

# Government at a Glance 2023

## Country Notes

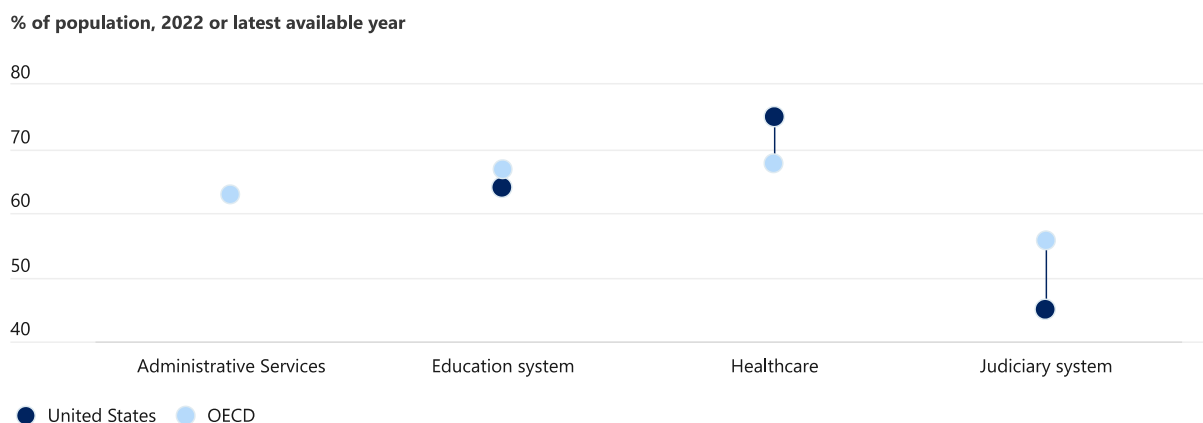
# United States

## Trust and satisfaction with public services

Trust in public institutions and satisfaction with public services are important yardsticks of the quality of public governance. They reflect people's perceptions of government competence in designing and delivering policies and services, and expectations on the behaviour of public institutions and their representatives. Although high trust in public institutions is not a necessary outcome of democratic governance, trust and satisfaction with public services facilitate effective governance, as they correlate with high rates of compliance with policies, participation in public life and social cohesion.

**The United States has a mixed performance on satisfaction with public services.** On health care, 75% of Americans report being satisfied, which is 7 percentage points above the average across OECD countries, whereas 45% are satisfied with the judicial system, 11 percentage points below the OECD average (56%). For the education system, the satisfaction level is slightly below the OECD average (64% compared to 67%).

**Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022**



## Achieving results with good governance practices

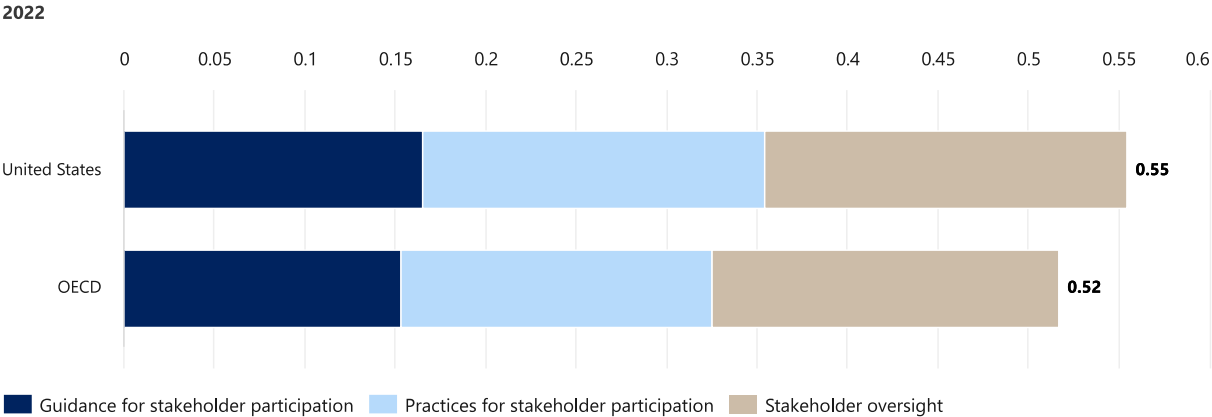
In an age of multiple crises, governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust in public institutions and enhance democratic resilience. Actions include building on democratic strengths, such as enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making; reinforcing key competences to handle crises, such as budgeting and public financial management processes to address the green and digital transitions; and protecting against threats to democratic values, such as maintaining effective public integrity rules and promoting ethical use of artificial intelligence.

Citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making helps to improve the design, implementation, and public acceptance of policies, infrastructure and services. The OECD Infrastructure Governance Index (IGI) on stakeholder participation provides an overview of countries' performance in developing national guidance for stakeholder engagement, promoting their effective participation, and ensuring stakeholder oversight over infrastructure projects.

**The USA achieves a score of 0.55 on the IGI on stakeholder participation, slightly above the OECD average (0.52).** It has a consistent score slightly above the OECD average for each dimension of the index, ranging from 0.16 to 0.20 out of a maximum value of 0.33.

**Figure 2. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making**

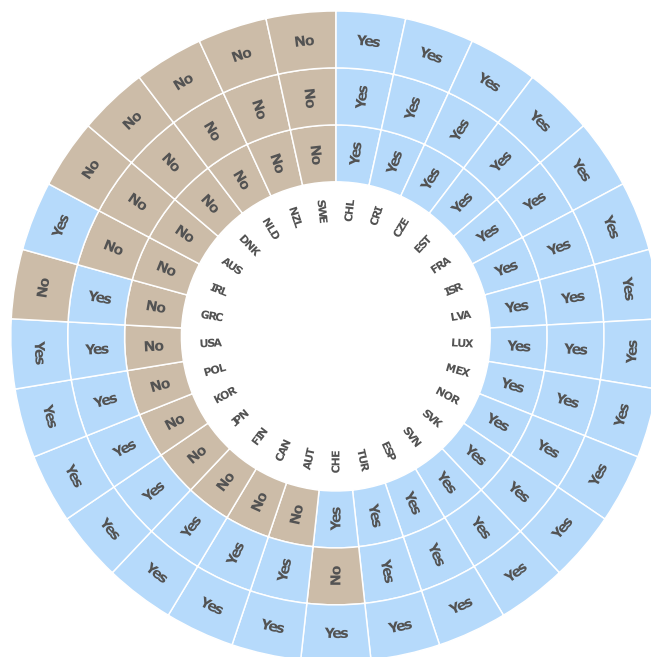
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



Financial contributions allow individuals and entities to support political candidates and parties. However, political finance needs to be adequately regulated to reduce risks of undue influence and policy capture.

**In the United States publicly owned enterprises and foreign states or enterprises are not allowed to finance political campaigns and parties.** However, anonymous donations to political parties or candidates do not need to be registered or reported.

**Figure 3. Regulation to ban financing political parties and election campaigns, 2022**



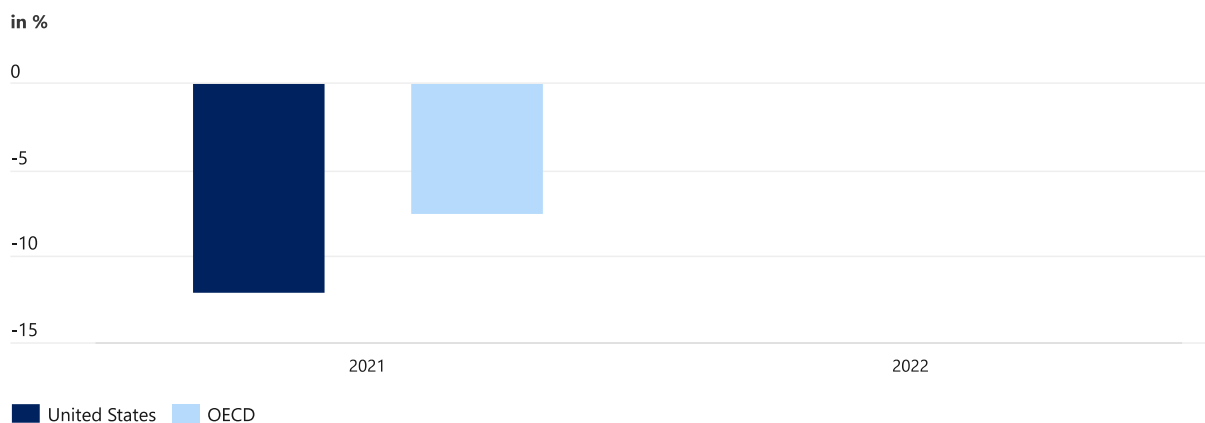
**Inner ring:** Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.  
**Middle ring:** Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.  
**Outer ring:** Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

### What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

After stark deterioration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which required emergency measures and direct support mechanisms to business and people, public finances show positive signs, but the recovery remains fragile. The fiscal balance is the difference between a government’s revenues and its expenditures in a year. When the government spends more than it collects, it has a fiscal deficit. When it spends less, it has a fiscal surplus.

**In 2021, the USA had a fiscal deficit of -12.1% of GDP, significantly higher than the average of -7.5% across OECD countries.** It also had a public debt slightly greater than the OECD average (126.3% against 120.8%). In 2022, the debt share diminished slightly to 121.3%.

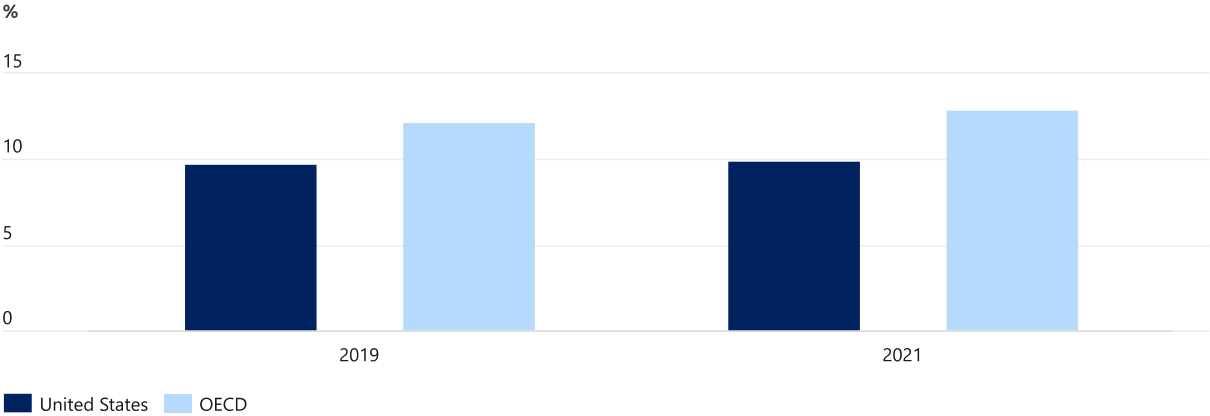
**Figure 4. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP**



Public investment can enhance productivity and economic growth and help implement long-term policies, such as green energy infrastructure to support action on climate change. In turn, governments procure large amounts of goods, services and works to help them implement policies and deliver public services.

**The USA spent 9.9% of its GDP on procurement, which is below the average across OECD countries (12.9%). Only minor changes were reported since 2019 (9.8%).** The USA investment spendings as share of GDP in 2021 (3.3%) was close to the OECD average (3.4%).

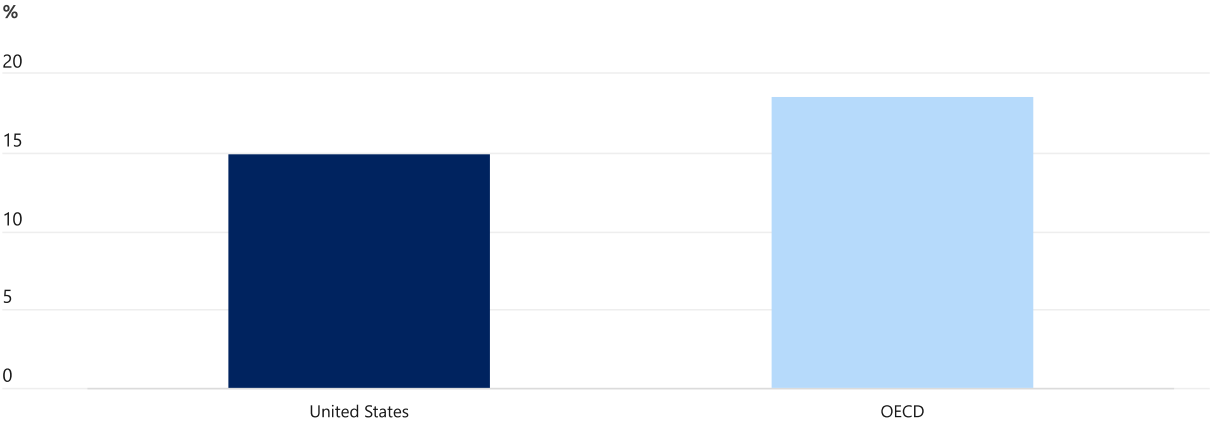
**Figure 5. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP**



The size of public employment varies significantly among OECD countries, ranging from around 10% to just above 30%.

**The size of employment as share of total employment in the USA was 15.0% in 2021, which is smaller than the average across OECD countries (18.6%).**

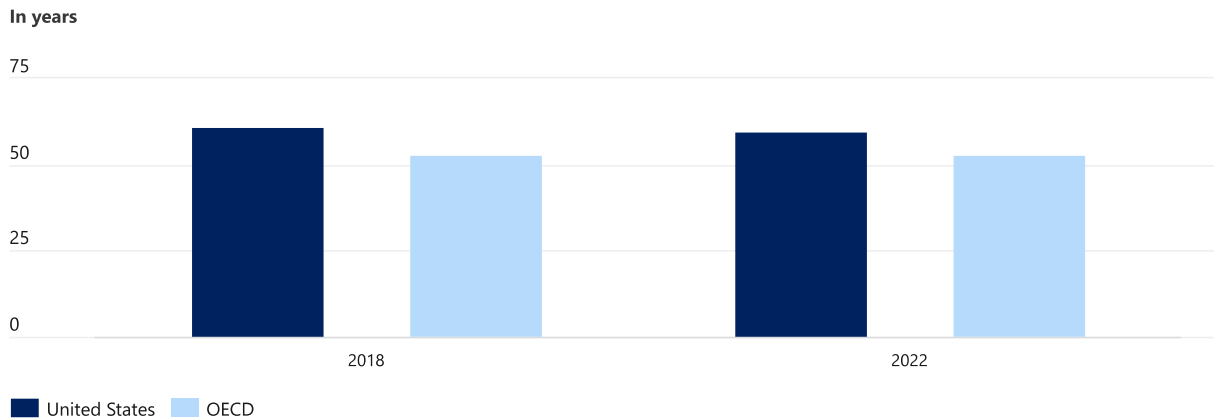
**Figure 6. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021**



Young people are under-represented in public and political life across the OECD, with the risk that their voice and interests are not sufficiently taken in consideration in policymaking.

**Average age of cabinet members in the USA is 60 years, on average 7 years higher than the OECD average (53 years).**

**Figure 7. Average age of cabinet members, 2018 and 2022**



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### **About the report**

Government at a Glance presents the most up-to-date internationally comparable data on how public administrations function and perform in OECD countries, accession countries, and other major economies. Country factsheets highlight key indicators against the OECD average. Data included in the factsheets are derived from the new Government at a Glance data portal, which allows for a more user-friendly and interactive way of comparing countries with each other and the OECD average. The factsheets do not provide a comprehensive picture of public governance performance, but rather a snapshot of key indicators in the three sections of the publication: a) trust and satisfaction with public services; b) achieving results with good governance practices and c) what resources public institutions use and how they are managed.

### **Figure notes**

People who express satisfaction with public services: for the judiciary and the courts the data reflect the proportion of citizens who express having confidence in the institution. Data on satisfaction with administrative services come from the OECD 2021 Survey on the Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions. Data on satisfaction with the education and health systems and confidence in the judiciary are from the Gallup World Poll. Data for satisfaction in administrative services are not available for the United States.

Data on public finance and economics are derived from the System of National Accounts (SNA) and were extracted on 5 May 2023.

Fiscal balance as reported in SNA framework, also referred to as net lending (+) or net borrowing (-) of government, is calculated as total government revenues minus total government expenditures.

Government gross debt is reported according to the SNA definition, which differs from the definition applied under the Maastricht Treaty. It is defined as all liabilities that require payment or payments of interest or principal by the debtor to the creditor at a date or dates in the future. All debt instruments are liabilities, but some liabilities such as shares, equity and financial derivatives are not debt.

Public employment refers to employment in the general government as defined in the System of National Accounts (SNA). Data on employment in general government were extracted on 17 April 2023.

Data on employment in general government for Iceland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Türkiye and the United States are from the International Labour Organization (ILO), ILOSTAT.

Data show women as a share of cabinet members who head ministries as of 1 January 2023 (excluding ministers without portfolios).

The data on age of cabinet members reflects the situation as of 20 December 2022.

OECD average refers to the unweighted average with the exception of public finance indicators.

For more information see

[www.oecd.org/governance/government-at-a-glance.htm](http://www.oecd.org/governance/government-at-a-glance.htm)