Sexual Orientation, Political Trust, and Same-Sex Relationship Recognition Policies: Evidence from Europe

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Abstract
This study uses data from the European Social Survey to analyse the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on the political trust of sexual minorities. We exploit temporal and geographic variation in the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies to test the effect of these policies on the political trust of sexual minorities. Findings suggest that same-sex relationship recognition policies increase the trust that sexual minorities have in the actors and institutions that were integral to the policy change. The findings further suggest an incentive mechanism exists for politicians and political parties to follow public policies that reduce structural stigma of minority groups and improve their political trust.

1. Introduction

A large literature has documented the determinants and importance of social trust (see *inter alia*: Zak & Knack, 2001; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002; Beugelsdijk et al, 2004; Bjørnskov, 2007; Nunn & Wantchekon, 2011) and more recently the determinants and importance of political trust. Economists have demonstrated that crime, protests, economic downturns and epidemics all lead to lower levels of trust in political leaders and institutions (Blanco & Ruiz, 2013; Grosjean et al, 2013; Sangnier & Zylberberg, 2017; Eichengreen et al, 2020). Furthermore, political trust is important for economic and social growth (Hwang, 2017), political participation (Hooghe & Marien, 2013), wellbeing (Grönlund and Setälä, 2007), and the stability of democratic regimes (Easton, 1965). It lowers transaction costs in economic and political relationships (Fukuyama, 1995), helps governments in implementing reforms that have longer rather than shorter term benefits (Gyorffy, 2013), improves law compliance and crime rates (Marien & Hooghe, 2011; Brodeur et al, 2021), and is key in framing individual policy preferences (Pitlik & Kouba, 2015). Further, trust in political institutions is frequently associated with institutional performance (Pitlik & Kouba, 2015) and institutional confidence is related to personal perceptions of incorruptibility and honesty of institutional actors (Van Ryzin, 2011; Gronlund & Setala, 2012).

With political trust declining in Europe (Algan et al, 2017), policy makers are keen to improve citizens' trust, and researchers are interested in understanding ways to do so, and a vast literature has documented the relationship between minority group status and political trust. Groups that have historically been discriminated against report significantly lower levels of political trust (see for example Schur & Adya, 2013 and Reher, 2018 for people with disabilities, and Mangum, 2016 and Wilkes & Wu, 2018 for ethnic minorities). In explaining these negative political trust gaps, scholars have linked this to discrimination and prejudice at both the institutional and interpersonal level. Policies that reduce stigma faced by minorities not only improve the institutional landscape for minorities but also improve attitudes towards minorities (Aksoy et al, 2020). That is, these policies reduce both structural and interpersonal stigma. As such, these policies may be central to improving the political trust of minorities.

According to performance theory (see Newton & Norris, 2000 *inter alia* for an application), political trust reflects an individual's performance evaluation of political actors and institutions and political trustworthiness can be seen as a function of an ability to promote and guarantee rights, liberties and equality among other things (Mishler & Rose, 2005; Röder & Mühlau, 2012). As such, Röder & Mühlau (2012) highlight that an institution's ability to promote equality and fairness will be more salient in minorities' evaluations. However, little is known about the impact of equality policy on the trust that individuals have in the actors and institutions that change these policies. While some work has identified a positive relationship between anti- discrimination policies and generalized trust (Ziller, 2017), no such research to date has examined the impact on political trust. Same-sex relationship recognition policies reduce structural stigma faced by sexual minorities by expanding access to legal recognition of relationships for sexual minorities. If the existence of policies that reduce inequalities are a salient factor in the performance evaluation of political institutions and actors among minorities, then these policies should have a positive impact on the trust that sexual minorities have in those legislative actors and institutions. Given that political actors and institutions (encompassing politicians, political parties, and parliaments/ governments) are intrinsic to the passage of equality policy and the implementation of policy, one can hypothesize that equality policy is associated with the trust that minorities have in these institutions and actors, and in the current work this is tested for the first time.

From a public choice perspective, the persuasive lack of a clear sense of empathy or good citizenship that is articulated in the work of Buchanan (having its roots in Buchanan & Tullock's (1962) seminal work) and of political activity motivated by self-interest is appealing. It is well-established that small, homogeneous groups with strong self-interest tend to be more effective suppliers of political support than larger groups with more diverse interests, and indeed the political participation of sexual minorities has been shown to be significantly greater than that of heterosexuals (Turnbull-Dugarte & Townsley, 2020). As such, the vote motive provides re-election seeking politicians with strong incentives to respond to the demands of small and/or minority groups that resonates with the well-established literature around special interest groups as originally forwarded by Olson (1965). This is very much in the spirit of the earliest public choice scholars such as Black and Downs who saw the role of political parties as vote gatherers, with this vote motive shaping their political positioning, not

necessarily because they think they are right, but rather because they think they will win. Moreover, Badgett (2005) explicitly proposes two political incentives for passing SSRRPs. Highlighting both the efficiency motivations for change, and a conflict and power explanation, these avenues incentivise politicians and increase the likelihood that they will pass such legislations. A potential implication of these policies is the impact that they may have on the trust that sexual minorities have in political actors, and importantly within this context, trust and voting for incumbent leaders are positively associated (Hetherington, 1999).

To test the effect of same-sex relationship recognition policies on the trust of sexual minorities, we exploit temporal and geographical variations in policy adoption within a triple-difference model using data from the European Social Survey (ESS) over the period 2004-2018. While it might be argued that the benefits that accrue from increasing political trust of a minority population are marginal, the proportion of individuals identified as a sexual minority is substantial and increasing, such that we are hardly talking about a minority in the broadest sense. For example, while 7.4% of the population in Germany identify as LGBT, 6.9% in Spain, 6.5% in the UK, and 6.4% in the Netherlands (Statista, 2022), Mishel (2019) finds that *self-reported* rates in the US (which has similar patterns to major European countries) are much higher at 20% for women and 10% for men. Furthermore, only 78.9% of Generation Z (those born 1997-2012) self-identify as heterosexual, standing in marked contrast to 91.1% of Baby Boomers (born 1946-1964) (Gallup, 2021). Clearly, the views and norms of the adults of the future, that is the Generation Z's of the world, will be ever more salient.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a review of the previous literature, with Section 3 discussing the policy background in more detail. A discussion of the data and empirical approach used is given in Section 4. Results are reported in Section 5, and an investigation of competing mechanisms is provided in Section 6. Section 7 provides a discussion of the results and some concluding remarks.

2. Background and Related Literature

Previous work has shown that groups historically discriminated against report significantly lower levels of

political trust. For example, Schur & Adya (2013) inter alia used data from the Current Population Survey to show that people with disabilities report significantly lower levels of trust in government. Similarly, Reher's (2018) analysis of European Social Survey data also documented lower levels of political trust for people with disabilities. A similar finding has also been reported for racial minorities, with Mangum (2016) documenting lower levels of political trust among African Americans in his analysis of the 1996 National Black Election Study data, Grabb et al (2009) documenting lower trust of non-white people in Canada, and de Vroome et al (2013) documenting that natives report greater political trust than non-natives in the Netherlands. Indeed, in a review of the literature Wilkes & Wu (2018) report a similar pattern, whereby racial and ethnic minorities generally report lower levels of generalized and political trust.

Much of this literature on minority-based negative trust gaps has linked this relationship to interpersonal and structural stigma and the literature generally documents a negative relationship between stigma and trust. For example, Glanville & Paxton (2007) show that interpersonal trust is negatively correlated with negative encounters such as discrimination and victimization, and Rothstein & Stolle (2008) show that such negative experiences can be at either the interpersonal or institutional level.

Sexual minorities, like other minorities, face discrimination, prejudice, and stigmatization at an interpersonal and institutional level. While other minorities have received significant academic attention, much less work has considered the trust gap for sexual minorities. Platt & Scheitle (2018) analyzed the relationship between sexual orientation and general trust using data from the General Social Survey (2008-2016), finding that sexual minorities do not necessarily report lower levels of general trust, but are more likely to answer "depends" when asked if they trust others. Platt & Scheitle (2018) referred to this as a *contingent* trust gap, in that sexual minorities trust others contingent on additional factors such as their views. They suggested that this contingent trust gap is symptomatic of sexual minorities being more likely to take a contingent approach to their trust of others due to pervasive societal heteronormativity; the existence of the belief and normalization that heterosexuality, heterosexual identities and heterosexual relationships are default or preferred.

Policies such as same-sex relationship recognition that reduce the structural stigma that sexual minorities face are, according to performance theory, likely to play a significant role in the performance evaluations and therefore trust of sexual minorities. While no research to date has explored the relationship between same-sex relationship recognition policies and trust, numerous papers have identified a positive relationship between same-sex relationship recognition policies and other outcomes for sexual minorities. Sansone (2019) used data from the American Community Survey and finds that same-sex relationship recognition policies in the US improved the labor market outcomes of sexual minorities, while Boertien & Vignoli (2019) highlight a positive impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on subjective wellbeing among sexual minorities using data from the Annual Population Survey. More broadly, same-sex relationship recognition policies have been shown to have important consequences for stigma; Aksoy et al (2020) find that same-sex relationship recognition policies in Europe were associated with reductions in interpersonal prejudice towards sexual minorities using data from the European Social Survey. Same-sex relationship recognition policies therefore reduce both structural and interpersonal stigma.

Badgett (2005) discusses two primary political incentives for the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies. The first, which she calls 'efficiency motivations for change', highlights that marriage leads to efficiency gains at both the societal and individual level through household specialization, economies of scale, and reduced transaction costs. Expanding access to marital institutions is therefore 'a pareto-improving modification to existing law' as same-sex relationship recognition policies have a material incentive as they increase the wealth, happiness and health of same-sex couples, which in turn contributes to increased economic productivity. The second motivation relates to 'conflict and power explanations' and highlights the importance of bargaining at both the social and political level. She proposes that the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies is likely associated with (and motivated by) three key factors. First, from a social perspective, countries that have more liberal views towards sexual minorities, or have had recent improvements in views towards sexual minorities, will be more likely to pass same-sex relationship recognition policies. Second, a greater motivation to pass same-sex relationship recognition policies will be seen when groups that support these policies gain power either through increased representation, increases in the vote share of more

liberal parties, decreases in the influence of religious organizations, or increases in the size and power of gay social movements. Finally, where there has been a declining importance in marriage (for example, in countries where there has been an increase in the proportion of heterosexuals that are cohabiting rather than becoming married), there will be less resistance to the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies. In all three cases, the likelihood of backlash from citizens is largely reduced, and thus incentives increase. Overall, Badgett (2005) demonstrates that there are motivations for politicians to pass these policies, and in recent years the social pressures to pass these policies through protests and non-government organisations also likely had a role, as have economic incentives (Badgett et al, 2019). These incentives likely increase the likelihood that policies are introduced and indeed passed into legislation by politicians.

3.   Same-Sex Relationship Recognition Policies

Denmark was the first country in the world to legally recognize same-sex relationships in 1989 through the introduction of registered domestic partnerships. These gave same-sex couples similar fiscal and legal rights to married heterosexuals, and by the end of 2003 a further eight European countries had similarly passed same-sex relationship recognition laws. Consistent with this, Aksoy et al (2020) note that there have been significant improvements in attitudes towards sexual minorities across much of Europe since 2002. A similar pattern is also evident in the US, with Twenge & Blake (2020) showing over a 50% increase in the proportion of people who support same-sex marriage since 1988, which is attributed primarily to time rather than cohort effects.

While there is no Pan-European legislation that requires member states to recognize same-sex relationships, the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) has decided in favor of same-sex relationship recognition policies. Although the ECHR does not require same-sex marriage legalization under the European Convention on Human Rights, it has held that member states must provide legal recognition. In Vallianatos & Others v Greece (2013) and Oliari and Others v Italy (2015), the ECHR ruled that excluding same-sex couples from registering partnerships was a violation of the human rights convention. In contrast, in Schalk & Kopf v Austria (2010) and Chapin & Charpentier v France (2016), it was ruled that restricting access to marriage was not a violation. As

such, the ECHR has set a precedent that demonstrates that not allowing access to legal relationship recognition for same-sex couples (through registered partnerships, civil partnerships, etc.) is a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, although marriage is a separate and often religious institution and as such not allowing same-sex couples to marry is not a breach.

The precedent set by early adopting countries in Europe, combined with the rising public support for same-sex relationship recognition policies and the support of the ECHR therefore created a legislative landscape where the passage of these policies was less likely to face public backlash, and the lack of legislative change could lead to repercussions due to violations of human rights conventions. As such, since 2003 there has been a dramatic increase in the number of countries adopting same-sex relationship recognition policies and by the end of 2018, 24 of the 32 European countries in our ESS sample had adopted such policies. While the early adopters were in Scandinavian and northern European states, these were followed by more north-central (Luxembourg, Switzerland) and peripheral (UK, Spain) countries in the years following 2003, with a further clutch of countries (Hungary, Austria, Portugal and Ireland) passing legislation between 2009-2010. Latterly, Estonia became the first Baltic state to pass legislation in 2014, with religiously Orthodox dominated Cyprus and Greece passing policies in late 2015, and the Catholic dominated Italy in 2016. The remaining countries within our sample, of Israel, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey have not passed any policies. Further details are provided in Appendix Table A1, which shows the year that a SSRRP policy was passed in each country. Further details on the rounds that each country is included in the ESS, and whether there is data before and after the passage of a same sex relationship recognition policy, are also included.

4. Data Description and Empirical Approach

The data used in this study comes from the European Social Survey (ESS), a large, pan- European survey which includes both individual and household level information.[1] The data used is taken from 7 biennial waves of the

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[1] Owing to their rigor in sampling methods, questionnaire design, translation, fieldwork, face-to-face interviewing and pilot testing, the ESS are regarded as the most reliable cross-national surveys of this kind (Kohler, 2007).

ESS covering the period 2004 to 2018.[2] In total, the ESS surveys participants from 38 of the 51 European countries and those not included are generally the smallest countries in terms of both land mass and population, except perhaps for Belarus and Kazakhstan.[3] Importantly, the ESS asks respondents what their relationship to other household members, is including whether a household member is a husband, wife, or partner. This can be combined with information that includes the gender of all household members to identify sexual minorities. Specifically, and consistent with much of the existing empirical literature, if the gender of the respondent and the gender of the corresponding husband, wife, or partner is the same, then these individuals are identified as sexual minorities. Conversely, if the gender of the respondent and the corresponding husband, wife, or partner is different, they are identified as heterosexual. In doing so, it is only possible to identify sexual orientation among individuals who are partnered and as such the sample is restricted to partnered individuals (in same-sex or opposite-sex couples) as no other information on sexual attraction, behavior, or identity is available within the ESS.[4] This method of identifying sexual minorities has become common in the literature because there are only very few surveys that include questions relating to sexual identity, and to the authors knowledge the ESS is the only pan-European survey that has any way of identifying sexual minorities. It should, however, be noted that focusing solely on couples may introduce a bias given that the direct effects of same-sex marriage legalization are greater for same-sex couples than for single sexual minorities.

The sample is restricted to individuals who have no missing information for outcome or control variables, leaving 137,075 individuals across 32 countries, of which 1,742 are identified as sexual minorities. This corresponds to 1.3% of individuals in the pooled ESS sample being identified as sexual minorities.[5]

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[2] The same countries are not surveyed in every wave. For more details on coverage see https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/ and Appendix Table A1.

[3] The ESS does not currently survey participants in Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, San Marino, Georgia, and Vatican City.

[4] It is not possible to identify single or non-cohabiting sexual minorities in the ESS. However, this partnership method has been commonly used in the literature to identify sexual minorities (see *inter alia* Arabsheibani et al, 2005; Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2010; Bridges & Mann, 2019; Turnbull-Dugarte, 2020; Drydakis, 2022) and has been used as a direct measure of discrimination and prejudice (see Ahuja and Lyons, 2019)

[5] Figure A1 in the Appendix plots the proportion of individuals identified as sexual minorities over time. Across the ESS years, there is an increase in the proportion of sexual minority individuals, although the proportion is generally between 1% and 2%. It is not the case, though, that this increase in the proportion of individuals identified as sexual minorities over time is driven by the policy change, or alternatively, predicts the policy change. We demonstrate that this is not the case in Appendix Table A3, where neither a SSRRP dummy

While the ESS includes several questions relating to trust, we make use of questions relating to trust in politicians, trust in political parties, and trust in parliament.[6] All three questions have been included in every wave and all participating countries since wave 2 (conducted in 2004). Specifically, respondents are asked *"Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0 – 10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust"*. Responses are recorded separately across a number of dimensions and using the three as we do allows for an extrapolation of which elements of political trust change following the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies, and identify whether changes in the trust of actors, institutions, or both, change. An additional and aggregate variable named *political trust* is also created which combines the trust in each of the political actors or institutions through principal component analysis (PCA).[7]

The levels of trust among sexual minorities differ across countries, and these differences in themselves may be related to differing legislative frameworks across countries. Broadly speaking, sexual minorities in Nordic countries tend to report higher levels of political trust, while sexual minorities in the Baltic states and Southern Europe generally report lower levels of political trust. The countries where sexual minorities have the greatest levels of political trust are those countries that have continually scored highest in terms of LGBT legislative frameworks (Rainbow Europe, 2020).[8] Reported in Table 1, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the rank of LGBT openness (the rainbow index) and the political trust of sexual minorities shows a negative and statistically significant coefficient for all four of the outcome variables. This suggests that those countries more open to sexual minority inclusiveness i.e., score closer to one on the rainbow index, score more highly across all

variable modelled against sexual minority status, nor a sexual minority dummy variable modelled against SSRRP are statistically significant. Furthermore, a probit model relating sexual minority status to the set of control variables used in the main analysis did not identify the passing of SSRRPs as having a significant effect upon sexual minority identification. These results are available upon request.

[6] The term parliament is used as this is what the ESS documentation uses. Further exploration of the ESS data indicates that in countries where the institution is not a "parliament" the actual institution referred to is the leading institution for law creation. For example, translating the question that is administered in Cyprus, respondents are asked to state their trust in the house of representatives, which is the Cypriot equivalent to a parliament.

[7] Specifically, we make use of the primary eigen vector, and all other suggested vectors have an eigen value less than one. This primary vector was rotated orthogonally, although using unrotated or oblique rotations does not impact the sign of the coefficients reported later and results remain statistically significant.

[8] This inclusion index is created by Rainbow Europe and covers the legal framework for LGBTQI+ people by country. Specifically, the index summarizes the legal framework under 6 broad categories: equality and non-discrimination, family, hate crime and hate speech, legal gender recognition and bodily integrity, civil society space, and asylum. Countries are ranked and a ranking of 1 is given to the country with the greatest LGBTQI+ inclusiveness.

aspects of political trust. Furthermore, the countries that have the greatest levels of political trust among sexual minorities are those countries that legalised same-sex relationship recognition policies earliest. For example, Denmark (the first country to legalise same-sex registered partnerships in 1989) and the Netherlands (the first country to legalise same-sex marriage in 1997) are both represented in the top countries for sexual minorities' trust in both politicians and parliament. Similarly, other countries that have continuously ranked as having high levels of inclusiveness on the LGBT inclusion index, such as Norway and Finland, also report high levels of political trust.[9]

<<Table 1 Here>>

On the other hand, countries that have continually scored low on the LGBT inclusion index, and that either do not have or were late to adopt same-sex relationship recognition policies (such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo and Lithuania), have some of the lowest average political trust among sexual minorities. This general pattern is present for all four outcome measures (see Figure 1).

<< Figure 1 Here>>

The average levels of trust of sexual minorities and heterosexuals in country by year cells where there is no same-sex relationship recognition policy and country by year cells where there is a same-sex relationship recognition policy are presented in Table 2. On average sexual minorities report similar levels of political trust compared to heterosexuals, with pairwise comparisons between sexual minorities and heterosexuals being statistically insignificant. More interestingly, political trust is significantly greater in those countries and years where a same-sex relationship recognition policy exists than in those countries and years where a same-sex relationship recognition policy does not exist. This is true for both heterosexuals and sexual minorities and for

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[9] One exception to this is Turkey. While sexual minorities report relatively low levels of political trust in Turkey, they report a relatively high level of trust in parliament. This likely reflects the major constitutional reforms that have happened in Turkey in recent years.

all outcome measures.

<< Table 2 Here>>

For completeness, the means of all control variables are presented in Appendix Table A4 when SSRRPs are in place and when they are not. In both reference groups there are generally similar patterns to the data, although several distinct differences are evident. Given the changing composition over time of the countries within the SSRRP sample, it would be unwise to think of these differences are being driven by the introduction of SSRRPs though. For example, while the modal conurbation setting in the pre-SSRRP period is in a big city (0.297), in the SSRRP period this value has dropped significantly to 0.152. It would be hard to imagine that this near halving of the proportion of the sample in big cities is driven by migration over time. In a similar way, although the average representation of sexual minorities increases from 0.6% in the pre-SSRRP period to 1.5% in the SSRRP period, the drivers of this are not necessarily the passing of policy itself. Indeed, when the probability of being identified as a sexual minority was modelled on the individual and country-level controls variables from the main trust analysis, the coefficient on the SSRRP control was statistically insignificant (results available upon request). It should also be noted that while the results of Appendix Table A4 are based upon the entire sample of sexual minorities and non-sexual minorities, the same patterns exist for the two separate sub-samples. The only proviso is that a number of the differences for sexual minorities, with a much smaller sample size, are statistically insignificant even if the direction of the change is the same.

In results presented in Table 3, the average trust of individuals in countries that have implemented a same-sex relationship recognition policy by the end of the sample period (n =24) is compared to the trust of individuals in all countries that do not implement a same-sex relationship recognition policy by the end of the sample period (n = 8).[10] This is done for sexual minorities and heterosexuals separately. In both cases and for all outcome measures, individuals living in countries that implemented a same-sex relationship recognition policy by the

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[10] The 8 countries that had not implemented a same-sex relationship recognition by the end of the study period are Bulgaria, Israel, Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey.

end of the sample period reported significantly greater levels of trust than individuals living in countries that had

not implemented the policy by the end of the sample period. In Panel B, this analysis is repeated by comparing

countries that do not implement to countries that do implement but only in years prior to the policy. While this

leads to a similar pattern for heterosexuals, the trust changes of sexual minorities in these comparisons

becomes statistically indistinguishable. For both heterosexuals and sexual minorities, the magnitude of the

difference is much smaller in Panel B. This suggests that while sexual minorities in countries with same-sex

relationship recognition policies report greater levels of trust than those that do not have such policies, these

significant differences in trust did not exist prior to the passage of these policies. Overall, this implies a positive

association between same-sex relationship recognition policies and political trust. To assess this in greater

detail, though, one must take account of other confounders that may be playing an important role at both the

individual and country level.

<< Table 3 Here>>

4.1. Empirical Approach

To investigate the causal impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on trust, a triple difference

model is estimated in the same way as Burn (2018) and Sansone (2019) have done to analyse the impact of

same-sex relationship recognition policies on labor market outcomes of sexual minorities. This exploits the

variation in the timing of the passage of these policies across countries and between a treatment group (sexual

minorities) and a control group (heterosexuals). In a traditional triple difference framework, there are two

groups (treated and control), two countries (treated and control), and two time periods (pre and post). Here

the triple difference is generalized. We use heterosexuals as a control group, given that the policy does not

directly impact their rights and so should not impact their levels of political trust (and any changes would not

reflect changes in rights). We then exploit variations over time and across countries to create both treated and

control countries for all time-periods within the sample. The model therefore compares individuals in same-

sex couples to individuals in different-sex couples over time and across countries, before and after the

passing of a same-sex relationship recognition policy. As such, time-varying confounders both within and across

countries are controlled for. The use of this model is important as it allows for within country changes in trust

following the passage of policies to be estimated. The model relies on the identifying assumption that the

relative political trust of heterosexuals and sexual minorities in treated countries trend in the same way as

relative outcomes in untreated countries; the model does not require that each of the two difference in

differences both have parallel trends, only that in the absence of the policy change the difference between the

treated group (sexual minorities) and the untreated group (heterosexuals) would have parallel trends (Olden &

Møen, 2020). The model can be specified as:

$$y_{ict} = \alpha + \beta_1(sexmin)_{ict} + \beta_2(SSRRP)_{ict} + \beta_3(sexmin \; x \; SSRRP)_{ict} + \beta_4 X'_{ict} + \beta_5 I_c + \beta_6 I_t \qquad (1)$$

$$+ \; \beta_7 I_{ct} + \varepsilon_{ict}$$

where y is the outcome variable of interest (trust in politicians, trust in political parties, trust in parliament, or

the principal component analysis derived aggregate political trust), for individual i, in country c, at time t.

$sexmin$ is a dummy variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is a sexual minority (treated), and 0 if the

individual is heterosexual (control). $SSRRP$ is a dummy variable that is equal to 1 if individual i, lives in

country c, on a date when a same-sex relationship recognition policy exists (treated) and zero on all dates prior

to the existence of a same-sex relationship recognition policy (control). $SSRRP$ is the first difference, comparing

the political trust of individuals before and after the introduction of the policy in countries that have enacted the

policies and those that have not, in the presence of country, (I_c) and year (I_t), fixed effects as well as country

specific linear time trends (I_{ct}). These capture unobserved differences common to all observations in a country

and year. The interaction variable, $sexmin \; x \; SSRRP$, adds a second difference, comparing sexual minorities

(treated) to heterosexuals (untreated).

X' is a vector of individual and country-level control variables that have been shown in the literature to influence

political trust. Specifically, the following individual controls are included: age (and its square), gender,

education, religiosity, employment status, political interest, and income quintile. In addition, the following country-level controls are included: sexual orientation-based employment non-discrimination acts, hate crime laws, election year dummy variables, and the left-right scale of the majority political party in power. A complete list of all variables and their descriptions is given in Appendix Table A2. For ease of interpretation linear probability models are estimated throughout.[11]

The coefficient of interest is β_3 which estimates the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on sexual minorities in the presence of country and year fixed effects. In doing so the model compares individuals within the same countries, which means that the coefficient for β_3 documents the improvements in trust in those countries that introduce same-sex relationship recognition policies and coefficients will not reflect (potential) reductions in trust in those countries that do not introduce these policies. Sample weights make the data representative at the country level and following Bertrand et al (2004), standard errors are clustered at the country level.

It should be emphasized that this triple difference model estimates the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies, not the impact of a relationship being legalized. As discussed by Sansone (2019), the model can estimate an intention-to-treat (ITT) not an average treatment effect on the treated (ATT) of relationship legalization. This ITT is relevant for policy makers as it quantifies the impact of the policy change, rather than the effect of people legalizing their partnerships.[12]

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[11] While a multinomial or ordered choice variant of the probit/logit model would take account of the categorical and ordinal nature of the dependent variable, the demands that these estimation strategies would place on the data meant that such approaches were not tenable. We also experimented with the use of a probit model and details of this are provided in a robustness check in section 6.2

[12] The ability of surveys such as the ESS to measure subjective measures such as trust would go back to the interpersonal utility comparisons arguments of Robbins (1932, 1938). Very much in a Benthamite tradition, the lack of a common unit with which to measure and compare different individuals' utilities allowed Robbins to feel justified in making his widely cited claim that such utility comparisons are unscientific. While it is not our intention to survey the large literature of interpersonal comparisons (with an excellent overview provided by Suzumura, 1996), Robbins himself concluded that it was legitimate to use interpersonal comparisons in analyses of economic policy provided that their non-scientific status was acknowledged (Robbins, 1981). While no work that we are aware of has explicitly placed these arguments in terms of subjective measures of trust, a corpus of work has evolved around another subjective response, namely well-being. Within this context, Frey & Stutzer (2010) note that cardinality and interpersonal comparability may be less of a practical problem than a theoretical one, and Kahneman et al (2004) report that psychologists seem to be more comfortable when comparing utility or personal feelings across individuals. Moreover, interpersonal comparability at the individual level is not a necessary condition for public good evaluation in the life satisfaction approach, and all that is required is that individual specific response frames do

5. Main Results

The causal estimates of the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on the trust of sexual minorities via the triple difference model of Equation (1) are presented in Table 4 across the various definitions of political trust.[13] The results indicate that same-sex relationship recognition policies have a positive and significant impact on the political trust of sexual minorities.[14] In all four columns, the triple difference coefficient (i.e. β_3) is positive and statistically significant. The impact of the policy dummy variable itself (i.e. β_2) is statistically insignificant and close to zero in all four columns, suggesting that the policy had no significant impact on the political trust of heterosexuals (outside of the other covariates that have been controlled for), thus offering support for the identification strategy.[15] This suggests that same-sex relationship recognition policies have a causal impact on the political trust of sexual minorities[16].

<< Table 4 Here>>

The impact of the sexual minority dummy (i.e. β_1) is negative and statistically significant again across all four columns, indicating that sexual minorities who live in countries where a same-sex relationship recognition policy is not present report significantly lower levels of trust across all of our included dimensions of political trust. These findings are consistent with Platt & Scheitle's (2018) contingent trust findings, showing that sexual minorities have greater political trust contingent on them having the same relationship recognition rights as

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not systematically vary between different groups either across space or over time (Frey at al., 2009; Frey & Stutzer, 2010). It should therefore be noted that our model compares people within the same country and of the same sexual orientation – i.e., only within country comparisons are made over time.

[13] The underlying OLS regression results suggest that the determinants of political trust conform with *a priori* expectations. As such, education and trust are positively correlated, as are trust and religiosity, employment, political interest, income, and LGBT policies. Trust has generally reduced over time, and sexual minorities report marginally lower levels of trust. These results are not presented here but are available on request.

[14] It was not feasible to estimate models across homosexual and heterosexual individuals separately as such models were poorly defined. Similarly, we also experimented with separate variables for same-sex marriage and same-sex registered partnerships/civil unions, but again such a strategy lacked sufficient power to identify effects separately.

[15] Further support of this is presented in Appendix Table A5, where we demonstrate that SSRRPs have no significant impact on the political trust of heterosexuals.

[16] A possible concern is how to treat always treated countries. To check whether their inclusion was influencing the results, Table 4 was re-estimated with the exclusion of these always treated countries. These results are presented in Appendix Table A6, with the nature of the results and the conclusions drawn remaining unchanged.

heterosexuals.[17]

Finally, the results offer only partial confirmation of the predictions of the performance model whereby the legalization of same-sex relationships impacts sexual minorities' evaluations of political actors and institutions. Moreover, we would expect that this would manifest itself more strongly for those more closely involved in the legalization process (i.e. politicians and political parties, the actors who decide whether to pass legislation) than those less involved (parliament). Indeed, the magnitude of the triple difference coefficient β_3 is greater for both trust in politicians (0.332) and trust in political parties (0.356) than it is for trust in parliament (0.198). However, neither of these differences is statistically significant at conventional acceptance levels.[18]

6. Alternative Mechanisms

Two alternative hypotheses are explored which may explain the results presented in the previous sections and the results of this are set out in Tables 5 and 6. Thus far it has been assumed that same-sex relationship recognition policies impact political trust, as the policies improve evaluations of political actors and institutions in line with performance theory. The first mechanism explored to analyze the validity of this assumed mechanism tests whether the increase in political trust associated with same-sex relationship recognition policies reflects a general increase in trust or if the additional trust is only awarded to those institutions and actors that were integral to changing the policy. That is, are the results reflective of same-sex relationship recognition policies leading to a more trusting society or do same-sex relationship recognition policies improve the performance evaluations of citizens as suggested by performance theory? The results of this are shown in

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[17] This negative trust impact for sexual minorities might seem to run counter to the previously discussed results of Tables 2 and 3, where there were no discernible trust differences between heterosexual and sexual minority groups. It should be remembered that these earlier figures related to *unconditional* trust. The implication of the results from Table 4 is that sexual minorities report lower trust *conditional* on the controls included.

[18] Robustness checks were performed on these baseline results and the conclusions drawn remained unaltered. Specifically: as treatment is staggered over time, the two-stage difference-in-difference estimator proposed by Gardner (2021) was employed to counter any bias in two-way fixed effects; an event study analysis indicated that the main estimates are not driven by biases arising from staggered treatment timing, and standard tests for pre-trends assumptions were passed, and that the effects identified are causal; country specific linear time trends were replaced by country by year fixed effects, country by sexual minority fixed effects, and sexual minority by year fixed effects to control for potentially divergent trends across countries, time, and sexual orientation; and people with an unidentifiable sexual identity were included and treated as heterosexual along the lines of Chen & Van Ours (2021). Full details and accompanying discussion can be found in Mann et al (2022).

Table 5, where the same analysis is run as before but now the dependent variable is a generalized measure of trust as opposed to the dimensions of political trust as previously. [19]

<< Table 5 Here>>

The coefficients presented in Table 5 are all small and statistically indistinguishable from zero, indicating that same-sex relationship recognition policies do not impact the general trust of sexual minorities or heterosexuals. Our previous findings are therefore not driven by a more trusting society following the legalisation of same-sex marriage legalisation, but an increase in trust towards those actors and institutions integral to the policy change.[20] Given that Aksoy et al (2020) documents that same-sex relationship recognition policies in Europe were associated with a significant reduction in interpersonal prejudice towards sexual minorities, the results presented in Table 5 can be interpreted as indicating that while interpersonal prejudice may have fallen following the passing of same-sex relationship recognition policies, this does not lead to an increase in trust among sexual minorities (or heterosexuals). However, these findings are perfectly in line with performance theory. Same- sex relationship recognition policies are integral to the performance evaluations made by sexual minorities given that they directly impact the rights of sexual minorities. In terms of trust, though, the extension of additional rights does not impact the way that those impacted individuals view fellow citizens.

Given that marriage and political trust are positively correlated (Drakos et al, 2019), a second potential mechanism that may account for the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on trust is marriage.[21] It may be the case that the main results do not reflect changes in performance evaluations but are rather

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[19] General trust is measured as responses to the question "most people can be trusted, or you can't be too careful" on a 10-point scale.

[20] While this is true of parliament-passed legislation, in the case of referendums the actors who decide whether legal relationship recognition is awarded to sexual minorities are citizens. In Switzerland and Ireland, referendums were passed in 2005 and 2015 respectively. Meanwhile, referendums in Slovenia and Croatia and in 2010 and 2013 respectively resulted in a no. In each of these cases it would be interesting to analyse the impact on general trust, but due to data limitations this cannot be completed in the present paper. The ESS was only completed in each of these countries either before or after the referendum, and thus there is no within country variation which is needed to estimate the difference in differences model.

[21] Here, legal partnership and marriage are used interchangeably, and civil and legal partners are identified as 'married' for the purpose of this exercise.

driven by additional political trust only among those individuals that make direct use of the policy change, i.e., those sexual minorities who become legally partnered. To investigate this, the baseline results are re-estimated for an unmarried sample (see Table 6, panel A) and then with an interaction between same-sex marriage legalisation, sexual orientation, and marriage for the full sample (see Table 6, panel B).

<< Table 6 Here>>

The results presented in Table 6 demonstrate that the increases in political trust among sexual minorities are not exclusive to only those sexual minorities that become married in the post- policy period. Unmarried sexual minorities experienced a statistically significant increase across all measures of political (with the exception of parliamentary) trust post-policy recognition. Like results for the full sample (see Table 4), the sexual minority coefficient is negative and statistically significant for all measures of political (with the exception of parliamentary) trust, indicating that on average unmarried sexual minorities report significantly lower levels of political trust than unmarried heterosexuals. For trust in politicians, a positive and significant coefficient is also documented for the SSRRP, and the positive and significant coefficient documented for the interaction between SSRRP and sexual minorities indicates that the magnitude of the effect of same-sex relationship recognition policies on political trust is greater among unmarried sexual minorities compared to heterosexuals. In panel B, an additional set of controls are included to capture married relative to unmarried samples. While the interaction between being a sexual minority and the same-sex relationship recognition policy remains positive and statistically significant for all outcome variables, and the sexual minority variable remains significantly negative, the additional interactions with marriage are insignificant in every instance. A corollary of this is that choosing to become legally married (partnered) does not impact upon the baseline results reflecting changes in political trust among sexual minorities.

7. Discussion and Conclusions

The current work contributes to a literature that has explored the relationship between equality and political

trust as well as a broader literature relating to the role of public policy in fostering trust, by examining the impact of same-sex recognition policies on the political trust of sexual minorities and heterosexuals. The results show that same-sex relationship recognition policies have had a positive and significant impact on the political trust of sexual minorities, which in turn can have positive societal, legal, and economic benefits. Same-sex relationship recognition policies reduce the structural stigma faced by sexual minorities, and the passage of these policies is associated with improved evaluations of political actors and institutions. Furthermore, these improvements in evaluations are greater for those actors that are more integral to the policy change.

From a policy perspective, the current work adds to a literature that demonstrates the positive impact of extending rights to sexual minorities (see *inter alia* Sansone, 2019; Aksoy et al, 2020; Carpenter et al, 2021; Badgett et al, 2021; Marcén & Morales, 2022). The results offer evidence that reducing structural stigma through public policy i.e., same-sex relationship recognition policies, can foster greater political trust among those impacted by the policy. This is important considering that political trust is declining in Europe (Algan et al, 2017), and political trust is positively associated with numerous economic and political outcomes. The findings presented here therefore suggest that as relationship recognition policies continue to expand, one may expect to observe improvements in political trust among sexual minorities, which may translate into positive outcomes for governments given the positive associations between political trust and growth (Hwang, 2017), political participation (Hooghe & Marien, 2013), wellbeing (Grönlund and Setälä, 2007), law compliance and crime rates (Marien & Hooghe, 2011). While the focus of this paper is the impact of same-sex relationship recognition policies on the political trust of heterosexuals and sexual minorities, it also adds to a larger debate, demonstrating that public policy (especially equality policy) can be used to foster greater political trust, especially among minorities, a large and growing community across Europe and beyond.

We demonstrate that the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies is associated with improvements in political trust. However, whether this trust will lead to trustworthy decisions by governments is unclear and indeed prior work has linked trust with untrustworthy decision making by political actors and institutions (Clark & Lee, 2001). Nonetheless, recent work has demonstrated that voting in favor of same-sex marriage legalization

is associated with increased political support and vote share (Kauder & Potrafke, 2022), suggesting that there is a political incentive to support same-sex relationship recognition policies. As argued by Glendon (1993) in her discussion of 'rights talk', voters' focus on rights and individual liberty in the political arena, and the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies is intrinsically linked to growing support among voters for equal rights for sexual minorities. Whether the passage of same-sex relationship recognition policies (and subsequent support for government and political actors) translates to improved societal outcomes and trustworthy decision making remains to be seen, though recent work by Badgett et al (2019) does document that LGBT+ legislative progress is associated with increased GDP and development. As such, even if same-sex relationship recognition policies run counter to Buchanan & Congleton's (2003) arguments that political decision making should reflect principle rather than interest and should not represent redistributive changes for specific groups of society, these policies may still have broader positive country-level effects.

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Table 1: Pearson Correlation Coefficient between Rainbow Index and Dimensions of Political Trust

	(1) Trust in Politicians	(2) Trust in Political Parties	(3) Trust in Parliament	(4) PCA Political Trust
Rainbow Index	-0.178***	-0.189***	-0.202***	-0.178***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)

Notes: standard errors in parentheses; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table 2: Difference in Political Trust Between Countries with SSRRP and without SSRRP by Sexual Orientation

	Sexual Minorities			Heterosexuals		
	No SSRRP	SSRRP	Difference	No SSRRP	SSRRP	Difference
Trust in Politicians	2.802	4.091	1.289***	2.861	4.087	1.226***
Trust in Political Parties	2.912	4.087	1.175***	2.864	4.062	1.198***
Parliamentary Trust	3.749	5.019	1.270***	3.791	5.066	1.275***
PCA Political Trust	-0.353	0.187	0.540***	-0.328	0.185	0.513***

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table 3: Difference in Political Trust Between Countries with SSRRP and without SSRRP by Sexual Orientation and with Different Control Groups

	Sexual Minorities			Heterosexuals		
	No SSRRP	SSRRP	Difference	No SSRRP	SSRRP	Difference
Panel A: Never has SSRRP compared to implements SSRRP						
Trust in Politicians	2.679	3.998	1.319***	2.704	3.902	1.198***
Trust in Political Parties	2.881	3.996	1.115***	2.693	3.885	1.192***
Parliamentary Trust	3.515	4.937	1.422***	3.575	4.883	1.308***
PCA Political Trust	-0.404	0.148	0.552***	-0.394	0.107	0.501***
Panel B: Never has SSRRP compared to implements SSRRP in years prior to implementation						
Trust in Politicians	2.679	2.930	0.251	2.704	3.030	0.326***
Trust in Political Parties	2.881	2.946	0.065	2.693	3.047	0.354***
Parliamentary Trust	3.515	3.992	0.477	3.575	4.024	0.449***
PCA Political Trust	-0.404	-0.299	0.105	-0.394	-0.257	0.137***

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table 4: Difference in Difference in Differences of SSRRP

	(1) Trust in Politicians	(2) Trust in Political Parties	(3) Parliamentary Trust	(4) PCA Political Trust
Full Sample				
SSRRP x Sexual Min.	0.332**	0.356**	0.198*	0.139**
	(0.130)	(0.137)	(0.107)	(0.055)
Sexual Min.	-0.362**	-0.309**	-0.264**	-0.152**
	(0.139)	(0.118)	(0.117)	(0.058)
SSRRP	0.233	0.176	0.083	0.098
	(0.154)	(0.170)	(0.172)	(0.064)
Number of Observations	137,075	137,075	137,075	137,075

Notes: additional controls are included for age, age squared, gender, education, income, religiosity, rurality, labor force status, political interest, the political leaning of the majority political party in power, election year, , sexual orientation based anti-discrimination policies, and sexual orientation based hate crime legislation, country and year fixed effects and country specific linear time trends; standard errors (in parentheses) are clustered at the country level; *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10.

Table 5: Alternative Mechanisms - General Increase in Trust

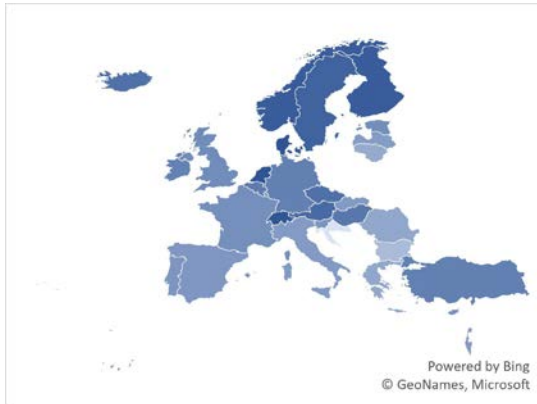|	General Trust
SSRRP x Sexual Min.	0.038
	(0.366)
Sexual Min.	-0.028
	(0.348)
SSRRP	0.034
	(0.124)
Number of Observations	136,943

Notes: see Table 4

Table 6: Alternative Mechanisms – Marriage

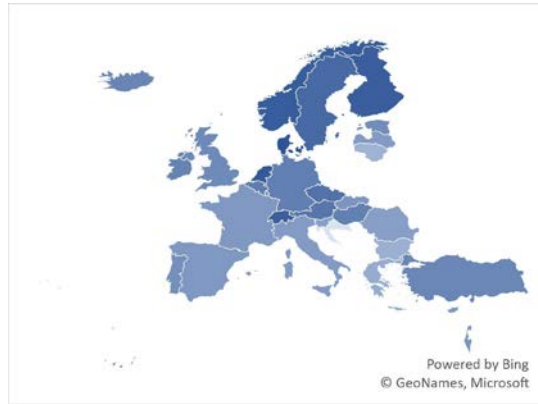|	(1) Trust in Politicians	(2) Trust in Political Parties	(3) Parliamentary Trust	(4) PCA Political Trust
Panel A: Unmarried				
SSRRP x Sexual Min.	0.471*	0.782**	0.296	0.197*
	(0.247)	(0.294)	(0.388)	(0.104)
Sexual Min.	-0.492*	-0.806***	-0.206	-0.206*
	(0.253)	(0.287)	(0.430)	(0.106)
SSRRP	0.293**	0.176	-0.021	0.123**
	(0.135)	(0.135)	(0.143)	(0.056)
Number of Observations	24,048	24,048	24,048	24,048
Panel B: Full Sample				
Married x SSRRP x Sexual Min.	-0.004	0.100	-0.216	-0.001
	(0.142)	(0.061)	(0.169)	(0.059)
SSRRP x Sexual Min.	0.347*	0.289*	0.334**	0.145*
	(0.181)	(0.150)	(0.158)	(0.076)
Married x SSRRP	0.115	0.020	-0.007	0.048
	(0.108)	(0.106)	(0.086)	(0.045)
Married	0.026	0.064	0.169**	0.011
	(0.102)	(0.098)	(0.069)	(0.043)
Sexual Minority	-0.358**	-0.299**	-0.238**	-0.150**
	(0.149)	(0.122)	(0.113)	(0.063)
SSRRP	0.145	0.165	0.100	0.061
	(0.135)	(0.148)	(0.167)	(0.056)
Number of Observations	137,075	137,075	137,075	137,075

Notes: see Table 4.

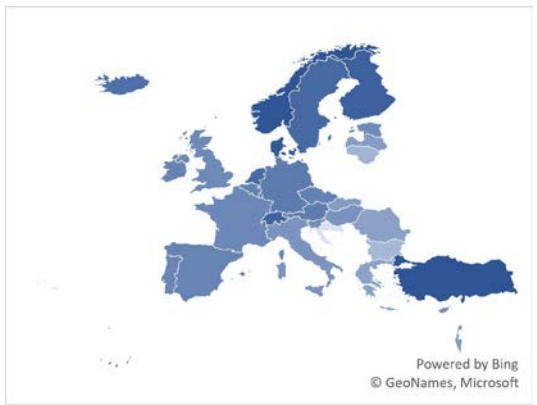# Figure 1: Dimensions of Political Trust of Sexual Minorities by Country

A – Trust in Politicians

B – Trust in Political Parties

C – Trust in Parliament
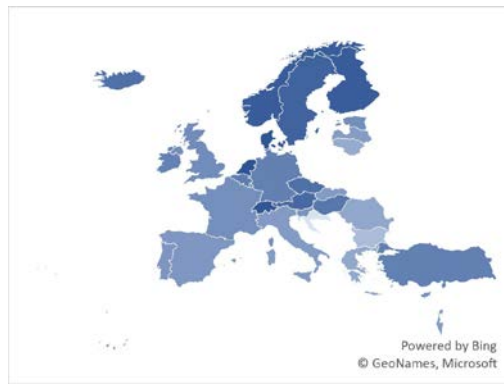

D – PCA Political Trust

Table A1: Years included in ESS, SSRRP, and Data Before and After the Passage of SSRRPs by Country

Country	ESS Rounds	SSRRP	Data for Before and After SSRRP
Albania	6	X	
Austria	1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9	2009	✓
Belgium	All	1999	
Bulgaria	3, 5, 6	X	
Switzerland	All	2004	✓
Cyprus	3, 5, 6, 9	2015	✓
Czechia	1,2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	2006	✓
Germany	All	2001	
Denmark	1-7	1989	
Estonia	4, 6, 8, 9	2014	✓
Spain	All	2005	✓
Finland	All	2001	
France	2-9	1999	
Great Britain	All	2004	✓
Greece	1, 2, 4, 5	2015	
Croatia	4, 5, 9	2014	✓
Hungary	2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9	2009	✓
Ireland	2–9	2010	✓
Israel	1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8	X	
Iceland	2, 6, 8	1996	
Italy	1, 2, 6, 8, 9	2016	✓
Lithuania	5, 6, 7, 8, 9	X	
Luxembourg	1, 2	2004	✓
Latvia	3, 4, 9	X	
Montenegro	9	X	
Netherlands	All	1997	
Norway	All	1993	
Poland	All	X	
Portugal	1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9	2010	✓
Romania	4	X	

Serbia	9	X	
Russian Federation	3, 4, 5, 6, 8	X	
Sweden	All	2003	✓
Slovenia	All	2016	✓
Slovakia	2, 3, 5, 6, 9	X	
Turkey	2, 4	X	
Ukraine	4, 5, 6	X	
Kosovo	6	X	

Table A2: Variable Descriptions

Variable	Description
Outcome Variables	
PCA Political Trust	Principal component analysis combining "trust in politicians", "trust in political parties" and "parliamentary trust". The variable is the first rotated principal component using the varimax method of rotation.
Trust in Politicians	A categorical variable ranging between the values of 1 and 10, where 1 refers to the lowest trust in politicians, and 10, the highest. Taken from responses to the question *""Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0 – 10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust" (Politicians)*
Trust in Political Parties	A categorical variable ranging between the values of 1 and 10, where 1 refers to the lowest trust in parliament, and 10, the highest. Taken from responses to the question *""Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0 – 10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust" (Political Parties)*
Parliamentary Trust	A categorical variable ranging between the values of 1 and 10, where 1 refers to the lowest trust in parliament, and 10, the highest. Taken from responses to the question *""Using this card, please tell me on a score of 0 – 10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust" ([Country's] Parliament)*
Individual Controls	
Age	Continuous variable that takes the value of the individual's reported age.
Female	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is female and 0 if the individual is male.
Less than Secondary Education	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if this is the individual's highest level of education, and 0 otherwise.
Lower Secondary Education	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if this is the individual's highest level of education, and 0 otherwise.
Secondary Education	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if this is the individual's highest level of education, and 0 otherwise.
Tertiary Education	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if this is the individual's highest level of education, and 0 otherwise.

Religious	A categorical variable ranging between the values of 1 and 10, where 1 refers to the lowest religiosity, and 10, the highest. Taken from responses to the question *"Regardless of whether you belong to a particular religion, how religious would you say you are?"*
Political Interest	A categorical variable taken from the question *"How interested would you say you are in politics - are you (4) very interested, (3) quite interested, (2) hardly interested, or (1) not at all interested?"*
Political Leaning	A binary variable that takes the value zero or one, where 1 refers to an individual having a left political learning, and 0 a right political leaning. Taken from responses to the question "In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?", where a score below or equal to 5 is dichotomized as 1 and a score greater than 5 is given the value zero.
Big City	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a big city, and 0 otherwise.
Suburbs	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in the suburbs, and 0 otherwise.
Town/ Small City	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a town or small city, and 0 otherwise.
Village	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a village, and 0 otherwise.
Countryside	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in the countryside, and 0 otherwise.
Employed	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is employed, and 0 otherwise.
Unemployed	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is unemployed, and 0 otherwise.
Out of Labor Force	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is out of the labor force, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 1	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the lowest household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 2	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the second household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 3	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the third household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 4	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the fourth household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.

Income Decile 5	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the fifth household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 6	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the sixth household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 7	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the seventh household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 8	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the eighth household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 9	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the ninth household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.
Income Decile 10	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual is in the highest household income decile for their country, and 0 otherwise.

Country Level Controls

Election Year	Binary variable that takes the value 1 in the years that a country had an election and 0 in non-election years. *(source: The Manifesto Project)*
Left	A variable that takes a value between 0 and 10 and represents the political leaning of the political party with majority party by country, where a greater score is associated with a greater political leaning. *(source: The Manifesto Project)*
SSRRP	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a country at a time where a same-sex relationship recognition policy has been enacted, and 0 otherwise *(source: Rainbow Europe)*.
ENDA	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a country at a time where an employment non-discrimination act covering sexual orientation has been enacted, and 0 otherwise *(source: Rainbow Europe)*.
Hate Crime Law	Binary variable that takes the value 1 if the individual lives in a country at a time where a hate crime law that covers sexual orientation has been enacted, and 0 otherwise *(source: Rainbow Europe)*.

Table A3: Difference-in-Difference for the Effect of the Policy on the Probability of Being a Sexual Minority and Whether the Policy can be Predicated by the Proportion of Individuals that are Sexual Minorities at the Country by Year Level

	(1) Sexual Minority	(2) SSRRP
SSRRP	0.013 (0.013)	-
Sexual Minority	-	0.015 (0.015)

Notes: See Table 4.

Table A4: Balance Table of Variable Means by SSRRP Period

	No SSRRP	SSRRP	Difference
Trust in Politicians	2.861	4.087	1.226***
Parliamentary Trust	3.791	5.065	1.274***
Trust in Political Parties	2.864	4.063	1.199***
PCA Trust	-0.328	0.185	0.513***
Sexual Minority	0.006	0.015	0.009***
Age	49.316	50.372	1.056***
Female	0.524	0.478	-0.046***
Education – Below Secondary	0.148	0.102	-0.046***
Education – Lower Secondary	0.192	0.243	0.051***
Education – Upper Secondary	0.410	0.339	-0.071***
Education – Tertiary	0.250	0.316	0.066***
Religiosity	5.422	4.245	-1.176***
Rurality – Big City	0.297	0.152	-0.145***
Rurality – Suburbs	0.095	0.140	0.045***
Rurality – Town/Small City	0.277	0.315	0.037***
Rurality – Village	0.289	0.306	0.018***
Rurality - Countryside	0.042	0.086	0.045***
Labor Market Status – Employed	0.568	0.626	0.059***
Labor Market Status – Unemployed	0.039	0.025	-0.013***
Labor Market Status – Out of Labor Force	0.394	0.348	-0.045***
Election Year	0.248	0.174	-0.074***
Left Political Leaning	5.416	5.744	0.328***
Political Interest	2.384	2.605	0.221***
Employment Non-Discrimination Act	0.767	0.745	-0.023***
Hate Crime Legislation	0.310	0.484	0.173***
Income Decile 1	0.070	0.038	-0.032***
Income Decile 2	0.081	0.061	-0.021***
Income Decile 3	0.101	0.079	-0.023***
Income Decile 4	0.110	0.096	-0.014***
Income Decile 5	0.113	0.108	-0.005***
Income Decile 6	0.112	0.118	0.006***
Income Decile 7	0.110	0.132	0.022***
Income Decile 8	0.108	0.131	0.023***
Income Decile 9	0.097	0.119	0.021***
Income Decile 10	0.097	0.119	0.022***
Number of Observations	41,581	95,494	

Notes: *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table A5: Difference in Differences (Heterosexuals Only)

	(1) Trust in Politicians	(2) Trust in Political Parties	(3) Parliamentary Trust	(4) PCA Political Trust
SSRRP	0.098	0.234	0.177	0.083
	(0.065)	(0.156)	(0.171)	(0.177)

Notes: see Table 4.

Table A6: Difference in Difference in Differences of SSRRP Excluding Always Treated Countries

	(1) Trust in Politicians	(2) Trust in Political Parties	(3) Parliamentary Trust	(4) PCA Political Trust
Full Sample				
SSRRP x Sexual Min.	0.159	0.162***	0.387***	0.462***
	(0.144)	(0.049)	(0.117)	(0.085)
Sexual Min.	-0.246*	-0.154**	-0.368**	-0.331**
	(0.122)	(0.060)	(0.143)	(0.122)
SSRRP	0.025	0.051	0.122	0.051
	(0.160)	(0.046)	(0.110)	(0.127)

Notes: see Table 4.

Figure A1: Proportion of Sexual Minorities in a Country by Year in the ESS