

Executive summary

Government at a Glance 2019 presents a dashboard of key indicators of public sector performance and policies that governments are implementing to reconnect with their people, improve equality and spur more inclusive growth. The policy chapter focuses on how “people-centric” public services are performing in terms of access, responsiveness and quality. The report provides outcome indicators on education, health and justice, complemented with measures of how people perceive those public services. The publication also reviews, through internationally comparable indicators, public governance practices and reforms from the perspective of people-centricity, for example in budgeting, regulatory governance, public procurement and the use of open government data.

Key findings

Persistently high debt levels reduce governments’ ability to react to economic shocks

- The average fiscal deficit has steadily improved since 2009, reaching 2.2% of GDP in 2017, although still below pre-crisis levels of 1.7%.
- Average gross government debt in 2017 reached 110% of GDP in OECD countries, reducing countries’ room for manoeuvre.
- General government expenditure on social protection and health, combined, accounted for over 21% GDP in OECD countries in 2017. Both showed an increase since 2007, primarily due to an aging population: 1.5 percentage points for social protection and 1.1 percentage points for health.
- Public investment on average represented 3.1% of GDP in 2017 and is still 0.5 percentage points lower than in 2007. There is a need to reduce the investment gap; increasing public investment can contribute to economic growth and provide needed capital for tackling climate change and implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs).

While public employment has been generally steady over time, not all public employees are treated equally

- Employment in general government is around 18% of total employment across OECD countries, unchanged compared to 2007.
- There are persistent gender gaps in the public sector workforce. For example, men are over-represented in higher-level court judges (67% of total) and in politics. On average, women account for 30% of seats in lower/single houses of parliaments in OECD countries and about one-third of ministerial positions in central government in 2019.

- In the central government, statutory civil servants make up, on average, 68% of the workforce and have more job security, better career advancement and more rigorous recruitment processes than other public employees.

A growing number of countries are pursuing budget practices that focus on the impact of budgetary decisions on key population groups and policy areas

- In 2018, close to half of OECD countries surveyed have implemented gender budgeting and about one-quarter have enacted gender budgeting into legislation.
- In 2018, around one-quarter of OECD countries surveyed published the environmental and climate impact of budget measures; a similar number of countries have provided information on the effects of the budget on societal well-being, and only 25% of countries have reflected the Sustainable Development Goals in performance budgeting systems.

Stakeholder consultation on draft laws and regulations is widespread in OECD countries, yet it usually occurs late in the process and stakeholders are seldom provided with feedback about the impact of their comments

- All surveyed OECD countries require stakeholder engagement for the development of at least some regulations.
- In twenty-eight OECD countries in 2016, the centre of government consulted directly with stakeholders on policies.
- Compared to 2014, countries have slightly improved their stakeholder engagement practices, more for primary laws - up from a score of 2 (on a scale from 1 to 4) in 2014 to 2.2 in 2017 - than for subordinate regulations (from 2 to 2.1).

Governments are increasingly using public procurement to advance sustainability goals.

- Public procurement accounted on average for 12% of GDP in OECD countries in 2017.
- All OECD countries had implemented green public procurement strategies in 2018, with an increasing number using public procurement to promote inclusive growth (29 countries), innovation (26 countries), and responsible business conduct (22 countries).

OECD countries continue to show progress in making data from public bodies available to all in open, free and accessible formats

- Thirty out of 33 OECD countries require government data to be available free of charge, twenty-nine require data to be available with open licence, and thirty-one require data to be provided in machine-readable formats. Twenty-one countries prioritise building skills and capacities within the public administration to reuse data.
- The Open, Useful and Re-usable (OURdata) Index, which benchmarks open government data policies and their implementation, increased in 2017 compared to 2014. Such an increase reflects improvements in all the underlying indicators: data availability, accessibility, and government support for reuse. Previously low-performing countries are catching up to frontrunners such as Korea, France and Japan.
- In 2016, in twenty-one OECD countries, the centre of government was involved in designing open government strategies and initiatives, and in twenty countries in implementing them as well.

While trust in government has returned to pre-crisis levels, people's sense of political efficacy remains low

- People's trust in their government, a measure that has deteriorated since 2007, has recovered back to 45% in the OECD area, a value similar to the pre-crisis level. Trust in government has increased in 16 countries such as Germany, Japan, Korea, Poland and Switzerland.
- On average, in 2016, only 37 percent of people in OECD countries felt they had an influence in what the government does, with this share dropping to 20% or less in Italy and Slovenia.

On average, citizen satisfaction with health and education and confidence in the judiciary have slightly increased in the OECD, but inequalities persist among population groups

- In 2018, 70% of citizens were satisfied with the availability of health care, 66% of citizens were satisfied with the education system and schools, and 56% had confidence in the judicial system and courts across OECD countries.
- Access, responsiveness and quality of services (education, health and justice) is improving in most countries. For example, the percentage of youth not in education, employment nor training (NEET) has decreased from 6.9 in 2012 to 5.2 in 2018.
- There are persisting inequalities among population groups. For example, unmet care needs for medical examination were 3.2 percentage points higher among low-income than among high-income individuals in 2017



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), "Executive summary", in *Government at a Glance 2019*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/cc113793-en>

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