

**CHINESE CITIZENS' DECLINING
TRUST IN THEIR CENTRAL
GOVERNMENT**

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Executive Summary

1. Trust in the central government largely indicates a citizen's confidence in the political regime. Chinese citizens generally have a high level of trust in the central government.
2. Four rounds of national public opinion surveys from 2002 to 2015, however, reveal that the trust level is on a continuous decline. The regime is seemingly losing the support of its people.
3. This confidence decline may be a persistent tendency. The younger generations, especially those born after 1980, are consistently more sceptical of the regime than the older generations.
4. Generally, the confidence decline is a result of economic development, urbanisation and modernisation, which have caused fundamental value changes in Chinese society.
5. Urban residents with better education have lost more trust in Beijing than those who live in the countryside or those who receive less education.
6. The steepest drop in trust is from those who have abandoned traditional family values and those who have developed a political preference for democracy.
7. The Chinese government will have to improve its performance in economic growth and containing corruption to boost the trust level. Data show that an optimistic economic evaluation and a cleaner local government will significantly boost people's trust in the central government.
8. Globalisation may also be on the side of Beijing. Those who have exposure to events overseas would have developed a more positive image of their country and are therefore more supportive of the regime.

9. In the long run the Chinese leadership may have to reform to make the regime more adaptable to social changes, failing which the decline of political trust may ultimately lead to instability of the political system.