# Government at a Glance 2023
Country Notes

Norway

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.

Norway performs exceptionally well on citizen satisfaction with public services. An estimated 87% of Norwegians are satisfied with the judiciary and education systems, compared to 56% and 67%, respectively, on average across OECD countries. Around 80% are satisfied with the health care system, 12 percentage points higher than the average across OECD countries (68%).

Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022

% of population, 2022 or latest available year

● Norway ● OECD
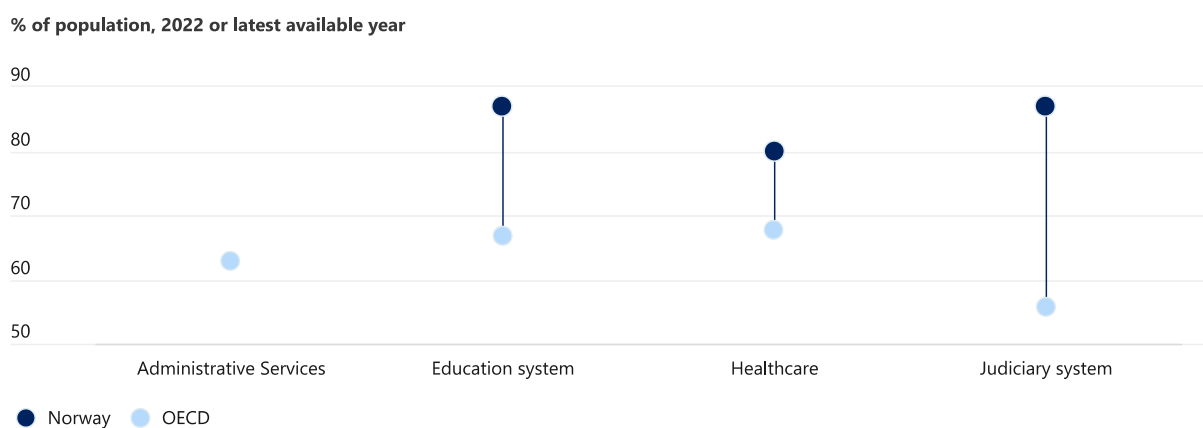
Norway is among the OECD countries with the highest levels of trust in public institutions. A majority of Norwegians reported high or moderately high trust in national (64%) and local governments (53%) and civil services (61%). The Norwegians had the highest level of trust in parliament, where 66% report high or moderately high trust, 27 percentage points above the average across the OECD countries (39%).

Figure 2. Trust in public institutions, 2021

% of population reporting high or moderately high trust in various public institutions, Norway, 2021
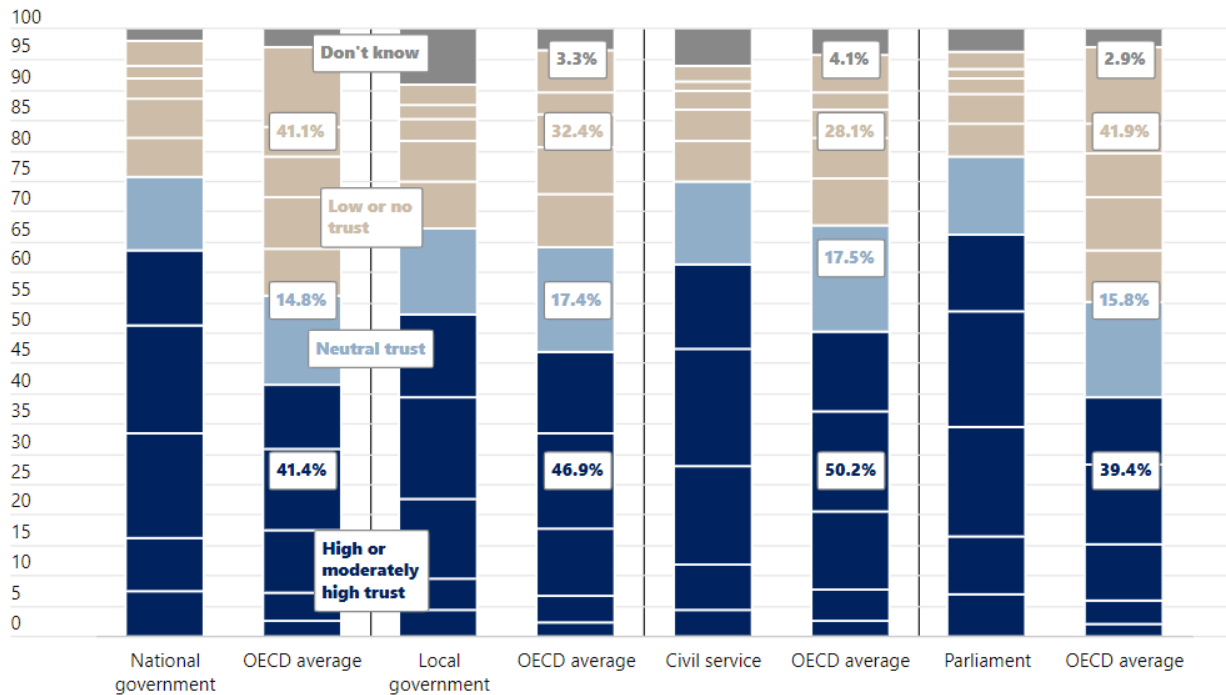
## Achieving results with good governance practices

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.

Norway achieves a score of 0.53 in the IGI on stakeholder participation, slightly above the OECD average (0.52). Norway performs close to, or slightly above, the OECD average for each subcomponent of the index, the weakest being stakeholder participation guidance (0.16).

Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making

From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022
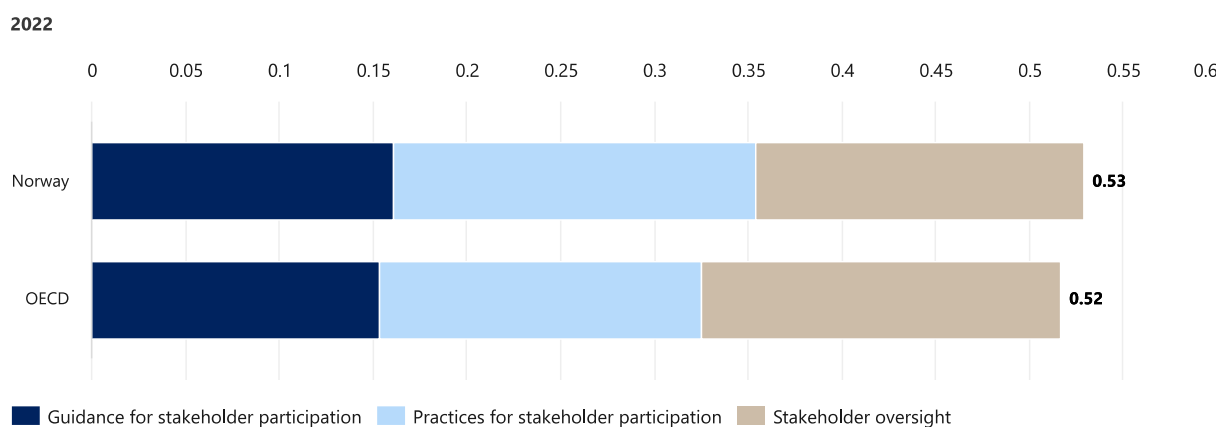
Budgeting management processes, such as green budgeting, can help address the climate crisis and achieve environmental goals. While there has been a rapid increase in the number of countries implementing green budgeting mechanisms, these could be used more effectively. Green budgeting mechanisms include 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.

Norway is a top performer in green budgeting, and the third-best performer out of 24 surveyed OECD countries in 2022. It scores 0.70 on the OECD Green Budgeting Index, compared to 0.49 on average across OECD countries (1 is the highest possible score). Norway fares comparatively well in all four dimensions of the index, although there is room for improvement on accountability and transparency, where the Norwegian score is 0.11 (with 0.25 being the maximum score).

Figure 4. OECD Green Budgeting Index, 2022
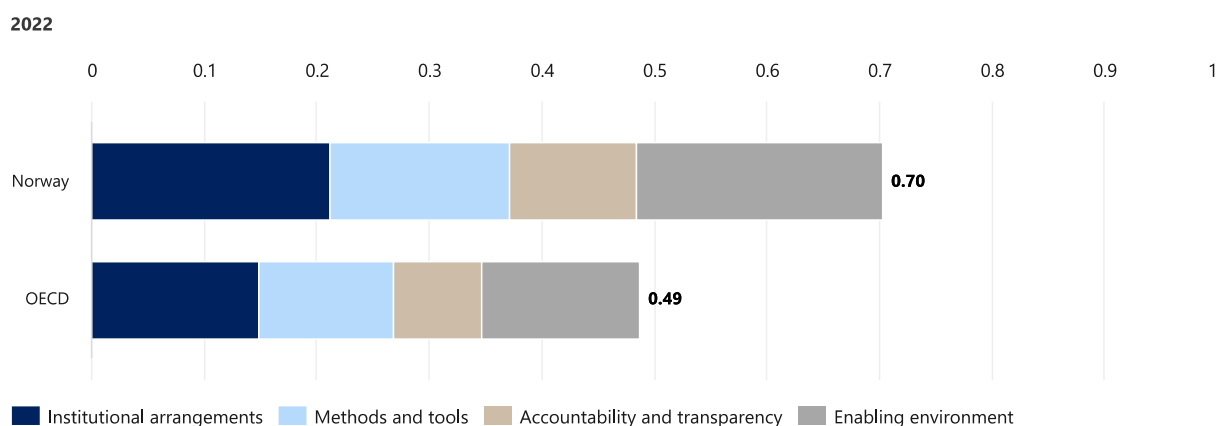
Financial contributions allow individuals and entities to support political candidates and parties. However, political finance needs to be adequately regulated to reduce risks of undue influence and policy capture.

In Norway, publicly owned enterprises and foreign states or enterprises are not allowed to finance political campaigns and parties. Anonymous donations to political parties or candidates need to be registered or reported.

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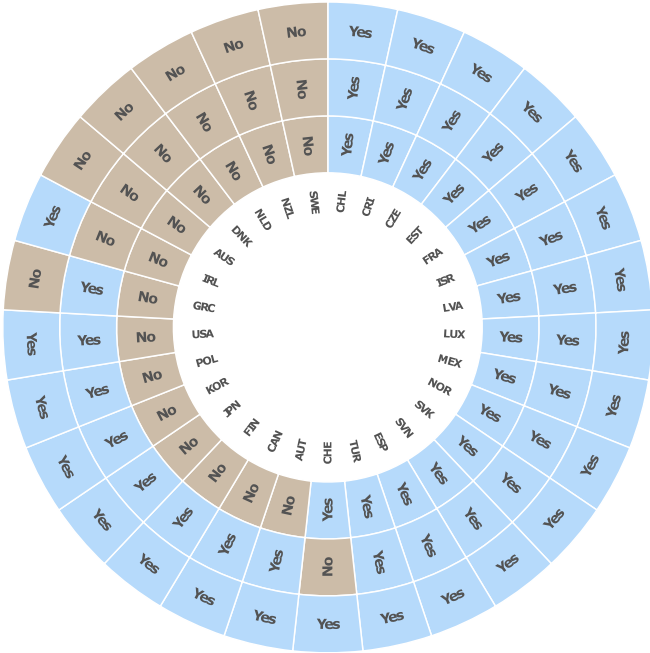

Inner ring: Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.
Middle ring: Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.
Outer ring: Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

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.

Norway 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

No mechanisms in place: 7%
Guidelines/principles: 40%
Formal requirements: 53%
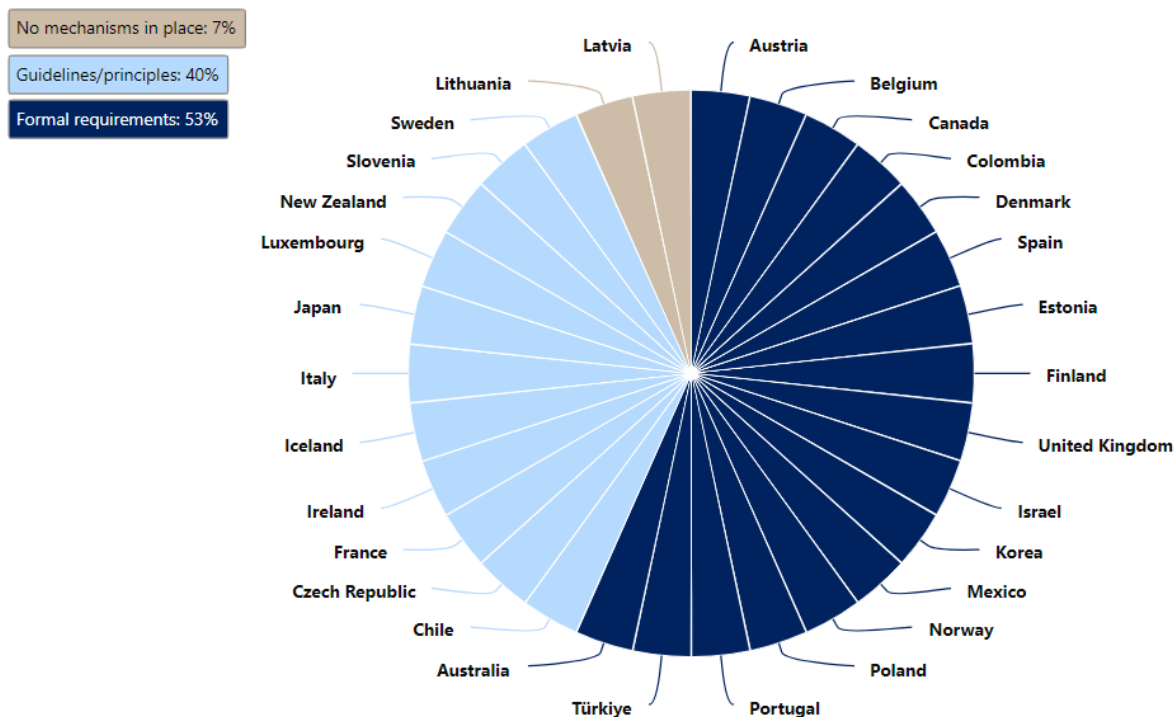
What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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.

Norway's fiscal surplus increased from 10.6% of GDP to 26.0% in 2022, the highest among all OECD countries for both years. In comparison, the average across OECD countries in 2021 was a fiscal deficit of -7.5% of GDP. In addition, Norway also has a low public debt, which decreased from 48.9% of GDP in 2022 to 42.2% in 2021. The average debt in OECD countries in 2021 was considerably higher (120.8%).

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

in %

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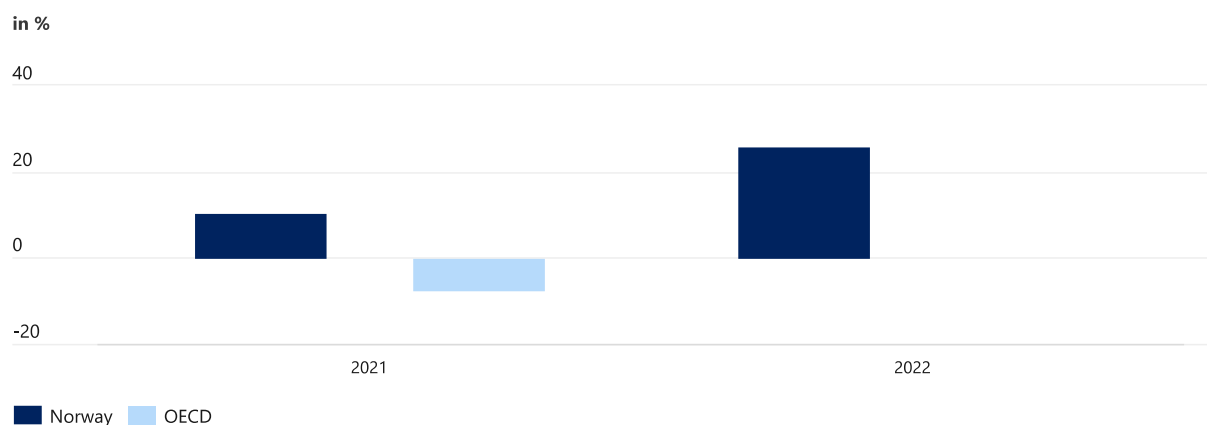
Public investment can enhance productivity and economic growth and help implement long-term policies, such as green energy infrastructure to support action on climate change. In turn, governments procure large amounts of goods, services and works to help them implement policies and deliver public services.

In 2021, Norway spent more than the average OECD countries on procurement, 14.6% of GDP compared to 12.9% on average in the OECD. The Norwegian procurement spendings have decreased by about 1.1 percentage points of GDP since 2019. Norway's investment as share of GDP (5.2%) in 2021 was almost 2 percentage points higher than the OECD average (3.4%). The investment level in Norway decreased in 2022 to 4.2%.

Figure 8. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP
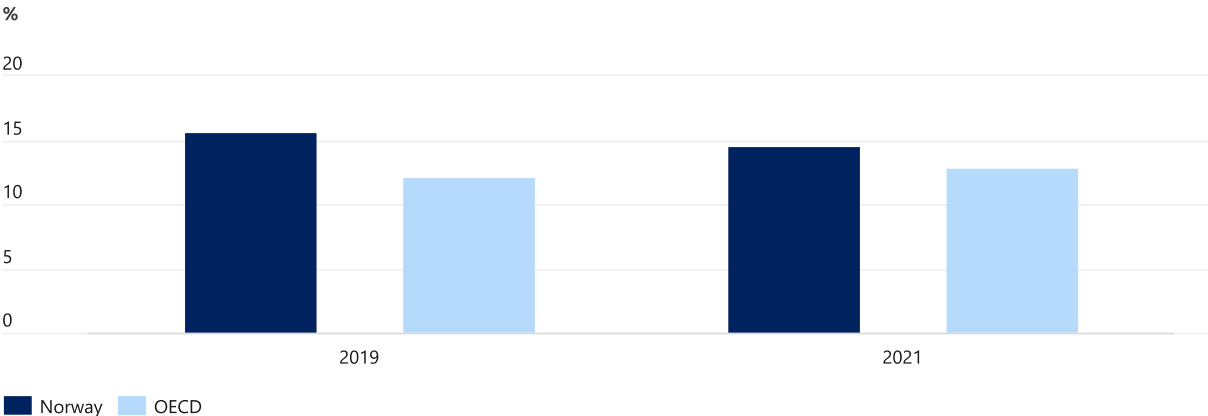
The size of public employment varies significantly among OECD countries, ranging from around 10% to just above 30%.

Norway is the OECD country with the largest share of public employment, 30.9% of total employment. The average across OECD countries is 18.6%.

### Figure 9. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021
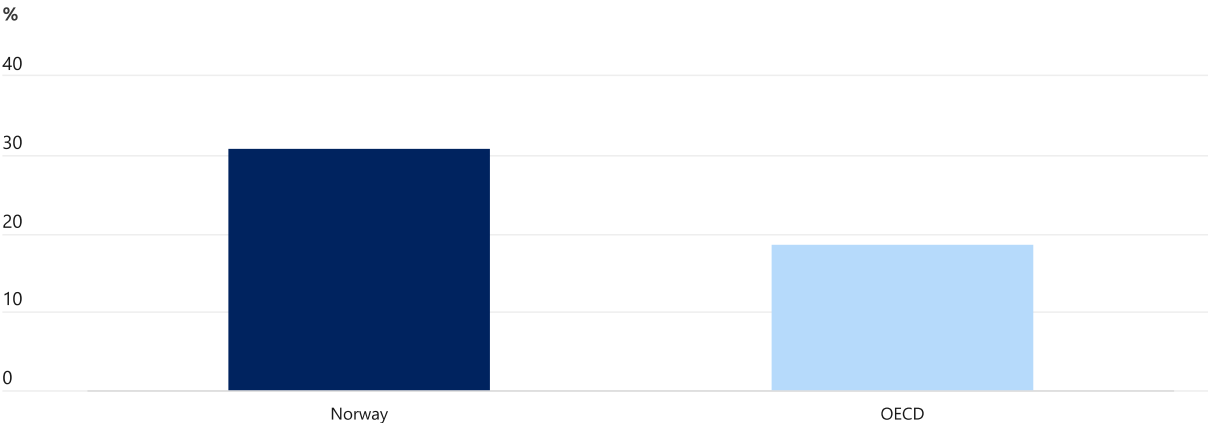
Governments use different mechanisms to harness and develop the capacity of their workforce. For example, internal mobility in public administrations helps to pool human resources across government and attract and retain civil servants.

In Norway, as in most OECD countries, internal mobility of civil servants is possible but not encouraged or recommended. Similarly, internal mobility is also possible for senior-level civil servants,

although it is not encouraged or expected. Norway has implemented the practice of developing individual learning plans for most or all public servants.

Figure 10. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022
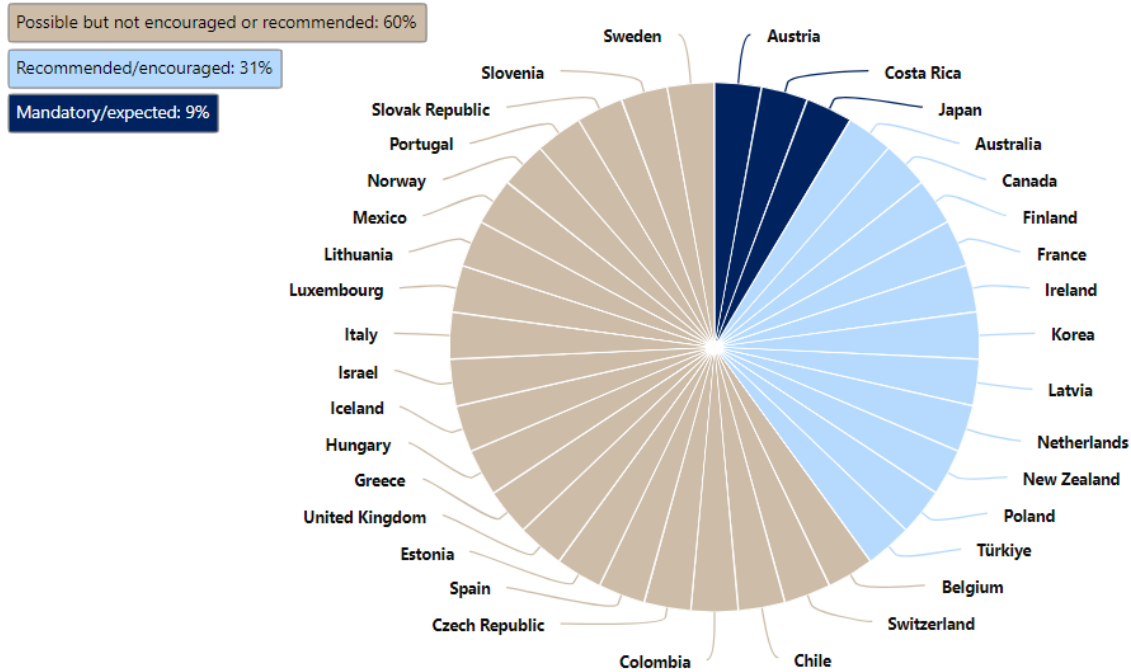
Equal representation of women and men in the public sector is a key indicator of progress towards gender equality, diversity and better representation. In 2020, a majority of employees in the public sector in OECD countries were women (58.9%), with large differences among countries. However, women are often under-represented in managerial positions.

Norway is slightly below the OECD-EU average for gender equality in senior management in national administration, with around 39.7% women in senior posts compared to 40.8%. However, Norway has achieved gender parity in ministerial positions (50%). The OECD average for 2023 is 36%.

Figure 11. Gender equality in senior management positions in national administration, 2021
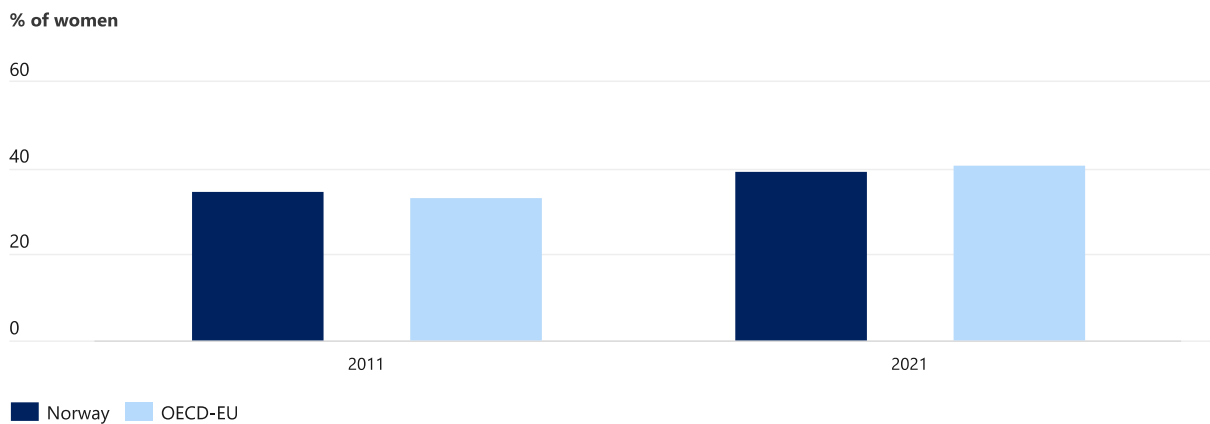

Young people are under-represented in public and political life across the OECD, with the risk that their voice and interests are not sufficiently taken in consideration in policymaking.

The average age of cabinet members in Norway is 49 years, among the lowest in the OECD and 4 years below the OECD average (53 years).

Figure 12. Average age of cabinet members, 2018 and 2022

In years
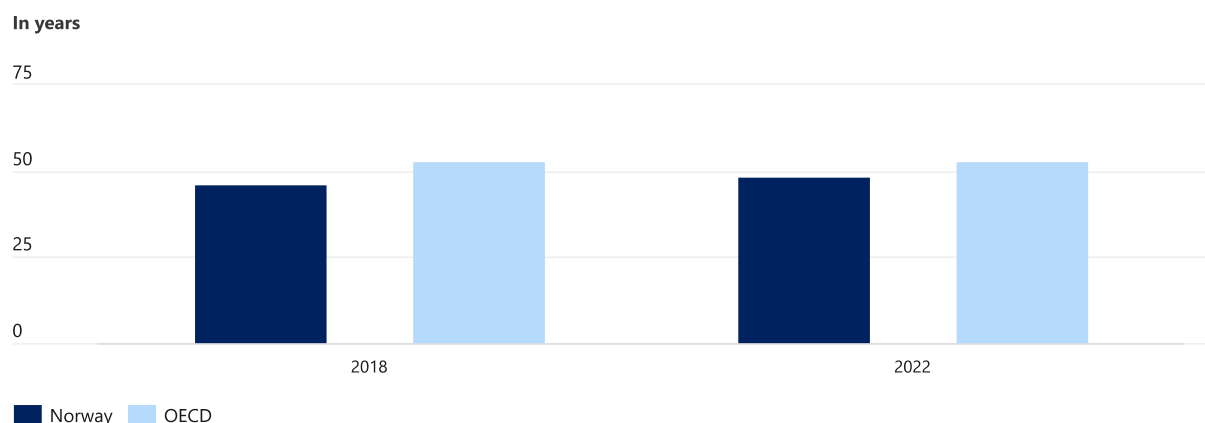
About the report

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 Norway.

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