

University of Missouri, St. Louis

IRL @ UMSL

Undergraduate Research Symposium

UMSL Undergraduate Works

4-26-2019

Impact of Literacy Rates on Democratic Desire

Katherine Vollandt

University of Missouri-St. Louis, katevollandt@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://irl.umsl.edu/urs>



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Vollandt, Katherine, "Impact of Literacy Rates on Democratic Desire" (2019). *Undergraduate Research Symposium*. 25.

<https://irl.umsl.edu/urs/25>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the UMSL Undergraduate Works at IRL @ UMSL. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Symposium by an authorized administrator of IRL @ UMSL. For more information, please contact marvinh@umsl.edu.

Impact of Literacy on Desire for Democracy

Katherine Volandt | Mentor: David Kimball, PhD, Professor and Graduate Director of Political Science
University of Missouri—St. Louis | St. Louis, MO 63121

Introduction

- There has been a global shift recently away from democracy and towards authoritarian forms of government.
- Data-driven foreign policy and nongovernmental efforts may be capable of aiding global democratization efforts.
- To determine where to focus those efforts, what factors might prove to be reliably predictive of democratic support or political participation?

What is Democratic Desire?

- Democratic desire is the desire to be governed democratically
- Enlightened democratic desire is the desire of one who understands democratic values to be governed democratically

Methods

- Independent variable: literacy rate
 - Used to estimate level of education
- First dependent variable: democratic desire
 - A response value of 0 indicates that the respondent has no desire at all to be governed by a democracy.
 - A response value of 1.0 indicates that the respondent has a very strong desire to be governed by a democracy.
- Second dependent variable: enlightened democratic desire
 - A response value of 0 indicates that the respondent either has no desire at all to be governed by a democracy or entirely lacks an enlightened understanding of democracy.
 - A response value of 1.0 indicates that the respondent has a strong desire to be governed democratically and holds an fully enlightened understanding of democracy.
- To control for whether education was received in a democratic or nondemocratic country, tests of hypotheses III and IV divided countries into democracies (n=117) and nondemocracies (n=73).

Background

- Survey respondents' understanding of democracy varies widely and greatly influences support for democratic values.
- The context in which respondents develop their idea of democracy "conditions" how they understand democracy.
- Previous studies show conflicting evidence on whether higher education predicts greater support for democratic governance.

Four Hypotheses

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>I
Countries with higher literacy rates will report stronger <i>democratic desire</i>.</p> | <p>II
Countries with higher literacy rates will report stronger <i>enlightened democratic desire</i>.</p> |
| <p>III
The relationship between higher literacy rates and stronger <i>democratic desire</i> will be stronger in democratic countries compared to nondemocracies.</p> | <p>IV
A relationship between higher literacy rates and stronger <i>enlightened democratic desire</i> will be stronger in democratic countries compared to nondemocracies.</p> |

Data Sources

- CIA World Factbook. 2009. <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2034rank.html> (accessed October 21, 2009).
- Pollock, Philip H. 2018. *An R Companion to Political Analysis*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: CQ Press.
- Welzel, Christian. 2013. *Online Appendix: Freedom Rising*. UC Irvine. https://www.cambridge.org/files/8613/8054/8416/FreedomRising_OA.pdf (accessed 2013).

Results

Hypothesis I

- There is a weak positive relationship ($r=0.23$) between literacy and democratic desire generally.
- This relationship is not statistically significant ($p=0.057$) and is likely due to chance.

Hypothesis II

- There is a moderate, positive relationship ($r=0.43$) between literacy and enlightened democratic desire.
- This relationship is statistically significant ($p=0.00022$) and unlikely to be due to chance.

Hypothesis III

- In countries governed *democratically*, there is a moderate, positive relationship ($r=0.5$) between literacy and *democratic desire* (see Fig. 1). This relationship is statistically significant ($p=0.00057$).
- In countries governed by *nondemocratic* regimes, there is a moderate negative correlation ($r=-0.2$) between literacy and *democratic desire* (see Fig. 2), although this relationship is statistically insignificant ($p=0.298$).

Figure 1
Democratic Desire in Democracies

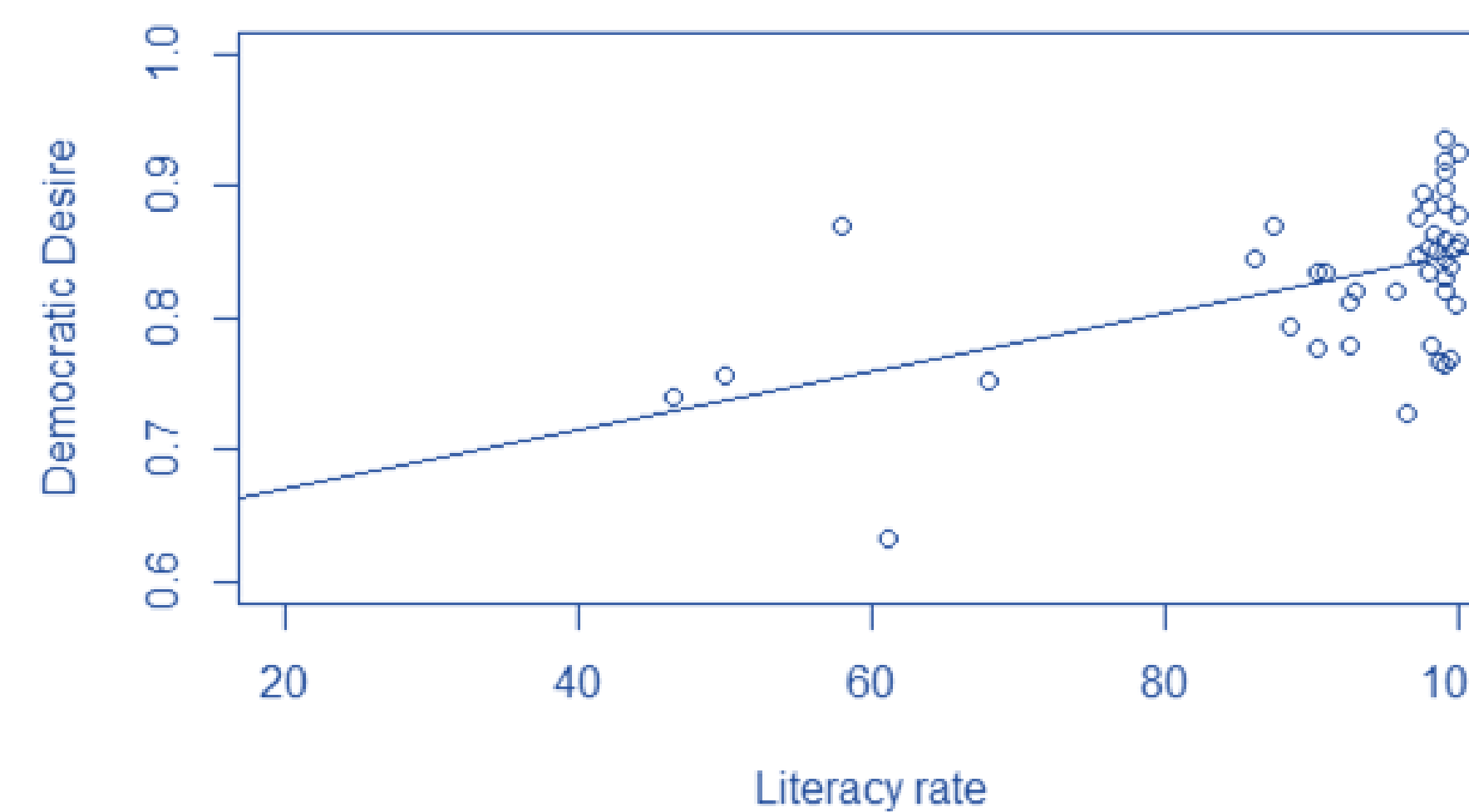
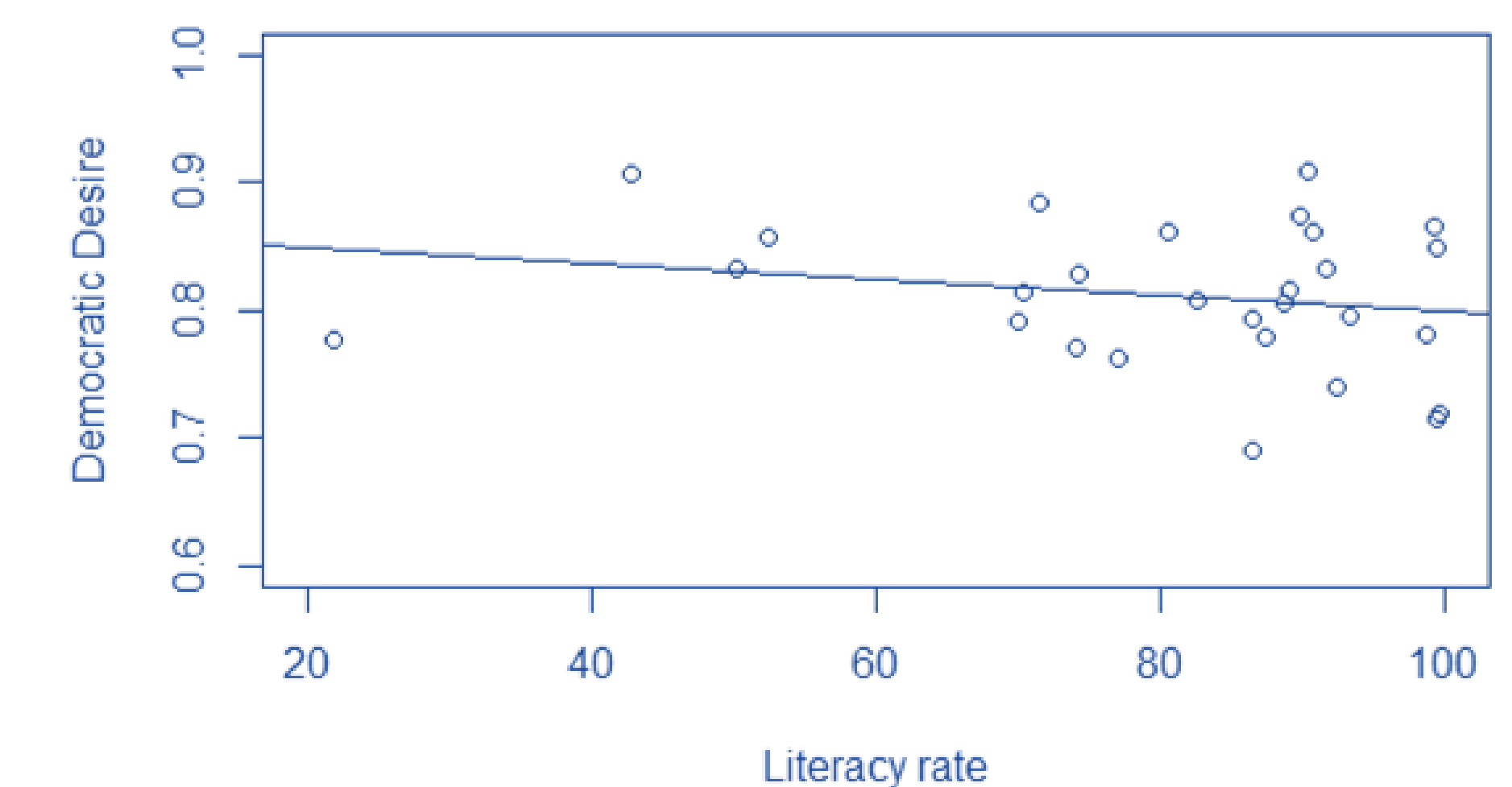


Figure 2
Democratic Desire in Nondemocracies



Hypothesis IV

- In countries governed *democratically*, there is a moderately strong ($r=0.62$), statistically significant ($p=0.00001$) relationship between literacy and *enlightened democratic desire* (see Fig. 3)
- In countries governed by *nondemocratic* regimes, there is a moderate, negative relationship ($r=-0.21$) between literacy and *enlightened democratic desire* (see Fig. 4). Again, this negative relationship is statistically insignificant ($p=0.29$).

Figure 3
Enlightened Democratic Desire in Democracies

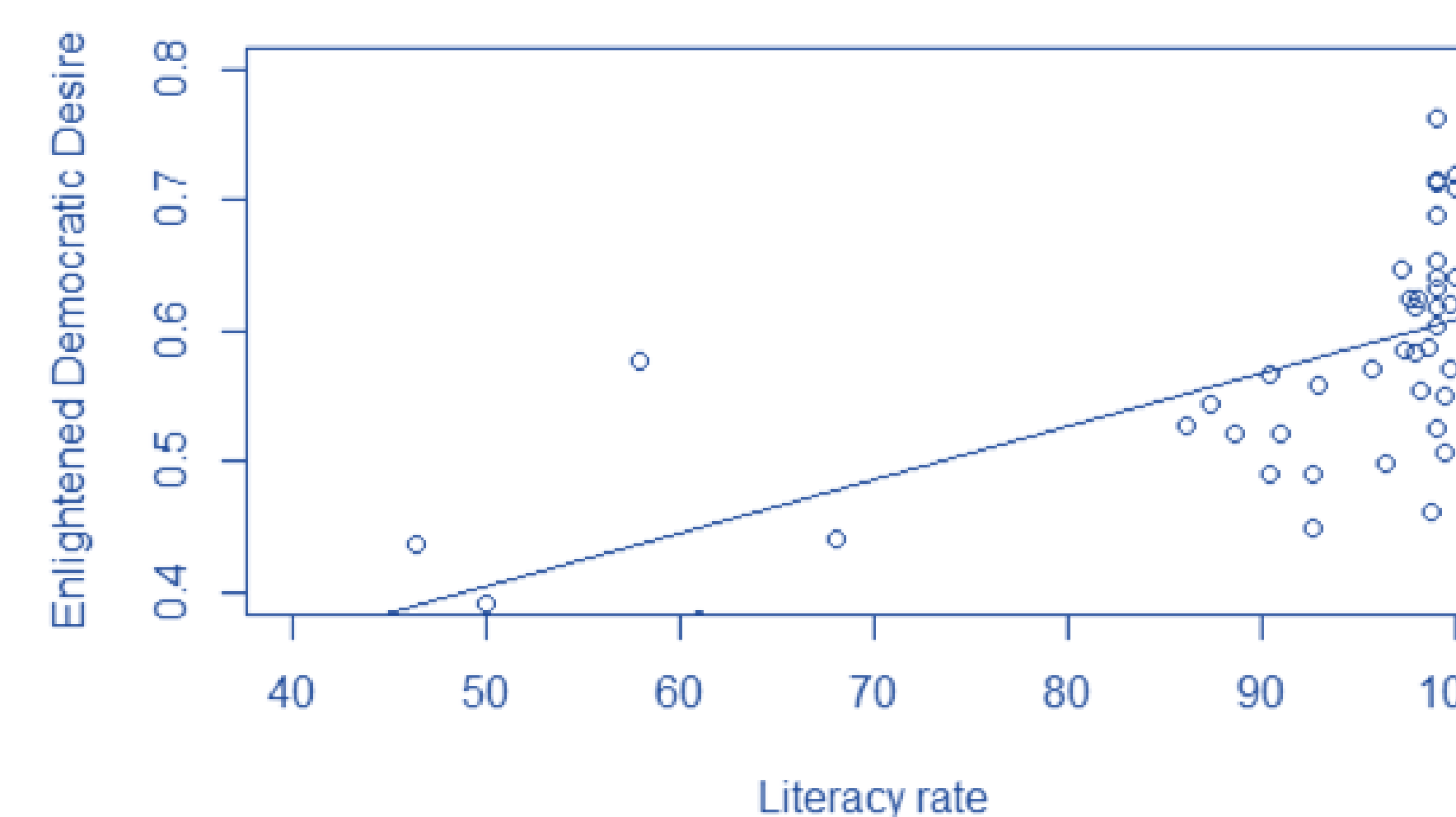
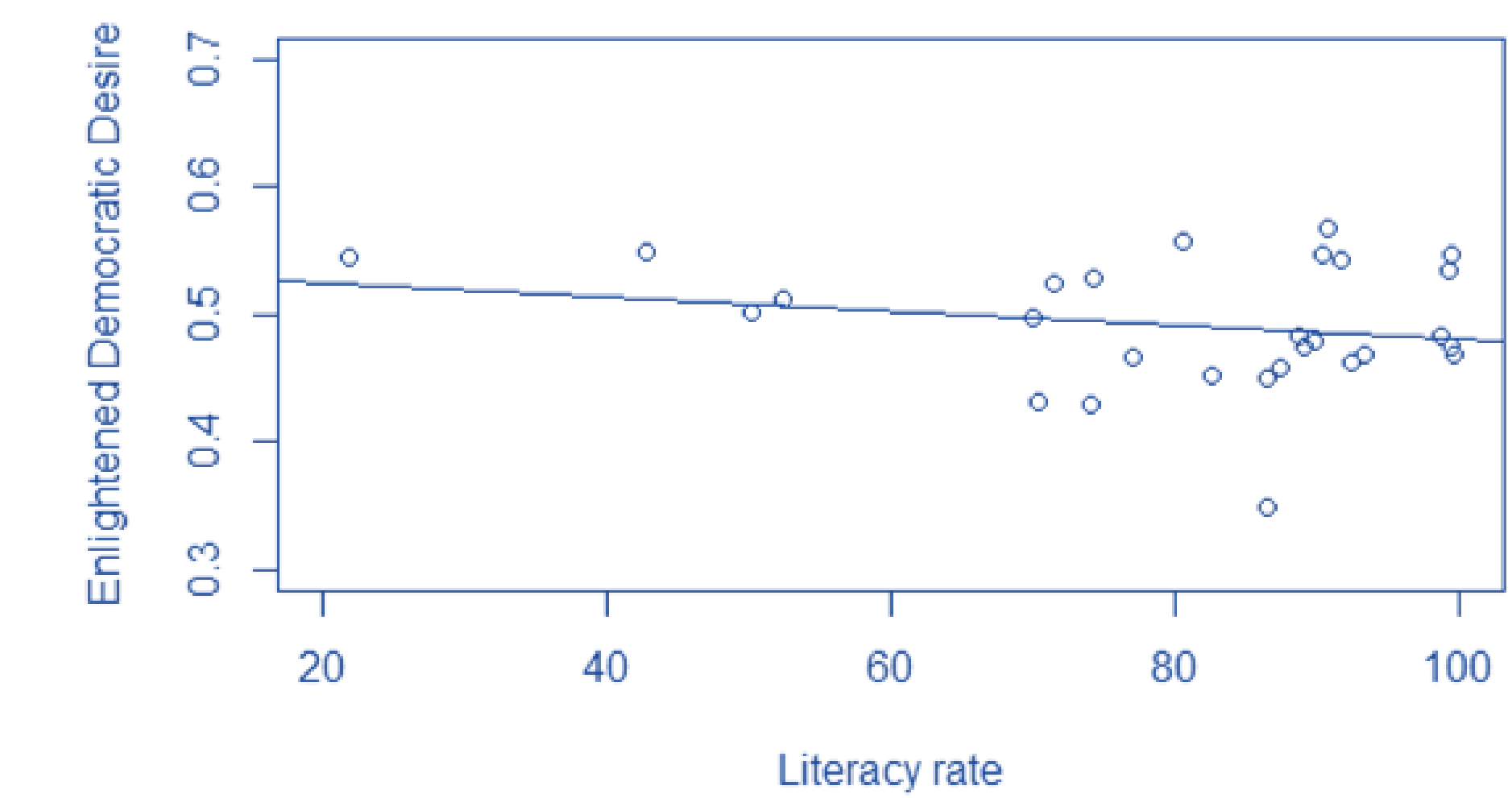


Figure 4
Enlightened Democratic Desire in Nondemocracies



Conclusion

- There is a clear difference between democracies and nondemocracies in the relationship between literacy and democratic desire.
- The role of regime type in respondents' enlightened desire for democracy is more significant than its role in respondents' simple democratic desire.
- There exists a significant, strong, and positive relationship between literacy rates and enlightened democratic desire in democratic countries. This relationship is not reflected in nondemocratic countries.**