Communicating on Development Co-operation
Survey of DAC members and partners

Conducted by the OECD DevCom Network

December 2025

Survey goal and themes

SURVEY GOAL

- To understand how DAC members and partners approach communications.

4 FOCUS AREAS

Communication **strategies**, objectives and target audiences.

Development **narratives**, messaging and branding.

Communication **channels** and content formats.

Skills and **resources** for communications.

Survey methodology and responses

- Led by the Secretariat of the **OECD DevCom Network.**

- Conducted **online** in **August-September 2025**.

- Shared with communications focal points in **<u>DevCom</u> and <u>DAC member countries</u>**.

- **19 organisations** responded. Responses are **anonymous.**

- **32 questions** (19 open-ended and 13 closed).
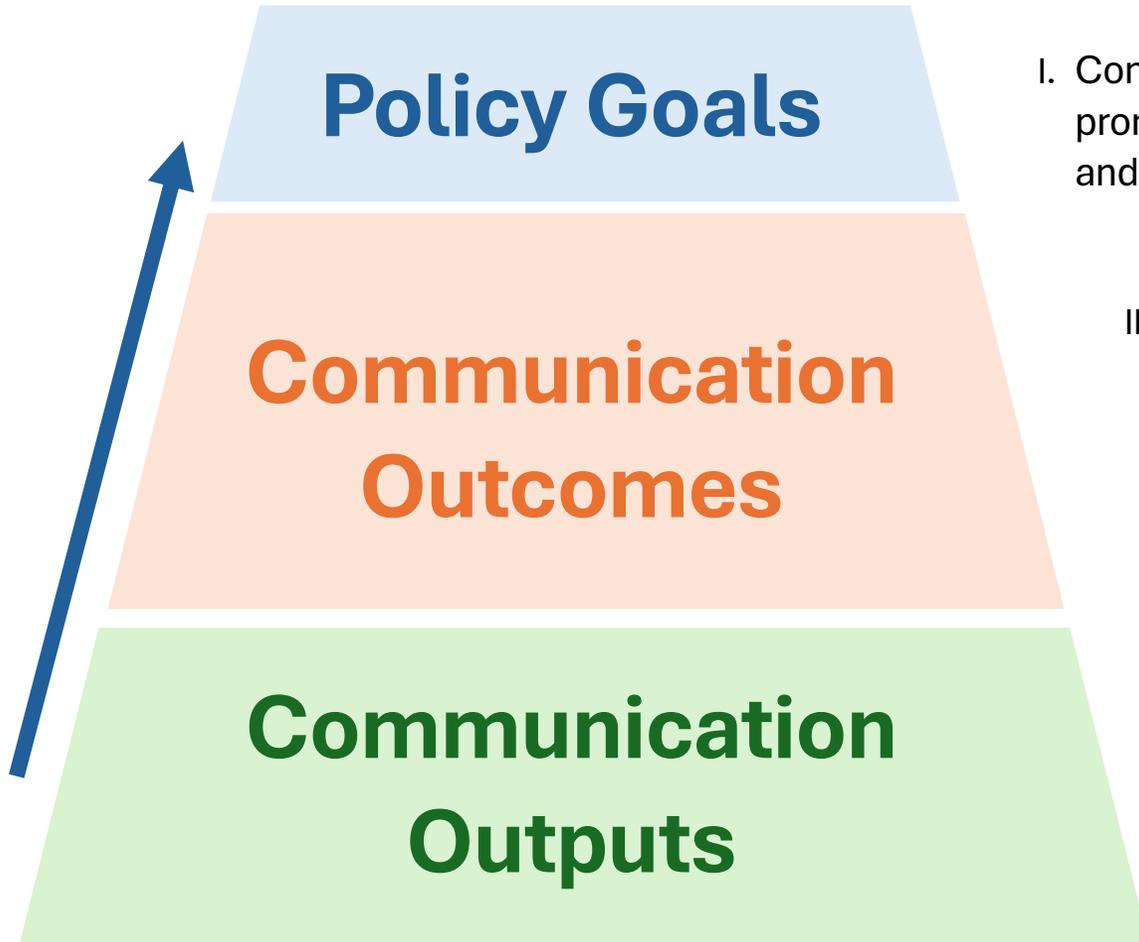
- Qualitative and quantitative questions.

Part 1
Communication strategies, objectives and target audiences

4

Goals: What do communicators aim to achieve?

When asked about their communication goals, respondents provide very diverse answers.
We divided them into 3 groups.

Policy Goals

Communication Outcomes

Communication Outputs

I. Communicators aim to help achieve policy goals, such as: promoting sustainable development; promoting national interests and values; and reinforcing multilateralism.

II. Communicators aim for impact on audiences. Their desired outcomes include: public support and taxpayer trust; informed and aware citizens; engaged stakeholders and project partners; improved national reputations; greater institutional visibility; and motivated staff.

III. In pursuit of the goals and outcomes above, communicators also aim to improve their outputs: ensuring accountability and transparency; combating mis- and disinformation; improving development storytelling, and education; communicating results; improving branding; and providing internal training.

In their own words: How selected respondents describe their goals

Our mission is to advance [our country's] interests and values by demonstrating why development matters—to [our country] and the world. We build public and stakeholder support by making the value of aid visible, its results credible, and its story compelling.

Increase our notoriety … in order to be known and recognised as a quality brand and to raise the public awareness of the added value of international cooperation.

Informing the public about global challenges and [our country's] contribution through development cooperation, building trust and legitimacy for development policy, … mobilising action and shaping narratives internationally to strengthen [our country's] role as a reliable partner and advocate for multilateralism and peace and security.

Increasing public awareness of [our country's] international assistance … Demonstrating the strategic and economic value of global engagement … Positioning [our country] as a global leader in peace, sustainable development, and security through compelling, human-centered storytelling … Reinforcing public trust by communicating how international assistance is managed, monitored, and evaluated.

1. Mobilize for joint efforts and increase knowledge so that the SDGs can be achieved. 2. Build trust in [our] ability to drive development cooperation forward and deliver results. 3. [Internally], create a culture of openness and curiosity, and motivate collective knowledge sharing and development.

Survey Question #5: What are your organisation's main communication goals?
Source: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Restricted Use - À usage restreint

## France

The French Development Agency (Afd) outlines its mission to raise awareness and provides partners with goals and guidance through a Communication kit for AFD-supported projects.

Sweden

The Swedish International Cooperation Agency (Sida) has a 2024-2026 Internal sub-strategy (pdf) on communications, clearly setting out the goals, audiences and principles for Sida's communications.
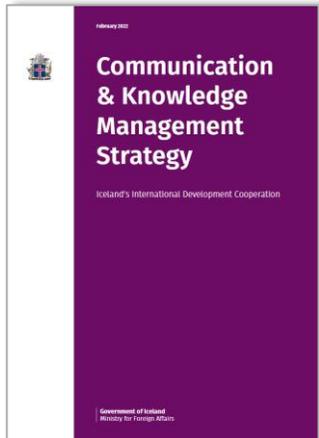
Iceland

In its Communication & Knowledge Management Strategy (pdf), the Ministry for Foreign Affairs sets out its goal of increasing understanding of the importance of the SDGs and development co-operation, and enhancing transparency and efficiency in information dissemination.

Poland

In the 2021-2030 Programme for Development Cooperation, Ch. 5 focuses on Global Education and Ch. 8 explains the purpose of communication.

Survey Question #4: Is your organisation's communication strategy publicly accessible? If yes, please provide the link.
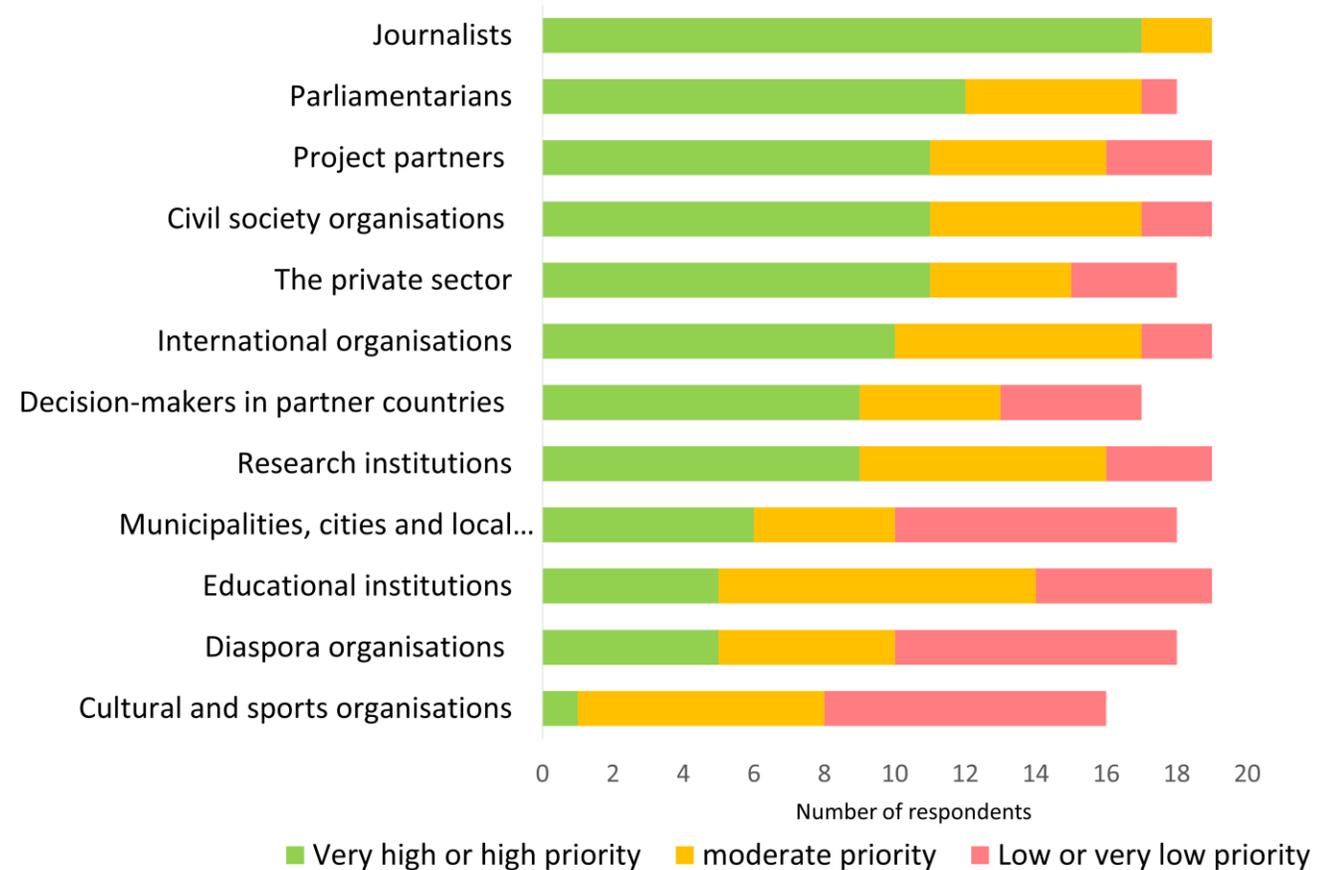**Source**: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

- Almost all respondents (17 out of 19) regard **journalists** as a high or very high priority audiences.

- In a tense political context, **parliamentarians** are seen as high or very high priority by 12 respondents.

- As key **development partners**, civil society organisations, project partners and the private sector have also joined the list of high priority audiences.

- **Educational, cultural and sports** organisations have low priority.

Number of respondents

- Very high or high priority
- moderate priority
- Low or very low priority

Survey Question #17: How much of a priority are the following stakeholder groups for your communication strategy?
Source: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

While **geo-political concerns** have grown, respondents are mainly focused on domestic audiences.

In a 2023 DevCom Survey, *half* of respondents said that their strategy focused *equally* at home and abroad.

14 of 19 respondents say that communications focuses "mainly on audiences in my country".

1 of 19 respondents says that communications focuses "mainly on audiences in partner countries".

Survey Question #8: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your organisation's communication strategy?
- The strategy focuses mainly on audiences in my country
- The strategy focuses mainly on audiences in partner countries.
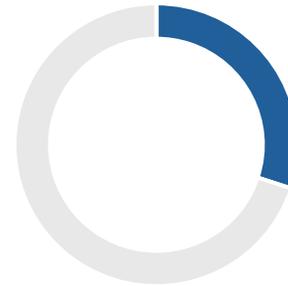**Source:** 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

The more you refine your target audience, the more effective your communication strategy.

However, only a **minority** of respondents said that they distinguish among audiences based on, for example their age or their degree of support for development co-operation.
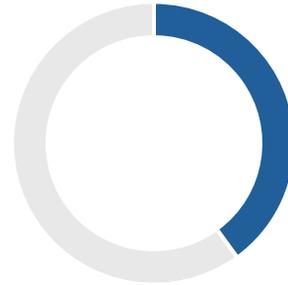
7 of 19 strategies distinguish between different age groups.

6 of 19 strategies segment audiences according to their degree of support for development co-operation.

Survey Question #8: How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about your organisation's communication strategy?
- The strategy distinguishes among different age groups
- The strategy segments audiences according to their degree of support for development co-operation

Source: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Part 2

Development narratives, messaging and branding.

Narratives: How do respondents explain development co-operation?

We asked respondents whether their narrative was changing.
Their answers highlight a new set of "narrative principles".

PRINCIPLES WE FOUND...

WHAT RESPONDENTS SAID...

Partnership

"we are a genuine partner"   *"respect mutual benefit and solidarity"*
"win-win partnerships"   *"co-operation among equals "*

Global influence / standing

"promoting our culture"   *"positioning us as global leader"*
"we remain committed while others step back"   *"emphasise our footprint"*

National interest

"alignment with foreign policy"   *"defending our sovereignty"*
"impact for us"   *"highlighting the role of global engagement in trade"*

Local ownership

"Country-led, inclusive approaches"   *"commitment to shift in power"*
"intersectionality, decolonized language, and inclusive storytelling"   *"We cannot pretend to "develop" a country. All countries are developing."*

Results & Strategy

"results-oriented narratives"   *"the strategic role of development"*
"a refreshed, modern approach development"

Several respondents told us that they were changing the terminology to describe their organisation's work.

OLD TERMS

"Aid"

"developing countries"

"donor"

"grants"

" development co-operation"

NEW TERMS

"sustainable investments"

"partnership"

"expertise"

"partner countries"

"investor"

"international cooperation"

Survey Question #13: Has the narrative of your organisation changed in recent years, or are changes planned? If so, please describe the reasons for this decision, the main elements of the new narrative and the main outcomes you have observed so far.
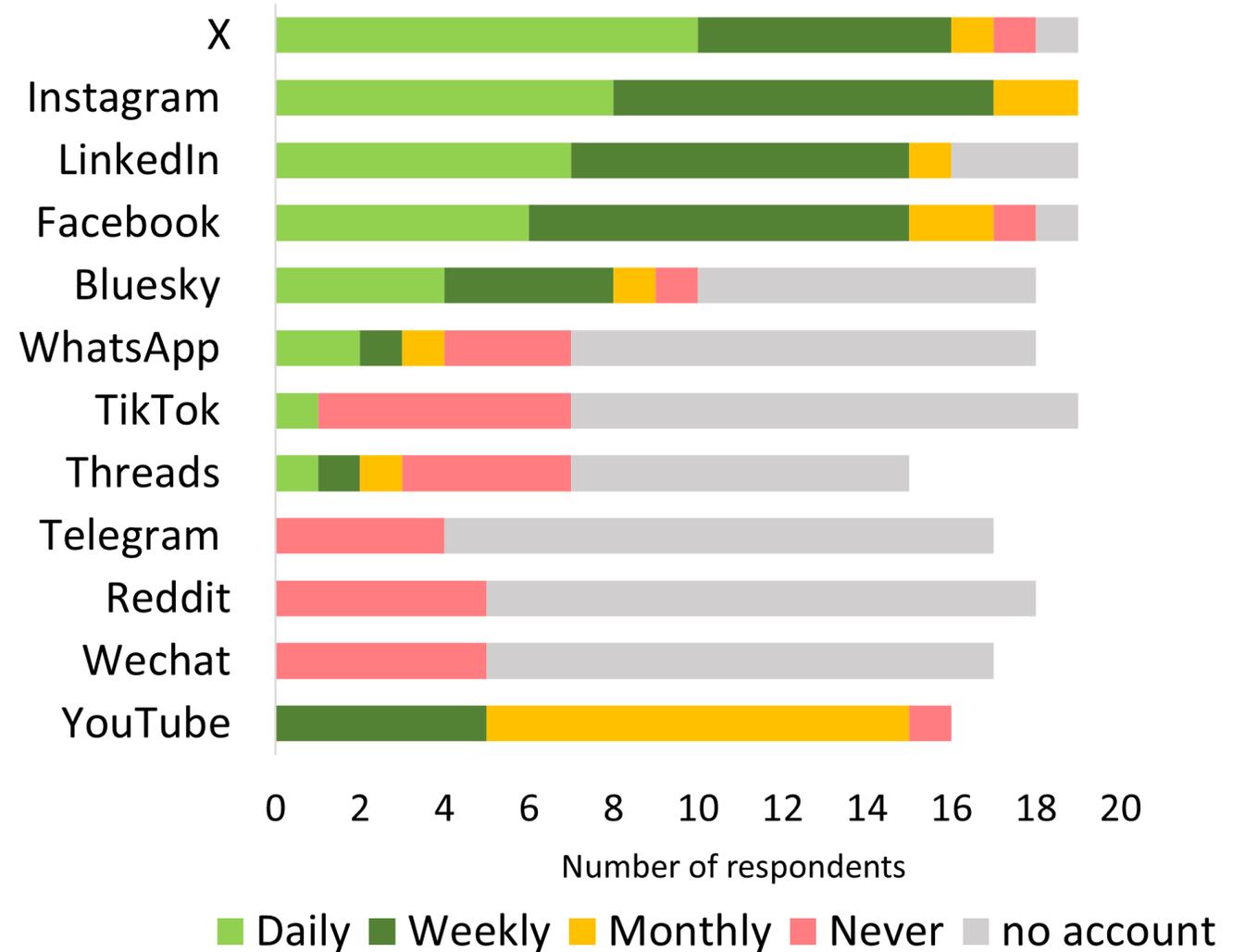**Source**: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

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Part 3
Communication channels and content formats

- **X** remains the most popular social media platform, with 10 respondents posting daily.

- At least 15 respondents post weekly on **Instagram**, **LinkedIn**, **Youtube** and **Facebook**.

- Almost all respondents have **Bluesky** and **Threads** accounts, but few post regularly.

- **2** respondents frequently use **WhatsApp**

- Only **1** respondent posts on **TikTok** frequently.

Number of respondents

Legend: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Never, no account

Survey Question #17: How often does your organisation posts on the following digital plaftorms?
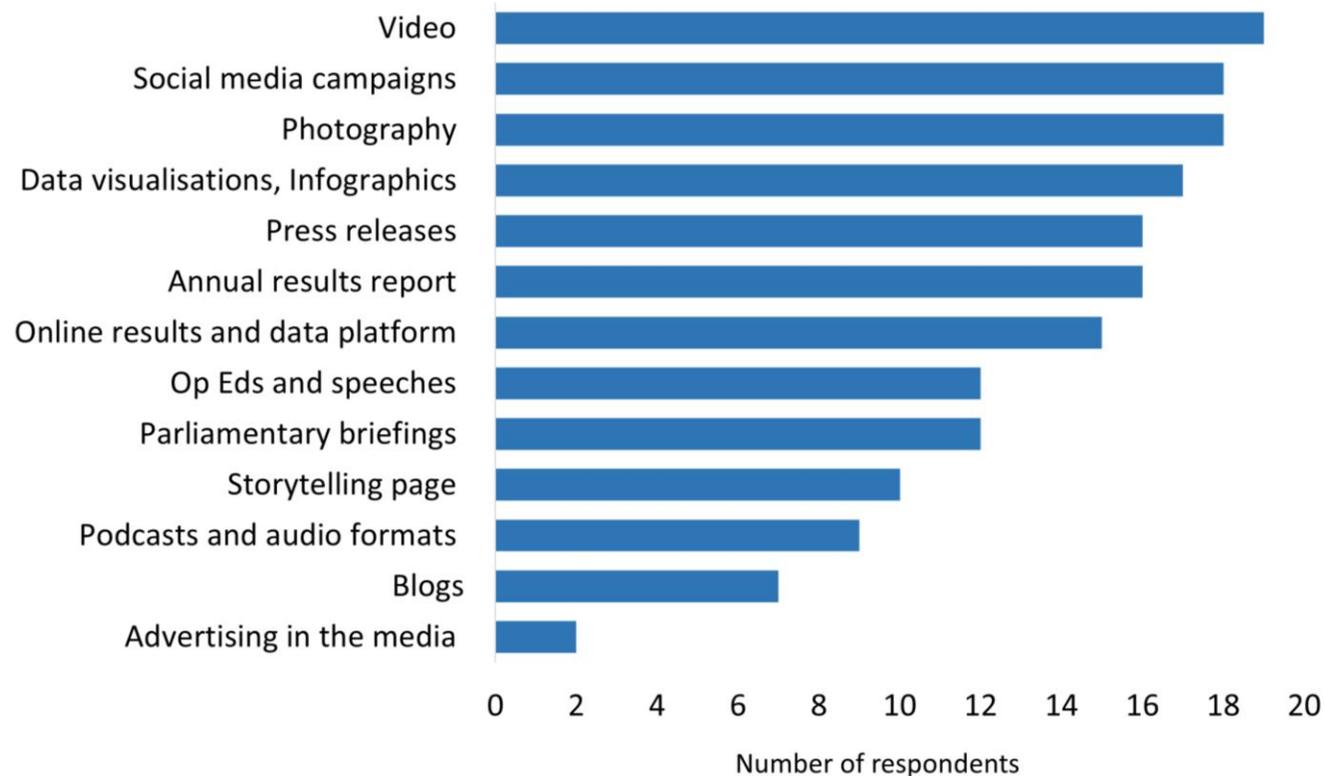**Source**: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

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Communicators are innovating. Among 19 respondents:

- All say they produce **video** content

- 18 work with **photography**

- 17 produce **data visuals and infographics**

- 9 use **podcasts and audio** formats

Formats and tools used to share results

Format	Number of respondents
Video	
Social media campaigns	
Photography	
Data visualisations, Infographics	
Press releases	
Annual results report	
Online results and data platform	
Op Eds and speeches	
Parliamentary briefings	
Storytelling page	
Podcasts and audio formats	
Blogs	
Advertising in the media	

Number of respondents

Survey Question #20: Does your organisation use the following tools to communicate about its results?
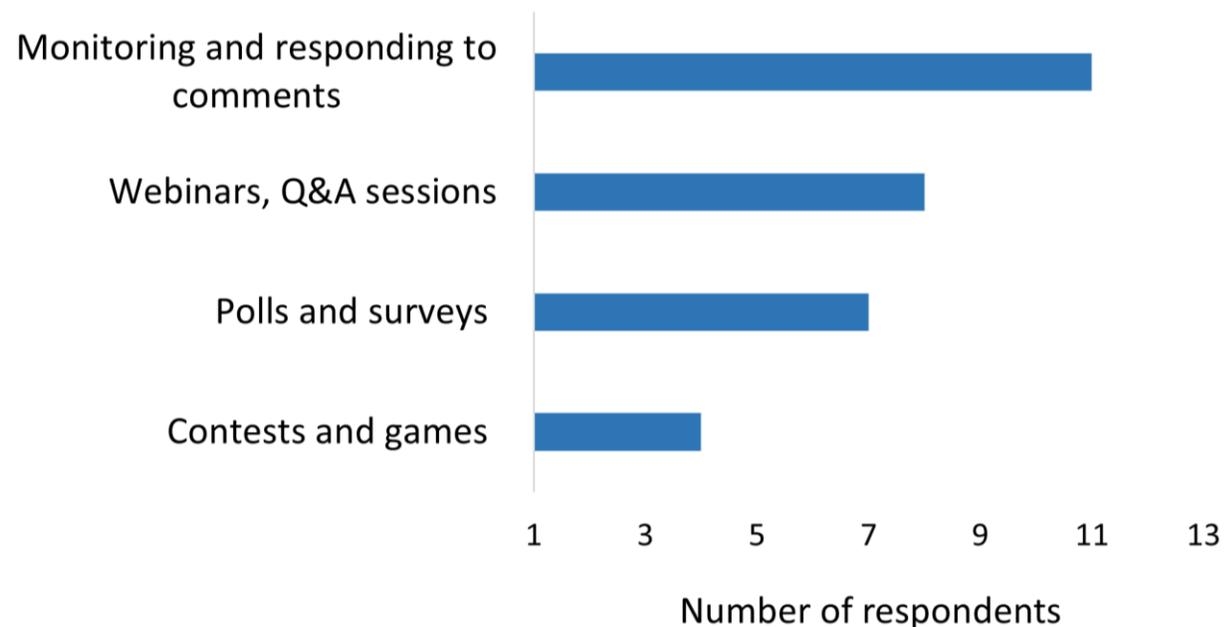**Source:** 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

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Offering audiences opportunities to interact can boost their interest and engagement.

Some respondents interact with their audiences, but interactive formats are not widely used.

- Respondents are more likely to interact with their audiences through **the monitoring and response to comments online**.

- Several respondents use **Webinars, Q&A sessions, polls, and surveys**.

- **Contests and games** are used rarely.

Methods used to interact with audiences

Number of respondents

Survey Question #22: Does your organisation interact with your its audiences online through the formats below?
Source: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Part 4
Skills & resources for communications.

TEAM SIZES

- When asked how many people have communications as a full-time responsibility in the organisation, answers **varied from 1 to 150**!

TEAM LOCATION

- Some have teams based entirely at **headquarters**. Others are spread across **country offices**.

TEAM FOCUS

- Some teams are **dedicated entirely to development co-operation**. Others are tasked with a much broader range of foreign policy issues.

TEAM POSITIONING

- In most cases, communication is **part of organisational leadership**.

Survey Question #27: How many individuals in your organisation have communications as their primary responsibility?
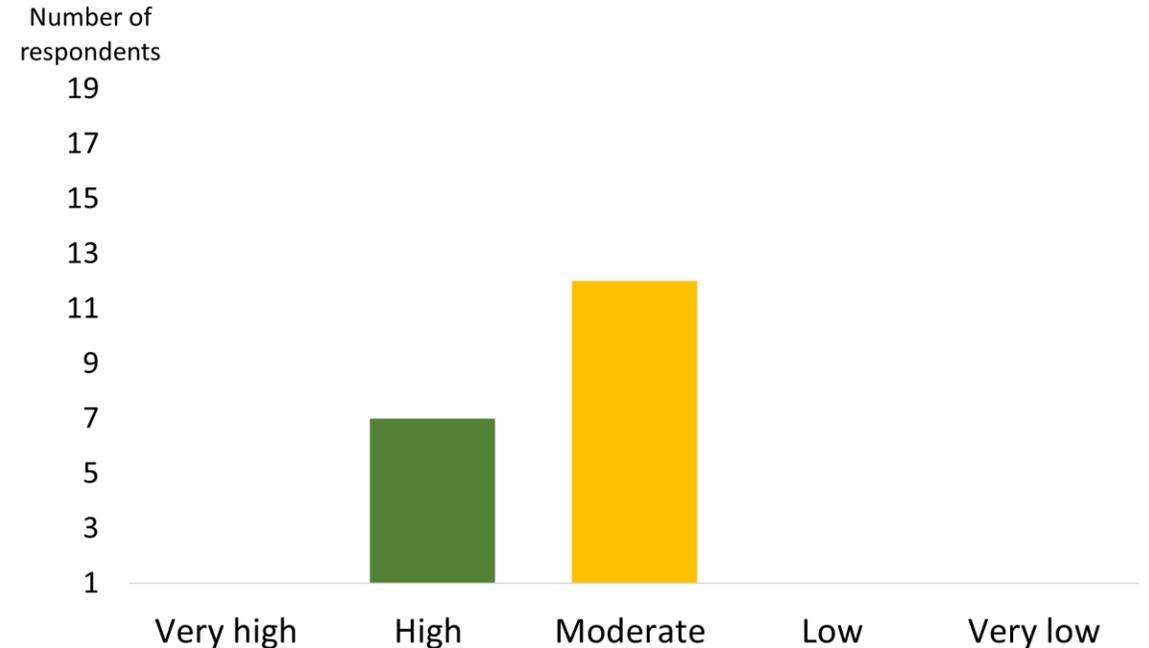**Source:** 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Are resources & skills for communications adequate?

- Respondents appear **satisfied** with the resources and skills at their disposal. Among our 19 respondents:

  - 7 rate their resources and skills as "high".

  - 8 told us their **teams had grown** in the past 2-3 years.

  - Almost all respondents told us that communications and policy departments were very well coordinated.

- However, not everyone feels the same way.

  - 12 rated their level of resources and skills as "moderate".

  - 4 told us their team had shrunk in recent years.

  - When asked about their main challenges, one respondent mentioned budget constraints, a lack of specialized personnel and the lack of support from policy departments.

How respondents rate their organisation's resources and skills for communications

Number of respondents

Bar chart showing number of respondents (y-axis from 1 to 19) by rating: Very high (0), High (7), Moderate (12), Low (0), Very low (0).

Question #23: How would you rate the level of resources and skills your organisation has for communications? How has the size of your organisation's communications team changed over the last 2-3 years?
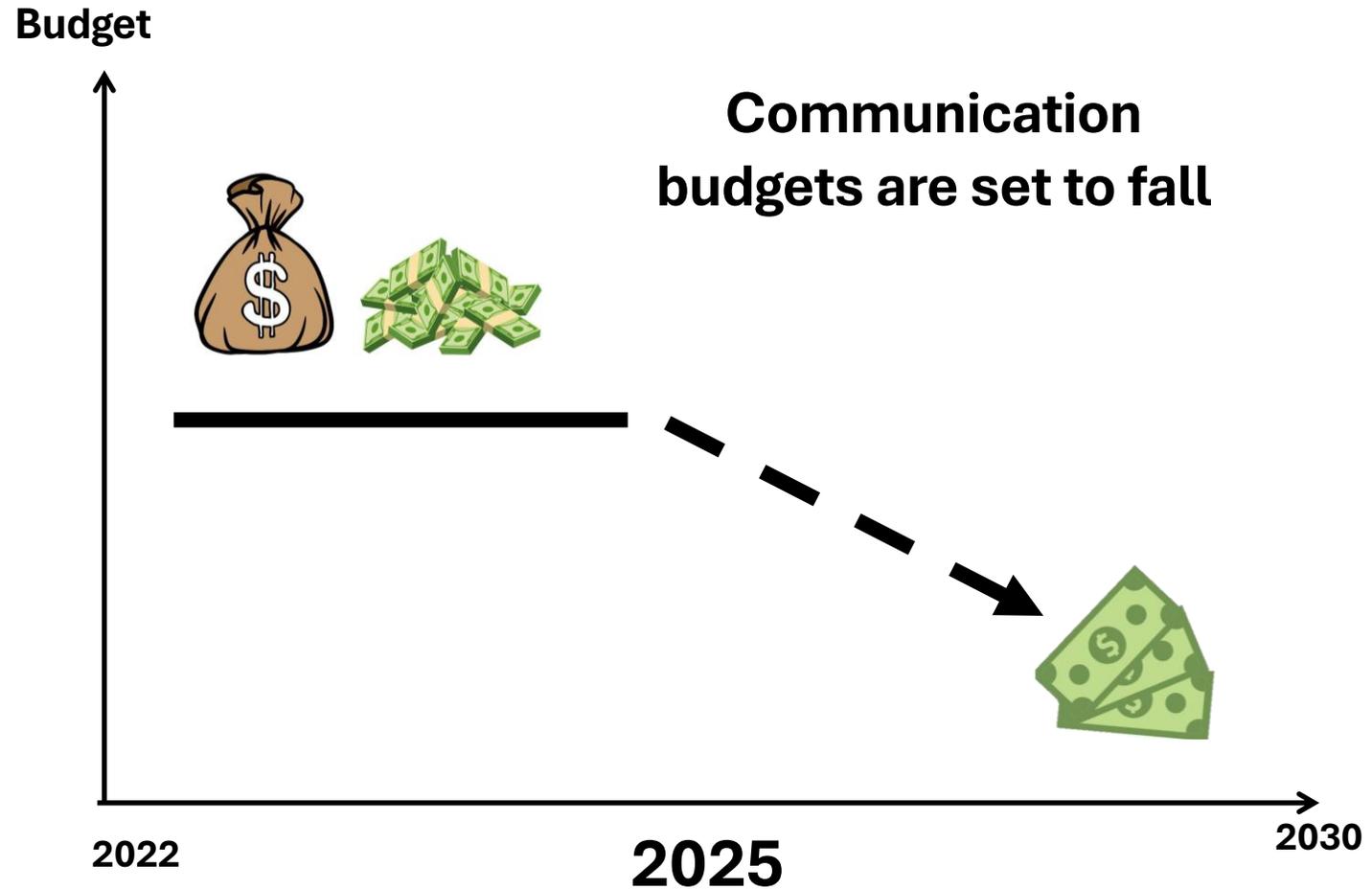**Source:** OECD DevCom Survey 2025

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Communicators face falling budgets

While communication budgets have remained stable in recent years, they are likely to fall.

- 10 (of 19) respondents said their budget had stayed the same over the past 2-3 years.

- 5 said that their budget had decreased, while 3 said it increased.

- **10 of 18** respondents believe their **budget will likely fall** in the next 2-3 years.

Budget

Communication budgets are set to fall

2022

2025

2030

Survey Questions #24 and #25: How has your organisation's budget for communications changed over the last 2-3 years? How do you expect your organisation's budget for communications to change over the coming 2-3 years?
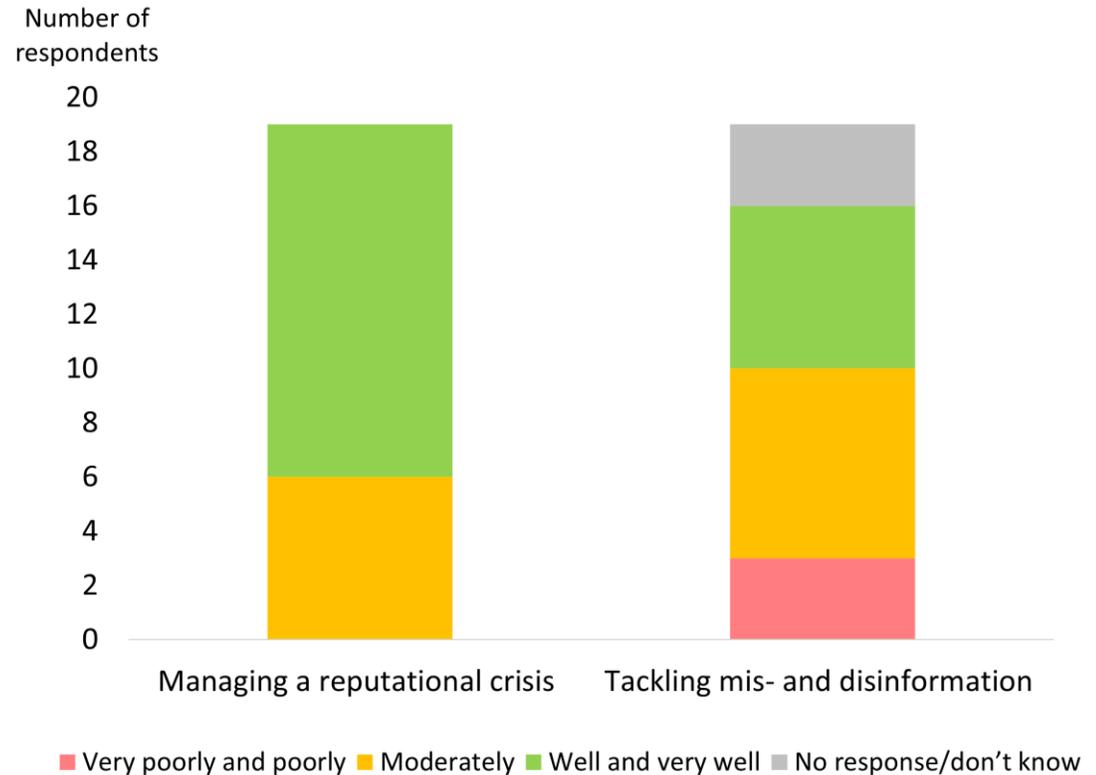**Source:** 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Respondents are fairly confident about reputation management.

- **13 of 19** said their organisation was **"well" or "very well" equipped** to manage a reputational crisis.

- Only **3 of 16** respondents said they were **"poorly" or "very poorly" equipped tackle mis- and disinformation.**

Readiness to manage a reputational crisis, and tackle mis- and disinformation

Number of respondents

Managing a reputational crisis   Tackling mis- and disinformation

■ Very poorly and poorly ■ Moderately ■ Well and very well ■ No response/don't know

Survey Question #30: How well would you say your organisation is equipped for the following task "managing reputational crisis" and "tackling mis- and disinformation?
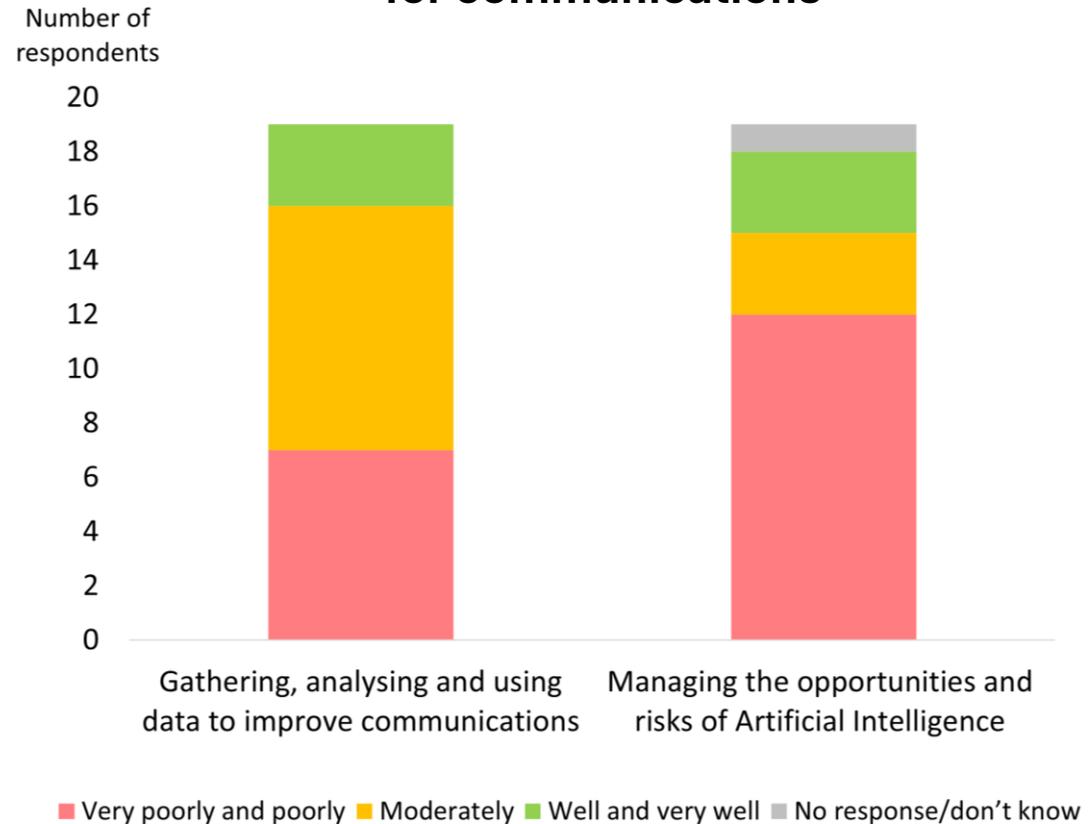**Source**: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

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- **Only 3 out of 19** respondents say they are "well" or "very well" equipped to gather, analyse and use data for communications.

- **12 out of 19** respondents believe their team is "poorly" or "very poorly" equipped in managing the opportunities and risks of A.I.

Readiness to harness data and manage A.I for communications

Number of respondents

Legend:
- ■ Very poorly and poorly
- ■ Moderately
- ■ Well and very well
- ■ No response/don't know

X-axis categories: Gathering, analysing and using data to improve communications | Managing the opportunities and risks of Artificial Intelligence

Survey Question #30: How well would you say your organisation is equipped for the following task: "gathering, analysing and using data to improve communications" and "managing the opportunities and risks of Artificial Intelligence "?
Source: 2025 OECD DevCom Survey

Top communication skills gaps in development organisations

**We asked respondents to describe the main communication skills gaps in their organisation.
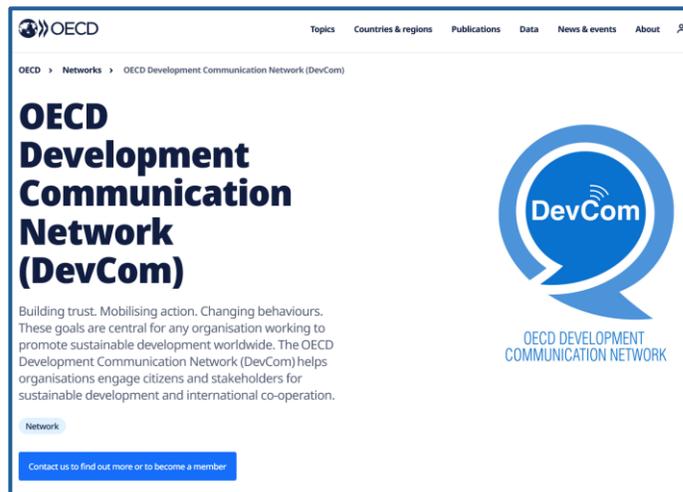Here are their five most common responses:**

1. Producing high-quality **multimedia** content.

2. Sourcing and telling **results** stories.

3. Analyzing and using **data**.

4. Mastering **A.I.**

5. Managing **campaigns**.

Thanks! Want to learn more?

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