



OECD Health Policy Studies



## Ready for the Next Crisis? Investing in Health System Resilience



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# Improving health system resilience

Promote key policies in:

1

Population Health



2

Health Workforce  
Retention



3

Data Collection & Use



4

International  
Cooperation



5

Supply Chain  
Resilience



6

Trust in Leadership &  
Governance





## What is the **policy relevance** of this report?

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- Resilience is understood as the ability of systems to prepare for, absorb, recover from and adapt to major shocks
- The COVID-19 pandemic is an extreme example of many different types of shock
- Could a lack of health system resilience contribute to worse outcomes and longer recovery across the OECD?
- Uses a multi-sectoral, multi-disciplinary and dynamic perspective
- Recommends reforms on an all-threat basis to reduce the impact of future disruptions



## How resilience differs from performance ?

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Three key differences:

1. Identifies connections

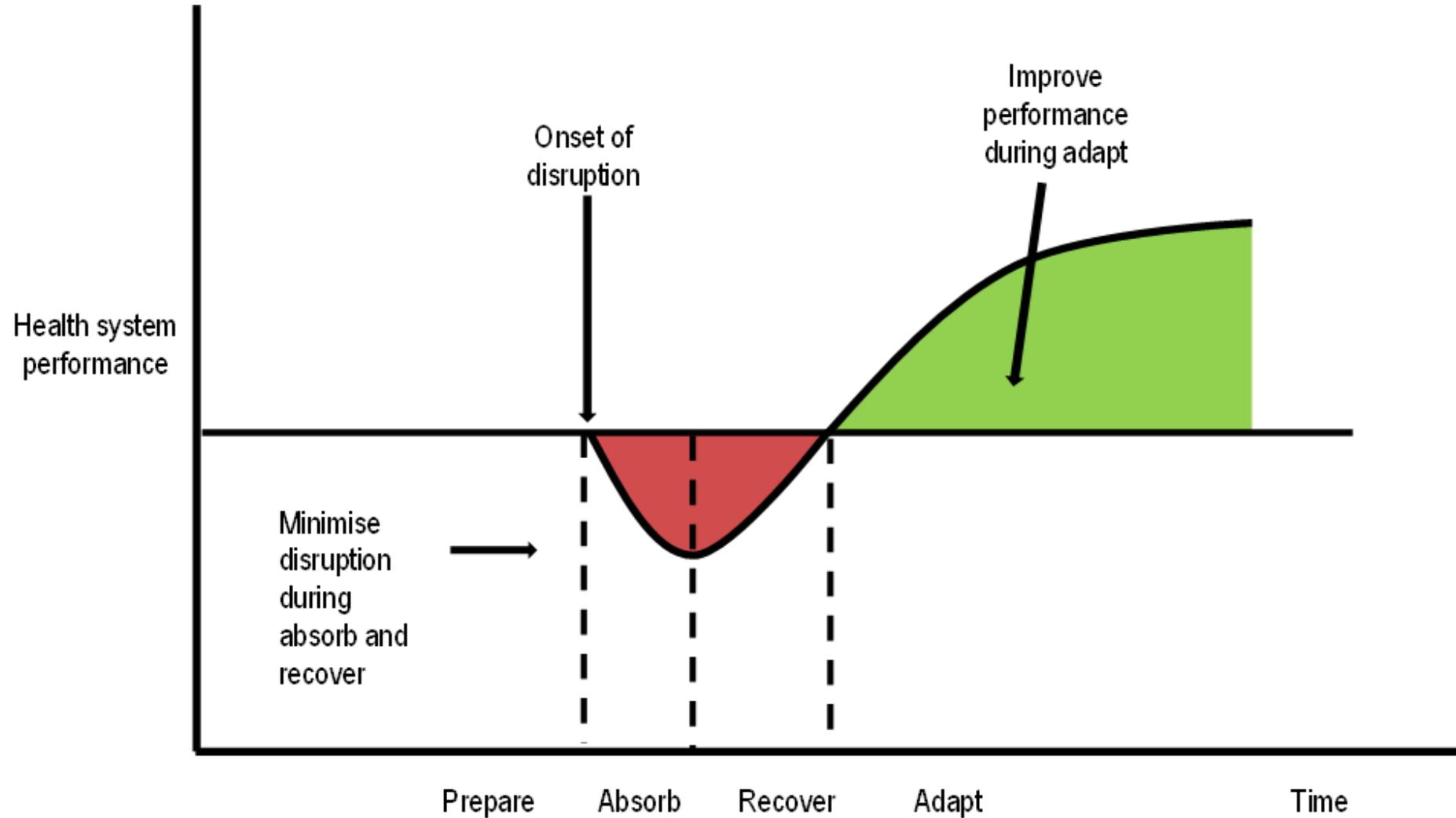
- Health systems depend on societies
- Societies depend on health systems

2. Considers recovery & adaptation, not only managing risk

3. Recognises the potential for negative feedback loops



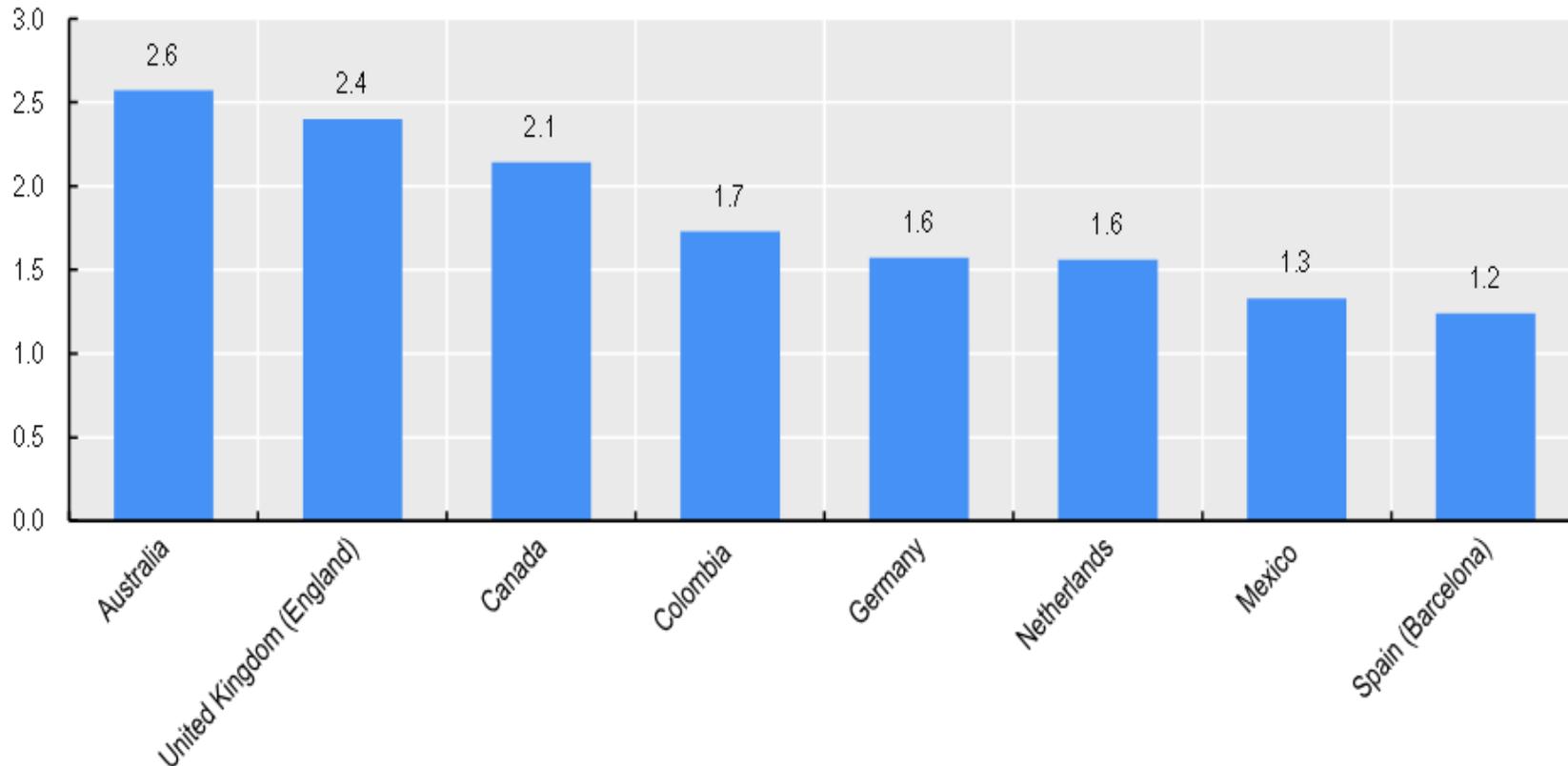
# Resilience: consider the whole **disruption cycle**





# Recommendation 1: promote healthy populations

Rate ratio for COVID-19 mortality between people living in the most and least deprived areas (selected OECD countries)

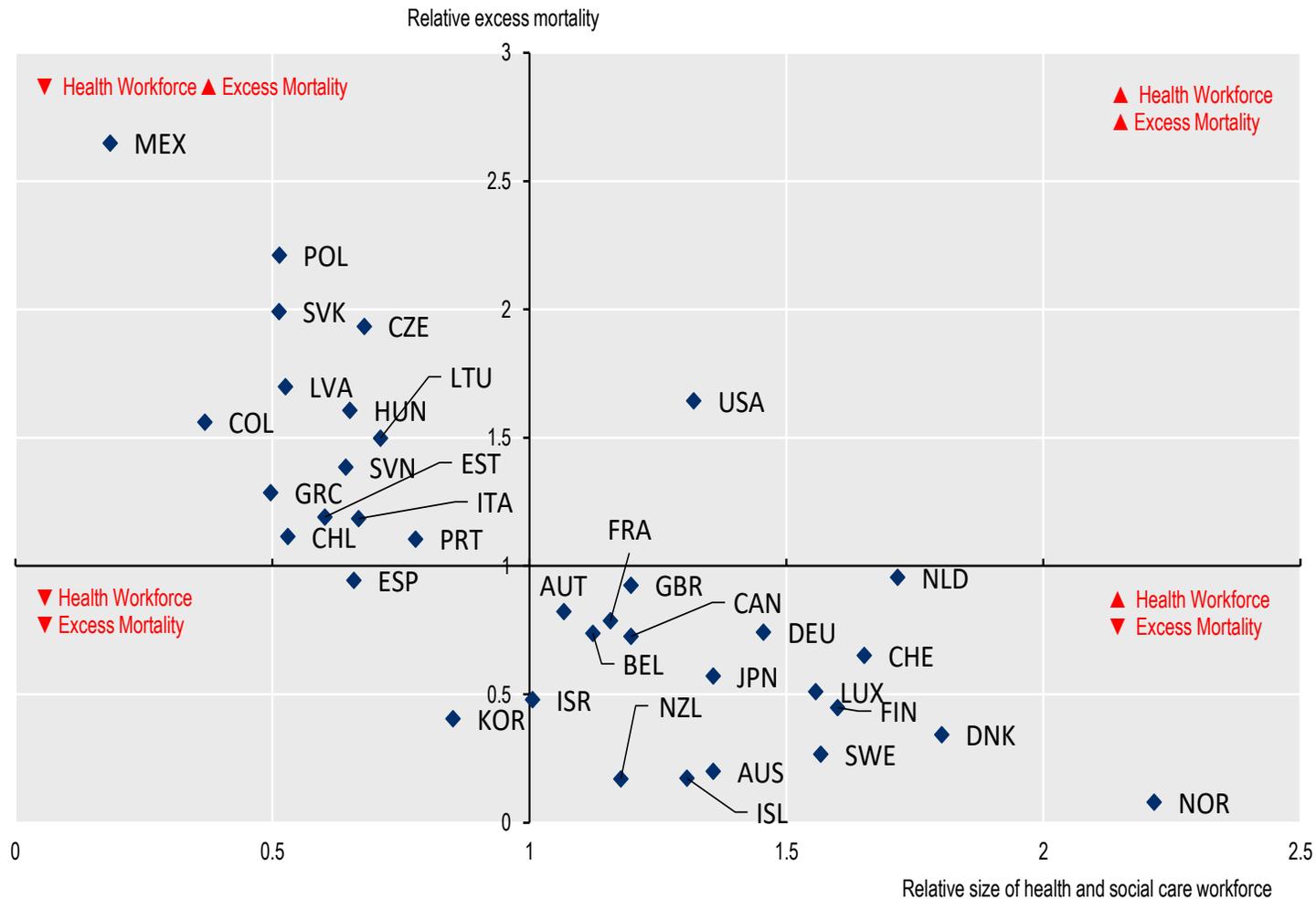


- Similar ratio when comparing other markers of vulnerability including chronic disease
- Intersectionality of multiple disadvantages
- Concerns that long COVID may have a similar gradient
- Increased vulnerability increases demand during times of disruption



# Recommendation 2: retain and recruit workers

More health workers associated with lower excess mortality (2020-21)

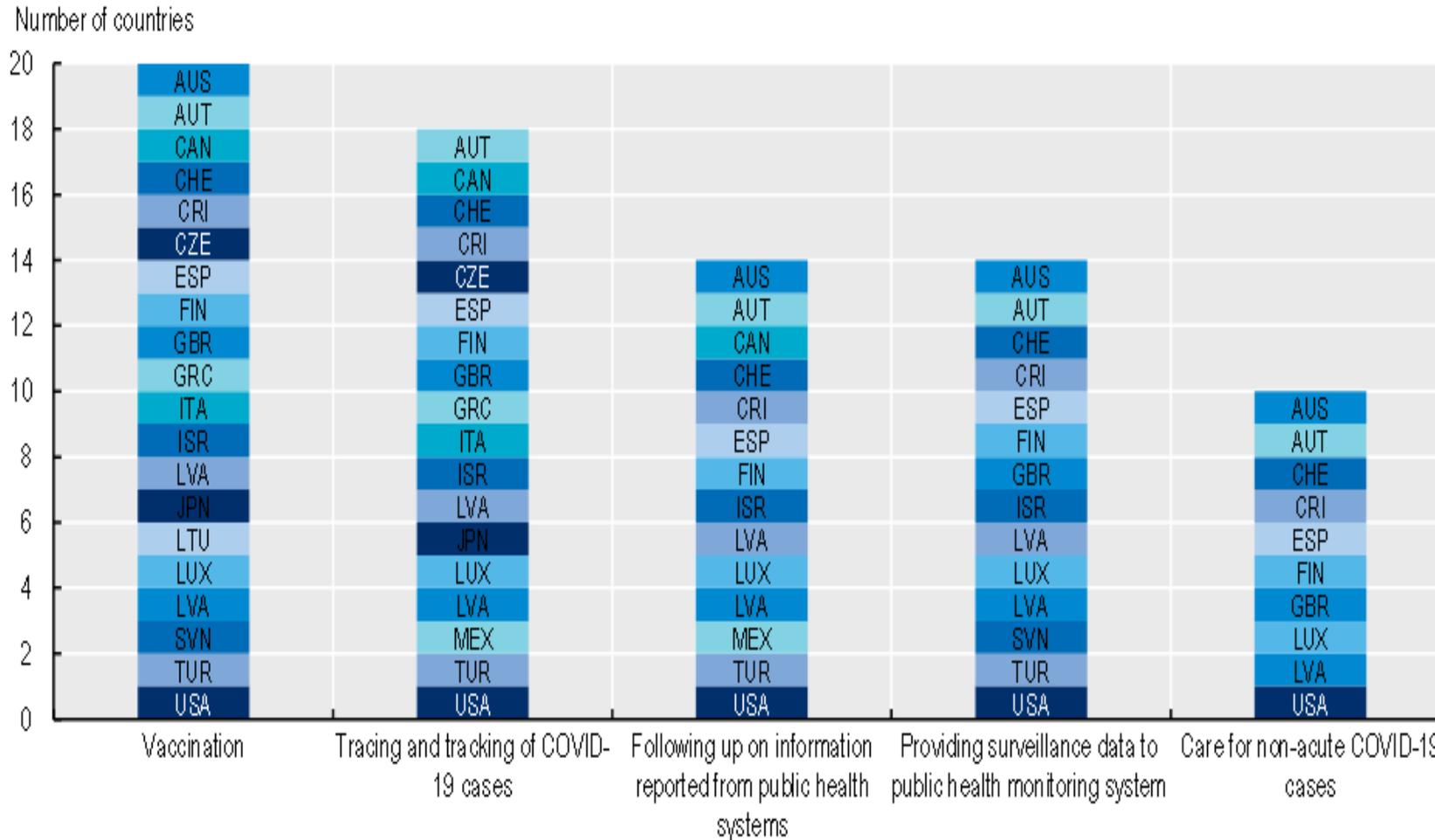


- Relying solely on increased effort from workers is problematic for chronic disruptions – it undermines recovery!
- Most countries experienced a problematic shortage of workers
- Most other critical care problems could be solved over time, but workforce shortages could persist



# Recommendation 2: workforce agility helped OECD countries absorb the pandemic

## OECD countries using non-physician health workers in COVID-19 vaccination and for track and trace activities

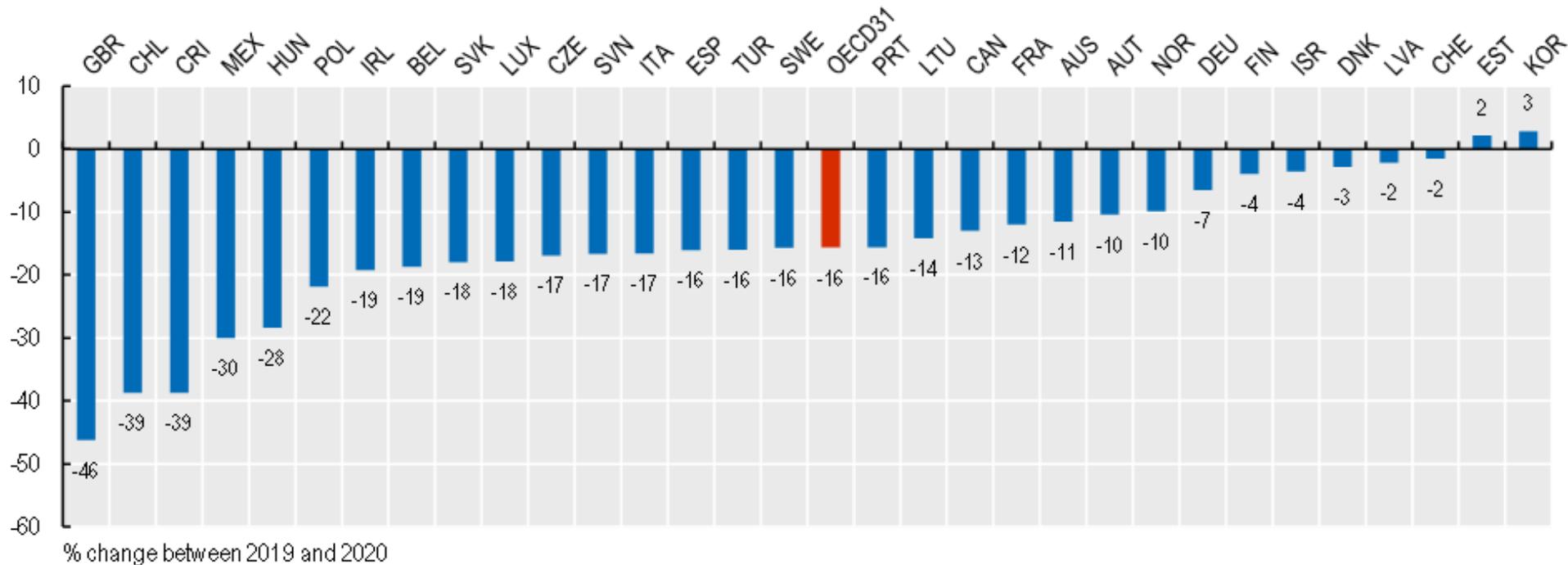


- Widespread changes in roles and responsibilities
- Widespread introduction and use of telehealth
- Different capacities required at different times during the disruption cycle



# Recommendation 2: workforce requirements change when recovering from a disruption

Reduction in hip replacements between 2019 and 2020



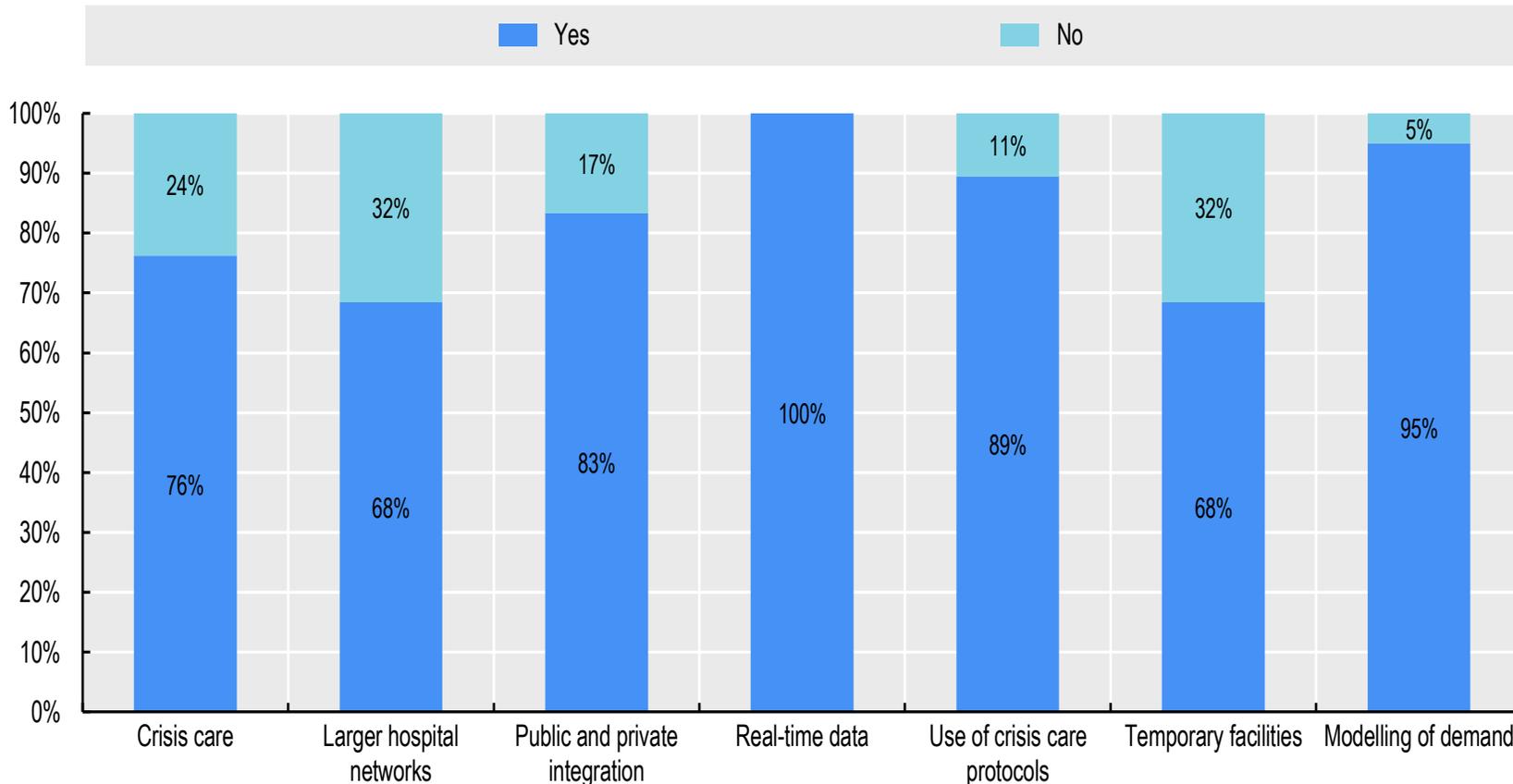
- Decisions made during the absorb stage flow on to the recover stage
- The ability to catch up on delayed and deferred care also depends on a sufficient workforce



# Recommendation 3: **enhance data** collection & use

A lack of real time data undermines effective action and reduces policy effectiveness

Percentage of countries implementing system wide policies for critical care

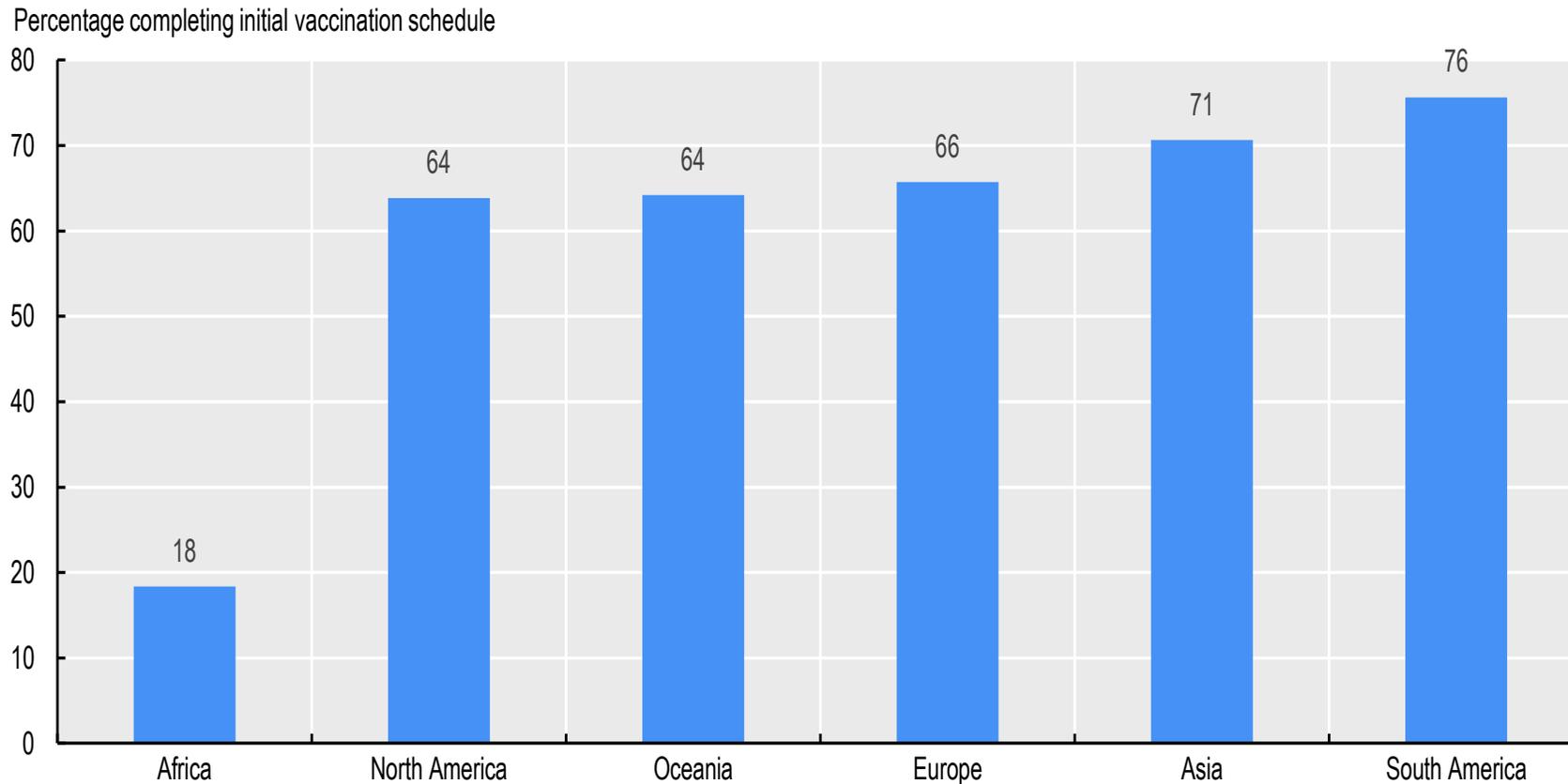


- Few countries could integrate real-time data prior to the pandemic
- The value of the information to multiple actors become apparent
- A move to telehealth was easier with a mature digital infrastructure
- Data following the patient eases transitions during disruption



# Recommendation 4: bolster **international co-operation** to respond to large-scale disruption

Completion of initial COVID-19 vaccination schedule by continent – mid 2022



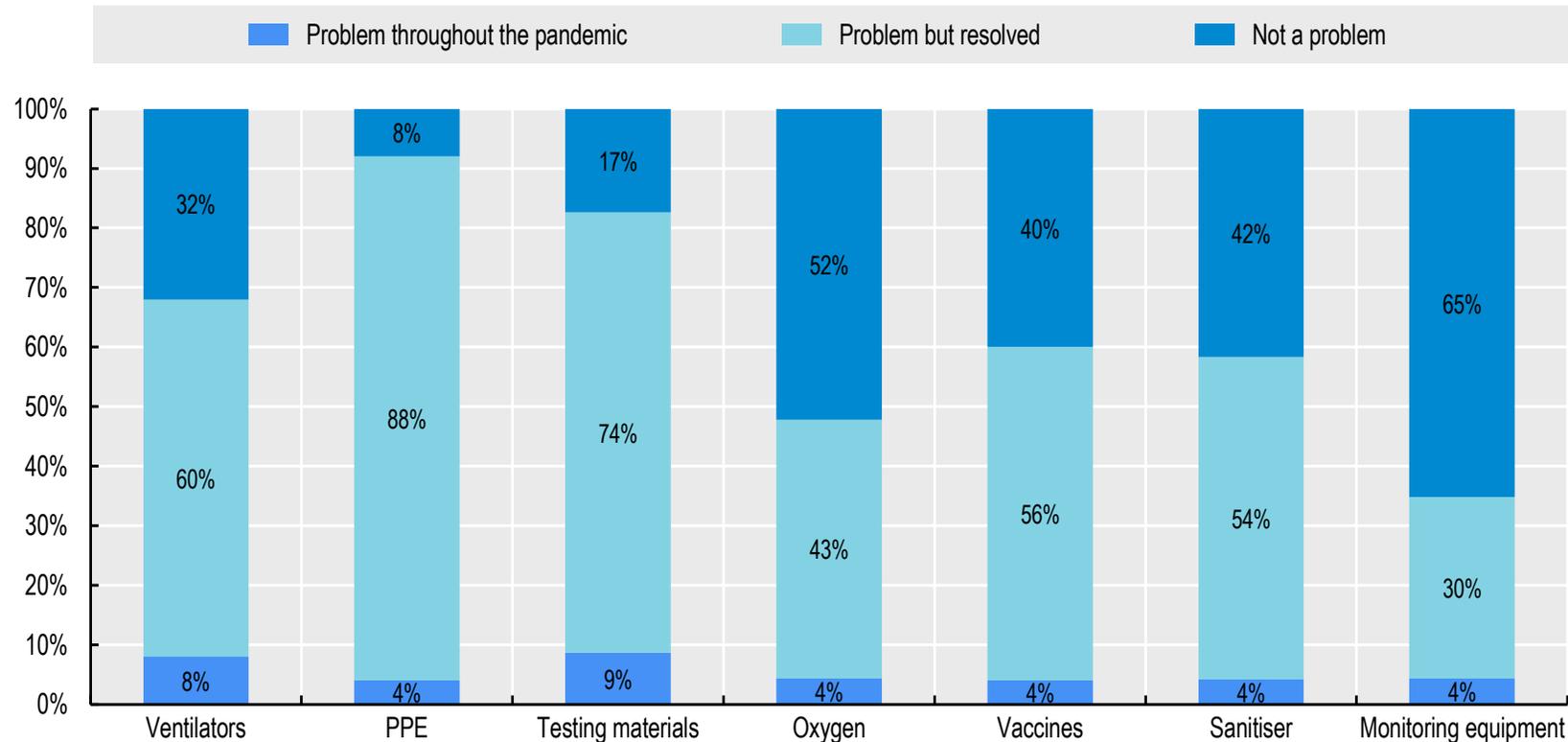
- Several problems require solutions at an international level
- Incentive and co-operation problems exist
- Global outcomes may worsen because of hoarding & free-riding issues
- Credible mechanisms need to be in place before large-scale disruption



# Recommendation 5: promote **supply chain resilience**

Reducing supply disruption critical to reducing the duration of the absorb stage

Widespread shortages of essential medicines & medical devices at the beginning of the pandemic

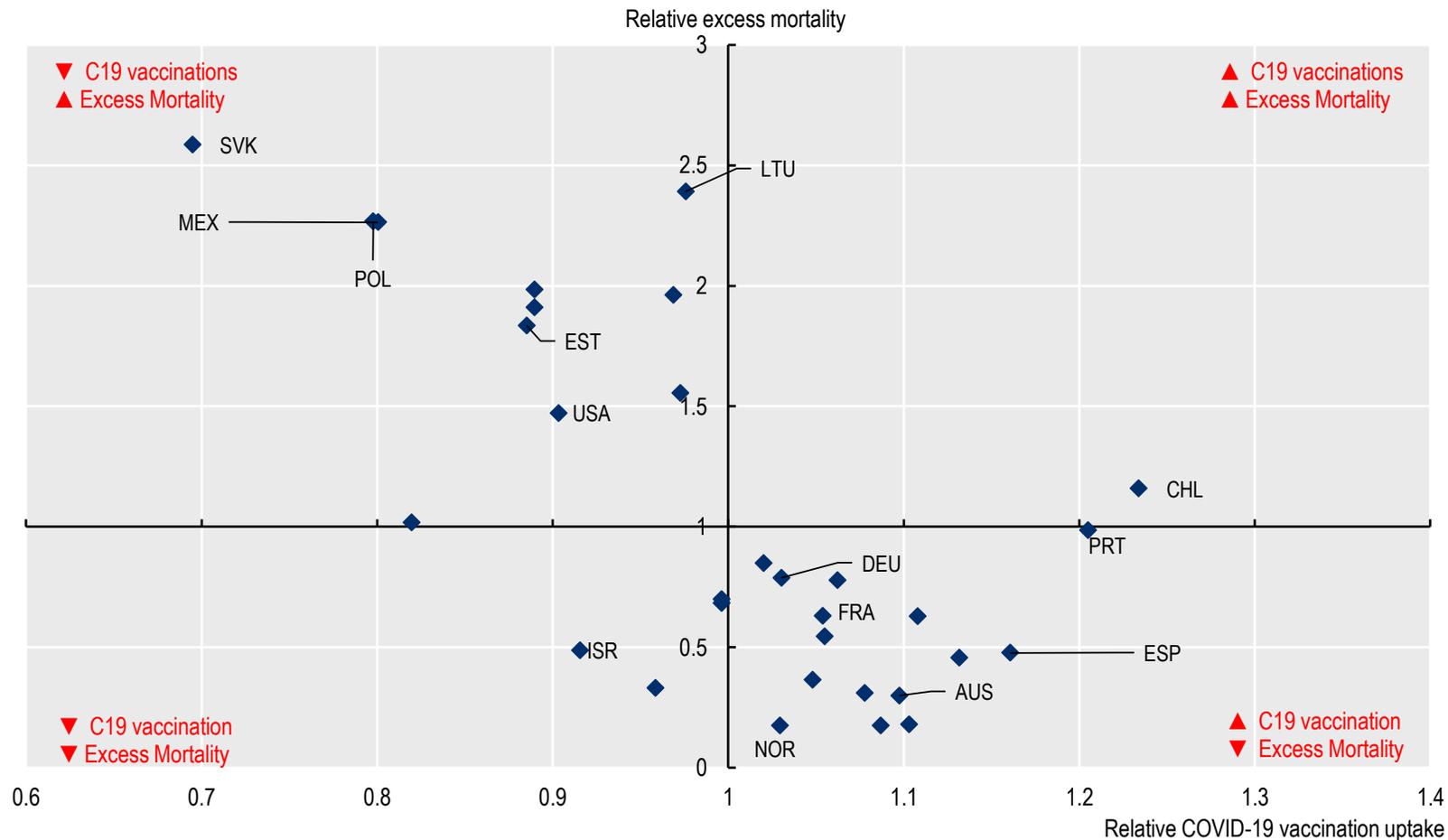


- Resilient supply chains need a combination of:
  1. Market intelligence - monitoring flows and state of supply chains
  2. Smart procurement - diversification in suppliers
  3. Strategic stockpiles - shared stockpiles with pre-agreed rules of distribution



# Recommendation 6: without **trust**, whole-of-society responses to large-scale disruption will be ineffective

Association between COVID-19 vaccination and excess mortality in 2021



- Uncertainty abounds during large-scale disruption
- Earlier policies may be reversed with evidence
- Whole-of-society cooperation is critical
- Mechanisms of transparency and trust need to be in place beforehand



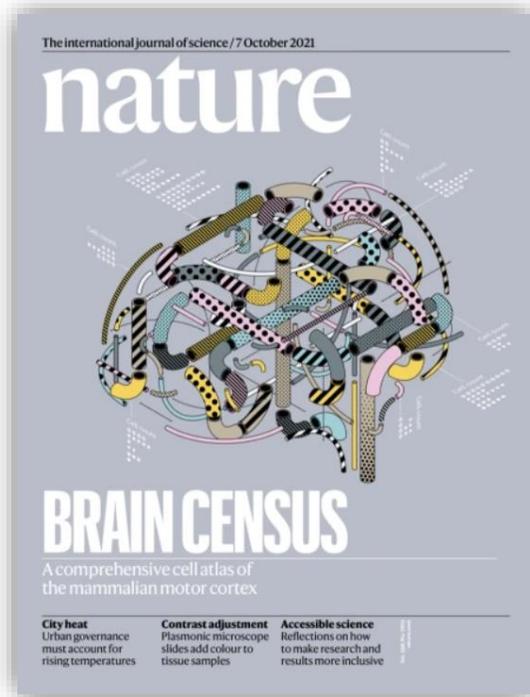
## Policy options to improve health system resilience

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- Reduce demand in times of large-scale disruption
- Ensure an available workforce for both absorbing and recovering from disruption
- Develop agility and a sound evidence base for policy action
- Consider how best to co-operate before disruption occurs
- Shorten the time to deliver essential medicines and medical devices
- Recognise that uncertainty will exist - and plan for it



# Do we need to combine **efficiency and resilience** in post-COVID societies?



“To meet the rising demands of society, efficiency-based approaches often rely on increasingly complex and interconnected systems. But when a tightly interdependent society encounters acute or chronic stressors beyond its expectations or operating capabilities, such **highly efficient systems are prone to catastrophic failure** that can delay or prevent recovery.

**More-resilient systems might be less efficient, but they recover better from systemic disruptions.”**



## Are there **trade-offs**?

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- Without investing in resilient health systems, interventions will be more costly and the impact on people greater
- Estimate 1.4% of GDP additional spending in health and social care relative to 2019
- Some policies to improve resilience will improve performance and efficiency, but not all
- Ongoing review and adaptation will be required

# THANK YOU

The report includes information and recommendations on:

Resilience in other sectors  
Containment & mitigation  
Care continuity  
Mental health  
Health workforce  
Digital foundations  
Investing in health system resilience

COVID-19 outcomes  
Critical care  
Long-term care  
Waiting times  
Supply chains  
Global public goods

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 <https://www.oecd.org/health/>

 <https://www.oecd.org/health/ready-for-the-next-crisis-investing-in-health-system-resilience-1e53cf80-en.htm>

