

4. GOVERNANCE OF THE POLICY CYCLE

Lobbying and influence

Interest groups can provide governments with valuable information about various public policies and regulations in place or under consideration. Nonetheless, experience shows that without the necessary safeguards, the abuse of lobbying practices – such as the monopoly of influence by special interest groups, undue influence through covert or deceptive evidence, or the manipulation of public opinion – can result in decisions on essential public policies that have hidden harmful impacts. Ultimately, the result can be public dissatisfaction with public institutions and democratic processes.

There is a widespread perception that policy makers and public policies may be influenced by special interest groups leading to policy outcomes contrary to the public interest. According to the OECD Trust Survey, 47.8% of people on average across 22 OECD countries, think that a high-level political official would grant a political favour in exchange for the offer of a well-paid private sector job (Figure 4.7). The OECD Recommendation on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying provides direction and guidance on regulations or policies on transparency and integrity standards to mitigate the risks of undue influence and policy capture.

Twelve out of 29 OECD countries with data available (41%) provide transparency through a publicly available lobbying register. In 10 countries, these registers include information on the lobbyist's name, the domain of intervention and the type of lobbying activities. Three OECD countries have a lobbying register that also discloses budget and expenses for lobbying activities, and the piece of legislation or regulation targeted (Figure 4.8).

Ten out of 29 OECD countries (34%) have a set of sanctions defined in the regulatory framework in case of breaches of transparency and integrity standards in lobbying. Seven of these countries have carried out investigations for non-compliance with the regulation of lobbying activities or incomplete or erroneous disclosure of information (Figure 4.9).

Methodology and definitions

Data were collected through a questionnaire based on the OECD Public Integrity Indicators on Accountability of Public Policy Making. Twenty-nine OECD countries and one accession country (Brazil) responded. Respondents were senior officials responsible for integrity policies in central government. The OECD Public Integrity indicators measure the state of play against the OECD Recommendation on Public Integrity. Public integrity refers to the consistent alignment of, and adherence to, shared ethical values, principles

and norms for upholding and prioritising the public interest over private interests in the public sector.

Special interest groups are groups, usually limited in number relative to the population, that are well-organised and have significant financial resources to focus on influencing public policies and regulations on a specific issue. The term has a negative connotation and denotes actions by these groups that primarily benefit the groups themselves, at the expense of society as a whole.

Undue influence is the attempt to influence the design, implementation, execution and evaluation of public policies and regulations administered by public officials, whether by providing covert, deceptive or misleading evidence or data; manipulating public opinion; or using other practices intended to manipulate the decisions of public officials.

Further reading

OECD (2021), *Lobbying in the 21st Century: Transparency, Integrity and Access*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/c6d8eff8-en>.

OECD (2020), *OECD Public Integrity Handbook*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ac8ed8e8-en>.

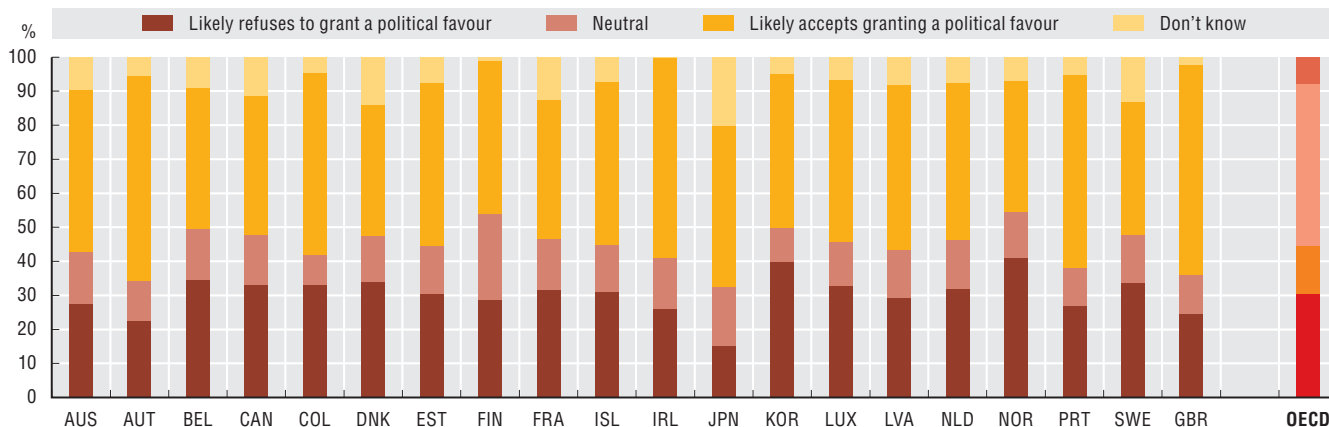
OECD (2010), "Recommendation of the Council on Principles for Transparency and Integrity in Lobbying", *OECD Legal Instruments*, OECD, Paris, <https://legalinstruments.oecd.org/en/instruments/OECD-LEGAL-0379>.

Figure notes

- 4.7. "OECD" presents the unweighted average across countries. Refers 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?". "Likely refuses to grant a political favour" corresponds to responses of 6-10 on a 0-10 scale; "Neutral" to 5; "Likely accepts granting a political favour" to 0-4; and "Don't know" was a separate option.
- 4.8. Inner ring: lobbyists' registration tools are accessible for all and detail step-by-step registration procedures. Middle ring: information in the lobbyists' register include name, organisation, domain of intervention and type of lobbying activities. Outer ring: information in the lobbyists' register includes budget/expenses for lobbying activities and legislation and regulations targeted.
- 4.9. Inner ring: proportional sanctions for breaches of transparency and integrity standards related to lobbying or influence are defined in regulations. Outer ring: at least one investigation was carried out in the last full calendar year for non-compliance with the transparency and integrity standards related to lobbying and influence or for incomplete or erroneous disclosure of information.

4.7. Perceptions of undue influence, 2021

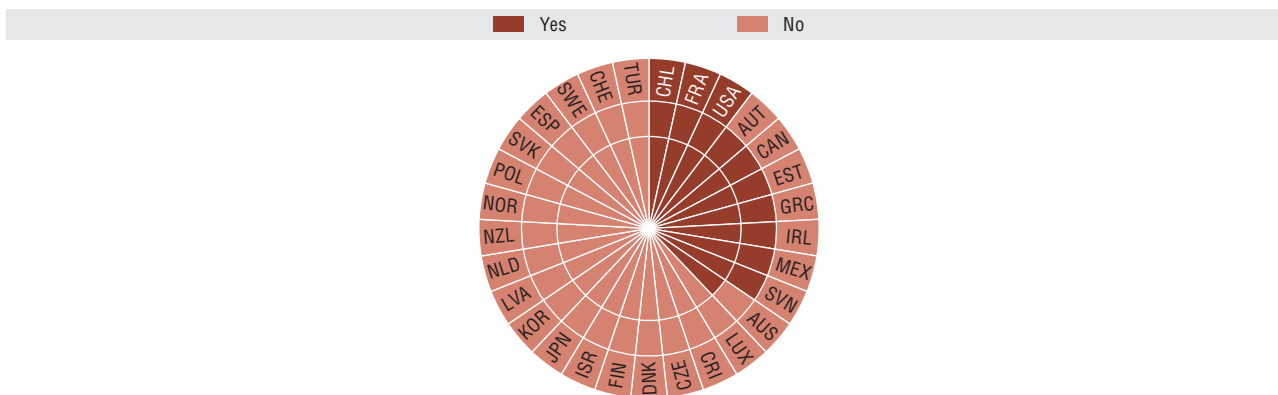
Share of respondents who indicate that an elected or appointed official would accept or refuse the offer of a well-paid private sector job in exchange for a political favour



Source: OECD Trust Survey (<http://oe.cd/trust>).

StatLink <https://stat.link/svxh0y>

4.8. Quality of lobbying registers: Accessibility and coverage, 2022

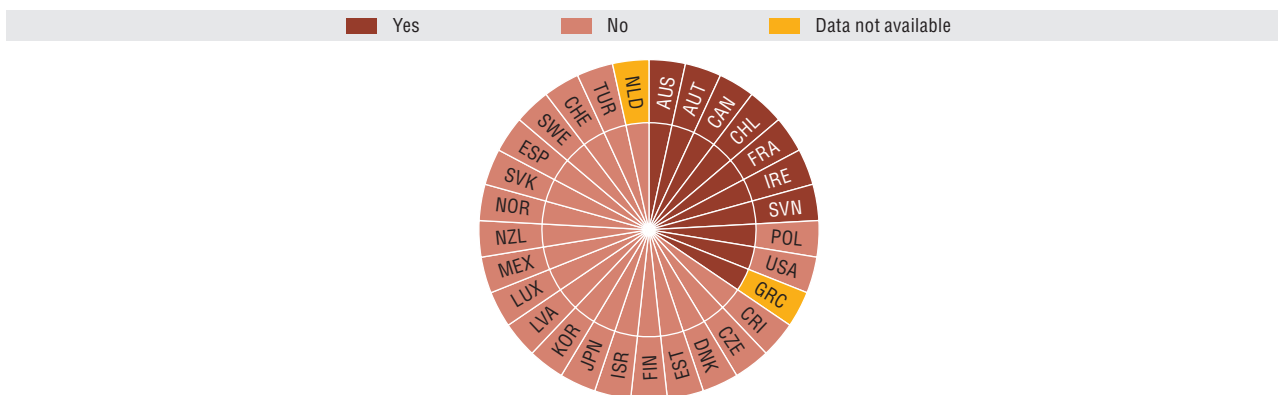


Note: Inner ring: lobbying registers are accessible; middle ring: registers record basic information; outer ring: registers record extended information.

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

StatLink <https://stat.link/qpbsdw>

4.9. Sanctions for breaches of transparency or integrity lobbying: Regulations and practice, 2022



Note: Inner ring: sanctions are defined; outer ring: investigations have been carried out in the past year.

Data not available: data the country could not provide because it does not exist.

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

StatLink <https://stat.link/nz4bwe>



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