OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index: 2019

For more information visit: oecd.org/gov/digital-government/

Document References:
OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (OECD, forthcoming)
Open, Useful and Reusable data (OURdata) Index 2019

This document presents the key policy messages from the 2019 edition of the Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index (Rivera Perez J.A, Emilsson C, and Ubaldi B, 2020). These findings draw upon the data collection and analysis that took place across OECD member and partner countries during 2018 and the first half of 2019. The 2017 edition and a pilot version launched in 2015 ahead of this third version of the Index.

The OURdata Index benchmarks the design and implementation of open data policies at the central/federal level. Therefore, it stresses the sustained political and policy relevance of this area of work for OECD member and partner countries.

The OURdata Index is a cornerstone of the extensive work of the OECD on Digital Government and data-driven public sector. Built on the OECD Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies, the OURdata Index responds to the need for an OECD measurement instrument on open data that continuously monitors the definition and implementation of open data policies and complementary governments’ efforts meant to promote peer exchange, political engagement, and ensure sustainable results for citizens.

The OURdata Index is structured in three pillars and nine sub-pillars which assess key elements of sound open data policies and related governments’ efforts:

**Pillar 1** “Data availability” measures the extent to which governments have adopted and implemented formal requirements to promote open government data at the central/federal level.

**Pillar 2** “Data accessibility” measures the extent to which government data are provided in open and reusable formats with their associated metadata.

**Pillar 3** “Government support for data reuse” measures the extent to which governments play a proactive role in promoting the re-use of government data inside and outside government.

The OECD Six dimensions of Digital Government

The OURdata Index contributes to the OECD broader measurement work on digital government. This includes the development of six indicators built in the Digital Government Index that assess, among other issues, governments’ efforts to improve data sharing practices within and outside the public sector, data governance and data ethics, in line with the six dimensions of a digital government as defined by the OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (OECD, forthcoming.)

Key Messages

The OECD 2019 Open, Useful and Re-usable data (OURdata) Index results, and the OECD average increase for 2019 in comparison to 2017, reveal overall improvements across OECD countries. However, challenges remain in terms of policy sustainability and maturity, illustrated by countries whose ranking has dropped. This can be explained as a result of political inertia, changing institutional governance arrangements, or competing policy priorities affecting the sustained implementation of open data initiatives.

→ OECD governments should acknowledge that extracting value from the application of open government data implies granting this policy area with the necessary political support, and an enabling environment to sustain implementation efforts in the long term.

A growing number of OECD countries have scaled up the adoption of ‘open by default’ approaches by including formal requirements in open data strategies, laws, regulations and other instruments. This contributed to stronger governance frameworks and the rise in the OECD average for data availability between 2017 and 2019.

→ OECD governments should build on these foundations to progress towards a common approach in the publication and use of open government data in areas such as sustainable development, public sector integrity and gender.

Governments are increasingly enabling their open government data portals as communication and feedback tools. However, many are still understood primarily as websites, ‘data catalogues’, or top-down platforms driven by data supply, rather than being seen as platforms to foster innovative, collaborative and knowledge sharing practices centred around easy access to and sharing of data.

→ OECD governments should conceive OGD portals as open, democratic and diverse spaces to engage the digital community in order to fully embrace ‘open by default’ and ‘government as a platform’ approaches.

Formal open government data requirements are essential but insufficient to ensure the release of, and access to, re-usable datasets of good quality and which respond to a specific purpose or demand.

→ OECD governments should ensure that de facto data release happens in a proactive, timely and understandable way for both humans and machines (e.g. using metadata, common standards); and should address issues of quality and biases in data collection and generation.

Implementing trustworthy, data governance frameworks play a key role in securing advancements and the sustainability of open data policies, while safeguarding citizens’ rights and promoting their control over their own data.

→ OECD governments should ensure open data policies and initiatives fit within broader efforts targeting the establishment of data governance frameworks for the public sector. This would foster alignment of open policies with data protection regulations de facto, and facilitate monitoring of compliance. Additionally, with growing global concerns over personal data protection, stakeholder engagement would offer the opportunity to increase policy ownership and trust.

OECD countries are growing more aware that the availability of valuable open data is more relevant than quantity. This has led to an acceleration of initiatives guiding the standardisation and production of good quality data from earlier stages of the data value cycle (data generation).

→ OECD governments should sustain practices aiming to secure the publication of high value data taxonomies and their integration into the data value chain in different sectors towards greater social, public sector and business innovation.

The political culture and administrative structure of a country, including multi-level governance arrangements, appear to sometimes risk slowing down data release. Yet, evidence from front-running OECD countries shows that even authorities within federal systems have found ways to successfully overcome these challenges.

→ OECD governments should focus on establishing data federation models that facilitate data discoverability, while keeping the right levels of data autonomy at the local level and quality assurance at the central level.

Across OECD countries, open data is becoming more intertwined with the development of government-wide data governance frameworks (e.g. national data strategies) and data management capacities, aimed to build an overall environment within the public sector that enables and incentivises data re-use.

→ OECD governments should not ignore the specific underlying arrangements needed to enable the delivery of value from open government data in order to sustain and multiply its benefits and impact.

A number of OECD countries previously seen as more mature in terms of open data policies are today doing considerably less to reach external data communities to encourage re-use outside the public sector.

→ OECD governments should maintain efforts aiming to promote the re-use of open government data outside the public sector, and its real-time integration into the data value chain of key actors (e.g. through APIs) as essential to support the long term continuity of open data policies.

OECD countries are taking further steps towards monitoring the economic and social impact of open data. This involves identifying, collecting and displaying examples of re-use on central/federal open data portals.

→ OECD governments should increasingly target measurement efforts to better understand the effects of data re-use within the public sector, particularly as they are coming to grips with the need to monitor the impact of OGD re-use.