

# Measuring National Well-being - Governance, 2012

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## Abstract

This article is published as part of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Measuring National Well-being Programme. The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation – how the UK as a whole is doing. This article explores in more detail aspects of governance considered important for understanding National Well-being. It considers information on the involvement in democracy and trust in how the UK is run including statistics on the percentage of registered voters who voted, percentage who trust in parliament and in national government.

## Introduction

This article is published as part of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Measuring National Well-being programme. It includes information on one aspect of National Well-being: Governance.

Governance is one of the ten domains which the Programme is using to help describe the well-being of the UK. The full list of these domains and the current measures within each domain can be seen in the Annex 'Proposed domains and measures for Measuring National Well-being'. More information about the Programme can be found on the [National Well-being page](#) on the ONS website.

Governance is a far reaching subject and to cover it in its entirety would be difficult in a single article. Therefore this article includes some of the main components of the subject and gives references to further reading where appropriate.

A fundamental part of the work of government is to support a better life for its citizens and help build strong and resilient communities which in turn may improve the wellbeing of individuals. This was highlighted in the ONS National Debate on Measuring National Well-being. When people were asked what mattered most for the measurement of National Well-being, national governance was one aspect that people considered important.

This article illustrates involvement in democracy and trust in how the UK is run and includes information about the headline measures currently proposed for this domain of National Well-being:

- Percentage of registered voters who voted.

- Percentage who trust in Parliament a lot or a fair amount.
- Percentage who have trust in the national government.

## Key points

### Democracy

- In 2012 over 6 in 10 (63 per cent) residents in Great Britain agreed that 'For all its faults, Britain's democratic system is one of the finest in the world' with a higher percentage of those over 60 (76 per cent) than those aged 18 to 24 (48 per cent) agreeing.
- When asked to choose features of Britain's political system under a third (32 per cent) of residents aged 18 and over in Great Britain mentioned the 'role played by the Queen as one they liked the most and over half (53 per cent) mentioned 'the quality of our politicians' as one they liked the least.

### Civic engagement

- The proportion of adults aged 16 and over in England engaged in some form of civic participation (34 per cent), was lower in 2009–10 and 2010–11 than in previous years.
- In 2011 those aged 18 and over in Great Britain with a GCSE or equivalent level qualification were more likely as those with a degree to agree with the statement 'politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on' at 65 per cent and 36 per cent respectively.

### Trust and accountability

- Less than a quarter (23 per cent) of people in the UK aged 15 and over tended to trust the UK Parliament in 2012 and just over a fifth (21 per cent) tended to trust the government: both of these were lower proportions than in some earlier years.

### Government spending

- In the UK in 2010, half (50 per cent) of GDP was spent by the Government on a variety of public services compared with the average of 46 per cent for 34 countries in the Organisation for Economic Development.

### e-government

- In 2007 about 78 per cent of basic government services in the UK were available online and this had risen to 98 per cent in 2010.
- In 2011 approximately 4 in 10 users of the Internet aged 14 and over in Great Britain had used it to access information on central government services (40 per cent) and information on local services (38 per cent).

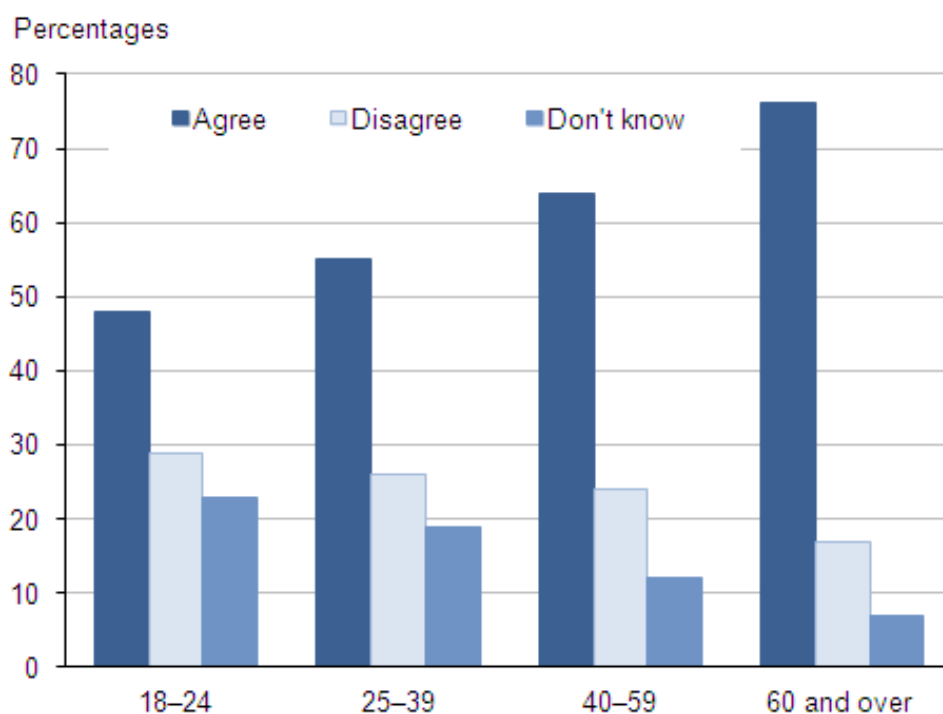
## Democracy

'Government of the people, by the people, for the people' was the definition of democracy given by the United States president Abraham Lincoln in 1863. Democracy can be defined as a form of government where a constitution guarantees basic personal and political rights, fair and free elections, and independent courts of law.

Many people stated in the findings from the National Well-being debate that democracy was important. A quote from the debate described the UK as 'a largely incorrupt democracy, albeit imperfect'.

**Figure 1: Proportion of people who agree or disagree that Britain's democratic system is one of the finest in the world(1): by age, 2012 (2)**

Great Britain



Source: YouGov Plc

### Notes:

1. Respondents aged 18 and over were asked whether they agree or disagree with the statement 'For all its faults, Britain's democratic system is one of the finest in the world'. Agree is a total of those who agreed strongly or tended to agree. Disagree is a total of those who tended to disagree and disagreed strongly.
2. Fieldwork was carried out on 12 to 21 January. Total sample size was 5,160. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Great Britain.

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In January 2012, adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain were asked in a survey conducted by YouGov whether they agreed with the statement 'For all its faults, Britain's democratic system is one of the finest in the world' (YouGov,2012).

- Over 6 in 10 (63 per cent) agreed strongly or tended to agree with the statement, while over 2 in 10 (23 per cent) tended to disagree or disagree strongly.

There was considerable variation by age group (**Figure 1**):

- Under half (48 per cent) of those aged 18 to 24 reported that they agreed strongly or tended to agree with the statement, compared to just over three-quarters (76 per cent) of those aged over 60.
- The proportion of those who stated that they didn't know also varied with 23 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 compared to just 7 per cent of those aged 60 and over.

On the same survey, respondents were asked to choose up to three features of Britain's political system that they liked the most:

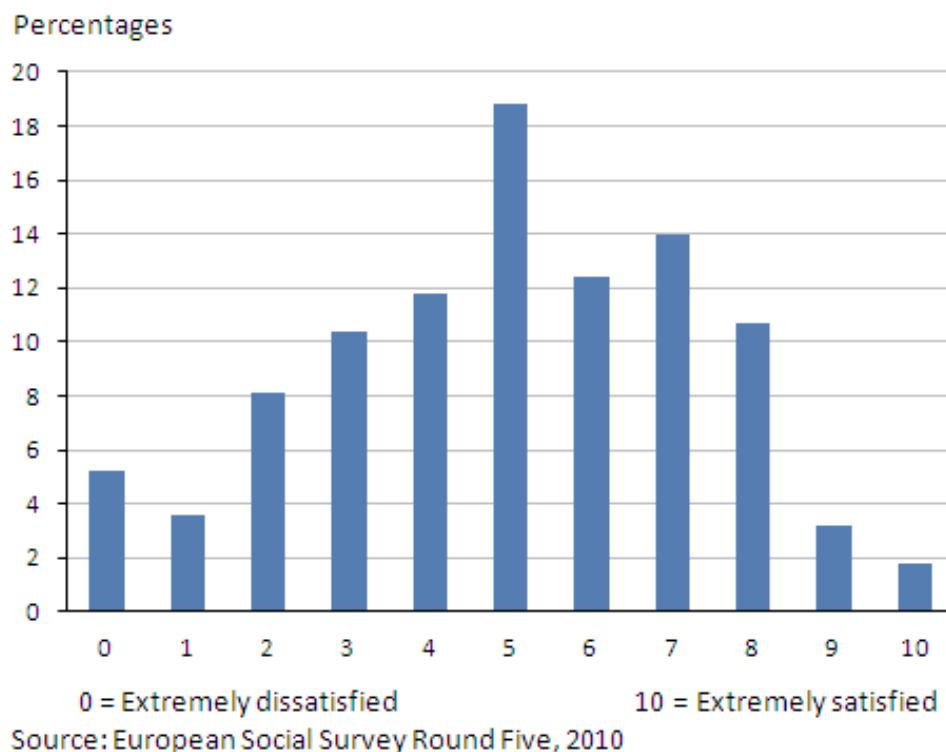
- Over a third (36 per cent) reported that they liked 'the coverage of politics on radio and television'.
- Just under a third (32 per cent) liked the 'role played by the Queen'.
- Under a quarter (23 per cent) liked 'the coverage of politics in the newspapers'.

When asked to choose up to three features of Britain's political system that they liked the least:

- Over half (53 per cent) reported 'the quality of our politicians'.
- Nearly 4 in 10 (39 per cent) chose 'the way peers are selected to be members of the House of Lords' and 'the quality of our political parties'.

## Figure 2: Satisfaction with the workings of democracy, (1) 2010

United Kingdom



### Notes:

1. Respondents aged 15 and over were asked 'On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Britain (or the UK if in Northern Ireland), where 0 means extremely dissatisfied and 10 means extremely satisfied.'

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The European Social Survey (ESS) asked people aged 15 and over in the UK in 2010 to rate the way they felt democracy works in the UK on a scale of 0 to 10 where 0 was extremely dissatisfied and 10 was extremely satisfied (**Figure 2**) (ESS, 2010).

In 2010:

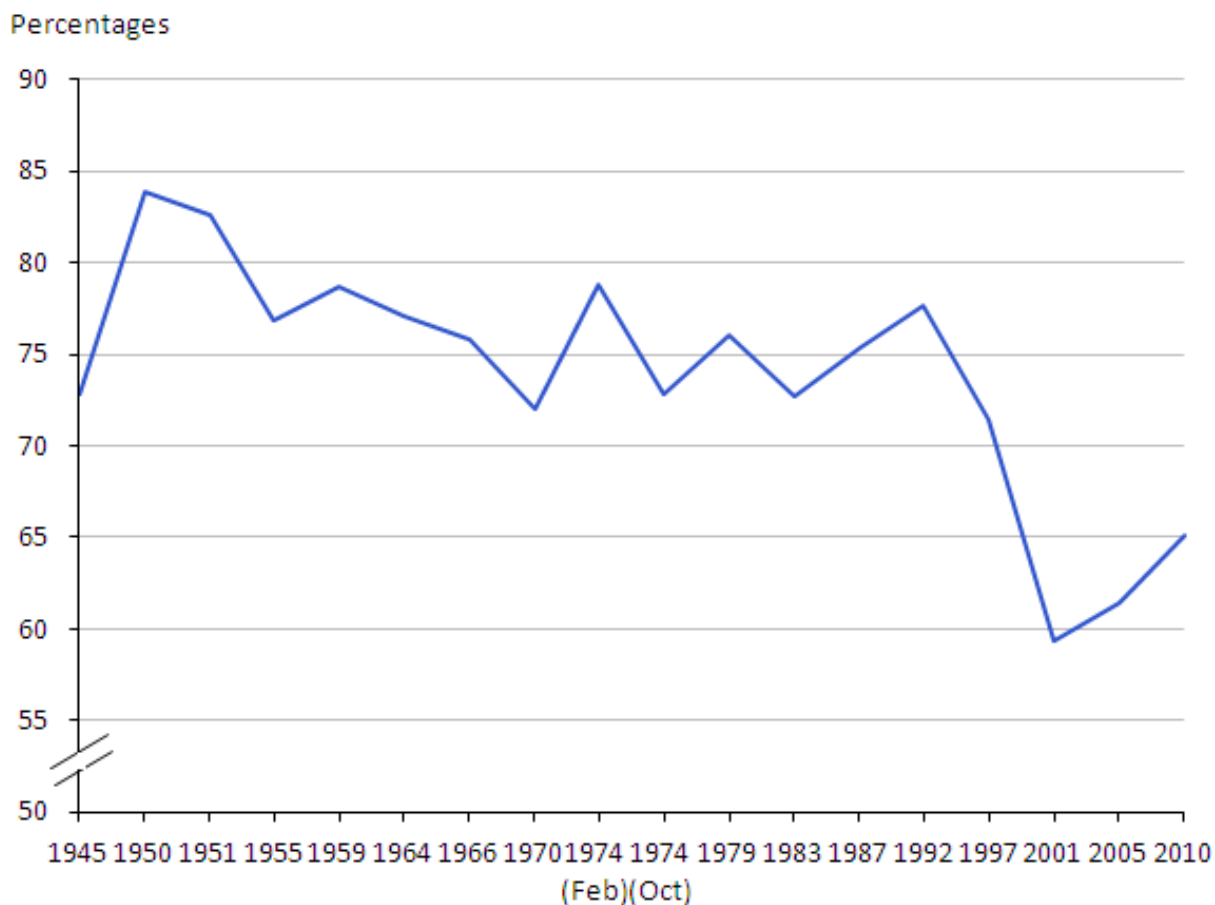
- Over half (53 per cent) had levels of 'satisfaction with democracy' of 3 to 6 out of 10.
- 30 per cent reported their satisfaction as 7 or more out of 10.
- However, a sizeable minority of the population were estimated to have very low ratings of 0 to 2 out of 10 (17 per cent).

One of the hallmarks of democracy in the UK is the election system. People can vote in person, by post or by proxy in regular elections of borough, county and parish councils, the London Assembly, mayoral elections, parliaments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and the European and Westminster parliaments. The strength of enthusiasm for and engagement with the democratic process in the UK is vital to sustaining a healthy representative democracy.

According to the 2010 British Social Attitudes survey (BSA), 61 per cent of adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain agreed strongly or agreed with the statement 'Voting is the only way people like me can have any say about how the government runs things', while a quarter (25 per cent) of adults disagreed or disagreed strongly with this statement (BSA, 2010).

### Figure 3: Voting turnout in UK General Elections (1)

United Kingdom



Source: House of Commons Research Papers 01/54, 05/33 & 10/37

#### Notes:

1. Valid votes as a proportion of the electorate.

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In 1950 voting turnout peaked with over 8 in 10 (83.9 per cent) of the electorate voting in General Elections<sup>1</sup> (**Figure 3**). By 1983, turnout was down to 72.7 per cent - and despite an improvement in participation in both 1987 and 1992, the General Elections in 2001 and 2005 had relatively low turnouts (59.4 per cent and 61.4 per cent respectively). In 2010 the turnout rose to 65.1 per cent.

Those that do use their votes are more likely to be from the older age groups with younger people less likely to vote. Data from the British Election Study shows that in 1964, 11 per cent of young people aged 18 to 24 and 19 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 were non-voters. Overall electoral turnout in 1964 was 77 per cent. During the 1970s and 1980s an average of around 25 per cent of those aged 18 to 24 and 19 per cent of those aged 25 to 34 were non-voters.

Turnout in these two decades varied from 72 per cent to 79 per cent. Electoral turnout in 2005 was 61 per cent, and the proportion of people aged 18 to 24 and 25 to 34 who did not vote had risen to 55 per cent and 47 per cent respectively (2005 is the latest data on age available).

## Notes

1. Voter turnout is measured by the number of people registered to vote. Non-voters are those registered but not voting.

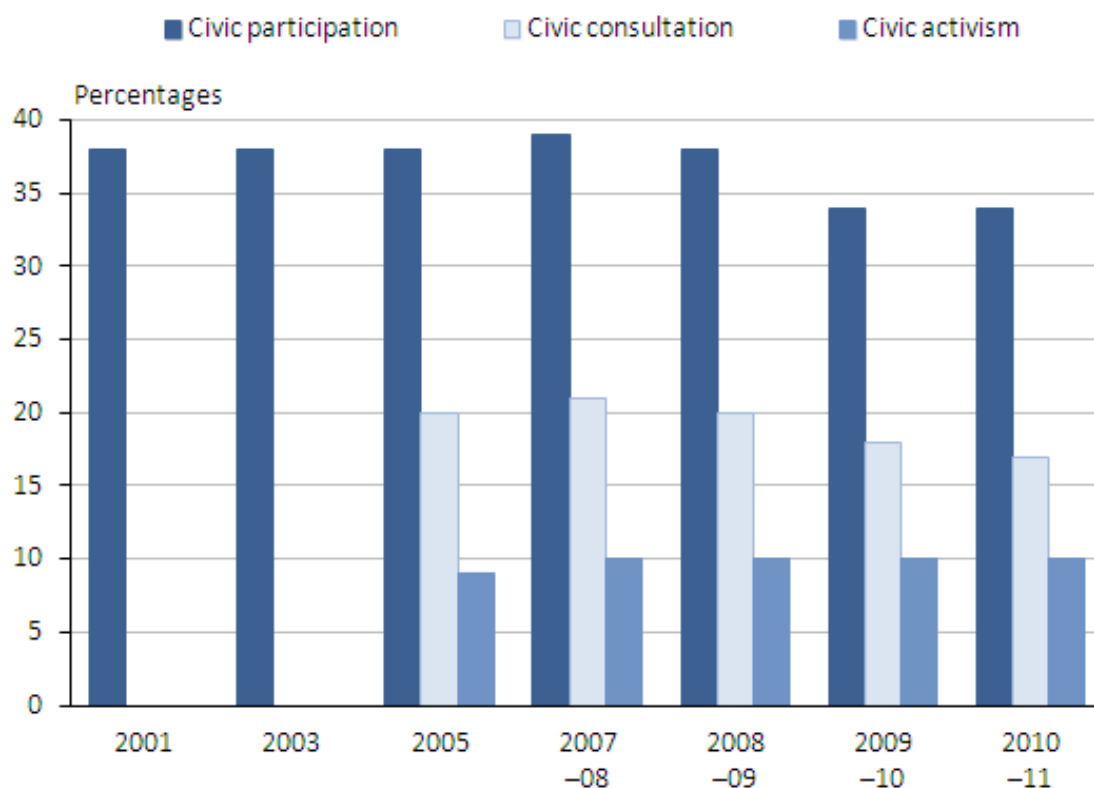
## Civic engagement

Civic engagement has three components:

- Civic activism – which refers to involvement either in direct decision-making about local services or issues, or in the actual provision of these services by taking on a role such as a local councillor, school governor or magistrate.
- Civic consultation – which refers to active engagement in consultation about local services or issues through activities such as attending a consultation group or completing a questionnaire about these services.
- Civic participation – which covers wider forms of engagement in democratic processes, such as contacting an elected representative, taking part in a public demonstration or protest, or signing a petition.

**Figure 4: Participation in civic participation, civic consultation and civic activism (1)**

England



Source: Citizenship Survey, Department for Communities and Local Government

**Notes:**

1. In the 12 months prior to interview.

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According to the Citizenship Survey run by the Department for Communities and Local Government (**Figure 4**) (DCLG, 2010-11):

- In 2010–11, around a third (34 per cent) of adults aged 16 and over in England engaged in some sort of civic participation at least once in the 12 months prior to interview; unchanged on 2009-10 but lower than in any year before (between 38 per cent and 39 per cent).
- Under a fifth (17 per cent) were involved in some sort of civic consultation in 2010–11 at least once in the 12 months prior to interview, lower than in all previous years (18 per cent to 21 per cent).
- The percentage of people reporting that they had engaged in civic activism during the previous year was 10 per cent in 2010–11, the same proportion as all previous years.



**Table 1: Public perception of civic participation (1), 2011 (2)**

Great Britain (Percentages)

	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>All</b>
Being active in politics is a good way to get benefits for groups that people care about like pensioners or the disabled	50	42	46
It takes too much time and effort to be active in politics and public affairs	39	35	37
Being active in politics is a good way	26	15	21

to get  
benefits  
for me  
and my  
family

**Source:**  
**YouGov**  
**Plc**

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**Table notes:**

1. Adults aged 18 and over who strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.
2. Fieldwork was carried out on 4 and 5 December 2011. Total sample size was 1,699. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Great Britain.

**Download table**

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YouGov asked adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain in 2011 to agree or disagree with statements about participation in politics (**Table 1**) (YouGov, 2011):

- Half of men (50 per cent) and 42 per cent of women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that being involved in politics was a good way to benefit groups that people care about like pensioners and disabled.
- Just over a quarter of men (26 per cent) and 15 per cent of women strongly agreed or agreed that involvement in politics was a good way to benefit them and their family.
- However, over a third of both men (39 per cent) and women (35 per cent) felt that being involved in politics and public affairs took too much time and effort.

Education may be a factor in developing an interest in politics and in turn participation in civic matters. The British Social Attitudes survey (BSA) asked adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain in 2011, whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'Sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on' (BSA, 2011):

- People with an O-level/GCSE or equivalent level qualification were more likely to strongly agree or agree with this statement (65 per cent) compared to those who had the higher qualification of a degree (36 per cent).

People were also asked how much interest in politics they have:

- 46 per cent of those with a degree reported a great deal or quite a lot of interest.
- This compares with 24 per cent of people with an O-level/GCSE A-C or equivalent qualification.

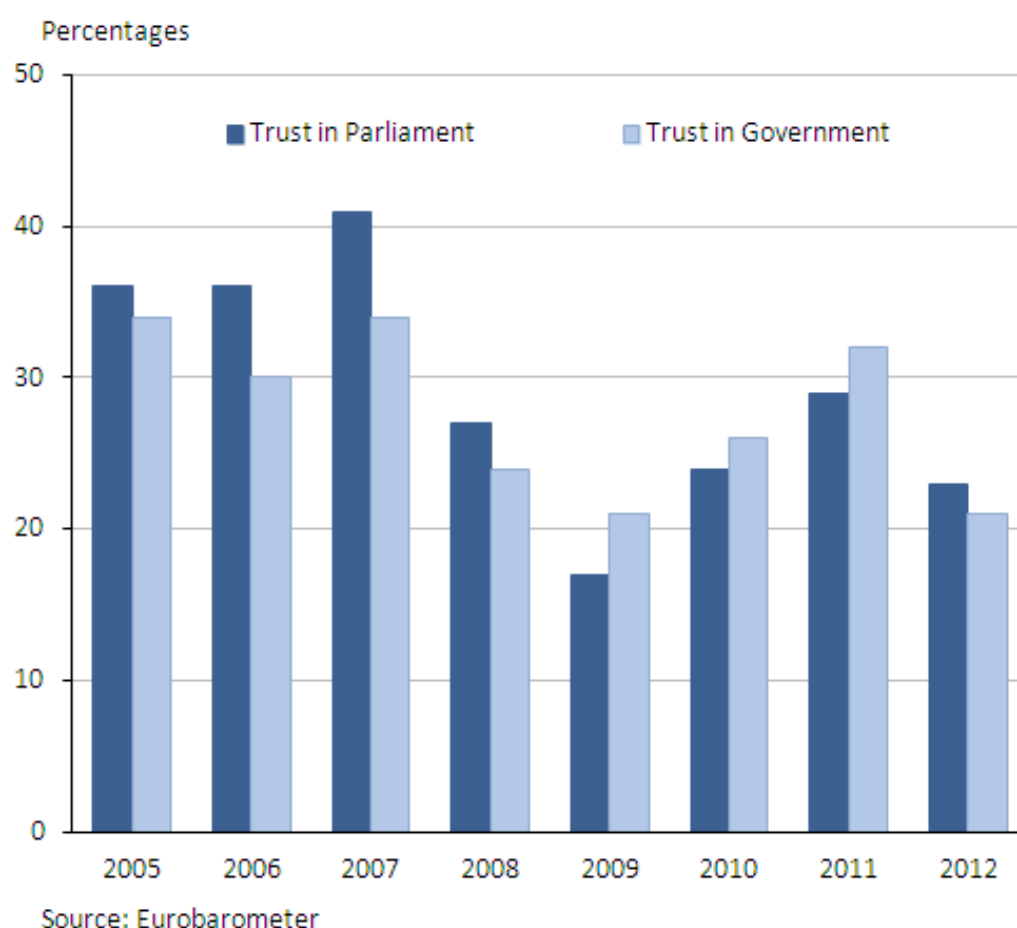
## Trust and accountability

Trust in, and accountability of, national government and other institutions such as local councils and the justice system were key concerns reported during the National Well-being debate.

In the simplest sense, government accountability means that the Government is answerable for its performance or results. Much of the public's trust rests upon the Government being openly accountable for its decisions, actions and mistakes. A loss of public trust in the Government may result when the Government operates in secret or refuses to disclose information to the public.

### Figure 5: Trust in parliament and government (1)

United Kingdom



#### Notes:

1. Respondents aged 15 and over were asked if they 'tend to trust' or 'tend to not trust' the UK parliament and government. Percentages are for those who answered 'tend to trust'. Fieldwork was carried out in May and June in 2005; March and May in 2006; April and May in 2007; March and April in 2008; June and July in 2009 and May in 2010 to 2012.

#### Download chart

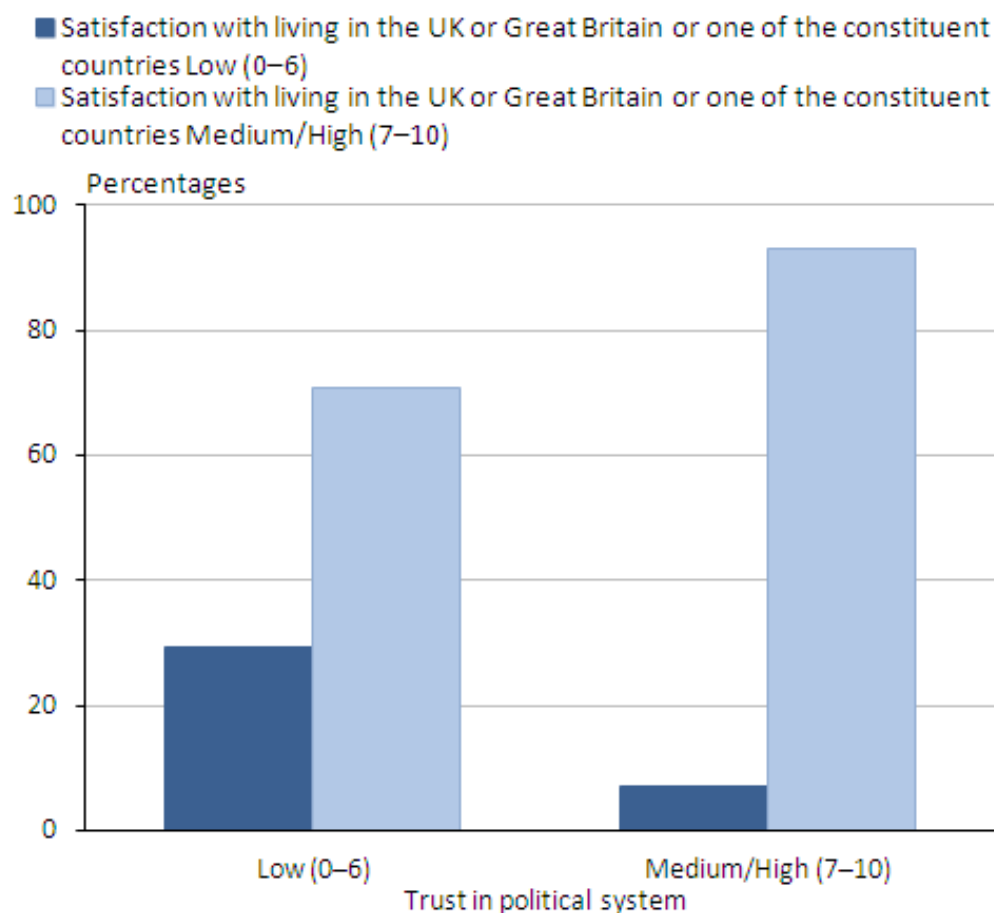
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According to the Standard Eurobarometer survey, less than a quarter (23 per cent) of people aged 15 and over in the UK 'tended to trust' the UK parliament in 2012, while just over a fifth (21 per cent) 'tended to trust the government' (**Figure 5**). Since 2005, trust in the UK Parliament peaked in 2007 at 41 per cent but then declined sharply to 17 per cent in 2009. Similarly, in 2007 the proportion of people that 'tended to trust' the Government, stood at over a third (34 per cent) but fell to just over a fifth (21 per cent) in 2009. These proportional declines may have been due to the UK parliamentary expenses scandal and the start of the financial crisis (Eurobarometer, 2012).

Trust in the political system and satisfaction with living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries is related.

**Figure 6: Trust in the political system (1) compared with satisfaction with living in the UK or Great Britain or constituent countries (2), 2011–12 (3)**

Great Britain



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'How much do you personally trust the political system?' where nought is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'.
2. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'How satisfied are you living in this country?' where nought is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'. 'This country' refers to the UK, Great Britain or one of the constituent countries. All respondents were asked when answering questions about 'this country', what country or countries

were you thinking of?' This data only includes respondents who answered UK, Great Britain or one of the constituent countries.

3. Data are for September 2011 and January and May 2012.

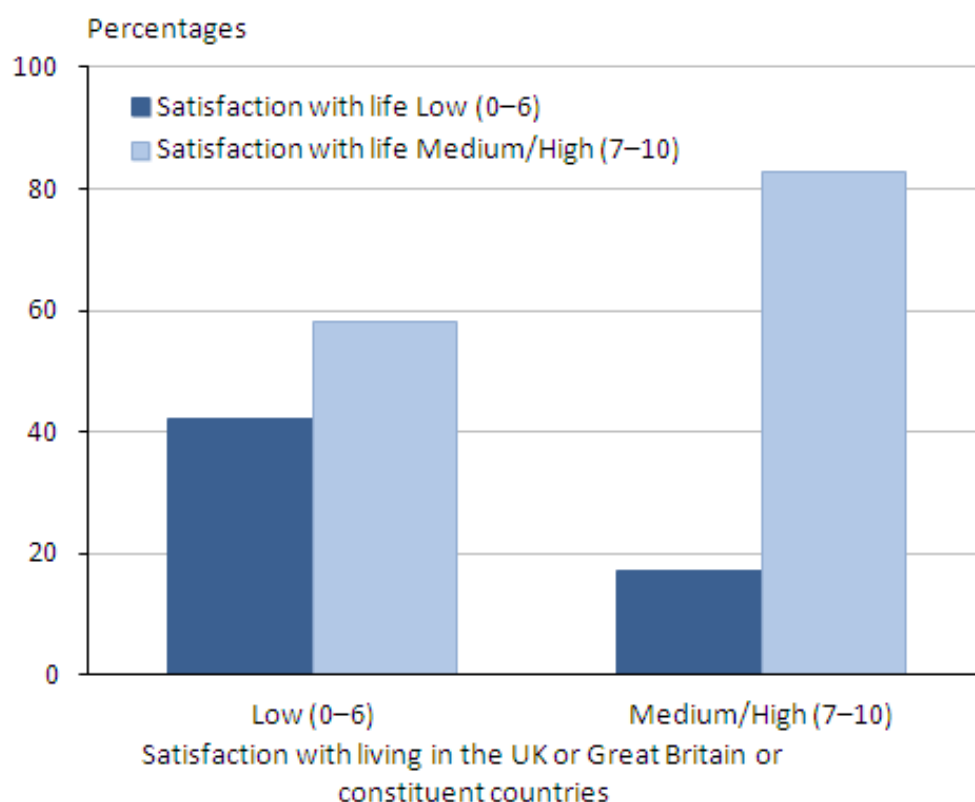
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Of adults aged 16 and over in Great Britain who reported a medium/high trust (7 to 10 out of 10) in the political system, 7 per cent reported a low satisfaction (0 to 6 out of 10) with living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries (**Figure 6**). However, of those reporting a low trust in the political system, nearly 3 in 10 (29 per cent) reported a low satisfaction for living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries. However, it must be noted that 71 per cent reported a medium/high satisfaction with living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries, despite a low trust in the political system.

## Figure 7: Satisfaction with living in UK or Great Britain or constituent countries (1) compared with life satisfaction (2), 2011–12 (3)

Great Britain



Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, Office for National Statistics

### Notes:

1. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'How satisfied are you living in this country? where nought is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'. "This country" refers to the UK, Great Britain or one of the constituent

countries. All respondents were asked when answering questions about 'this country', what country or countries were you thinking of?' This data only includes respondents who answered UK, Great Britain or one of the constituent countries.

2. Adults aged 16 and over were asked 'How satisfied are you with your life nowadays?' where 1 is 'not at all satisfied' and 10 is 'completely satisfied'.
3. Data are for September 2011 and January and May 2012.

## Download chart

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Of adults aged 16 and over in Great Britain who reported a medium/high (7 to 10 out of 10) satisfaction for living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries, 17 per cent reported a low satisfaction with life (**Figure 7**). However, of those reporting a low satisfaction for living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries, 42 per cent reported a low life satisfaction. However, it must be noted that 58 per cent reported a medium/high satisfaction with life despite a low satisfaction for living in the UK or Great Britain or one of the constituent countries.

Associated with people's trust in parliament is their trust in politicians. Adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain were asked on the British Social Attitudes survey 'How much do you trust politicians of any party in Britain to tell the truth when they are in a tight corner?' (BSA, 2010).

- In 2000 just over 1 in 10 (11 per cent) reported that 'politicians told the truth almost always or most of the time when in a tight corner' compared with 46 per cent who reported that they told the truth almost never.
- In 2010, 7 per cent reported that politicians told the truth just about always or most of the time. However, those that reported 'almost never' increased by 10 percentage points to 56 per cent.

Trust in the Criminal Justice System (CJS) was another issue raised in the National Well-being debate. The CJS is an important part of society, and it is expected to be fair, impartial, efficient and effective.

**Table 2: Public confidence in the Criminal Justice System, (1) 2007/08**

England and Wales and Northern Ireland (Percentages)

	England and Wales	Northern Ireland
Respects the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treats them fairly	80	82
Treats people who come forward as witnesses well	69	68
Effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice	44	43
Deals with cases promptly and efficiently	42	37
Effective at reducing crime	38	38
Meets the needs of victims of crime	36	37
Effective at dealing with young people accused of crime	25	29

**Source: Crime Survey for England and Wales, Office for National Statistics (formally the British Crime Survey, Home Office), Northern Ireland Crime Survey, Department of Justice**

**Table notes:**

1. Data in the table is for adults aged 16 and over who answered 'very' or 'fairly confident' or 'very' or 'fairly effective'. The unweighted base for the headline measure for England and Wales (effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice) was 36,425, other unweighted bases for the other measures were similar.

**Download table**

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According to a report compiled by the Ministry of Justice with data from the Crime Survey for England and Wales<sup>2</sup> (formerly known as the British Crime Survey), less than half (44 per cent)

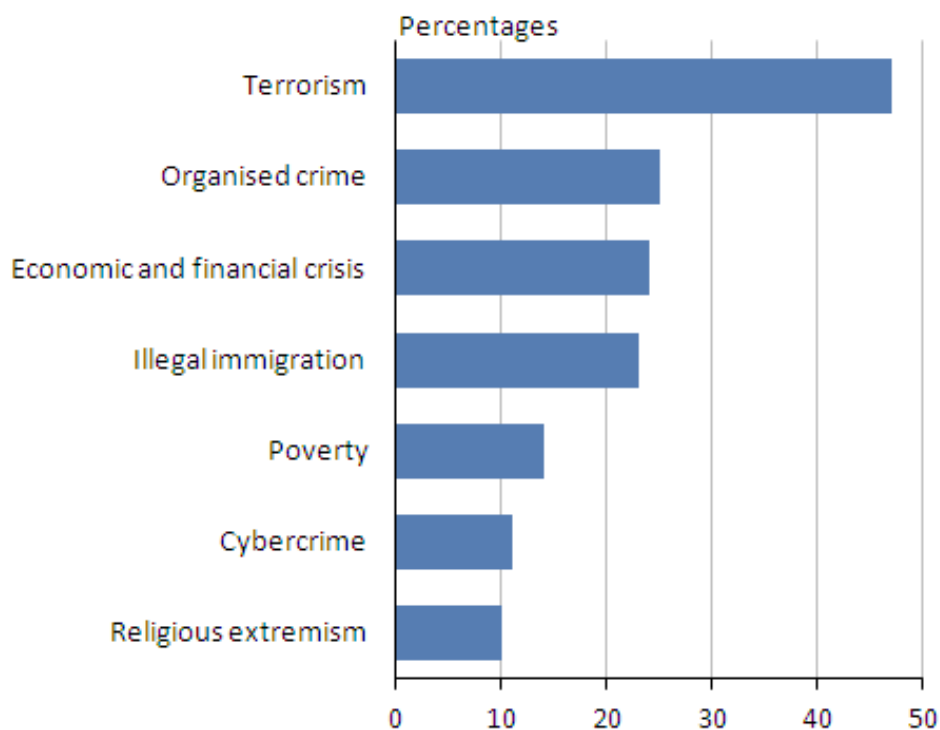
of adults aged 16 and over in England and Wales in 2007/08 (the latest data available for these measures<sup>3</sup>) reported that they were very or fairly confident that the CJS was effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice (**Table 2**).

A larger proportion of adults (80 per cent) felt very or fairly confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treated them fairly. Just under 7 in 10 (69 per cent) felt very or fairly confident that the CJS treated people who came forward as witnesses well. Similarly in Northern Ireland less than half (43 per cent) of adults reported that they were very or fairly confident that the CJS was effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice, with over four-fifths (82 per cent) very or fairly confident that the CJS respected the rights of people accused of committing a crime and treated them fairly (CSEW, 2007/08).

Although most people live in relative safety, the challenges to peace and security are ever increasing. Many of these challenges, including the risk of terrorism and cybercrime, are becoming increasingly sophisticated. They may have an impact on people's sense of security and in turn their general well-being.

**Figure 8: Selected challenges to the security of UK citizens (1), 2011**

United Kingdom



Source: Eurobarometer

**Notes:**

1. Respondents aged 15 and over were asked in June 2011, 'What do you think are the most important challenges to the security of UK citizens at the moment?'



## Download chart

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People aged 15 and over in the UK were asked on a Eurobarometer Survey in 2011 to identify the most important challenges to the security of UK citizens (**Figure 8**) (Eurobarometer, 2011):

- Nearly half (47 per cent) identified terrorism and a quarter organised crime (25 per cent).
- The recent economic and financial crisis and illegal immigration were reported by just under a quarter (24 per cent and 23 per cent respectively).
- 14 per cent reported poverty as an important challenge.
- Around 1 in 10 people reported that Cybercrime and religious extremism was a challenge to security at 11 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

People were asked on the same survey if the UK was doing enough to 'fight' some of these challenges:

- Nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) agreed that the UK was doing enough to fight terrorism.
- Half (50 per cent) agreed that the UK was doing enough to fight organised crime.
- Just over 4 in 10 (41 per cent) agreed that the UK was doing enough to fight cybercrime.

## Notes

1. The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is responsible for detecting crime and bringing offenders to justice; carrying out the orders of court, such as collecting fines; and supervising community and custodial punishment. Criminal justice agencies include the police, the Crown Prosecution Service, the courts, the prison service, the probation service, and the youth justice service.
2. The British Crime Survey (BCS) is now known as the Crime Survey for England and Wales (effective from 1 April 2012) to better reflect its geographical coverage. While the survey did previously cover the whole of Great Britain it ceased to include Scotland in its sample in the late 1980s. There is a separate survey – the Scottish Crime and Justice Survey – covering Scotland.
3. 2007/08 was the last time these measures were used. A new set of questions were developed and entered into the survey in 2007/08 and these have been used from then onwards. These new measures are:
  - Confident that the CJS is effective.
  - Confident that the CJS is fair.

For more information see Table D50 [Crime Statistics - period ending September 2012](#).

## Government spending

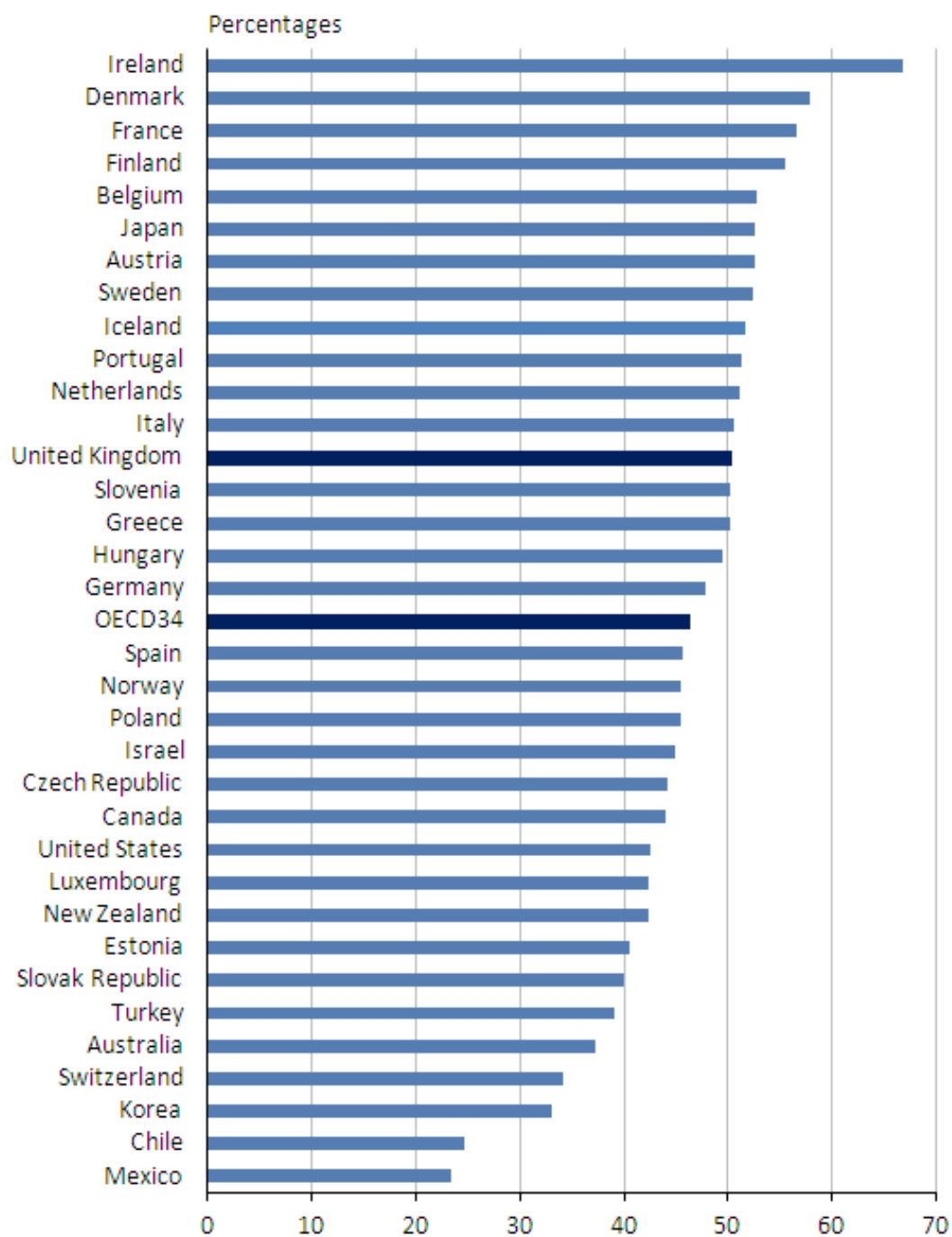
Government spends money to provide goods and services and redistribute income, which in turn may have some effect on the well-being of some of its citizens. The economy as a whole and its

relation to measuring national well-being was covered as a Measuring National Well-being domain article in its own right in October 2012<sup>1</sup>. However, for the purposes of this article it is worth having a look at the UK's government expenditure compared to the other member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

General government spending<sup>2</sup> as a share of GDP provides an indication of the size of the government across countries. However, the large variation in these ratios highlights different approaches to delivering public goods and services and providing social protection not necessarily differences in resources spent.

**Figure 9: General government expenditures as a percentage of GDP, 2010 (1)**

OECD 34



Source: OECD National Accounts Statistics

**Notes:**

1. Data for Australia, Chile, Korea and New Zealand are for 2009.

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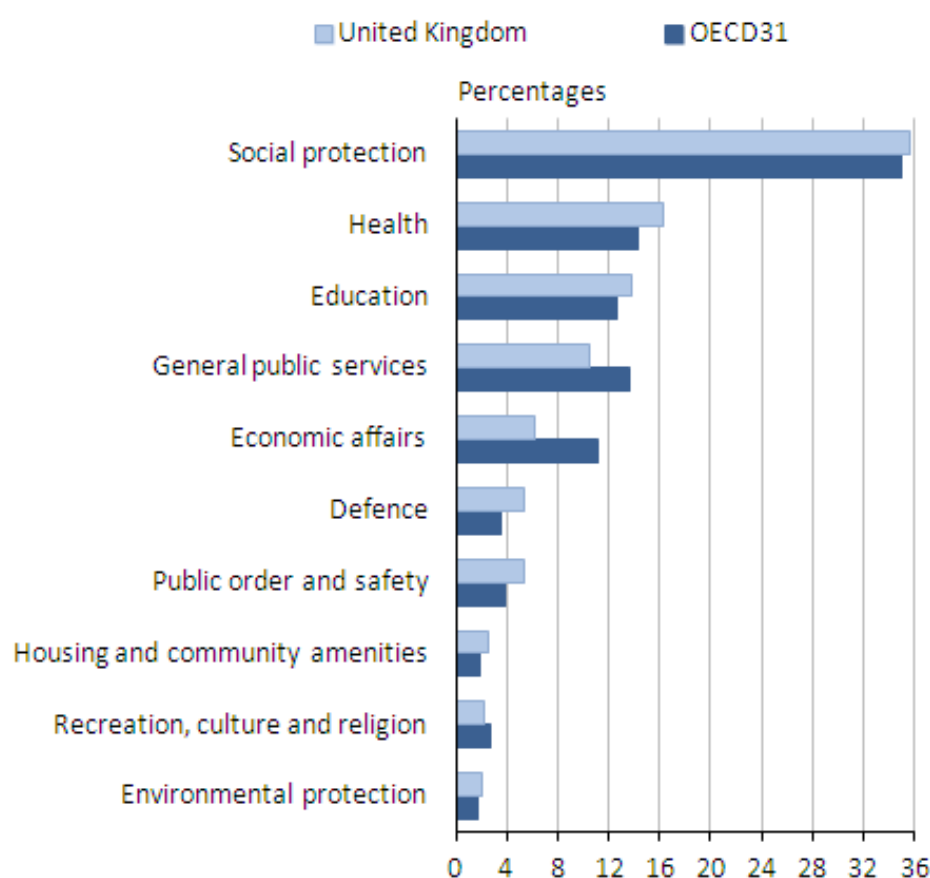
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On average, government expenditures across the 34 countries of the OECD represented 46 per cent of GDP in 2010 according to OECD National Accounts Statistics (**Figure 9**). This compares with 50 per cent of GDP in the UK. In general, countries from the European Union (EU) tend to have a higher ratio than other OECD member countries. Ireland (67 per cent), Denmark (58 per cent), and France (57 per cent) spend the most as a share of GDP. Mexico and Chile spend the least, 23 per cent and 25 per cent of GDP respectively (OECD, 2010).

Government finances a variety of public goods and services, for example, providing benefits, building public infrastructure or subsidising alternative energy sources. However it must be noted that other factors, such as an ageing population or a high level of national debt requiring substantial amounts of interest payments, also influence the size and structure of general government expenditures.

### Figure 10: General government expenditure (1), 2010

United Kingdom and OECD31 (2)



Source: OECD National Accounts Statistics

**Notes:**

1. By Classification of the Functions of Government (COFOG).
2. Data for Australia, Chile and Mexico are not available.

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**Figure 10** shows a comparison of the proportion of spending on different functions between the UK and 31 of the 34 member states of the OECD. Social protection was the largest category of expenses in both the UK and the OECD31, representing over one third of total expenditures in 2010. Aside from social protection, OECD member countries spent the most on health (14 per cent), general public services, which include interest payments on debt (14 per cent) and education (13 per cent). In general, OECD member countries spend the least on environmental protection and housing and community amenities. Aside from social protection, the UK spent the most on health (16 per cent), Education (14 per cent) and general public services (11 per cent) (OECD, 2010).

How the UK acts and is perceived abroad was mentioned in the National well-being debate as the following quote demonstrates;

‘Knowing that the UK is meeting its international obligations and providing leadership on poverty reduction, climate change, combating AIDS, fighting major causes of mortality etc.’

An important obligation is the UK’s expenditure on International Development Assistance. In 2010, UK Official Development Assistance (UK ODA) accounted for 0.57 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI), equivalent to £8,452 million.

**Table 3: Public perception on UK Overseas Development Assistance, (1) 2010 (2)**

Great Britain (Percentages)

	18–24	25–39	40–59	Aged 60 and over	All aged 18 and over
The UK's development assistance to poorer countries helps us to protect our national interests and long-term security, and the government is right to protect it from public spending cuts	39	34	28	22	29
Much development assistance is wasted and does little or nothing to promote British interests; it should be radically reduced	30	46	59	67	54
Don't Know	31	20	13	11	16

**Source:**  
**YouGov Plc/  
 Chatham  
 House survey**

**Table notes:**

1. Adults aged 18 and over were asked which of the statements in the table above come closest to your view.

- Fieldwork was carried out on 24 and 25 June 2010. Total sample size was 2,481. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all adults in Great Britain.

## Download table

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Adults aged 18 and over in Great Britain were asked in a survey conducted by YouGov in June 2010 which of two statements on UK ODA they felt came closest to the way they felt. Just under 3 in 10 (29 per cent) felt that the statement 'The UK's development assistance to poorer countries helps us to protect our national interests and long-term security, and the government is right to protect it from public spending cuts' was closest to their view (**Table 3**). However agreement with this statement decreased with age, with just under 4 in 10 (39 per cent) of those aged 18 to 24 and around 2 in 10 (22 per cent) of those aged over 60 (YouGov, 2010).

Over half of all adults (54 per cent) reported that the statement 'Much development assistance is wasted and does little or nothing to promote British interests; it should be radically reduced' came closest to the way they felt. Agreement with this statement increases with age with 3 in 10 (30 per cent) of those aged 18 to 24 reporting that the statement came closest to their view compared to nearly 7 in 10 (67 per cent) of those aged 60 and over.

## Notes

- [The economy](#)
- Government expenditures data are derived from the OECD National Accounts Statistics, which are based on the System of National Accounts (SNA), a set of internationally agreed concepts, definitions, classifications and rules for national accounting. In SNA terminology, general government consists of central, state and local governments and social security funds.

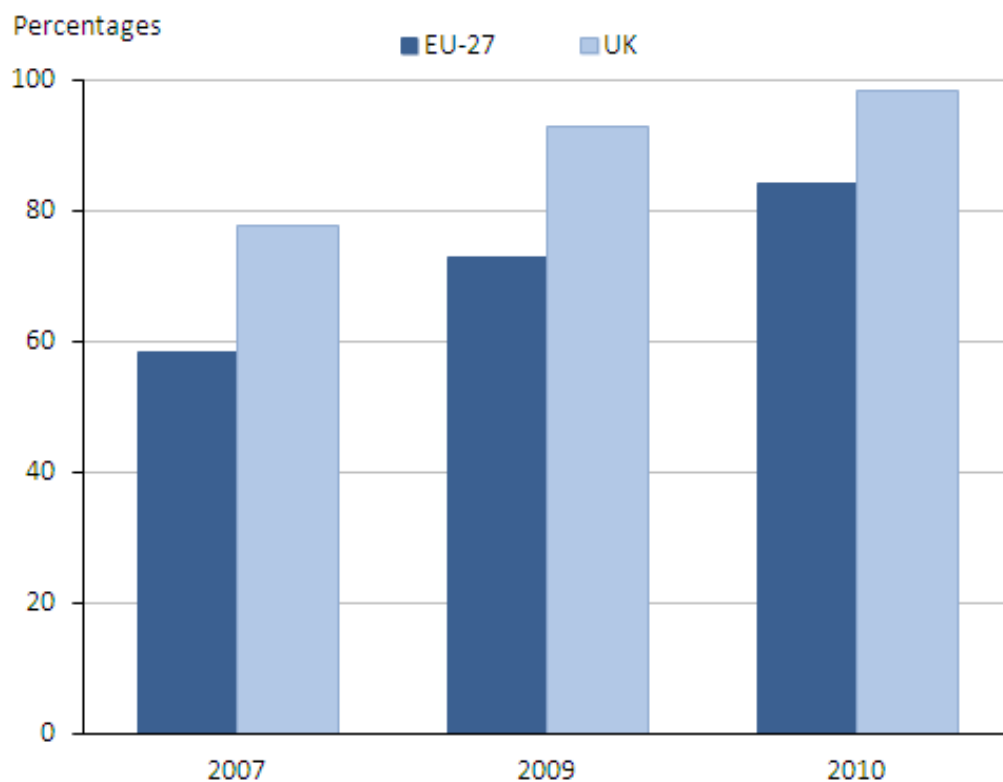
## e-government

e-government is the use of information technology by government to interact with citizens, businesses and other governments. The Internet has transformed the way in which many UK citizens interact with banks, shops, travel companies, airlines, the media and a whole host of social groups. It has also changed the way that people interact with government and the way government interacts with its citizens.

Interacting with public authorities' online makes obtaining information and downloading and submitting forms easier for some people than by, for example, queuing at a post office or government office. In 2010 nearly half (48 per cent) of adults aged 16 to 74 in the UK used the Internet for interaction with public authorities in the 12 months prior to interview, compared with 41 per cent in the EU-27 according to Eurostat statistics. The highest proportions of people interacting online with public authorities were in Denmark (78 per cent) and Sweden and Finland (both 68 per cent), while the lowest percentage was in Romania (8 per cent) (Eurostat, 2010).

**Figure 11: Availability of e-government online (1)**

UK and EU-27



Source: Eurostat

**Notes:**

1. The indicator shows the percentage of the 20 basic services which are fully available online i.e. for which it is possible to carry out full electronic case handling. For example if in a country 13 of the 20 services were measured as being 100 per cent available online and one service was not relevant (e.g. does not exist), the indicator is 13/19 which is 68.4 per cent. Measurement is based on a sample of URLs of public web sites agreed with Member States as relevant for each service.

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**Figure 11** shows a comparison of the availability of e-government services over time. Between 2007 and 2010, the proportion of 20 basic e-government services<sup>1</sup> which were fully available online in the UK rose from 78 per cent to 98 per cent. Over the same period the percentage of e-government services in the EU-27 overall, rose from 58 per cent to 84 per cent. In 2010, the UK ranked second after six countries that had 100 per cent availability online (Austria, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Sweden).



According to the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, people had different reasons for using the Internet to interact with public authorities:

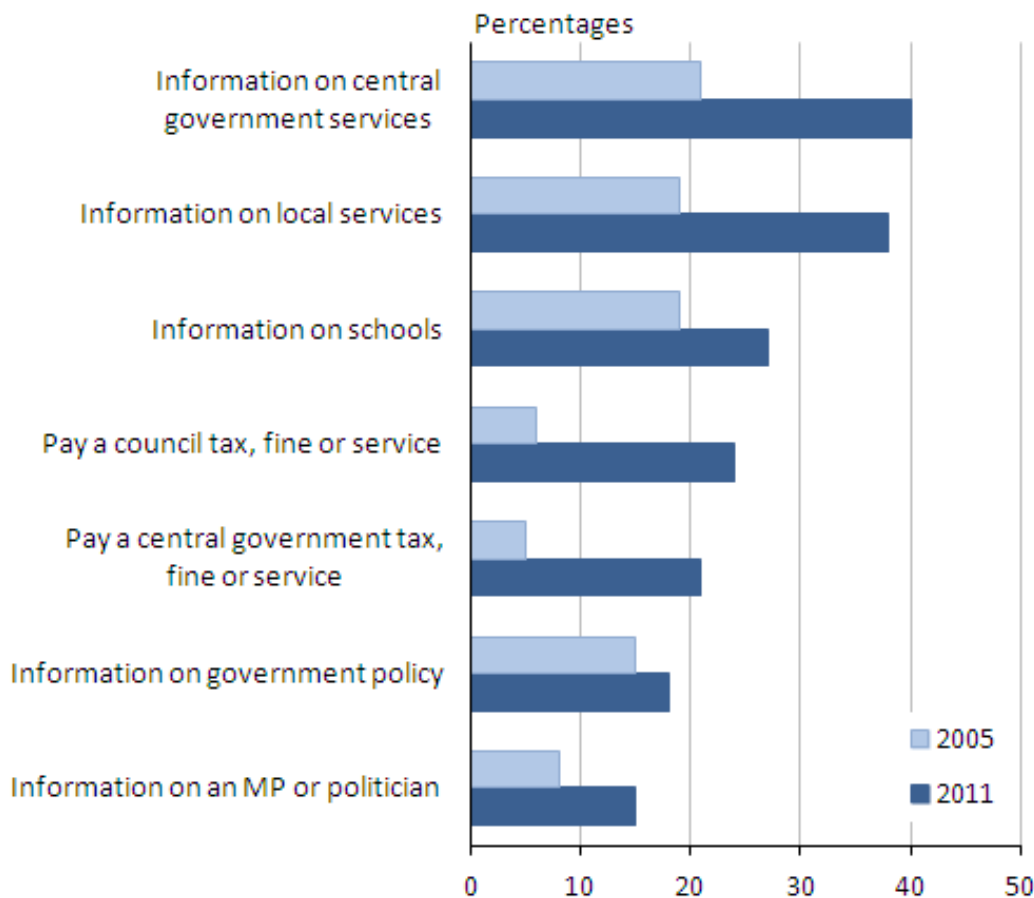
- Almost a third (32 per cent) of Internet users aged 16 and over in Great Britain in 2011 obtained information from public authority websites.
- Over a quarter downloaded official forms or submitted completed forms (26 per cent and 27 per cent respectively).

However it must be noted that over half (56 per cent) of Internet users did none of these things.

Looking at the online use of government services in more detail, **Figure 12** contains data for 2005 and 2011 from the Oxford Internet Survey run by Oxford University.

**Figure 12: Use of online government services (1)**

Great Britain



Source: Oxford Internet Survey, Oxford University

**Notes:**

1. Current users of the Internet at time of interview, aged 14 and over.

## Download chart

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(29 Kb)

Online use of government services by current users of the Internet aged 14 and over in Great Britain increased between 2005 and 2011 (OXIS, 2011):

- Looking for information on central government services and looking for information on local services, both increased by 19 percentage points to 40 per cent and 38 per cent respectively.
- Paying council tax, a fine or paying for a service increased by 18 percentage points to 24 per cent.
- Paying a central government tax, fine or service increased by 16 percentage points to 21 per cent.

As previously mentioned, less than half of all adults in the UK interact with government online. There could be many reasons for this including not having an internet connection. According to the ONS Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (ONS, 2012):

- 20 per cent of households in Great Britain did not have Internet access at home in 2012.
- Over half (54 per cent) of all households with no Internet access reported that they did not need the Internet.
- Over a fifth (22 per cent) reported a lack of skills.

The Accenture Digital Citizen Pulse Survey reported that a quarter of respondents in the UK indicated that they were not aware of ways to interact digitally with government or they did not want the government to access personal data.

The Internet is enabling people to participate in civic affairs in a new environment. According to the 2011 Oxford Internet Survey, the most common online civil participation activity carried out by internet users aged 14 and over in Great Britain was signing a petition online at 14 per cent, twice the proportion of that in 2007 (7 per cent). Around 1 in 10 users performed other civic activities online such as sending a message supporting a political cause (9 per cent), commenting on politics in a social media environment (9 per cent) or contacting a politician (8 per cent) (OXIS, 2011).

## Notes

1. The 20 basic e-government services are:

- Income taxes,
- Job search,
- Social security benefits,
- Personal documents (passport and driver's license),
- Car registration (new, used, imported cars),
- Application for building permission,
- Declaration to the police (e.g. in case of theft),
- Public libraries (availability of catalogues, search tools),

- Certificates (birth and marriage): request and delivery,
- Enrollment in higher education/university,
- Announcement of moving (change of address),
- Health related services (interactive advice on the availability of services in different hospitals; appointments for hospitals),
- Social contributions for employees,
- Corporate tax: declaration, notification,
- VAT: declaration, notification,
- Registration of a new company,
- Submission of data to statistical offices,
- Customs declarations,
- Environment-related permits (including reporting),,
- Public procurement.

## About the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme

### NWB logo 2



This article is published as part of the ONS Measuring National Well-being Programme.

The programme aims to produce accepted and trusted measures of the well-being of the nation - how the UK as a whole is doing. It is about looking at 'GDP and beyond' and includes:

- Greater analysis of the national economic accounts, especially to understand household income, expenditure and wealth.
- Further accounts linked to the national accounts, including the UK Environmental Accounts and valuing household production and 'human capital'.
- Quality of life measures, looking at different areas of national well-being such as health, relationships, job satisfaction, economic security, education environmental conditions.
- Working with others to include the measurement of the well-being of children and young people as part of national well-being.
- Measures of 'subjective well-being' - individuals' assessment of their own well-being.
- Headline indicators to summarise national well-being and the progress we are making as a society.

The programme is underpinned by a communication and engagement workstream, providing links with Cabinet Office and policy departments, international developments, the public and other stakeholders. The programme is working closely with Defra on the measurement of 'sustainable development' to provide a complete picture of national well-being, progress and sustainable development.

Find out more on the [Measuring National Well-being](#) website pages.

## Background notes

2. Details of the policy governing the release of new data are available by visiting [www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html](http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html) or from the Media Relations Office email: [media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:media.relations@ons.gsi.gov.uk)

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This document is also available on our website at [www.ons.gov.uk](http://www.ons.gov.uk).

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## Proposed domains and measures for Measuring National Well-being

More information about these proposed domains and measures can be found in '[Measuring National Well-being, Summary of Proposed Domains and Measures](#)'.

[RFT - Domains and measures \(24.5 Kb Excel sheet\)](#)