Modernising Access to Social Protection: Strategies, Technologies and Data Advances in OECD Countries
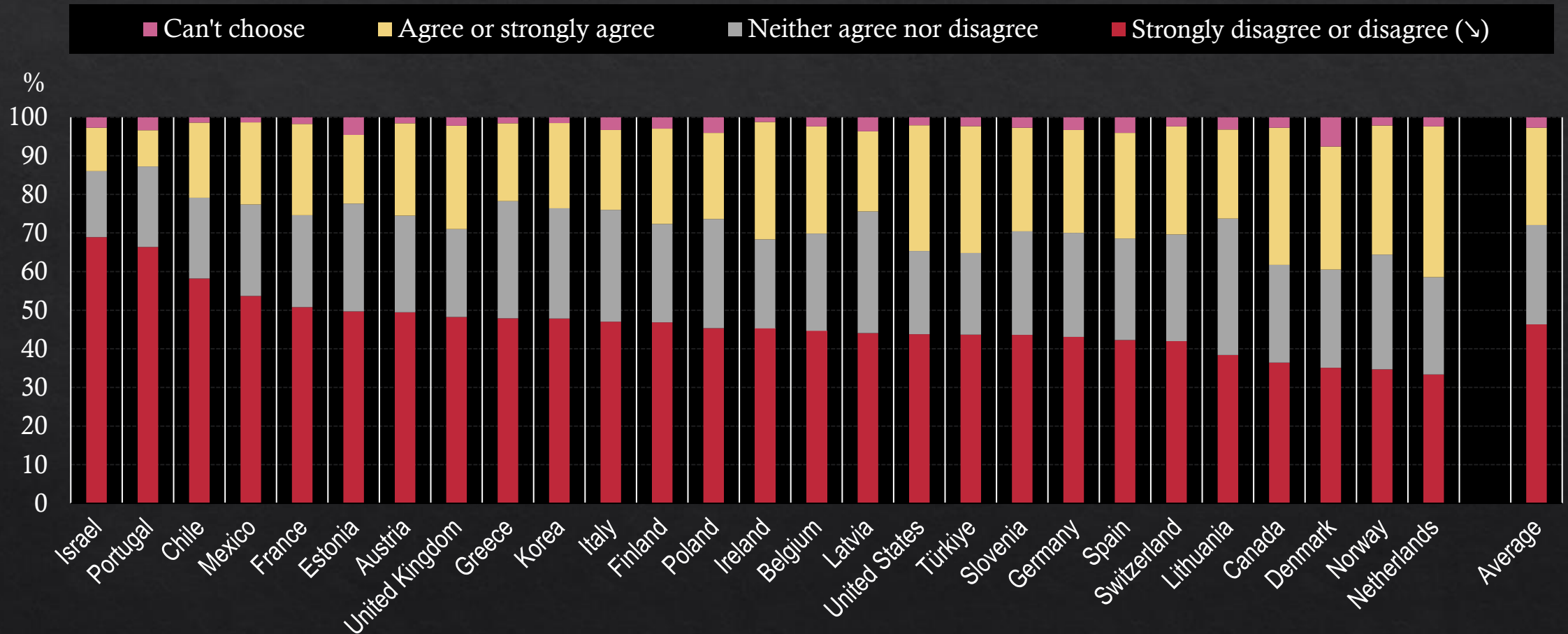
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Few feel that they could access public benefits in time of need

Share of RTM 2022 respondents who agree or disagree with the statement:
"I feel that I could easily receive public benefits if I needed them", by country, 2022

Legend: ■ Can't choose ■ Agree or strongly agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Strongly disagree or disagree (↘)

Countries (left to right): Israel, Portugal, Chile, Mexico, France, Estonia, Austria, United Kingdom, Greece, Korea, Italy, Finland, Poland, Ireland, Belgium, Latvia, United States, Türkiye, Slovenia, Germany, Spain, Switzerland, Lithuania, Canada, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, Average

Source: OECD Risks that Matter Survey 2022 (http://oe.cd/rtm)

How do OECD governments identify vulnerable people? An overview of national frameworks

Probabilistic estimates with de-identified data

Identification:

- Traditional approach -- used in most countries

- Typically use survey data to identify vulnerable regions or groups (e.g. young people) in need of social services or benefits

Expanding coverage:

- Policy response casts a wide net

- Better communication around existing and new programmes, often targeting specific groups

- Investment in new programmes

Pros: Fewer data privacy issues, helps to identify people who are not in the social protection system, helps identify systematic disadvantage.

Cons: Potential beneficiaries still need to enrol!

Linking personally-identified data across sources

Identification:

- Social database/registry: Voluntary enrolment and/or automatic enrolment (by administering agencies)

- Linking admin data across agencies to identify non-take-up

Expanding coverage:

- Notify potential beneficiaries of eligibility for other benefits/services

- Simplify the application for other benefits (e.g. pre-filling)

- Automatic enrolment

Pros: Specifically identifies and facilitates the enrolment of people who are known to the government.

Cons: Misses people who live outside the social protection system. Still usually some burden to enroll.

The use of advanced technologies and data can improve the take-up and delivery of social programmes

› OECD countries are increasingly leveraging technology and data to improve social programme coverage and delivery

› Digitalised welfare systems are starting to change the nature of the bureaucratic encounter between the state and individuals

› More services are now available online, enabling welfare agencies to focus resources on people with needs that are not suited to automated systems

› Technologies like websites, portals and apps are commonly used

› Social policy ministries however are early in their digital transformation journeys relative to other parts of the public sector

› So far, deployment of more advanced technologies like AI is limited, and is primarily used to provide automated support(e.g., chatbots) and/or to automate back-office processes

› Significant risks come with the use of advanced technologies and data and countries are proceeding with caution

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Adopting a balanced risk management approach

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Governments are seeking to strike the right balance between progressing digital transformations and managing associated risks and challenges

Risks

- Protecting people's privacy – the data collected and used for social protection can be highly sensitive

- Data breaches are on the rise, which can harm the individual(s) involved and damage public trust and confidence

- Digitalisation can reinforce or create new sources of exclusion and disadvantage

- Access to digital infrastructure and tools is uneven

Challenges

- Enabling the wide range of foundations necessary for digital transformation

- Achieving the significant cross-government and agency collaboration often required

- Getting the data right

- Ensuring appropriate accountability frameworks are in place

- Developing a skilled workforce, equipped for ongoing digital transformation

- Investing sufficiently in modern technology infrastructure

Mitigations

- Legal, regulatory and accountability frameworks

- Offering services through multiple channels

- Involving service users in solution design

- Achieving incremental improvements through agile ways of working

- Encouraging innovative cultures through leadership and champions

Thank you

Check out the full report : https://oe.cd/modern-sp-2024

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