WORLD GOVERNMENTS SUMMIT 2026

REPORT

The Global Minister's Survey 2026

The Motion Imperative

Designing government for a world that will not stand still



in collaboration with

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To Inspire and Enable
The Next Generation of Governments

The World Governments Summit is a global platform dedicated to shaping the future of governments worldwide. Each year, the Summit sets the agenda for the next generation of governments with a focus on how they can harness innovation and technology to solve universal challenges facing humanity.

The World Governments Summit is a knowledge exchange center at the intersection of government, futurism, technology, and innovation. It functions as a thought-leadership platform and networking hub for policymakers, experts, and pioneers in human development.

The Summit is a gateway to the future as it functions as the stage for analysis of future trends, concerns, and opportunities facing humanity. It is also an arena to showcase innovations, best practice, and smart solutions to inspire creativity to tackle these future challenges.

Table of Contents

Topics

Introduction: Governing in Motion 04

1. From Future-Ready to Fit-for-Motion 06

2. A New Operating Reality: The Six Structural Trade-offs of Modern Governance 08

2.1 The Continuity Trade-off: Resilience vs. Adaptability 11

2.2 The Traction Trade-off: Strategy vs. Execution 13

2.3 The Trust Trade-off: Speed vs. Legitimacy 15

2.4 The Coordination Trade-off: Control vs. Orchestration 17

2.5 The Governability Trade-off: Innovation vs. Institutionalization 19

2.6 The Sovereignty Trade-off: National Mandates vs Transnational Reality 21

3. Leadership in Motion 23

Introduction: Governing in Motion

About the Survey and its Analytical Framework

Governments are no longer preparing for change. They are operating within it.

The Global Ministers Survey 2026 draws on insights from 61 ministers across regions and portfolios to examine how public leadership is evolving under conditions of sustained volatility, complexity, and interdependence.

The findings point to a fundamental shift. The question is no longer whether institutions must transform, but whether systems designed for stability can function effectively when public value itself is no longer fixed. Today, value moves across sectors, across borders, and across institutional boundaries. It is shaped not only by governments, but by markets, platforms, and transnational forces. It can scale rapidly and erode just as quickly.

This report introduces six structural trade-offs that define how ministers now govern in practice. These are not problems to be solved once and for all. They are enduring tensions that must be continuously managed.

Why these Trade-offs Matter for Ministers Today

These trade-offs matter for three reasons:

- First, today's challenges cannot be resolved through single reforms or policy choices. They require continuous management of competing priorities.
- Second, effectiveness now depends on balance, not optimization. Ministers must move quickly while maintaining trust, coordinate across systems without losing control, and adapt without undermining stability.
- Third, these tensions reveal institutional capability more clearly than traditional performance metrics. They show not only what governments aim to do, but how they are able to operate.





Structure of the Report

This report is organized around three core elements. Section One sets the context, outlining the shifting conditions of governance and the rationale for the analytical framework. Section Two explores the six structural trade-offs in depth, drawing on survey findings to illustrate how these tensions are experienced in practice. The concluding section synthesizes these insights and reflects on what governing in motion means for institutional design and leadership.

Positioning Within Existing Work

Recent public governance literature has increasingly highlighted the limits of stability-based models of government, emphasizing adaptability, coordination, and system-level capacity as critical capabilities[1]. While much of this work focuses on institutional reform or sector-specific transformation, fewer studies capture how senior political leaders experience these pressures simultaneously across domains. The Global Ministers Survey contributes to this gap by offering a ministerial perspective on the structural tensions shaping governance today.

Methodology Snapshot

- Survey administered to 61 ministers across multiple regions
- Responses collected between [February–September 2025]
- Combination of closed-ended and open-ended questions
- Focus on governance conditions, institutional capacity, and leadership risks, challenges and opportunities
- The survey is not intended as a statistically representative sample, but as a strategic instrument capturing patterns in ministerial experience and judgement.

Section 1

From Future-Ready to Fit-for-Motion



Section 1

From Future-Ready to Fit-for-Motion

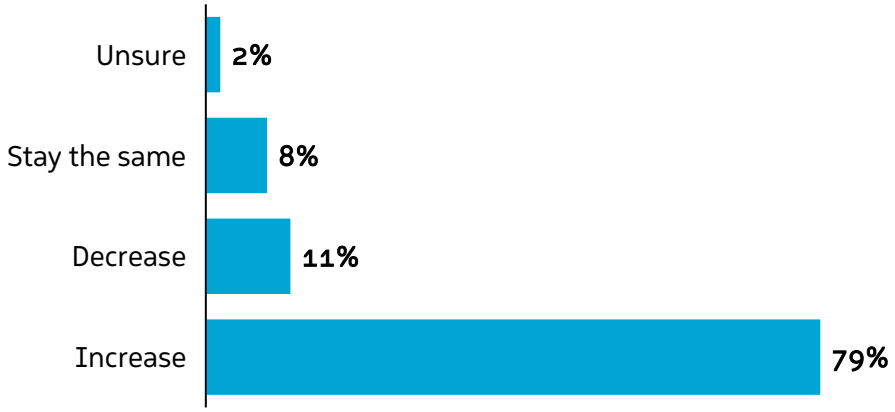
Over the past decade, governments have invested heavily in becoming "future-ready." Digital strategies, innovation units, and long-term transformation agendas reflected a shared recognition that traditional governance models were no longer sufficient.

The previous inaugural edition of the Global Ministers Survey, *The Innovation Imperative*, captured this moment clearly. ministers emphasized modernization, experimentation, and new forms of public value creation. The question then was how to change. Two years later, the context has shifted. The challenge is no longer preparing for a future state. It is operating in a present that does not stabilize. This marks a transition from future-readiness to what might be described as institutional fitness for motion: the ability to function, deliver, and adapt continuously under conditions of sustained change.

Table 1: The question has shifted from *How do we prepare for the future?* to *How do we govern in a present that does not stabilize?*

2024 Survey: "The Innovation Imperative"	2026 Survey: "Value in Motion"
Future-ready	Fit-for-motion
Innovation-led	Tension-managed
Co-creation	Orchestration
Strategy	Execution
Participation	Legitimacy
Preparedness	Continuous readiness

Figure 1: How ministers see the role of government evolving



Do you believe the role of your government will increase, stay the same, or decrease in the future?

Section 2

A New Operating Reality: The Six Structural Trade-offs of Modern Governance



Section 2

A New Operating Reality:

The Six Structural Trade-offs of Modern Governance

Figure 2: The six structural trade-offs confronting ministers today

The Continuity Trade-off

Resilience vs. Adaptability
Can institutions remain reliable while continuously reconfiguring?

The Legitimacy Trade-off

National Mandates vs. Transnational Reality
Can governments govern in an interconnected world?

The Governability Trade-off

Innovation vs. Institutionalisation
Can innovation scale without undermining oversight and control



The Traction Trade-off

Strategy vs. Execution
Can ambition be translated into sustained delivery under constant change

The Trust Trade-off

Speed vs. Trust
Can governments act quickly without eroding public confidence?

The Coordination Trade-off

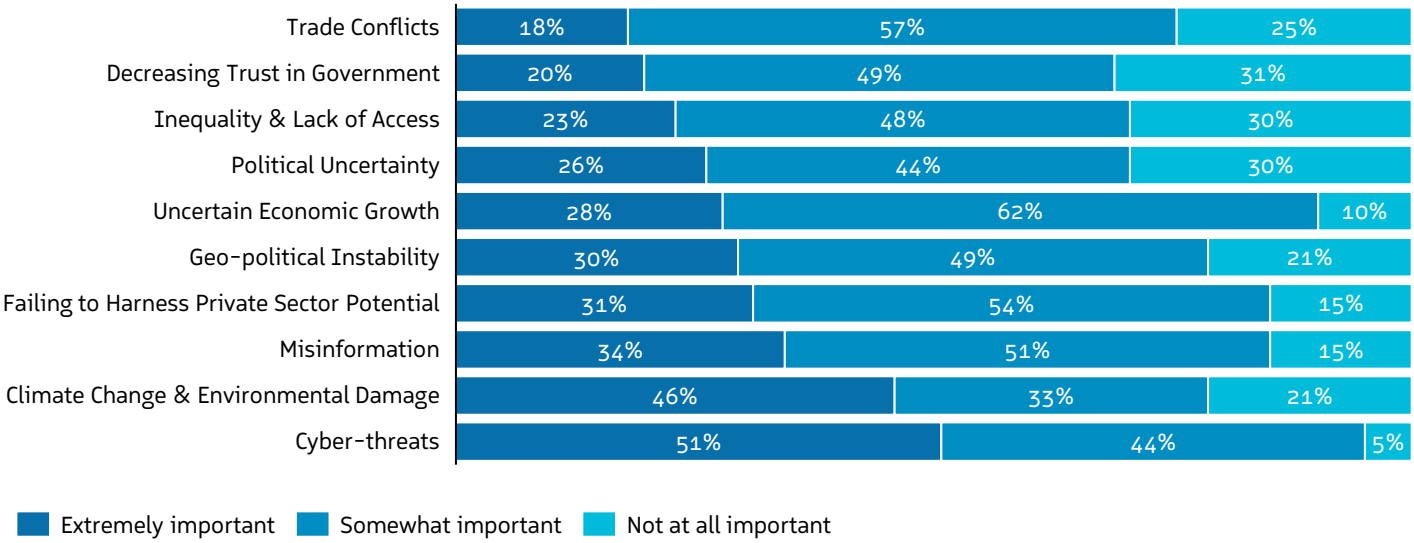
Control vs. Orchestration
Can outcomes be governed when authority is increasingly distributed?

Historically, governments operated in environments that were relatively stable. Policy cycles were long. Institutional advantages accumulated gradually. Crises were episodic rather than continuous. Public expectations evolved over generations, not in real time. That world no longer exists. Today's ministers are not managing a single transition, but the collision and convergence of many at once. Economic restructuring, climate pressures, technological disruption, geopolitical fragmentation, and shifting social expectations are not unfolding in isolation. They interact, compound, and accelerate the pace at which public value can be created, and lost[2].

In this environment, public value is no longer a stable asset. It is in motion, moving across sectors, across borders, and across institutional boundaries. It is shaped not only by governments, but by platforms, private actors, communities, and transnational forces. It can scale with extraordinary speed and erode just as quickly. This is a fundamental break from the conditions under which most public institutions were originally designed.

The condition of value in motion does not produce a single, discrete problem. It generates a set of enduring tensions and tradeoffs that now define the operating reality of governance that cannot be resolved once and for all. The sections that follow examine six such trade-offs, each illuminating a different dimension of what it now means to govern.

Figure 3: Ministers are not in the same place on the change curve



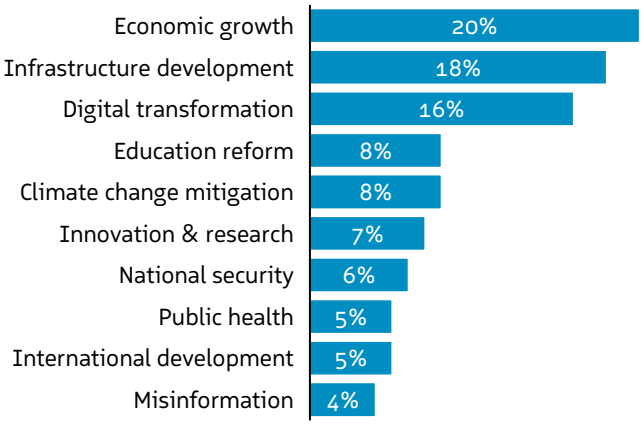
In my opinion, these challenges/gaps are priorities that must be addressed in my Ministry if we are to achieve our future objectives

Why This Changes the Logic of Governance

This year's Survey reflects this new reality in multiple ways. Ministers describe operating under heightened uncertainty, where external risks are no longer episodic but persistent. At the same time, expectations of government continue to rise. Citizens, businesses, and communities demand faster responses, more personalized services, greater transparency, and more visible results.

This combination, greater volatility alongside higher expectations, creates a new kind of pressure on public institutions. Ministers increasingly recognize that the core challenge is not disruption itself, but institutional fit, and whether they will be able to effectively both plan and importantly, *operate* in it. This requires a shift from a governance model built around control, defining rules, enforcing compliance, maintaining order; to one built around alignment between competing priorities in a world where value is constantly in motion. These trade-offs are not temporary dilemmas or transitional problems. They are structural features of the current operating environment. They are experienced by ministers not as abstract design questions, but as lived tensions: between speed and legitimacy, control and coordination, resilience and adaptability.

Figure 4: Ministerial priorities are no longer singular



What are the top three priorities for your government in the next five years?



2.1 The Continuity Trade-off: Resilience vs. Adaptability

The central question of this trade-off is straightforward: *Can institutions absorb shocks while continuously reconfiguring?*

For decades, resilience has been a cornerstone of public governance. Governments have invested heavily in systems designed to withstand crises, absorb shocks, and maintain continuity of service. Emergency response frameworks, fiscal buffers, and infrastructure redundancy all reflect an understanding of resilience as the capacity to endure. That still remains essential, but it is no longer enough.

Disruption is no longer episodic. Ministers now face a landscape defined by near-continuous volatility, where economic realignments, climate-related events, technological leaps, geopolitical tensions, and shifting social expectations overlap and intensify one another. Crises do not arrive sequentially; they compound[3]. In this environment, the challenge is not only how to withstand disruption, but how to reconfigure in response to it. This is the core tension between resilience and adaptability.

Why This Tension Has Become Structural

Historically, resilience and adaptability could be pursued in sequence: stabilize, then reform. That sequencing no longer holds. Institutions are now expected to deliver continuity while being redesigned. The very features that enable resilience: standardization, hierarchy, procedural control; can limit adaptability. Conversely, adaptability introduces variability, risk, and coordination challenges. This tension is no longer transitional. It is structural.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

Survey responses indicate that ministers are acutely aware of this dilemma. Many describe operating in an environment where crises are no longer treated as exceptional events but as a normal condition of policymaking. External risks are perceived as persistent rather than episodic. Preparedness is no longer about planning for specific contingencies, but about maintaining constant readiness.

At the same time, ministers point to structural constraints that limit their ability to adapt: rigid budget frameworks, inflexible workforce models, slow procurement systems, and governance processes designed for stability rather than recalibration. The result is a widening gap between what governments must do and what their systems currently allow them to do.

In the 2024 edition of the survey, resilience emerged as a dominant strategic priority. The focus was on building buffers, strengthening core systems, and improving preparedness for future crises. While that emphasis remains, ministers now recognize that resilience without adaptability can become a form of fragility. Last year's conversation centered on endurance; this year's responses highlight the need for institutions that can endure and evolve simultaneously.

The question has shifted from *Can we withstand disruption?* to *Can we change while doing so?*

What Governing in Motion Now Requires

Public institutions were originally built for stability. They emphasized standardization, risk minimization, procedural consistency, and clear jurisdictions; traits that once ensured reliability but now risk creating rigidity in a world defined by constant motion.

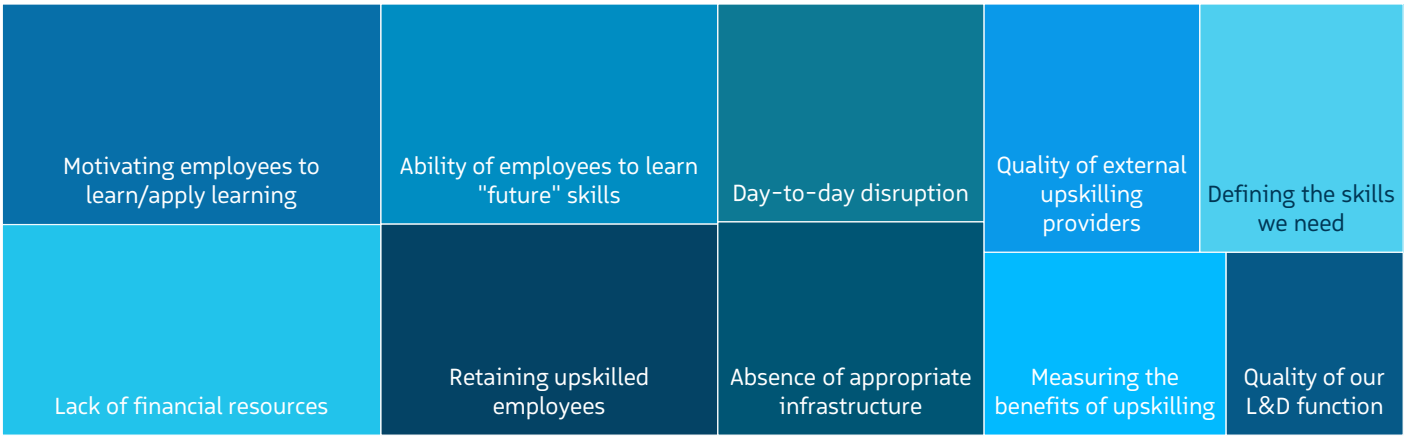
Building adaptability requires something different: modular systems, flexible funding models, mobile talent pools, rapid feedback loops, and decision rights that shift with context. These are not marginal adjustments; they represent a fundamentally different approach to how public action is organized.

For ministers, this tension reshapes the very meaning of "strong government." Strength is no longer defined solely by the ability to hold the line. It is defined by the ability to move without fragmenting, and to redesign systems in ways that preserve function and maintain stability even under conditions of continuous change. The most resilient governments of the future will not be those that resist change, but those that are built to undergo it.

What ministers can do now

- **Build flexibility into core systems, not just crisis response**
  Introduce contingency-enabled budgets, modular programmers, and adaptive procurement mechanisms that allow reconfiguration without full redesign.
- **Create standing "surge capacity" across government**
  Establish cross-entity talent pools and rapid redeployment mechanisms to respond to overlapping shocks without disrupting core delivery.
- **Shift from static preparedness to continuous readiness**
  Replace one-off crisis plans with live monitoring, regular stress-testing, and decision triggers that enable early adjustment.

Figure 5: How prepared is the public workforce for continuous change?



Please rank five greatest challenges your Ministry currently faces in its upskilling efforts

2.2 The Traction Trade-off: Strategy vs. Execution

Can ambition be translated into sustained delivery?

Over the past decade, governments have become increasingly skilled at articulating long-term visions. National strategies, sectoral roadmaps, digital agendas, and transformation plans now serve as core instruments through which states signal direction, intent, and ambition. In many countries, these strategies are sophisticated, forward-looking, and aligned with global priorities.

Yet the gap between what governments aspire to achieve and what they are able to deliver remains stubbornly persistent. *This is the tension between strategy and execution.*

Why This Tension Has Become Structural

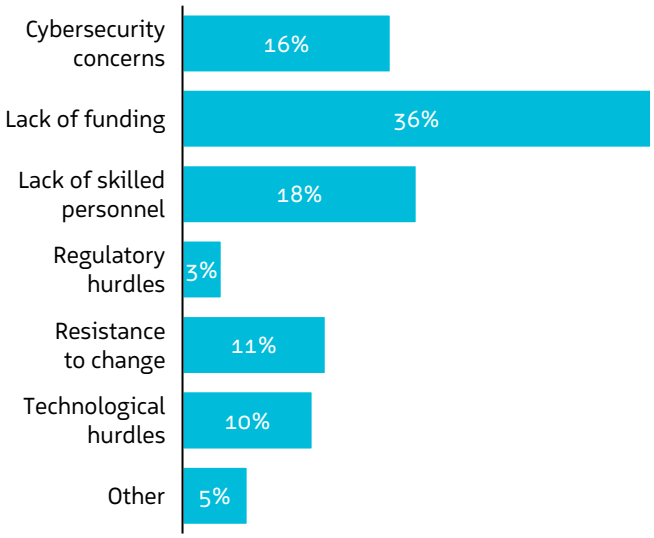
Historically, public strategy was constrained by limited foresight tools, slower policy cycles, and narrower mandates. That is no longer the case. Governments today have access to advanced analytics, global benchmarking, scenario planning, and policy intelligence. The challenge is not a shortage of ideas, it is the institutional capacity required to translate those ideas into sustained, system-wide impact.

Execution is not faltering because leaders lack ambition. It falters because institutions were not designed for continuous delivery under conditions of constant change. Many public systems remain optimized for policy formulation rather than implementation, for compliance rather than iteration, for process rather than outcome, for inputs rather than impact. These design choices once ensured consistency, legality, and accountability. In a world defined by continuous motion, they increasingly function as bottlenecks.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

The Global Ministers Survey 2026 reveals a clear pattern: ministers know what they want to achieve. They express strong alignment around digital transformation, economic resilience, social inclusion, and long-term sustainability. What they express far less confidence in is their ability to execute.

Figure 6: What is blocking digital delivery? The execution gap



What are the biggest challenges your ministry faces in implementing digital transformation?

Across domains, ministers point to constraints rooted not in vision but in delivery: fragmented mandates, slow procurement processes, siloed bureaucracies, legacy IT systems, and limited operational flexibility. The data suggests that many governments are attempting to run 21st-century strategies on 20th-century operating models, creating a credibility gap not between ministers and citizens, but between ambition and institutional reality.

In the 2024 edition of the survey, strategy was still treated as the primary lever of transformation. Vision-setting and agenda alignment dominated the conversation. While that emphasis remains, ministers are now far more attuned to the friction that emerges after the strategy is announced; when policies must be operationalized, programs coordinated, budgets reallocated, and services redesigned. Last year's conversation was about direction; this year's is about traction.

What Governing in Motion Now Requires

Execution is not an afterthought; it is a core element of institutional design. Yet many public institutions still treat delivery as something that follows strategy rather than something embedded within it. This disconnect produces a predictable pattern: strategies grow more ambitious, implementation remains incremental, and outcomes fall short. In fast-moving environments, this gap becomes untenable.

Effective execution today requires cross-agency coordination, real-time performance feedback, flexible funding models, decision-making authority closer to the point of impact, and iterative policy design. These are not technical adjustments; they represent a deeper redesign of how governments operate.

For ministers, this tension reshapes a long-held assumption: leadership is no longer only about setting direction; it is about building the machinery that delivers results. In a world defined by constant motion, effective leadership shifts from announcements to operating models, from plans to pipelines, from control to coordination, and from policy to performance.

Strong governments will not be those that publish the most compelling strategies. They will be those that can turn intent into action… repeatedly, reliably, and at scale.

What ministers can do now

- **Embed delivery into strategy from the outset**
  Ensure every major strategy is tied to clear ownership, funding pathways, and cross-agency execution mechanisms from day one.
- **Prioritize a small number of high-impact outcomes**
  Focus political and institutional attention on a limited set of priorities with visible delivery milestones to build momentum and credibility.
- **Create real-time execution visibility**
  Use simple, minister-level dashboards and 60–90 day delivery cycles to track progress and intervene early when implementation slows.



2.3 The Trust Trade-off: Speed vs. Legitimacy

Can governments move quickly without eroding trust, consent, and accountability?

In an environment of continuous disruption, speed has become a defining requirement of effective governance. Crises escalate rapidly. Public expectations shift in real time. Political and economic windows open and close with little warning. Ministers are increasingly expected to act decisively, communicate instantly, and deliver visible results.

Yet legitimacy, the foundation of public authority, is not built at speed. It is built through process, participation, transparency, and accountability. These require time, consultation, and deliberation. This creates a fundamental tension: *the faster governments are expected to move, the harder it becomes to sustain the legitimacy that gives their actions meaning and authority.*

Why This Tension Has Become Structural

Historically, governments could afford to move slowly. Policy cycles were long, decisions unfolded through extended consultation, and authority was reinforced by procedural formality. Today, the tempo of politics, media, markets, and crises has accelerated dramatically. Ministers operate under constant pressure to respond in real time to geopolitical shocks, economic volatility, technological failures, and social unrest.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

The Global Ministers Survey 2026 indicates that ministers are acutely aware of this tension. On one hand, they face mounting pressure to act quickly, to modernize services, respond to crises, and demonstrate responsiveness. On the other, they express deep concern about declining trust, rising polarization, and the difficulty of maintaining public confidence amid constant decision-making.

The data points to a growing fear that governments are being forced into a false choice between being fast and being fair. This marks a shift from the 2024 edition of the survey, where participation and engagement were framed primarily as aspirational goals and markers of inclusive, future-oriented governance. This year, ministers recognize the challenge of governing in conditions where delay is interpreted as failure and deliberation as indecision.



What Governing in Motion Now Requires

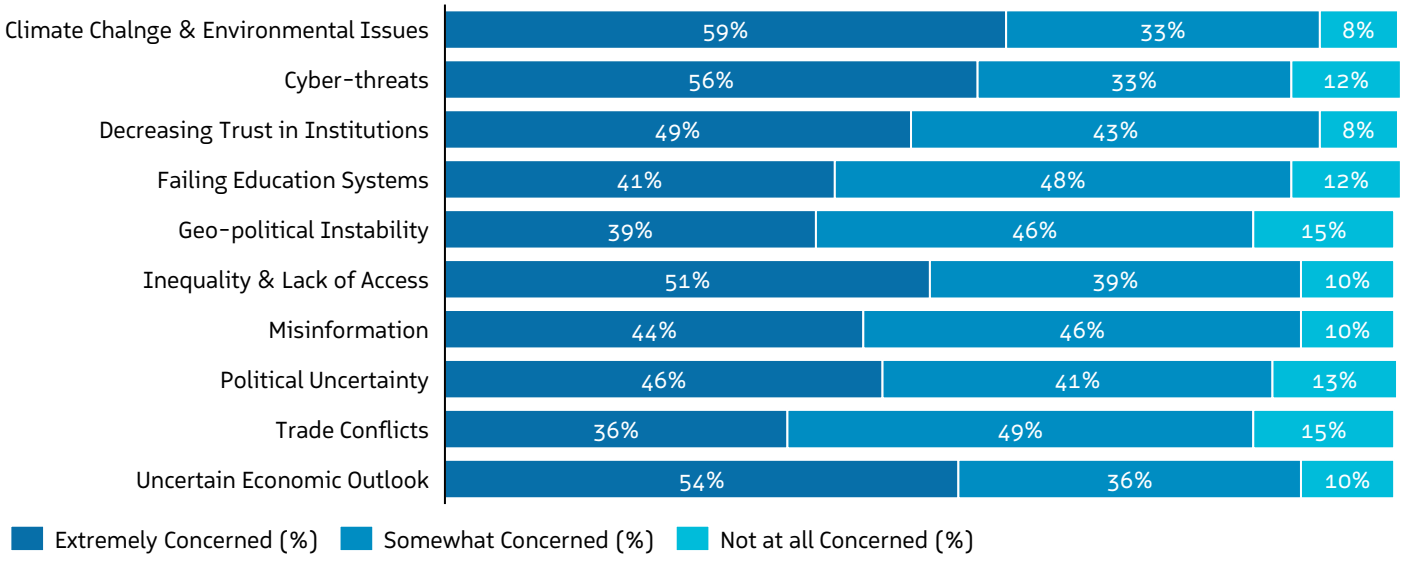
Many public institutions were built for deliberation rather than acceleration. They emphasize procedural safeguards, checks and balances, formal accountability, and public consultation. These features uphold legitimacy, but they are poorly suited to environments where decisions must be made in days rather than months.

The result is a structural mismatch: institutions struggle to balance the need for speed with the processes required for consent. This is not a communications challenge; it is a design challenge that reshapes the meaning of decisiveness. Decisiveness is no longer simply about acting quickly. It is about acting in ways that remain legitimate, trusted, and accountable ... even under pressure.

What ministers can do now

- **Design fast-track decision protocols with built-in safeguards**
  Define when accelerated action is appropriate, and embed minimum standards for transparency, documentation, and accountability.
- **Communicate decisions as they are made, not after the fact**
  Share rationale, trade-offs, and uncertainties early to maintain trust, even when consultation windows are compressed.
- **Institutionalize feedback and course correction**
  Create mechanisms to revisit and adjust decisions quickly, reinforcing legitimacy through responsiveness rather than delay.

Figure 7: External risks now shape domestic policy space



In your opinion, what are the top three trends shaping the future of your government

2.4 The Coordination Trade-off: Control vs. Orchestration

Can governments govern outcomes they no longer fully control?

For much of the modern era, governments were designed as the central producers of public value. They set policy, delivered services, regulated markets, and enforced rules. Authority flowed hierarchically, and accountability was largely vertical. That model no longer reflects how value is created today.

Public outcomes are now shaped by complex ecosystems of actors: private firms, civil society organizations, community groups, digital platforms, philanthropies, and international institutions. Governments remain central, but they are no longer solitary. *This is a clear shift from control to orchestration.*

Why This Tension Has Become Structural

In stable environments, control is efficient. Clear mandates, direct authority, and centralized decision-making allow governments to act decisively. But in environments where value is produced across networks rather than within single institutions, control becomes both limited and costly. No single actor controls digital infrastructures, capital flows, information ecosystems, innovation pipelines, or social mobilization. Yet governments are still held accountable for outcomes shaped by these systems. This creates a structural dilemma: governments retain responsibility without retaining full control. As a result, they increasingly operate as orchestrators that shape incentives, coordinate actors, align interests, and build shared purpose across fragmented systems.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

This year's Survey shows that ministers increasingly recognize the limits of traditional command-and-control approaches. Many describe the need to work more closely with the private sector, civil society, and local communities; not as a strategic preference, but as an operational necessity. They point to domains such as digital services, workforce development, climate action, and social inclusion as areas where government action alone is insufficient. At the same time, ministers express concern about accountability gaps: who is responsible when outcomes depend on networks rather than hierarchies?

This represents a subtle but significant shift from the 2024 edition of the survey, where collaboration was framed primarily as an opportunity, a pathway to innovation, efficiency, and new partnerships. In this year's findings, collaboration emerges as a structural requirement that introduces new risks, new dependencies, and new forms of complex governance.



What Governing in Motion Now Requires

Most public institutions were built to control the processes they directly oversee. They rely on clear authority lines, formal reporting, hierarchical accountability, and fixed organizational boundaries; features that falter in today's networked environments. Effective orchestration now depends on setting incentives rather than rules, convening rather than commanding, coordinating rather than enforcing compliance, enabling boundary-spanning roles, and adopting shared metrics of success. These are not peripheral tasks; they are essential capabilities.

For ministers, this shift redefines authority. Authority is increasingly exercised through alignment rather than command. Leadership moves from managing organizations to shaping systems, from issuing directives to building coalitions, and from enforcing compliance to enabling coordination. The most capable governments will be those that can mobilize and align actors effectively and consistently.

What ministers can do now

- **Clarify roles across a distributed system**
  Define where government sets direction, where it enables others, and where it partners... reducing duplication and fragmentation.
- **Strengthen coordination capabilities, not just authority**
  Invest in cross-government platforms, joint delivery units, and shared data systems that enable alignment across actors.
- **Measure outcomes, not just compliance**
  Shift performance management toward system-level results, including contributions from private sector and non-state actors.

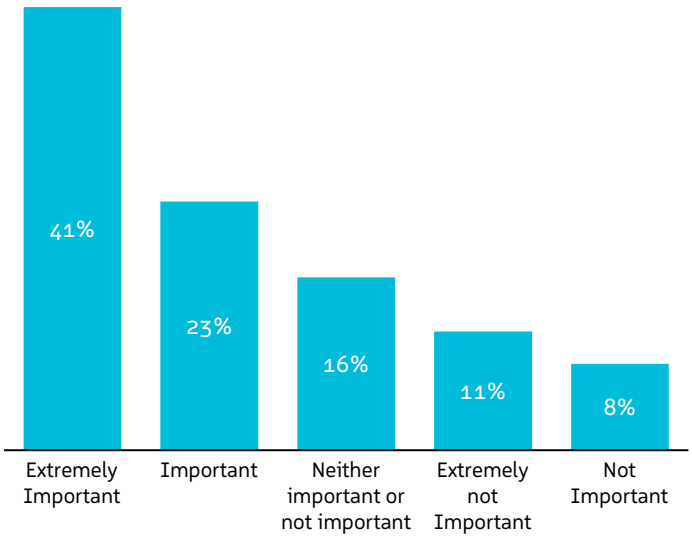


2.5 The Governability Trade-off: Innovation vs. Institutionalization

Can governments remain innovative without becoming ungovernable?

Over the past decade, innovation has become a central pillar of public sector reform. Governments have invested in digital platforms, data infrastructure, AI experimentation, and new service models. Innovation labs, sandboxes, and agile teams have proliferated. These efforts have delivered tangible benefits: faster services, more personalized interactions, and new ways of engaging citizens.

Figure 8: Ministers increasingly view citizen engagement as a core enabler of effective service delivery



How important is citizen engagement in your ministry's decision-making process?

But innovation also introduces new risks. As systems become more complex, more automated, and more interdependent, they become harder to understand, regulate, and control. This is the tension between innovation and Institutionalization.

Why This Tension Has Become Structural

In earlier eras, innovation in government was relatively contained. Changes were incremental, pilots were limited in scope, and systems were easier to audit and reverse. That is no longer the case.

Today's innovations, especially those involving data, AI, and platform-based services, scale rapidly, affect large populations, and reshape core public functions. They are not marginal improvements; they are systemic transformations.

This creates a paradox: the more innovative public systems become, the harder they can be to Institutionalize. Complexity increases. Dependencies multiply. Feedback loops become harder to detect. And the consequences of failure become more severe.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

The Global Ministers Survey 2026 shows that ministers remain strongly committed to innovation. Digital transformation, data-driven governance, and new service models consistently rank as top priorities. Yet many ministers express concern about regulatory lag, ethical risks, cybersecurity vulnerabilities, and the unintended consequences of automation.

The data points to a growing anxiety: governments are being pushed to adopt new technologies faster than they can build the institutional capacity to govern them.

What Governing in Motion Now Requires

Most governance systems were built for an analog era. One defined by slow, linear, and clearly bounded processes. They rest on assumptions of transparent decision-making, human-in-the-loop control, reversible outcomes, and predictable chains of causality. Digital and AI-driven systems disrupt all of these foundations, demanding new forms of governance and institutionalization. Effective oversight now requires built-in auditability, explainable systems, human oversight by design, robust regulatory sandboxes, and real-time monitoring. These are not technical extras; they are core governance features for a digital age.

For ministers, this shift challenges the long-standing belief that innovation is inherently beneficial. In complex, fast-moving systems, innovation without institutionalization becomes a risk rather than an asset. Leadership is no longer only about encouraging experimentation, it is about ensuring that experimentation remains accountable.

This requires moving from speed to oversight, from novelty to reliability, and from disruption to durability. The strongest governments will not be those that innovate the fastest, but those that can innovate while still governing effectively.

What ministers can do now

- **Create protected spaces for experimentation**
  Establish regulatory sandboxes, pilot zones, or innovation units where new approaches can be tested without destabilizing core systems.
- **Define clear pathways from pilot to scale**
  Ensure that successful innovations can be institutionalized through funding, policy alignment, and operational integration.
- **Update governance frameworks in parallel with innovation**
  Regularly review regulatory, ethical, and accountability mechanisms to keep pace with technological and policy experimentation.



2.6 The Sovereignty Trade-off: National Mandates vs Transnational Reality

Can governments govern nationally in a borderless world?

Governments derive their authority from national mandates. Their legitimacy, legal powers, fiscal tools, and accountability structures are rooted in the nation-state. Policy is designed, debated, and implemented within national boundaries. Yet many of the forces that now shape public value do not respect those boundaries. Capital flows across borders. Digital platforms operate globally. Supply chains span continents. Climate impacts are transnational. Geopolitical shocks cascade across regions. *This is the tension between national mandates and transnational reality.*

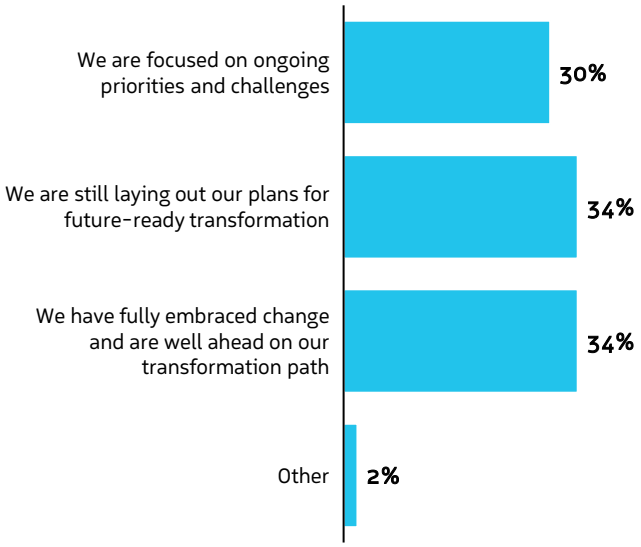
Why This Tension Has Become Structural

Historically, governments could treat international dynamics as an external context rather than an internal constraint. While globalization influenced trade and diplomacy, core policy levers remained largely national. Today, many of the most consequential policy challenges, economic stability, energy security, data governance, climate adaptation, technological sovereignty; are structurally transnational. No government can fully control the forces at play, whether digital infrastructures, global capital markets, or cross-border information systems. Yet citizens still hold national governments responsible for outcomes shaped by these forces.

What Ministers Are Telling Us

The Global Ministers Survey 2026 reflects this tension clearly. Ministers report rising exposure to external risks: geopolitical volatility, economic fragmentation, cyber threats, and global market dependencies. These risks increasingly shape domestic policy space. At the same time, ministers emphasize the importance of sovereignty, national resilience, and domestic legitimacy. The result is a growing strain: governments are being pulled simultaneously toward greater national control and deeper global entanglement. Ministers describe a world of sharper geopolitical competition, greater fragmentation, and more volatile global interdependence.

Figure 9: Ministers' assessments of future readiness highlight uneven preparedness for a world in motion



How "future-ready" is your government?



What Governing in Motion Now Requires

Most public institutions are built on territorial logic, assuming clear jurisdictional boundaries, national policy autonomy, domestic accountability, and centralized authority. These assumptions falter in a world where outcomes are shaped across borders.

Effective governance now depends on cross-border coordination, data sharing, regulatory alignment, new forms of multilateralism, and institutional capacity for interdependence. These are no longer peripheral foreign-policy tools; they are core capabilities for governing transnational realities.

For ministers, this shift redefines sovereignty. Sovereignty becomes less about control and more about capacity; the capacity to shape external dependencies, absorb external shocks, and act collectively when unilateral action falls short. Leadership must move from autonomy to interdependence, from insulation to strategic integration, and from national solutions to networked ones.

What ministers can do now

- **Build cross-border coordination into domestic policy design**
  Anticipate external dependencies, whether economic, technological, or environmental, when shaping national strategies.
- **Engage proactively in international rule-shaping**
  Participate in regional and global platforms to influence standards, rather than adapting to them after the fact.
- **Align national priorities with system-level resilience**
  Identify where collective action (e.g., supply chains, climate, digital infrastructure) strengthens national outcomes.



Section 3

Leadership in Motion



Section 3

Leadership in Motion

The conditions described in this report are not experienced abstractly. They are lived, directly, by those responsible for governing. The six trade-offs do not sit at the level of systems alone. They translate into competing demands on ministers' time, judgement, and authority… often simultaneously, and often without the benefit of clear sequencing or resolution.

The Survey responses reflect this clearly. Ministers describe operating in environments where expectations are rising, timelines are compressing, and decisions must be taken across interconnected issues that do not lend themselves to simple trade-offs. The challenge is no longer choosing between competing priorities once, but holding them together continuously.

This changes the nature of leadership. Leadership is no longer defined primarily by the ability to set direction and oversee implementation within stable parameters. It is increasingly defined by the ability to navigate competing demands in real time; balancing speed with legitimacy, control with coordination, and innovation with institutional stability.

This requires a different set of capabilities. Leaders must be able to act without full certainty, while remaining open to recalibration. They must make decisions that carry immediate consequences, while managing longer-term implications that are still unfolding. They must operate across institutional boundaries, often without direct authority, while maintaining coherence of action and intent.

It also requires a shift in leadership style. Control, in its traditional sense, becomes less viable as systems become more distributed. Influence, alignment, and coordination become more central. Authority is still required, but it is exercised differently; less through directive command, and more through shaping conditions, enabling action, and maintaining alignment across actors.

At the same time, the demands on personal leadership characteristics become more pronounced. Decisiveness remains essential, but it must be paired with adaptability. Confidence must coexist with openness to challenge and revision. Speed must be matched with an awareness of legitimacy and trust. Leaders are required to absorb pressure without transmitting instability, and to sustain clarity of direction even as conditions continue to shift.

The task of leadership is no longer to eliminate trade-offs, but to operate within them—continuously, deliberately, and without pause.
That is the Motion Imperative.



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Endnotes

1. UNDP (2023). *Signals Spotlight: Governance Futures 2030* indicates that agile, adaptative governments are the new normal; and World Economic Forum (2022). *Global Governance Toolkit for Digital Transformation*. World Economic Forum, Geneva emphasizes models focused on agility, resilience, and proactive, iterative approaches for government, with the objective of achieving "dynamic stability".
2. OECD (2020). *The Innovation Imperative in the Public Sector: Setting an Agenda for Action.* Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, Paris, argues that due to dynamic environments, new challenges, evolving citizen expectations, and tighter budgets, governments must move beyond traditional stability-based, bureaucracy-driven government toward a more proactive, adaptive model.
3. The World Economic Forum's annual *Global Risks Report* consistently highlights how economic, environmental, technological, and geopolitical risks are increasingly interconnected, overlapping, and persistent rather than episodic.

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