

Preface

Citizens' trust in public institutions is strongly influenced by how these institutions perform in terms of competence and values, and it is a vital public policy outcome. While it is just a perception, its implications for policy are fundamental and multiple. Since the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis and resulting recession, trust has come to the forefront of the public debate in many OECD countries. While there is clear evidence that trust influences the relationship between citizens and governments, and has, in turn, an impact on the outcomes of public policy, there remains relatively limited comparative international or specific country experience with measuring the drivers of institutional trust.

We very much welcome this joint effort by the OECD and the Korea Development Institute (KDI) to develop the first national case study on trust in the context of Korea's 20th anniversary of OECD membership. After several decades marked by sustained economic and social progress, Korea is at a crossroads. While it has a strong fiscal position and its public sector performance rates above the OECD average according to several measures, the country is experiencing economic slowdown, significant inequality, an ageing population, and a high share of youth that are neither in employment nor in education or training. Korea also has persistently low levels of trust in public institutions, revealing a gap between the collective achievements of the country and the satisfaction of citizens with how governments are working and delivering on their promises. Cultivating greater trust by citizens will be critical to sustain Korea's ability to implement a wide range of needed structural reforms, to face current and future challenges.

This study was undertaken to help promote a shared understanding of trust in public institutions and identify policy solutions.

It analyses several dimensions of trust, and relates them to a set of public institutions, from the national assembly to the public health system. It was carried out via a survey conducted in early 2016, complemented by qualitative analysis and desktop research. Through a holistic approach this study helps identify policy actions to strengthen the competence of public institutions. First, there is a need to promote greater transparency, consistency and a shared understanding of long-term national priorities. Second, risk management frameworks should be reviewed and adjusted. Third, the government has an opportunity for enhancing public sector innovation capacity by promoting a flexible work environment and ensuring the right mix of skills in the workforce. Concerning the values of public institutions, there is a need to refine integrity frameworks at the highest level, to boost the credibility and legitimacy of government institutions. In addition to rejuvenating consultation practices, investing at an earlier stage in the relationship with citizens would facilitate meaningful engagement. Finally, there is a need to address concerns over fairness in the distribution of burdens, opportunities and rewards across social groups and geographic locations.

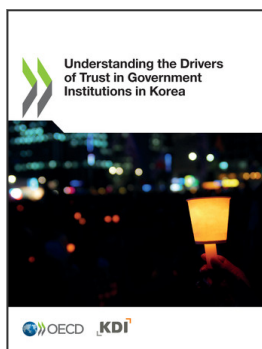
We hope that Korea's example will serve as a benchmark and an inspiration for other countries in promoting holistic, sustainable growth paths that nurture the foundations of trust between government and citizens. The goal is to chart a national vision that enables sustained and shared prosperity, and forges stronger relationships between citizens and the institutions that serve them.



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