

Annex A. Methodology

The OECD Report “Public Communication: the Global Context and the Way Forward” is based on data collected through the OECD 2020 Understanding Public Communication Surveys administered to Centres of Government (CoGs)¹ and Ministries of Health (MHs) in 46 OECD member and non-member countries as well as the European Commission. It builds on the mandate of the OECD’s Public Governance Committee and draws on the OECD’s analytical framework on public communication as well as discussions of the OECD Working Party on Open Government (WPOG) and Experts Group on Public Communication (EGPC).

Survey responses

This Report is based on 64 survey responses (from both CoGs and MHs) from 46 countries (including 35 OECD members) and the European Commission. More specifically, 39 countries replied to the CoG survey and 24 to the MH survey.

Throughout the report, data is presented using the following ISO country codes.

Table A A.1. ISO Codes of the countries referred to in this report

1	Armenia	ARM	24	Korea	KOR
2	Australia	AUS	25	Latvia	LVA
3	Austria	AUT	26	Lebanon	LBN
4	Belgium	BEL	27	Lithuania	LTU
5	Brazil	BRA	28	Luxembourg	LUX
6	Canada	CAN	29	Mexico	MEX
7	Chile	CHL	30	Morocco	MAR
8	Colombia	COL	31	Netherlands	NLD
9	Costa Rica	CRI	32	Norway	NOR
10	Czech Republic	CZE	33	Paraguay	PRY
11	Ecuador	ECU	34	Philippines	PHL
12	Estonia	EST	35	Poland	POL
13	Finland	FIN	36	Portugal	PRT
14	France	FRA	37	Romania	ROU
15	Germany	DEU	38	Slovak Republic	SVK
16	Greece	GRC	39	Slovenia	SVN
17	Hungary	HUN	40	Spain	ESP
18	Iceland	ISL	41	Sweden	SWE
19	Ireland	IRL	42	Switzerland	CHE
20	Israel	ISR	43	Thailand	THA
21	Italy	ITA	44	Tunisia	TUN
22	Japan	JPN	45	Turkey	TUR
23	Jordan	JOR	46	United Kingdom	GBR

Relevant considerations

The aim of the OECD surveys was to understand how public communication is used across OECD member and non-member countries. More specifically, it focused on the contribution of communication for improved governance, policy-making and service design and delivery, as well as increased public trust and country resilience to mis- and disinformation.

The surveys benefited from the input of different teams within the OECD Public Governance Directorate, including the digital government, behavioural insights, risks, governance indicators and policy evaluation teams.

Based on the surveys, the report conducts an exploratory analysis across a variety of themes, while acknowledging that complex competencies such as evaluation or crisis communication cannot be grasped in their entirety through a limited number of questions. Given these limitations, the report focuses on selecting communication competencies based on priority needs of surveyed countries, while also identifying future areas of research that merit further reflection.

The survey shared with CoGs asked respondents to provide information and data on their whole-of-government practices. The survey sent to MHs aimed to complement this holistic perspective with a sectoral one from a key service-providing ministry and a crucial actor in times of health crises.

Given that the COVID-19 crisis unfolded in parallel to the data collection process, and while the survey requested countries to answer regarding the practices and status quo in 2019, some survey responses may reflect the priorities of countries in 2020. Whenever applicable, the OECD noted these instances and nuanced the implications to the survey findings in the Report. Based on the request of EGPC members, the OECD incorporated examples related to COVID-19 responses throughout the report based on cases shared during the data collection process, meetings held, as well as desk research.

Furthermore, certain countries did not respond to all questions, depending on their particular context. In the case of Austria for example, the CoG was unable to answer several questions given the multiple changes in the administration in the recent years. The CoG in Germany also noted that certain questions (such as those linked to the structuring, hiring and staffing of public communication teams for example) would not accurately portray their practices given the federal nature of the state, but provided additional information to contextualise their answers. In countries where the CoG did not conduct activities for the whole-of-government, such as Israel for example, responses to certain questions were also nuanced. It is also worth noting that the mandate for whole-of-government communication is located outside the CoG in certain countries (such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Korea or Paraguay). Their activities however remain comparable to those of the CoG, and this has been clarified namely in Chapter 2. Finally, and wherever a country did not provide data to a specific question, the OECD noted this under the respective figure and adjusted the calculation baseline.

Structure of the surveys

For the purpose of the surveys, public communication is understood as any communication activity or initiative led by public institutions for the public good. It is different from political communication, which is linked to the political debate, elections, or individual political figures and parties.

They focused on the following 10 thematic areas:

1. strategy and planning
2. audience and channels
3. campaigns
4. media engagement

5. digital communication
6. internal communication
7. crisis communication
8. evaluation
9. disinformation and media ecosystems
10. cross-cutting questions.

The questionnaires included yes or no options as well as multiple-choice questions. They offered space for countries to provide further explanations on their specific case, share supporting documentation and make any additional remarks. Wherever possible, the report complements aggregate data with boxes containing examples of good practices to reflect different country experiences. While it is not possible to include all insights and practices in the report, all input was thoroughly assessed to help contextualise the findings and interpret the data.

The OECD Secretariat submitted a draft version of the CoG and MH surveys to the WPOG for their review. Following the integration of comments, the Secretariat piloted the surveys with countries from different regions (Costa Rica, Latvia, Morocco and the United Kingdom).

Data cleaning and validation process

The final surveys were sent to the delegates of the WPOG on February 2020 who were asked to share them with the relevant officials at the respective CoG and MH. The OECD extended the initial deadline to respond given public communicators' massive workload when the COVID-19 crisis erupted.

The OECD administered the surveys online via the Checkbox tool, accepting only one response per institution (i.e CoG, MH per country). Respondents were asked to liaise with relevant actors across the Government as needed. The Secretariat conducted a review of all submissions to ensure the overall consistency, comprehensiveness and comparability of data, as well as to identify where additional evidence or documents were needed. During this process, the OECD followed up with each country for additional information, clarifications and examples with particular attention to federal countries to better contextualise existing practices. Respondents were asked for a final validation of their responses in January and February 2021 following the changes requested by some countries to their submissions. As a result of this process, some answers were modified to ensure consistency across respondents.

The Secretariat subsequently validated the key survey findings with responding countries during a series of in-person and online events (including the first meeting of the EGPC on 30 September 2020, as well as regional events for Latin America and the Caribbean as well as MENA on 17 November 2020). The data validation period went from June 2020 to February 2021. Members of the EGPC and WPOG endorsed the key findings of the Report during the third meeting of both groups on 28 and 29 June 2021 respectively.

Note

¹ Centre of government is defined as the support structure serving the highest level of the executive branch of government (presidents, prime ministers and their equivalents).



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