

Structure and indicators

The *Government at a Glance* series provides reliable, internationally comparable data on government resources, activities and their results in OECD countries and beyond. In turn, these data can be used by countries to benchmark their governments' performance, track domestic and international developments over time and provide evidence of the impact of their public policies. The indicators in *Government at a Glance* are becoming themselves a measuring standard in many fields of public governance and have extended beyond the OECD to cover countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and the Western Balkans. In addition to the core indicators that constitute the trademark of the publication, this seventh edition includes a selection of new indicators and additional data sources, allowing for a more complete picture of the work and results of public administrations across OECD countries. In the current edition, about half of the indicators presented are based on primary evidence collected directly from government officials through OECD survey instruments aimed at tracking countries' adherence to the OECD Recommendations and Principles on Public Governance. The remainder come from secondary sources and rely on either administrative records (e.g. public finances), household surveys (e.g. trust, satisfaction with services, political efficacy) or, to a lesser extent, on expert assessment collected by other organisations (e.g. the World Justice Project's Rule of Law Index).

What's new in *Government at a Glance* 2021?

The 2021 edition of *Government at a Glance* provides a mix of core chapters that remain stable in every edition, and new features. In addition, the present edition has adapted to reflect the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for public governance. Accordingly, some two-pagers incorporate evidence on the measures adopted by countries to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

The core chapters of *Government at a Glance* present the most recent data on: public finance and economics (Chapter 2); public employment (Chapter 3); institutions (Chapter 4); budgeting practices and procedures (Chapter 5); human resources management (Chapter 6); regulatory government (Chapter 7); public procurement (Chapter 8); core government results (Chapter 13); and serving citizens (Chapter 14).

New indicators

Many of the core chapters of *Government at a Glance* 2021 present new indicators:

- Chapter 5 on budget practices and procedures presents topical aspects of the budget process in areas where new trends and shared practices across OECD countries are emerging or consolidating. Accordingly, it includes indicators on green budgeting practices and their use in supporting a green recovery, spending reviews, and the role of independent fiscal institutions (IFIs) during the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak.

- New indicators in Chapter 6 on human resources management cover the use of proactive recruitment practices, policies to manage senior civil servants and the development of a diverse public workforce. It also includes a special feature on people management responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in the public service and results from a pilot exercise on measuring engagement through employee surveys.
- Chapter 7 on regulatory governance includes, in addition to descriptive information on stakeholder engagement, regulatory impact assessment and *ex post* evaluation, indicators on the independence, accountability and performance of regulators in key sectors (e.g. energy, e-communications, rail transport, air transport and water).
- Chapter 8 on public procurement includes new evidence on strategic public procurement with a focus on responsible business conduct (RBC), the management of emergency procurement and risks, and the professionalisation of the procurement function.
- To highlight the growing focus on improving the measurement of outputs and outcomes of governments, Chapter 13 includes a new indicator on internal political efficacy or people's ability to participate in politics. In addition, it includes a more comprehensive set of measures on trust in different institutions and the evolution of levels of trust in government during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic.

New features in this edition of *Government at a Glance* include:

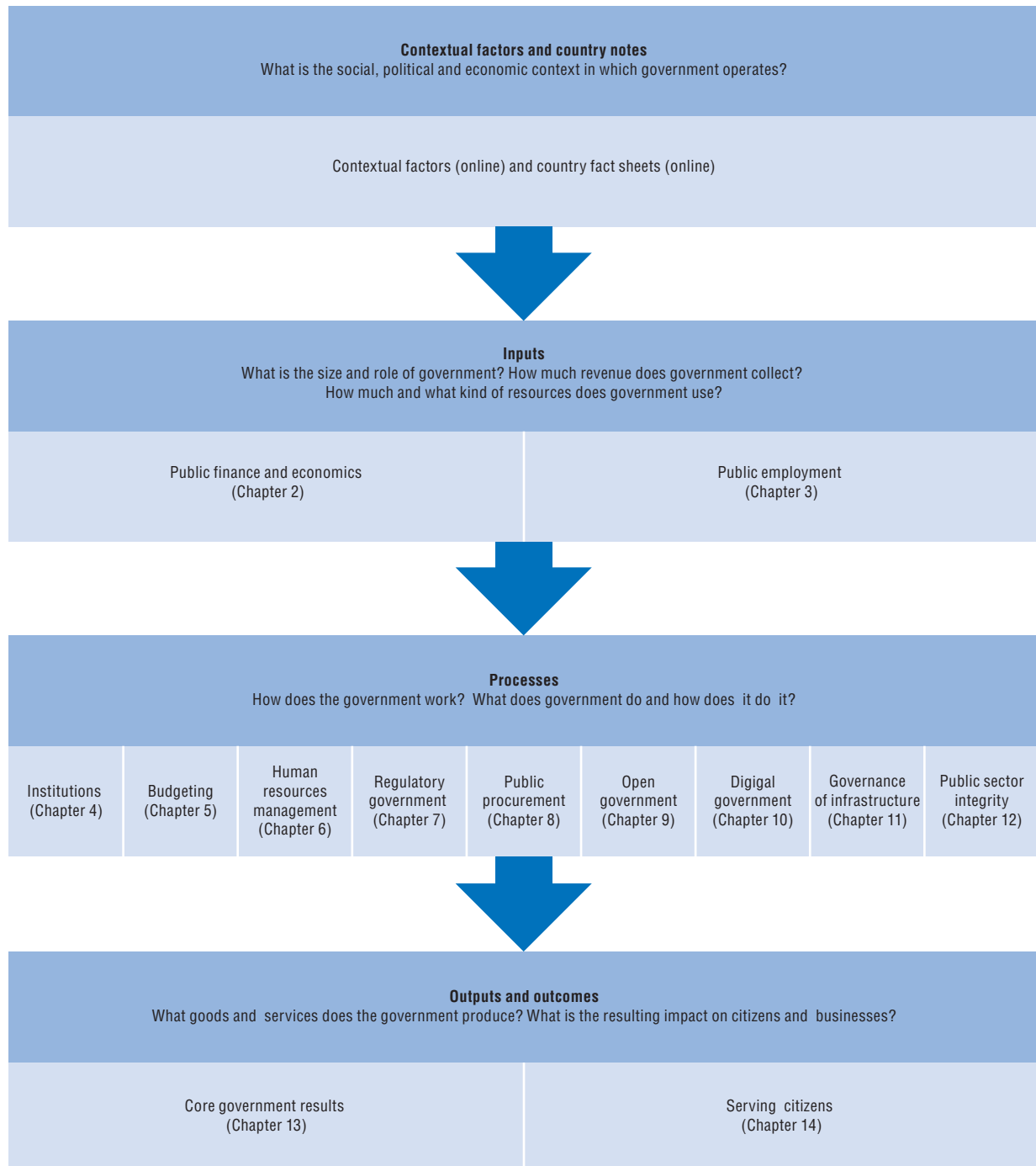
- Chapter 4 presents a new series of indicators on public communication and management of COVID-19 responses. While the chapter on institutions addressing practices of the centre of government (CoG) has been a recurring issue in past editions of *Government at a Glance*, this edition places a particular focus on communication during crises and the immediate and planned response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Chapter 9 on open government is based on a new questionnaire designed to measure the 2017 Recommendation on Open Government. It displays specific aspects related to open government literacy in administration, citizen and stakeholder participation portals and the implementation of access to information laws.
- Chapter 10 on digital government presents for the first time the results of the Digital Government Index (DGI) and the role of data as a strategic asset within the administration.
- Chapter 11 on the governance of infrastructure is included for the first time in *Government at a Glance*. The questionnaire informing this chapter has been designed to measure implementation of the 2020 Recommendation on the Governance of Infrastructure.
- Chapter 12 on public sector integrity includes indicators on the existence of integrity strategies, based on the 2017 OECD Recommendation on Public Sector Integrity as well as evidence on transparency in lobbying activities.

Framework and structure of the publication

Government at a Glance covers the 37 OECD countries and includes data, when available, on accession countries (Costa Rica) at the time the report was compiled as well as other major economies such as Brazil, China, India, Indonesia and South Africa. These countries play a significant and increasing role in the world economy and international political structures. At the time of drafting, Costa Rica was still an accession country and is therefore treated as such throughout and not included in OECD averages. It will be considered as a full OECD member from the next issue of the report.

This seventh edition of *Government at a Glance* includes contextual information as well as input, process, output and outcome indicators. The diagram below presents the conceptual framework for *Government at a Glance*.

Conceptual framework for Government at a Glance 2021



Context

Contextual factors (online) present information on some key features of the political and administrative structures for each OECD country. Considering contextual information makes it possible to understand the major institutional differences and similarities among countries, and thereby help to identify comparators for benchmarking purposes. In addition, the country fact sheets (online) provide a country-by-country storyline on how the data provided in *Government at a Glance* apply to the specific context of public sector reforms in OECD countries and some accession countries.

Inputs

Inputs refer to the resources used by governments in their production function, as well as how they are mixed; these resources correspond to labour and capital. The chapters that describe these inputs are “Public finance and economics” (Chapter 2) and “Public employment” (Chapter 3), including indicators on government expenditures, production costs, employment and the composition of the public sector workforce. Differences in these indicators can help readers understand the different capacities of governments in producing and delivering public goods to citizens. Chapter 1 discusses how the COVID-19 crisis is bringing to the fore the importance of government information and public assets as potential additional categories of inputs.

Processes

Processes refer to the public management practices and procedures undertaken by governments to implement policies. These address the means used by public administrations to fulfil their duties and obtain their goals. In consequence, they are often essential for ensuring the rule of law, accountability, fairness and openness of government actions. Public sector reforms often target these processes; as such, they capture the public’s attention. This edition contains information on government institutions, budget practices and procedures, human resources management, regulatory governance, public procurement, open government data and the governance of digital government strategies, governance of infrastructure, and public sector integrity (Chapters 4-12).

Outputs and outcomes

The dividing line between outputs and outcomes can be blurred. While outputs refer to the amount of goods and services produced by governments, outcomes show the effects of policies and practices on citizens and businesses. The success of a given policy should be measured, at a first stage, by outputs, but should ultimately be judged by the outcomes it achieves. Generally speaking, outcomes refer to the effects of public programmes and services on citizens, in improvements to welfare, health, educational/learning and so on. While these outcomes can certainly be affected by the quality of programmes and services provided, they can also be affected by other factors, such as the socio-economic background of the population and individual behavioural factors.

In *Government at a Glance 2021*, measures of outputs and outcomes are provided in two separate chapters:

- Chapter 13 on core government results focuses on whole-of-government aspects, such as the confidence of citizens in their national government, the rule of law, income redistribution and broad measures of cost-effectiveness (outcome-based).

- Chapter 14 on serving citizens follows a sectoral approach to measuring the outputs and outcomes of public sector activities. Based on a consolidated framework developed with other OECD directorates, and in collaboration with OECD countries, the chapter provides measures of services to citizens in terms of access, responsiveness and quality in three sectors: health care, education and the justice system. A methodological paper testing the robustness of the selection of indicators to measure the dimensions of the serving citizens framework will be published together with this publication.

Future activities

In order to produce *Government at a Glance*, the OECD works in close co-operation with other organisations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), the World Justice Project, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), Gallup and the European Commission, to provide a comprehensive view of what governments do and how they do it, while avoiding duplication of data collection. Co-operation will continue to be strengthened to ensure the comparability of data across countries covered in *Government at a Glance*.

For future editions of *Government at a Glance*, the following activities are planned:

- Update and expand the data collection on public finance and public expenditures by government function, especially beyond OECD EU member countries.
- Develop new composite indicators measuring “intermediate outcomes”, including in the areas of governance of infrastructure, green budgeting and open government.
- Explore the inclusion of new outcome indicators in areas closely related to major public governance principles or sectors that have a large impact on citizen wellbeing (e.g. satisfaction with democracy).
- Generate primary comparative evidence on institutional trust and its determinants (e.g. responsiveness, reliability, openness, integrity and fairness) using household surveys through the OECD Trust Survey.
- Include new indicators to measure the delivery of administrative services (e.g. permits) to citizens.
- Explore the inclusion of non-consolidated data on recent trends of public expenditure by large functions.
- Deepen the already existing work between the OECD Secretariat and other OECD directorates regarding the possible use of new methodologies for both data collection and analysis, such as text mining or big data, as well methodologies to develop dashboard and composite indices on qualitative variables.

Regional editions of *Government at a Glance*

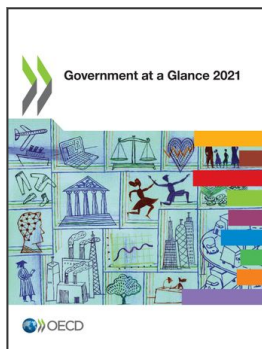
The first edition of the Western Balkans *Government at a Glance* was published in June 2020 and the third edition of the Latin America and the Caribbean *Government at a Glance* in March of that same year. Additionally, the Southeast Asian *Government at a Glance* was published in September 2019. These publications provide the latest available data on public administrations in Latin America and the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, and the Western Balkans region and compare them to OECD countries. These regional editions allow the *Government at a Glance* dataset to be enlarged to include 28 countries beyond OECD membership.

All data and indicators on public governance are accessible online

All data collected by the OECD Public Governance Directorate for the production of *Government at a Glance* (starting with the 2015 edition), and for other purposes, are available online at <https://www.oecd.org/gov/govataglance.htm>.

Readers interested in using the data presented in this publication for further analysis and research are encouraged to consult the full documentation of definitions, sources and methods presented in the *Government at a Glance* publication and online.

The *Government at a Glance* statistical database includes both qualitative and quantitative indicators on public sector inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes and is regularly updated as new data are released.



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