CHAPTER 28

Government Analytics Using Citizen Surveys

Lessons from the OECD Trust Survey

Monica Brezzi and Santiago González

SUMMARY

This chapter takes stock of the work of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on defining and measuring what drives people's trust in public institutions. It presents an updated framework on the public governance determinants of trust, demonstrating that competence (for example, responsiveness and reliability) and values (for example, openness, integrity, and fairness) are fundamental public governance levers to improve or harm levels of trust in different institutions, while also recognizing the importance of people's perception of how intergenerational and global challenges are handled by institutions, as well as cultural, economic, and political drivers. In addition, it shows that it is possible, on the basis of this framework, to advance in gathering citizens' evaluations of the functioning of governments and public governance by designing nationally representative population surveys with high standards of statistical quality. The OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (OECD Trust Survey) has been specifically designed and tested to capture people's expectations of and experiences with public institutions around the five drivers of trust while controlling for socioeconomic, political, and institutional characteristics. In a handful of countries that, in addition, have conducted in-depth case studies, the evidence resulting from the survey has proven to be a key input for improving policy making, leading to concrete actions for building or strengthening institutional trust. The inaugural cross-country survey was applied to 22 OECD countries at the end of 2021, and the results were made available in June 2022. Consolidating this evidence will be essential to enhancing benchmarking and monitoring of the evolution of policies over time.

Monica Brezzi is head of the Territorial Analysis and Statistics Unit and Santiago González is an economist/policy analyst at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Directorate for Public Governance.

ANALYTICS IN PRACTICE

- It is possible to measure trust and its drivers through household surveys and to produce actionable evidence. Trust indicators have been widely collected by unofficial data producers and are commonly picked up by the media as metrics of government performance. However, indicators on the public governance drivers of trust have been scarcely and inconsistently produced and are not commonly found in population surveys. Over the past years, a body of theoretical and empirical evidence has consolidated, leading to the development of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (OECD Trust Survey) as an effort to fill this gap and develop comparative statistics on what drives trust in public institutions. The survey's unique focus on the drivers of trust aims to provide countries with actionable evidence on the strengths and weaknesses of governments and public institutions.

- Bringing together the statistical and policy communities is a key step for ensuring the production of statistics with high standards of quality. Other than their potential sensitivity, there are no good reasons why statistics on trust and its drivers cannot be subject to the same quality standards and requirements that apply to other social, economic, and environmental statistics. The development of the OECD Trust Survey has been led by the OECD Public Governance Committee and has brought together policy makers at the central level of government and representatives from national statistical offices (NSOs), who have reviewed the process for developing and implementing the survey. Bringing together both communities has the advantage of reconciling the development of meaningful statistics with adherence to high requirements and standards of quality. While in most countries, the OECD Trust Survey has been implemented by the OECD via a survey provider, in Finland, Ireland, Mexico, and the United Kingdom, it has been implemented by NSOs.

- The OECD competence-values framework has proven to be a powerful analytical tool to understand the public governance drivers of trust in institutions and provide evidence to public administrations on how to increase their effectiveness to enhance trust. Following the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting social and economic crisis, a consultative process to revisit the framework on the drivers of trust in public institutions was launched. The process resulted in the enlargement of the framework by adding a section on the perception of public institutions' action on intergenerational and global challenges and further recognition of individual cultural, economic, and political drivers. However, the building blocks of the framework—competence and values—have proven robust, offering a compelling and encompassing framework for understanding and measuring public administrations' work and how they could advance in building trust.

- The drivers of trust vary by institutional actor and level, calling for different types of actions to influence them. The debate on public trust has been dominated by measures of *trust in government* that, to a large extent, are proxies of political trust or trust in the current government. Yet distinctions by the level of government (for example, local government) or between "politicians" and "bureaucrats" have not been rigorously considered. The OECD Trust Survey considers differences across institutions and levels of government and allows for a differentiated analysis of what drives each of them.

- Institutional trust remains a multidimensional construct: drivers and actions to preserve it or restore it are also influenced by context. In addition to the competence and values of public institutions, trust is also influenced by cultural and socioeconomic determinants. Accordingly, baseline levels of trust in a given country are influenced by its history and the current moment. Because cross-country comparisons of trust levels are informative and appealing, contextual elements should be considered when interpreting data and carrying out comparisons. In-depth analysis combining quantitative and qualitative methods at the country level is an important complement to advancing actions for restoring trust.

- Evidence-based regional dialogue and experience-sharing could be powerful tools for strengthening institutional trust. The potential effect of cultural context can be minimized by comparing countries with similar histories, institutional settings, and contexts. Accordingly, evidence generated by the OECD Trust Survey could be a powerful driver of regional dialogue and experience-sharing about actions that could influence public trust in similar contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The availability of internationally comparable data on how public administrations function and perform has dramatically improved over the past 10 years (OECD 2021b). However, measures of governance outcomes, which can help benchmark the effectiveness of public governance, are still scarce. The reasons behind this are conceptual and methodological in nature. On the conceptual side, measuring governance outcomes implies consideration of democratic standards that go beyond a performance-oriented notion of public management. Methodologically, public surveys of an international scope raise questions regarding the validity and robustness of these measures.

Measurement of governance outcomes includes, among other things, assessing levels of satisfaction with public services or *trust in government*. The inclusion in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development of a *governance* Sustainable Development Goal (SDG16) has given new impetus to the development of metrics for the outcomes or results of political institutions and processes and to the expansion of household surveys to measure governance results (United Nations Praia Group 2020). In particular, the United Nations Praia Group on Governance Statistics' *Handbook on Governance Statistics* takes stock of existing practices in governance data collection along eight dimensions of public governance, discusses the steps required to achieve international statistical standards, and, in some cases, proposes common questionnaires to be included in household surveys.

This chapter discusses how population surveys can be used to measure governance outcomes and provide guidance to public administrations on actions to increase their effectiveness. After some examples of existing national citizen surveys, the chapter presents recent developments in measuring people's trust in government and its main determinants. Measures of people's trust in government are commonly used indicators of public administration performance (or results) and are included as one of the eight dimensions of the *Handbook on Governance Statistics*.

This chapter presents results from the application of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions (OECD Trust Survey) as a key example to better understand opportunities and challenges in using citizen surveys to develop evidence on governance outcomes at a national and international scale. The OECD Trust Survey builds on an analytical framework structured along five key dimensions: responsiveness, reliability, openness, integrity, and fairness. Preliminary results suggest important insights from the survey. We find that different public institutions, from national to local governments, map onto different drivers of public institutional trust. Survey findings can guide governments in prioritizing specific areas to strengthen institutional trust.[1]

USING CITIZEN SURVEYS TO MEASURE GOVERNANCE OUTCOMES

Governance statistics are fundamental to ensuring that the relationship between the state and its people is inclusive, transparent, and accountable. However, while public governance issues figure prominently in national and international policy discussions, the state of available statistics (in terms of international standards, measurement guidelines, and the availability of comparable information from official sources)

lags well behind the quality of information available in other fields (for example, economic, social, and environmental statistics). As detailed in chapter 27 of *The Government Analytics Handbook*, the World Bank's Worldwide Bureaucracy Indicators are a major exception, aggregating household survey data to measure key public administration productivity inputs (such as public sector wage premiums).

Traditionally, there are two main limitations of public governance statistics. First, most measures refer to the input and processes of governments, while more limited evidence is available on the outputs of governments and the outcomes of public governance, such as the assessment of and satisfaction with public services or trust in government. Second, most governance measures are generated through expert assessments aimed at capturing how governments work. These assessments

> typically refer to professionals such as academics, lawyers or civil servants who answer a questionnaire in the area of interest. The resort to experts is thought to be advantageous because they can assess complex topics related to governance through an informed judgment. Expert assessments are frequently combined to create composite governance indexes that summarize multi-concept and complex phenomena into rankings and reference data. There are, however, reasonable concerns on how representative a sample of experts is of the universe of people with knowledge in the matter of interest, as well as about the degree of validity and reliability of data obtained through expert assessments. (United Nations Praia Group 2020, 15; see also González, Fleischer, and Mira d'Ercole 2017; Kaufmann and Kraay 2007)

Broadening the measurement approach to also include citizen surveys can help address both limitations, by shifting the focus to the outcomes of public governance as perceived and experienced by people and by including people's views, through nationally representative population samples, in addition to expert assessments (Fukuyama and Recanatini 2018).

Citizen surveys can also strengthen government accountability. When participating in regular population surveys, citizens are invited to provide feedback on different aspects of public governance, which allows governments to gather input and hear the people's voice beyond electoral processes. Governments and policy makers can also use survey results to better inform policies, identify citizens' priorities and concerns, and assess the support for or impact of different initiatives.

Over the past few years, some developments at international levels, which build on national experiences, have helped to increase the availability of governance statistics. The inclusion of a *governance* goal in the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as mentioned above, and the agreement of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) on several indicators for global reporting in this field (which creates reporting obligations for national statistical offices, or NSOs) are expected to increase the demand for comparable, high-quality evidence on public governance and to broaden measurement approaches. For over a decade, in its flagship report *Government at a Glance*, the OECD has published internationally comparable data on governments' inputs, activities, outputs, and, to the extent possible, outcomes in OECD countries.

The indicators feeding these publications focus on how governments perform from an international perspective, allowing countries to benchmark their performance relative to other countries and over time and providing evidence to policy makers about areas where further progress is needed. Furthermore, initiatives such as the OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust (OECD 2017a, 2017b) and the Praia Group's *Handbook on Governance Statistics* (United Nations Praia Group 2020) have provided methodological guidance to NSOs on how to develop comparable measures for several dimensions of public governance.

Specifically, the Praia Group, set up in 2014, has mapped in its *Handbook on Governance Statistics* existing measurement initiatives on eight dimensions of public governance: nondiscrimination and equality, participation, openness, access to and quality of justice, responsiveness (satisfaction with services and political efficacy), absence of corruption, trust, and safety and security. The *Handbook on Governance Statistics* highlights the paucity of statistical standards, technical guidelines, and methodological tools that currently exist in many dimensions of governance statistics (for example, on

discrimination, participation in political and public affairs, openness, access to civil justice, satisfaction with services, and forms of corruption other than petty bribery); at the same time, it sheds light on the feasibility of generating comparative evidence on some dimensions of public governance through population surveys, notably on crime victimization, access to criminal justice, political efficacy, and trust in public institutions (United Nations Praia Group 2020).

The *Handbook on Governance Statistics* also highlights some methodological challenges of household surveys—in particular, respondent burden and accessibility standards for specific populations (for example, people with disabilities)—that should be addressed in questionnaire design as well as survey method selection. The authors note that

> with a sufficient sample size, survey results may be representative of the population of a country, of a specific area (such as a province or a small locality) or a specific group (e.g., urban/rural populations). However, such disaggregations for governance statistics are not commonly found in national statistical systems and will require special attention from the statistical community (United Nations Praia Group 2020, 14).

Nevertheless, they acknowledge that "household surveys are particularly useful to give voice to marginalized populations in contexts in which the mechanisms to respond to citizens' demands are not yet consolidated" (United Nations Praia Group 2020, 14; see also AU and UNDP 2017).

One public governance area in which population surveys would provide relevant information to governments is experience and satisfaction with public services. More countries are putting in place regular surveys on public services, although with several challenges. For example, since 2010, the Agency for Public Management and eGovernment in Norway has carried out the Norwegian Citizen Survey. The survey provides a substantial knowledge base for assessing the performance of public services across different sectors and levels of government. The survey is understood as an additional way to engage citizens apart from direct mechanisms, and it addresses perceptions, expectations, and areas of improvement, aiming to develop public outputs and services in a more user-friendly manner, based on citizens' needs and expectations.

However, the evolution of the survey over time has shown that respondents may find it difficult to answer "customer satisfaction" questions on a large number of services. Since 2018, the survey has included only the largest state-provided services (tax administration, hospitals, police, etc.) and services at the municipal level to which people have regular access (for example, schools). The survey also asks about recent experiences with these services as one criterion that could shape satisfaction levels. The questions address the quality and accessibility of services; satisfaction with information, communication, and consumer orientation; perceived competence, capacity, and trust in the public authority; and general satisfaction (OECD 2022b).

Similarly, the Citizen Experience Survey, conducted since 2019 by the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet in Australia, measures public satisfaction, trust, and experiences with Australian public services, with the aim of improving public services and making them more citizen-centered. The survey aims to provide the right evidence for governmental agencies to act on: when data flag "hot spots" in the system that warrant extra attention, senior policy makers and other stakeholders engage in dialogue to identify actions that can help improve services.[2]

Surveys of the general population can also provide useful data about citizens' perceptions of the quality of governance in the country where they live, an outcome that is usually measured through expert assessments. The General Population Poll (GPP) by the World Justice Project (WJP) asks citizens about their perceptions of and experience with public institutions.[3] The survey inquires about a wide range of topics, from access to public services (including access to information and justice), respect for the law by private and public actors (for example, abuses of power), and civic participation. Data coming from the GPP are included in the WJP Rule of Law Index, which ranks countries according to the quality of their governance, alongside the results of an expert assessment.

WHY MEASURE PUBLIC TRUST?

People's trust in public institutions has long been considered a key outcome of good governance (OECD 2021b). Accordingly, institutional trust happens when citizens consider the government and its institutions in general, as well as individual political leaders, to be promise-keeping, efficient, fair, and honest (Blind 2007). In this chapter, *trust* is defined as a person's belief that another person or institution will act consistently with expectations of positive behavior (OECD 2017a, 2017b). While there are several trust relationships, this chapter focuses on the interaction between governments and citizens, or *institutional trust*, which refers to people's appraisal of public institutions.

Institutional trust is recognized as an important foundation upon which the legitimacy and sustainability of political systems are built. Trust is the basis of the social contract that allows for the delegation of power and sets the basis for democracies to work. In turn, trust is essential for social cohesion and well-being because it affects a government's ability to govern and enables it to act without having to resort to coercion. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance of public trust for enhancing and accepting behavioral change in order to achieve a collective objective, as well as its importance for achieving compliance (Bargain and Aminjonov 2020). Recent research has shown that support for future-oriented policies on global challenges, such as climate change, is mediated by people's institutional trust (Fairbrother et al. 2021). In a low-trust context, citizens will prioritize immediate, appropriable, and partial benefits and will induce politicians to seek short-term and opportunistic gains through free-riding and populist attitudes (Győrffy 2013).

Still, institutional trust remains a complex, multidimensional concept influenced by a wide array of facts, circumstances, experiences, and perceptions (OECD 2013). Trust metrics are often quoted by the press and have the capacity to raise awareness and trigger institutional reactions; however, they remain poorly understood. Furthermore, it is not always clear what lies behind these signals and to what extent it is possible to influence them. The OECD's work has focused on conceptualizing the main determinants of institutional trust and developing comparative evidence on them based on citizen surveys.

The remainder of this chapter explores existing metrics of institutional trust, presents the OECD policy framework and its accompanying measurement strategy for the public governance determinants of institutional trust, and concludes with lessons that could inform a measurement agenda moving forward.

EXISTING METRICS FOR INSTITUTIONAL TRUST

In some contexts, there is a long tradition of collecting metrics of trust in government. For instance, in the United States, the Pew Research Center has measured "government confidence" since at least 1958. Similarly, the American National Election Study (ANES), a project of the Center for Political Studies at the University of Michigan, has collected survey-based measures of trust, associated with electoral cycles, since at least 1952. However, it is only since the beginning of the 21st century that cross-country comparative statistics of institutional trust have become widely and regularly available. González and Smith (2017) review these metrics and find seven cross-country comparative surveys (commercial and noncommercial) that have regularly collected trust data since 2002. These surveys have different coverage periodicity and work under different criteria of statistical quality. The most widely used of these surveys is the Gallup World Poll because of its extensive country coverage, its time extension, and the annual frequency of its data.

However, existing measures of institutional trust have shortcomings. Some are technical (such as sampling, scale, and level of representativeness for some population groups); others are conceptual (such as the meaning of *government*). In this chapter, we use *institutional trust* to indicate trust in different types of institutions, such as trust in political institutions (for example, the parliament), trust in administrative

institutions (for example, the civil service or public administration) and nongovernmental institutions (for example, the media), and trust in justice and law administration (for example, the police). Accordingly, institutional trust is measured using a general formulation: "Do you have confidence in …?" or "How much do you trust …?" followed by a detailed list of institutions. Empirical analysis suggests that, given the wide range of institutions, people's responses can be grouped into three categories: political and administrative institutions, law-and-order institutions, and nongovernmental institutions (González and Smith 2017).

Based on existing evidence, the OECD has developed the Guidelines on Measuring Trust (OECD 2017a, 2017b). The guidelines mark an advance in providing an analysis of the accuracy of trust measures. Accuracy has two dimensions: *reliability* and *validity*. The *reliability* of a metric is the degree to which repeated measurements of the same thing produce the same results. In this sense, a reliable measure involves minimal *noise*, or random errors in the measurement process. *Validity* is usually analyzed in terms of *face validity* (whether the measure makes sense intuitively), *convergent validity* (whether the measure correlates well with other proxy measures of the same concept), and *construct validity* (whether the measure behaves as theory and common sense dictate).[4] The guidelines have found good evidence on the reliability and construct validity of existing trust metrics, but evidence on their face and convergent validity is scarce and inconclusive, calling for further research in the area. The guidelines also propose modules for measuring institutional trust, including an experimental module on the determinants of public trust that will be discussed later in this chapter.

MEASURING WHAT DRIVES PUBLIC TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS

The OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions

At least three trends emerge from the academic literature for understanding what drives levels of trust in institutions. One theory emphasizes the role of culture and argues that individuals learn to trust or distrust based on early socialization and interpersonal networks, which, in turn, influence their trust in institutions (Tabellini 2008). A second stream of work recognizes the importance of the economic cycle, as well as economic and personal characteristics and preferences (Algan et al. 2018, 2019). Finally, institutional theories focus on the performance and reputation of institutions, both in terms of processes and outcomes, as the key determinants explaining levels of institutional trust (Bouckaert 2012; Rothstein 2013; Van de Walle and Migchelbrink 2020). While institutional trust is probably influenced by a combination of elements driven by culture, economic conditions, and institutions, the OECD's work on understanding drivers of trust in public institutions has, since 2013, emphasized the importance of high-performing institutions for building public trust.

Understanding the effects of institutions on trust depends on the congruence of people's preferences (their interpretations of what is right and fair and what is unfair) and their perceptions of the actual functioning of government (Van de Walle and Bouckaert 2003). Other authors have distinguished between *trust in competence*, the ability to deliver on expectations, and *trust in intentions*, performing in good faith according to one's competence (Nooteboom 2006). These distinctions are extended by Choi and Kim (2012) and Bouckaert (2012), who distinguish between the *logic of consequences*, where trust is derived causally from outcomes, and the *logic of appropriateness*, where trust is based on values, such as integrity and transparency.

Despite the complexity of the subject and the variety of approaches, there is consistency across the literature on institutional trust in at least two key aspects. First, the literature highlights two different but complementary components that matter in understanding and analyzing trust: *competence*—operational efficiency, or the ability, capacity, and good judgment to actually deliver on a given mandate—and *values*—the underlying intentions and principles that guide actions and behaviors. Second, there is consistency in the literature regarding specific attributes that matter for trust, in relation to both competence and values (see table 28.1).

TABLE 28.1 Deconstructing Citizens' Trust in Public Institutions

Trust component	Government mandate	Concerns affecting trust	Policy dimension
Competence: *The ability of governments to deliver to citizens the services they need, at the quality level they expect*	Provide public services	• Access to public services, regardless of socioeconomic condition • Quality and timeliness of public services • Respect in public service provision, including response to citizens' feedback	Responsiveness
	Anticipate change and protect citizens	• Anticipation and adequate assessment of citizens' evolving needs and challenges • Consistent and predicable behavior • Effective management of social, economic, and political uncertainty	Reliability
Values: *The drivers and principles that inform and guide government action*	Use power and public resources ethically	• High standards of behavior • Commitment against corruption • Accountability	Integrity
	Inform, consult, and listen to citizens	• Ability to know and understand what government is up to • Engagement opportunities that lead to tangible results	Openness
	Improve socioeconomic conditions for all	• Pursuit of socioeconomic progress for society at large • Consistent treatment of citizens and businesses (vs. fear of capture)	Fairness

Source: Original table for this publication.

Building on the above, the OECD has put forward an analytical framework that offers an instrumental approach to building citizens' trust in public institutions, facilitating measurement efforts (both based on experience and expectations) and policy attempts to influence trust. The OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, developed in 2017 and reviewed in 2021 through broad consultation with academics, policy makers, and civil society, includes four components (Brezzi et al. 2021). The updated framework is presented in table 28.2.

First, the framework places a greater emphasis on capturing trust levels in a larger set of institutions—for example, political parties or intergovernmental organizations—to further recognize the variety of institutions that influence policy making and that can shape people's assessment of public affairs as well as leaders' behavior. In addition, it recognizes the importance of improving the representation of diverse population groups that may be systematically excluded from voicing their views in traditional democratic processes, either due to personal characteristics (for example, geography or socioeconomic background) or because they persistently distrust "the system" and opt out of opportunities to express their voice.[5] The two broad dimensions of public sector competence and values—disentangled in responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness, and fairness—remain core to the framework, as tested through country studies in the Republic of Korea, Finland, and Norway (OECD 2021a, 2022b; OECD and KDI 2018).

Third, the revised framework presents an "overlay" of the cultural, political, and economic factors that, at both an individual and group level, strongly influence levels of trust in government. Institutional competence and values are, in fact, mediated by individual and group identities, traits, and preferences—including political attitudes. These revisions attempt to emphasize more strongly the role played by political attitudes, including disengagement with the system, in explaining institutional trust.

Finally, the revised framework underlines the role people's confidence plays in the sustainability and effectiveness of policy action to address long-term and global challenges (for example, climate change, fiscal sustainability, digitalization, and inequality) (Brezzi et al. 2021). As the issues tackled by public institutions become increasingly complex, with long-term consequences involving a larger set of governmental and nongovernmental actors, greater coordination and the ability of institutions to manage uncertainty and address trade-offs (for example, generational and economic trade-offs) will be key to preserving social cohesion and maintaining institutional trust.

TABLE 28.2   OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions

Levels of trust in different public institutions		
Trust in national government, local government, civil service, parliament, police, political parties, courts, legal systems, and intergovernmental organizations		
Public governance drivers of trust in public institutions		
Competence	Responsiveness	• Provide efficient, quality, affordable, timely, and citizen-centered public services that are coordinated across levels of government and satisfy users • Develop an innovative and efficient civil service that responds to user needs
	Reliability	• Anticipate needs and assess evolving challenges • Minimize uncertainty in the economic, social, and political environment • Effectively commit to future-oriented policies and cooperate with stakeholders on global challenges
Values	Openness	• Provide open and accessible information so the public better understands what the government is doing • Consult, listen, and respond to stakeholders, including through citizen participation and engagement opportunities that lead to tangible results • Ensure equal opportunities to participate in the institutions of representative democracy
	Integrity	• Align public institutions with ethical values, principles, and norms to safeguard the public interest. • Make decisions and use public resources ethically, promoting the public interest over private interests, while combatting corruption • Ensure accountability mechanisms between public institutions at all levels of governance • Promote a neutral civil service, whose values and standards of conduct prioritize the public interest
	Fairness	• Improve living conditions for all • Provide consistent treatment of businesses and people regardless of their background and identify (for example, gender, socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic origin)
Cultural, economic, and political drivers of trust in public institutions		
• Individual and group identities, traits, and preferences, including socioeconomic status and interpersonal socialization and networks • Distrust toward and disengagement with the system		
Perception of government action on intergenerational and global challenges		
• Perceptions of government commitment and effectiveness to address long-term challenges		

Source: Brezzi et al. 2021.
Note: OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

The Measurement Strategy

The OECD Framework on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions is operationalized through a nationally representative population survey: the OECD Trust Survey. An experimental module of questions to measure the five public governance drivers of trust was included in the OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust (OECD 2017a, 2017b). The statistical feasibility and empirical relevance of the population survey were tested in six countries (France, Germany, Italy, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and the United States) through the OECD Trustlab in 2018 (Murtin et al. 2018) and in Korea, Finland, and Norway through in-depth country studies (OECD 2021a, 2022b; OECD and KDI 2018). Adjusted and improved versions of these questions have been selected by the European Social Survey (ESS) to be included in their Cross-National Online Survey (CRONOS 2) in 2021.

The measurement approach for the competence and value drivers of institutional trust moves away from perceptions and focuses instead on specific situations. Situational questions present respondents with a stereotypical situation involving the interaction of people with public institutions and inquire about its expected outcome. The deconstruction of situational questions allows for analysis of the kind of behavior under scrutiny. Typical behavioral questions, as used in psychology or sociology, investigate the subjective reaction expected from individuals in a specific situation. Complementary- and confirmatory-mechanism experiments are suggested to see whether individuals stick to their revealed choices.

However, these situational questions are not stereotypical behavioral questions: they don't focus on individual behavior but rather on the positive conduct expected of a third party: in this case, public institutions.

TABLE 28.3 Examples of Questions on the Determinants of Public Trust

Dimension	Example question
The following questions are about your expectations of behavior of public institutions. Please respond on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means very unlikely and 10 means very likely.	
Responsiveness	If many people complained about a public service that is working badly, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that it would be improved?
Reliability	If a serious natural disaster occurred in [country], how likely or unlikely do you think it is that existing public emergency plans would be effective in protecting the population?
Openness	If a decision affecting your community is to be made by the local government, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that you would have an opportunity to voice your views?
Integrity	If a government employee is offered a bribe in return for better or faster access to a public service, how likely or unlikely is it that they would accept it?
Fairness	If you or a member of your family would apply for a government benefit or service (e.g., unemployment benefits or other forms of income support), how likely or unlikely do you think it is that your application would be treated fairly?

Source: 2021 OECD Trust Survey (Nguyen et al. 2022).

For this reason, they measure the *trustworthiness* of a given institution or public agent. Unlike attitudes (passive response) and behaviors (active response), trustworthiness is based on the expectation of positive behavior that lies at the heart of the working definition of trust being considered. In general terms, a situational approach to measuring trustworthiness is based on the following type of question: "If a certain situation happens, how likely or unlikely is it that [public institution] will do [expected positive behavior]?" (see table 28.3).

The module of the survey on the five public governance drivers of trust helps practitioners understand not only people's perception of their government's responsiveness, reliability, openness, fairness, and integrity but also which of these five components has a larger impact on the level of trust toward specific institutions. This evidence can provide guidance to improve public administration's effectiveness.

SOME RESULTS FROM APPLYING THE OECD TRUST SURVEY

Data collected through the OECD Trust Survey go beyond measuring trust levels and aim at identifying what drives trust in public institutions. As an example, in the case of Norway, the OECD Trust Survey shows that the most important determinants of trust in the civil service in Norway are impartial treatment when addressing the administration and responsiveness to people's demands for service improvement. Other societal (for example, the sustainability of the welfare model) and personal (for example, living in the capital or being more educated) characteristics also have significant, although small, relative correlations (figure 28.1).

Along the same lines, the OECD Trust Survey in Finland finds that the government's responsiveness and reliability are the main drivers of trust, but drivers of trust vary among institutions. Specifically, in Finland, the trust relationship between people and their institutions is strongly correlated with the perceived high competence of the government and the civil service and more tenuously with values such as integrity, openness, and fairness, most likely because the latter are recognized as entrenched in public sector culture. Figure 28.2 shows the trust payoff if all significant elements pertaining to competence and values increase by one standard deviation. The responsiveness of public services and the reliability of the government in addressing future challenges and providing a stable economic environment have a greater effect on trust in the national government and civil service, while engagement opportunities are more important for explaining trust toward local governments. These data, combined with qualitative analysis and international policy dialogue, have enabled a series of policy recommendations to preserve and strengthen the trust capital in these countries (OECD 2021a, 2022b).
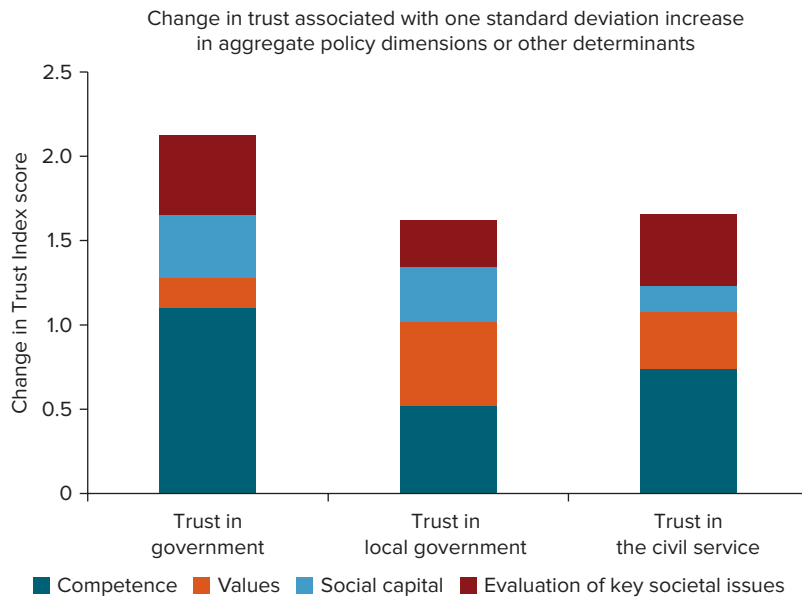
FIGURE 28.1   Determinants of Trust in the Civil Service in Norway

Change in self-reported trust associated with a one standard deviation increase in ….
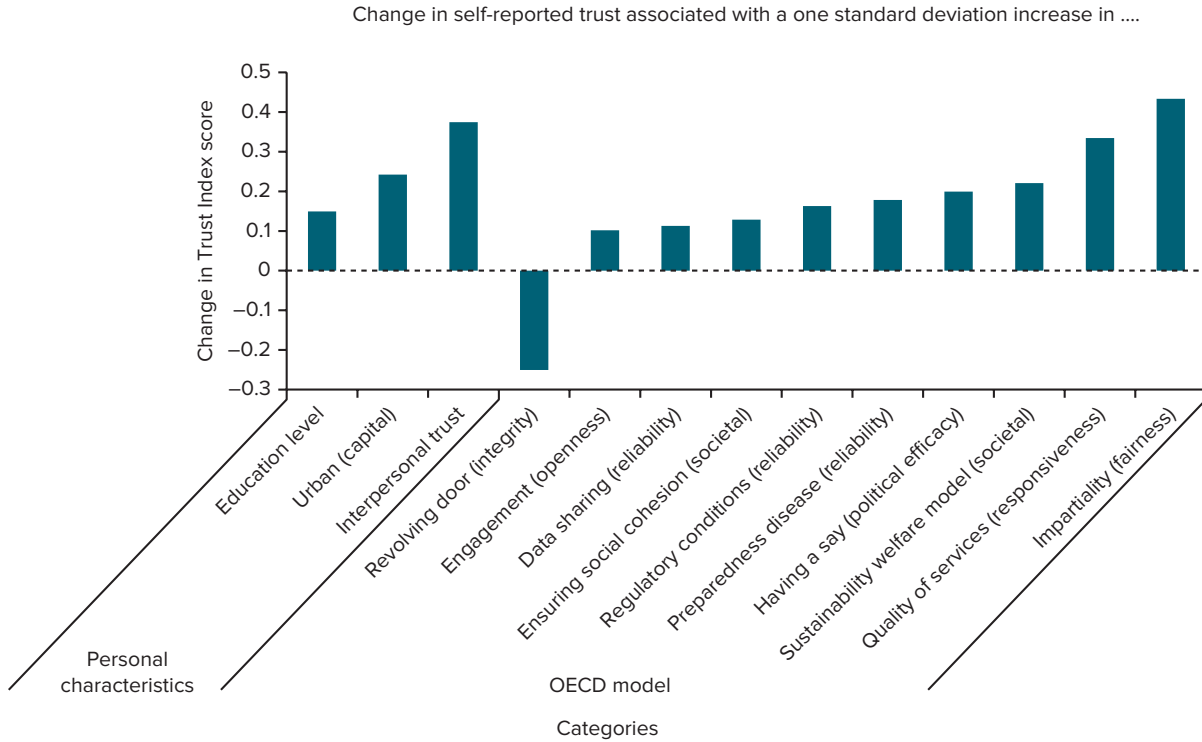
Source: OECD 2022b.
Note: This figure shows the most robust determinants of self-reported trust in government in an ordinary least squares (OLS) estimation that controls for individual characteristics. All variables depicted are statistically significant at 99 percent. The policy dimension is shown in parentheses. OECD = Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

FIGURE 28.2   Trust Payoff Associated with Increase in Public Institutions' Competence and Values in Finland, 2020

Change in trust associated with one standard deviation increase in aggregate policy dimensions or other determinants

Source: OECD 2021a.
Note: This figure shows the results of a statistical analysis to calculate the most robust determinants of trust in government. The figure shows that if competence increases by one standard deviation, then trust in the national government would increase by 1.10, trust in the local government would increase by 0.52, and trust in the civil service would increase by 0.74. If the values dimension increases by one standard deviation, then trust in the national government would increase by 0.18, trust in the local government would increase by 0.50, and trust in the civil service would increase by 0.34. Other elements, such as social capital (interpersonal trust) and the evaluations of current policies to address future challenges, are also correlated with trust in the different institutions.

Different countries have pursued different strategies to act upon these data. For example, in 2018, the Korean administration set a numerical target for its innovation strategy to improve trust levels. To achieve this target, it also included a series of actions: among others, generalizing open-government principles in different instances of the administration as a review of hiring procedures to ensure the right mix of skills for enhancing innovation within the administration. Likewise, the Finnish government has set up an inter-agency expert group to discuss concrete actions based on the data—for instance, reforming the process for formulating government policies to ensure better coordination for the inclusion of subjects such as climate change, intergenerational justice, and the preservation of social cohesion. In addition, it promotes citizenship education programs and engagement opportunities in policy choices for improving levels of political empowerment.

Based on the body of evidence developed so far, the OECD Trust Survey (based on table 28.2) has been carried out in 22 OECD countries, and the results were published in June 2022 (OECD 2022a). In addition, a number of briefs, country analyses, working papers, and country dialogues will be developed based on the OECD Trust Database.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has taken stock and presented evidence of the OECD's work in understanding the determinants of institutional trust and improving their measurement. The evidence developed so far sheds light on the feasibility and pertinence of including questions on public trust and its drivers in regular household surveys as well as their relevance for informing policy developments. While politically sensitive, there are no a priori reasons why measures of institutional trust could not be collected regularly and be subject to the same quality standards and requirements that apply to other social, economic, and environmental statistics, such as those produced by NSOs.

The OECD Trust Survey will provide international benchmarks on people's perceptions, evaluations, expectations, and experiences with the public sector and will inform the debate on how to preserve and strengthen democratic values in OECD countries and beyond. It will also allow practitioners to observe levels of trust across different institutions and drivers of trust according to different socioeconomic characteristics. In addition, it will shed light on the relative effects of the determinants of public trust in different contexts, as well as their commonalities and differences. The results will set a course in public governance areas to improve institutional trust. The performance and pertinence of new experimental modules are still to be assessed.

There is, however, room to further develop our understanding and measurement of different trust relationships. Greater attention could be paid to interagency trust or government officials' perceptions of citizens—for example, by analyzing aspects of trust across different public agencies or trust from institutions toward citizens. It may also be possible to incorporate additional aspects that influence institutional trust into the survey as ad hoc modules that respond to specific realities in each context. While these ad hoc modules might make cross-national comparisons more challenging, they would enable countries to have greater flexibility and control over designing strategies to strengthen institutional trust.

NOTES

The chapter was prepared between October and December 2021. This document, as well as any data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries, and to the name of any territory, city, or area.

1. Results from the OECD Trust Survey are available on the OECD's website at https://www.oecd.org/governance/trust-in-government/.

2. Data from the Citizen Experience Survey, now known as the Survey of Trust in Australian Public Services, are available on the Australian government's website at https://data.gov.au/data/dataset/trustsurvey.

3. The questionnaire for the 2019 General Population Poll can be found on the website of the World Justice Project at https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work/research-and-data/wjp-rule-law-index-2021/2020-wjp-rule-law-index-questionnaires.

4. Other types of validity, referred to as *discriminant validity* and *predictive validity*, are encompassed by construct validity, and the corresponding analysis is presented in the OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust (OECD 2017a, 2017b).

5. *Distrust* refers to attitudes of insecurity, cynicism, disengagement, contempt, fear, anger, and alienation that may result in withdrawal, defiance, and support for populism. It is different from *mistrust*, which is associated with a positive attitude of critical citizenship that exercises vigilance in judging the components of the political system by being cautious, constructive, and alert. While measures of *trust in government* and the *trustworthiness* of public institutions are becoming more widely tested and used since the release of the OECD Guidelines on Measuring Trust, there are still a certain number of empirical challenges in measuring distrust at the individual level, which may require additional efforts, including, for example, enhanced sampling and focus groups.

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