

Government at a Glance 2023

Country Notes

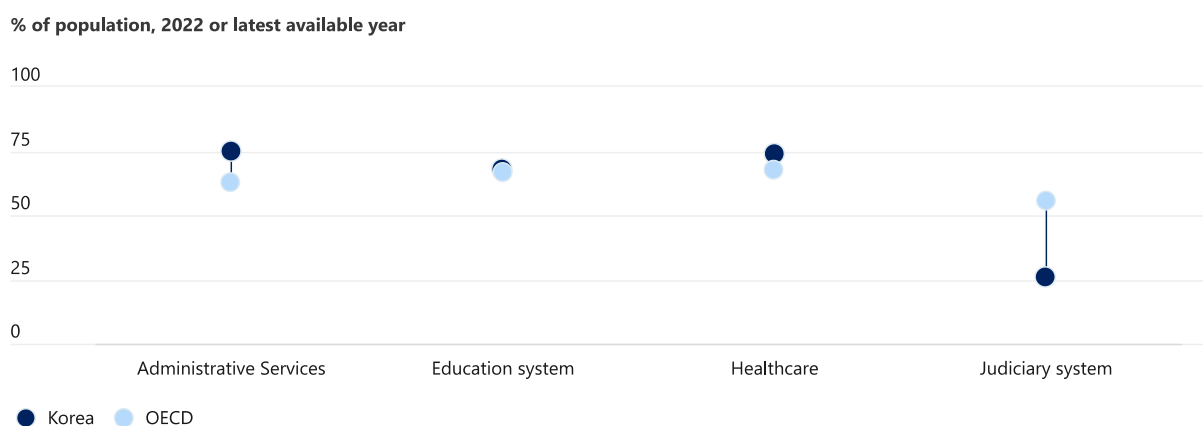
Korea

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.

Korea fares above OECD average on satisfaction with public services. An estimated 74% and 75% are satisfied with the healthcare system and with administrative services, respectively, above the corresponding averages across the OECD countries (68% and 63% respectively). Satisfaction with the education system (68%) is close to the OECD average (67%).

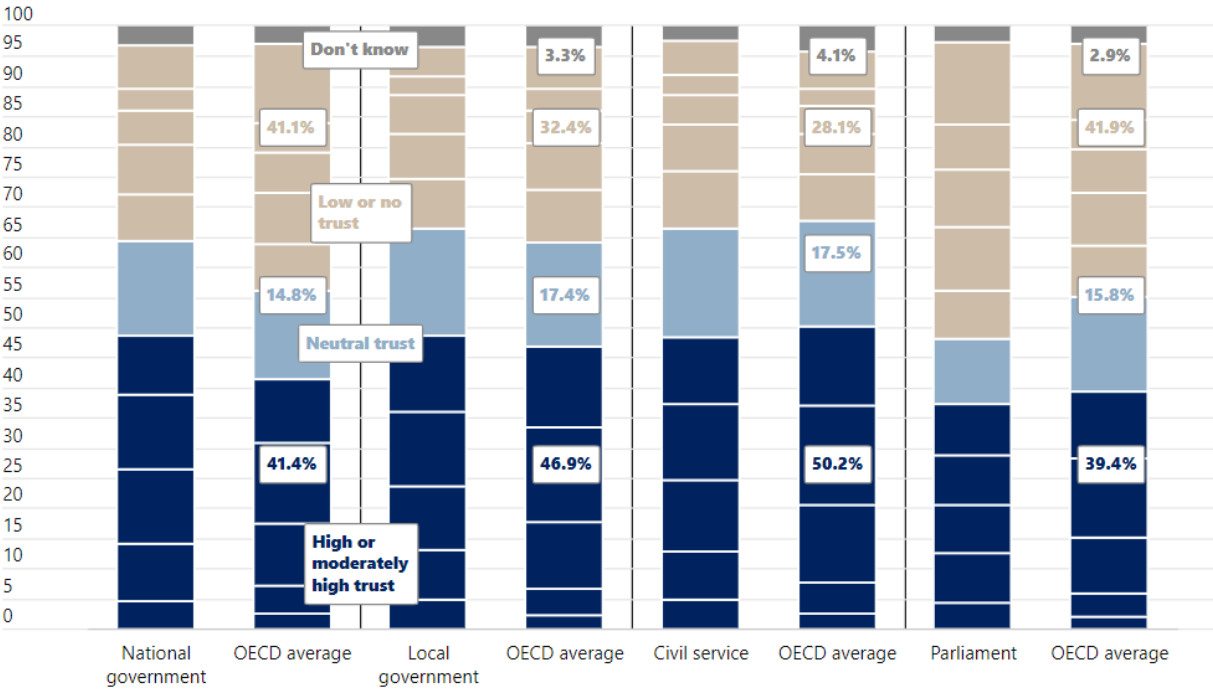
Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022



In 2021, 49% of Koreans indicated high or moderately high trust in the national government, above the OECD average. Similarly, slightly less than half (49%) report high or moderately high trust in local government, above the average across OECD countries (47%). On the other hand, the share of Koreans indicating high or moderately high trust in the civil service (48%) is slightly below the OECD average (50%).

Figure 2. Trust in public institutions, 2021

% of population reporting high or moderately high trust in various public institutions, Korea, 2021



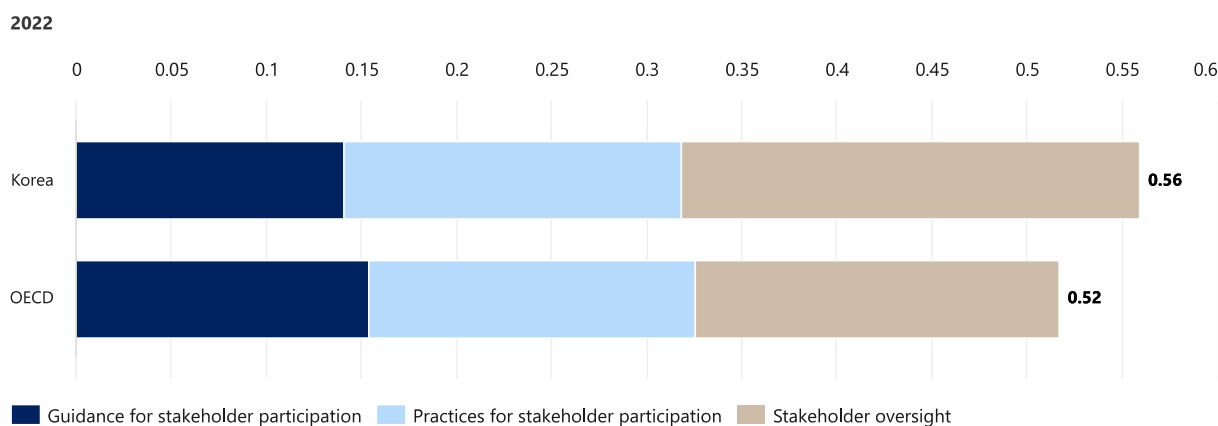
Achieving results with good governance practices

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.

Korea performs above the OECD average on the IGI on stakeholder participation. It scores 0.56 on the IGI, compared to the average value 0.52 across OECD countries (1 is the maximum possible score, meaning full application of IGI on stakeholder participation). Korea performs particularly well on stakeholder oversight, with a score of 0.24 out of a maximum value of 0.33.

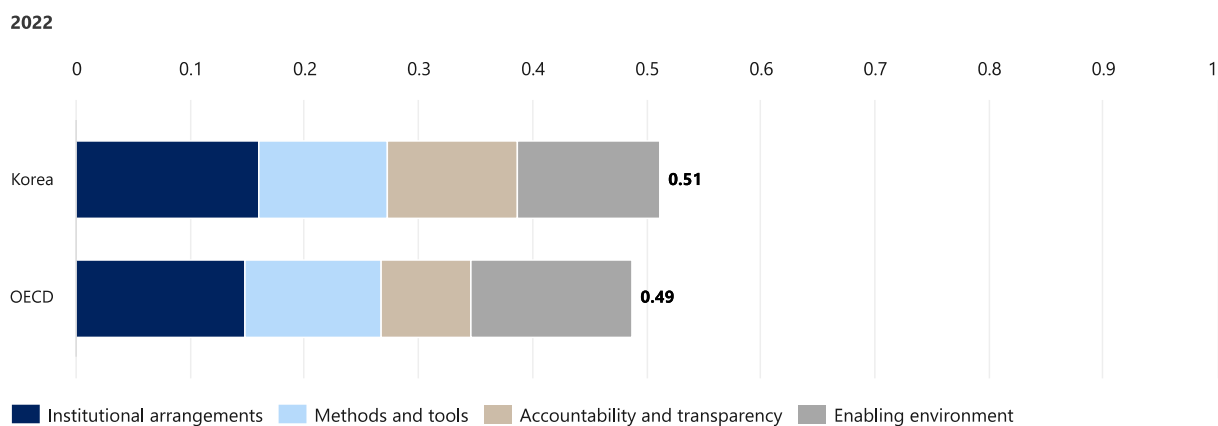
Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



Budgeting management processes, such as green budgeting, can help address the climate crisis and achieve environmental goals. While there has been a rapid increase in the number of countries implementing green budgeting mechanisms, these could be used more effectively. Green budgeting mechanisms include institutional arrangements to assess the environmental impacts of budgetary and fiscal policies, methods for evaluating their consistency, mechanisms to enhance transparency and accountability, and an enabling budgetary governance framework.

Korea performs slightly above the average across OECD countries in the application of green budgeting with a score of 0.51, on a 0-1 scale. Korea achieves its highest score in the institutional arrangements dimension (0.16 out of a maximum possible of 0.25) and its lowest scores on methods and tools and accountability and transparency (0.11 in each dimension).

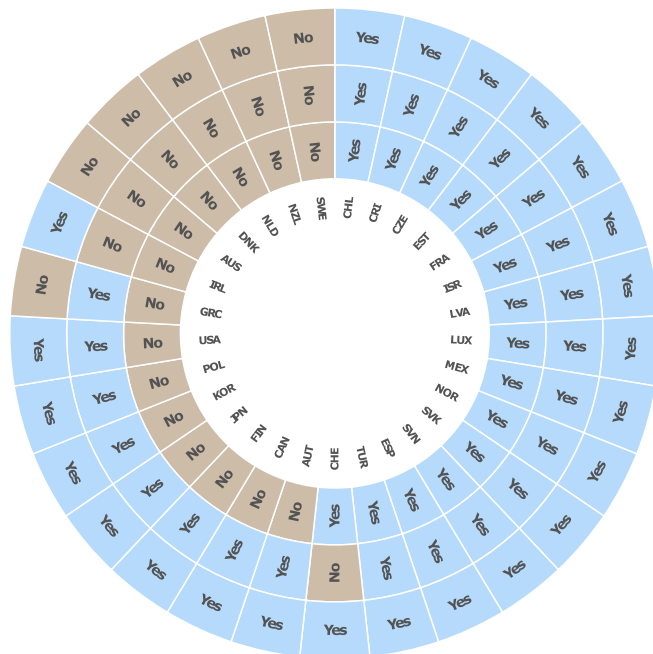
Figure 4. OECD Green Budgeting Index, 2022



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 Korea, 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 5. Regulation to ban financing political parties and election campaigns, 2022

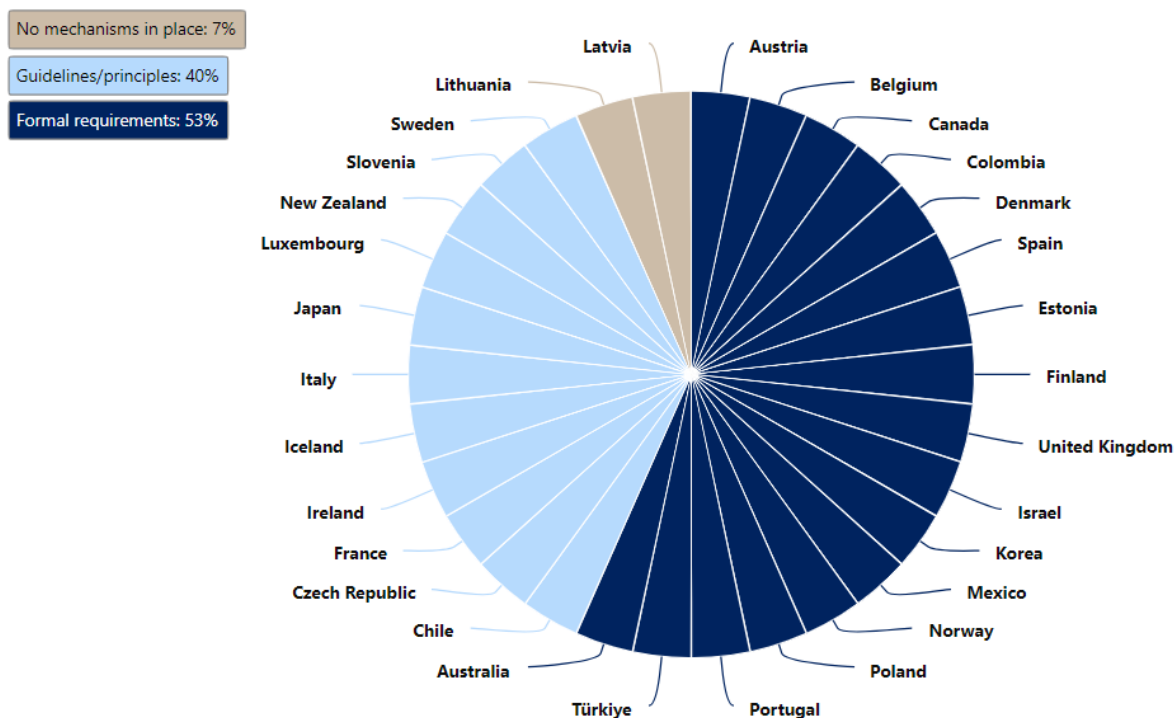


Inner ring: Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.
Middle ring: Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.
Outer ring: Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

Strengthening information integrity has become particularly complex in the digital age. While digitalisation and artificial intelligence (AI) provide enormous opportunities, including in expanding and protecting the exercise of some democratic rights and freedoms, their use also brings challenges for governments such as ensuring that they enhance people’s willingness and ability to engage constructively in democratic life and that they benefit society as a whole.

Korea, along with 16 other OECD countries, has introduced laws and regulations (formal requirements), to ensure the ethical management and use of algorithms for AI by public institutions.

Figure 6. Mechanisms used to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence in government, 2022

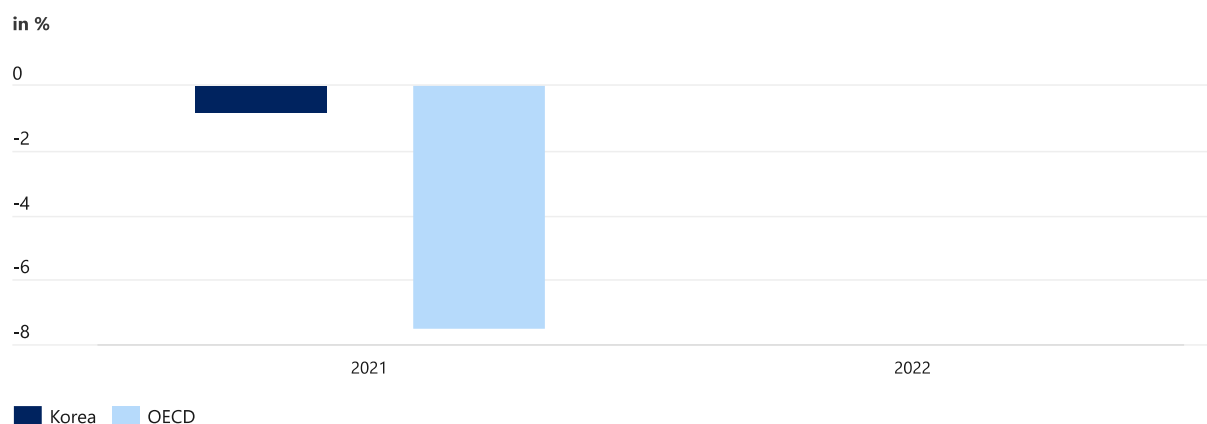


What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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.

Korea's fiscal deficit in 2021 was -0.8% of GDP, significantly lower than the average across OECD countries (-7.5%). Moreover, Korea also has a small public debt, 50.6% of GDP in 2021, compared to 120.8% on average among OECD countries.

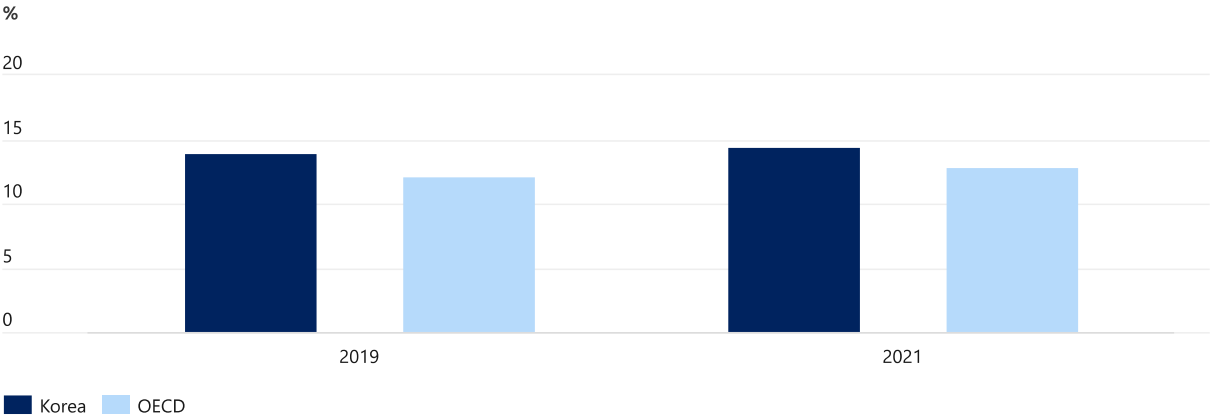
Figure 7. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP



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.

Korea spends more than the OECD average on public procurement, 14.5% of GDP in 2021, compared to 12.9% on average in the OECD. Korea is among the countries in the OECD with the highest rate of public investment. In 2021, Korea invested 5.1% of GDP compared to 3.4% on average across the OECD.

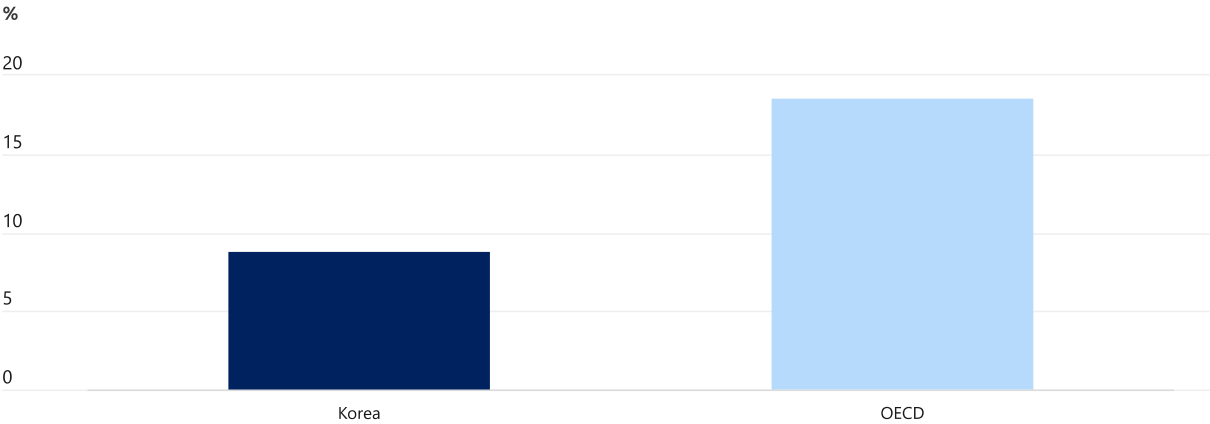
Figure 8. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP



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

Public employment amounts to 8.8% of total employment in Korea. This number is the second lowest in OECD and significantly below the OECD average (18.6% of total employment).

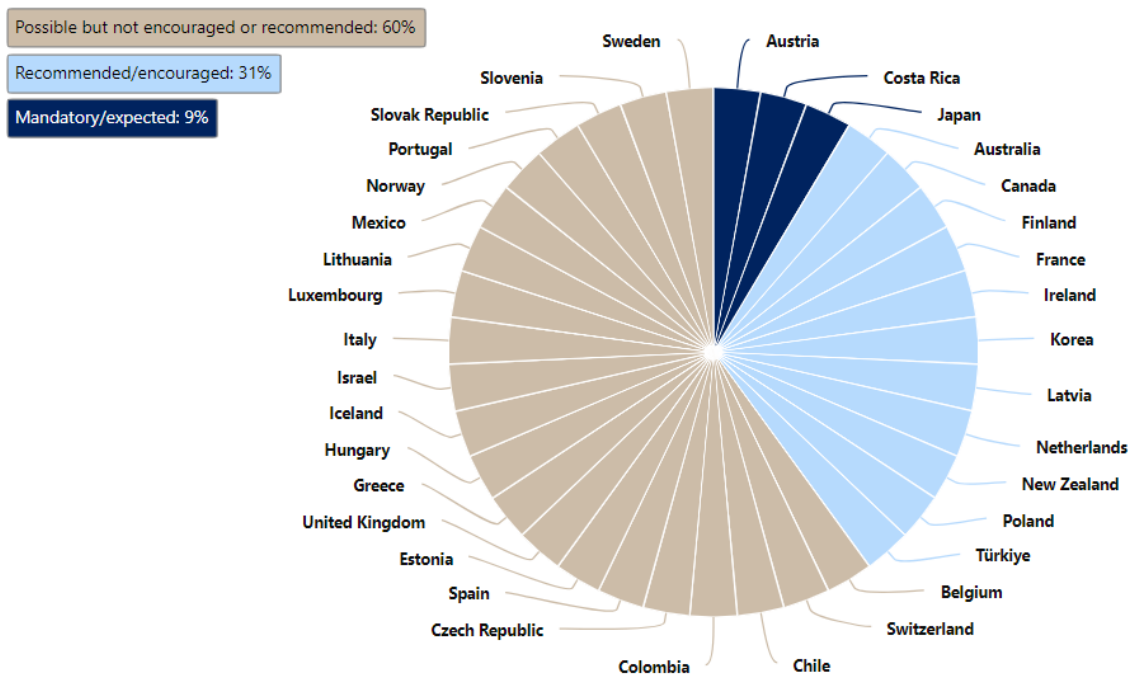
Figure 9. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021



Governments use different mechanisms to harness and develop the capacity of their workforce. For example, internal mobility in public administrations helps to pool human resources across government and attract and retain civil servants.

In Korea internal mobility of civil servants is recommended or encouraged, although not mandatory. Similarly, internal mobility for senior-level civil servants is also recommended or encouraged. Korea has the practice of developing individual learning plans for all or most public employees.

Figure 10. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022



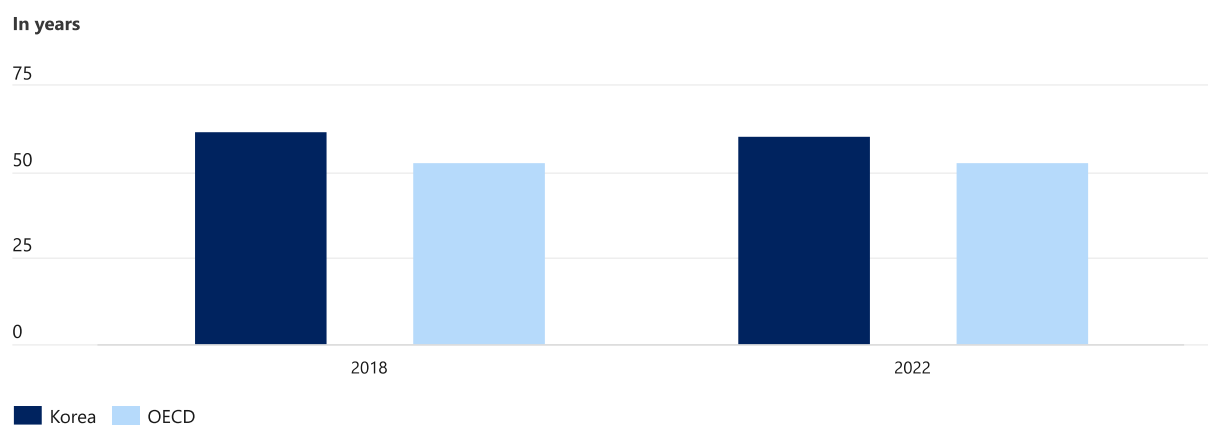
Equal representation of women and men in the public sector is a key indicator of progress towards gender equality, diversity and better representation. In 2020, a majority of employees in the public sector in OECD countries were women (58.9%), with large differences among countries. However, women are often under-represented in managerial positions.

Women are underrepresented in ministerial positions in Korea. In 2023, only 17% of ministerial positions were held by, compared to the OECD average (36%).

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.

In Korea, the average age of cabinet members – 61 years – is among the highest in the OECD. The average across the OECD is 53 years.

Figure 11. Average age of cabinet members, 2018 and 2022



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 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