

Trust in Government Survey QMI

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.

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1 . Output information

- Survey name: Trust in Government Survey
- Data collection: Cross-sectional sample survey
- Frequency: Every two years
- How compiled: Survey data
- Geographic coverage: United Kingdom
- Related publications: [Trust in Government, UK: 2022](#)

2 . About this Quality and Methodology Information report

This Quality and Methodology Information report contains information on the quality characteristics of the data (including the European Statistical System's five dimensions of quality), as well as the methods used to create them.

The information in this report will help you to:

- understand the strengths and limitations of the data
- learn about existing uses and users of the data
- understand the methods used to create the data
- help you to decide suitable uses for the data
- reduce the risk of misusing data

3 . Important points

- The Trust in Government Survey provides estimates of people's trust in government and institutions, opinions about public services and attitudes towards political issues.
- The estimates are produced using data collected from a sample of the population; a sample of 4,071 individuals aged 18 years and over and living in the UK were invited to complete the survey.
- The achieved sample size was 3,162, which is a response rate of 78%.
- The data were mainly collected through an online self-completion survey, but a small percentage of participants were contacted via telephone.
- The survey will be administered every two years by member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); 2022 is the first year the survey has been conducted.

4 . Quality summary

Overview

The Trust in Government Survey is part of a wider international study coordinated by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). The OECD will conduct its Trust Survey every two years across its member countries; this edition (2022) is the first time that it has been conducted. The UK's Trust in Government Survey incorporates the OECD Trust Survey and additional UK-focussed questions. More information about the OECD study is available on the [OECD Trust in Government](#) webpage.

Uses and users

The purpose of the Trust in Government Survey is to measure people's trust in government, public services and other institutions. It estimates people's political participation, satisfaction with public services and evaluation of government action on important long-term challenges, such as climate change, automation and digitalisation.

The statistics based on the survey data are used by those who want to understand current levels of trust and identify what factors might affect trust. These individuals include:

- policymakers
- MPs
- journalists
- charities
- the private sector
- students
- researchers and academics
- members of the general public

The data from all countries involved in the wider OECD study are collated by the OECD to provide international benchmarks. The results inform the OECD's work on how governments can build trust and maintain political participation and social cohesion.

Strengths and limitations

The main strengths of the statistics based on the Trust in Government Survey data are that:

- the statistics provide users with a unique insight into levels of trust and satisfaction amongst the UK population
- the statistics allow international comparisons with the OECD as a whole and with individual member countries
- the administration of the survey every two years will allow for comparisons over time
- the sample process and weighting are designed to limit bias and produce estimates representative of the UK population
- the survey questionnaire is designed by an expert group from OECD member countries, with additional UK-specific questions designed by Office for National Statistics (ONS) researchers
- the survey is thoroughly tested, and the data quality assured, to minimise risk of error

The main limitations of the statistics based on the Trust in Government Survey data are that:

- the statistics are based on data from a sample survey and as such the estimates presented contain some [uncertainty](#); confidence intervals are included to provide estimates of the uncertainty
- analysis of sub-groups within the sample is limited because of the small sample size, for example, estimates cannot be produced for individual UK nations
- there is a possibility of some cohorts being underrepresented, for example, people without access to the internet (although a telephone option was available)
- there may be a sampling bias because the sampling frame comes from those who have already responded to a government survey, and these individuals may be more trusting of government than the general population
- the sampling frame is not fully representative of the UK population since it omits communal establishments, with the exception of people in NHS housing, students in boarding schools and students in halls of residence, who are included

5 . Quality characteristics of the Trust in Government Survey data

This section provides a range of information that describes the quality and characteristics of the Trust in Government Survey data.

Relevance

(The degree to which the survey meets users' needs.)

The purpose of the Trust in Government Survey is to measure people's trust in government, public services and other institutions. It estimates people's political participation, satisfaction with public services and evaluation of government action on important long-term challenges, such as climate change, automation and digitalisation. The survey measures the public's trust in government through measurement of five drivers of trust: responsiveness, reliability, integrity, openness and fairness.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Trust Survey questions are designed by a group of experts from OECD member countries. They are based on research, by the OECD and others, on strategies for measuring trust in institutions.

Additional UK-focused questions in the Trust in Government Survey ask participants about their access to, satisfaction with, and trust in UK public services. These questions provide users with more detailed information about UK institutions not covered in the OECD questionnaire.

Accuracy and reliability

(The degree of closeness between an estimate and the true value.)

The Trust in Government Survey is a sample survey, so estimates are subject to sampling variability. This is because the sample selected is only one of a large number of possible samples that could have been drawn from the population. The total error in a survey estimate is made up of two types: sampling error and non-sampling error.

The main sources of sampling error are:

- the size of the sample
- the effects of the sampling method
- the effects of weighting

The main sources of non-sampling error are:

- frame under-coverage
- non-response
- response errors (for example, because of misleading questions)
- errors when imputing or processing data

To minimise the effects of non-sampling errors, the questionnaire is carefully designed and tested, several attempts are made to contact respondents, and quality control procedures are used throughout. Weighting is used to compensate for non-response and frame under-coverage.

Coherence and comparability

(Coherence is the degree to which data that are derived from different sources or methods, but refer to the same topic, are similar. Comparability is the degree to which data can be compared over time and domain, for example, geographic level.)

There are other data sources that provide estimates of trust in and satisfaction with government, public services and other institutions.

Firstly, there is the [OECD Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions](#) (OECD Trust Survey). The UK statistics estimated from the Trust in Government Survey are directly comparable with the other OECD member countries who participated in the OECD Trust Survey. With the exception of the UK-specific additions, the survey questions are the same, or very similar, for all countries, and sample parameters were set by the OECD. Any differences in demographic concepts (for example, income bands and education levels) are harmonised between different countries. The OECD present comparisons between the UK and other OECD countries in an international report. The OECD Trust survey will be replicated over time (every two years).

There is also the [Public Confidence in Official Statistics \(PCOS\) report](#). Administered by NatCen Social Research, this online survey asks about the population's trust in the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and, more relevantly, trust in other organisations, including the government. However, it is not possible to make a direct comparison with the results since the PCOS survey uses a four-point labelled scale, whereas the Trust in Government Survey uses an eleven-point numerical scale as defined by the OECD. In particular, a respondent can position themselves as having a neutral opinion with a response of 5 in the Trust in Government Survey, whereas there is no neutral response option in the PCOS survey. Additionally, the PCOS survey is limited to Great Britain only (the Trust in Government Survey covers all of the UK) and the PCOS field work took place during Quarter 4 (Oct to Dec) 2021 compared with Quarter 1 (Jan to Mar) 2022 for the Trust in Government Survey.

There is also the [British Social Attitudes \(BSA\) Survey](#). Administered by NatCen Social Research, this annual online survey covers a range of topics. The democracy questions are indicative of overall trust in government. For example, wave 38 of the BSA Survey asks whether respondents would trust the government to place the needs of the nation above their party and whether they would trust politicians to tell the truth in a tight corner. However, making a direct comparison between the BSA Survey and the Trust in Government Survey is limited in similar ways to the PCOS survey. The responses are based on categorical labels, rather than a numerical scale, and the sample only covers Great Britain rather than the whole of the UK.

Lastly, there is also the [European Social Survey](#). The European Social Survey asks a number of similar questions to the Trust in Government Survey, including about trust in government and institutions. The questions are answered on an identical 0 to 10 scale, where a rating of 6 or more is categorised as someone who trusts the government or institution; this is the same categorisation as used in the Trust in Government Study. However, the most recent iteration of the European Social Survey in the UK was in 2018, which was both pre-coronavirus pandemic and before the last general election, meaning its potential to offer meaningful comparisons with the 2022 Trust in Government Survey findings are limited.

Accessibility and clarity

(Accessibility is the ease with which users can access the data, also reflecting the format in which the data are available and the availability of supporting information. Clarity refers to the quality and sufficiency of the release details, illustrations and accompanying advice.)

Analysis and interpretation of the data are presented in a statistical bulletin, which includes narrative and data visualisation and is published as an HTML webpage. Data tables are published in accessible Excel files. We also offer users the option to download the narrative in PDF format. All outputs are freely available on the ONS website.

Timeliness and punctuality

(Timeliness refers to the lapse of time between data collection and data delivery. Punctuality refers to the gap between planned and actual data delivery dates.)

The gap between data collection and data delivery in the 2022 iteration of the Trust in Government Survey was four months. This time allows for data to be cleaned, weighted and analysed and statistical commentary to be drafted and presented in a bulletin.

Geography

Estimates are for the United Kingdom.

Why you can trust our data

The ONS is the UK's largest independent producer of official statistics and its recognised National Statistical Institute. [Our Data Policies](#), available on the ONS website, details how data are collected, secured and used in the publication of statistics at the ONS. We treat the data that we hold with respect, keeping the data secure and confidential, and we use statistical methods that are professional, ethical and transparent.

The Trust in Government Survey is carefully designed and tested, and extensive quality control procedures are used throughout.

6 . Methods used to produce the Trust in Government data

How we collect the data, main data sources and accuracy

Data collection for the Trust in Government Survey is primarily collected through a self-completion online questionnaire. If requested, the interview is conducted by telephone. In 2022, less than 0.2% of responses were collected with the help of telephone interviewers. The population of interest is residents in the UK aged 18 years and over.

- The sampling frame for the Trust in Government Survey includes individuals who have participated in the Labour Force Survey (LFS), consented to re-contact and either participated in the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (OPN) for Great Britain addresses or participated in the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) for Northern Ireland addresses.
- The sampling frames used for the LFS are the Royal Mail's Postcode Address File of small users for addresses in Great Britain and POINTER central register of domestic properties for addresses in Northern Ireland.

A sample of approximately 4,000 adults are asked to participate in the Trust in Government Survey. The selected respondent (aged 18 years and over) is the only household member who is eligible to participate in the survey. Proxy interviews or responses are not permitted.

Sampling from the OPN and EHIS introduces a potential source of bias as it only includes those who have completed the LFS and the OPN or EHIS, and who consented to be re-contacted. Data collected in the OPN and EHIS are used in the weighting process to reduce this potential bias. Previous data are also used to adjust for non-response bias before weighting the adjusted sampling weights to population estimates.

How we process the data

The data are validated and cleaned, variables are derived, and weights are applied. As the Trust in Government Survey collects information on a sample of the population, the data are weighted to enable us to make inferences from this sample to the entire population.

Weighting includes calibrating by the following factors:

- sex
- age
- educational attainment
- region

Estimates from the Trust in Government Survey together with confidence intervals, for questions with sample base sizes greater than 10 cases, are published in the reference tables.

How we analyse and interpret the data

The data are analysed to address identified policy questions and to provide all users with a comprehensive overview of the survey results.

Weighted estimates are produced using statistical software. Estimates are produced for every question based on all respondents who answered the question. Estimates are produced for a sub-sample of respondents (for example, those who provided a particular answer to another question) where there is an identified policy need for the information, or where this will increase users' understanding of the data.

To support interpretation of the results, upper and lower 95% confidence limits are produced for all estimates. The statistical significance of differences between data points is determined based on non-overlapping 95% confidence intervals.

How we quality assure and validate the data

There are quality assurance processes included at all stages, from the drawing of the sample and the development of the questionnaire to publication of the data and estimates. These processes include:

- validating the accuracy of contact information in the sample
- the research team and other researchers at the Office for National Statistics (ONS) thoroughly testing the questionnaire
- conducting a series of checks on the data post-collection to identify inconsistencies and invalid responses
- making sure estimates are dual run and checked at multiple stages between analysis and final publication
- applying statistical disclosure control (suppressing estimates to avoid any disclosure of personal information)

How we disseminate the data

The [Trust in Government Survey data](#) are published on the ONS website as accessible Excel reference data tables. An HTML bulletin, [Trust in Government, UK: 2022](#), is also published, which includes interpretation of the data presented as narrative, charts and tables.

Anonymised data are provided to the Cabinet Office and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as part of quality assurance and data processing procedures.

7 . Other information

Useful links and references

Our [Trust in Government, UK: 2022 bulletin](#) is available, as well as the [accompanying data tables](#).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [Trust methodology note](#) and the [OECD Trust report](#) provide further information about the OECD Trust Survey and its findings.

NatCen Social Research's [Public Confidence in Official Statistics report](#) and the [British Social Attitudes Survey](#) have explored trust in government for Great Britain in the past and provide wider context to the area

The [European Social Surveys](#) provides international comparisons of trust in government from 2018.

User feedback

We welcome feedback on the content, format and relevance of our releases and encourage users to send feedback via email to publicservicesanalysis@ons.gov.uk