countries are characterised by many similarities and share identities along many visible dimensions, such as religion, language, and race (Onuch & Hale, 2018). Drawing upon this assumption, this study compares the extent to which Ukraine and Russia can be considered culturally similar by using social trust as the main framework of analysis.

Two reasons justify the choice of trust as a critical focus of analysis. First, social trust is characterised by the dual nature of its creation. Even if viewed as a cultural attribute, confidence levels can change due to experiences with other individuals or the context of a country (Uslaner, 2008). Based on this assumption, social trust may provide a single framework for a joint analysis of dispositional and experiential factors. Such a framework can enable the testing of how cultural attributes inherited by Ukraine from the shared past with Russia have been challenged in defining social trust levels through the latest experiences of independence and the shift to more liberal democratic forms of governance. Second, the issue of social trust has been of utmost importance to both countries due to its significant impact on political, economic, and social

developments (Torrente et al., 2019), which Ukraine and Russia are still struggling to improve. In particular, trusting others is closely related to the population's democratic behaviour (Hutchison & Johnson, 2011), the emergence and sustainability of democratic governments and institutions (Brown, 2020). It also contributes to the promotion of cooperation among individuals and “glues” society together. (Barbalet, 2009).

This study aims to juxtapose the patterns of social trust formation between Ukraine and Russia. The main assumption of my analysis is that the two countries can be considered culturally similar if they are characterized by identical modes of social trust creation. My primary focus is on the impact that the common cultural attributes (religion, religiosity, and language) have on the level of trust in both countries. Their juxtaposition is expected to reveal the extent to which any resemblance in the primary cultural attributes is pervasive and, hence, results in a resemblance in the formation of secondary cultural phenomena, such as social trust for instance.

A social trust framework of analysis: A literature overview

Trust is a complex concept. Limited by confidence in strangers, social trust is often seen as a partly habituated, embodied way of engaging with others and the world (Borum, 2010). The literature broadly classifies approaches to conventional trust sources into: dispositional and experiential. Dispositional theories reduce social trust to the trait of one's character or disposition, often understood as rooted in the personality. Defined as an internal characteristic, trusting is linked to one's psychology and emotions that give rise to *faith* in others by regulating the level of positive affect toward the object of trust (Belli & Broncano, 2017).

The formation of trust as faith unfolds as an unconscious process that remains beyond cognition and does not involve rational thinking. Instead, faith draws exclusively on an individual's internally formed ability to trust, ignoring the social nature of their existence (Stemmler & Wacker, 2010). Seen as deeply entrenched in genetics, family, and culture, faith creation is attributed to intergenerational transmission. Children are believed to learn from their parents about whether they have to trust strangers or about particular situations where they can do so (Stolle & Nishikawa, 2011). Religiosity and religious beliefs are often seen as cultural settings that channel transmissions of trusting attitudes across generations.

In addition, the dispositional approach examines social trust in relation to one's social perspective on the world. In this case, trust creation is directly linked to self-perception (Frederiksen, 2019). Analysing others through one's own self is expected to yield greater trust by allowing the trustor to feel competent in judging strangers or by drawing similarities in social stances with others (Daukas, 2006). While limiting self-perception to one's social position or class, trust theory also touches on the general concept of identity. Viewed as socially constructed, identities allow individuals to categorise themselves versus others and define their position in relation to the human environment. Understanding where others belong can be used as a reference for inferring information about these individuals (Hale, 2004).

The experiential approach relies on the premise that social trust is an action. Since an action requires interaction with others, this strand focuses on socialization as the most important mechanism of social trust formation (Hooghe et al., 2012). As such, the processes of the creation and maintenance of trust are reduced to assessing the trustworthiness of others. Trust is expected to emerge from judging others as trustworthy people or assessing the probability of being deceived as generally low. This calculative process is primarily conditioned by the context.

In this view, the faith mechanism only lays the foundation for the potential creation of trust, whereas its ultimate level is determined by how this basic faith fits real-life situations created by the context. Drawn upon this assumption, trust formation is no longer a subconscious process. Instead, it also involves a cognitive mechanism that steers a realistic evaluation of the environment in which the individual acts. As rational thinkers, people try to avoid being cheated, as the context increases or decreases the probability of running into this unpleasant experience (Hooghe et al., 2012). By weighing the multitude of pros and cons derived from contextual characteristics, cognition tries to adjust the faith that the individual possesses in others to the actual conditions in which the trust decision is made.

The literature primarily focuses on institutions when analysing the context in relation to trusting others. The institutional approach brings forward the state and argues that the quality of formal settings underpins social confidence in terms of just administrative procedures and civil servants (Rothstein & Stolle, 2010). The state should be just in the eyes of citizens for people to trust each other. Alternatively, the government should create credible institutions to punish those who cheat or protect those who have been deceived (Brown, 2020).

Recent studies suggest that, in addition to institutions, individual perceptions of inequalities within society influence social trust (Larsen, 2013). Economic polarisation or a mere decrease in income can cause a loss of a great deal of trust among individuals (Torrente et al., 2019). Language or ethnic diversity additionally creates imbalances in interactions with others, further undermining trust levels (Loxbo, 2018).

The role of the state is also theorised in trust literature through insecurity. Making individuals feel secure in their community is seen as a precondition for pro-social behaviour and placing trust in co-citizens (Hardin, 2002). In a broader sense, the notion of security is expanded

to include the impact of ethnic wars or conflicts. Wars are recognised as having a distinct effect on social trust, which is defined by the character of the conflict (Hutchison & Johnson, 2011). Ethnic wars are expected to yield greater trust among the country's residents through discourse on the collective threat that unites the country's population against a common aggressor (Frahm, 2012). Ideological wars diminish social trust because they lack similar discourse and increase personal insecurities and losses instead (Rohner et al., 2013).

In summary, the contextual approach brings forward the factors that measure the quality of the institutional context; the extent of ethnic, linguistic, or economic fractionalisation; and the degree of insecurity the individuals are confronted with in their community. They are supposed to enter the trust model, in addition to dispositional variables, as major predictors of confidence in others. Given this dual nature of social trust formation, the primary objective of my empirical analysis is twofold. On one hand, I aim to define the set of dispositional and contextual factors that are conducive to social trust in Ukraine and Russia. On the other hand, I examine whether these factors are equally important for trust in both countries.

Data and methods

I used data from the two most recent rounds (6 and 7) of the World Values Survey to analyse social trust formation. The sixth round refers to 2011, whereas the seventh corresponds to 2017 in Russia and 2020 in Ukraine. The total sample includes 4979 cases, out of which 2005 cases belong to Ukraine and 2974 cases belong to Russia.

The key dependent variable is social trust operationalised through the question, "Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you cannot be too careful in dealing with people?" Trust is codified as a dichotomous variable that takes the value

of 1 if respondents believe that “most people can be trusted” and the value of 0 if they think that “you need to be careful when dealing with people.” Experimental studies demonstrate that a survey question assessing trust in imaginary strangers provides objective and empirically valid measures of confidence in others (Robbins, 2019).

The independent variables were selected based on both dispositional and experiential approaches, given the availability of their operationalisations in the WVS. The dispositional set of determinants includes conventional predictors of trust, such as religiosity, religion, nationalism, health, and happiness levels (Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005). In particular, religiosity is approximated through the frequency with which one attends religious services varying between 0 for “more than once a week” and 1 for “never.” Religion types are summarised by four binary variables that take the value of 1 if the individual adheres to the respective religious denomination: Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or other religions. A group of atheists is used as the reference category. Nationalism is measured by asking respondents about the extent of pride they feel for their nation. The initial responses are combined into a dichotomous variable by assigning the value of 1 to positive choices (“quite proud” and “very proud”) and 0 to negative choices (“not really proud” and “not at all proud”). Self-defined health condition is measured on a five-point scale (1 = very good health, 5=very poor health). Happiness refers to the extent to which the respondents feel happy. The responses are codified by assigning the value of 1 for “very happy” or “quite happy” and 0 for “not really happy” or “not at all happy.”

The experiential or contextual set of predictors includes democracy, measures of fractionalisation, insecurity, and institutional confidence. Democracy is measured through the perceived quality of democracy operationalised by asking respondents to assess the level of democracy in their country using a ten-point scale. The initial answers varied from 0 “not at all

democratic” to 1 “completely democratic.” In addition, I include the preference for democracy operationalised through the value respondents assign to this form of governance or the need to choose their leader through free elections. The former is operationalised by asking respondents to specify the importance of democracy as a form of governance for a good political system. The answer “strongly agree” is assigned a value of 1, while other choices are combined and assigned a value of 0. The latter is approximated through the extent to which respondents agree with the statement, “In a democracy, people should choose their leader in free elections.” The responses were provided on a ten-point scale and further recorded to change between 0 and 1.

Fractionalisation levels are operationalised through ethnic and linguistic diversity, and income inequality. Ethnic divide refers to the ethnicity group the respondents feel they belong to and includes three binary variables: Ukrainian, Russian, and other. Language fractionalisation is operationalised by asking respondents to specify which language (Ukrainian, Russian, or other) they use at home. Income inequality refers to one’s stance with regard to economic differentiation in society, with answers varying from 1 “incomes should be made more equal” to 10 “we need larger income differences as incentives.”

Security is approximated by perceived security in the neighbourhood and the existence of war. The respondents’ perceived level of security is measured by asking them to indicate how secure they feel in their neighbourhood. The initial responses are combined into a dichotomous scale, taking the value of 1 if the respondents feel “very secure” or “quite secure” and 0 for “not really secure” or “not at all secure.” The war variable separates the war from the pre-war period. It takes the value of 1 if the responses belong to 2020 and 0 for 2011.

Institutional trust is captured by respondents’ trust in their government. This variable is operationalised by asking how much confidence they have in their national governments. The

positive responses such as “a great deal of confidence” and “a lot of confidence” are combined and assigned a value of 1. Negative responses that corresponded to “no confidence at all” or “little confidence” are scored as 0.

Finally, conventional control variables such as respondents’ migrant background, age, and region of residence are included. The five territorial binary variables capture the geopolitical division of Ukraine into West, East, Central, South, and Kyiv, and are constructed based on the geographical division map provided by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Administrative_divisions_of_Ukraine#/media/File:Ukraine_KIIS-Regional-division2.png). For Russia, I use the regional dummies provided by the WVS in the sixth and seventh waves.

Table 1 near here

Table 1 summarises the descriptive statistics of the key variables. Table 2 juxtaposes the means values between Ukraine and Russia. Briefly, both countries resembled in the prevalence of the Orthodox religious denomination (69.3 vs. 61.2). Ukrainians and Russian also displayed relatively similar religiosity levels (0.6 vs. 0.7), equal percentages of people who reported feeling happy (75.6 vs. 79.3) or healthy (53.9 vs. 51.5). Only marginal differences emerged regarding their residents’ evaluations of democracy (0.475 vs. 0.507) and income inequality (0.469 vs. 0.480). Both nations also believed that leaders must be chosen through public elections (84.7 percent in Ukraine vs. 82.1 percent in Russia).

Noticeable contrasts could primarily be observed in the greater importance of democracy for Ukrainians (33.9 vs. 24.9) than Russians. Many studies showed that mass pro-democratic values were present in Ukraine since the very beginning of the transition, supporting the

democratisation process and becoming a cause for the divergent paths of political shifts between the two countries (Brudny & Finkel, 2001). In the aftermath of the Orange Revolution in 2004, Ukraine became the most democratic country in the post-Soviet region (with the exception of Baltic states). In contrast, Russia, after a short period of relative freedom in the early 1990s, went back to a more authoritarian way of governance (Feklyunina, 2016).

Additionally, Ukrainians trusted their government significantly less than Russians (22.8 vs. 51.8). Instead, they felt closer to their society: 30.6 percent of Ukrainians (vs 23.9 in Russia) declared in 2020 to trust in their co-citizens. Finally, despite high levels of militarisation and possession of nuclear weapons by the country, fewer Russians felt secure than Ukrainians (71.0 percent vs. 77.7 percent).

Table 2 near here

However, the major difference between the two countries lies in the fact that Ukraine is characterized by the large Russian-speaking minority (Kulyk, 2016). According to the WVS, approximately 44 percent of Ukrainians still use Russian to communicate at home, even though this share dropped from 50 percent in 2011 to 40 percent in 2020. Similarly, 17.3 percent of Ukrainian residents could identify themselves with Russian ethnos in 2011, with this percentage dropping to 4.9 percent in 2020.

I use logistic regression to estimate the effects of the above dispositional and contextual predictors on social trust. Because logit coefficients do not facilitate straightforward interpretation, I report the average marginal effects describing each factor's impact on social trust. The average marginal effects show the average change in an individual's likelihood of trusting others when raising a given factor from its minimum to its maximum value and keeping other variables

constant. This measure provides a clear picture of the full range of variations that a given variable may produce on social trust in a manner that enables comparison with the influence of other predictors.

Main empirical results

To compare social trust formation between Ukraine and Russia, I initially estimated a model containing only dispositional factors and gradually augmented it with experiential sources of trust, such as the measures of fractionalisation, democracy, and security. Generally, including more predictors improved log-likelihood, which justifies the choice of a large number of variables for the regressions. No multicollinearity problems were detected despite the large number of predictors. I reported the mean variance inflation factor (VIF) estimations for each regression to support the validity of this statement. The empirical results of the analysis are summarised in Tables 3 and 4.

Tables 3 and 4 near here

The final models in Tables 3 and 4 (Model 5) show significant contrasts in social trust formation patterns between Ukraine and Russia when analysing the pooled data. These differences concerned not only the impact of contextual variables on the likelihood of trusting but also dispositional predictors. Even if both populations adhered to the same religion and possessed close levels of religiosity, the impact of religion and religiosity on social trust appeared to differ significantly between the two countries. Individuals who adhered to the Orthodox religion were characterised by lower levels of trust in Ukraine but tended to trust

slightly more in Russia (-14.7 vs. 3.7). This difference can be explained by the strength of links between the church and politics. In Ukraine, these links are nonexistent, as a result of which adhering to the Orthodox religious denomination reduces trust due to the practice of absolution. The belief that the church can absolve individuals' sins usually discourages people to trust their fellow citizens (Van Oorschot & Arts, 2005). In contrast, Russia is characterized by a close connection between Orthodoxy and politics. The strong ideological interdependence between religion and the state is used as an important symbol of local history and tradition that lays the foundation for nurturing the feeling of belonging to the nation and society (Köllner 2021). Consequently, individuals who adhere to the Orthodox religion have higher trust levels than non-religious individuals in Russia.

For Ukraine, the positive impact of religion on social trust manifested itself through religiosity. In particular, attending church on a weekly basis increased the likelihood of trusting others by 11.7 percentage points among Ukrainians but showed no significant difference from non-religious respondents in Russia. The results for Ukraine are commensurate with the existing findings, according to which religious people adopt more prosocial behaviors when they have higher levels of religiosity (Bradshaw et al., 2019).

While health and happiness levels similarly influenced social trust formation in both countries, trust levels differed in their relationship to nationalism. This predictor appeared to be more important in bonding individuals in Ukrainian society than in Russia. Developing a sense of pride for their country could increase the likelihood of trusting by 6.9 percentage points in Ukraine and have no impact on social trust in Russia.

The same paradox has been established for democracy-related predictors. Even though both societies had relatively similar scores on the quality of democracy, this variable had a

positive effect on social trust in Ukraine (11.1 percentage points) and showed no association with trust formation in Russia. A significant difference also emerged in the value respondents assigned to democracy as a form of governance in their country. Individuals who believed that democracy is a foundation for a good political system were 8.0 percentage points more likely to trust others in Ukraine, but not in Russia. According to Gudkov et al (2020), Russian citizens are largely characterized by the low significance attributed to any democratic values (the right to own property, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, etc.) and hence by the limited role these values play in shaping social relations. At the same time, viewing free elections as a foundation for choosing a leader was not robustly associated with trust scores in either country.

Of the selected fractionalisation predictors, only income inequality had an influence on social trust. An inclination toward an economically egalitarian society could increase the likelihood of trusting by 8.4 percentage points in Ukraine and 7.5 percentage points in Russia. Language polarisation was not related to social trust in any country. At the same time, ethnic fractionalisation was marginally associated with trust scores in Ukraine but not in Russia. Individuals who tended to identify with the Ukrainian nation were characterised by a lower likelihood of trusting than individuals who did not.

Sharp differences also concerned the impact of a sense of security on social trust. The war variable was a positive and statistically significant determinant of trust levels in Ukraine but not in Russia. This finding could be explained by the fact that recent military confrontation between the two countries was concentrated in Ukraine. Commensurate with the existing findings, the war with Russia had an unexpected positive influence on Ukrainian society by uniting the country's population against the common aggressor (Frahm, 2012).

In contrast, confidence in the government positively influenced social trust among the Russian people, increasing their likelihood of trusting by 8.1 percentage points. This positive association arises directly from the perceived role of the state as a guarantor of national security, with the issue of security being one of the utmost importance among the Russian population (Gudkov et al., 2020). Additionally, the idea of a strong state is a central point in the Russian imperialist ideology that has significantly impacted contemporary Russian society (Düben, 2020).

No such effect was established in the case of Ukraine, where trust was nurtured not directly by the government but by democratic settings that this government was able to create in the country. The state remained immature in Ukraine as a political force uniting the society, which can be explained by the country's long experience as a colony, initially occupied by the Russian empire and later by the Soviet Union. Both granted a secondary role to Ukrainians as a nation and transferred decision-making for national matters to a foreign government. As a consequence, Ukrainians often perceived the public authorities or their policies as foreign and adverse to local interests (Chayinska et al., 2021).

However, both societies viewed security in neighbourhoods as a foundation for trust formation. Changing from feeling insecure to secure could increase the likelihood of trusting others by approximately five percentage points. Finally, there was wide variation in trust levels across Ukraine's regions, which can be justified by the country's historical specificities of territorial formation and unequal distribution of Russian-speaking minorities across the country. In contrast, Russia's society was more homogenous in terms of trust, even though some marginal regional differences could also be observed.

Overall, my results suggest that even if the two countries considerably resemble each other in their cultural, economic, and contextual characteristics, many of them play very different roles in yielding greater trust (see Figure 1). Both dispositional and contextual factors have contributed to the formation of social trust in Ukraine and Russia. However, the trust creation process was influenced by a more significant number of contextual determinants in Ukraine than in Russia.

Figure 1 near here

Since social relations were shaped by the imperial visions of the population, the idea of a strong state constituted a central point in the creation of social confidence in Russia. Russian citizens were united through their attachment to the government and the low significance attributed to any democratic values (the right to own property, freedom of speech, freedom of conscience, etc.), which resulted in the limited role these values played in shaping social confidence. Social trust took the form of faith, with the Orthodox religion only reinforcing people's connection to the state. This strong ideological interdependence between religion and the state was used in Russia as an important symbol of local history and tradition for nurturing the feeling of belonging to the society.

In contrast, social trust followed an entirely different mode of formation in Ukraine. Despite the shared past with Russia, the state had only an indirect influence on uniting the population by creating democratic institutions in the country. The aspiration for democracy directly arose from the opposition to the idea of a dominant state, often interpreted through the country's long experience as a colony, initially occupied by the Russian empire and later by the

Soviet Union. The church's independence from politics further promoted free thinking and Ukraine's ultimate departure from the legacy created by the common past with Russia. Russia's invasion of Ukraine demonstrated to Ukrainians the importance of political unity, created by bonding people through mutual aspirations about their own nation and country (Aliyev, 2019).

Nonetheless, the impact of the conflict in eastern Ukraine is likely to go beyond its direct effect on social trust. The open confrontation between the two countries caused a path break, at least in Ukraine. It marked the country's embarkment on a definite way toward liberal democratic governance and strengthened the population's inclination toward the West. This conflict increased the importance assigned by individuals to democracy as a form of governance and raised their sense of ethnic and civic identity (Aliyev, 2019; Chainska et al., 2021). It also encouraged people to use Ukrainian as the primary language of communication (Kulyk, 2018) and promoted trust in the national government. Insecurity levels equally showed an upward trend, especially regarding one's fear of a foreign invasion (Smirnova & Iliev, 2017).

To account for the possible path break in social trust formation between the two waves, I separately calculate regressions for each WVS round (see Table 5 and Figure 2). As expected, the analysed periods saw not only a significant change in the values of the critical factors, but also an apparent alteration in the role these factors played in social trust emergence. In the case of Ukraine, military conflict neutralised the effect of nationalism, democracy evaluation, and the choice of leader in free elections on social trust. Instead, the war shifted its weight toward dispositional predictors by enhancing the role of religiosity and religious denomination, along with happiness levels, in trust formation. Political factors retain their importance in increasing trust. However, the critical influence came in 2020 from the determinants directly related to the

scope of the war: the value assigned to democracy, the use of Ukrainian as a language of communication, and the issue of national security.

Additionally, Russia's first invasion of Ukraine neutralised regional differences, which were quite pronounced in the pre-war round. In 2011, Ukrainians living in the East were very different from their Western compatriots or from the individuals living in the southern and central regions; no such cleavages re-appeared in the regional distribution of trust scores in the sample of 2020. The war united the population against a common aggressor, making Ukraine a more homogenous society.

Conversely, war nullified the influence of dispositional determinants in Russia, such as religiosity and the effect of happiness and health-related factors. Social trust primarily became a matter of security and confidence in the government. Additionally, the conflict of 2014 increased the role of elections in choosing a leader and the perceived quality of democracy for social trust formation among Russians.

Table 5 and Figure 2 near here

Conclusion and discussion

This study explored whether Ukraine and Russia are culturally similar. The analysis suggested that the two countries were characterised by relatively comparable shares of religious individuals and religion types, health conditions and happiness levels, perceived quality of democracy, and adherence to elections as a framework for choosing leaders. In addition, Ukraine had a large proportion of the population speaking Russian at home and identifying themselves with Russian ethnos. Based on these findings, one could come to a false conclusion that Ukrainians and

Russians are akin. However, my analysis negated this superficial judgment. Instead, it demonstrated that close similarities in basic cultural features can coexist with wide differences in the formation of a secondary cultural phenomenon, such as social trust. These differences can be broadly summarised as follows:

First, social trust formation patterns differ significantly between Ukraine and Russia in terms of their major sources. In Ukraine, trust was, to a larger extent, the result of contextual factors, whereas this was not the case in Russia. Russians primarily relied on their dispositional characteristics to define their level of confidence. This suggests that social trust took the form of faith in Russia, while it was a result of experiences with the country's context in Ukraine.

Second, among the contextual characteristics, Ukraine stood out in the role of democracy-related factors in shaping trusting attitudes. Both the actual quality of democracy and aspirations for democracy as a form of governance significantly defined trust levels. In contrast, Russians' social trust was largely shaped by two contextual factors directly related to their imperialist identity, such as trust in the government and security issues. The dominant narrative of a "great empire" not only nurtured a strong attachment of the individuals to the state and the fear of constant danger but also essentially influenced social trust. Those who trusted the government and felt protected by the state displayed greater confidence in their fellows.

Third, despite the established similarities in many cultural factors, such as religion and religiosity, Ukraine significantly differed from Russia in how these factors influenced confidence in society. For Ukraine, the data confirmed existing patterns regarding how the relevant variables affect the formation of social trust (Bradshaw et al., 2019). In contrast, a specific pattern was found for Russia. Due to the strong link between the state and Orthodoxy, both religion and religiosity showed a relationship with trust levels that was opposite to the existing theories.

Fourth, the conflict in eastern Ukraine had a strong positive impact on social trust. The war united Ukrainians in the face of a common aggressor. In Russia, the war did not play a substantial role in yielding greater trust among individuals. This is because Russia's first invasion of Ukraine was presumably initiated by the government and not the population; as a result, it failed to promote bonds among residents. Instead, greater trust in the government and security issues arising from Russians' imperialist identity united the country's population.

Fifth, significant differences in social trust formation existed between Ukraine and Russia, even in the earlier periods. The conflict in the eastern Ukraine further increased this heterogeneity, entirely changing the mode of social trust formation in both countries. Coming as a shock, Russian aggression strengthened fear among individuals in Ukraine, bringing forward the issue of national security as an influential factor of social cohesion. This conflict also increased the role of democratic aspirations in yielding greater trust. In Russia, attachment to the state, measured through confidence in the government, has become the most significant predictor of trust levels, in addition to security issues.

In summary, my comparative analysis between Ukraine and Russia using social trust shows that Kremlin's assumption that race, religion, and language are critical markers for drawing similarities should be perceived as false. Even if Ukrainians and Russians had the same religion and racial features or spoke the same language, they developed different trusting attitudes and patterns of trust formation. My results highlight the existence of a wide gap between the two populations, suggesting that it is not the language and religion that make a nation but the way in which people act within the given religious and linguistic settings that make these people into a distinct nation.

Further research should focus on identifying the main reasons for why one can nowadays observe increasing differences in beliefs and behavioural patterns between Ukrainians and Russians. One should consider as a possible explanation whether this trend can be attributed to the collective memory of oppression created by the unequal distribution of political and economic powers between Ukraine and Russia that always characterised their shared past. Clarifying these aspects would shed more light on the interdependence between cultures and the process of state and nation building in the modern times.

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TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Key Variables

VARIABLES	Mean	St. dev.	Min.	Max.
Social Trust	0.272	0.445	0	1
Church Attendance	0.652	0.272	0	1
Religion types				
Atheist	0.205	0.404	0	1
Orthodox	0.644	0.478	0	1
Catholic	0.029	0.166	0	1
Protestant	0.010	0.099	0	1
Other	0.019	0.137	0	1
Nationalism	0.825	0.379	0	1
Health	0.524	0.159	0	1
Happy	0.779	0.414	0	1
Democracy Value	0.286	0.452	0	1
Choose Leader in Elections	0.831	0.226	0	1
Democracy Evaluation	0.493	0.236	0	1
Ukrainian Ethnic Identity	0.884	0.320	0	1
Russian Ethnic Identity	0.609	0.487	0	1
Use Russian to Communicate at Home	0.740	0.438	0	1
Income Inequality	0.475	0.305	0	1
Feel Secure	0.736	0.440	0	1
Confidence in the Government	0.403	0.490	0	1
Born in the country	0.944	0.229	0	1
Age	46.414	17.379	18	91

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2011, 2017, and 2020).

TABLE 2. A Comparative Analysis of Mean Values and Variances for the Key Variables

VARIABLES	Mean Values		Contrasts	Analysis of Variance	
	Ukraine	Russia		Between Groups	Within Groups
Social trust	0.276	0.269	0.007	0.077	1341.9
Born in the country	0.930	0.953	-0.023***	0.911	370.2
Church Attendance	0.558	0.715	-0.157***	41.008	471.7
Religion types					
Atheist	0.089	0.284	-0.195***	63.512	1071.9
Orthodox	0.693	0.612	0.081***	10.915	1582.9
Protestant	0.013	0.008	0.005**	0.048	69.2
Catholic	0.071	0.002	0.069***	7.777	193.5
Other	0.033	0.010	0.023***	0.876	130.2
Nationalism	0.782	0.854	-0.072***	8.435	964.9
Health	0.539	0.515	0.024***	0.956	178.8
Happy	0.756	0.793	-0.037***	2.277	1172.8
Democracy Value	0.339	0.249	0.090***	12.138	1256.6
Choose Leader in Elections	0.847	0.821	0.026***	1.106	348.4
Democracy Evaluation	0.475	0.507	-0.032***	1.649	367.9
Ukrainian Ethnic Identity	0.884	0.011	0.873***	1283.490	333.1
Russian Ethnic identity	0.093	0.943	-0.850***	1220.616	461.5
Use Ukrainian to Communicate at Home	0.545	0.000	0.545***	502.554	691.1
Use Russian to Communicate at Home	0.439	0.935	-0.496***	415.616	947.4
Use Other Language to Communicate at Home	0.015	0.065	-0.050***	4.125	303.2
Income Inequality	0.469	0.480	-0.011***	0.200	637.5
Feel Secure	0.777	0.710	0.067***	7.068	1300.1
Confidence in the Government	0.228	0.518	-0.290***	137.55	1500.9

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2011, 2017, and 2020).

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

TABLE 3. Key Factors behind Social Trust Formation in Ukraine

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Born in the country	0.007 (0.042)	0.000 (0.044)	0.030 (0.048)	0.054 (0.051)	0.053 (0.050)
Age	0.001* (0.001)	0.001* (0.000)	0.001 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Church Attendance	-0.138*** (0.040)	-0.122*** (0.044)	-0.115*** (0.044)	-0.104** (0.045)	-0.117** (0.047)
Religion types					
Atheist	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Orthodox	-0.109*** (0.034)	-0.110*** (0.035)	-0.109*** (0.035)	-0.139*** (0.036)	-0.147*** (0.036)
Protestant	-0.040 (0.081)	-0.064 (0.085)	-0.061 (0.085)	-0.099 (0.087)	-0.108 (0.086)
Catholic	-0.089* (0.047)	-0.089* (0.050)	-0.082 (0.051)	-0.128** (0.052)	-0.126** (0.053)
Other	-0.221*** (0.064)	-0.175** (0.069)	-0.171** (0.069)	-0.217*** (0.073)	-0.212*** (0.072)
Nationalism	0.068*** (0.024)	0.074*** (0.025)	0.080*** (0.025)	0.064** (0.026)	0.069*** (0.026)
Health	-0.316*** (0.066)	-0.310*** (0.070)	-0.308*** (0.070)	-0.251*** (0.073)	-0.244*** (0.073)
Happy	0.066*** (0.024)	0.063** (0.025)	0.066** (0.025)	0.071*** (0.026)	0.070*** (0.026)
Democracy Value		0.066*** (0.020)	0.067*** (0.020)	0.074*** (0.020)	0.080*** (0.020)
Choose Leader in Elections		-0.047 (0.046)	-0.051 (0.046)	-0.078* (0.047)	-0.090* (0.047)
Democracy Evaluation		0.114*** (0.038)	0.118*** (0.039)	0.109*** (0.041)	0.111*** (0.041)
Ukrainian Ethnic Identity			-0.066* (0.038)	-0.090** (0.040)	-0.085** (0.040)
Other Ethnic Identity			Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Use Ukrainian to Communicate at Home			-0.001 (0.022)	-0.007 (0.023)	0.014 (0.027)
Use Other Language to Communicate at Home			Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Income Inequality			-0.006 (0.034)	-0.075* (0.039)	-0.084** (0.039)
Feel Secure				0.049* (0.026)	0.053** (0.026)

Confidence in the Government				0.034	0.036
				(0.023)	(0.023)
War				0.099***	0.107***
				(0.024)	(0.024)
Regions					Ref. category
East					-0.120***
West					(0.039)
South					-0.134***
Center					(0.031)
Kiev					-0.111***
					(0.035)
					-0.088**
					(0.038)
Log-likelihood	-1397.555	-1258.769	-1240.263	-1161.096	-1151.713
Mean VIF	1.52	1.39	1.38	1.36	1.57
Observations	2,005	2,005	2,005	2,005	2,005

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2011 and 2020).

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

TABLE 4. Key Factors behind Social Trust Formation in Russia

VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Born in the country	0.035 (0.036)	0.033 (0.038)	0.042 (0.038)	0.048 (0.039)	0.047 (0.039)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Church Attendance	0.007** (0.003)	0.007* (0.004)	0.006* (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)	0.007* (0.004)
Religion types					
Atheist	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Orthodox	0.048*** (0.018)	0.052*** (0.019)	0.043** (0.019)	0.039** (0.019)	0.037* (0.020)
Protestant	0.114 (0.081)	0.110 (0.086)	0.082 (0.087)	0.066 (0.095)	0.066 (0.094)
Catholic	0.153 (0.143)	0.160 (0.144)	0.149 (0.144)	0.186 (0.140)	0.166 (0.138)
Other	0.025 (0.076)	0.034 (0.081)	0.042 (0.082)	0.080 (0.082)	0.089 (0.081)
Nationalism	0.037* (0.022)	0.022 (0.024)	0.026 (0.024)	0.011 (0.025)	0.003 (0.025)
Health	-0.272*** (0.057)	-0.287*** (0.060)	-0.301*** (0.061)	-0.269*** (0.063)	-0.234*** (0.063)
Happy	0.100*** (0.021)	0.114*** (0.023)	0.111*** (0.023)	0.099*** (0.024)	0.094*** (0.023)
Democracy Value		0.012 (0.018)	0.011 (0.018)	0.010 (0.018)	0.011 (0.018)
Choose Leader in Elections		0.048 (0.035)	0.029 (0.035)	0.013 (0.035)	0.035 (0.036)
Democracy Evaluation		0.046 (0.035)	0.094*** (0.036)	0.049 (0.038)	0.047 (0.038)
Russian Ethnic Identity			-0.049** (0.019)	-0.018 (0.042)	-0.024 (0.042)
Other Ethnic Identity			Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Use Russian to Communicate at Home			0.038 (0.040)	0.059 (0.041)	0.062 (0.041)
Use Other Language to Communicate at Home			Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Income Inequality			-0.089*** (0.029)	-0.074** (0.030)	-0.075** (0.030)
Feel Secure				0.051***	0.054***

				(0.018)	(0.018)
Confidence in the Government				0.086***	0.081***
				(0.016)	(0.016)
War				-0.021	-0.005
				(0.041)	(0.041)
Regions					Ref. category
Moscow					0.035
North West					(0.049)
Central					0.027
North Caucasian					(0.044)
Privolzhsky					-0.096
Urals					(0.080)
Far East					0.092**
Siberian					(0.043)
South					0.019
					(0.049)
					0.099*
					(0.057)
					-0.006
					(0.046)
					0.110**
					(0.045)
Log-likelihood	-2051.693	-1860.657	-1773.164	-1644.205	-1627.124
Mean VIF	1.18	1.16	1.26	1.84	1.97
Observations	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974	2,974

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2011 and 2017).

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

TABLE 5. Shifts in Trust Formation Mechanisms over the Analyzed Period

VARIABLES	Ukraine		Russia	
	2011	2020	2011	2017
Born in the country	0.069 (0.056)	0.017 (0.096)	0.045 (0.051)	0.052 (0.065)
Age	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.001)	0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
Church Attendance	-0.020 (0.058)	-0.193*** (0.076)	0.014** (0.006)	0.004 (0.005)
Religion types				
Atheist	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Orthodox	-0.093** (0.038)	-0.199** (0.088)	0.042 (0.029)	0.043 (0.027)
Protestant	-0.033 (0.090)	-0.174 (0.215)	0.085 (0.102)	0.001 (0.030)
Catholic	-0.059 (0.068)	-0.184* (0.106)	0.175 (0.179)	0.174 (0.213)
Other	-0.096 (0.101)	-0.273** (0.121)	0.146 (0.107)	-0.018 (0.141)
Nationalism	0.084*** (0.030)	0.056 (0.050)	0.001 (0.030)	0.042 (0.048)
Health	-0.209** (0.094)	-0.261** (0.115)	-0.359*** (0.089)	-0.107 (0.088)
Happy	0.047 (0.030)	0.119** (0.049)	0.119*** (0.031)	0.053 (0.036)
Democracy Value	0.057** (0.026)	0.104*** (0.033)	0.021 (0.026)	0.006 (0.026)
Choose Leader in Elections	-0.134** (0.058)	-0.024 (0.078)	-0.056 (0.049)	0.131** (0.054)
Democracy Evaluation	0.130** (0.053)	0.094 (0.067)	-0.029 (0.053)	0.117** (0.056)
Ukrainian Ethnic Identity	-0.027 (0.043)	-0.187** (0.083)		
Russian Ethnic Identity			-0.062 (0.051)	-0.062 (0.051)
Other Ethnic Identity	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category
Use Ukrainian to Communicate at Home	-0.046 (0.031)	0.097** (0.049)		
Use Russian to Communicate at Home			0.046 (0.057)	0.074 (0.061)
Use Other Language to Communicate	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category	Ref. category

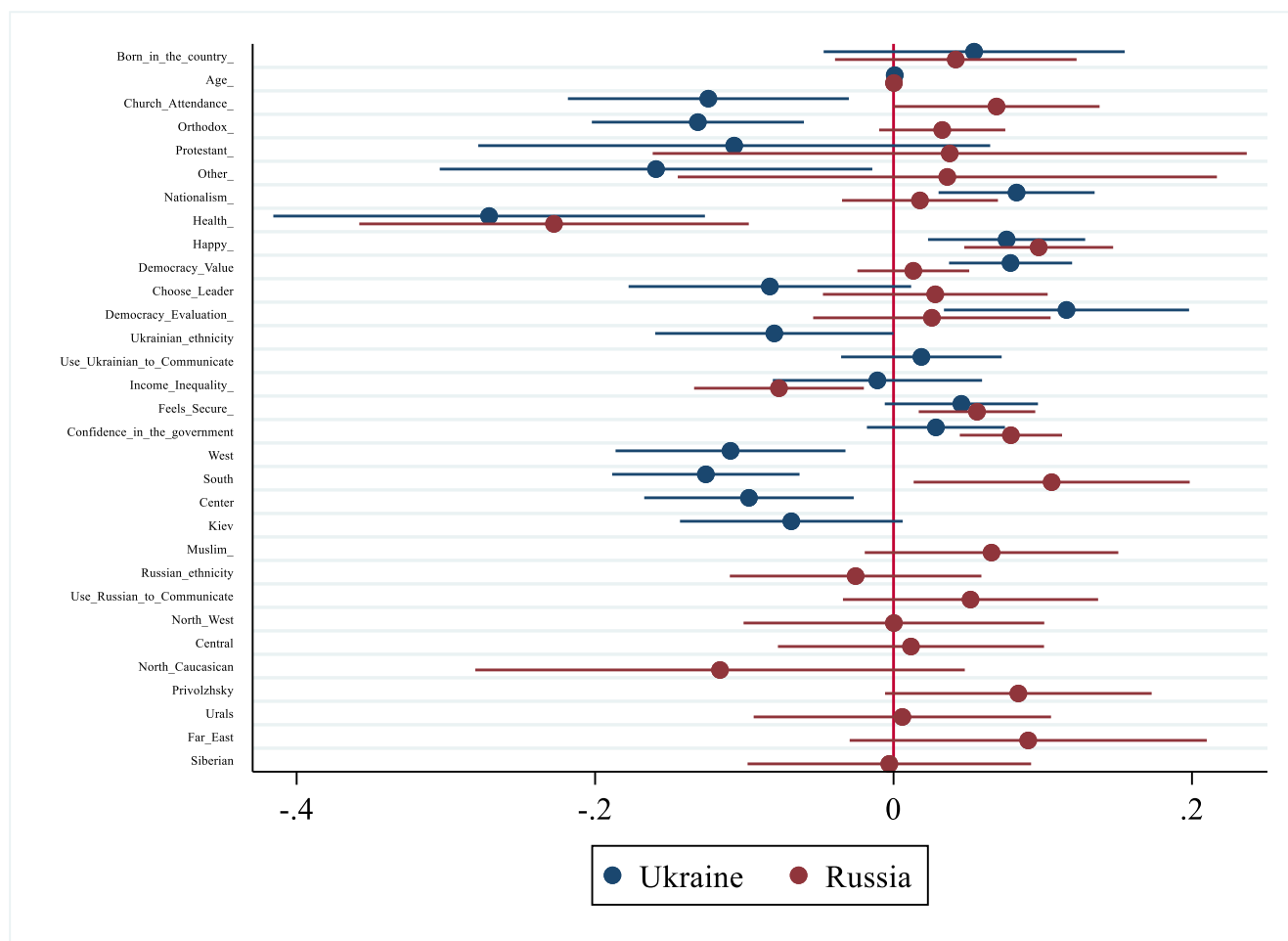
at Home				
Income Inequality	-0.007 (0.050)	-0.118* (0.063)	-0.076* (0.045)	-0.067 (0.041)
Feel Secure	-0.001 (0.032)	0.106*** (0.041)	0.018 (0.026)	0.087*** (0.026)
Confidence in the Government	0.015 (0.029)	0.036 (0.038)	0.071*** (0.023)	0.102*** (0.024)
Regions (Ukraine)				
East	Ref. category	Ref. category		
West	-0.200*** (0.047)	0.001 (0.075)		
South	-0.103*** (0.034)	-0.119 (0.064)		
Center	-0.094** (0.039)	-0.064 (0.071)		
Kiev	-0.114** (0.047)	0.003 (0.068)		
Regions (Russia)				
Moscow			Ref. category	Ref. category
North West			0.051 (0.056)	-0.119** (0.051)
Central			0.083* (0.048)	-0.152*** (0.038)
North Caucasian			-0.098 (0.074)	-0.087 (0.096)
Privolzhsky			0.101** (0.048)	-0.064 (0.040)
Urals			-0.045 (0.061)	-0.041 (0.048)
Far East			0.124* (0.071)	-0.047 (0.066)
Siberian			-0.026 (0.053)	-0.117** (0.045)
South			0.084* (0.049)	0.045 (0.056)
Log-likelihood	-639.875	-479.891	-905.275	-698.842
Mean VIF	1.43	2.27	1.52	1.92
Observations	1,180	825	1,605	1,369

Source: Author's calculations using the WVS (2011, 2017, and 2020).

Notes: Standard errors in parentheses.

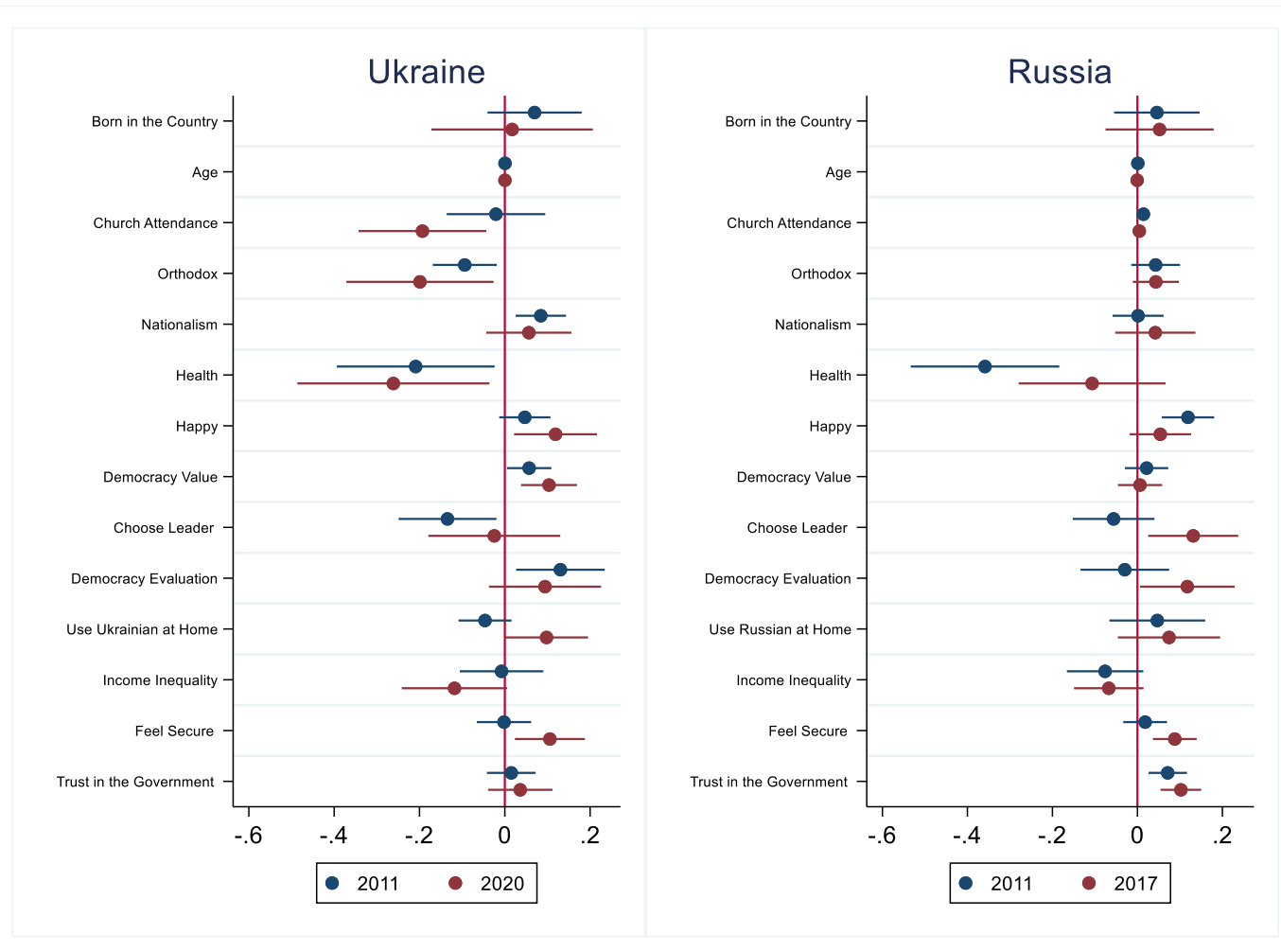
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

FIGURE 1. Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Trusting Others: Ukraine vs. Russia



Notes: The average marginal effects were calculated for the pooled sample that combined data from 2011, 2017 and 2020. The calculations are done based on the models reported in Column 5 (see Table 3 for Ukraine and Table 4 for Russia). Average marginal effects for the variable “Catholic” were suppressed due to the wide variation of its predicted probabilities.

FIGURE 2. Change in Average Marginal Effects on the Probability of Trusting Others: Ukraine vs. Russia



Notes: The average marginal effects were calculated for each wave separately based on the models reported in Table 5.