Leveraging artificial intelligence for proactive delivery of public policies and services

Proactive governments anticipate people's needs and respond to them rapidly, increasing accessibility and satisfaction with public services and reducing administrative burdens. The strategic and ethical adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), such as that promoted by the OECD AI Principles and the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence, can help governments achieve this vision.

OECD countries are improving the governance and use of AI in the public sector to deliver proactive public services and improve processes. Most countries with data available (29 out of 30, or 97%) have strategies, agendas or plans for AI that include objectives or actions for its use in the public sector (Figure 9.4).

Alignment and adherence to shared ethical values and principles for the management of algorithms are essential when using AI in the public sector. Building on the OECD AI Principles, the Survey on Digital Government found significant differences in the approaches countries used to ensure the ethical management and use of algorithms by public sector institutions. While 16 out of 30 (53%) countries rely on formal requirements (e.g. laws or regulations) for this purpose, 12 (40%) use policy initiatives such as guidelines, standards or principles. Two (7%) of the surveyed countries did not use any instruments (Figure 9.5).

Implementation and use of AI in the public sector also vary across countries. Twenty-three of the 30 countries surveyed (77%) reported using AI in at least one of three evaluated categories: public sector internal processes, public services design and delivery, and policy making. Looking specifically at each category, 22 out of 30 countries (73%) used AI to improve internal public sector processes. Canada uses robotic process automation to streamline internal processes and make officers' workflows more efficient, for example. The same number had developed AI projects for public service design and delivery. For instance, Finland's AuroraAI recommends public services to end users based on their attributes. In contrast, only a small number of countries (11 out of 30, or 37%) have applied AI to improve policy making, such as Estonia's semi-automatic remote sensing information system for geo-referencing forest resources and improving environmental decision-making capabilities. Only ten countries (33%) are using AI across all three categories while seven (23%) have not developed AI projects in any of the three categories (Figure 9.6).

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through the OECD Survey on Digital Government 2.0, which was designed to monitor the implementation of the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies and assesses countries' shift towards greater levels of maturity to deliver a human-centric and whole-of-government digital transformation of public processes and services. Survey data will be used for the forthcoming second edition of the OECD Digital Government Index.

The data presented in this section correspond to an initial analysis of the information collected through the survey which was launched in November 2022. At the time of writing, responses from 30 OECD countries and 3 accession countries (Brazil, Croatia and Romania) have been analysed. Survey respondents were senior officials in central and federal governments, who were leading and/or implementing digital government reforms, and who gathered data from different parts of the public sector as relevant.

Proactiveness is the principle representing governments and civil servants' ability to anticipate people's needs and respond to them rapidly, so that users do not have to engage with the cumbersome process of data and service delivery (OECD, 2020).

Artificial intelligence refers to a machine-based system that can, for a given set of human-defined objectives, make predictions, recommendations, or decisions influencing real or virtual environments. AI systems are designed to operate with varying levels of autonomy (OECD, 2022).

Further reading

OECD (2022), "OECD AI Principles", *https://oecd.ai/en/ai-principles*.

OECD/CAF (2022), *The Strategic and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence in the Public Sector of Latin America and the Caribbean*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/1f334543-en*.

OECD (2020), "The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: Six dimensions of a digital government", *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No. 02, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/f64fed2a-en*.

OECD (2019), "Recommendation of the Council on Artificial Intelligence", *OECD Legal Instruments*, OECD, Paris, *https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/oecd-legal-0449*.

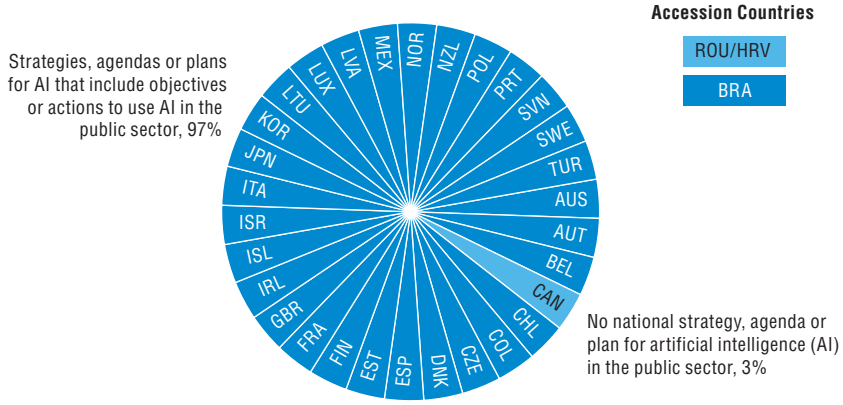
Ubaldi, B., et al. (2019), "State of the art in the use of emerging technologies in the public sector", *OECD Working Papers on Public Governance*, No. 31, OECD Publishing, Paris, *https://doi.org/10.1787/932780bc-en*.

Figure notes

Data are not available for Costa Rica, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, the Slovak Republic, Switzerland and the United States.

9.6. Belgium, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Israel, Japan, Norway and Poland did not present AI projects for the analysed categories.

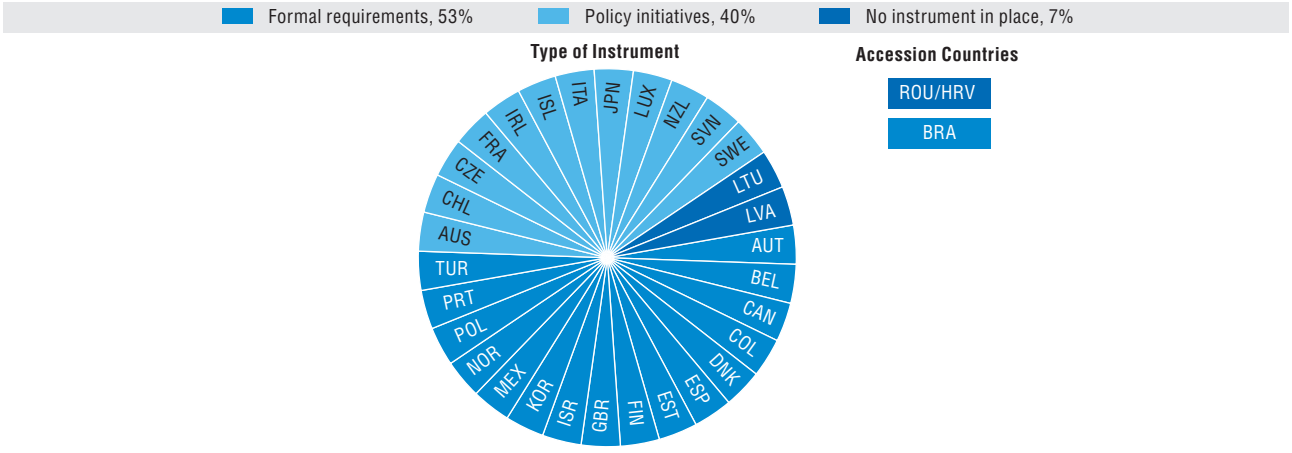
9.4. Availability of a national plan for artificial intelligence in the public sector, 2022



Source: OECD (2022), Survey on Digital Government 2.0.

StatLink https://stat.link/hnso0x

9.5. Instruments used to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence, 2022

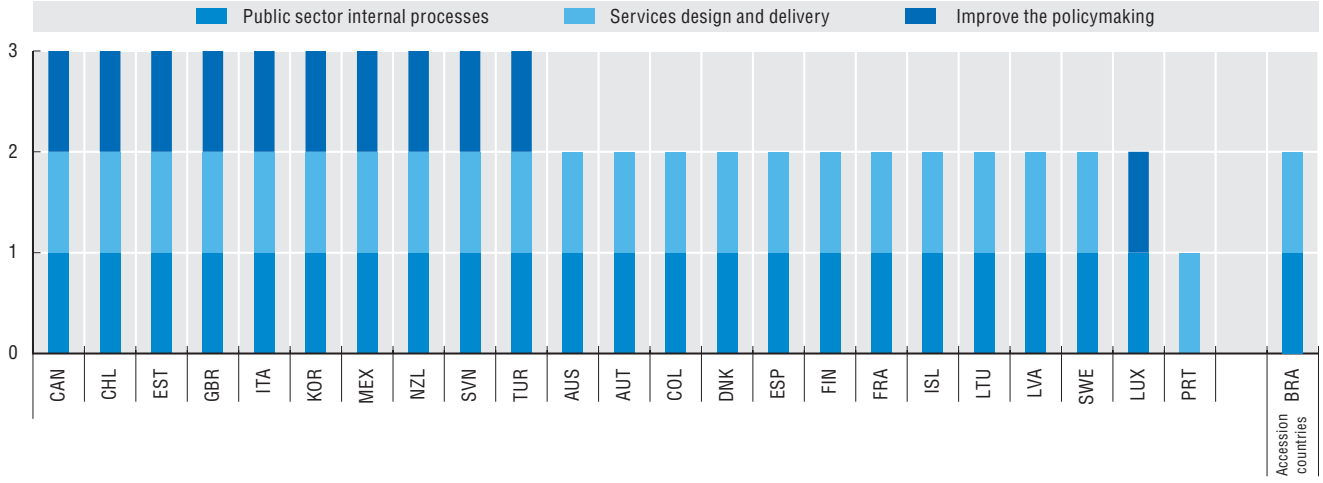


Source: OECD (2022), Survey on Digital Government 2.0.

StatLink https://stat.link/7wi1nr

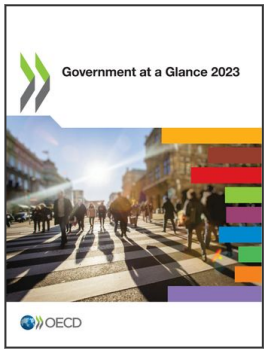
9.6. Use of artificial intelligence in the public sector, 2022

Existence of at least one AI project in each category



Source: OECD (2022), Survey on Digital Government 2.0.

StatLink https://stat.link/imef87



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