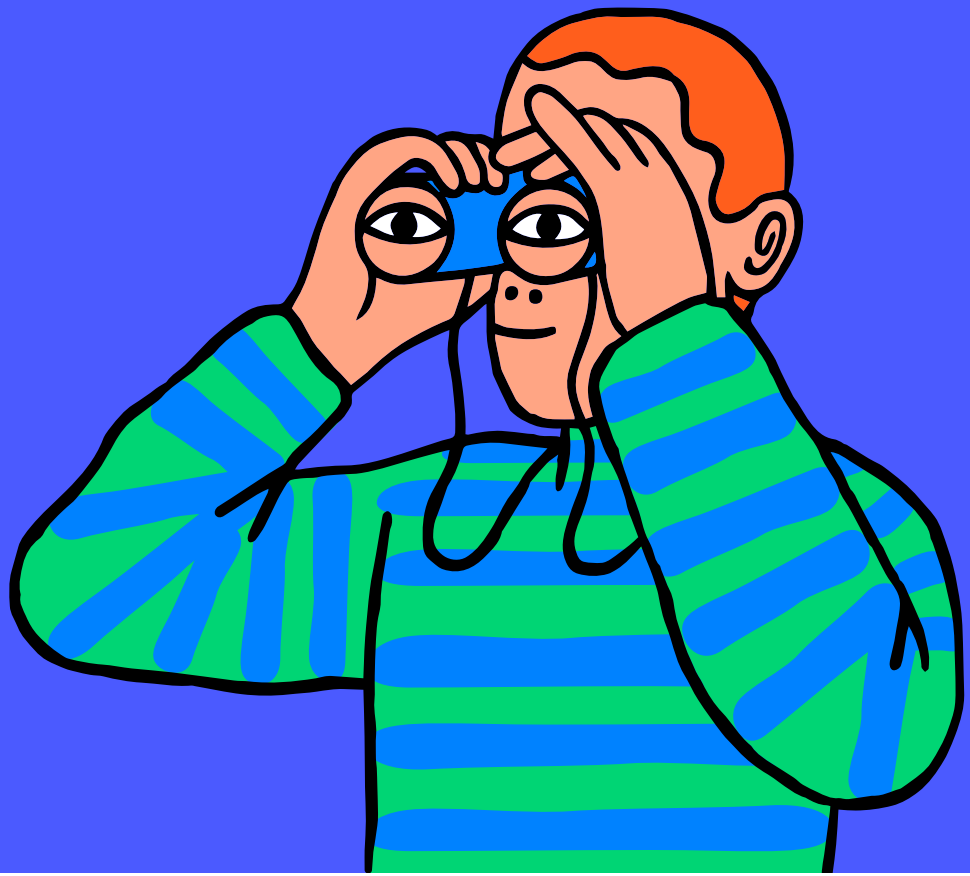
# Mission-oriented innovation needs assessment survey



## Highlights & insights on mission work

January 2022
OECD & Danish Design Center

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# The aim of the survey & analysis

This survey aims to understand ongoing missions practices, challenges and areas for further development of the international community of practice.

Hereon out we define **missions** as initiatives that address grand societal challenges that are cross-sectoral, ambitious and measurable.

**Mission-oriented innovation** establishes **a clear outcome towards the societal challenges and an overarching objective for achieving a specific mission** (e.g. setting clear goals and roadmaps towards carbon neutrality or approaching the system differently to radical change mental health for young people).

Singular, unconnected interventions (e.g. challenges prizes, general applied research) are not considered to be missions, while they may contribute to mission-oriented innovation portfolios aiming to achieve the mission.

The essence of the survey results and data analysis is summarized in this report including the most surprising and important findings.

Results are presented in three sections:
- Current mission practices
- Mission design
- Biggest mission challenges & support needs.

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# Methodology

Data has been collected from an open and online survey that has been distributed by the OECD and Danish Design Center through various channels such as newsletters, LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. The survey has been targeted individuals in organizations either involved in missions or mission-oriented innovation.

In total 227 individuals have responded to the survey. The survey respondents represent over 40 countries, with a majority based in Europe, the USA and Australia.

The results provide insights into tendencies in an emerging field in constant movement and unfolding. This is clearly legible in the survey results.

The results do not take into account that interpretations and language concerning “missions” and “mission-oriented innovation” can vary e.g., from organization to organization and from country to country and the fact that it is an area still to solidify.
To understand the gaps, needs and challenges working with mission-oriented innovation and get a nuanced and solid data set, the following analysis and conclusions **are based on answers from the respondents who are currently engaged in mission-oriented innovation**.

Analysis of the responses and data points from respondents not involved currently but planning to, can be requested separately.

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# Key highlights

64 % of the respondents are currently involved with a mission or mission-oriented innovation.

Of those not currently involved in concrete mission work, 50 % is planning to start in the near future.

Only 25% of the respondents state that mission work has a clear target

Only 11% of the respondents state that the mission has a clear plan and process for monitoring and evaluation

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# Key challenges

Working with mission-oriented innovation is a new and emerging field which still lacks good practices, tools and methodologies. Respondents highlight the following challenges:

### Financial challenges
- Aligning resources across government or organizations
- Lack of risk capital and high-risk, high-reward investments
- Lack of targeted resources

### Structural challenges
- Changing current organizational models
- To have the implementation of the mission to fit into current budgeting timelines and structures
- Ensuring coordination between different policy bodies in various policy fields

### Political challenges
- Going beyond policy and electoral cycles

### Methodological challenges
- Lack of mission-based portfolio tools
- Lack of evaluation tools (learning and measurement)
- Lack of analytical framework to better understand different types of missions and their respective merits

### Building and sustaining the mission roadmap
- Collecting the right data and insights from the mission portfolio to re-feed to the mission work (e.g., new projects, initiatives, or experiments)
- Balancing both short-term and long-term projects
- Creating agility and adaptability in the portfolio

### The biggest risks of possibly failing
- Effect of silos
- Keeping momentum and motivation over time
- Lack of continued support

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# *Current* mission practice

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“In my opinion, the entire point of having a mission is that there is no other way to move a complex stakeholder system. So obviously, there will be issues, but they are kind of part of the reason of having a mission in the first place. Missions allow stakeholders to align *themselves* towards a common goal shared by all.”

Quote from respondent on structural challenges

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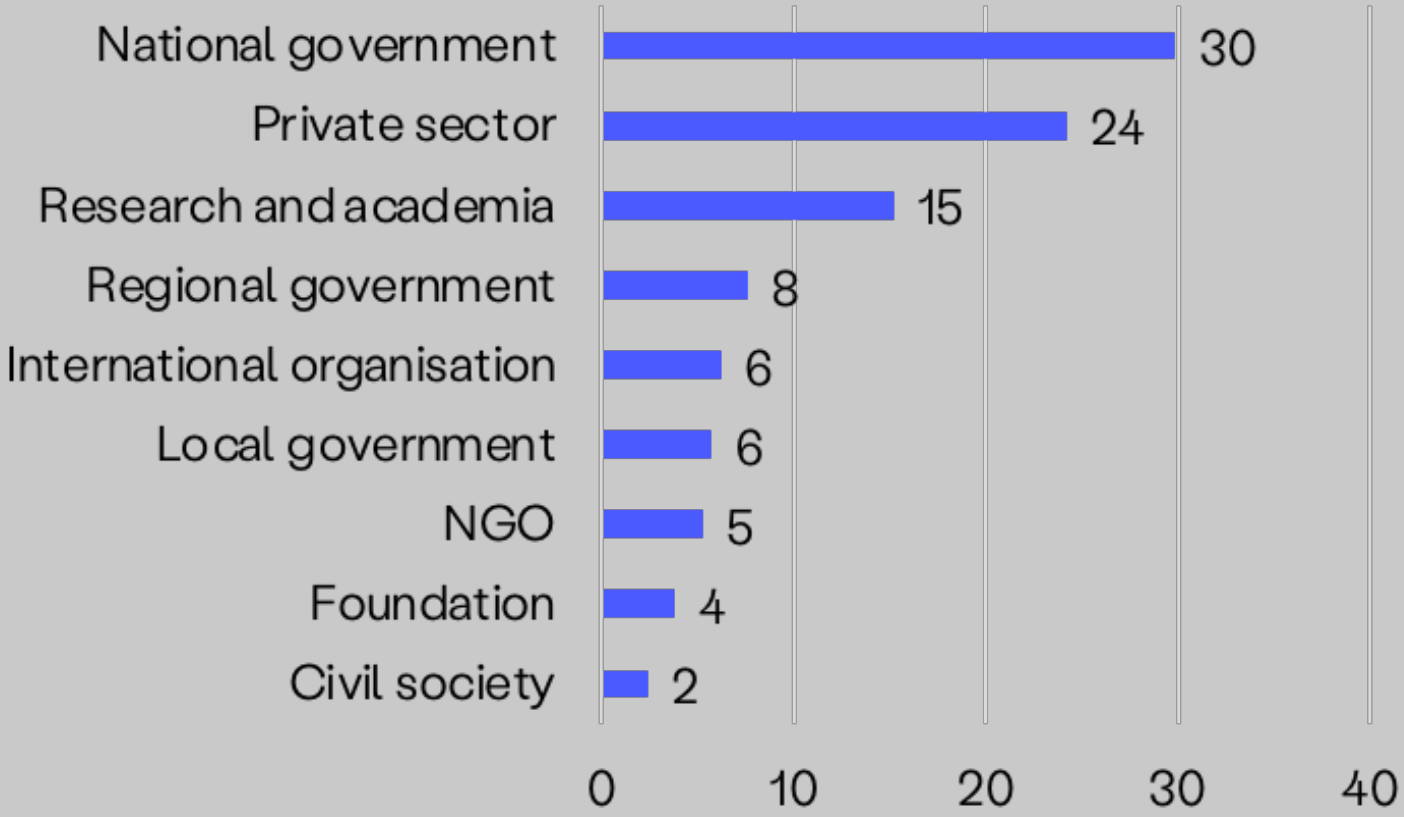
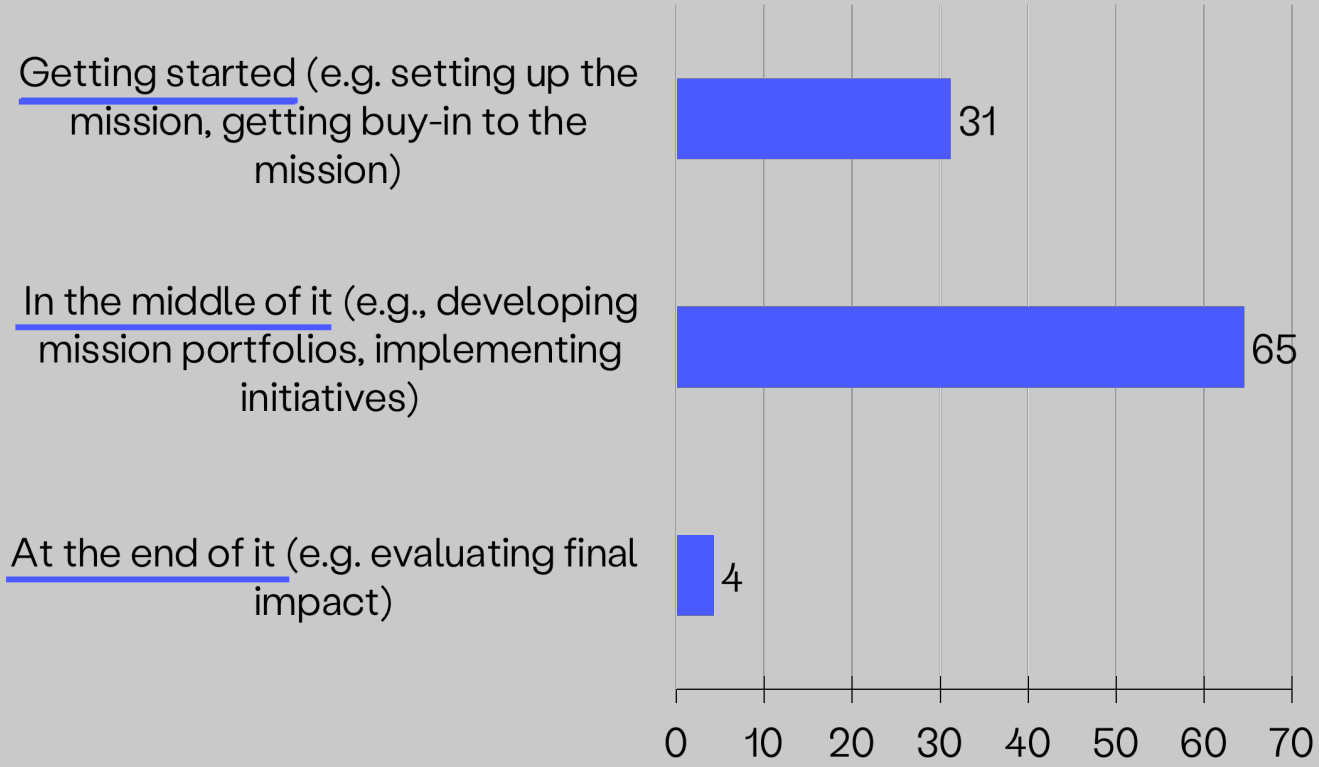
# What is your type of organization?




The survey respondents primarily represent national government, private sector and research and academia.

N: 221

# What phase is your mission in?

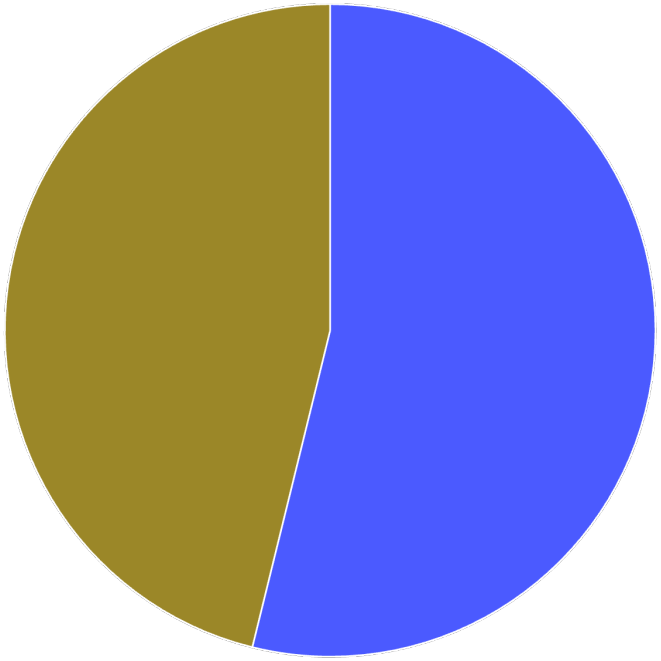



Most respondents work on missions that are in the implementation phase.

N: 141

# How would you primarily describe the implementation of your mission?

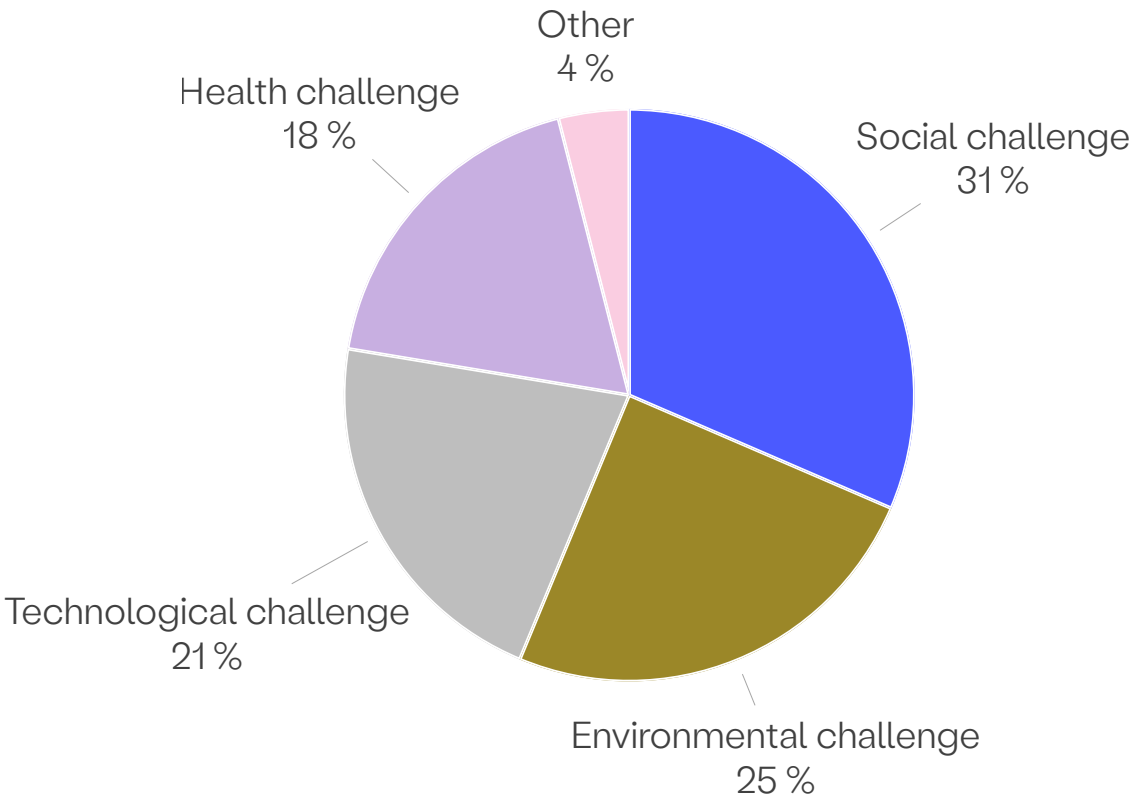
**Top-down driven**
(the mission was set primarily by government bodies/officials and is coordinated and driven by them)
**46%**



**Bottom-up driven**
(the mission was set primarily by the stakeholders and is driven forward by the ecosystem connected to the mission
**54%**

N: 83

# What societal challenge will mission-oriented innovation help you to address?




The respondents address all four proposed challenges; health, social, environmental and technological almost equally.

Most missions are intersectional and address multiple challenges at once, e.g. environmental and social goals.

Other challenges mentioned (as comments) are governance, cultural, or employment issues, or challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

N: 173

# *Mission* design

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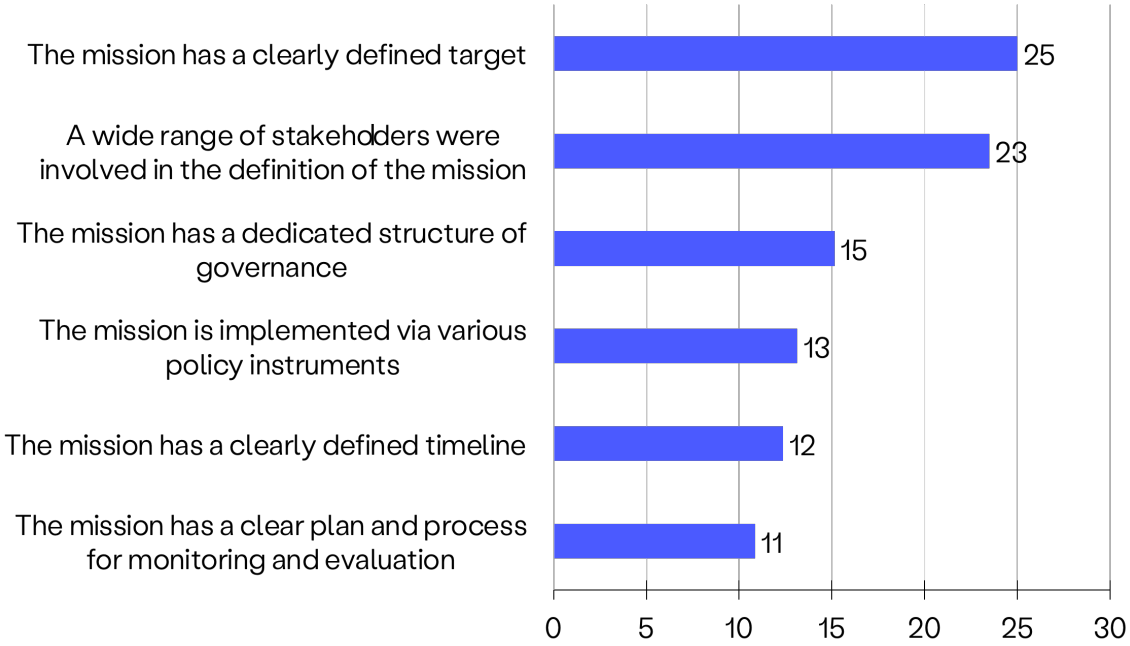
# How would you characterize your mission in regard to the following statements?




Only 25% have a clearly defined target and only 11% have a clear plan and process for monitoring and evaluation, highlighting the methodological gap in this field.

N: 139

# Where does funding come from?

| | None | 1 Small funding | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 Substantial funding |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| State | 32.2% | 9.6% | 7.8% | 7% | 13.9% | 29.6% |
| Regional | 57% | 7.5% | 9.7% | 8.6% | 8.6% | 8.6% |
| Local government (e.g. city) | 49.5% | 12.4% | 11.3% | 10.3% | 8.2% | 8.2% |
| Philanthropic organisations | 63.4% | 11% | 6.1% | 4.9% | 9.8% | 4.9% |
| EU | 54.2% | 7.3% | 4.2% | 8.3% | 12.5% | 13.5% |
| International organisations | 65.9% | 8.5% | 8.5% | 4.9% | 9.8% | 2.4% |
| Private investors, such as… | 65.5% | 10.7% | 6% | 7.1% | 2.4% | 8.3% |
| Collective across stakeholders | 38.9% | 13.3% | 13.3% | 18.9% | 8.9% | 6.7% |

Funding for mission-oriented innovation has multiple sources, with the majority of funding coming from national actors.

The collected data from the survey shows a scattered image of funding resources when working with missions.

The analysis shows that funding from the state in some cases play an important role in mission-oriented work, but at the regional and local level funding does not seem to be granted.

Worth highlighting is that funding from philanthropic organisations and impact investments is almost non-existing.

N: 115

# What has made mission-oriented work possible?

Insights in to the primary incentives or drivers that has made mission-oriented innovation possible are based on analysis on the responses to an open ended question. The incentives and drivers can be divided into those that are primarily internal and primarily external.

**Primarily internal incentives and drivers** cover *strategies* and/or *policies* promoting a mission-oriented approach, a *methodology* to help create *impact* through securing implementation of initiatives and organizational *capacity* that has been built demanding mission-orientation or the missions as a *communication* tool.

**Primarily external incentives or drivers that are**; mission-oriented work as a last resort in order to meet *global societal challenges*, promoted by *economic priorities* catering to missions, a way to work in multi-stakeholder *collaborations* in a joint *direction.* In some cases emphasis is put on *individuals or small teams* as pivotal in launching and driving the mission forward.

Collaboration is noted in more than one third of the responses as a driver for mission-oriented work and it, thus, a major theme to explore. Also taking into consideration that collaboration is prominent in the data on which challenges that the respondents seek to solve with mission. This shows a widespread understanding as missions being a framework that can aid collaboration across sectors and ecosystems.

The drivers are not mutually exclusive and for policy and strategy, 40% of the respondents noting strategy as a main driver have also noted policy. Even though there is a difference between strategy and policy, is may be suspected that some respondents do not differentiate between the two. Making explicit top-down demand for mission-oriented work a substantial force in enabling mission-oriented work.

In 14% of the answers that noted collaboration as a driver, learning and knowledge building across organizations and on ecosystems level are specifically noted as something that calls on the need for mission-oriented work.

# What has made mission-oriented work possible? Internal factors

| | |
|---|---|
| **Strategy**<br>**24%** | Missions are a strategic goal in themselves or are a means of reaching strategic goals set by one or more actors. |
| **Policy**<br>**18%** | Missions benefit from a push at the political level to work in a mission-oriented manner - either explicitly stated with "mission" as policy or as a means to reach ambitious political goals. |
| **Impact**<br>**15%** | Missions are a means to focus the implementation of activities, creating action and impact that was not possible before. |
| **Capacity**<br>**8%** | Organizational factors such as leadership practices and internal processes have changed to push for a mission-oriented approach in the organization. |
| **Method**<br>**7%** | New methods are supporting mission-oriented innovation, such as methods involving design, foresight, participation, etc. |
| **Communication**<br>**1%** | Missions are a tool to improve communication about a cause between actors and with beneficiaries |

Does not amount to 100% since some respondents mention more than 1 driver.

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# What has made mission-oriented work possible? External factors

| | |
|---|---|
| **Collaboration**<br>**34%** | Collaborations ranging from a few close partners to triple and quadruple helix structures. Themes here are the notion of critical mass and commitment from more actors in order to push development forward and unleash potential. Missions as a way to structure this work. |
| **Global challenges**<br>**21%** | Missions are a means to tackle grand challenges spanning several sectors or subject areas which cannot be addressed by one actor alone. Respondents indicate that their missions address social, environmental, or digital challenges, or the SDGs in general. |
| **Economic**<br>**13%** | Funding opportunities or other financial incentives are driving force for mission-oriented innovation. |
| **Direction**<br>**12%** | Missions are a means to align actors and give them a common direction for their development and activities. |
| **Individuals**<br>**4%** | Some respondents mention passionate individuals or teamsteams as crucial in initiating and driving the mission. |

Does not amount to 100% since some respondents mention more than 1 driver.

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# *Biggest* mission *challenges & support needs*

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# Major risks

The data show that **effect of silos, keeping momentum and motivation over time**, and **lack of committed support** are considered the biggest risks connected to missions possibly failing.

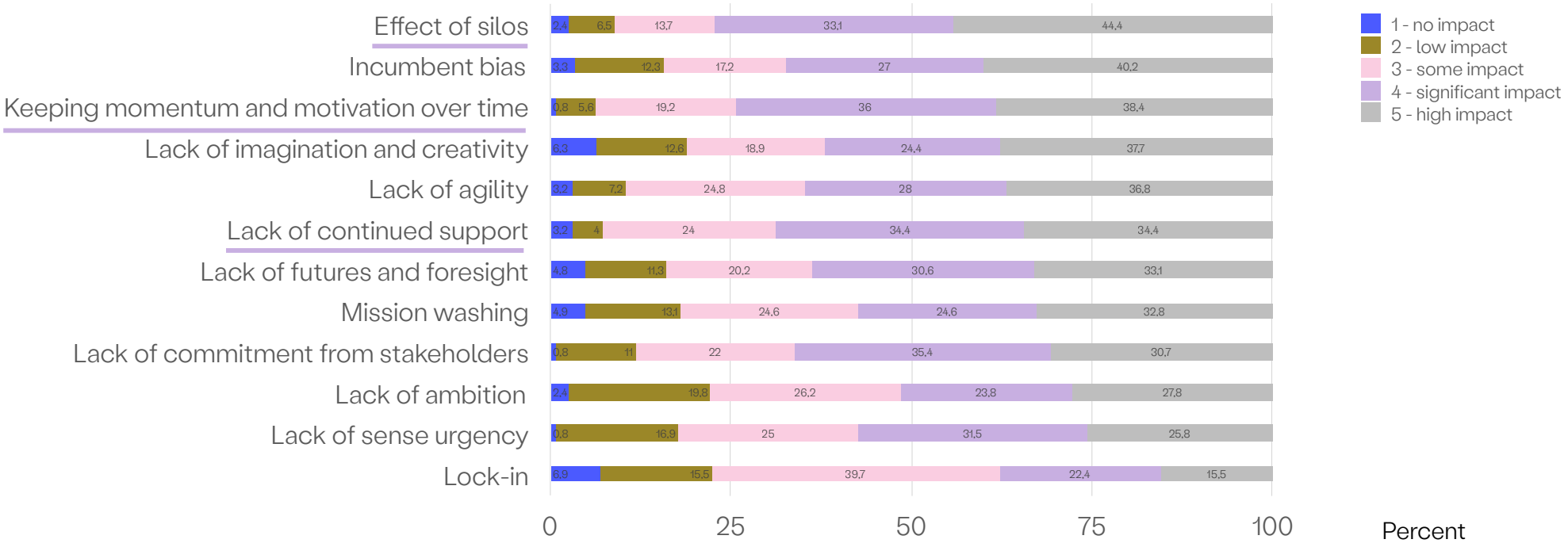
In addition, some respondents also point to risk of failing due to stress in the system. Climate change is moving too fast, and as a consequence stress in the system can easily result in conflicts between stakeholders. Other respondents highlight the risk of having actors involved in missions that create resistance because of fear of losing power, and in situations where personal needs, goals and image overshadows long-term impact.

To mitigate risk some respondents suggest that large bureaucratic organizations should take the roles as initiators and leaders, and leave implementation to private companies.

“Large bureaucratic organizations should focus more on curating mission-oriented innovation challenges and less on being implementors. These large international groups absolutely should be responsible for establishing high-level criteria, requirements, safety, budget, and a transparent bidding process, but not get involved in solving the challenge downstream. They should let private companies go and compete against each other on cost and innovation, safety, and creating a virtuous cycle of economic development and capability.”

Quote from respondent on major risks

# What are the biggest risks connected to missions possibly failing?




N: 127

“There is a major risk of placing too much emphasis on the mission's success being driven by a charismatic and powerful individual, and not effectively underpinned by infrastructure, governance and oversight.”

Quote from respondent on major risks

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# Summary of biggest challenges for missions

**Financial challenges**
- Aligning resources across government or organizations
- Lack of risk capital and high-risk, high-reward investments
- Lack of targeted resources

**Structural challenges**
- Changing current organizational models
- To have the implementation of the mission to fit into current budgeting timelines and structures
- Ensuring coordination between different policy bodies in various policy fields

**Political challenges**
- Going beyond policy and electoral cycles

**Methodological challenges**
- Lack of mission-based portfolio tools
- Lack of evaluation tools (learning and measurement)
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**Building and sustaining the mission roadmap**
- Collecting the right data and insights from the mission portfolio to re-feed to the mission work (e.g., new projects, initiatives, or experiments)
- Balancing both short-term and long-term projects
- Creating agility and adaptability in the portfolio

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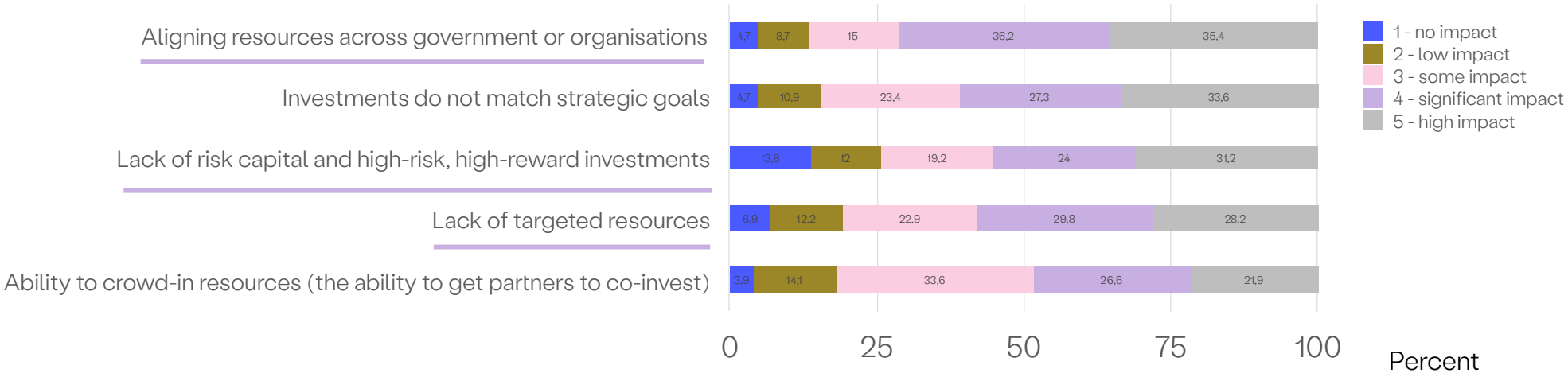
# What are the biggest *financial challenges*?

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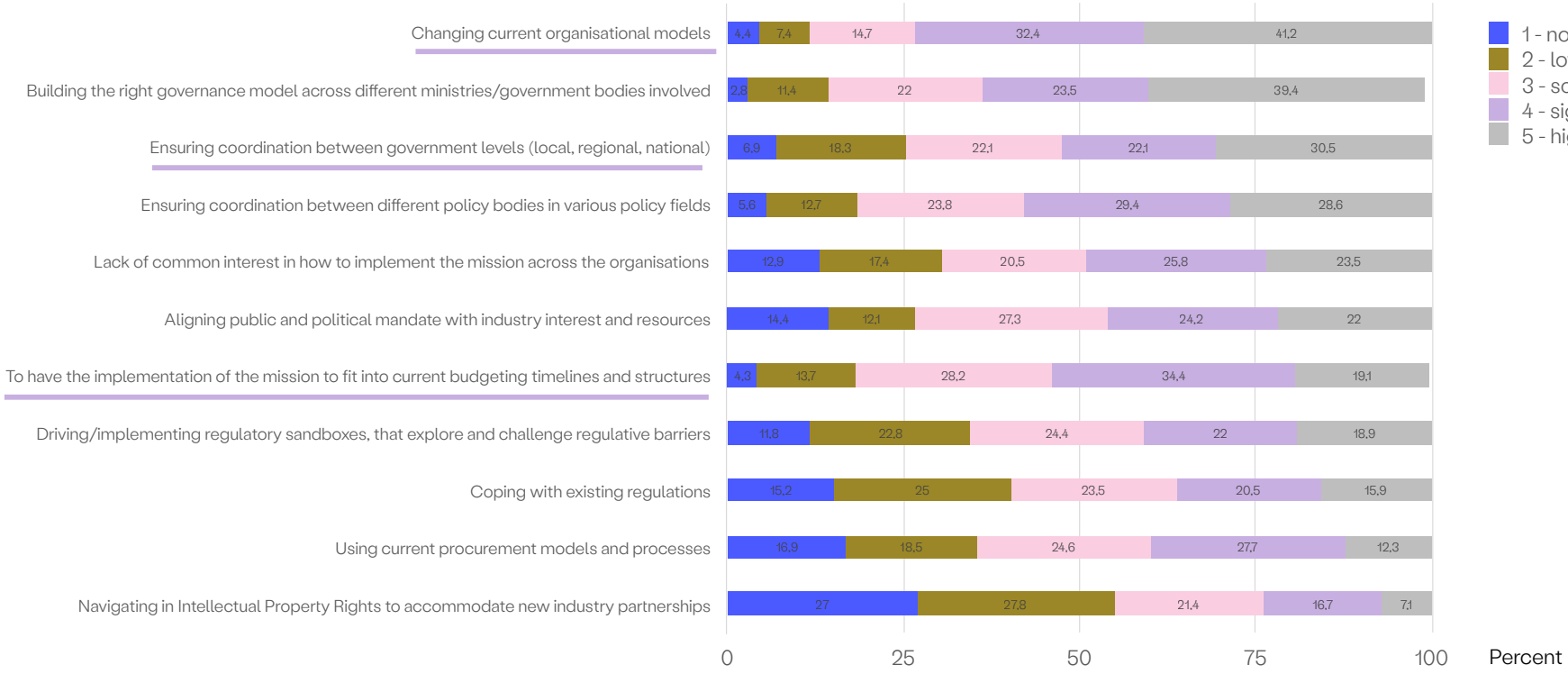
# What are the biggest *structural challenges*?

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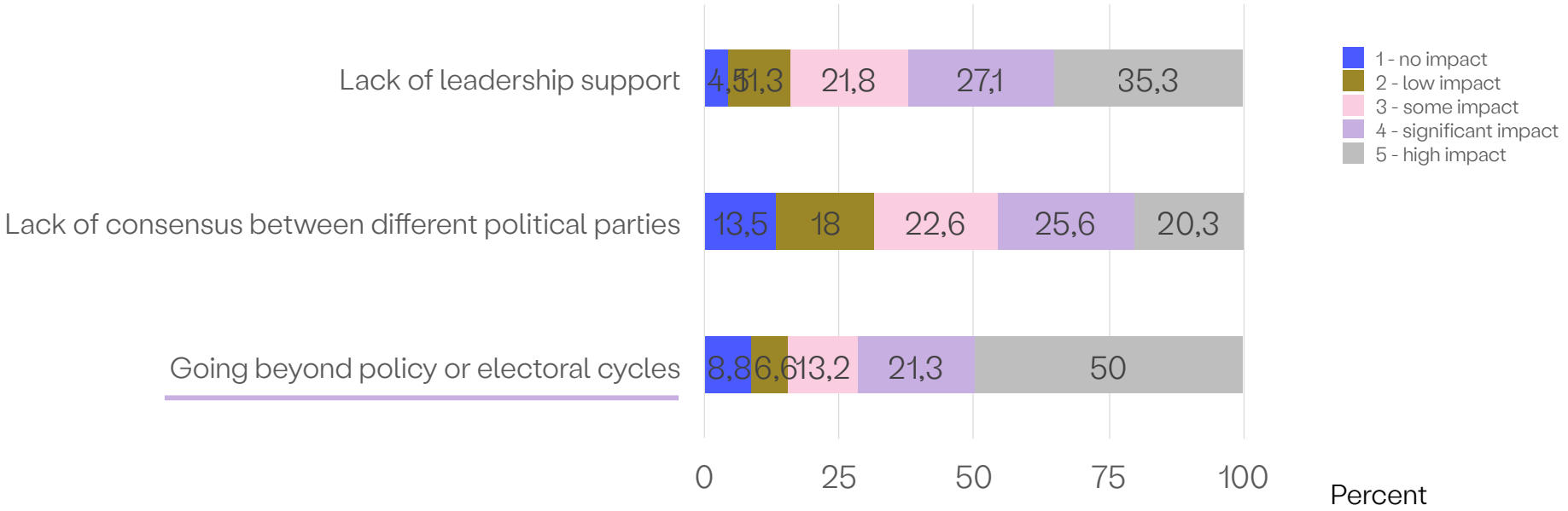
# What are the biggest *political challenges*?

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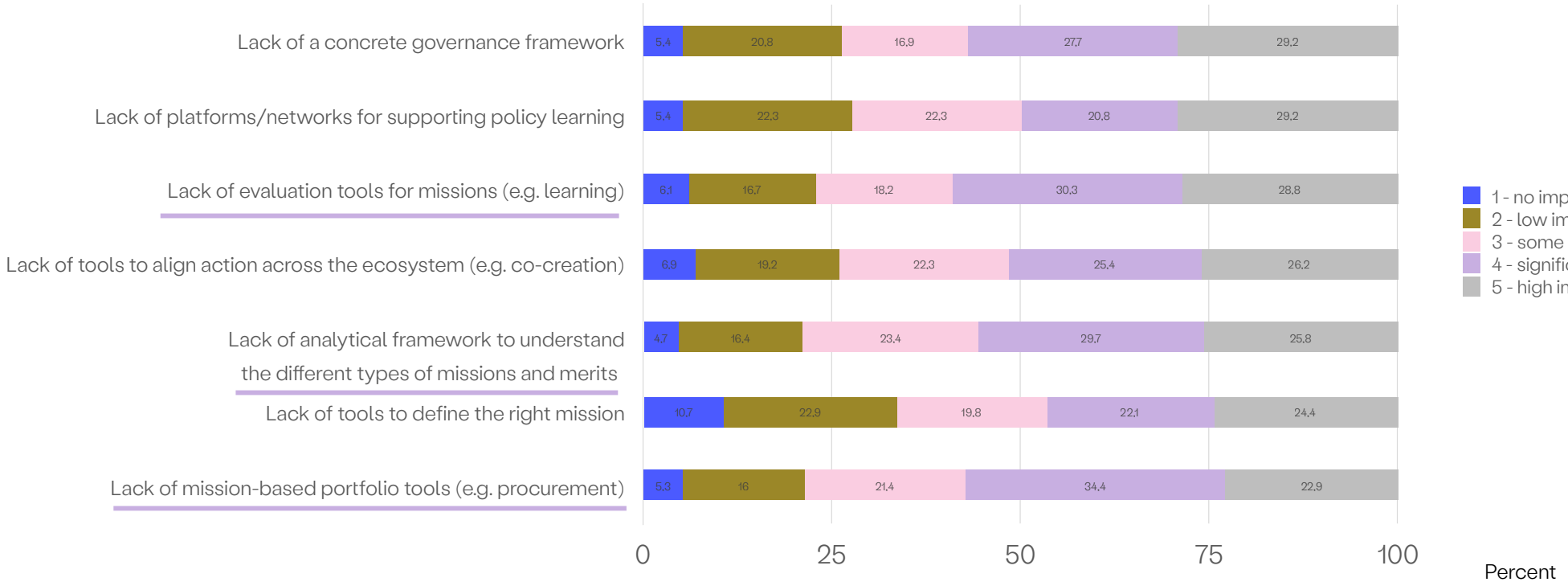
# What are the biggest *methodological challenges?*

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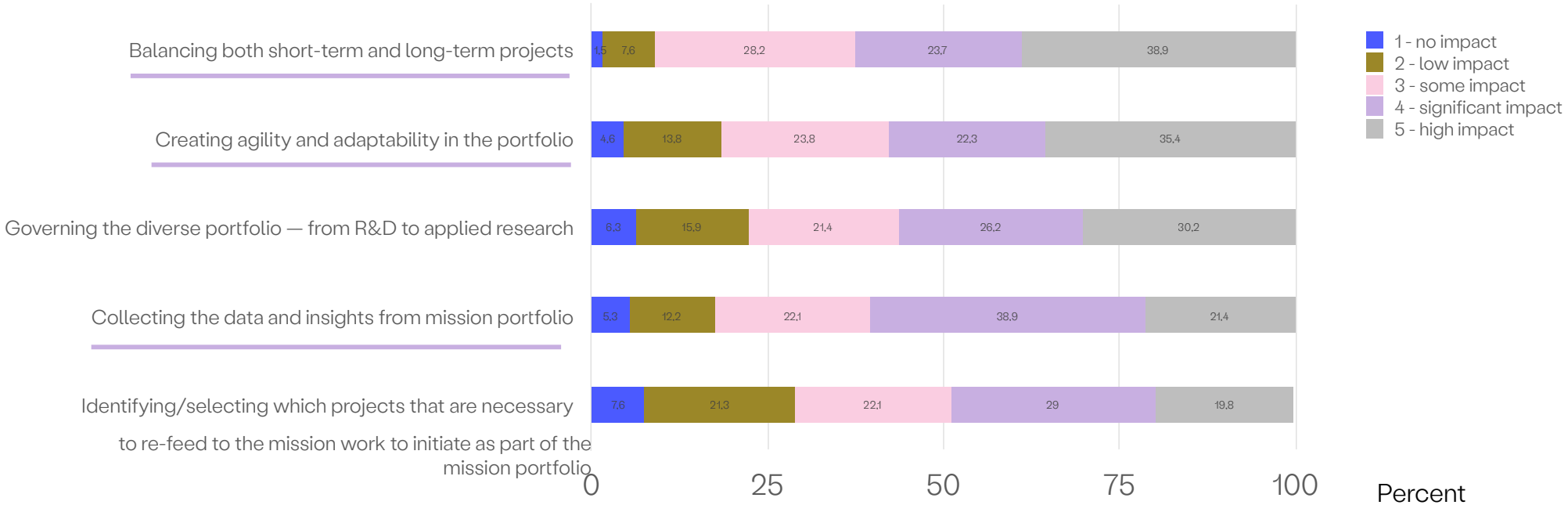
# What are the biggest *challenges building and sustaining the mission roadmap*?

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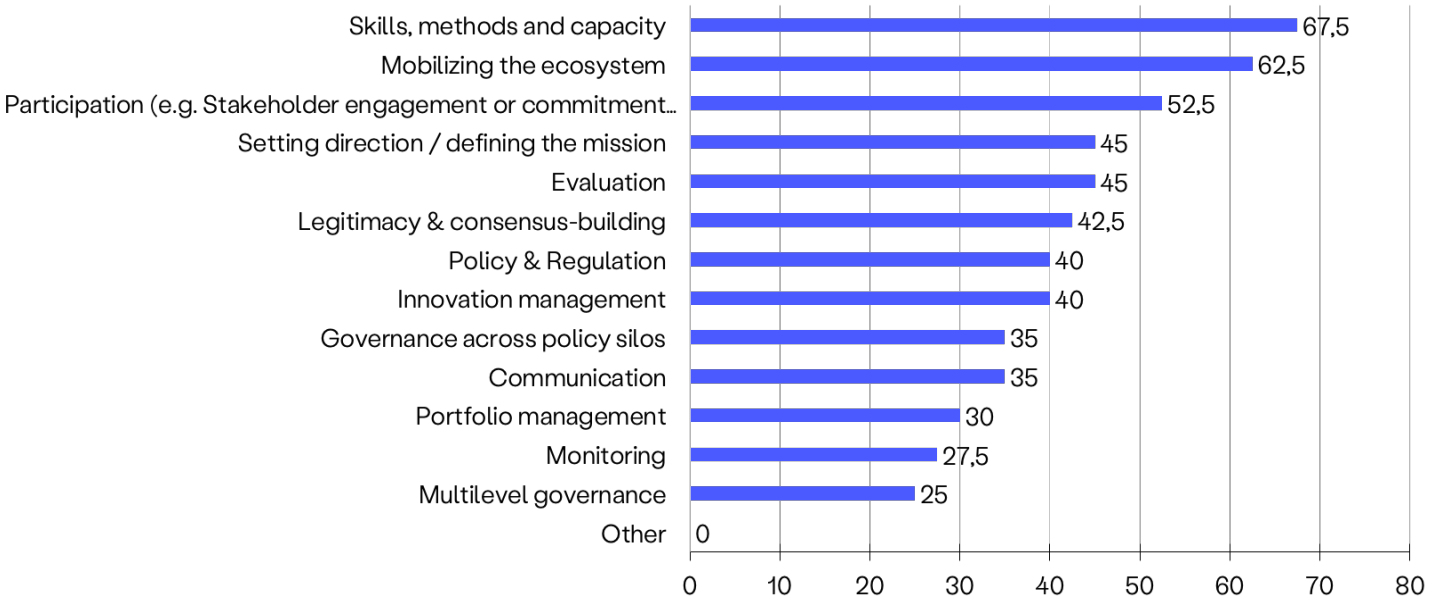
# In what areas do you need external help?




There is an ask for a broad range of support among the respondents which reflects a field in emergence.

It is noticed that e.g. governance across policy silos and monitoring is not high up this list even if these are areas mentioned as key challenges.

N: 130

“Experimentation. Missions is a novel approach, room for iterating the framework and tools through learning could be emphasized.”

Comment from respondent on support need

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# Interested in connecting - or diving more into the data?

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