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GOVERNANCE | CLIMATE | PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Governance Research Brief · Edition 7 · 16 October 2026

What Government Counts, and Whom It Hears

Five recent publications examine how public institutions count prevention spending, decide who may use personal data and respond to citizens, and what government reform needs to make those decisions accountable.

RESEARCH EXAMINED IN THIS EDITION

Five publications released from 12 to 15 October 2026. None featured in an earlier edition.

Every Friday, Ahmednadhira.com examines recent research and institutional developments for the decisions they place before public authorities. This edition follows the information that enters a public decision: the spending identified in a budget, the reasons accepted for using personal data and the views an institution is prepared to answer.

Government reform

Prevention spending

Health records and public benefit

Personal information and AI

Citizens and the public response





GOVERNMENT REFORM

A digital service still depends on the institution behind it

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 12 October 2026

Comparative government reform report

Government Unstuck: The Next Frontier of Government Transformation

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The OECD brings evidence on public participation, administrative complexity, fiscal flexibility and digital capability into a programme of government reform. Its account of 2025 survey findings shows a revealing difference: 68% of respondents across OECD member countries believed voting influenced government, while 31% felt people like them had a say in decisions. The report argues for changes to public-service skills, internal procedures, budgeting and citizen engagement, alongside better connected data and responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI).

Scope of the evidence

The survey percentages concern different questions and describe perceptions, not measured service performance or a causal effect on trust. The report's comparative reform agenda is not an evaluation proving that every proposed practice works in every setting.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE

Kenya

For Kenyan ministries and counties, a useful starting point is a recurring service problem whose records cross departmental boundaries. A digital referral or licensing system will expose unresolved handovers if staff cannot change the process behind the screen. Reform needs a named service responsibility, budget support and evidence from the people using it.

Global South

Where fiscal space and specialist staff are scarce, importing a comprehensive reform model can overload the same officials expected to deliver services. Sequencing around a few high-volume services offers a more credible route, provided simplification preserves safeguards against exclusion, arbitrary discretion and misuse of public money.

Wider world

Digital sovereignty includes the ability to determine how information changes an administrative decision. National control of infrastructure is incomplete if public bodies cannot connect relevant records, explain the resulting action or hear a challenge from the person affected.





PREVENTION SPENDING

Prevention spending can disappear inside a larger budget

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 15 October 2026

Health working paper · initial estimates

Improving estimates of spending on prevention and public health in the European Union

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

Reported prevention spending accounts for around 3% of total health expenditure across the European Union. This working paper examines reporting gaps and develops methods to estimate missing activity. Initial results suggest preventive spending may be underestimated by around one-quarter, particularly in health-condition monitoring and epidemiological surveillance. Activities embedded within larger programmes or spread across institutions are difficult to classify consistently.

Scope of the evidence

The approximate 3% share and one-quarter underestimation concern the European evidence examined. The latter is an initial estimation result, not a 25-percentage-point funding gap. Neither figure is a Kenyan estimate or a universal correction factor.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE

Kenya

For national and county health teams, the immediate lesson concerns the quality of the expenditure record. Surveillance staff, outreach transport and prevention activities may sit within broader cost centres. Reconciling programme activity with actual expenditure can improve a budget discussion before any claim is made about whether prevention is adequately funded.

Global South

Fragmented donor and domestic accounts can obscure the resources sustaining a preventive service. A consolidated view needs a defensible way to allocate shared costs and avoid counting the same activity twice. Greater detail is valuable only when reporting effort remains proportionate to its use.

Wider world

Comparisons between countries depend on what each reporting system includes. A low recorded share can reflect limited expenditure, incomplete classification or both. Correcting the account can improve policy judgement, but cannot by itself establish whether the resulting level of prevention spending is sufficient.





HEALTH RECORDS AND PUBLIC BENEFIT

A second use of health records needs its own public purpose

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 15 October 2026

Policy guidance

Determining public interest in the secondary use of health data

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

This policy brief examines how authorised bodies judge access to health information for purposes beyond the care for which it was collected. It identifies five areas for assessing public interest: population health and planning; research and innovation; ethical and risk considerations; health equity; and public communication and transparency. Unclear definitions and different review practices can obstruct useful collaboration as well as weaken confidence in decisions.

Scope of the evidence

The five areas are assessment criteria, not a numerical scoring model, automatic permission or proof of benefit. This is policy guidance rather than a trial measuring health outcomes.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE

Kenya

Where hospital or county records are requested for a separate research or AI project, the proposal needs a defined public purpose, an appropriate decision-maker and a record of the conditions attached to access. Those considerations do not establish a legal basis by themselves; applicable authorisation and data-protection requirements still govern the decision.

Global South

Research partnerships can bring analytical capability while concentrating control over datasets and resulting knowledge elsewhere. A public-benefit assessment can examine who receives usable findings, whether local institutions gain capability and how the people supplying the information are protected.

Wider world

An important distinction emerges between a technically feasible use and a justified use. A consistent review process can make decisions more intelligible across organisations without assuming that all health-data projects present the same benefits, risks or distributional consequences.





PERSONAL INFORMATION AND AI

Deleting a record and changing a trained model are different tasks

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 15 October 2026

Policy brief · emerging practices

Enhancing user control and privacy protections in the context of AI

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The brief examines personal information collected through interactions with AI systems and through automated collection from public web pages. It reviews notices, opt-out tools, filtering, privacy-preserving methods and routes for redress. It also examines the difficulty created when a model retains information from its training data, including the developing possibilities of removing learned information from a model.

Scope of the evidence

The brief reviews emerging practices and regulatory guidance. It does not establish that every model memorises every record or that removal of learned information is a complete, generally reliable remedy.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE

Kenya

A public institution considering a chatbot needs to understand whether the service stores citizens' submissions, permits further training uses and offers a workable route for correction or complaint. Procurement terms and actual settings both matter. Restricting what users submit can reduce exposure, but cannot replace the institution's responsibility to govern its chosen service.

Global South

Publicly available material in local languages can enter systems developed elsewhere, sometimes with limited practical means for contributors to understand or contest the use. Bargaining over access, training permissions and redress is therefore part of digital sovereignty, alongside computing infrastructure and domestic technical skills.

Wider world

Control has to remain meaningful as information moves through collection, training and deployment. Removing a source record does not necessarily demonstrate that its information has been removed from a trained model. Public assurance needs evidence about the stage to which a promised control actually applies.





CITIZENS AND THE PUBLIC RESPONSE

Consultation needs a public account of the response

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 12 October 2026

Country review and recommendations

Open Government Review of Australia: Strengthening Civic Space and Participation

WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS

The review finds a strong Australian participation landscape but uneven application, resources and co-ordination across the public sector. Its recommendations address participation skills, shared quality measures, more coherent digital arrangements and a common approach to explaining how public input was handled. The emphasis is on making engagement a regular part of governing rather than adding more disconnected consultation exercises.

Scope of the evidence

This is a country review and a set of recommendations. It does not demonstrate that every Australian consultation changed policy or that the proposed arrangements would produce identical outcomes elsewhere.

WHY IT MATTERS FOR GOVERNANCE

Kenya	For county planning and budgeting, the useful question is what happens to a submission after it is received. A clear account can connect an issue raised by residents to the body's response, the decision reached and any resulting change. Australian institutional arrangements are not a substitute for Kenya's own participation duties or local needs.
Global South	Digital platforms can widen access while excluding people facing language, disability, connectivity or time barriers. Participation design needs supported offline routes as well as a public record of how competing views were weighed. The capacity to respond deserves a place in the engagement budget.
Wider world	A consultation count measures an activity. Democratic accountability also requires an explanation of how decisions were reached, including why a well-supported proposal was declined. Shared standards can improve that explanation without promising that every contribution will be adopted.



**THE GOVERNING QUESTION**

Public decisions need the evidence, the reasons and the response

The publications expose several ways that a public decision can lose contact with the people it concerns. Prevention activity is dispersed across accounts. Personal information moves into new uses whose benefits and risks require fresh judgement. Public consultation generates submissions, but its value becomes difficult to assess when the response is missing. Government reform needs the staff, procedures and budget arrangements to address these gaps.

These are different problems, with different remedies. More spending does not repair an unclear account; better classification does not settle whether funding is enough. A technically secure data transfer does not establish a public purpose. A participation platform cannot supply the institutional willingness to explain a decision.

The common practical demand is a record that carries the relevant evidence, costs and disagreement into the decision, followed by an explanation people can examine. Public institutions need the skills and discretion to make that judgement, together with safeguards that make the use of discretion answerable.

REFLECTIONS FOR POLICY WORK

What is absent from the account?

Which shared costs, unrecorded activities or excluded experiences could change the apparent case for a service or budget choice?

Who authorises the next use?

When information is reused, who judges the purpose, risks and distribution of benefits, and what conditions follow the data?

Where can people see the response?

Can residents trace an issue they raised into the institution's reasons, decision and any subsequent change?





ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

Sources and publication dates

The research accounts report each publication's claims. The governance readings and synthesis are Ahmednadhira.com's analysis. These different forms of evidence do not establish a common measured effect on public services.

Government Unstuck: The Next Frontier of Government Transformation

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) · 12 October 2026
Comparative government reform report

<https://doi.org/10.1787/464c0cff-en>

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<https://doi.org/10.1787/2bdddb5d-en>

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Policy guidance

<https://doi.org/10.1787/5105c8dc-en>

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<https://doi.org/10.1787/e0bd9a46-en>

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