

## 11. CORE GOVERNMENT RESULTS

### Trust in government

Trust is broadly understood as holding a positive perception about the actions of an individual or an organisation. While trust may be based on actual experience, it is for the most part a subjective phenomenon, reflected in the eyes of the beholder. Trust in government represents the confidence of citizens and businesses in the actions of governments to do what is right and perceived as fair. Most importantly the legitimacy of governments is built on being trusted by their citizens, as trust is mainly an enabler of fluent and effective interactions between governments and citizens.

Existing measures of trust in government are based on perception surveys. Data from the Gallup World Poll is used here; this is the only survey that collects annual data since 2005 for OECD countries as well as strategic partners. However, one of the shortcomings of this survey is that it only asks a single question about whether or not people have confidence in their national government. It does not differentiate between politicians and the bureaucracy nor allow the identification of government actions that might cause citizens to trust or distrust their government. As cultural factors have a large influence on the differences in trust levels across countries, rather than comparing absolute levels, the comparison of changes in trust levels over time and across countries is presented. The years selected are 2007 and 2014 (2007 being the last year before the financial and economic crisis that started in 2008).

From 2007 to 2014 on average confidence in national governments across OECD countries declined 3.3 p.p. from 45.2% to 41.8%. During this period the steepest declines took place in Slovenia (30 p.p.), Finland (29 p.p.), Spain (27 p.p.) and Portugal (22 p.p.). However, some countries experienced increases in trust levels for the same period, notably Germany (25 p.p.), Israel (22 p.p.) and Iceland (22 p.p.). Changes in trust levels could be affected by many factors, including the economic outlook, political changes (e.g. elections) or other major events, such as disasters or major scandals (e.g. corruption cases). Moreover, expectations by citizens could grow at a faster pace than government responses, challenging the confidence of citizens in the ability of governments to react to new demands.

Preliminary evidence suggests that citizens' trust in government reflects primarily their approval of their country's leadership. Evidence also shows that trust in government is negatively correlated with the perceived levels of corruption in government. Misuse of public resources or inadequate behaviour by government representatives shape public opinion on the overall trustworthiness of government.

Restoring trust in governments is essential to reinforce and consolidate the foundations of modern states. It is also a necessary condition for governments to successfully carry out public sector reforms. Better understanding of the drivers and dimensions of trust is required to disentangle its multidimensionality. Consequently, a refined measurement of trust in government and in public institutions is needed to enable governments to propose and adjust actions aimed at regaining trust from their citizens.

#### Methodology and definitions

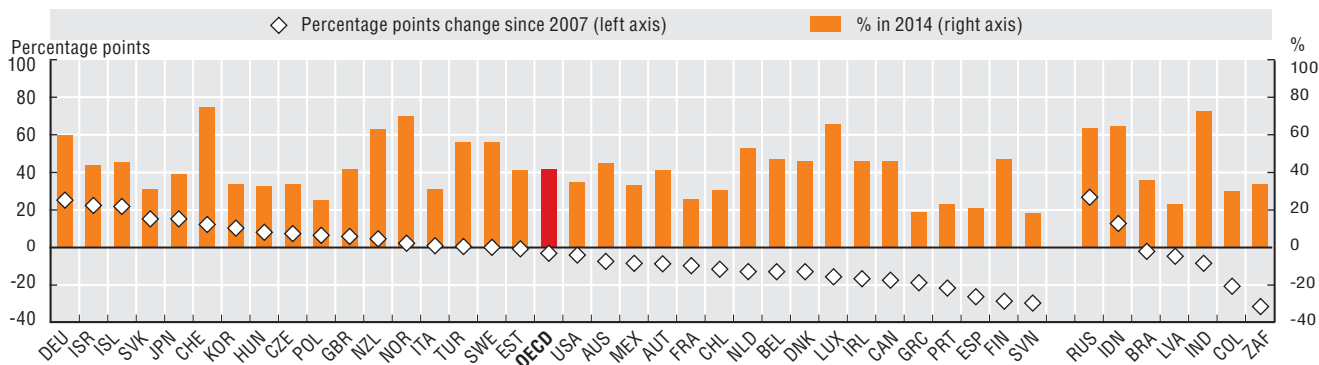
Data were collected by Gallup World Poll. The World Poll uses proportional stratified probability sampling and has a sample of 1000 citizens in each country. There is more information at: [www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx](http://www.gallup.com/services/170945/world-poll.aspx).

#### Figure notes

- 11.1: Data refers to the percentage who answered "yes" to the question "Do you have confidence in national government" Data for Chile, Hungary and Iceland are 2013 rather than 2014.
- 11.2: Data for approval of country leadership represent the percentage of "approve" answers to the question: "Do you approve or disapprove the job performance of the leadership in this country?" Data for Canada, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Korea and Mexico are for 2013 rather than 2014.
- 11.3: Data for the perception of government corruption represent the percentage of "yes" answers to the question "Is corruption widespread throughout the government or not?". Data for Australia, Canada, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Korea and Mexico are for 2013 rather than 2014.

Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>.

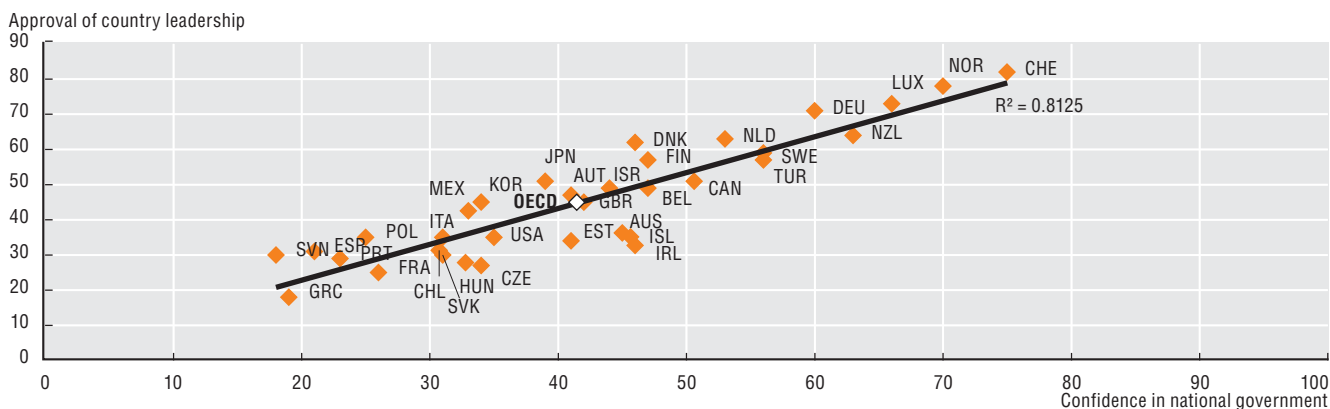
11.1. Confidence in national government in 2014 and its change since 2007



Source: Gallup World Poll.

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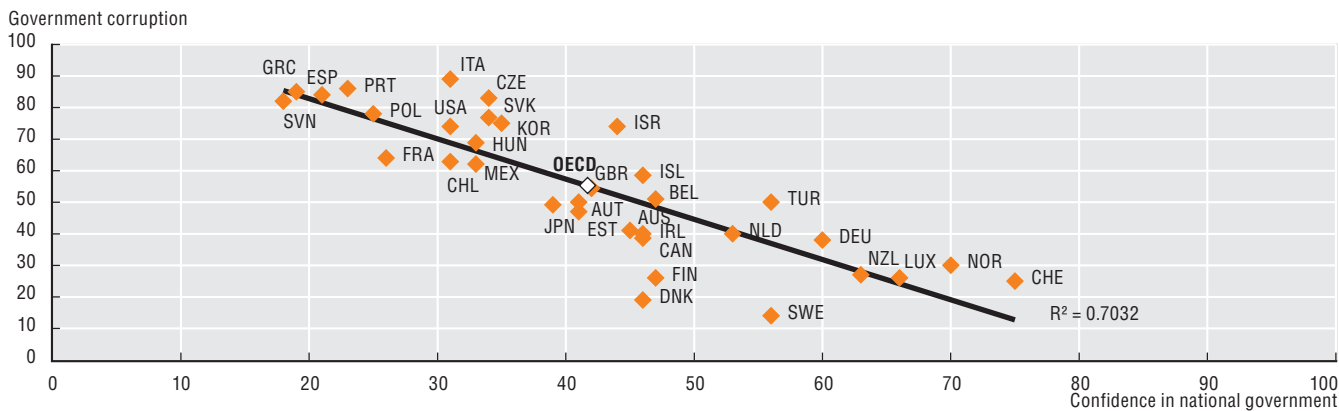
11.2. Correlation between confidence in national government and perception of government leadership, 2014



Source: World Gallup Poll.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249237>

11.3. Correlation between confidence in national government and perception of government corruption, 2014



Source: World Gallup Poll.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933249244>



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