

#### Perceptions of government effectiveness and fairness

OECD countries have some of the most comprehensive social protection systems in the world. They spend, on average, more than 20% of GDP on social policies delivering public health, housing and family services, old-age supports like public pensions, and income supports for people in need. Research on redistribution and poverty suggests that, in many cases, these social policies are effective. Yet, the *Risks that Matter* survey reveals widespread dissatisfaction with public policies: public programmes are not reaching all groups effectively and policies do not always correspond to needs and expectations.

**On average, only about one in five people think that they could easily receive public benefits if they needed them,** with well over 50% *disagreeing* that access would be easy across the 21 countries surveyed (Figure 3.3). People are most confident in their ability to access public benefits in Canada (34% agree or strongly agree that they could easily access public benefits if needed), the Netherlands (38%), and Norway (35%).

**Most people do not feel that they receive a fair share of public benefits, given the taxes and social contributions they pay.** With the exception of Denmark and Norway, the most common response in all countries was “disagree” or “strongly disagree” (59% on average) with the statement “I feel that I receive a fair share of public benefits, given the taxes and social contributions I pay” (Figure 3.4). In Chile, Greece, Israel and Mexico, three-quarters or more of the population disagree that they get their fair share given the taxes they pay (OECD 2019).

Simultaneously, there is a strong sense that others are taking more than they should. On average across the 21 countries, two-thirds of respondents (strongly) agree with the statement “Many people receive public benefits without deserving them” (ibid).

**Underlying this sense of injustice is a commonly-held belief that government is not working for, or listening to, the people.** In all but four of the surveyed countries (Canada, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands), a majority of respondents to the *Risks That Matter* survey *disagree* with the statement “I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits” (Figure 3.5). In countries like France, Greece, Israel, Lithuania, Portugal and Slovenia, this share rises as high as 70% or more (Figure 3.5). These feelings spread across most social groups, and are not limited just those deemed “left behind”. Notably, despite the common perception that

young people are among the most disillusioned with government, respondents aged 18-29 are much less likely than others to feel that their voice is being ignored in the policy debate (ibid).

**Despite a widespread sense of injustice and disillusionment, people continue to express compassion and support for pro-poor redistributive policies.** When asked to explain why people live in poverty, the most common answer in 17 of the 21 surveyed countries was “injustice in society”: 71% of Portuguese and 68% of Mexicans pointed to injustice as the root cause of poverty, as did more than two-thirds of French, German and Slovenian respondents (OECD, 2019). At the same time, in every country surveyed, more than half of respondents say that the government should tax the rich more than they currently do in order to support the poor. In Greece, Germany, Portugal and Slovenia, the share rises to 75% or more (ibid).

#### Definition and measurement

Figure 3.3, Figure 3.4 and Figure 3.5 present results from the OECD’s 2018 *Risks that Matter* survey (see Chapter 2 for more information about the survey). In Figure 3.3, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them”. For Figure 3.4, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I feel that I receive a fair share of public benefits, given the taxes and social contributions I pay”. For Figure 3.5, respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with the statement “I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits”.

Possible response options for all three questions were “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “undecided”, “agree” and “strongly agree”.

#### Further reading

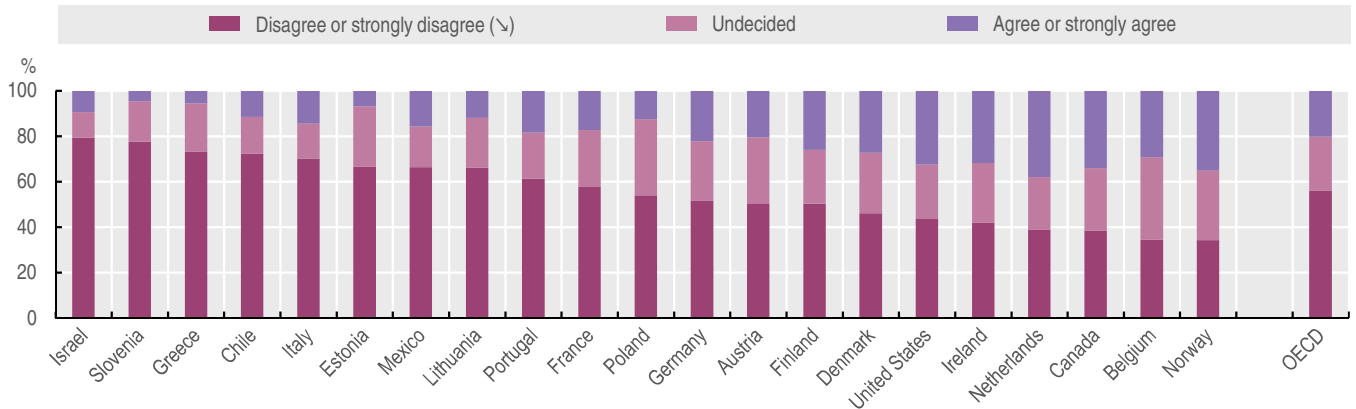
OECD (2019), *Risks that Matter: Main Findings from the 2018 OECD Risks that Matter Survey*, OECD Publishing, Paris, [www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm).

### 3. PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL RISKS AND GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVENESS

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##### 3.3. Few believe they could easily access public benefits if they needed them

Distribution of responses to the statement "I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them", 2018

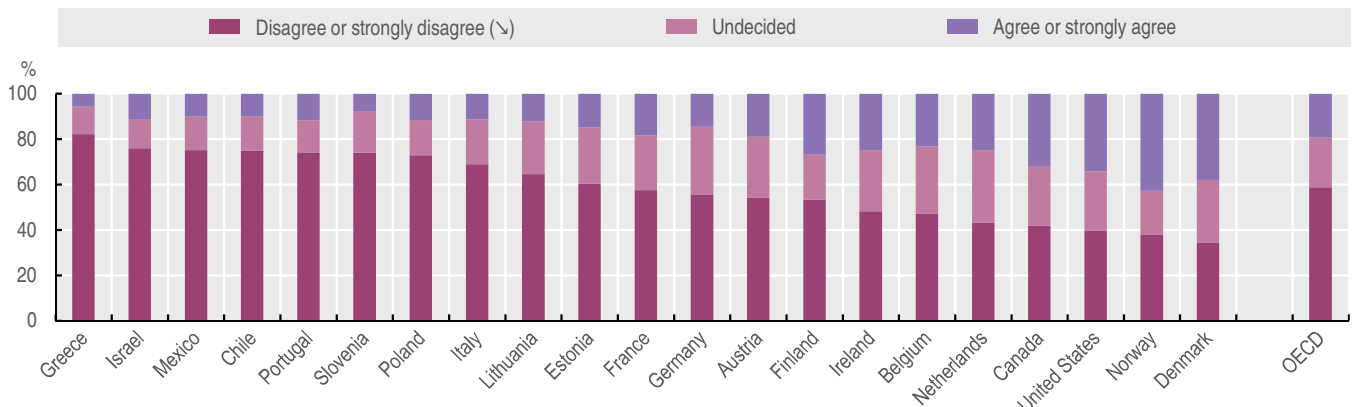


Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter survey (2018), [www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938344>

##### 3.4. Many people feel they do not receive the benefits they should, given the taxes they pay

Distribution of responses to the statement "I feel that I receive a fair share of public benefits, given the taxes and social contributions I pay", 2018

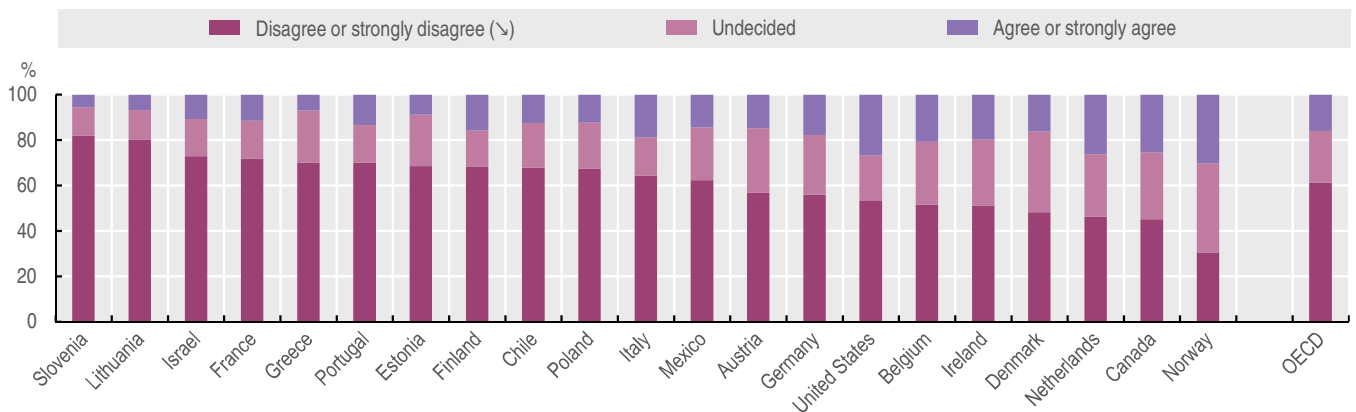


Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the 2018 OECD Risks That Matter survey, [www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938363>

##### 3.5. In most countries, respondents feel that government does not incorporate the views of people like them when designing social benefits

Distribution of responses to the statement "I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits", 2018



Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the 2018 OECD Risks That Matter survey, [www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm](http://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933938382>



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