



# Trust and Multilevel Governance

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## Trust and the COVID-19 Crisis: Regulation and Compliance in Multi-level Governance

GOVTRUST Symposium, January 29, 2021



Does the Covid-19 response affect intergovernmental relations in federal Belgium?

Does citizens' trust in various levels of government differ and evolve throughout the pandemic?

Do explanations for individual trust in government differ across government levels?



## Does the Covid-19 response affect intergovernmental relations in federal Belgium?

Popelier, P & Bursens, P. (2021). Managing the Covid-19 Crisis in a Divided Belgian Federation: Cooperation against All Odds, in Steytler, N. (ed.) *Combating the COVID-19 pandemic: Federalism a boon or bane?*, forthcoming

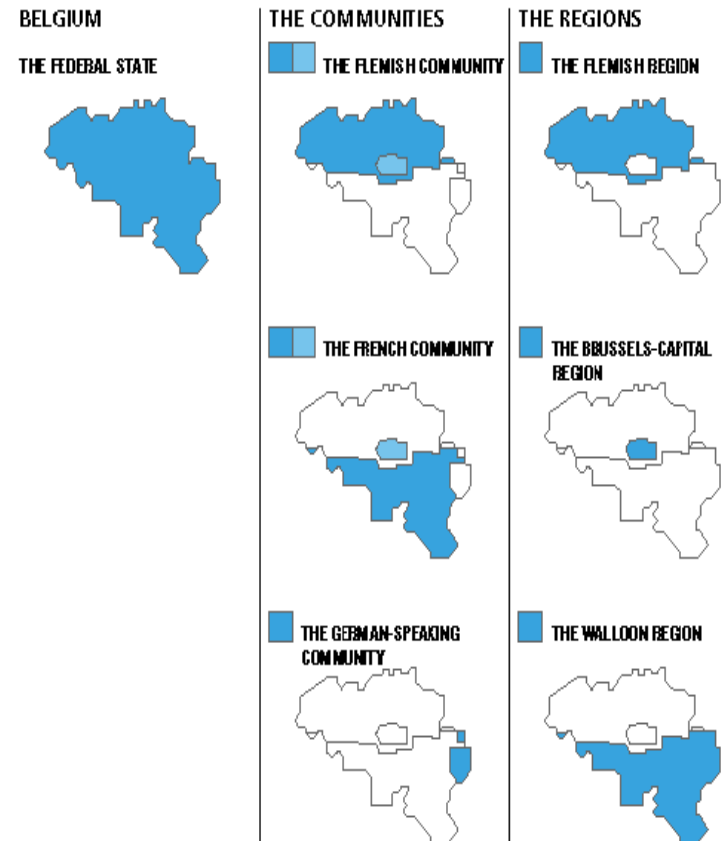
Bursens, P., Popelier, P. & Meier, P. (2021). Belgium's response to the first and second COVID-19 wave. How to manage a pandemic in a competitive federal system? in Knuepling, F. (ed.) *COVID-19 & Federalisms Response*, Routledge, forthcoming



# Belgian federalism meets pandemic response

## Belgian federalism:

- **centrifugal**: pacification of conflicting interests
- **dual / competitive**: exclusive competences, one level cannot overrule another, to avoid intergovernmental relations
- **intricate division of competences**
- **split electoral and party system**: horizontal and vertical divergent interests





# Belgian federalism meets pandemic response

## Belgian coordination of the pandemic response:

- protocol recognizes federal level as coordinating level in case of a pandemic ('federal phase')
- political consensus across parties and levels: federal level should take the lead, but should involve the regional levels
- **ministerial level:**
  - first wave: federal crisis management committee
  - second wave: concertation committee
- **advisory bodies:**
  - National Security Council
  - scientific advisory boards (RMG, RAG)
  - multidisciplinary advisory groups (GEES, GEMS)



# Belgian federalism meets pandemic response

- composition of ministerial coordination bodies:
  - the federal prime minister
  - the federal ministers responsible for the relevant policy domains
  - the prime ministers of the Regions and Communities
- measures and division of competences:
  - preventative and subsequent economic support measures had an impact across all levels of government in Belgium
  - often implementation by regional and local levels



## Belgian federalism meets pandemic response

All levels were forced into **intergovernmental relations** under **leadership of the federal level**, despite such relations being discouraged by dual federalism principles

Sometimes lengthy discussions, yet cooperation always **delivered** preventative and economic measures **supported by all levels of government**

de iure dual federalism => de facto cooperative federalism





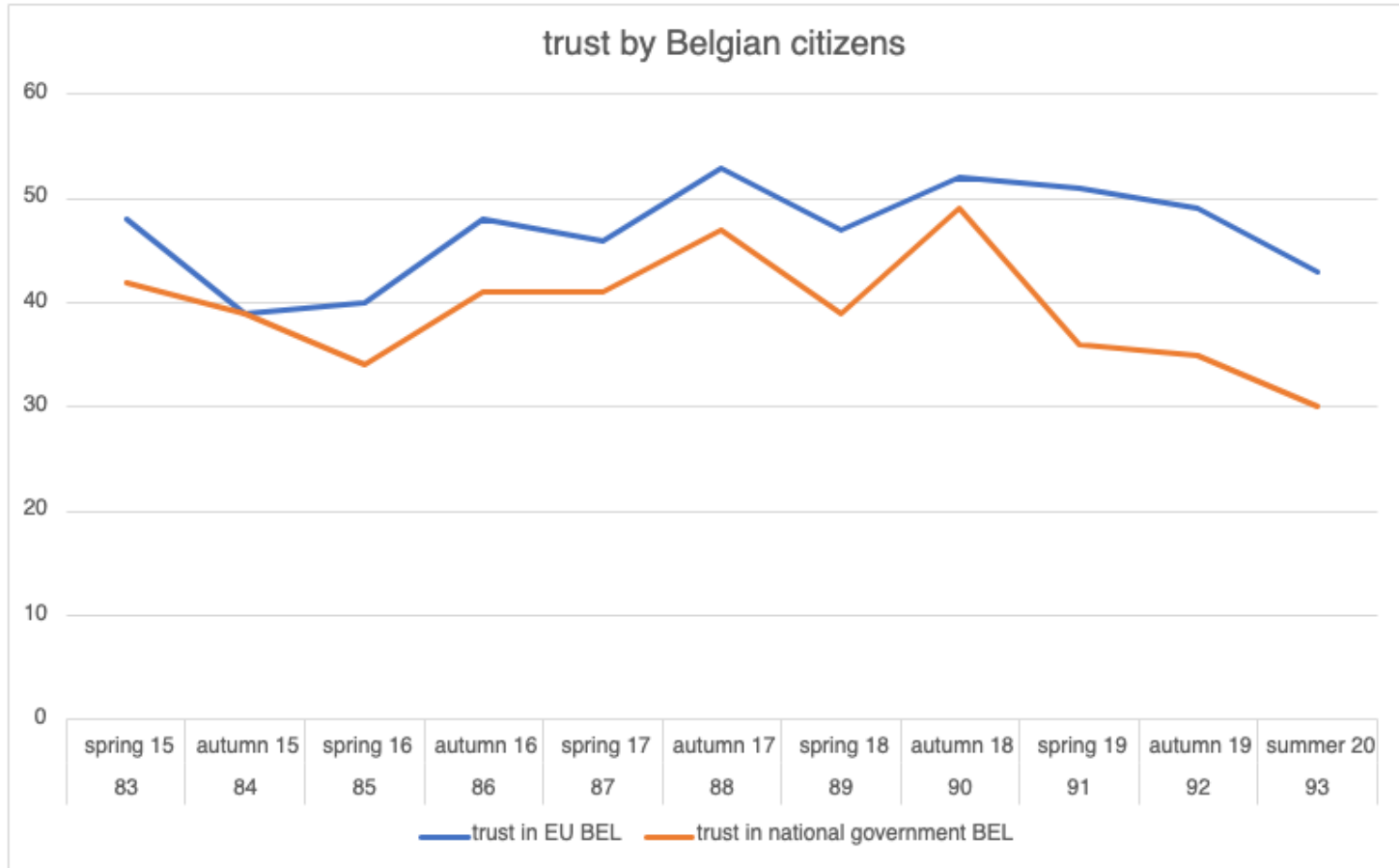
## Does citizens' trust in various levels of government differ and evolve throughout the pandemic?

Bursens, P., De Vadder, S., Glavina, M., Popelier, P., Van Zimmeren, E., Verhoest, K. (2021), Citizens' Trust in Government Response to the Pandemic. How to understand Variation in Trust across Time and Levels of Government in Belgium., *Politics of the Low Countries*, in preparation.





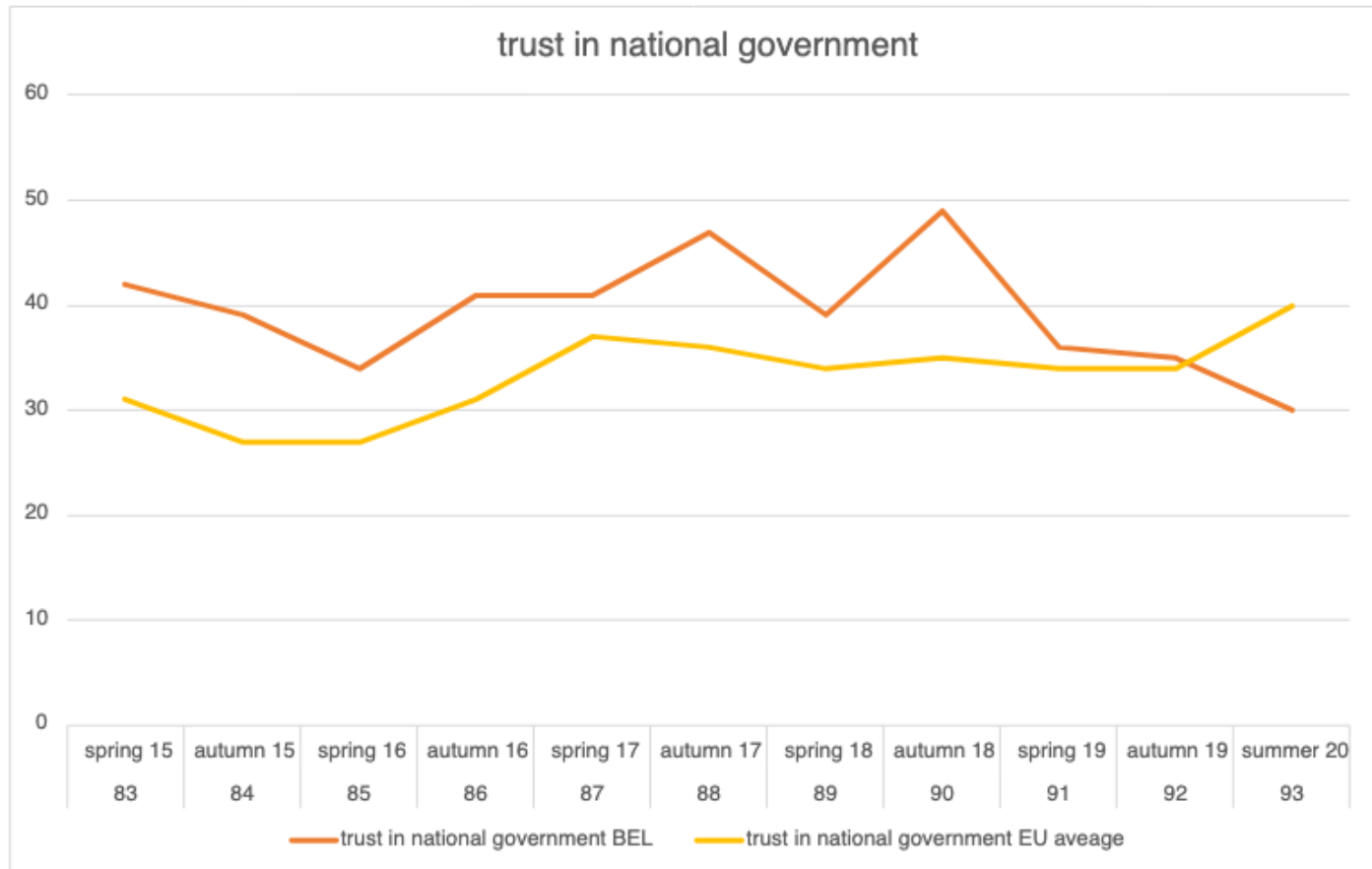
# trust in multiple levels of government



source: Eurobarometer



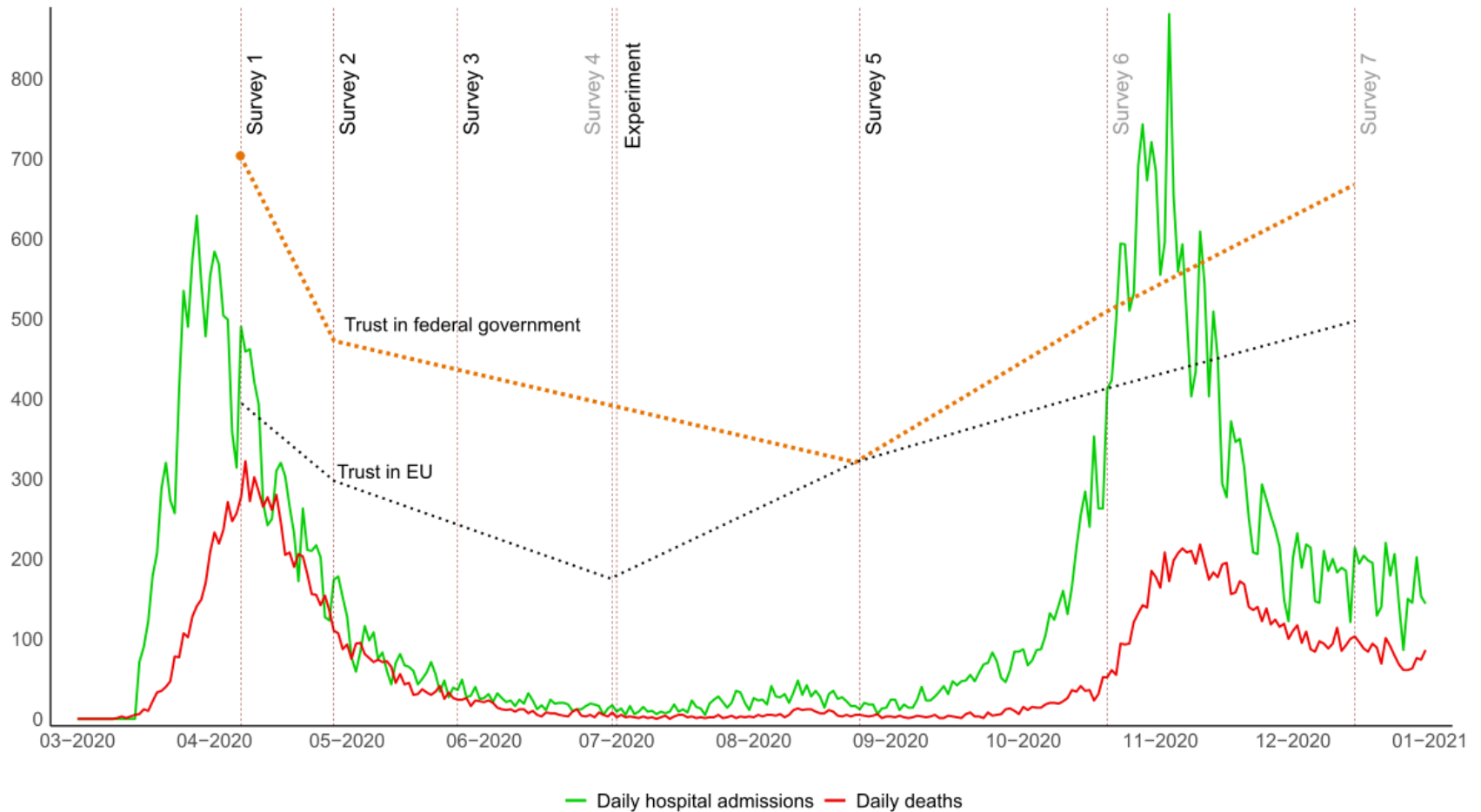
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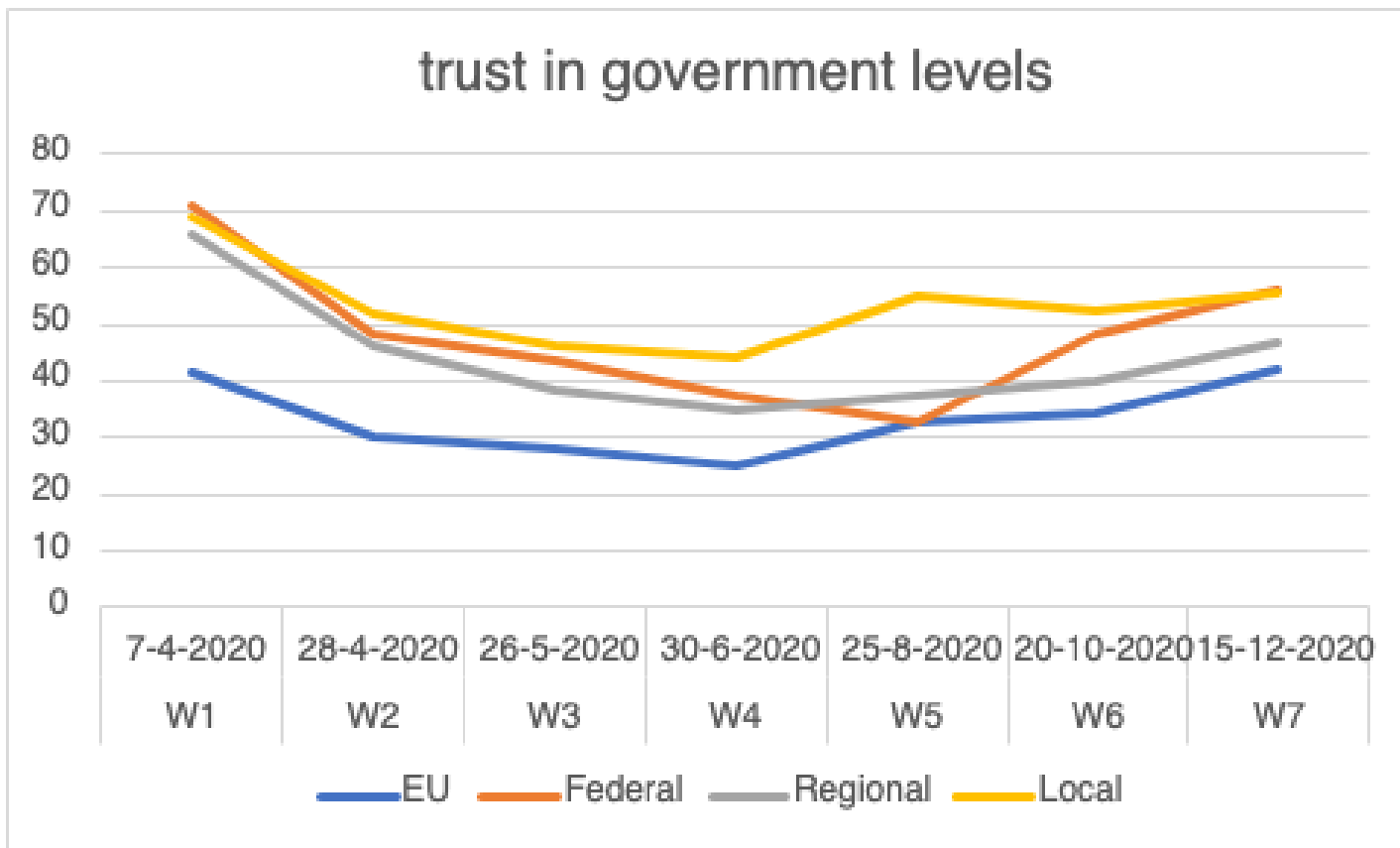
# trust in multiple levels of government



source: UAntwerp Corona survey and Sciensano



# trust in multiple levels of government



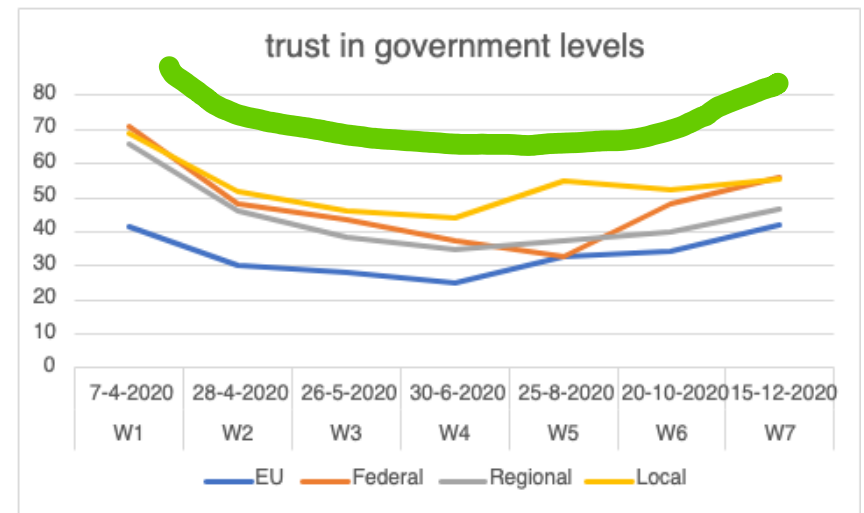
source: UAntwerp Corona survey



# trust in multiple levels of government

Initial high level of trust in the federal, regional and local government levels. Parallel evolution of the three government levels until the end of June.

⇒ rally round the flag effect

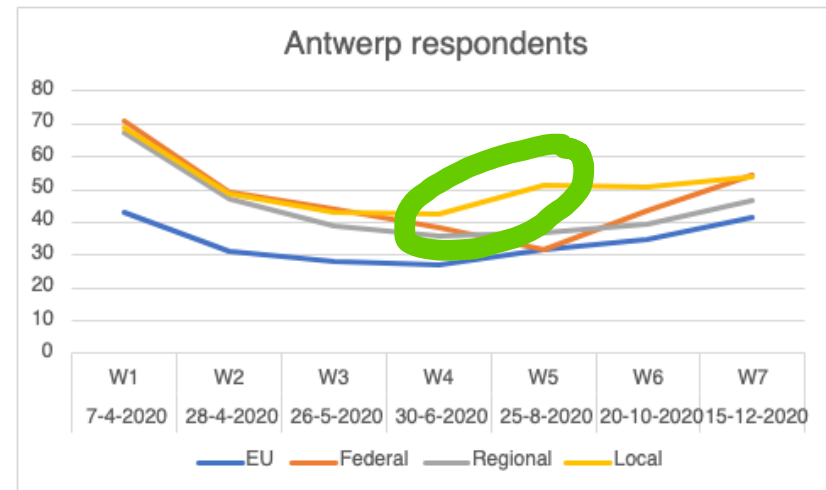
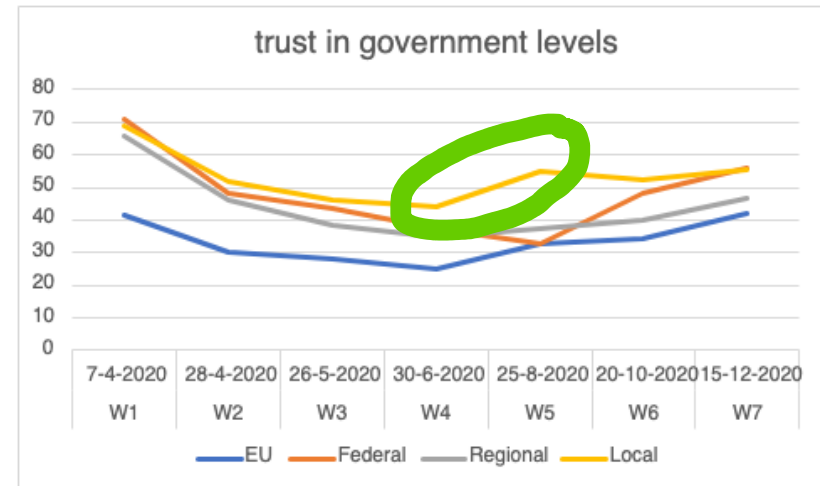




# trust in multiple levels of government

Trust in the local level increases over the summer and remains higher than trust in the other levels.

⇒ Evaluation of local preventative measures on top of enforcement of higher-level measures

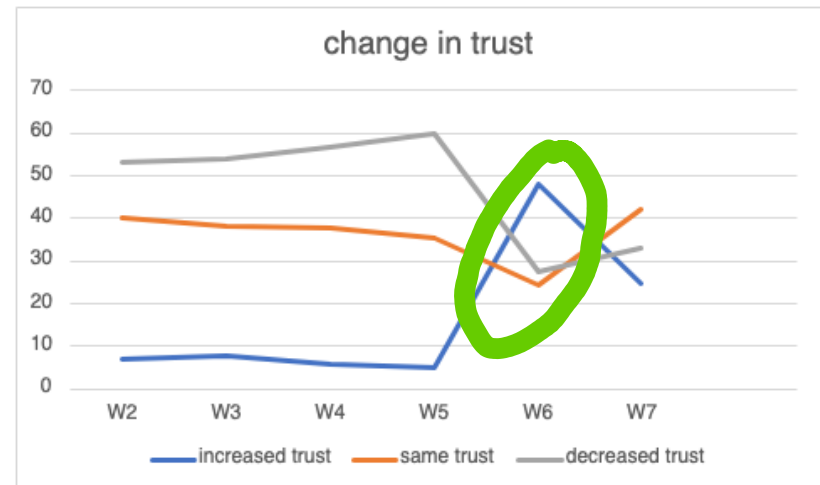
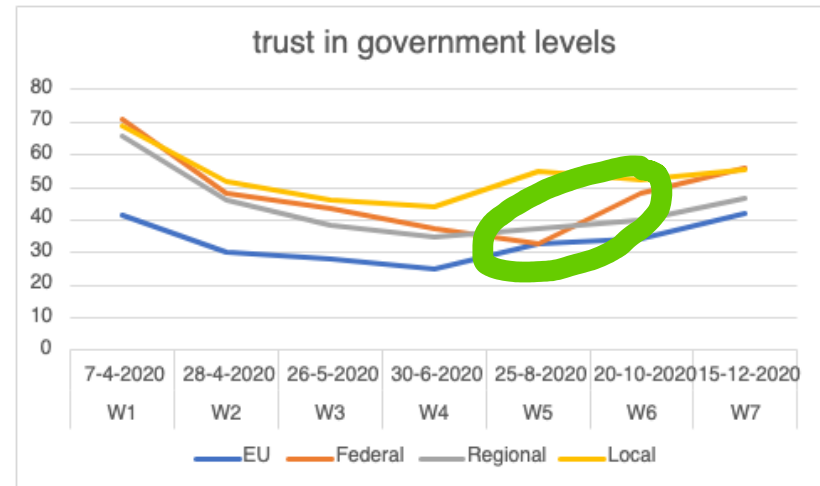




# trust in multiple levels of government

Trust in the federal level increases after the summer and remains higher than trust in the regional level, even equals the local level in December.

- ⇒ domestic political event: new federal government
- ⇒ evaluation of more restrictive federal measures

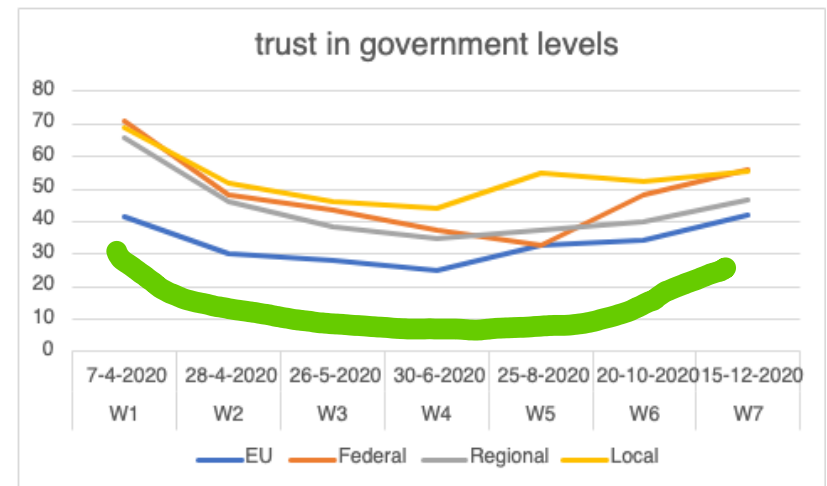




# trust in multiple levels of government

Lower level of trust in the EU throughout the whole period. EU trust level follows evolution of other government levels

- ⇒ EU measures / EU competences in the background
- ⇒ congruence but no compensation







## trust in multiple levels of government

- in times of crisis: **congruence** but no compensation between national and EU level
- initial **rally-round-the flag effect** for all domestic government levels
- **preventative measures** trigger trust, especially in those that are responsible for the measures
- effect of media attention on trust?



Do explanations for individual trust in government differ across government levels?



## individual trust across government levels

- **the more measures are perceived effective, the more government is trusted**
  - most important factor to explain trust, but more important to explain trust in federal government
- **the more measures are perceived appropriate, the more government is trusted**
  - only matters to explain trust in federal government, not trust in EU
- **the higher generalized trust in people and prosocial attitudes, the more government is trusted**
  - matters for both trust in federal government and trust in EU
- **the higher the perceived risk, the more government is trusted**
  - only matters for the federal government after the summer of 2020



# individual trust across government levels

- **age**

- being **young** has a positive effect on trust in **EU**, whereas being **old** has a positive effect on trust in **federal government**

- **gender**

- being **female** has a positive effect on trust in **EU**, whereas this is only the case for the trust in federal government after the summer of 2020

- **education**

- having a **higher level of education** is positive for **both** trust in the federal government and the EU



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