

OECD contribution to the:



OECD States of Fragility 2016 report

At the moment, 1.5 billion people - one in five people - live in contexts affected by fragility. Improving our understanding of this momentous development challenge lies at the heart of the OECD States of Fragility report. This year's edition, forthcoming in November 2016, will be dominated by two questions: How should we monitor fragility? And what role does the 'new violence' play in fragility? Although the research for the report is still in progress, this note offers a preview of some emerging research findings.

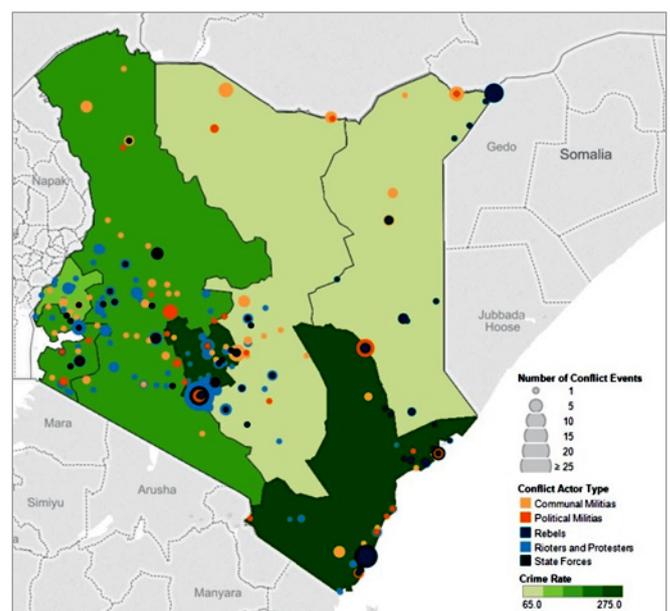
1) A SPOTLIGHT ON VIOLENCE

The 'new violence' – the role it plays in fragility, and its implications for donor policies

To get closer to truly capturing fragility, we must improve our understanding of its relationship to violence. The States of Fragility 2016 report will therefore zoom into the latest research findings on trends in violence and conflict. It will ask what drives the various types of violence today, and what role development actors could possibly play in addressing it.

Emerging research findings show that after years of declining intensity and frequency of violence since the 1990s, there are signs of growing insecurity and instability in specific regions. Over the last 15 years, 53 countries were affected by some degree of political violence amounting to a total population is 3.34 billion. In particular, civil and transnational wars are decreasing, while domestic political instability is increasing and social violence is widespread. Violence and conflict are complex, multidimensional and adaptive. Living within a conflict-affected country does not mean that every community is directly affected by the same form of violence: there is tremendous subnational variation in conflict dynamics and patterns and countries can be affected by multiple, different forms of conflict and violence simultaneously.

The drivers of violence are not limited to grievances: grievances are widespread but conflict is not. Rather, political processes can drive violence and conflict, and processes of exclusion and inclusion can turn into violent elite competition over the terms of access to power and resources. Countries with recently violent histories are especially likely to experience violence over typical domestic politics. States and regimes not considered as fragile are often implicated in conflict. These states may use violence to strategically maintain their power. Violence is perpetuated in weak and fragile states by various actors on all levels of the spectrum, including powerful agents. Therefore, international approaches that address both subnational and the regional violence dynamics show most promising results.



Violence varies subnationally: Conflict Events by Type of Conflict Agent and Underlying Crime Rate in Kenya, 2014

2) TOWARDS A MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONCEPT OF FRAGILITY

A new way to frame fragility for the OECD

The OECD has been monitoring fragility and financial flows in fragile contexts since 2005 on the basis of a so-called “fragile states list”. While the list is a powerful tool for comparison, there is an increasing awareness that a binary list does not do justice to the multi-faceted nature of fragility. The OECD has therefore committed to developing a multidimensional approach to monitoring fragility, and phasing out the fragile states list by 2017. Having published a multidimensional working model in its 2015 report, the OECD held an extensive consultation process over late 2015 to get closer to a universal, multidimensional framework for fragility.

Emerging from the consultations is an understanding of fragility as an accumulation of risk factors in four dimensions (for a tentative description, see the table below). While every context faces certain risks, they cause most concern when they are high in several dimensions at once. The accumulation of risk factors multiplies the threat of fragility, because all risks weigh on a country’s coping capacity.

Violence and conflict play an important role in many fragile contexts and can be understood as a manifestation of fragility. Yet the absence of violence does not necessarily mean that a context is not fragile. The OECD framework will therefore consider high levels of violence as an indicator of whether a context has taken on a crisis dimensions. Resilience, fragility and crisis are thereby considered as moving points along a spectrum.

DIMENSION	DESCRIPTION
	Societal: the vulnerability to risks affecting societal cohesion that stem from horizontal inequalities (inequality among culturally defined [or constructed] groups, social cleavages, etc.)
	Political: the vulnerability to risks inherent in political processes, events or decisions; to its political inclusiveness (incl. elites) and transparency (corruption) and to its ability to accommodate change and avoid oppression
	Economic Foundations: the vulnerability to risks stemming from the weaknesses in the economic foundations – including macroeconomic shocks, unequal growth, high youth unemployment, etc.
	Environmental: the vulnerability to environmental and climatic risks to citizens’ lives and livelihoods.