

Estonians are worried about economic insecurity and the adequacy of government support

The OECD's cross-national Risks that Matter (RTM) survey examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and how well they feel their government reacts to their concerns. The survey polled a representative sample of 25000 people aged 18 to 64 years old in 25 OECD countries to understand better what citizens want and need from social policy – particularly in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.

RTM finds a high degree of perceived economic insecurity, with over 60% of Estonians saying they are somewhat or very concerned about their household's finances and overall social and economic well-being over the next year or two. 65% of Estonians are worried about their country's economic situation and believe that it has worsened since 2019, although this degree of concern is still lower than the cross-national average of 71%.

Estonian respondents are very concerned with not being able to make ends meet during the short term (Fig. 3), while in the longer term are much more concerned about health.

In the face of this insecurity, there is some scepticism in government support. In Estonia, there is a greater than 30 percentage point difference in the share of people who are somewhat or very confident that friends and

family would support them through financial difficulties (nearly 50%), relative to the share (nearly 15%) who are confident that government would sufficiently support them through financial difficulties.

There is also scepticism around benefit receipt, with about half (51%) of respondents in Estonia saying they do not think they could receive public benefits if they needed them. Within this group (Fig. 2), a high share (63%) report feeling unsure about whether they would even qualify for these public benefits.

In terms of policy priorities, Estonians call on the government to spend more on pensions. This result holds even when respondents are asked to consider cost: 53% of Estonians say they would pay an additional 2% of their income to support pension benefits. This is the policy area with the greatest degree of support.

About three-quarters of Estonians say that they would like government to do more or much more to ensure their economic and social security. Support for progressive redistribution is also relatively high. Around 60% of Estonians think that the government should be doing more or much more to reduce income differences, in line with the OECD average (Figure 1).

Fig. 2. Share identifying that they are not sure if they would qualify for benefits, among the respondents who do not think they could easily access public benefits if needed

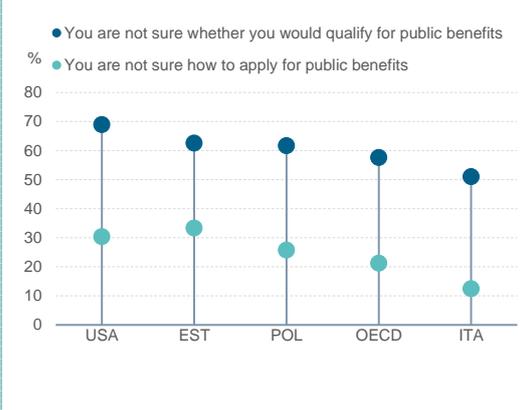


Fig. 3. Percent identifying economic risks they are somewhat or very worried about

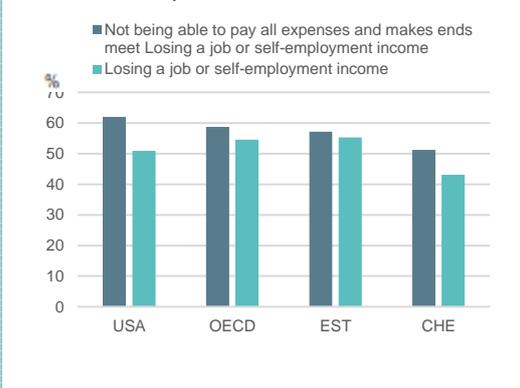
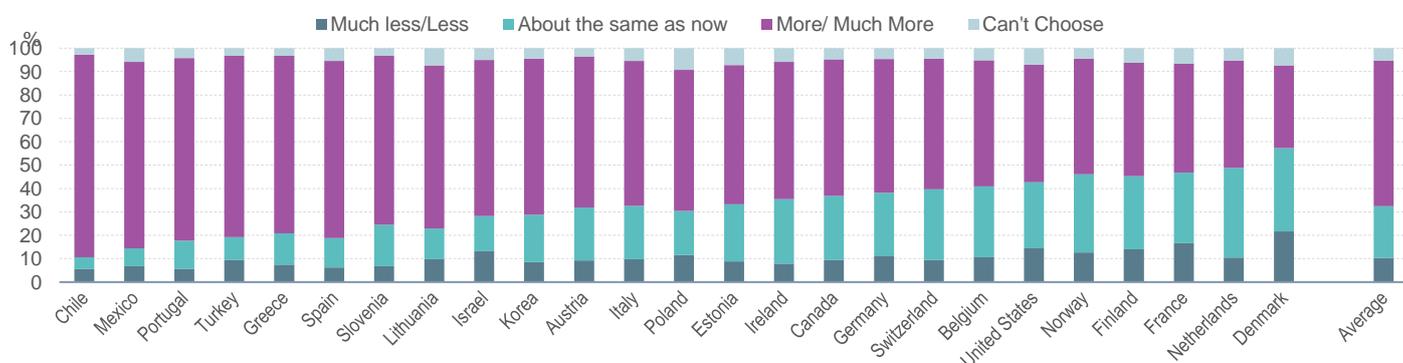


Fig. 1. About six of ten Estonians say government should redistribute more to reduce income differences



Notes: Respondents were asked whether they thought the government should be doing less, more, or the same as they are currently doing reduce income differences. They could also choose "don't know" as a response option. Countries are ranked by the percentage of respondents choosing "more". Source: OECD Secretariat estimates based on the OECD Risks That Matter 2020 survey, <https://www.oecd.org/social/risks-that-matter.htm>

The OECD Risks that Matter (RTM) survey is a cross-national survey examining people's social and economic concerns, how well they think government responds to their needs and expectations, and what policies they would like to see in the future. The survey was conducted for the first time in 2018 to support the OECD Social Policy Ministerial. The 2020 survey, conducted in September-October 2020, draws on nationally-representative samples in Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Mexico, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United States.