

# Executive summary

Governments worldwide have faced severe challenges in the last few years. The world had little time to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine dealt the global economy a series of shocks. The culminative effect of these events has been the destruction of lives and livelihoods, and growing humanitarian, economic and governance crises. Millions of people have been displaced, energy and food markets have been severely disrupted, inflation continues to surge, and economic growth is slowing). Governments must cope with and respond to these emerging threats while already grappling with issues such as climate change, digital disruption. The challenges they face in ensuring positive outcomes for their people seem to be increasing.

Yet, despite compounding challenges, governments have demonstrated in many cases capacities for resilience, including for adaptation and innovation. More specifically to the focus of this work, governments have managed demonstrate they are open to changes on how they design policies, deliver services and manage the business of government. If anything, recent and ongoing crises have [catalysed](#) public sector innovation and reinstated the critical role of the state. While the overall tone may be pessimistic, public sector innovation has provided bright spots and room for hope.

The search for these bright spots and entry points for change is the driving force behind this report, and the research that underpins it

For 2023, OPSI has identified four primary innovation trends, alongside ten in-depth case studies and dozens of supporting examples of projects at the forefront of innovation to illustrate them. This wealth of innovative activities among governments and their partners in industry and civil society by far surpasses the level of innovation observed in previous years, demonstrating that governments are willing and able to step up and take rapid and impactful action to overcome the obstacles in their path and to help ensure the well-being of their citizens and residents. The trends identified are:

1. **New forms of accountability for a new era of government.** Focusing on algorithmic accountability in the public sector and new aspects of transparency regarding Rules as Code concepts and Internet of Things (IoT) sensors, this trend is supported by case studies on the United Kingdom's Algorithmic Transparency Recording Standard and Amsterdam's Sensor Register regulation and map.
2. **New approaches to care.** Re-orienting of care systems for a more integrated and patient-centred approach, as well as specific focuses on empathic care to support mental health and leveraging new technologies to revolutionise healthcare. This trend is supported by case studies on the Bogotá Care Blocks in Colombia, which provide integrated support to women carers and their families, as well as a Mental Health Café in Australia and the AI-powered Tucuvi virtual nurse in Spain.
3. **New methods for preserving identities and strengthening equity.** Innovative approaches to engaging with Indigenous peoples, safeguarding cultural heritage and enabling families and communities for equitable outcomes and enhanced wellbeing. This trend is supported by case studies on Ethical Deliveries, an alternative to private sector delivery platforms in Bologna, Italy, as well as efforts to support citizenship, participation and access to justice for Indigenous Maxakali communities in Brazil and the Empowered Families Initiative in Singapore.

4. **Trend 4: New ways of engaging citizens and residents.** Evolving upon and strengthening public engagement practices, while also empowering people to have a stronger role in re-imagining and seeing new norms for physical and environments. This trend is supported by case studies on permanent Deliberative Committees in the Brussels, Belgium Regional Parliament, as well as the creative #FreetownTheTreeTown initiative to promote the planting and caring for trees in the capital of Sierra Leone.

As can be seen throughout this report, government responses to COVID-19, and their efforts to move towards long-term recovery, permeate several of these trends, and in many cases serve as the point of origin for their underlying initiatives. In many ways, the four leading trends represent the systemic evolution and maturity of government priorities and workstreams already underway, rather than the introduction of radically new concepts. Accountability, public care services and protecting cultures and marginalised groups are age-old functions of government. Likewise, governments have been working to open their systems to the public for several decades now. Yet, recent events, new technologies, growing expectations from citizens and increasing awareness of inequities and injustices in society have compelled and empowered governments to act in new ways. While the resulting efforts in recent years were often ad-hoc, those seen this year, while still innovative in their approach, are often more intentional, building on lessons learned from previous efforts and seeking to address the root cause of issues rather than symptoms.

In addition to the four leading trends, a number of additional secondary trends emerged. Although these are not the focus of this report, they may be the subject of future work. These secondary trends include:

- **Public administration transformation.** Governments are innovating to transform nuts-and-bolts operations, such as procurement, training and reskilling and upskilling public servants, and seeking to measure public sector innovation.
- **New foundations for young people and intergenerational justice.** Governments are developing novel solutions tailored to the needs of young people and giving a voice to future generations in today's policy making.
- **Accelerating the path to net zero.** Governments are taking creative approaches to reduce carbon emissions and promote sustainable approaches.
- **Strengthening and leveraging GovTech ecosystems.** Governments are reaching beyond the public sector for innovative solutions and tapping into new ideas from agile startups.



**From:**  
**Global Trends in Government Innovation 2023**

**Access the complete publication at:**

<https://doi.org/10.1787/0655b570-en>

**Please cite this chapter as:**

OECD (2023), "Executive summary", in *Global Trends in Government Innovation 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/930b7b95-en>

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