

# Priorities of progress: understanding citizens' voices

What are citizens' priorities in society? What regional and national differences exist?



Civilisations and societies have long grappled with what constitutes society. How do today's citizens feel about the state of their nations? Great thinkers, from Plato to Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes to Mahatma Gandhi, have put forward competing visions about what form a society should take. Cultural, historical, economic and geographical factors shape people's views about what societies look like—and the role of government, commerce, the family and civil society in bringing it about.

## I. What kind of society do citizens want to live in?



Asking citizens in 50 countries, we found that, overall, **healthcare (#1)** sits at the top of citizens' priorities, followed by **social protection (#2)**, **access to education (#3)**, **public order (#4)**, **transport infrastructure (#5)**, **the environment (#6)**, and **R&D (#7)**.

### Healthcare is #1 priority of citizens

How citizens would prioritise public budgets:

Priority Ranking

**#1**

Improving the quality of and access to healthcare

**#2** Social protection (supporting low-income households, the elderly, disabled, sick, unemployed or young persons)

**#3** Improving the quality of and access to education

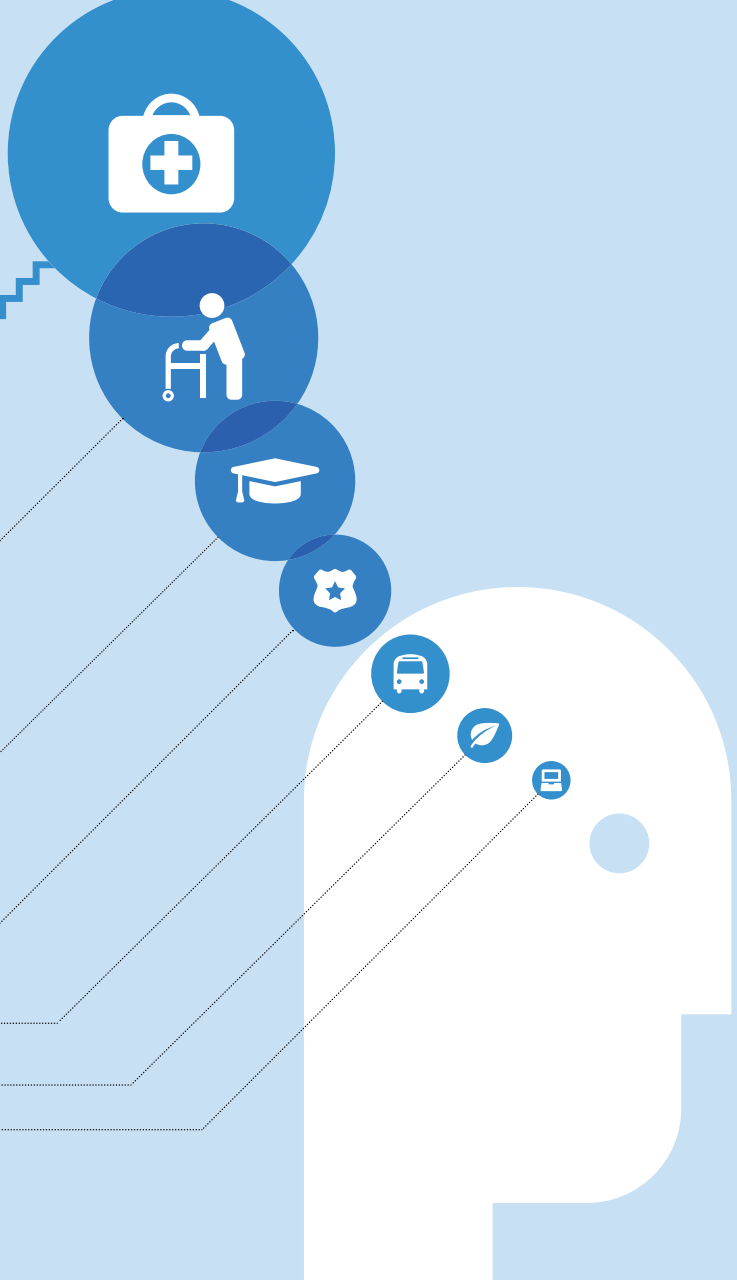
**#4** Public order and safety

**#5** Quality of transport

**#6** Protecting the environment

**#7** R&D (assisting innovation such as technology and the Internet of Things, of products and procedures)

The next chart shows how each government budget allocation aligns with overall citizens priorities in each region.



## II. Citizens' priorities and government spending - a regional view



How well do governments understand the regional consensus of how citizens think government budget should be allocated? We created a ranking to show which countries are better at managing their economies in line with the expectations and specific regional needs of its citizens.

### Which government priorities most closely represent citizen priorities?

The smaller the **differential**, the closer the alignment between citizens and their government on how money should be distributed between education, healthcare, the environment, public order and safety, transport, R&D, and social protection. For overall citizens' priorities in each region, see the previous chart.



For the survey results of individual countries, [click here](#).

**"Public consultation can transform electoral democracy into deliberative democracy, where citizens play a role in shaping the formulation of the problem and identifying solutions."**

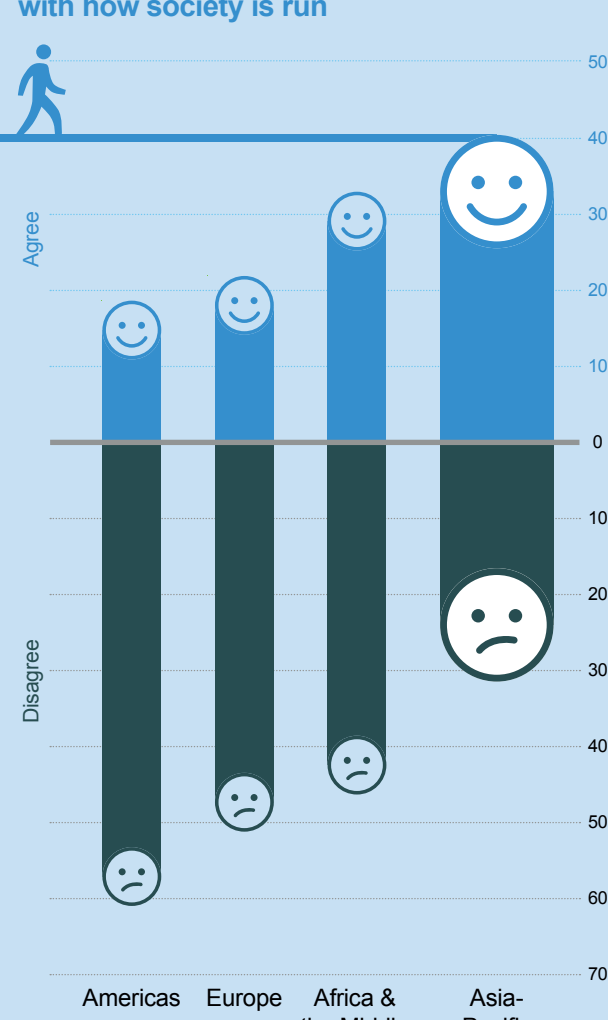
Alessandro Bellantoni, deputy head, Public Governance Reviews, and head, Open Government Unit, OECD

## III. How are we doing today?

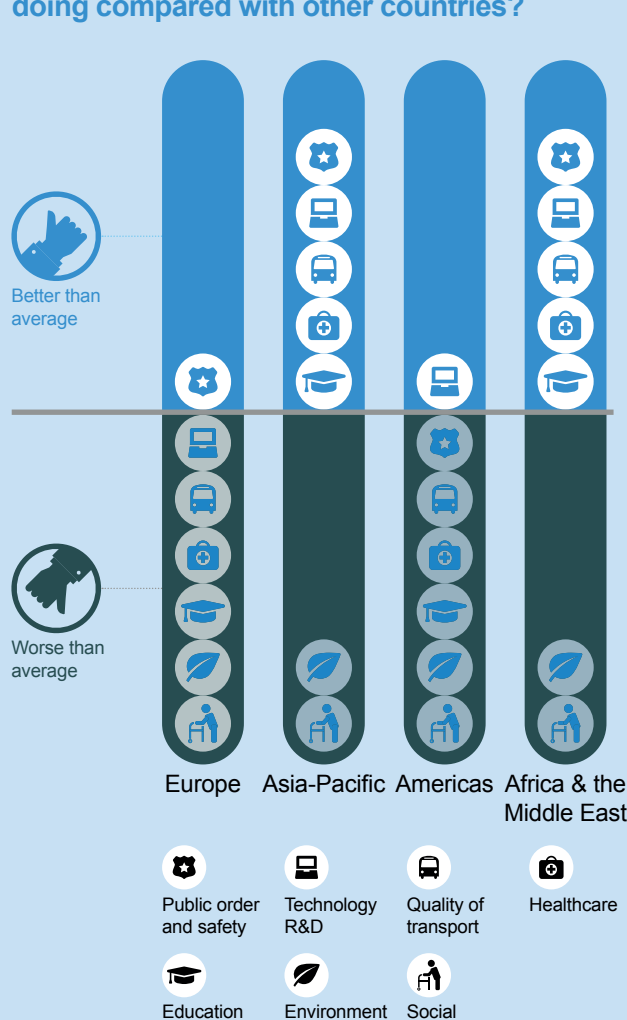


There are myriad data that indicate citizens' widespread dissatisfaction with the direction of their countries.

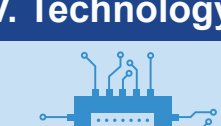
### Citizens in Asia are happiest with how society is run



### How do you think your country is doing compared with other countries?



## IV. Technology and society

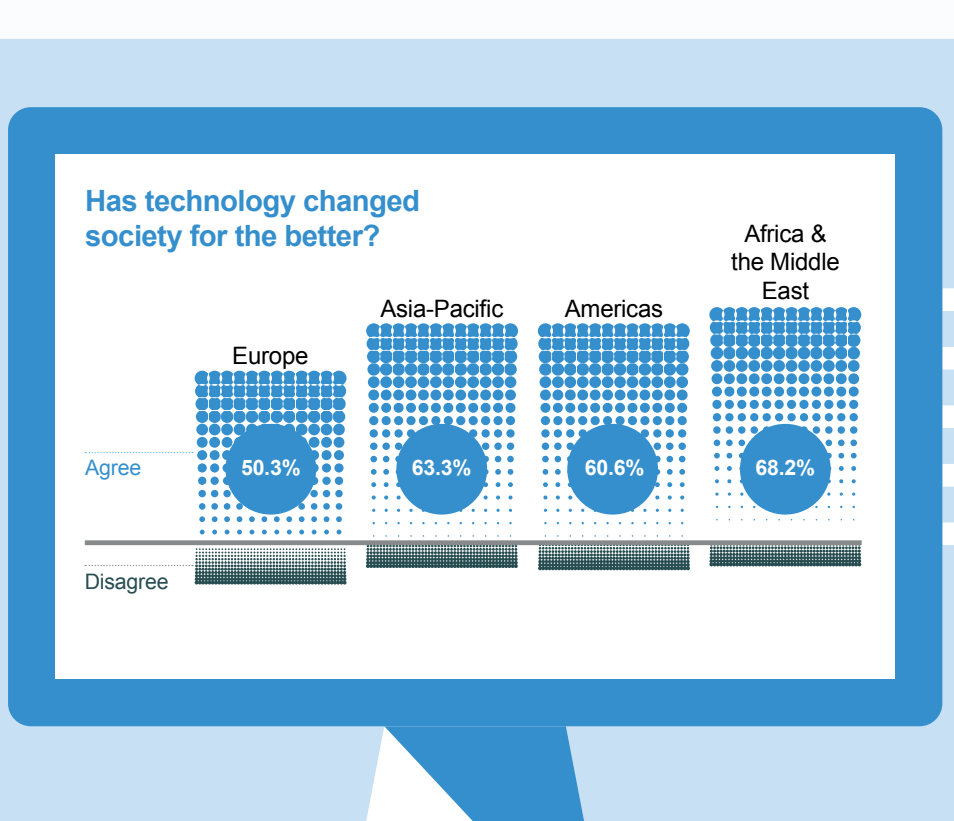


From consumer electronics, apps and smartphones to the latest frontiers in quantum computing, artificial intelligence and blockchain, technology is playing a crucial role in furthering social goals, from telehealth to education tech.

Internet users globally have grown from 1.9bn (2010) to 3.3bn (2016). Technology is creating new income streams that can improve people's material well-being as platforms like Uber, Airbnb and Upwork provide new, flexible income streams.

### 60% believe technology benefits society

While, overall, the respondents overwhelmingly agreed that technology has changed society and their personal lives for the better, there were regional differences. Europe has shown less enthusiasm for the positives of technological developments on both the individual and the society levels (the percentage of respondents agreeing is the least, and it is the highest in disagreeing in all four questions related to technology).



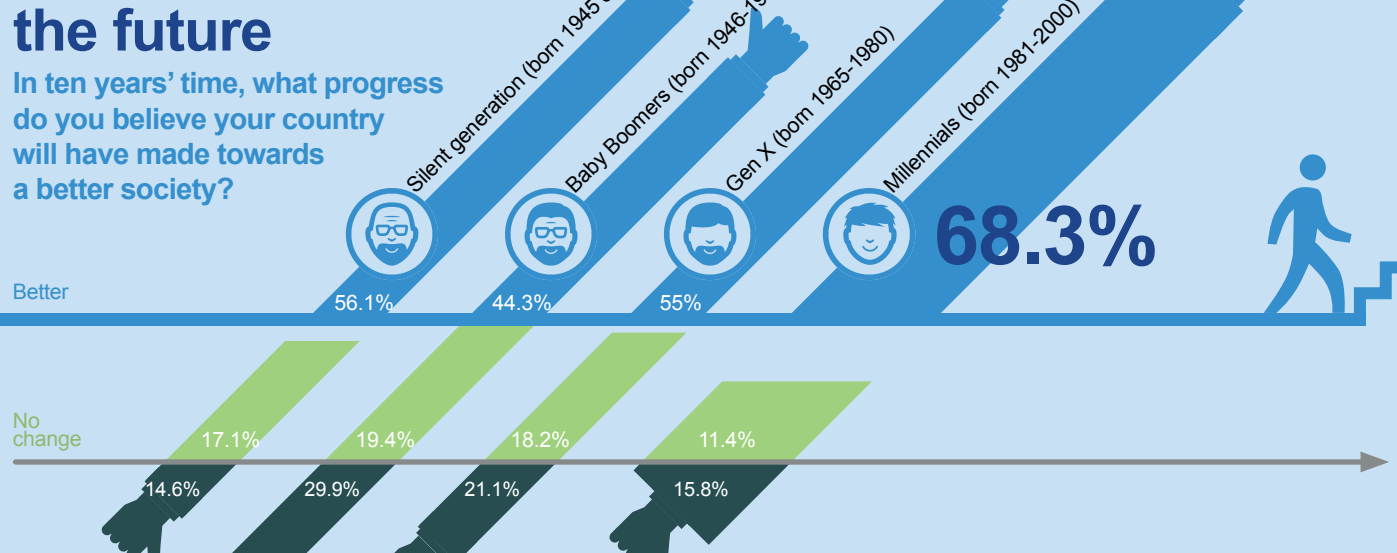
## V. Future vision



Across the world, each generation has enjoyed a steady improvement in material well-being from the last, but data indicates that may not hold for today's young people, especially in stagnating developed economies. To build a vibrant, resilient society, it is crucial that the public have a say in the decisions affecting their lives.

### Millennials are most positive about the future

In ten years' time, what progress do you believe your country will have made towards a better society?



**"The presence of trusting, happy, friendly, relationships in daily life don't rule out the importance of the standard economic and physical health measures that were focused on before, but in fact are very important relative to them and, in a well-functioning society, are complementary with them."**

John Helliwell, professor emeritus of economics, University of British Columbia, and editor, World Happiness Report