

Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice

Fit for all generations?

Highlights



www.oecd.org

#OECD4Youth #Fit4AllGenerations



Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice

Fit for all generations?

Global transformations – from population ageing to digitalisation, rising inequalities and climate change – have created profound uncertainties for young people and future generations, despite unprecedented access to information, education and technology. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing challenges in youth's mental well-being and employment, while raising concerns about the sustainability of public finances.

The report *Governance for Youth Policy, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for all generations?* provides the first comparative assessment of the policies, laws, institutional capacities and governance tools put in place by 34 OECD countries, the European Union and eight non-member countries to promote youth empowerment and intergenerational justice. It is based on a data collection carried out between May 2019 and February 2020. It also presents the results from the *OECD Youth Governance Survey* of 80+ youth-led organisations in the participating countries. Based on these two surveys, the report sets benchmarks for cross-country comparisons in three main areas:

- 1) Supporting youth's transition to an autonomous life
- 2) Enhancing youth's participation and representation in public life as well as trust in government, and
- 3) Delivering fair policy outcomes for all generations.

This highlights document presents the main findings and recommendations from the report. It provides practical insights for policy makers, civil society and young people seeking to build a present and future that leaves no generation behind.

The report is part of the work of the OECD Public Governance Committee (PGC) to promote inclusive and citizen-centred policy design to ensure inclusive growth. It benefits from the discussions by the Friends of Youth PLUS group, which brings together PGC delegates, youth policy makers and representatives from youth and elderly organisations.

Figure 1. presents the analytical framework. Outside of the triangle are the main policy objectives (i.e. trust, transition, intergenerational justice). Inside are the governance arrangements put in place by governments to achieve these objectives. For the purpose of this report, the analysis focuses on legal frameworks, institutional capacities and co-ordination, the existence of a whole-of-government youth policy, tools for mainstreaming youth-related considerations in policy making, and youth engagement and representation in state institutions.





01

Are governments delivering for all generations?

The COVID-19 pandemic affects young people disproportionately at a moment when countries have barely recovered from the global financial crisis of 2007-08. Both crises have resulted in a sharp increase in youth unemployment, rising levels of public debt and an exacerbation of existing inequalities both within and among different age cohorts.

COVID-19 also increases already high levels of uncertainty for youth due to global transformations that affect their access to decent jobs, affordable education and housing, and opportunities to participate in public and political life. For instance, the future of work, characterised by digitalisation and automation, presents new opportunities for highly skilled graduates but also new challenges for middle-skilled jobs, which are often held by young people. OECD indicators suggest that, across a number of areas, today's youth find it increasingly difficult to achieve some of the classical milestones of adulthood, such as financial independence.

Over the last decade, young people's perception of having a say in politics, participation in elections and their representation in state institutions have barely improved. More worrisome, youth's trust in government has decreased since 2006 in the majority of OECD countries. At the same time, young people are leading social movements and demonstrate a strong agency for addressing global challenges such as climate change,

rising inequality and threats to democratic institutions. New forms of youth engagement harness and coincide with the emergence of digital tools and innovation, but also new threats to civic space. In many ways, OECD countries need to strengthen the relationship between youth and public institutions.

The ambition that each new generation will fare better than the previous one appears increasingly difficult to realise. The notion of intergenerational justice underlies many of today's most heated political debates, such as the sustainability of national deficits, the depletion of natural resources or the extinction of endangered species and pollution. It is also characteristic of debates in the field of social policy, especially due to an ageing population across all OECD countries, and frames discussions about inclusive participation in decision-making due to a decline of younger voters. However, the report demonstrates that demographics are not destiny – policies and institutions matter.

Spurring social and economic inclusion across all ages concerns the core functions of government – from rulemaking to public budgeting to public decision making. Are governments currently fit to deliver for all generations?



02

Empowering youth to succeed: A call for action

A generation hit by two major global crises in the last decade, today's youth face new challenges in starting an autonomous life and shaping their life course. They are the first generation to have less income at their disposal than previous young generations, they are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than people aged 25-64, and find it more difficult to afford housing, especially in urban areas. Moreover, they are more likely to work in insecure jobs and face a higher risk of living in poverty than other age cohorts.

In 2019, 1 in 10 youth aged 15-24 years on average across OECD was not in education, employment or training (NEET). The OECD estimates that this share accounts for an economic cost equivalent to 0.9-1.5 percent of GDP across OECD. The COVID-19 pandemic further aggravates this challenge. For instance, youth (15-24) were most affected by the rise in unemployment between February and August 2020. If unaddressed, these challenges will deprive countries of an important resource of human capital and risk diminishing the potential for inclusive growth.

The impact of COVID-19 on young people's lives

The COVID-19 pandemic affected young people at a moment when they were already facing significant challenges to start an autonomous life:

- **Youth faced a disruption in their access to education**, in particular youth from less fortunate socio-economic backgrounds: 1 in 5 young people (15) from disadvantaged schools do not have access to a computer for schoolwork. More than 1 in 10 do not have an internet connection. Lost opportunities for learning have an impact across a person's life cycle: OECD estimates show that a lost school year can reduce lifetime income by 7–10%
- **35% of youth (15-29) are employed in low-paid and temporary employment** in sectors most severely affected by COVID-19 (e.g. restaurants, gig industry, etc.). These jobs often present limited possibilities for teleworking and offer less social protection.
- **OECD evidence from a survey among youth-led organisations** in 48 countries demonstrate that they are most concerned about the impact of the crisis on young people's mental health, employment, disposable income and education.
- **Intersecting identity factors have aggravated the vulnerability of different youth populations.** Since the outbreak of the pandemic, emergency calls reporting domestic violence against women and children have increased by 60% compared to the same period of the previous year in Europe according to the WHO.

Source: OECD (2020), "Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience", OECD Publishing, Paris, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134356-ud5kox3g26&title=Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience.

To support youth in their transition to an autonomous life, governments should consider:

01 Designing a holistic approach to youth policy in line with the principles of good governance, for instance through national youth strategies

National youth strategies (NYS) are a common tool for government-wide strategic planning and priority setting in youth policy. 80% of institutions in charge of youth policy in the surveyed countries report that adopting and implementing a NYS is a top priority.

As of April 2020, 76% of OECD countries have an operational national or federal multi-year youth strategy in place (Figure 2). According to the survey respondents, the main objectives of implementing a dedicated youth strategy are to support young people in their transition to an autonomous life (100%), to integrate youth's concerns in all relevant public policy/service fields (84%) and to improve youth's access to public policies and services that are responsive to their needs (80%).

Yet, adopting a national youth strategy alone is not sufficient. Governments need to ensure that these strategies are evidence-based, transparent and accountable, and that youth stakeholders from diverse background are involved in their design and implementation. Adequate resources as well as sound monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are critical to translate youth commitments into tangible outcomes.

The survey results demonstrate that significant governance challenges persist. Across the OECD, only 20% of national youth strategies are fully participatory, budgeted, monitored and evaluated. The OECD Assessment Framework for National Youth Strategies measures to what extent entities in charge of youth affairs operationalise the principles of good governance in strategy design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (Figure 3). The strategies formulated by Estonia, New Zealand and Austria align most closely with the OECD Framework in terms of promoting transparency, accountability and inclusiveness (Figure 4).

The analysis also shows that investing in national youth strategy pays off with a dividend: In countries that perform well, youth tend to express greater interest in politics.

Figure 2. Three in four countries have an operational national youth strategy, 2020

Countries that do not currently have a national youth strategy

Countries, which are elaborating a national youth strategy

Countries with a national youth strategy

Note: The graph shows 34 OECD countries and 7 selected non-member countries, namely Argentina, Bulgaria, Brazil, Costa Rica, Peru, Ukraine and Romania.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

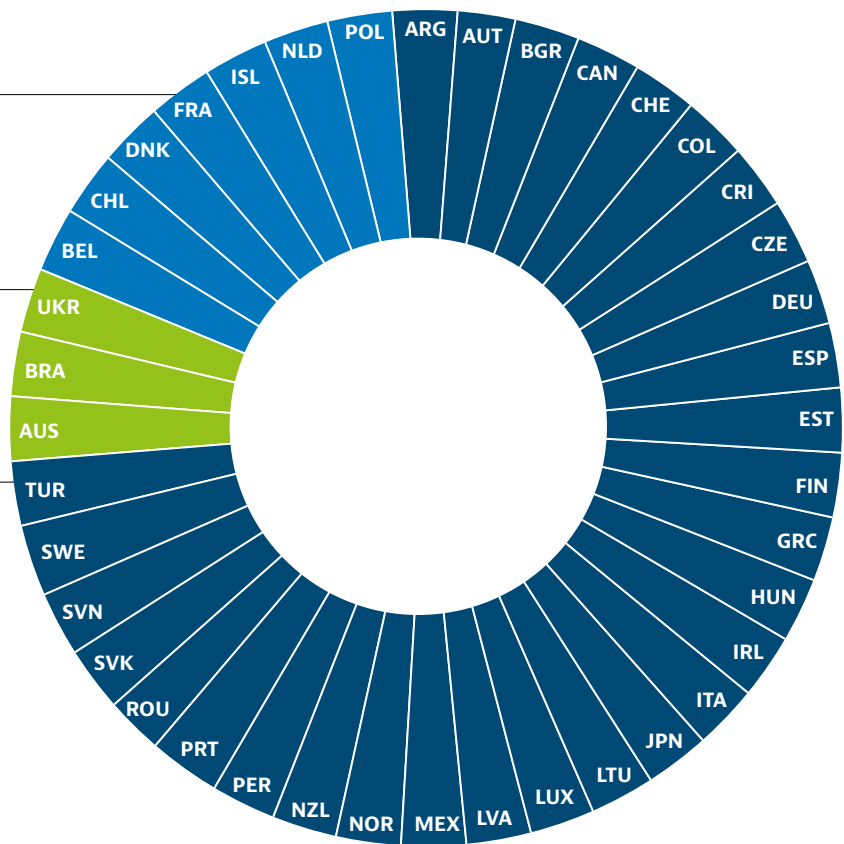
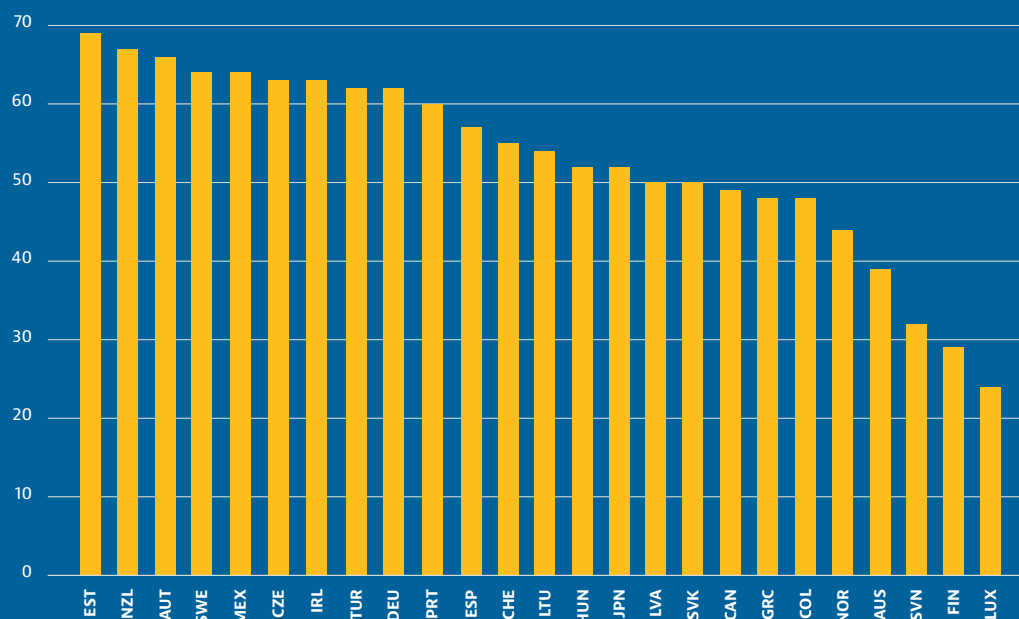


Figure 3. The OECD Assessment Framework for National Youth Strategies



Figure 4. The extent to which national youth strategies meet the principles of the OECD Assessment Framework varies significantly across countries (%)

Note: Methodology is explained in the Annex of the Report.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.



02 Equipping policy makers with adequate resources, skills and establishing effective coordination mechanisms to deliver youth policy and services

Youth as a policy field cuts across many different policy areas including employment, education, health, justice, housing, transportation, sports, gender equality and environment. Strong co-ordination mechanisms, clear mandates and responsibilities across ministries and subnational levels of government are needed to avoid policies and services are delivered in a fragmented way.

The survey results demonstrate that significant challenges persist. Entities in charge of youth affairs highlight that the lack of institutional mechanisms (e.g. inter-ministerial committee/focal point) is the most important barrier for inter-ministerial co-ordination (45%). They also point to insufficient capacities in line ministries (42%) and within their own entity (39%) as key barriers.

The replies from the responding line ministries in OECD countries point to the same obstacles but they express significantly fewer concerns than entities in charge of youth affairs do (Figure 5). Indeed, more

than 40% of line ministries say that they do not notice any challenges. On the other hand, line ministries are more likely to point to the lack of incentives and clear mandate within the entity responsible for youth affairs as a barrier to co-ordination.

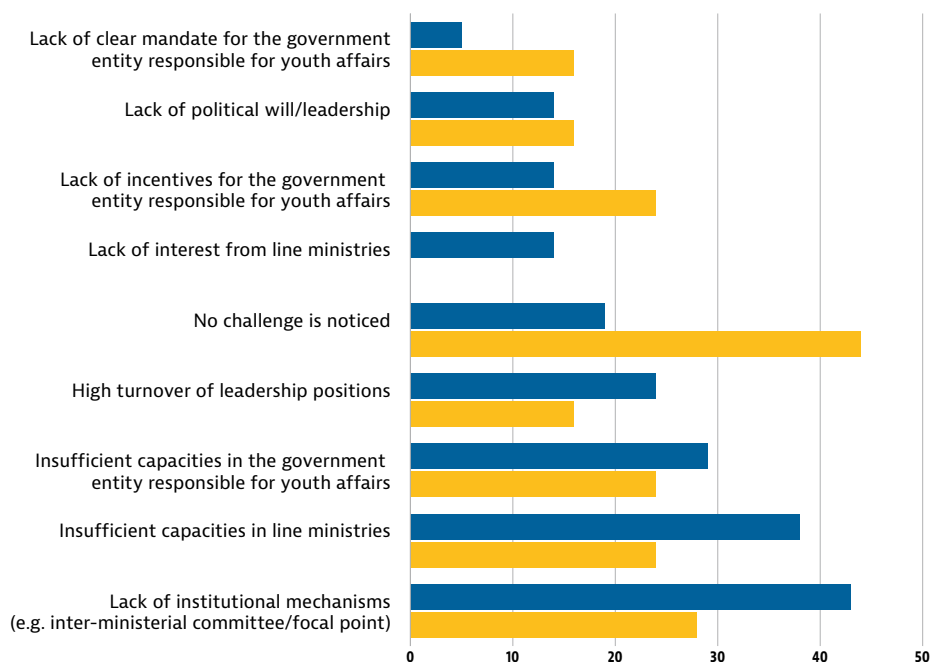
In terms of co-ordination with subnational levels of government, more than half (52%) of the entities in charge of youth affairs point to insufficient capacity at the subnational level as the most pressing challenge. In contrast, limited capacities in central youth institutions (26%), lack of institutional mechanisms (22%), lack of interest from subnational levels of government (22%) as well as high turnover of leadership positions (22%) are less frequently perceived as obstacles.

These challenges point to the need to equip institutions in charge of the youth portfolio, line ministries and subnational authorities with sufficient capacities, clear mandates and incentives and to institutionalise co-ordination mechanisms. Laws are important, too. Statistical evidence from the surveys demonstrates that countries with a Youth Law are less likely to report that the lack of clear mandates or adequate incentives is a challenge to co-ordination.

Figure 5. Entities in charge of youth affairs and line ministries express diverging views about co-ordination challenges

Note: Data refers to 21 OECD countries in which both the ministry in charge of youth affairs and one or two line ministries answered the OECD Youth Governance Surveys. The results refer to 21 entities in charge of youth policy and 25 line ministries in OECD countries.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

■ Government entities in charge of youth affairs
■ Line ministries



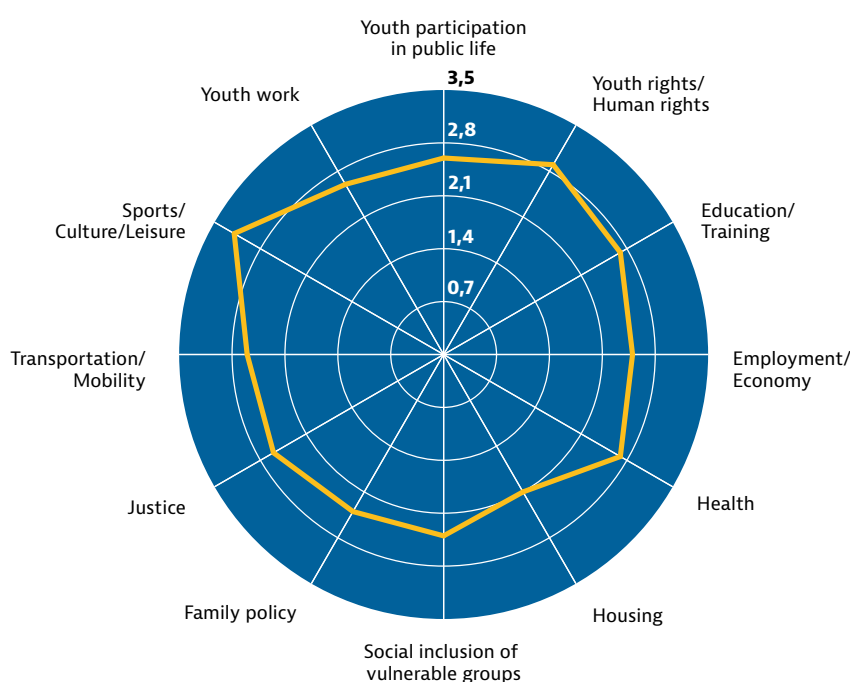
03 Providing user-friendly public services for youth to facilitate their access to information and counselling, including through digital means

Young people have specific interests and needs across all policy and service areas. Findings from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys show that youth organisations in OECD countries are most satisfied with

the work of their government in the area of sports, culture and leisure. However, they express significantly lower levels of satisfaction in the field of housing, followed by employment and economy, which could in turn also affect their trust in national governments (Figure 6). Governments must seek to integrate youth's concerns in all policy areas. To ensure that the different views of youth are reflected in policy outcomes, governments must seek to systematically engage young people from a diversity of backgrounds.

Figure 6. Youth organisations are rather satisfied with governments' performance in the field of sports, culture and leisure but express concerns about housing and employment

Notes: Based on 52 youth organisations in OECD countries. Youth organisations were asked to rate their satisfaction on a scale from 1 to 5, hence lower value represents lower satisfaction.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.



04 Providing targeted policies and services for young women and men from diverse backgrounds, especially to the most vulnerable groups

Young people are not a homogeneous group. Governments should take account of intersecting identity factors to address inequalities based on gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity and disability, among others.

The survey findings suggest that engaging difficult-to-reach youth continues to be a challenge for policy makers. One in every two institutions responsible for youth policy finds it difficult to collect evidence on the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, potentially undermining their ability to provide targeted support.

Despite some notable initiatives to engage difficult-to-reach youth, only one-third of countries conducted specific consultations with youth not in education, employment or training (NEET), youth with disabilities and other vulnerable and marginalised groups in the formulation of their national youth strategy.

05 Reviewing age-based criteria to access public services and opportunities to participate in public life

Legal frameworks are an important determinant of youth's access to public services. For instance, governments apply minimum-age requirements in diverse fields such as the period of compulsory education, access to employment, criminal responsibility or recruitment into the armed forces. Minimum age requirements also affect the opportunities for young people to participate in political life, for instance as voters or candidates in elections. In setting these requirements, governments must strike a balance between protecting young people from potential harm and empowering them to participate in social, economic and political life. In other words, they must seek to avoid the creation of arbitrary legal barriers and age-based discrimination.

Across the responding OECD countries, the age of criminal responsibility varies between ages 10 to 18. Apart from Greece (17) and Austria (16) among OECD members as well as Argentina (16) and Brazil (16) among the participating non-member countries, young people must be 18 years old to be eligible for voting. The current age requirement for running as a member of parliament across OECD countries is 20.1 for lower houses of parliament and unicameral systems (24.7 for upper houses of parliament) (Figure 7). In six OECD countries, young people can be recruited into the armed forces without being eligible to vote due to their age. In more than one-third of responding countries, age requirements also determine young people's access to medical advice and counselling for reproductive health services, which ranges from age 12 to 18.

When asked about the appropriate minimum ages, the surveyed youth organisations suggest that the minimum age required to run as a candidate and vote for national and sub-national elections should be lowered. At the same time, for the age of criminal responsibility and recruitment into armed forces, they maintain that the threshold should be slightly higher.

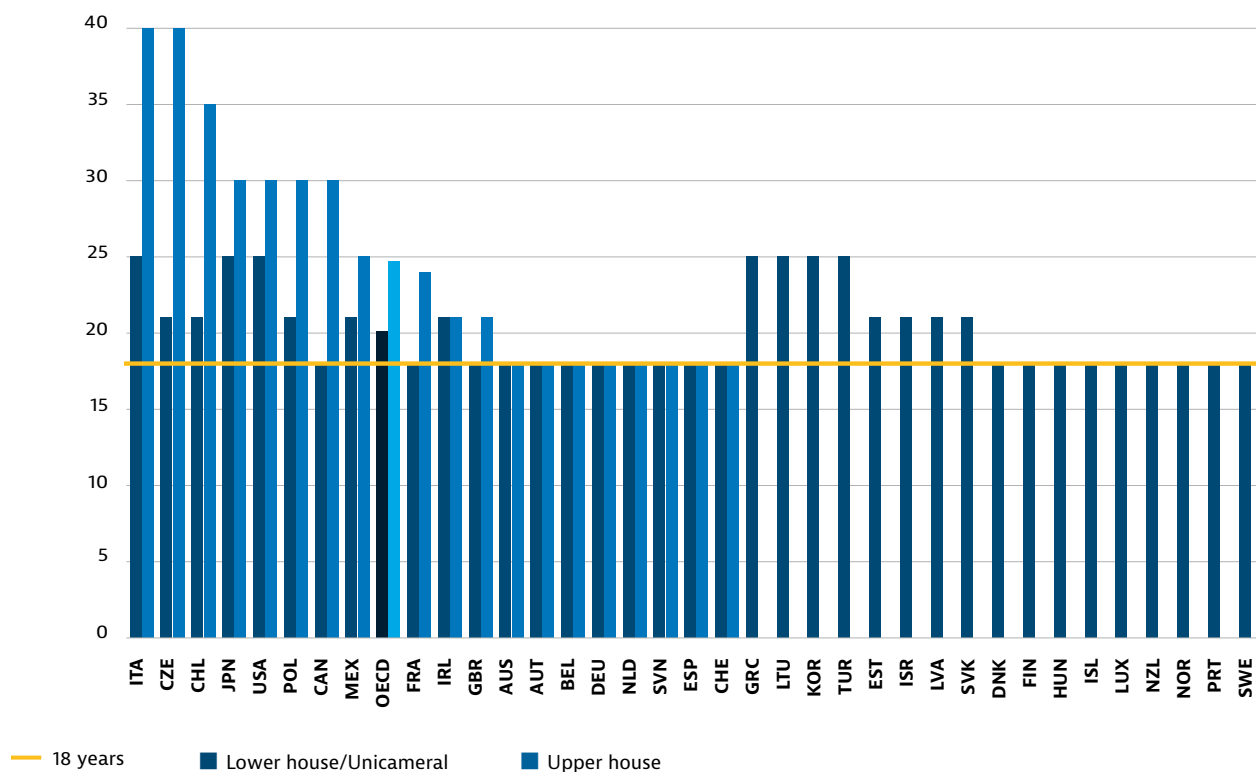
Governments should seek to review existing minimum age requirements in laws and regulations with a view to recalibrating the balance between protecting and empowering youth.

06 Systematically gathering age-disaggregated data and anticipating the impact of rulemaking and budgeting within and among different age cohorts

Public budgets, regulations and procurement are critical instruments government can leverage to generate youth-responsive policy outcomes.

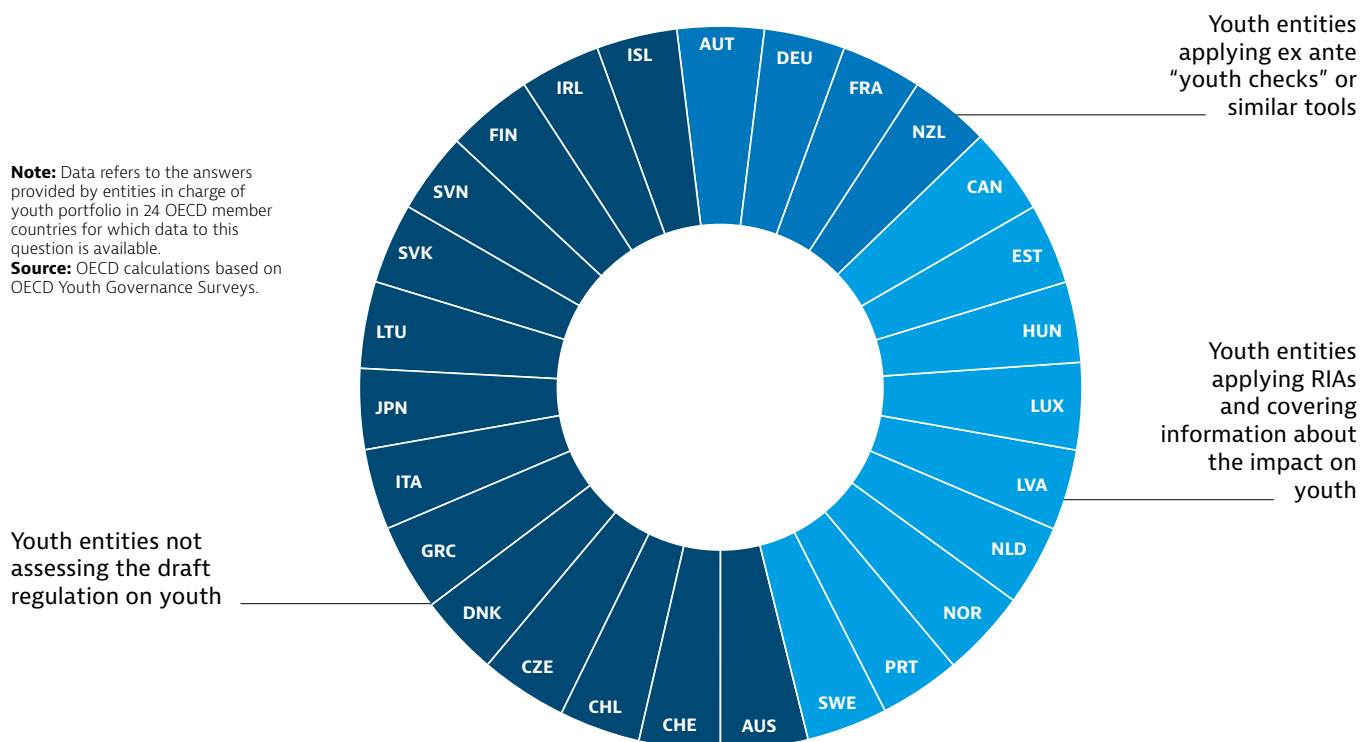
Over the last years, a number of countries are experimenting with innovative governance tools to ensure their policies and services reflect more systematically the needs of young people from diverse backgrounds.

Figure 7. Minimum age required to run for a seat in parliament



Note: Data refers to the answers provided by entities in charge of youth portfolio in 24 OECD member countries for which data to this question is available.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Figure 8. Use of regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) to advance youth-specific objectives



Note: Data refers to the answers provided by entities in charge of youth portfolio in 24 OECD member countries for which data to this question is available.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

While a third of OECD countries use general regulatory impact assessments and provide specific information on the expected impact on young people, Austria, France, Germany and New Zealand apply ex ante “youth checks” to broaden the default “adult” perspective in policymaking (Figure 8).

Budgeting can also be a powerful tool to align the broader economic and social objectives of government with the needs of young people by integrating a youth perspective within the budget process. For instance, Canada anticipates the impact of budgetary allocations across different age cohorts in the framework of Gender Budgeting (GBA+) to determine the impact on younger and older age cohorts. In New Zealand, in 2019, budget bids by government agencies were assessed against the Living Standard Framework (LSF), which, among others, sheds light on inequalities across age cohorts and their negative implications for broader economic and social performance. In Spain, ministerial departments are required to send a report to the State Secretariat for Budget and Expenditures to analyse the childhood, youth and family impact of their spending programmes in the preparation of the General Budgets of the State.

Accounting for 12% of GDP in OECD countries, public procurement can be used strategically by governments to support wider cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes. For instance, governments can formulate the requirements in public tenders such as to reduce the risk that young people and future generations will pay unreasonable costs because of premature wear or hidden external costs.



03

Youth and public institutions: Stronger together



Youth and public institutions in the context of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of a strong relationship between youth and public institutions.

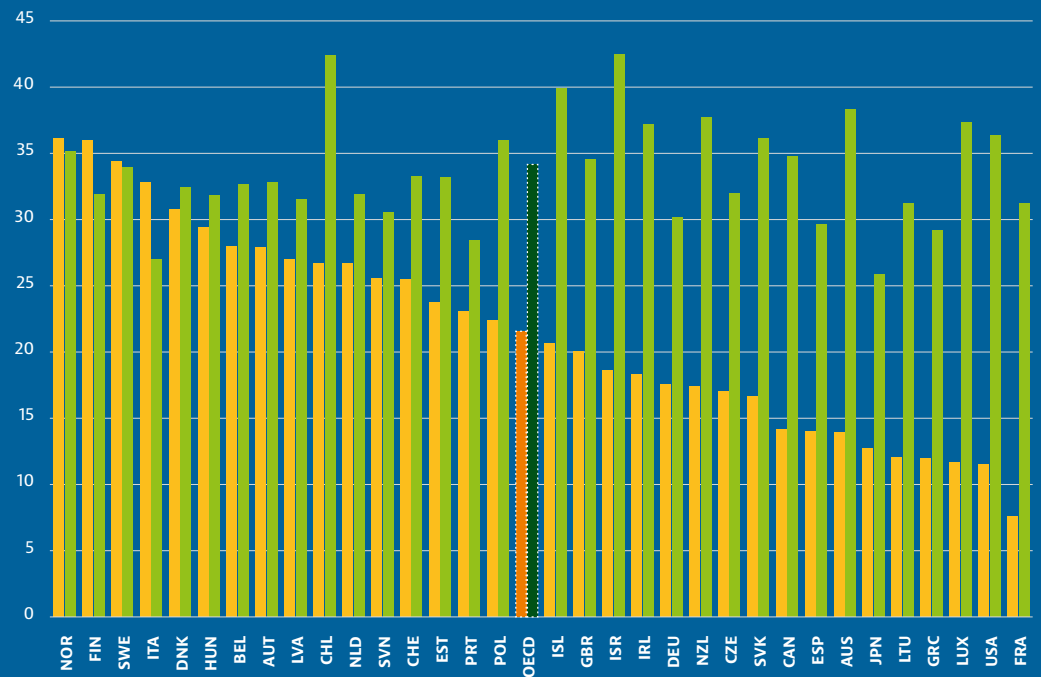
- Snapshot data from an OECD Survey conducted in mid-April 2020, showed that trust in government had increased since the outbreak of COVID-19 for 40% of youth organisations surveyed in OECD countries. However, concerns are now shifting towards governments' capacity to ensure a strong recovery.
- Youth-sensitive recovery measures require youth's engagement and representation in finding solutions to the crisis. Yet, young people continue to be under-represented in public institutions.
- Young volunteers and the youth work sector have helped mitigate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, calling for governments to strengthen these sectors to ensure society's resilience to future shocks.

Figure 9. Youth representation gaps in parliaments in OECD countries remain wide

Percentage of Members of Parliament (lower chamber in bicameral systems) that are 40 years of age or under in 2020, compared to the percentage of population aged 20-39 as a share of the population aged 20 or above in 2018.

Sources: OECD calculations based on OECD Demography and Population (database); Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline database on national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org>).

■ People aged 20-39 as a share of people aged 20 or above (%)
■ Share of MPs aged 40 or below (%)



01 Re-building youth's trust in government and ensuring a fair representation in public institutions

Since the global financial crisis, youth's trust in national governments, compared to the total population, has decreased in the majority of OECD countries. Similarly, their perception of having political influence and their representation in state institutions and decision-making have stalled. To re-build youth's trust in governments and ensure a fair representation in public institutions, governments should consider:

- ➔ **Reforming registration rules and lowering minimum age requirements** to address barriers to youth participation in political life and promote age diversity in state institutions.
- ➔ **Providing programmes to enable young people join and thrive in the public sector workforce** as well as **programmes for inter-generational learning** between older and younger employees.

Only 46% of young people expressed confidence in their national government in OECD countries in 2019

Youth join political parties and participate in elections less than their older peers. In OECD countries for which data is available, 68% of young people go to the polls compared to 85% of people over 54 on average.

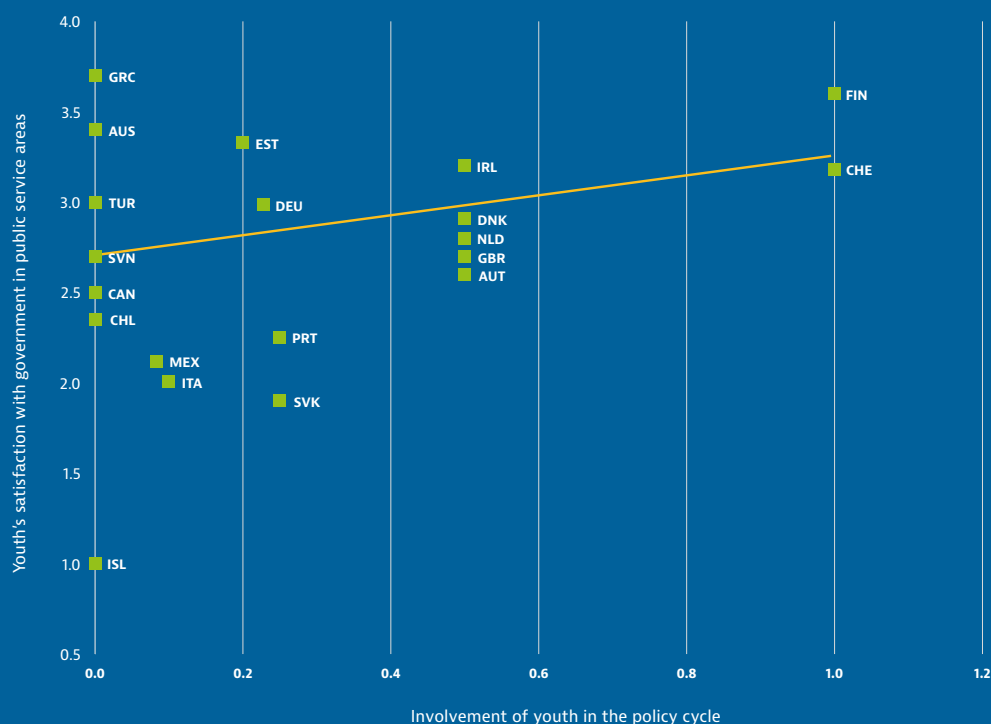
Young officers were fewer in central public administrations, where on average only 18% of civil servants were aged 18-34 in 2015. With 25% of civil servants in central public administrations over the age of 50 across the OECD, governments are presented with the need and opportunity to transform public administrations to attract new generations of civil servants as well as develop structured opportunities for inter-generational learning between older and younger employees in the face of an ageing workforce.

With a representation gap of 12 percentage points in parliaments and an average Cabinet age of 53 years across OECD countries, young people remain severely under-represented in public institutions. While the share of members of parliament under the age of 40 is 22% (lower houses), the share of people aged 20-39 in the population over 20 years of age is 34% across OECD countries (Figure 9). Some positive cases stand out: for instance, in Italy, Finland, and Norway the share of MPs below 40 is actually higher than the share of people aged 20-39 (by 6 percentage points in Italy, 4 p.p. in Finland and 1 p.p. in Norway). Despite improvements, youth's representation in the public administration remains limited: even among the surveyed OECD

Figure 10. A participatory policy cycle can sustain youth's satisfaction with government

The horizontal axis plots the extent to which youth organisations in a country reported to have been involved in the policy cycle (informed, consulted and/or engaged). The vertical axis plots the average satisfaction reported by youth organisations in a given country across a number of public service areas.

Notes: Correlation coefficient: 0.35; p-value: 0.12. The dependent variable is a mean of means of 10 satisfaction scores (1-5) reported by youth organisations in a given OECD country with government's responses in education, employment, health, housing, inclusion, family policy, justice, mobility, leisure, and youth work. When a country had missing information, the mean of the others was imputed. The independent variable is the mean of the shares of youth organisations in a given OECD country that reported they were consulted or engaged in the policy cycle.
Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.



entities in charge of youth affairs, only 26% of the staff is under the age of 34 on average.

02 Strengthening youth's relationship with public institutions

While young people's engagement through institutionalised forms of participation such as political parties is on the decline, young people are leading social movements and demonstrate agency for addressing global challenges such as climate change, rising inequality and threats to democratic institutions. To strengthen youth's relationship with public institutions, governments should consider:

- ➔ **Engaging youth stakeholders throughout the policy cycle** to ensure age-diversity in public consultations and more responsive and inclusive policy outcomes, through in-person as well as digital means.
- ➔ **Exploring the co-creation of innovative mechanisms to engage with non-institutionalised youth activism** and recognise its important contribution to the political discourse.

According to the OECD Youth Governance Surveys, only 26% of youth organisations reported to be satisfied with governments' performance on youth participation in public life. A quantitative analysis of data from the surveys (Figure 10) shows that where youth organisations have been involved in the policy cycle to a greater extent, they report a higher satisfaction with government's performance across public service areas (such as transportation, health, housing, and employment among others). However, OECD data shows that even among the government entities in charge of youth affairs, youth stakeholders' participation in the policy cycle remains limited. Indeed, while 92% of entities in charge of youth affairs informed and consulted young people in the past year, only 43% engaged them throughout the policy cycle.

The representation of youth in state institutions also remains limited: up from 15% in 2015 and 20% in 2017, officials aged 18-34 represented 26% of the total staff of entities in charge of youth affairs in 2019, on average across OECD countries.

Key obstacles remain in the road to effective co-ordination between youth organisations and governments. OECD entities in charge of youth affairs point to insufficient financial and human resources among youth organisations (45%) and among their own entities (32%), as well as to the lack of institutional

mechanisms (26%) as the main challenges to better co-ordinate with youth organisations. The lack of institutional mechanisms such as joint committees and advisory councils is also highlighted by 46% of the responding youth organisations as a key barrier. However, they most commonly point to the lack of political will and leadership among government officials (67%).

03 Ensuring societal resilience in the face of shocks and disasters

The COVID-19 crisis has proven that young volunteers and youth workers are a crucial resource in ensuring societal resilience in the face of shocks and disasters. Governments should consider:

- ➔ **Strengthening volunteering and youth work through national laws, strategies and programmes** that include a common vision and clear responsibilities, co-ordinated action, and resources for building youth's skills and competences as well as social cohesion and societal resilience.

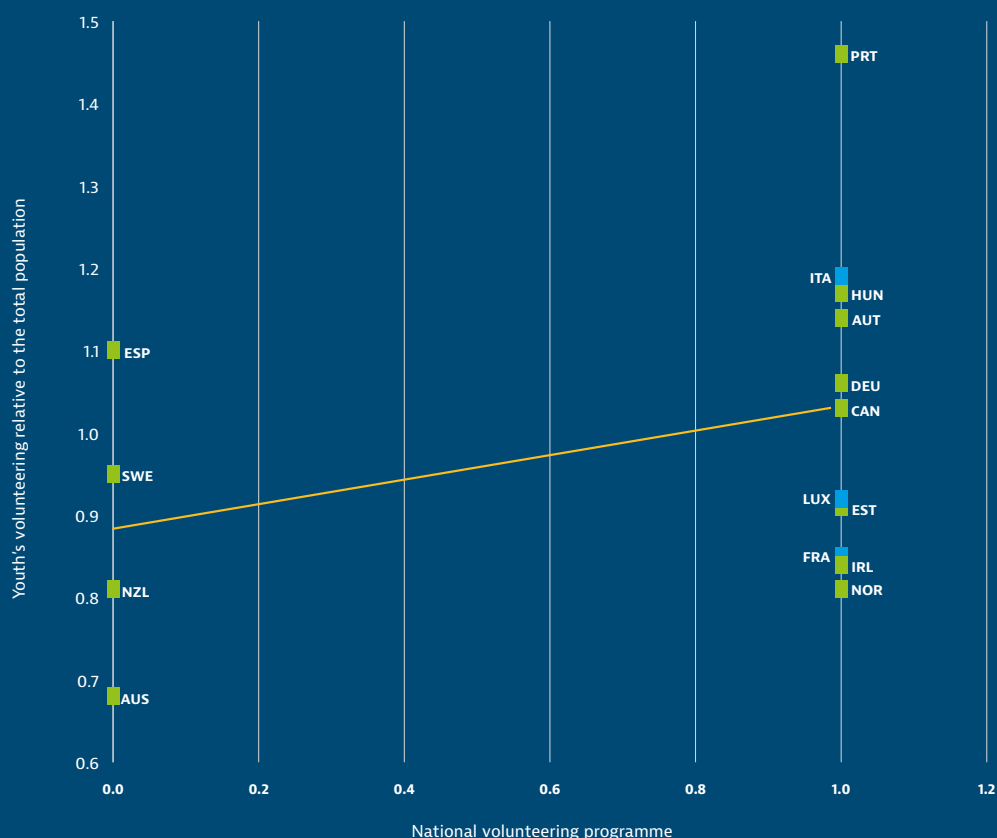
Data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys shows that both governments and youth organisations across OECD countries highlight a lack of financial resources as a key challenge for the youth work sector (52% for OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs; 59% for youth organisations in OECD countries). The lack of a national youth work sector strategy and a lack of coordination also emerge as areas where further improvement is warranted. Similar challenges are present in the youth volunteering sector, with youth organisations highlighting a lack of opportunities, resources, and awareness. Strategic planning for the volunteering sector, for instance through dedicated strategies or integrated ones, can be useful in clarifying responsibilities, promoting coordination, creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and ensuring dedicated financial resources. 64% of OECD countries for which data is available deliver or finance specific national programmes to promote youth volunteering.

As Figure 11 shows, there is a positive and precise relationship between having a national programme for youth volunteering and the extent to which young people volunteer compared to the total population.

Figure 11. National programmes and strategies can be effective in promoting youth volunteering

The horizontal axis plots countries with such programmes at value 1, and countries without such programmes at value 0. The vertical axis plots the share of young people reporting that they have volunteered time to an organisation in the past month relative to the share of the total population that did, in 2019.

Notes: The Wilcoxon rank sum test yields a p-value of 0.14; "youth" here refers to people aged 15-29.
Sources: OECD calculations based on 2019 Youth Governance Surveys and Gallup World Poll (Database).





04

Delivering fair and inclusive policy outcomes for all generations

Intergenerational justice in the context of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has placed concerns about intergenerational justice prominently in the policy arena:

- Lockdown and confinement measures demand solidarity across all ages
- Youth(-led) organisations have helped people in need, including elderly in isolated care facilities, creating a new sense of intergenerational support
- The adoption of large-scale economic stimulus packages raises the question how governments can build back better for all generations and allocate public resources fairly. It also raises new questions about the sustainability public service delivery models and public finances.

The ambition that each new generation will fare better than the previous one appears increasingly difficult to realise. The notion of intergenerational justice underlies many of today's most heated political debates, such as the sustainability of national deficits, the depletion of natural resources or the extinction of endangered species and pollution. It is also characteristic of debates in the field of social policy, especially due to an ageing population across all OECD countries, and frames discussions about inclusive participation in decision-making due to a decline of younger voters.

To foster intergenerational justice in the context of ageing societies, governments can consider:

01 Demonstrating strong political commitment to act upon inequalities both within and between different age cohorts and address inter-generational challenges:

Youth (below 26 years) are more likely to live in households with lower income and wealth and face a greater risk of poverty than other age cohorts. They are also significantly less likely to vote than older age cohorts. On the other hand, youth enjoy more social support and interactions than the middle-aged and elderly, they work less long hours and they express higher life satisfaction overall.

With regard to the foundations of future wellbeing, the rise of carbon concentrations and CO₂ emissions and the extinction of animal and plant species are causes of significant concern. In the context of the global financial crisis and COVID-19, the rise in government debt per person under 20 years raises new questions about intergenerational justice and the well-being today's youth and future generations can expect to enjoy.

There is a strong business case for governments to act: Countries in which inequalities between generations are small also report higher levels of life satisfaction overall.

Embedding considerations of intergenerational justice into policymaking, public spending and public decision-making requires an integrated governance approach. The OECD Framework introduced in the Global Report

identifies five pillars of such approach: 1) Political commitment, 2) Strategic vision, 3) Accountability and oversight institutions, 4) Anticipatory and adaptive tools, and 5) Age diversity in public life and decision-making.

As a policy objective, intergenerational justice cuts across various ministerial departments, such as ministries of finance, environment, social affairs, youth/elderly and others. Political leadership is critical to unite all ministries behind the objective of distributing entitlements fairly across generations, such as demonstrated by New Zealand with the adoption of the Living Standard Framework, and Wales (UK) by passing the Well-Being of Future Generations Act in 2015. To be successful in the long run, political commitments must be institutionalised in order to outlive electoral cycles and short-term considerations.

02 Integrating intergenerational justice considerations in laws, policies, strategies and programmes and promote co-ordination across government to ensure policy coherence:

None of the OECD countries has adopted a stand-alone national strategy to advance intergenerational justice and there is no binding international instrument to grant future generations enforceable rights.

As of 2020, such commitments are scattered across policies and strategies. At least eight OECD countries feature provisions to "future generations" in their Constitution, and at least 13 cover generational commitments in their Sustainable Development Strategies. 12 OECD countries do so in their national youth strategies (i.e. with the creation of an Innovation Fund "Climate protection as a youth policy" in Germany and investments into environmental literacy in Portugal). In at least seven OECD countries, such commitments feature prominently in national elderly/ageing strategies.

This diversity reflects that intergenerational justice covers multiple dimensions as much as it calls for strong co-ordination and oversight mechanisms to ensure policy coherence.

When age-related inequalities are low,
life satisfaction overall is high

Figure 12. Countries with lower age-related inequalities have higher levels of life satisfaction overall

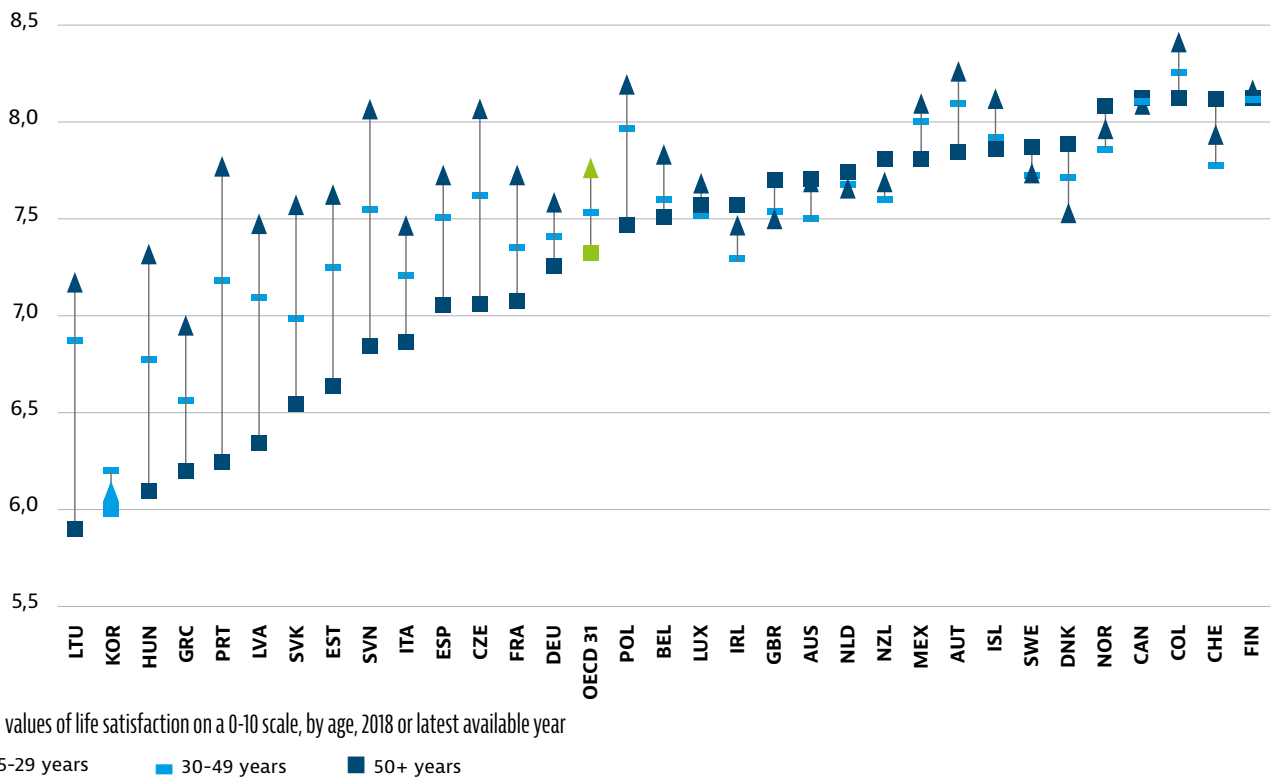


Figure 13. A governance approach to promoting intergenerational justice





Figure 14.
Selected oversight
bodies to promote
intergenerational
justice, 2020

| | Institution |
|-------------|--|
| New Zealand | Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment (1986-now) |
| Finland | Committee for the Future (1993-now) |
| France | Council for the Rights of Future Generations in France (1993-2013) |
| Canada | Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development (1995-now) |
| Israel | Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations (2001-06) |
| Germany | Parliamentary Advisory Council for Sustainable Development (2004-now); councils on global change and sustainable development (both 2017-now) |
| Hungary | Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations (2008-12); Deputy Ombudsperson for Future Generation (2012-now) |
| Australia | Commissioner for Sustainability and the Environment (since 1993) |
| Malta | Guardian of Future Generations (2012-16, 2017-now) |

03 Creating or strengthening oversight institutions/ mechanisms to monitor intergenerational justice commitments by ensuring resources and their legal, financial and political independence:

At least nine OECD countries have established public institutions to monitor the implementation of government commitments to future generations of which seven are currently operational. These institutions differ widely in where they are located within the broader governance structure, their level of independence from political considerations, thematic focus, and specific functions and enforcement mechanisms.

Most oversight bodies do not hold legislative power to enforce compliance. Instead, they monitor the implementation of commitments by public bodies and the integration of intergenerational justice objectives into sector priorities and policies. Most also encourage coordination across ministries on this topic and communicate their findings to the public to increase transparency and accountability. Some entities like the Finnish Committee for the Future and the Future Generations Commissioner in Wales consult and engage the public in setting the agenda for future work programmes.

04 Ensure policy makers are aware and have the right skills and public management tools to promote intergenerational justice in policymaking, public spending and decision-making

To operationalise intergenerational justice, policy makers must be aware of the costs of generational inequalities for societies and economies and have the right skills and tools to address them, including:

- **Age-disaggregated evidence to make visible inequalities both within the same age cohort** (i.e. taking into account their diversity due to differences in sex, geography, income, ethnicity and other factors) and between different age cohorts. A holistic approach also takes into account intergenerational challenges that also concern unborn generations (e.g. sustainability of public finances, climate change, etc.).

- **Foresight capacity** to integrate a longer-term perspective in policymaking and define challenges as intergenerational in the context of uncertainty and possible future disruptions.
- **Impact assessment tools** in rule making and public budgeting to anticipate distributional effects across all age cohorts and determine “what is fair” from an intergenerational perspective, such as experimented by Netherland’s “Generation Test”, the creation of “Climate Justice” funds and other innovative developments.
- **Monitoring and performance frameworks**, underpinned by a comprehensive set of indicators, to capture generational gaps and their impact on well-being in the present and for future generations.

05 Promoting age diversity in public life and decision-making

Population ageing is decreasing young people’s political weight in the electorate. In this context, the risk of a pro-elderly spending bias by governments and marginalisation of youth in the democratic process have been evoked. While there is little evidence that younger and older people necessarily hold diverging interests about the future, available evidence suggests that both life stage and generational identity influence political behaviour.

The analysis finds that countries with a higher mean Cabinet age and older demographics tend to spend a higher share of the public budget on pensions relative to education. However, the findings also suggest that different drivers are at play and that policy choices matter. Interestingly, countries in which the mean Cabinet age is higher also tend to have a higher total government debt per under 20 person. These findings suggest that age diversity and inclusiveness in public life and in senior leadership positions of the government are critical to promote intergenerational justice.

The Way Forward

Investments into empowering youth and promoting intergenerational justice are likely to pay off with a dividend. Where youth succeed in their transition to an autonomous life, societies and economies will harness their productive potential rather than bearing the costs of compounding inequalities over their life cycle. Countries with a youth policy that follows the principles of good governance tend to see higher interest among young people in politics. When young people are engaged systematically in policymaking, they are more likely to express higher satisfaction with policy outcomes. Moreover, in countries in which inequalities between different age cohorts are smaller, life satisfaction tends to be higher.

The report provides countries with the opportunity to benchmark current practices against comparative evidence and good practices from across 42 countries and the European Union. It paves the way for developing a forward-looking OECD agenda on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice including country-based assessments, practical support, tools, and joint standards and principles.

This report provides policy and decision makers with an unequivocal business case to act: Policies must be fit for all generations to spur social cohesion, improve citizens' trust and well-being, and, ultimately, deliver more inclusive growth.





References

Notes *The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.



www.oecd.org



Contact: GOVYouth@oecd.org
#OECD4Youth #Fit4AllGenerations

