

Digital Governance Fact Sheet

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- ✓ More members of the [Open Government Partnership \(OGP\)](#) are promoting transparency, participation, and accountability in the use and design of digital technology in the public sector than ever before.
- ✓ Of the few commitments that have been implemented in this area, many have been highly effective.
- ✓ OGP members should aim to use their action plans to address digital governance issues, such as by making the digital transformation more inclusive, safeguarding against technology misuse, and protecting civic space online.

WHY DIGITAL GOVERNANCE?

While members have made commitments that use technology to streamline government processes since OGP was established in 2011, attention must also be given to the potential risks and governance required of these new digital tools. New digital technologies are allowing citizens to become more active participants in democracy and governments to become more transparent, participatory, and accountable. But issues like unregulated digital political campaigns, discriminatory algorithms, and digital surveillance have shown that open government and democratic processes can be easily undermined by the misuse of technology. The COVID-19 health crisis has further demonstrated how digital technologies can be both used as a critical tool for disseminating information and a tool for stifling democratic dissent.

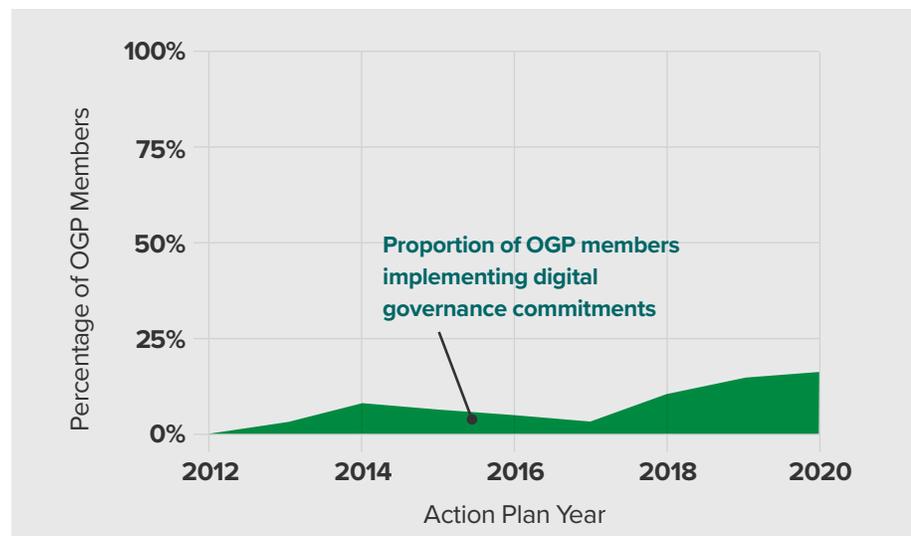
STATUS QUO

- **Surveillance during the pandemic:** Although many countries are using location and app data in response to the pandemic, emergency measures in about one in three OGP countries specifically reference using surveillance.
- **Up and coming:** Digital governance is the second-fastest growing policy area in current OGP action plans. Specifically, more members are focusing on accountability surrounding government use of algorithms and artificial intelligence (AI).
- **Emphasis on transparency:** Nearly all digital governance commitments involve transparency. About half include participatory elements, whereas almost none involve public accountability.

Commitment data analyzes all commitments through the 2020 action plan cycle. As of 2020, OGP consisted of 98 national and local members.

COMMITMENT PROGRESS

OGP members are making more digital governance commitments in recent years (see figure below). Currently, 8 OGP members are implementing digital governance commitments from their 2019 or 2020 action plans. Altogether, under 20 percent of members have made 27 total digital governance commitments since OGP was established in 2011.



WHAT ARE OGP MEMBERS DOING?

- Publishing data on government surveillance activities
- Making government algorithms publicly available
- Protecting digital rights and privacy

WHERE TO NEXT

The following recommendations summarize key actions for OGP members to implement:

Promote Inclusive Digital Transformation and Innovation

- Make digital citizen engagement inclusive by ensuring that internet access is affordable and accessible for all.
- Use digital tools to create adequate feedback mechanisms for monitoring of public services.
- Publish government information in an open format to increase accessibility and interoperability across various datasets.

Safeguard Against Misuse of Digital Technologies

- Implement appropriate data management policies that are aligned with global norms with regard to protecting data rights, use, storage, and privacy.
- Create policies that increase transparency, openness, and oversight on the use of automated decision-making systems in the public sector.
- Develop regulations for online political advertising, and establish oversight agencies to determine what constitutes acceptable political advertisements.

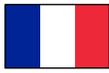
Protect Civic Space Online

- Introduce policies to tackle disinformation and misuse of social media platforms and implement programs that build capacities of citizens to increase media literacy.
- Create policies to limit abusive surveillance and safeguard against censorship and arbitrary shutdowns.
- Establish platform procedures to prevent and address online harassment.



NOTABLE COMMITMENTS

Recent Results

 **France - Opening Artificial Intelligence Lab for Public Sector (2018)**

As part of their 2018 action plan, France set up a lab for in-house experts to assist government agencies in their efforts to use artificial intelligence. Agencies submitted proposals for AI projects, and 21 proposals were selected by the lab through 2019 and 2020. Lab experts helped agencies anticipate the effects of AI on public administration, such as the Nuclear Safety Agency's use of inspection data and the Council of State's automatic identification of cases that refer to the same decision.

Commitments to Watch

 **Mexico - Improving Democratic Controls on Interventions of Private Communications (2019)**

In 2017, a [New York Times article](#) revealed that the Mexican government had spent US\$80 million over 18 months on spyware to surveil lawyers, journalists, and human rights defenders. Mexico's 2019 commitment seeks to address the lack of regulation and supervision of government digital surveillance. The commitment will establish a group of experts from a variety of sectors and government agencies to analyze and modify regulations on the use of surveillance in private communications.

 **Netherlands - Increasing Transparency of Government Algorithms (2020)**

The Netherlands is improving the supervision of the government's use of algorithms through their 2020 action plan. The commitment includes the development of an algorithm and human rights impact assessment and improvements in the transparency of algorithm procurement.

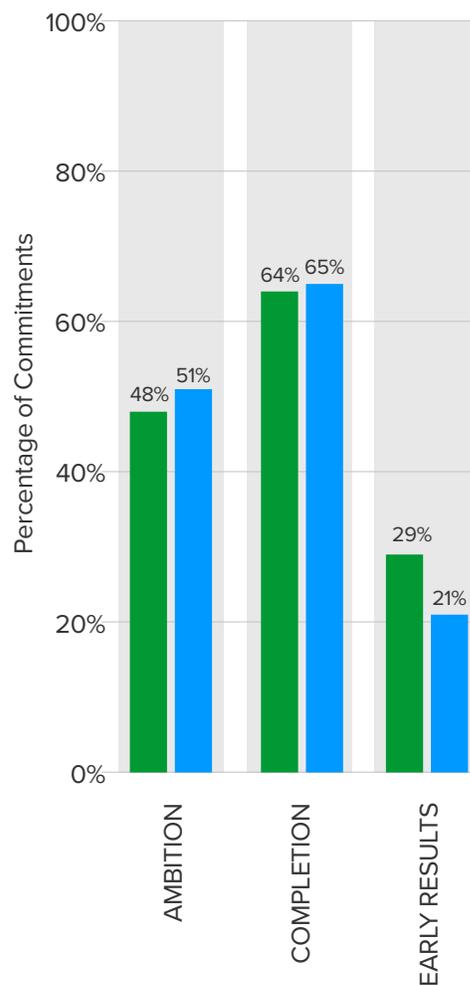
 **Spain - Strengthening Systems of Public Integrity (2020)**

Spain's 2020-2024 action plan includes a commitment to create policies and tools that strengthen integrity and prevent corruption within the government. An important milestone is the creation of guides for the use of artificial intelligence in the public sector. Additionally, the commitment includes the establishment of a Data and Ethics in Innovation Center, which will offer recommendations and advise civil servants on the ethical use of new technologies in government practices.

IRM QUICK STATS

According to OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), digital governance commitments show stronger early results than the average OGP commitment, but perform similarly on ambition and completion.*

Commitment Performance



 Digital Governance commitments

 All OGP commitments

* sample size < 50

Ambition - Ambitious commitments are those that the IRM finds would make transformative changes if fully implemented.

Early Results - Strong early results indicate the commitment made significant improvements to government openness.