

# **Government at a Glance 2023**

## **Country Notes**

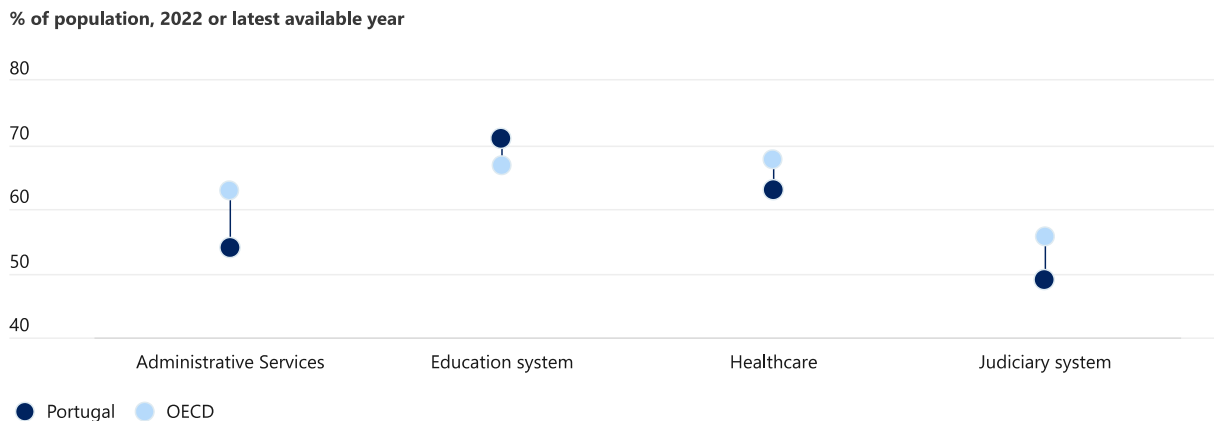
# Portugal

## 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.

**A majority in Portugal is satisfied with public services, although in international comparison the results are mixed.** About two-thirds of citizens (63%) are satisfied with the health care and 71% with the education system, compared to 68% and 67%, on average and respectively, across OECD countries. Portugal fares below the OECD average on satisfaction with administrative services, with 54% who are satisfied with administrative services compared to 63% on average in the OECD.

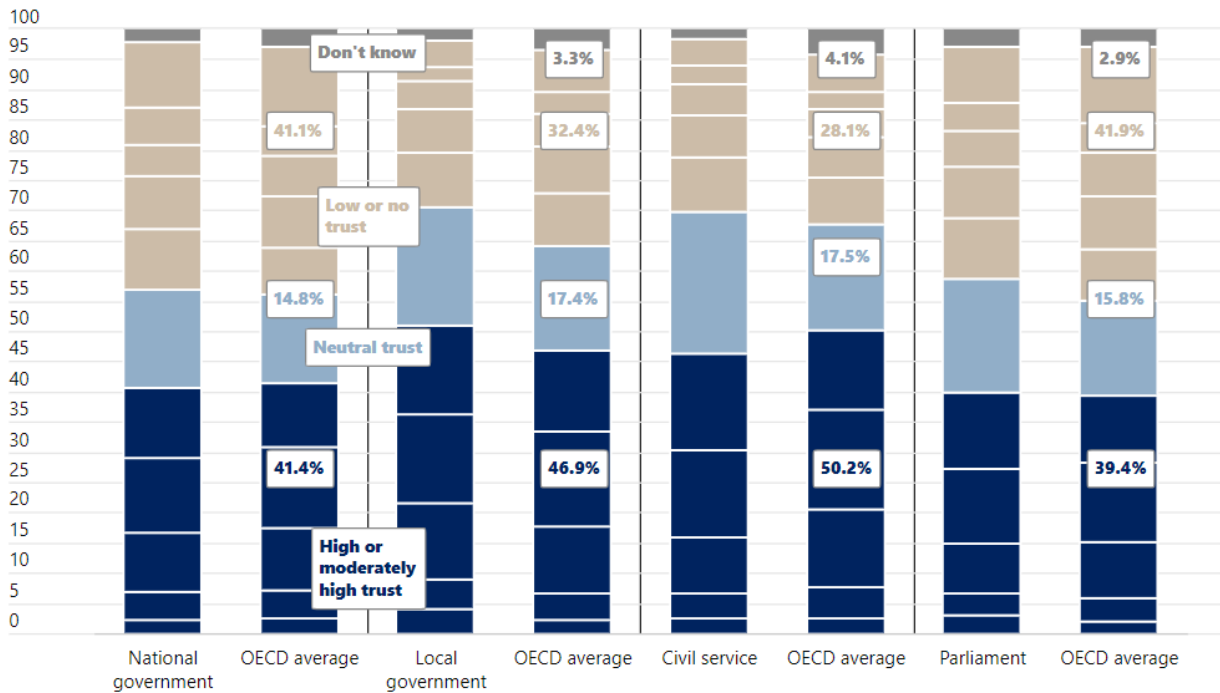
**Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022**



**People in Portugal reported levels of trust across public institutions similar to OECD averages.** Around 4 out of 10 Portuguese respondents (41%) reported having high or moderately high trust in their national government, a value very similar to the OECD average. However, while more than half of respondents (51%) report high or moderately high trust in the local government, above the OECD average (47%), trust in the civil service (46%) is slightly lower than across OECD countries (50%).

**Figure 2. Trust in public institutions, 2021**

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



## Achieving results with good governance practices

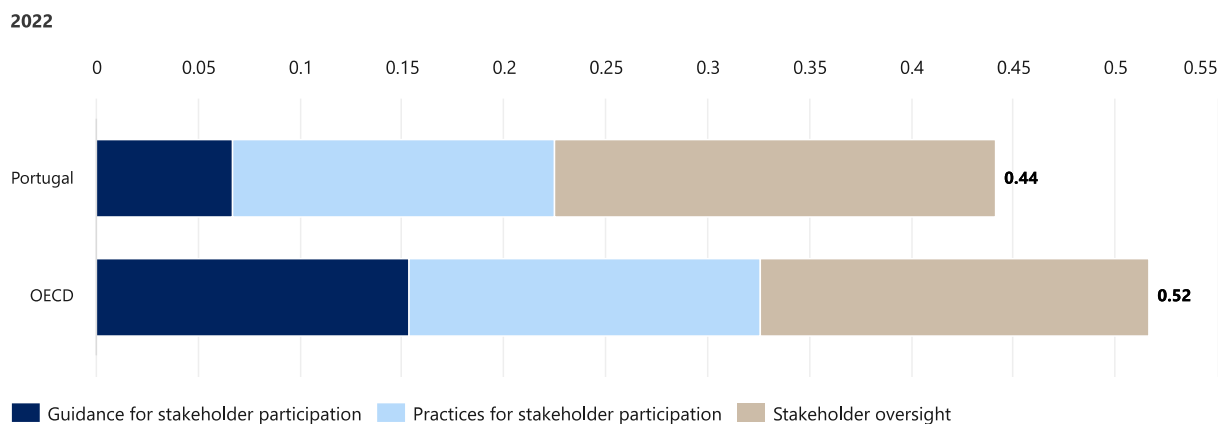
In an age of multiple crises, governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust in public institutions and enhance democratic resilience. Actions include building on democratic strengths, such as enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making; reinforcing key competences 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.

**With a score of 0.44, Portugal fares below the average across OECD countries (0.52) on the OECD IGI on stakeholder participation.** However, the country scores (0.22) slightly above the OECD average (0.19) concerning stakeholder oversight.

**Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making**

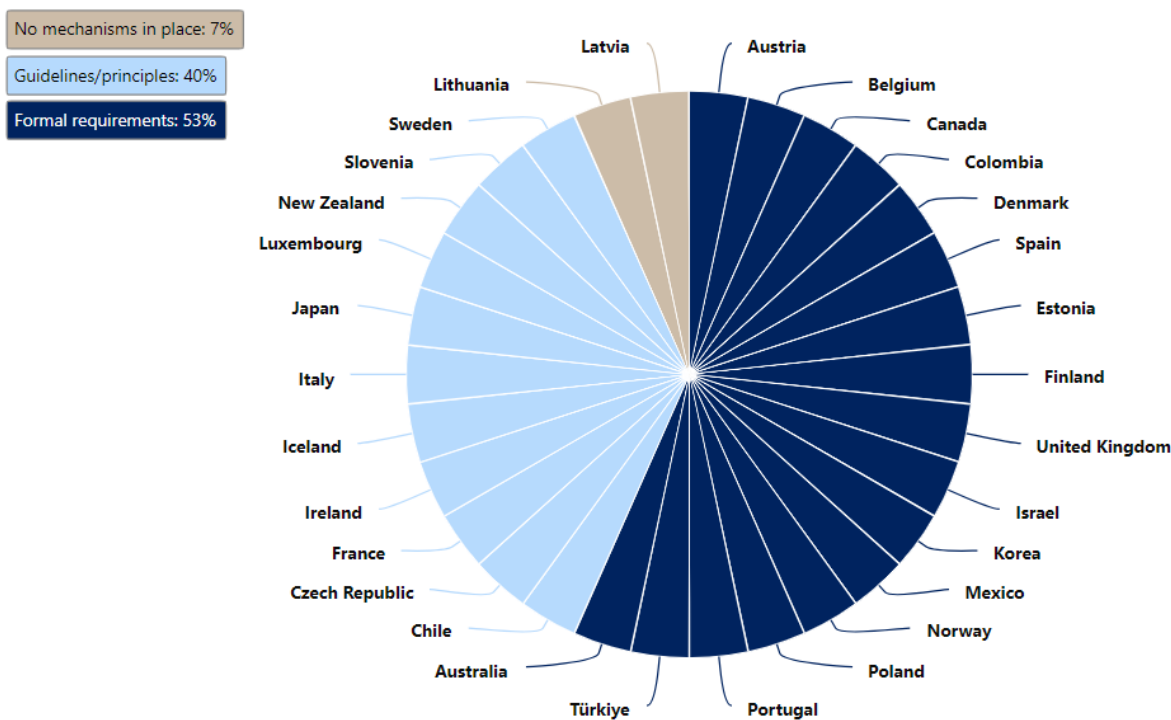
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



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.

**Portugal, 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 4. Mechanisms used to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence in government, 2022**

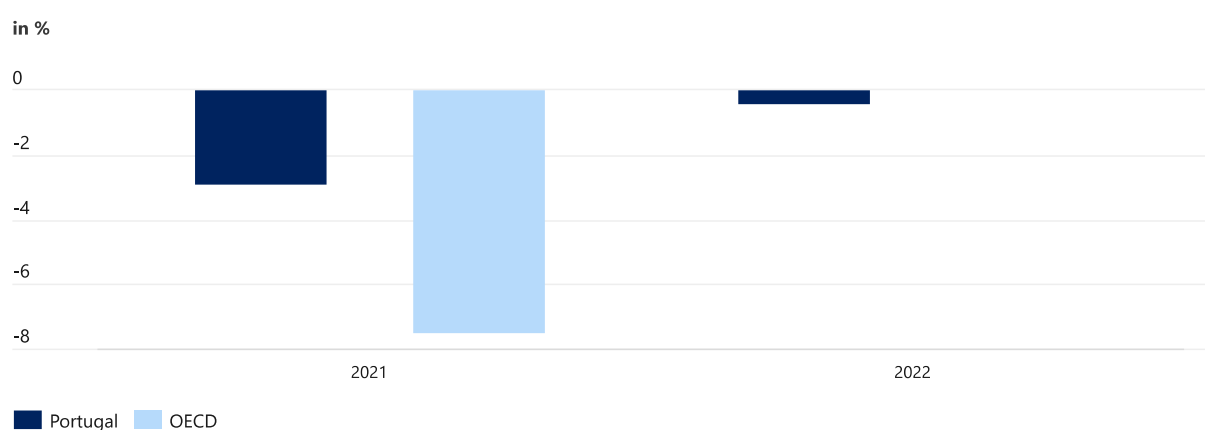


## What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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.

**In 2021, Portugal had a fiscal deficit of -2.9% of GDP, which was lower than the average deficit across OECD countries (-7.5%).** In 2022, the deficit diminished to -0.4%, not far from fiscal equilibrium. However, Portugal has a large public debt. Portugal's public debt decreased from 143.7% of GDP in 2021, which was above the OECD average of 120.8%, to 116.6% in 2022.

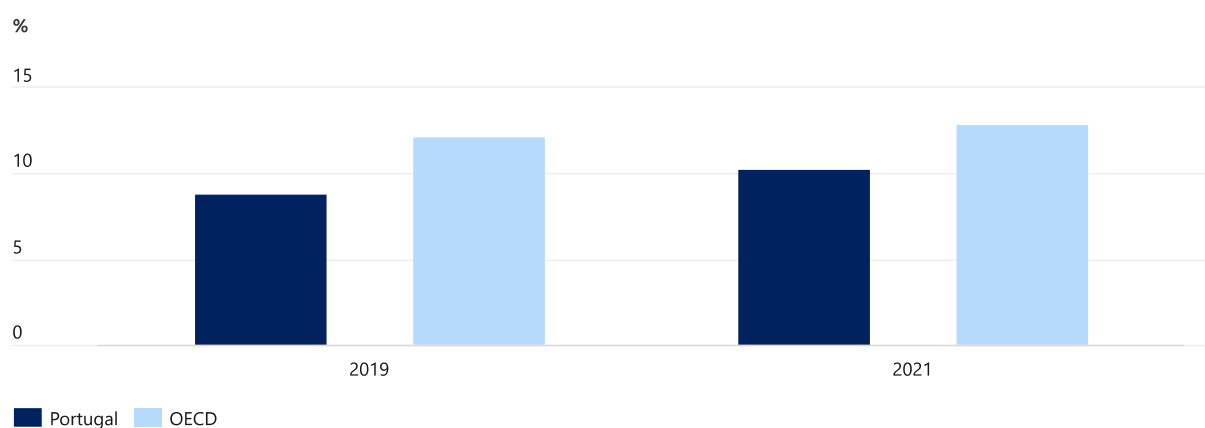
**Figure 5. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP**



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.

**Portugal spent less than average on public procurement, 10.3% of GDP in 2021, compared to 12.9% in the OECD.** Portugal's public investment was 2.6% of its GDP in 2021, slightly below the OECD average (3.4%).

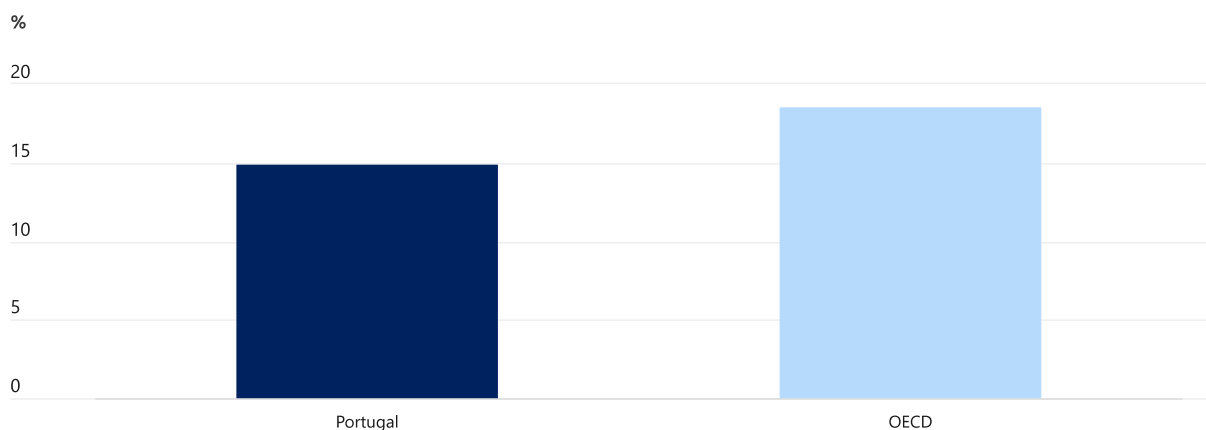
**Figure 6. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP**



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

**Portugal's public employment as a percentage of total employment is comparatively low.** In 2021, public employment represented 15.0% of total employment in the country. This rate is below the average rate across OECD countries (18.6%).

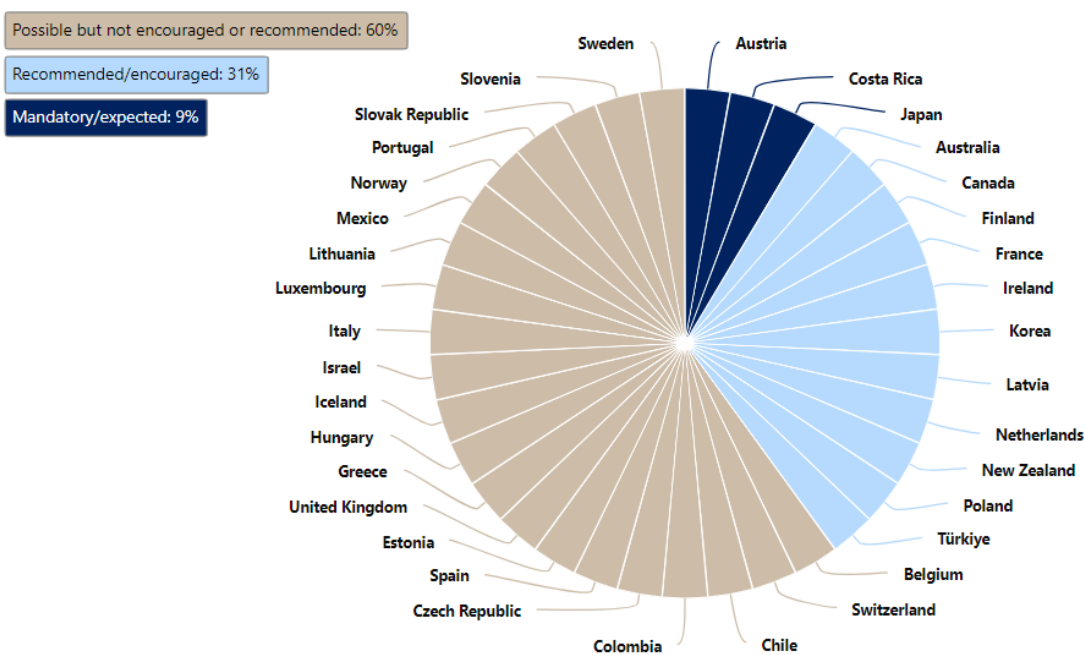
**Figure 7. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021**



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 Portugal, internal mobility is possible with the exception of senior civil servants.** The appointment of senior civil servants involves a special recruitment procedure, which includes a personal application and an evaluation by a special committee of experts. Portugal is in the process of implementing the practice of developing learning plans for public servants.

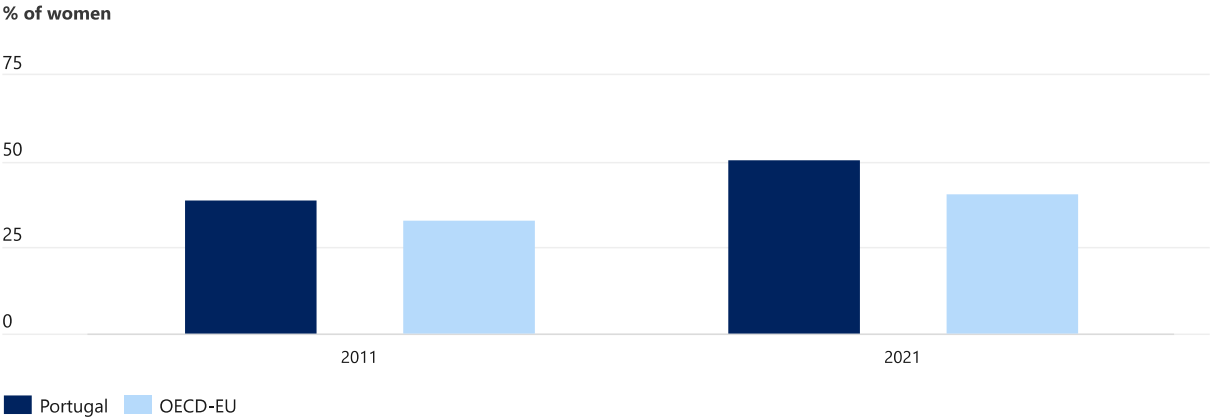
**Figure 8. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022**



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.

**With 50.8% women in senior management positions in national administration, Portugal has achieved gender parity in 2021.** In addition, 41% of ministers in the country are women, 5 percentage points above the OECD average (36%), albeit below gender parity.

**Figure 9. Gender equality in senior management positions in national administration, 2021**

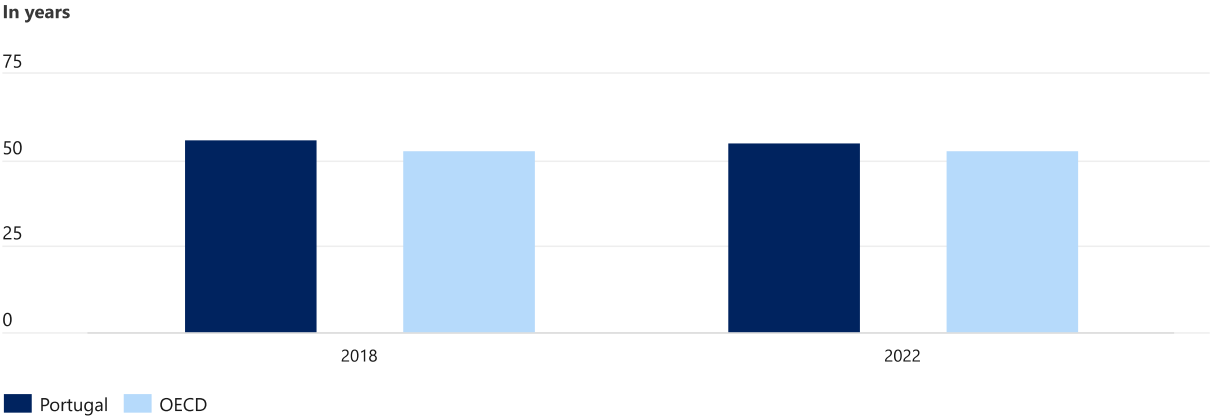


Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) Gender Statistics (database); Women and men in decision-making (WMID)

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 Portugal was 55 years, 2 years above the OECD average (53 years).**

**Figure 10. 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 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)