GOVERNMENT INTEGRITY and Citizen Trust

Policy Brief

Digital technologies and data as tools for transparency, integrity and reinforcement of trust between governments and citizens in LAC [1]

Leveraging digital tools and data to reinforce integrity and public trust in Latin America

A robust public governance is pivotal for Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. Public trust in the region has declined during the past decade, reaching 33.9% in 2018, 4.4 p.p. lower than in 2007, and below the OECD average of 45% (OECD, 2020[1]). In this context, the COVID-19 crisis has added further pressure on LAC public institutions by deepening existing social and economic inequalities (OECD, 2020[2]). However, the capacity of LAC governments to mitigate some of the consequences of the crisis in a context of restricted economic conditions as well as forced remote operations and public services has slowed down this trend in 2020 (Latinobarómetro, 2021[3]).

Digitaltools have been vital for governments in the aftermath of the COVID-19. As demonstrated in the response and ongoing recovery to the pandemic, digital tools, channels and data have been critical to secure the continuity of public services and governments' core functions to deliver timely assistance to citizens and businesses (OECD, 2021[4]; OECD, 2020[5]). Meeting people needs during a crisis can be essential to contain mistrust in public institutions (OECD, 2021[6]), and digital tools and data can help in the recovery and reform phases to rethink processes and services around the needs of citizens, improve their well-being and confidence in the public sector (Welby, 2019[7]; OECD, 2020[5]).

Opening remarks

José Antonio Ardavín
Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Division, Global Relations Secretariat, OECD

Sebastián Nieto-Parra
Head of the Latin America and the Caribbean Unit, Development Centre, OECD

Fabrizio Mena
Under-Secretary of Public Innovation, El Salvador

Carlos Santiso
Director, Digital Innovation in Government, Development Bank of Latin America-CAF

Digital tools and data, if used strategically, can be a catalyst for public transparency, integrity and trust in the region. Governments have deployed unprecedented support programmes, expanding public expenditure and speeding up procurement procedures to cope with the sanitary and economic consequences of the emergency. These fast-paced actions have encompassed the mitigation of associated risks to avoid a backlash in public trust. For example, using open government data to communicate governments' actions and policies, or switching service delivery to digital channels have been critical for citizens to have trusted interactions with the public sector when they needed them the most (OECD, 2021[4]; G20/OECD, 2021[8]).

Despite positive progress observed in the past months, **the COVID-19 crisis has made evident the still ongoing transition towards competent digital governments in the region.** Some LAC governments countries lack some of the foundations for an effective digital delivery such as: limited access, sharing and re-use of data within the public sector, restricting a timely planning and delivery of social benefits and health-related measures; or challenges to adapt service delivery models to the new normal, including uptake and maturity of critical shared infrastructure such as digital identity. The journey for being digital in LAC countries is just beginning.

[1] Based on the preparatory webinar held on 19/03/2021

Understanding digital government maturity in LAC countries

Using digital technologies and data to boost trust, integrity and transparency in the public sector demands public sectors with solid digital government foundations and practices for sustained and whole-of-government transformation. **However, LAC countries showed dissimilar digital government maturity levels before the COVID-19 outbreak hit the region.** The results of the OECD 2019 Digital Government Index for selected LAC countries shows that Colombia, Uruguay, and Brazil had more solid digital competencies prior to the outbreak compared to Chile, Panamá, and Argentina which tiered below the OECD average (OECD, 2020[9]). A more in-depth analysis of the six dimensions assessed in the DGI **reveals broader regional gaps in the ways digital tools and data can be used to achieve more open, people-driven and proactive public sectors** able to respond to citizens' needs and expectations in the digital age.

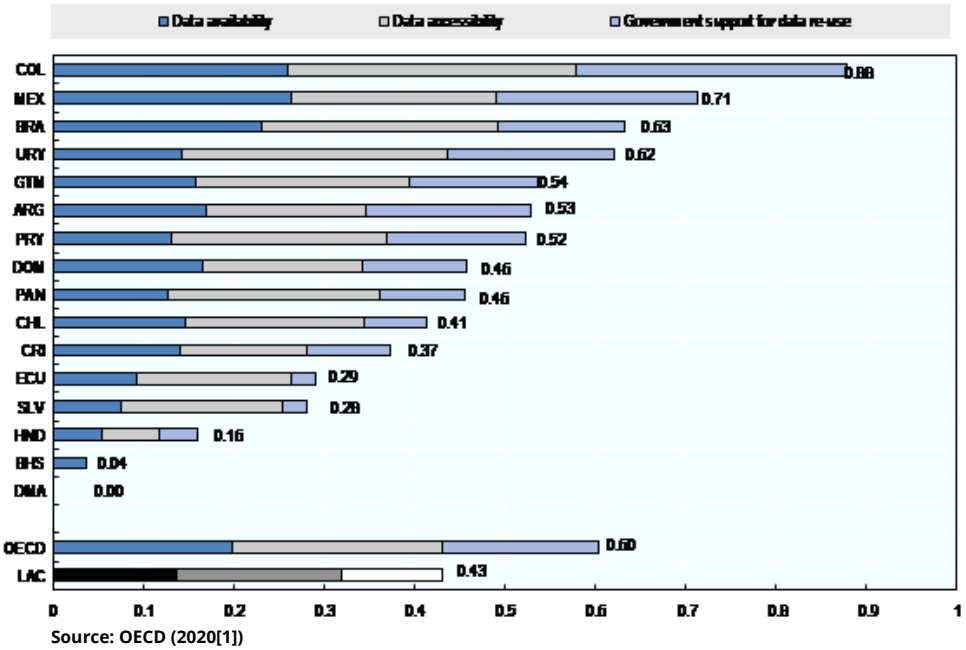
Table 1. OECD 2019 Digital Government Index, LAC

Dimension	OECD	Colombia	Uruguay	Brazil	Chile	Panama	Argentina
Digital by design	0.55	0.75	0.65	0.54	0.38	0.35	0.43
Data-driven public sector	0.44	0.59	0.56	0.47	0.26	0.35	0.39
Government as a platform	0.54	0.79	0.54	0.48	0.46	0.53	0.28
Open by default	0.64	0.67	0.60	0.61	0.59	0.45	0.58
User-driven	0.47	0.80	0.65	0.54	0.42	0.09	0.20
Proactiveness	0.42	0.78	0.55	0.42	0.36	0.28	0.18
Composite Score	0.50	0.73	0.60	0.52	0.41	0.34	0.34

Source: OECD (2020[9])

When looking at the availability and use of open government data, LAC countries echoed the heterogeneous performance observed in digital government policies. The OECD Open, Useful and Re-usable Data Index measures digital maturity for sound data availability, data accessibility, and government support for data reuse. In the 2019 LAC Edition, most of the 16 countries participating in this benchmark had limited development and capacities to timely release and reuse high-quality public data (LAC average 0.17 lower than OECD countries) (OECD, 2020[1]). Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, and Uruguay stand out at the regional and international level, scoring above the OECD average.

Figure 1. OURData Index LAC, 2019



Source: OECD (2020[1])

The COVID-19 outbreak found LAC countries in a context of positive yet limited digital government maturity. The results of the DGI and OURdata Indices indicates the extent to which LAC governments are still in the transition for being digital. Similar differences in the readiness of LAC governments to use digital and data to respond to the COVID-19 crisis were observed in 2020 (Roseth, Reyes and Yee Amézaga, 2021[10]). Considering the spike of digital services availability and uptake amid the pandemic, LAC countries would need to strengthen governance frameworks for digital government to consolidate the developments achieved in the past two years for a systemic and sustainable transformation. This includes building up critical digital public goods such as data governance and sharing, digital identity systems, and digital document management systems; as well as increased awareness and actions to foster service design and user research to better understand and meet user needs (OECD-CAF, forthcoming[11]).

Digital tools and data tackling mistrust and corruption in LAC

Despite the cross-country differences in digital maturity and the regional challenges observed to enable a systemic digital transformation in LAC governments, **there are positive examples of how countries in the region have used digital tools and data to promote transparency, integrity and reinforce public trust.** By fostering strategic access and sharing of timely and high-quality data, promoting its open availability and re-use, and setting the ground for critical enablers such as digital identity, governments have prompted the public institutions' transparency and efficiency.

Advanced and open use of data for transparency and integrity

Integrity policies in the public sector can benefit from availability and advanced use of public data and then contribute to more trusted and transparent governments. Progressing towards a data-driven public sector demands governments to build solid data governance frameworks that ensure sharing and use of timely and high-quality data under clear rules and ethical principles for results to contribute to the public interest (OECD, 2019[12]; OECD, 2021[4]).

Some LAC governments are promoting and using advanced data analytics to improve their auditing and oversight functions. For example, the Federal Superior Audit Office (Auditoría Superior de la Federación, ASF) in Mexico is conducting advanced analytics to audit public tenders, integrating different data sources to identify patterns and mitigate corruption risks in public procurement. Similarly, the Audit Office of Brazil (Controladoria-Geral da União, CGU) has created a predictive model to rate each inter-departmental transfer agreements according to its associated risk. In Chile, ChileCompra is using contracting data to identify risks associated to public tenders and flag this information to relevant public sector authorities for corrective actions.

Governments are also leveraging open government data (OGD) to foster transparency in the public sector. Long-standing efforts to promote and use OGD in LAC have been reinforced by the need to enhance transparency policies amid the COVID-19 crisis. Several LAC countries have implemented dedicated OGD platforms and data visualisations to make COVID-19-related policies and actions more transparent and accountable, including data on social benefits, financial packages, and extraordinary procurement exercises (OECD, 2021[4]).

Panellists

Emilio Barriga
Special Auditor, Federal Superior Audit Office (ASF), Mexico

Aura Cifuentes
Director of Digital Government, Ministry of Information and Communication Technologies (MITIC), Colombia

Jorge Mora
Director of Digital Governance, Ministry of Science and Information Technologies (MICIT), Costa Rica

Luis Felipe Monteiro
Head of Digital Government, Ministry of Economy, Brazil

Moderator and closing remarks

Barbara Ubaldi
Head of the Digital Government and Data Unit, Public Governance Directorate, OECD

In Colombia, the platform CoronaVirus facilitated the publication and visualisation of OGD to communicate social aid packages, impact of government decisions on transport and economic reactivation. Similarly, Colombia's CompraEficiente set dedicated and fast track COVID-19 framework agreements with all contracting data fully disclosed using Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS). Efforts in Colombia to open up public data have been complemented with actions to foster data reuse, such as the data sandbox initiative, a collaborative space that encourages experimentation and stakeholder engagement for data-enabled public value creation.

The advanced and open use of public data demands **sound data governance as a key enabler.** Further alignment with whole-of-government data policies are needed for public sector organisations to implement and scale similar initiatives, facilitating data sharing and integration across government institutions while fostering trusted and ethical use (OECD, 2021[13]; OECD, 2021[4]; ILDA-CEPAL, 2021[14]).

Designing and delivering inclusive public services

Meeting the needs of citizens and businesses is essential for the public sector to foster citizens' trust. Adopting a people-driven approach when designing and delivering public services can promote inclusiveness and representativeness, helping to better understand user needs to shape government policies and public services. This includes offering different and integrated service channels for the experience of users with the public sector to be coherent regardless of their preferred mean e.g., in-person, telephone, or digital (OECD, 2020[15]).

Governments' responsiveness to listening to and meeting citizens' needs is fundamental to promote public trust (OECD, 2021[6]). **During the COVID-19 pandemic LAC governments turned to digital channels to continue providing public services.** In line with global trends, several LAC countries had to secure public service continuity by rapidly digitalising existing offline services. For example, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Panamá, and Uruguay made more than 50 services available online during the pandemic (Roseth, Reyes and Yee Amézaga, 2021[10]). Other countries like Mexico and Argentina developed AI-powered chatbots to provide timely information and guidance about the emergency (G20/OECD, 2021[8]).

Similarly, **embracing an omni-channel service delivery strategy is fundamental for governments to be responsive to citizens' needs,** securing the same service quality through all available channels. In the context of the COVID-19, Argentina deployed a gender violence reporting chatbot, providing a safe channel to report domestic violence, complementing the traditional phone line (Linea 144). Other countries have advanced in more comprehensive omni-channel service strategies, such as the case of Chile (ChileAtiende) and Uruguay (Atención a la Ciudadanía), both integrating online and offline channels for more inclusive and responsive services. However, further capacities are needed in LAC governments on service design and user research for citizens to effectively shape public services instead of the existing dominant top-down assumption of their demands and expectations (OECD-CAF, forthcoming[11]). Likewise, the speed and pressure under which countries had to react and made critical public services available using digital channels query the extent the COVID-19 crisis has been a catalyst for sustainable and systemic service transformation around user needs; or for replicating analogue (paper-based) formalities through digital means (G20/OECD, 2021[8]; OECD, 2020[5]).

In Colombia, the platform CoronaVirus facilitated the publication and visualisation of OGD to communicate social aid packages, impact of government decisions on transport and economic reactivation. Similarly, Colombia's CompraEficiente set dedicated and fast track COVID-19 framework agreements with all contracting data fully disclosed using Open Contracting Data Standard (OCDS). Efforts in Colombia to open up public data have been complemented with actions to foster data reuse, such as the data sandbox initiative, a collaborative space that encourages experimentation and stakeholder engagement for data-enabled public value creation.

Strengthening digital identity for trusted access to digital public services

Trustworthy digital tools are essential to empower citizens to benefit from the digital age. This includes giving them trusted access to digital services, for example through digital identity. **During the COVID-19 crisis, digital identity solutions have been essential to secure service continuity and enable the uptake of digital services in LAC countries.** For example, Brazil experienced a boost in digital identity usage to access public services at GOV.BR, the national central service delivery platform. The three-tier validation system embedded in Brazil's digital identity solution allowed citizens to have trusted access to more than 3,000 services online as well as to enable authentication of citizens to use private digital financial services given the integration and collaboration with the banking sector.

In the same line, Chile's ClaveÚnica, the country's digital identity solution, observed a sharp increase in the number of users and adoption to access digital services. For example, between 2020 and 2021 there was a 100% increase in active discrete digital identities of Chilean citizens, from 6M to 12M users. Similarly, the sharp uptake of ClaveÚnica triggered a 400% increase in digital-identity-enabled transactions from 6M to 30M during the first half of 2020.

The critical role of digital identity systems to promote trusted access to digital services during the COVID-19 crisis should also correspond the growing interest to enable secure cross-border service delivery in the LAC region. For this, **further international co-operation and standard-setting is needed at regional and global levels to enable portable and cross-border solutions for trusted digital identity systems.**

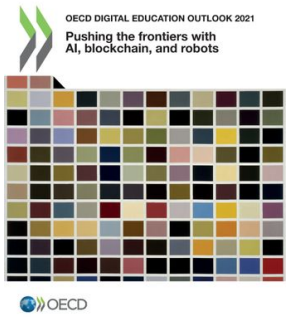
Ensuring coherence and alignment with broader digital government policies

The strategic use of digital tools and data is an opportunity for governments in the region to support policies to tackle integrity and trust issues. In line with the OECD Recommendations on Digital Government Strategies (2014[16]), **LAC governments should develop strategic approaches for the adoption and use of trusted digital tools and data that lead to a sustainable public sector transformation**. As demonstrated by the recent experiences in in Costa Rica, Chile, and Peru, embracing sound governance frameworks for digital government is essential to secure a coherent use of digital technologies and data across sectors. This implies understanding the transformative role of digital government, and fostering the co-ordination, alignment, investments and institutional capacities needed to unlock the benefits of digital tools and data in the public sector. Leveraging national digital government strategies facilitates coordination and provides a strategic roadmap to guide sectoral actions to transform public operations and services – including efforts for more transparent, accountable and trusted governments.

Similarly, national public sector data strategies (including open government data) can enable a coherent approach for data-driven value creation that leads to improved transparency and accountability of public sector institutions. As underlined in the OECD Recommendation on Enhancing Access to and Sharing of Data (2021[17]) and demonstrated during the COVID-19 crisis, LAC governments should intensify efforts to strengthening data governance frameworks to enable access, sharing and use of timely and high-quality public sector data.

Further reading

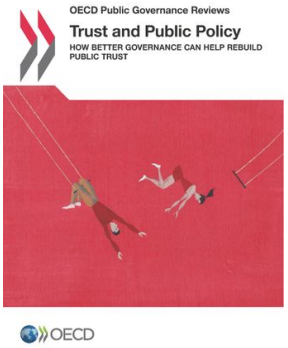
SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT



SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT



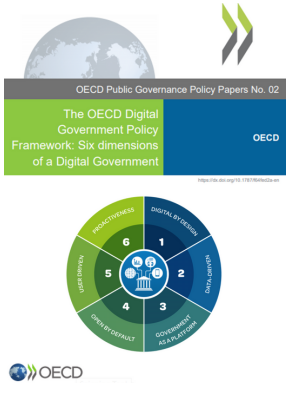
SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT



SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

SCAN TO READ
THE REPORT

References

[8] **G20/OECD (2021), "Compendium on the use of digital tools for public service continuity",** https://assets.innovazione.gov.it/1628073696-g20detfoecdcompendiumdigitaltools.pdf.

[14] **ILDA-CEPAL (2021), Apertura y uso de datos para hacer frente al COVID-19 en América Latina,** https://hdl.handle.net/11362/47172.

[3] **Latinobarómetro (2021), Informe 2021: Adiós a Macondo, Latinobarómetro, Santiago de Chile,** https://www.latinobarometro.org.

[13] **OECD (2021), Good Practice Principles on Data Ethics in the Public Sector,** https://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/good-practice-principles-for-data-ethics-in-the-public-sector.html

[6] **OECD (2021), Government at a Glance 2021, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://doi.org/10.1787/1c258f55-en.

[4] **OECD (2021), Open Data in action: Initiatives during the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic,** http://www.oecd.org/digital/digital-government/use-of-open-government-data-to-address-covid19-outbreak.htm.

[17] **OECD (2021), Recommendation of the Council on Enhancing Access to and Sharing of Data,** https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0463 (accessed on 4 November 2021).

[2] **OECD (2020), COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean: An overview of government responses to the crisis, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/0a2dee41-en.

[15] **OECD (2020), Digital Government in Chile – Improving Public Service Design and Delivery, OECD Digital Government Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/b94582e8-en.

[9] **OECD (2020), Digital Government Index (DGI): 2019 Results, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://doi.org/10.1787/14e1c5e8-en-fr.

[1] **OECD (2020), Government at a Glance: Latin America and the Caribbean 2020, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/13130fbb-en.

[5] **OECD (2020), The Covid-19 crisis: A catalyst for government transformation?,** http://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-covid-19-crisis-a-catalyst-for-government-transformation-1d0c0788/.

[20] **OECD (2020), The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: Six dimensions of a Digital Government, OECD Publishing,** https://doi.org/10.1787/f64fed2a-en.

[12] **OECD (2019), The Path to Becoming a Data-Driven Public Sector, OECD Digital Government Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/059814a7-en.

[16] **OECD (2014), Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies,** https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0406.

[11] **OECD-CAF (forthcoming), Digital Government Review of Latin America and the Caribbean.**

[10] **Roseth, B., A. Reyes and K. Yee Amézaga (2021), Servicios públicos y gobierno digital durante la pandemia: Perspectivas de los ciudadanos, los funcionarios y las instituciones públicas, Inter-American Development Bank,** http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0003122.

[7] **Welby, B. (2019), "The impact of digital government on citizen well-being", OECD Working Papers on Public Governance, No. 32, OECD Publishing, Paris,** https://doi.org/10.1787/24bac82f-en.

OECD
BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES