

Statistical bulletin

Trust in government, UK: 2023

Estimates of trust in government and institutions, satisfaction with public services, and political attitudes, collected as part of an international research project. These are official statistics in development.

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1 . Main points

- People in the UK trust non-political institutions, such as the judicial system, police and civil service, more than the national and devolved governments, Parliament and political parties.
- Around half of people in the UK had accessed an administrative service, for example, applying for a passport or benefits in the last year; satisfaction with administrative services was generally higher than with the health and education systems in the UK.
- The integrity of politicians and officials was an important driver of trust, with most people stating that officials abiding by the same rules as everybody else was a factor in how much they trust the national government.
- A majority of people in the UK had participated in a political activity in the past year, most commonly voting in a recent local election, and most agreed that the general public should be able to vote directly on issues of national importance in a referendum.
- Just under half of people said they had little to no confidence in their own ability to participate in politics, and two-thirds had little or no confidence that they have a say on the decisions made by the government.
- Two-thirds of people said that the cost of living was one of the three most important issues facing the UK, and three-quarters were concerned about their own household's finances and overall economic well-being.

This release contains data from the Trust in Government Survey. The survey was undertaken by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Cabinet Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The survey was run in 30 countries and the full international dataset will be published by the OECD in summer 2024.

These are [official statistics in development](#). The methodology developed by OECD and used to compile these statistics is new and subject to future review.

2 . Trust in government and institutions

The majority (70%) of people in the UK reported that, in general, they trust most people.

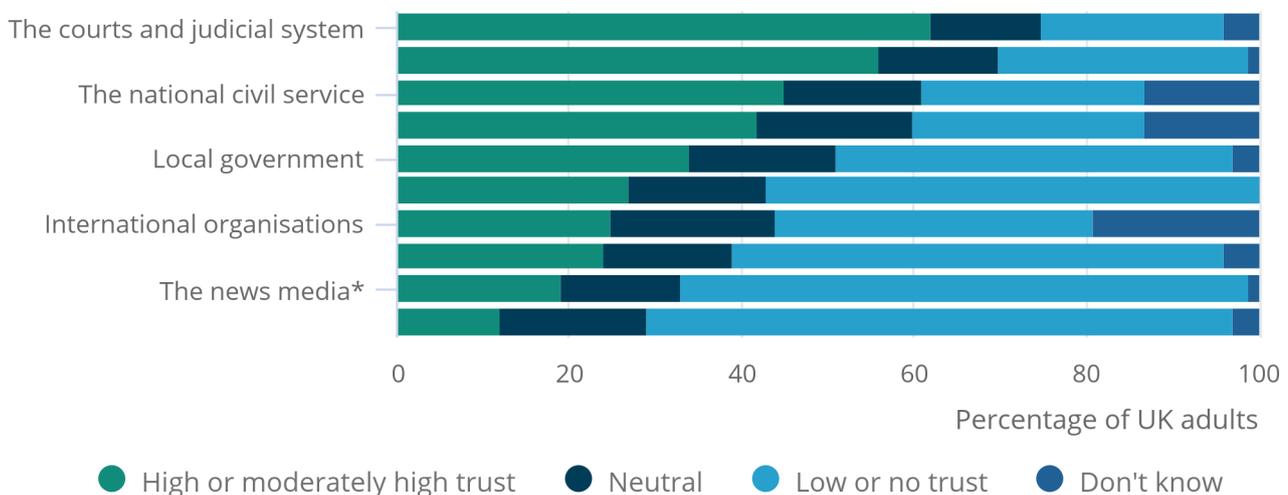
Of the institutions asked about in the survey, the courts and judicial system were the most trusted, with nearly two-thirds (62%) stating that they trust these institutions (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Courts, police and civil service were the most trusted institutions

Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, 2023

Figure 1: Courts, police and civil service were the most trusted institutions

Levels of trust in public institutions, UK, 2023



Source: Trust in Government Survey, UK: 2023 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Levels of trust were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. The 'high or moderately high trust' category represents scores of 6 to 10, 'neutral' represents scores of 5 and 'low or no trust' represents scores of 0 to 4.
3. For institutions marked with an *, the category 'Do not know' is based on a sample size of less than 30 and should be treated with caution.

The most trusted parts of government were the national and regional civil service, with 45% and 42% of people, respectively, saying they trusted these institutions. A third (34%) trusted local government and a quarter (27%) trusted the UK government. Parliament, including both the House of Commons and House of Lords, and the political parties were the least trusted, with 24% and 12% trusting, respectively.

Devolved administrations

Table 1: Trust levels differed between the UK government and devolved administrations
Average trust score out of 10, UK, 2023

Government body	Average score
Welsh Government	4.2
UK Government	3.8
Scottish Government	3.7
Northern Ireland Executive	3.2

Source: Trust in Government Survey, UK: 2023 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. The average trust score is the mean of all scores for respondents who answered between 0 and 10 where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. Between October 2022 and February 2024, including the fieldwork period of the Trust in Government Survey, the Northern Ireland Executive was suspended, and civil servants were responsible for the day-to-day business of government.

3 . Public services

In the last 12 months, 9 in 10 people, or somebody in their household, had made use of the healthcare system, while just under half (46%) had accessed an administrative service, for example, applying for a passport or benefits. Around one-quarter (26%) of people, or someone in their household, had been enrolled in an educational institution in the last two years.

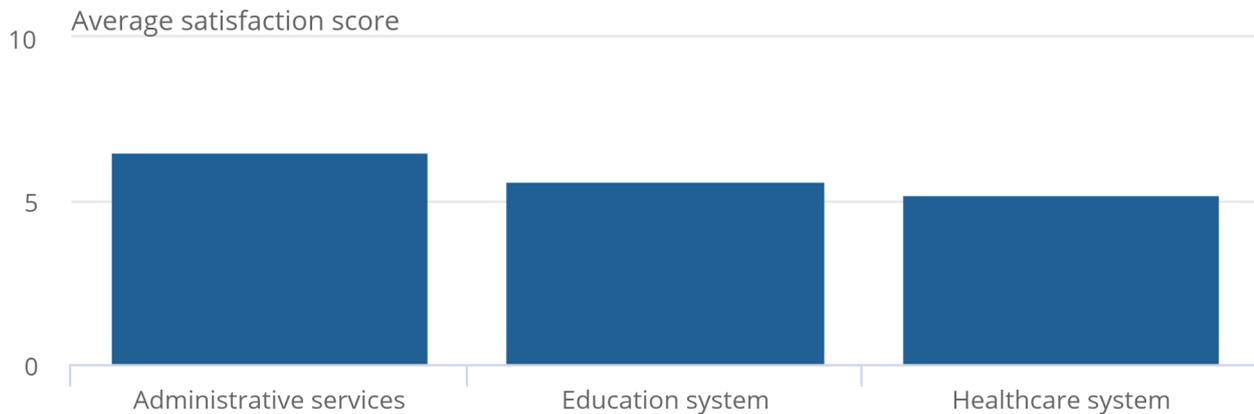
Satisfaction with administrative services in the UK was generally higher than for education and health systems (Figure 2), and most (58%) felt that it was likely they would be treated fairly when applying for a government benefit or service.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with administrative services was higher than for the education and health systems

Average level of satisfaction with public services, UK, 2023

Figure 2: Satisfaction with administrative services was higher than for the education and health systems

Average level of satisfaction with public services, UK, 2023



Source: Trust in Government Survey, UK: 2023 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes:

1. Levels of satisfaction were reported on a 0 to 10 scale, where 0 is 'not at all' and 10 is 'completely'.
2. The average satisfaction score is the mean of all scores for respondents who answered between 0 and 10.

4 . Drivers of trust

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of people said that officials abiding by the same rules as everyone else influences how much they trust the national government, while 59% said policies balancing the interests of current and future generations influence how much they trust the government.

Half (50%) of people said that the government competently carrying out its tasks was a factor in how much they trust the government, and a similar proportion (49%) said that engaging citizens was a contributing factor.

The OECD has identified [five public governance drivers that can influence trust in government institutions](#): integrity, responsiveness, reliability, openness and fairness. People were asked to report how well the UK government and institutions perform against the OECD's five drivers, and to select factors that impact their level of trust.

Table 2: On average, measures of reliability, openness and fairness were more positive than measures of integrity and responsiveness

Percentage of adults reporting scenario is likely, UK, 2023

UK adults %**Reliability**

Government institutions ready to protect lives in large-scale emergency	47
Personal data shared with public agency used for legitimate purposes only	47
Laws and regulations for businesses stable and predictable	46
UK government regulate new technologies and help responsible use	34

Openness

Information about administrative service easily available	79
Opportunity to voice opinion about decision affecting local community	40
UK government clearly explains how reform affects you	28
Government adopts opinions expressed in public consultation	22

Fairness

People treated fairly when applying for government benefit or service	58
Public employee treats people equally	48
UK Parliament balances needs of different regions and groups when debating new policy	20

Responsiveness

UK government draws on best available evidence when making decisions	37
Government department adopts innovative idea to improve public service	30
National policy changed if most people against it	27
Public service improved if people complained was working badly	24

Integrity

Court makes decision free from political influence	45
Public employee refuses money for speeding up access to service	38
UK Parliament holds UK government accountable	36
Politician refuses job in exchange for political favour	18
National government agrees to corporation's demand that could harm society	55

Source: Trust in Government Survey, UK: 2023 from the Office for National Statistics

Notes

1. Likelihood of scenario happening in the UK reported on a 0 to 10 scale where 0 is 'very unlikely' and 10 is 'very likely'.
2. The 'likely' category represents scores of 6 to 10.
3. Full question wording in Trust in Government UK data worksheets 3.1 to 3.6.

5 . Political engagement

The majority (78%) of people in the UK had participated in at least one political activity in the last year (Figure 3), participating in an average of two activities. Three-quarters of people (73%) felt that the public should be able to vote in referendums on issues of national importance.

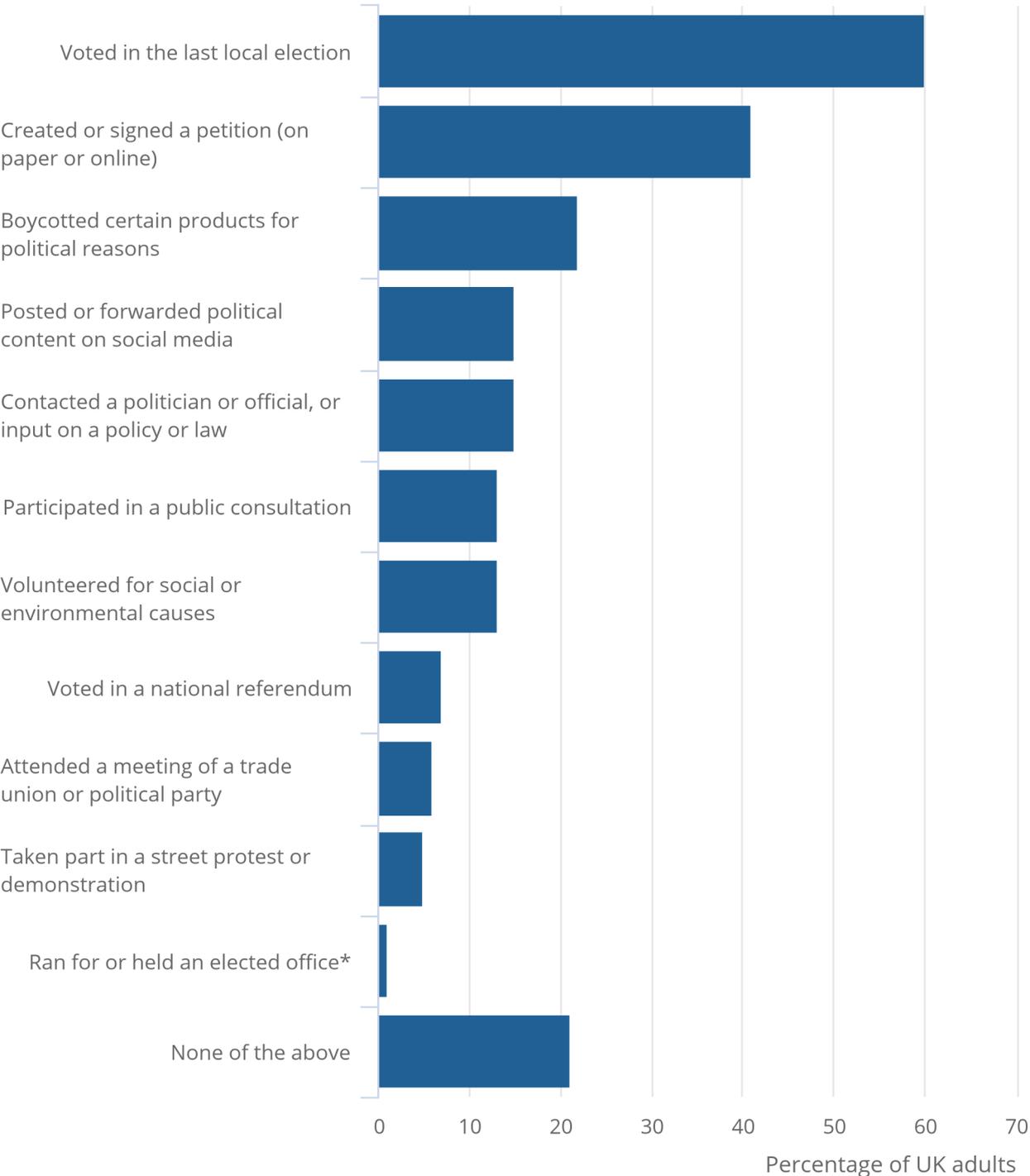
One in five people (21%) said they had not taken part in any of the political activities in the last year, and nearly half (44%) said they had little or no confidence in their ability to participate in politics. Most people (63%) had little or no confidence that they have a say in what the government does.

Figure 3: Most people had participated in a political activity in the last 12 months

Participation in political activities in the last 12 months, UK, 2023

Figure 3: Most people had participated in a political activity in the last 12 months

Participation in political activities in the last 12 months, UK, 2023



Notes:

1. Respondents were able to select multiple options. Therefore, percentages will not sum to 100%.
2. The category 'Ran for or held an elected office' is based on a sample size of fewer than 30, so should be treated with caution. This is marked with an asterisk (*).

6 . Issues, policy priorities and goals

Two-thirds (63%) of people said that the cost of living was one of the top three most important issues facing the UK (Figure 4). Nearly three-quarters (73%) of people said they were concerned about their household's finances and overall economic well-being.

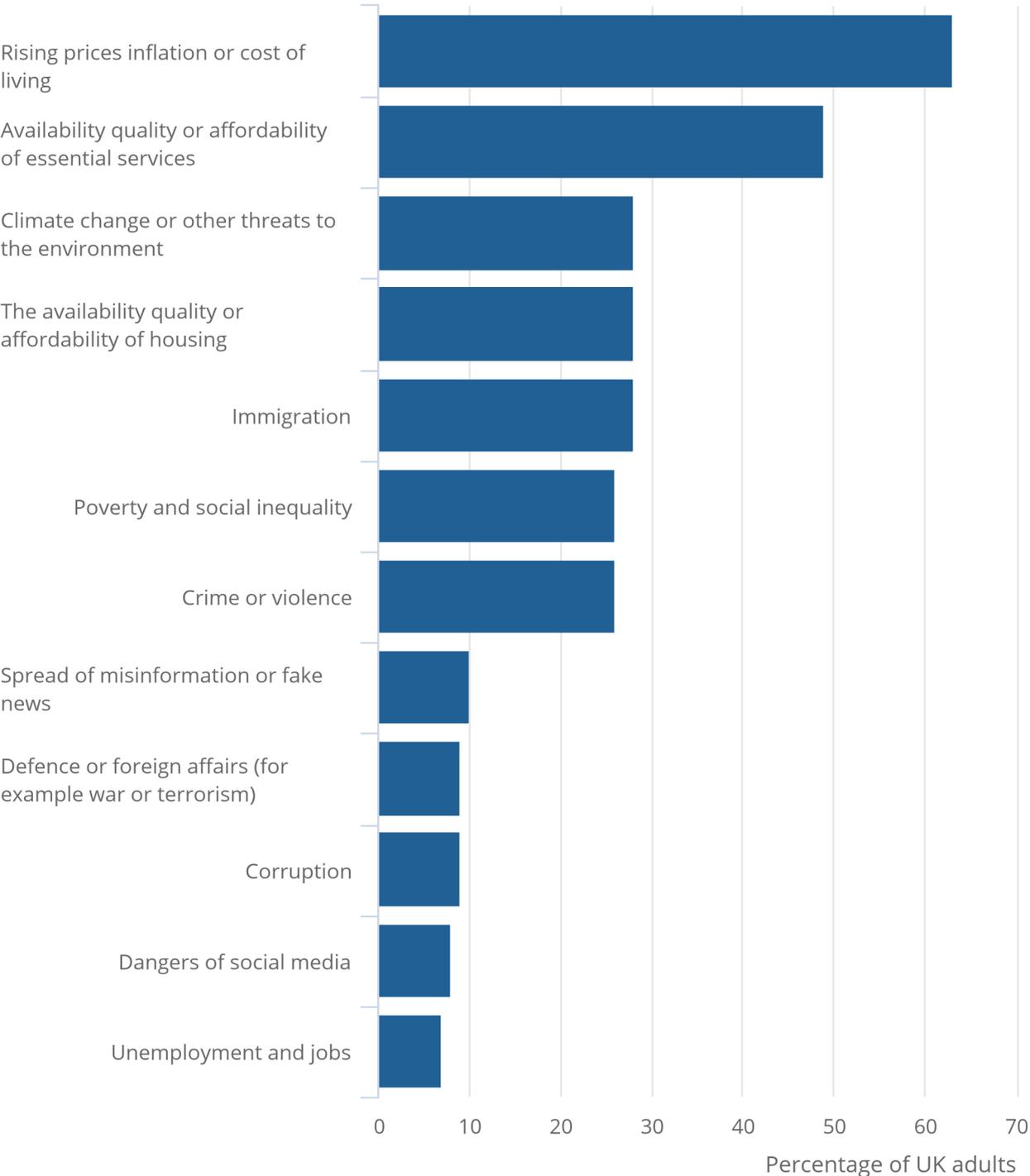
Just over a quarter (28%) said climate change was one of the three most important issues. A third (35%) of people were confident that the UK will succeed in reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the next 10 years.

Figure 4: Most people thought the cost of living was an important issue facing the UK

Adults reporting issue as important, UK, 2023

Figure 4: Most people thought the cost of living was an important issue facing the UK

Adults reporting issue as important, UK, 2023



Notes:

1. Respondents were able to select up to three options. Therefore, percentages will not sum to 100%.

7 . Trust in government data

[Trust in government UK data](#)

Dataset | Released 1 March 2024

Indicators from the Trust in Government Survey to monitor people's trust across different institutions and levels of government. The dataset includes data on drivers of trust, political attitudes, political participation and satisfaction with public services. These are official statistics in development.

8 . Glossary

Civil service

Non-elected government employees.

Devolved administrations

National governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

OECD

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is an international organisation that promotes economic growth, trade and cooperation among its member countries.

UK government

The UK government consists of the Prime Minister and government ministers.

9 . Measuring the data

This release contains data from the Trust in Government Survey. The survey was undertaken in the UK by the Office for National Statistics on behalf of the Cabinet Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The survey was run in 30 countries and the full international dataset will be published by the OECD in summer 2024.

The survey was completed online between 27 September and 23 October 2023. In a small number of cases (1.7%) the respondent completed the survey over the telephone with an ONS telephone operator.

Sampling and weighting

A total of 4,135 adults (aged 18 years or over) living in the UK were sampled and invited to complete the survey. These were selected from those who had previously completed the Labour Force Survey, for those living in Great Britain. For those living in Northern Ireland, addresses were sampled from an address file provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA). The responding sample was 1,919 individuals, representing a 46% response rate.

These were selected from those who had previously completed the Labour Force Survey, for those living in Great Britain. For those living in Northern Ireland, addresses were sampled from an address file provided by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Survey weights were applied to make the estimates representative of the UK population.

Uncertainty

View more information on [how we measure and communicate uncertainty for our surveys](#).

Average trust and satisfaction scores

Survey respondents were asked how much they trust a range of public institutions, as well as people in general. Trust questions were answered on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being "not at all" and 10 being "completely". Responses were grouped into three categories: trust (scores of 6 to 10), neutral (score of 5) and do not trust (scores of 0 to 4).

Average trust and satisfaction scores represent the mean score for all respondents who gave an answer between 0 and 10. This is the sum of all scores, divided by the number of respondents who provided a score.

Quality

More quality and methodology information on strengths, limitations, appropriate uses, and how the data were created is available in our [Trust in Government Survey Quality and Methodology Information](#).

10 . Related links

[Trust in Government Survey QMI](#)

Methodology | Released 1 March 2024

Quality and Methodology Information (QMI) for the Trust in Government Survey, detailing strengths and limitations of the data, methods used, and data uses and users.

11 . Cite this statistical bulletin

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