11. SERVING CITIZENS

Citizen satisfaction with public services and institutions

Hospitals and schools are some of the frontline public institutions where people have a direct experience with public services. While a smaller share of the population interacts with courts, they play a key role in safeguarding fundamental rights and ensuring that a system of checks and balances is in place. Satisfaction with services is considered an outcome of government activity and is monitored by most OECD countries seeking to improve service delivery. However, until today there is no internationally standardised method for conducting surveys on the subject.

The Gallup World Poll regularly collects data on the satisfaction of citizens about a range of public services, including health, education and justice. Although there are many factors that can influence responses to opinion polls –such as recent experience with civil servants, respondent fatigue and response styles-, the dataset allows for comparison of citizen perception over time and across OECD countries.

Satisfaction with health and education, and confidence in the judiciary, have slightly increased, on average, in OECD countries over the past decade. In 2018, 70% of citizens were satisfied with the availability of health care where they lived, a proportion that has remained stable since 2007. In turn, on average, 66% of citizens are satisfied with the education system and schools, a 3 p.p. increase since 2007. Finally, 56% have confidence in the judicial system and courts, which represents, a 4 p.p. increase.

Satisfaction with the health care system is highest in the Netherlands (90%), Belgium (89%), Norway (89%), Denmark (88%) and Switzerland (88%) and lowest in Chile (40%), Latvia (40%) and Greece (42%). While the countries with the highest citizen satisfaction have almost universal public health care, coverage in Chile is among the lowest in the OECD. There have been improvements in citizen satisfaction in health care in Estonia (21 p.p.) and Lithuania (19 p.p.). In contrast, large declines in citizen satisfaction can be observed in Japan (-13 p.p.), France (-10 p.p.), Greece (-10 p.p.) and Luxembourg (-10 p.p.).

Citizens are most satisfied with schools and the education system in Norway (87%), Switzerland (85%), Denmark (84%) and Finland (84%), and least in Turkey (35%), Lithuania (43%) and Hungary (48%). The Netherlands, Switzerland and Israel are among the countries with the largest improvements in citizen satisfaction (16 p.p. and 12 p.p. respectively). In contrast Turkey has experienced the largest decrease (-17 p.p.).

Norway (89%), Denmark (87%) and Switzerland (82%) are countries where the majority of citizens express confidence in the judiciary system. By contrast, Chile (24%) and Latvia (28%) are where the smallest proportion of citizens expresses confidence in justice institutions. Trust in the judiciary system and the courts could be affected by perceptions of other governmental institutions related to law enforcement, such as prosecutors or police officers with whom citizens could have more frequent contact (see Trust in government, page 158).

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected by Gallup World Poll, generally based on a representative sample of 1000 citizens in each country. More information about this survey is available at: www.gallup.com/home.aspx

Response styles are tendencies in respondents’ behaviour that are not related to the content of questionnaires nor the presentation, which bias the results—for example, always selecting the extremes of a scale or the middle point. Respondent fatigue occurs when the motivation and attention of survey participants drops due to being asked too many questions, which results in low-quality data.

The level of satisfaction with health care/education is based on the proportion of respondents who reported being “satisfied” when asked, “In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the availability of quality health care/ with the educational system or the schools?”

For the judiciary system, interviewees were asked, “In this country, do you have confidence in each of the following, or not? How about the judicial system and courts?” The data are expressed as the proportion of respondents who replied “yes”.

Further reading


Figure notes

Countries are ranked in descending order of the national average. Data for Austria, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland are for 2006 and Luxembourg are for 2008 rather than 2007. On data for Israel, see http://doi.org/10.1787/88932315602.

11.3. The Korean data are not displayed due to reliability issues. The OECD will work towards improving the quality on data on judicial system and the courts. Data for courts in South Africa are for 2006 instead of 2007.

11.4. (Confidence in the local police, 2018) is available online in Annex F.
11. SERVING CITIZENS

Citizen satisfaction with public services and institutions

11.1 Citizen satisfaction with the health care system, 2007 and 2018

Source: Gallup World Poll 2018 (database)
StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934033441

11.2 Citizen satisfaction with the education system and schools, 2007 and 2018

Source: Gallup World Poll 2018 (database)
StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934033460

11.3 Citizen confidence in the judiciary system and the courts, 2007 and 2018

Source: Gallup World Poll 2018 (database)
StatLink https://doi.org/10.1787/888934033479