

# **Government at a Glance 2023**

## **Country Notes**

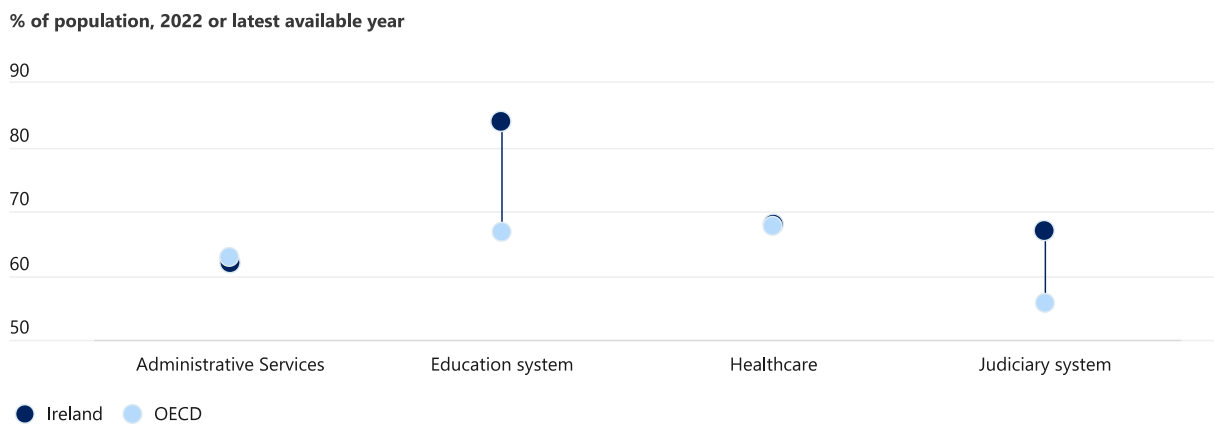
# Ireland

## 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.

**Most Irish people (84%) are satisfied with the education system, which is 17 percentage points above the average across OECD countries (67%).** Around two-thirds of Irish people are satisfied with the judiciary (67%), the health care system (68%) and administrative services (62%), values close to the corresponding OECD averages.

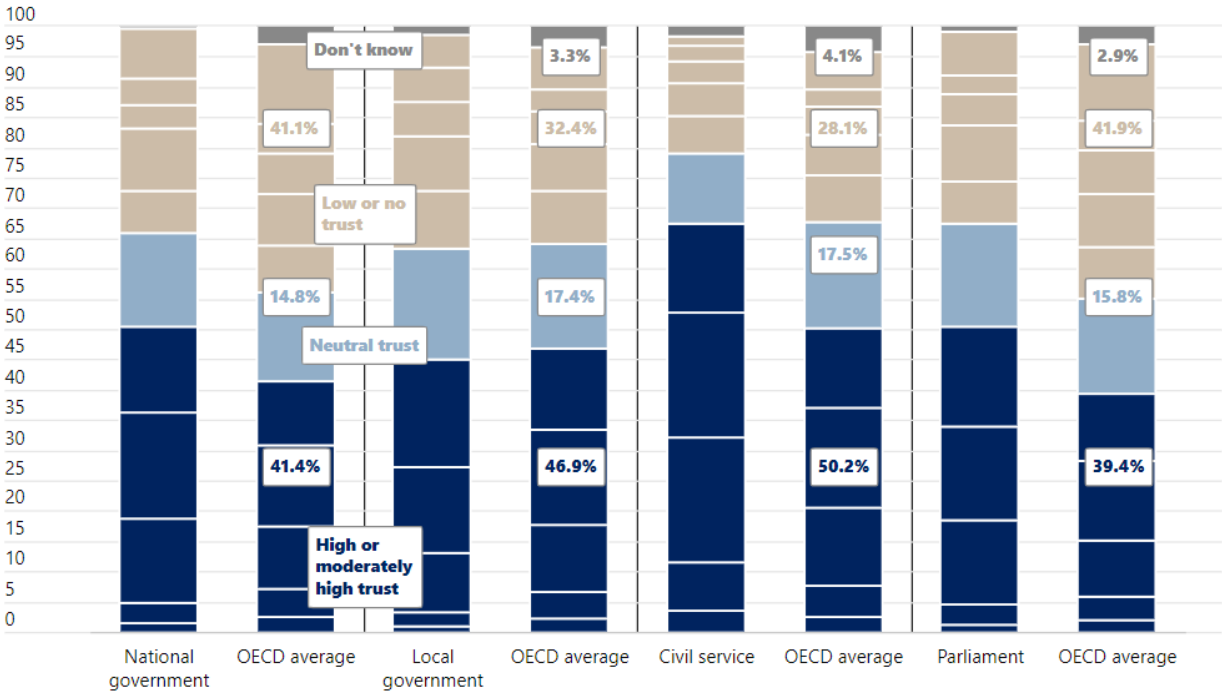
**Figure 1. Satisfaction with public services, 2022**



**Just over half of Irish people have high or moderately high trust in their national government (51%), above the average across OECD countries (41%).** A large majority of Irish people indicate high or moderately high trust in the civil service (68%), and 51% in the parliament, both values well above the OECD average. Trust in the local government is, however, slightly below the OECD average, with 45% of Irish people indicating high or moderately high trust compared to 47% for the OECD.

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

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



**Achieving results with good governance practices**

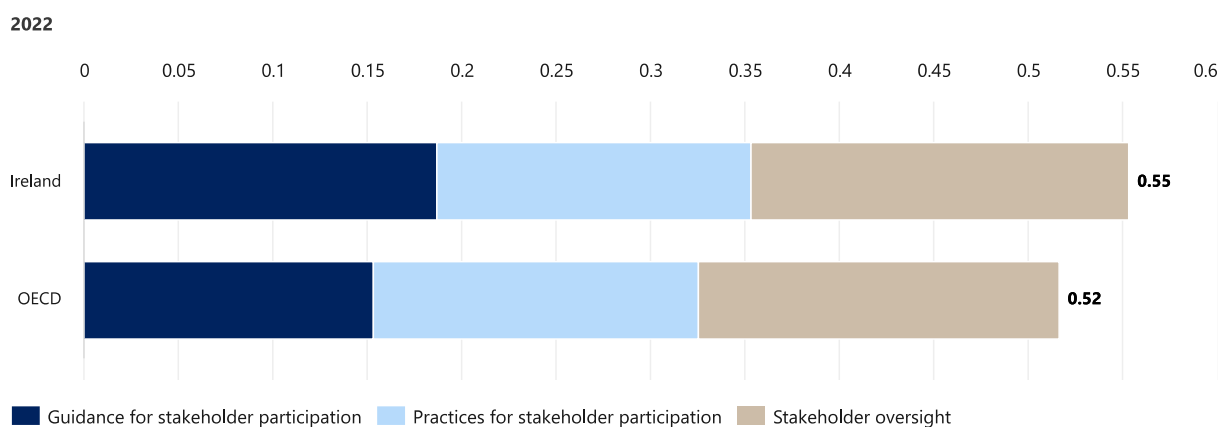
In an age of multiple crises, governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust in public institutions and enhance democratic resilience. Actions include building on democratic strengths, such as enhancing citizen and stakeholder engagement in decision making; reinforcing key competences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

**Ireland achieves a score of 0.55 on the IGI on stakeholder participation, slightly above the OECD average (0.52).** It has a consistent score equal or slightly above the OECD average for each dimension, ranging from 0.17 to 0.20 out of a maximum value of 0.33.

**Figure 3. Index on stakeholder participation in infrastructure decision making**

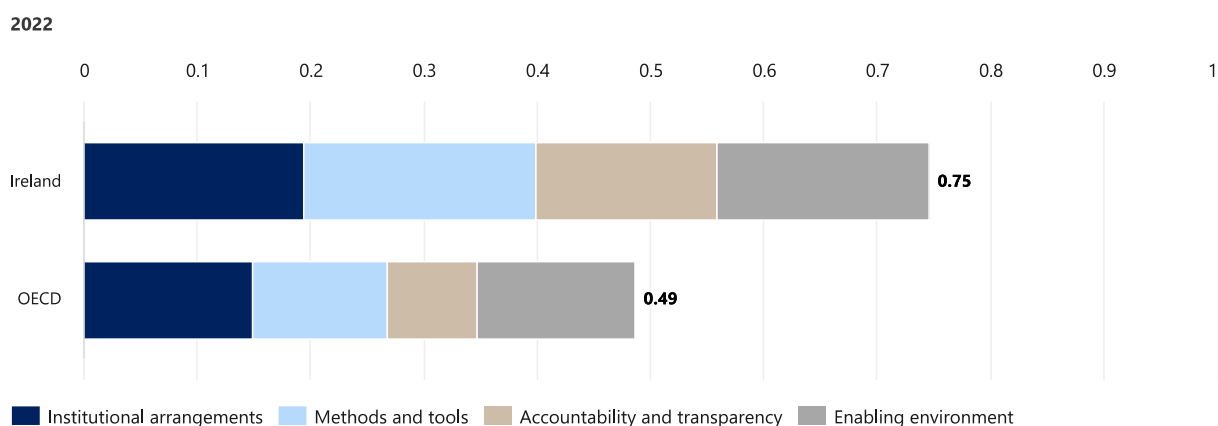
From 0 (lowest) to 1 (highest), 2022



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.

**Ireland is the second highest performer in green budgeting out of 24 surveyed OECD countries in 2022.** It scores 0.75 on the OECD Green Budgeting Index, compared to 0.49 on average across OECD countries (1 is the highest possible score). Ireland achieves a consistent score ranging from 0.16 to 0.20 out of a maximum value of 0.25 across the four components of the index, the highest being methods and tools.

**Figure 4. OECD Green Budgeting Index, 2022**

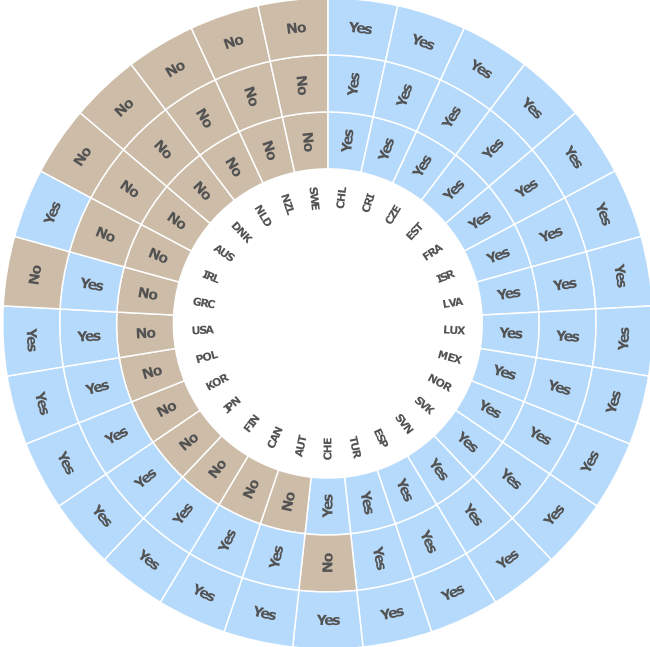


Financial contributions allow individuals and entities to support political candidates and parties. However, political finance needs to be adequately regulated to reduce risks of undue influence and policy capture.

**Foreign states or enterprises which do not keep an office in Ireland are not allowed to finance political campaigns and parties.** Donations from publicly owned enterprises are not banned but are restricted to a maximum of €200 in a calendar year. If a corporate donor is registered on the Register of Corporate Donors, the amount is instead restricted to €1 000 to a candidate or €2 500 to a political party.

Anonymous donations of EUR 100 do not need to be registered or reported. However, when donations from the same source exceed a value of EUR 100 in the same calendar year, that donation and all donations thereafter, irrespective of value, must be registered and reported.

**Figure 5. Regulation to ban financing political parties and election campaigns, 2022**

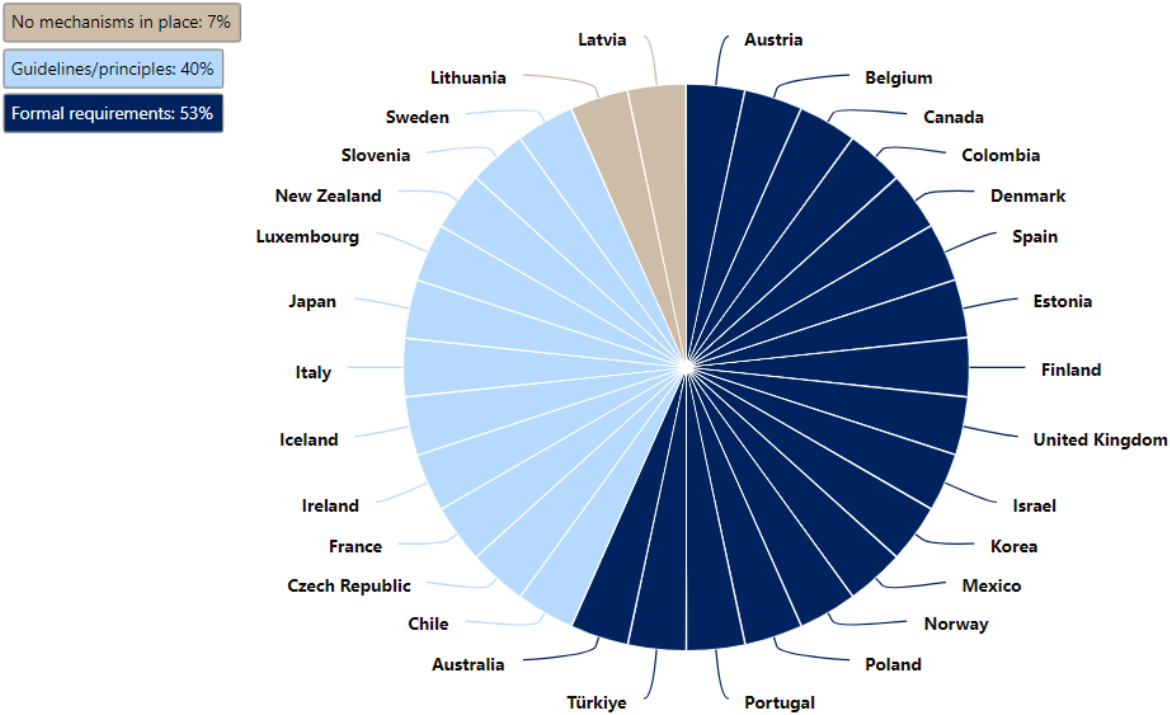


**Inner ring:** Ban on anonymous donations, and all contributions made to political parties and/or candidates must be registered and reported.  
**Middle ring:** Ban on contributions from publicly owned enterprises.  
**Outer ring:** Ban on contributions from foreign states or foreign enterprises.

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.

**Ireland, 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 6. Mechanisms used to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence in government, 2022**

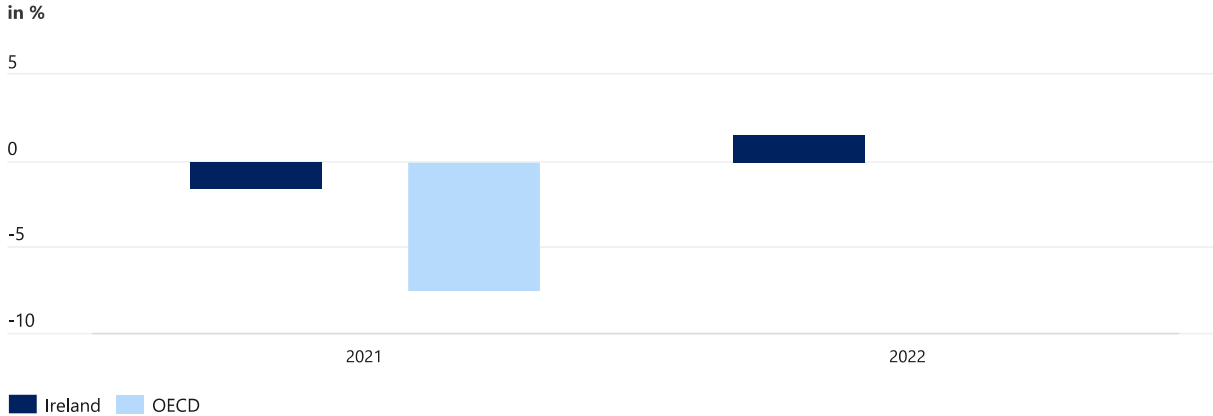


**What resources public institutions use and how they are managed**

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.

**Ireland went from a fiscal deficit of -1.6% of GDP in 2021, to a surplus of 1.6% in 2022.** The deficit in 2021 was considerably lower than the average fiscal balance across OECD countries of that year (-7.5%). In addition, its public debt as share of GDP was also below the OECD average in 2021 (65.5% against 120.8%) and declined in 2022 to 46.7%.

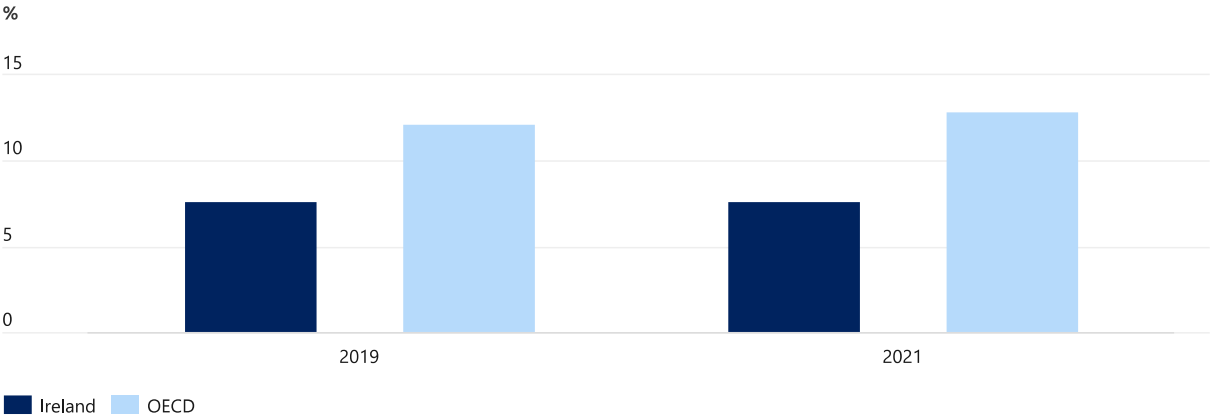
**Figure 7. General government fiscal balance as a percentage of GDP**



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.

**Ireland spends below the OECD average on public procurement, 7.7% of GDP in 2021 compared to 12.9% on average across the OECD.** Ireland invested a smaller share of its GDP compared to the average among OECD countries in 2021 (2.1% against 3.4%), and was one of the countries with the smallest shares of investment for that year.

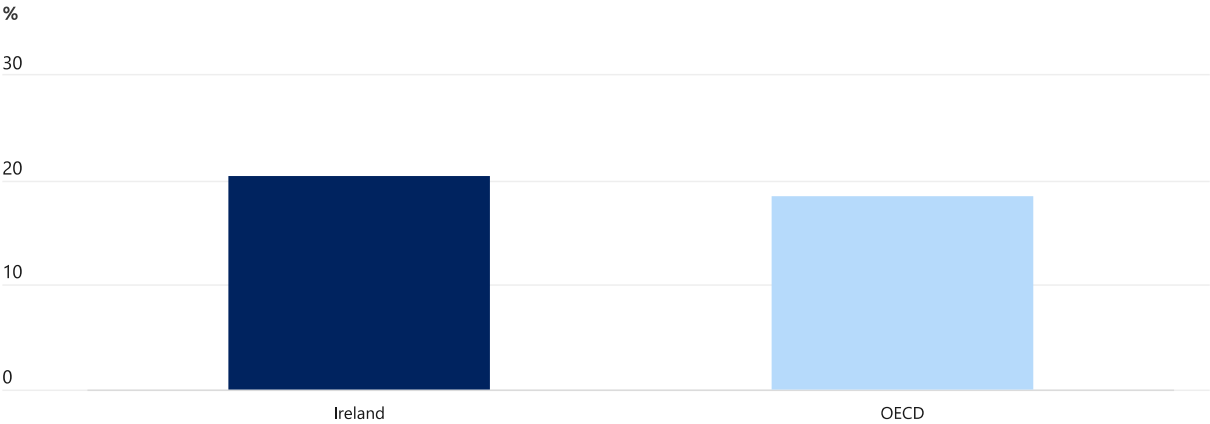
**Figure 8. Government procurement spending as a share of GDP**



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

**Ireland has 20.5% of its workforce in public employment as share of total employment, which is a higher share than the OECD average (18.6%).**

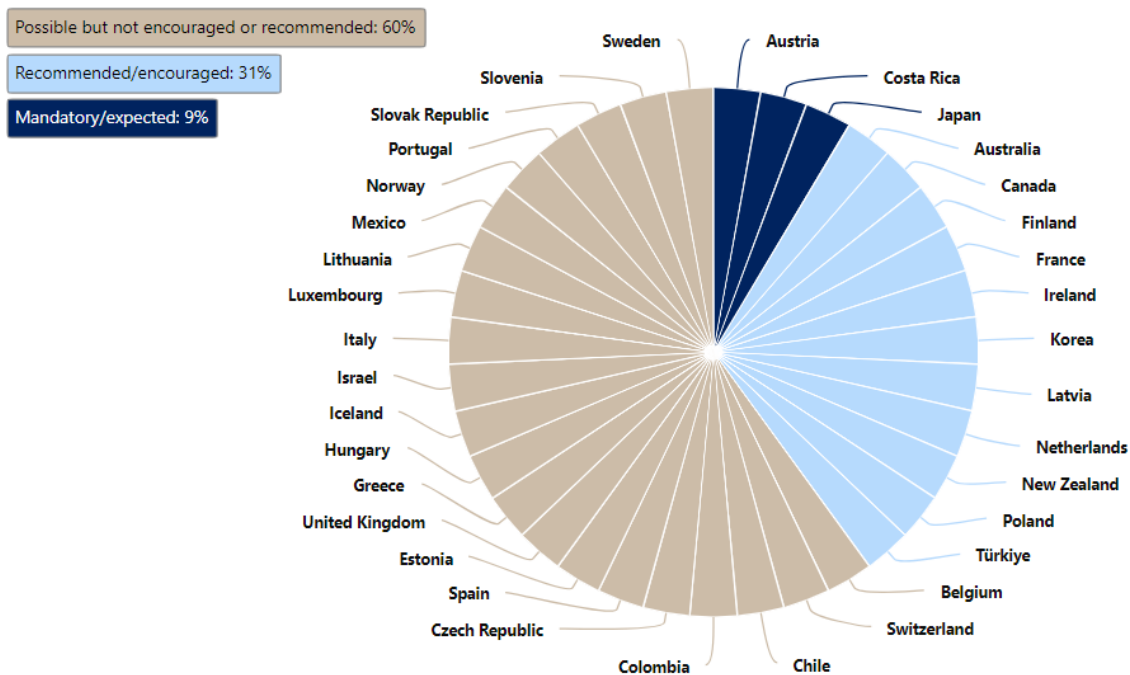
**Figure 9. Public employment as a percentage of total employment, 2021**



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 Ireland, internal mobility of civil servants is recommended or encouraged.** Similarly, internal mobility for senior-level civil servants is also recommended or encouraged. However, Ireland has not implemented the practice of developing individual learning plans for most public servants.

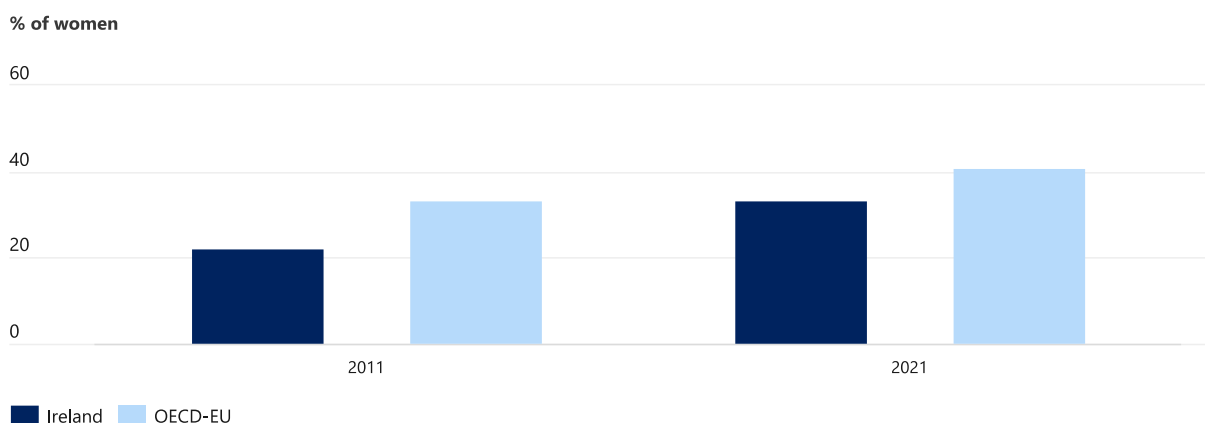
**Figure 10. Mobility of civil servants across public administrations in central government, 2022**



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.

**With 33.3% women in senior management positions in the national administration, Ireland has not achieved gender equality and is below the OECD-EU average (40.8%).** In addition, Ireland has below average representation of women in ministerial positions, 23% compared to 36% on average across OECD countries.

**Figure 11. Gender equality in senior management positions in national administration, 2021**

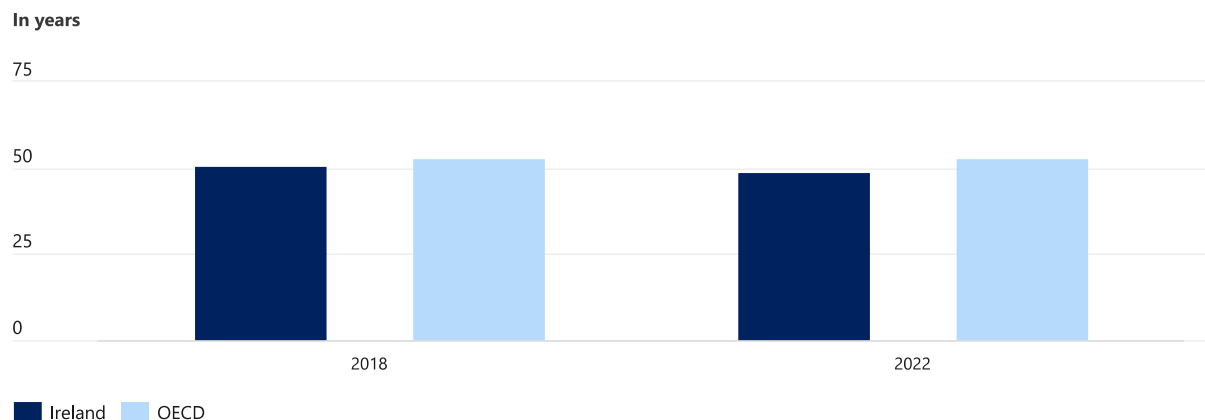


Young people are under-represented in public and political life across the OECD, with the risk that their voice and interests are not sufficiently taken in consideration in policymaking.



In Ireland, the average age of cabinet members – 49 years – is among the lowest in the OECD and 4 years below the OECD average (53 years).

**Figure 12. 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)