

Island identities? Comparing the perceptions of islanders towards governing institutions and quality of life.

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, we seek to shed light on issues related to satisfaction with government institutions and personal quality of life from living on an island, teasing out common themes to determine whether there is a shared identity among islanders, regardless of geography, level of development and size, as it relates to governance. We explore these qualities in six different groups of island residents across ten islands or archipelagos, ranging in size, location and governance features. Half are sovereign states and the rest are subnational island jurisdictions: Tobago (Trinidad & Tobago), Grenada, Prince Edward Island (Canada), St. Lucia, Lesvos (Greece), Cyprus, Newfoundland (Canada), Iceland, Reunion (France) and Mauritius. Using a Likert-type questionnaire, island participants were asked about the factors that constitute “quality of life” on their islands, with a particular focus on governance. The construction of composite indicators from survey questions and cluster analysis allows us to compare the attitudes within and between different groups of islands and stakeholder groups. Results suggest that, despite significant contextual variances among stakeholders and island locations and situations, some common threads run through all groups and all islands, related to the group the respondents were classified in. These threads comprise a rough basis for a deeper understanding of island identities.

Keywords: island identities, governance, composite indicators, opinions, island residents

Introduction: island lives and living on islands

The geographical boundary of an island is “nature’s emphatic and unambiguous way of telling Islanders that they are a separate and unique people ... a geographic situation [that] dictate[s] both a sense of unity and separateness, of inclusion and exclusion” (Baglolle & Weale, 1973, pp. 105-6). The defined edge provides a natural limit, concentrating that sense of belonging to what is knowable, rendering “their inhabitants the permanent consciousness of being on an island” (Peron, 2004, p. 328). Thus, in western cultures, being surrounded by water serves to bind together an island’s inhabitants, giving them a shared sense of identity (Royle & Brinklow, 2018). Because of the bounded size and tightly woven character of an island community, in terms of day-to-day life on an island the scale is often smaller and more manageable; this particularly holds true in terms of governance (Warrington & Milne, 2018).

The geographical and logistical parameters of being small and islanded encourage many of these territories to develop as distinct administrative units (Baldacchino & Milne, 2006), historically in many cases because of colonialism. To the outside world, islands appear distinct, set apart from the mainland, thus making them look like property (Edmond & Smith, 2003). Often subject to governance from ‘away’, islanders may feel an even stronger sense of identity when set in opposition to a controlling mainland. How these dynamics of ‘us versus them’ play out in perceptions of quality of life and attitudes towards government and governance on island states and subnational island jurisdictions provides a backdrop to the overall objectives: gauging the perceptions of islanders regarding their governing institutions and the public services provided on their islands and analysing the characteristics that shape these perceptions.

In this paper, we compare the opinions of island residents on ten small island states and territories that ranged in size, geographical location and governance situation: with half being sovereign states and the other half being subnational island jurisdictions (SNIJs). We attempt to answer questions related to the islanders' perceptions and satisfaction towards governing institutions and public service on their islands and the characteristics (personal and that of the islands) that shape these perceptions.

Governing Institutions on islands and quality of life: a Literature Review

Given the similarity in their application, it is common to espy confusion in use of the terms trust, satisfaction and subjective quality of life (or social well-being) as they relate to the performance of government (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2003). The trust we are discussing here is political in nature and is directed to institutions or organisations rather than individuals. Blind (2006) defines it as “citizens’ evaluation of the performance of the overall political system and the regime”; while Bouckaert & Van de Walle (2003, p. 337) describe it as the “... congruence between citizens’ preference and the perceived actual functioning of government”. Public satisfaction with government has been defined similarly as “... a function of both public expectation and perception of government performance” (Welsh, Hinnant & Jae Moon, 2005, p. 374). Christensen & Læg Reid (2005) distinguish the two concepts by suggesting that satisfaction is related to the delivery of public services, which in turn produces a level of trust in government. Early work by Schneider (1974) and others suggests that satisfaction is the most useful indicator of life quality. In recent research in Taiwan, Edara (2021) found that confidence in government was the strongest predictor of life satisfaction. In addition, there is considerable correlation between residents’ satisfaction with services provided by government (e.g., education, health care, employment opportunities) and their assessment of their own personal quality of life (Sirgy, Gao, & Young, 2008). Some have gone so far as to suggest that the degree of overlap between subjective quality of life and subjective well-being is such that

there should be a new “Life Quality and Well-being” (LQW) model (Skevington & Böhnke, 2018). In this research, and consistent with others (Şahin, 1997; Uysal et al., 2016), we use these terms interchangeably.

A substantial amount of research has looked at the longitudinal changes in levels of trust and satisfaction with political and government institutions (Catterberg & Moreno, 2006; Citrin & Stoker, 2018; Drakos et al., 2019). One study found that “political trust is shaped by both early and late experiences with institutions” and those “who have accumulated more socio-economic, education and motivational resources throughout their life course express higher levels of political trust than those with fewer resources” (Schoon & Cheng, 2011, p. 1).

Unlike much of the work described above that has tracked changes in institutional trust and satisfaction, the research presented here is cross-sectional, examining factors on ten islands that might be associated with trust or satisfaction in institutions at one point in time, including individualised demographic and socio-economic status (SES) variables, such as age, gender, educational attainment, relative income and occupational status, as well as broader macro-level characteristics such as the population and state of development of a jurisdiction. Although it is conceptually and empirically difficult to separate out the specific individualized factors that may be linked to the level of trust in institutions, it has been attempted. For example, using data from the European Social Survey and applying it to Ecuador, Martin, Roman and Vinan (2020) found that the level of trust associated with local government, the judicial system, politicians, political parties, national parliament and the United Nations varied across the nine Ecuadorian provinces and that trust was influenced by gender, with males trusting institutions more than females. Conversely, Laegreid (1993) found that women tended to support the public sector more than men, and that this was at least partly a function of the higher levels of public sector labour force participation by women.

Using the 1990 World Values Survey for forty countries, Weakliem (2002) determined that education influences most political opinions but that the relationship became weaker in the more developed countries. Trust in government tends to be highest among those with a higher education, those who work in the public sector, with women, and with age (Christensen & Lægreid, 2005). Bouckaert and Van de Walle (2001) also found that the level of education was directly correlated with the level of trust in government. In an analysis of the determinants of Europeans’ confidence in government, Foster and Frieden (2017) established that those with more education and higher skill levels had greater levels of trust in government. In an analysis of trust in government on the island country of Dominican Republic (DR) between 1994 and 2001, Espinal, Hartlyn and Kelly (2006) established that there was a U-shaped relationship between socio-economic status (SES) and institutional trust. Middle-income groups were much less trusting of government than the relatively poor and the relatively rich. Older DR citizens, who had lived through autocratic regimes, were considerably more trusting of democratic institutions. Specific to citizen security, the LAPOP Americas Barometer Reports track perceived citizen trust in the judicial system across many Latin American states (Donoso et al., 2016). They found that in the Eastern Caribbean trust in the justice system was much lower in Saint Lucia than in Grenada and that age was a significant distinguishing feature in the level of trust; while gender and education were only occasionally significant.

These demographic variables seem to correlate most strongly with trust in the civil service but not as strongly with trust in political parties, local councils, or individual politicians. Therefore, different demographic factors appear to correlate differently with different types of public institutions, with education being much more strongly associated with trust in parliament, the cabinet and the civil service but not with trust in local government or politicians.

Another thread of research suggests that it is less about the specific characteristics of the citizens and more about the performance of their institutions that influences the level of dissatisfaction with government institutions (Torcal & Montero, 2006). For example, institutional trust in Haiti and the Dominican Republic was explained by public participation and prior government performance (Stoyan et al., 2016). Particularly important was the perception of how governments had addressed corruption and crime, more so than the economy. A similar result emerged from research on government trust in Japan and South Korea, where performance with respect to the economy, controlling political corruption, and quality of public services, crime and inviting citizen input, were all significantly associated with trust in government (Kim, 2010). In the aforementioned work by Foster & Frieden (2017) on trust in the EU, participants in those jurisdictions with higher unemployment rates were less likely to trust national governments. In the Balkans, Luhiste (2006) found that trust was influenced by how well the participants thought their economic and political system was working.

Despite these micro-level findings, overall there was very little difference in the level of trust across the various institutions. Those who trust one institution tend to trust all others. Citizens who were engaged and involved in the political system tended to have a higher level of trust in most government institutions and, as described above, gender may be influencing the level of trust in some institutions. The survey used in this current research was not a representative cross-section of the citizenry and thus likely produced a level of satisfaction that was higher than one might expect from the public-at-large.

The literature has also examined the role population size may have on the level of trust or satisfaction with government. Most of the work that examines this association with scale is done at a municipal level and addresses the impacts of amalgamation or merger of adjacent jurisdictions. An often-posed research question is whether residents are more or less satisfied with these larger municipal units. The results seem to be consistent that there is an inverse relationship; in other words, as the size of the place increases, the perceived trust or satisfaction in government decreases (Hansen, 2015). This pattern holds at the national and international scale as well. For example, in examining the relationship between the size of the political system and political trust across municipalities in Denmark, Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Norway, Denters (2002) found that there was a tendency for those in small municipalities to be more satisfied with their local government than those in larger political units. Using survey data for different sized nations in Europe, North America, and Oceania, Matsubayashi (2007) found that those in less populous and more decentralized countries/states expressed higher levels of satisfaction for their governments than those in larger, more centralized jurisdictions. The implication of these results suggests that smaller places allow for greater autonomy, accountability and transparency of government, where “Citizens can interact more with government and better scrutinize their actions...” (Diaz-Serrano & Rodriguez-Pose, 2012, pp. 182-3).

Beyond the question of scale, trust and satisfaction with government institutions may also be a product of a jurisdiction’s level of development. In a macro-study of six large Asian-Pacific countries, Wang (2010) found that the level of satisfaction with government performance is highest in those places with the fastest-growing economies. The most satisfied citizens seem to be those in relatively richer countries (Schafer, 2013). This does not imply that there is no variation within developed countries. For example, using the European Social Survey and analysing responses to the question, “How satisfied are you with the way your government is doing its job?”, Diaz-Serrano and Rodríguez & Pose (2012) found that those in

the Nordic and Western European countries were significantly more satisfied than those in Eastern and Southern Europe. These findings also should not be construed to imply that, *ceteris paribus*, democracy or capitalism are more important in generating trust or satisfaction with government. In research on institutional trust in East Asia, Wang (2013) found that citizens in non-democracies showed higher levels of trust than was the case in democracies.

This paper has already noted that research on residents' satisfaction or trust with government is closely connected to their perceived quality of life (QOL) or well-being, where QOL is concerned with understanding people's perceived satisfaction with the circumstances in which they live (Moscardo 2019). It can be measured using secondary or so-called 'objective' surrogate indicators, subjective, perceptual indicators (e.g., satisfaction with various aspects of one's personal life), or a combination of both (Schalock & Siperstein, 1996). It is not uncommon for residents to see their own personal well-being to be congruent with their perceptions of community well-being (Sirgy et al., 2010). There are also many municipal initiatives that employ QOL surveys of their residents as a form of benchmarking government success in providing various public services (Culwick, 2018; Uysal & Sirgy, 2019).

Methods and data

Research questions

In this paper, we attempt to shed light on issues related to satisfaction with government institutions and personal QOL from living on an island. The study compares the opinions of island residents using surveys conducted on ten small island states and territories. We targeted six stakeholder groups of island residents across the ten islands or archipelagos that ranged in size, geographical location and governance situation: with half being sovereign states and the other half being subnational island jurisdictions (SNIJs). Using a Likert-type questionnaire, participants from these islands were asked about the factors that constitute 'quality of life' on their islands, with a particular focus on governance. Participants in the online survey were then invited to participate in focus group sessions to explore the issues in more detail.

The paper attempts to answer the following overarching questions: What are islanders' perceptions and satisfaction towards governing institutions and public service on their islands and what characteristics shape these perceptions? To answer these broad questions, we sought to answer more specific questions: Does the level of development or population size of the island impact perception and satisfaction with governing institutions? Are there differences in the perception and satisfaction with governing institutions between small island states and subnational island jurisdictions? The research aims to tease out common themes to determine whether there is a shared identity among islanders, regardless of geography, level of development, and size, as it relates to governance.

Methods: questionnaire, setting, case studies, composite indexes

The study examines people's perception and satisfaction of governing institutions on five small island states (Saint Lucia, Mauritius, Grenada, Iceland and Cyprus) and five subnational island jurisdictions (Tobago, Prince Edward Island, Lesvos, Newfoundland and Reunion) (Figure 1). The online survey examined quality of life and governance, where participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with governing institutions and their own quality of life, as well as demographic and socioeconomic characteristics regarding themselves and their households (e.g., age, gender, occupation, income status, household status

and education). The responses for most of the questions were predetermined along a five or seven point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree or extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied.

Participants were selected based on their likely affiliation with one of six different groups: youth (between 18 and 29, including students), members of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), government employees or representatives, business persons (having their own and/or running a business), private sector employees, and academics. These groups are not mutually exclusive and despite a pre-survey selection process from us and to reduce bias, participants ultimately self-selected the group to which they most closely identified and these self-identified groups were used for the analysis. The selection process was similar for all islands: It was based on a snowball type of sample acquisition, with key informants from each group that local organizers contacted, who provided more contacts for their group, but also for other groups. These were contacted and asked to provide even more contacts until a predefined number of people was reached for each island (50 participants). This number was the minimum and local organizers were encouraged to contact as many participants as possible. This process yielded quite different numbers of participants per island, including distribution between the six groups, but also personal characteristics (Tables 1 & 2). The differences can be attributed to island sizes and their economies and societies: e.g. on Lesbos, the members of NGOs have increased rapidly in the last decade due to the refugee inflows and the population of possible participants reached was larger, while in St Lucia and Cyprus the population of (small) business persons and younger private sector employees is high and those reached more than the ones of the same groups on other islands. The fact that the survey was mostly completed online created further barriers for groups of residents that are not frequent internet users or have random access to the internet and in some instances, we had to fill the questionnaire ourselves during a face-to-face interview. Therefore, the number and distribution of the participants are not representative of the overall distribution in the six selected groups, neither towards age and/or education patterns (Table 2). So, we treat the findings of this research as exploratory rather than representative. The islands included are very diverse and from different localities and present a unique opportunity to compare the views of island residents.

In order to undertake a comparative analysis across the ten islands, composite indexes were created consisting of the sums of the scores of the different questions that make up a separate part of the questionnaire. These indexes are used to provide an overview of the issue and correlate the scores with other indexes and the personal and social characteristics of the participants on the different islands. The indexes used are:

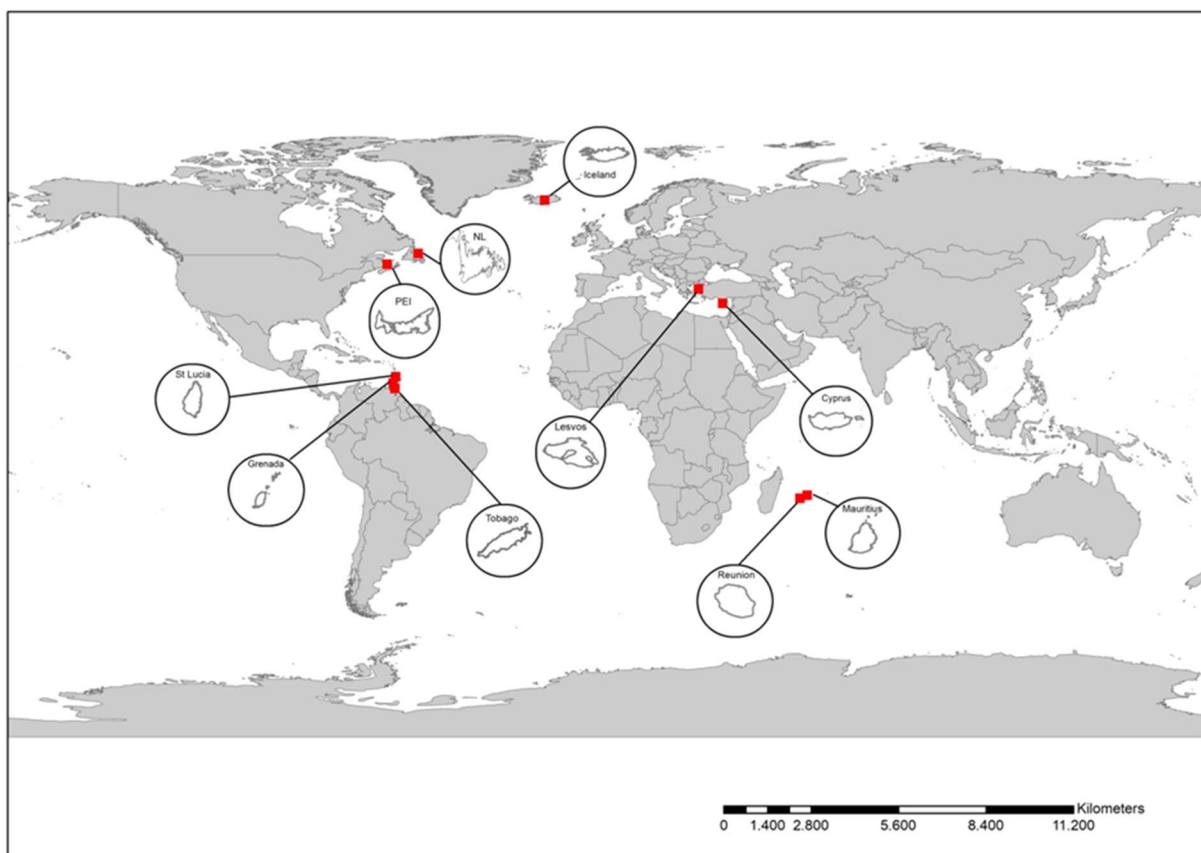
- Q1 sums the responses of six questions on the perception of the importance of the island's judiciary, parliament (or equivalent), civil service, police, and provincial/regional/state and municipal governments (where applicable). The question reads, "With respect to your island, please rate your opinion of the current importance of each of the following activities or public services associated with government when it comes to the smooth running of your island checking one box per row from Most Important to Least Important."
- Q2 sums the responses of six questions regarding the same institutions of governance and quality of life as described above, but now asks participants to assess their degree of satisfaction with these institutions. The question reads, "How satisfied are you with the performance of your island institutions, checking one box per row from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Dissatisfied."

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- Finally, Q3 sums the responses to nine questions on the satisfaction with different aspects of what might be described as “quality of life”, including satisfaction with the economy, public services, stakeholders, safety, public information, education, health, relationships with the metropole government (for the SNIJs) and relationship to other international governments. The question reads, “How satisfied are you currently with your island government’s performance regarding each of the following, checking one box per row from Extremely Satisfied to Extremely Dissatisfied”.

Based on this approach to summarizing the data, the lowest aggregate point totals would be most closely linked with a high degree of importance (Q1) or satisfaction (Q2 and Q3) attached to the institutions; while the highest aggregate scores indicate that the participants view the institutions as irrelevant or are dissatisfied with their performance on their island.

Figure 1: Location of the islands in the study.



Source: our own analysis

One of the objectives of this study is to analyse the differences in people’s perceptions of importance and satisfaction with the institutions of governance among islanders based on such broad structural characteristics as population and level of economic development (measured by GDP per capita). As such, the islands were grouped into categories (see [Table 1](#)). The selection of the number of categories for each variable was guided by the range of the values, which was considered as high for GDP per capita and population and three classes were deemed necessary to separate among the lower values of the variables. For population, we classified the islands into three classes based on the 25% quartile (114,290 people) and median (273,880 people): Class 1 - population up to 114,290; Class 2 - population between 114,290

and 273,880; Class 3 - greater than 273,880. For GDP per capita, we used 2018 World Bank data in US\$ equating national and island GDPs where island data were not available (i.e., Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Tobago), except for Reunion and Lesvos, for which we used 2018 data from EUROSTAT in € which were converted to US\$ using the equivalence of €1 = US\$1.21 (21 February 2021). We used the 25% quartile (\$11,483) and median GDP (\$23,721) to set up three classes: Class 1 - GDP less than \$11, 483; Class 2 - GDP between \$11, 483 and \$23,720; and Class 3 - greater than \$23,720.

Table 1: Categorisation of islands using population and Gross Domestic Product per capita. (Subnational island jurisdictions are *in italics*.)

	Population	Total Area (Km ²)	GDP (per capita)	Participants (#)	Population class	GDP class
<i>Tobago</i>	60,874	300	17,038	51	1	2
Grenada	112,523	348	10,808	56	1	1
<i>Prince Edward Island</i>	159,713	5,660	46,194	118	2	3
St. Lucia	183,627	617	11,611	54	2	1
<i>Lesvos</i>	114,880	1,633	19,582	60	1	2
Cyprus	1,207,359	9,251	27,858	42	3	3
<i>Newfoundland</i>	479,538	108,860	46,194	109	3	3
Iceland	364,134	103,000	66,944	67	3	3
<i>Reunion</i>	859,959	2,511	28,666	57	3	2
Mauritius	1,271,768	2,040	11,100	57	3	1

Results

Descriptive statistics

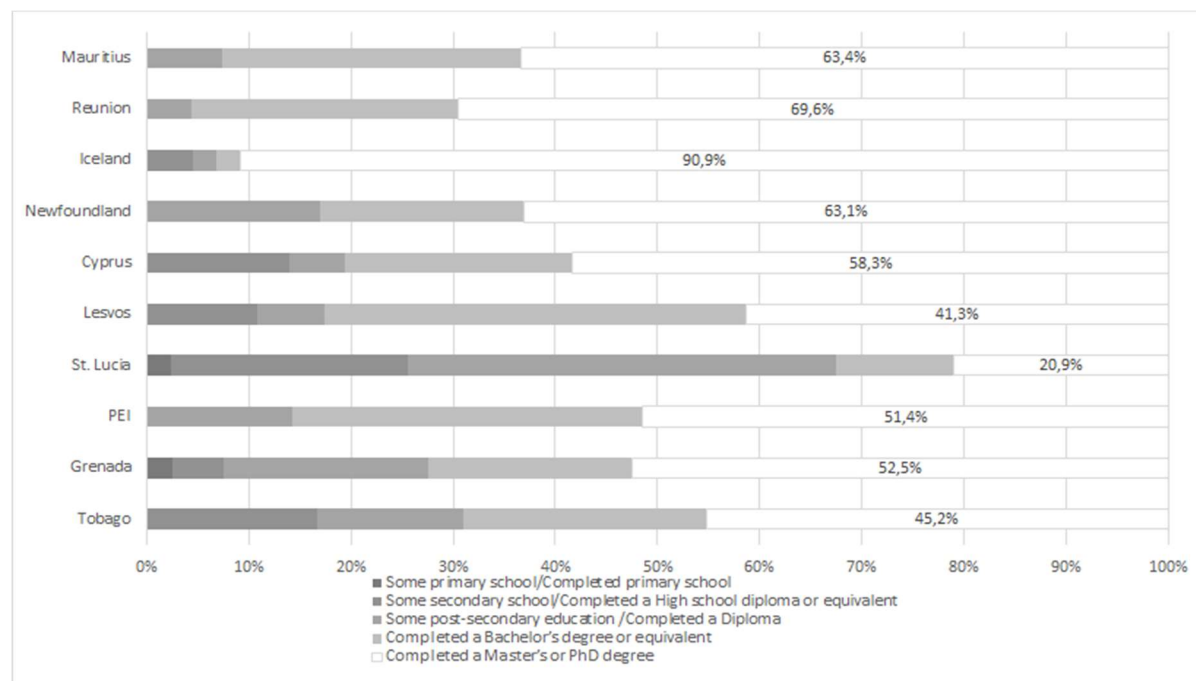
A total of 671 persons on the ten islands completed the online survey. The number of participants for each of the islands is shown in [Table 1](#). The age of the participants differs across the different islands. Except for St Lucia, the majority of the participants in the rest of the islands are over 40 years old ([Table 2](#)). The older populations are in Canada, with 50% of the total number of participants being older than 50 and the youngest in St Lucia, Cyprus, Reunion and Lesvos. To standardise “income”, the question asks how they feel their household income compares to others in the community. Most participants classified themselves as about the same or with moderately higher incomes, with the exception of Cyprus and St Lucia, where reported incomes are lower. Not surprisingly, these are the islands with the youngest populations; in the case of St Lucia the majority of the participants were youth/students ([Table 2](#)).

Table 2: Frequency distributions for gender, age and relative income for survey participants. (ALL by %)

	Gender	Age				Perceived Relative Income				
	Female	<25 years	25-39 years	40 – 54 years	>54 years	Income is much lower than average in community	Income is moderately lower than average in community	Income is about same as others in community	Income is moderately greater than average in community	Income is much greater than the average in community
Tobago	54.8	0.0	16.3	53.5	30.2	2.4	7.3	34.1	36.6	19.5
Grenada	45.0	7.5	20.0	35.0	37.5	0.0	5.3	28.9	44.7	21.1
PEI	49.5	3.8	21.0	23.8	51.4	1.0	9.7	33.0	37.9	18.4
St. Lucia	74.4	51.2	25.6	11.6	11.6	0.0	16.7	40.5	38.1	4.8
Lesvos	45.7	13.0	39.1	43.5	4.3	4.3	13.0	52.2	26.1	4.3
Cyprus	38.9	8.3	58.3	19.4	13.9	2.8	30.6	30.6	25.0	11.1
Newfoundland	37.9	9.1	19.7	24.2	47.0	4.6	7.7	23.1	40.0	24.6
Iceland	61.4	2.3	18.2	45.5	34.1	2.3	13.6	31.8	36.4	15.9
Reunion	58.7	10.9	37.0	37.0	15.2	6.5	6.5	17.4	41.3	28.3
Mauritius	51.2	7.3	41.5	29.3	22.0	2.4	9.8	46.3	22.0	19.5

The education level of the participants is high to very high on some islands. In Iceland, more than 90% of the participants held a post-baccalaureate degree and in all islands except St. Lucia the percentage in this category is higher than 40%. The fact that the groups include academics and those employed in the local government contributed to these higher percentages than the total population of the islands (e.g., in Lesvos the percentage of people with academic degrees is 12% according to the official statistics of ELSTAT and for the survey participants on this island it was 41%).

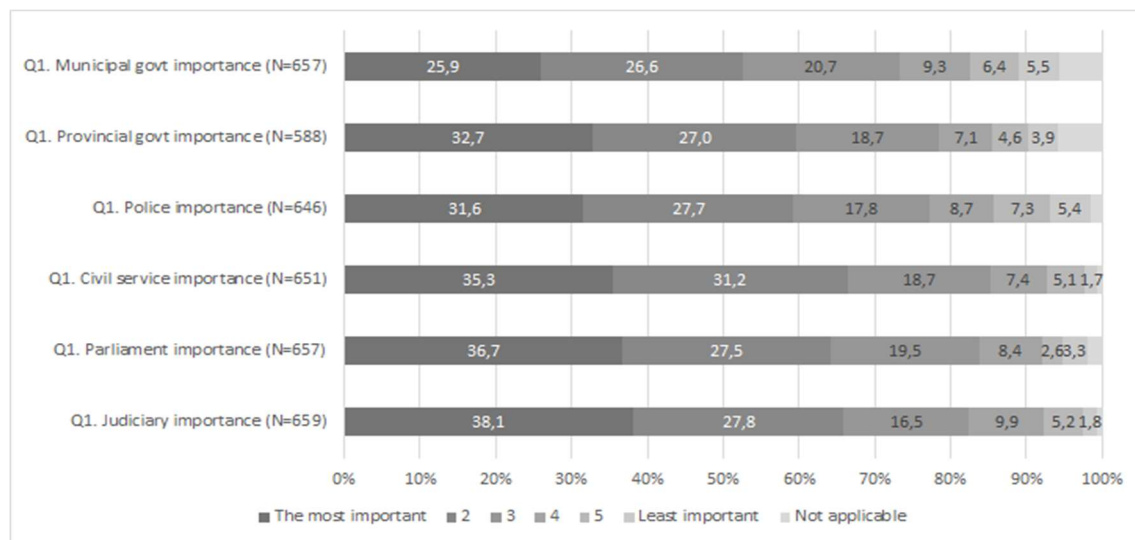
Figure 2: Education level of the participants, by island.



Importance of specific public services associated with the government (governing institutions)

Participants were asked to rate their perception of the current importance of public services associated with government when it comes to the smooth running of their island. The responses to the six questions on the importance of different aspects of governing institutions and quality of life are similar. Almost all participants agree that all governing institutions listed in the survey are very important (Figure 3). Participants that consider the importance of the judiciary, the parliament, civil service, the police, provincial government and municipal government to be extremely important and very important range from 55% (for municipal government) to 67% (for civil service).

Figure 3: Perceived importance of different governing institutions from “most important” to “least important”.



Satisfaction with government institutions

Participants were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the performance of their island governing institutions. Although the majority of the participants ranked these institutions as extremely important or very important, their satisfaction with them is significantly lower (Figure 4), ranging from 18% (for parliament and provincial governments) to 32% (for police). The cross-tabulation of importance and satisfaction reveals that almost all (except one case) responses for importance are statistically significant ($p = 0.01$). This means that there is a positive relationship between importance and satisfaction with the performance of governing institutions.

The findings from the focus groups confirm these survey findings. For example, in Saint Lucia residents expressed concerns about the rising crime rate on the island. This was in tandem with their less-than-satisfactory view of the performance of the judiciary on the whole.

The justice system needs urgent attention. It is not functioning. The wheels are not turning and there needs to be improvement in terms of how the courts function and the efficiency of the courts. I mean, we have people who have buried their relatives over a decade ago and the court case has not been heard. (St Lucia, household participant 1).

Comparing the perceptions of islanders towards governing institutions and quality of life.

On Prince Edward Island, the issue of transparency in the provincial government was raised by several participants:

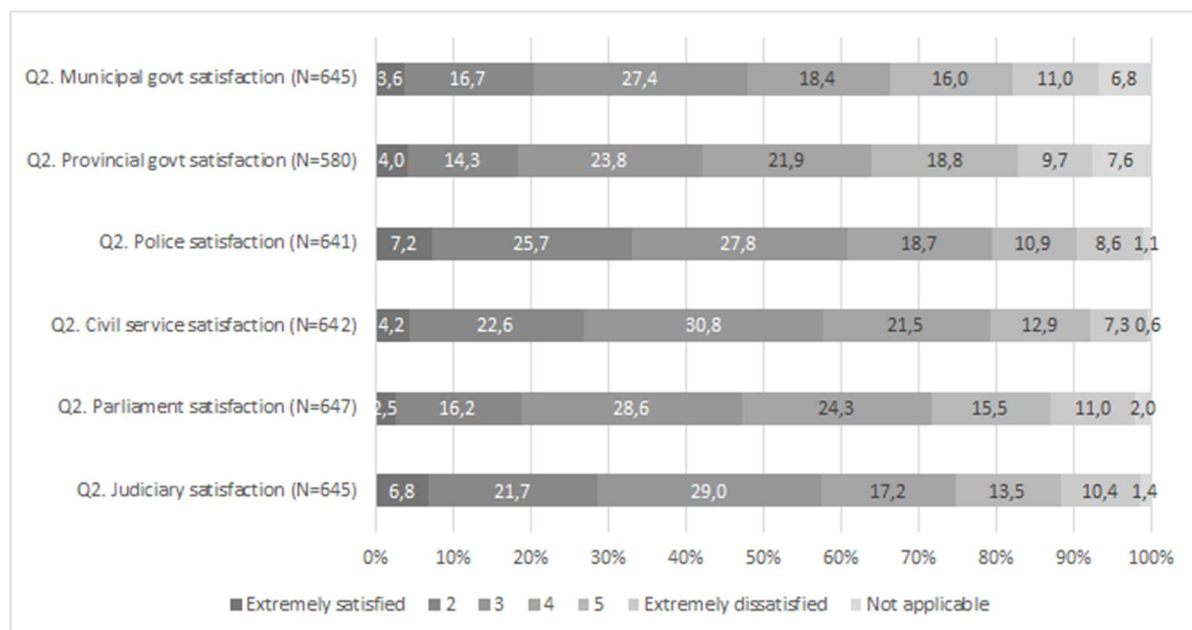
An issue in general that people have pointed out time and time again in different areas of responsibility in relation to the provincial government which is accountability and transparency and trust (Prince Edward Island, youth participant 3).

Transparency is a huge one. It gets promised in every election and we still haven't seen enough of it and I think it... really comes down to process and proper consultation. (Prince Edward Island, NGO participant 5).

On the other hand, one participant noted,

We're small and our politicians are much more accessible to us than in a lot of the larger provinces. Our government works well here and it has to do with size, I think. People can make their voices heard here and be listened to. You can access the Premier, I mean, where else can you do that? (Prince Edward Island, NGO participant 7).

Figure 4: Satisfaction with governing institutions from “extremely satisfied” to “extremely dissatisfied”.

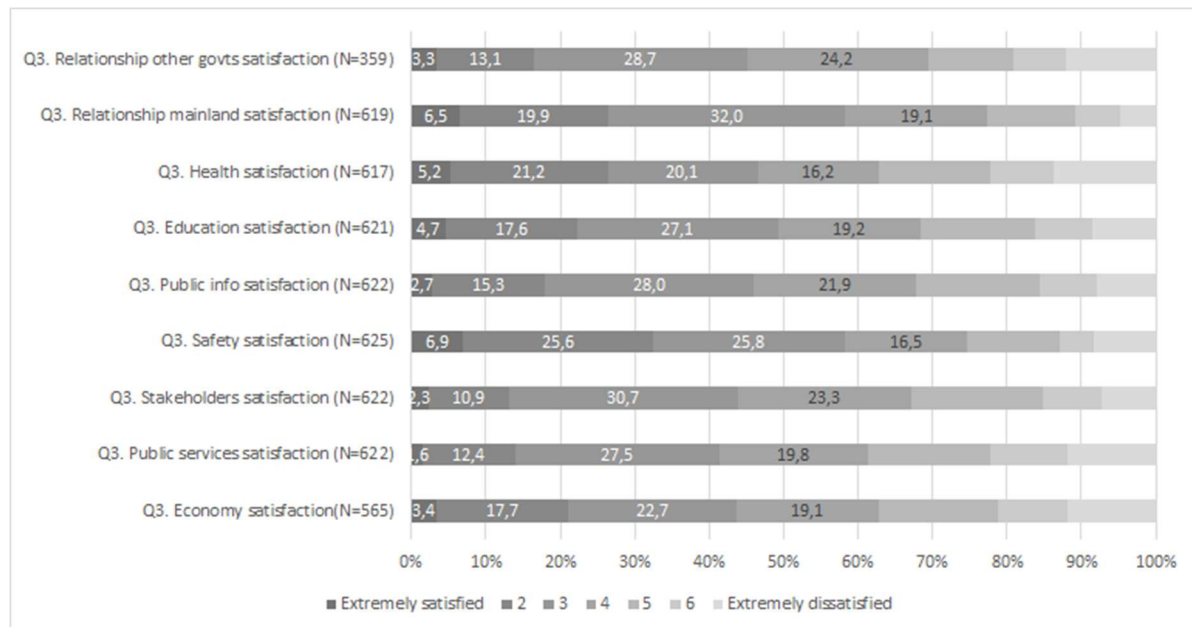


Satisfaction with governance and quality of life

Participants were also asked to rate their satisfaction with their government’s performance in nine areas that impact on their own quality of life, including the economy, health care and education. The results in Figure 5 reveal a medium to high degree of satisfaction with the economy (i.e., 42% chose one of the three highest categories) and public services (41% chose one of the three highest categories). The highest levels of satisfaction were recorded for perceptions of “safety and security” (58% in the three highest classes and 6.9% “extremely satisfied”), which is one of the characteristics typically associated with islands in general. The responses for other characteristics that are often mentioned as well in the quality of life literature (Michalos, 2000; Sirgy, Gao & Young, 2008; Sirgy, et. al., 2000), health and

education, also suggest a relatively high degree of satisfaction (49% in one of the three highest categories for education and 46% for health). Responses on the satisfaction with the relationship with the mainland and other governments also show a relatively high level of satisfaction (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Satisfaction with aspects of quality-of-life from “extremely satisfied” to “extremely dissatisfied”.



Although residents in the subnational island jurisdictions expressed high levels of satisfaction regarding their islands’ relationship with their metropolises, this was not a consistent response when probed further in the focus groups, where the relationships were seen as complex and nuanced. For example, a participant in Tobago said:

I don’t think Tobago has benefitted from the relationship with Trinidad. I support Tobago’s independence much more than being dependent on Trinidad as I do not think we are being developed in the same way Trinidad is. (Tobago, participant 7).

I would say that we’ve got a great relationship with our federal counterparts and again, I reiterate that we speak every second week. (PEI, Government employee 1).

One way to look at the relationship [between the island and the federal government] is as a host and parasite and in a host-parasite relation it’s the parasite, that’s us, who benefits from the larger, or the generally unwilling or involuntary generosity of the host. Does that in our case breed a dependency and permanent kind of dependency we cannot get away from? (PEI, Government participant 2).

Differences per islands and other demographic variables

Using the three composite variables, we tested for differences among participants based on demographic and socio-economic variables such as age, gender, relative income and self-identified affiliation using ANOVA. Probability values (p-values) of less than 0.05 (or 5% level of significance) indicate statistically significant differences. The results are shown in Table 3. As it relates to gender, there are no statistically significant differences in the composite indexes

(Q1-Q3) based on gender (Table 3), indicating that gender is not important in most of the participants' attitudes. A closer analysis of the individual questions that make up the composite indexes (Supplementary Material Tables S4, S5) confirms this.

However, as a participant noted about Prince Edward Island's commitment to gender equity,

It's not sufficient to get to a truly sustainable level or to get to a point where we could say that gender equity is central or core in the way that we are approaching policy in PEI. And alongside gender equity it's really looking at the sustainability of human health and human populations. (Prince Edward Island, NGO participant 3).

In relation to age, the average values of the satisfaction in the governing institutions on the islands have statistically significant differences for composite indexes, Q1 ($F = 3.032$, $p = 0.029$) and Q2 ($F = 6.773$, $p = 0.000$). These findings seem to indicate that older participants perceive the institutions as more important and are also more satisfied with their government's performance with respect to these institutions than those who are younger.

There are no significant differences with the perceived importance of government institutions (Q1) based on income, employment or participant's stakeholder group affiliation. However, our results show that the average values of the satisfaction with the performance of government (composite index Q2) and quality of life domains on the islands (composite index Q3) have statistically significant differences for relative income (increasing with rising relative income), education (which increases with rising education levels) and for employment, with people not employed/currently looking for work being the less satisfied group on average, followed by the self-employed, while retired participants were the most satisfied (Table 3). Group affiliation was also important for Q2 and Q3, with academics being the group that was most satisfied for the domains covered by both indicators; and businesspersons being the least satisfied on average.

Statistically significant differences are observed for all three composite indicators based on the island of the participants. For Q1, the importance is highest on average for Iceland (with participants of higher educational attainment than the rest of the islands), followed by Grenada, Mauritius, Prince Edward Island and Tobago, while participants from all other islands consider these issues less important on average (Table 3). For the same issues, satisfaction (Q2 composite indicator) is higher overall for all islands and similar differences are observed, with participants from so-called developed countries being the most satisfied (Iceland and the two Canadian islands followed by Cyprus, but not Lesvos), while participants from smaller and less-developed countries/islands expressed less satisfaction on average (Table 3). Tobagonians believe these government institutions are important; but they are also the most dissatisfied with their government's performance.

Finally, for satisfaction with quality-of-life issues (Q3 composite indicator), the pattern is similar, with Iceland and Lesvos participants expressing the greatest degree of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, respectively (with a difference of almost 20 points, Table 3). Participants from the two Canadian islands and Cyprus were also satisfied, along with participants from Grenada and Mauritius. The fact that participants from Saint Lucia were the third most dissatisfied group in their assessment of quality-of-life factors may be related to the high proportion of youth/students in the survey.

Table 3: Average values and statistically significant differences for selected variables of participants (shaded areas indicate statistically significant differences at the p=0.05 level).

Composite Scores (Q1 to Q3)		Q1	Q2	Q3			Q1	Q2	Q3
Gender	Female	13.72	21.36	32.62	Island	Tobago	13.20	24.92	37.82
	Male	14.31	20.68	30.77		Grenada	16.48	24.23	28.25
	Other/Prefer not to Answer	14.24	22.29	35.05		PEI	13.18	17.63	27.39
	Total	14.01	21.09	31.89		St. Lucia	15.35	24.57	34.56
Age	<25 years	14.92	22.00	32.87		Lesvos	15.53	24.55	40.53
	25-39 years	14.71	21.96	32.66		Cyprus	15.36	20.98	28.26
	40 – 54 years	14.06	21.48	32.70		Newfoundland	15.06	18.63	28.65
	>54 years	13.08	19.65	30.04		Iceland	9.00	13.78	20.76
	Total	14.03	21.11	31.89		Reunion	16.74	21.07	32.77
Perceived Relative Income	Income is much lower than average in community	16.85	21.92	35.15		Mauritius	12.68	21.28	29.54
	Income is moderately lower than average in community	14.63	22.93	35.18		Total	14.13	20.50	30.24
	Income is about same as others in community	13.50	21.17	32.36		Employment	Not employed/currently looking for work	13.67	25.44
	Income is moderately greater than average in community	14.52	20.66	30.99	Not employed/not currently looking for work		16.50	20.83	30.67
	Income is much greater than the average in community	13.41	20.67	30.68	Employed part-time/Employed full-time		13.96	20.82	31.50
	Total	14.06	21.12	31.98	Self-employed		13.97	23.15	35.55
Stakeholder	NGO	13.58	21.45	32.10	Student/Apprentice. intern or on the job training		15.15	21.68	32.00
	Academic	12.95	19.25	29.58	Retired	12.45	18.89	28.58	
	Youth/student	15.71	21.70	32.58	Other	16.31	20.92	35.23	
	Government/employee	13.85	21.29	32.69	Total	14.08	21.15	32.00	
	A business person	14.59	22.68	34.72					
	Trade union/workers	14.75	21.72	32.19					
	Total	14.05	21.13	32.06					

We sought to further analyse differences among the composite indicators based on population and level of economic development as measured by GDP/capita. Our results show no statistically significant differences in the perceived importance of government institutions based on these categories as defined in Table 1. However, we did find significant differences in the level of satisfaction (Q2) based on these variables. Participants on richer and more populated islands are also statistically more satisfied with their quality of life (Q3) when compared to smaller, poorer and less populated islands (Table 4).

Table 4: Mean composite values in satisfaction and quality-of-life based on level of economic development and population size (shaded areas indicate statistically significant differences at the $p=0.05$ level).

		N	Mean			N	Mean
Q1total	Lower population islands	167	12.12	Q1 total	Poorer islands	167	12.31
	Medium population islands	172	13.33		Medium islands	168	13.52
	Larger population islands	332	13.35		Richer islands	336	13.16
	Total	671	13.04		Total	671	13.04
Q2total	Lower population islands	167	21.25	Q2 total	Poorer islands	167	20.44
	Medium population islands	172	19.08		Medium islands	168	21.98
	Larger population islands	332	18.32		Richer islands	336	17.27
	Total	671	19.24		Total	671	19.24
Q3total	Lower population islands	167	35.59	Q3 total	Poorer islands	167	30.73
	Medium population islands	172	29.64		Medium islands	168	34.74
	Larger population islands	332	26.69		Richer islands	336	26.59
	Total	671	29.66		Total	671	29.66

Finally, we sought to investigate the variation in perceived satisfaction with governing institutions and quality of life between the two broad governance models of island jurisdictions; whether they were small island states or SNIJs. Our findings show that there are no significant differences in the perceived satisfaction of the performance of their governing institutions, but differences do exist in their perceived importance of these same institutions and quality-of-life issues. Residents on island states are statistically more likely to view governing institutions as more important and are more satisfied with how governments have improved their quality-of-life issues than their counterparts on subnational island jurisdictions. This may be related to more extreme attitudes among participants from Tobago with respect to protection of their natural environment (Maharaj-Sharma, 2015; Rauwald & Moore, 2002) and government handling of the refugee crisis on Lesvos (Bousiou, 2020; Cederquist, 2019; Dinos et al., 2019)

Discussion

This study explored the perceptions and satisfaction with governing institutions/public services and quality-of-life issues among six groups of residents drawn from ten islands. We further sought to uncover whether islanders' perceptions of importance and satisfaction were associated with certain socio-economic or demographic characteristics such as gender, age, relative income, area of employment and the island on which they reside.

Unlike the literature cited above (Martin, Roman & Vinan, 2020; Weakliem, 2002), the results presented here suggest that gender was not a significant factor in distinguishing the level of satisfaction with governing institutions. However, several other socio-demographic factors did appear to conform to existing research. For example, as was the case with the research findings by Christensen and Læg Reid (2005), Espinal, Hartlyn and Kelly (2006), and Weakliem (2002), older participants on these ten islands were statistically more likely to be satisfied with the institutions associated with government.

Also consistent with the literature (Bouckaert & Van de Walle, 2001; Foster & Frieden (2017), the level of satisfaction with government institutions was significantly higher among those with higher educational attainment, higher relative incomes, and higher status occupations. Unlike the findings in the Dominican Republic (Espinal, Hartlyn, & Kelly, 2006), we did not find a

U-shaped relationship between socio-demographic status and perceptions of institutional performance. Those who considered themselves relatively poorer and those who were unemployed were least satisfied with government performance.

Not surprisingly, current literature suggests that those employed in state institutions are more likely to be satisfied with the performance of those institutions (Christensen & Læg Reid, 2005). The survey research upon which these results are based did not ask participants their specific sectors of employment. However, those who self-identified as working within the state did not have the highest levels of perceived satisfaction with governing institutions. The most satisfied were academics (albeit a form of state employment). As is the case in the literature, businesspeople were least satisfied with state-related institutions.

Contrary to the literature suggesting that those in less populated jurisdictions tend to be more satisfied with the performance of their governing institutions (Denters, 2002; Hansen, 2015; Matsubayashi, 2007), the results above found that those on the larger islands are more satisfied and those on the smallest islands are least satisfied with their governing institutions. This also seems to run contrary to our understanding of political life on small islands, where the average citizen can and often does interact with those employed in many of these governing institutions. In fact, given the occupational multiplicity so often found on small islands, it is not uncommon for island decision-makers to be your neighbours, owners of businesses you patronize, and fellow members of volunteer boards on which you serve (Baldacchino & Veenendaal, 2018; Lévêque, 2020). This proximity with decision-makers and local administration may provide access, in principle, but also stresses the importance of personal relations and networks. This personalizes administration and governance in ways that do not exist on larger islands and other large mainland jurisdictions where institutions may be more distant and less personal. While the quality of governing institutions is not dictated by population size alone, it can be a limiting factor for public services (Everest-Phillips, 2014). The smallest countries tend to have the largest relative size of government due to diseconomies of scale in the provision of public services such as health and education and because of the 'village-like' context of small jurisdictions. Contrasted with the rational-legal process of institutions associated with larger jurisdictions, the impartial application of laws and processes is often undermined in small jurisdictions as personality may trump policy and nepotism and patronage politics have an opportunity to flourish (Everest-Phillips, 2014).

Those on the most developed islands, including Iceland, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island, had the highest levels of trust or satisfaction with their governing institutions. This is consistent with the work by those such as Listaug and Aardal (2003) who found higher levels of trust associated with stable democracies in the European Union. It may also reflect satisfaction with the way these governments have addressed the current COVID-19 pandemic crisis, irrespective of their underlying performance in addressing other governance issues.

Apart from how closely the findings from this research may correspond with existing literature, a larger issue that should be addressed is the value of these results for various stakeholder groups. Boivard and Löffler (2003) suggest that much of the existing literature on QOL and satisfaction with government appears to be for the benefit of the researchers themselves rather than the average citizen or even to politicians. As Prinsen (2015) suggests in a reflexive article on designing indicators of sovereignty on Pacific islands, creating indicators is an inherently political process, while indicators designed specifically to measure sustainability are instruments of political power (Russell & Thomson, 2009). Rarely during the development of the research objectives, design of the methodologies, and analysis of the results is thought given to the relevance of these outcomes to the day-to-day lives of island residents.

Although the stakeholders who participated in these surveys and focus groups were from diverse groups, their occupational and socioeconomic characteristics suggest that they are still drawn from a narrower subset of the general populations on these islands. As such, the impact of these findings on their own QOL is muted at best.

Conclusion

In this paper, we compared the views of different groups of islanders on small island states and SNIJs and their perceptions on quality of life and governing institutions. This study adds to the extant literature on identity and tries to uncover whether residents' satisfaction with their quality of life and governing institutions are shaped by their island of residence or other socio-demographic characteristics.

Our study offers some useful insights into islanders' perceptions about their well-being and their attitudes towards government institutions. However, it is not without its limitations. The findings are not generalizable as the participants were not representative of the overall population on the islands. Moreover, some demographic characteristics of the participants were overrepresented relative to the general population; particularly those with higher educational levels, who are middle-aged and have relatively higher incomes. At the same time, the intent was never to have a statistically representative sample of the general population. Rather, it was to focus on those individuals who were understood to have a background knowledge of issues related to sustainability and sustainable development on their islands.

Nevertheless, despite significant contextual differences among the stakeholders and island locations and situations, our results indicate that there are common threads that run through all groups and all islands. The findings from our survey and focus groups revealed that almost all participants agreed that the public services associated with the governing institutions (e.g., judiciary, police, civil service, parliament/legislature, municipal and provincial governments) are all very important to island life. However, they were less satisfied with the performance of these institutions. The stakeholders chosen for this study all play critical roles in policies and solutions and the fact that they are not entirely satisfied with how they are being engaged means there is much work to be done to analyse the gap between perception of importance and success in delivering these public services. Stakeholder participation in governance is critical and increased engagement of these groups can strengthen local governing institutions and inform local policies and actions. At the same time, while some of the participants on the subnational islands may still express a longing for independence, as expressed by the following quote,

We've always been dependent on federal transfers. For that reason every time we run into trouble we turn to the federal government to bail us out. And that takes away a bit of our self-reliance or what should be our self-reliance. (Prince Edward Island, Academic participant 4).

... most participants are satisfied with the relationships their governments have with their metropolises and are not thinking about severing political ties.

While this study looked at ten islands by incorporating stakeholder groups, i.e., representatives from government, NGOs, business, youth, the labour movement, and academia, and used a perceptual/attitudinal approach to assessing residents' well-being, we have demonstrated the importance of a more balanced approach to assessing perception of governing institutions. By this, we have in mind governing systems that can be adapted to the

particularities of islands and life on them and the challenges of finding solutions and making decisions, especially for island jurisdictions that depend on continental policies and policy-makers but have to consider islanders' lives and needs. We expect this approach will provide direction for other small states and territories beyond those that were directly involved in this study. In addition to being global in reach, by looking at such a diverse set of islands, this approach adds to the rich literature on small sovereign states and small semi-autonomous territories. As a direction for future study, we feel that island and small state studies would benefit from more qualitative and globally comparative work on the perceptions of governing institutions and quality of life between island and mainland jurisdictions.

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Supplementary Material

Table S1. ANOVA test results of composite indicators, island, age, income, employment and stakeholder group of the participants.

		Sum Squares	df	Mean Square	F value	Sig.
island	Q1total	2,360.204	9	262.245	8.536	0.000
	Q2total	5,760.571	9	640.063	15.723	0.000
	Q3total	18,813.722	9	2090.414	15.294	0.000
age	Q1total	297.777	3	99.259	3.032	0.029
	Q2total	788.610	3	262.870	6.773	0.000
	Q3total	693.958	3	231.319	2.106	0.098
income	Q1total	77.299	4	19.325	0.588	0.671
	Q2total	558.254	4	139.564	3.652	0.006
	Q3total	1,415.745	4	353.936	3.276	0.011
employment	Q1total	278.544	6	46.424	1.421	0.204
	Q2total	548.517	6	91.419	2.376	0.028
	Q3total	1,701.625	6	283.604	2.632	0.016
Stakeholder group	Q1total	263.687	5	52.737	1.628	0.151
	Q2total	432.040	5	86.408	2.285	0.045
	Q3total	1,673.467	5	334.693	3.112	0.009

Table S2. Spearman linear correlations of composite indicator values.

Spearman's rho	Q2 (N=671)	Q3 (N=671)	Age (N=510)	Income (N=502)
Q1 (N=671)	.315**	.154**	-.153**	-0.033
Q2 (N=671)		.655**	-.224**	-.155**
Q3 (N=671)			-.090*	-.132**
Age (N=510)				.274**

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table S3. Averages' differences of island states and subnational islands for composite indicators.

	N	Q1 Mean	Q2 Mean	Q3 Mean
Island State	276	11.97	18.70	27.93
Subnational Island	395	13.79	19.62	30.87
Total	671	13.04	19.24	29.66

Table S4. Frequencies of responses for selected questions of the quality of life section of the survey (from “extremely satisfied” to “extremely dissatisfied”).

	Q3. Safety satisfaction		Q3. Education satisfaction		Q3. Health satisfaction		Q3. Economy satisfaction		Q3. Public services satisfaction	
	Island State (N=256)	Subnational Island (N=369)	Island State (N=256)	Subnational Island (N=365)	Island State (N=252)	Subnational Island (N=365)	Island State (N=235)	Subnational Island (N=330)	Island State (N=256)	Subnational Island (N=366)
Extremely satisfied	37.2%	62.8%	20.7%	79.3%	37.5%	62.5%	47.4%	52.6%	60.0%	40.0%
2	35.0%	65.0%	34.9%	65.1%	32.8%	67.2%	53.0%	47.0%	42.9%	57.1%
3	46.6%	53.4%	39.9%	60.1%	37.9%	62.1%	50.8%	49.2%	43.9%	56.1%
4	39.8%	60.2%	40.3%	59.7%	38.0%	62.0%	40.7%	59.3%	43.9%	56.1%
5	50.6%	49.4%	43.2%	56.8%	40.9%	59.1%	31.1%	68.9%	35.3%	64.7%
6	34.5%	65.5%	68.8%	31.3%	51.9%	48.1%	28.3%	71.7%	33.8%	66.2%
Extremely dissatisfied	36.5%	63.5%	43.4%	56.6%	55.3%	44.7%	31.3%	68.7%	40.5%	59.5%
Total	41.0%	59.0%	41.2%	58.8%	40.8%	59.2%	41.6%	58.4%	41.2%	58.8%

Table S5. Frequencies for responses for the quality of life section of the survey and GDP per capita (from “extremely satisfied” to “extremely dissatisfied”).

Q3. Economy satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=156)	Medium islands (N=149)	Richer islands (N=271)	Total (N=565)	Q3. Safety satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=156)	Medium islands (N=159)	Richer islands (N=210)	Total (N=625)
Extremely satisfied	26.3%	5.3%	68.4%	100.0%	Extremely satisfied	7.0%	4.7%	88.4%	100.0%
2	26.0%	9.0%	65.0%	100.0%	2	16.3%	10.6%	73.1%	100.0%
3	28.1%	16.4%	55.5%	100.0%	3	26.7%	21.7%	51.6%	100.0%
4	22.2%	37.0%	40.7%	100.0%	4	31.1%	34.0%	35.0%	100.0%
5	24.4%	40.0%	35.6%	100.0%	5	36.4%	35.1%	28.6%	100.0%
6	22.6%	30.2%	47.2%	100.0%	6	24.1%	51.7%	24.1%	100.0%
Extremely dissatisfied	29.9%	38.8%	31.3%	100.0%	Extremely dissatisfied	32.7%	53.8%	13.5%	100.0%
Total	25.7%	26.4%	48.0%	100.0%	Total	25.0%	25.4%	49.6%	100.0%
Q3. Public services satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=156)	Medium islands (N=157)	Richer islands (N=309)	Total (N=622)	Q3. Education satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=156)	Medium islands (N=158)	Richer islands (N=307)	Total (N=621)
Extremely satisfied	30.0%	0.0%	70.0%	100.0%	Extremely satisfied	6.9%	31.0%	62.1%	100.0%
2	22.1%	9.1%	68.8%	100.0%	2	12.8%	24.8%	62.4%	100.0%
3	24.0%	17.5%	58.5%	100.0%	3	24.4%	20.8%	54.8%	100.0%
4	20.3%	29.3%	50.4%	100.0%	4	21.0%	27.7%	51.3%	100.0%
5	24.5%	32.4%	43.1%	100.0%	5	30.5%	33.7%	35.8%	100.0%
6	26.2%	29.2%	44.6%	100.0%	6	50.0%	10.4%	39.6%	100.0%
Extremely dissatisfied	37.8%	43.2%	18.9%	100.0%	Extremely dissatisfied	39.6%	32.1%	28.3%	100.0%
Total	25.1%	25.2%	49.7%	100.0%	Total	25.1%	25.4%	49.4%	100.0%
Q3. Health satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=153)	Medium islands (N=158)	Richer islands (N=306)	Total (N=617)	Q3. Public info satisfaction	Poorer islands (N=157)	Medium islands (N=158)	Richer islands (N=307)	Total (N=622)
Extremely satisfied	12.5%	34.4%	53.1%	100.0%	Extremely satisfied	29.4%	29.4%	41.2%	100.0%
2	9.2%	22.1%	68.7%	100.0%	2	14.7%	14.7%	70.5%	100.0%
3	18.5%	19.4%	62.1%	100.0%	3	24.1%	13.2%	62.6%	100.0%
4	23.0%	29.0%	48.0%	100.0%	4	23.5%	27.9%	48.5%	100.0%
5	28.0%	28.0%	44.1%	100.0%	5	28.2%	38.8%	33.0%	100.0%
6	46.2%	25.0%	28.8%	100.0%	6	35.4%	29.2%	35.4%	100.0%
Extremely dissatisfied	48.2%	30.6%	21.2%	100.0%	Extremely dissatisfied	36.7%	49.0%	14.3%	100.0%
Total	24.8%	25.6%	49.6%	100.0%	Total	25.2%	25.4%	49.4%	100.0%

Figure S1. Boxplots of composite indicators for island states and subnational islands.

