

Government at a Glance 2023

Country Notes

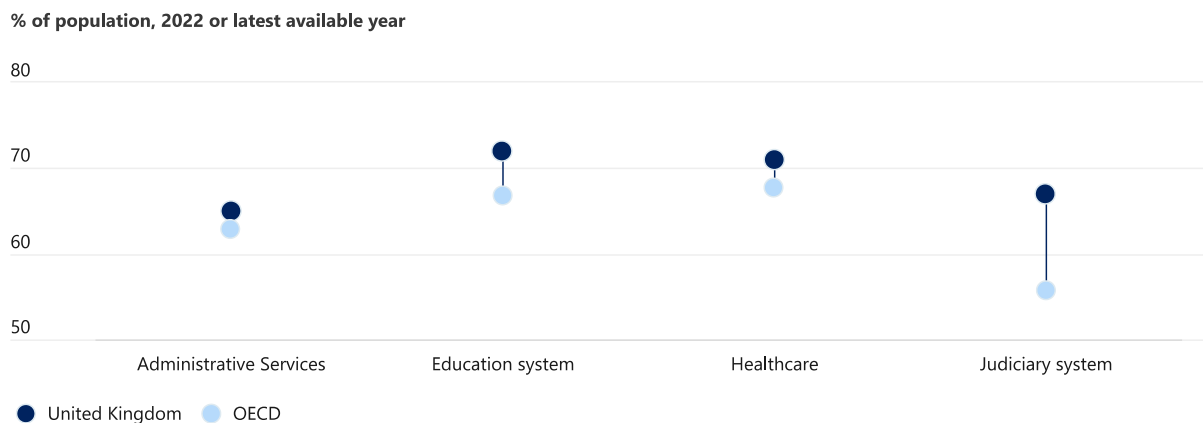
United Kingdom

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 Kingdom is above the OECD average in satisfaction with public services. The services with the highest level of reported satisfaction are the education system (72%) and healthcare (71%), compared to 67% and 68%, respectively, in the OECD. With 67% satisfaction in the judicial system, the United Kingdom is 11 percentage points above the OECD average. Around two-thirds (65%) are satisfied with administrative services, which is comparable to the OECD average (63%).

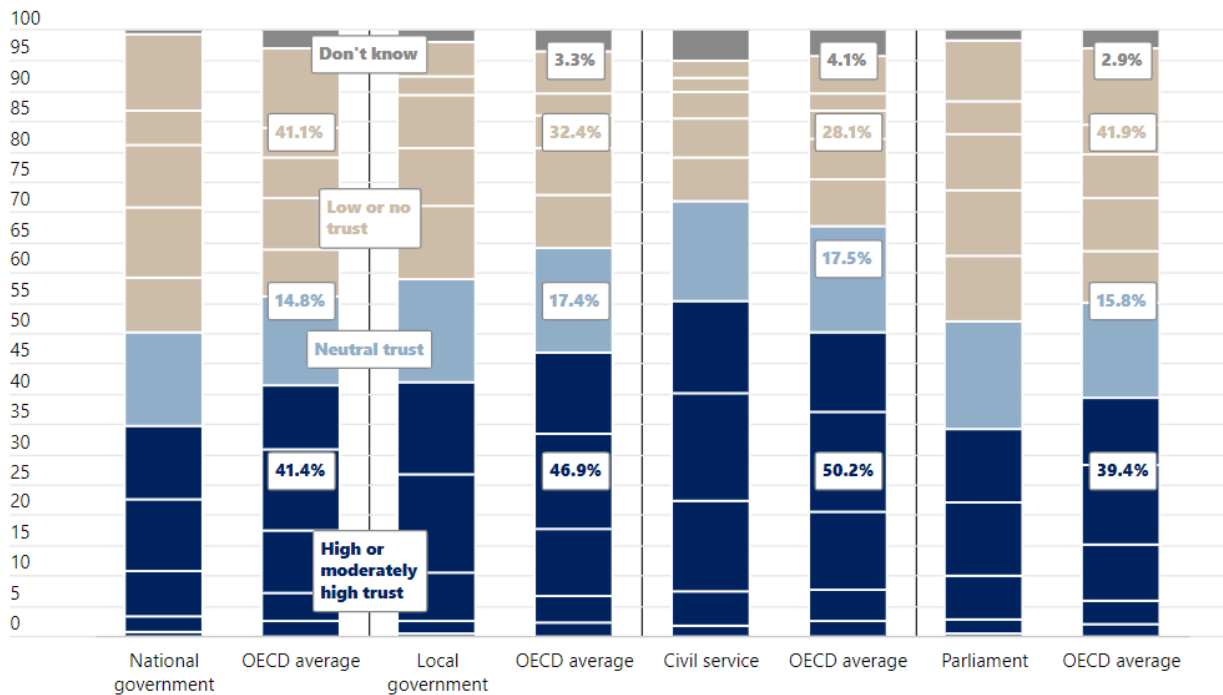
Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022



Slightly more than one-third in the United Kingdom reported high or moderately high trust in the national government (35%) and 42% in the local government, both below the average across OECD countries. Trust in the parliament (34%) is also below the OECD average (39%). However, a majority of people (55%) had high or moderately high trust in the civil service, compared to 50 % on average in the OECD.

Figure 2. Trust in public institutions, 2021

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



Achieving results with good governance practices

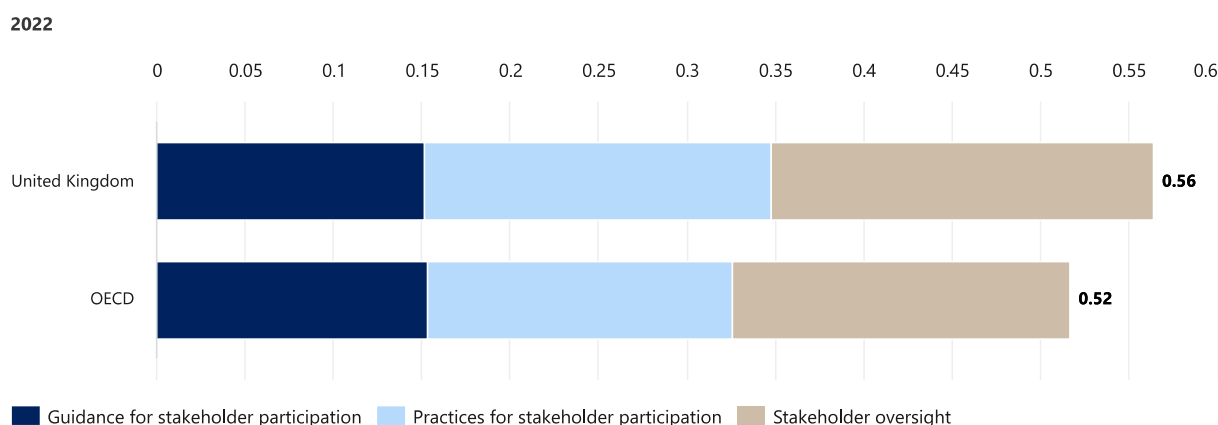
In an age of multiple crises, governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust in public institutions and enhance democratic resilience. Actions include building on democratic strengths, such as enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making; reinforcing key competences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

The United Kingdom fares slightly 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). It has a consistent score, equal or slightly above the OECD average for each dimension of the index, ranging from 0.15 to 0.22 out of a maximum value of 0.33.

Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making

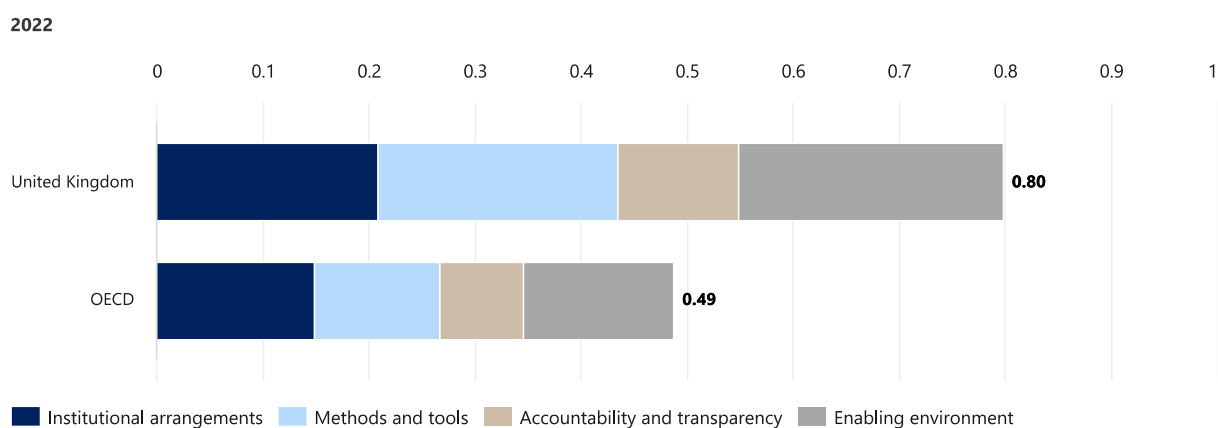
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



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.

The United Kingdom is the top performer on green budgeting out of the 24 OECD surveyed countries in 2022. It achieves a 0.80 score on the OECD Green Budgeting Index, with 1 being the highest possible score and the OECD average at 0.49. The United Kingdom fares above the OECD average in all four dimensions of the index, achieving the maximum score of 0.25 on enabling environment (the highest possible) and a score of 0.23 on methods and tools. There is room for improvement, however, on accountability and transparency, where the United Kingdom’s score is 0.11.

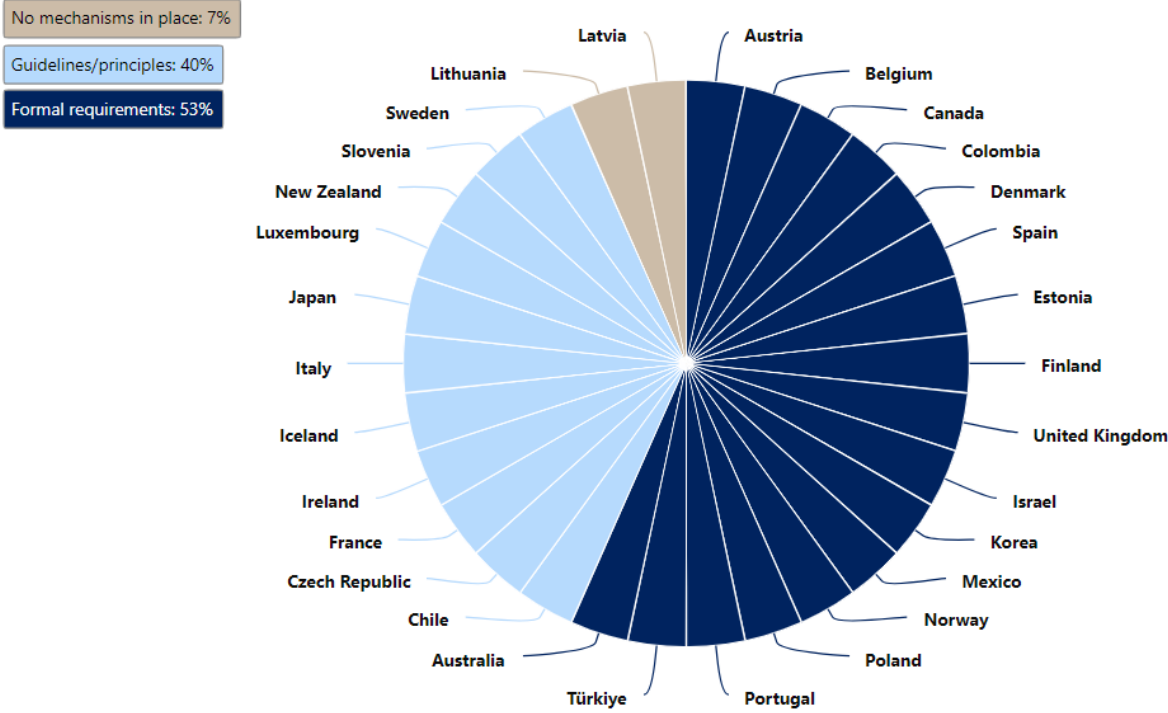
Figure 4. OECD Green Budgeting Index, 2022



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.

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

Figure 5. Mechanisms used to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence in government, 2022

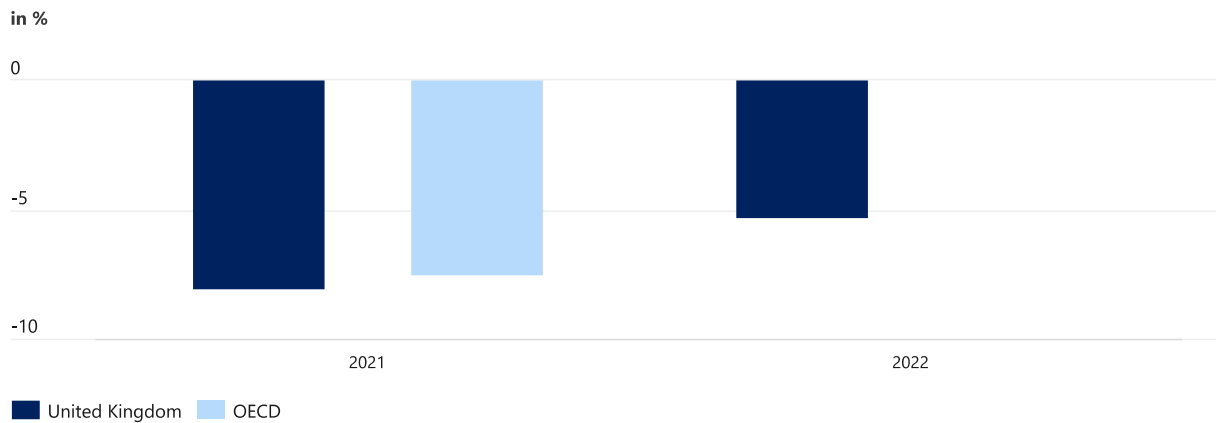


What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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, the United Kingdom had a fiscal deficit of -8.0% of GDP, which was larger than the average across OECD countries (-7.5%). The fiscal deficit diminished to -5.2% in 2022. The United Kingdom also has a higher public debt than on average in the OECD. In 2021, the public debt as share of GDP was 142.6%, compared to 120.8% on average in the OECD. The debt ratio diminished to 103.6% of GDP in 2022.

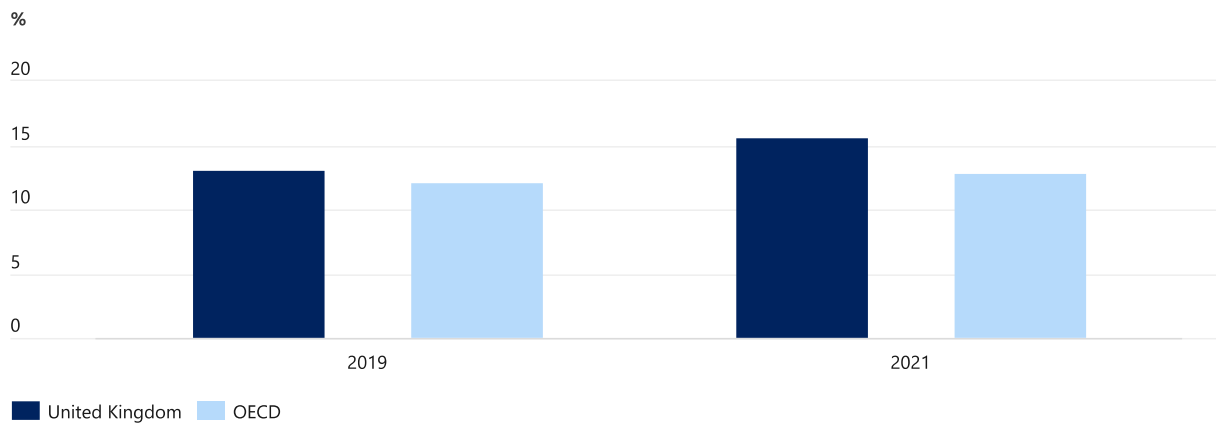
Figure 6. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP



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 procurement spending in the United Kingdom has increased from 13.1% of GDP in 2019 to 15.7% in 2021. This is above the OECD average (12.9% in 2021). The United Kingdom invested 3.0% of GDP in 2021 and 2022, which is slightly below the OECD average (3.4% in 2021).

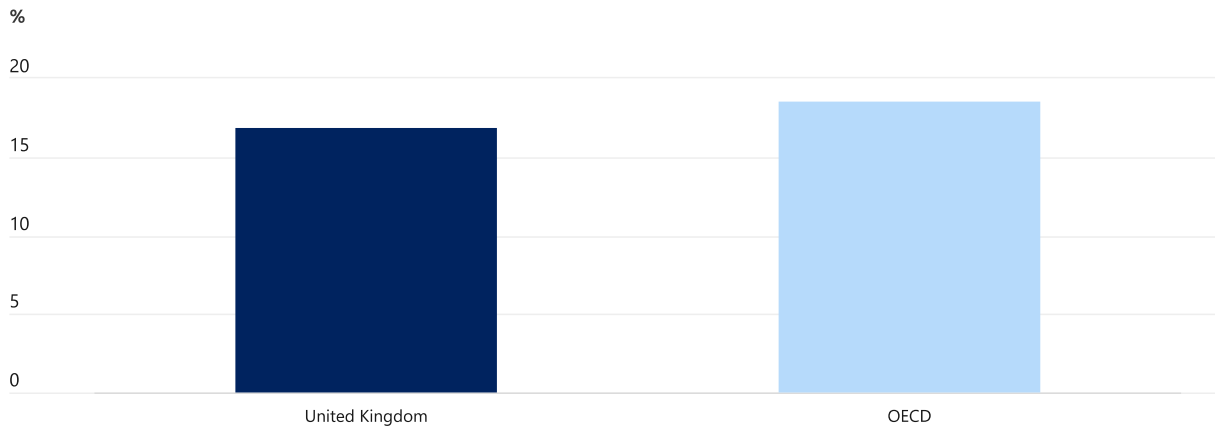
Figure 7. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP



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

The size of public employment as share of total employment in the United Kingdom was 16.9% in 2021, which is smaller than the average across OECD countries (18.6%).

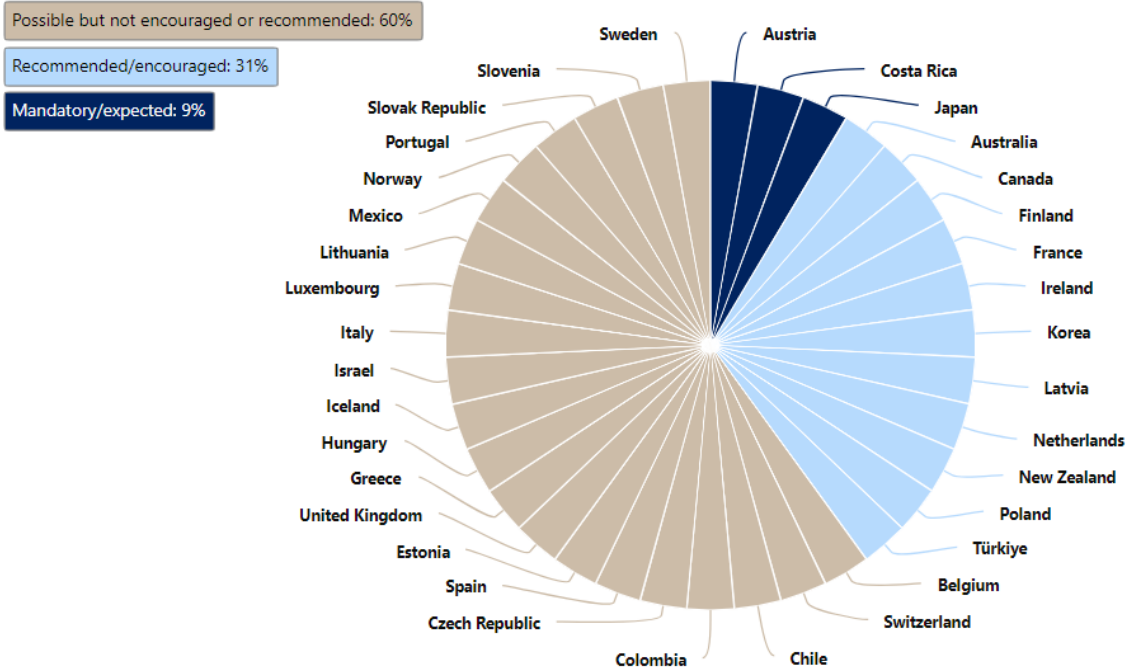
Figure 8. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021



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 the United Kingdom, as in most OECD countries, internal mobility is possible for civil servants but not encouraged. For senior-level civil servants, however, internal mobility is recommended and encouraged. In addition, the United Kingdom has implemented the practice of developing individual learning plans for most or all public employees.

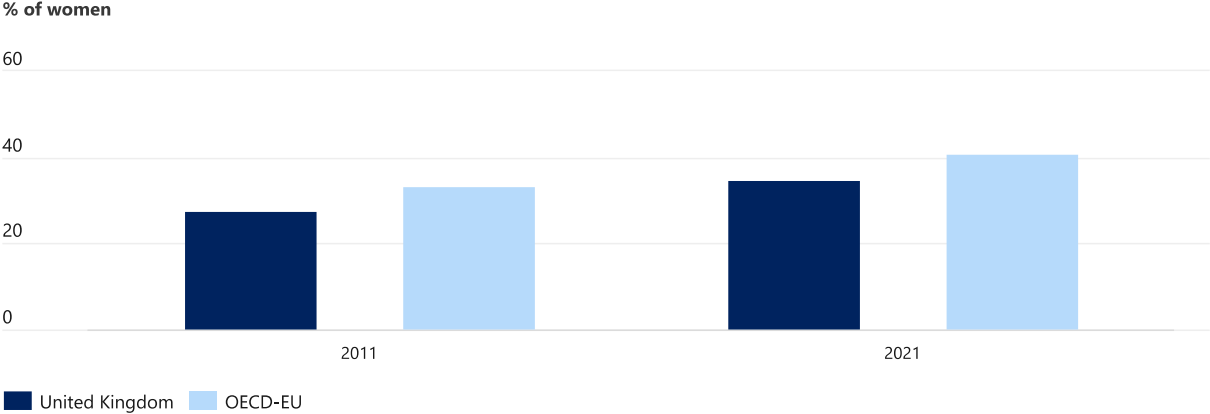
Figure 9. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022



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.

The United Kingdom has room for improving on gender equality in senior management positions. In 2021, 34.8% of senior managers were women, below the OECD-EU average (40.8%). The share of women in ministerial positions is close to the OECD average (33% and 36%, respectively), in both cases still far from gender parity.

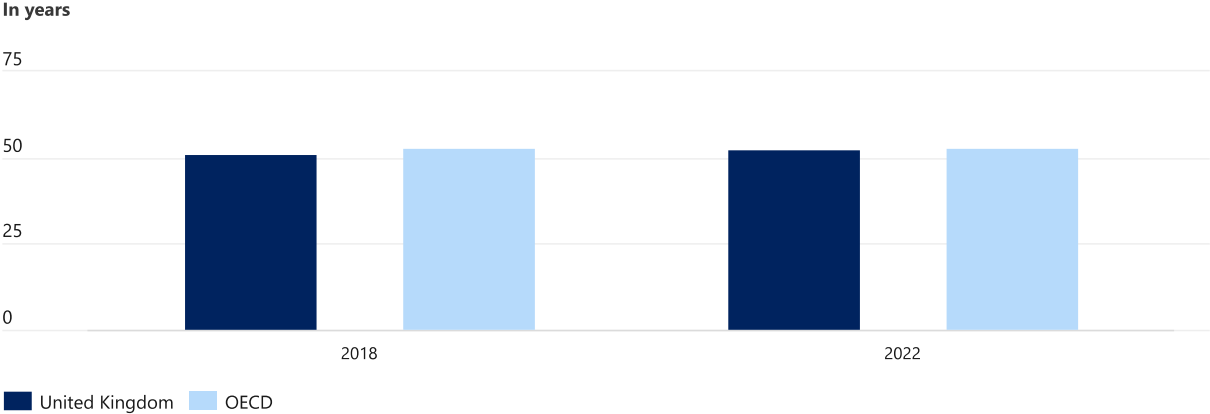
Figure 10. Gender equality in senior management positions in national administration, 2021



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.

In the United Kingdom, the average age of cabinet members – 53 years – is aligned with the average across OECD countries (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