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## Future scenarios of the state of social trust in 2026

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### Abstract

Living in today's societies is impossible without mutual communication with others, and meeting all kinds of individual needs forces people to interact with one another. These interactions create expectations among the parties involved, which can be defined and explained through social trust.

Most of the research conducted on the phenomenon of social trust has shown a decrease in social trust at the community level. For example, in the analysis of the trend of interpersonal trust in two surveys (the first wave of the 2000 Iranian Values and Attitudes National Survey and the 2017 National Report on the Social, Cultural, and Moral Status of the Iranian Society), it was found that trust in family members in 2017 compared to 2000 has increased, but trust in family and relatives is less, and

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trust in friends has decreased drastically. Also, in the analysis of the generalized trust trend based on the first wave of the national survey of values and attitudes of Iranians that was conducted in 2000 and the second wave of the national survey of social capital that was conducted in 2014, the level of trust in doctors, teachers, university professors, The judgment of journalists, clerics, and law enforcement officials has decreased, which is a serious decrease in trust in teachers, university professors, and doctors. Also, in the second wave of the national survey of the values and attitudes of Iranians (2003), in response to the question of how reliable you think people are in general (evaluation of the general trend of social trust), 28.8% said that people are less are reliable, 56.9% average and 14.3% have evaluated people as very reliable. Also, in the second wave of the national social capital measurement survey (2014), 35.6% believed that people are little or very little trustworthy. 47.1% moderate and 17.3% have evaluated the reliability of people as high and very high. As you can see, people's trustworthiness has decreased.

Therefore, it is necessary to continuously monitor and evaluate the state of the phenomenon of social trust at different levels. This will allow for the assessment of the necessity and feasibility of reviewing the plans and the methods of implementing them formulated by the authorities, to prevent the emergence of a crisis of distrust in society that could potentially lead to social collapse.

The formation of trust and related theories can be divided into three levels: macro, medium, and micro. At each of these levels, various theories have been presented, each offering a distinct perspective on the social phenomenon of trust.

Trust at the macro level, as a characteristic of social relations or a characteristic of a social system, such as the performance of institutions, especially government institutions, democracy, the performance of the judicial system in ensuring equal implementation of the law for all people, accountability and transparency in affairs, the equal distribution of justice, and in general, is conceptualized as a collective characteristic.

Trust at the intellectual level is presented as a personal characteristic and emphasis is placed on personal feelings, emotions, and values, in the investigation of trust, personal variables such as; Honesty, truthfulness, faithfulness to promises, cooperative tendencies, altruism, frankness, network of personal

interactions, etc. are taken into consideration.

Between micro and macro theories of trust, theorists like Giddens reject reductionism in the study of the concept of trust. Instead, they analyze trust by combining micro-level and macro-level analyses, considering both the processes of construction and action.

The purpose of this research is to compile scenarios on the possible, probable, and desirable futures of social trust among 1404 residents of Tehran. The research methodology combines quantitative and qualitative approaches, including a review of sources, analysis of documents, exploratory interviews, environmental surveys, and expert Delphi sessions. Eleven key drivers were identified: 1- Perception of power 2- Perception of corruption 3- Social participation 4- Perception of justice 5- Change in shared moral values 6- Life satisfaction 7- Social harm 8- Religiosity 9- Sense of security 10- Altruism 11- Growth and development of technology and communication innovations.

Through cross-matrix analysis, the relationships and mutual influences among these drivers were examined. The most impactful driver in direct relationships was life satisfaction, while the perception of justice had the most significant direct impact. In indirect relationships, the perception of justice emerged as the most influential driver, with the perception of government performance being the most effective in indirect relationships.

Utilizing scenario wizard software and the transition balance matrix analysis technique, seven key drivers were further identified for scenario formulation: perception of justice, social harm, social participation, perception of corruption, perception of government performance, life satisfaction, and change in shared values.

In the output of the scenario wizard software to determine the possible, probable, and desirable scenarios of the future of social trust, 288 possible scenarios were reported from the combination of the possible states of the descriptors of the drivers. Of these, there were two scenarios with compatibility and internal harmony. In the first scenario called "Hell; Chah Weil," the future of the social trust situation at all levels (institutional trust, generalized trust, and interpersonal trust) has experienced a sharp downward trend, and distrust will increase dramatically. This scenario depicts a future of social trust in which various dimensions of social trust will have a downward trend in terms of in-

stitutional trust, generalized trust, interpersonal trust, and institutional trust.

In the ideal image of the future state of social trust, the second scenario—called ‘Utopia: Behesht’—presents a contrasting perspective. Unlike the first scenario, social trust in all three levels will experience an upward trend and be highly favorable.

According to the findings of current research and the higher probability of the first scenario (probable scenario), based on expert opinions, some suggested strategies to realize the second scenario (optimal scenario) include: stabilizing democracy, ensuring equal implementation of the law for all people, reforming or abolishing corrupt laws, and facilitating the free flow of information.

**Key words:** Future, scenarios, social trust, Iran.