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Trust in day-to-day interactions with public institutions

National, regional and local government policies frame the day-to-day interactions between the public and government institutions. This chapter analyses how people perceive the competence and values displayed by public institutions. First, it presents satisfaction rates with public services, including education, health, and administrative services, among recent service users across OECD countries. It further explores how satisfaction with different aspects of service quality is related to overall satisfaction with administrative services. The chapter also provides insights into how people perceive the fairness and integrity of the civil service towards the public in their day-to-day interactions. Finally, it discusses people's perceptions of local governments' and civil servants' responsiveness to public feedback.



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National, regional and local government policies set the context for the day-to-day interactions between public institutions and the population. Implementing policies and programmes and delivering services that are reliable, responsive to people's needs and open to their inputs is an important ingredient for creating trust between the public and the institutions established to serve them. Civil servants and local policy makers, who are more likely to interact with citizens on a day-to-day basis, can significantly contribute to building trust by displaying values of fairness and integrity in these interactions.

A majority of people, in most countries, are satisfied with their national health and education systems, and with administrative services, based on positive perceptions of different dimensions of service quality. A slight majority across OECD countries believe that they will be treated fairly when seeking benefits or services. However, a sizeable minority are sceptical that government employees would always act fairly and with integrity. Further scope for improvement also lies in the responsiveness of public institutions in adapting services to people's needs and expectations, making use of innovation and people's feedback.

3.1. A MAJORITY IS SATISFIED WITH PROVISION OF HEALTH AND EDUCATION, ALTHOUGH LESS THAN TWO YEARS AGO

People in OECD countries generally perceive public institutions as reliable in providing public services.

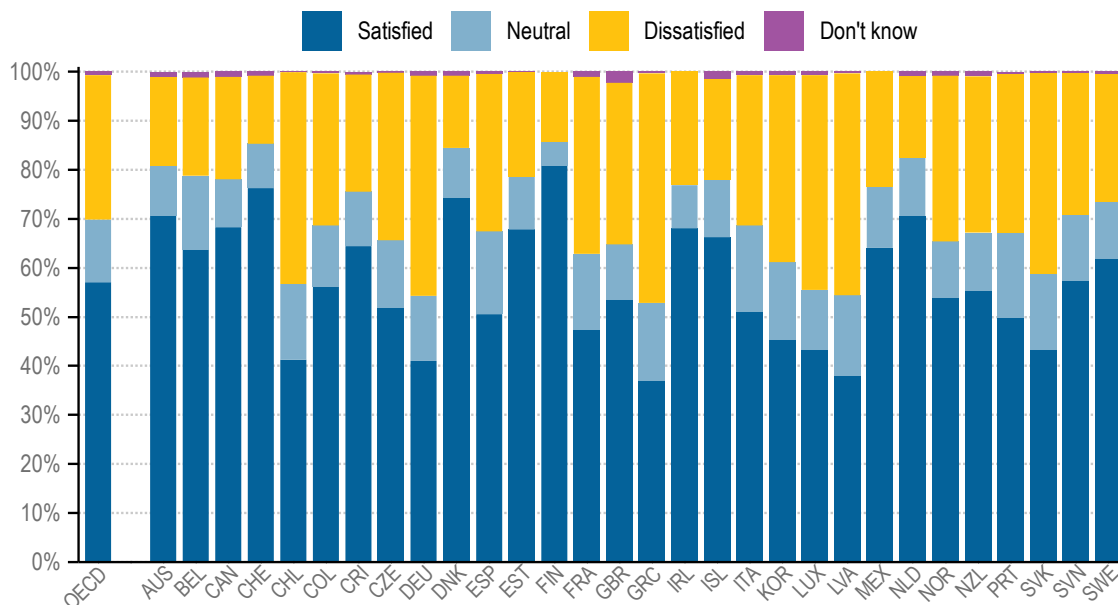
In 2023, as was the case in 2021, a majority of respondents to the OECD Trust Survey were satisfied with their country's education and health systems, and even more so with administrative services. In a context of rapid digital transformation and service modernisation, it is also noteworthy that a majority are confident that public institutions would use their data solely for legitimate purposes.

Across the OECD, nearly six out of ten (57%) are satisfied with their country's educational system, among those who were enrolled in an educational institution in the past two years, or had a family member enrolled (Figure 3.1).¹ Satisfaction with the healthcare system is somewhat lower, with an average of 52% of satisfied users, across the OECD. The OECD average for satisfaction with the healthcare system, however, hides a very large variation across countries. The span between countries for this question is larger than for the satisfaction with the education system or with administrative services.

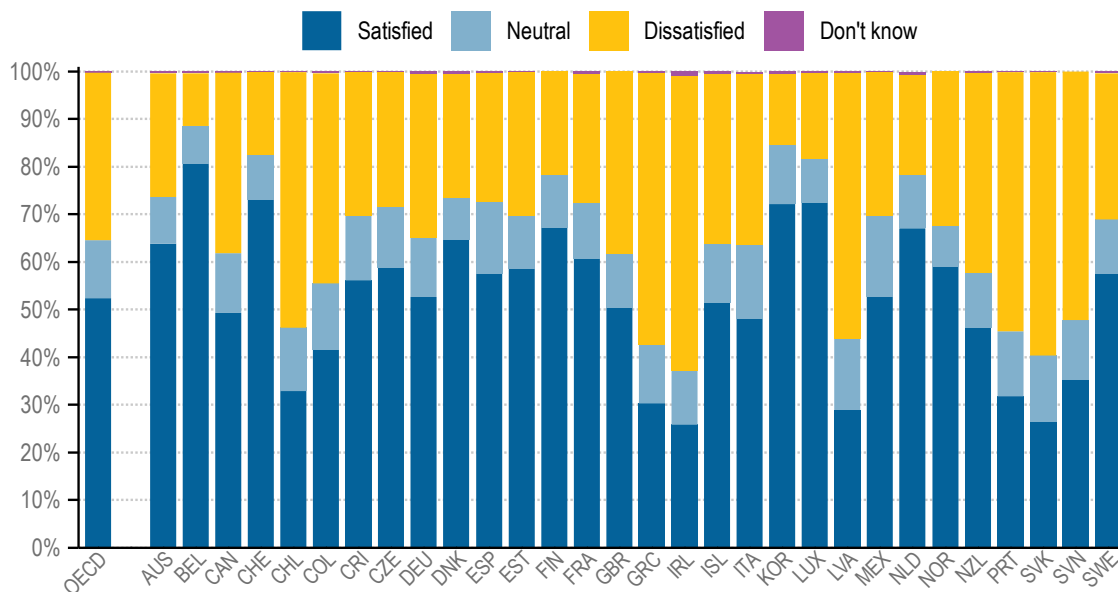
The availability, quality, and affordability of essential services, such as healthcare and education, are listed as one of the three most important issues in their country by 28% of adults on average across OECD countries (Figure 1.1. in Chapter 1), and more than 45% of individuals in Finland, Iceland, Ireland and Latvia.

Figure 3.1. More than one in two are satisfied with the education and healthcare systems

Panel A: Share of population with recent contact with the education system reporting different levels of satisfaction with the education system in their country, 2023



Panel B: Share of population with recent contact with the healthcare system reporting different levels of satisfaction with the healthcare system in their country, 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the questions “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the education system in [COUNTRY]?” (Panel A) and “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the healthcare system in [COUNTRY]?” (Panel B). Respondents with recent contact are those who reply in the affirmative to the question “In the last 2 years, have you or somebody in your household been enrolled in an educational institution in [COUNTRY]?” (Panel A)/ “In the last 12 months, have you or somebody in your household personally made use of the healthcare system in [COUNTRY]?” (Panel B). The “satisfaction” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “dissatisfaction” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

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User satisfaction with the education and health systems declined compared to 2021. Among the countries that participated in the OECD Trust Survey in 2021 and 2023, the share who were satisfied with the education system decreased by three percentage points, from 63% to 60% (Figure 3.2); and the share who were satisfied with the healthcare system decreased by eight percentage points, from 63% to 55% (Figure 3.3). These parallel trends, hide, however, that satisfaction with the education system has actually risen in seven out of nineteen countries, with a drastic increase in Colombia; but that these increases were counterbalanced by drastic drops in satisfaction in Korea, Norway and, to a lesser extent, Finland. Satisfaction in the healthcare system, in contrast, has decreased in all countries but Australia, Belgium and Colombia. The after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic may have contributed to the decline in satisfaction with health and education systems observed between the two rounds of the Trust Survey.

For education, this decrease may be partially attributed to the learning losses experienced by students during the pandemic that have accumulated throughout the pandemic and thus appear more prominent in 2023 than in 2021 (Di Pietro, 2023^[1]). However, data from Gallup World Poll shows that satisfaction with education in the overall adult population across the OECD has remained relatively constant since 2010 and on an upward trend between 2017 and 2022 (Gallup,

2024^[2]).² Trust in the education system will have to be carefully monitored in the future iterations of the trust survey.

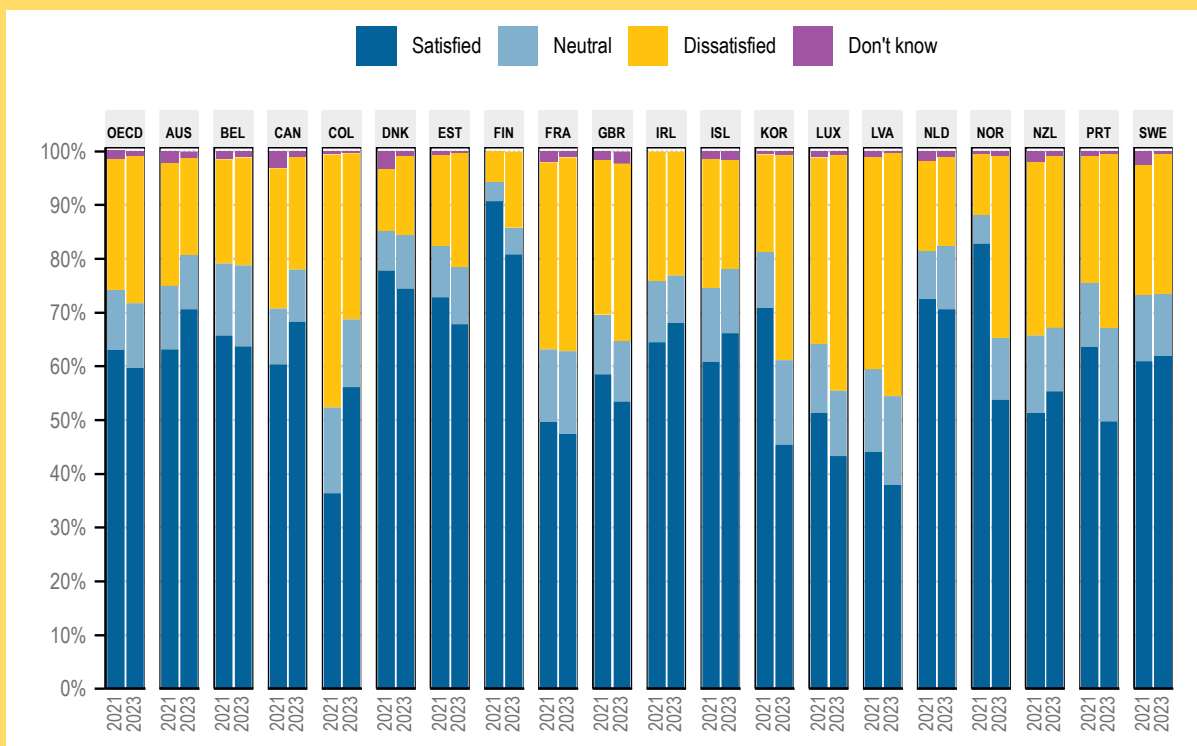
The stronger drop in satisfaction with the healthcare system, in contrast, is probably partially due to a temporary bump in satisfaction during the Covid-19 pandemic, but also part of a longer-term trend. Evidence from the Gallup World Poll finds that that average satisfaction with the availability of quality healthcare across OECD countries declined from 71% in 2010 to 68% in 2022, with a temporary rise in satisfaction between 2017 and 2020. To zoom in on the pandemic and post-pandemic period, the Ipsos Global Health Service Monitor (IPSOS, 2023^[3]) shows that among the twelve countries with available data for 2018 and 2021-23,³ the share of respondents that agreed with the statement "I trust the healthcare system in my country to provide me with the best treatment" rose quite strongly in 2021, from an average of 48% to 56%. The proportion remained relatively constant in 2022, but then fell to 52%. Therefore, while satisfaction with the healthcare system may indeed be declining over the longer term, the drop in satisfaction observed between 2021 and 2023 is likely to have been a result of the increase in reported satisfaction in 2021. Nevertheless, the concerns expressed by people about essential services; and the overall trend of a slight decline in satisfaction with the healthcare system point to the need to reinvest in the system, including in light of the strain it underwent during the pandemic.

Box 3.1. Spotlight on changes: Satisfaction with the education and healthcare system

On average across the OECD with available information, user satisfaction with the education and especially with the health systems was lower in 2023 than in 2021. But while satisfaction with the education system rose in some and dropped in other countries, the decline in satisfaction with the health system was much more uniform.

Figure 3.2. Satisfaction with education system remained relatively stable in many countries, but declined sharply in some

Share of population with recent contact with the education system reporting different levels of satisfaction with the education system in their country, 2021 and 2023

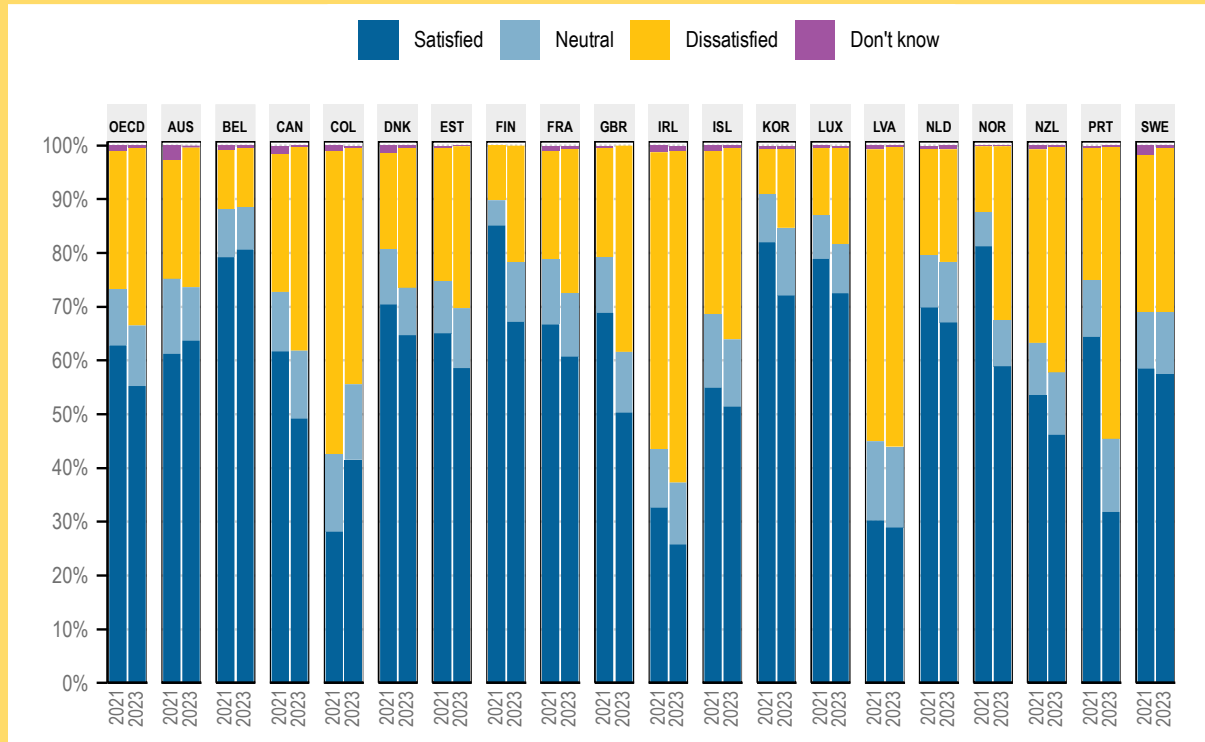


Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the questions “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the education system in [COUNTRY]?” in 2021 and 2023 waves. The survey question in Norway followed a different wording in 2021: “How good or poor do you find upper secondary schools?”. Individuals with recent contact are those who reply in the affirmative to the question “In the last 2 years, have you or somebody in your household been enrolled in an educational institution in [COUNTRY]?”. The survey question in Norway followed a different wording in 2021: “Did you or your child use upper secondary school in the last 12 months?”. The “satisfaction” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “dissatisfaction” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023. Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

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Figure 3.3. Satisfaction with the healthcare system has declined in 16 out of 19 OECD countries

Share of population with recent contact with the healthcare system reporting different levels of satisfaction with the healthcare system in their country, 2021 and 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the questions “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the healthcare system in [COUNTRY]?” in 2021 and 2023 waves. The survey question in Norway followed a different wording in 2021: “How good or poor do you find primary care physician/doctor?”. Individuals with recent contact are those who reply in the affirmative to the question “In the last 12 months, have you or somebody in your household personally made use of the healthcare system in [COUNTRY]?”. The survey question in Norway followed a different wording in 2021: “Did you see a primary care physician/doctor in the last 12 months?”. The “satisfaction” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “dissatisfaction” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

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3.2. CONFIDENCE IN GOVERNMENT’S PERSONAL DATA HANDLING REMAINS POSITIVE, AND IMPROVING SPEED AND EASE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES COULD FURTHER BOOST SATISFACTION

Daily interactions between public institutions and citizens occur for different reasons: people turn to

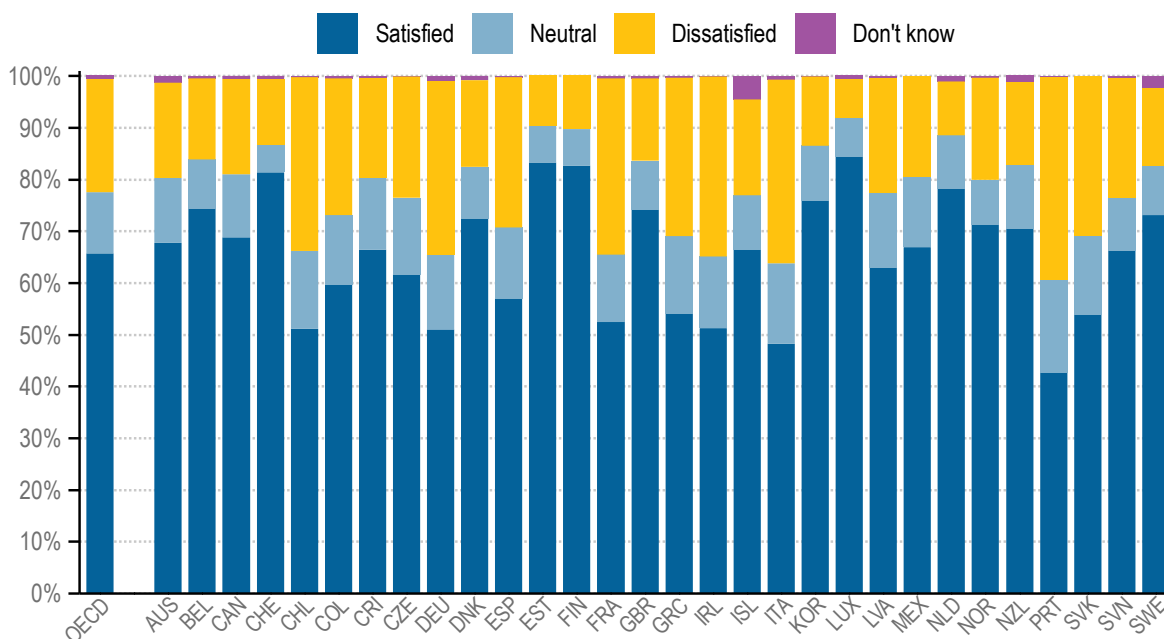
public agencies because they need to apply for a benefit or a service, because they have a question about an upcoming infrastructure project in their community, because they want to register to vote or participate in a citizens’ dialogue, because their business requires a permit, etc. Satisfaction with public services is a key performance indicator for government and included in the Sustainable Development Goals to measure national progress towards “effective, accountable and transparent institutions”.

Two thirds (66%) of people who have used administrative services in the previous year are satisfied with the quality of such services (Figure 3.4).⁴ It is also noteworthy that in 28 of the 30 participating countries, a majority of users are satisfied. In Luxembourg, 84% of recent users are satisfied, and the satisfaction rate is similar in Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands and Switzerland. Among all respondents,⁵ satisfaction across the 18 countries with data for both years rose slightly from

64% to 65%, with the largest improvements observed in Australia, Colombia, Estonia, and Sweden (Figure 3.7). Satisfaction with administrative services is the most important public governance driver for trust in the national civil service and the second most important driver for trust in local government. It has also a positive impact on trust in the national government, albeit with smaller importance than other public governance drivers (see Chapter 1 and Annex A).

Figure 3.4. A large majority is satisfied with administrative services

Share of recent users reporting different levels of satisfaction with administrative services in their country, 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses among recent users to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the quality of administrative services in [COUNTRY] (for example applying for an ID, registering a birth or applying for benefits)?” Recent users replied in the affirmative to the question “In the last 12 months, have you personally made use of an administrative in [COUNTRY] (for example, applying for a passport, registering a birth, or applying for benefits etc.)?”. The “satisfaction” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “dissatisfaction” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don't know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

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A large majority of administrative service users are satisfied with different features of their most recently obtained service, but improvements in the speed and ease of obtaining the service could boost satisfaction even further. When asked to rate different features of their most recent experience with an administrative service, over seven out of ten indicate that they were satisfied with the employees’ courtesy and competence, the clarity of

language and information, and the degree to which the service met their needs (Figure 3.5). Increasing satisfaction with the ease and speed of obtaining the service are likely to be the most impactful levers for increasing satisfaction with the overall quality of administrative services: individuals who are satisfied with these service components are ten and thirteen percentage points more likely, respectively, to rate overall administrative service quality

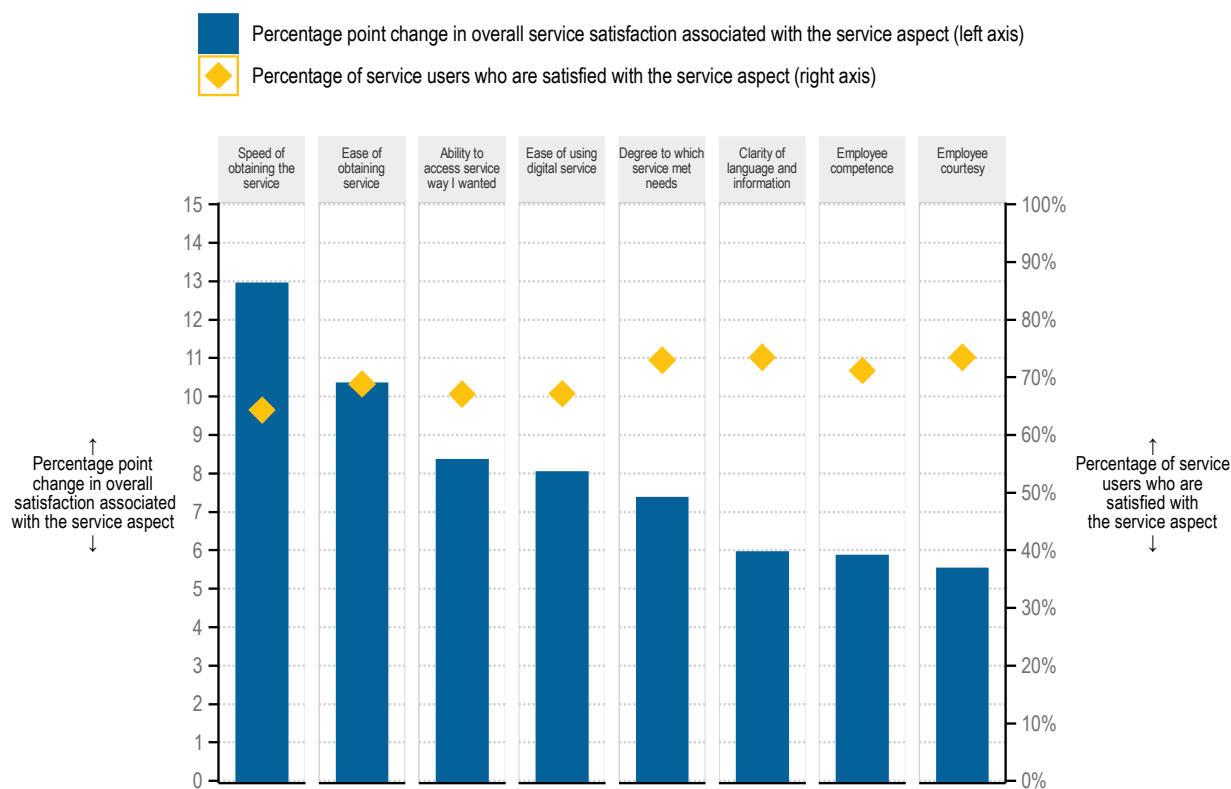
positively compared to otherwise similar individuals who were not satisfied with these aspects of their experience.

Service digitalisation can be a means to improve service satisfaction, but the link is not automatic. For example, it is noteworthy that in Estonia and Finland, two of the countries with the highest overall satisfaction with administrative services,

eight out of ten more recent users were satisfied both with the ability to access the service the way they wanted and the ease of using digital services. However, in other countries that invested heavily in the digital transformation of their public sector (OECD, 2024^[4]), this is not always instantly rewarded by extremely high satisfaction with administrative services overall and with these service aspects in particular.

Figure 3.5. Increasing the speed and ease of obtaining the service could boost satisfaction with both in-person and remote administrative services


Percentage point change in likelihood of being satisfied with administrative services following an increase in satisfaction with any of the service aspects (left Y-axis, represented by bar) and share of users satisfied with service aspect (right Y-axis, represented by dots), OECD average, 2023



How to read: For example, on average across the OECD, 64% are satisfied with the speed of obtaining the service, and this is associated with a 13 percentage point increase in the likelihood of being satisfied with administrative services.

Note: On the right Y-axis and represented by dots, the figure presents the OECD unweighted average of the share who indicated satisfaction with the respective aspect when answering the question: “Thinking about the most recent administrative service that you personally made use of, how satisfied were you with each of the following? Please give your answer on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means you are not at all satisfied, and 10 means you are completely satisfied”. The satisfied proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale. ‘Don’t know’ and ‘not applicable’ were separate answer options. The percentage point change in satisfaction with administrative services, on the Y-left axis represented by bars, corresponds to the average marginal effect of a being satisfied as compared to not being satisfied with any of the eight service aspects, when all the other service aspects, age, gender, and education levels are kept constant. The average marginal effects are statistically significant at $p < 0.01$.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

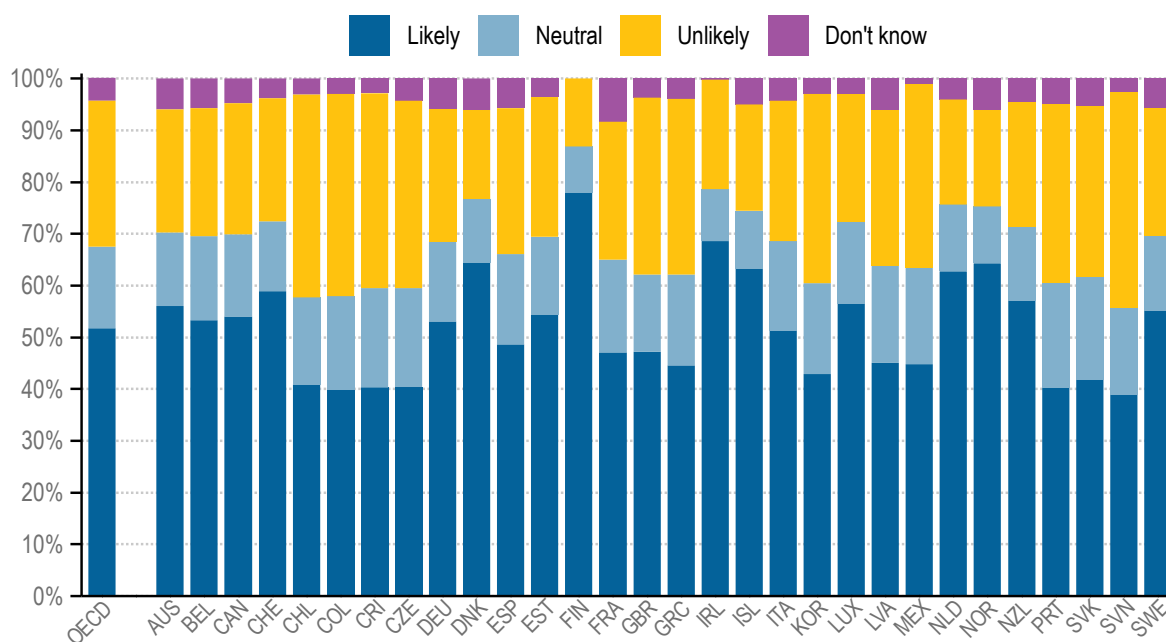
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The increased prevalence of remote service delivery and digital interactions with the public, make the responsible use of personal data by public agencies even more relevant. On this criterion as well, a majority (52%) are confident that their data will only be used for legitimate purposes (Figure 3.6). The share of those that are confident has increased from 52% to 53% among the 18 countries with data available for both 2021 and 2023 (Figure 3.8).

People satisfied with administrative services and confident that the government would use data for legitimate purposes tend to have higher levels of trust not only in the civil service but also in others. This suggests that confidence in the legitimate use of data is associated with the belief that most fellow citizens, including civil servants, can generally be trusted (Chapter 1 and Annex A).

Figure 3.6. One in two people think that public agencies use their personal data only for legitimate purposes

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that a public agency would use their personal data for legitimate purposes only, 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “If you shared your personal data with a public agency/office/department, how likely do you think it is that it would be used for legitimate purposes only?”. The “likely” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “unlikely” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don't know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average of responses across countries.
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

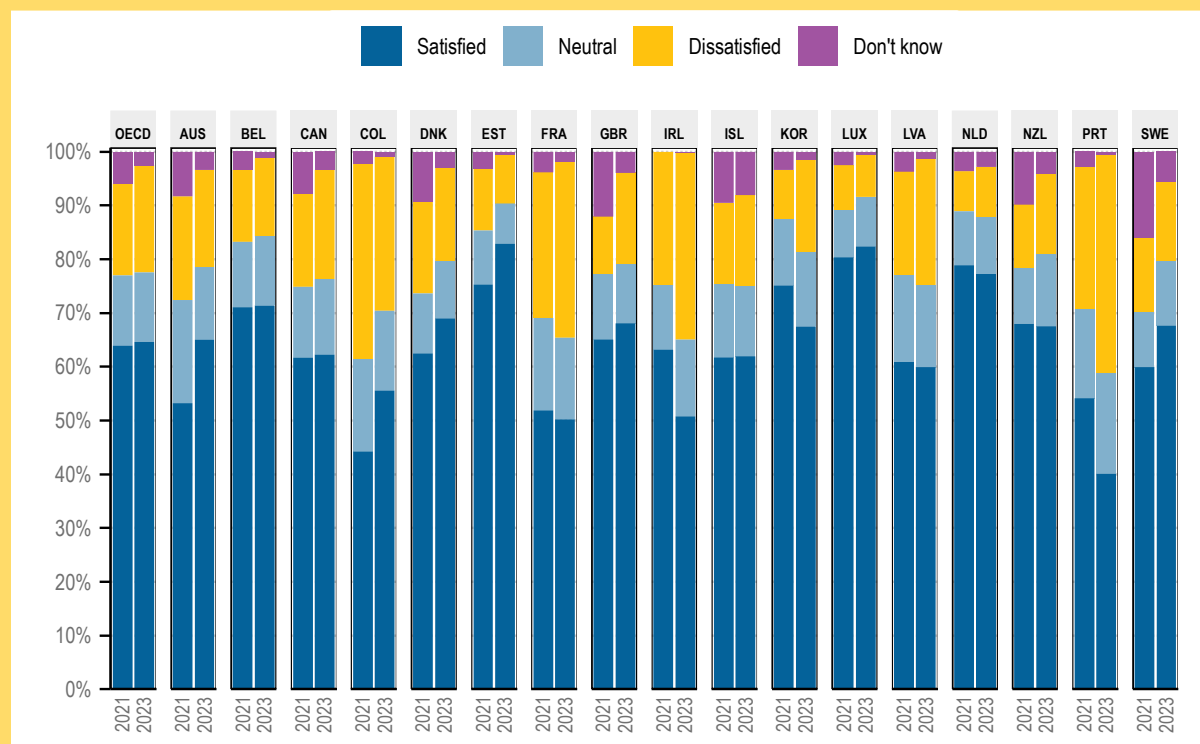
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Box 3.2. Spotlight on changes: Satisfaction with administrative services and legitimate data handling

Satisfaction with administrative services and confidence that public agencies use personal data only for legitimate aims have remained stable between 2021 and 2023.

Figure 3.7. From 2021 to 2023, there was no significant change in the OECD average satisfaction with the administrative system

Share of population reporting different levels of satisfaction with administrative services in their country, 2021 and 2023



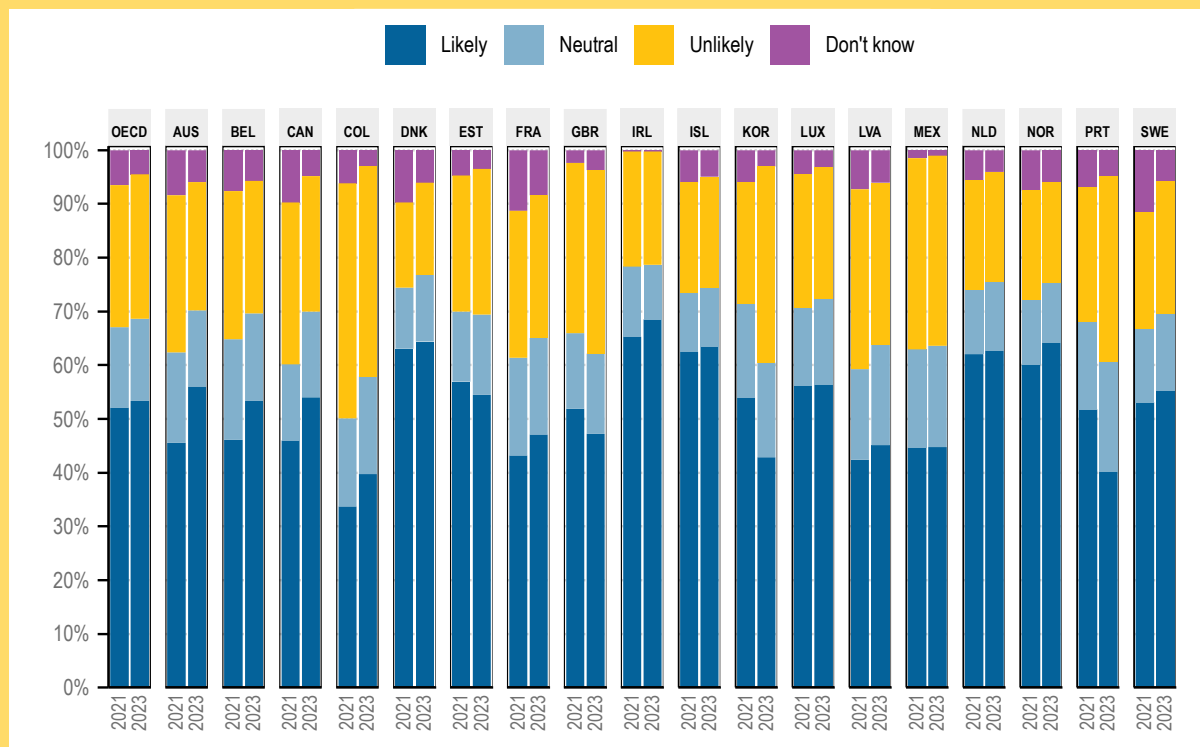
Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, how satisfied are you with the quality of administrative services in [COUNTRY] (for example applying for an ID, registering a birth or applying for benefits)?” in 2021 and 2023 waves. The “satisfaction” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “dissatisfaction” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don't know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023. Unlike the data presented in Figures 3.4 and 3.5, the sample is not restricted to individuals who had recent contact with administrative services.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

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Figure 3.8. A majority continues to express trust in their government's use of personal data for legitimate purposes

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that a public agency would use their personal data for legitimate purposes only, 2021 and 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “If you shared your personal data with a public agency/office/department, how likely do you think it is that it would be used for legitimate purposes only?” in 2021 and 2023 waves. The survey question followed a slightly different wording in 2021 in Norway: “If you share your personal details with a public authority, how likely is it that said information will be used only for the purposes for which it was collected?” and in Mexico: “If you were to share your personal data (name, telephone, address, etc.) with a public institution in Mexico, how likely is it that this information would be used exclusively for the reason for which it was requested?”. The “likely” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “unlikely” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “don't know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

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3.3. PEOPLE HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN THE FAIRNESS OF CIVIL SERVANTS THAN IN THEIR INTEGRITY DURING DAY-TO-DAY INTERACTIONS WITH THE PUBLIC

In daily interactions with public institutions, people expect public officials or employees they encounter to treat them fairly, regardless of their background, and to act with integrity. However, perceptions of fairness and integrity in particular are somewhat less positive.

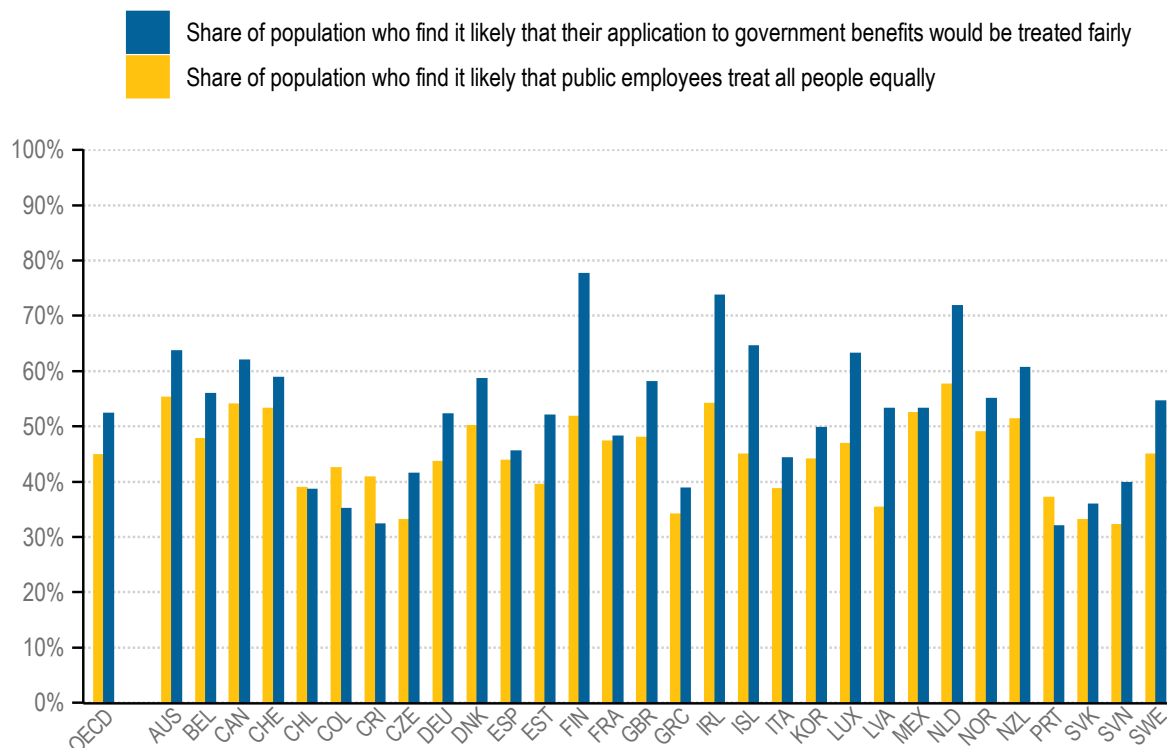
As in 2021, the 2023 OECD Trust Survey contained two questions concerning the fairness of civil servants when interacting with the public. One question asked respondents to assess the likelihood of a public employee in their area treating everyone equally, regardless of income level, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or country of origin. The second, more personal question, asked respondents to share how likely it would be that an application for a service or benefit by them or a household member would be treated fairly.

People generally express more confidence that their own application would be treated fairly than in the likelihood that all people would be treated equally, regardless of their background. While 52% express confidence that their application would be treated fairly, only 45% believe that this will be true for all people (Figure 3.9). A possible explanation is that people may think back to their personal experiences with regards to the fair treatment of the own application question, and rather than expressing distrust of public employees, express empathy towards those they see as disadvantaged. Responses to the two questions often align, but an average of one in five people who believe that it is likely or unlikely that public employees will act fairly according to one question, have the opposite opinion for the other question. The less positive assessment of the general as compared to the personal fairness question holds in most countries, apart from the participating Latin American countries. There, the share who view fair treatment as likely is either roughly equal for both questions (Chile and Mexico) or the likelihood of fair treatment at the personal level is perceived as less likely than equal treatment of people with different backgrounds (Colombia and Costa Rica).



Figure 3.9. More people find it likely that their own application for government benefits would be treated fairly than public employees would treat all people equally regardless of background

Share of population who find it likely that they would be treated fairly and that all people would be treated equally, 2023



Note: The figure shows the within-country distributions of the share who respond that it is 'likely' (responses 6-10 on a 0-10 scale) to the questions "If a public employee interacted with the public in the area where you live, how likely do you think it is that they would treat all people equally regardless of their income level, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or country of origin?" (blue) and "If you or a member of your household applied for a government benefit or service, how likely do you think it is that your application would be treated fairly?" (yellow).

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

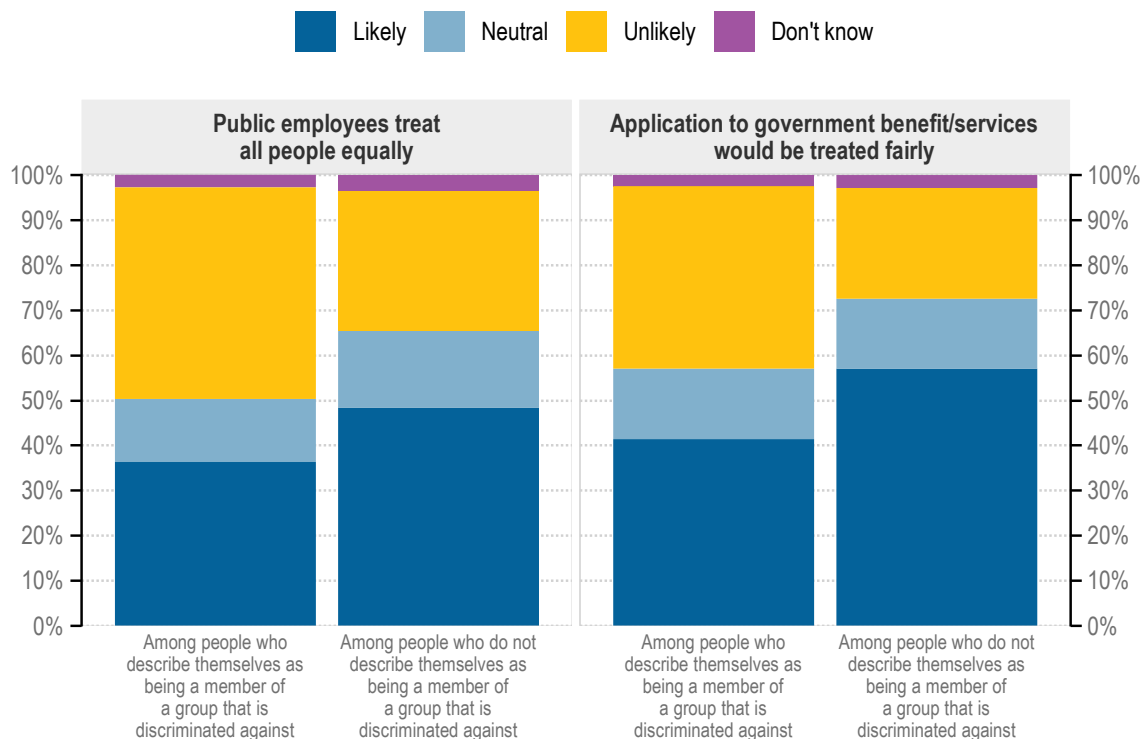
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Individuals who identify as belonging to a group that is discriminated against in the country assess the likelihood of fair treatment more negatively. For both the personal and the general question, the share who find it unlikely that civil servants will behave fairly is approximately fifteen percentage points higher for this group than for those who do not identify as belonging to a discriminated-against group (Figure 3.10). Both personal experience with discriminatory treatment and a higher awareness of potential unfair treatment could be behind this discrepancy. Even in countries where the perceived fairness of treatment is very high, such as in Finland, where three quarters (77%) believe that their application for a benefit or service would be treated

fairly, this share decreases to 56% among those identifying as belonging to a discriminated-against group. Nevertheless, Finland is still among the five countries where perceptions of fairness among people who identify as belonging to a discriminated-against group are highest. Ensuring that individuals regardless of their background can be confident they will receive fair treatment for themselves and others can contribute to trust, as these variables are positively associated with high or moderately high trust in the national civil service and local government when analysing the public governance drivers and background variables jointly (see Chapter 1 and Annex A).


Figure 3.10. People who identify as belonging to a group that is discriminated against in the country have lower expectations of fair treatment

Expectations of fair treatment by whether people self-identify themselves as belonging to a group they believe is discriminated against in the country, OECD average, 2023



Note: The figure shows the OECD unweighted country averages for the distribution of responses to the questions “If a public employee interacted with the public in the area where you live, how likely do you think it is that they would treat all people equally regardless of their income level, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity or country of origin?” (left) and “If you or a member of your household applied for a government benefit or service, how likely do you think it is that your application would be treated fairly?” (right), by whether the respondent replied yes or no to the question “Would you describe yourself as being a member of a group that is discriminated against in [COUNTRY]?”. For France, the overall average responses to the two questions were included under the statistic for each group.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

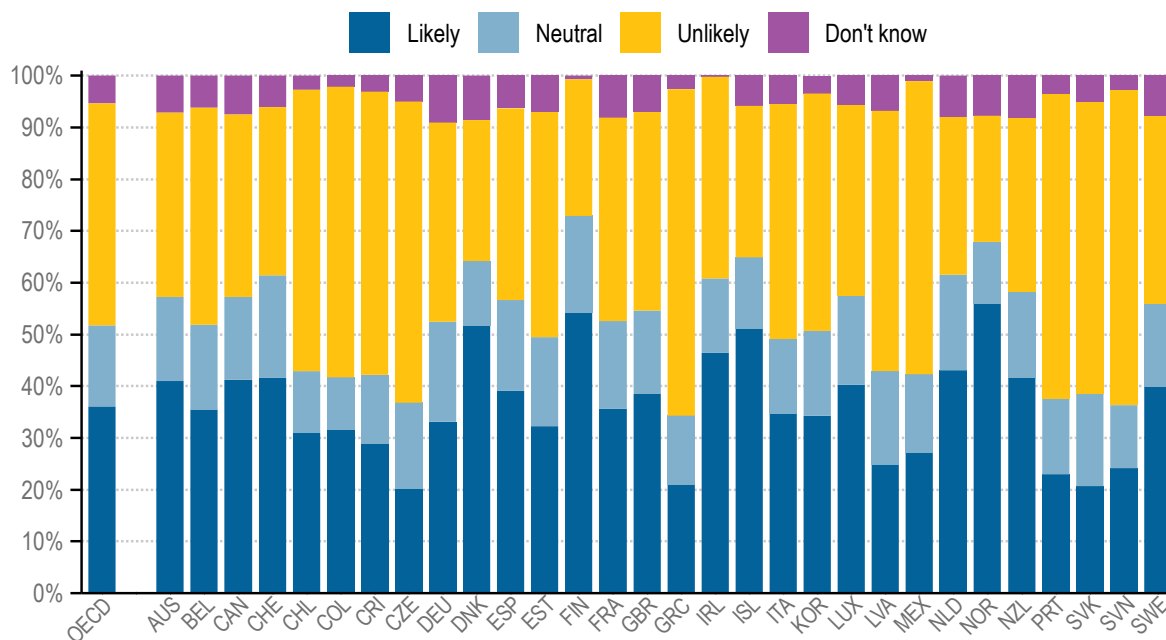
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Perceptions about public sector integrity are a concern in most countries. When asked about the likelihood that a public employee would accept or refuse a bribe to speed up a service, more than 43% on average think that a civil servant would engage in such petty corruption, and only 36% think they would not (Figure 3.11). Even in Denmark, Finland, Iceland and Norway, where a majority expect a civil servant would turn down the offer of a bribe, about a quarter of adults find it unlikely; and in some countries in particular in Central and Southern Europe and Latin America, their share exceeds 50%. Prior research has found that these perceptions can be highly detrimental to trust (Espinal, Hartlyn and

Kelly, 2006^[5]; Van de Walle and Migchelbrink, 2020^[6]); and findings from the 2023 OECD Trust Survey likewise suggest a high positive correlation between the share that find it likely that a civil servant will turn down a bribe and trust in the national civil service (Figure 3.12). Regression analyses (that consider several factors at the same time) likewise confirm that people who find it more likely that this form of petty corruption does not take place are more apt to trust their local government and civil service. There is also a positive association with trust in the national government, but it is less pronounced (see Chapter 1 and Annex A).

Figure 3.11. Only slightly more than one third believe that a public employee would turn down money offered for speeding up access to a public service

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that a public employee would refuse a bribe, 2023



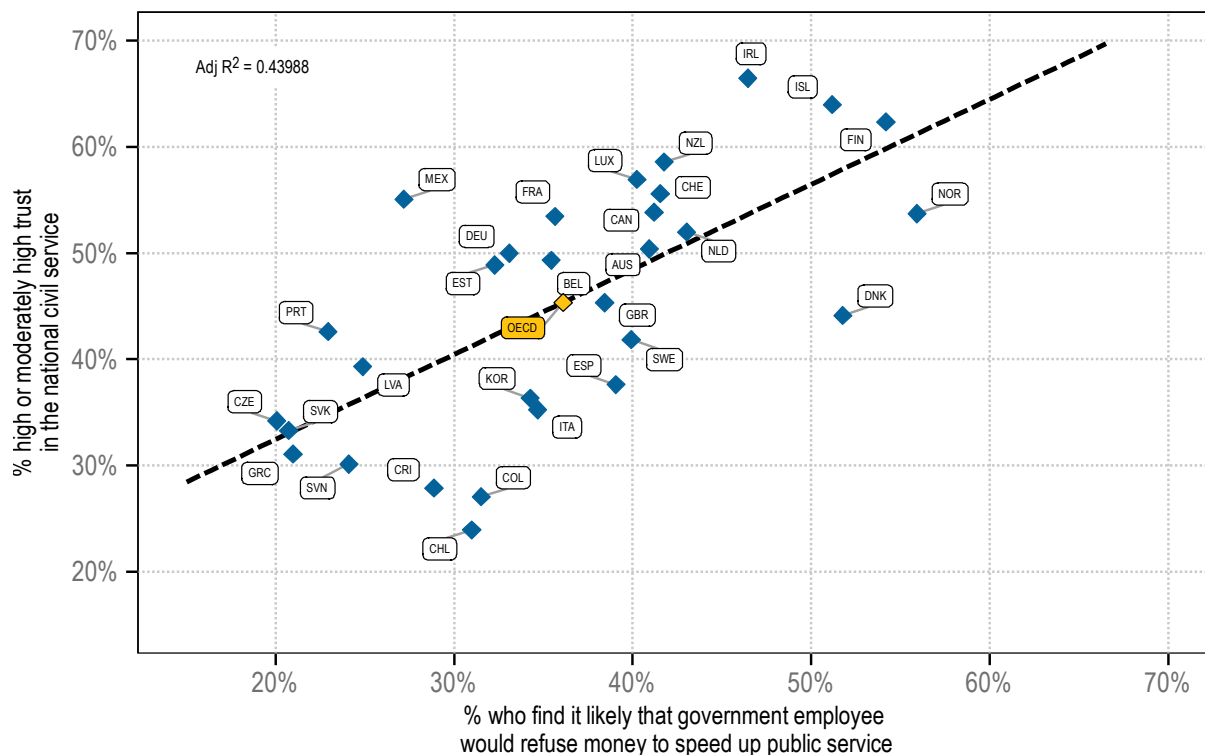
Note: The figure shows the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If a public employee was offered money by a citizen or a firm for speeding up access to a public service, how likely do you think it is that they would refuse it?". The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer. "OECD" presents the unweighted average of responses across countries.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

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Figure 3.12. Trust in the civil service is higher in countries where more people believe that public employees would refuse money to speed up access to a public service

Share with high or moderately high trust in the national civil service (y-axis) and share who find it likely that a government employee would refuse money to speed up access to a public service (x-axis), 2023



Note: The figure shows the average for the respective country of the share of population with high or moderately high trust in the civil service (y-axis) and who find it likely that a government employee would refuse money for speeding up access to a public service. Shown on the y-axis is the proportion of the population that have “high or moderately high trust” based on the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the 0-10 response scale. The survey question shown on the x-axis is “If a public employee was offered money by a citizen or a firm for speeding up access to a public service, how likely do you think it is that they would refuse it?”. The share who find it likely correspond to the responses 6-10 on the 0-10 scale. “OECD” presents the unweighted average of responses across countries.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

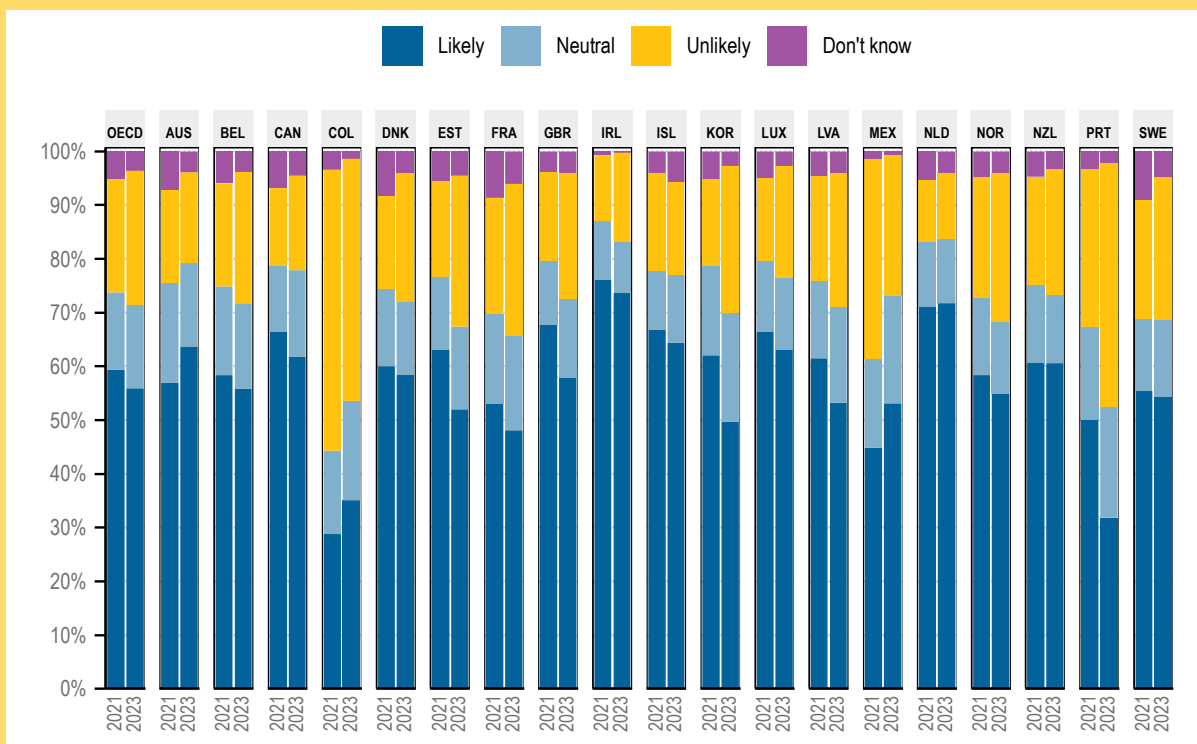
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Box 3.3. Spotlight on changes: Fair treatment and integrity of civil servants

Between 2021 and 2023, the share who find it likely that their own application for a government would be treated fairly, decreased in thirteen countries and on average from 59% to 56% (Figure 3.13). During the same period, the perception of the integrity of public servants has slightly deteriorated on average, but improved in one third of the participating countries (Figure 3.14).

Figure 3.13. A slightly declining share believe that their own application for a government benefit would be treated fairly

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that their application for government benefits/services would be treated fairly, 2021 and 2023



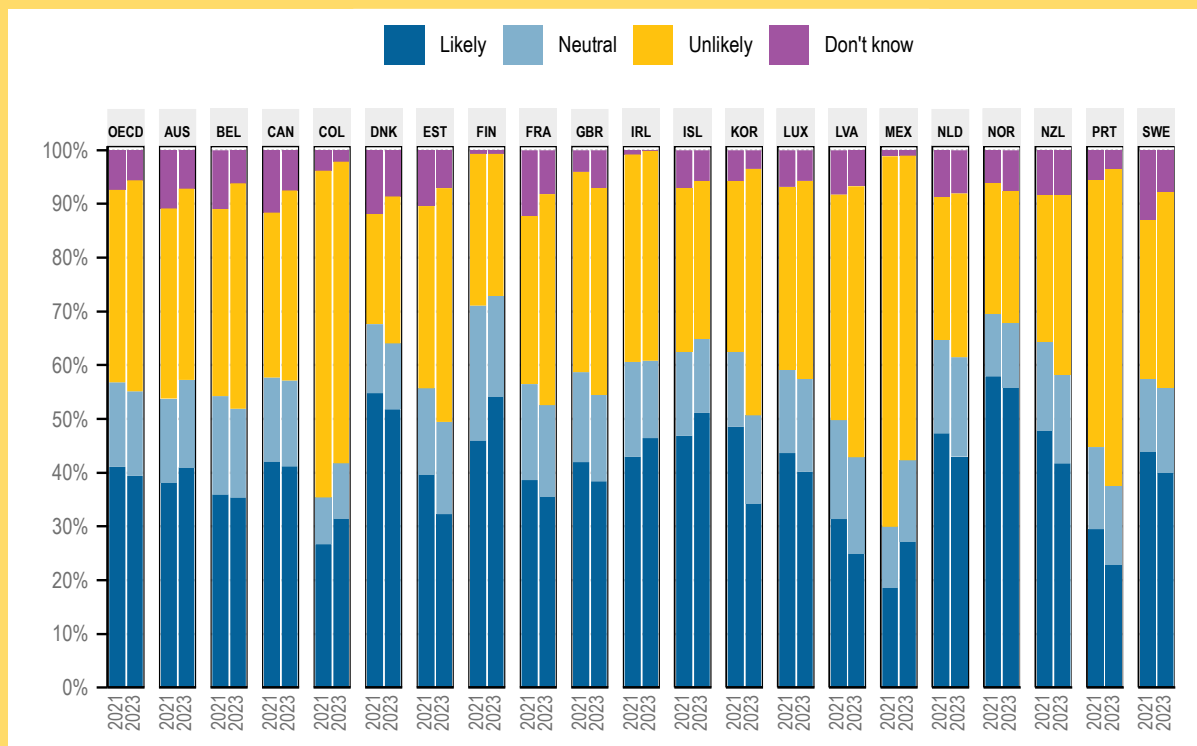
Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “If you or a member of your household applied for government benefit or service, how likely do you think it is that your application would be treated fairly?” in the 2021 and 2023 waves. The survey questions followed a slightly different wording in 2021 in Norway (“If you were to apply to the public authorities for help or support, how likely is it that your application will be processed fairly?”) and in Mexico (“If you were to submit an application for government support, how likely is it that your application would be treated fairly?”). The “likely” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “unlikely” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/xvoq17>

Figure 3.14. Perceptions of the integrity of civil servants have marginally deteriorated

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that a government employee would refuse a bribe, 2021 and 2023



Note: The figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If a government employee was offered money by a citizen or a firm for speeding up access to a public service, how likely do you think it is that they would refuse it?" in the 2021 and 2023 waves. The 2021 question was worded slightly differently in Norway ("If a member of the Storting were to be offered a bribe or other benefit in return for exercising their influence on a parliamentary matter, how likely are they to accept it?"), in Mexico ("If a public servant were offered money to speed up the processing of a public service in the area where you live, how likely would they be to accept it?") and in Finland: ("If a parliamentarian were offered a bribe to influence the awarding of a public procurement contract, do you think that he/she would refuse the bribe?"). The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

3.4. DOUBTS PERSIST REGARDING THE RESPONSIVENESS OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO CONCERNS AND FEEDBACK ON THE PROVISION OF SERVICES AND PROGRAMMES

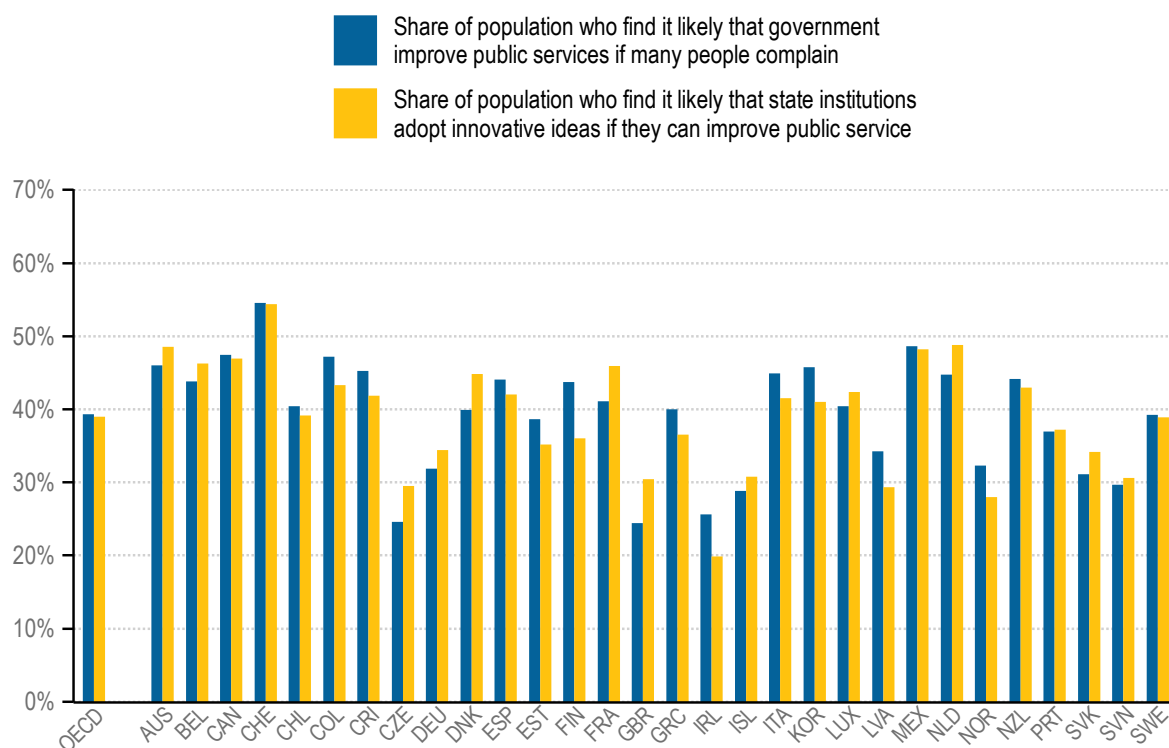
Public institutions that seek to implement policies, programmes, and services that correspond to the everyday needs of people are much more likely to succeed in doing so when they are open to receiving and responding to public feedback. Echoing findings from the 2021 OECD Trust Survey, the 2023 Trust Survey finds that public institutions in OECD countries could be more successful at

conveying their openness and responsiveness to citizens. This includes local matters and public services, for which their input is informed by their own experiences.

People are pessimistic when it comes to public institutions being responsive to improving the effectiveness and quality of public services responding to user needs. Fewer than four in ten people (39%) believe that a public service would be improved if many people complained that it was working badly, and an equal share believe that an innovative idea would be adopted by the responsible institution if it could improve a service (Figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15. An average of four in ten people believe that a public service would be improved if people complained and if an innovative idea was proposed

Share of population who find it likely (a) that government improve services if many people complain, or (b) that state institutions adopt innovative ideas if these ideas can improve public services, 2023



Note: The figure shows the average share of the population who respond that it is 'likely' (responses 6-10 on a 0-10 scale) to the questions "If many people complained about a public service that is working badly, how likely do you think it is that it would be improved?" and "If there was an innovative idea that could improve a public service, how likely do you think it is that it would be adopted by the responsible public institution?". "OECD" presents the unweighted average of "likely" responses across countries.

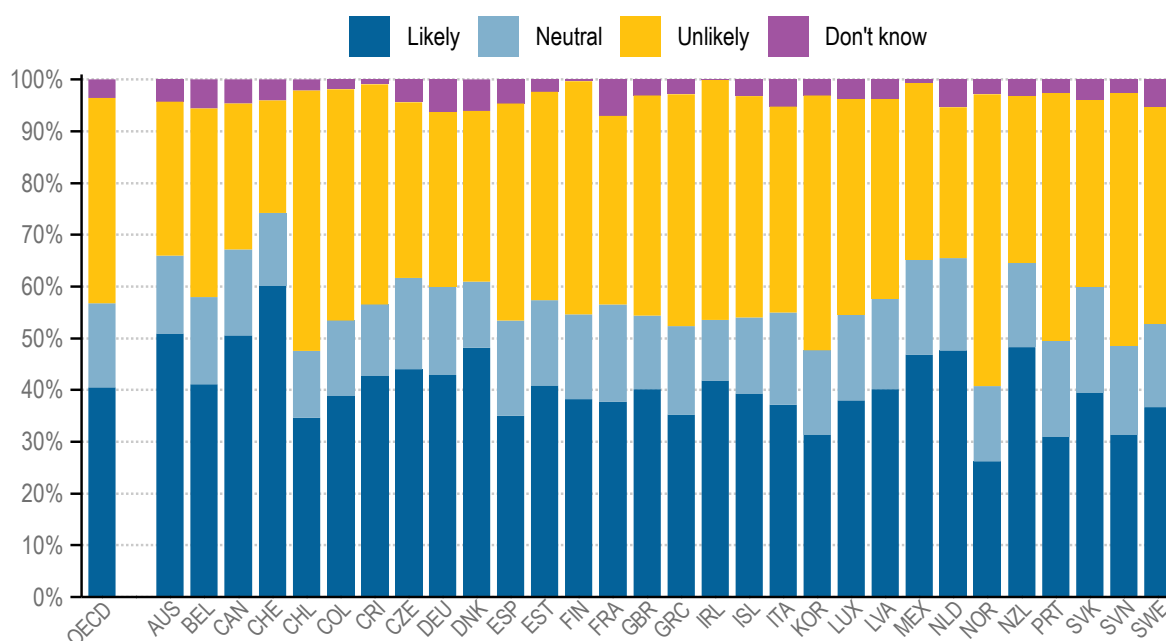
Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

An average of four in ten people think it is likely and think it is unlikely, respectively, that they will have the opportunity to voice their opinion when the local government takes a decision that affects their local community (Figure 3.16). This share has remained relatively stable across the countries with data for 2021 and 2023, dropping from 42% to 41% (Figure 3.17). In some countries, the share is as low as a quarter, while in Australia, Canada and Switzerland, the majority think that they would likely be able to voice their opinion in this scenario.

Positive perception to be able to voice opinions on a local matter has the largest positive influence on trust in local government than any other public governance driver. More positive perceptions of public institutions' responsiveness to complaints about a public service are likewise associated with higher trust in local government and in the civil service (Chapter 1 and Annex A).

Figure 3.16. An average of 41% believe they would be able to voice their opinion before local government takes a decision affecting their community

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that they would be able to voice their opinion on a decision affecting their local community, 2023



Note: The question is "If a decision affecting your local community is to be made by the local government, how likely do you think it is that you would have an opportunity to voice your opinion?". The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer. "OECD" presents the unweighted average of responses across countries.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/an5wqy>

The responsiveness to inputs, from citizens, outside experts or civil servants themselves, requires that decision makers, be they policy makers or high-level civil servants, are both open to receiving and listening to the feedback and have the agency to enact change. As will be seen in the next chapter, doubts about this willingness and ability apply not

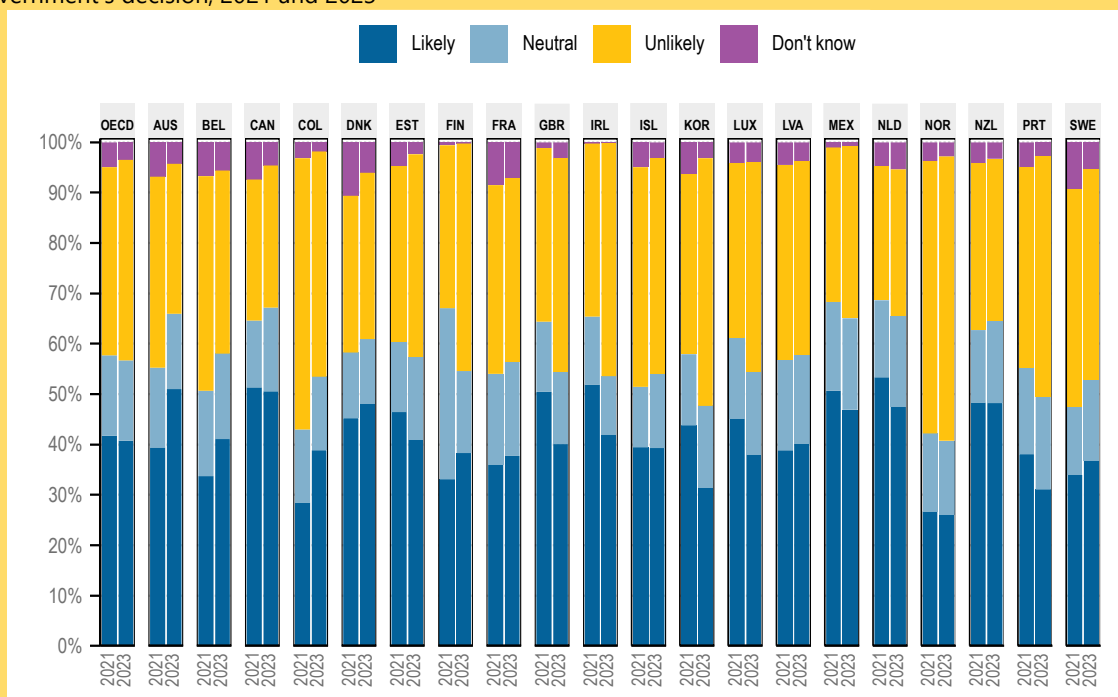
only to more straightforward matters such as public services and local policy changes, but even more so to policy making on complex issues. Yet, investing in the capacity of public institutions at all levels to be responsive to evidence and feedback can pay important trust dividends.

Box 3.4. Spotlight on changes: Openness and responsiveness on day-to-day interactions

On average, the perceptions of openness and responsiveness in day-to-day interactions have remained almost equal. In 2023 as in 2021, an average of around four in ten people across the OECD found it likely that they would be able to voice their opinion on local government decisions (Figure 3.17), that public services would be improved after complaints (Figure 3.18), and that innovative ideas to improve public services would be adopted (Figure 3.19). Perceptions on these three aspects of openness and responsiveness tend to move in tandem, meaning that in countries with a significantly improved perception for example of the adoption of innovative ideas, perceptions of the other two also improved. The exception is Sweden, where an increasing share find it likely that they can voice their opinion on local governments' decisions and that innovative ideas would be adopted, but a decreasing share find it likely public services would be improved following complaints.

Figure 3.17. Around 40% of individuals across the OECD remained confident that they have a voice in local governance

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that they have an opportunity to voice their opinion on local government's decision, 2021 and 2023



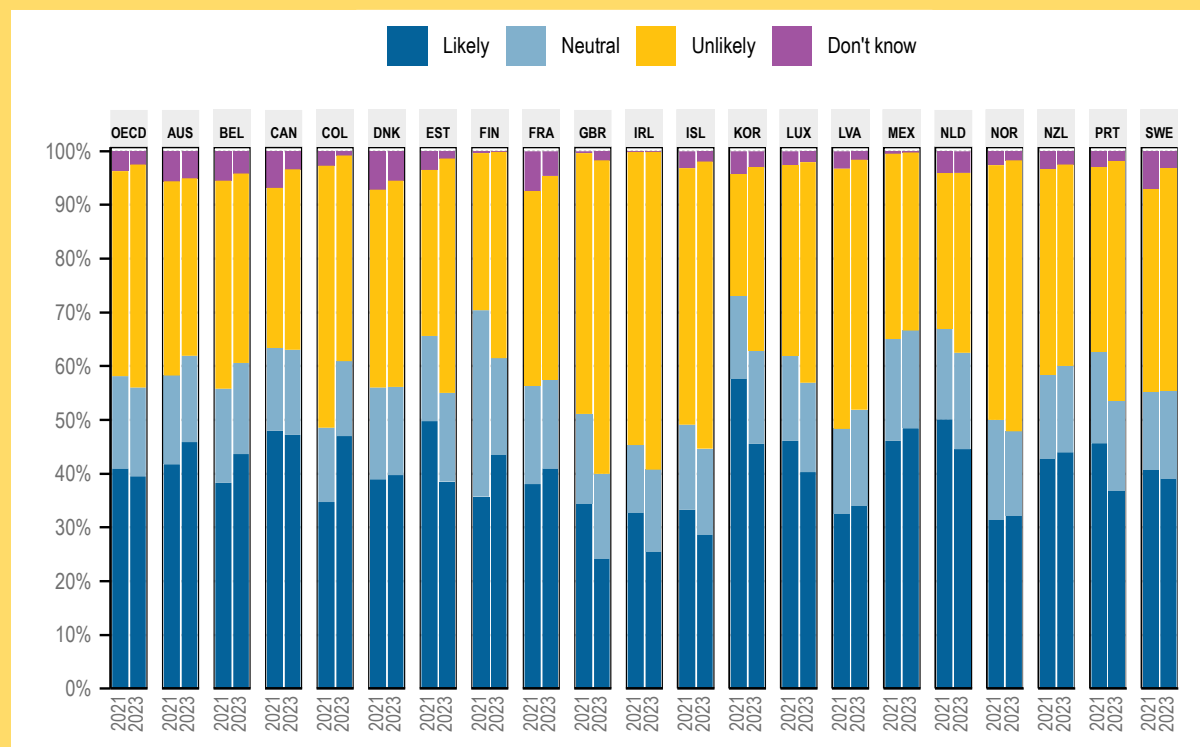
Note: The figures present the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If a decision affecting your local community is to be made by the local government, how likely do you think it is that you would have an opportunity to voice your opinion?" in 2021 and 2023. The 2021 survey question was worded slightly differently in Norway ("If a decision is to be made which will impact on the area where you live, how likely is it that you and other local residents will be given the opportunity to influence the decision?"), in Mexico ("If the authorities were to make a decision that would affect the area where you live, how likely is it that the people who live there would have the opportunity to influence that decision?") and in Finland ("If a decision affecting your community were to be taken by the local or regional government, how likely is it that you and others in the community would have an opportunity to voice your concerns?"). The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/3hkwn5>

Figure 3.18. Perceptions of service responsiveness to complaints about public services remained almost the same on average between 2021 and 2023

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that governments improve public services if many people complain, 2021 and 2023



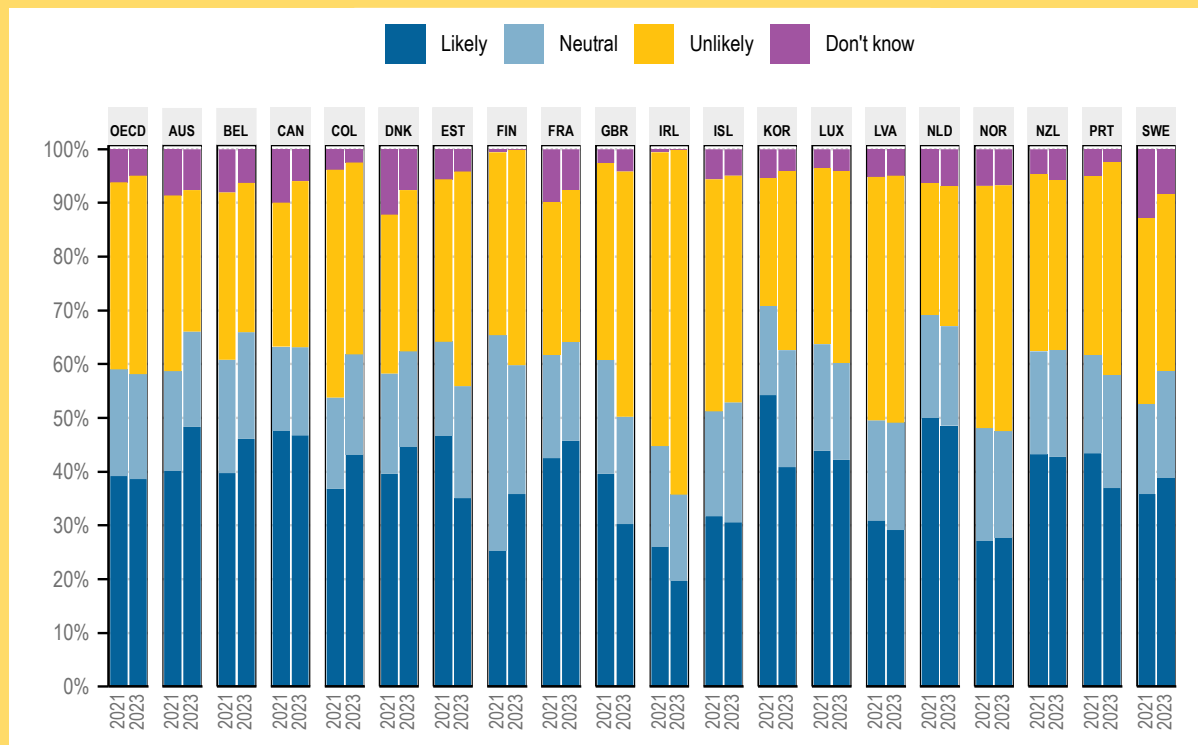
Note: The figures present the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If many people complained about a public service that is working badly, how likely do you think it is that it would be improved?" in 2021 and 2023. The 2021 survey question was worded slightly differently in Norway ("If you complain about the quality of a public service, how likely is it that it will be improved?"), in Mexico ("If many people complained about the quality of a public service, how likely would the government be to improve it?") and in Finland ("If a large group of citizens expresses dissatisfaction with the functioning of a public service (e.g. the education, health or justice system) do you think that corrective actions will be taken?"). The "likely" proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; "neutral" is equal to a response of 5; "unlikely" is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate answer choice. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/jxca4l>

Figure 3.19. In many countries, perceptions about the responsiveness of public institutions to innovative ideas have remained relatively stable

Share of population who find it likely or unlikely that public institutions adopt innovative ideas if they can improve public service, 2021 and 2023



Note: The figures present the within-country distributions of responses to the question “If there was an innovative idea that could improve a public service, how likely do you think it is that it would be adopted by the responsible institution?” in 2021 and 2023. The 2021 survey question was worded slightly differently in Norway (“If a public employee has a suggestion on how to improve a service, how likely is it that the suggestion will be taken into account?”) and in Finland (“If a government employee has an idea that could lead to better provision of a public service, do you think that it would be adopted?”). The “likely” proportion is the aggregation of responses from 6-10 on the scale; “neutral” is equal to a response of 5; “unlikely” is the aggregation of responses from 0-4; and “Don’t know” was a separate answer choice. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries, for the listed countries for which the variable was available in 2021 and 2023.

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2021 and 2023.

StatLink  <https://stat.link/jnfux9>

3.5. CONCLUSION FOR POLICY ACTION TO ENHANCE TRUST

While on the day-to-day interactions with citizens, the levels of satisfaction are relatively good, they remain very important for trust and areas of focus for the future include the following:

- While the majority is satisfied with the daily provision of public services, decreasing satisfaction levels among users of healthcare and education systems in the past 2 years call for close monitoring in the future.
- A majority expresses satisfaction with administrative services, highlighting their quality, the courtesy and competence of employees, and the clarity of information. However, improving the speed and ease of service delivery would contribute to even higher satisfaction levels.
- While enhancing service speed and ease, it is critical to ensure and communicate around responsible data use, as this is closely linked with trust in the civil service. Importantly in the digital environment, a majority is confident in the government's responsible handling of personal data, with increased satisfaction since 2021. The relatively positive confidence in this aspect gives a solid basis for further investments in digital public infrastructure and digital government that continue to be crucial.
- Most people believe their personal applications for benefits or services will be handled fairly, however, fewer are confident that all individuals, regardless of background, will receive similar treatment. Moreover, perceptions of fairness are lower among individuals who identify as belonging to a group that is discriminated against. Ensuring that individuals regardless of their background can be confident they will receive fair treatment can contribute to trust, as these variables are positively associated with high or moderately high trust in the national civil service and local government.
- On average, over 43% of people in surveyed OECD countries believe that a civil servant might engage in petty corruption, while only 36% think otherwise. Countries would need to ensure that public integrity frameworks are in place and fully implemented (OECD, 2024^[7]).
- Only 39% of people believe that public services would improve following complaints or that public agencies would adopt innovative ideas to improve services. This indicates that governments should be more open to modifying their processes based on feedback from users or ideas from frontline public employees. Efforts to increase responsiveness must balance innovation and increased use of citizen feedback with ethical considerations.

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NOTES

¹ An average of 39% of Trust Survey respondents had contact with the education system in the past two years, either directly or through a family member; and an average of 83% of respondents either used the healthcare system personally within the last twelve months, or had a household member who used it. Overall satisfaction with the education and healthcare system among the entire adult population, including those who were not in contact with the systems in the respective time frames, are similarly high to satisfaction among users: An average of 53% of all individuals are satisfied with the education and 51% with the healthcare system.

² In the Gallup World Poll, satisfaction with the educational system is based on the proportion of respondents who answered "satisfied" to "In the city or area where you live, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the educational system or the schools?". The OECD average for 2010 was 67%, for 2017 65% and for 2022 67%. Compared to the proportion of respondents who give an answer of six to ten on the scale of how satisfied they are with the educational system in their country, satisfaction levels measured this way through the Gallup World Poll are generally higher. For example, for the 2022 Gallup World Poll, the cross-country average for satisfaction was 70% for the 30 countries that participated in the 2023 OECD Trust Survey, compared to the 53% with moderate to high satisfaction as measured by the OECD Trust Survey.

However, when adding the group of 'neutral' respondents (5 on the 0-10 scale) to the proportion of 'satisfied' respondents, the OECD Trust Survey result is considerably closer to the level of satisfaction measured by Gallup: 66%, just slightly below the value measured by Gallup a year prior. It therefore appears that the binary choice of forcing respondents into clear statement whether they are satisfied or dissatisfied induces relatively neutral respondents to declare that they are satisfied with the system. However, differences in the geographic scale of the question (city or area where you live versus country) and in the reference year (2022 versus 2023) can clearly also contribute to differences in the values measured by the two surveys.

³ The countries are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, Italy, Korea, Mexico, Spain, Sweden and United Kingdom (excluding Northern Ireland). The trend is comparable when including Hungary, Japan, Poland and the United States in the averages.

⁴ In 2023, an average of 53% of Trust Survey respondents used an administrative service in the past twelve months. Average satisfaction among all individuals, including those who did not obtain an administrative service in the past year, is equal to 63%.

⁵ The 2021 OECD Trust Survey did not include a question on whether the respondent used an administrative service in the prior year.



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