

Understanding the crucial role of information delivery in improving citizen perceptions of government policy

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Transparent government practices and communication can enhance citizen trust and foster a positive relationship between the government and citizens. Credit: "Kyoto City Government - panoramio" by ccfarmer Image Link: <https://openverse.org/image/dfb6a32f-4e13-45df-9929-1626fb7b5ad0?q=kyoto%20government>

Citizens are often deeply concerned about how the government manages public finances and taxes. However, understanding government fiscal policy can be complex, leaving citizens without a complete picture of the factors guiding budget decisions.

Kyoto City, the ninth most populous city in Japan, has been facing [financial difficulties](#) due to declining tax revenues and rising [government spending](#). This has caused citizens to hold [negative views](#) about [government policies](#), even though they may not fully understand them.

A study published in the journal [*International Review of Administrative Sciences*](#) on March 27, 2024, by Professor Yu Noda from the Faculty of Policy Studies at Doshisha University, identified the factors that affect citizens' perception of the government's fiscal policy decisions in Kyoto City. His investigation also explored whether opinions would change if citizens were better informed.

"This study identifies the citizen evaluations of finances in Kyoto and can serve as an important reference for examining how information should be provided in financially distressed municipalities in other countries," explains Prof. Noda.

Prof. Noda conducted an [online survey](#) from June 7 to June 12, 2023, involving 1109 participants between the ages of 20 and 79. The respondents were first asked to provide their own opinions on Kyoto City's financial situation without being given any actual information. After this initial assessment, the participants were provided with information about Kyoto's finances, the government's plans, and the city's achievement of a balanced budget in 2023 after 22 years.

To analyze the effects of different information formats on financial evaluations, the respondents were divided into two groups: a treatment group, which received easy-to-understand information accompanied by

figures, and a control group, which received only textual information. Following this, the respondents were asked to reassess Kyoto's financial status and provide feedback on their level of trust in the government.

This research revealed that people's initial perceptions of government policy were positively influenced by their trust in the government, government performance, its transparency in providing information, its compliance with laws, and respect for citizen's rights. However, people's initial views changed significantly after obtaining additional information.

Those who initially rated Kyoto's finances excessively low came to rate them higher, while those who rated them excessively high came to rate them lower. This learning effect was more noticeable among individuals dissatisfied with insufficient access to government [information](#).

"These findings indicate a need for a governmental response and a public relations strategy to communicate with citizens regarding how well services are being delivered, and to help citizens experience the benefits of respect for their rights and accessibility," says Prof. Noda.

The study underscores the benefits for governments in fostering a transparent environment where citizens are well-informed about fiscal policies. Such efforts can promote [civic engagement](#), improve citizen's trust, and cultivate a more positive relationship between the government and citizens.

"A high level of transparency in government improves the degree of trust citizens have in their government. A government with an increased degree of trust provides more opportunities for citizens to participate and promotes civic engagement," summarizes Prof. Noda.

More information: Yu Noda, Information on local financial reforms and cognitive processes of citizens, *International Review of*

Administrative Sciences (2024). [DOI: 10.1177/00208523241240128](https://doi.org/10.1177/00208523241240128)

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