

# **Government at a Glance 2023**

## **Country Notes**

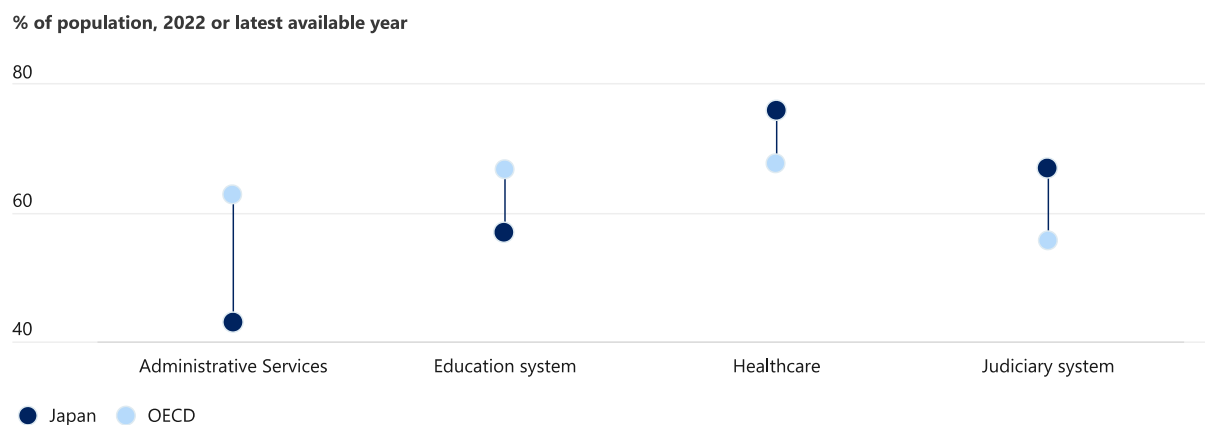
# Japan

## 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.

**Japan fares comparatively well on satisfaction with the healthcare and the judiciary system.** Over three quarters (76%) of Japanese are satisfied with the healthcare system, significantly above the OECD average (68%). Similarly, satisfaction with the courts and legal system in Japan (67%) outperforms the OECD average (56%). In turn, 57% and 43% of Japanese report being satisfied with the education system and administrative services below the respective OECD averages, 67% and 63%.

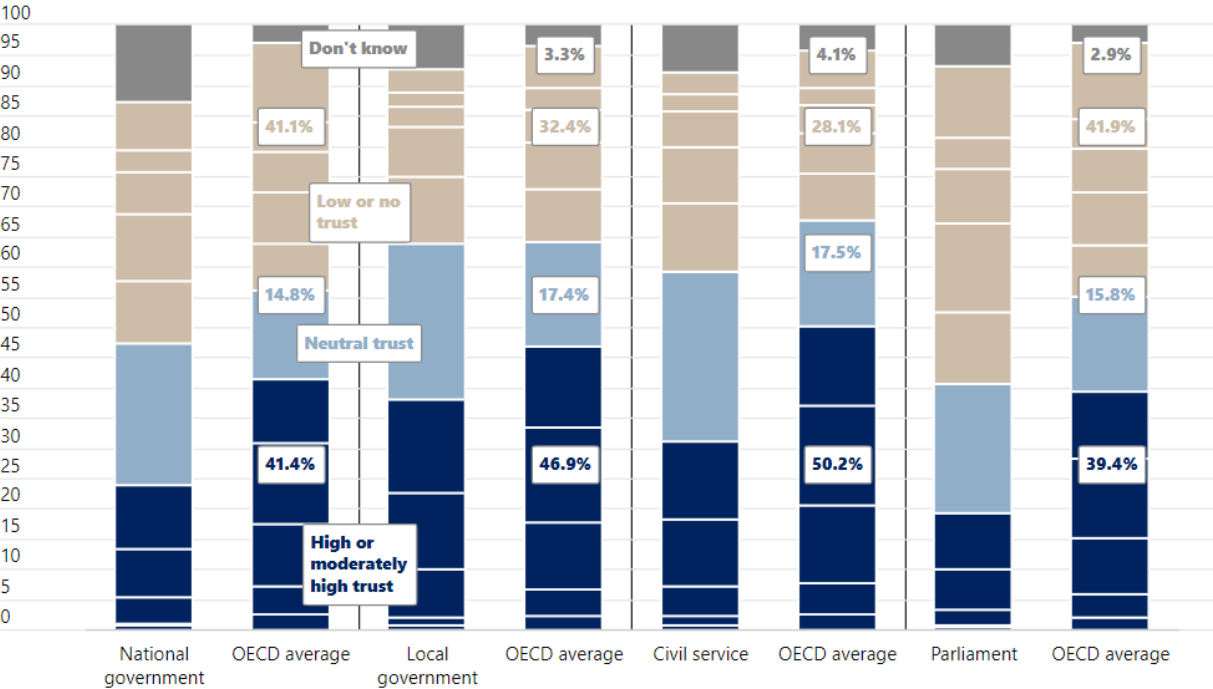
**Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022**



**About a quarter of Japanese reported high or moderately high trust in the national government (24%) in 2021.** A larger share indicated high or moderately high trust in local government (38%) and civil service (31%), than in the national government.

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

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

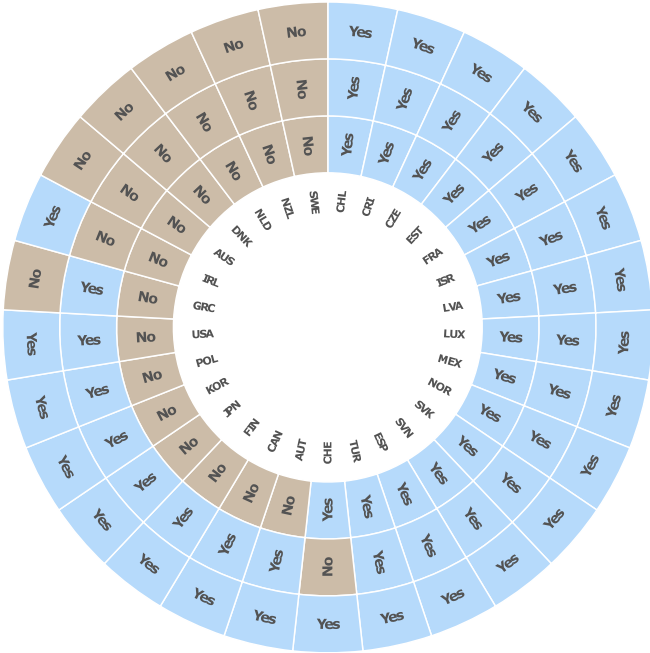


**Achieving results with good governance practices**

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.

**In Japan, 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 3. Regulation to ban financing political parties and election campaigns, 2022**

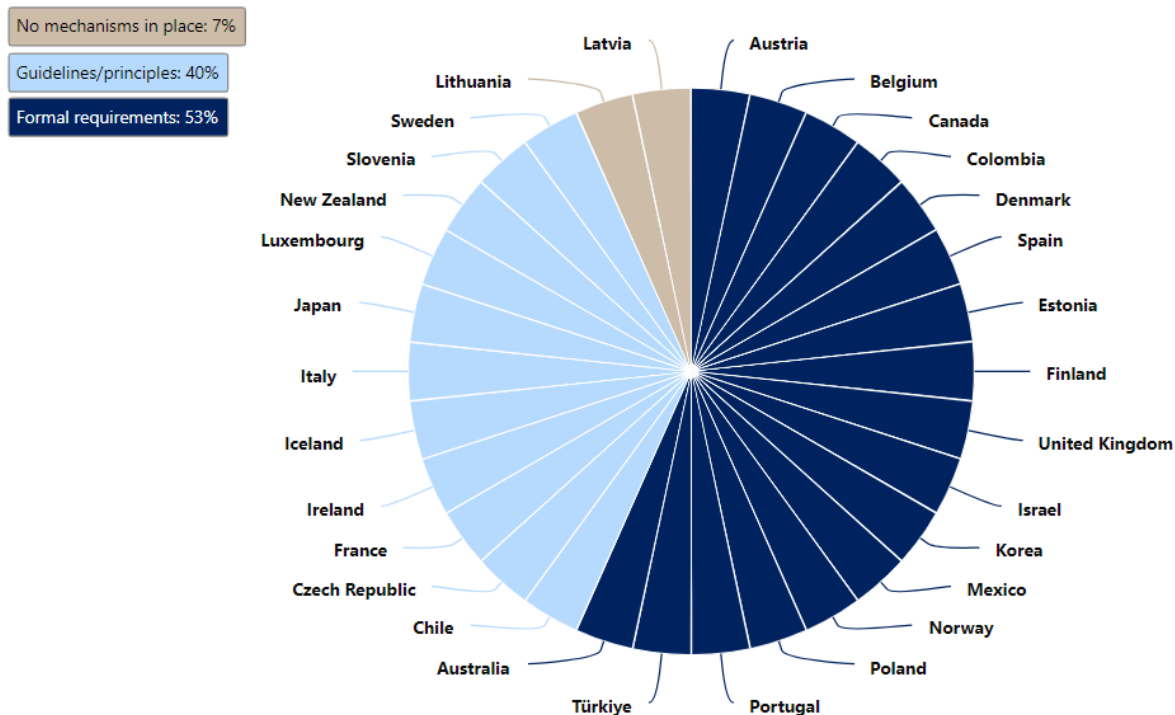


**Inner ring:** Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.  
**Middle ring:** Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.  
**Outer ring:** Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has the potential to revolutionise the impact of public policies and services. But AI also brings important challenges. Governments must promote innovative and trustworthy AI that respects human rights and democratic values. For this reason, it is important to have instruments to ensure the ethical use of AI.

**Japan has introduced policy initiatives (e.g. guidelines, standards or principles), 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**

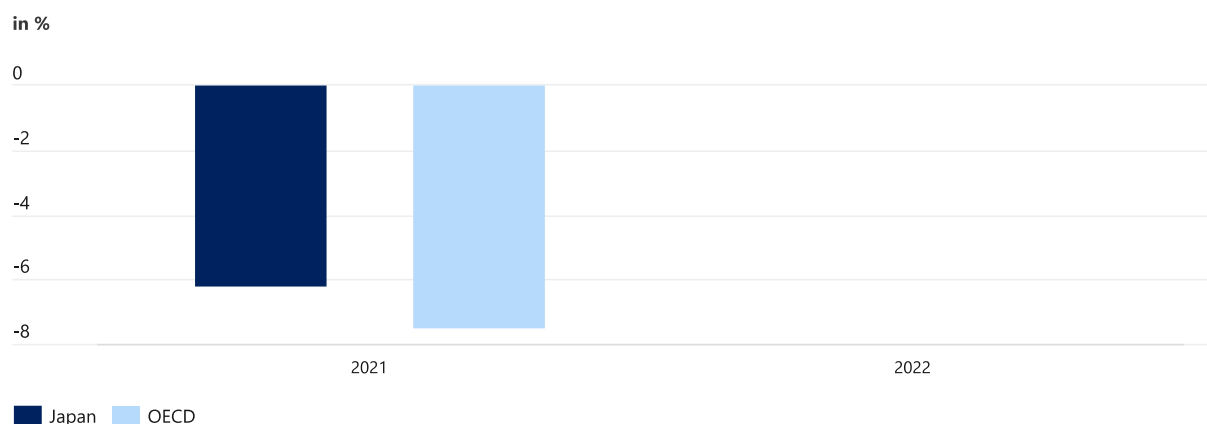


### What resources public institutions use and how they are managed

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.

**The fiscal deficit in Japan in 2021 was -6.2% of GDP below the OECD average (-7.5%).** Japan’s debt (245.5% of GDP) is the highest in OECD. In comparison, the OECD average debt in 2021 was 120.8%.

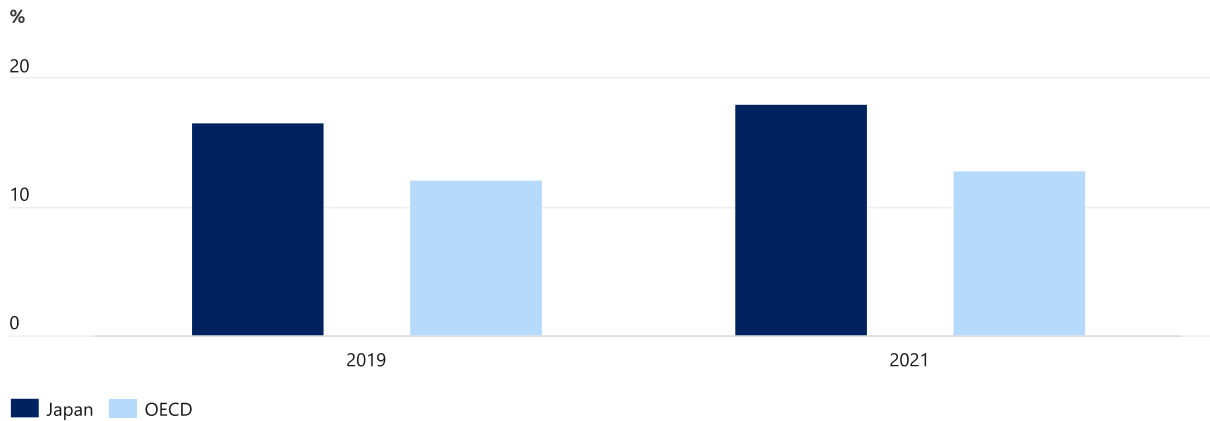
**Figure 5. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP**



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.

**Japan spends more on public procurement, 18.1% of GDP in 2021, compared to the OECD average of 12.9%.** Japan’s rate of public investment is higher than the OECD average. In 2021, Japan invested 4.4% of GDP compared to 3.4% on average across OECD countries.

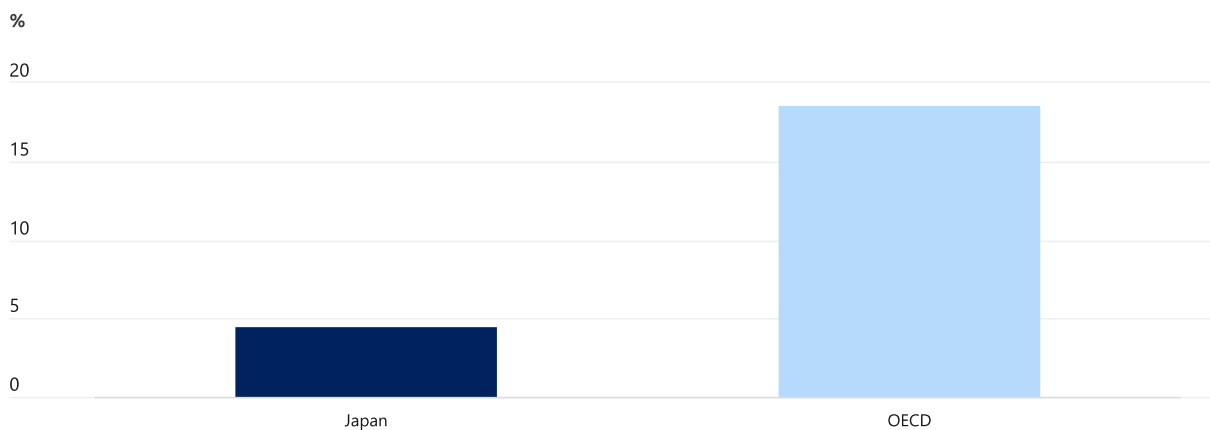
**Figure 6. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP**



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

**Public employment amounts to 4.5% of total employment in Japan.** This number is the lowest in OECD and significantly below the OECD average (18.6% of total employment).

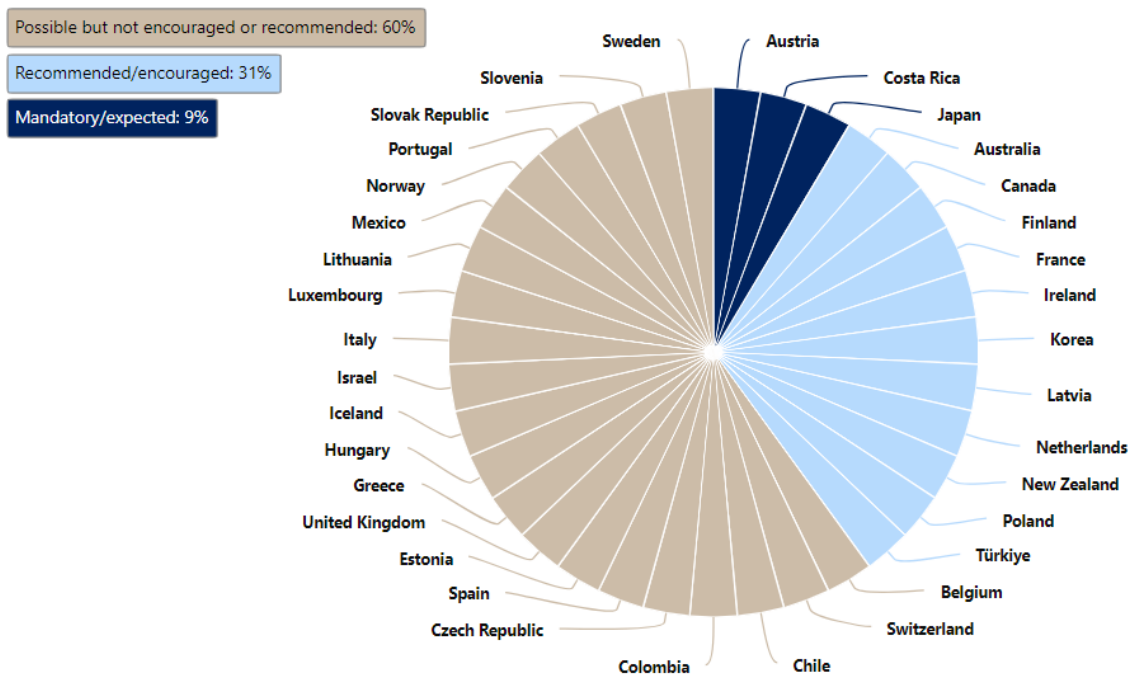
**Figure 7. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021**



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.

**Japan is one of three OECD countries where internal mobility for civil servants is mandatory or expected.** Similarly, internal mobility for senior-level civil servants is also mandatory or expected. In Japan, the practice of developing individual learning plans for all or most public employees is not common.

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



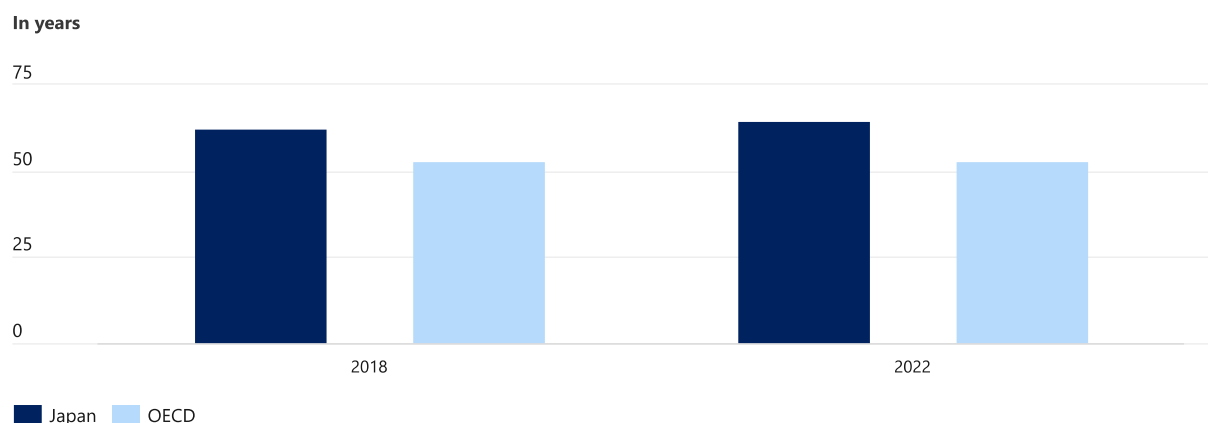
Equal representation of women and men in the public sector is a key indicator of progress towards gender equality, diversity and better representation. In 2020, a majority of employees in the public sector in OECD countries were women (58.9%), with large differences among countries. However, women are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

**Women are underrepresented in ministerial positions in Japan.** In 2023, only 8% of ministerial positions were held by women 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 Japan, the average age of cabinet members – 65 years – the highest in the OECD. The average across the OECD is 53 years.**

**Figure 9. 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)