

Government at a Glance 2023

Country Notes

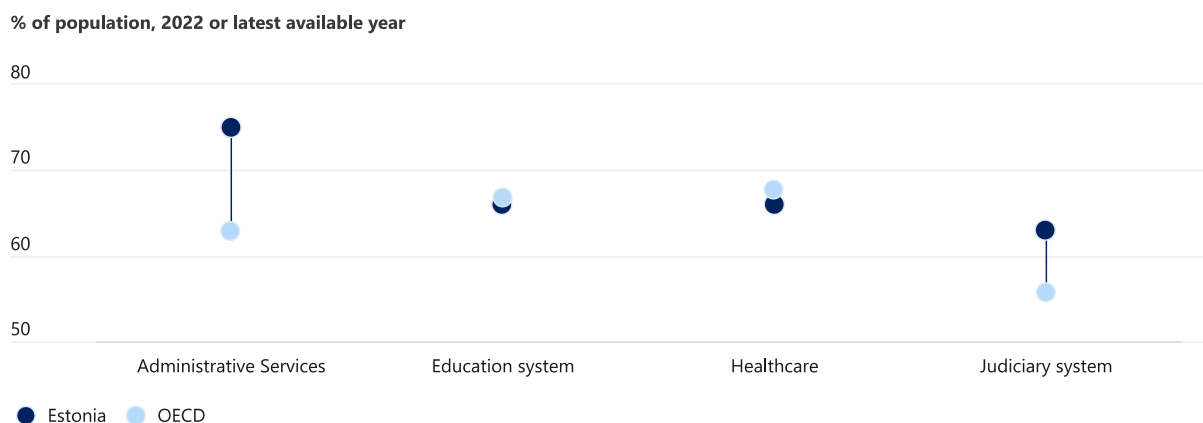
Estonia

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.

Estonia performs comparatively well on people's satisfaction with public services. An estimated 66% of Estonians are satisfied with the health care and education systems, only slightly below the OECD averages, and 63% are satisfied with the judiciary system, which is 7 percentage points higher than OECD average. Additionally, Estonians are significantly more satisfied with administrative services than the OECD average (75% and 63%, respectively).

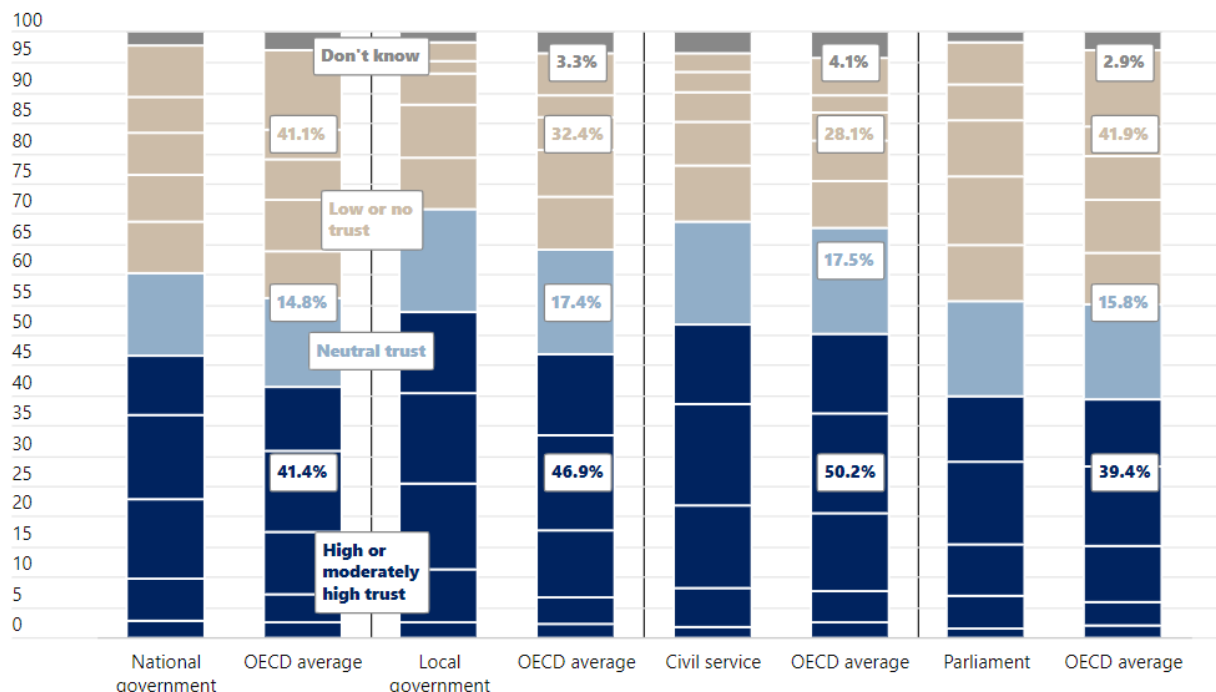
Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022



Trust in the national government, local government, civil service and parliament in Estonia was slightly higher than the averages across OECD countries. Almost half of Estonian respondents (47%) indicated high or moderately high trust in the national government, and 54% in local government, which are above the OECD averages of 41% and 47%, respectively. A majority of Estonians (52%) reported high or moderately high trust in the civil service, above the OECD average of 50%.

Figure 2. Trust in public institutions, 2021

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



Achieving results with good governance practices

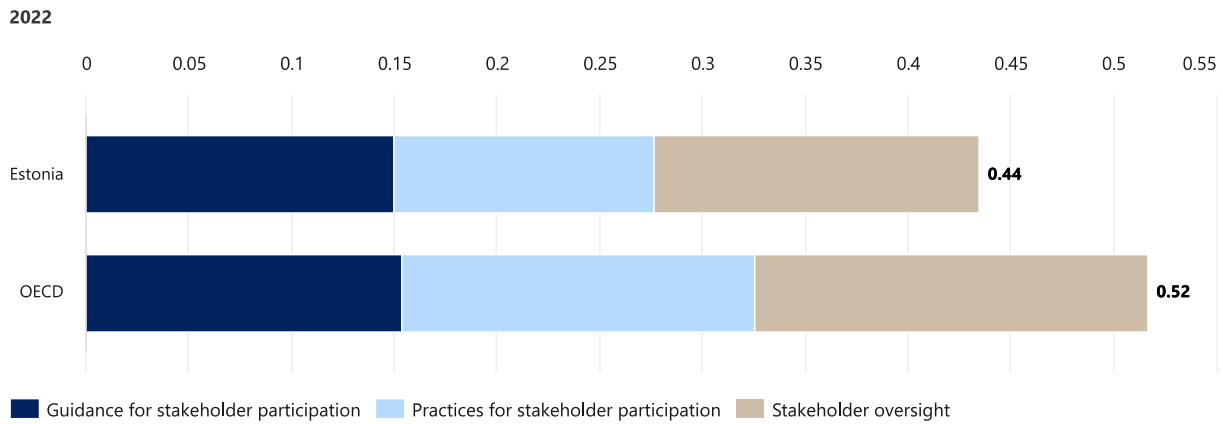
In an age of multiple crises, governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust in public institutions and enhance democratic resilience. Actions include building on democratic strengths, such as enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making; reinforcing key competences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

Estonia fares slightly below the OECD average on the IGI on stakeholder participation. It scores 0.44 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). The country's highest score is in stakeholder oversight of infrastructure projects at 0.16, although below the OECD average (0.19). Estonia scores the lowest in stakeholder participation practices (0.13 compared to the OECD average of 0.17).

Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making

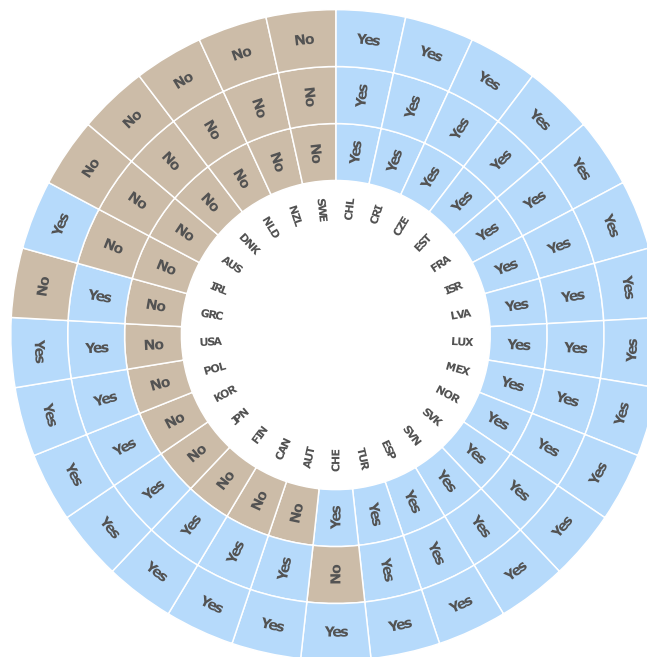
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



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

Figure 4. Regulation to ban financing political parties and election campaigns, 2022



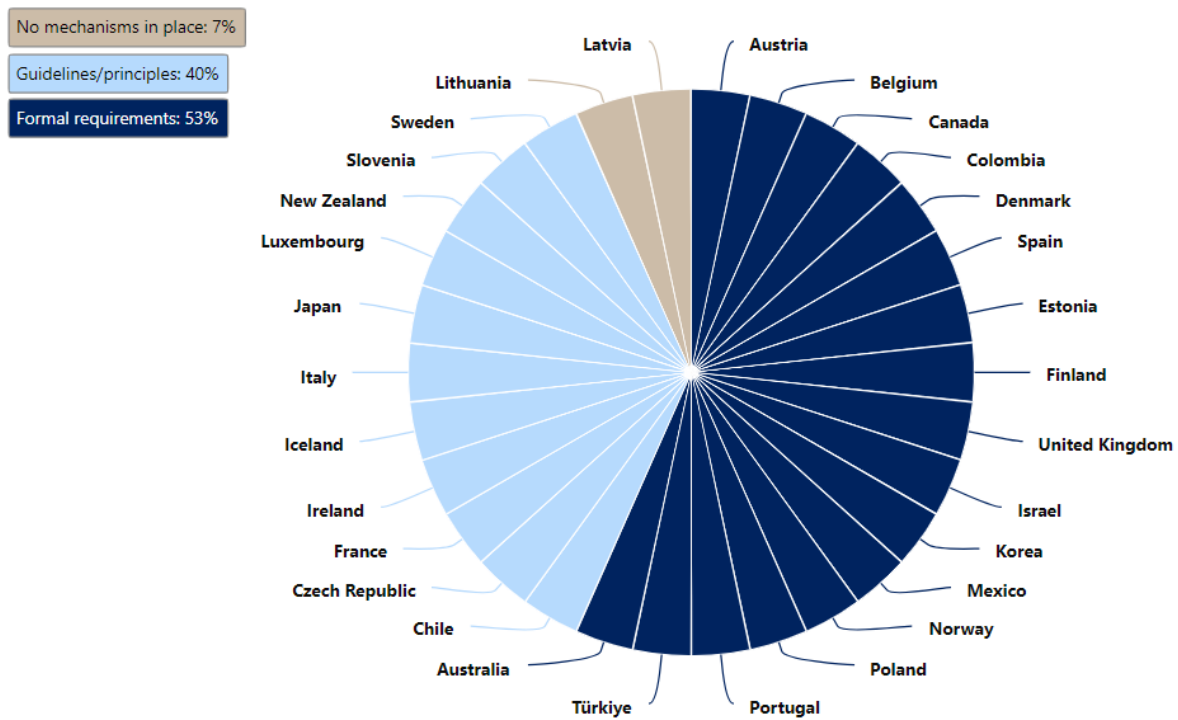
Inner ring: Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.
Middle ring: Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.
Outer ring: Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

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.

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

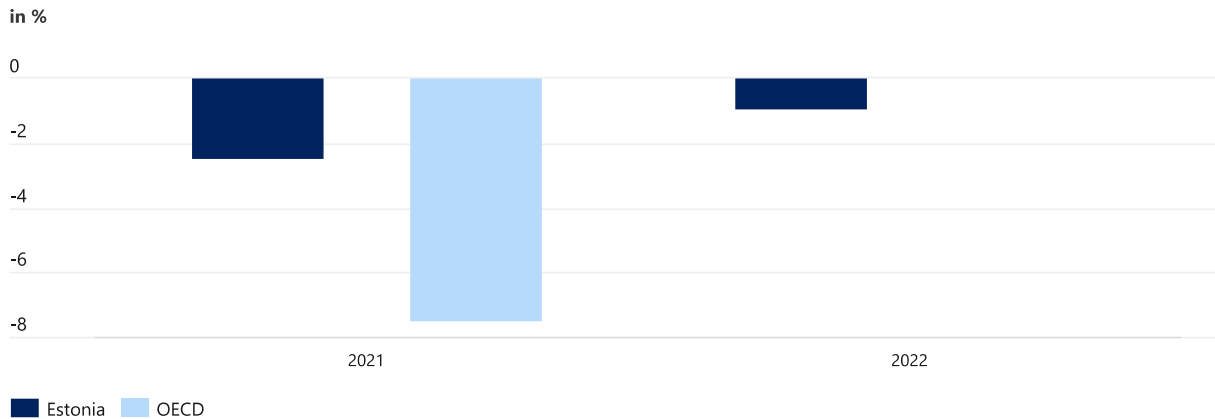


What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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, Estonia had a fiscal deficit of -2.4% of its GDP, which was considerably smaller than the average of -7.5% across OECD countries. The fiscal deficit also diminished in 2022 to -0.9% of GDP. In addition, in 2021 Estonia had the lowest public debt as share of GDP of all OECD countries, 24.3% compared to 120.8% on OECD average.

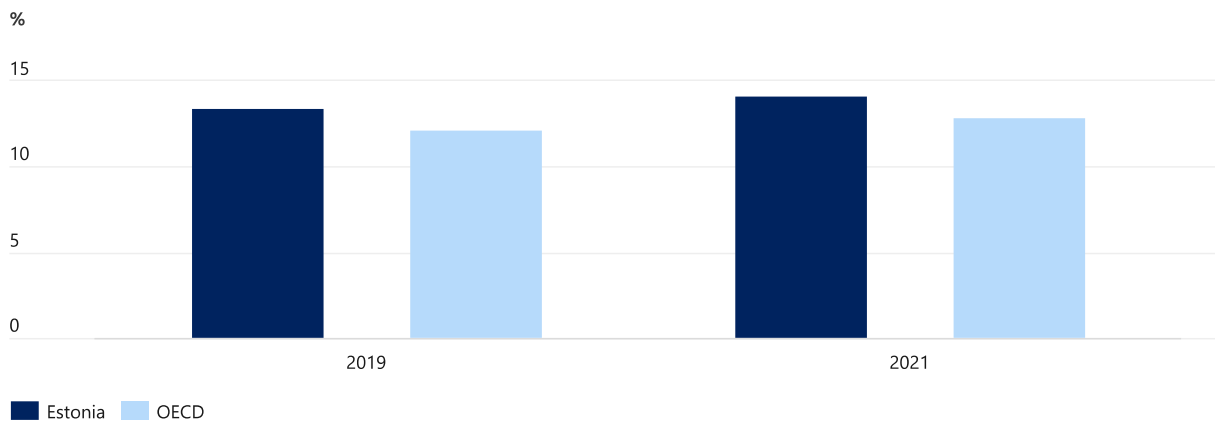
Figure 6. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP



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.

Estonia spends a high share of GDP on procurement, 14.2% in 2021, compared to 12.9% on average across OECD countries. Estonia spent 5.5% of its GDP on public investment in 2021, which is the second highest rate in the OECD and more than 2 percentage points above the OECD average (3.4%).

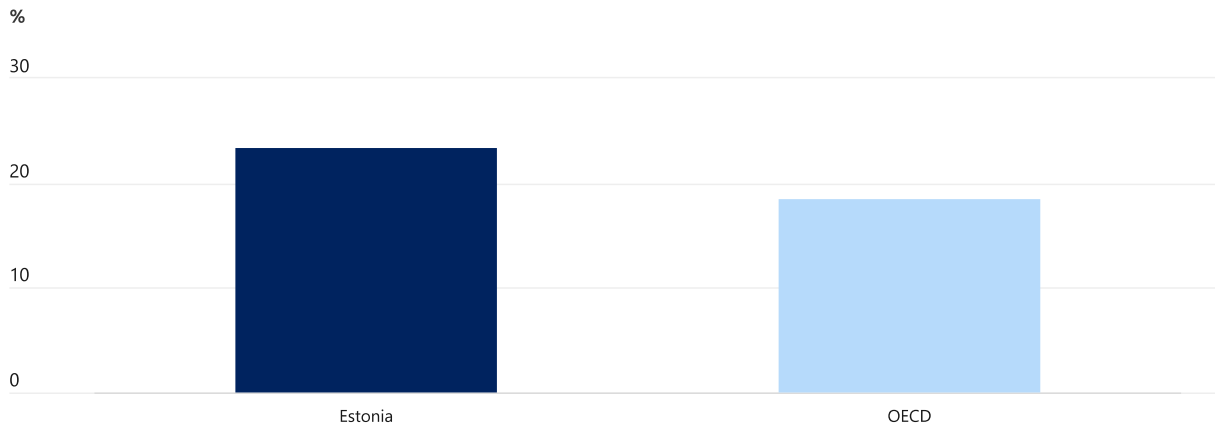
Figure 7. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP



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

In Estonia, almost one-quarter (23.4%) of total employment is in public employment, which is higher than the average of 18.6% across OECD countries.

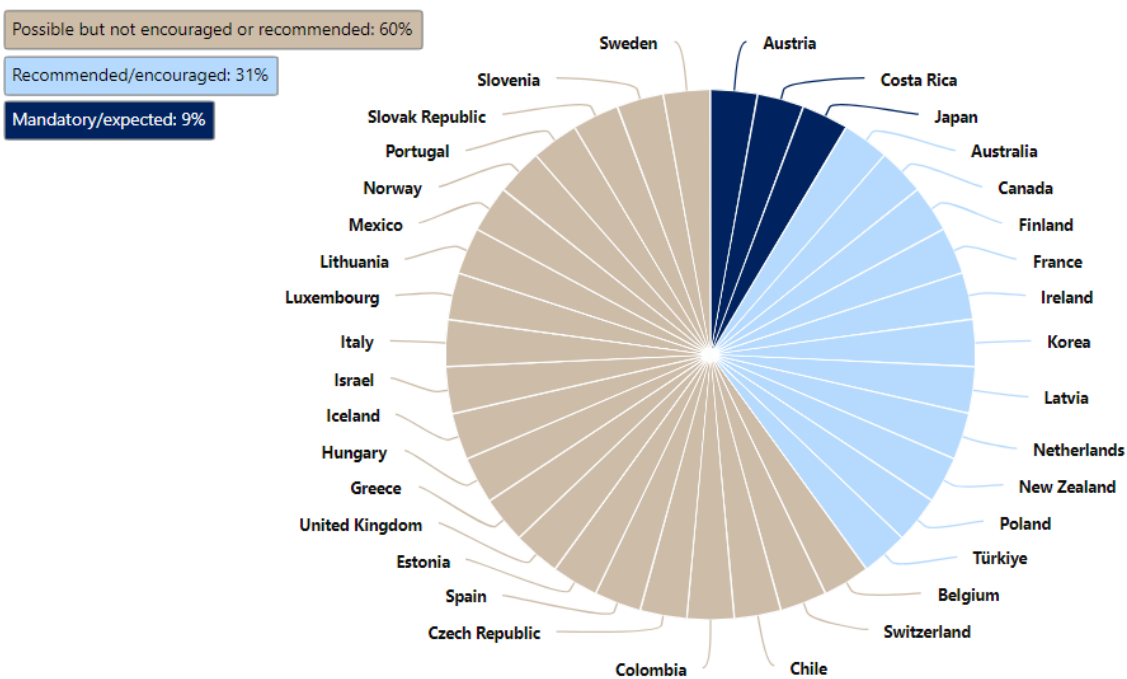
Figure 8. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021



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 Estonia, as in most OECD countries, internal mobility is possible but not expected for civil servants. Instead, it is recommended and encouraged for senior-level civil servants. Estonia has implemented the practice of developing individual learning plans most or all public servants.

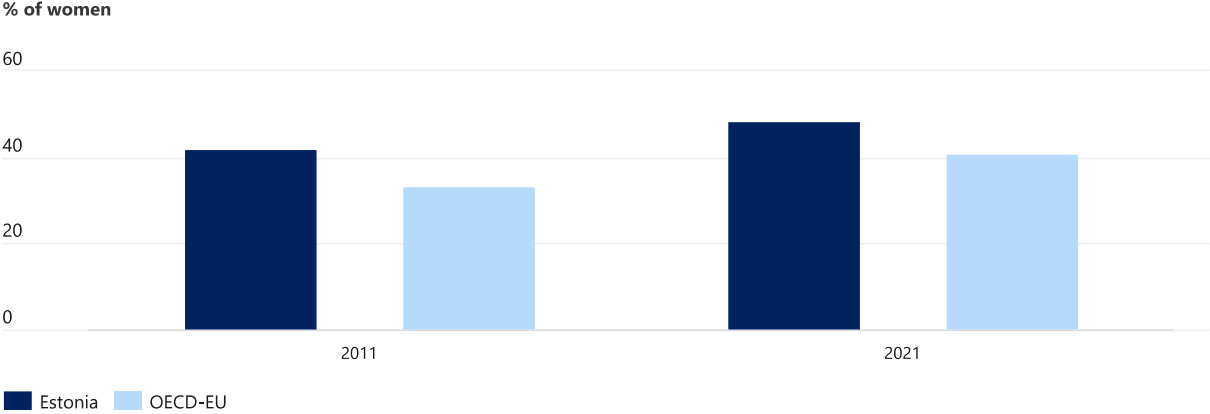
Figure 9. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022



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.

Estonia has shown significant leadership in achieving gender equality in senior management positions within national administration. Approximately 48.5% of these positions were held by women in 2021, which is substantially higher than the OECD-EU average of 40.8%. Furthermore, the share of women in ministerial positions (43%) in Estonia is higher than the OECD average of 36%.

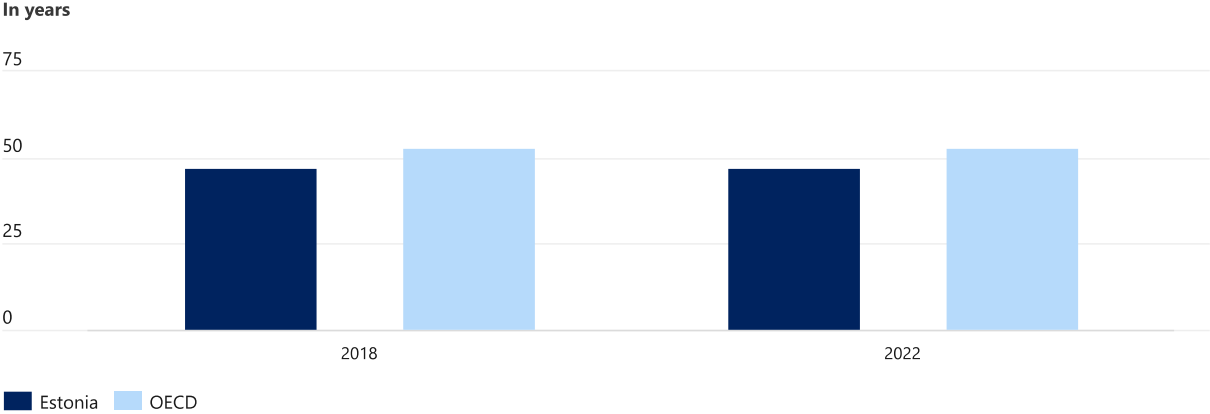
Figure 10. Gender equality in senior management positions in national administration, 2021



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 Estonia, the average age of cabinet members is 47 years old, which is among the lowest in the OECD. This is six years below the OECD average of 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