

Norwegians cautiously optimistic about social protection

The OECD's new cross-national survey, *Risks That Matter*, examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they feel government reacts to their concerns. The survey polled a representative sample of 22 000 adults in 21 OECD countries in 2018 in an effort to understand better what citizens want and need from social policy.

Norwegians are most worried, in the short run, about becoming ill or disabled. 55% of Norwegians list this as a top-three risk in the next couple of years. Norwegians also worry about struggling to meet daily expenses despite working (39% list this as a top-three concern) and affording adequate housing (33%) in the next year or two.*

When looking beyond the next decade, pensions are the most common concern for Norwegians, as they are in every country surveyed. 64% of Norwegians list "financial security in old age" as a top-three long-term risk, followed by concerns that their children will not do as well as they have in life (38%) and worries about securing/maintaining adequate housing (35%).*

Compared to respondents in other countries, Norwegians are relatively satisfied with social protection. 43% of Norwegians feel they receive their "fair share" of public benefits, given the taxes and contributions they pay – compared to the

*Values sum to exceed 100% because respondents could select up to three answers.

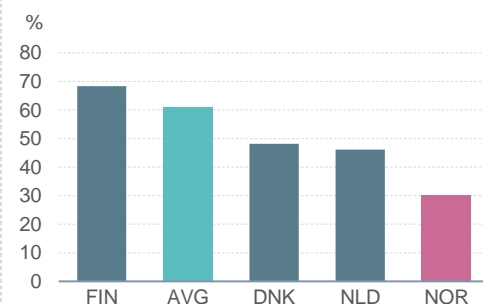
cross-country average of 19%. Only 30% of Norwegians feel government does *not* incorporate their views when designing policies – a lower level of scepticism than in every other country (Fig. 1).

Norwegians are also optimistic about their ability to access benefits easily when needed. 35% of Norwegians say they believe they could easily access public benefits if they needed them – the second most positive result across the 22 countries surveyed, after the Netherlands (38%) (Fig. 2).

While about half (53%) of Norwegians say government should be doing more to ensure their economic and social security, 32% of Norwegians say the government should keep doing what it has been doing – one of the highest levels of satisfaction in the survey (Fig. 3).

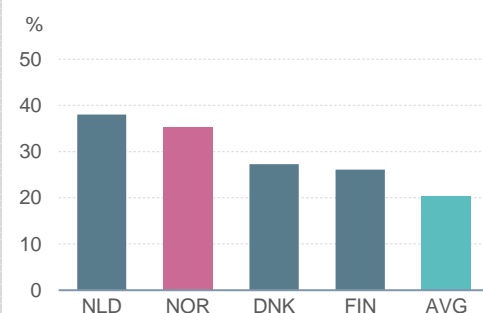
Despite these positive results, there is still room for improvement in social protection. Half of Norwegians say the government should increase spending on pensions, even if it means taxes will rise and other programmes may need to be cut; 42% support this trade-off for education, and 40% support it for housing.* Gender gaps exist in economic insecurity, too – 51% of women, compared to just 40% of men, say they would have trouble covering their basic expenses for two months if they lost their job and there were no unemployment benefits or social assistance.

Fig. 1. Norwegians less likely to feel ignored by government than people in all other countries surveyed



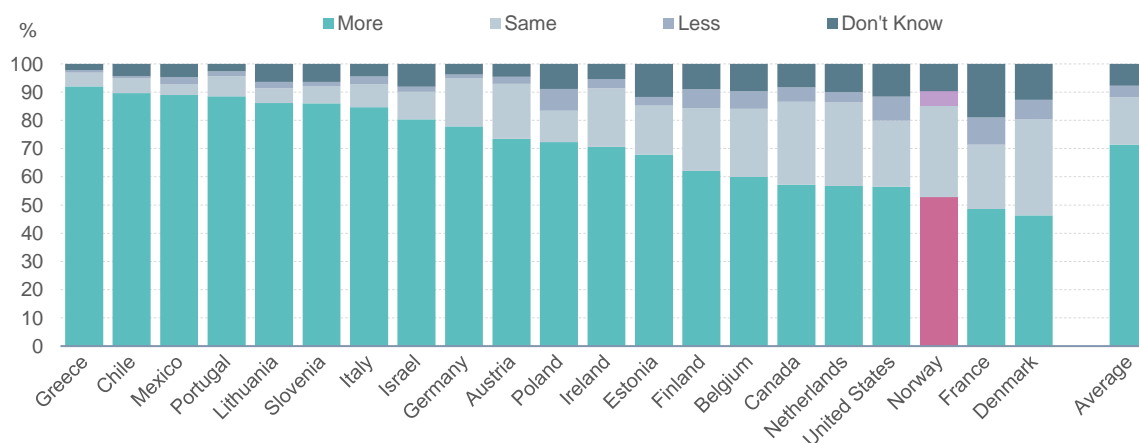
Note: Percent that disagree (or strongly disagree) with the statement "I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits."

Fig. 2. Norwegians more positive than most about benefit access



Note: Percent that agree (or strongly agree) with the statement "I think I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them."

Fig. 3. Just over half of Norwegians want government to do more to safeguard their economic and social security



Note: Distribution of responses to the question "Do you think the government should be doing less, more, or the same to ensure your economic and social security?"
Source: OECD (2019), *Main Findings from the 2018 OECD Risks that Matter Survey*, OECD Publishing, Paris.