

Belgians worried about pensions, want more support from government

The OECD's new cross-national survey, *Risks That Matter*, examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and their views on how well 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.

Belgians are most worried, in the short run, about becoming ill or disabled, even though they are reasonably satisfied with government healthcare supports. 63% of Belgians list illness or disability as a top-three risk in the next couple of years, and 61% agree that they have access to good-quality and affordable healthcare. The next most frequently cited short-term worries were crime or violence (42%) and struggling to make ends meet (42%).*

When looking beyond the next decade, pensions are by far the most common concern for Belgians. 64% of people in Belgium list "financial security in old age" as a top-three risk, and 48% say that they do not think the government would (or does) provide them with adequate income in old age.

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

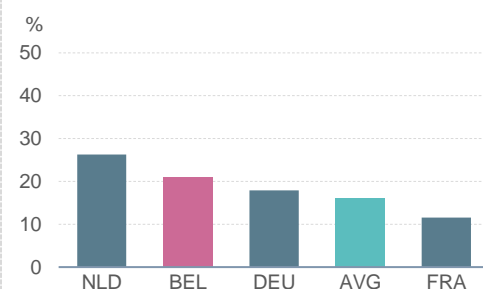
Similar to results in other countries, most people in Belgium feel they have little influence on public policy. Only 21% agree or strongly agree with the statement "The government incorporates the views of people like me when designing/reforming public benefits." (Fig. 1)

Most Belgians want more support from their government. 60% of Belgians say their government should do more to ensure their economic and social security (Fig. 3).

Only 29% believe they could easily access public benefits if they needed them – a higher share than in most other countries, but nevertheless a small share of Belgium's population.

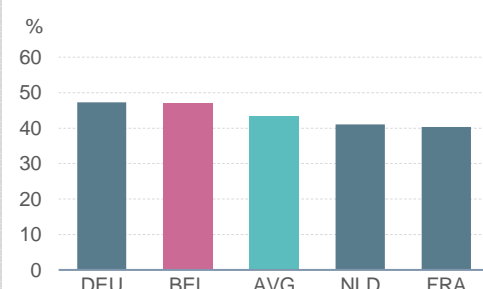
Belgians were most likely to pick pensions when asked which social programmes should receive greater investment. 47% of Belgians agreed that spending on pensions should increase, even if it means taxes will rise and other programmes may have to be cut (Fig. 2). 36% said that government should provide a basic level of income support to everyone (i.e. basic income), even if it means taxes will rise and some people will choose to work less. This is stronger support for basic income than in most other countries.

Fig. 1. As in many countries, few Belgians feel like their voice is being heard



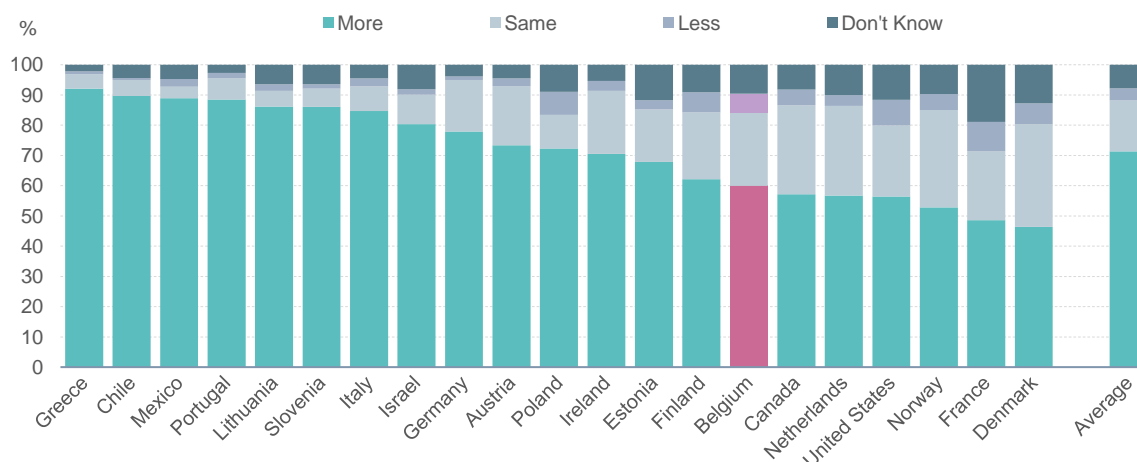
Note: Percent that agree (or strongly agree) with the statement "I feel the government incorporates the views of people like me when designing or reforming public benefits."

Fig. 2. Many Belgians back increased public spending on pensions



Note: Percent that agree (or strongly agree) that "Government should increase spending on pensions, even if it means that taxes will rise and some other programmes may have to be cut."

Fig. 3. Most Belgians 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.

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 Information on data for Israel: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932315602>