

Americans worried about making ends meet – today and in retirement

The OECD's new cross-national survey, *Risks That Matter*, examines people's perceptions of social and economic risks and assesses 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.

Americans are most worried, in the short run, about making ends meet. 48% of Americans list "struggling to meet daily expenses despite working" as a top-three risk in the next couple of years. The second most common short-term worry for Americans is becoming ill or disabled – the top concern in most other countries.

When looking beyond the next decade, 71% of Americans identify financial security in old age as one of their top-three risks. This is the most common result across countries. Nearly half (46%*) of Americans worry about social mobility, reporting that they do not think they will do as well in life as their parents.

Most Americans feel they have little influence over public policy, though they are more optimistic than people elsewhere. **27% of Americans agree that the**

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

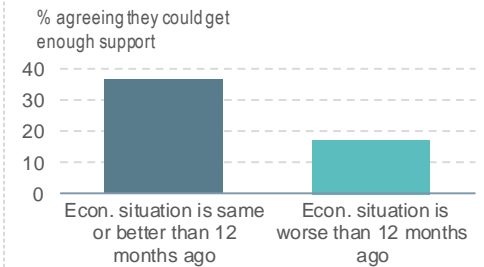
government incorporates the views of people like them when designing policies, compared to an average of 16% across countries.

Americans who face economic troubles are especially disillusioned with social safety nets. Among those who feel their economic situation has worsened over the past year, fewer than 20% feel that government would provide them with adequate income support in case of unemployment (Fig. 1).

Most people want government to do more to protect their economic security (Figure 3), and many are willing to pay for it. Given a range of policy priorities, Americans are most supportive of increased public spending on healthcare to feel more economically secure.

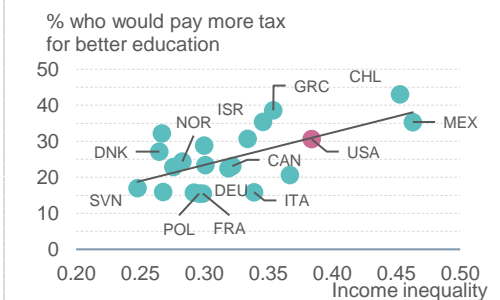
45% of Americans say they would be willing to pay an extra 2% of their income in taxes and contributions to receive better healthcare, and about one-third say they would pay an extra 2% to get better public education. Across countries, higher levels of inequality correlate with a greater willingness to invest more in education (Fig. 2), perhaps to help promote equality of opportunity.

Fig. 1. Americans with economic troubles are skeptical about getting public support in case of job loss



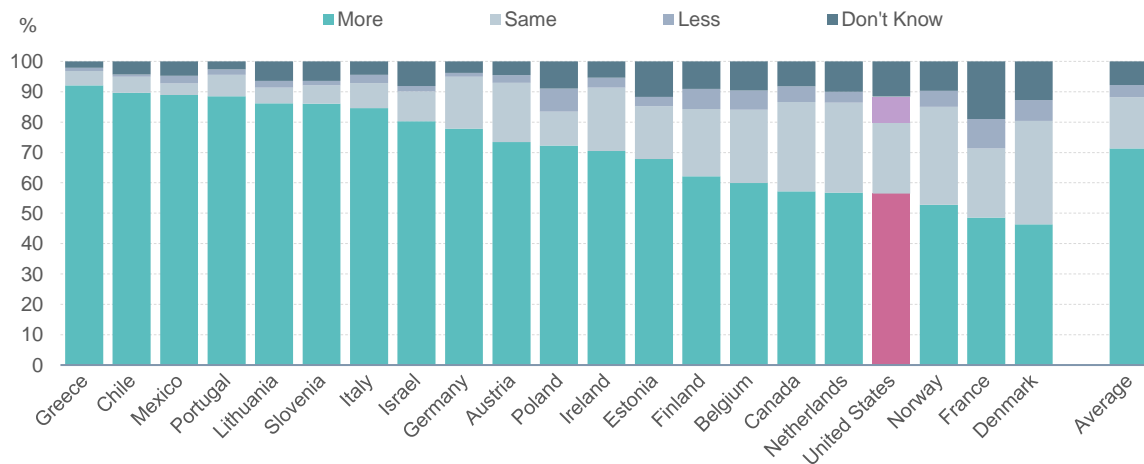
Note: Percent that agree (or strongly agree) with the statement "I think that the government would (or does) provide my family and me with adequate income support in the case of income loss due to unemployment", by beliefs around own economic situation, United States only.

Fig. 2. Higher inequality correlates with greater willingness to pay for education



Note: Percent that say they would pay an additional 2% of their income in taxes for "better provision of and access to" education. "Income inequality" refers to the Gini coefficient on disposable income.

Fig. 3. A majority (57%) of Americans 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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