

50. Special feature: Partnering with citizens in service delivery

Volunteer community groups partnering with local police to increase safety in their neighbourhoods; patients with chronic illnesses taking control over their health with the support of health-care professionals; young parents using online social networks supported by social workers to get guidance and share advice regarding their children's upbringing. These are all examples of user-centred collaborative approaches in service delivery (also referred to as "co-production") where citizens or service users design, commission, deliver or evaluate a public service in partnership with service professionals. In co-production, because at times users may take responsibility over the initiative for service development, the line between service delivery and policy making can be sometimes blurred.

In a time of increased budgetary pressure and growing demand for public services, these approaches can be a source of innovation leading to greater individual and community empowerment, increased user satisfaction and reduced production costs. The results of an OECD survey on service delivery indicate that for the majority of OECD countries that have adopted some forms of co-production, the objectives being primarily to increase the involvement of citizens and achieve better quality service delivery (60%) rather than to reduce costs (23%).

However, despite an increased focus by OECD countries on user-centricity, co-production as a form of service delivery remains developmental. Indeed, the majority of member countries have some experiences of co-production in one or more public service categories, but few of them (e.g. Canada, Norway, the United States, Finland, and the United Kingdom) have gone beyond piloting this approach to embed these schemes in the delivery of some public services.

Governments face several barriers to adopting co-production as a means of service delivery. A shortage of resources (42%), organisational resistance to change (36%), and lack of financial incentives (31%) are the most frequent obstacles identified by government officials. Additionally, there is still limited understanding and measurement by governments of the benefits and costs of co-production schemes, as also reflected by the scarce development of standardised business cases; 29% of respondents from OECD countries reported that they lacked evidence of the potential benefits of co-production.

Survey results suggest that the implementation of co-production may require a set of changes within public service delivery organisations. Leadership and commitment from senior public officials and the willingness to engage with users and citizens are identified as the top two levers leading to effective citizen and user input in service delivery. Clear accountability and financial frameworks (73% of respondents) are also identified as a critical factor of success, especially in more complex forms of co-production involving resource transfers to service users (e.g. self-directed budgets). Finally, as co-production alters the professional roles and responsibilities of traditional service providers, new skill sets and

competencies for service professionals may need to be introduced across services.

Methodology and definitions

Co-production can be defined as a way of planning, designing, delivering and evaluating public services, drawing directly from citizens and/or civil society organisations. Co-production schemes represent a step forward from simple forms of citizen involvement (e.g. consultation and feedback on service quality) towards a more in-depth and systematic association of citizens, service users and non-government organisations. These actors are invited to contribute their own resources (e.g. time, knowledge and efforts) in the design and delivery of public services. Co-production is also distinct from common contractual practices (such as outsourcing), as it refers to an undefined and rather unspecified invitation to contribute to the service delivery process as opposed to a contractual agreement with specific organisations to perform an activity for the government. When analysing the use of co-production, countries' own internal systems for service delivery need to be taken into account, as do different contexts for public engagement.

Data were collected through the 2010 OECD Survey on Innovation in Public Services. Central government officials responsible for service delivery responded to the survey. Respondents in 20 OECD member countries replied to the survey. Government officials in Brazil, Egypt, the Russian Federation and Ukraine also completed the survey.

Many different agencies or organisations within the central government contributed to answering the survey. The percentages in the figures refer to the sum of the affirmative responses to each of the question items for all respondents in each country divided by the total number of responses to this question for all countries. Thus, 100% would indicate that all respondents in all countries answered affirmatively to this question for all service categories.

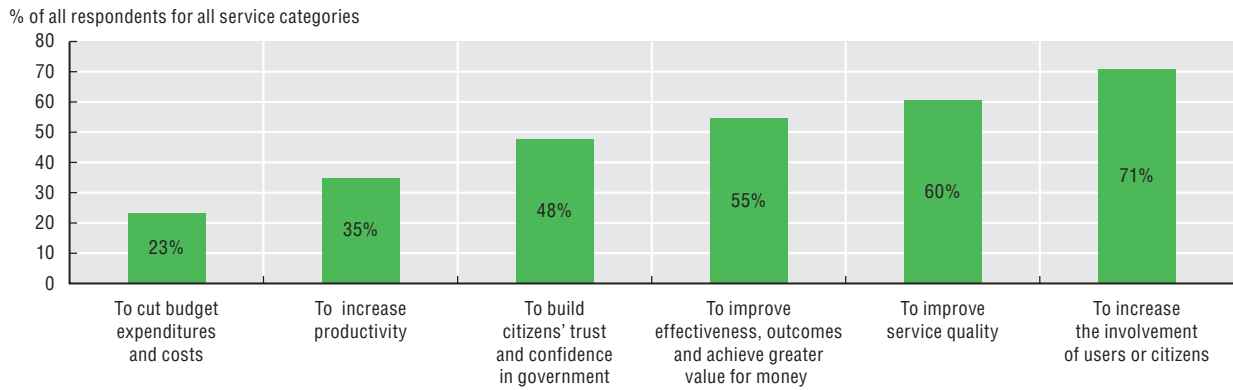
Further reading

OECD (2009), *Focus on Citizens: Public Engagement for Better Policies and Services*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

OECD (forthcoming), *Partnering with Citizens and Civil Society for Innovative Service Delivery*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

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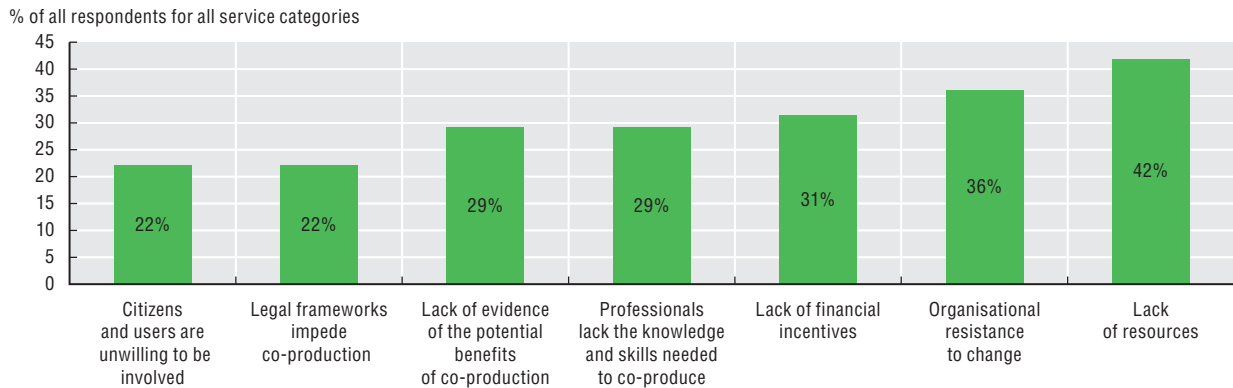
50.1 Reasons for partnering with citizens in public services delivery (2010)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Innovation in Public Services.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932391336>

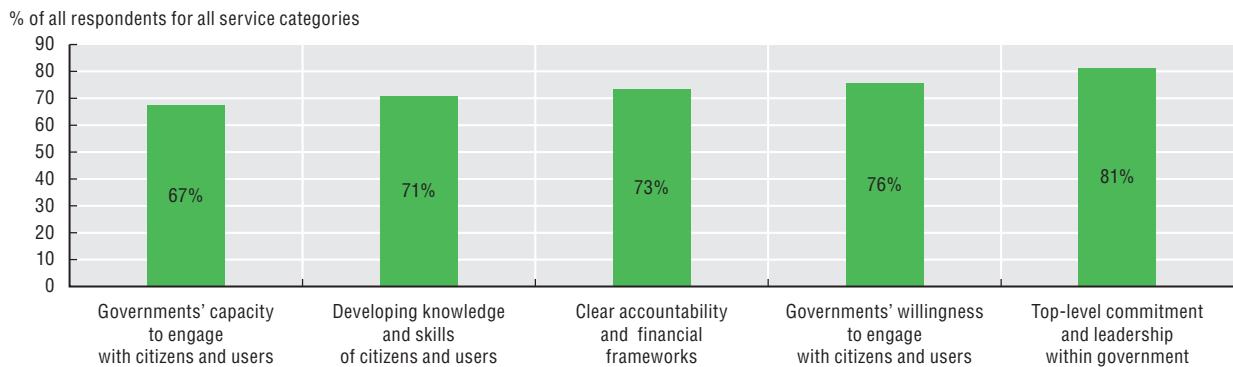
50.2 Barriers to partnering with citizens in public services delivery (2010)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Innovation in Public Services.

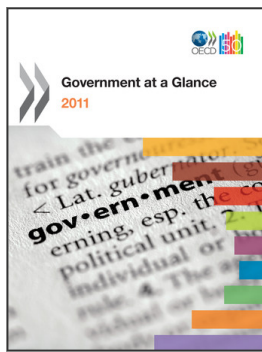
StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932391355>

50.3 Factors leading to effective partnership with citizens in public services delivery (2010)



Source: 2010 OECD Survey on Innovation in Public Services.

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932391374>



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