

Combating disillusionment with governments calls for people-centric public policies and services

Today, the worst consequences of the 2008 financial crisis may be behind us. Yet, most OECD countries are still saddled with high debt loads that, on average, amounted to 110% of GDP in 2017. Such high debt levels reduce governments' ability to stimulate economic growth and address imperative challenges, including rising inequalities and a sense of insecurity induced by rapid technological advancements that are making many people feel insecure about the future of their work. Redistribution through taxes and transfers has fallen. There is also less money available for investment, while the urgency to renew ailing infrastructure is becoming increasingly apparent.

These trends, and others, have led to increasing discontent with governments and democratic institutions. People in many countries are questioning whether their governments serve the interest of the majority or just the select few. In fact, in 2016, only 37% of people in OECD countries considered that they had a say in what their government does. Such discontent is often reflected in political narratives and election outcomes. Overall, this data shows that further action is needed to strengthen trust in governments and public institutions.

Public institutions have tools at their disposal that allow them to reconnect with citizens and improve the effectiveness of public policy. Key among these are people-centred approaches to policy-making and delivering services. Such approaches allow governments to consult citizens about their needs, encouraging direct participation in designing and implementing policies. They also allow them to evaluate their impacts on society.

Government at a Glance 2019 presents indicators and analysis on how far OECD countries have come in achieving a people-centric approach in their public management and governance practices. It showcases comparative results across the 36 OECD countries in numerous governance areas.

The results show that countries are starting to adopt people-centric public services. The access, responsiveness and quality of services – in areas such as education, health and justice – are improving in the majority of countries. In 2018, for example, an average of 70% of OECD citizens were satisfied with the availability of healthcare, 66% were satisfied with the education system and 56% had confidence in the judicial system and courts.

Public management and governance are also moving in the same direction. In their efforts to improve the transparency, responsiveness, accountability and the efficiency of the public sector, OECD countries are increasingly making data from public bodies available in open, free and accessible formats. Additionally, a growing number of countries are focusing on the impact of budgetary decisions on key population groups and policy areas. For example, the number of OECD countries carrying out gender budgeting increased from 12 in 2016, to 17 in 2018. Stakeholder consultations on draft laws and regulations are now

a widespread practice, although their timing and feedback mechanisms must be further improved. Investments in the civil service are also becoming a priority: in 2019, 24 OECD countries placed a high priority on executive leadership training and coaching. In spite of this, only 17 countries prioritised training in IT and digital skills.

Government at a Glance 2019 demonstrates how governance indicators can become a critical tool in helping us to understand new developments in public governance, and to foster and multiply good practices. As such, it is a critical resource for policymakers, practitioners, researchers and citizens.

Yours sincerely,



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From:
Government at a Glance 2019

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/8ccf5c38-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2019), “Combatting disillusionment with governments calls for people-centric public policies and services”, in *Government at a Glance 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/3d7501c6-en>

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