

### Political efficacy

A fundamental element of democracy is the principle that people are free to express opinions and have equal opportunities to be represented in government decision-making. People who feel they can influence political processes are more likely to participate in civic life through voting, or by engaging with politicians and political parties. Active engagement in politics builds stronger democratic values and ensures the political system's legitimacy. People who feel they have no political voice, are less likely to comply with laws and regulations, and more likely to engage in protests such as boycotts, or to exit the democratic process entirely by not engaging or abstaining from voting (Prats and Meunier, 2021).

Political efficacy refers to the feeling that one's political input has an impact on political processes. Political efficacy has two dimensions: internal efficacy, or the confidence to understand and participate in political processes, and external efficacy, or the feeling of having a say in what the government does. On average across OECD countries, 41% of people are confident they are able to participate in politics but only 30.2% feel that the political system in their country lets them have a say (Figure 2.7).

Perception about government responsiveness to public feedback and capacity to allow people to have a voice, are associated with government initiatives to include people in policy making. In turn, lack of responsiveness could lead to perceptions that the system works in the interests of a few, fuelling political alienation (OECD, 2022). The OECD Trust Survey finds a positive association between the share of people who expect that a national policy would be changed if most people expressed a view against it and the share of people who feel they have a political voice. On average, only 36.5% of respondents say a national policy would be changed if a majority of the population opposed the policy (Figure 2.8).

More broadly, external efficacy is also positively correlated with people's satisfaction with democracy, which is said to measure people's satisfaction with how democracy works in practice (Poses and Revilla, 2021). The latest data from the European Social Survey confirms the positive association between the perception of having a say in what the government does and satisfaction with democracy. Iceland, Norway and Switzerland score highly on both (Figure 2.9).

#### Methodology and definitions

The OECD explores perceptions of public governance using nationally representative data from the OECD Trust Survey conducted across 22 countries. Most countries were surveyed in November-December 2021, with a few surveys taking place in 2020

and January-March 2022. The OECD Trust Survey aggregates 11-point response scales as follows: 0-4 = Low / unlikely; 5 = Neutral; 6-10 = High / likely. The OECD Trust Survey has significant country coverage (usually 2 000 respondents per country), which allows subgroup analysis and help ensure the reliability of results. For a detailed discussion of the survey method and implementation, please find an extensive methodological background paper at <https://oe.cd/trust>.

The European Social Survey (ESS) is a cross-national survey established in 2001 and conducted biennially to measure people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. The latest data from Wave 10 were collected between September 2020 and May 2022 in 32 countries; 9 countries piloted self-completion (web-based) surveys instead of face-to-face surveys due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The minimum sample size is 1 500, or 800 for countries with a population of less than 2 million.

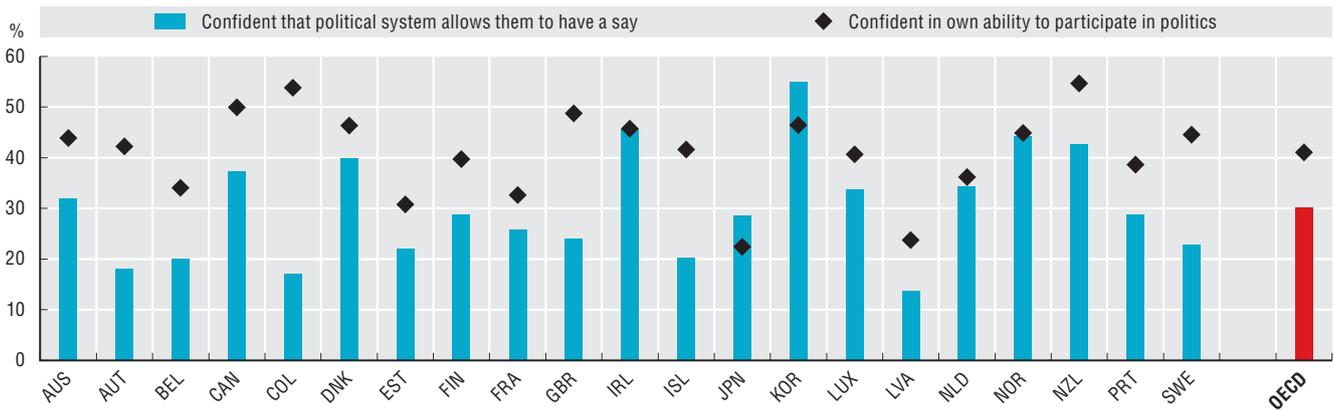
#### Further reading

- OECD (2022), *Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions*, Building Trust in Public Institutions, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b407f99c-en>.
- Poses, C. and M. Revilla (2021), "Measuring satisfaction with democracy: how good are different scales across countries and languages?", *European Political Science Review*, Vol. 14/1, pp. 18-35, <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1755773921000266>.
- Prats, M. and A. Meunier (2021), "Political efficacy and participation: An empirical analysis in European countries", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 46, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/4548cad8-en>.

#### Figure notes

- 2.7. Refers to the questions "How much would you say the political system in your country allows people like you to have a say in what the government does?" and "How confident are you in your own ability to participate in politics?" Confident corresponds to responses of 6-10 on a 0-10 scale.
- 2.8. Refers to the questions "If over half of the people clearly express a view against a national policy, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that would be changed?" Likely corresponds to responses of 6-10 on 0-10 scale, neutral to 5 and unlikely to 0-4.
- 2.9. Refers to the questions "And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?" and "And how much would you say that the political system in [country] allows people like you to have an influence on politics?" Confident corresponds to responses of 6-10 on a 0-10 scale to the first question, and satisfied to responses of 4 (a lot) and 5 (a great deal) on a 1-5 scale to the second.

2.7. External and internal political efficacy, 2021

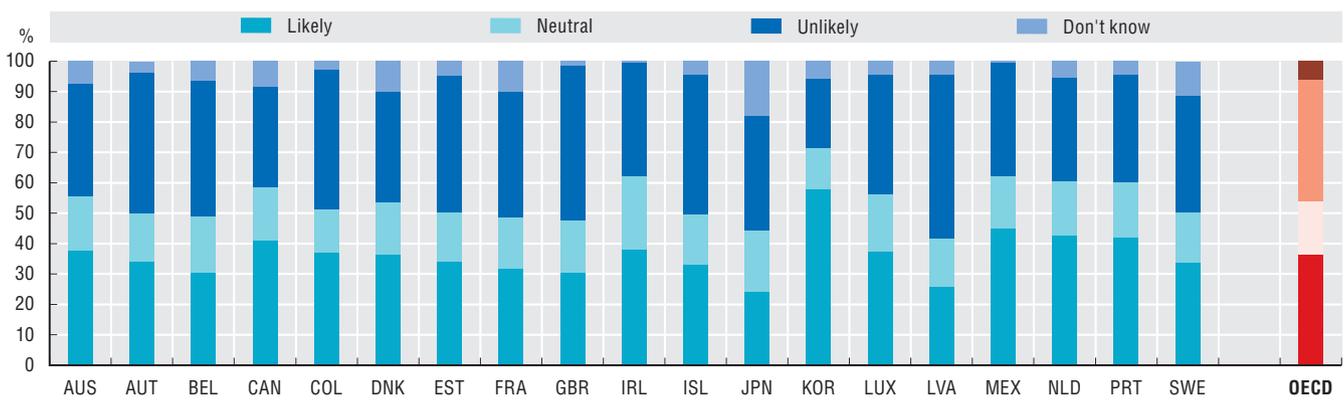


Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>).

StatLink <https://stat.link/9miobs>

2.8. Perceptions of responsiveness of policies to public feedback, 2021

Share of respondents reporting different levels of perceived likelihood that a national policy would be changed if a majority of people expressed a view against it (on a 0-10 scale)



Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>).

StatLink <https://stat.link/g9x4pb>

2.9. External political efficacy and satisfaction with democracy, 2021



Source: OECD calculations based on the European Social Survey, Wave 10.

StatLink <https://stat.link/pju3bt>



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