

3. Youth and Public Institutions: Stronger Together

This chapter focuses on the role of governance in fostering the relationship between youth and public institutions. After a general deterioration in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial crisis, trust in public institutions, representation in decision-making and political efficacy remain low among young people. At the same time, youth are vocal in the public debate through non-institutionalised channels of participation. Re-building their trust and enhancing their participation in decision-making remain crucial in order to ensure the resilience, effectiveness and long-term legitimacy of public institutions and to achieve more sustainable policies in response to global transformations and shocks.

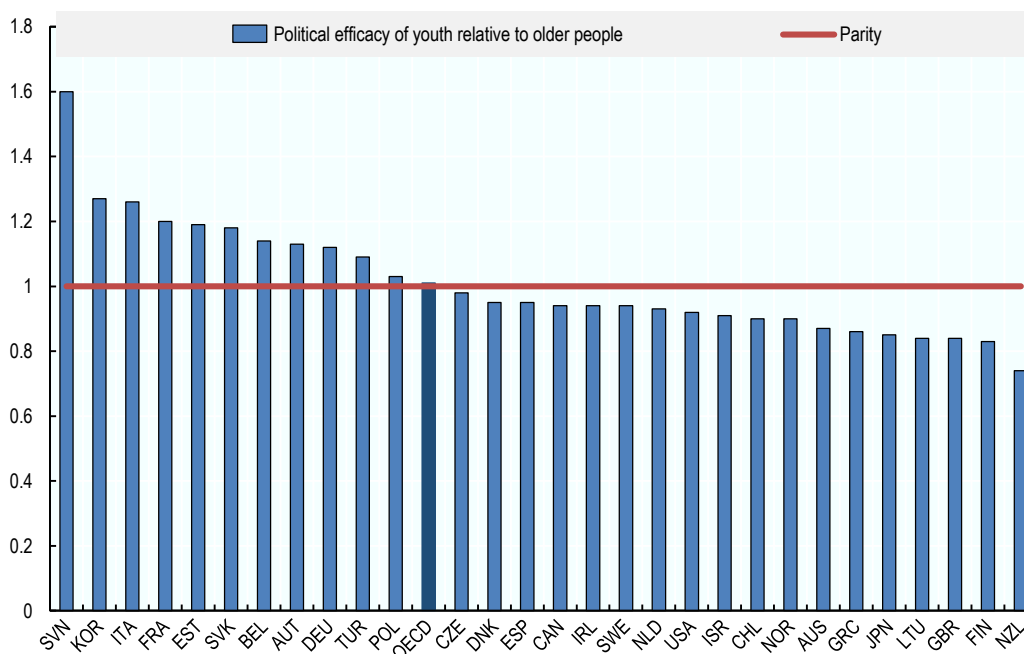
Building a strong relationship to ensure resilience and effectiveness

Less than half of young people expressed confidence in their national government in OECD countries in 2019 (45.6% on average).¹ Youth also tend to join political parties and participate in elections less than their older peers: 68% of young people go to the polls compared to 85% of people over 54 on average in OECD countries (OECD, 2020, p. 188_[1]). The representation of youth in state institutions also remains limited with an average representation gap of 12 percentage points between the share of members of lower houses of parliament under the age of 40 (22%) and the share of people aged 20-39 in the population over 20 years of age (34%).² Among the surveyed OECD ministries in charge of youth affairs, only 26% of the staff is under the age of 34 on average.³ At the same time, young people demonstrate agency in the public sphere. From online campaigns raising awareness about violence against women to social movements fighting inequality, racial discrimination and climate change, young people actively participate in the public debate through non-institutionalised channels.

In more than half of OECD countries for which data is available, young people are less likely than older people to feel to have a say on what the government does (Figure 3.1). Limited political efficacy may feed into support for “populist movements.” In fact, research on European countries finds that populist parties draw their support disproportionately from younger voters (Foa and Mounk, 2019_[2]): disinformation through social media and instant messaging apps might further exacerbate youth’s vulnerability to populism. To the extent that they amplify grievances toward institutions, the appeal of populist parties among youth could contribute to the deterioration of liberal democratic institutions in the long-run.

Figure 3.1. In 18 OECD countries, youth expressed less political efficacy than older people did

Political efficacy is captured by people reporting that they feel to have a say on what the government does. The red line marks the point in which younger and older citizens feel empowered to the same extent within a country. Above the line, young people feel empowered to a greater extent than older fellow citizens do, and vice versa.



Notes: “Youth” here refers to people aged 16-24; “Older people” here refers to people aged 25-44.

Sources: OECD (2020), *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en>.

The effectiveness of government policies widely rests on compliance. For instance, in responding to the COVID-19 crisis, governments have taken measures that have drastically altered the everyday behaviour and life of citizens in order to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on people's lives. When citizens trust state's institutions they tend to comply voluntarily with rules to a greater extent (Murphy, 2004^[3]). Promoting trust and strengthening the relationship between young people and public institutions is hence crucial to ensure the readiness and resilience of societies to future shocks.

A strong relationship between youth and public institutions is also necessary to mobilise support for structural reforms and sustain short-term sacrifices in exchange of long-term, less tangible benefits (OECD, 2013^[4]). This is especially crucial as youth are likely to bear most of the long-term implications of today's decisions. For instance, where policy timeframes are longer, governments can align more easily measures to recover from the socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 with tangible investments into young and future generations (see Chapter 4).

The COVID-19 crisis has presented governments with great challenges: at the same time, it provides a window of opportunity to recalibrate the relationship between youth and public institutions. This Chapter:

1. analyses trends in youth's trust in government, use of non-institutionalised and institutionalised channels of political participation, and representation in public administrations and state institutions;
2. discusses governance challenges and barriers that hinder youth's relationship with public institutions and how governments can address them; and
3. highlights the role of youth work and youth volunteering in promoting resilient societies and how governments can strengthen these fields through programmes and resources.

In institutions we trust (less)

A glance at a decade-long erosion

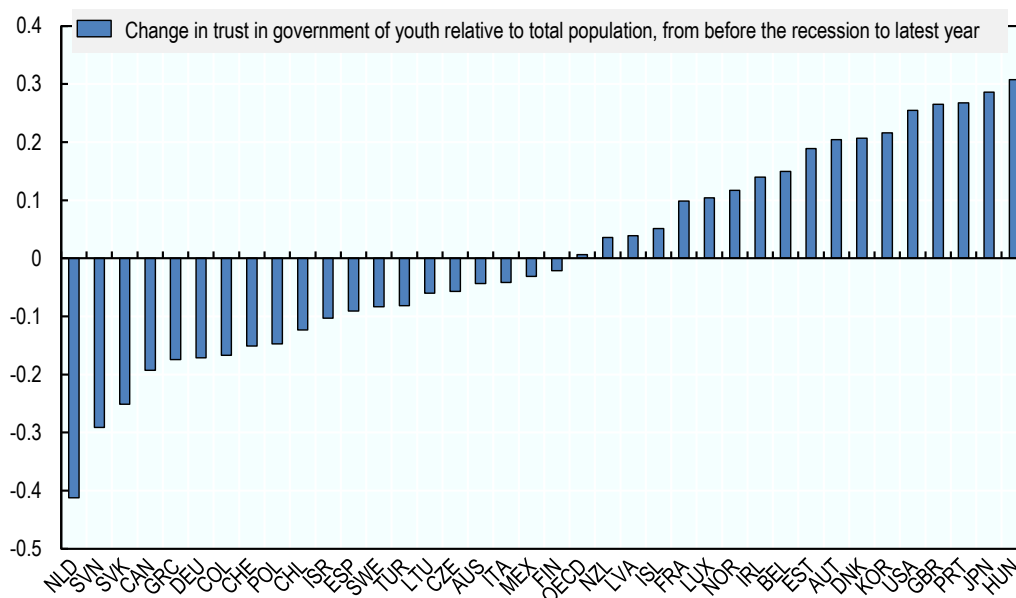
The erosion of trust in public institutions has come to the forefront of the policy debate since the 2007-2008 financial crisis and the recession that followed it. Inequalities in income and opportunities, unemployment and job insecurity, lack of economic growth, perceived corruption and global challenges have undermined citizens' confidence in institutions (OECD, 2017^[5]). Young people were disproportionately affected by the adverse impact of the 2007-2008 financial crisis (see Chapter 1) and particularly lost confidence. For instance, trust in government decreased by 5 percentage points (p.p.) between 2007 and 2012 among the total population in OECD countries (OECD, 2013, p. 26^[4]). During the same period, in countries most affected by the crisis, youth's trust in national governments declined by 25 p.p. in Greece (2007-2012), by 19 p.p. in Spain (2006-2012) and by 15 p.p. in Portugal (2006-2012).⁴

In 2019, only 45% of the population on average expressed trust in their national government in 2019, barely recovering from its low of 40% recorded in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2010-12 (OECD, 2020^[1]). Similarly, in 2018-2019 only 46% of people aged 15-29 expressed trust in national government across the OECD.⁵ Furthermore, in more than half of OECD countries (20 out of 37), the trust expressed by young people in national governments, compared to the total population, has decreased since 2006 (Figure 3.2).

OECD analysis shows that among individual characteristics, economic and social uncertainty is a strong predictor of low trust (OECD, 2017^[5]). Such uncertainty is more likely to be experienced by young people during their transition to an autonomous life (see Chapter 2): the 2007-2008 crisis magnified the uncertainty faced by youth, especially in the labour market (France, 2016^[6]). Learning from past experiences, governments must seek to mitigate the youth-specific impacts and uncertainties brought by the COVID-19 crisis, as well as avoid a further erosion of their trust (OECD, 2020^[7]).

Figure 3.2. In more than half OECD countries, youth trust government less than before the 2007-2008 financial crisis (relative to the total population)

Change in trust in government of youth relative to total population, from 2006-2007 to latest year available.

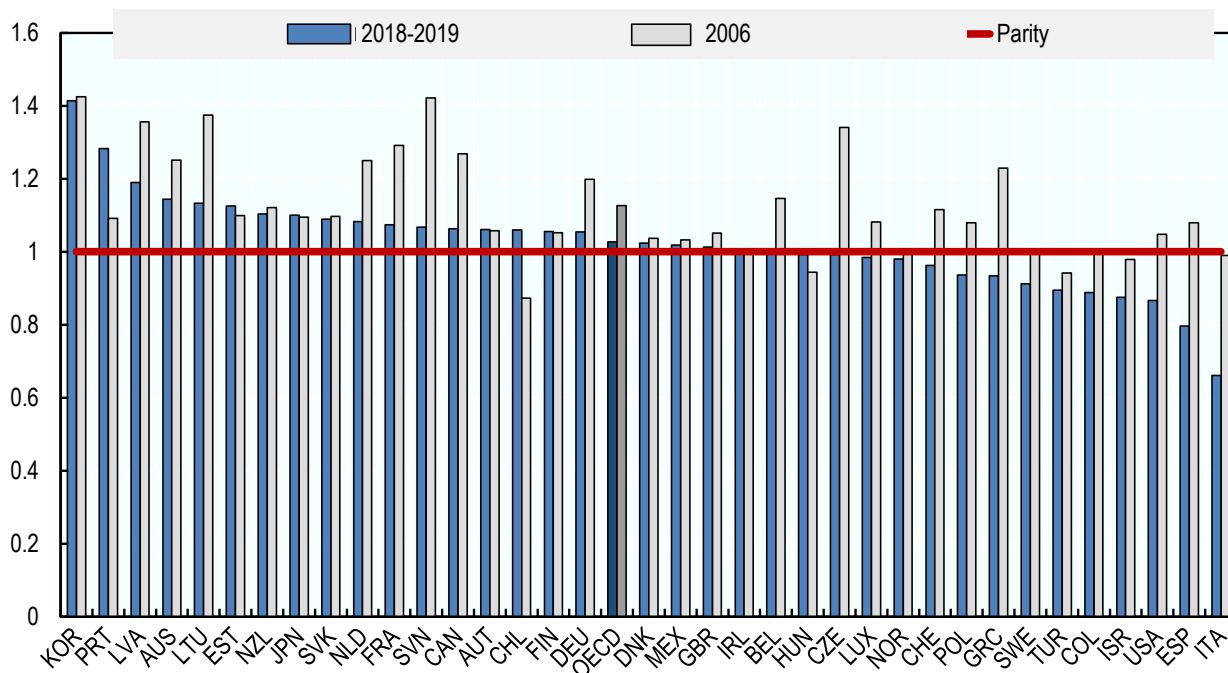


Notes: "Youth" here refers to people aged 15-29.
 Source: OECD calculations based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

Beyond the national government, young people have been losing trust in public institutions widely, which raises concerns about the legitimacy of fundamental democratic institutions. For instance, less than half of the total population (44%) expressed trust in their country’s parliament in 2018, across 16 OECD countries.⁶ Furthermore, in 2018-2019, 56% of youth expressed trust in the judicial system on average across 36 OECD countries (similarly to 55% of the total population).⁷ However, before the 2007-2008 financial crisis, young people trusted the judicial system more than the total population in 30 OECD countries. The latest data (2018-2019) shows that this is now the case in only 21 OECD countries and that overall the relative level of trust that young people express in the judicial system has declined in 29 OECD countries (Figure 3.3). Despite the negative trends, youth’s confidence in and access to the judicial system remains an area that is often overlooked: only 25% of the countries that responded to the OECD Youth Governance Surveys included objectives, targets and actions on justice in their national youth strategies (see Chapter 2).

Figure 3.3. Youth trust the judicial system more than the total population in 21 OECD countries, but their trust (relative to the total population) has decreased in 29 OECD countries since 2007

The charts shows the share of youth that express confidence in the judicial system relative to the share of the total population that does, in 2018-2019 (blue bars) and in 2006-2007 (grey bars). The red line marks the point in which youth and the overall population trust the judicial system to the same extent within a country. Above the line, young people express trust in the judicial system to a greater extent than the total population does, and vice versa.



Notes: "Youth" here refers to people aged 15-29. Age-disaggregated data across years is not available for Iceland. Data for Luxembourg refers to 2010.

Source: OECD calculations based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

Re-building youth's trust in government

Trust in public institutions is a multifaceted concept driven by a variety of factors. A functioning democratic system (macro-level), outcomes of policy-making (meso-level) and the government's ability to deliver everyday services to citizens (micro-level) matter for trust (Bouckaert, 2012^[8]). The perceived level of corruption in the political system also has a significant, negative impact on citizen's trust in public institutions (Rothstein, 2011^[9]). OECD analysis (OECD, 2017^[5]) suggests that governments can promote public trust by delivering services and policies that are high in quality, responsive to citizens' demands, reliable and guided by principles of integrity, openness and fairness (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1. OECD Trust Framework: Deconstructing citizens' trust in public institutions

Trust Component	Government Mandate	Concern affecting trust	Policy dimension
Competence: governments' ability to deliver to citizens the services they need, at the quality level they expect	Provide public services	Access to public services, regardless of social/economic condition; Quality and timeliness of public services; Respect in public service provision, including response to citizen feedback	Responsiveness
	Anticipate change, protect citizens	Anticipation and adequate assessment of evolving citizen needs and challenges; Consistent and predictable behaviour; Effective management of social, economic and political uncertainty	Reliability
Values: drivers and principles that inform and guide government action	Use power and public resources ethically	High standards of behaviour; Commitment against corruption; Accountability	Integrity
	Inform, consult, and listen to citizens	Ability to know and understand what government is up to; Engagement opportunities that lead to tangible results	Openness
	Improve socioeconomic conditions for all	Pursuit of socio-economic progress for society at large; Consistent treatment of citizens and businesses (vs. fear of capture)	Fairness

Source: OECD (2017), *Trust and Public Policy: How Better Governance can Help Rebuild Public Trust*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264268920-en>

At the macro-level, across 16 OECD countries, 14% of people under the age of 29 held a disenchanted view about democracy in 2010-2014 (i.e. considering democracy “a bad way of governing”). This compares to only 9% of the people aged more than 50 that shared the same opinion.⁸ At the meso-level, young people are voicing concerns about the short-termism of policy outcomes that fail to address long-term challenges such as climate change and social inequalities (see Chapter 4). At the micro-level, some of the everyday services do not seem to address the challenges young people face in their transition from education to employment, in finding affordable housing and other areas. Indeed, data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys highlights general dissatisfaction of surveyed youth organisations with governments' performance across service areas and in particular for housing, employment, family policy and justice (see Chapter 2). Further research would be needed to collect and analyse data on public trust and its drivers among different population groups: the OECD is exploring this aspect in its work on measuring trust in government.⁹

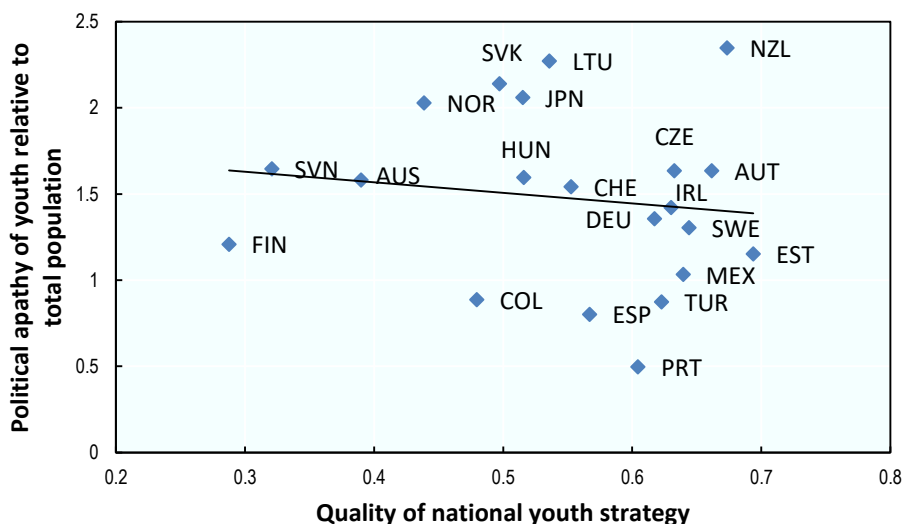
Chapter 2 has explored the role that national youth strategies (NYS) play in easing youth's transition to an autonomous life. Across most OECD countries, national youth strategies also guide policy makers in reinforcing the relationship between youth and public institutions. For instance, 88% of NYS aim at engaging young people in the decision-making process (88% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD).¹⁰ The Czech Republic's national youth strategy (2014-2020), for instance, includes strategic goals to promote the active involvement of children and young people in decision-making processes and in influencing the social and democratic life of the country.¹¹ A large majority (81%) intend to integrate the concerns of young people across all relevant public policy/service fields (84% for OECD; 5 out of 7 for non-OECD).¹² However, only four in ten NYS cover commitments to increase the representation of young people in state institutions (40% for OECD; 2 out of 7 for non-OECD).¹³ Among others, the national youth strategy of Slovenia (2013-2022) includes objectives and measurable indicators on youth's participation in elections as voters and candidates as well as their representation in institutions both at the local and national level.

Figure 3.4 shows that there seems to be a tendency between the quality of a national youth strategy¹⁴ and greater interest of young cohorts in politics. In other words, in countries that have adopted national youth strategies based on the principles of good governance (see Chapter 2), young people tend to report to be

interested in politics more often than the total population. Although the relationship is statistically imprecise, it highlights why decisive action is needed. Furthermore, in all countries except Colombia, Portugal, Spain and Turkey young people report more political apathy than the total population.

Figure 3.4. Where national youth strategies are based on principles of good governance, political apathy among young people tends to be lower

The horizontal axis plots the quality of the national youth strategy, a measure based on data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys. The vertical axis plots the share of young people that report “not to be interested at all” in politics relative to the share of the total population that does (2018 or latest year available): value “1” is where political apathy is the same among young people and among the total population.



Notes: Correlation coefficient: -0.14; p-value: 0.54; “youth” here refers to people aged 15-29.

Sources: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys; OECD calculations based on OECD (2019), *Society at a Glance 2019: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2019-en.

Building from the ground up: ensuring an enabling environment

Protecting the civic space in which young people find themselves is the very first step in ensuring a strong relationship between youth and public institutions. The civic space is shaped by the institutions, laws, regulations and rules that influence youth’s basic civil and political rights and liberties, including their access to information, freedom of speech and expression, right of association and assembly, right to privacy, non-discrimination, the freedom of the press, as well as open internet and data protection among others. OECD analysis shows that significant variations still exist among OECD countries when it comes to political rights and civil liberties (OECD, 2018_[10]).

Beyond basic rights, other legal and policy frameworks can facilitate the inclusion of young people in the public sphere, in particular policies governing hate speech and incitement to violence as well as policies ensuring youth’s access to justice. Laws, policies and funding mechanisms can also be designed to protect and promote the space for civil society organisations, including youth organisations, to thrive.

Effective implementation, monitoring and sanctioning of violations are essential elements for legal frameworks to be effective and all state institutions have a role to play. As outlined in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017_[11]), governments should “explore the potential of moving from the concept of open government toward that of open state.” Building an open

state requires the executive, legislature, judiciary, independent public institutions and all levels of government “to collaborate to promote transparency, integrity, accountability, and stakeholder participation, in support of democracy and inclusive growth” (OECD, 2017^[11]).

In the context of an Open State, Ombudspersons for children and youth rights fulfil an important function as independent oversight institutions to protect and promote the rights of children and young people. OECD evidence shows that 19 OECD countries have created a specific ombudsperson for youth at regional or national/federal level and 11 have created a dedicated office within the national ombudsperson office, or included youth affairs as part of its mandate (OECD, 2018^[10]). Their competencies vary widely across countries: from anonymous helplines to policy advice, from mediation to full-fledged independent investigations. Furthermore, their competency on overseeing government’s youth policies remains untapped, as no OECD government collaborates with these institutions in monitoring and evaluating national youth strategies (see Chapter 2).

Youth activism: a display of agency and a call for governments to act

Young people show political agency, but they are increasingly turning to non-institutionalised channels of political participation, including online activism, issue-based mobilisation, demonstrations, political consumerism and signing petitions (Marien, Hooghe and Quintelier, 2010^[12]). In 2018, 23% of people aged 15-29 surveyed across 22 OECD countries in the European Social Survey reported that they had shared or posted online about politics in the previous 12 months, compared to 15% of respondents aged 30+.¹⁵ Young people have catalysed social media and other online channels to raise their voices on issues around inequality and discrimination (e.g. gender or race/ethnicity-based), climate change, the freedom of speech on the internet, and ethnic violence, with significant ripple effects on public debates as well as national and international policy agendas.

Available data suggests that young people are more likely to take part in public demonstrations than older fellow citizens: in 2018, 10% of respondents aged 15-29 reported that they had taken part in demonstrations in the previous 12 months, compared to 7% of respondents aged 30+, across 22 OECD countries.¹⁶ Youth’s participation in public demonstrations was as high as 26% of 15-29 respondents in Spain, 18% in Norway and 16% in France.¹⁷ In the past, young people have especially mobilised at times of crises. Sloam (2014^[13]) illustrates how young people became “activated” in the aftermath of the 2007-2008 financial recession, taking “digitally networked action” based on digital technology platforms.

According to survey data from ORB Media, young people are between 9 and 17 percent more likely to prefer informal political activity than those older than 40: in the early 2000s, young people were only 3% more likely to protest than older people.¹⁸ Furthermore, in the past, young people that were interested in politics and involved in protests were also more likely to vote: 15% of the young respondents to ORB Media’s surveys both voted and participated in protests in the 2000s. This is no longer the case: only 7% of the young population surveyed in 2017 both voted and participated in protests.¹⁹

The reasons behind young people’s preference for non-institutionalised channels are in fact manifold. Findings from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys highlight that 79% of surveyed youth organisations in OECD countries believe that young people’s participation in elections is hampered by a lack of confidence that their vote will lead to positive change, while 75% of them point to the lack of a youth-focus in political party programmes. Ehsan (2018^[14]) finds that identifying with a “minor party”²⁰ is strongly related with the non-institutional political participation of British youth. Non-institutionalised political participation might hence be preferred by young people as a high-impact alternative to institutionalised channels: digital technologies might also contribute by ensuring access to such participation with limited transaction costs.

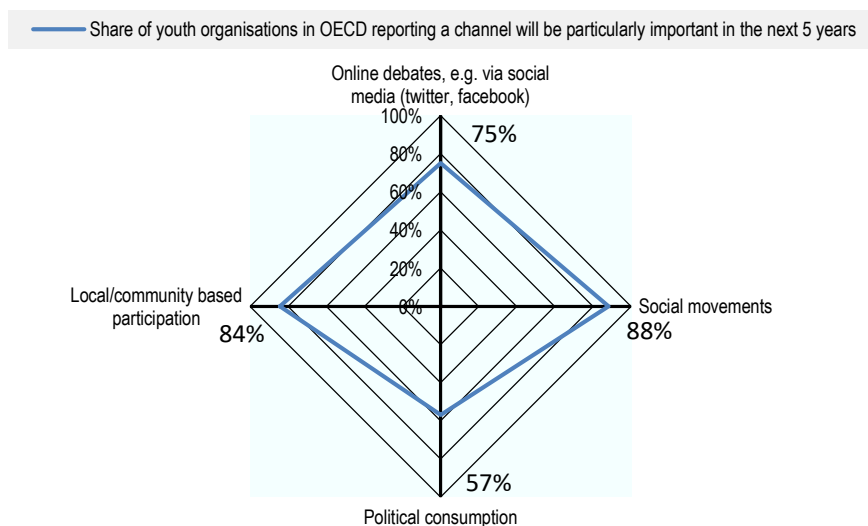
A prominent example is the global mobilisation of pupils and students in demonstrations calling for governments’ action on climate change. The 13 million-people²¹ social movement under the banners of

“Fridays For Future” has been a critical element in re-introducing climate change at the top of the political agenda and in national reform plans. For instance, the Danish government has supported the creation of a Youth Climate Council, which advises the Ministry of Environment in the areas of climate change, environmental protection, farming and food production. At the international level, in December 2019, the European Commission presented the European Green Deal, a strategy aimed at zeroing net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 and at decoupling economic growth from the use of resources (European Commission, 2019^[15]).

Non-institutionalised channels such as online debates, petitions and social movements are already significant today, but they are likely to become even more important in the future, as also believed by a large majority of youth organisations (Figure 3.5). These dynamics underline a significant change in the paradigm of youth’s manifestation of civic duty and involvement in public life at the global, national, local and community levels, calling for governments to adapt existing participatory channels and adopt innovative ones.

Figure 3.5. Youth organisations expect non-institutionalised channels to become more important

The chart shows four non-institutionalised channels of political participation and, for each, the share of youth organisations based in OECD countries that believe this channel will be of particular importance in the next 5 years.



Notes: Based on 51 youth organisations in OECD countries. Youth organisations reporting that these channels will be of “particular importance” refers to the share of youth organisations reporting that the channels will be “extremely important” (score of 5 out of 5) or “moderately important” (score of 4 out of 5) in the next 5 years.

Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

While non-institutionalised channels mobilise young people around specific societal and political topics, they also show limitations. Concerns mainly revolve around issues of transparency, accountability and unequal access across society. For instance, Marien, Hooghe, and Quintelier (2010^[12]) find that access to non-institutionalised channels is more biased than access to institutionalised forms due to inequalities in education (although less biased when it comes to gender and age). Signing a petition or joining an internet forum might require more financial and technological resources, replicating entrenched socio-economic inequalities (Norris, 2001^[16]). Furthermore, avoiding the exploitation of personal data, resisting the “tribalisation” boosted by digital technologies, and limiting the influence of “fake news” require extensive digital and cognitive skills. Donating money or buying “fair trade” goods and services also require financial resources (Stolle, Hooghe and Micheletti, 2005^[17]).

For policy makers, the shifting pattern of political participation among young people represents a call for action to understand the underlying reasons of youth's limited participation in institutionalised channels and to re-think and address the barriers to such channels. At the same time, policy makers should acknowledge the contribution of non-institutionalised youth activism to the political discourse and work to address the inequalities in youth's access to such channels (including digital skills, access to the internet, formal and civic education).

In order to bridge the divide between public institutions and youth activism, public authorities from all levels of government can adopt innovative forms of deliberative democracy to take into account the voices of youth activists. In the last decade, governments at all levels have been increasingly adopting innovative deliberative processes, such as Citizens' Assemblies, Juries and Panels that bring together groups of randomly selected participants and facilitate deliberation to complement the decision-making process of public institutions (OECD, 2020^[18]).

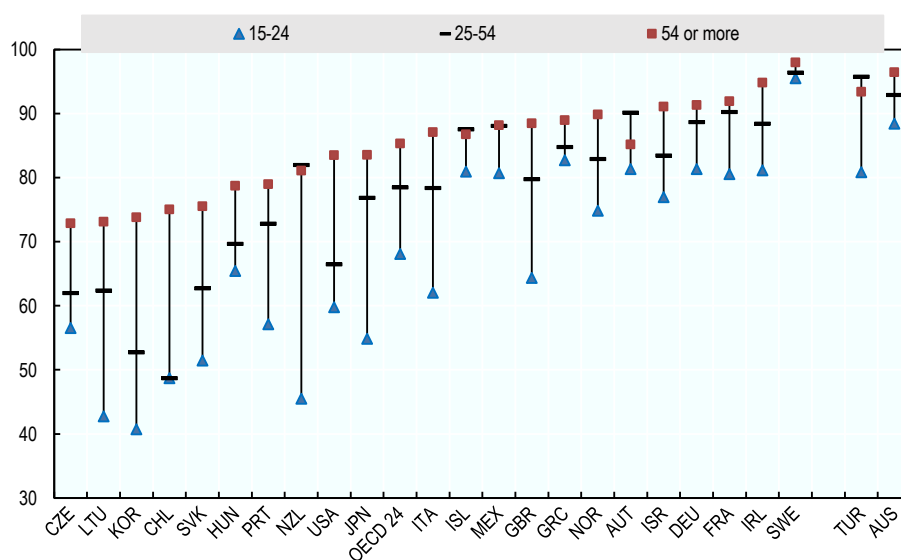
Youth and the ballot box

Young people tend to vote less

Across OECD countries, young people tend to turnout for elections less than any other group in society (Figure 3.6): 68% of young people aged 15-24 go to the polls on average compared to 85% of people aged 54 or more (OECD, 2020^[11]). Furthermore, the turnout gap between young and older voters is larger than 20 percentage points in 10 of the OECD countries included in Figure 3.6. In Lithuania, New Zealand and Korea the gap is larger than 30 percentage points. Young people, however, are not a uniform group and differences in turnout within younger age cohorts must be considered in relation to their level of education, gender, parental education and income, and ethnicity. Plutzer (2002^[19]) finds parental socio-economic and political resources to be positively related to young people's turnout. As for ethnicity, studies have found that enfranchised young people from minority groups tend to participate less in elections (Togeby, 2008^[20]).

Figure 3.6 Young people tend to vote less than their older peers do

Self-reported voter turnout by age, percent, 2012-18



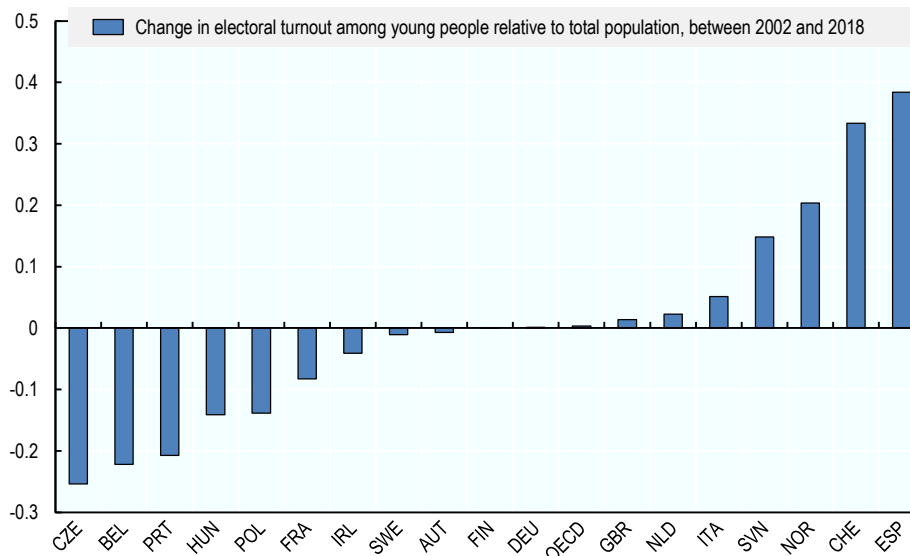
Note: Australia and Turkey enforce compulsory voting.

Source: OECD, (2020^[11]), *How's Life? 2020: Measuring Well-being*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9870c393-en>.

Research points to life-cycle effects to explain why young people participate in elections less than older people, arguing that turnout increases within a given generation as the members of that generation grow older (Blais, Gidengil and Neviite, 2004^[21]; Wass, 2007^[22]). Research from Denmark highlights that first-time voters tend to vote more than slightly older youth (Bhatti, Hansen and Wass, 2012^[23]): in other words, turnout rates decline with age in the years right after an individual becomes eligible to vote, while they are higher for older citizens. Such life-cycle effects might be linked to “adult roles” and the idea that young adults might be focused on finding employment or building a family, and only partake in other adult roles such as participating in elections later in life (Highton and Wolfinger, 2001^[24]; Goerres, 2007^[25]). People might also become accustomed with participating in elections over the course of their lives (Goerres, 2007^[25]). However, the gap in electoral participation between younger and older people has widened over time in almost half OECD countries for which data is available (Figure 3.7). In other words, today’s youth tend to vote less than the youth of the past in numerous countries. Lowering the bar for young people to vote could help tackle such historical trends. The next section explores potential strategies such as lowering the voting age.

Figure 3.7. In 9 out of 19 available OECD countries, youth go to the polls less than in 2002 (relative to the total population)

Change in electoral turnout among young people relative to total population, from 2002 to 2018.



Notes: “OECD” here refers to the average of the available OECD countries. “Youth” here refers to people aged 18-24.

Sources: OECD calculations based on European Social Survey ESS1-2002 and ESS9-2018.

The gap between younger and older people’s electoral participation overtime might also be partly explained by cohort effects, such as shared historical experiences and socio-economic characteristics experienced by a specific generation (Goerres, 2007^[25]). For instance, today’s young people might perceive electoral participation as a “right” more than a duty, compared to cohorts of the past (Blais, Gidengil and Neviite, 2004^[21]). Furthermore, people that come of “political age” in years of rapid economic expansion might form different electoral behaviours than people that come of “political age” in years of economic recession: these behaviours might then stick throughout a person’s life.

Strengthening participation in elections

Available data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys point to a considerable discrepancy between the challenges that entities in charge of youth affairs seek to address to encourage young people to vote and the challenges considered most significant by youth organisations.

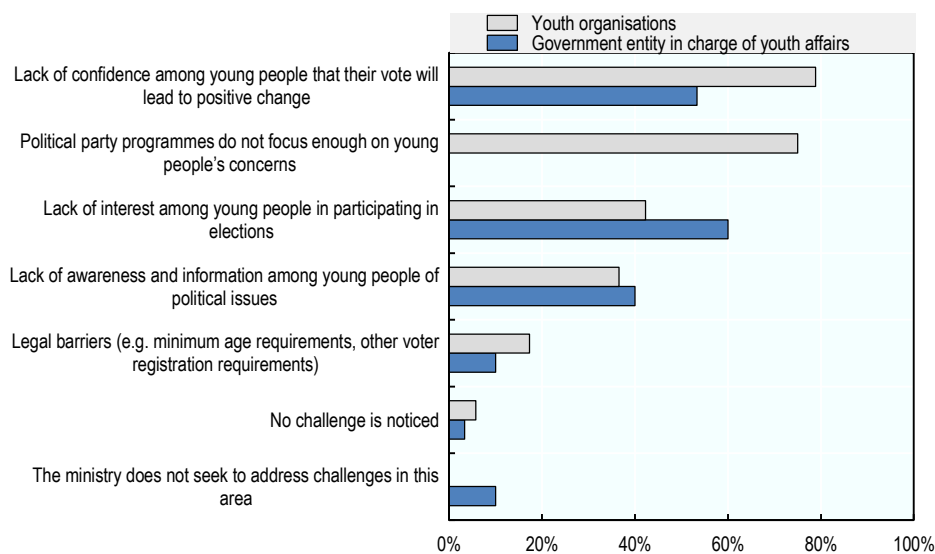
As shown in Figure 3.8, 60% of OECD ministries in charge of youth affairs seek to address the lack of interest among young people. Denmark places a particular focus on first-time voters, while the efforts undertaken by France and Sweden target young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Denmark, for instance, has included specific commitments on promoting the electoral participation of first-time voters in Open Government Action Plans in the past.²² Furthermore, 10% of surveyed OECD entities in charge of youth affairs stress that they do not seek to address challenges in this area.

In contrast, youth organisations overwhelmingly point to a lack of confidence in institutional channels (79% of youth organisations in OECD countries) and the absence of youth's priorities in the programmes of political parties (75%).

Understanding the challenges faced by young people in participating in elections constitutes the first step in addressing the root causes. For instance, the Canadian institution responsible for conducting elections, "Elections Canada", analyses the obstacles that first-time voters face, including youth's lack of knowledge of electoral processes and difficulty in finding accessible information, and issues of mobility and registration requirements, among others.²³

Figure 3.8. Challenges and priorities to encourage youth's participation in elections do not match

The grey bars show the share of youth organisations in OECD countries that mention a specific challenge for youth's participation in elections; the blue bars show the share of OECD ministries in charge of youth affairs that mention a specific challenge they seek to address.



Notes: Based on 30 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs and 52 youth organisations in OECD countries. Ministries in charge of youth affairs were not asked about parties' programmes as a priority area for youth's participation in elections.

Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

From a governance perspective, voter registration rules, compulsory voting, voting age requirements and civic education are some of the elements that can influence the likeliness of young people to vote. Although

outside of the scope of this report, electoral systems can also create incentives (or disincentives) for voter turnout.

Do I need to register to vote?

In Australia, Mexico, the US and the UK, citizens are responsible to register themselves in electoral lists as a prerequisite for voting. This type of provision introduces an additional step between not voting and voting, regardless of whether registration is voluntary or mandatory. In Chile, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Norway, South Korea, Spain and Sweden, voter registration is automatic, although often based on national or local registers. For instance, voter registration in Germany is automatic, but based on residency registries: in turn, it is the responsibility of the individual to update their place of residence with the local government.

Voter registration requirements can represent a considerable challenge especially for first-time voters who are more likely to be changing residency at a time of transition. Governments can take various steps in order to facilitate youth's registration. In the US, for instance, in face of the challenges posed by registration requirements, some states have started to allow individuals younger than 18 years of age to register to vote, so that they will be registered and eligible to cast a ballot once they reach 18. Holbein and Hillygues (2016^[26]) find that states in the US that have preregistration rules in place also report higher youth's voter turnout, with equal effectiveness across socio-economic and political subgroups. Governments should ensure that young citizens have accessible information at hand on how to register and vote, for instance through information and registration campaigns in schools, universities and other places where young people socialise. Social media can also be leveraged, for example by prominently displaying reliable information and links to governmental websites to all users of voting age.²⁴

Compulsory voting is currently in place and enforced in Australia, Belgium, Luxembourg and Turkey. Compulsory voting remains an appealing and effective mechanism to assure higher turnout rates among youth as well as the total population: Australia and Turkey are among the OECD countries with highest turnout rates for all population groups as shown in Figure 3.6. At the same time, compulsory voting is often at the centre of controversial discussions due to theoretical (e.g. voting as a right and a civic duty) and practical considerations (e.g. "free riding," and potential infringements of individual liberties).

Some countries, including Switzerland, the UK and the US have also held trials of electronic voting as a means to promote turnout by ensuring an easier access to voting. More systematically, Estonia has held several rounds of local, national and European elections in which people could cast votes over the internet (i-voting, or e-voting), since 2005. E-voting has become more popular through the years in Estonia: in the 2019 parliamentary elections 43.8% of all votes were cast online, compared to 3.4% in the 2007 parliamentary elections.²⁵ However, only 29.2% of e-voters were aged 18-34 in 2019, compared to 44% in 2007.²⁶ A number of studies also show that electronic voting has not had a positive impact on new voters and on youth turnout in Estonia. Instead, the new channel mainly reached existing voters and replicated socio-economic inequalities in access to the internet (Bochsler, 2010^[27]; Vassil and Weber, 2011^[28]; Wigartz, 2017^[29]). Measures aimed at ensuring equal access to the internet and online tools in the first place are hence crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the digitalisation of public services and public life (see Chapter 2).

Am I old enough to vote?

Voting age requirements can be a barrier to the political socialisation of young people. According to IPU data, the minimum voting age for elections at the national level (for the lower house of parliament, where applicable) is 18 in all OECD countries except Austria and Greece where it is respectively 16 and 17 (it is 16 also in Argentina and Brazil). In Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Estonia, Greece and Israel, the minimum age to vote is also below 18 in subnational elections (17 for Greece and Israel; 16 for all the others). It is also below 18 for subnational elections in Germany for the elections in four federal states and for local-

level elections in eleven federal states. According to the youth organisations based in OECD countries surveyed in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys, the threshold should be lowered to 16.7 years (on average), which resonates with advocacy initiatives led by the European Youth Forum to lower the minimum age to 16 for parliamentary elections at the national level.²⁷ The idea of lowering minimum voting age requirements has recently gained further traction in countries such as France, Germany and Italy. Moreover, recently, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe supported lowering the voting age in 2011; Scotland enfranchised 16- and 17-year olds for the independence referendum in 2014; and Malta lowered the general voting age to 16 in 2018. Recent debates have also explored the provocative idea of lowering the voting age to zero with varying proposals on the exercise of children's voting right by their guardians, also known as demeny or family voting (Sanderson and Scherbov, 2007^[30]; Aoki and Vaithianathan, 2009^[31]; Vanhuysse, 2013^[32]).

One argument in favour of lowering voting age requirements revolves around political socialisation. When aged 18 or 19 most young people have completed secondary education and many have already left their parents' home, and they are hence harder to reach as a group. In contrast, when aged 16-17, youth are more likely to be living with their families and to be in education. In turn, considering that close relatives and partners play a strong role in people's voting behaviour (Stoker and Jennings, 1995^[33]), political socialisation by family members and school-based voter education programmes are most impactful for youth aged 16-17 years old. After a series of reductions of voting age requirements at the national level (in 1992 from 19 to 18 years) and at the sub-national level (from 18 to 16 in five out of nine federal states by 2005), Austria became the first OECD country to adopt a general voting age of 16 years in 2007. Initial research shows that turnout of 16- and 17-year old Austrians tends to be higher than that of older first-time voters with no significant differences in their political maturity in terms of interest and knowledge (Aichholzer and Kritzingner, 2020^[34]; Zeglovits, 2020^[35]). Furthermore, these effects can also generate long-run benefits as people that vote when young are also more likely to continue voting when growing older (Goerres, 2007^[25]).

Why should I vote?

The positive impact of lowering age requirements on youth's turnout is however largely dependent on young people's interest, awareness and confidence in the value of participating, as highlighted in Figure 3.8. Civic and citizenship education in schools and through extra-curricular activities can be instrumental in this regard. For instance, in the Austrian experience, the 2007 electoral law reform was accompanied by a number of measures to raise awareness among young voters, enhance civic and citizenship education in schools, and engage schools in preparing 16- and 17-year olds for the 2008 federal elections (Schwarzer and Zeglovits, 2013^[36]). More generally, while the evidence for a direct link between civic education and youth's electoral turnout remains non-conclusive, a review of existing evidence shows that civic education can enhance young people's awareness of civic and political issues, information about democratic processes and institutions, and political expression (Manning and Edwards, 2014^[37]). Civic curricula should also focus on strengthening youth's ability to understand and exercise their rights and duties, embrace democratic values and acquire the necessary skills for active citizenship.

As recognised by the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Integrity (2017^[38]), civic education in schools can also help promoting a culture of integrity in society. Box 3.1 points to some interesting practices on civic and citizenship curricula in schools. However, there are wide differences in the organisation of the curricula (for instance as separate subjects or integrated with other subjects), in the number of years and hours for which they are taught (from 8.8 hours in Lithuania to 72 hours in France throughout primary and secondary education in 2017), in students' involvement in shaping the curricula, and in the levels of training of teachers on this subject (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2017^[39]). Youth organisations and the youth work sector can also provide a substantial contribution in educating young people to democratic values and promoting their awareness and interest for civic issues. For instance, the Finnish National Youth Council Allianssi conducts mock elections simultaneously with

national and EU elections in order to introduce to voting those who are too young to take part in the elections. In parallel to the 2019 parliamentary elections, more than 600 schools and 60,000 students took part in such mock elections.²⁸

Box 3.1. Civic and citizenship education

Belgium (German-speaking Community): Politics

The current strategic youth plan (Jugendstrategieplan) of the German-speaking Community of Belgium aims at fostering a strong political culture among young people, not only in time of elections, but throughout their education. In particular, the Community supports young people's understanding of the political sphere by addressing questions such as: are politics currently concerned with topics that matter to my age cohort? Who was elected and what does it mean? The curricula are prepared in a participatory way together with the different stakeholders.

Norway: Democracy and Human Rights

Within their national youth strategy, the Ministry of Education in Norway has implemented commitments on educating young people to democracy and human rights, as part of the new school curricula of primary and secondary schools. This approach aims to build a sense of awareness of global issues already at a young age, for youth to develop during their secondary and post-secondary education and experiences. The inclusion of this type of education within the national youth strategy can also help with its effective implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Sources : Jugendstrategieplan 2016-2020;

<http://www.ostbelgienlive.be/PortalData/2/Resources/downloads/jugend/DG-Jugendstrategieplan%20f>

OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

No relation without representation

A fair representation of young people in public institutions is critical to ensure that public decisions take into account different realities and perspectives; that policy solutions benefit from a range of experiences, skills and views; and ultimately that policy outcomes are more sustainable and responsive to all citizens. Furthermore, the active involvement of young people in institutions can serve as a model to inspire others of the same age cohort and restore their trust in public institutions. Such positive impacts of a fair representation have already been explored through gender lenses (Wolbrecht and Campbell, 2007^[40]; OECD, 2019^[41]). Equal access to decision-making and political leadership can also have a positive impact on economic and social outcomes: OECD analysis shows that countries with a higher share of women in legislatures tend to face lower levels of inequality and higher levels of trust in government (OECD, 2014^[42]). This section looks into youth's representation in state institutions (such as public administration, parliaments and cabinets) and its role in promoting better policy outcomes, as well as youth's trust in governments and political interest.

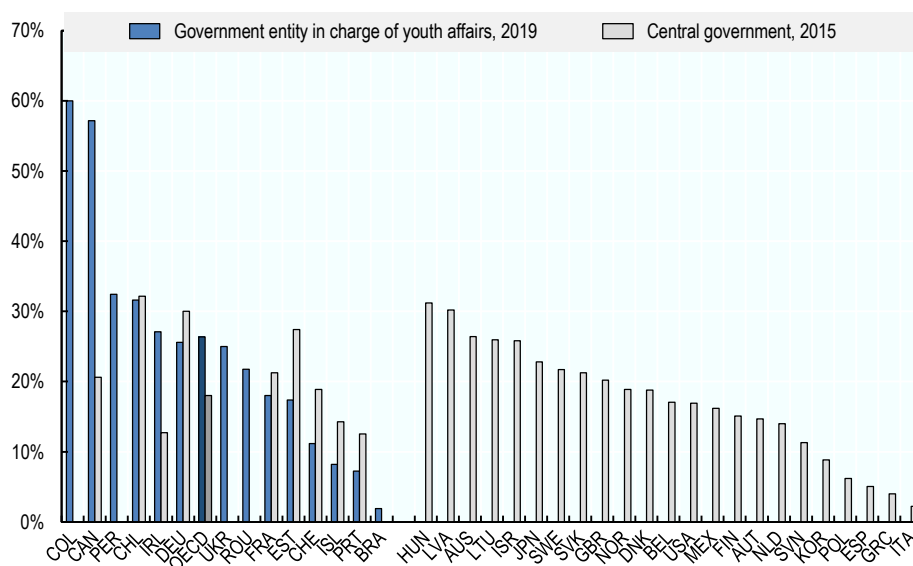
Work ahead on age-diversity in the public administration

Despite improvements, youth's representation in the public administration remains limited (Figure 3.9). Up from 15% in 2015 and 20% in 2017, officials aged 18-34 represented 26% of the total staff of entities in charge of youth affairs in 2019, on average across OECD countries for which data is available (20% for non-OECD).²⁹ Significant differences are evident, from higher shares in Colombia and Canada (respectively 60% and 57%) to much more limited ones in Portugal and Iceland (respectively 7% and 8%).

Young officers were fewer in central public administrations, where on average only 18% of civil servants were aged 18-34 in 2015.³⁰ With 25% of civil servants in central public administrations over the age of 50 across the OECD,³¹ governments are presented with the need and opportunity to transform public administrations to attract new generations of civil servants in the face of an ageing workforce.

Figure 3.9. Public administrations are still not inclusive enough when it comes to young people

Share of official staff aged 18-34 in entities in charge of youth affairs in 2019, compared to the share of official staff aged 18-34 in central/federal governments in 2015.



Sources: OECD calculations based on 2019 OECD Youth Governance Surveys; OECD (2016) Survey on the Composition of the workforce in Central/federal Governments.

Countries with a lower than average representation of young people in the public administration are not necessarily less successful in delivering programmes and services that respond to their needs (OECD, 2018_[10]). Nevertheless, as highlighted in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Public Service Leadership and Capability (2019_[43]), governments should build an inclusive and safe public service that reflects the diversity of society, which also includes age-diversity. Countries can proactively seek to attract under-represented groups such as young people and their skill-sets to ensure public service capability. A fair representation of young people in the civil service can also conduct to better policy outcomes as far as diversity in decision-making can help generate innovative ideas. Through its 2020 Youth Policy, for instance, the Canadian government committed to having 75% of crown corporations include a young person on their board.³² Yet, only 38% of countries with or elaborating a national youth strategy include objectives on increasing the representation of young people in state institutions such as the civil service (40% for OECD; 2 out of 7 for non-OECD).³³

Limited shares of young employees may result from low attractiveness of the public sector as an employer compared to the private sector. However, while salary considerations are important to young people, research from Gallup highlights other elements that millennials³⁴ look for in a job: purpose, development, coaching, ongoing conversations, a focus on strengths, and healthy work-life balance (Gallup, 2016_[44]). Governments can improve the attractiveness of their public sector in these areas, including through employer branding activities aimed at making the public sector an employer of choice for young people. Public administrations can strengthen their brand as an employer meeting integrity and ethical standards, delivering value for money, and giving employees the opportunity to contribute to public value. OECD

evidence from the 2016 Survey on Strategic Human Resource Management shows that most governments emphasise the opportunity to contribute to public value, learning opportunities, and work-life balance on governments' recruiting websites and communication material. However, OECD data also points to the lack of governments' joint plans and strategies to effectively guide and brand such efforts.

Beyond enhancing the attractiveness of the public sector, governments can re-imagine recruitment strategies and selection tools. Recruitment processes are often challenged by high volumes of applications, lengthy procedures, numerous assessment steps and tight regulations. OECD data indicates that it can take up to three months to recruit professionals in 19 OECD countries and in eight it can be as long as six months.³⁵ More flexible contractual modalities and dedicated programmes to attract young talent such as graduate programmes can help recruit youth into the public sector. Yet, even among entities in charge of youth affairs, such programmes are still limited. Only 61% of surveyed entities in charge of youth affairs have internship programmes in place (62% for OECD; 4 out of 7 for non-OECD).³⁶

The Turkish Presidential Human Resources Office through the "Internship Mobilization Programme" offers senior undergraduate students the chance to intern in one of the various ministries and public sector agencies. Similarly, Bulgaria's "Career Start" Programme gives graduates the chance to work in the civil service for nine months to gain professional experience to advance their career in the public sector.³⁷ The Flemish community of Belgium offers an internship scheme dedicated to young people under 26 years of age from disadvantaged groups.³⁸ Internship schemes can be helpful in offering young people the chance to gain skills and exposure to public institutions. However, governments can also proactively develop their workforce through longer-term, structured graduate programmes aimed at attracting, developing and retaining highly-qualified young talent through training, mentoring, job rotation and accelerated promotion tracks. While some countries have put in place structured programmes for graduates to join the public sector (Box 3.2), they are less common: only 42% of youth ministries have such programmes (42% for OECD; 3 out of 7 for non-OECD). Among ministries of education not in charge of youth affairs as well as other surveyed line ministries, programmes to attract graduates are even less frequent (respectively 24% and 25% of surveyed ministries).³⁹

Box 3.2. Graduate programmes: attracting and developing young talent in the public administration

Ireland: Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service

The Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) supports an integrated approach to policy formulation and implementation in the civil service based on economic and analytical skills. As a cross-government service, it has provided needed skills and competences to the public administration while attracting and developing the skills of young economics graduates. The recruitment process involves on average 20 graduates per year, with an increase in intake in recent years for a total number of 160 IGEES staff working across the departments as of 2020.

Australia: APS Graduate Programs

The APS Graduate Programs allow new graduates in Australia an entry-level pathway into the public sector. The graduate programs generally take 10 to 18 months to complete, with two to three rotations through different work areas, to give participants a range of skills, knowledge and experience at the start of their career. Participants normally follow face-to-face workshops, trainings and simulation activities. Successful completion of the programs can give participants further opportunities of career development within the public sector as well as study assistance for further training.

Sources: <https://igees.gov.ie/>; <https://www.finance.gov.au/publications/information-sheet/graduate-program>; <https://www.apsjobs.gov.au/s/graduate-programs>.

An ageing workforce and a small share of young employees is a risk factor for public administrations, in terms of limited capacity for renewal and diversity (OECD, 2017^[45]). The lack of evidence on the share of youth in ministries' staff in many countries suggests that age balance in public institutions is not systematically monitored. Governments can consider “conducting measurement and benchmarking at regular intervals to monitor progress, detect and remove barriers, and design interventions” (OECD, 2019^[43]). At the same time, ageing workforces can provide young entrants with opportunities to learn from older, more experienced civil servants. For the large share of officials that will retire, effective knowledge management and transfer strategies are needed to avoid a loss of institutional knowledge and experience (OECD, 2015^[46]). Countries should create and develop structured, regular and extensive opportunities for inter-generational learning between older and younger employees. These programmes can help bridging the generational gaps between leadership and entry-level positions and flatten the hierarchical organisation of public administrations.

More widely, ensuring age-diversity in the civil service cannot be limited to the selection phase: public administrations also need to develop the leadership capabilities of current and potential senior-level public servants (OECD, 2019^[43]). Induction and on-boarding programmes, internal secondments, job rotations and networking opportunities can be helpful in exposing young civil servants to other work areas and identify potential future managers. Career development programmes for young officials (such as leadership programmes) as well as mentorship programmes can also be instrumental in developing young talent, their skills and capabilities to achieve a modern and effective public administration. However, only 39% of surveyed entities in charge of youth affairs run career development programmes (35% for OECD; 4 out of 7 for non-OECD), and only 30% of them have established mentorship programmes (32% for OECD; 1 out of 7 for non-OECD).

While public administrations with limited shares of young employees do not necessarily fare worse than others in delivering on youth's needs, governments can use branding, recruiting and development activities to promote age-diversity to promote innovation, organisational performance and trust in public institutions.

Youth are under-represented in parliament and cabinet

With a representation gap of 12 percentage points in parliaments and an average Cabinet age of 53 years across OECD countries, young people remain severely under-represented in public institutions. Ensuring that young people take part in decision-making through representation in parliaments and cabinets is critical in ensuring greater diversity, mainstreaming a youth's perspective in policy-making, as well as ensuring more responsive policy outcomes. In turn, better policy outcomes and better services' provision are instrumental in regaining citizens' trust (OECD, 2017^[5]).

In 2018, people aged 20-39 represented 34% of the total population aged 20 or above on average across OECD countries.⁴⁰ Yet, in 2020, only 22% of members of parliaments (MPs) in OECD lower houses of parliament are 40 years of age or below: this points to a representation gap of 12 percentage points on average.⁴¹ A similar representation gap of 13 percentage points emerges when comparing MPs under the age of 30 and the share of 20-29 year-olds in the over-20 population. The gap is even larger for upper houses of parliament, where only 9% of MPs are under the age of 40 across 14 OECD countries, partly due to higher minimum age requirements.⁴² Wide differences exist among OECD countries (Figure 3.10): in Italy, Finland and Norway the share of MPs below 40 is actually higher than the share of people aged 20-39 (by 6 percentage points in Italy, 4 p.p. in Finland and 1 p.p. in Norway). In all other OECD countries, the share of “young MPs” is lower than the corresponding share of people aged 20-39 in the over-20 population. The largest representation gaps emerge in Luxembourg (26 p.p.), the United States (25 p.p.) and Australia (24 p.p.).

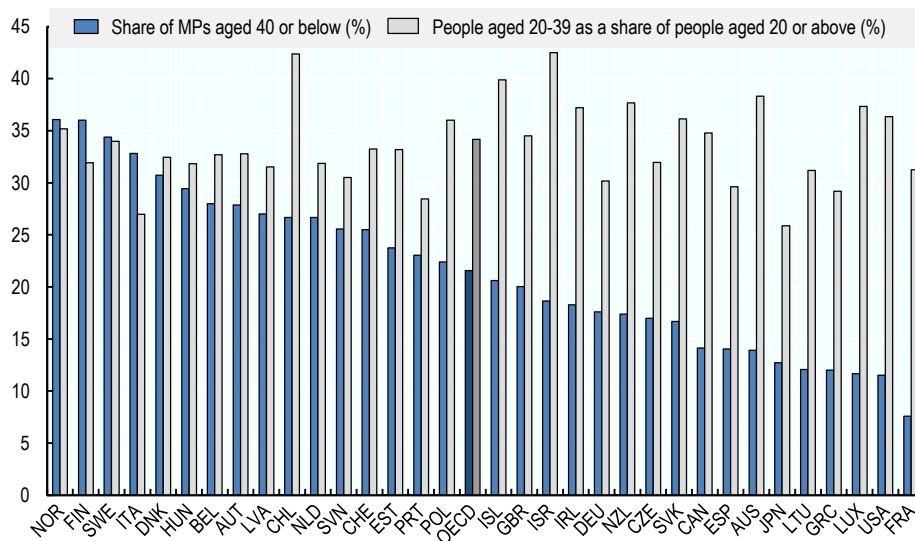
Beyond looking at the share of young MPs, it is also crucial to monitor and analyse youth's share of parliamentary leadership positions in order to ensure their fair representation in parliamentary decision-making. Future analysis should examine such question, for instance, in reference to speakers and deputy

speakers of the house, leaders of political groups, minority leaders, majority leaders and chairs of parliamentary committees.

Representative democracy does not necessarily require its institutions to mirror the composition of its population and demographics alone do not determine the access of younger candidates to decision-making bodies. However, large representation gaps are a warning sign about norms, rules and regulations that hamper youth's access to these bodies and that may fuel disenchantment and disinterest for politics among young people.

Figure 3.10. Youth representation gaps in parliaments in OECD countries remain wide

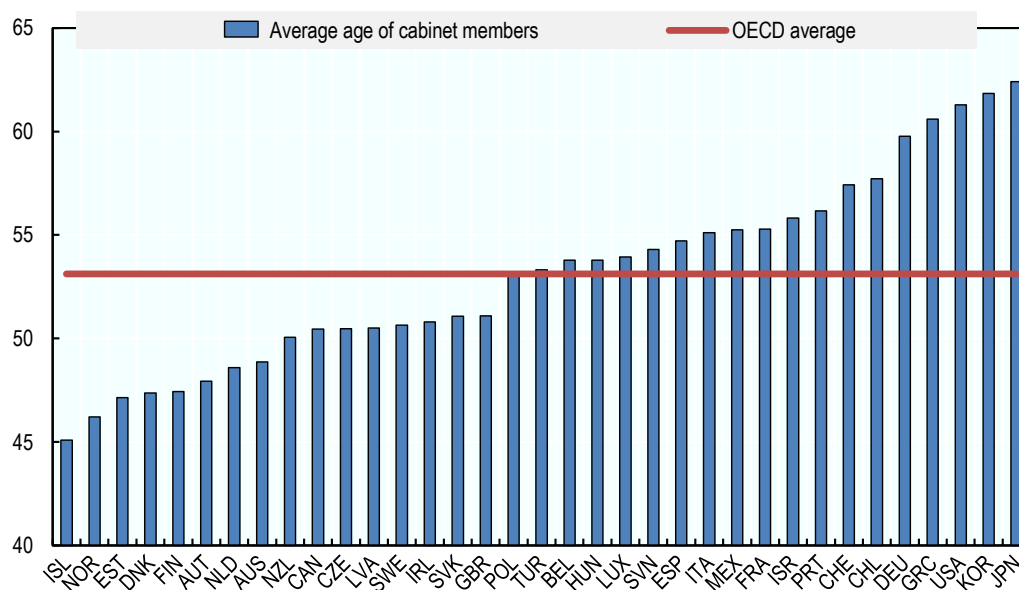
Percentage of Members of Parliament (lower chamber in bicameral systems) that are 40 years of age or under in 2020, compared to the percentage of population aged 20-39 as a share of the population aged 20 or above in 2018.



Sources: OECD calculations based on *OECD Demography and Population* (database); Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Parline database on national parliaments* (<https://data.ipu.org>).

This type of representation gap is even more pronounced when it comes to the country's political leadership. As illustrated in Figure 3.11, the average age of cabinet members varied between 45 years and 62.4 years in 2018. Four of the five youngest cabinets across the OECD countries were located in Nordic countries. Furthermore, in eight of the 16 countries that have an average age of cabinet members below the OECD average of 53 the share of elderly in the population is actually above the OECD median. That is the case for Austria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands and Sweden. These patterns show that demography is not destiny, and that social norms as well as legal and institutional barriers to youth's political careers matter. As of February 2018, only 51 of the then-incumbent cabinet members were younger than 40 years (8%) and only 20 were 35 years or younger (3%). In 13 OECD countries, there was no minister or Head of State or Government below 40 years in 2018 (OECD, 2018_[10]). The age composition of the Cabinet may have implications for government priorities and spending patterns: Chapter 4 explores these correlations in detail.

Figure 3.11. Youth are under-represented in national cabinets



Notes: Data for one cabinet member in Canada and three members of cabinet in Mexico could not be found. Representatives were selected based on the Members of Cabinet listed on the official government websites.

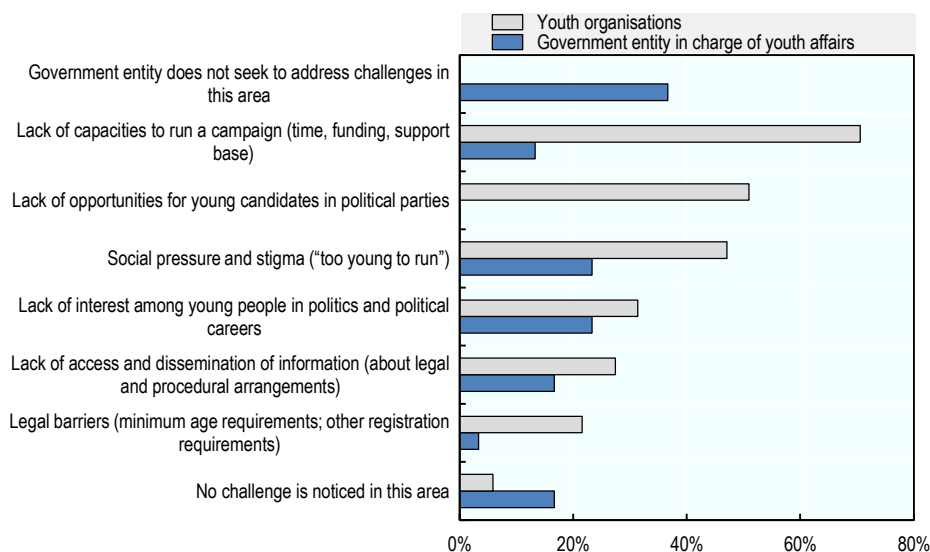
Source: OECD Stocktaking Report (2018).

Promoting a fair representation for young people

When it comes to explaining the limited representation of young people in parliaments, academic and policy research is particularly scarce and mostly focuses on the role of electoral systems (Sundström and Stockemer, 2018_[47]). Instead, OECD data shows that young people face numerous financial, legal and other obstacles in their path to becoming a member of parliament or cabinet. Running a campaign requires time and funding: 71% of the youth organisations in OECD countries surveyed in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys indicate this as the main challenge. As shown in Figure 3.12 (grey bars), limited opportunities for young people within political parties and traditional stereotypes portraying youth as lacking the necessary experience are also perceived as major barriers. The minimum age required to run for office is pointed to as another challenge, especially in the upper houses of parliament. These barriers can hinder the chances for young people running for office, as well as limit their aspirations to political office in the first place. Yet, as shown in Figure 3.12 (blue bars), OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs largely underestimate these challenges. 53% of them do not notice challenges or do not seek to address them, which might partly be explained by a lack of mandate in this field.

Figure 3.12. Youth's barriers to candidacy to political office are often underestimated

The grey bars show the share of youth organisations in OECD countries that mention a specific challenge that prevents youth from presenting themselves as candidates in elections; the blue bars show the share of OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs that mention a specific challenge they seek to address.



Notes: Based on 30 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs and 51 youth organisations in OECD countries. Ministries in charge of youth affairs were not asked about the lack of opportunities for young people in political parties.

Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

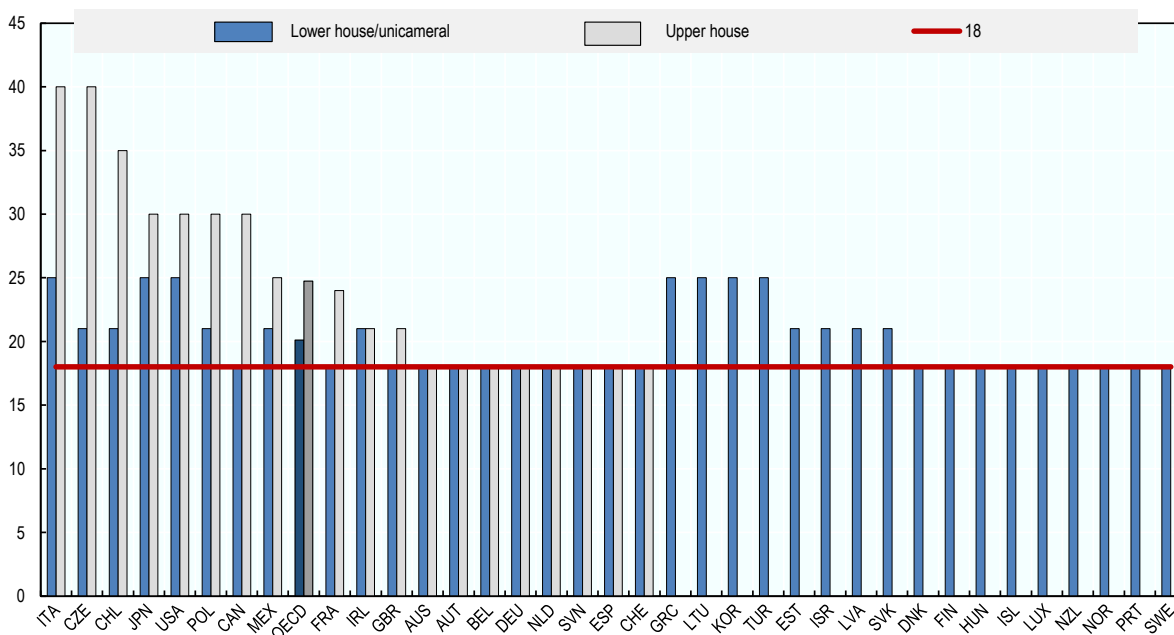
Political parties, and especially their youth wings, can offer an important avenue for young people to participate in shaping parties' programmes, access decision-making procedures and start their career in politics. However, evidence collected in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys suggests that the appeal of political parties among young people remains limited. For instance, in Portugal, only 1% of people aged 15-24 are members of a party, compared to 2% of the total population. Similarly, in Germany, 1.5% of people aged 15-35 were members of a party in 2018, compared to 5% of the total population in 2014. Norway and Sweden follow similar patterns, respectively with 6% and 5% of young people⁴³ holding membership of a party (compared to respectively 7% and 5.5% among the total population).⁴⁴ 78% of surveyed youth organisations in OECD point to a lack of openness of political parties to new ideas and innovations and 42% to a lack of interest among young people in politics as significant barriers.⁴⁵

To address these challenges, governments must seek to ensure that minimum age requirements and other registration requirements do not discriminate against young people as candidates in elections. Evidence also suggests that proportional representation electoral systems are more conducive to youth's representation in parliament (Stockemer and Sundström, 2018^[48]). However, a detailed discussion of the impact of electoral systems remains outside the scope of this Report.

Stockemer and Sundström (2018^[48]) find that for every year candidate age requirements are lowered, the share of young deputies aged 40 and lower increases by more than 1 percentage point. While voting age requirements are most commonly fixed at 18 in most OECD countries, age requirements to run for office at the national level tend to be higher and more diverse across countries (Figure 3.13). For instance, 7 OECD countries set the minimum age to run as a candidate for the lower house at 25. Italy and the Czech Republic set the threshold at 40 years when it comes to the upper house of parliament. Imbalances between minimum voting age and minimum candidacy age requirements can send mixed messages to young people. For instance, the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU, 2010, p. 14^[49]) has previously recommended for parliaments to "align the minimum voting age with the minimum age of eligibility to run

for office in order to ensure greater participation by youth in parliaments.” Similarly, while the current age requirement for running as a member of parliament across OECD countries is 20.1 for lower houses of parliament and unicameral systems (24.7 for upper houses of parliament),⁴⁶ OECD-based youth organisations surveyed in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys believe candidacy age requirements should be lowered to 19.4 years on average (see Chapter 2).⁴⁷

Figure 3.13. Minimum age to run as a member of parliament



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Parline database on national parliaments* (<https://data.ipu.org>).

A large body of literature shows that legislative gender quotas in parliament or in electoral lists can boost the representation of female representatives. According to the IPU, 130 countries around the world have introduced constitutional, electoral or political party quotas for women. The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Gender Equality in Public Life (2015^[50]) refers to “quotas” as a possible measure that adherents are recommended to consider in order “to achieve gender balanced representation in decision-making positions in public life.” Similarly, with due attention to the electoral system and contextual factors, governments could consider to adopt quotas for youth in parliaments to increase youth’s representation. Youth quotas have previously been endorsed by the Inter-Parliamentary Union Assembly (IPU, 2010^[49]) and a few countries have already adopted such measure (Table 3.2). For instance, Sweden has adopted a 25% quota for candidates under the age of 35 within party lists (IPU, 2018^[51]). Voluntary quotas for candidates on some political party lists have been established in Mexico (30% and 20% under 30 in two political parties), Sweden (25% under 35), Lithuania (under 35), Hungary (20%, age: n.a.) and Turkey (10%, age: n.a.) (IPU, 2018^[51]).

Table 3.2. Youth quotas and youth representation in parliament around the world

Country	Quota type	Age group	Quota %	Gender	% under age 30	% under age 40
Rwanda	Reserved	Under 35	7.7	Embedded	1.3	22.5
Morocco	Reserved	Under 40	7.6	Embedded	1.6	14.7
Kenya:						
Lower H	Reserved	Under 35	3.4	Embedded	No data	No data
Upper H	Reserved	Under 35	2.9	Embedded	3.0	26.9
Uganda	Reserved	Under 30	1.3	Embedded	1.1	22.9
Philippines	Legislated	Unknown	50*	Mixed	1.7	15.8
Tunisia	Legislated	Under 35	25**	Separate	6.5	22.6
Gabon	Legislated	Under 40	20	No	0.0	8.6
Kyrgyzstan	Legislated	Under 36	15	Separate	4.2	35.0
Egypt	Legislated	Under 35	Varied****	Separate	1.0	11.8
Nicaragua	Party	Unknown	40,*** 15	Mixed	1.1	14.1
Romania	Party	Unknown	30	Separate	6.4	35.3
Mexico	Party	Under 30	30, 20	Separate	7.6	35.7
Montenegro	Party	Under 30	30, 20	Separate	9.9	30.9
Vietnam	Party	Under 40	26.5	Separate	1.8	12.3
El Salvador	Party	Under 31	25	Separate	2.4	14.3
Sweden	Party	Under 35	25	Separate	12.3	34.1
Mozambique	Party	Under 35	20	Separate	0.0	17.2
Cyprus	Party	Under 45, 35	20	Separate	1.8	12.5
Lithuania	Party	Under 35	Unknown	Separate	2.8	19.2
Hungary	Party	Unknown	20	Separate	2.0	29.4
Senegal	Party	Unknown	20	Separate	0.0	11.0
Angola	Party	Unknown	15	Separate	0.6	11.1
Turkey	Party	Unknown	10	Separate	0.2	8.8
Croatia	Party	Unknown	Unknown	Separate	2.7	21.9
Ukraine	Party	Unknown	Unknown	Separate	5.0	41.2

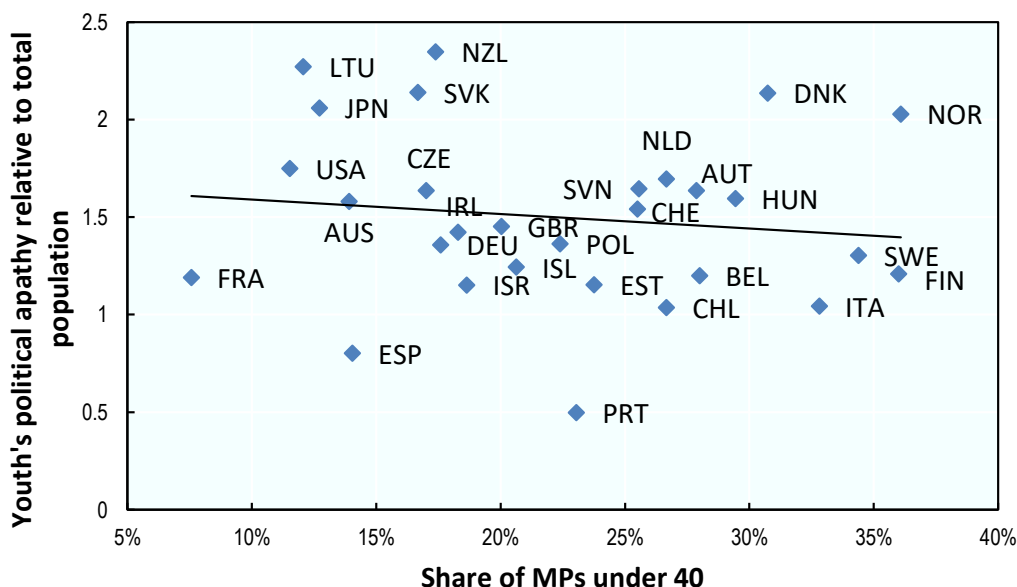
Notes: Policies apply to single and lower chambers of parliament (except in Kenya, as noted). *50% of PR lists must come from different sectors, including youth. **In districts with four or more seats, one young candidate should be placed in one of the top four list positions. ***Women and youth together. ****Minimum of 16 young candidates must be nominated across 4 electoral districts.

Source: Readapted from IPU (2018), *Youth participation in national parliaments: 2018*, Inter-Parliamentary Union, <https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2018-12/youth-participation-in-national-parliaments-2018>.

Quantitative analysis (Figure 3.14) shows that there is a mild tendency between having a higher share of parliamentarians under the age of 40 and young people expressing more interest in politics (as well as feeling more politically empowered), although the relationship is statistically imprecise. On the other hand, a higher share of young parliamentarians is not related to higher political trust among young people, which suggests that a more complex combination of drivers is at play. These findings highlight the imminent relevance for governments to tackle the under-representation of young people in state institutions.

Figure 3.14. Where there are younger MPs, youth tends to express less political apathy

The horizontal axis plots the share of MPs aged 40 or below (in unicameral systems or in lower houses). The vertical axis plots the share of young people that report not to be interested at all in politics relative to the share of the total population that reports the same (2018 or latest year available): value “1” is where political apathy is the same among young people and among the total population.



Notes: Correlation coefficient: -0.13; p-value: 0.50; “youth” here refers to people aged 15-29.

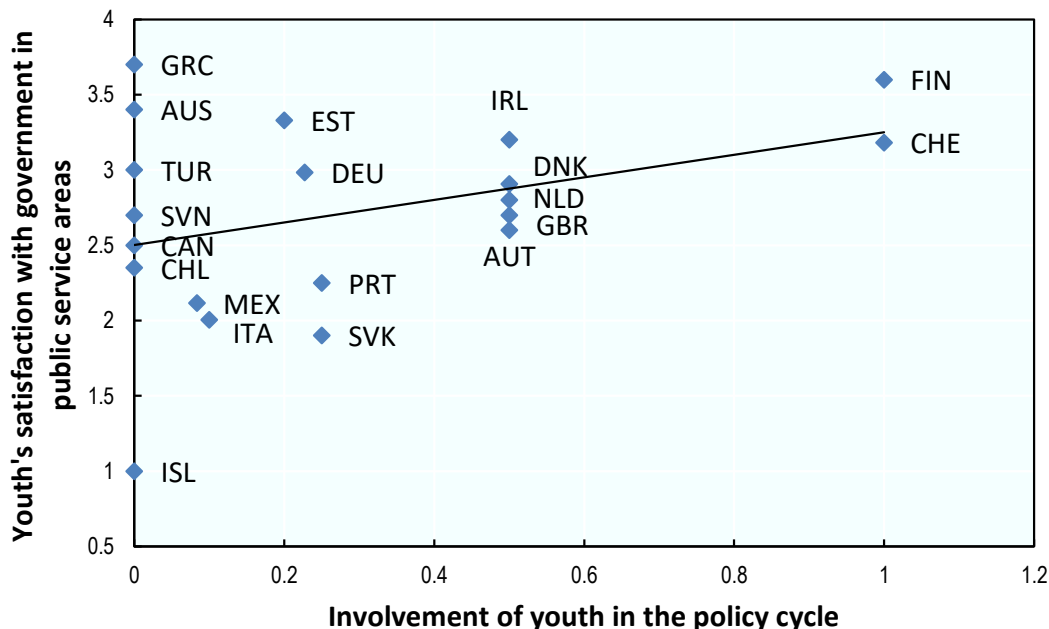
Sources: OECD calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Parline database on national parliaments* (<https://data.ipu.org>); OECD calculations based on OECD (2019), *Society at a Glance 2019: OECD Social Indicators*, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/soc_glance-2019-en.

Walking the inclusive path in the policy cycle

According to the OECD Youth Governance Surveys, only 26% of youth organisations reported to be satisfied with governments’ performance on youth participation in public life.⁴⁸ As recognised in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017_[11]), stakeholder⁴⁹ participation in the policy cycle increases government’s accountability, broadens citizen’s empowerment and influence on decisions, builds civic capacity and improves the evidence for policy-making, among others. When it comes to young people, quantitative analysis of data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys (Figure 3.15) shows that where youth organisations have been involved in the policy cycle to a greater extent, they report a higher satisfaction with government’s performance across public service areas (such as transportation, health, housing and employment among others).

Figure 3.15. A participatory policy cycle can sustain youth’s satisfaction with government

The horizontal axis plots the extent to which youth organisations in a country reported to have been involved in the policy cycle (informed, consulted and/or engaged). The vertical axis plots the average satisfaction reported by youth organisations in a given country across a number of public service areas.



Notes: Correlation coefficient: 0.35; p-value: 0.12. The dependent variable is a mean of means of 10 satisfaction scores (1-5) reported by youth organisations in a given OECD country with government’s responses in education, employment, health, housing, inclusion, family policy, justice, mobility, leisure, and youth work. When a country had missing information, the mean of the others was imputed. The independent variable is the mean of the shares of youth organisations in a given OECD country that reported they were consulted or engaged in the policy cycle.

Source: OECD calculations based on OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Transparency and communication are the first steps toward effective participation

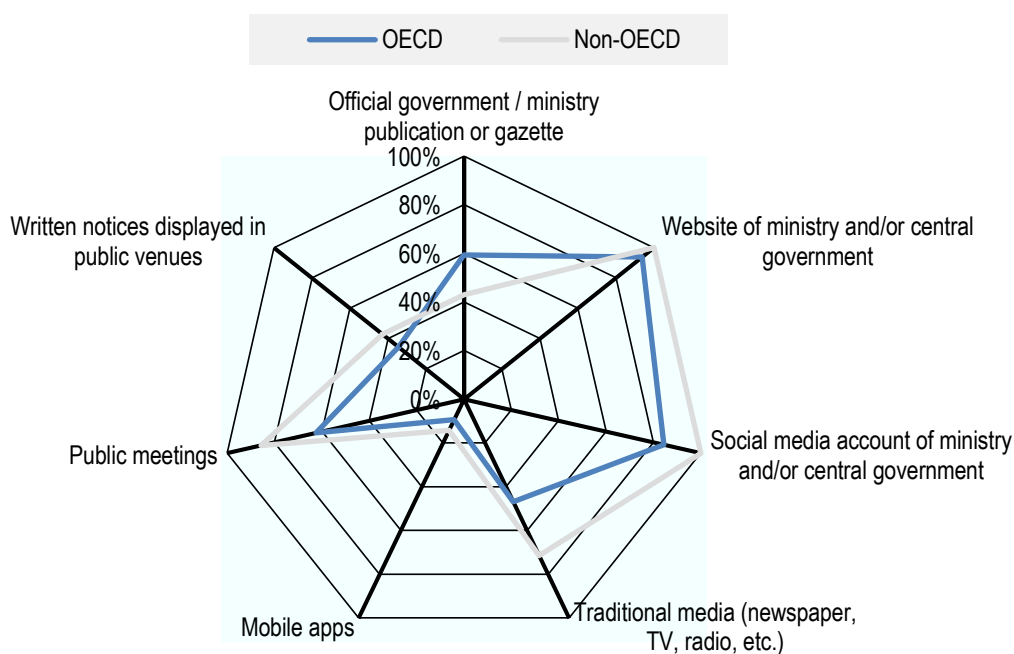
Government transparency and good communication with youth is the first step to establish meaningful participation in the policy cycle: indeed, 72% of entities in charge of youth affairs indicated that they prioritise improving their communication with youth stakeholders and strengthening transparency.⁵⁰ Ministries’ websites remain the most common platform to provide information about their work and access to public programmes and services, as indicated by 95% of them (94% for OECD; 7 out of 7 for non-OECD). However, as Figure 3.16 shows, governments have largely started to innovate their communication strategies to reach out to young people via social media. In Colombia, France, Turkey and Brazil, government entities in charge of youth affairs also communicate with young people through mobile phone apps. As recognised in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017_[11]), governments should promote innovative ways to promote stakeholder participation by leveraging digital government tools.

Communication and transparency can also be strengthened by establishing mechanisms for young people and youth organisations to provide feedback to ministries on the quality of policies, programmes and services. In Japan, for instance, junior high school students are recruited as “Special Youth Reporters” for the Cabinet Office: their role is to report their opinions on a variety of policy topics, which are then shared by the Cabinet Office with the relevant ministries and agencies.⁵¹ In a number of OECD countries, consultation portals are established: in Iceland, a one-stop Consultation Portal allows everyone to submit comments and suggestions to all public consultations published by ministries.⁵² However, when it comes

to communicating with young people, policy makers should tailor their messages and delivery modes to the intended audience. This requires governments to conduct research into the young audience they intend to approach to gain a deeper understanding of their motivations, fears or barriers. The OECD Communication Guide on Engaging Young People in Open Government (OECD, 2018^[52]) also highlights the importance of communicating as early as possible, presenting clear and detailed reasons, scope of interaction and expected outcomes. Furthermore, governments should ensure that communication unfolds as a two-way road, rather than a one-way dissemination of information. A range of traditional and digital forms of communication such as online platforms and social media can be leveraged depending on the particular communications objective.

Figure 3.16. Ministries of youth are modernising their communication practices

The chart shows the share of OECD and non-OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs that reported using a given channel to provide information about youth-related policies, programmes and services.



Note: Based on 32 OECD and 7 non-OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Inform, consult, engage

Transparency and effective communication create the adequate environment for young people to participate to the policy and service cycle. However, meaningful participation requires further steps (Box 3.3). The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (OECD, 2017^[11]) stipulates that countries shall “grant all stakeholders equal and fair opportunities to be informed and consulted and actively engage them in all phases of the policy-cycle and service design and delivery.”

Box 3.3. A model to assess stakeholder participation

The OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017_[11]) defines “stakeholder participation” as “all the ways in which stakeholders can be involved in the policy cycle and in service design and delivery, including

1. **Information:** an initial level of participation characterised by a one-way relationship in which the government produces and delivers information to stakeholders. It covers both on-demand provision of information and “proactive” measures by the government to disseminate information.
2. **Consultation:** a more advanced level of participation that entails a two-way relationship in which stakeholders provide feedback to the government and vice-versa. It is based on the prior definition of the issue for which views are being sought and requires the provision of relevant information, in addition to feedback on the outcomes of the process.
3. **Engagement:** when stakeholders are given the opportunity and the necessary resources (e.g. information, data and digital tools) to collaborate during all phases of the policy-cycle and in the service design and delivery.”

Source: OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017_[11]).

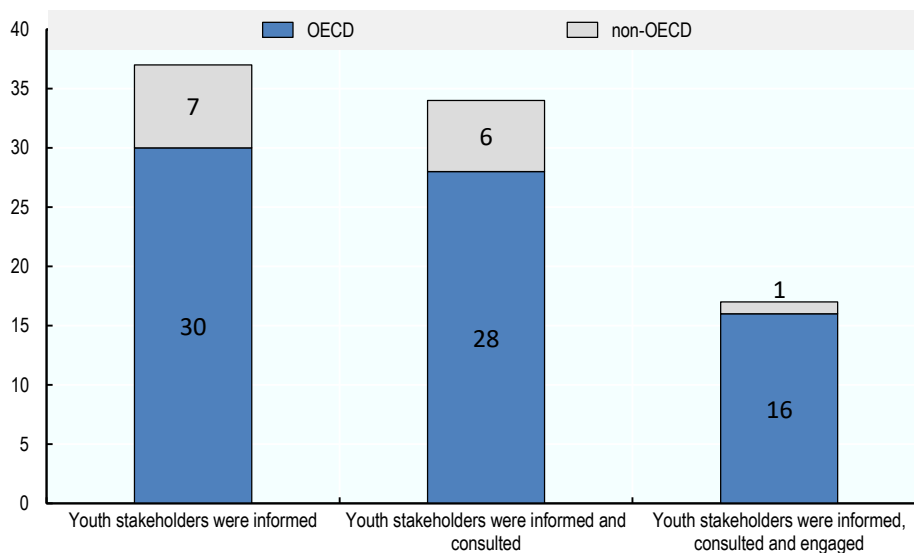
Chapter 2 highlighted that systematic, timely and inclusive consultation with a wide range of youth stakeholders throughout formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation is crucial to ensure that national youth strategies can deliver their intended impact. OECD data shows that even among the government entities in charge of youth affairs, there is still room to enhance youth stakeholders’ participation in the policy cycle (Figure 3.17). Indeed, while 92% of ministries of youth informed and consulted young people in the past year (93% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD), only 43% engaged them (50% for OECD; 1 out of 7 for non-OECD).⁵³

Youth’s participation should not be limited to the policies and services discussed in the entity in charge of youth affairs, considering the relevance of a wide array of policy areas to the lives of young people. For instance, in Norway, the Ministry of Culture consulted children and young people between the age of 3 and 19 in the formulation of a white paper on art, culture, and digital artistic and cultural expression in 2019.⁵⁴ Norwegian children and youth organisations were also consulted in the formulation of the government’s strategy for “Children Leaving in Poverty (2015-2017)” and the action plan to combat violence against children.⁵⁵ In 2018, New Zealand’s Ministry of Education extensively consulted and engaged young people in shaping the future of education in their country through an Online Youth Forum,⁵⁶ two Education Summits bringing together youth from a wide array of backgrounds with special attention to marginalised groups, as well as online surveys.⁵⁷

However, line ministries generally provide fewer participation or engagement opportunities for youth. Only 14% of survey respondents from ministries of education (not in charge of youth affairs) informed, consulted and engaged young people in their policy cycle over the last 12 months (18% for OECD; 1 out of 3 for non-OECD). Among the participating line ministries, only 12% did (14% for OECD; 0 out of 3 for non-OECD).⁵⁸ At the same time, increasing opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making is recognised as a priority area by 77% of entities in charge of youth affairs and 72% of ministries of education, but only by 53% of other line ministries surveyed.⁵⁹

Figure 3.17. Youth’s engagement in the policy cycle of OECD entities in charge of youth affairs remains limited

Number of OECD and non-OECD entities in charge of youth affairs that informed, consulted and/or engaged youth stakeholders in the policy cycle in the past 12 months.



Note: Based on 30 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Engaging young people in the policy cycle requires adequate financial and human resources, open information, good co-ordination and appropriate incentives for public officials to close the feedback loop. Concrete support to encourage participation, particularly among marginalised youth, includes reimbursing expenses, providing childcare and holding consultations in different geographical areas. Where widely accessible, digital tools can also be leveraged to reduce the transaction costs. For instance, the Latvian Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development co-organised hackathons with high school and university students to explore applications of open data to current issues.⁶⁰ Box 3.4 provides some examples of consultation and engagement practices undertaken across OECD countries.

Box 3.4. Consulting and engaging: amplifying young people’s voices

Luxembourg: the Youth Parliament

The Parliament for Youth is an assembly composed by youth and working for youth. Every person aged 14-24 living in Luxembourg can be a member. A parliamentary session lasts from October to the following October. The Parliament for Youth is composed of commissions and an executive board. Since its creation, it has published resolutions on a variety of policy areas including waste management, European affairs and the quality of life. It also holds regular meetings with government officials. The Youth Parliament’s main partners are the National Youth Council of Luxembourg (CGJL), the Ministry of National Education, Children and Youth as well as the Chamber of Deputies.

Latvia: Coffee with Politicians

“Coffee with Politicians” is a method of participation created in Sweden and adapted to the context in Latvia. The aim is to provide an opportunity to both youth and politicians to meet and discuss issues

that are important to them. For young people, it is often the first opportunity to address high-level decision makers directly and immediately, and engage in a debate with them about issues that concern them. In turn, it is an opportunity for politicians to hear about the issues that young people care about from the “primary source” – young people themselves.

European Union (EU): Youth dialogue

One of the main instruments of the EU Youth Strategy 2019- 2027 for youth participation is the EU Youth Dialogue. Drawing on the former Structured Dialogue, this programme consists of a dialogue with young people and youth organisations involving policy and decision makers, as well as experts, researchers and other relevant civil society actors. The EU Youth Dialogue is steered by a group composed of young people and youth organisation at the European, national and local levels. The programme has resulted in the strengthening of National Youth Councils as representative bodies that allow youth to voice their opinions through decision-making, and developing young people's skills for active citizenship.

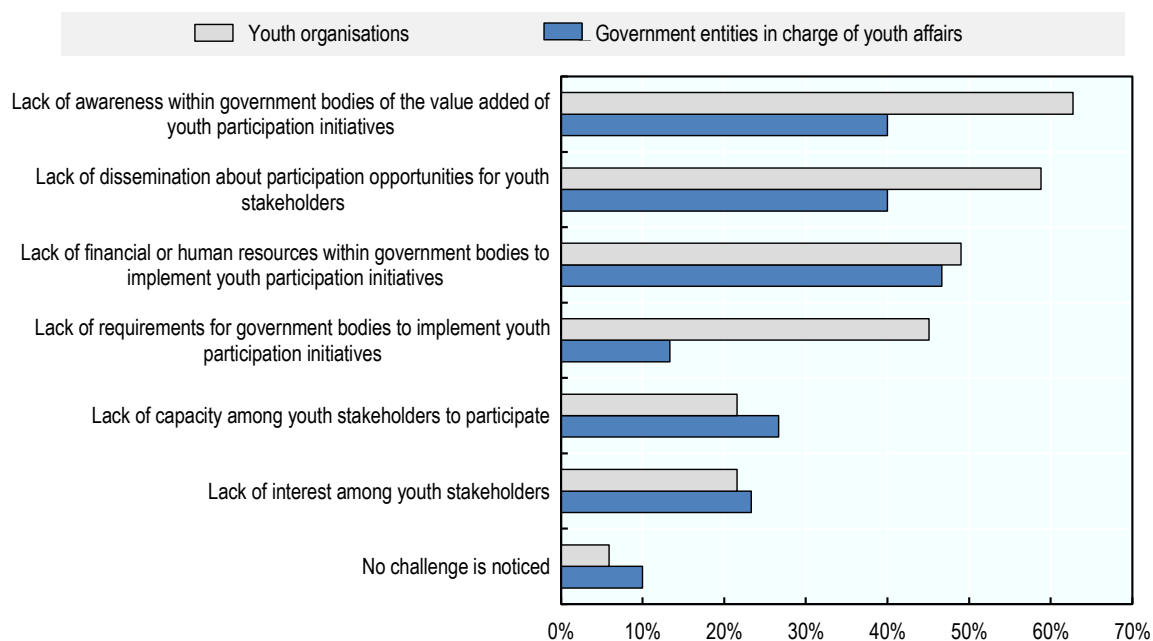
Sources: <https://www.jugendparlament.lu/>; OECD Youth Governance Surveys; https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/implementation/dialogue_en.

Addressing challenges requires commitment

Youth-led organisations identify three main challenges to a more frequent and meaningful participation of young people in the policy cycle. First, government bodies lack awareness of the value added of youth participation initiatives; second, such opportunities are not well disseminated; and third, government bodies lack the necessary financial and human resources to implement them. This diagnosis matches the priority areas identified by government entities in charge of youth affairs, although to a more limited extent. For instance, only 40% of the entities in charge of youth affairs indicated that they seek to address the lack of awareness within government bodies for this purpose, compared to 63% of youth organisations that consider it a main challenge (Figure 3.18).

Figure 3.18. Governments and youth identify similar priorities on youth's participation in the policy cycle but to different extents

The chart shows the percentage of youth organisations in OECD countries indicating a given challenge as one of the three main challenges preventing youth from participating in the policy cycle. The chart also shows the percentage of OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs reporting a given challenge as one of the three main challenges they seek to address.

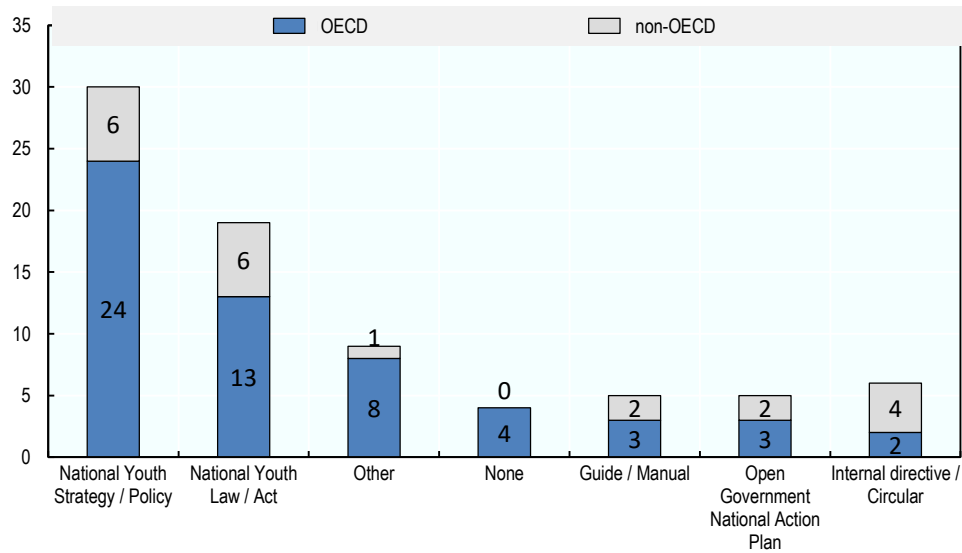


Note: Based on 30 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs and 51 youth organisations in OECD countries.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Through commitments in youth policy and national strategies, governments can create a stronger mandate across ministerial portfolios to address such challenges (Figure 3.19). National youth strategies are the most common type to feature such objectives: 77% of countries with a NYS in place cover a commitment to promote youth's participation in the policy cycle (75% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD) (see Chapter 2).⁶¹ Less than half of countries (49%) have commitments enshrined in national youth laws (41% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD).⁶² At the same time, as highlighted in the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Open Government (2017_[11]), supporting documents such as guidelines and manuals for policy makers can encourage youth's participation in the policy cycle. However, practical manuals and guidelines are still uncommon: only 13% of the surveyed entities in charge of youth affairs have elaborated manuals for decision makers on how to engage youth systematically in the decisions that affect their lives (9% for OECD; 2 out of 7 for non-OECD).⁶³ For instance, Germany is currently refining general quality standards and recommendations to ensure an effective participation of children and youth in day care centres, schools, municipalities and youth work centres in co-operation with the Federal Youth Council.⁶⁴

Figure 3.19. Practical guidance to promote youth participation in the policy cycle remains scarce among OECD countries

The chart shows the number of OECD countries that have documents featuring commitments to encourage youth participation in the policy/service cycle.



Note: Based on 32 OECD and 7 non-OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

As Figure 3.19 illustrates, Argentina, Bulgaria, Luxembourg, the Slovak Republic and Spain have elaborated Open Government National Action Plans that feature youth-specific commitments on open government as part of their membership to the Open Government Partnership.⁶⁵ Including youth-specific commitments in these action plans can be an effective way of promoting youth's involvement in the policy cycle not only within the government entity in charge of youth affairs, but also across ministries and government entities, given their cross-sectorial scope. For instance, Spain's 2017-2019 Open Government Action Plan includes a commitment for the Spanish Youth Institute INJUVE to promote the effective participation of young people in democratic life and in the creation of youth policies through the national implementation of the EU Structured Dialogue. The nature, ambition, implementation and tracking of youth-specific commitments however vary greatly across countries.

Engaging young people in deciding how public resources are allocated can ensure that their interests are addressed in public expenditure and increase their interest and ownership in an exercise otherwise perceived as technical, while also increasing the process' transparency and accountability. Participatory budgeting programmes allow citizens or specific sub-groups to provide preferences on how budgets are allocated across specific projects or priority areas. Such programmes can be particularly useful when young people are involved in the whole process of designing, selecting and implementing the budgeted projects. For instance, in each of the 82 cantons of Costa Rica, a youth committee receives yearly funding from the national Young Person Council to develop and implement activities and projects formulated by each committee on the basis of the priorities and objectives individuated by its young members.⁶⁶ In Portugal, a participatory budgeting initiative was first undertaken at the national level in 2017: people aged 14-30 had the chance to elaborate proposals in fields such as sport, social innovation, science education and environmental sustainability for a total amount of EUR 300 000. At the sub-national level, the Portuguese Municipality of Gaia is currently implementing a three-year participatory budgeting initiative dedicated to people aged 13-30 with a total budget of EUR 240 000.⁶⁷

A seat at the table: youth bodies and co-ordination with government

Youth-led organisations and representative bodies play a crucial role in representing the voice of young people vis-à-vis state institutions. Present in 77% of the countries surveyed (78% for OECD; 5 out of 7 for non-OECD),⁶⁸ national youth councils can prove a valuable partner for governments to gather information, ensure wide consultations and run joint activities and programmes.

According to evidence from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys, youth councils at the subnational level (regional as well as local) are even more common: they exist in 85% of the countries surveyed (88% for OECD; 5 out of 7 for non-OECD). Local youth councils can empower young people by allowing them to participate in local decision-making, as well as by promoting a sense of belonging and responsibility within their community. In some countries, youth participation is further institutionalised. For instance, in countries such as Finland and Norway, the establishment of local youth councils is mandatory at the municipal level. Similarly, in the Flemish Community of Belgium, public institutions are compelled by decree to consult young people in policy-making both at the community and city-level.⁶⁹

A second mechanism through which governments and ministries seek the inputs of young people is through advisory youth councils. These bodies are normally affiliated to governments or specific ministries, such as in Denmark where the Ministry of Environment and Food has established a Youth Climate Council. While such bodies exist in 59% of the countries surveyed in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys (53% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD), they widely differ in terms of functions, composition, terms of appointment, financial and human resources, and involvement in the policy cycle (Box 3.5). For instance, the Swiss Federal Commission for Children and Youth (CFEJ), with one third of members under 30 years of age, advises the Federal Council on matters of children and youth policy, monitors the situation of youth and children and proposes necessary measures. It also evaluates ex-ante the potential impact of new policies and regulations on youth policy and child policy in Switzerland.⁷⁰

Box 3.5. Youth advisory councils

France: Council of Orientation of Youth Policy (Conseil d'orientation des politiques de Jeunesse; CoJ)

Since 2016, the Conseil d'orientation des politiques de Jeunesse (CoJ), acts as an advisory body to the Prime Minister. The CoJ contributes to the co-ordination and evaluation of youth-related policies, and is composed of commissions dealing with education and participation within policy-making. Its 79 members, including Ministers, youth representatives and youth organisations, can also be consulted on legislative or regulatory drafts on issues relating to youth and may examine any general drafts law relating to youth policies.

New Zealand: Youth Advisory Group

The Ministry of Education in New Zealand has created an advisory group composed of 12 members aged 14 to 18, which are expected to inform the Ministry on the impact of activities and measures adopted within the education field. The group allows young people to voice their opinions and share insights about education policies, and suggest how to improve them. The members are expected to draft a feedback report targeting the Ministry, which is also released to the public.

Chile: Youth Cabinet (Gabinete Juven)

Since 2018, the National Institute of Youth in Chile (INJUV) implements the initiative "Gabinete Juvenil" bringing together 155 young people aged 15-29 elected at the local level to regional youth cabinets. The initiative provides an opportunity for dialogue, debate and integration of new and innovative ideas in the policy cycle of the institute through national commissions on a variety of issues and topics.

Source: <https://www.jeunes.gouv.fr/coj>; OECD Youth Governance Surveys; https://programassociales.ministeriodesarrollosocial.gob.cl/programas_otrasinic/62713/2019/4.

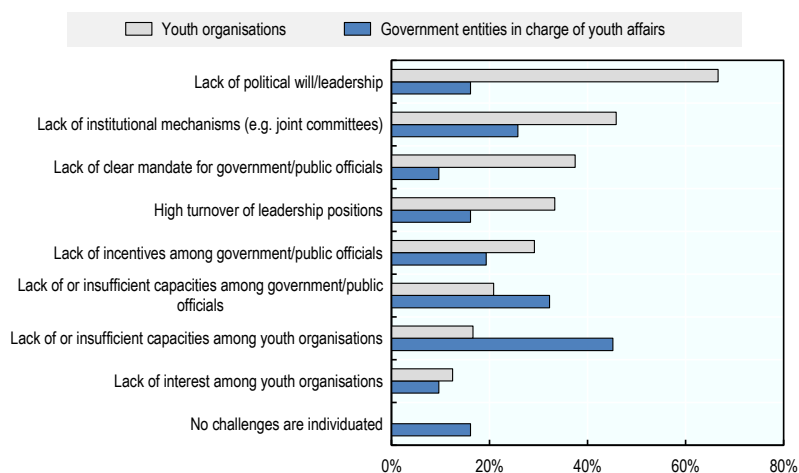
National and school student unions are important spaces for youth to engage in democratic decision-making and can be vehicles of youth's demands to governments. National student unions are present in 82% of the countries surveyed (81% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD) and high school student unions in 77% of them (78% for OECD; 5 out of 7 for non-OECD). Cross-national student unions, such as the European Students Union, play an important advocacy role in matters exceeding national boundaries. In the education field, school and student councils that represent students' interests vis-à-vis the administrations of schools and universities fulfil important functions in ensuring that students' voices are heard and included when taking decisions, as well as in promoting active citizenship and civic education.

All youth-representative bodies and organisations, from the school-level to the sub-national up to the national levels, should be equipped with appropriate resources, clear mandates, independence and an inclusive composition. For instance, challenges for an effective co-ordination between government entities and youth organisations are widespread. Some of the entities in charge of youth affairs surveyed in the OECD Youth Governance Surveys expressed concerns that young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, marginalised youth, and young people from minority groups might be less likely to take part in youth organisations and representative bodies in the first place. This challenge calls for governments to equip youth organisations with the necessary tools and resources to broaden their membership, as well as consider establishing innovative mechanisms to engage marginalised young people directly.

Data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys (Figure 3.20) shows that the perceptions of governments and youth organisations on the main obstacles for an effective co-ordination with one another greatly diverge. OECD entities in charge of youth affairs point to insufficient financial and human resources among youth organisations (45%) and among their own ministries (32%), as well as to the lack of institutional mechanisms (26%) as the main challenges to better co-ordinate with youth organisations. The lack of institutional mechanisms such as joint committees and advisory councils is also highlighted by 46% of the responding youth organisations as a key barrier. However, they most commonly point to the lack of political will and leadership among government officials (67%).

Figure 3.20. Governments and youth organisations highlight different obstacles to effective co-ordination

The chart plots the share of youth organisations in OECD countries and the share of OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs reporting a specific challenge as one of the top three challenges when coordinating youth-related policies, programs or services with one another.



Note: Based on 31 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs and 24 youth organisations in OECD countries.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Identified as a key challenge by government entities in charge of youth affairs, the lack of financial and human capacities among youth organisations requires action from governments. Available data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys shows that 79% provide funding to youth organisations (81% for OECD; 5 out of 7 for non-OECD). In some cases, financial support is provided by entities in charge of youth affairs directly, while in other cases youth organisations are funded through local authorities or national youth councils. For instance, in Denmark, the Danish Youth Council (DUF) receives a share of the Danish lottery funds and then distributes funding to its member children and youth organisations.⁷¹ Similarly, in Norway, the Ministry of Culture provides financial support to youth organisations via the “Frifond” grants that are distributed by the Norwegian Children and Youth Council (LNU) and the Norwegian Music Council.⁷² In Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture (also responsible for youth affairs) awarded EUR 18.6 million of funding to youth organisations in 2020, to be disbursed through the ministry itself as well as the regional state administrative agencies.⁷³ 55% of entities in charge of youth affairs also provide educational and technical assistance to build up the administrative capacities of youth organisations (48% for OECD; 6 out of 7 for non-OECD).⁷⁴ 61% of the ministries of education provide organisational and technical support to school and student councils (58% for OECD; 4 out of 6 for non-OECD). In Lithuania, for instance, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports provides the Lithuanian School Student Union (LMS) with training support on a yearly basis with a particular focus on upskilling trainings for coordinators of school student unions.

In partnership with governments, well-funded youth representative bodies with clear mandates, independence, access to decision-making, adequate capacities and an inclusive membership can be an effective way of bringing innovative and youth-responsive solutions into the decision-making process. They also fulfil an important function in fostering an active and democratic life among young people.

Youth workers and young volunteers: the potential for resilient societies

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that young volunteers and youth workers are an important resource for societies in ensuring societal resilience in the face of shocks and disasters. Youth volunteers and youth workers have helped mitigate the impact of the crisis on the everyday lives of the most vulnerable people, from elderly people with limited access to public services to children with limited out-of-school activities.

In need of a compass: youth work and government strategies

Youth work includes a wide range of social, cultural, educational, sports-related, leisure and political activities designed for young people and managed by professional and voluntary youth workers through organisations, informal groups, public youth services and individually. Youth workers can also engage in “open youth work” prioritising the participation of young people themselves in ideating, planning, organising and evaluating activities.⁷⁵ Youth work activities such as Scouting provide young people with out-of-school and informal opportunities to learn, grow, socialise and actively participate in their communities. Youth workers also play a crucial role in providing targeted support to vulnerable and marginalised youth (such as youth in need of health counselling, access to justice, support to prevent the misuse of drugs, etc.), especially when they would not turn to public services for help. Youth workers can also provide trainings and support to youth organisations and their leaders, ensuring they have the right skills and capacities to successfully conduct their own activities. The COVID-19 crisis has also highlighted the crucial role that digital youth work can play.

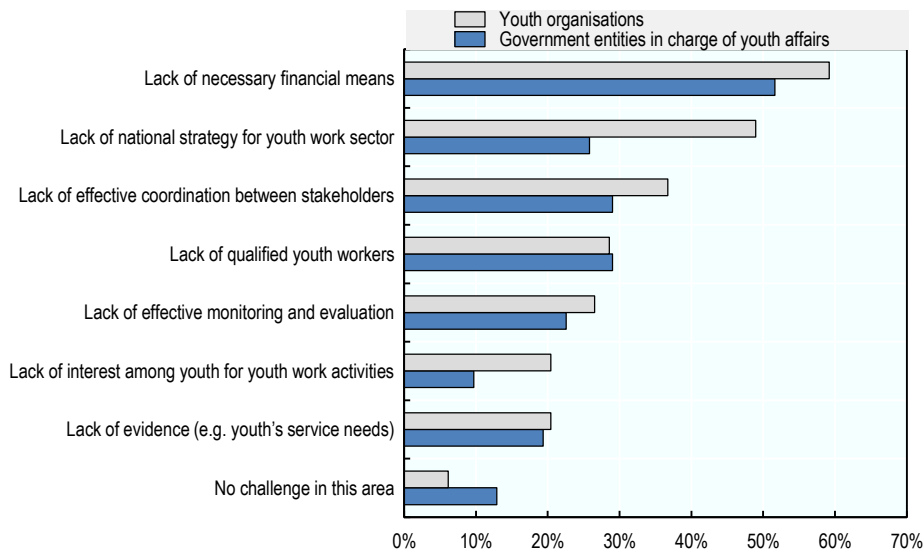
Data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys shows that both governments and youth organisations highlight a lack of financial resources as a key challenge for this sector (52% for OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs; 59% for youth organisations in OECD countries). Youth work has often suffered deep cuts in financial resources from public authorities since the 2007-2008 financial crisis. In England and Wales, for instance, local authorities’ expenditure on the sector has been cut by 70% in real terms in

less than a decade, resulting in the loss of 760 youth centres and more than 4,500 youth workers since 2010-2011 (YMCA England and Wales, 2020^[53]). Similarly, government spending on youth work services in Ireland decreased by 32% between 2008 and 2014: while partly recovered, its projected level for 2020 is still almost 15% below its 2008 level (NYCI, 2019^[54]). Evidence from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys shows that, across six OECD countries, the share of the budget of the government entity in charge of youth affairs dedicated to the youth work sector has shrunk from 7% in 2015 to 4% in 2019.⁷⁶ The limited availability of comparable evidence also suggests that governments still do not adequately monitor youth work spending.

The lack of a national youth work sector strategy and a lack of effective co-ordination also emerge as areas where further improvement is warranted, in particular considering the shared competencies national and sub-national authorities have in promoting and financing the youth work sector (Figure 3.21). The findings also point to a general underestimation by governments of the challenges in the sector compared to the perceptions of surveyed youth organisations.

Figure 3.21. Financial support and integrated strategies are needed for a thriving youth work sector

The chart plots the share of youth organisations in OECD countries and the share of OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs reporting a specific challenge as one of the top three challenges for the youth work sector.



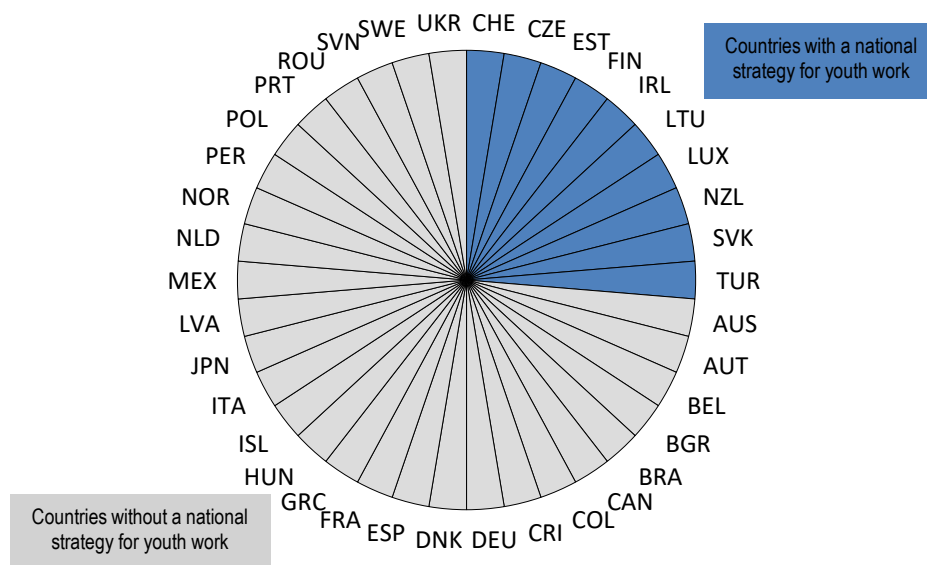
Note: Based on 31 government entities in charge of youth affairs and 49 youth organisations in OECD countries.

Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Public authorities can support youth work services by investing into the skills and qualifications of youth workers, the financial capacities of their organisations as well as supporting the digitalisation of the sector. Good co-ordination between government entities, sub-national levels of government and youth workers as well as proper monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are also required for a successful youth work sector. As highlighted in the Recommendation on Youth Work (2017^[55]) adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, “special attention should be paid to the need for strategies, frameworks, legislation, sustainable structures and resources, effective co-ordination [...] that promote equal access to youth work for all young people.” As Figure 3.22 shows, 26% of the countries surveyed have a dedicated strategy for the youth work sector in place (30% for OECD; 0 out of 7 for non-OECD). Furthermore, 78% feature commitments for the youth work sector in their national youth strategies (72% for OECD; 7 out of 7 for non-OECD). In Estonia, the Youth Work Act (2010)⁷⁷ defines the scope of youth work activities, clarifies the

responsibilities across levels of government and includes provisions on supervision and funding mechanisms. Building on that and previous acts, the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan (2014-2020)⁷⁸ presents actionable objectives, targets and actions to enhance quality youth work. Similarly, as part of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, the European Union is currently developing a European Youth Work Agenda to ensure quality, innovation and recognition to youth work across member states (Council of the European Union, 2018^[56]).

Figure 3.22. Dedicated strategies for the youth work sector remain uncommon



Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

Leveraging youth volunteering for resilient societies

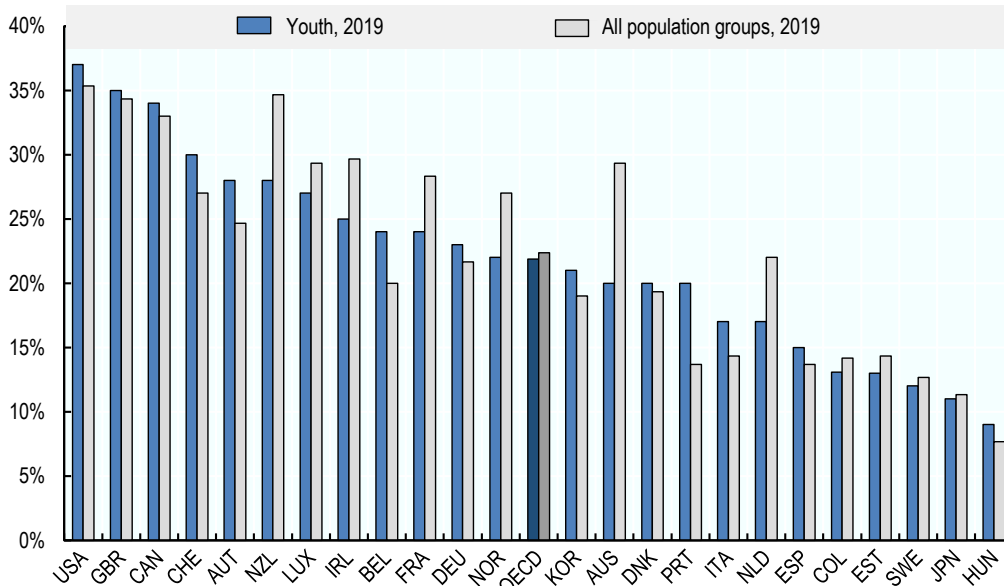
Volunteering is a tool for combatting social exclusion, as it allows people to participate in their community as valued and valuable citizens, make new friends, expand their network and boost their social skills (OECD, 2015^[57]). Young people can develop valuable “hard skills” as well as “soft skills” when volunteering, which could in turn help them in their career paths (OECD, 2015^[57]). In addition, volunteering creates social capital, building and consolidating bonds of trust and co-operation, while cultivating norms of altruism, solidarity, civic mindfulness and respect for diversity (Putnam, 2000^[58]). However, it is also important to note that volunteering programmes should not replace government programmes dedicated to bring youth not in employment, education or training closer to the labour market. During the COVID-19 crisis, young volunteers have stepped up to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the most vulnerable groups in society, also showing intergenerational solidarity. Governments have also promoted youth volunteering in that critical context through dedicated programmes, such as the French “Je veux aider” and the Canadian “I Want to Volunteer” platforms (OECD, 2020^[71]).

22% of young people in OECD countries reported of having volunteered in the previous month in 2019, across 24 OECD countries (Figure 3.23). In more than half OECD countries for which data is available, young people volunteered more than all population groups on average. Particularly, high shares of young volunteers are reported in the United States (37%), the United Kingdom (35%) and Canada (34%). On the other hand, less than 15% of surveyed youth reported having volunteered in Hungary (9%), Japan (11%), Sweden (12%), Estonia (13%) and Colombia (13%). Figure 3.23 also shows that youth volunteered more than the total population especially in Portugal (1.5 times) and Belgium (1.2 times), while the opposite is true in Australia and the Netherlands among others (0.7 times in Australia and 0.8 times in the

Netherlands). With almost half of people aged 14 to 25 engaged in voluntary activities (49.2%), young people were identified as the most voluntarily active age group in Germany in 2014.⁷⁹

Figure 3.23. In 13 of 24 available OECD countries, young people volunteer more than the total population

The chart shows the share of young people (15-29) who reported having volunteered in the previous month in 2019 (blue bars) and the average among the share of young, middle-aged and elderly people who reported the same in 2019 (grey bars).

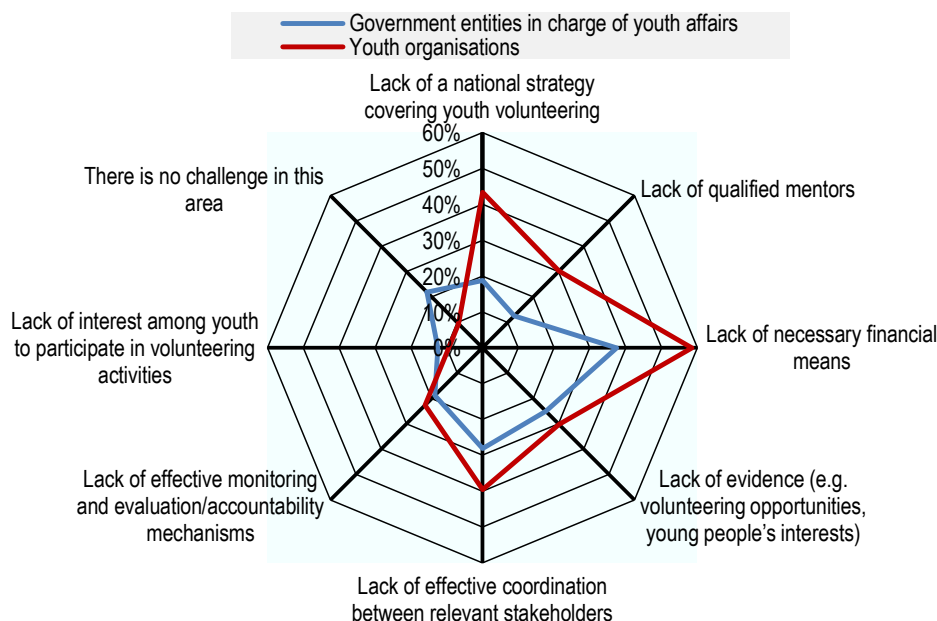


Source: OECD calculations based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

Available evidence indicates that youth volunteering is hampered by lack of opportunities, resources and awareness. Difficulties related to logistics or personal costs can curtail volunteering of young people from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Facilitating the access to volunteering for all young people regardless of their socio-economic background remains a key challenge to be addressed. Data from the OECD Youth Governance Surveys highlights that OECD entities in charge of youth affairs and youth organisations in OECD countries identify similar challenges in this area, although to different extents (Figure 3.24). The most common challenges reported by policy makers are the lack of financial means (38%) and the lack of effective co-ordination between relevant stakeholders (28%). The lack of a national strategy covering youth volunteering is individuated by 19% as a main challenge. Youth organisations report the same main challenges in this area, although to a much larger extent: the lack of financial means is mentioned by 58% of respondents, the lack of a national strategy by 43% of them, and the lack of effective co-ordination by 40%. Finally, only 9% of youth organisations report no challenge, compared to 22% of the OECD entities in charge of youth affairs.

Figure 3.24. Youth organisations are more concerned than governments about the barriers to youth volunteering

The chart shows the share of OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs (blue line) and the share of youth organisations in OECD countries (red line) that reported a given challenge when asked about the top three challenges for youth volunteering.



Note: Based on 32 OECD government entities in charge of youth affairs and 53 youth organisations in OECD countries.
Source: OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

With the objective of increasing the share of young volunteers, countries such as the Czech Republic, Germany, Lithuania, Slovakia and Spain include strategic objectives on youth volunteering within their national youth strategy. Strategic planning for the volunteering sector (through dedicated strategies or integrated ones) can be useful in clarifying responsibilities, promoting effective co-ordination, creating monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and ensuring dedicated financial resources.

64% of OECD countries for which data is available⁸⁰ deliver or finance specific national programmes to promote youth volunteering. While funding for the volunteering sector has increased or remained stable since 2015 in all 4 OECD countries for which comparable data is available, the share of resources of entities in charge of youth affairs dedicated to volunteering remains limited in Germany (3.2%), Portugal (2%), Norway and Hungary (all three below 1%). At the European level, youth volunteering is supported by the European Solidarity Corps,⁸¹ which was sustained with a EUR 375.6 million budget in 2018-2020.⁸² While ensuring adequate, larger resources for youth volunteering remains crucial, there is a risk that this might come at the expenses of other programmes or priorities within the entities in charge of youth affairs. Box 3.6 presents innovative cases of national programmes to promote youth volunteering.

Box 3.6. National volunteering programmes: bringing them in

Canada: National Service Corps Programme

The national Service Corps in Canada gives young Canadians the opportunity to be involved in meaningful volunteering projects that have a positive impact on their communities. The programme offers “micro-financing” ranging from CAD 250 to 1,500 for youth to lead their own volunteering projects. Since its creation, more than 2,000 young Canadians have benefited from the available grants. Funding also targets vulnerable youth populations, such as young people who have been granted refugee status.

France : Civic Service (Service Civique)

With the law of 10 March 2010, the French government created the “Service Civique” programme, designed to encourage civic commitment by young people aged 16 to 25, as well as by people with disabilities aged 16 to 30, without any qualification conditions. Volunteering projects typically last between 6 to 12 months with at least 24 hours per week, working with NGOs in areas of education, environment, science, sports, family, civil security, or French language promotion. Volunteers receive an allowance of around EUR 473 net per month provided by the State.

Belgium: Bel’J

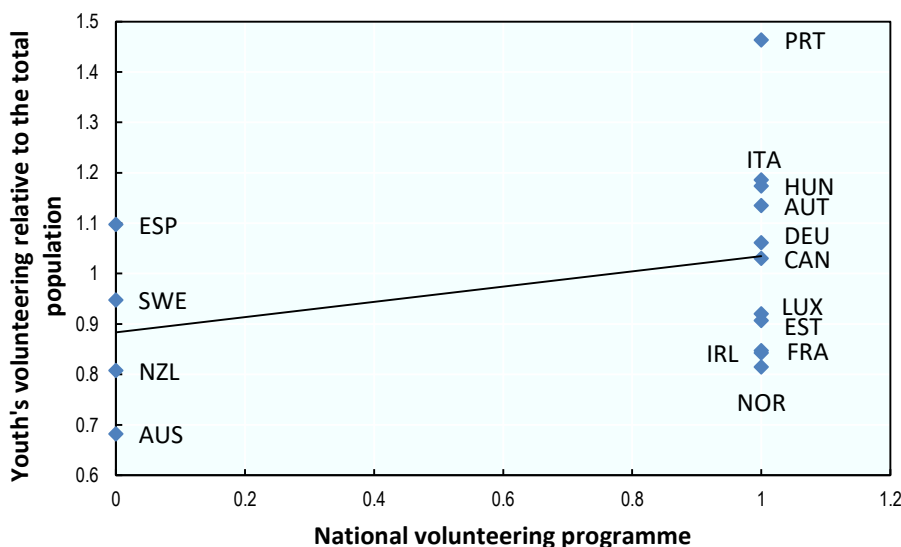
Established in 2009, the “Bel’J” is a youth volunteering programme that gives young people aged 12-30 the opportunity to volunteer in a community different from their own. The programme aims at fostering the cultural immersion of youth in different communities; helping young people identify similarities and understand differences across communities; and improving language skills. Each community has appointed an agency to implement the programme: Flemish Community - JINT vzw; French Community - Bureau International Jeunesse (AT); German-speaking Community - Jugendbüro der Deutschsprachigen Gemeinschaft VoG.

Source: <https://www.canada.ca/en/services/youth/canada-service-corps/about.html>;
<http://www.bel-j.be/bel-j/index.php/nl/>;
<https://www.service-civique.gouv.fr/uploads/content/files/a1f4929fa0322ef849461854a6b7840d94f45d6f.pdf>

National programmes and strategies covering youth volunteering, when equipped with the right financial and human resources, can help promote youth volunteering. As Figure 3.25 shows, there is a positive and precise relationship between having a national programme for youth volunteering and the extent to which young people volunteer compared to the total population. In countries in which there is no such programme, young people volunteer less than the total population on average (0.88). Instead, in countries with youth volunteering programmes, youth volunteer more than the total population on average (1.04).

Figure 3.25. National programmes and strategies can be effective in promoting youth volunteering

The horizontal axis plots countries with such programmes at value 1, and countries without such programmes at value 0. The vertical axis plots the share of young people reporting that they have volunteered time to an organisation in the past month relative to the share of the total population that did, in 2019.



Notes: The Wilcoxon rank sum test yields a p-value of 0.14; “youth” here refers to people aged 15-29.
Sources: OECD calculations based on Youth Governance Surveys and Gallup World Poll (Database).

Policy recommendations

This chapter has provided an evaluation of the current state of the relationship between youth and public institutions across a variety of dimensions as well as an analysis of the impact of legal frameworks, governance tools, strategies, policies, practices and capacities. Young people demonstrate interest and awareness of global challenges and take action through non-institutionalised channels. At the same time, youth’s trust in institutions has halted and their participation in elections remains lower than for other age groups. Across OECD countries, significant representation gaps emerge when looking at youth’s representation in the public administration, cabinets and parliaments.

Governments have put in place practices to consult and engage young people and their representative bodies in the policy cycle: however, they still need to address considerable challenges that lie ahead. Finally, despite their contribution to ensuring resilient societies, the youth work and youth volunteering sectors need to be strengthened especially through adequate financing, strategic guidance and effective co-ordination.

To re-build youth’s trust in governments and strengthen their relationship with public institutions, governments should consider:

1. Reforming registration rules and lowering minimum age requirements to address barriers to youth participation in political life and promote age diversity in state institutions.
2. Providing programmes to help young people join and thrive in the public sector workforce as well as programmes for inter-generational learning between older and younger employees.
3. Engaging youth stakeholders in a meaningful way throughout the policy cycle to ensure age-diversity in public consultations and more responsive and inclusive policy outcomes, through in person as well as digital means.

4. Strengthening volunteering and youth work through national laws, strategies and programmes that include a common vision and clear responsibilities, co-ordinated action, and adequate resources for building youth's skills and competences as well as social cohesion and societal resilience.
5. Exploring the co-creation of innovative mechanisms to engage with non-institutionalised youth activism and recognise its important contribution to the political discourse.

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Notes

¹ OECD calculation based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

² OECD calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline database on national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org>) and OECD Demography and Population (Database).

³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys. Data available for 10 OECD entities in charge of youth affairs.

⁴ OECD calculations based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

⁵ OECD calculation based on Gallup World Poll (Database).

⁶ OECD calculations based on European Social Survey ESS9-2018, considering respondents that reported a level of confidence in their country's parliament between 6 and 10 (on a scale 0-10). Data available for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany, Estonia, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

⁷ Age-disaggregated data not available for Iceland.

⁸ World Values Survey Wave 6: 2010-2014. Data available for Australia, Chile, Colombia, Estonia, Germany, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand and Poland.

⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/gov/webinar-measuring-public-trust-after-a-pandemic-and-economic-crises.htm>

¹⁰ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

¹¹ <https://www.msmt.cz/file/35221/>.

¹² OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

¹³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

¹⁴ Definition and measurement discussed in Chapter 2 and Annex 2.

¹⁵ OECD calculations based on European Social Survey ESS9-2018. Data available for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

¹⁶ OECD calculations based on European Social Survey ESS9-2018. Data available for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

¹⁷ OECD calculations based on European Social Survey ESS9-2018. Data available for Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

¹⁸ ORB Media's data from surveys with 979,000 respondents from 128 countries overtime; at the time of writing, the 2018 data included 3,754 respondents from 52 countries; <https://orbmedia.org/stories/generation-activist/data>.

¹⁹ ORB Media's data from surveys with 979,000 respondents from 128 countries overtime; at the time of writing, the 2018 data included 3,754 respondents from 52 countries; <https://orbmedia.org/stories/generation-activist/data>.

²⁰ The study refers to the Liberal Democrats, the UK Independence Party and the Green Party in this category. The study's finding also holds for then opposition Labour Party.

²¹ FridaysForFuture – Statistics: <https://www.fridaysforfuture.org/statistics/graph> accessed on 4 April 2020.

²² For instance, in Denmark's Open Government National Action Plan 2013-2014, https://www.opengovpartnership.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Denmark_Open-Government-Action-Plan-2013-2014_ENG_1-sided_print.pdf

²³ <https://www.elections.ca>.

²⁴ Facebook, for instance, has announced such a campaign in the US in the run-up to the 2020 Presidential elections, <https://about.fb.com/news/2020/07/facebook-does-not-benefit-from-hate/>

²⁵ Estonian National Electoral Committee, <https://www.valimised.ee/et>.

²⁶ Estonian National Electoral Committee, <https://www.valimised.ee/et>

²⁷ <https://www.youthforum.org/vote-16>

²⁸ You can find more information at <http://www.nuorisovaalit.fi/>

²⁹ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

³⁰ OECD (2016) Survey on the Composition of the workforce in Central/federal Governments.

³¹ OECD (2016) Survey on the Composition of the workforce in Central/federal Governments.

³² [canada.ca/content/dam/y-j/documents/YP-ENG.pdf](https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/y-j/documents/YP-ENG.pdf)

³³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

³⁴ The Gallup Report defines millennials as those born between 1980 and 1996.

³⁵ 2016 OECD survey on Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM).

³⁶ 2019 OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

³⁷ <https://www.az.government.bg/pages/programa-start-na-karierata/>

³⁸ <https://overheid.vlaanderen.be/personeel/diversiteit-en-gelijke-kansen/stages-en-startbanen>.

³⁹ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁴⁰ OECD calculations based on OECD Demography and Population (Database).

⁴¹ OECD calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline database on national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org>).

⁴² OECD calculations based on Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline database on national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org>). Data available for Australia, Austria, Chile, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

⁴³ “Young people” refers to people aged 16-24 for Norway, and to people aged 18-24 for Sweden.

⁴⁴ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁴⁵ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁴⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union, Parline database on national parliaments (<https://data.ipu.org>).

⁴⁷ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁴⁸ Respondents were asked to rate government’s response in this area on a scale 1-5. Satisfaction here is defined as respondents indicating a score of 4 or 5.

⁴⁹ The Recommendation defines “stakeholders” as “any interested and/or affected party, including: individuals, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious and political affiliations; and institutions and organisations, whether governmental or non-governmental, from civil society, academia, the media or the private sector.”

⁵⁰ OECD Youth Governance Surveys. Respondents were asked to rank priority areas on a 1-5 scale. The percentages reflect the respondents that indicated a priority score of 4 or 5.

⁵¹ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://www8.cao.go.jp/youth/youth-opinion/index.html>.

⁵² OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://samradsgatt.island.is/um-samradsgatt>.

⁵³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁵⁴ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://www.kulturtanken.no/busk>

⁵⁵ https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/ff601d1ab03d4f2dad1e86e706dc4fd3/children-living-in-poverty_q-1230-e.pdf

⁵⁶ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://educationcentral.co.nz/tag/online-youth-forum/>

⁵⁷ <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/education-conversation/whatyou-told-us/>

⁵⁸ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁵⁹ OECD Youth Governance Surveys. Respondents were asked to rank priority areas on a 1-5 scale. The percentages reflect the respondents that indicated a priority score of 4 or 5.

⁶⁰ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁶¹ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁶² OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁶³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁶⁴ <https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/941118/c49d4097174e67464b56a5365bc8602f/kindergerechtes-deutschland-broschuere-qualitaetsstandards-data.pdf>

⁶⁵ The Open Government Partnership is a multilateral initiative launched in 2011 that aims to secure concrete commitments from governments to promote transparency, empower citizens, fight corruption, and harness new technologies to strengthen governance. Member countries commit to deliver a country action plan developed with public consultation, and commit to independent reporting on their progress. Currently, the Partnership holds 78 country and 20 local members working alongside thousands of civil society organisations. For more information: <http://www.opengovpartnership.org>.

⁶⁶ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; GOP+Jovem 2020, Vila Nova de Gaia, Câmara Municipal, <https://www.cm-gaia.pt/pt/cidade/juventude/gop-jovem-2020/>.

⁶⁷ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; The initiative falls under the framework of the *Gaia Orçamento Participativo* (Gaia Participatory Budgeting or GOP) + *Jovem 2020* project which focuses on three main areas: i) creativity, culture and sport; ii) environment and sustainability; iii) intergeneration and youth volunteering.

⁶⁸ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁶⁹ Flemish Parliament Act of 20 January 2012 on a revised youth and children's rights policy

⁷⁰ <https://www.ekkj.admin.ch/fr/>

⁷¹ <https://en.duf.dk/>

⁷² <https://www.frifond.no>

⁷³ OECD Youth Governance Surveys; <https://nuorisotilastot.fi/#!/en/avustukset/perus/choice-1/prosentit/whiteblue//Koko%20maa/table/suhde//null/kunta/donut/%5B%5D/kohteet/%5B%5D/sortToimija/2016-2018/not-final/Miten%20edustuksellinen%20demokratia%20nuorten%20osalta%20toteutuu%20kunnassanne%20ja%20mit%20C3%A4%20edustuksellisen%20demokratian%20mahdollisuuksia%20nuorille%20on%20tarjolla%3Fundefined/////e30=>.

⁷⁴ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁷⁵ <https://www.ecyc.org/about-us/open-youth-work#:~:text=Open%20youth%20work%20is%20a%20partnership%20between%20youth%20workers%20and,as%20partners%20in%20the%20process.&text=Open%20youth%20work%20enables%20communities%20to%20contribute%20to%20meeting%20their%20own%20needs> .

⁷⁶ Data available for Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland and the Slovak Republic. Data from Latvia is available only for 2017-2019.

⁷⁷ <https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/eli/530102013106/consolide>.

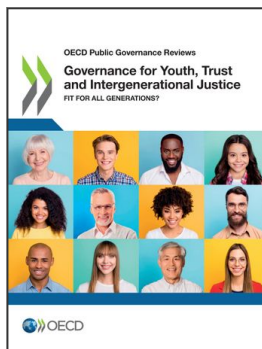
⁷⁸ https://www.hm.ee/sites/default/files/nak_eng.pdf.

⁷⁹ Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth,
<https://www.bmfsfj.de/blob/113702/53d7fdc57ed97e4124ffec0ef5562a1/vierter-freiwilligensurvey-monitor-data.pdf>.

⁸⁰ OECD Youth Governance Surveys.

⁸¹ https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en

⁸² OECD Youth Governance Surveys.



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