

Executive Summary: Key facts and data

In recent years, multiple, consecutive shocks have threatened economic resilience and wellbeing worldwide. Governments in OECD countries - and democratic systems- have been at the centre of responding to these crises. While countries have generally responded at scale and speed, in the context of multiple crises this is unlikely to be sufficient. Governments need to adopt more advanced practices to build trust and enhance democratic resilience to better weather the challenges they face. Actions include to i) Build on democratic strengths such as citizen and stakeholder participation and representation, inclusion, and innovation; ii) Reinforce key governance competencies to support delivery in the context of multiple crises; and iii) Protect against active threats to public trust arising from failings in public integrity and mis- or disinformation.

Multiple crises can reduce democratic resilience by undermining trust in public institutions

- Across 22 OECD countries surveyed, just over four in ten people (41%) indicate high or moderately high trust in national government in 2021. Trust is evenly split: 41% indicate low or no trust in national government. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, trust levels varied substantially but did not plummet as drastically as following the financial crisis in 2008. On average it took about a decade for public trust to recover from the 2008 crisis across OECD countries.
- In OECD countries, people tend to view public institutions as reliable, and are broadly content with public services. Around two-thirds of respondents are satisfied with their health care system (68%), education system (67%) and with administrative services (63%). More than half of respondents on average across 22 OECD surveyed countries trust their government to use their personal data only for legitimate purposes (51%). A majority of people (67%) are satisfied with access to information on administrative procedures and about half (49%) with government preparedness to tackle a future crisis.
- Few people see their government as responsive to their needs and wants, and say it falls short of their expectations on participation and representation. On average, less than half of respondents (40%) expect that their government would improve a poorly performing service or implement an innovative idea (38%). Only 30% of people feel they can have a voice on what the government does.
- Public perceptions of government integrity are also an issue, 48% of people on average expect that a high-level political official would grant a political favour in exchange for the prospect of a well-paid private sector job.

Governments must better harness their strengths in participation and inclusion

- There is a wide margin to improve participatory decision making. More than four in ten respondents (43%) across 22 OECD countries say it is unlikely that government would adopt opinions expressed in a public consultation. More advanced mechanisms for participation are needed. While 27 of 29 OECD countries had a central office to provide support to public institutions on how to consult citizens and stakeholders in 2020, participatory practices are still often implemented on an ad hoc basis.
- All OECD countries engage stakeholders in the development of laws and regulations. Similarly, 33 OECD countries (87%) have put in place mechanisms for stakeholder participation in infrastructure projects. However, there is room to improve transparency and oversight. Only 6 and 4 countries, respectively, announce all forthcoming consultations on laws or on regulations, before they begin and only 17 out of 33 countries give stakeholders a role in oversight and monitoring of infrastructure projects.
- Governments are seeking to improve inclusiveness, including for example through gender budgeting. In 2022, 23 out of 38 OECD countries had applied gender budgeting, representing an increase since 2016 and 2018 when only 12 and 17 respectively applied it. However, most countries lag on accountability and impact assessment of gender budgeting.
- Despite progress made over recent years, women and young people remain underrepresented in politics and public institutions. In 2021, women held only 36% of ministerial positions on average in OECD countries. The share of women in senior positions grew in most countries between 2011 and 2021 from 33% on average in OECD-EU countries to 41% in 2021, yet still below gender parity. People aged 20–39-year represent 34% of voting age populations across OECD countries, but the percentage of young members of parliament was 23% in 2022.

Governments must reinforce key competencies to handle crises

- Preserving the resilience of public finances is key to respond to unexpected expenditures and finance structural environmental and societal transformations. After stark deterioration due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are some positive signs in public finances, but the recovery remains fragile. From a low point in 2020 (-10.2% of GDP), the average general government fiscal deficit in OECD countries diminished to -7.5% of GDP in 2021; and to -3.5% of GDP on average in OECD-EU countries in 2022.
- Budgeting management processes can help address the climate crisis and achieve environmental goals. While there has been a rapid increase in the number of countries implementing green budgeting mechanisms, from 14 countries in 2021 to 24 in 2022, green budgeting could be used more effectively by further involving civil society and parliaments in monitoring and ensuring oversight.
- Public procurement can also help achieve the green transition. Most OECD countries (32 out of 34) have introduced public procurement strategies, policies or frameworks to ensure purchasing of less environmentally harmful products and services, but only 38% of countries regularly report on the impact of green public procurement. A similar trend is observed in other sectors; around two-thirds countries, for which data are available (17 out of 27), require a climate impact assessment to estimate the potential emissions of transport infrastructure projects, although only 12 countries systematically use the results to select or prioritise projects.

- Mobility of civil servants within administrations can be a cornerstone to build capacity, innovation and enhance resilience of public workforce. Despite these benefits, in 2022, mobility of civil servants was mandatory or expected in only 3 out of 35 OECD countries, recommended or encouraged in 11 countries, and possible but not encouraged in 21 countries.

Governments must protect against risks arising from corruption, lack of integrity, and mis- and disinformation

- Many OECD countries lack the full safeguards to prevent corruption in lobbying, political finance and conflict-of-interest situations. On average across 29 OECD countries, only 12 have a publicly available lobbying register. In 14 OECD countries, political parties and campaigns are prohibited by law from receiving anonymous donations or financial contributions from enterprises and foreign states, and all contributions need to be registered; while 5 countries do not impose any type of bans or registering obligations. Finally, disclosure of private interests is required across all three branches of government in 17 out of 29 OECD countries.
- Strengthening information integrity has become particularly complex in the digital age. Artificial Intelligence (AI) provides enormous opportunities, including in expanding and protecting the exercise of some democratic rights and freedoms; however, its use also brings challenges for governments such as ensuring that it enhances people's willingness and ability to engage constructively in democratic life and that it benefits society. In 2022, 16 out of 30 OECD countries (53%) have laws or regulations to ensure the ethical use of AI, while 12 countries (40%) have introduced as guidelines, standards or principles.



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