

Review

Feeling of safety and trust in the police and the legal system – Denmark compared with other European countries

This report deals with feelings of safety and trust in the police and the legal system in Denmark compared with other European countries. A number of surveys of feelings of safety have already been conducted in Denmark.¹ The survey dealt with in this report distinguishes itself by offering a comparison at country level. The report is based on the results of the last round of the European Social Survey (ESS) from 2018 in which 49,519 people from 29 European countries participated and on the results from 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018 for the Nordic countries. Overall, the survey illustrates that the level of feeling of safety and trust in the police and the legal system is high in Denmark compared with most other European countries and that it has been high for many years.

In the survey, the feeling of safety is measured by asking citizens in the individual countries how safe or unsafe they feel walking alone in their local area after dark.

- In 2018, 56 per cent of Danes responded that they felt very safe walking alone in their local area after dark. This is a larger share than in 2014 when Denmark participated in the survey the last time.
- In 2018, Denmark was the country in the survey with the third largest share of people who felt very safe. Only Iceland and Norway had larger shares which to some extent reflects a larger share of women who feel safe in those countries.

The feeling of unsafety is measured by asking the same question and by looking at the share of citizens who feel unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their local area after dark.

- 9 per cent of Danes responded that they felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their local area after dark. The share of those who felt unsafe and very unsafe in 2018 was thus in line with the shares in 2014 and 2012 but lower than in 2010.
- In 2018, only Norway and Slovenia had lower shares than Denmark of those who felt unsafe or very unsafe walking alone in their local area after dark. In those countries, the share of women who felt unsafe or very unsafe was lower than in Denmark whereas the share of men who felt unsafe did not differ between the three countries.

Trust in the police is measured by asking citizens about their trust in the police on a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being ‘no trust at all’ and 10 being ‘complete trust’.

- In 2018, Danish citizens’ level of trust in the police averaged 8.0 on a scale of 0 to 10. Accordingly, the average level of trust in the police in Denmark was higher in 2018 than in 2014 and 2010 and in line with the level of trust in 2012.

¹ See 1) Christensen, G., M. L. Christensen, L. Mehlsen, M. H. Enemark og V. Jakobsen (2019). [Tryghed og trivsel i de udsatte boligområder – Evaluering af Landsbyggefondens boligsociale indsatser finansieret af 2015-18-midlerne](#). København, Vive og Statens Byggeforskningsinstitut, 2) The Danish National Police (2020). [Politiets Tryghedsundersøgelse 2019](#). Copenhagen, the Danish National Police or 3) the City of Copenhagen (2021). [Københavns Kommunes Tryghedsundersøgelse 2021](#). Copenhagen, the City of Copenhagen.

- In 2018, the average level of trust in the police in Denmark was in line with that of Finland and higher than those of the other countries participating in the survey.

Trust in the legal system is measured by asking citizens about their trust in the legal system on a scale of 0 to 10 with 0 being ‘no trust at all’ and 10 being ‘complete trust’.

- In 2018, Danish citizens’ level of trust in the legal system averaged 7.5 on a scale of 0 to 10. As was the case with the level of trust in the police, the average level of trust in the legal system in Denmark was higher in 2018 than in 2014 and 2010 and in line with the level of 2012.
- In 2018, the average level of trust in the legal system in Denmark was in line with that of Norway and higher than those of the other countries participating in the survey.

The data collection for the tenth round of the European Social Survey was supposed to be conducted in 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and will instead be conducted from September 2020 to the beginning of 2022. Denmark will not participate in the tenth round of ESS.

