Do People Trust the Government More? Unpacking the Distinct Impacts of Anticorruption Policies on Political Trust

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Online Appendix A. Replicate with a "Conservative Sample"

The following regressions use data of respondents interviewed before November 2012 in CFPS to ensure that all the respondents were not affected by the anticorruption policies in 2012, because President Xi assumed position in mid-November 2012. The results are largely similar with the main results of the article.

Table A1. Baseline regression

	DV: Trust in Local Government	
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
LnAnti	0.109***	0.113***
	(0.036)	(0.035)
Education		-0.145***
		(0.049)
Health		-0.082***
		(0.017)
Urban		-0.199**
		(0.093)
Party Member		0.233
		(0.244)
Year fixed effect	Yes	Yes
City level control	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effect	Yes	Yes
Constant	6.304***	7.015***
	(0.982)	(0.973)
Observations	39,946	39,873
Number of sampleid	19,973	19,965

Note: a. Robust standard errors in parentheses
b. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1.

Table A2. State-system insiders' response to anticorruption enforcement

	DV: Trust in Local Government			
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
LnAnti	0.116***	0.115***	0.113***	0.121***
	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)	(0.035)
Party Member	0.281	0.239	0.230	0.239
	(0.243)	(0.243)	(0.244)	(0.245)
Party_Member*LnAnti	-0.033**			
	(0.015)			
Gov_Soe		0.144		
		(0.252)		
Gov_Soe*LnAnti		-0.037*		
		(0.021)		
Cadre*LnAnti			0.022	
			(0.045)	
Businessman*LnAnti				-0.055***
				(0.019)
Indiv_Character	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	7.006***	6.948***	7.021***	7.076***
	(0.971)	(0.969)	(0.973)	(0.968)
Observations	39,873	39,873	39,873	39,873
Number of sampleID	19,965	19,965	19,965	19,965

Notes: a. Robust standard errors in parentheses

b.*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

c. Statistical significance of the coefficient of the interaction term of Gov_SOE declines to 0.1 is partly because of the decline of the sample size.

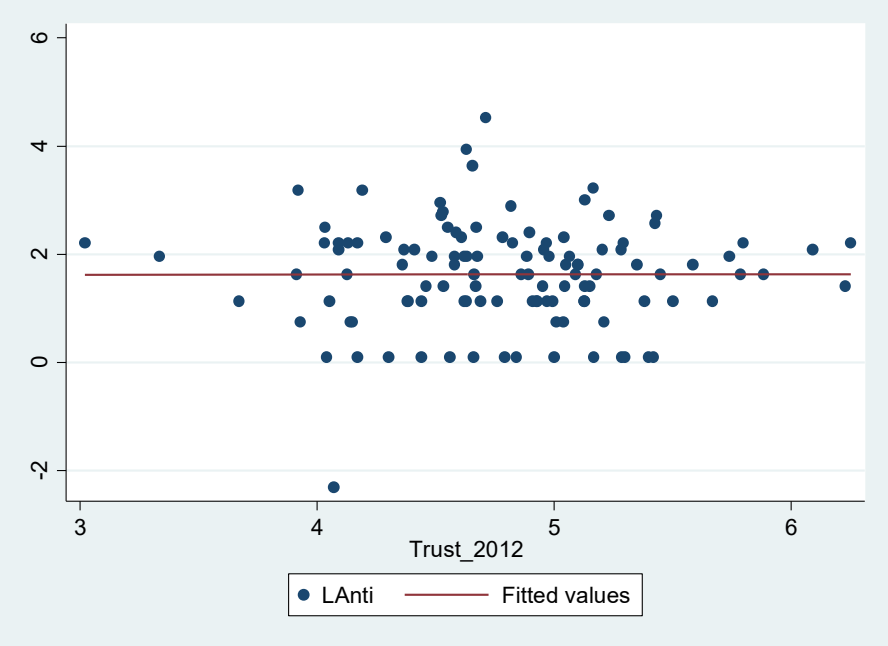
Table A3. Media effect of the anticorruption enforcement

	DV: Trust in Local Government		
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)
LnAnti	0.140***	0.153***	0.131***
	(0.034)	(0.036)	(0.035)
Mid sch	0.084		
	(0.316)		
College	0.546		
	(0.588)		
Mid sch*LnAnti	-0.060***		
	(0.012)		
College*LnAnti	-0.076***		
	(0.021)		
Mid-age*LnAnti		-0.048***	
		(0.012)	
Young*LnAnti		-0.094***	
		(0.017)	
Internet*LnAnti			-0.094***
			(0.012)
Indiv_Character	Yes	Yes	Yes
City level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effect	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	7.031***	7.098***	6.475***
	(0.960)	(0.982)	(0.975)
Observations	39,873	39,873	39,873
Number of sampleID	19,965	19,965	19,965

Note: a. Baseline group for education is illiterate/primary school.
b. The reference group for age is elderly.
c. Robust standard errors in parentheses.
d. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Online Appendix B. Test Pre-Trend Effect

Figure B1. Testing Pre-Trend Effect: Trust in 2012 and LnAnti



Note: If cities that subsequently have a higher number of arrested officials happened to be also undergoing a trend of high public trust increase (or less public trust decline), compared to cities that have a relatively lower number of arrested officials, the two waves of DID results may be driven by the pre-trend of trust increase rather than the anticorruption effort. To test this possibility, we first made an assumption that most cities that experience a higher increase in public trust did not start with a particularly lower level of trust than others. Thus, cities with pre-trend should already have a relatively high trust at the starting point of our data (year 2012). If the pre-trend threat existed, we should be able to observe a positive relationship between trust in our first wave of data (2012) and the number of arrested officials. However, the scatter plot in Figure B1 shows no significant relationship between the two variables, so it should be safe to reject the pre-trend explanation.

Online Appendix C. Alternative Measure of Anticorruption Efforts

People may only have an approximate perception of the level of their local government's anticorruption efforts (e.g., high, medium, low), instead of the exact number of the arrested officials. We therefore convert the independent variable into an ordinal variable, "low (i.e., 0 to 5 arrests), medium (i.e., 6 to 15 arrests), and high (i.e., >16 arrests)" for a robustness check. For the cut-off point, we considered both the range of arrests (most city's arrest numbers fall between 0 and 25) and the sample distribution. We also tried other cut-offs, such as taking no arrests as the baseline, 1 to 10 arrests as low anticorruption effort, and more than 10 as high anticorruption effort, and the results were similar. Methodologically, to allow sufficient variation for statistical testing with the broad classification of anticorruption efforts, we pooled each subgroup of "insiders" and "better-informed" together as two variables, "insider" and "better-informed", correspondingly. The following results are still consistent with our major findings.

Table C1. Perception of anticorruption efforts in three levels:

	DV: Trust in Local Government	
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
Medium_Anti	0.201**	0.237***
	(0.080)	(0.079)
High_Anti	0.360***	0.401***
	(0.80)	(0.079)
Insider	0.219	
	(0.258)	
Medium_Anti*Insider	-0.206***	
	(0.056)	
High_Anti_*Insider	-0.408**	
	(0.195)	
Better_informed		-0.084***
		(0.143)
Medium_Anti* Better_informed		-0.307***
		(0.064)
High_Anti* Better_informed		-0.597***
		(0.116)

Year fixed effect	Yes	Yes
Individual fixed effect	Yes	Yes
Personal control	Yes	Yes
City level control	Yes	Yes
Constant	6.771***	6.719***
	(1.088)	(1.109)
Observations	41,842	41,842
Number of sampleid	20,950	20,950

Note: a. Robust standard errors in parentheses clustered at the city level

b. ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

c. Baseline is low levels of anticorruption efforts (i.e., arrest number is between 0 and 5, Medium_Anti denotes medium anticorruption efforts (i.e., arrest number is between 5 and 15); and High_Anti means high levels of anticorruption efforts (i.e., arrest number is 16 and above).

Online Appendix D. Test Selection Bias of Insiders

We further alleviate the concern that the state-system insiders may be more competitive and have better access to alternative information. We test the effects of being an insider within highly homogeneous groups that enjoy similar high levels of access to information, such as a subsample of people who frequently read political news online. Within this highly informed group, outsiders might also enjoy a high level of access to alternative information known to insiders. Within this group, if insiders still have a less increase in political trust than outsiders when anticorruption efforts are higher, this will give us more confidence about the experience effect. Moreover, for the insiders, especially those at higher administrative levels, the insider information solely accessible to them is sometimes important government information conveyed to insiders, which is actually part of their experience during the anticorruption crackdown, instead of the "alternative information" so to speak of the outsiders.

Table D1 shows the results of using a restricted sample to respondents who frequently read political material online as a measure of a highly informed group. Given the highly selective group and the small sample size, we had to run the interaction between anticorruption efforts and "insiders" as one group. As predicted, insiders still had less increased political trust than outsiders, thus the finding is consistent with our main results.

Table D1. The heterogeneous effects of anticorruption efforts on the highly-informed group

VARIABLES	DV: Trust in Local Government
LAnti	.069**
	(.046)
Insider	-.250**
	(.098)
LAnti*Insider	-.050***
	(.021)
Indiv_Character	Yes
City level controls	Yes
Year fixed effect	Yes
Indivi fixed effect	Yes
Constant	8.429***
	(1.955)
Observations	9,513
Number of sampleID	4,765

Note: a. Robust standard errors in parentheses clustered in city level
b. ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Online Appendix E. Robustness Check for "Experience"

The dummy variable "experience" was constructed based on respondents' answers to four questions: whether the respondent had received or seen any unfair treatment from local government officials; had encountered or seen conflict with local government officials; was delayed or observed any delay by local government officials; or whether they had been charged or served an extra fee by local officials. We code the dummy as 1 if at least one of the answers is yes, and 0 otherwise.

There may be a concern about potential confounding factors that are associated with "experience" of interacting with government but also affect people's responses to anticorruption efforts. The difficulty here is that we cannot have control variables parallel to interaction terms in regression analysis. However, given the nature of the confounding variables, if this kind of confounding variable exists, it is very likely to be personal characteristics that are possessed systematically by those who have "experience" of interacting with government. Therefore, one way to alleviate this concern is to identify these personal characteristics as much as possible and rule out them as possible channels. Therefore, our general design is to try our best to identify the possible confounding factors by testing whether these critical factors are associated with "experience" and then running a robustness check of the effect of "experience" on the subsamples one by one, borrowing the idea of "within subjects design."

Relying on the existing literature, we narrowed the personal characteristics down to sex, education, age, rural/urban identity, and state-system insider/outsider identity. In particular, classic studies have argued that men are generally more interested in politics and political participation in light of the political socialization process (Welch 1977). Education and age have also been found to

exert an impact on people's political engagement (Galston 2004). People with more political knowledge are more likely to argue for their own interests with the government, and younger people are easier to mobilize than elders. A rural-urban disparity may also exist in political engagement (e.g., Thananithichot 2012). The gap exists largely because of experience with the political system rather than education and interest. Finally, state-system insiders such as officials doubtless have daily communication with the government. Businessmen in China, in both private and public sectors, must maintain a close relationship with local governments that constantly swing between a developmental and a clientelist state model (Ong 2012). Thus, in general, insiders are more likely to interact with government. The *t*-test results in Table E1 demonstrate that these variables show a statistically significant association with the variable "experience."

In the next step, we tested the effect of "experience" conditioned on each of these variables. Specifically, we ran separate regressions with the interaction term between "experience" and anticorruption efforts using subsamples of male, middle-aged, urban residents, those with middle school or more education, and state-system insiders, respectively. The results are presented in Figure E1. The interaction term between experience and anticorruption efforts remained statistically significant and negative in each of the five regressions, which means that those with direct interaction experience with the government would still have the least-increased political trust within each of the subgroups. In other words, even after consideration of the confounding variables, "experience" is highly likely to lead to its own negative effect on political trust increase when anticorruption efforts are higher.

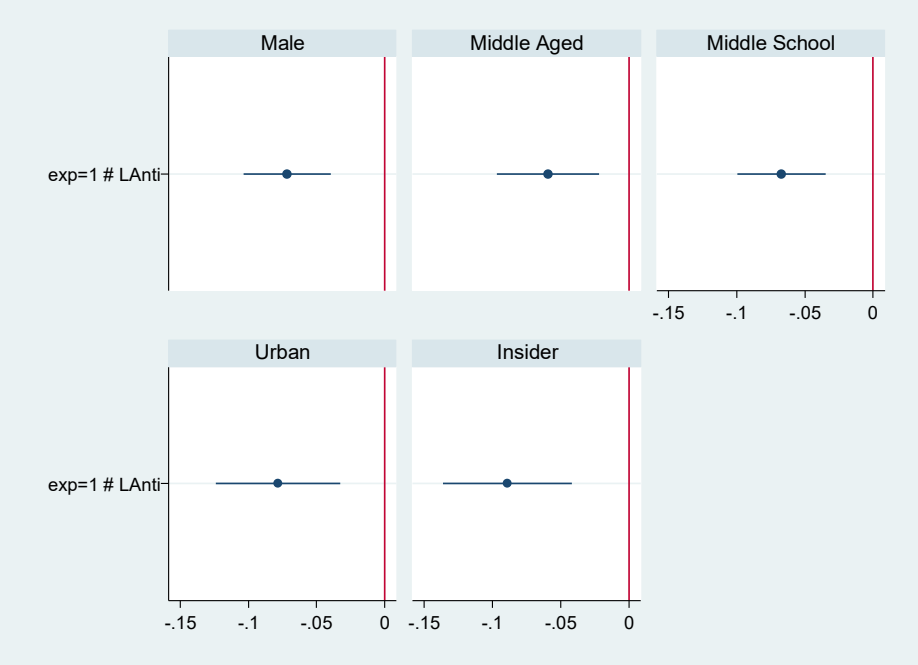
Table E1. *t*-test of respondents with and without interaction "experience" with government

	Non-Experience (N = 17,447)	Experienced (N = 4,258)	Difference	*p* value

Male	0.460	0.572	-0.112	0.00***
Age	47.1	46.0	1.1	0.00***
Education	0.482	0.504	-0.022	0.01***
Urban	0.246	0.474	-0.228	0.00***
Insider	0.202	0.261	-0.059	0.00***

Note: Because education is a three-category ordinal variable, we combine middle_school and college education together as one group, and use those below middle_school education as the other group to run the *t*-test.

Figure E1. Interaction effect of "experience" and anticorruption efforts in subgroups.



Note: The subsamples used in the analysis are: male for sex, middle aged for age_group, middle school or above for education, urban *hukou* for urban, insiders for state-system insiders.

References:

Galston, W. A. (2004). Civic education and political participation. *PS: Political Science & Politics*, *37*(2), 263-266.

Ong, L. H. (2012). Between developmental and clientelist states: Local state-business relationships in China. *Comparative Politics*, *44*(2), 191-209.

Welch, S. (1977). Women as political animals? A test of some explanations for male-female political participation differences. *American Journal of Political Science*, 711-730.

Thananithichot, S. (2012). Political engagement and participation of Thai citizens: the rural–urban disparity. *Contemporary Politics*, *18*(1), 87-108.

Online Appendix F. Test of Preference Falsification

There is a concern of preference falsification. For instance, government insiders, especially those at higher administrative levels, might perceive themselves to be the target of the anticorruption campaign, and their fear may lead them to over-report their trust in local government. We follow a practice developed by Jiang and Yang (2016) to address this concern. The question we used from CFPS is "How do you anticipate your future turning out? Score 1 for "very badly", to 5 for "very well"? The question can effectively capture the feelings of people under political shock, but is much less sensitive than asking about trust in local government. We compare the effect of anticorruption on the changes of political trust with its effect on future anticipation in the whole population and subgroups, to ascertain the extent of preference falsification. If people report they have more trust in government, but have serious pessimism about the future, the preference falsification may be serious. If not, preference falsification should not be a major concern in our dataset. We use the same equation (1) by using future anticipation as the dependent variable to estimate implicit political support. The result in column 1 of Table F1 suggests a better anticipation for future by the general population, given a larger number of arrested officials, which is consistent with the finding of increased trust. Thus, we are confident that the preference falsification is not biasing the overall result on the whole population. As local government is the focus of our research, it is generally less sensitive to criticism, as shown in the literature on hierarchical trust between central and local government (Dickson 2016; Li 2013).

For state-system insiders who are politically more vulnerable than outsiders, party members (column 2 in Table F1), government/SOE employees (column 3), and cadres (column 4) show a consistently significant negative view about their future relative to their counterparts, and the aggregate effect holds statistically insignificant. This implies that as the targets of anticorruption,

insiders can cautiously report a positively biased opinion on political trust. The genuine political support of the three groups may therefore be even lower, with a possible decline of trust under the anticorruption enforcement. However, the potential preference falsification of party members and government/SOE employees does not affect our hypothesis test in the main regression. Because as Table 3 shows, even with a potentially over-reported political trust, these two groups still have less increase of political trust than state-system outsiders. In other words, if with genuine political trust, the marginal effect of the two groups would be even lower, which would give even stronger support to our argument.

In contrast, cadres seem to have more serious problems with preference falsification, which may have biased the main regression results. There are multiple reasons that cadre's preference falsification could be higher than that of other insiders. In our dataset, cadres include government officials and SOE leaders of "mid-level," "high-level," and "top-level" administrative positions. In comparison to ordinary party members and public employees of lower ranks (e.g., government/SOE employees in general), cadres have more power and are presented with more opportunities to be involved in corruption. Therefore, they may perceive themselves as more of a target of the anticorruption campaign. They may also feel themselves to have more to lose. They also usually know the regime more and receive more political education than others and therefore are more aware of the danger of revealing genuine preferences. Each of these factors leads to a more serious preference falsification problem with cadres than with other insiders.

Finally, for the better-informed group, their aggregate anticipation for the future remained positive, consistent with their trust in local government, which means preference falsification is minimal in this social group. Thus, in general preference falsification should not bias our general findings very much.

Table F1 Test of preference falsification

VARIABLES	DV: Anticipation for Future							
Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
LnAnti	.042**	.045**	.044**	.042**	.043***	.058***	.050***	.048***
	(.017)	(.018)	(.017)	(.017)	(.018)	(.018)	(.019)	(.018)
Party member *LnAnti		-.029***						
		(.006)						
Gov_soe*LnAnti			-.037***					
			(.006)					
Cadre*LnAnti				-.031**				
				(.014)				
Business*LnAnti					-.009			
					(.009)			
Mid sch*LnAnti						-.033***		
						(.008)		
College*LnAnti						-.049***		
						(.008)		
Mid-age*LnAnti							-.002	
							(.008)	
Young*LnAnti							-.041***	
							(.008)	
Internet*LnAnti								-.028***
								(.006)
Overall Effect of Anticipation on Identified Group in Respective Model		.016	.007	.011	.035**	.025**	.048***	.20*
Overall Effect of Anticipation on Identified Group in Respective Model_2						.009	.009	
Indiv_Character	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
City Level controls	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year Fixed Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indivi Fixed Effect	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Constant	5.19***	5.17***	5.16***	5.18***	5.19***	5.10***	5.30***	5.12***
	(.650)	(.650)	(.650)	(.650)	(.647)	(.646)	(.660)	(.655)
Observations	41,631	41,631	41,631	41,631	41,631	41,631	41,631	41,631

Number of sampleID	20,944	20,944	20,944	20,944	20,944	20,944	20,944	20,944

Note: a. Baseline group for education is illiterate/primary school. Baseline group for young and mid-aged groups is the elderly (age above 60). Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

b. All lower-ordered terms of multiplicative interaction are included in individual characteristics.

Online Appendix G. Test Ceiling Effect

There may exist the concern that insiders have a relatively high level of political trust than the outsiders, thus their further increase of political trust could be unbalanced due to a possible ceiling effect. To rule out this possibility, we check the scores of political trust of the 2012 CFPS respondents. The average score for all the respondents is 4.86, and 7.2% of people scored above 8. As shown in Table G1, the general statistical distribution of political trust of insiders and outsiders are quite comparable. Moreover, insiders do not have higher shares of very high scores of political trust than outsiders. For instance, among outsiders, 2.5% and 6.7% of them have political trust at 9 and 10, respectively. Among insiders, 2.3% and 3.9% of them have political trust at 9 and 10, respectively. Thus, the ceiling effect should be rather small; and even if there exists a ceiling effect, it affects both the groups of insiders and outsiders, instead of only lowering political trust increase of the insiders group.

To further address the concern of a ceiling effect lowering the insiders' increase in political trust, we conducted a robustness check restricted to a subsample of respondents with political trust lower than 9, so that most respondents would be affected very little by the potential ceiling effect. The results in Table G2 show that in this subsample, insiders still have less increased political trust than the outsiders when anticorruption efforts are higher. Thus, the ceiling effect is not a concern here.

Table G1. Descriptive statistics of political trust for different groups of insiders and outsiders

	Year 2012			**Year 2014**		
Groups	**Obs.**	**Mean**	**Std.**	**Obs.**	**Mean**	**Std.**
Party Member	1,734	5.29	2.28	1,927	5.35	2.48
Non-party member	19,971	4.83	2.50	19,778	4.99	2.65

Gov_soe	1,139	4.61	2.41	1,198	4.6	2.61
Non-gov_soe	20,566	4.88	2.49	20,507	5.04	2.64
Cadre	214	5.33	2.28	214	5.61	2.37
Non-cadre	21,491	4.85	2.48	21,491	5.32	2.28
Businessman	1,964	4.50	2.46	1,964	4.50	2.61
Non-businessman	19,741	4.90	2.49	19,741	5.07	2.64
Netizen	4,963	4.43	2.32	4,963	4.28	2.46
Non-netizen	16,742	4.99	2.52	16,742	5.24	2.65
Age_old	4,942	5.36	2.49	6,013	5.66	2.55
Middle	13,179	4.75	2.49	12,653	4.90	2.68
Young	3,584	4.57	2.35	3,039	4.55	2.44
Education_primary	11,152	5.06	2.58	11,044	5.34	2.72
Middle school	9,114	4.68	2.39	8,855	4.71	2.56
College and above	1,439	4.48	2.22	1,806	4.55	2.30

Note: For all categories, the minimum, medium and maximum are all 0, 5 and 10 respectively.

Table G2. Impact of anticorruption efforts on below-ceiling sample

	DV: Trust in Local Government	
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)
LAnti	0.080**	0.098**
	(0.033)	(0.033)
Insider		.272
		(.260)
LAnti*Insider		-.069***
		(0.014)
Indiv_Character	Yes	Yes
City level controls	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effect	Yes	Yes
Indivi fixed effect	Yes	Yes
Constant	8.176***	8.054***
	(1.110)	(1.090)
Observations	38,824	38,824
Number of sampleid	19,437	19,437

Robust standard errors in parentheses
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Online Appendix H. Self-selection of Internet Usage

Some may concern that those with less political trust may self-select themselves as "netizens." While there exists this possibility, it should not be a major concern here. According to reports by Chinese state media, such as Xinhua Net (2019), 70% of Chinese currently have access to the Internet. The Internet for Chinese today is more a platform for communication, online shopping and entertainment than an avenue for access to political news. In other words, there should be very limited self-selection in Internet usage due to political skepticism. Our own CFPS 2014 data show consistent observations: 45% of self-reported "netizens" reading political news online frequently, whereas 61% use the Internet for study, 84% for social interaction and communication, and 88% for entertainment.

To further alleviate this concern, we restricted our data to individuals with political trust scores of 5 or higher (i.e., having relatively high levels of political trust originally) and ran the regression with the netizen interaction term. The results in Table H1 shows that Internet users with a high level of trust also had a lower trust increase than non-Internet users, consistent with the main regression findings.

Table H1. Political trust for the Internet users with relatively high political trust

VARIABLES	DV: Trust in Local Government
LnAnti	0.171***
	(0.043)
Internet*LnAnti	-0.105***
	(0.012)
Indiv_Character	Yes
City level controls	Yes
Year fixed effect	Yes
Individual fixed effect	Yes
Constant	7.070***
	(1.313)
Observations	26,710
Number of sampleID	13,372

Note: a. Robust standard errors in parentheses clustered at the city level
b. ***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Reference:

Xinhua Net, 2019 China's netizen reaches 830 million. Retrieved at http://www.xinhuanet.com/politics/2019-08/13/c_1124871915.htm