

Trust is bad for democracy (Harvard IV)

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I am not sure if this is an amazing insight or a statement of the bleedin' obvious. But their [statistics](#) look very impressive.

[Pippa Norris](#) and [Ronald Inglehart](#) argue in a paper presented this afternoon that trust in the media and government is a negative indicator of democracy. In other words, Chinese people express a lot of faith in their media and government, despite (or rather because) of the limits of media and other freedoms.

They go further and assert that with growing economic wealth and development people become more sceptical (or Skeptical as they say here in Boston) and that actually leads to greater self-expression which (with the help of free media) leads to greater democracy.

So the country with low faith in media and government (Sweden, Germany) has high ratings for democracy.

It's more complicated than that of course (everything in Harvard is) but the World Bank's Sina Odugbemi points out one danger. If you say that democracy follows growth (with the help of free media etc) then the danger is that rulers in poor countries can tell their people to prioritise economic growth above democracy. I think I have got that right, but what does it mean for the role of journalism? See for yourself via Pippa's [website](#). Also check out Ronald's [World Values Survey](#) website.

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