

The risk of corruption is significantly heightened in a secretive environment. Facilitating the reporting of misconduct can substantially help monitor compliance and detect misconduct. OECD member countries are increasingly providing procedures for public officials to “blow the whistle” or raise concerns about suspected misconduct of other public officials and the violation of laws. Whistle-blowing is seen as a manifestation of an open organisational culture where public officials are aware of and have confidence in procedures to report their concerns. It is also seen as a solution to safeguard the public interest in order to maintain confidence in public organisations. Although whistle-blowing has remained a *bona fide* action to defend the public interest, a few countries, for example Korea, have also introduced financial incentives to facilitate whistle-blowing.

Since 2000, many OECD member countries have developed mechanisms to allow public officials to more easily expose misconduct. As of 2009, 29 OECD member countries either oblige their public officials to report misconduct and/or provide procedures to facilitate reporting, compared with 21 countries in 2000. In general, reporting procedures are defined in legal provisions, and many countries supplement these legal provisions with internal rules. For example, in Australia, the Public Service Regulations describe the minimum requirements for whistle-blowing programmes, while the heads of public organisations must establish specific procedures for alleged breaches of the code of conduct. In addition, in some OECD member countries, public officials are obliged by law to report misconduct or any crime, including corruption. For example, Article 40 of the French Penal Procedure Code makes it compulsory for public officials to report suspected violations of the law, including fraud and corruption, to the public prosecutor.

Providing adequate protection, including legal safeguards and institutional assistance to whistle-blowers, has become a serious concern of OECD member countries. As of 2009, almost 90% of all OECD member countries provide some sort of protection to whistle-blowers, most often legal. Several countries provide anonymity and others protect whistle-blowers against dismissal or other forms of retaliation.

Methodology and definitions

Whistle-blowers are persons who expose wrongdoing in the public service. Data represent central government laws, policies or organisational rules on whistle-blowing that were in place in 2000 and 2009, including procedures and protection for whistle-blowers. Data for 2000 were collected by the OECD via a survey and were originally published in *Trust in Government* (2000). Respondents to the survey were OECD member country delegates in charge of integrity in central government. Data were updated in 2009 via a survey completed by members of the OECD Expert Group on Conflict of Interest. A total of 29 OECD member countries responded to both the 2000 and 2009 surveys. Thus, the data presented in 26.1 and 26.2 represent the percentage of the 29 countries for which data are available in 2000 and 2009 that answered the survey question affirmatively. Annex D provides data for each country on the procedures in place for public officials to report misconduct and the types of protection offered. It also provides data for the Slovak Republic, which only answered the 2009 version of the survey.

Further reading

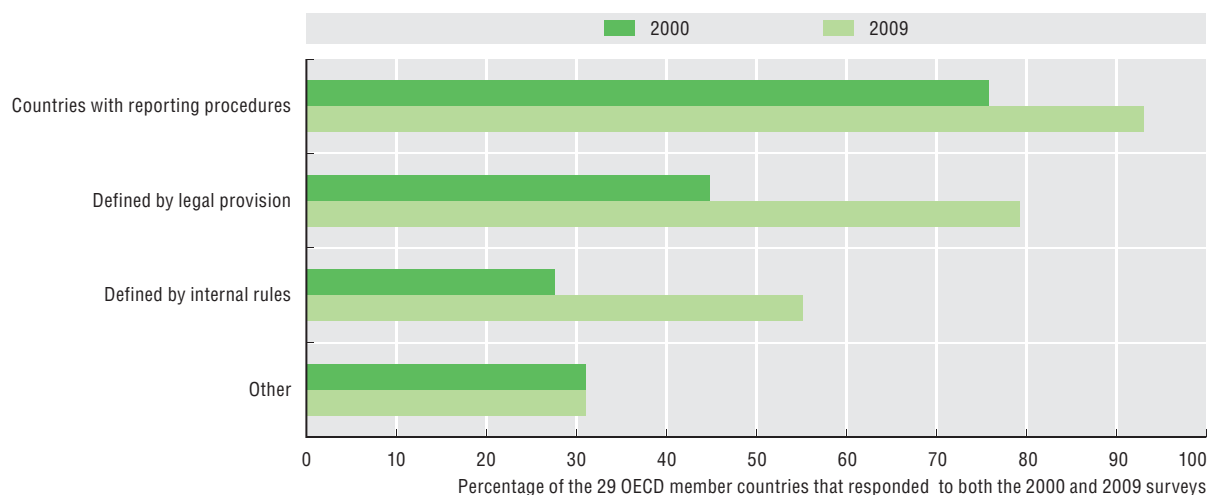
- Brown, A.J. (ed.) (2008), *Whistle-blowing in the Australian Public Sector: Enhancing the Theory and Practice of Internal Witness Management in Public Sector Organisations*, ANU E-Press, Australian National University, Canberra.
- OECD (2000), *Trust in Government: Ethics Measures in OECD Countries*, OECD, Paris.

Note

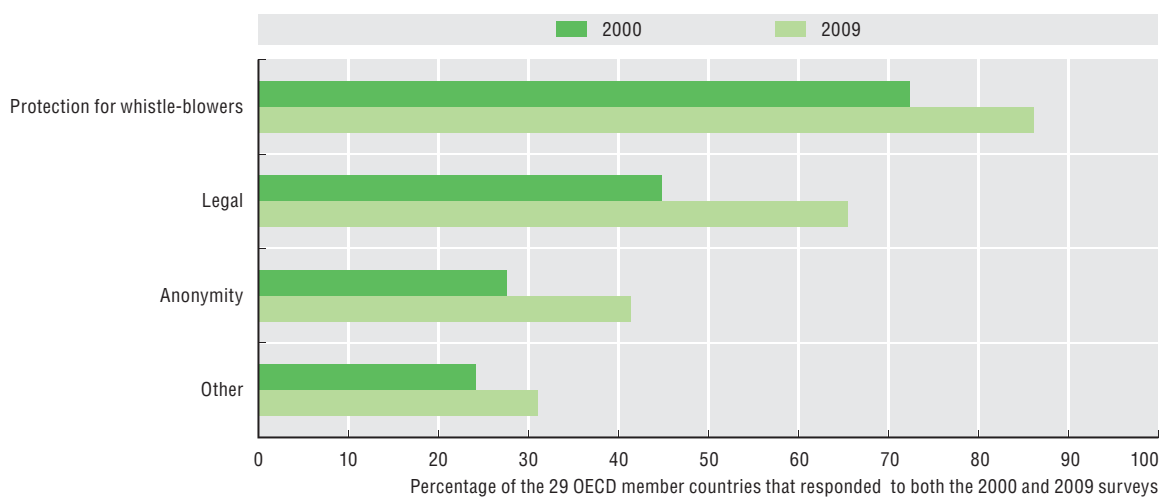
Data are not available for the Slovak Republic.

26. Public interest disclosure: Whistle-blowing

26.1 Procedures for public officials to report misconduct (2000 and 2009)

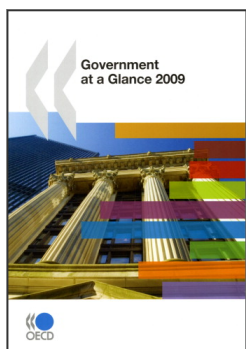


26.2 Countries that offer protection for whistle-blowers (2000 and 2009)



Source: OECD Survey on Integrity (2000 and 2009).

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