Political agency is the most powerful driver of trust.

Across OECD member countries, trust in public institutions varies more depending on **individuals sense of political agency** and partisanship than on their socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

% high or moderately high trust in national government
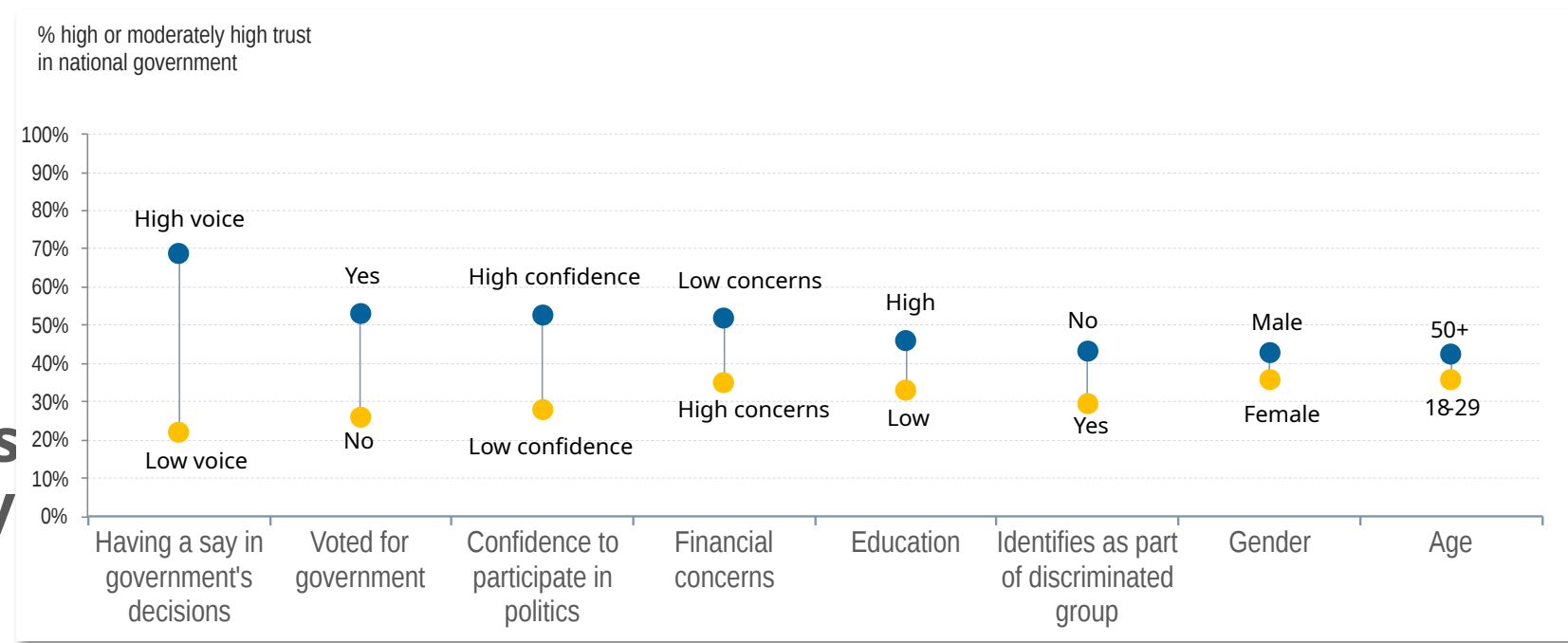
Note: Share of population with high or moderately high trust in the national government by level of respondents' socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, partisanship and political agency, OECD, 2023

Source: OECD Trust Survey 2023.

Harnessing AI tools for more and better citizen participation in policymaking

Why AI? And what for?

More and better opportunities for citizens to participate in policymaking carry the potential to improve trust and strengthen democracy.

Artificial Intelligence tools present **relevant opportunities** to improve and create new bridges between governments and citizens by:
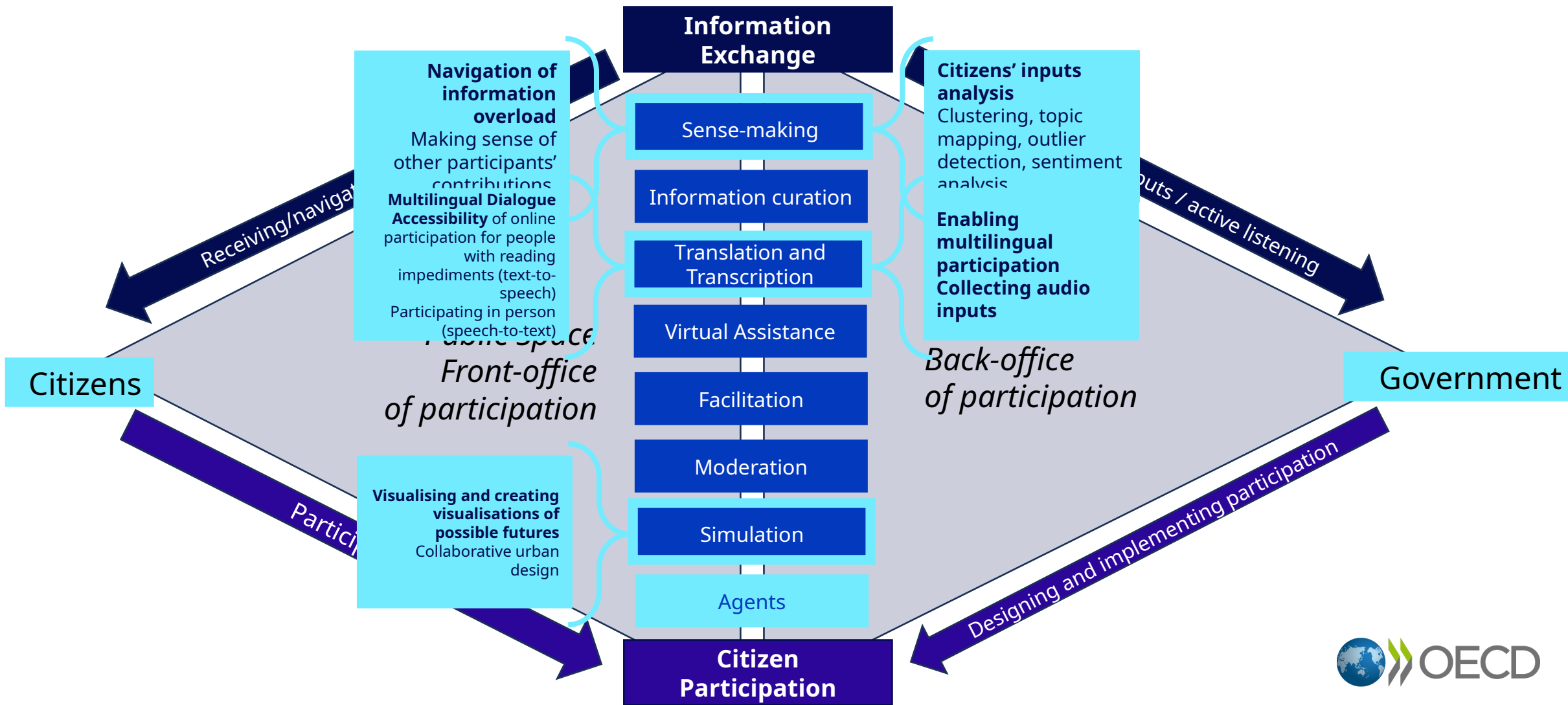
- **Supporting citizens** in navigating government complexity ,

- **Expanding government capacity** to take citizen voices into account when making decisions.

Our Approach

Mapping out relevant applications of AI tools in the existing institutional mechanisms of citizen participation in policymaking, with the aim of empowering governments and citizens by addressing some of the challenges of citizen participation, such as:

- Alignment between the **"back" and the "front office"** of participation

- **Accessibility** of institutional mechanisms of participation (language, complexity)

- **Efficient use of government resources** when designing and implementing participation

- **Scale** of institutional mechanisms of participation (including deliberation)

A Typology of Applications of AI for Citizen Participation and Democracy

Information Exchange

Navigation of information overload
Making sense of other participants' contributions
Multilingual Dialogue Accessibility of online participation for people with reading impediments (text-to-speech)
Participating in person (speech-to-text)

Citizens' inputs analysis
Clustering, topic mapping, outlier detection, sentiment analysis

Enabling multilingual participation
Collecting audio inputs

Sense-making

Information curation

Translation and Transcription

Virtual Assistance

Facilitation

Moderation

Simulation

Agents

Public Space
Front-office of participation

Back-office of participation

Citizens

Government

Receiving/navigating

...puts / active listening

Participating

Designing and implementing participation

Visualising and creating visualisations of possible futures
Collaborative urban design

Citizen Participation

Restricted Use - À usage restreint

OECD

Pol.is: helping public authorities map citizens' voice and scale deliberation

Pol.is is an AI-powered open-source software for online conversations, using an algorithm that clusters opinions and identifies "consensus and divisive statements", becoming a useful tool to reach consensus on controversial policy issues.
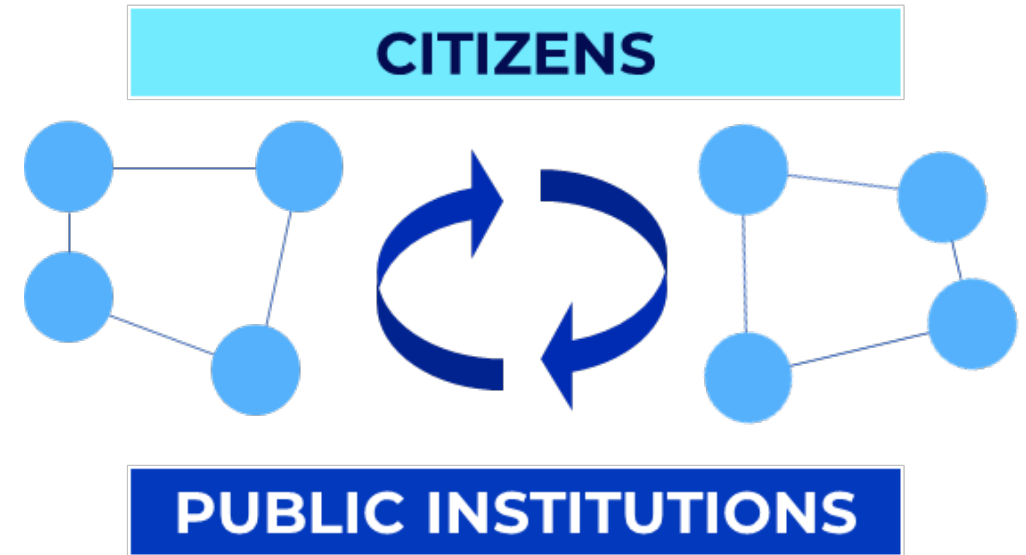

Sense-maker

- Summary of results
- Cluster analytics
- Large conversations on divisive issues
- Scale deliberation

IMPACT: Complexity to process inputs received. Cluster mapping can help policymakers visualise citizens' inputs on complex topics and increase the uptake of their participation.

ISOLATION: Gap between process (and its outcomes) and the wider public. Pol.is can amplify the impact of a Citizen Assembly by combining small in-person and massive online deliberations.

RESOURCES: Insufficient time and skills to prepare and run the process. The use of AI tools like Pol.is can scale deliberation by multiplying small, representative groups deliberating on a same subject with the help of AI moderators

CITIZENS

PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS

Example cases

AI can facilitate consensus decision-making

OECD

Panoramic: connecting Citizens Assemblies to the broader public

Panoramic AI is an online platform powered with generative artificial intelligence to ensure the results of the deliberative process, including the learning materials, hearings, as well as deliberation of the members are accessible to a wider audience, in an easy and interactive manner.
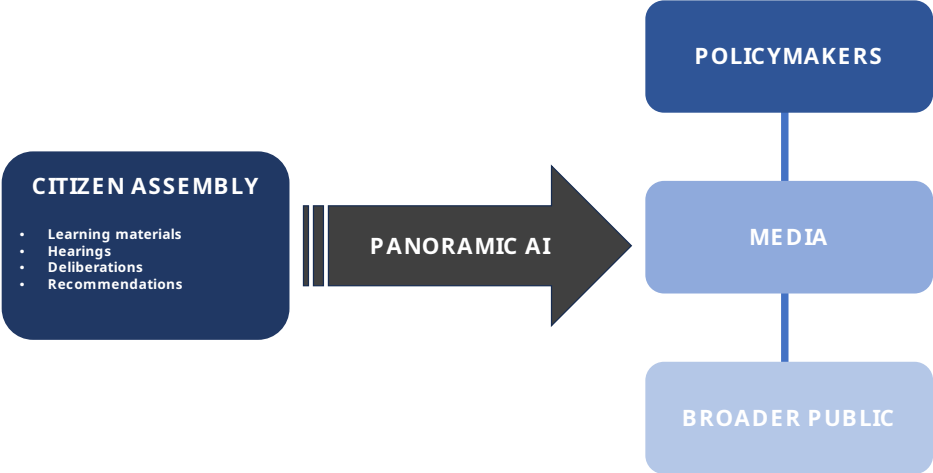
Sense-maker

- Summary of results
- Cluster analytics
- Large conversations on divisive issues
- Scale deliberation

IMPACT: It can support uptake of recommendations by the media, civil servants, and public authorities by making the results of the process (recommendations and deliberations) easy to navigate.

INCLUSION: Citizen assemblies usually deal with complex topics, such as climate change. Panoramic AI helps the public navigate technical language whilst keeping links to original sources.

ISOLATION: Gap between process (and its outcomes) and the wider public. It can connect Citizen Assemblies with the broader public by making its content more accessible, appealing, and easy to re-use.

POLICYMAKERS

CITIZEN ASSEMBLY
- Learning materials
- Hearings
- Deliberations
- Recommendations

PANORAMIC AI

MEDIA

BROADER PUBLIC

Example cases

AI can amplify a deliberative process

OECD

UrbanistAI: creating visualizations of possible futures to co-design urban spaces.

UrbanistAI is a digital tool that uses image generation to visualize different options for a given space. Citizens can use such tools to illustrate and discuss their ideas in collective sessions or remotely.
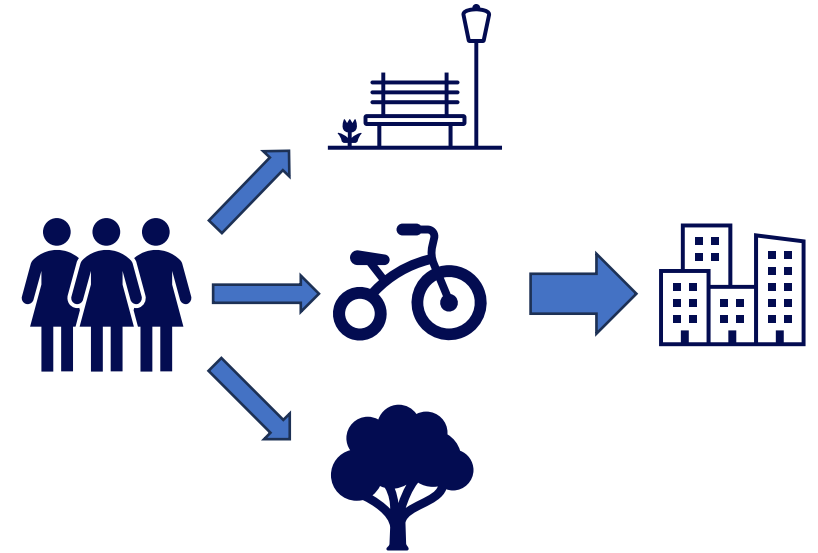

Simulation

- Creation and visualization of possible futures

DESIGN: Discussing and building consensus based on images allows for a common understanding of the options proposed.

ACCESSIBILITY/INCLUSION: Images are easy to generate and easy to understand for everyone.

Example cases

 Redesigning summer streets

 Co-designing the new capital city

OECD

The use of artificial intelligence tools in democratic processes entails **significant risks**

Trust
- Lack of **transparency and explainability**,
- Acceptability of use of digital technology as **intermediary** between governments and citizens in the context of participation in policy and decision-making.

Equality
- **Encoded biases** based on training datasets.

Divides
- **Digital divides** both in access and skills.

Civic space
- AI-enhanced digital environments can threaten the **online civic space** by enhancing hate speech, surveillance, or predictive policing.
- Biased moderation

Information
Accuracy, fairness and biases in information, information integrity, mis and disinformation.

))) OECD

Recommendations

- Map out the activities required to design and implement citizen participation (both internally and citizen-facing) and identify which use(s) of AI is **most relevant and needed in your context**.

- **Make clear for citizens** which kind of AI tools are being used and what for.

- **Train civil servants** on the adequate uses and risks of AI tools.

- Use AI tools to **support human work**, not to replace it. Build processes in which a "human check" and a human "final word" are always included.

- When possible, **test the performance of the AI tools** you intend to use on past data for previous participatory processes.

OECD