

# Measuring social cohesion: evidence from Africa

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**UN-DESA and UNU-WIDER Expert Group Meeting**

**“New research on trust and social cohesion”**

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- Long **tradition** of research on social cohesion especially in sociology and social psychology: what holds society together? (Back, 1951; Durkheim, 1893; Festinger, Back, & Schachter, 1950)
- Focus on **high-income countries** and **horizontal dimension** (relationship among individuals within a society)
- Over the past decades, the debate has expanded to other disciplines, to low-and middle income countries and has captured enormous attention among policy-makers and international organizations (Alexandre et al., 2012; Langer et al., 2017; OECD, 2011; UNDP, 2016).
- What are the ***ingredients of social cohesion***? Long debate (Schiefer & van der Noll, 2017), but some common elements are detectable.
- We favored a ***thin concept*** (Chan et al., 2006), which incorporates only the essential attributes of SC, leaving out the possible drivers (inequality, wellbeing etc)  we can analyze empirically, for example, whether inequality is really deleterious for SC.

*Social cohesion refers to both the **vertical and the horizontal relations** among members of **society and the state**, which hold societies together. It is characterized by a set of attitudes and behavioral manifestations that includes **trust**, an **inclusive identity**, and **cooperation for the common good**.*

Source: Leininger, Burchi et al. (2021)



- **3 attributes:** trust, inclusive identity and cooperation for the common good
- **2 dimensions:** horizontal and vertical

- ❑ **Few attempts to systematically *measure* social cohesion**
  - regional focus (mainly Europe, Asia and high income countries) & case studies
  - Focus on one element of social cohesion
  
- ❑ **What is the objective?**
  - Comparing countries and identify patterns? 
  - Analyze effects of specific policies on social cohesion, maybe at more local level  
(to be discussed in a separate event)

# IDOS measurement of Social Cohesion

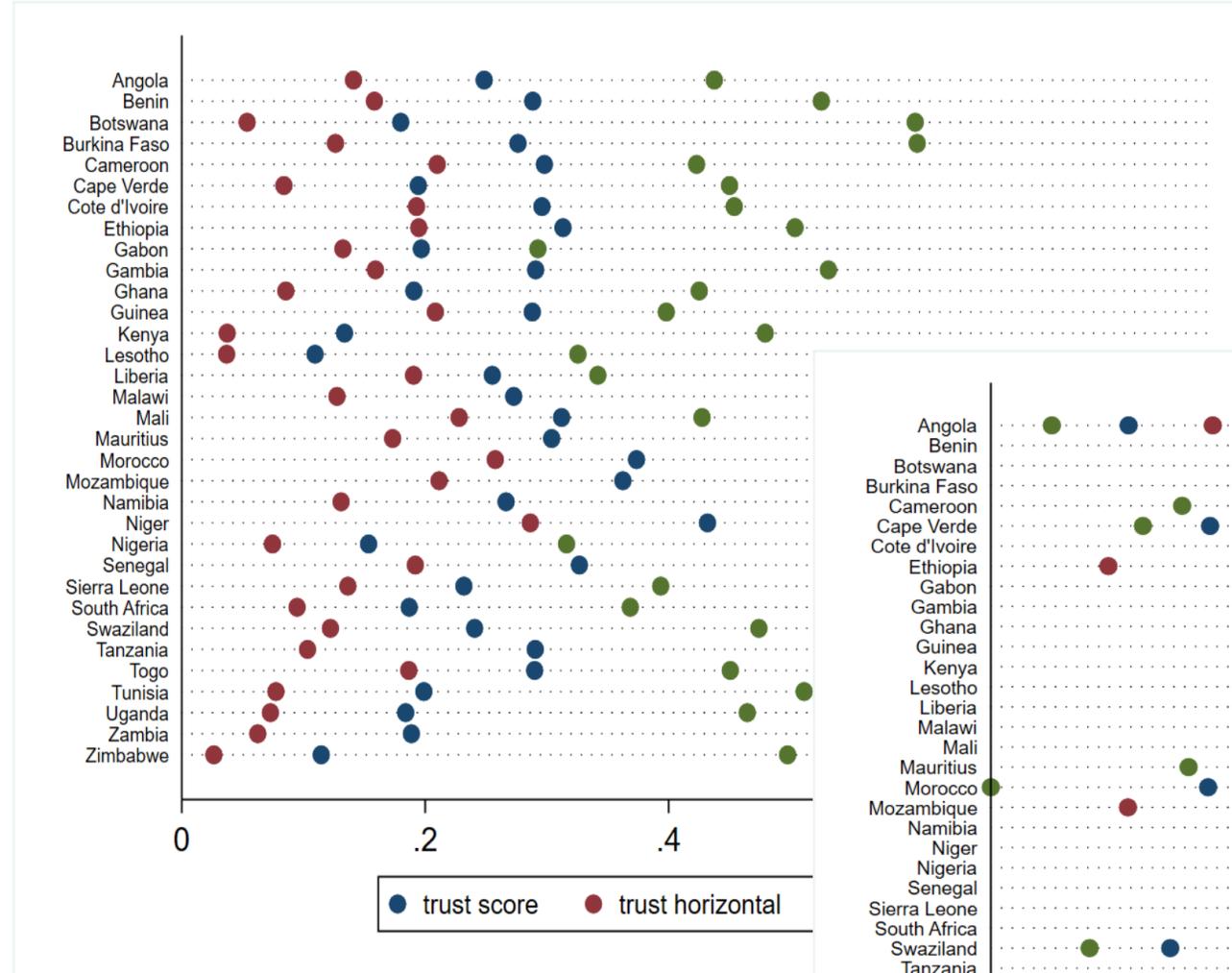
- **Goal:** measurement applicable worldwide, first applied to Africa
- **Data:** Afrobarometer household data plus Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) expert data (for cooperation)
- **Indicators:** vertical and horizontal dimension of three attributes (inclusive identity, trust, cooperation for the common good)
- **Sample:** 32-36 African countries

Me	SC attribute	Sub-attribute	Question	Calculation
	Identity		<p>Let us suppose that you had to choose between being a [national identity] and being a [respondent's ethnic group]. Which of the following statements best expresses your feelings?                      Answers:                      (1) I feel only [national identity].                      (2) I feel more [national identity] than [ethnic identity].                      (3) I feel equally [national identity] and [ethnic identity].                      (4) I feel more [ethnic identity].                      (5) I feel only [ethnic identity].                      (7) Don't know (Do not read)</p>	Unweighted arithmetic mean to aggregate group means (penalize countries with large disparities between group values)
	Trust	Horizontal trust	"Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you must be very careful in dealing with people?"	$\text{Trust Score} = \sqrt{\text{Trust}_{\text{horiz}} * \text{Trust}_{\text{vert}}}$
		Vertical trust	Combine 3 indicators measuring trust in the parliament, the police and the courts of law. Answers: "not at all" (0), "just a little" (1), "somewhat" (2), "a lot" (3).	
	Cooperation	Horizontal cooperation	<p><u>Perception data</u> (Afrobarometer)                      Q1: membership in voluntary associations or organizations                      Q2: joined others to raise an issue</p> <p><u>Expert data</u> (V-Dem)                      Q3: rate how participatory the CSO environment is in each country</p>	$\text{Coop Score} = \sqrt{\text{Coop}_{\text{horiz}} * \text{Coop}_{\text{vert}}}$
		Vertical cooperation	<p><u>Perception data</u> (Afrobarometer)                      Q1: frequency of attending community meetings                      Q2: frequency of contacting officials:</p> <p><u>Expert data</u> (V-Dem)                      Q3: level of state repression toward CSOs                      Q4: extent to which CSOs consulted by policymakers</p>	

# A snapshot of country performance in the 3 attributes (2019-21)

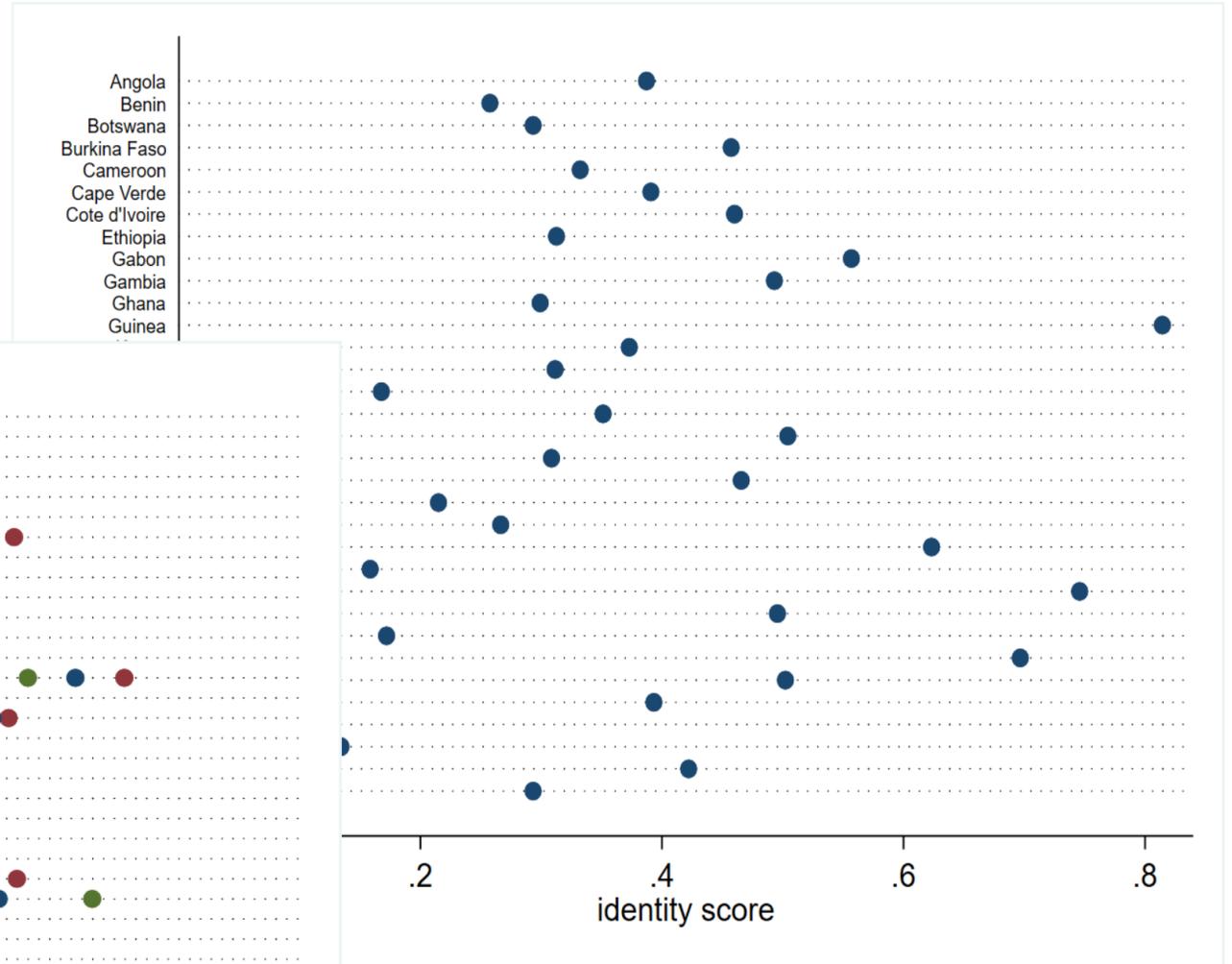


## TRUST



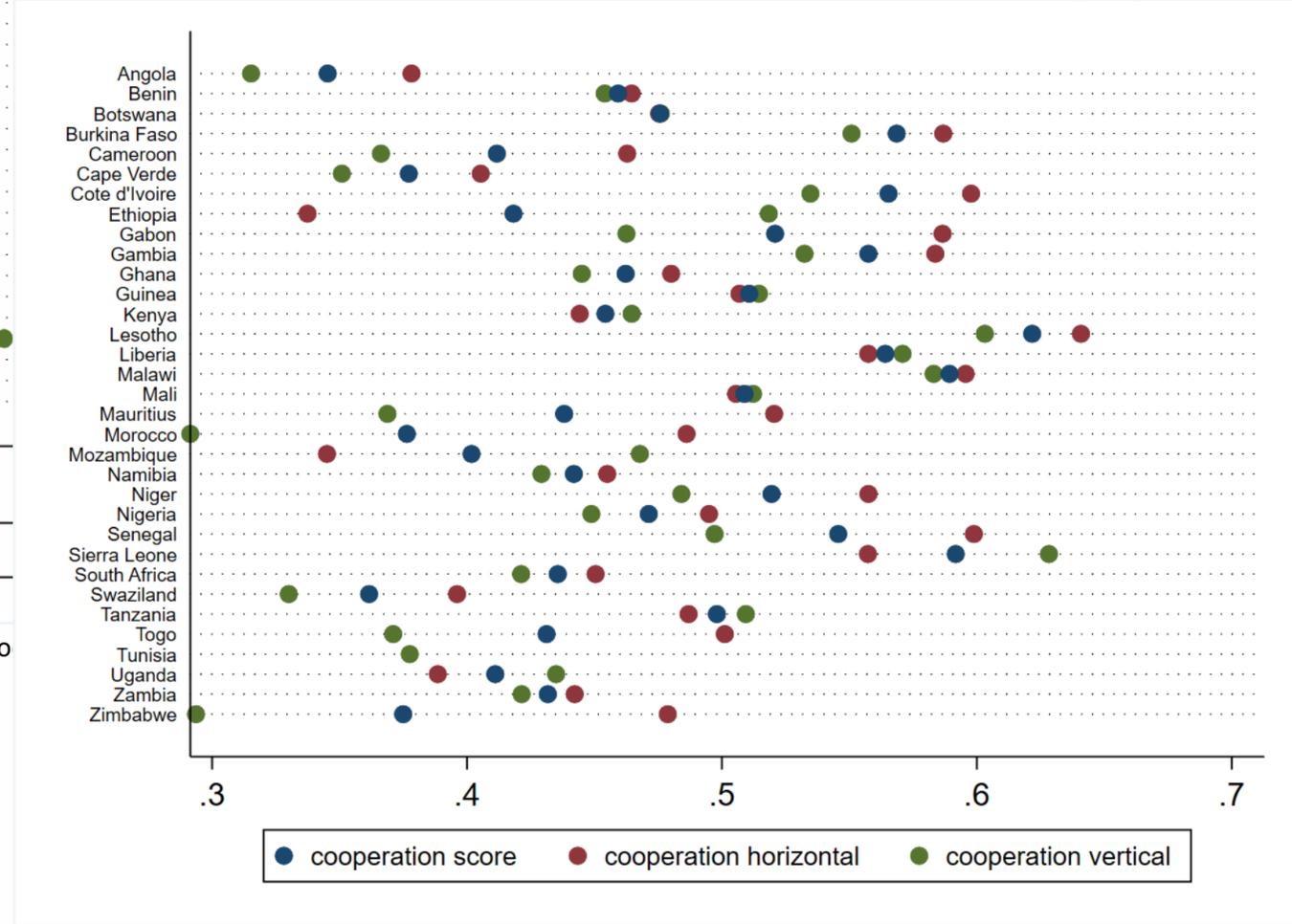
Source: Own calculation using the latest Afrobarometer data (period: 2019-2021).

## IDENTITY



Own calculation using the latest Afrobarometer data (period: 2019-2021).

## COOPERATION



Source: Own calculation using the latest Afrobarometer and V-Dem data (period: 2019-2021).

# Correlation between attributes (and sub-attributes)

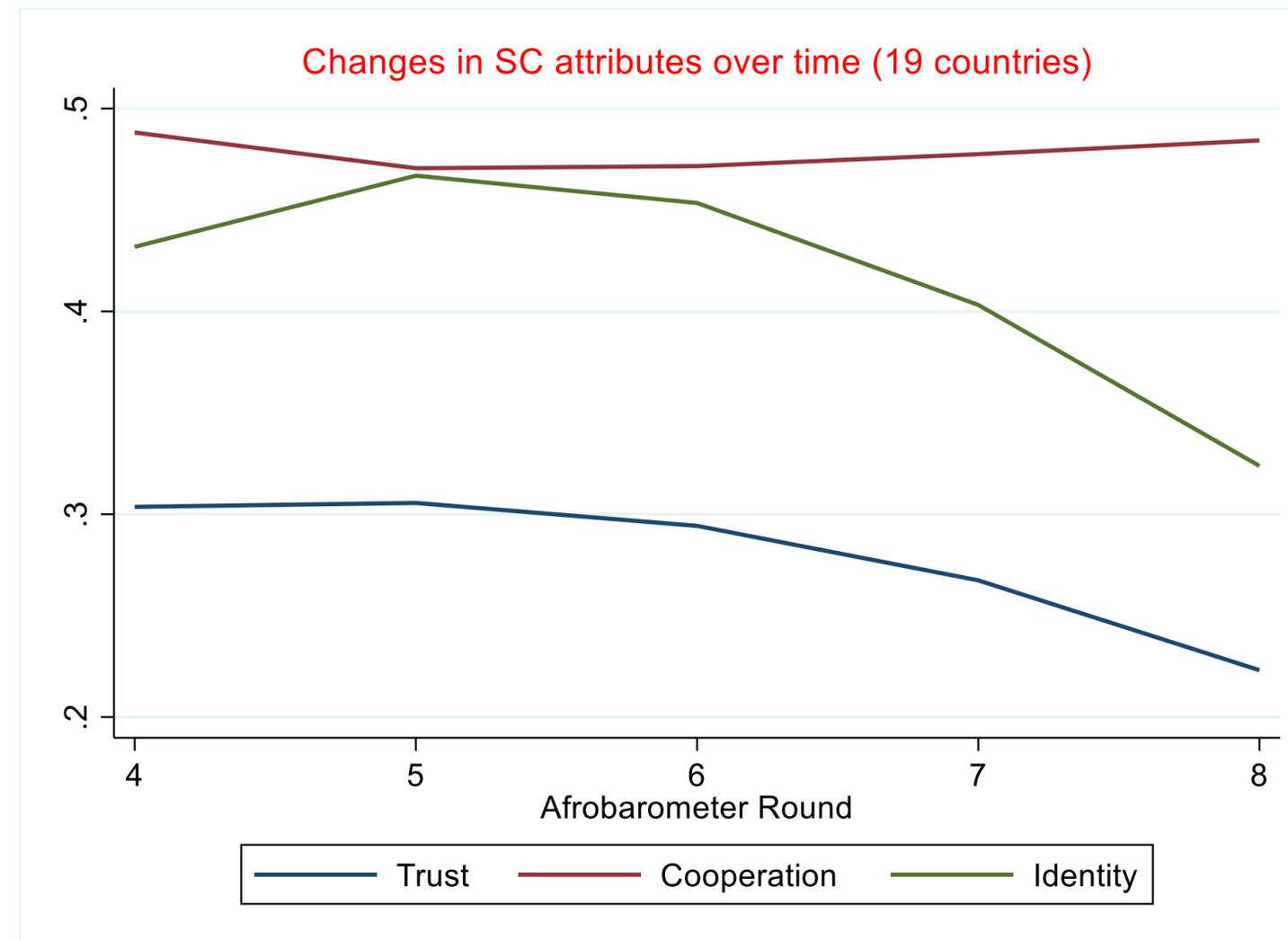
	Identity	Trust	Cooperation
Identity	1		
Trust	0.38	1	
Cooperation	0.22	0.04	1

- The correlation between the three attributes is positive, though low between trust and cooperation (0.04) ➡ 1 outlier (Lesotho)
- The strongest correlation is between trust and inclusive identity (0.38)
- Given the magnitude of these coefficients, none of the attributes covers the whole phenomenon of social cohesion

- The correlation between horizontal and vertical trust is low (0.14)
- Overall trust is mainly driven by horizontal trust
- The horizontal and vertical components of cooperation are much more correlated (0.56) and provide a similar contribution to overall cooperation for the common good.

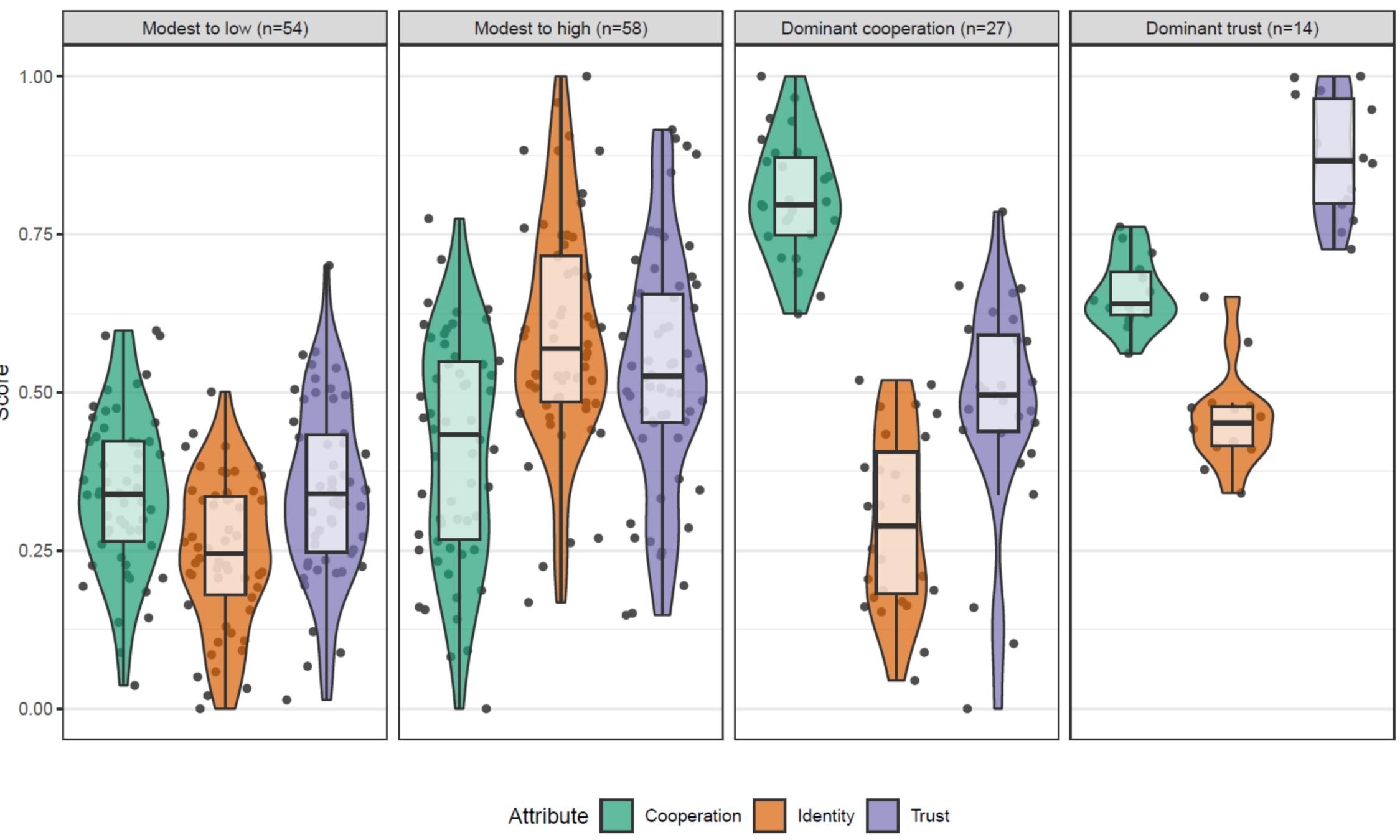
	Trust score	Horizontal trust	Vertical trust
Trust score	1		
Horizontal trust	0.93	1	
Vertical trust	0.47	0.14	1

	Cooperation score	Horizontal Cooperation	Vertical Cooperation
Cooperation score	1		
Horizontal Cooperation	0.86	1	
Vertical Cooperation	0.90	0.56	1



- Starting from round 5 (2011-13), both trust and inclusive identity have clearly declined
- Cooperation for the common good, instead, remained substantially stable over time.

# Constellations of social cohesion (4 groups)



### Examples:

**Dominant coop:** Lesotho, Malawi, Sierra Leone

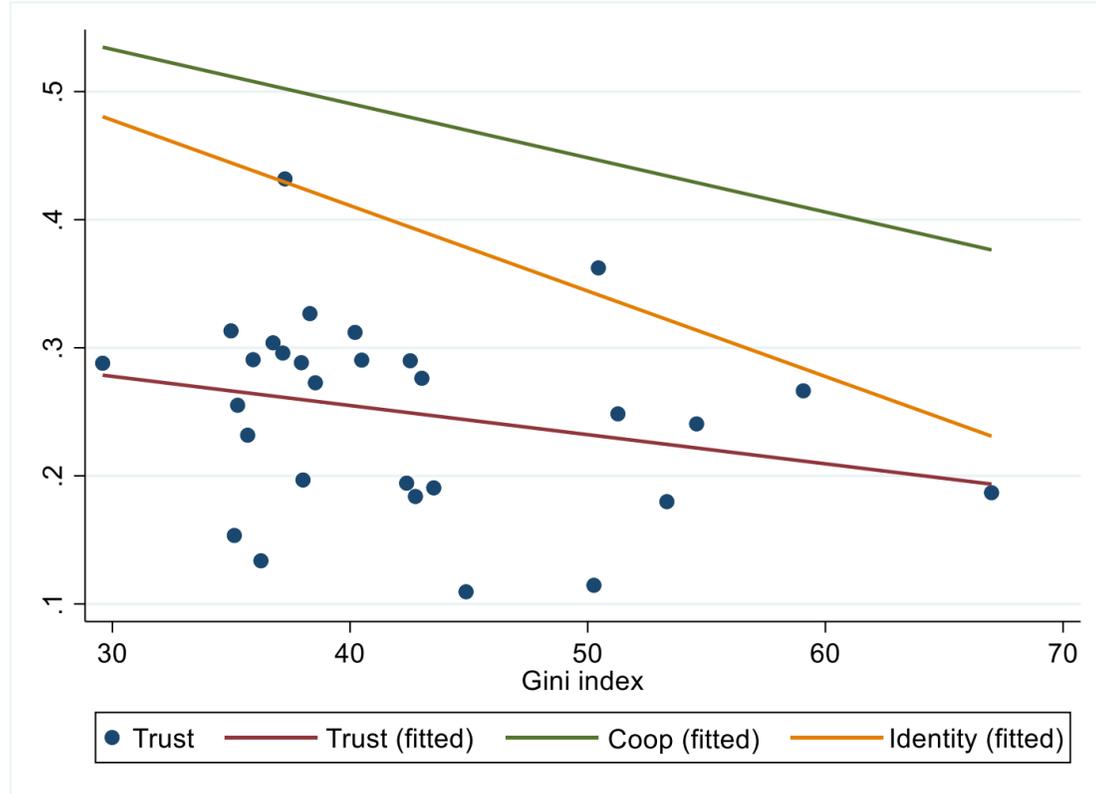
**Dominant trust:** Niger

**Modest to high SC:** Gabon, Morocco, Senegal, Tanzania

**Modest to low SC:** Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda

Source: updated based on Leininger, Burchi et al. (2021)

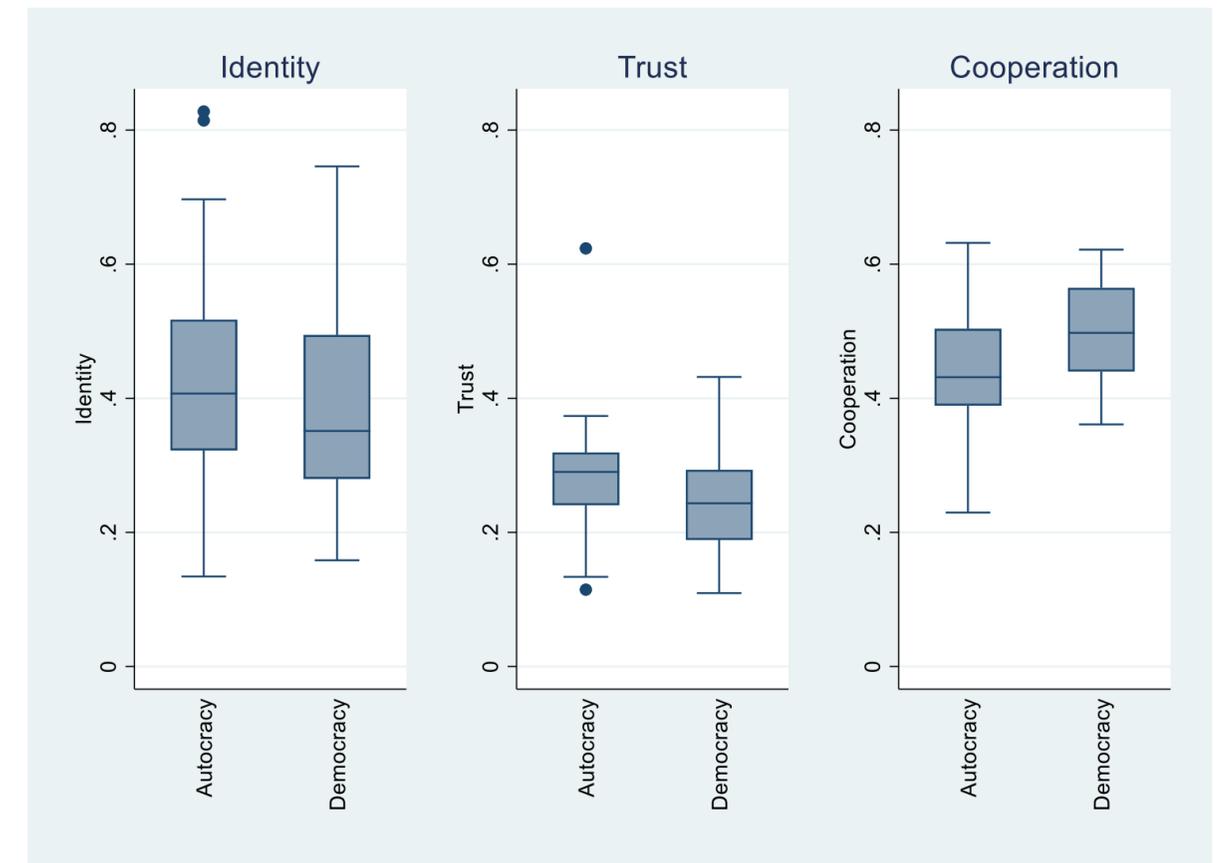
# SC, Inequality and Democracy



Source: Own calculation using the latest country data from Afrobarometer and WIID (29 countries).

- Income inequality is negatively correlated with all 3 attributes
- The strongest correlation is with identity
- Big differences between horizontal and vertical trust (Burchi & Zapata-Roman, 2022).

- Democratic countries have lower mean and median values of identity and trust
- Democratic countries have higher mean and median values of cooperation for the common good.



- The measurement of SC should be clearly rooted in a sound definition and conceptualization
- SC is a multidimensional phenomenon, which cannot be adequately captured by one single component
- Our measurement allows providing a comprehensive picture of SC in Africa....

but it has also important limitations, which should be addressed in future research:

- ✓ Non-optimal measurement of cooperation for the common good
  - ✓ Small sample size
  - ✓ While the concept navigates across regions, this measurement is specific only for African countries
- Future research should develop a measure of SC that navigates across world regions, going beyond Africa.

## Challenges:

1. Data availability: explore sources like World Values Survey, Gallup and the recent Survey Data Harmonization (SDR) 2.0 database
2. Interpretation of answers/indicators across different regions, cultures and political regimes (see vertical trust in SSA and Latin America (Mattes, 2017)).

***Thank you very much  
for your attention!***

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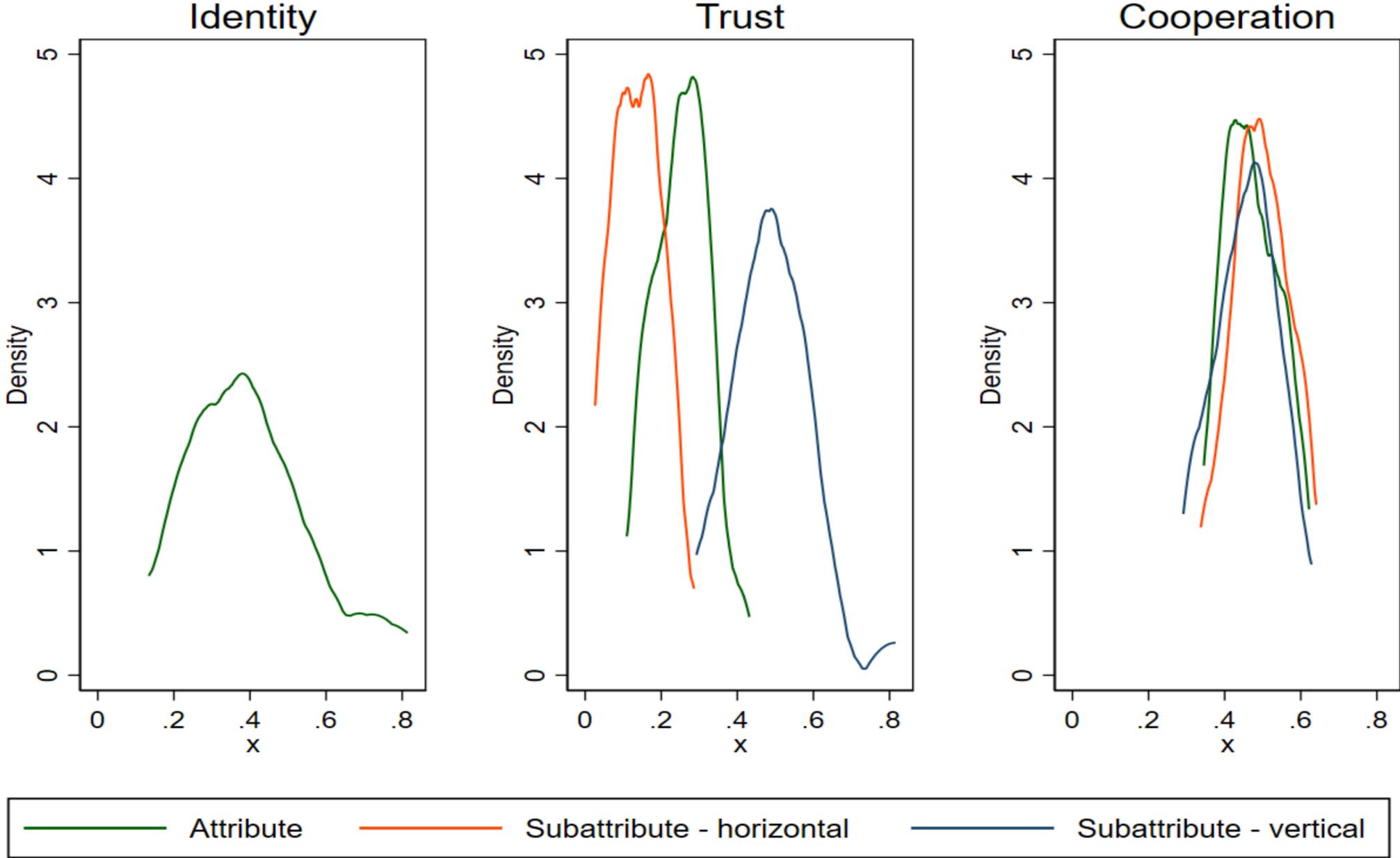
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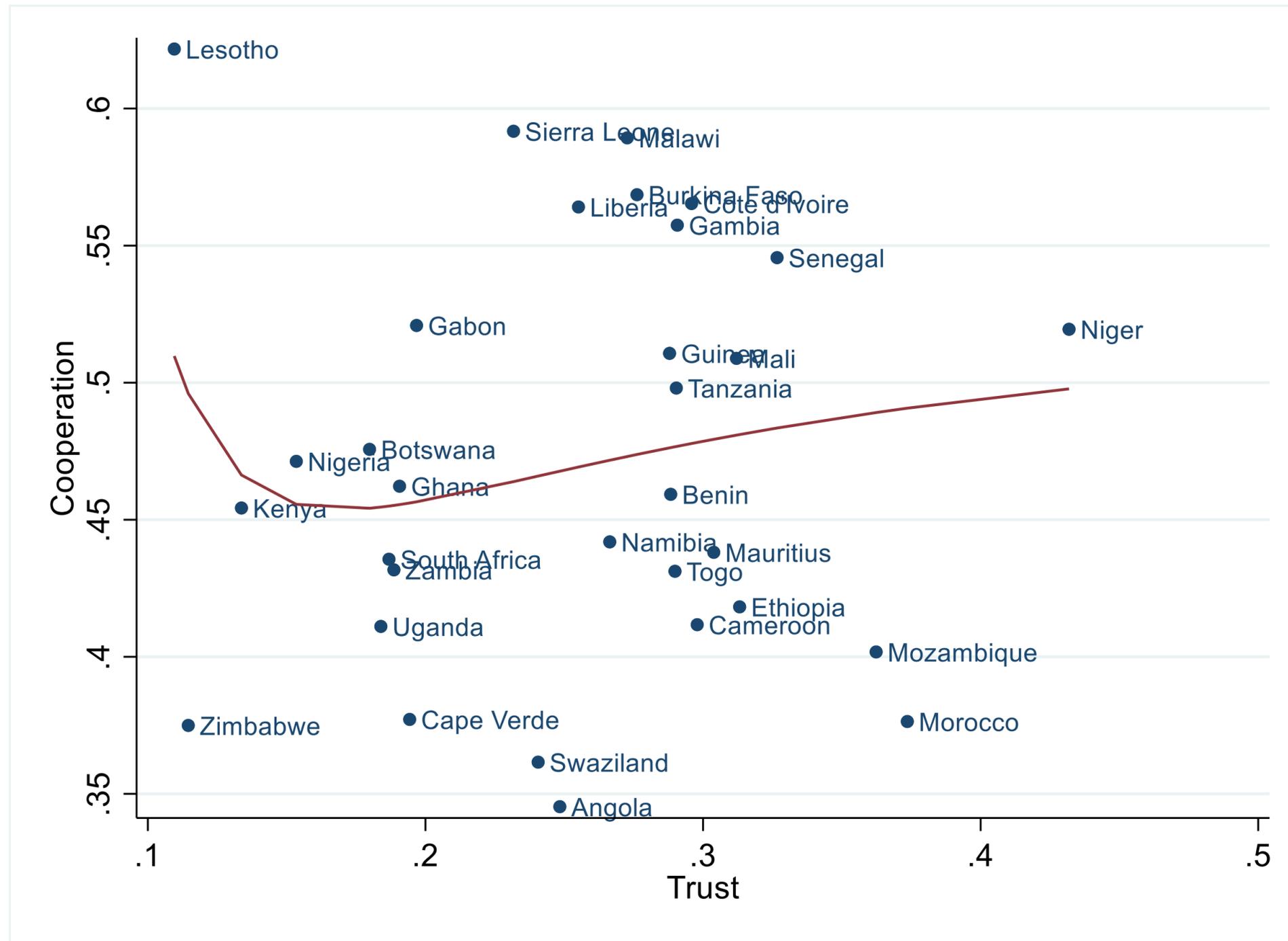
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# Kernel density of the distribution of attributes and sub-attributes



# Correlation Trust-Cooperation (2019-2021)



# Inequality and Trust by income level

