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## THE INFLUENCE OF IDENTITY ON THE LEVEL OF YOUTH TRUST IN POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF MEGACITIES IN KAZAKHSTAN

This article analyzes the influence of various types of identity (national, political, religious, and professional) on the level of youth trust in political institutions in the megacities of Kazakhstan. In the context of political culture transformation, urbanization, and digitalization, the issue of youth trust in state institutions is significant, as trust in government institutions indicates political stability and civic engagement in socio-political processes. The study's methodological framework is based on a quantitative sociological analysis conducted using a representative sample (N = 1598) of young people residing in Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent. An adapted institutional trust scale was employed to measure the level of institutional trust, while a multidimensional approach to social identity assessed the degree of different identity types. Data analysis was done using correlation analysis and multivariate statistical methods in SPSS software. The findings indicate that socio-economic characteristics and identification patterns determine youth trust in political institutions. Religious identity strongly influences trust in government institutions, as evidenced by its high correlation with trust in the government, the president, and local authorities. National identity also has a significant impact, particularly on trust in the parliament and government. Political identity primarily affects trust in political parties, whereas professional identity demonstrates moderate correlations with trust in all political institutions. The results confirm the hypothesis that identity type is a significant factor in shaping youth trust in state institutions. This study contributes to political sociology and youth studies by expanding the understanding of the determinants of political trust in the post-Soviet space. The practical significance of the research lies in the potential application of its findings in developing youth policies aimed at strengthening trust in state institutions and shaping political socialization strategies that account for young people's identification characteristics. This potential impact on policy development should make the audience feel the practical relevance and importance of the study, as it provides actionable insights for policymakers and researchers in the field.

**Keywords:** trust, youth, political institutions, identity, Kazakhstan.

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### Жастардың саяси институттарға деген сенім деңгейіне сәйкестіктің әсері: Қазақстан мегаполистерінің мысалында

Мақалада Қазақстанның мегаполистеріндегі саяси институттарға жастардың сенім деңгейіне сәйкестіктің әртүрлі түрлерінің (ұлттық, саяси, діни, кәсіби) әсерін талдау ұсынылған. Саяси мәдениеттің трансформациясы, урбанизация және цифрландыру жағдайында жастардың мемлекеттік құрылымдарға деген сенімі ерекше маңызға ие болады, өйткені билік институттарына деген сенім саяси тұрақтылық пен азаматтардың қоғамдық-саяси процестерге тартылуының көрсеткіші болып табылады. Зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізіне Астана, Алматы және Шымкент қалаларында тұратын жастардың (N = 1598) репрезентативті үлгісі негізінде жүргізілген сандық социологиялық талдау кіреді. Сенім деңгейін өлшеу үшін бейімделген институционалдық сенім шкаласы пайдаланылды және әртүрлі сәйкестік түрлерінің ауырлық дәрежесі әлеуметтік сәйкестілікке көп өлшемді тәсілді қолдану арқылы бағаланды. Деректерді талдау SPSS бағдарламалық жасақтамасындағы корреляциялық талдау әдістері мен көп өлшемді статистиканы қолдану арқылы жүзеге асырылды. Зерттеу нәтижелері жастардың саяси институттарға деген сенім деңгейі тек әлеуметтік-экономикалық сипаттамаларға ғана емес, сонымен қатар

ліктеріне де байланысты екенін көрсетті. Билік институттарына деген сенімге ең айқын әсер діни сәйкестілік болып табылады, бұл Үкіметке, президентке және жергілікті өзін-өзі басқару органдарына деген сеніммен жоғары корреляцияда көрінеді. Ұлттық бірегейлік, әсіресе Парламент пен үкіметке деген сенімге қатысты айтарлықтай әсер етеді. Саяси сәйкестілік негізінен саяси партияларға деген сенімге әсер етеді, ал кәсіби сәйкестік Барлық саяси институттарға деген сеніммен қалыпты корреляцияны көрсетеді. Алынған нәтижелер сәйкестік типі жастардың мемлекеттік институттарға деген сенімін қалыптастырудың маңызды факторы болып табылады деген гипотезаны қолдайды. Бұл зерттеу посткеңестік кеңістіктегі саяси сенімнің детерминанттары туралы түсініктерді кеңейте отырып, саясат әлеуметтануы мен жастарды зерттеудің дамуына ықпал етеді. Зерттеудің практикалық маңыздылығы оның тұжырымдарын мемлекеттік институттарға деген сенімді нығайтуға бағытталған жастар саясатын әзірлеу кезінде, сондай-ақ олардың сәйкестендіру сипаттамаларын ескере отырып, жастарды саяси әлеуметтендіру стратегияларын қалыптастыру кезінде пайдалану мүмкіндігі болып табылады.

**Түйін сөздер:** сенім, жастар, саяси институттар, бірегейлік, Қазақстан.

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### **Влияние идентичности на уровень доверия молодежи к политическим институтам: на примере мегаполисов Казахстана**

В статье представлен анализ влияния различных типов идентичности (национальной, политической, религиозной, профессиональной) на уровень доверия молодежи к политическим институтам в мегаполисах Казахстана. В условиях трансформации политической культуры, урбанизации и цифровизации, проблема доверия молодежи к государственным структурам приобретает особую значимость, поскольку доверие к институтам власти является индикатором политической стабильности и вовлеченности граждан в общественно-политические процессы.

Методологическая основа исследования включает количественный социологический анализ, проведенный на основе репрезентативной выборки (N=1598) молодежи, проживающей в Астане, Алматы и Шымкенте. Для измерения уровня доверия использовалась адаптированная шкала институционального доверия, а степень выраженности различных типов идентичности оценивалась с применением многомерного подхода к социальной идентичности. Анализ данных осуществлялся с использованием методов корреляционного анализа и многомерной статистики в программном обеспечении SPSS. Результаты исследования продемонстрировали, что уровень доверия молодежи к политическим институтам обусловлен не только социально-экономическими характеристиками, но и идентификационными особенностями. Наиболее выраженное влияние на доверие к институтам власти оказывает религиозная идентичность, что проявляется в высокой корреляции с доверием к правительству, президенту и органам местного самоуправления. Национальная идентичность также имеет значимое влияние, особенно в отношении доверия к парламенту и правительству. Политическая идентичность оказывает влияние преимущественно на доверие к политическим партиям, тогда как профессиональная идентичность демонстрирует умеренные корреляции с доверием ко всем политическим институтам. Полученные результаты подтверждают гипотезу о том, что тип идентичности является значимым фактором формирования доверия молодежи к государственным институтам. Данное исследование вносит вклад в развитие социологии политики и молодежных исследований, расширяя представления о детерминантах политического доверия в постсоветском пространстве. Практическая значимость исследования заключается в возможности использования его выводов при разработке молодежной политики, направленной на укрепление доверия к государственным институтам, а также в формировании стратегий политической социализации молодежи с учетом их идентификационных характеристик.

**Ключевые слова:** доверие, молодежь, политические институты, идентичность, Казахстан.

## **Introduction**

*Justification of the Research Topic.* The study of youth trust in political institutions is a crucial academic task, as this indicator reflects not only the stability of the political system but also the extent of

youth engagement in public processes. In Kazakhstan, research on trust in state institutions has primarily focused on socio-economic factors such as income level, employment, and education. However, the influence of identity on political trust remains underexplored, particularly in the country's mega-

cities. International studies (Inglehart, 2005; Norris, 2011) suggest that national, political, religious, and professional identity can significantly impact citizens' trust in government institutions. However, this aspect has been overlooked mainly in Kazakhstan, where urbanization, globalization, and digitalization shape new identity models among youth. Despite studies on youth policy and political participation, a gap remains in analyzing the relationship between youth identity and trust in state institutions. This issue is particularly relevant for megacities such as Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent, where youth represent highly diverse social groups, and political socialization occurs unevenly. Thus, the choice of this research topic is justified by both a scientific and practical problem: the absence of a comprehensive analysis of how different types of identity influence youth trust in political institutions in the major cities of Kazakhstan. This study, focusing on the influence of identity on political trust in the post-Soviet space, is a novel and unique contribution to the field, promising to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic to the audience.

*Relevance of the Topic.* The level of youth trust in political institutions is a key indicator of the stability of democratic processes and the effectiveness of state governance. Traditionally, this issue has been analyzed through socio-economic determinants (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 2000). However, contemporary trends indicate that identity is increasingly significant in shaping political trust. In the megacities of Kazakhstan, shifts in youth value orientations make this topic particularly relevant.

Kazakhstani youth exhibit diverse political behavior patterns: some remain loyal to state institutions, others display political apathy, and a third group actively engages in alternative forms of civic participation. National identity in Kazakhstan has traditionally been a stabilizing factor in politics. At the same time, political activism among youth is growing, especially in Almaty, where skepticism toward state institutions is more pronounced. In contrast, Shymkent demonstrates a higher level of trust in the government and local authorities, primarily due to strong traditional ties and religious identity. Moreover, religious identity has been shown to correlate with trust in political structures (Omirzakova, 2021: 92). Religious adherence varies among Kazakhstani youth, potentially creating additional differences in trust toward the state. Professional identity also plays a role in political trust; young professionals, particularly those working in the public sector, tend to exhibit higher trust in the govern-

ment, whereas students and unemployed youth often express dissatisfaction with state institutions. Thus, studying the relationship between identity and trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities addresses contemporary academic challenges. It deepens our understanding of youth political socialization mechanisms and provides recommendations for developing effective youth policies to strengthen trust in state institutions.

*This study's research object is the level of youth trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities, specifically Astana, Almaty, and Shymkent. The research subject, on the other hand, is the influence of different types of identity (national, political, religious, and professional) on youth trust in political institutions. This distinction helps to clearly define the focus and scope of the study.*

*The study aims to analyze the relationship between youth identity types and the level of trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities.*

*Research Hypothesis is that the level of youth trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities is determined by socio-economic factors and identity type (national, political, religious, and professional).*

*Theoretical and Methodological Approaches.* This study is based on several key sociological and political science approaches that explain the influence of identity on youth trust in political institutions. These approaches include specific theories and methodologies chosen for their relevance and applicability to the research topic. These approaches provide a robust theoretical and methodological framework for the study, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings.

According to social capital theory, trust is a fundamental element of successful institutions and social stability. This framework posits that youth trust is shaped not only by economic and political factors but also by social ties, values, and character. Political culture theory examines the influence of national and historical factors on youth political socialization, recognizing that youth political socialization occurs through collective standards and views. Social identification theory (Tajfel, 1986: 73) explains how membership in particular communities (domestic, spiritual, and professional) influences behavioral attitudes, such as opinions of administrative organizations. In this regard, it is crucial to examine how youth who identify with diverse groups display differing degrees of trust in the leadership. According to modernization theory (Inglehart, 2005), socio-financial dynamics, includ-

ing urbanization, digitization, and the expansion of education, are linked to changes in young people's value orientations. According to this method, young people in Kazakhstan's cities are influenced by both regional and global trends, creating new models of faith in government agencies. Using these theoretical frameworks, this analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics underlying youth political trust and elucidates the disparities in trust levels between different groups in society.

**Scientific and Practical Relevance of the Research.** The research is of very high academic relevance as it enhances political sociology and studies in youth by advancing knowledge on how identity influences political trust in state institutions. Through an examination of the relationship between national, political, religious, and professional identity, the research provides emerging determinants of political trust beyond the traditional explanations based on economic and institutional factors. Moreover, its findings will be relevant to comparative analysis of political socialization among young people in Kazakhstan and other post-Soviet countries, and hence the research will be useful on the international platform. Utilitarian-wise, the research can help government departments dealing with youth policy-making inasmuch as it provides deeper understanding of the intentions and dispositions of young citizens of Kazakhstan's megalopolises. The research findings can help shape political communication strategies that take into account the unique identities of young people. Additionally, the data can support civil society organizations and NGOs in creating programs that boost youth involvement in civic activities and include them in decision-making. Over time, these efforts could improve political stability in Kazakhstan, decrease youth apathy and protests, and strengthen democratic institutions.

### Literature review

Youth identity in Kazakhstan plays a significant role in shaping trust in political institutions. In a context of ethnocultural diversity and ongoing nation-building, various aspects of identity—including ethnic, civic, linguistic, and religious—affect perceptions of state authority and the degree of youth engagement in political processes (Sharipova, 2020: 89). Kazakh-speaking citizens exhibit a higher level of trust in state institutions compared to Russian-speaking citizens (Sharipova, 2020: 91). These findings may be linked to the post-Soviet

state policy aimed at strengthening Kazakh identity, which some groups perceive as a form of cultural hegemony (Blackburn, 2019: 217). Furthermore, research by Burova et al. indicates that youth with a strong national identity are more likely to support government initiatives. In contrast, those oriented toward global values tend to be more skeptical of state activities (Burova, 2023).

The influence of ethnic identity on trust in political institutions is a critical factor in youth political socialization (Blackburn, 2019: 221). An analysis of the historical and cultural aspects of national identity formation suggests that young people who retain elements of Soviet identity are less inclined to trust contemporary political structures (Blackburn, 2019: 218). This is explained by the fact that Soviet ideology was based on internationalism and Russification. In contrast, modern Kazakhstan actively promotes the concept of a national state (Sharipova, 2020: 92). Baikulova et al. highlight a clear divide between youth who prioritize national identity and those who perceive themselves as part of a globalized world, which significantly impacts their level of political activity and trust in state institutions (Baikulova, 2024: 289). At the same time, as noted by Nikolayenko, the use of social media and digital platforms fosters a critical perception of political processes, particularly among urban youth with access to independent sources of information (Nikolayenko, 2015: 257).

Mass media plays a key role in shaping youth political identity and trust in state institutions (Koh, 2023: 91). Koh's study emphasizes that reliance on traditional media, such as television and state-controlled press, reinforces trust in government, whereas social media often fosters a more critical stance toward political processes. Social networks provide access to alternative viewpoints, frequently more critical of state structures (Nikolayenko, 2015: 260). The impact of the information environment on political identity is particularly evident among youth in major cities such as Almaty and Astana, where internet access is significantly higher than in rural areas (Sairambay, 2022: 571). Consequently, the information environment exerts a dual influence: On the one hand, it promotes civic engagement, but on the other, it diminishes trust in traditional state institutions (Yeskarauly, 2015). Economic conditions also play a crucial role in shaping political trust among youth (Junisbai, 2020: 53). Research indicates that economic instability and high youth unemployment rates contribute to declining trust in state structures, particularly in large cities, where



young people are more exposed to global economic trends (Junisbai, 2020: 55). Perceptions of good governance positively impact youth subjective well-being, which, in turn, strengthens trust in state institutions. This is especially relevant in Kazakhstan, where government-led social and economic reforms are central to stabilizing the political landscape (Serikbayeva, 2022: 140). It is important to note that youth with access to quality education and promising employment opportunities exhibit higher levels of trust in state institutions compared to those facing difficulties in social and economic adaptation (Sairambay, 2022: 574). The political socialization of Kazakhstani youth is shaped by multiple factors, including participation in civic initiatives and social activism (Sairambay, 2022: 577). Young people engaged in political and social movements display a stronger civic identity, which enhances their involvement in political processes. However, this same group is more likely to criticize the inefficiency of state institutions and demand greater transparency in governance (Yeskarauly, 2015).

Yeskarauly's research (2015) examines the policy of inclusive nation-building to foster a unified civic society, which could potentially increase youth trust in state structures. Nonetheless, differences persist between young people who grew up in a multicultural environment and those who identify exclusively with Kazakh national identity, leading to variations in levels of political trust (Sharipova, 2020: 103). Overall, youth trust in political institutions remains a dynamic process influenced by numerous sociocultural and economic factors, underscoring the need for further research.

### Materials and methods

The study was conducted using a survey method, with a representative sample of 1,598 respondents. The data collection instrument was a structured questionnaire designed to measure identity and trust in political institutions. The sample included 1,598 individuals, distributed according to demographic characteristics (see Table 1).

**Table 1** – Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Parameter	Category	Number of Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Total Sample Size		1,598	100
Gender	Male	835	52.3
	Female	763	47.7
Age	18–24 years	780	48.8
	25–29 years	375	23.5
	30–35 years	443	27.7
Marital Status	Single	1,043	65.3
	Married	401	25.1
	Divorced	107	6.7
	Widowed	47	2.9
Number of Children	No children	1,090	68.2
	1–2 children	291	18.2
	3–4 children	141	8.8
	More than 4 children	76	4.8
Education Level	Primary	74	4.6
	Secondary	657	41.1
	Higher education	803	50.3
	Postgraduate	64	4.0

Continuation of the table

Parameter	Category	Number of Respondents (N)	Percentage (%)
Employment Sector	Government & Public Sector	374	23.4
	Municipal & Infrastructure Services	75	4.7
	Healthcare & Social Welfare	193	12.1
	Education, Science & Culture	112	7.0
	Industry & Construction	42	2.6
	Agriculture & Trade	85	5.3
	Finance & IT Sector	134	8.4
	Business & Food Services	238	14.9
	Military Service	154	9.6
	Students	191	12.0
City of Residence	Almaty	590	36.9
	Astana	472	29.5
	Shymkent	536	33.5
Ethnicity	Kazakh	1,011	63.3
	Russian	260	16.3
	German	40	2.5
	Tatar	52	3.3
	Uzbek	51	3.2
	Uyghur	34	2.1
	Ukrainian	35	2.2
	Tajik	89	5.6
Personal Income (Tenge)	No income	178	11.1
	0 – 45,000	211	13.2
	45,001 – 100,000	209	13.1
	100,001 – 200,000	254	15.9
	200,001 – 300,000	227	14.2
	300,001 – 400,000	193	12.1
	400,001 – 500,000	110	6.9
	500,001 – 1,000,000	105	6.6
	Above 1,000,000	111	6.9

The survey questionnaire included questions to assess the strength of different identity types (national, political, religious, and professional) and their impact on trust in political institutions. A multi-dimensional approach to social identity was employed to evaluate identity expression levels, and an adapted institutional trust scale was used to measure trust in political institutions.

*Identity Measurement Methodology.* The identity of respondents was assessed based on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979) and the multidimensional identity approach (Phinney, 1992). The mea-

surement employed a self-identification scale based on the degree of respondents' affiliation with various social groups and categories. The identity construct included the following aspects: national identity, professional identity, political identity, ethnic identity, religious identity, and linguistic and cultural identity. Each of these aspects was evaluated using a Likert scale (ranging from 1 – «do not identify at all» to 5 – «fully identify»), allowing for the identification of the degree of expression of different forms of identity. An institutional trust scale was used to assess the level of trust, adapted from the

World Values Survey methodology. Respondents were asked to evaluate their trust in the following institutions: government institutions (President, Parliament, Government), political parties, and local government bodies. Trust was also measured using a five-point scale (from 1 – «do not trust at all» to 5 – «fully trust»), enabling an analysis of institutional trust levels among respondents. Data was processed using SPSS software, and descriptive and inferential statistical analysis was applied. In the initial analysis, a frequency analysis was performed to examine the distribution of responses across key variables. The statistical processing included an analysis of valid and missing values and cumulative percentage calculations. Additionally, correlation analysis was conducted to identify relationships between different forms of identity and levels of trust in political institutions. This analysis allowed for assessing the degree of dependence between variables, identifying significant correlations, and determining key factors influencing trust levels in society. The study was based on a quantitative approach, ensuring the measurement of identity and trust using standardized scales, which provided reliability and comparability of results.

## Results and discussion

Trust in government institutions is one of the key indicators of the stability of the political system and social cohesion within a society. It reflects the legitimacy of state authority, citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of government structures, and the level of satisfaction with the current political and social situation. In the context of ongoing social and economic transformations, examining the factors influencing trust in political institutions has become particularly relevant. Analyzing gender differences in trust levels reveals variations in respondents' approval of different government institutions. Among men, 24.4% fully trust the president, compared to 20.4% among women. The proportion of respondents who "rather trust" the president also differs: 37.1% among men and 41.8% among women. Meanwhile, the level of distrust (including "rather disagree" and "completely disagree" positions) is comparable between gender groups. Trust in parliament follows a similar pattern: 18.8% of men and 16.4% of women fully trust this institution, whereas 31.7% of men and 37.7% of women express partial trust. Regarding the government, 19.4% of men fully trust it, compared to 17.8% of women. Thus, women tend to express moderately positive attitudes

toward government institutions, whereas men demonstrate more differentiated assessments. Trust in political parties remains relatively low regardless of gender. 18.0% of men and 15.9% of women fully trust political parties, while 36.3% and 38.5% express partial trust. The level of distrust in local government institutions is 29.0% among men ("rather disagree"), whereas it is slightly lower at 27.8% among women. The analysis of age groups shows that younger respondents (18–24 years old) are more likely to express trust in the president: 21.4% of respondents in this age group fully trust the head of state, while 41.0% rather trust him. In the 30–35 age group, these figures are somewhat lower—25.5% and 39.5%, respectively. As age increases, the proportion of respondents who express complete trust in government institutions gradually declines, while the number of those who rather distrust or completely distrust them rises. For instance, among respondents aged 25–29 years, 33.3% express distrust toward parliament ("rather disagree"), and among those aged 30–35 years, this figure reaches 29.6%. A similar trend is observed regarding the judicial system. Among young respondents (18–24 years old), 17.9% fully trust the judiciary, while in the older age group (30–35 years), this figure decreases to 14.7%. Trust in local government authorities among 18–24-year-olds stands at 16.8% ("fully agree"), compared to 14.4% among 30–35-year-olds.

The data suggest a correlation between respondents' education levels and attitudes toward government institutions. Among those with primary education, 20.3% fully trust the president, whereas among respondents with higher education, this figure is 22.3%. A lower level of trust in political parties is observed among respondents with postgraduate education: 17.2% express complete trust, compared to 21.6% among those with primary education. The judicial system elicits the most skepticism among respondents with postgraduate education, where 32.8% indicated that they do not trust the judiciary. This suggests that more educated citizens tend to perceive government institutions more critically. Ethnic background also influences the level of trust in government institutions. Among Kazakhs, 22.1% fully trust the president, while among Russians, this figure is 23.1%. However, distrust toward parliament is higher among representatives of national minorities, which may be linked to perceptions of political processes and the representation of different ethnic groups in government structures. An analysis of differences in trust levels among residents of major cities indicates that Shymkent has the highest

trust in the president (25.9% fully trust) compared to Almaty (21.7%) and Astana (19.7%). A similar pattern is observed regarding parliament and the government: residents of Shymkent are more likely to express trust, whereas Almaty and Astana exhibit a more critical attitude.

Respondents' income levels also influence their trust in government institutions. Those earning more than 1,000,000 tenge demonstrate lower trust in the president (21.6% fully trust), while among those with an income below 45,000 tenge, this figure is 26.4%. Respondents with an income between 500,000 and 1,000,000 tenge express the highest skepticism toward parliament: 38.1% state that they do not trust this institution, and 19.0% do not.

The data analysis indicates significant differences in trust levels toward government institutions based on respondents' socio-demographic

characteristics. Gender differences manifest in women exhibiting greater trust in government structures, whereas men provide more varied assessments. Young people tend to trust the government more; however, they become more critical in their evaluations as they age—higher education and income correlate with increased skepticism toward political institutions. Ethnic background also plays a role, which may be linked to different perceptions of the political process and the representation of various groups within government structures.

An analysis of correlation relationships between different types of identity—professional, political, national, and religious identity—and the level of youth trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities (Table 2) reveals statistically significant dependencies ( $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table 2** – Correlations Between Identity Types and Youth Trust in Political Institutions in the Megacities of Kazakhstan

Identity Type	I Trust the President	I Trust the Parliament	I Trust the Government	I Trust Political Parties	I Trust the Local Government	I Trust the Judicial System
Professional Identity	,301**	,274**	,292**	,264**	,240**	,213**
	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Political Identity	,245**	,251**	,278**	,288**	,264**	,212**
	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
National Identity	,292**	,301**	,299**	,288**	,288**	,258**
	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
Religious Identity	,340**	,327**	,361**	,323**	,342**	,303**
	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000

*Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).*

Professional identity exhibits moderate positive correlations with trust in all examined political institutions. The strongest associations are observed with trust in the President ( $r = 0.301$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the Government ( $r = 0.292$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that professional self-realization plays a crucial role in shaping trust in state structures. The weakest correlation is found about the judicial system ( $r = 0.213$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which may indicate the limited influence of professional identity on the perception of judicial bodies. These findings align with the study by Malkina et al., which emphasizes that the perceived effectiveness of government institutions and the level of interpersonal trust are key determinants of political trust (Malkina, 2020: 77). The results in-

dicate that political identity is positively associated with trust in political institutions, with the strongest correlation found with trust in political parties ( $r = 0.288$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the government ( $r = 0.278$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). This confirms the hypothesis that identification with the political system contributes to higher trust in the corresponding institutions. The weakest influence of political identity is observed about trust in the judicial system ( $r = 0.212$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

National identity demonstrates consistently positive correlations with trust in all political institutions. The strongest associations are observed with trust in the Parliament ( $r = 0.301$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the Government ( $r = 0.299$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that a sense of national belonging fosters loyalty to



state authorities. The correlation is slightly weaker concerning the judicial system ( $r = 0.258$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which may be attributed to specific perceptions of the justice system. These findings are supported by Kiselev S.'s research, which explores the correlation between national identity and the level of political trust (Kiselev, 2014: 55).

Religious identity exhibits the highest correlation coefficients among all identity types, indicating a significant impact of religious beliefs on trust in political institutions. The strongest correlations are observed with trust in the Government ( $r = 0.361$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and local government authorities ( $r = 0.342$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). High correlations are also found with trust in the President ( $r = 0.340$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the judicial system ( $r = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that religious attitudes serve as a significant source of trust in state institutions. These results are consistent with the findings of Ilicheva I. and Lapin A., who analyze the influence of religious beliefs on trust in government and political institutions (Ilicheva, 2022: 45).

The obtained results confirm the hypothesis that youth trust in political institutions in the megacities of Kazakhstan is determined not only by socioeconomic factors but also by identity type. Among the examined factors, religious identity has the most substantial impact on trust in political institutions, while professional identity has a moderate effect. Political and national identity also demonstrate significant but less pronounced correlations. These findings underscore the importance of considering identity-related factors in analyzing youth political trust and developing strategies to enhance trust levels.

## Conclusion

The study's findings' analysis confirms the existence of significant relationships between youth identity types and levels of trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities. A complicated socio-political phenomenon, trust in government institutions is influenced by several variables, such as socioeconomic status, age, educational attainment, political orientation, religious and national affiliation, and professional identification. In addition to classic explanatory trust models that are primarily based on socioeconomic variables, the correlations found show that youth identity features have a substantial impact on opinions of political institutions. The findings show that faith in governmental institutions is most significantly shaped by religious identification. The president, the government, and

local authorities are more likely to be trusted by young people who strongly identify as religious. Both the active participation of religious organizations in socio-political processes and the influence of religious worldviews, which frequently encourage recognition of hierarchical power systems, may be responsible for this. National identity also exerts a considerable influence, particularly on trust in the Parliament and the Government, highlighting the connection between national belonging and perceptions of state legitimacy.

Political identity, as expected, has the most substantial impact on trust in political parties while also correlating with trust in the Government. This supports the thesis that young people identifying with specific political ideologies or movements are likelier to trust institutions they perceive as representing their interests. Professional identity, in turn, exhibits moderate correlations with trust in all political institutions, with the most substantial impact on perceptions of the Government and the President. This may be explained by the fact that young people often perceive professional self-realization as a result of interactions with state institutions that regulate the labor market and social policies.

Beyond identity-related influences, analyzing socio-demographic factors reveals important differences in trust levels across various youth categories. Gender differences show that women tend to demonstrate more moderate and stable trust in government institutions, whereas men provide more varied assessments. Age-related differences indicate that younger respondents (18–24 years old) are likelier to express trust in the government. However, trust declines with age, possibly due to an increased critical perception of political processes.

Education level and income also influence attitudes toward government institutions. The findings reveal a tendency for respondents with higher education, particularly postgraduate education, to exhibit more critical views of political structures. This supports the hypothesis that access to a broader range of information and the development of analytical thinking contribute to more balanced and critical evaluations of government performance. A similar pattern is observed concerning income levels: respondents with higher incomes are more likely to be skeptical of political institutions, whereas youth with lower incomes demonstrate higher trust.

Regional differences indicate that trust in government institutions is highest in Shymkent compared to Almaty and Astana. This may be linked to

historical and socio-cultural factors and differences in levels of urbanization and political culture. In Almaty and Astana, a more critical stance toward state institutions is observed. This could be attributed to greater youth engagement in civic and political activities, broader access to information, and a more substantial presence in civil society.

Thus, the study confirms that socio-economic factors and different types of identity influence youth trust in political institutions in Kazakhstan's megacities. Religious identity has the most pro-

nounced impact, followed by national, political, and professional identity. The findings support the hypothesis that youth identity characteristics are crucial to trust in government institutions.

The study's practical significance lies in its potential application to developing effective strategies for government engagement with youth. Incorporating identity-related factors into public policy could enhance trust in government institutions, thereby contributing to better political stability and social cohesion.

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Келін түсті: 09 ақпан 2025 жыл  
Қабылданды: 18 тамыз 2025 жыл