

Chapter 1

Build, reinforce and protect: Democratic resilience in an era of multiple crises

Over many decades democratic governance has proven itself to be the best institutional system for protecting and promoting individual rights and freedoms while allowing long-term sustainable gains in wellbeing. At the OECD Ministerial on “Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy” in November 2022, ministers and high-level representatives from the 38 OECD countries, the European Union, as well as some OECD accession countries re-affirmed that “democracy remains the system of government best placed to ensure inclusive, prosperous, sustainable and peaceful societies through constant self-assessment and self-improvement.” (OECD, 2022_[1])

In recent years, democracies have faced a series of shocks, and challenges to economic and democratic resilience. Russia’s unprovoked war of aggression against Ukraine and the global COVID-19 pandemic have had substantial effects on public welfare in OECD countries. These came after many countries had already experienced prolonged periods of social, political and economic stress as societies worked through the long tail of effects from the global financial crisis of 2009. In OECD countries, governments and democratic systems have been at the centre of the response to these crises. In many cases, they have remained resilient and effective, working at scale and speed to contain and then reverse the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2021_[2]) and to respond to Russia’s war against Ukraine and the resulting economic effects in 2022, including rising prices.

However, as countries fight to emerge from the largest health, economic and social crises in decades and prepare for the current and future environmental challenges, the public in OECD countries are evenly split between people who trust their national government and those who do not (OECD, 2022_[3]), **only slightly better than in the aftermath of the global financial crisis.** Low voter turnout, rising numbers of citizens dissociating themselves from traditional democratic processes, increasing mis- and disinformation, and greater political polarisation are undermining democratic resilience and the ability of governments to prepare for and respond to external shocks. OECD Ministers have already stressed that “in the current socioeconomic, climate, digital and geopolitical environment, the democratic model of government needs to be both deepened and protected.” (OECD, 2022_[1]) In particular, they highlighted the parallel trends of increased uncertainty and crisis events, alongside challenges to democracy from within and outside, emphasising the need to invest in strengthening our democracies as well as our economic and social policy responses.

Maintaining democratic resilience is key to continued sustainable long-term gains in wellbeing. In its strictest sense, democratic resilience means preventing democracies from becoming undemocratic. However, it also refers to maintaining high-quality institutions ensuring representative government and participatory engagement, respect for fundamental rights, checks on government, and the support of an impartial administration. Trust in public institutions is particularly important for democratic resilience. In democracies, trust levels naturally fluctuate. It is the continuous search for trust which guarantees that democratic governments continuously improve, allows stable business conditions, prevents corruption, ensures the credibility of systems of international rules, thus fostering innovation and sustainable business investment. In return, long-term low levels of trust, dissatisfaction

with public institutions and political polarisation can undermine governments' capacity to implement needed structural reforms. To support growth and continue to make our societies and economies stronger, fairer and more resilient to shocks sound public governance and trust are needed to implement the ambitious combination of currently required climate, energy, macroeconomic, trade, tax, social, and education policies (OECD, 2022_[4]). They will contribute to the wider acceptance of policies, smarter and better-targeted public spending and investments, more effective structural reforms, more inclusive dialogue leading to policies and services that are more responsive to needs, and the efficient and fair use of public resources.

The management of multiple overlapping crises creates specific challenges for maintaining democratic resilience. Democracies operate using a complex system of checks and balances to promote debate, aggregate interests, identify which solutions have broad support and transparently review how public institutions are delivering. In addition to supporting fundamental rights, democracies deliver because they do more to understand and balance the needs of the public than any other form of government, and because governments are held accountable for delivering. However, their complexity can make them slower to operate, and allows various points of potential failure. Crises can undermine democracies through exactly these channels. On the one hand, the need for rapid responses can reduce participation in public life and the exercise of civil liberties. This can lead the public to experience a loss of “voice” and to disassociate from democratic processes. On the other hand, failing to rapidly or effectively respond to a crisis can undermine perceptions of the competence and values of public institutions. Uneven recovery can exacerbate feelings of being excluded or “left behind”. Moreover, in an open society, crises can create fertile ground for the spread of mis- and disinformation, and for malicious actors to gain undue influence. All of these failings can undermine trust in democratic institutions and turn people towards alternative models of government. These often appeal by promising to deliver more quickly, or by offering simple solutions to complex policy challenges. Populism, nationalism and autocratic tendencies thrive during crises.

Risks to democratic resilience from crises and shocks are unlikely to dissipate. More frequent shocks can be expected in an interconnected world with major environmental challenges. Countries are already facing an energy crisis and the existential climate crisis. They also face issues such as ageing populations and new technologies, which involve deep structural societal changes. Moreover, recent shocks have demonstrated how, in an interconnected world, events can cascade, generating major and unexpected effects on economies, democracies and public welfare.

OECD countries have already committed to a broad set of actions to respond to some of the key governance challenges to democracy as part of an ongoing agenda. The Luxembourg Declaration on Building Trust and Reinforcing Democracy presents a way forward for OECD countries to work together to build trust and reinforce democracy. It is based on five pillars: 1) combatting misinformation and disinformation; 2) enhancing participation, representation and openness; 3) embracing the global responsibilities of public institutions; 4) governing green; and 5) transforming public governance for digital democracy (OECD, 2022_[1]). The OECD Reinforcing Democracy initiative has further defined the main challenges to governments in the current environment and the way forward (OECD, 2022_[5]).

This chapter proposes how governments can best strengthen democratic resilience in the context of multiple crises, safeguarding our democracies for the long term. The section that follows outlines how overlapping crises risk undermining perceptions of competence

and values on which public trust in democratic government is based. While acknowledging that each country has a unique set of historical, political and institutional circumstances, the next section then explores three dimensions for action: 1) **Build** on democratic strengths in participation and representation, inclusion, innovation and co-operation; 2) **Reinforce** the key governance competencies needed to support delivery in the context of multiple crisis; and 3) **Protect** against active threats to public trust arising from failings in public integrity and mis- or disinformation. Addressed jointly, these will work to reinforce our democracies in the face of crises and ensure that we leave healthy democracies for future generations.

Democratic governance in an uncertain world

An era of multiple crises

Many OECD countries have faced significant shocks to social and economic stability in recent years. The first edition of *Government at a Glance* was published in 2009, in the closing stages of the global financial crisis. The very first focus chapter laid out priority areas for public governance reform as governments recovered from the crisis and steered back towards a more stable and predictable operating environment. However, 2009 did not mark the point of return to business as usual. Rather, it marked the point of departure into an era punctuated by multiple crises, which have tended to unfold with increasing intensity ever since.

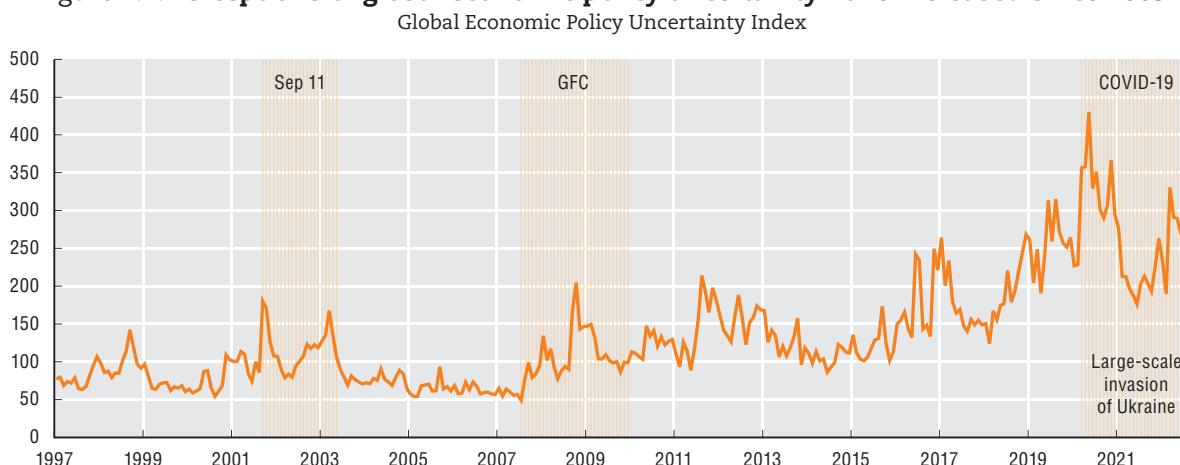
The global financial crisis created major economic shocks in many OECD countries, with significant knock-on effects for the economic and social outcomes the public experienced. Many OECD countries experienced major recessions, followed by years of budget consolidation and low growth (IMF, 2018^[6]) and, in a number of cases, periods of stagnant or falling living standards. In 2020, the world experienced the largest crisis since World War 2 with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic caused economic activity to contract in 90% of countries, and the world economy to shrink by about 3% (World Bank, 2022^[7]). This has been swiftly followed by Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The invasion has led to a massive energy price shock, a surge in inflation to levels not experienced since the 1970s and a fall in living standards in many OECD countries (OECD, 2022^[4]). Although more positive signs have now started to appear, global growth is still projected to remain below trend in 2023 and 2024. Inflation is projected to moderate gradually, but to remain elevated until the second half of 2024 in most countries (OECD, 2023^[8]).

Figure 1.1 graphs perceptions of the unfolding and historically unusual levels of disruption, volatility and uncertainty experienced since 2009, using the Global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index. This index examines the intensity of media discussion of policy-related economic uncertainty in 20 major economies, primarily OECD countries, and shows substantive jumps during high-profile disruptions. More importantly, as the figure shows, there has been an upward trend in discussions of uncertainty since 2009, as multiple and increasingly overlapping crises and shocks took place.

Regular crises are now likely to be a continuing feature, rather than a transitory phenomenon. Ongoing and linked crises are likely to become a structural element of governments' operating environment (Tooze, 2022^[9]). Global heating is increasing both the probability and intensity of natural disasters. The frequency of climate- and weather-related disasters (e.g. droughts, storms, cyclones, hurricanes, typhoons and extreme temperatures) nearly quadrupled from the 1970s to the 2010s. Hydrological disasters (e.g. floods) were six times more frequent globally in the 2000s than the 1970s (FAO, 2021^[10]). Recent findings

suggest that many climate “tipping points” can be crossed, with a considerably higher probability and at much lower levels of heating than previously assumed, and are an imminent threat (OECD, 2022^[11]). Economic and technological change may create shocks to economic security, especially for the most vulnerable: 14% of existing jobs could disappear as a result of automation in the next 15-20 years, and 32% are likely to change radically as tasks are automated (OECD, 2019^[12]). Workers with poor digital skills may find it more difficult to shift to non-automatable, higher value-added tasks within their occupations (Georgieff and Hye, 2021^[13]). These shifts will occur in societies where many households already have limited ability to withstand economic uncertainty. Inequality in OECD countries is now at its highest level for the past half century (OECD, 2023^[14]). More than one-third of households in OECD countries are at risk of falling into poverty (OECD, 2020^[15]).

Figure 1.1. **Perceptions of global economic policy uncertainty have increased since 2009**



Note: The Global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index is a standardised measure that quantifies countries’ newspaper coverage of policy-related economic uncertainty. The Global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index is a GDP-weighted average of 20 national indices: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, China, France, Germany, Greece, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Each national index is normalised to a mean of 100 before calculating the global index as the GDP-weighted average of monthly national indices. For additional details, including an analysis of the performance of the model, see Baker, Bloom and Davis (2016^[16]).

Source: Global Economic Policy Uncertainty Index: Current Price Adjusted GDP [GEPUCURRENT], retrieved from FRED, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2 December 2022, <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/GEPUCURRENT>.

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When shocks occur, they are more likely than before to have cascading and unexpected consequences. The world has developed high level of interconnectedness of economies, trade, finance, populations and information flows. Highly connected and open economies and societies have brought very substantial benefits for the public’s economic welfare and life opportunities. However, a side-effect of high inter-connectedness can be that when shocks or crises arise, they can have cascading effects, sometimes in rapid and unexpected ways. Disturbances and changes in one area can quickly affect others through both known and unexpected connections, in unforeseen ways. For example, disruptions in a single sector of the economy, even if individually small, may lead to substantially larger aggregate shocks (Acemoglu et al., 2012^[17]). This may be within one country or across countries. In the worst case, the combination of interconnectivity and unpredictability can lead to rapid, cascading, multiple failures (Hynes et al., 2020^[18]). This “cascade” effect has been a prominent feature of both the GFC (Haldane, 2013^[19]) and the COVID-19 pandemic (Hynes et al., 2020^[18]).

Unfortunately, cascading and unpredictable effects may increasingly become a feature of the climate crisis. The effects of climate change can cause individual disasters to cascade into social and economic outcomes (OECD, 2022^[11]). Once crossed, major large-scale tipping points can have biophysical impacts on ecosystems, water and food systems. These cause socio-economic impacts, including on livelihoods and health, which in turn can potentially induce political and social instability (Franzke et al., 2022^[20]; Black et al., 2022^[21]).

Governments also face constraints on their ability to address future shocks, due to the accrued effects (“scarring”) from past crises. Many states built up high levels of public debt to finance their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which are now constraining their ability to finance large and unexpected crisis responses in future (Chapter 11). Operating under multiple crises for an extended period also takes its toll in more subtle ways, such as “burnout” of public officials and workers (Scieपुरa and Linos, 2020^[22]), or a loss of focus on strategic priorities (Laybourn, Throp and Sherman, 2023^[23]). This is partly offset by lessons learned from past crises that have improved some aspects of government capabilities, such as the skillset of public servants, crisis management procedures or relevant regulations. The overall effect will thus depend on the characteristics of future crises, and the quality of learning from past ones.

Crisis, trust and democratic resilience

Multiple or recurrent crises can reduce democratic resilience by undermining trust in public institutions. In democratic countries, trust is a key indicator of how people perceive the quality of, and how they associate with, public institutions. It is a key barometer of perceptions of public institutions in democracies for two reasons. First, accurate measures of trust are possible in democracies because, unlike in autocracies, the public have freedom to report whether they trust their government. Second, democracies are characterised by transparent review of the performance of public institutions and open debate on policy.

Trust in democratic public institutions is driven by two complementary components: competence and values. Competence means having the ability, capacity and good judgement required to deliver on a given mandate. Public institutions must demonstrate competence by being responsive to the needs of the public and reliable in assessing evolving challenges, minimising uncertainties and implementing future-oriented policies. Values are the underlying intentions and principles that guide governments’ actions. To be trusted, public institutions must demonstrate their values by being seen to be work with openness: providing information; consulting, listening and responding to stakeholders; and ensuring everyone has equal opportunity to effectively participate in the institutions of representative democracy. They must work with integrity, by aligning with ethical values, principles and norms to safeguard the public interest, and with fairness, by improving living conditions for all and providing consistent treatment regardless of people’s backgrounds or characteristics (Brezzini et al., 2021^[24]).

Crisis can weaken trust in public institutions by undermining perceptions of the values of public institutions. This effect is seen most dramatically when expediency in the face of an emergency leads to the suspension of standards for consultation, transparency, oversight and even civil liberties. During COVID-19, emergency measures translated into extensive law-making powers for the executive in most OECD members, sometimes with limited or almost no external or parliamentary scrutiny (OECD, 2022^[25]). Even if reversed, measures of this kind may pose risks for public perceptions of the values of public institutions. Crisis

can also create conditions in which self-interested and corrupt actors, and malicious actors actively seeking to undermine governments in democratic countries, can exploit loopholes in public integrity standards to engage in corruption and gain undue influence.

Crises can also undermine public trust by undermining perceptions of competence. Crisis response and recovery requires solving complex and often unexpected problems at speed. These are prime conditions for creating policy failures, or uneven or ineffective responses, with knock-on effects for trust in institutions in democracies where difficulties for governments to deliver come fast into the open. Government reliability in protecting the public from economic shocks has a direct impact on trust in public institutions. The level of trust in public institutions among those who feel they are in a financially precarious situation (34.6%) is much lower than among people with fewer financial worries (51.2%) (OECD, 2022^[3]). More broadly, In several recent crises, public expectations about future economic prospects have been shown to affect overall satisfaction with democracy (De Simone et al., 2021^[26]; Devine, 2019^[27]).

Trust in public institutions has been relatively resilient across the OECD during recent crises, including COVID-19. After the financial crisis of 2009, trust fell to a low ebb in 2012. While confidence in national governments followed different trends in different OECD countries over the last 15 years, the data indicate it took about a decade on average for public trust to recover from the 2009 crisis. In contrast, while trust levels varied substantially across OECD countries during the COVID-19 pandemic, the overall average in 2021 had not fallen (Figure 2.3).

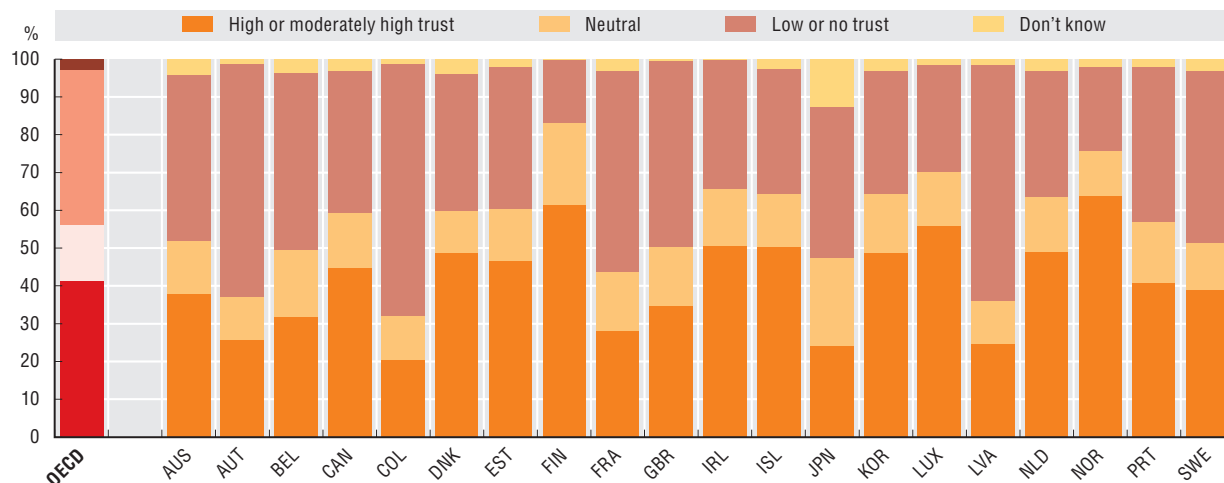
Nonetheless, just over four in ten people indicate high or moderately high trust in their national government. In 2021, the first OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions found that only about four in ten respondents (41.4%), on average, reported trusting their national government highly or moderately (Figure 1.2). Moreover, there are significant differences in trust levels across population groups. Across OECD countries, women, young people and those with lower levels of education and income report less trust in government (Figure 2.2). Differences in trust in public institutions are reinforced by underlying inequalities in society, and not all groups view government as working well for them.

Levels of trust also vary widely across countries and institutions. Law and order institutions are on average the most trusted. Half of respondents (50.2%), on average, say they trust the civil service highly or moderately. Slightly less than half (46.9%) say they trust their local government highly or moderately (Figure 2.1).

In OECD countries, people tend to view public institutions as reliable, and are broadly content with public services. Chapter 3 examines satisfaction with public services. Most people in OECD countries report being satisfied with their healthcare system (68%, Figure 3.2), their education system (67%, Figure 3.2) and with administrative services provided by their governments (63%, Figure 3.3). Moreover, most OECD countries are performing reasonably well in public perceptions of government reliability, i.e. its ability to anticipate people's needs and minimise economic, social and political uncertainty. Notably, in the context of the COVID-19 crisis, only one-third are concerned that their government would not be prepared for a future pandemic (OECD, 2022^[3]). People also tend to trust government with their data and believe that it is likely to only use that data for legitimate purposes (Figure 2.5). Perceptions of the reliability of public institutions are key determinants of trust in the government and the civil service (Figure 2.4).

Figure 1.2. **Just over four in ten people indicate high or moderately high trust in their national government**

Share of respondents who indicate different levels of trust in their national government (on a 0-10 scale), 2021



Note: Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question “On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust the national government?” The OECD Trust Survey aggregates 11-point response scales as follows: 0-4 = Low / unlikely; 5 = Neutral; 6-10 = High / likely. Don’t know is a separate category. Mexico and New Zealand are excluded from the figure as the question “on trust in national government” is not asked. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries. For more detailed information, please find the survey method document at <http://oe.cd/trust>.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>) (OECD, 2022_[31]).

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However, many express concerns about responsiveness, openness and integrity in government. Few people see their government as responsive to their needs and wants, and say it falls short of their expectations on participation, representation and public integrity. On average, less than half of respondents expect that their government would improve a poorly performing service, implement an innovative idea or change a national policy in response to public demands. Fewer than one-third believe that the government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation (OECD, 2022_[31]). In open feedback, many people raised issues of “corruption”, “influence” and “power” as factors behind low trust in public institutions (OECD, 2023_[28]). The feeling of having a political voice is a key driver of trust in public institutions across national and local government and the civil service. On average, trust in the government among people who feel they have a say in the political system is 43 percentage points higher than among those who feel they do not (Figure 2.2).

Risks to democratic resilience are real: globally, the extent and quality of democracy has fallen over the past decade or more. Papada and colleagues (2023_[29]) estimate that, since around 2012, the degree of democracy enjoyed by the average global citizen has deteriorated to levels experienced in 1986, before the collapse of the Soviet Union and the wave of democratisation in the 1990s. Freedom House (2023_[30]) estimates that the number of countries with falling standards of democracy has been greater than the number with improving standards for each of the past 17 years. Similarly, International IDEA (2022_[31]) suggests that the number of countries moving towards authoritarianism in 2022 was more than double the number moving towards democracy.

Democratic standards have typically altered little in most OECD countries (Papada et al., 2023_[29]). However, in an interconnected world, no country is fully insulated from risks to democratic resilience, which are also apparent in OECD countries. A recent study of 20 mainly

OECD countries found that 48% of respondents were not satisfied with how democracy was working in their country (Pew Research Center, 2022^[32]). In the broadest sense, public support for democracy is an important determinant of its resilience (Claassen, 2019^[33]). Aspects of public governance which influence trust in public institutions can also influence satisfaction with democracy (Dahlberg and Holmberg, 2013^[34]). Failures in democratic governance are a key route through which the quality of democracy can fall over time (Diamond, 2020^[35]).

Supporting democratic resilience

To safeguard democratic resilience in the multi-crises environment, governments must take decisive steps to support trust in public institutions over the long-term. Democracies, characterised by checks and balances, are in a competition of ideas with governance models which advocate apparently quicker or simpler ways of responding to crises. Governments cannot safeguard economic and democratic resilience solely by relying on contingency planning and occasional exceptional responses. Governments must put in place public governance processes and standards which will help to systematically maintain and improve trust in institutions in a crisis environment. Action now is an investment in cementing democratic resilience for the long-term and for future generations. Key dimensions for action are shown in Figure 1.3.

Figure 1.3. **Dimensions for action to support democratic resilience**



Source: OECD Illustration.

First, OECD countries should **build on democratic strengths** to drive demonstrably better outcomes for the public, in particular on the major challenges of addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. This means making greater use of citizens' voices to build solid consensus, particularly by using more advanced participation and representation tools; ensuring all groups in society are included; harnessing openness, innovation, learning and adaptability to seek solutions in an evolving environment; and building international co-operation so countries can mutually support each other. Importantly, it means better institutionalising these capabilities, to ensure they work effectively and rapidly to support decision making in a fast-moving environment. Second, governments should **reinforce key competencies to handle crises**. This means enhancing coherence, prioritisation and foresight in setting policy; maintaining resilient public finances, supply chains and infrastructure; and building flexible capacity, resources and skills in the public sector. Finally, governments must **protect against threats to democratic values** and public perceptions of their values. This includes maintaining effective public integrity rules and countering actors seeking to use crises to gain undue or malign influence, combatting mis- and dis-information, and defining how crisis-induced exceptions to public governance standards are managed.

The data in *Government at a Glance 2023* shows that all OECD countries can improve on these areas. Governments must be ready to take further action.

Governing better on green, gender and the next generation are cross-cutting priorities.

One of the most effective actions governments can take to support democratic resilience is to address the climate crisis. This will help to mitigate some of the shocks which may pose a risk to democratic resilience. The OECD has recently published its advice on using governance tools and processes to address the climate crisis (OECD, 2022_[5]). Key aspects are steering and building consensus and trust for delivering green in the next decade, using the right tools for climate and environmental action, and building a greener and more resilient public sector. As such, this topic has been mainstreamed in *Government at a Glance 2023* and data on the green aspects of relevant government processes have been included in many of the chapters that follow.

As noted above and in chapter 2, it is also clear that groups including young people, women, and those with more precarious economic circumstances are less likely to view government as working well for them. As such, public governance processes to support inclusion and the needs of diverse groups in society are foregrounded throughout this chapter, and *Government at a Glance 2023*. Addressing the needs of young people in particular is critical to cementing long-term economic, social, and political sustainability.

Build on democratic strengths

Democratically governed countries must harness their strengths in participation, inclusion, innovation and co-operation to improve how they address crises. Public governance in democratic countries has unique features designed to foster open public debate, the expression of expectations and trade-offs across society, critical and transparent reflection, and change and innovation in order to meet public needs. These features are critical for supporting democratic resilience in a multi-crisis environment. They improve governments' ability to solve complex problems and deliver novel solutions, increasing government reliability in the face of unexpected shocks. They also empower citizens to have a say in public decisions, helping to ensure trust in the values of government. Democracies must harness and maximise these strengths to deliver outcomes.

However, democracies must use these strengths in a timely manner. A characteristic feature of modern democracies is the existence of checks and balances to limit and control abuses of power. In a multi-crisis environment, the need to respond effectively to fast-moving events may be less than the time required for open and democratic public governance processes. This section explores how public governance can better institutionalise the strengths of democracies and use them proactively.

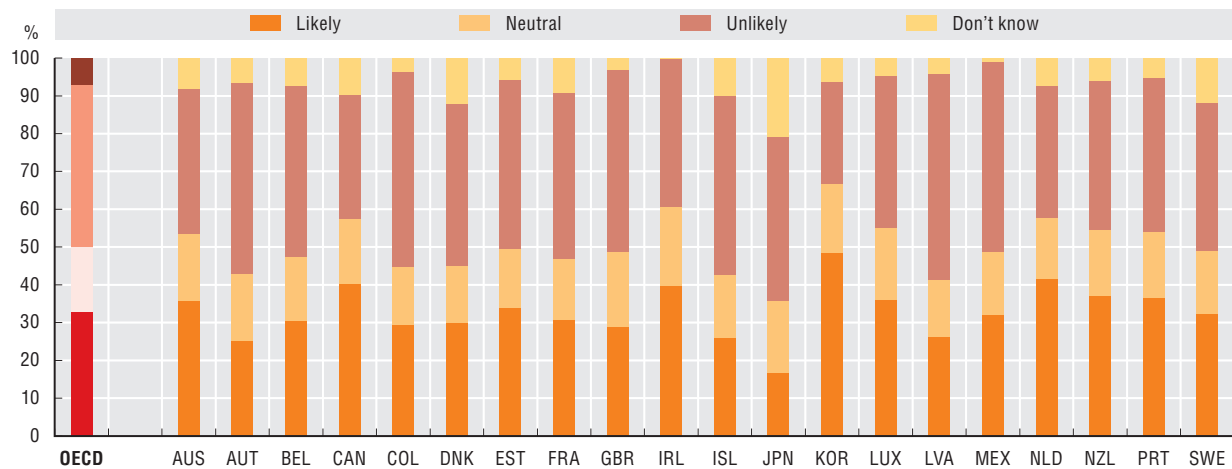
Representation, participation and engaging the voice of the people

The public believe there is a wide margin to improve participatory decision making and political representation. Processes of participation and representation are at the heart of democracy. They include electoral processes, institutionalised participatory mechanisms, social dialogue and public engagement at local level. In the current multi-crisis context, there is a widespread sense of a lack of opportunities to exercise effective political voice and choice. Across OECD countries, public institutions are extensively seen as falling short of people's expectations for representation and impact. The OECD Trust Survey finds that less than one-third of people (30.2%) say the political system in their country lets them have a say. More than four in ten respondents (42.8%) say it is unlikely that government would

adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation (Figure 1.4; see also Figure 4.3). There is a widespread sense that democratic government is working well for some, but not well enough for all (OECD, 2022^[3]). Many citizens are choosing to disengage from representative processes, as shown by declining turnout in elections in many countries (Solijonov, 2016^[36]). Re-engaging citizens in politics and political processes after the pandemic is particularly challenging, as it caused disruption to electoral processes which has worsened a declining trend in voter turnout globally (International IDEA, 2022^[37]).

Figure 1.4. **Few think their government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation**

Share of respondents who indicate different levels of perceived likelihood that a government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation (on a 0-10 scale), 2021



Note: The OECD Trust Survey aggregates 11-point response scales as follows: 0-4 = Low / unlikely; 5 = Neutral; 6-10 = High / likely. Don't know is a separate category. Figure presents the within-country distributions of responses to the question "If you participate in a public consultation on reforming a major policy area (e.g. taxation, healthcare, environmental protection), how likely or unlikely do you think it is that the government would adopt the opinions expressed in the public consultation?" Finland and Norway are excluded from the figure as the data are not available. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. For more detailed information, please find the survey method document at <http://oe.cd/trust>.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>) (OECD, 2022^[3]).

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Representative, or indirect, democracy, whereby elected officials represent the voice of the people, is historically the primary means by which the views and needs of different citizens and constituencies are brought into decision making. Trust in the process is vital, particularly in a crisis context. However, across OECD countries, only 4 out of 10 respondents trust their parliament or congress (Figure 2.1). In many countries without mandatory voting, voter turnout is low, and parliamentarians are often seen as part of a political elite. The disruption caused by COVID-19 may have further reduced trust in parliaments in those countries where they were unable to quickly innovate and transform their way of working (IPU, 2022^[38]). During crises, the role of parliaments has been constrained in some cases. This is particularly the case in polarised political contexts with highly fragmented parliaments that have hindered the building of cross-party consensus for complex but swift crisis responses. The integrity of decision making has also been called into question.

Many governments are now turning to public participation as a means to further engage citizens. To safeguard attachment to democratic systems in the face of future shocks, it is important that governments search for the most effective forms of citizen participation to complement existing processes for political representation and aggregation of interests

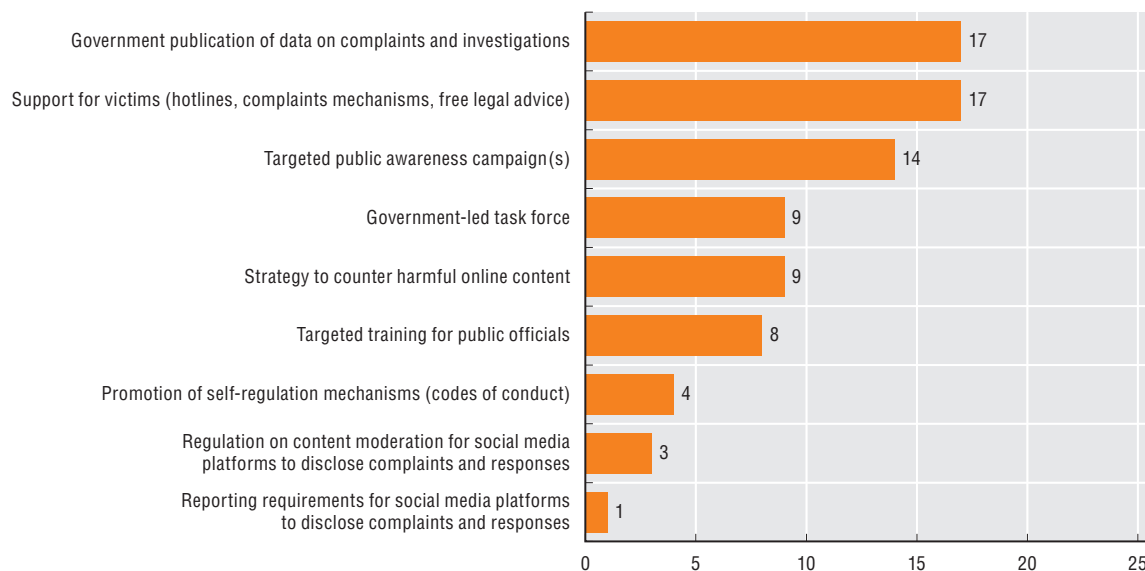
towards consensus. Institutionalising effective rules and processes for public participation in a way that is consistent with representative democracy will be key to enhancing governments' agility when engaging the public in crisis decision making, so they can effectively respond to crises and recover from them.

A first priority when institutionalising public participation is promoting a vibrant civic space, i.e. the legal, political and social environment that allows people to engage in public debate and to influence politics and society (OECD, 2022_[25]). While the legal foundations for civic space (freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and the right to privacy) are generally strong in OECD countries, challenges remain and become particularly apparent during crises. During these times, governments sometimes have to restrict the exercise of civic freedoms. For example, emergency measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on citizens' ability to gather and peacefully protest. In addition, burdensome administrative and reporting procedures represent barriers to civil society organisations, making it harder for them to participate in crisis responses. Hostile public discourse, smear campaigns and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) are also growing threats (OECD, 2022_[25]).

Civic space has also been increasingly affected by hate speech against journalists, human rights defenders, activists and ordinary citizens, especially women and minorities. Consequently, there is a strong trend among OECD members to prohibit hate speech as a recognised form of discrimination. Several have introduced measures to combat online hate speech in particular, including support for victims (17 of 26, 65% of countries with data available), publication of data on complaints (17 of 26, 65%) and targeted public awareness campaigns (14 of 26, 54%), but there is more to do (Figure 1.5).

Figure 1.5. **Measures to counter online hate speech can be strengthened**

Number of OECD countries with measures in place, 2020



Note: Figure displays data on 26 OECD countries. Data on Australia, Austria and Ireland are based on OECD desk research and were shared with them for validation.

Source: OECD (2020_[39]), OECD Survey on Open Government.

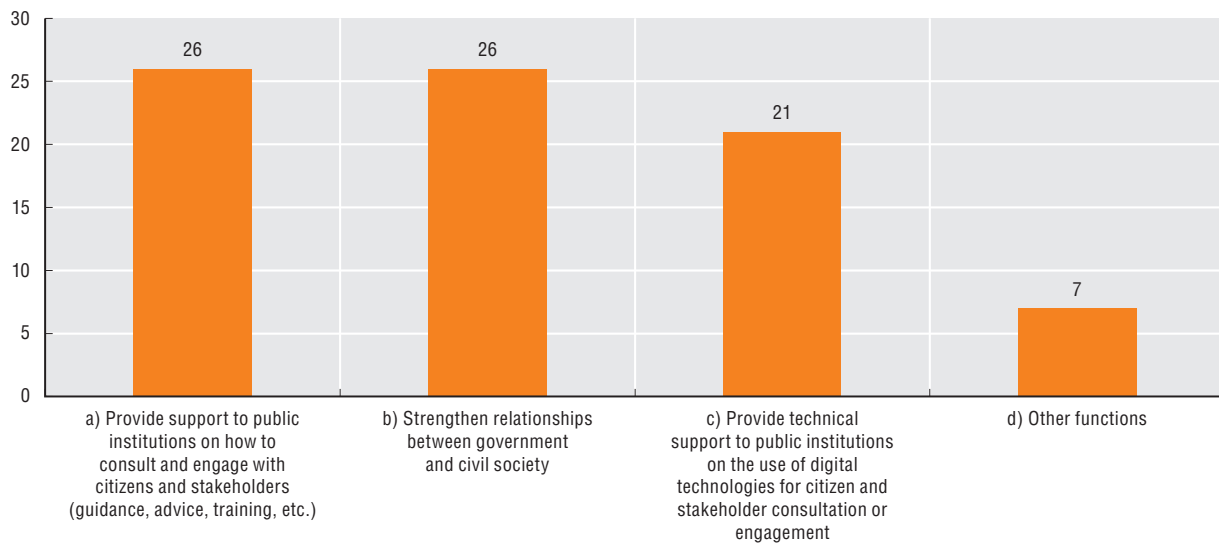
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Better institutionalising participatory processes in policy and decision making would improve the involvement of citizens. Governments have long consulted with external stakeholders (see for example Figure 8.1 on stakeholder engagement in regulatory policy and infrastructure planning) and most OECD countries have adopted stakeholder engagement practices. For example, 27 of 32 OECD countries (85%) have a government-wide online consultation portal to involve citizens and stakeholders (OECD, 2021_[2]). Good practices can be found across OECD countries at all levels of government, such as Mexico City’s consultation on its constitution. However, stakeholder consultation still tends to happen late in the decision-making process, or only reaches a small proportion of the population (OECD, 2020_[39]).

Most OECD countries adhering to the OECD Recommendation on Open Government for which data are available have institutions overseeing participatory mechanisms. Most (26 of 29, 90%) have a central office to provide support to public institutions on how to consult citizens and stakeholders. Most (26 of 29, 90%) also have a central office to strengthen relationships between government and civil society (Figure 1.6). However, participatory practices are still often implemented on an ad hoc basis by public institutions. Responsibilities are usually scattered across multiple institutions, sometimes with conflicting tasks. At the level of central or federal ministries, few have dedicated staff in charge of encouraging participation in most of their central or federal ministries (OECD, 2020_[39]).

Figure 1.6. Most OECD countries have established offices to support participatory practices

Number of OECD countries with institutions/offices with a mandate to support or streamline participatory practices in the central government



Note: Figure displays data from 29 OECD countries that responded to the survey.

Source: OECD (2020_[39]), OECD Survey on Open Government.

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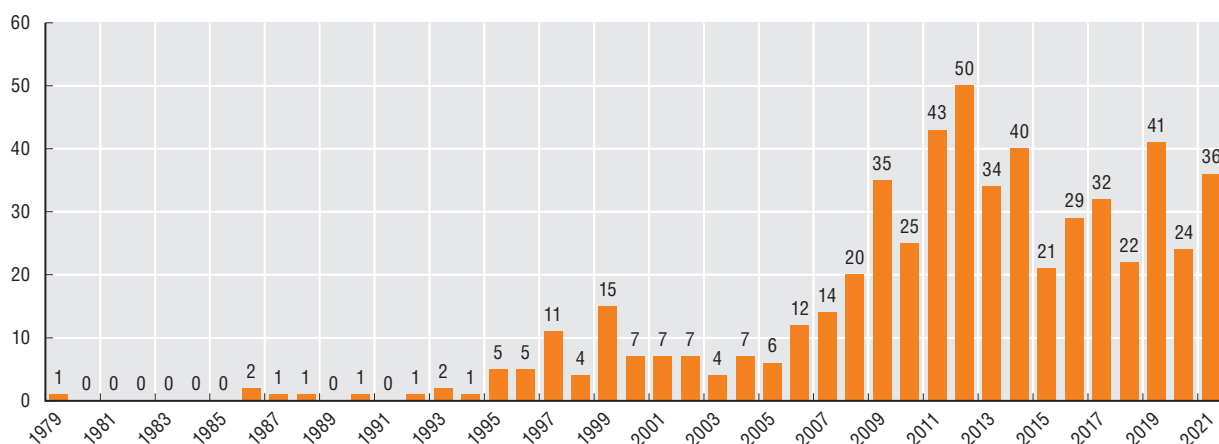
A number of governments have moved beyond consultations towards new forms of deliberative processes to improve citizen participation. These include processes such as civic lotteries, citizens’ assemblies and representative deliberative councils. They can broaden participation to a wider and more diverse group of people, guard against the undue influence of lobbies, and create the conditions for everyday people to exercise public judgement, complementing representative democratic institutions. For example, Lisbon established a permanent Citizens’ Council with 50 randomly selected residents to advise the City Hall

on policy questions such as climate change or mobility. In doing so, it joined other cities like Paris, Milan and Toronto in establishing new democratic institutions (OECD, 2021^[40]; Mejia, 2022^[41]).

In particular, OECD countries have substantially increased their use of representative deliberative processes since the global financial crisis (Figure 1.7). These are when randomly selected citizens spend significant time in facilitated deliberation to develop collective recommendations for public authorities. Public authorities have most often commissioned them for specific issues that have a direct impact on a community's life, such as planning, health and the environment. They have most frequently been used by subnational governments, especially cities. Increasingly, representative deliberative processes have been used to help policy makers address polarising issues and involve under-represented groups. For example, Ireland used deliberative processes to debate major policy changes on issues such as abortion and divorce (OECD, 2020^[43]). There have been at least 69 deliberative processes on environmental issues, including in Denmark, Poland, Spain and the United Kingdom (OECD, 2021^[42]). These help to involve citizens in reconciling interests and suggesting solutions that go beyond short-term political cycles (OECD et al., 2022^[44]) and contribute more broadly to crisis mitigation. Nonetheless, questions remain about the efficacy, integrity and accountability of these processes and further work needs to be done to better harness citizen participation for democratic resilience. The effectiveness of instruments of direct democracy also deserves further examination.

Figure 1.7. **A wave of deliberative processes has been building over time**

Number of representative deliberative processes in OECD countries, 1979-2021



Note: n=566; This is the total number of processes recorded in OECD countries by the OECD. Data for OECD countries are based on 24 countries that were OECD members in 2021 plus the European Union. Processes that spanned over multiple years are included in the year they were completed (except for permanent ongoing processes).

Source: OECD (2021^[42]), Database of Representative Deliberative Processes and Institutions, <https://airtable.com/shrHEM12ogzPsOnQG/tbl1eKbt37N7hVFHF>.

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Digital technology offers new routes for public participation, potentially also increasing their scale and speed (Box 1.1). Online platforms and digital tools can help public authorities to reach a wider population and cover broad geographical areas. Almost all OECD countries are using online platforms for citizen and stakeholder participation, in particular city governments. In 2020 and 2021, online deliberation was the most commonly used medium for conducting a deliberative process (OECD, 2021^[42]), and almost all OECD countries are using online portals to support participation (Box 1.1). However, to be effective and inclusive, digital democracy platforms must be well governed to mitigate the risk of excluding vulnerable

groups with low digital literacy, protect fundamental rights and freedoms online, ensure individual privacy and data protection, prevent algorithms from introducing opacity and bias, as well as protecting against cyber risks. Consideration should also be given to how digital tools can be used to enable access to justice and support the rule of law.

Box 1.1. **Harnessing digitalisation for democratic resilience**

Public participation

Online platforms, digital channels and tools enable alternative spaces for consultation and deliberation on public policies. In 2020, 85% of OECD countries for which data is available had government-wide portals which acted as “one-stop shops” for the public to learn about past, current and future opportunities for participation (OECD, 2021^[2]), such as Portugal’s *Portugal Participa* (Government of Portugal, 2023^[49]). However, fewer governments use other innovative approaches like co-production meetings (32%), virtual public meetings (28%) and posting proposals online with invitations to comment (41%) (OECD, 2020^[39]). These could help to digitally expand participation.

Digital technologies can also contribute to modernising legislative processes, increasing the transparency of parliamentary practices and enhancing constituency relations. For example, Brazil’s E-Democracia platform allows the public to interact with parliamentarians through different mechanisms. These include interactive hearings, where the public can follow parliamentary sessions in real time, a tool for consulting and co-writing legislation with citizens and stakeholders in real time, and a tool allowing citizens to suggest topics for discussion and to prioritise elements in the Chamber’s agenda (OECD, 2022^[50]).

Online tools can help government to rapidly implement channels for public participation in crises. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government hosted an online public discussion to gather citizens’ ideas and concerns around lockdown (Webster, 2020^[51]). A similar exercise in Finland, the online Lockdown Dialogues, attracted people from different age groups and occupations from all over the country (Timeout Foundation, 2020^[52]).

Fundamental rights in the digital era

Digitalisation has provided a space to expand and protect the exercise of some democratic rights and freedoms, allowing individuals and groups, including vulnerable people, to voice concerns more effectively. At the same time, it is also creating significant challenges for some human rights, freedoms and democratic values. Issues include privacy and the use of personal data, challenges to equal opportunities and fair treatment through the biased use of artificial intelligence, or discrimination through the diffusion of hate speech and harmful racial, gender-based or other stereotypes. As such, governments are increasingly developing new regulations, declarations, or charters to protect human rights and freedoms in a digital context. Examples include the Spanish Charter of Digital Rights (Government of Spain, 2021^[53]) and the proposed European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles (European Commission, 2023^[54]). Some are also considering new rights for the digital era (OECD, 2022^[55]).

Rule of law in the digital age

Digitalisation can enhance the rule of law by promoting efficiency, accessibility, fairness and transparency in the legal system. It can provide easier access to legal information, resources, and representation. For example, the digitalisation of court systems is radically altering how the public can access information on court decisions and proceedings. Transparency initiatives also increase understanding, accessibility and access to justice (e.g. through open data portals, streaming of sessions, published court agendas and the use of plain language). Technology can also enhance efficiency, reduce costs and increase transparency in the legal system; advance evidence-based decision making; and improve communication and collaboration. At the same time, policy makers need to address potential risks and challenges, such as privacy concerns, digital divides, cybersecurity threats, algorithmic bias, the spread of mis- and disinformation, cybercrime, and regulatory challenges.

Public communication needs to be transformed, to give citizens a greater voice, and provide for open, fact-based public debate. Effective participatory, representative and deliberative practices require an informed public who can give constructive input on public matters. However, media consumption is in decline, as is trust in the media (OECD, 2022_[3]), and people are turning away from a news cycle they find increasingly overwhelming (Newman, 2022_[45]). The information ecosystem is growing more fragmented and vulnerable to polarising speech and mis- and dis-information (Matasick, Alfonsi and Bellantoni, 2020_[46]). This makes it increasingly important for governments to communicate meaningfully with citizens. Timely, truthful and relevant public communication is an essential tool against mis- and dis-information (OECD, 2022_[47]).

There is a need to further consolidate the shift to a citizen-centred public communication model. OECD has analysed a wave of communication practices that favour more inclusive, responsive and compelling – or “citizen-centred” – public communication (Alfonsi et al., 2022_[48]). Experiences of responding to recent crises, including COVID-19, have demonstrated that meaningful public communication is about listening to citizens in order to deliver relevant information that can help them make better choices. This supports perceptions of government reliability and can help build trust. Relevant practices include the responsible application of digital technologies to deliver more evidence-based, targeted and relevant messages and the use of behavioural insights to design communications that help citizens understand policy goals and act in line with them. Diversifying channels and relying on influential messengers can help to reach audiences outside the mainstream, and those who are disengaged or distrustful of government.

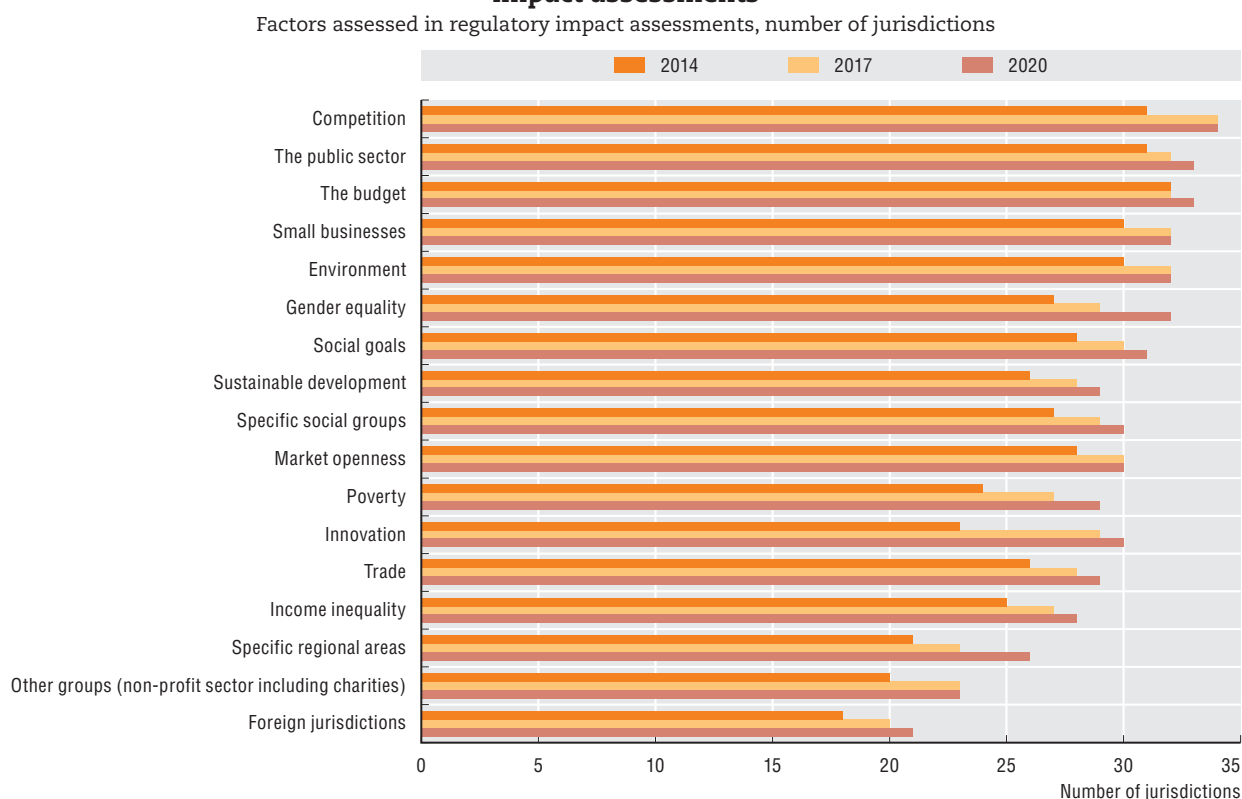
Inclusion and supporting diverse groups

Inclusion is a key dimension and strength of democracy. Both crises and government responses affect different groups in society in different ways. This can cause issues for trust in public institutions if policies are viewed as unfair or failing to meet the needs of some. Young people and the most vulnerable in society consistently report lower levels of trust and satisfaction with government. On average across 22 OECD countries, young people, and those with lower income and education levels report less trust in national government (see Figure 2.2). In the face of ongoing crises, governments can scale up their use of tools to examine how policy responses have different economic and social impacts on different groups in society. This will help to support trust by improving the extent to which policies are seen as fair and responsive, and prevent communities being “left behind”.

Countries are increasingly using practices which help to ensure inclusion is considered in policy making. Considering the impacts of laws, regulations and policies on diverse social groups is crucial for promoting equity and fairness, and building trust in government institutions. Chapter 5 covers governance of the regulatory process. Identifying the impacts of policies on diverse groups helps governments to adjust their policies to prevent unintended consequences and improve their responsiveness to the needs of different groups (OECD, 2020_[56]). Of 34 OECD countries analysed plus the EU, more than 90% now require small businesses, gender equality and various social impacts to be considered in regulatory impact assessments (RIAs) (Figure 1.8, and also Figures 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 in Chapter 5). Austria, France, Flanders in Belgium and Germany apply “youth checks”. (OECD, 2020_[57]). Canada uses Gender-Based Analysis Plus to assess the impacts of policies and programmes on people across factors including gender and age. OECD


countries could further benefit from making these approaches more systematic. When people feel that their voices and needs are being heard and considered, they are more likely to support and comply with measures (Lind and Arndt, 2016^[58]).

Figure 1.8. **Impacts on different groups are increasingly examined in regulatory impact assessments**



Note: Data based on 34 OECD member countries and the EU. Data for Colombia, Costa Rica, Latvia and Lithuania not included. Due to a change in the political system during the survey period affecting the processes for developing laws, responses for Türkiye are not available for RIA for primary laws.

Source: Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG) Survey, 2014, 2017 and 2021, oe.cd/ireg. See also Figure 5.5.

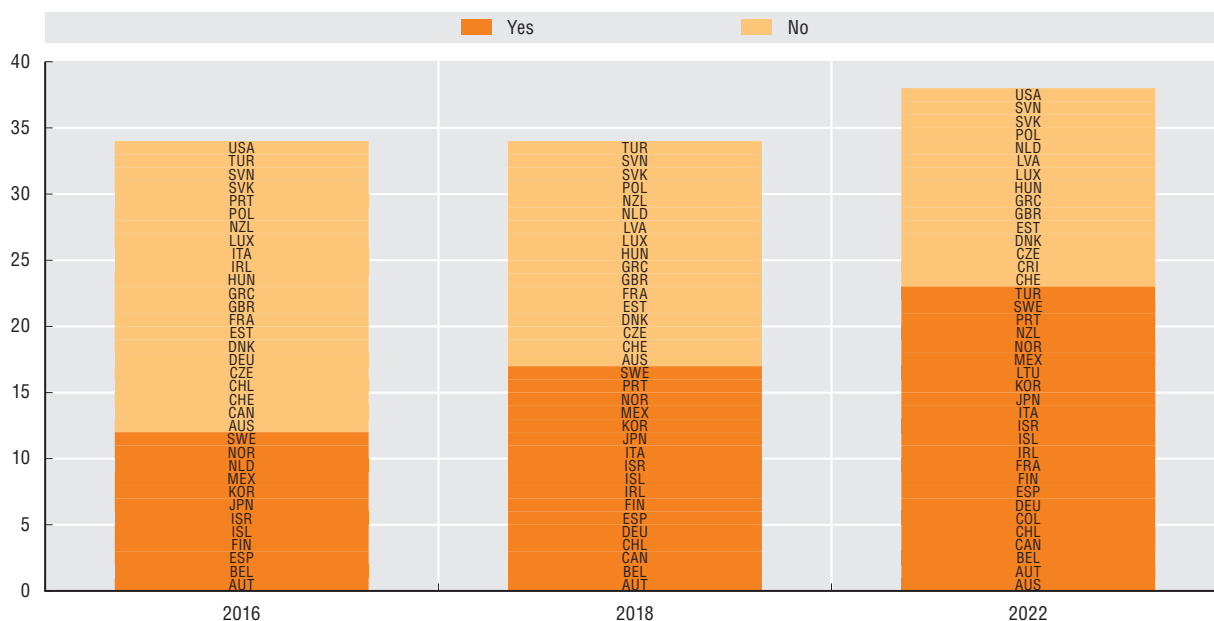
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More countries are factoring in concerns about distributional impacts and responsiveness in their public expenditure management and budget processes. Government responses to crises can affect different groups in society in different ways. Spending measures to address the consequences of COVID-19, the energy crisis and inflation have all had a distributional impact. At least 10 European countries have integrated distributional concerns into budget planning on at least one occasion over the past 8 years. Sweden and the Netherlands model which groups are likely to be most affected by various policies, and recently reviewed the impact of a temporary energy price cap on different income groups. Ireland has calibrated its energy support for households and monitored the implications of its carbon tax. New Zealand uses a “wellbeing” approach which integrates distributional concerns. Slovak Republic considers intergenerational fairness in long-term sustainability of public finances, and Australia undertakes intergenerational budgetary forecasts (OECD, 2020^[57]). Embedding distributional analysis early in the policy-making process helps the public sector to be more responsive to the needs of diverse groups, helping them to access the benefits of economic growth, and helping ensure that no one is “left behind”.

The number of countries using gender budgeting has nearly doubled since 2016, to 61% of OECD countries (Figure 1.9 and also Figure 6.4 in Chapter 6). Gender budgeting is a tool to include consideration of gender equality in policy and budget decisions. Around half of countries practising gender budgeting (48%) undertake gender impact assessments of budget measures before they are brought forward. These help identify possible negative impacts of a measure on certain individuals or groups, allowing steps to be taken to mitigate or reduce these. Where budget measures are accompanied by information on their gender impact, this allows for more informed decision making and better-targeted use of public resources.

Figure 1.9. The use of gender budgeting has increased rapidly

Number of OECD countries practising gender budgeting, 2016, 2018 and 2022



Note: Since 2018 Australia, Colombia, France, Lithuania, New Zealand and Türkiye have introduced gender budgeting. New Zealand introduced gender budgeting on a pilot basis. Luxembourg, Latvia and Slovenia are actively considering implementing gender budgeting. For 2016 and 2018, no data are available for Colombia, Costa Rica and Lithuania. For 2018, no data are available for the United States.

Source: OECD (2022_[59]), Survey on Gender Budgeting.

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It is particularly important that governments place a special emphasis on understanding and supporting the needs of young people (Box 1.2). Young people have been badly affected by recent crises. They are also bearing the brunt of longer-term trends in economic opportunities and climate change. The views of young people will have a longer-lasting impact on democratic resilience than those of older groups. Supporting their needs and using public governance processes to engage them in democratic processes is essential.

User engagement in public service delivery can help ensure services are offered proactively and responsive to the evolving needs of the public. During times of crisis, public services play a critical role in meeting the diverse needs of society, especially those of the most vulnerable. This has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this also posed challenges to the public sector to cope with rising demands and expectations. Preliminary OECD results find that the “unexpected increase in the volume of citizens’ demands” and the “limited capabilities to address all citizens’ needs” were pressing challenges countries faced in the field of digital government during the COVID-19 pandemic (OECD, 2022_[63]).

Box 1.2. **Enhancing the focus on young people**

Two generations of young people have borne the brunt of the crises in the last 15 years, calling into question future generations' wellbeing and prosperity. Young people have been hit disproportionately hard by COVID-19 and rising inflation, affecting their employment, income and future earnings, mental health, education, and affordable housing (OECD, 2020_[60]; OECD, 2022_[61]). Inter-generational issues such as climate change and public debt may further affect future generations' wellbeing. These trends are concerning for many young people: 56% of those aged 14-26 reported being worried about their security, health and finances, among other issues, more than any other age group (Edelman, 2022_[62]). Most young people in OECD countries (56%) want their government to do more to reduce climate change (OECD, 2022_[3]). On average across OECD countries, only 37% of people aged 18-29 trust the national government, compared to 41% of those aged 30-49, and 46% of those aged 50 and over (OECD, 2022_[3]).

Enhancing youth participation and representation in democratic processes can bring more diversity and responsiveness to public policies and services. Young people are less likely to participate in elections and to join political parties, and are under-represented in public institutions (OECD, 2020_[57]; OECD, 2022_[3]) (Figures 12.10 and 12.12). Instead, young people are more likely to engage in non-institutionalised political activity e.g. through their employment and consumer choices or by creating online content. Greater youth participation and representation can be achieved by strengthening civic literacy programmes, removing the barriers young people face in entering political life (especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds), enhancing public communications, and creating opportunities for youth participation in decision making including through dedicated bodies.

Safeguarding democracy for future generations also requires governments to have better administrative and institutional capacity to serve young people. While three-quarters of OECD countries have a national youth strategy, only 20% are fully participatory, budgeted, and monitored and evaluated (OECD, 2020_[57]). Better data, evidence and methods for assessing the impacts of policies on young people are also required. The collection and use of age-disaggregated data remains uneven across OECD countries, with many reporting challenges in collecting age-disaggregated data on social inclusion of vulnerable groups (45%), youth participation in public life (42%) and youth rights (36%) (OECD, 2020_[57]).

While satisfaction with public services is relatively good on average in OECD countries, governments could make their service delivery more responsive to citizens' needs. Across the OECD, only 40.2% of people believe it is likely that a public service would be improved in response to users' feedback (Figure 4.2). Governments are exploring user-engagement methods to design and deliver services, such as design-thinking sessions, testing and evaluating digital projects/initiatives, or monitoring user satisfaction. Most countries with data available have policies to test and evaluate digital initiatives involving end users (18 of 29, 62%). Some use indicators to monitor satisfaction (48%) or have formal requirements to engage users in service design (48%) and delivery (27%) (OECD, 2021_[2]). Governments are also making progress in using data and technologies such as artificial intelligence to anticipate user needs and deliver tailored services (Figures 9.5 and 9.6). Agile service delivery has also proved effective in increasing responsiveness and quality of service delivery. This involves using multidisciplinary teams, informed by data and clear targets, with a mandate to improve outcomes for citizens (De Seve, 2022_[64]).

Governments should continue to innovate in their use of technology and data to design responsive and accessible public services, both online and offline. Portable digital identities can enhance the effectiveness of service delivery by allowing users to access services in different locations, and for different purposes, while being able to count on the same quality and trustworthiness across channels. The importance of reliable digital identities for public service delivery was proved during the pandemic, with a global rise in the uptake of digital identity solutions (OECD, 2021_[2]). An omnichannel service approach can also greatly improve accessibility and inclusion, and provide a seamless experience of government.

Learning, innovation and adaptability

Learning, innovation and adaptability are key assets of democratic governance in a crisis-prone environment. When faced with novel problems and overlapping crises, public institutions must have the ability to transparently assess the performance and delivery of policies, and continue to find new and better ways to deliver for the public. These aspects of democratic governance should ideally allow public institutions to think their way through novel problems and deliver solutions.

Public institutions in OECD countries demonstrated a capacity to learn and adapt during the COVID-19 crisis (OECD, 2021_[2]). However, the public does not generally view public institutions in their countries to be innovative. Only 38% of people on average across OECD countries believe that their government would improve a poorly performing service in response to public demands or implement an innovative idea (OECD, 2022_[3]). This perception has a significant effect on trust levels: people who are confident in the public sector's ability to innovate are much more likely to trust civil servants (Figure 2.6).

Governments must have systems to identify weaknesses and improve policy design. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are the feedback loop through which governments understand the quality of their policies and delivery. In crises, when the scope and time for democratic deliberation is often curtailed, policy evaluations also increase accountability, providing “results-based legitimacy” in the absence of “input legitimacy” (Bekker, Ivankovic and Biermann, 2020_[65]). However, crises make M&E both more difficult to conduct and less of a priority for busy institutions. This appears to have been the case during COVID-19, when OECD governments may have curtailed their use of *ex ante* evaluations (i.e. assessments made before policies go into effect) in order to speed up the adoption of exceptional measures. Instead, governments have relied mostly on *ex post* policy evaluations from actors outside of the executive, such as supreme audit institutions (OECD, 2022_[66]).

In the context of multiple crises, governments will need to find new ways to generate evidence, identify weaknesses and improve policy. During COVID-19, OECD countries increased their use of evidence synthesis methods and used innovative evaluation or data collection methods. For example, rapid evaluation methods were used in the State of Victoria's Health Department to evaluate 15 policy solutions delivered during COVID-19 (Gawaya, Terrill and Williams, 2022_[67]). Rapid evaluation methods can provide insights in a timeframe more in line with the fast pace of decision making needed during crises.

Governments could improve their oversight and deliberate stewardship of innovation in the public sector. Innovation can be thought of as implementing something novel in order to achieve impact (OECD, 2017_[68]). It is a tool for finding solutions to shocks and novel problems. Better measurement of innovative capacity in the public sector is key to identifying vulnerabilities and opportunities to build successful innovative practices

(Kaur et al., 2022^[69]). Even without strong metrics, governments can improve public sector innovation capacity. This is a pro-active investment in ensuring capacity is available to respond to crises. Governments could use audits to identify opportunities for innovation, build skillsets such as strategic foresight and behavioural insights capacities, and develop public sector innovation strategies and innovation incubators.

The sharing and use of data within government enable learning and public sector innovation. Timely data access and sharing, including across sectors and levels of government, can improve governments' preparedness and readiness to face crises (OECD, 2021^[70]). Developing data governance frameworks for data access and sharing sets the foundations for using data for evidenced-based policy making and user-centric services. Improving responses to future crises requires interoperable data governance mechanisms and improved data readiness, trustworthiness and accessibility, including in the form of open data. Scaling up data governance also requires measures to enhance trust in the management of data, including ensuring that benefits are weighed against risks, and that appropriate processes, controls and tools for ethics, transparency and personal data protection are in place.

International co-operation and multilateralism

Democratic governments can harness their strengths in international co-operation to improve how they deal with crises which cross national borders, especially climate change. Many of the world's multilateral institutions were established in the aftermath of World War 2, a crisis which posed existential risks for democratic governance. The OECD is included among this number. To prevent and manage the cross-boundary and cascading crises of the current era, it is important that democratically governed countries put in place the governance practices for more effective multilateral engagement. These should include better co-ordination within government for multilateral affairs, including horizontal and vertical co-ordination across domestic government agencies working on international policy issues; mechanisms to promote policy coherence; and developing the skills of public servants to think in global terms (OECD, 2022^[5]).

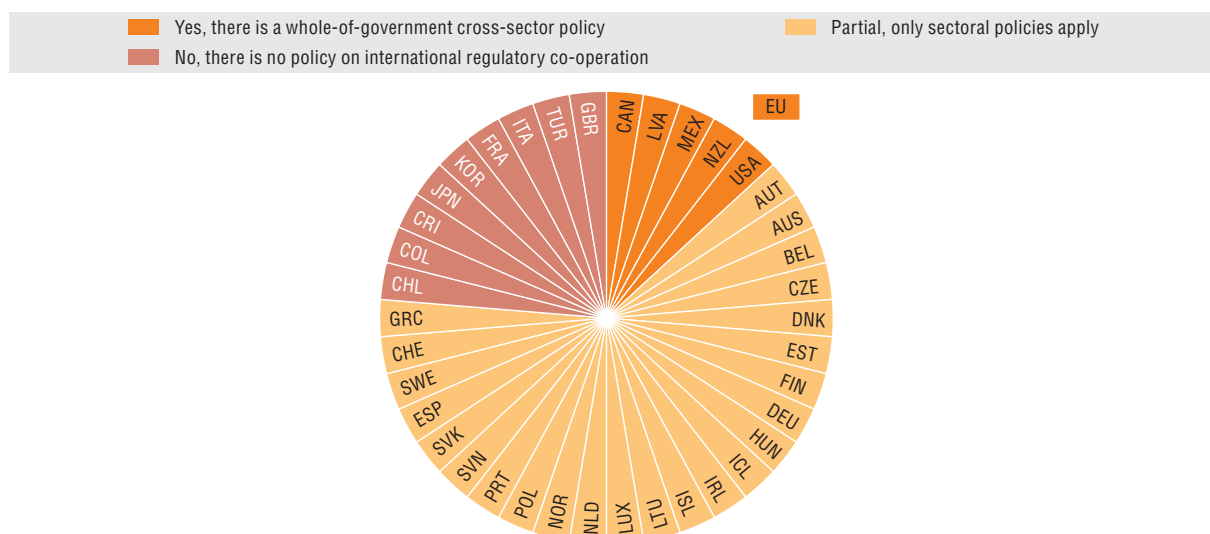
Better understanding of cross-border impacts will be important for supporting co-operation and mitigating cascading risks. A more interconnected world economy means that individual countries' policies can have spillover effects on other countries. These transboundary impacts can take effect through financial flows, trade, migration, transfers of knowledge and carbon emissions. If countries focus solely on domestic interests, the impact of policies on other countries may well be negative. Emerging evidence suggest this area requires improvement (OECD, forthcoming^[71]). Less than half of OECD countries for which data are available (5 of 12) have requirements in place to analyse transboundary impacts (Figure 4.15). Only one-third (4 of 12) are using indicators or other available data to monitor such impacts (Figure 4.16). Governments can do more to facilitate communication and effectively address negative transboundary impacts, and to use available tools, evidence and data to reduce them.

Governments can also strengthen international regulatory co-operation (IRC). IRC enables governments to collaborate on common problems and learn from each other. In June 2021, the OECD adopted a recommendation on how countries can effectively adopt IRC. This recommendation is built around three pillars: taking a whole-of-government approach to IRC, recognising IRC throughout domestic rule making and co-operating internationally through a variety of mechanisms (OECD, 2020^[72]). Only 5 of 38 OECD countries (14%) have adopted

IRC as a whole-of-government policy, although 23 (61%) have partial policies (Figure 1.10). Such partial policies can be very ambitious but focused on certain regions or sectors. In 9 of 38 countries (24%) there is no policy on international regulatory co-operation (Figure 1.10, and also Figures 5.9 and 5.10 in Chapter 5).

Figure 1.10. **Most OECD countries only take a partial approach to international regulatory co-operation**

OECD countries with a whole of government, or a cross-sectoral approach to IRC, 2021



Note: Depicts the United Kingdom as not having a whole-of-government approach to IRC. However, since the last measurement in January 2021, the country has established a national policy for it.

Source: OECD (2021^[73]), Indicators of Regulatory Policy and Governance (iREG) Survey.

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Reinforce key competencies to handle crises

To manage a more crisis-prone environment, governments must reinforce the key public governance competencies and tools required to ensure strategic coherence, minimise economic shocks and protect the most vulnerable. They must remain responsive to the needs of citizens, and reliable in helping them to manage shocks. This section highlights the key competencies of policy foresight and coherence, public financial management, the planning and delivery of public infrastructure, public procurement, crisis management, and public service management. As covered in *Government at a Glance 2021* (OECD, 2021^[21]), maintaining the ability to act at scale and speed by ensuring buffers of flexible resources, remains central. In an age of multiple crises, this must be augmented by the ability to manage complex and interlinked issues, over varying timelines, while taking into account the effects on diverse groups in society.

Policy foresight and coherence

Crises will create a greater need for prioritisation and coherence in setting policy. Operating in an environment with regular crises will stretch governments' ability to manage urgent short-term needs while continuing to focus on delivering the most important long-term priorities, and to manage trade-offs and interactions between policy areas. The danger is, as some suggest, that multiple crises could overwhelm governments' capacity to work towards long-term goals (Laybourn, Throp and Sherman, 2023^[23]). Failures would undermine perceptions of government reliability and trust in institutions.

Centre of government (CoG) institutions will play a critical role, balancing crisis responses, long-term planning and co-ordination on cross-cutting issues. The CoG is the structure that supports the prime minister and council of ministers (e.g. the office of the prime minister or president). During COVID-19, COGs took on more co-ordination work and responsibilities (OECD, 2021^[74]). Preliminary data show this trend has continued, with many CoGs increasing their range of responsibilities, policy areas, cross-government co-ordination activities and workforces between 2019 and 2023 (OECD, forthcoming^[75]). Their crisis management work has also increased in the last three years, often through the use of ad hoc taskforces for short-term issues.

CoGs will need to safeguard government delivery, mixing crisis response with whole-of-government strategic planning. Common priorities for CoGs in 2023 include inflation, national security, climate, energy and biodiversity (OECD, forthcoming^[75]). These involve addressing complex, and sometimes conflicting, priorities. Preparation, planning and prioritisation influences the quality of crisis responses and the ability to continue working on long-term objectives. For instance, Luxembourg’s risk analysis and co-ordinated approach had already identified the risks of an influenza pandemic before COVID-19, which facilitated actions to mitigate the crisis (OECD, 2022^[76]).

Policy coherence capabilities will be key to balancing policy trade-offs over time and across policy areas. The causes of, and solutions to, many crisis issues interact across multiple policy areas. For example, government expenditure on measures supporting the production and consumption of fossil fuels almost doubled in 2021 (OECD, 2022^[77]), partly due to COVID-19 support. This undermines international efforts to combat climate change. Governments must use more systemic approaches to support coherence across policy areas. Among OECD countries with data available, 11 out of 12 (92%) have a formal commitment to policy coherence for sustainable development, and 9 (75%) have a lead institution overseeing it (OECD, forthcoming^[71]).

However, challenges remain in delivering policy coherence and defining long-term strategies that extend beyond 2030. This requires a public service with the tools (strategic foresight, systems-thinking, scenario development, modelling tools, impact assessments, etc.) to cope with multiple global challenges, their interconnections and their potential future effects. **Strategic foresight will be increasingly indispensable for managing the long term.** Strategic foresight is an established practice for perceiving, making sense of and acting upon the future as it emerges in the present. In country studies, the OECD has found that, while strategic foresight capabilities exist in government, they are often in silos and not integrated into policy making. Where strategic foresight is used, there is a lack of ability to communicate and produce foresight information for senior leadership, and limited knowledge about the uses and benefits of strategic foresight (OECD, 2022^[78]). This contributes to a considerable “impact gap” (OECD, 2022^[78]). The OECD’s Anticipatory Innovation Governance model addresses this, examining how to tie futures and foresight knowledge into decision making and core government processes (Tönurist and Hanson, 2020^[79]). Governments will also need to regularly review emerging trends and consider how to incorporate them into strategic planning. For example, New Zealand is considering how to better make use of long-term insights in their policy planning cycles (OECD, 2023^[80]).

Resilient public finances

Governments must have credible public financial management frameworks to build trust in budgetary governance and maintain enough fiscal space to be able to finance crisis responses when needed. Budget processes and governance are examined in Chapter 6. Each

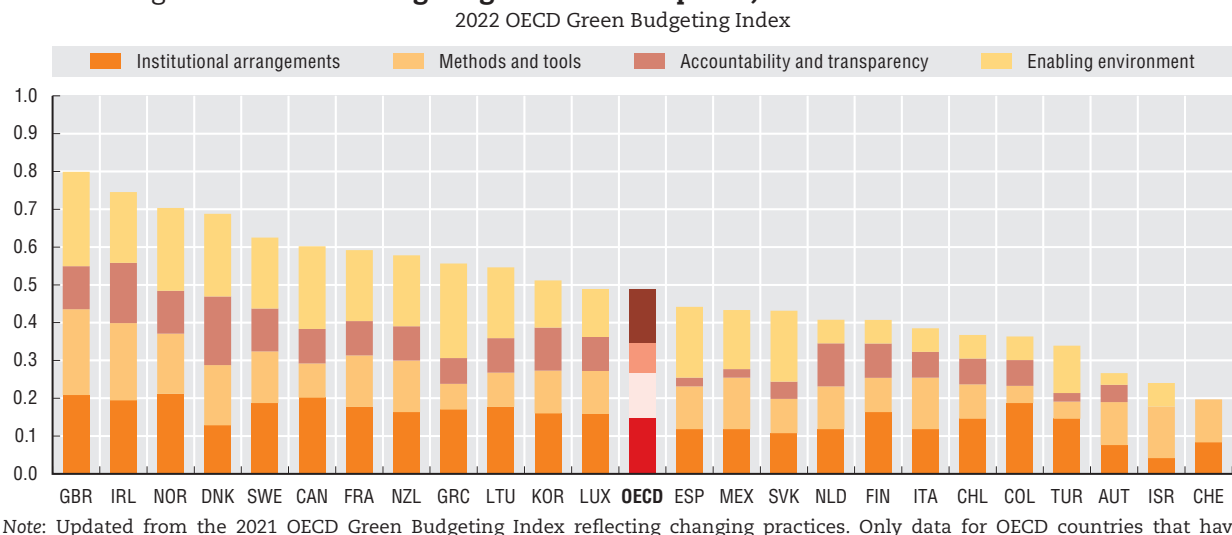
of the crises of recent years has shown the importance of preserving the resilience of public finances; countries need to be able to finance large and unexpected expenditures, such as in the aftermath of major natural disasters, to support a distressed sector or to address the consequences of a major pandemic. However, debt levels in OECD countries have risen significantly in recent years (Figure 10.10).

Maintaining appropriate fiscal rules is crucial. Almost all OECD countries use fiscal rules. Rules on budget balance and debt are the most commonly used. Nominal budget balance fiscal rules are used by 20 countries with a legal basis and by 6 countries with a political basis. Structural budget balance fiscal rules are used by 22 countries with a legal basis and by 3 countries with a political basis. Rules on debt ceilings with a political basis are used by 20 OECD countries (OECD, 2019_[81]). During the COVID-19 pandemic, several countries breached or suspended their fiscal rules and multi-annual budget plans in order to accommodate large discretionary fiscal responses. Some countries are now taking the opportunity presented by the crisis to examine changes to their fiscal frameworks. These questions are already central in the concerns of some institutions, for example, in the current European Economic Governance review (European Commission, 2023_[54]).

Countries also need to identify and manage their fiscal risks (i.e. sources of potential large deviations from the fiscal forecast). These include events that are outside of the control of governments, such as macroeconomic shocks but can also be generated by governments' own activities, for example if governments grant large loans or guarantees, with a significant probability that these might not be repaid or might be called in. There are processes in place in 75% of OECD countries to manage their fiscal risks (OECD, 2019_[81]). However, the comprehensiveness in the identification of these risks and how effectively they are monitored varies widely across OECD countries. The OECD has recently called for OECD countries to strengthen their processes for the identification, analysis and management of fiscal risks (Moretti, Boucher and Giannini, 2021_[82]), including guidance for more prudent budgetary governance for loans and guarantees (Moretti, Braendle and Leroy, 2021_[83]).

Subjecting government's macroeconomic forecasts to review by an independent fiscal institution (IFI), or outsourcing them to an IFI altogether, can substantially increase the credibility of a government's strategy and the resilience of its public finances. There has been a surge in the number of IFIs since the global financial crisis, and they are now in place in 29 of 38 OECD countries (Figure 6.7). In the majority of countries, the IFI has a key role in endorsing (11 of 29, 38%) or scrutinising (12 of 29, 41%) official forecasts. In 3 of 29 countries (10%), the IFI produces the official macroeconomic forecast (OECD, 2021_[84]). In the Netherlands, the Central Planning Bureau, acting as an IFI, provides forecasts directly to the Government. In Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, IFIs publish their assessment of the soundness of government fiscal plans.

More effective use could be made of budgeting and public financial management processes to address the climate crisis. There has been a rapid increase in the number of countries implementing green budgeting mechanisms, from 14 out of 35 countries in 2021 (40%) to 24 out of 36 in 2022 (66%) (Figure 6.1). Methods and tools used to implement green budgeting continue to be widely adopted, and OECD countries have also strengthened their institutional arrangements for green budgeting (Figure 1.11 and also Figure 6.2 in Chapter 6). However, there is scope to improve accountability and transparency. Countries do not make widespread use of practices such as involving civil society, monitoring green budgeting, or submitting a green budget statement to parliament.

Figure 1.11. **Green budgeting is now widespread, but could be more effective**

Note: Updated from the 2021 OECD Green Budgeting Index reflecting changing practices. Only data for OECD countries that have introduced green budgeting are shown.

Source: OECD (2022_[85]), Survey on Green Budgeting.

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Governments could also enhance the resilience of their public finances to major and severe climate-related events. In 2022, natural disasters, many driven by climate change, are estimated to have caused economic losses of USD 313 billion globally (AON, 2023_[86]). The OECD has developed an integrated framework to help governments build integrated financial strategies, co-ordinated with fiscal risk assessments, to ensure their public finances are resilient to climate-related risks (OECD, 2022_[87]). For high-frequency, low-severity climate-related events (e.g. local floods or droughts), governments with budgetary flexibility and capacity should set up a general contingency reserve to cover disaster relief and response needs. For high-severity, low-frequency climate disasters, reserve funds are more appropriate (depending on the ease and cost of access to public debt financing). Budgetary frameworks for emergencies should allow funds to be rapidly reallocated to cover immediate post-disaster needs. For example, Colombia's financial strategy uses budget reallocations as a tool to finance lower-layer risks and to meet needs in the aftermath of a climate-related disaster (Ministerio de Hacienda y Crédito Público, 2021_[88]). Governments can also use balance sheet measures to improve the availability of affordable insurance and reduce government expenditure needs following a disaster. For instance, Australia has implemented a government-backed reinsurance pool for cyclones and related flood damage (OECD, 2022_[87]).

Planning and delivering resilient public infrastructure

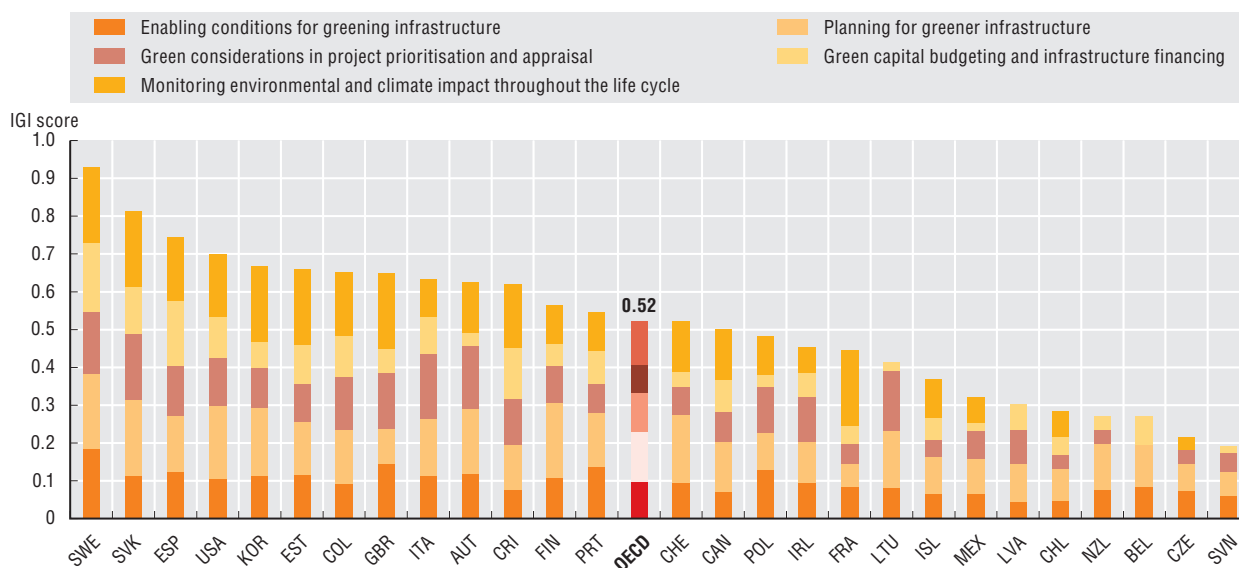
Infrastructure governance will play a crucial role in combatting the climate crisis, and in ensuring continuity of service through other shocks. Achieving net-zero emissions in 2050 will require an increase in global annual energy sector investment from the USD 2.3 trillion achieved in recent years to USD 5 trillion by 2030 (IEA, 2021_[89]). At the same time, infrastructure assets and operations will be increasingly exposed to the impacts of climate change, directly affecting public service provision. Developing reliable, sustainable and resilient infrastructure will require realigning infrastructure planning and delivery processes. Robust institutional capacities, appropriate processes and robust appraisal are preconditions for achieving optimal infrastructure investments which deliver the expected outcomes.

Chapter 8 examines how governments plan and manage the delivery of public infrastructure. The goal is to ensure that the right projects are selected, and that they are cost-efficient, affordable and represent value for money to the public sector and end-users. A lifecycle approach to infrastructure planning and management takes into account infrastructure performance, costs and benefits at all stages of the lifecycle, starting from planning, prioritisation and funding, through to design, procurement, construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning. This can help optimise assets and make them more resilient.

The OECD infrastructure governance indicator on environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure provides an overview of the different governance elements supporting environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure. Country indicator values range from 0.19 to 0.93 (with 0 and 1 min and max possible values) with OECD average of 0.52 (Figure 1.12, see also Figure 8.7 in Chapter 8). While countries show some good practices, there is significant room for improvement in all five governance aspects considered. For example, while 63% of countries for which data are available (17 out of 27) require a climate impact assessment to estimate the potential emissions of a transport infrastructure project, only 44% (12 out of 27) systematically use the results to select or prioritise projects. Less than half (12 out of 26 or 46%) require climate change adaptation measures to be integrated into the design of transport infrastructure projects. Only 35% (9 of 26) systematically use climate resilience criteria to inform how they select and prioritise projects (see also Figure 8.7 and Table 8.8).

Figure 1.12. **Governments can significantly improve on delivering environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure**

OECD infrastructure governance indicator on governance for greening infrastructure, 2022



Note: Scores can range from 0 to 1. Data for Australia, Germany, Greece, Japan, Luxembourg, Norway and Türkiye are not available. Data for Belgium are based on responses from Flanders only. Belgium (Flanders) does not have complete data for this indicator. Only the sub-pillars with complete data have been included in the graph (scores for Belgium (Flanders) are not included in the OECD average). Detailed methodological note is available in Chapter 8, see section “Delivering environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure”

Source: OECD (2022^[90]), Survey on the Governance of Infrastructure – Part V: Deliver environmentally sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure; OECD (2021^[91]), Regulatory Indicators Survey.

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States must ensure that public infrastructure, and particularly critical infrastructure, is resilient to risks, including those posed by the climate crisis. Shocks such as natural disasters, extreme weather events and health crises may become more frequent and/or intense due to the climate crisis, which may leave infrastructure assets and networks vulnerable to damage and disruption. This is compounded by ongoing infrastructure governance challenges such as ageing and poor maintenance. Maintaining resilience is essential to help absorb adverse shocks and ensure quality of services.

To ensure the resilience of existing infrastructure, countries could make greater use of innovative and sustainable solutions for asset management. By collecting better data on infrastructure performance and feeding them into information management systems, countries can make more informed decisions about the management of their assets. To ensure infrastructure resilience over time, countries can monitor assets at different lifecycle stages against performance standards and develop enforcement regimes that ensure compliance with those standards. For example, 58% of OECD countries (15 out of 26) have mechanisms in place to monitor and mitigate environmental and climate change risks throughout the operation, maintenance and decommissioning of assets (OECD, forthcoming_[92]).

Using procurement practices for more resilient public sector supply chains

Public procurement policy should work to ensure the resilience of public sector supply chains, especially in essential goods and services, while reinforcing an open system of international trade. Chapter 7 covers public procurement. Supply chains have become increasingly globalised and interdependent. While this has generated productivity gains and lowered production prices, it has also increased public buyers' exposure to risks of supply chain disruption. This has been evident in recent crises, in which risks to the supply of essential goods like medical supplies and energy have emerged. It is important that public procurement strategies manage these risks in ways that reinforce an open system of international trade. Governments are adopting a range of strategies to strengthen the resilience of their public sector supply chains, including risk management strategies to secure the provision of essential goods and services (OECD, 2020_[93]). Better knowledge of supply chains can help public buyers to identify, prioritise and address risks to them (OECD, 2020_[93]). However, in 2018, only 52% of OECD countries for which data were available had a national strategy for assessing, preventing and mitigating public procurement risks (OECD, 2019_[94]).

Effective strategies to ensure resilience of public sector supply chains and access to essential goods in a framework of open trade can include diversifying suppliers and improving cross-border co-operation (OECD, forthcoming_[95]). International procurement co-operation (e.g. agreements to share essential goods, conduct joint procurement or avoid export restrictions) can facilitate the sharing of goods and services and avoid governments competing against each other to procure them (OECD, forthcoming_[95]). For example, the Baltic Procurement Initiative, created in 2012, established a centralised joint purchasing system for Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to reduce expenditure and ensure continuity of access to medicines and vaccines (Vogler et al., 2021_[96]). More recently, Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine led the EU to propose new rules to make it possible for member states to purchase gas jointly on global markets (EU, 2022_[97]).

Navigating a complex web of interconnected supply chains to manage supply risks requires advanced procurement skills. In 2020, only 35% of OECD countries had made it mandatory for public procurement officers to receive specialised training (OECD, 2023_[98]).

Many countries offer optional training, such as Austria's Public Procurement Academy, where staff are trained to ensure quality, value for money and fairness throughout the procurement process (OECD, 2023^[98]). Countries can also promote collaborative approaches with knowledge centres to improve skills and competencies. In 2020, 62% of OECD countries had collaborated with knowledge centres to develop training, a substantial increase from the 39% which had done so in 2018 (OECD, 2023^[98]).

Public procurement can also help to achieve objectives on the green transition. This is explored in Chapter 7. Governments across the OECD are increasingly using their purchasing power to steer their economies towards greater consideration of environmental choices and outcomes. In 32 out of 34 OECD countries surveyed (94%) there is an active national green public procurement policy or framework, which has been recently updated to target high-impact sectors and to move towards cleaner products in two-thirds of countries (Figure 7.3). However, only 12 out of 32 OECD countries with GPP policies (38%) report on their impact and are therefore able to understand how they are contributing to meeting their sustainability goals (Figure 7.6).

Crisis management

Governments need to adapt their crisis management policies and practices to improve how they handle the unexpected and enhance the agility of their systems. Traditional approaches to crisis management, based on standard operating procedures and past events, are no longer sufficient when facing more frequent shocks, or those which are unprecedented or unexpectedly large (OECD, 2015^[99]). This is demonstrated by 18 out of 25 OECD countries for which data are available having experienced at least one major non-COVID-19 crisis since 2017 which they were not prepared to cope with (OECD, forthcoming^[100]).

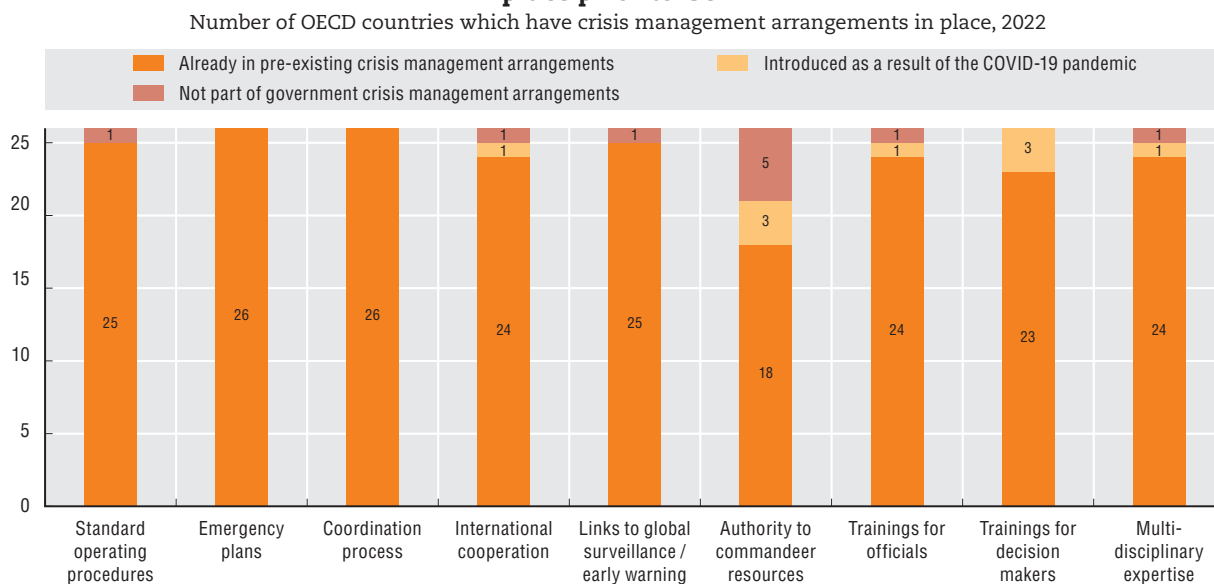
First, governments must set up robust governance frameworks for managing both classic and more complex crises. It is important to engage multiple agencies as well as the private sector in crisis management, and to put in place arrangements for co-ordinating these stakeholders both nationally and internationally. Second, governments need to establish a network of actors with multi-disciplinary scientific expertise and the capacity to provide easily understood information to support strategic decision making during crises. Unbundling complexities and identifying uncertainties are essential for making sense of emergency situations. Third, crisis managers should be able to enact crisis communication strategies to respond to citizens' expectations. Finally, governments must train professionals and leaders in managing and preparing for complex crises. Most OECD countries now include many of these core features in their crisis management systems (Figure 1.13, (OECD^[100]) forthcoming). Nevertheless, it will be critical that they keep their strategic crisis management capabilities ahead of the evolving risk landscape through continuous improvement, training and learning in order to maintain national resilience.

Skills and management in the public service

Governments should take steps to maximise the agility of their workforces. Chapter 13 presents data on how public servants are managed in OECD countries. Flexible public services are able to adjust quickly to fast-changing and emerging priorities. They are a core feature of the future of the public service (OECD, 2021^[102]). The OECD has identified three aspects of a flexible public service: mobility, learning cultures and the use of flexible working arrangements, including remote work (OECD, 2023^[103]). Each of these areas contributed

significantly to public service resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. Public services across the OECD have the chance to refine and scale up promising new practices in all three areas and use flexibility to enhance performance in a potentially more crisis-prone period.

Figure 1.13. Many OECD countries had key crisis management arrangements in place prior to COVID



Note: Data is for 26 OECD countries. The question asked was “Which, if any of the following features, were established in your Government’s crisis management mechanism prior to COVID-19, or introduced as a result of COVID-19?”

Source: OECD (2022_[101]), Questionnaire on the Governance of Critical Risks.

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Mobility means giving public servants the opportunity to work in different parts of the public service. Emergency situations like COVID-19 showed the importance of having mechanisms to quickly identify people with specific skill sets and move them to where they are most needed. Beyond emergencies, as policy challenges become more complex, mobility can be a critical tool to help public administrations align the right skills and expertise, while also providing important workforce learning and development opportunities. The strategic use of mobility tools can be a cornerstone of greater resilience, capability and innovation. Despite these benefits, mobility is not mandatory or explicitly recommended in most administrations (Figure 13.1).

To be resilient, public services must learn quickly, to adapt to fast-changing circumstances and build skills in foresight and innovative problem solving. This requires a learning culture, where learning is continual, career-long and expected. It must also be aligned with incentives, such as growth opportunities and performance feedback. To cultivate a learning culture, it is important that leaders prioritise learning, create space for both formal and informal learning, and promote mobility as a learning opportunity. Most public administrations have learning strategies (Figure 13.3), but they are not always supported with enough data or systematic planning.

Flexible working practices, both spatial (e.g. remote working) and temporal (e.g. part time), are essential for workforce resilience in the public service. The COVID-19 pandemic showed the importance of enabling public servants to work from anywhere, at any time, to

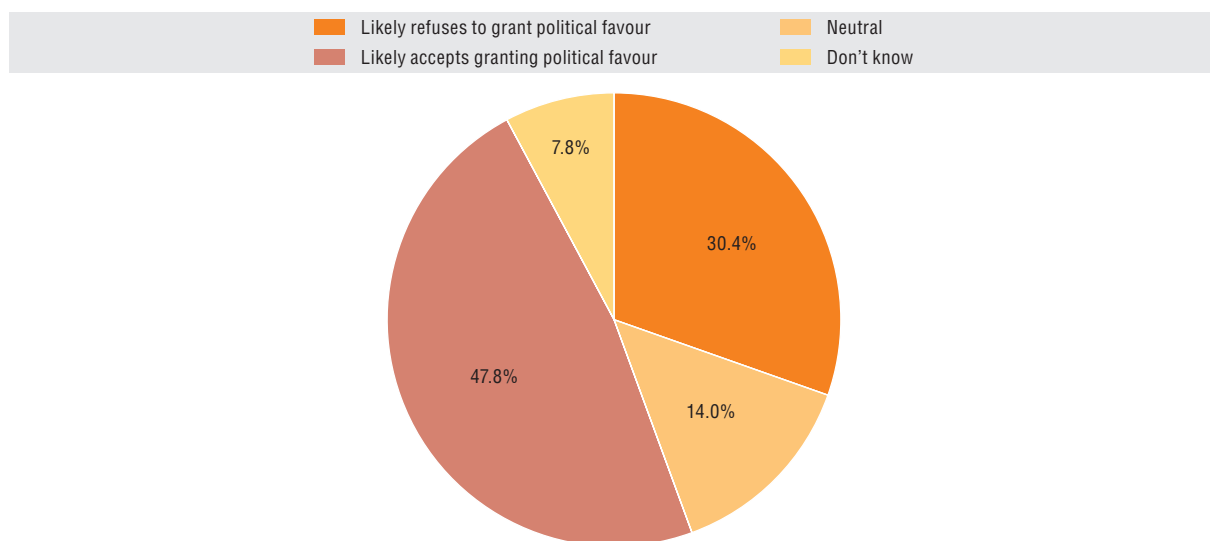
meet the needs of the public. Flexible ways of working encompass a variety of tools enabling public servants to adjust their working hours and location in line with their preferences and organisational requirements. They are key to attracting and retaining the skills needed in the public service workforce of the future. Many forms of flexible working are available to public servants in OECD countries (Figure 13.5), but very few of these are established rights (Figure 13.6).

Protect against threats to democratic values

Democratic governance must protect against risks to democratic resilience arising from corruption, lack of integrity, and mis- and disinformation, that are enhanced at times of crisis. These issues form direct, and sometimes intentional, threats to trust in public institutions. Chapter 4 covers issues related to integrity and how policy making is governed. Across OECD countries, there is a widespread scepticism about the integrity of high-level political officials. On average, almost half of respondents to OECD surveys (48%) predict that a high-level political official would grant a political favour in exchange for the offer of a well-paid private sector job (Figure 1.14). These risks can be heightened during crises. The pressures of speed and expedience can lower standards of democratic governance and oversight. This may allow actors to exploit weaknesses in public integrity systems to pursue their own interests. This might include both domestic and foreign actors seeking to gain undue influence, or to undermine democratic countries for strategic reasons. This section covers key actions democratic governments need to take to create firewalls against these threats.

Figure 1.14. Perceptions of undue influence are widespread

Share of respondents who indicate that an elected or appointed official would accept or refuse the offer of a well-paid private sector job in exchange for a political favour, unweighted OECD average, 2021



Note: Figure presents the unweighted OECD average of responses to the question “If a high-level politician were offered the prospect of a well-paid job in the private sector in exchange for a political favour, how likely or unlikely do you think it is that they would refuse it?”. The OECD Trust Survey aggregates 11-point response scales as follows: 0-4 = Low / unlikely; 5 = Neutral; 6-10 = High / likely. “OECD” presents the unweighted average across countries. Mexico and New Zealand are excluded from this figure as respondents were not asked about trust in the national government. For more detailed information please find the survey method document at <http://oe.cd/trust>.

Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>); OECD (2022^[3]), Building Trust to Reinforce Democracy: Main Findings from the 2021 OECD Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions, <https://doi.org/10.1787/b407f99c-en>.

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Integrity and anti-corruption

Governments must ensure that democratic governance systems protect and enforce the “rules of the game” for democracy. Democratically governed systems are based on the expectation that both elected political leaders, and public officials with key decision-making capacities, will design policies for the benefit of the public. When designing and implementing policies, governments need to engage diverse interest groups and consider the costs and benefits for these groups. In this context, engagement between interested stakeholders and government through lobbying and other influence practices is a natural part of the democratic process (OECD, 2010_[104]).

The manner in which these practices take place is critical to democratic resilience. Public policies suffer if lobbying and influence are abused, for example if special interest groups monopolise influence or use misleading evidence to advance their own interests or manipulate public opinion. Decisions on public policies can have harmful impacts if political leaders and public decision makers breach political integrity standards and use their position to further the commercial or political interests of particular groups. This can result in mistrust in public institutions and democratic processes (OECD, 2021_[106]).

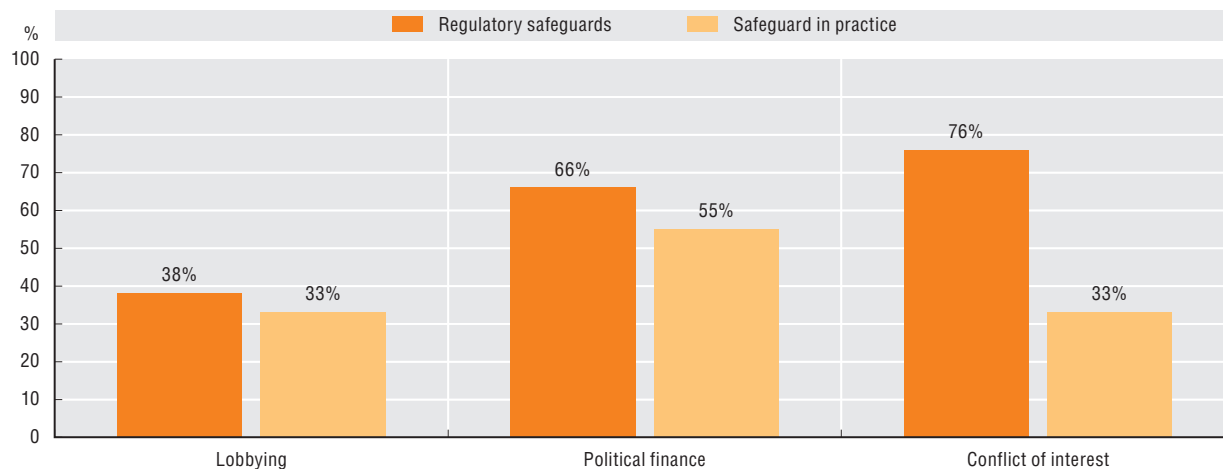
Corruption risks can be heightened by crisis conditions. The COVID-19 crisis highlighted governments’ vulnerability to undue influence. Lobbying activities related to the pandemic increased significantly in the early months of the crisis (OECD, 2021_[106]). Concerns arose over the influence of powerful interest groups on COVID-19-related policies, such as vaccine purchases (European Court of Auditors, 2022_[107]), and a lack of transparency in response to access to information requests that could have shed light on the influence of powerful interest groups in key decision-making processes (EU Ombudsman, 2022_[108]; EU Ombudsman, 2023_[109]). This echoes previous crises, where affected businesses and stakeholders have influenced policy responses (OECD, 2021_[106]). Moreover, many governments established ad hoc procedures to gather scientific and technical expertise for policy responses and recovery plans. While appointed experts can provide credible information and legitimacy to crisis response, they also pose an integrity risk related to possible unmanaged conflicts of interest.

Many OECD countries lack the full safeguards to prevent corruption in lobbying, political finance and conflict-of-interest situations (Figure 1.15). Lobbying is a particularly unregulated policy area in OECD countries. On average across 28 OECD countries, only 38% of standard regulatory safeguards on lobbying are in place, and only 33% are implemented in practice (more details in Figures 4.8 and 4.9). This can lead to opportunities for undue influence over policy making. Countries fare better in regulating political finance, with 66% of standard criteria and regulations in place, and 55% implemented in practice (more details in Figures 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12). This suggests a comparatively lower risk of businesses securing advantages through contributions to campaigns and parties. Regulations in OECD countries to safeguard against conflicts of interest meet 76% of criteria on average, but their actual practices only meet 33% (more details in Figures 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6). Despite strong regulatory requirements, many countries often fail to track whether interest and asset declarations have been submitted, or have weak procedures to verify their content.

Integrity risks are magnified when foreign governments, particularly non-democratic regimes, aim to destabilise democracies through, inter alia, disinformation campaigns, malign political financing, and interference in domestic policymaking through covert lobbying practices. In a more interconnected and digital world, these practices are increasingly common and pose a new threat to democratic resilience especially in times of crisis.

Figure 1.15. **Many OECD countries lack full safeguards to prevent corruption in lobbying, political finance and conflict-of-interest situations**

% of regulatory safeguards which existing, and % which are fulfilled in practice (average across OECD countries)



Note: Percentage values represent the average score across 28 OECD countries on the fulfilment of standard criteria for each category. For conflict of interest, the OECD Public Integrity Indicators measure the fulfilment of 9 standard regulatory safeguards and 9 standard safeguards to implement in practice. For lobbying, they measure 4 standard regulatory safeguards and 9 standard safeguards to implement in practice. For political finance, they measure 11 standard regulatory safeguards and 8 standard safeguards to implement in practice. Data not available for Belgium, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, New Zealand, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

Source: OECD (2022_[105]), OECD Public Integrity Indicators, <https://oecd-public-integrity-indicators.org/>.

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Protecting democratic resilience against the risks of undue influence and foreign interference will require governments to implement a number of mutually supportive actions. First, they need to strengthen integrity and transparency over lobbying and influence by commercial and political interests, whether national or foreign, including via political financing. A minority of OECD countries still do not ban contributions to political parties and election campaigns from foreign states or enterprises. This makes it possible for foreign agents to directly influence national democratic outcomes. In addition, less than half of OECD countries have established lobby registers, and not all of them cover influence from abroad, in particular activities conducted on behalf of foreign governments. Functioning lobby registers are a precondition for transparency over the activities of both national and foreign actors.

Second, public officials, and in particular elected and appointed officials, need a public integrity framework adapted to the risks related to lobbying and influence activities. This should include an effective system to manage pre/post public employment risks and other conflict-of-interest situations. Similarly, companies, business and trade associations, consultancies and law firms, non-governmental organisations, think tanks, research bodies and other organisations engaging in lobbying and influence activities need a transparency and integrity framework for engaging with the policy-making process.

Finally, greater transparency and internal controls are needed for residence-by-investment (RBI) and citizenship-by-investment (CBI) schemes. Evidence has shown that these programmes are highly vulnerable to misuse and abuse, and may be used to hide or facilitate financial and economic crimes, including corruption, tax evasion and money laundering. Some research also suggests that in small island nations, where these schemes can form a significant proportion of national income (sometimes up to 50%), the firms involved in facilitating these programmes

are also playing a significant role in political finance, lobbying and unduly influencing the government and encouraging corrupt activities (OECD, 2022_[5]; OECD, 2019_[110]).

Combatting mis- and disinformation

Governments must take effective action to tackle mis- and disinformation, the threats of which are enhanced in times of crisis. The existence of false and misleading information, and the challenges such content poses to governments and societies, is not new. Nevertheless, defending and strengthening information integrity has become particularly complex in the digital age. Anyone can be a source of information (or mis- and dis-information), content can be shared instantly and globally, and artificial intelligence (AI) tools facilitate the creation and dissemination of misleading content. In addition, malign foreign and domestic actors are using this new context to attack the integrity of information in democracies. More widely, the amplification of false and misleading content can undermine the public's willingness and ability to engage constructively in democratic life.

In this complex environment, regular crises provide increased opportunities for both misleading and malicious information to be fostered. The COVID-19 pandemic and the large-scale Russian aggression against Ukraine have underscored the threats posed by disinformation for democratic resilience. Growing numbers of individuals engage with mis- and disinformation across a range of social media platforms. For example, in New Zealand, the vectors, velocity, and volume of mis- and dis-information steadily increased in the months following the implementation of a COVID-19 “traffic light” system and the outbreak of Omicron (Hannah, Hattotuwa and Taylor, 2022_[111]). There was an increasing spread of conspiracy theories in the run up to riots outside parliament (Smith, 2022_[112]).

Democratic resilience requires a careful balance of actions to reduce the prevalence and impact of mis- and disinformation, while maintaining and strengthening fundamental freedoms. In democracies, reinforcing information integrity depends on many actors. Governments must be sources of transparent and accurate information, while also ensuring freedom and independence for media, researchers and civil society organisations. While many of the interventions in this space focus on counteracting false or misleading content, governance efforts to build information integrity should therefore be driven by a whole-of-government and whole-of-society perspective. Governments need to put in place effective institutional architecture to respond to dis- and misinformation. These include co-ordination mechanisms across government, the development of strategies and tools to support capacity building among public servants, the role of the public communication function, and participation in international collaboration mechanisms to identify threats and effective responses.

A whole-of-society response to information integrity includes media and digital literacy initiatives, promoting and maintaining a diverse and independent media sector, and structures to engage with non-governmental partners. Governments will also need to examine the opportunities and challenges of oversight and regulation. This includes identifying appropriate and effective regulatory processes; transparency frameworks for social media platforms; and efforts to map regulatory entry points and clarify the values, objectives and lessons of regulation in this space (OECD, 2022_[5]). The OECD has recently established a *Mis- and Dis- Information Resource Hub* to identify new approaches to strengthen the integrity of information and collect evidence to identify what policy responses work across society.

Oversight of emergency powers and regulations

Emergency powers and regulations must be transparently governed, credibly time-bound and subject to review. Crises make the need for trusted, evidence-based, internationally co-ordinated and well-enforced policies and regulations particularly acute. A key challenge to democratic governance when facing crises is that the need for rapid action often clashes with wider principles of democratic governance, such as the need for consultation, participation, transparency and the assessment of impacts. In some crises, such as during COVID-19, effective crisis responses may involve restrictions even on fundamental democratic rights. In most OECD member countries, emergency COVID-19 measures gave the executive extensive law-making powers, sometimes with limited or next to no external and above all parliamentary scrutiny (OECD, 2022_[25]). The proportionality and duration of the suspension of parliamentary scrutiny remains debated in many settings.

To maintain democratic resilience, it is important to have appropriate oversight over and limitations on the use of emergency powers and regulations. One common approach is to ensure emergency powers and regulations are explicitly temporary in nature. OECD countries self-reported a total of 190 specific regulations that were issued in response to the COVID-19 pandemic as of September 2020. Around half of these included a sunset clause (see OECD (2021_[113]), Table 2.3). In a context where consulting with all potentially affected parties on urgent measures is challenging, policy makers may rely on advisory groups consisting of experts from all relevant areas. On crucial decisions, social partners and local governments might still be consulted, if time allows (OECD, 2020_[114]). Robust and adequately resourced regulatory oversight bodies will play a crucial role in ensuring better regulation habits do not inadvertently fall in priority in a time of crisis (see OECD (2021_[113]), Figure 3.10). Finally, it is important that fast-track or emergency regulations undergo *ex post* review, to ensure that measures are scrutinised and lessons learned.

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