

Public Perceptions of Standards in Public Life in the UK and Europe

Committee on
Standards in
Public Life

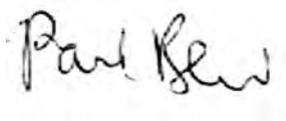
March 2014

Foreword from the Chair of the Committee on Standards in Public Life

Last Autumn, my Committee published our final biennial survey of public attitudes towards conduct in public life. This survey contained a great deal of data about public perceptions and expectations and drew on data collected from our surveys of the last 10 years. It generated much interest. The survey confirmed that the seven principles of public life are as relevant as they ever were and are supported by the public. Worryingly, it demonstrated that over the lifetime of the survey there has been a continuous and substantial decline in public perceptions of standards in public life.

In order to ascertain whether this is a unique national trend or part of a broader change in public attitudes across Western democracies, the Committee commissioned this research to compare public perceptions of standards in public life in the UK with those recorded in a number of other European countries. What this research finds is that British citizens' assessments of standards in public life are not unusual and they are rarely the most cynical. Indeed British citizens' perceptions and experiences of corruption are consistently lower than those in most other European countries.

However, there is no room for complacency. Whilst declining perceptions of government institutions and office holders have not been matched by comparable decreases in citizens' support for democracy, this research also finds that current events both in terms of national scandals and economic events and the response to them play a part in informing citizens' views of standards, probity and trust. Public perceptions of standards in public life have political consequences. It is important therefore that public authorities and office holders remain alert to the fundamental role that high ethical standards play in the healthy functioning of society.



Lord Paul Bew
Chair
March 2014



Public perceptions of standards in public life in the UK and Europe

Research by the Committee for Standards in Public Life (CSPL) has measured a decline in perceptions of standards in public life amongst the British public, alongside a decreasing level of trust in many public institutions, since its first survey into public attitudes to standards in public life in 2004. However, data from these surveys do not allow us to assess citizens' perceptions of standards in public life in the UK compared with those in other countries. Without such information, we are unable to determine if increasingly negative views of standards in public life, or declining trust in the UK, represent a national trend that may be motivated by domestic factors or if they are part of a broader change in the attitudes of citizens across western democracies. This paper aims to go some way to addressing this issue by comparing citizens' perceptions of standards in public life in the United Kingdom with those recorded in a number of European countries.

This paper uses data from three cross-national survey series, the European Values Survey (EVS), the European Social Survey (ESS) and the Eurobarometer, to examine European citizens' perceptions of the probity of public officials, along with their levels of trust and confidence in a range of public institutions. The diverse questions asked in these surveys mean we are unable to make direct comparisons between their responses,¹ but together they afford an informative picture of attitudes to standards in public life and trust in government across the EU. Although this latter measurement cannot be assumed to be a function of standards of conduct in public life alone, as citizens' satisfaction with government outputs and their partisan preferences may also impact their levels of trust in government, it offers the opportunity to compare assessments of both office holders and institutions on a cross-European level.

1 Key findings

Using data collected in the three different surveys across the course of three decades, this analysis finds that across Europe (including in the UK):

- Despite widespread beliefs that corruption is a problem in most countries (section 2.1), very few people report recently being asked or expected to pay a bribe to a public official (section 2.2).
- People's perceptions of national and local public institutions are largely the same (section 2.3).
- Levels of trust in representative institutions (such as parliament and political parties) tend to be lower than in administrative institutions (such as the judicial and police services) (section 2.5).
- Levels of trust in political institutions often rebound after general elections, however this increase tends not to be sustained (section 3.1).
- Levels of trust in political institutions may suffer at times of political crisis, such as the fall of the Italian government in 2008, and the British MPs' expenses scandal in 2009 (sections 3.1 and 3.2).
- Citizens across Europe tend to believe that there is insufficient transparency in and supervision of the financing of political parties (section 3.4).

¹ Further details of the data used in this analysis can be found in the appendix.



- Levels of satisfaction with government tend to fluctuate more than levels of satisfaction with democracy (section 3.5).
- Perceptions of the judicial and police services tend to be largely positive and have tended to fluctuate less than perceptions of representative institutions since these were first measured in the 1980s (sections 4.2 and 4.3).

However, compared with the UK:

- Citizens in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands believe there is less corruption in their own countries than British citizens do. However, the proportion of citizens who believe that corruption is widespread in the UK or its public institutions is still below the EU average (sections 2.1).
- Citizens in most other European country are consistently more likely to report that they have had personal experience of corruption (section 2.2).
- There is no consensus in other European countries that corruption is most widespread amongst public officials holding political office. In many other European countries, public officials awarding public tenders and issuing building permits are often viewed as or more negatively than those holding political office (section 2.4).
- Citizens in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands consistently tend to have more positive views of almost every public institution (section 2.5).
- The countries that have been worst hit by the European economic crisis (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain) have recorded larger decreases in trust in political institutions in recent years (sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). These countries have also recorded the most dramatic decline in levels of satisfaction with democracy (section 3.5).

2 General perceptions of corruption in public institutions

The Eurobarometer's special surveys on corruption have been conducted every two years between 2007 and 2013. The data these have collected offer the opportunity to investigate citizens' perceptions and experiences of corruption (as one facet of opinion towards standards in public life) at the cross-national level. This allows us to compare these views across European countries. In the UK, experiences of corruption tend to be lower and perceptions more optimistic than the EU-wide average.

2.1 Perceptions of overall levels of corruption

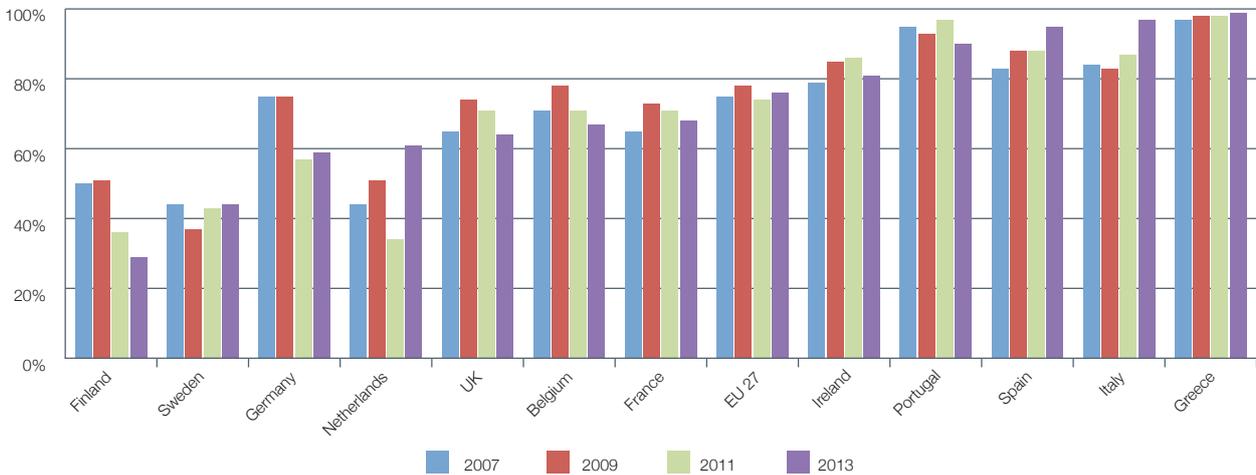
Figure 1 shows that the proportion of respondents in the UK who believe that corruption is a major (or widespread)² problem was consistently below the EU average in each of the four surveys conducted between 2007 and 2013. This proportion peaked in 2009, when 73% of British respondents indicated that they thought corruption was a major problem. This is perhaps unsurprising as, although this question does not pertain to political institutions alone, the 2009 survey was conducted only four months after details of the MPs' expenses scandal were first revealed. Since then, the proportion of British respondents with such a pessimistic attitude has been in decline; between 2009 and 2013, it decreased by 10 percentage points.

The proportion of respondents in the UK who indicated that they believed corruption to be a major problem is largely comparable to those levels measured in France and Belgium. However more people in Britain think that corruption is a major problem than in Sweden, Finland and – despite a dramatic rise between 2011 and 2013 – Denmark. A large increase was also recorded in the Netherlands between the last two survey waves, but this followed a marked decrease in the proportion of respondents who thought corruption was a major problem in 2009 and 2011. However, the proportion of respondents who believed corruption to be a major problem in most

² In the 2013 survey, the question "Corruption is a major problem in this country" was replaced by "The problem of corruption is widespread in this country". Despite these differences, responses to both questions have been included in this analysis.

European countries has not fluctuated widely. The most consistent evaluations were offered in the most pessimistic country, Greece, where between 97% and 99% of respondents consistently thought corruption was a major problem. The lack of a common trend across European countries suggests that national factors are impacting these assessments.

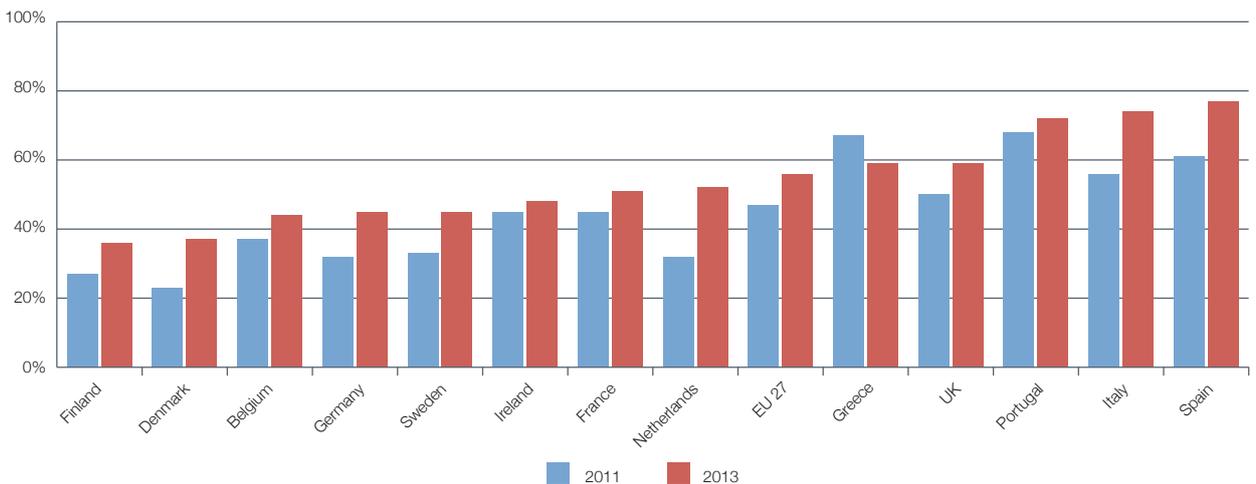
Figure 1: Percentage of respondents who believe corruption is a major/widespread problem in their country



(Data source: Eurobarometer)

Although the proportion of respondents in the UK who believed corruption to be a major problem decreased in 2011 and 2013, at least 50% of respondents thought that corruption had recently risen in the UK in both years (see figure 2). In the UK, the proportion of respondents who believed corruption had increased over the previous three years rose from 50% to 59% between 2011 and 2013. In both years, this was greater than the EU average. Only respondents in Greece, Portugal, Italy and Spain were more likely than British respondents to believe that corruption had increased over the previous three years in either survey.

Figure 2: Average proportion of respondents who believe that corruption has increased over the previous three years



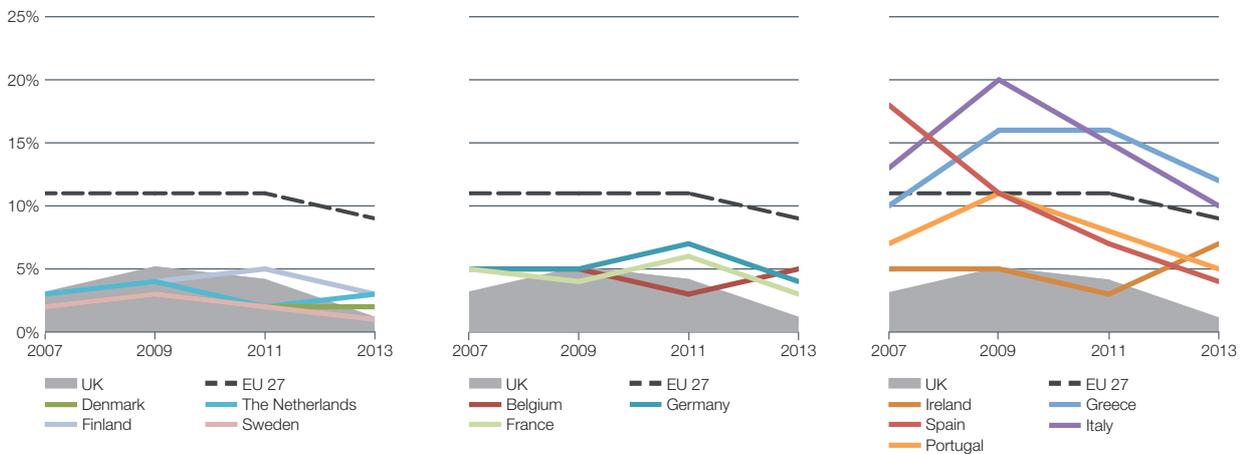
(Data source: Eurobarometer)

2.2 Experiences of corruption

Citizens' perceptions of corruption do not appear to align with their personal experiences of bribery. In most countries, especially the UK, far fewer people reported being asked or expected to pay a bribe than the proportion who thought corruption was a major problem. This may be due to individuals' reluctance to admit paying a bribe, their belief that other forms of corruption are more common in their national institutions or their views on probity and standards being shaped by more than their personal experiences of bribery alone.

As figure 3 shows, in the UK, no more than 5% of respondents ever indicated that they had been asked or expected to pay a bribe for public services. This proportion actually declined in both the 2011 and 2013 surveys, despite respondents reporting that they believed corruption had increased in the country over the previous three years. By 2013, the UK recorded the lowest level of experiences of corruption across the EU, but these were not translated to the most positive perceptions of probity and standards.

Figure 3: Proportion of respondents who had been asked or expected to pay a bribe in previous 12 months

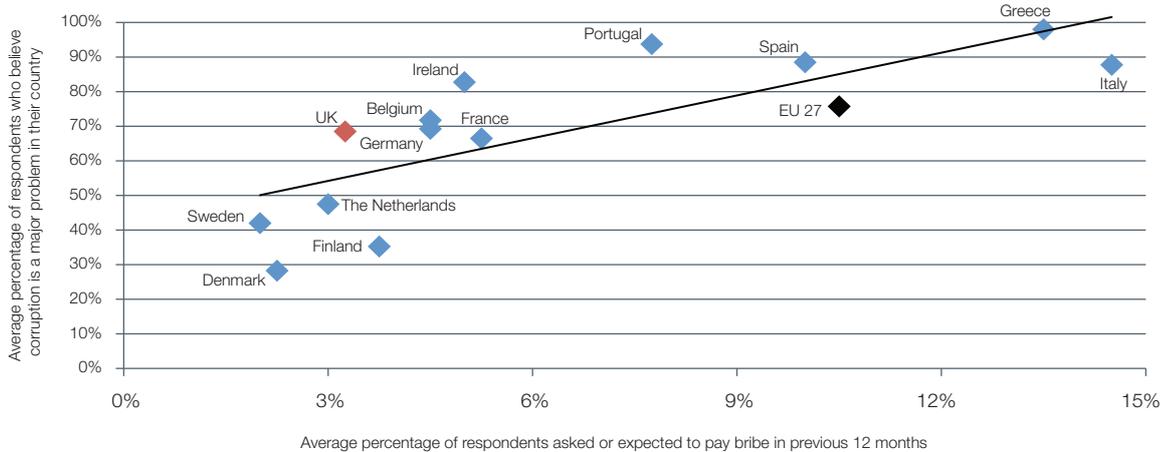


(Data source: Eurobarometer)

The disparity between individuals' experiences and perceptions of corruption is not confined to the UK. As figure 4 displays, even in Greece and Italy where corruption was most frequently reported, no more than 20% of respondents ever reported being asked or expected to pay a bribe over the previous 12 months. But the magnitude of the difference between experiences and perceptions does not appear to be consistent throughout the countries in this analysis. For example, figure 4 shows that an average of 3% of respondents in both the UK and the Netherlands reported that they had been asked or expected to pay a bribe during the previous 12 months, but while only 49% of respondents thought corruption was a major problem in the Netherlands, this proportion was 20 percentage points higher (69%) in the UK.



Figure 4: Comparison of respondents' experiences of corruption and belief that corruption is a major/widespread problem in their country



(Data source: Eurobarometer)

2.3 Perceptions of corruption in public institutions

Figure 5 shows that a majority of respondents in the UK consistently report that they believe there is corruption in national and local public institutions. This proportion varies between 63% and 76% across the surveys and is consistently around 10 percentage points lower than the EU-wide average. The most negative views in the UK were recorded in 2009 (a matter of months after the MPs' expenses scandal first broke). Although this scandal was limited to national representatives, it also coincided with an increase in the proportion of respondents who thought there was corruption in local public institutions. Since 2009, however, the proportion of British respondents believing there to be corruption in local public institutions has decreased more rapidly than the proportion with such negative views of national public institutions.

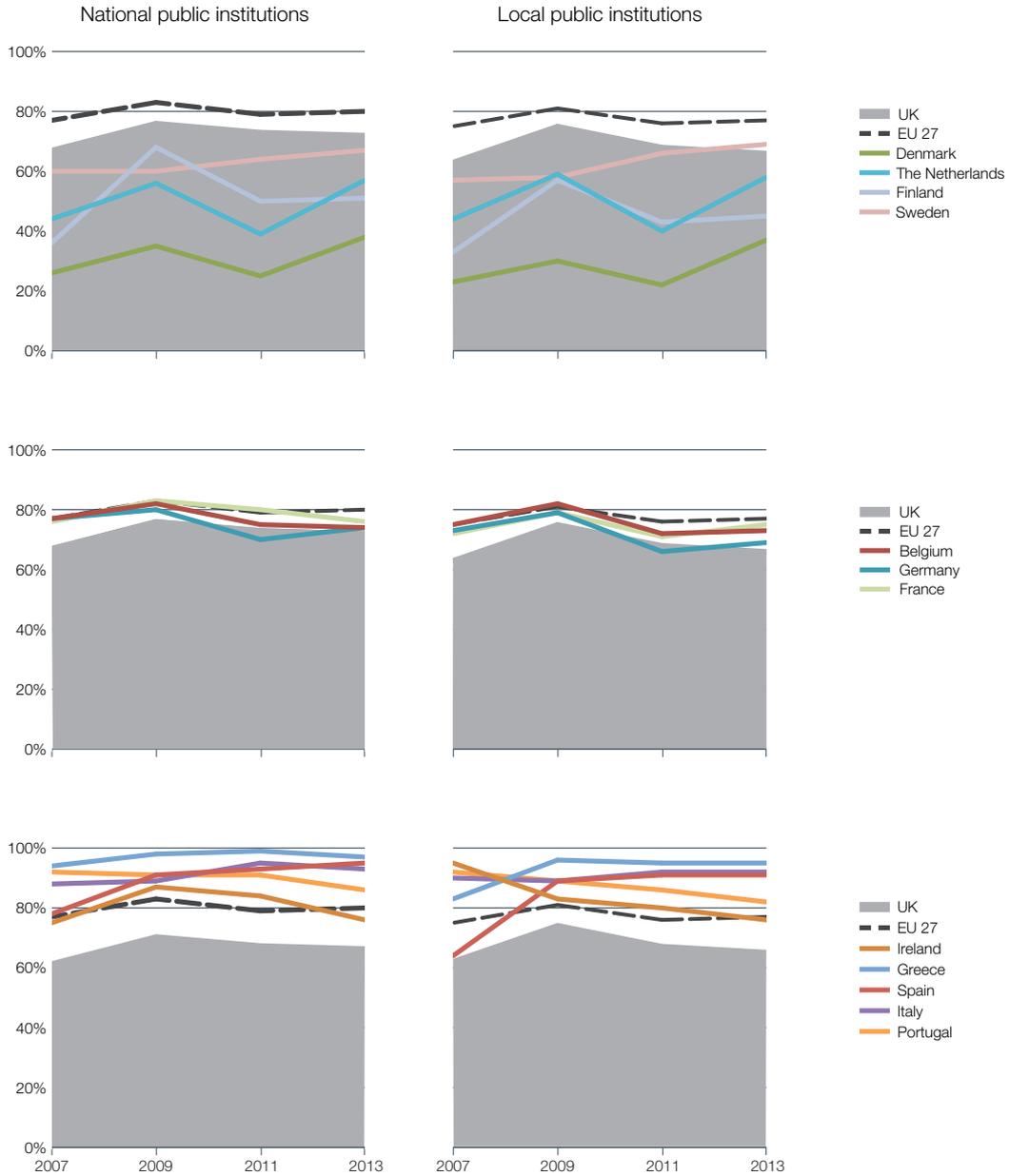
There were various fluctuations over time in the views of corruption in national and local institutions within individual countries. As these occurred at different times in different countries, this suggests that they were impacted by national factors. The most dramatic increase in the proportion of respondents who believed there was corruption in their national and local public institutions was recorded in Finland between 2007 and 2009 (though even by 2009, both levels were still much lower than those recorded in the UK and the EU averages). These increases in Finland coincided with a political party finance scandal in the country, but were not sustained beyond 2009. By 2011, the proportion of respondents with negative views of the Finnish national and local public institutions fell by around 15% (albeit not to the pre-scandals levels recorded in 2007).

Greece consistently recorded the highest proportion of respondents reporting corruption in their national public institutions and, since 2009, in local public institutions. By 2013, these figures were 97% and 95% respectively. Although there were substantial increases in the proportion of Danish respondents who believed corruption was widespread in their national and local institutions between 2011 and 2013, they remained the most optimistic country in this survey and the only one where the majority of respondents never believed there to be corruption in either national or local public institutions.

In most countries, respondents have marginally more optimistic views of their local than national institutions. This is reflected in the EU average, as well as in the levels recorded in the UK. In Spain and Greece, substantially more respondents believed there was corruption in national institutions than local institutions in 2007. However, negative views of local institutions increased dramatically in 2009 and appear to have stabilised at a higher level. Since then, they now appear to mirror more closely the pessimistic perceptions that Spanish and Greek respondents hold of national public institutions.



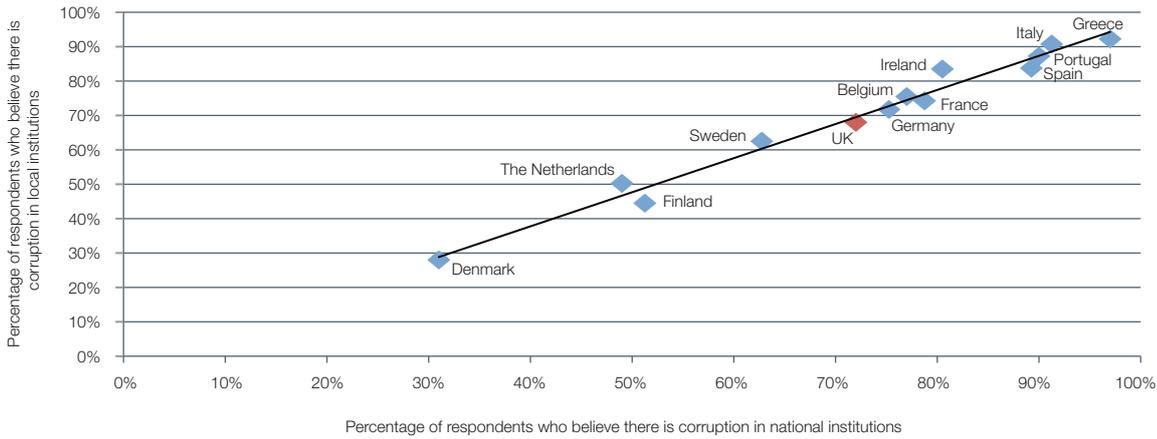
Figure 5: Percentage of respondents who believe there is corruption in their national and local public institutions



(Data source: Eurobarometer)

Figure 6 highlights that countries where respondents are more likely to report corruption in their national public institutions are also those where respondents are more likely to report corruption in their local public institutions. The UK sits in the middle of the countries included in this analysis, with an average of 72% of respondents across the four surveys thinking that there is corruption in national public institutions (four percentage points higher than those with the same view of local public institutions). Comparable differences can be found in many European countries. Only in the Netherlands, Sweden, Ireland and Italy are the average perceptions of national institutions more positive than those at the local level.

Figure 6: Comparison of views of corruption in national and local public institutions



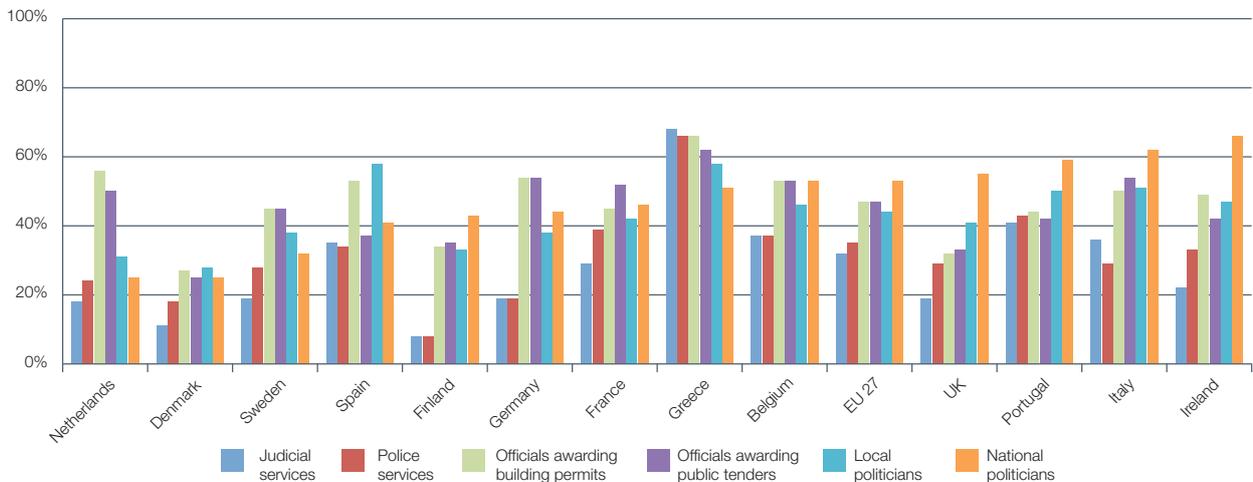
(Data source: Eurobarometer)

2.4 Cross-national differences in the perceptions of corruption in public institutions

Respondents across the EU tend to believe that members of the police and judicial services are the least likely public office holders to take bribes or abuse their power for personal gain. In contrast, national politicians are, on average, afforded the most pessimistic evaluations. In fact, they are the only office holder whom the majority of respondents across the EU believe take bribes or abuse their power for personal gain. However, the relative rankings of these office holders are not consistent when examined at the national level; in a number of countries, public officials awarding public tenders or issuing building permits are viewed more negatively than national politicians.

Compared with the EU average, notably fewer British respondents believe that people working in the judicial services, awarding public tenders and issuing building permits take bribes or abuse their power for personal gain. In fact, respondents in the UK report some of the most optimistic evaluations of public officials awarding public tenders or issuing building permits. However, even though local politicians are also viewed relatively favourably, the average proportion of respondents in the UK who believe that national politicians take bribes or abuse their powers is 14 percentage points higher than those who believe local politicians act in such a way. These higher levels of negative views of national politicians in the UK are comparable to the EU average.

Figure 7: Average proportion of respondents who believe that office holders take bribes or abuse their powers for personal gain



(Data source: Eurobarometer)

Although the proportion of respondents who believe that public office holders take bribes or abuse their power for personal gain varies across Europe, figure 7 highlights some commonalities between these evaluations. Almost all European respondents think that members of the judicial services are less likely to take bribes or abuse their power, usually followed by members of the police services. The notable exception is Greece, where, on average, public officials working in the police or judicial services are considered to be the most likely to abuse their powers.

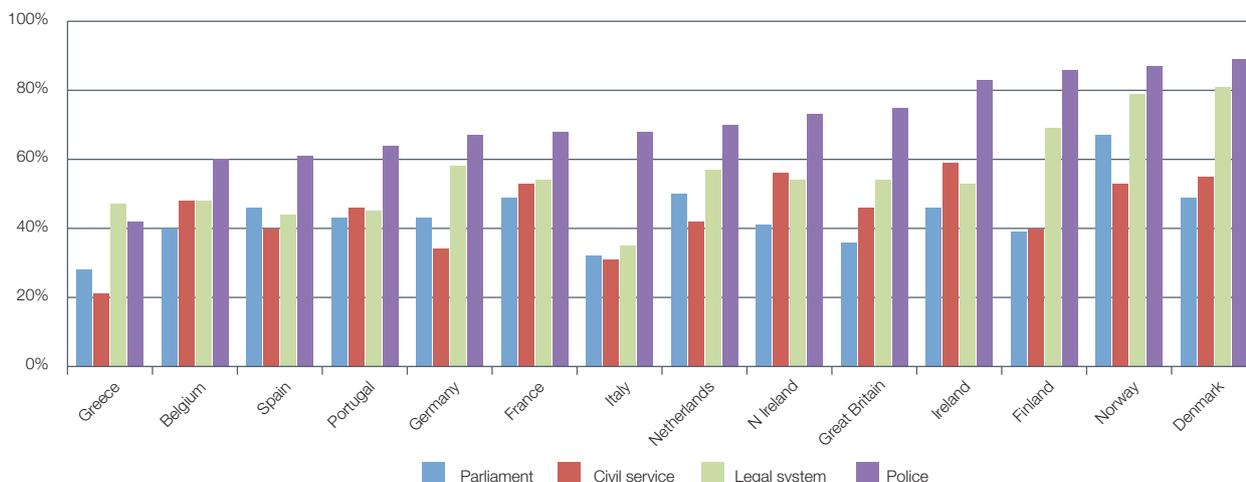
Of the countries included in this analysis, only British and Portuguese respondents rate both national and local politicians more negatively than they rate all other public office holders. Although, on average, national politicians are considered to be the most likely to take bribes or abuse their power across the EU, they are not the most negatively rated in every country; in Greece they have actually been the most positively rated set of office holders. On the whole, local politicians tend to be rated much more favourably. On average, EU respondents have more positive views of local politicians than they do of public officials awarding public tenders or issuing building permits (though this is not the case at the national level in the UK). Only in Spain are local politicians considered to be the group that is the most likely to take bribes or abuse their powers.

2.5 Cross-national differences in levels of trust in public institutions

Respondents in most European countries also tend to share essentially the same *relative* ranking of levels of confidence and trust in public institutions (see figure 8). In each country apart from Greece, respondents are most likely to have confidence in the national police force often followed by the country’s judicial system. However, in Ireland and Northern Ireland the national civil service receives better ratings than the legal system. While there tends to be a difference of around 10 percentage points in levels of confidence in the police and justice system in most European countries, this is closer to a 20 point gap in Great Britain and Northern Ireland and a 30 point gap in Ireland. This gap is even larger in Italy where just over half as many respondents (35%) indicated that they had confidence in the police as the proportion who had confidence in their justice system (68%).

National parliaments – the representative institution of government – tend to be the lowest rated institution in European nations. Only in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Greece are average levels of confidence in the national civil service still lower. The ranking of these institutions in Great Britain therefore appears to be largely in line with those assessments found in other European countries. Nonetheless, while British respondents reported one of the highest levels of confidence in the police, only Italian and Greek respondents had less confidence in their national parliament; in all other countries, an average of at least 40% of respondents reported that they had confidence in their national parliament.

Figure 8: Average levels of confidence in public institutions

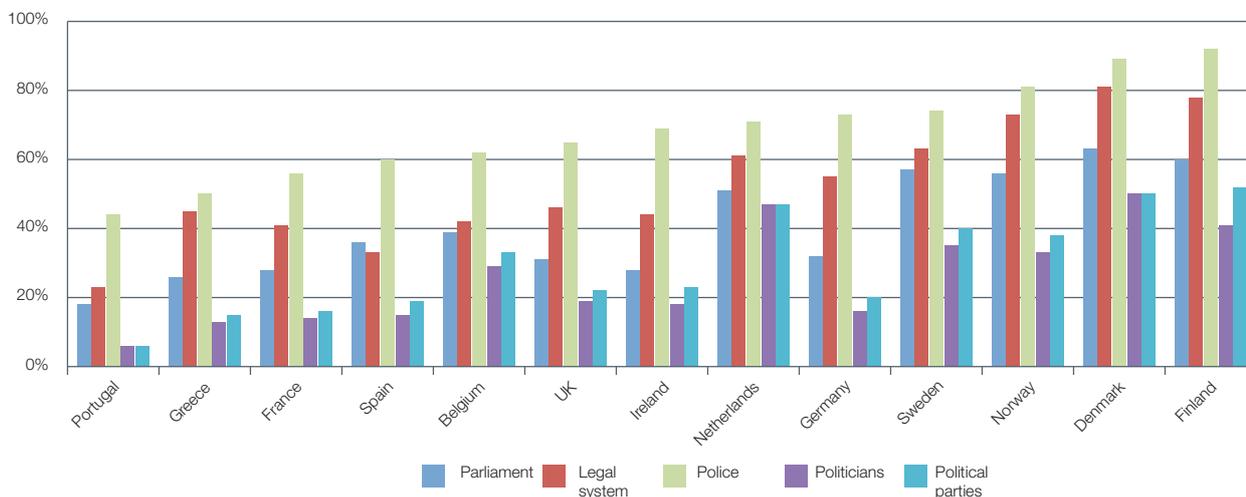


(Data source: European Values Survey)



Data from the European Social Survey, as shown in figure 9, reinforces this suggestion that respondents in most European countries trust administrative institutions more than representative institutions; people are more likely to trust their national police force than any other institution of government. This is almost always followed by their country's legal system. Politicians and political parties are consistently ranked lowest, regardless of a country's political set-up or electoral system.

Figure 9: Average levels of trust in public institutions



(Data source: European Social Survey)

These findings also suggest that trust in different public institutions is inter-related; those countries that rank one institution highly are also likely to have positive attitudes to other institutions. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands tend to have higher levels of trust in all institutions than any of their European neighbours apart from the Netherlands and Sweden, while Portugal tends to have lower levels of trust in both administrative and representative institutions of government.

3 Perceptions of representative institutions

National representative institutions are the only bodies of central government that are elected – either directly or indirectly – by the citizens of each country and are accountable to citizens at election time. Levels of trust in these institutions and the people who compose them tend to be lower than those in administrative institutions across Europe, including in the UK, despite their direct accountability to citizens in elections. The levels of trust vary across countries, suggesting that country specific factors – which may be linked to the political structures and cultures within these countries – influence attitudes to representative institutions.

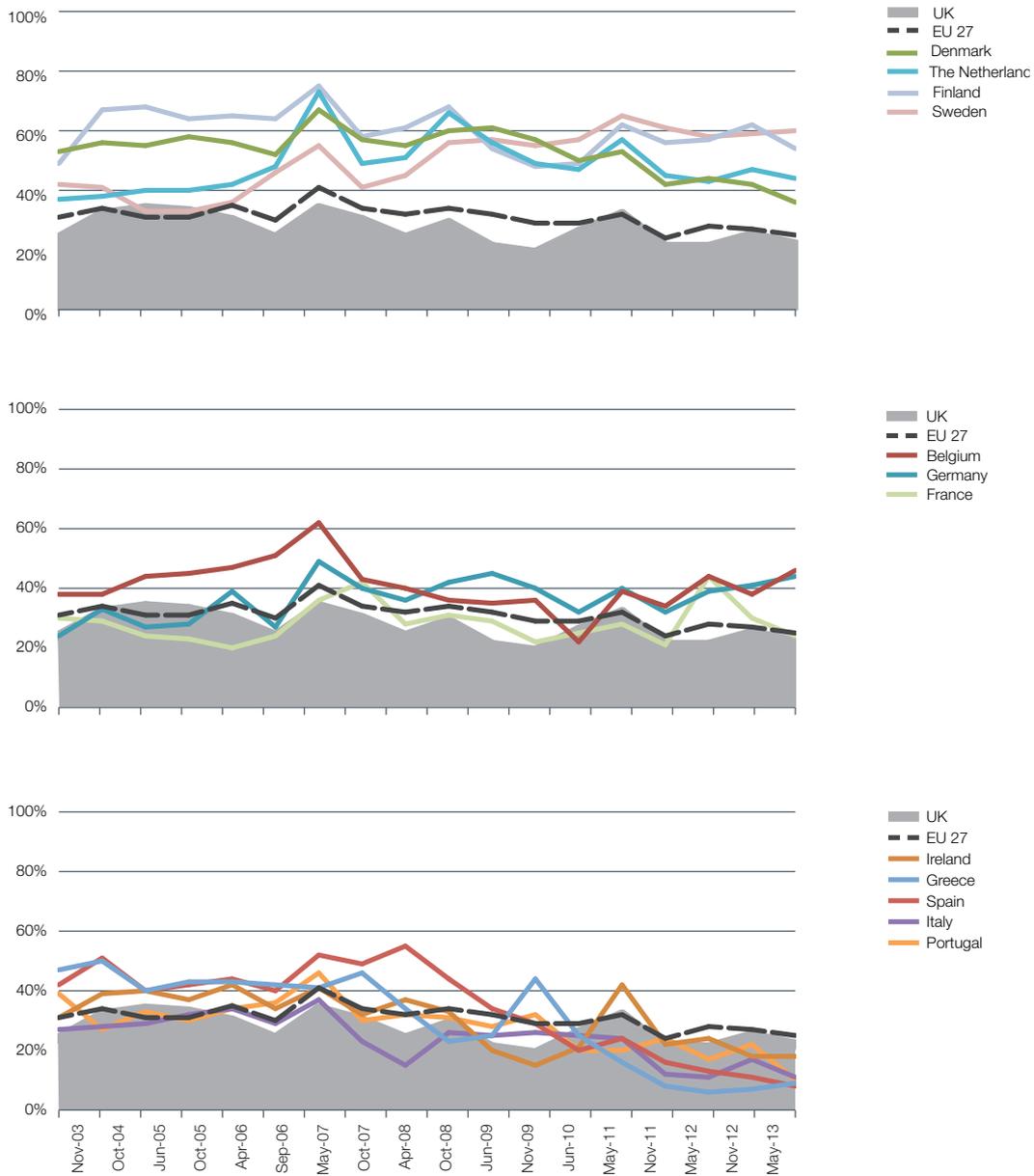
Perhaps unsurprisingly, levels of trust in representative institutions appear to be more sensitive to political events than do assessments of administrative institutions. In particular, fluctuations in attitudes are often detected around elections or at times of political crises. These fluctuations mostly affect political parties (who tend to be trusted the least of all political institutions), politicians, the government, and – although to a lesser extent – national parliaments.

3.1 Perceptions of national government

Figure 10 shows that there were many fluctuations in citizens' trust of national government in data collected by the Eurobarometer survey between 2002 and 2012. In the UK, the most severe drop in trust in government was measured in the first half of 2009, with fewer than 2 out of 10 respondents indicating that they trusted the British government in June 2009. This low coincided with the height of the MPs expenses scandal, suggesting that political scandals may be linked to citizens' levels of trust in government.



Figure 10: Percentage of respondents who “tend to trust” their national government

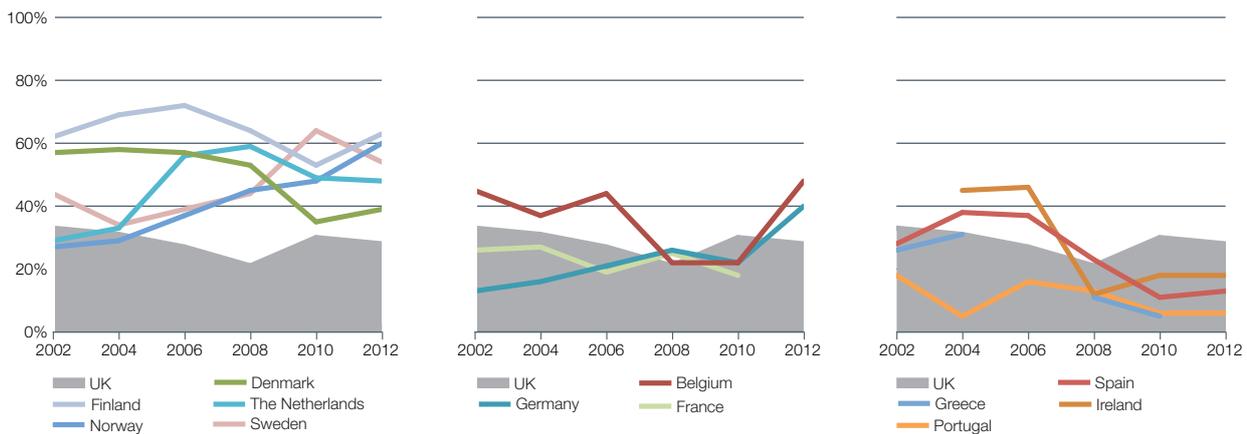


(Data source: Eurobarometer)

There is further evidence that political crises are linked to lower levels of citizens' trust as another notable low was recorded in Italy in April 2008, following the break-up of a fragile government coalition that finally lost power after the leader of one of the smaller parties was investigated for corruption. After April 2008, when the Freedom's People coalition recorded a decisive electoral victory, levels of trust in the Italian government recovered by more than 10 percentage points and remained relatively stable until May 2011.

Increases in trust in government are often recorded after an election – especially when an incumbent government is replaced – as an indication of renewed hope for the future direction of the government. However, these are not always maintained. A steady decline in trust in government in the UK was measured in the months following the 2005 General Election and within a year of the 2010 General Election. But even the dramatic resurgence in trust in the Greek government that was recorded after their legislative elections in October 2009 was soon eradicated; within six months trust in government had returned to pre-election levels and continued to plummet. By May 2012, only 6% of Greek respondents indicated that they trusted their national government which was still unable to resolve the country's economic problems.

Figure 11: Percentage of respondents who are satisfied with their government



(Data source: European Social Survey)

More generally, particularly large drops in levels of trust are apparent in the countries most seriously affected by the global financial crisis. For example, between April 2008 and November 2009, levels of trust in government in Ireland plummeted from 37% to 15% – the lowest level of the countries included in this analysis at this time. Although this recovered in subsequent years, only Portugal, Italy, Spain and Greece (also severely affected by the European sovereign-debt crisis) have since recorded lower levels of trust in their national government. Elaine Byrne argues that this “collapse in trust coincided with the dramatic demise of the Irish economy... [where many people thought that] the economic crisis was the culmination of successive crises in politics”,³ suggesting that government was blamed for the economic crisis that hit the country.

Whether or not respondents are able to distinguish between the notion of ‘government’ as an institution and the incumbent party or parties in office is much debated,⁴ particularly as supporters of a party in governmental office tend to report notably higher levels of trust in government.⁵ Although the concepts are often difficult to disentangle, trust in a country’s political structures is not the same as support for incumbents or satisfaction with the outputs of their government.

Figure 11 shows that respondents’ levels of satisfaction with government also appear to fluctuate widely across the lifetime of the European Social Survey. This suggests that such evaluations may be more an assessment of government performance than a manifestation of more general, diffuse support for the structure of government. The 13-point difference between the lowest (20%) and highest (33%) levels of satisfaction recorded in Great Britain was symptomatic of the large changes recorded in most countries, with the low recorded in 2008 amid the global financial crisis.

Levels of satisfaction with government increased in the 2010 survey in the United Kingdom which was conducted after the General Election of May that year. Similar increases were also recorded at this time in Ireland and – albeit at a much lower level – in Portugal, neither of whom held general elections that year. However, the UK, Ireland and Portugal had experienced previous drops in citizen satisfaction with government that may be linked to the earlier impact of the global financial crisis in these countries. In almost all other countries, levels of satisfaction with government decreased between 2008 and 2010 when the economic crisis was hitting most of Europe the hardest. Therefore, by 2010, levels of satisfaction in government in the UK were comparable with those measured in Ireland, but higher than those in Belgium, Germany, France, Spain and Portugal.

3.2 Perceptions of national parliaments

Levels of confidence in the British parliament have dropped notably over recent decades. Figure 12 shows that the proportion of British respondents who indicated they had confidence in their national parliament was 17%

3 Byrne, E. (14 January 2013) Power, corruption and political trust. *Policy Network*. Retrieved from <http://www.policy-network.net>

4 Citrin, J. (1974). “Comment: The political relevance of trust in government.” *The American Political Science Review* 68(3): 973-988;

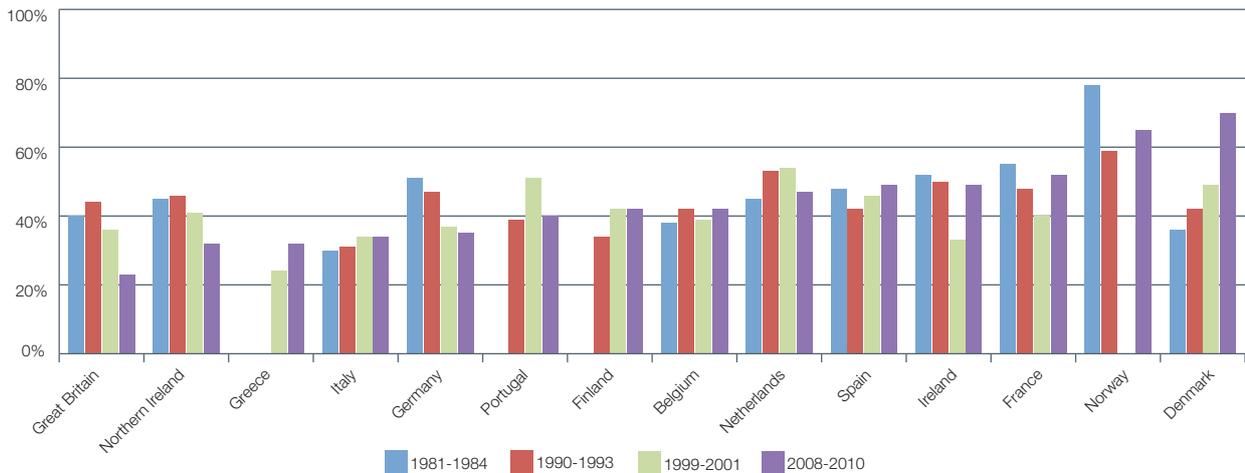
Miller, A. H. (1974). “Rejoinder to “Comment” by Jack Citrin: Political Discontent or Ritualism?” *American Political Science Review*, 68(3): 989-1001.

5 Norris, P. (1999). *Critical Citizens: Global Support for Democratic Government* (Oxford University Press).

lower in the most recent wave of the European Values Survey (conducted between 2008 and 2010) than in the original survey (conducted between 1981 and 1984). Similar decreases were also recorded in Germany, Northern Ireland and Norway, though in Norway over 60% of respondents still indicated that they had confidence in their national parliament.

In contrast, levels of confidence in national parliaments actually increased slightly during this period in Belgium, Italy, and Spain. More notably, the proportion of respondents reporting confidence in the Danish parliament increased by over 30 percentage points during this time. This means that despite reporting similar levels of confidence in their parliament in the first wave of the EVS, nearly three times as many Danish than British respondents reported confidence in their national parliament by 2008-2010.

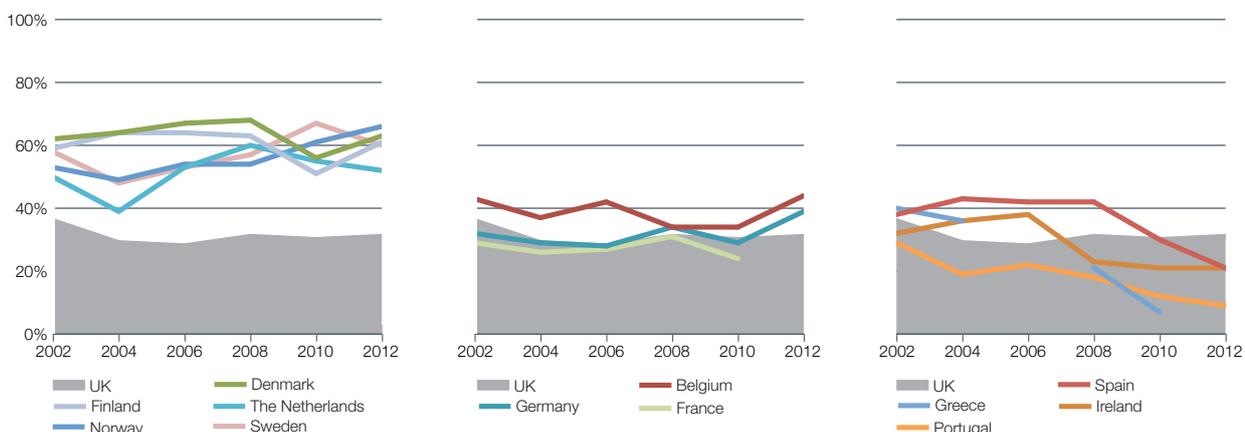
Figure 12: Percentage of respondents with “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in their national parliament



(Data source: European Values Survey)

Although levels of confidence in the British parliament fell dramatically across the 1980s and 1990s, figure 13 shows that levels of trust in the British parliament (as recorded by the European Social Survey) have been relatively stable for the past decade. After an initial high of 36% of British respondents reporting trust in their national parliament in 2002, this dropped to, and stabilised at, around 30% for the following five surveys. This was similar to the proportion of French and German respondents who indicated they trusted their national parliament. These levels are lower than those recorded in the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, where the majority of respondents consistently reported that they trusted their national parliament. However, lower average levels of trust in national parliaments have consistently been recorded in Portugal, Ireland and Greece since 2008.

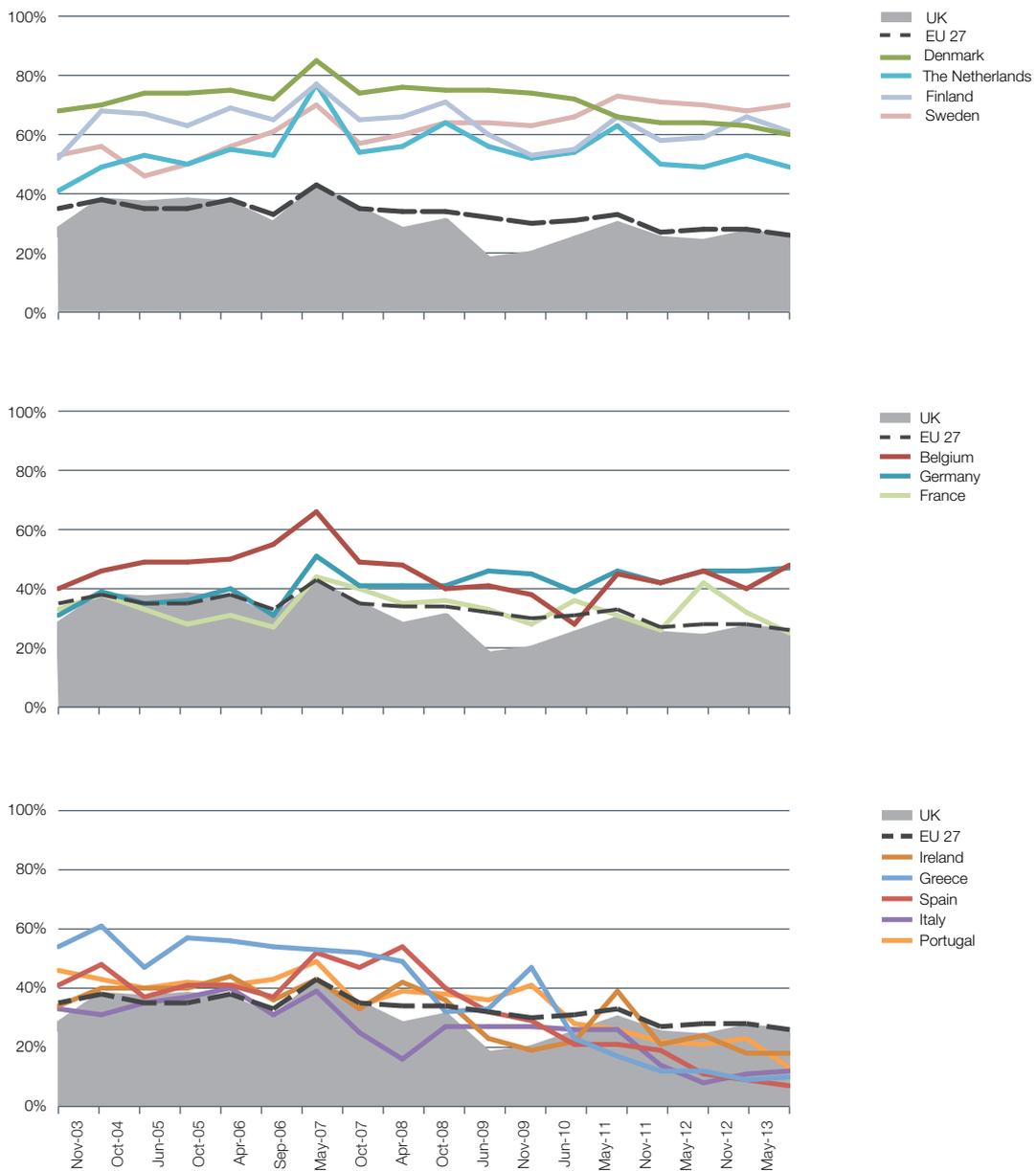
Figure 13: Average percentage of respondents who trust their national parliament



(Data source: European Social Survey)

Data from the Eurobarometer survey suggest that trust in national parliaments also appear to track closely that measured in national government (see figure 14). After a spike in the proportion of citizens who trusted their national government in almost every European country in the spring of 2007, all of these almost immediately decreased and continued to fall. In the UK, these levels reached a low in June 2009 – when fewer than one in five respondents indicated they tended to trust parliament – during the MPs’ expenses scandal. Since then it appears that levels of trust in the UK parliament have recovered better than the levels of trust in the parliament of many of our European neighbours. Levels of trust in the UK parliament are now higher than the equivalent levels in Ireland, Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain (although all these countries were more severely affected by the European sovereign debt crisis) and comparable to those in France.

Figure 14: Percentage of respondents who “tend to trust” their national parliament



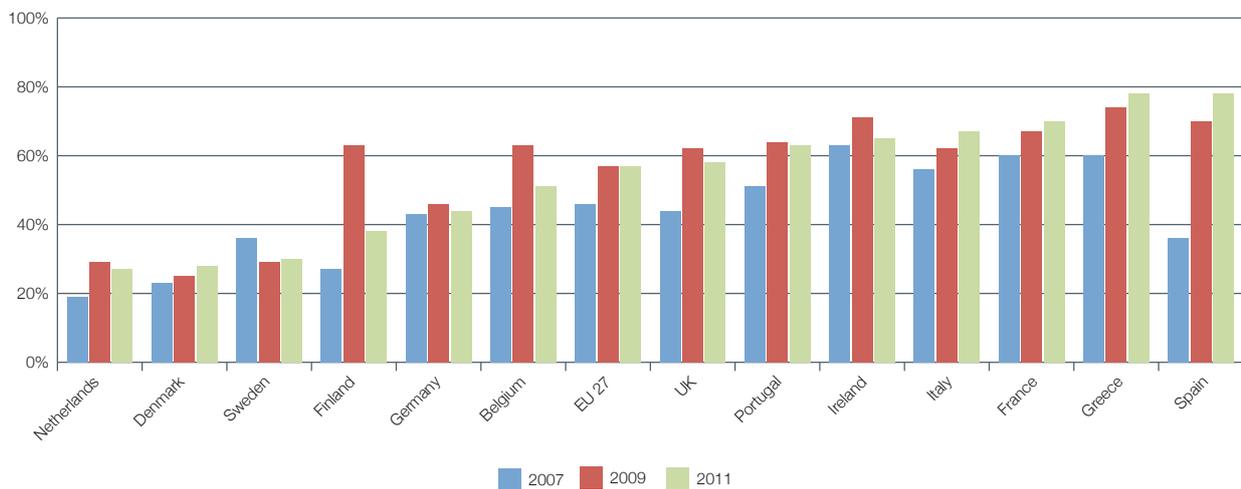
(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

3.3 Perceptions of politicians

Perceived levels of corruption in national politicians in the UK were comparable to the EU average in the Eurobarometer surveys of 2007 and 2011, before and after the MPs' expenses scandal. But figure 15 shows that the proportion of respondents in the UK who believed that corruption was widespread among national politicians increased dramatically, and exceeded the EU average, in 2009. This coincided with the MPs' expenses scandal which broke four months before the survey was undertaken.

Fluctuations in the number of respondents who believe that corruption is widespread among national politicians have not been confined to the UK. An increasing number of respondents recorded negative evaluations of national politicians in Greece, France, Italy and Portugal and, most notably, in Finland and Spain. In Spain, one of the countries worst hit by the financial crisis, this proportion more than doubled from 36% to 78% in 2011. Finland recorded a similar increase to Spain between 2007 and 2009 (after a widespread scandal concerning the funding of political parties came to light in 2008),⁶ but levels recovered in 2011 when under 40% of Finnish respondents reported they believed corruption was widespread among their national politicians. Sweden is the only country where fewer respondents believed corruption was widespread among their national politicians in 2011 than did in 2007. Only in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands and Denmark did fewer than 50% of respondents consistently indicate that they believe corruption was widespread among national politicians.

Figure 15: Percentage of respondents who believe that corruption is widespread among politicians at a national level

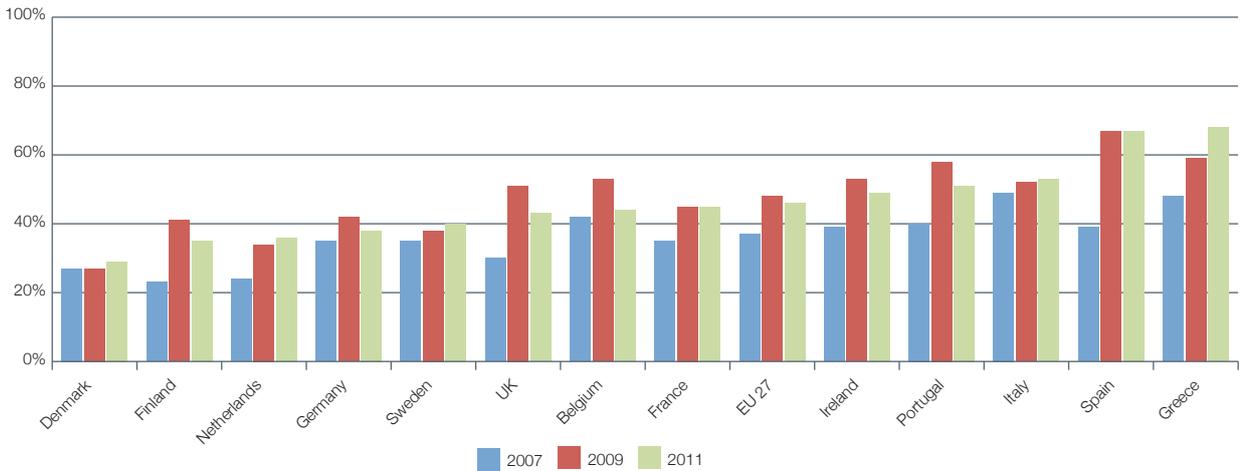


(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

Although respondents' hold similar views of national and local public institutions, their perceptions of local politicians tend to be more positive than their views of national politicians (see figure 16). In fact, on average across the EU, the majority of respondents do not think that corruption is widespread among politicians at the local level. In the UK, this only peaked at 51% in 2009 and has since declined. However, relatively more positive evaluations of local politicians are not extended to all European countries. Respondents in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands are more likely to think corruption is widespread among local than national politicians. Nonetheless, respondents in these countries still have some of the most positive views of local politicians.

⁶ Ibison, D. (10 June 2008). Funding scandal taints Finland's reputation. *Financial Times* Retrieved from <http://www.ft.com>

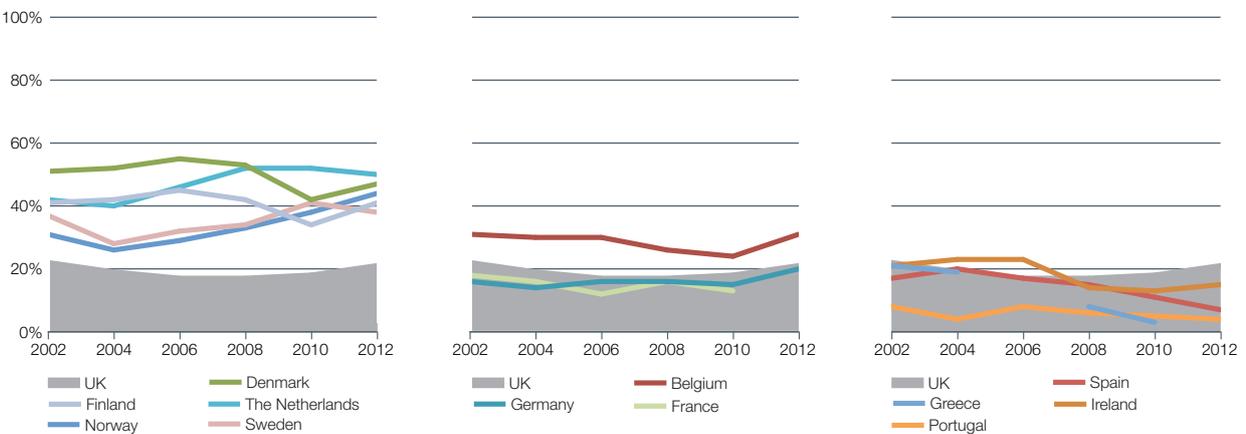
Figure 16: Percentage of respondents who believe that corruption is widespread among politicians at a local level



(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

Trust in politicians is rare across Europe. In the UK, politicians are consistently regarded as one of the least trustworthy professions (only tabloid journalists were considered less trustworthy than government ministers and MPs in general in the CSPL's Fifth Biennial Survey of Public Attitudes Towards Conduct in Public Life). Figure 17 shows that, according to the European Social Survey, no more than 20% of British respondents ever indicated that they trust politicians. By 2008, levels of trust are even lower in Greece, Ireland, Spain, and Portugal. Even in the Netherlands, where respondents were recently the most likely to report trusting their politicians, only 50% reported such favourable views by 2012.

Figure 17: Percentage of respondents who trust politicians



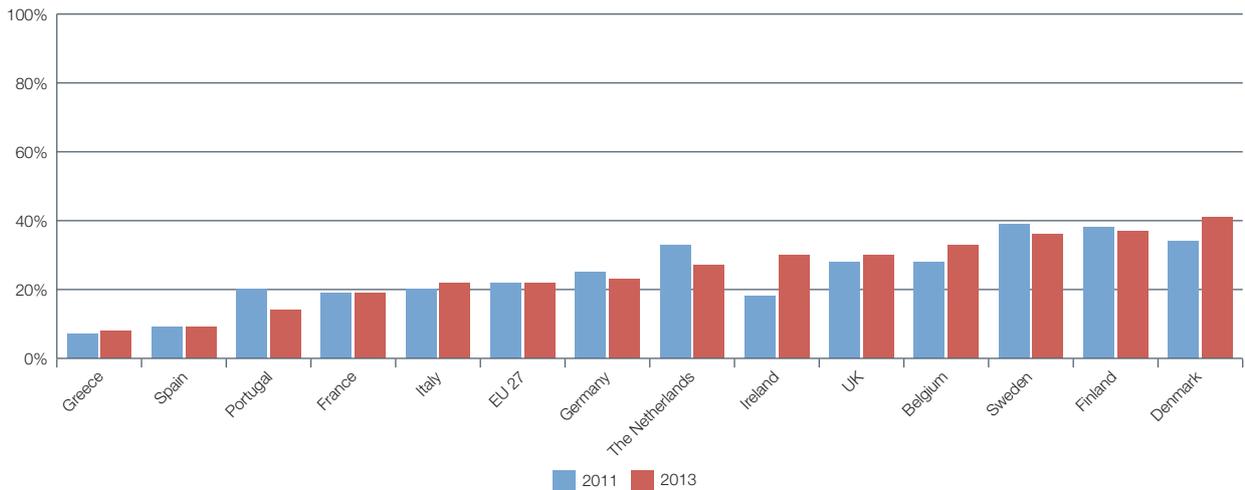
(Data source: European Social Survey)

However, there appears to be no clear Europe-wide trend regarding trust in politicians. After levels of trust in politicians in the UK fell by less than 5 percentage points between 2002 and 2010, these remained relatively stable from 2006 to 2010. This reflects similar fluctuations in the level of trust in the British parliament. In contrast, the decreases in levels of trust in politicians (and in parliament) in Denmark and Finland were most severe between 2008 and 2010, albeit from a much higher starting point. Conversely, in the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden, levels of trust in politicians (along with levels of trust in parliament) increased from 2004 onwards. Once again, this suggests that national factors and events may impact such views.

3.4 Perceptions of political parties

The CSPL has previously asserted its concern at the system of political party funding in the UK.⁷ However, concerns as to the financing of political parties are not confined to the UK alone. Although fewer than a third of respondents in the UK agreed that there is sufficient transparency and supervision of the financing of political parties when questioned by the Eurobarometer in 2011 and 2013, the EU average of 22% was notably lower (see figure 18). In no country did the majority of respondents ever believe that there is sufficient transparency and supervision of party funding, with only respondents in Belgium and the Nordic countries offering more positive responses than those recorded in the UK.

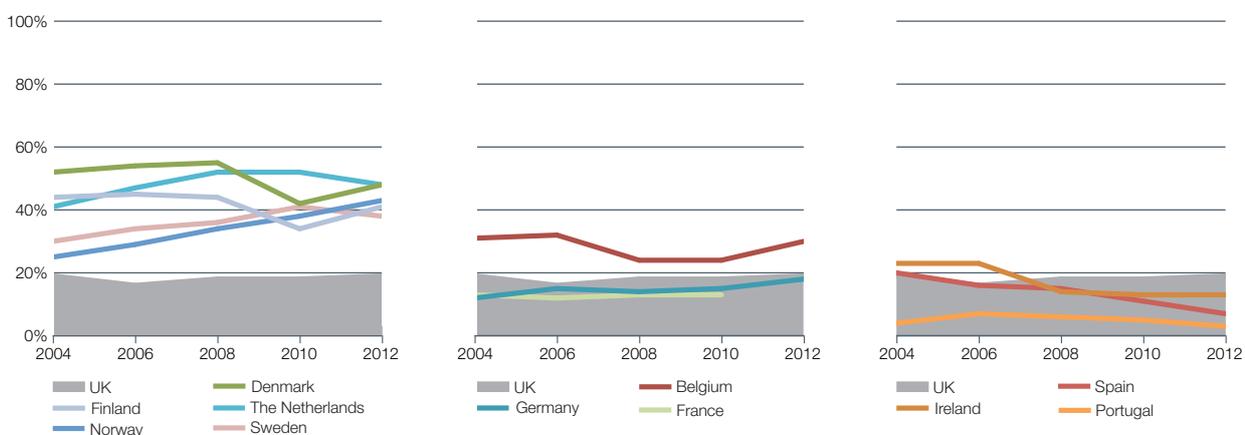
Figure 18: Percentage of respondents who agree that there is sufficient transparency and supervision of the financing of political parties



(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

Low levels of trust in political parties also appear to mirror those recorded in politicians and parliaments. Figure 19 shows that in the UK, comparatively low levels of trust in political parties have remained relatively stable since 2004; fewer than 20% of British respondents have consistently indicated that they trust political parties. This is substantially lower than the proportion of respondents who indicated that they trusted political parties in the Netherlands, Sweden and Norway (where this proportion has steadily increased) or Denmark, Finland and Belgium (where, despite decreases, respondents are still substantially more likely to trust political parties).

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents who trust political parties



(Data source: European Social Survey)

⁷ Committee on Standards in Public Life (2011), *Political Party Finance: Ending the Big Donor Culture, Thirteenth Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life*. (London: The Stationery Office)



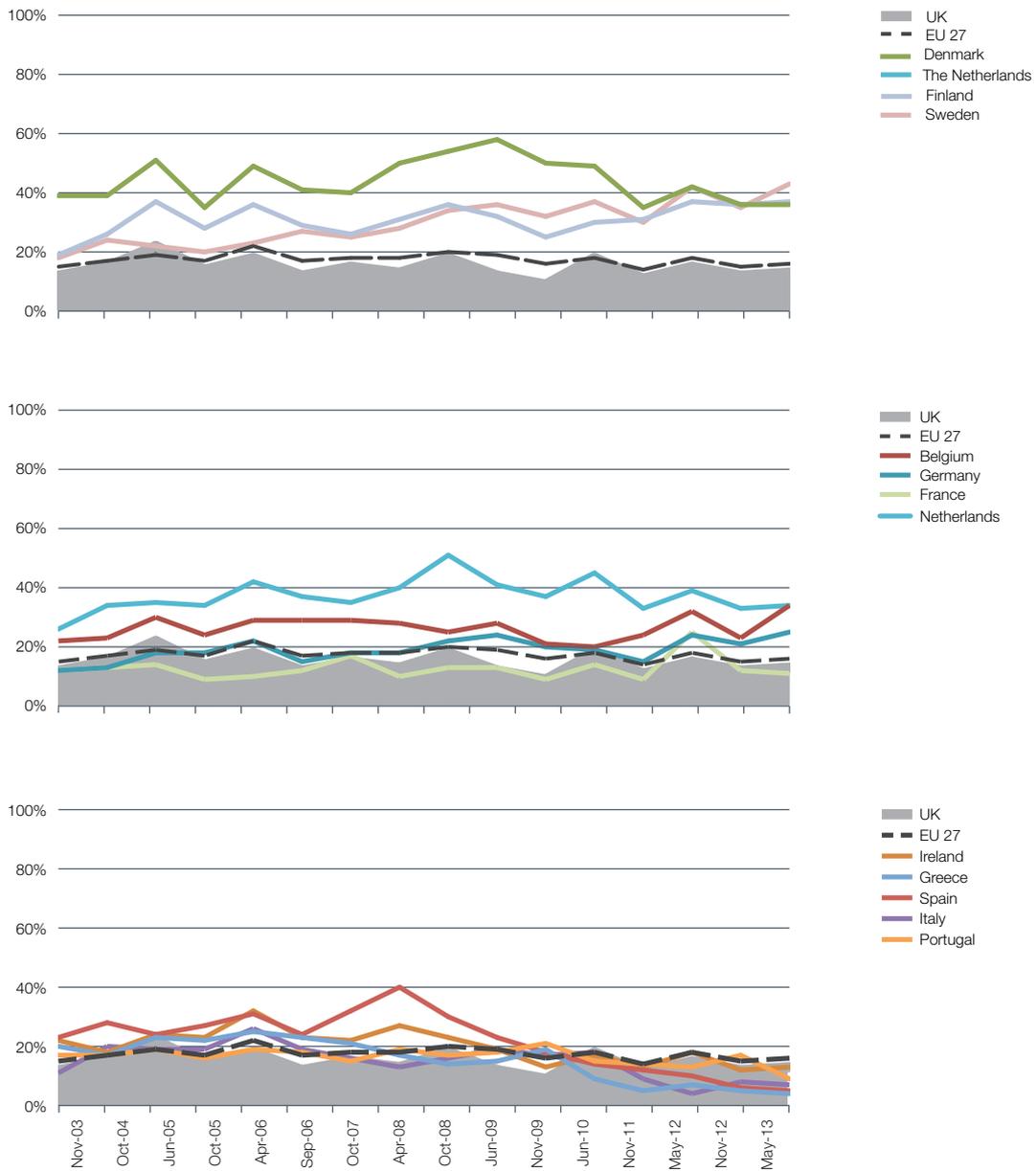
As in the UK, levels of trust in political parties have also remained relatively stable in France and Germany. Greater fluctuations have been recorded in other European countries. In particular, levels of trust in political parties steadily decreased after 2008 in Ireland and Spain, both of whom were seriously affected by the European economic crisis. These levels also dropped notably in Denmark and Finland between 2008 and 2010, but appeared to have largely recovered by 2012. In contrast, levels of trust in political parties actually increased in Norway, Sweden and – until 2010 – in the Netherlands.

In its more frequent surveys, the Eurobarometer detected greater fluctuations in levels of trust in political parties between 2003 and 2013. As figure 20 shows, levels of trust in British political parties are relatively low with no more than 20% of respondents ever indicating that they trust political parties. Peaks in these levels were recorded in July 2005 and July 2010, only two months after successive British General Elections. Perhaps more surprisingly, levels appeared to increase during the election campaigns themselves, despite worries about the effects of negative campaigning. Even after the MPs expenses scandal of 2009, the 2010 General Election appears to have offered the opportunity for some political renewal. However, after these post-election peaks, the proportion of British citizens indicating that they trusted political parties steadily decreased.

While Denmark and the Netherlands were once again found to be among the most trusting nations, Sweden recorded the highest level of trust in political parties by the most recent survey. This was the culmination of a steady rise in positive perceptions. In Sweden, the percentage of respondents indicating that they tended to trust political parties had increased by over 20 percentage points over the previous 10 years. The startling rise recorded in Sweden was the exception rather than the norm. In contrast, there were drastic decreases in levels of trust in political parties in Spain (from a peak of 40% in April 2008 – shortly after the incumbent government was defeated in the general election – to 5% in May 2013). This reflects a broader trend of decreasing trust in political parties in the countries worst hit by the European debt crisis; by January 2013, fewer than 10% of respondents in Italy, Spain and Greece said that they tended to trust political parties. However, higher levels of trust in Portugal and Ireland (countries that were also badly hit by the economic crisis) suggest that it may not only be the economic situation but also parties' reaction to it that drives these levels of trust.



Figure 20: Percentage of respondents who “tend to trust” political parties



(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

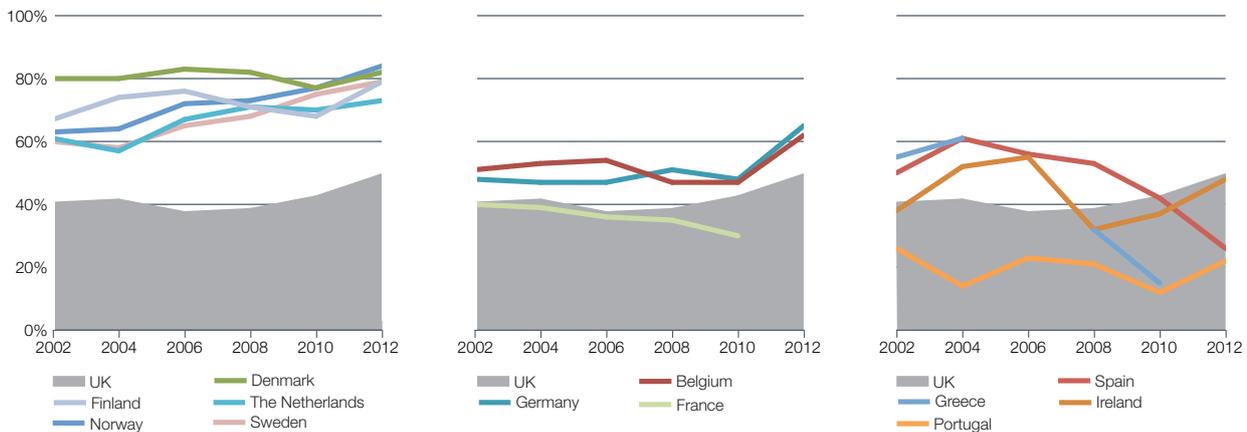
Overall, the Nordic countries and the Netherlands have tended to record higher levels of trust in the political institutions of government. At this stage, it is unclear as to what factors may be driving these higher levels of trust but two factors should be noted. First, looking at government performance levels, these countries have tended to be less badly affected by the European economic crisis than some of their southern neighbours. Furthermore, at the institutional level, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands all use a system of proportional representation in their legislative election. Such systems tend to foster a more conciliatory and co-operative style of politics than the First-Past-The-Post system, as used in the UK, or the majoritarian (run-off) system, as used in France.

3.5 Attitudes towards democracy

Despite apparent declining levels of trust in the representative institutions of government, dissatisfaction with political bodies does not appear to be translated into a wholesale dissatisfaction with democracy. Across Europe, levels of satisfaction with democracy tend to be substantially higher than levels of satisfaction with government in each country. Furthermore, fewer countries (and only those worst affected by the European sovereign debt crisis) have experienced a marked decline in democratic satisfaction.

According to responses to the European Social Survey, as shown in figure 21, about 4 in 10 respondents have indicated that they were satisfied with the way democracy works in the UK between 2002 and 2010. This level increased by 10 percentage points in 2012, but it is still substantially lower than the levels of satisfaction recorded in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands. In these countries, over two thirds of respondents have indicated that they are satisfied with democracy since 2006. There was a dramatic drop in the recorded levels of satisfaction with democracy in Ireland after 2006 and then in Spain and Greece after 2008. Coupled with a smaller decrease in Portugal after 2008, this suggests that a country's economic problems may have an impact on its citizens' satisfaction with democracy, as well as with their evaluations of the performance of government itself.

Figure 21: Percentage of respondents who are satisfied with democracy



(Data source: European Social Survey)

4 Trust in administrative institutions

In contrast to representative institutions, administrative institutions of government across Europe tend to be removed from any direct accountability to the electorate and, often, any formal partisanship. They may still feel distant from the average citizen, but they are also often less likely to be characterized by the adversarial nature of politics.

Despite their lack of democratic accountability, more people appear to have more positive views of administrative than representative institutions in the UK and across Europe. In particular, it is not unusual for the majority of respondents to indicate that they have trust or confidence in their country's legal system or police force. However, while confidence in the civil service has increased in many European countries over the past 3 decades, confidence in the legal system has often decreased. A similar decrease in confidence in the police was recorded in Great Britain and Northern Ireland since the 1980s, though this was not common to other European countries.

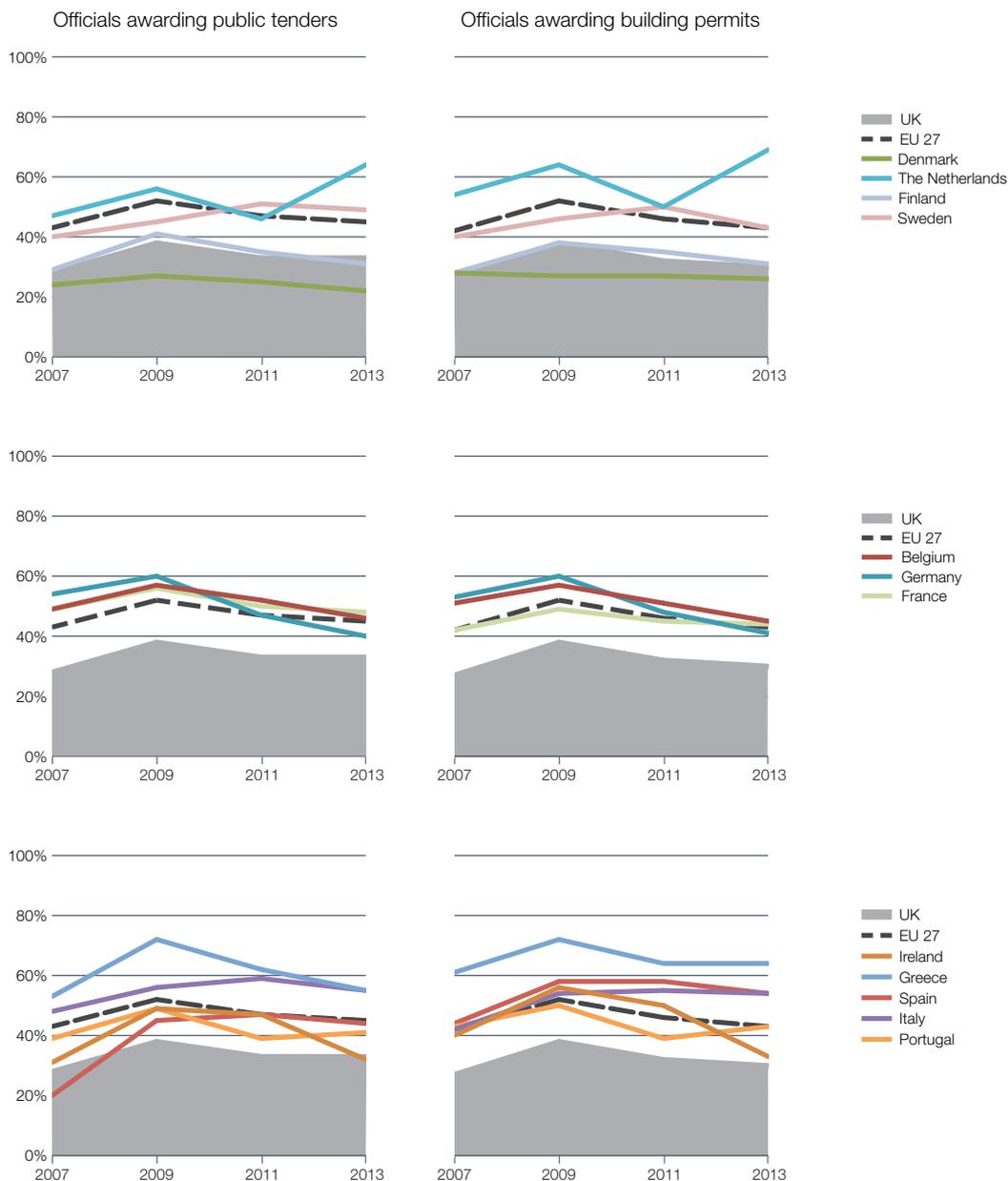
4.1 Perceptions of civil services

Despite recording relatively negative views about elected officials, figure 22 displays that respondents in the UK hold some of the most optimistic views about the conduct of non-elected public officials, including civil servants, across the EU. The proportion of British respondents who believe that bribery and the abuse of power is widespread among public officials who award public tenders or issue building permits is consistently around

10 percentage points less than the EU average. Only Danish respondents consistently offered more positive evaluations of these public officials. Until 2013, Greek respondents once again tended to be the most likely to believe that bribery and the abuse of power was widespread. However, in the latest Eurobarometer survey, Dutch respondents were the most likely to hold such negative perceptions after an increase of almost 20 percentage points between 2011 and 2013.

The proportion of respondents who believe that bribery and the abuse of power is widespread among these public officials is also more stable in the UK than in a number of other European countries. While the proportion who held positive views of officials awarding public tenders remained within a 10 percentage point range in the UK (with a low of 28% in 2007 and a high of 38% in 2009), it more than doubled from 20% to 45% in Spain during the same period. In 2007, Spanish respondents were already more likely to think that corruption was widespread among public officials awarding building permits and evaluations of both sets of public officials are now largely comparable in Spain.

Figure 22: Percentage of respondents who believe that the abuse of power is widespread among public officials



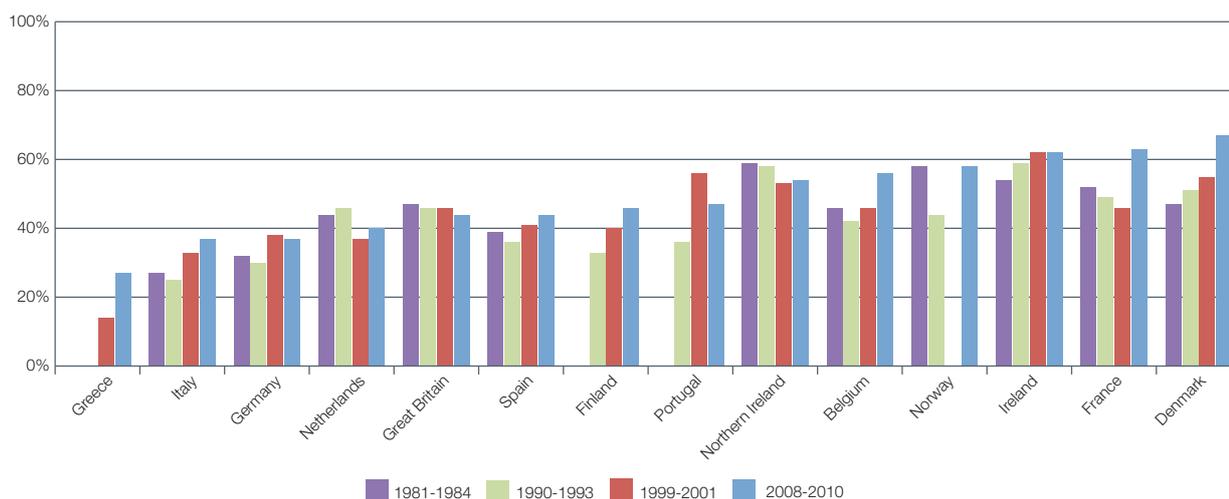
(Data Source: Eurobarometer)



Despite the small proportion of respondents who believe public officials awarding public tenders and issuing building permits abuse their power in the UK, this is not simply translated to high levels of confidence in the British civil services. In no wave of the European Values Survey did the majority of British respondents indicate that they had confidence in their national civil service. As fewer than 4 out of 10 British respondents thought corruption was widespread among public officials awarding public tenders and issuing building permits from 2007 onwards, this suggests that such confidence is based on more than perceptions of corruption among such public officials.

Figure 23 shows that level of confidence in the British civil services has remained relatively stable across the past 30 years; between 44% and 47% of British respondents have consistently indicated that they hold such positive views. At the start of the 1980s this placed Great Britain alongside Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands. However, during this period there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of respondents indicating that they trust the Belgian and Danish (as well as French and Irish) civil services, and a notable drop in the proportion trusting civil servants in the Netherlands. Steady increases were also recorded in Germany and Italy (and, in the most recent two surveys, in Greece) – who have consistently recorded the smallest proportion of respondents with confidence in their national civil services. Therefore, by the fourth wave of the EVS, the difference between the proportion of respondents with confidence in their national civil service in Italy and Germany and those with such views in Great Britain had been reduced to less than 10 percentage points.

Figure 23: Percentage of respondents with “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in their national civil service



(Data source: European Values Survey)

4.2 Perceptions of legal and justice systems

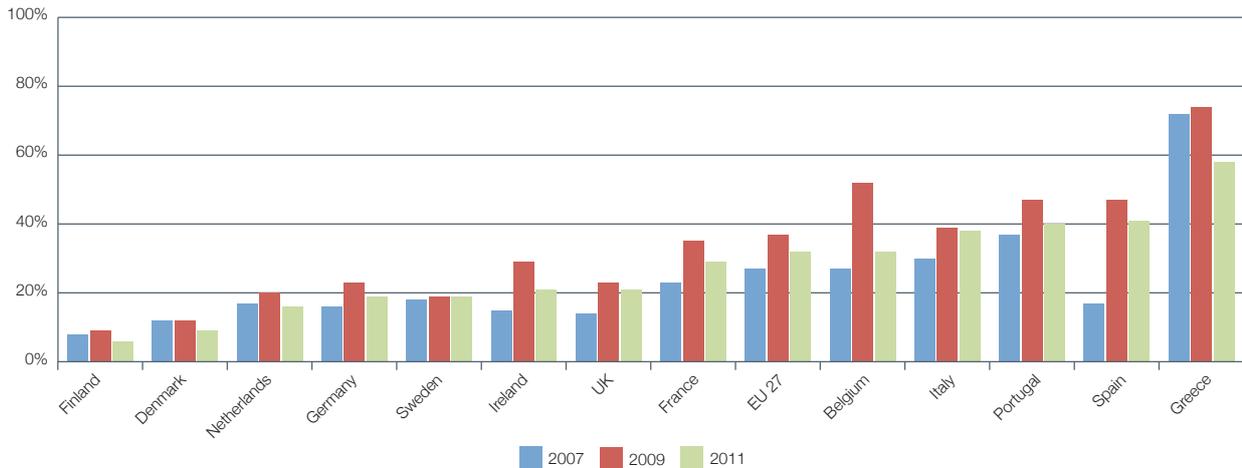
Citizens’ perceptions of legal and justice systems tend to be more positive than their views of most other public bodies in almost all European countries. In particular, few countries consider corruption to be widespread among people working in the judicial services. In the UK, less than a quarter of respondents have ever indicated that they believe corruption to be widespread in the judicial services, but this proportion is even smaller in Denmark and Finland. Greece is unusual within the European context because it is the only country where a majority of respondents ever indicated that they believe corruption to be widespread in their judicial services. Even here, where more than 70% of respondents held this view in 2007 and 2009, this level decreased to less than 58% in 2011.

Figure 24 shows that a number of countries (including Belgium, Italy, France and Ireland) have recorded notable increases in the proportion of respondents who believe corruption is widespread in the judicial services between 2007 and 2009. In Belgium, the proportion of respondents holding this view almost doubled from 27% in 2007 to 52% in 2009, amid a scandal over the conduct and credibility of the Belgian judiciary.⁸ However, this level has since recovered to a level equivalent to the EU-wide average (32%).

⁸ “Belgian judiciary scandal ‘hushed up’” (14 August 2009). *Press Europ*. Retrieved from <http://www.presseurop.eu>



Figure 24: Percentage of respondents who believe that corruption is widespread among people working in the judicial services

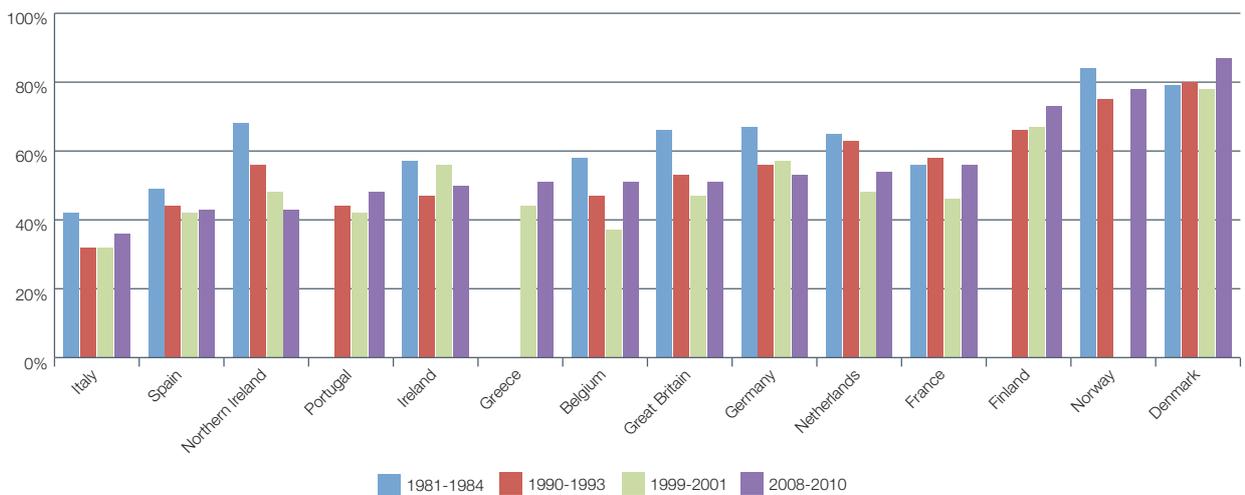


(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

This suggests that perceptions of national legal systems tend to be more positive than evaluations of representative bodies, such as political parties, parliament and government. This is reinforced by higher levels of confidence and trust in judicial institutions compared with political bodies. Levels of confidence in the British legal system – from a high of 65% in the first wave of the EVS to 50% in the most recent survey – are notably higher than levels of confidence in British political institutions. These now rank alongside the levels of confidence recorded in the Netherlands (which has more positive views of almost every political institution), Ireland, Germany, and France.

While levels of confidence in the British legal system have been in a relatively steady decline, the EVS recorded fluctuations in most other European countries (see figure 25). However, since the 1990s, only small fluctuations were measured in either Italy or Spain – both of whom have had consistently lower levels of confidence in their legal system. Only Denmark – the country with the highest levels of confidence in the legal system throughout the past three decades – experienced a notable net increase across all four waves of the survey with 87% of Danish respondents reporting confidence in their legal system by the final round.

Figure 25: Percentage of respondents with “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in their legal system, 1981-1984 to 2008-2010

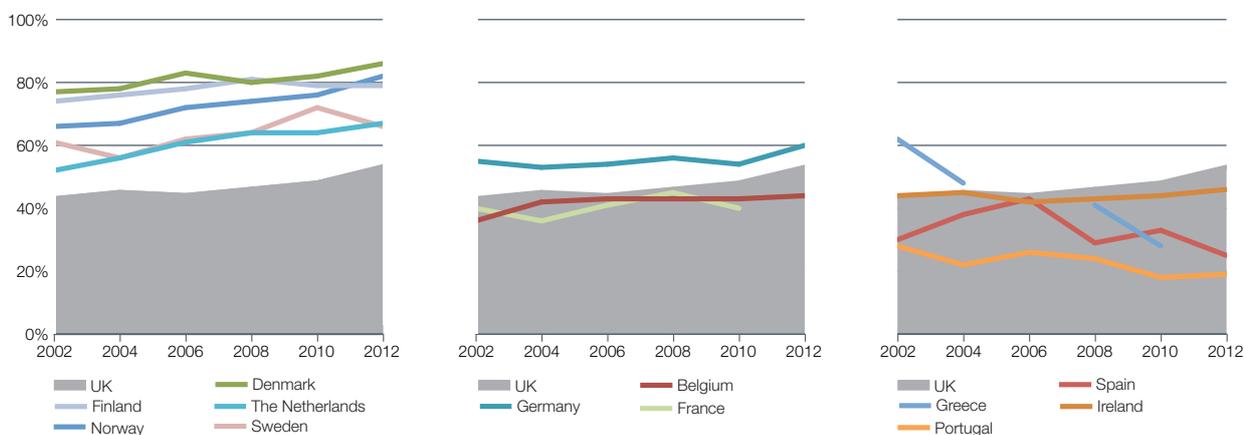


(Data source: European Values Survey)



Data from the ESS suggests that, since 2002, levels of trust in the British legal system have undergone a steady increase. Figure 26 shows that by 2012, a small majority of British respondents (51%) indicated that they trusted the country's legal system. Levels of trust in the national legal system varied greatly across Europe, with a high of 83% of Danish respondents in 2006 and a low of 18% of Portuguese respondents in 2010 reporting they trust their legal system.

Figure 26: Average percentage of respondents who trust their national legal system



(Data source: European Social Survey)

The most notable increase in trusting respondents in the UK was recorded between 2010 and 2012 when the proportion of respondents who reported that they trusted the British legal system increased by over 5 percentage points. During the same period, similar sized increases were recorded in a number of countries with even more positive views of their national legal system – including Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Denmark (where respondents were almost always the most likely to report trust in their legal system). Only Spain, Portugal and Greece recorded net decreases in the proportion of respondents indicating that they trust their national legal system between 2002 and 2012. Even in Ireland, where levels of trust in most other public institutions fell amid the financial crisis, levels of trust in the national legal system remained relatively stable.

4.3 Perceptions of the police

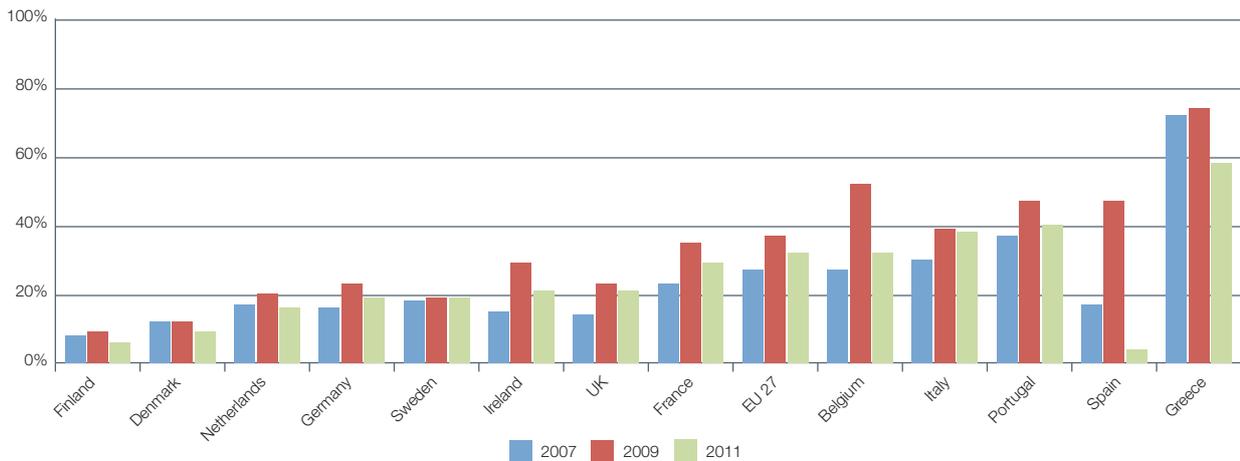
Like perceptions of the judicial services, citizens' views of public officials working in the police services are generally positive in the UK and across Europe. In some countries, most notably Italy, respondents believe corruption is less widespread in the police force than it is among the judicial services, public officials awarding public tenders or issuing building permits and politicians. Furthermore, the police force is almost universally the most trusted institution in public life across Europe.

Despite an increase in the number of respondents in the UK who believe that corruption is widespread among people working in the police service, figure 27 shows that this proportion did not exceed a third of respondents in the Eurobarometer surveys of 2007, 2009 and 2011.⁹ This level is below the EU average, despite increasing by 7 percentage points during this period. The most dramatic change in perceptions of the police was recorded in Greece. Here the proportion of respondents believing that corruption is widespread among the police service fell from 77% to 50% between 2009 and 2011. On the whole, perceptions of corruption in the police service appear often to mirror perceptions of corruption in the legal services in many European countries.

⁹ The 2013 Eurobarometer survey on corruption offered different response categories and has therefore not been used for this analysis.



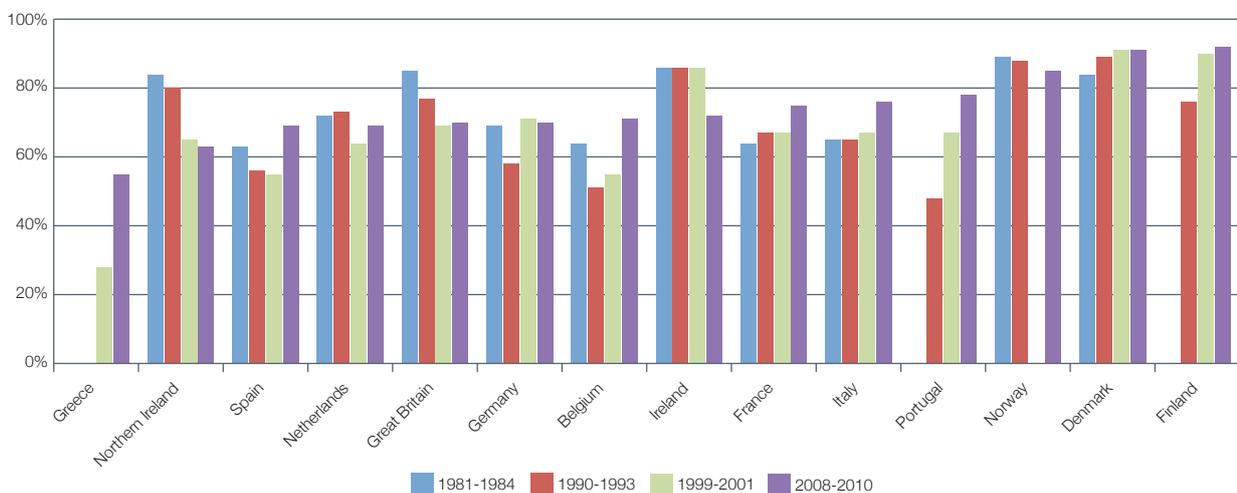
Figure 27: Percentage of respondents who believe that corruption is widespread among people working in the police service



(Data Source: Eurobarometer)

Once again, levels of confidence in the police (an administrative rather than representative institution of the government) also tend to be higher than levels of confidence in political institutions in most European countries. Figure 28 shows that even though levels of confidence in the British police dropped in the 1980s and 1990s, by the fourth wave of the EVS (conducted between 2008 and 2010), 70% of respondents still indicated that they had a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police. This level is comparable with those measured in Germany, the Netherlands and Spain. Only Norway, Finland and Denmark now record substantially more positive perceptions of the police than the UK.

Figure 28: Percentage of respondents with “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the police between 1981-1984 and 2008-2010



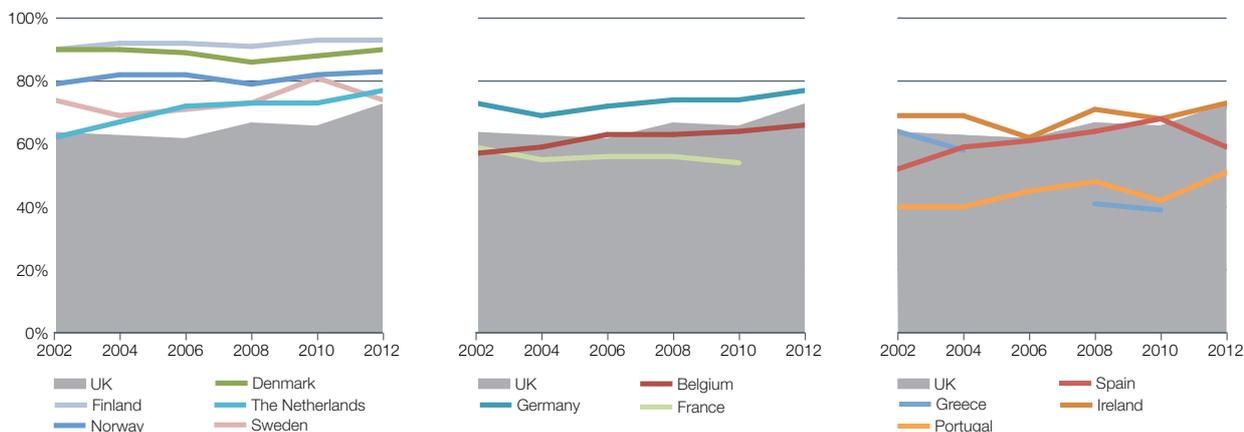
(Data source: European Values Survey)

Like levels of trust in the legal system, levels of trust in the police also experienced little variation since 2002 across most European countries, according to data from the ESS (see figure 29). This includes UK responses between 2002 and 2010 where between 60% and 65% of respondents consistently indicated that they trusted the British police. A more substantial increase was measured between 2010 and 2012, where the proportion of British respondents who trusted the police rose to 73% (comparable with those levels recorded in Ireland and Sweden). An even more dramatic increase (of 15 percentage points) was measured between 2002 and 2006 in Spain, though a subsequent decline between 2010 and 2012 almost halved these gains.



Once again it is in the Nordic countries that citizens have reported the highest levels of trust in the police; about 9 out of 10 respondents in Denmark and Finland, and 8 out of 10 in Norway consistently reported that they trusted the police. Furthermore, countries characterized by low levels of trust in other public bodies (both representative and administrative institutions) also report low levels of trust in the police; only once, in the most recent survey, did a majority of Portuguese respondents indicate that they trust the police (though this proportion still only measured 51%).

Figure 29: Percentage of respondents who trust the police



(Data source: European Social Survey)

5 Conclusions

Perceptions of standards in public life vary across Europe and, often, within countries across time. However, there are a number of trends that are apparent when comparing perceptions of standards in public life within the UK with the views of citizens in many other European countries.

British citizens do not appear to be unusual in their assessments of standards in public life when compared with their European counterparts.

While British citizens never offer the most positive evaluations of any public institution – levels of confidence and trust in all bodies are almost always consistently higher in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands – the British public is rarely the most cynical when asked to assess these institutions.

British citizens are less likely than most other European respondents to believe that corruption is widespread among most public officials.

Fewer respondents in the UK than in other European countries think that corruption is widespread among public officials in the judicial or police services and those who award public tenders or issue building permits. However, British views of public officials holding political office are more negative, and closer to the European average.

Higher levels of trust in administrative bodies than representative bodies are also not unique to the UK.

The same relative ranking of public institutions is found in almost every country; the police and judicial services are almost always rated the most positively with political institutions (and their members) less likely to be trusted than administrative institutions.

There was a notable increase in the number of people who believed corruption was widespread in British public institutions and a drop in trust in political institutions around the time of the MPs' expenses scandal in 2009.

Current events appear to play a part in informing views of standards, probity and trust. This is not confined to the UK; citizens' perceptions of Finnish politicians and the Belgian judiciary also appear to have been adversely (if temporarily) affected by national scandals in these countries.



The restorative properties of elections are not unique to Great Britain as similar increases can be seen in other countries after elections.

Levels of trust in British political institutions appear to have largely recovered since the height of the MPs' expenses scandal, and particularly after the General Election of May 2010 (although their potential longevity remains to be seen). Increases in levels of trust in political institutions are also evident in other European countries after elections. However, these often prove to be only temporary recoveries.

In recent years, perceptions of standards in public life in the UK have fared better than those in the countries that were worst hit by the European sovereign debt crises (Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain).

The countries worst hit by the European financial crisis have recorded some of the lowest levels of trust in government and most negative views of probity and standards among public officials. Many of these countries have experienced severe – and prolonged – declines in trust since 2008. This is particularly the case for the representative institutions of these countries that many citizens would have expected to solve their economic problems. This decrease in trust in government could therefore be a product not only of the economic events themselves but of their government's response to them.

Drops in levels of trust and confidence tend not to have been matched by comparable decreases in citizens' support for democracy.

Despite declining perceptions of government institutions and office-holders in many European countries, citizens in most countries have not reported a similar growing dissatisfaction with the democratic system of government. Therefore, any frustration with or distrust of government does not appear to have (yet) expanded to disenchantment with the political system as a whole. However, there is some evidence of a growing dissatisfaction with democracy in the countries worst hit by the European financial crisis.



Appendix:

Data and methods

Data for this analysis comes from three sources; the European Values Survey (1981-2010), the European Social Survey (2002-2012) and the Eurobarometer (2003-2013). Each of these three surveys has collected data from a range of European country over the course of a number of decades.

Although the majority of data available on levels of corruption and probity in public institutions is confined to expert surveys (such as Transparency International's Global Corruption Index), the Eurobarometer has recently conducted a series of special studies along the theme of corruption. These included questions canvassing respondents' views as to the level of corruption in their country, focusing on citizens' perceptions rather than expert assessments. These questions included asking respondents to what extent they agreed with the phrases:

"Corruption is a major problem in this country" (2007-2011)

"The problem of corruption is widespread in this country" (2013)

"There is corruption in the national institutions in this country" (2007-2013)

"There is corruption in the local institutions in this country" (2007-2013)

"There is sufficient transparency and supervision of the financing of political parties" (2001-2013)

"In this country, do you think that the giving and taking of bribes, and the abuse of positions of power for personal gain, are widespread among people working in the police service/people working in the judicial services/politicians at the national level/politicians at the local level/public officials awarding public tenders/public officials issuing building permits" (2007-2013)¹⁰

"In the past 12 months has anyone in this country asked you or expected you to pay a bribe for his or her services?" (2007-2013)

This analysis focuses on the proportion of respondents who indicated that they "tend to agree" or "totally agree" with the first five phrases and those who responded "yes" to the final 2 sets of questions. The most recent two surveys also asked respondents:

"In the past three years, would you say that the level of corruption has increased a lot/increased a little/stayed the same/decreased a little/decreased a lot"? (2011-2013)

This analysis focuses on the proportion of respondents who indicated that they thought corruption had increased a lot or a little.

¹⁰ In 2013, respondents were asked if they thought bribery and the abuse of power was widespread among a number of professions. However, a number of the response categories were grouped differently from the previous 3 surveys so are not included in this analysis.

Although questions about trust and confidence in public institutions are more common in public attitudes survey, each of the three surveys used in this analysis asked different questions about respondents' attitudes to their country's institutions of government. While this prevents the direct comparison responses, it does allow us to build up a broader picture of attitudes to public bodies in a number of European countries through these diverse questions, as listed below.

Questions from the European Values Survey asked respondents:

"Please look at this card and tell me, for each item listed, how much confidence you have in them, is it a great deal, quite a lot, not very much or none at all?"

For each country, the items included:

- The national parliament
- The civil service
- The justice system
- The police

For the purpose of this analysis, respondents who indicated that they have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of trust in an institution were considered to be trusting of it.

Questions from the European Social Survey asked respondents:

"Please tell me on a score of 0-10 how much you personally trust each of the institutions I read out. 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust."

For each country, these institutions included:

- The national parliament
- Political parties
- Politicians
- The legal system
- The police force

For the purpose of this analysis, respondents who gave a score of 6 or above were considered to be trusting of that institution.

The ESS also asked respondents about their views on the performance of their national political system through the questions:

"Thinking about the government in your country, how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?"

and:

"On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in your country?"



Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale of 0 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied). For the purpose of this analysis, respondents who gave a score of 6 or above were considered to be satisfied citizens.

Questions from the Eurobarometer asked respondents:

"I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in certain institutions. For each of the following institutions, please tell me if you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it?"

These institutions included:

- Their national government
- Their national parliament
- Political parties

However, it should be noted that the questions from the EVS ask respondents about their confidence, rather than trust, in a number of public institutions. Although these terms are often used as if they were interchangeable, they do in fact relate to somewhat different concepts. Compared to trust, which can be considered to be a normative judgment of how individuals or institutions will act,¹¹ confidence can be generated simply by successful past performance.¹²

Similarly, the ESS questions asking respondents to assess their satisfaction with national government are more likely to measure their views of government outputs and performance than a normative evaluation of the institution itself. However, questions regarding individuals' satisfaction with democracy are more likely to measure their views on the entire system of government, and if it delivers for them.

However, not every question was asked in every country in each wave of each survey. Therefore, to be able to examine how responses have changed over time, this analysis is limited to countries with no missing data for each survey. As the European Values Survey canvassed opinion from the 1980s onwards, fewer countries are included in every wave for this analysis.

Therefore, only a limited number of countries are used in this analysis, and not all can be used when examining each topic areas. The countries included reflect different political and social identities, and include:

- Great Britain or United Kingdom (depending on the survey design)
- Northern Ireland
- Nordic countries
 - Denmark
 - Finland
 - Norway
 - Sweden

11 Hetherington, M.J. (2005). *Why Trust Matters: Declining Political Trust and the Demise of American Liberalism* (Princeton University Press).

12 Siegrist, M. (2010) "Trust and Confidence: The Difficulties in Distinguishing the Two Concepts in Research," *Risk Analysis* 30(7): 1022-4.



- Western European countries
 - Belgium
 - France
 - Germany
 - The Netherlands
- Countries worst hit by the European sovereign debt crisis
 - Greece
 - Ireland
 - Italy
 - Portugal
 - Spain

About the author

Isabel Taylor is a doctoral researcher in the School of Politics and International Relations at the University of Nottingham where she holds a collaborative PhD studentship supported by the ESRC and the Committee on Standards in Public Life. Her research for her PhD thesis focuses on the consequences of political trust and the effect it has on the day-to-day business of politics in Britain.

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March 2014