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.

✅ However, commitments in this area tend to show lower ambition, meaning the potential to create demonstrable improvements in government practices, than the average OGP commitment.

✅ 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.

STATUS QUO

➜ **Surveillance during the pandemic:** Although many countries used location and app data in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency measures in about one in three OGP countries specifically referenced using surveillance.

➜ **Up and coming:** Digital governance is the 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.
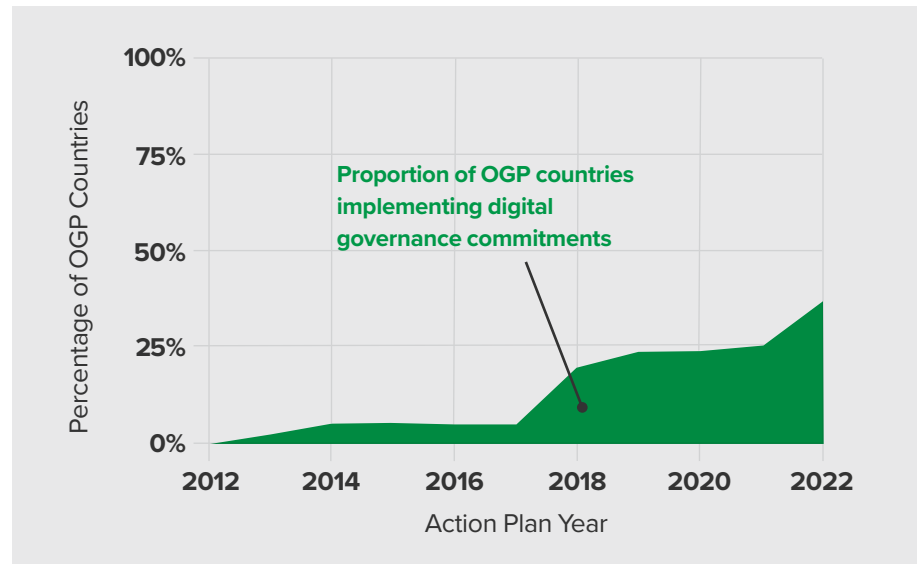
This fact sheet covers all commitments submitted as of June 30, 2023. As of this date, OGP consisted of 76 national and 104 local members.

Open
Government
Partnership

COMMITMENT PROGRESS

OGP countries are making more digital governance commitments than ever before (see figure below*). Over one-third of active national action plans currently include a digital governance commitment. Altogether, 28 OGP countries and four local jurisdictions members have made a total of 62 digital governance commitments since OGP was established in 2011.

Figure displays commitment trends at the national level due to recent growth in local members.

Proportion of OGP countries implementing digital governance commitments

Percentage of OGP Countries

Action Plan Year

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

New Zealand - Creating an Algorithm Charter (2018)

Following months of information-gathering and public consultations, Statistics New Zealand released a voluntary Algorithm Charter for Aotearoa New Zealand, which gained 27 government agency signatories by October 2021. The Charter, published in both English and te Reo Māori, sets standards for safe and ethical use of algorithms by public-sector agencies and guidance for meeting transparency and accountability objectives. New Zealand is continuing to refine the Charter through its 2022-2024 OGP action plan.

Netherlands - Increasing Transparency of Government Algorithms (2020)

In 2021, the Netherlands published an Impact Assessment Human Rights and Algorithms tool that can be used to guide policymakers' discussions on whether to develop an algorithmic government application. The government also launched an online algorithm register where government agencies publish the algorithms they use. As of April 2023, there are 109 algorithms on the register.

Commitments to Watch

Croatia - Conducting Data Protection Trainings (2022)

As part of the implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Croatia committed to training relevant public servants and officials on personal data protection and how to properly apply GDPR provisions. These training sessions will include detailed overviews of the legal foundations for processing personal data, the roles of controllers and processors, remedies, and potential liabilities and sanctions.
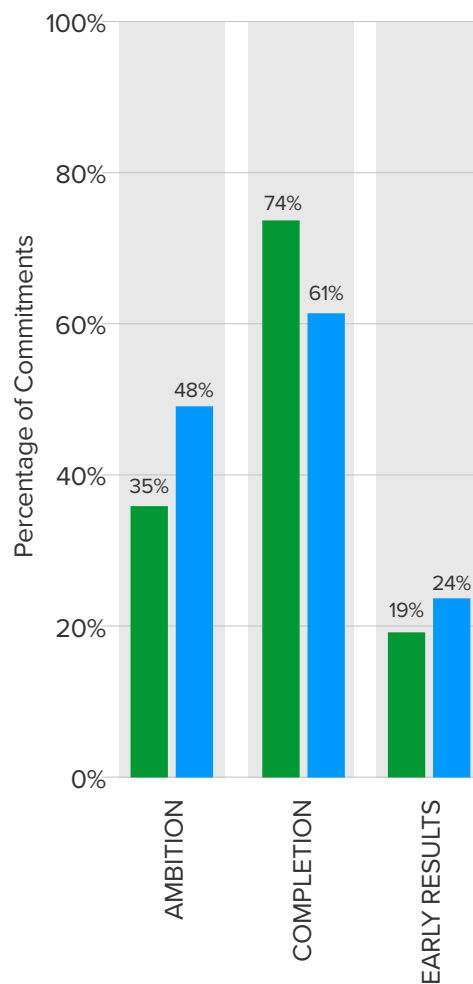
Uruguay - Creating an Artificial Intelligence Observatory (2022)

Uruguay committed to creating an Artificial Intelligence Observatory that promotes the ethical, responsible, safe, and reliable use of AI. This includes implementing an open space for exchange between different actors, generating recommendations for AI use and transparency, and publishing government AI use cases.

IRM QUICK STATS

According to OGP's Independent Reporting Mechanism (IRM), digital governance commitments show stronger completion rates than the average OGP commitment but tend to have much lower ambition.*

Commitment Performance

Legend:
- Digital governance commitments
- All OGP commitments

Chart data (Percentage of Commitments):
- AMBITION: 35% (Digital governance), 48% (All OGP)
- COMPLETION: 74% (Digital governance), 61% (All OGP)
- EARLY RESULTS: 19% (Digital governance), 24% (All OGP)

sample size < 50

Ambition - Ambitious commitments are those that have substantial potential for results, according to the IRM.

Completion - Completed commitments indicate that the commitment was substantially or fully implemented within the action plan period.

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