

The Causal Effect of Social Drinking/Eating Networks on Trust

Abstract

Social drinking and/or eating is both a common human behavior and a verified network generator from a variety of social network research around the world. Yet, its causal consequences are not well-established empirical evidence. To fill in this gap, the present study is designed to examine the causal effect of social drinking/eating networks (SDEN) on measures of generalized and institutional trust. Ongoing analysis of data from the 2017 module of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) shows that there is a great variation in both measures of trust and an individual's SDEN frequency across the 30 ISSP member countries/regions in Americas, Asia, and Europe. OLS models reveal that a citizen's SDEN frequency is associated positively with one's trust in anyone in society at large but negatively with one's trust in the national court and major corporations of one's own country/region. These results survive a causality test using Instrumental Variable Models in which the reversal causality from trust measures to SDEN frequency is statistically ruled out. Further data analysis is underway to explore how the causal effect of SDEN on trust may vary between the East and West, among political regimes, and across cultural contexts.