WHAT'S NEXT FOR DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES?

EXPLORING CITIZEN APPETITE AND ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Infosys®

Navigate your next

IN THE MIDST OF THE PANDEMIC, AGILE AND ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES HAVE NEVER BEEN MORE CRUCIAL IN OPTIMISING PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT. IN FACT, OUT OF 1,500 AUSTRALIAN AND 1,000 NEW ZEALAND RESIDENTS SURVEYED BY INFOSYS, 8 OUT OF 10 LEVERAGED GOVERNMENT ONLINE SERVICES DURING THE PANDEMIC.

AS CITIZENS EXPECT MORE ACCESSIBLE, RESPONSIVE, TRANSPARENT, AND SECURE SERVICES FROM THE GOVERNMENT, AGENCIES ARE FURTHER SCALING THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY. THE ONSET OF A GLOBAL HEALTH AND ECONOMIC CRISIS IN 2020 REINVIGORATED THE ROLE OF DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES, REINFORCING A STRONG APPETITE AMONG CITIZENS FOR SEAMLESS SELF-SERVICE PUBLIC SECTOR PLATFORMS.

While the government has been evolving digital services for many years, the pandemic accelerated the need to enhance online offerings that support citizens' financial and wellbeing needs.

It's important that digital evolution is defined by what success looks like in the eyes of the public.

In this report, Infosys sets out to understand how citizen interaction with the public sector has shifted, and how government agencies can identify their 'Next' in online services so they can roll-out optimised platforms that meet user needs and demands.

Digital adoption at the fore

While in-person consultations are still preferred by some, this research shows that people from all backgrounds and abilities are moving to digital services – whether by necessity or choice – and most users aren't looking back. Agencies also have an opportunity to optimise these services to make them more inclusive to those with diverse cultural backgrounds and people with disability.

Insights that build in privacy

Citizen privacy and corresponding data protection has become increasingly imperative as large parts of the population remain wary. In fact, over a third of citizens cite privacy, trust, and security as critical to their use of these online services. As the pandemic continues, governments will need to continue arming themselves with more real-time insights about their communities so they can continue to deliver the right services at the right time. However, a privacy-first approach to this data will be key to building trust and confidence.

A virtual future

Technology is at the core of enabling a personalised citizen experience, leveraging data and enabling the execution of rapidly evolving changes with greater agility and speed.

Based on citizen responses about their present interaction with digital government portals, it is clear we have come a long way. However, public agencies should continue improving the usability of online services so we can forge a virtual future.

This report was undertaken to identify citizen demands and potential barriers, and to anticipate needs faced by those using digital government services into the future. We wanted to uncover what more can be done to support user appetite in this space and improve experiences.
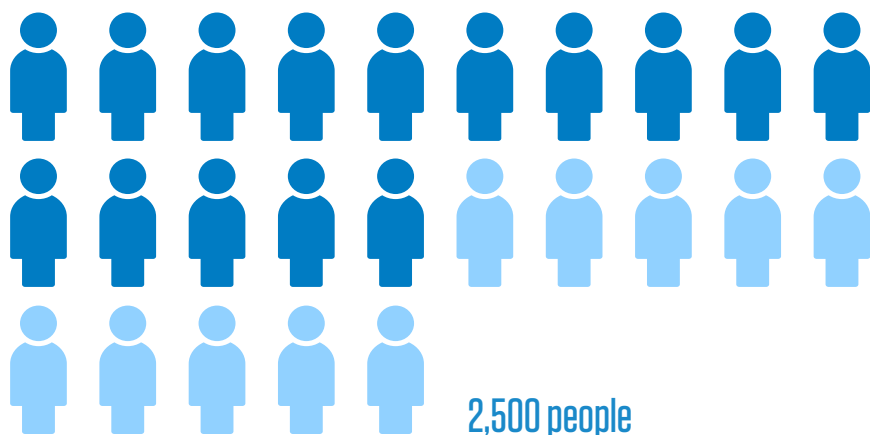
We found that prime opportunities exist in the evolving digital landscape for governments to adopt new tools and create future-forward platforms in line with changing public needs. For example, building adaptive systems to optimise vaccine management and enable travel passports[1] are imperative to Australia and New Zealand's digital landscape.
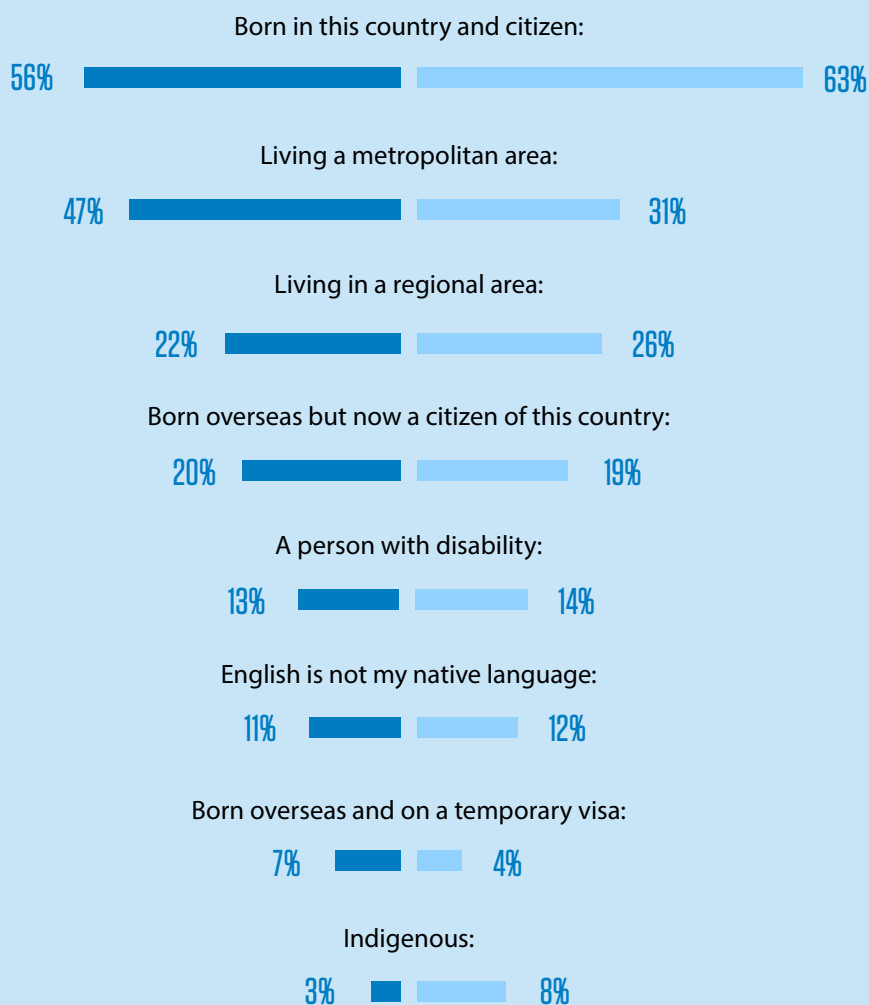
Uncovering key trends:

- Digital government services usage has significantly increased as public sentiment grows.

- Digital inclusion and optimising services for people with disability is key to usage growth.

- Citizens have an appetite for single sign-on to simplify how they navigate digital government services.

- Majority of respondents state that digital government services are on par or better than those in the private sector.

- Embedding human empathy within digital services divides opinion.

- There's a huge opportunity to proactively improve digital accessibility.

- Building privacy and security into every digital service is a leading trust indicator that encourages continued usage and brings others along on the digital journey.

During January 2021, we asked:

1,500 people

2,500 people

1,000 people

Respondents identified as:

AUSTRALIA

NEW ZEALAND

Born in this country and citizen:

56% | 63%

Living a metropolitan area:

47% | 31%

Living in a regional area:

22% | 26%

Born overseas but now a citizen of this country:

20% | 19%

A person with disability:

13% | 14%

English is not my native language:

11% | 12%

Born overseas and on a temporary visa:

7% | 4%

Indigenous:

3% | 8%

DIGITAL SERVICES HAVE COME A LONG WAY.

We have seen a rapid and effective response from governments to reduce the need for in-person services. From the inner-city to regional towns, the constituent experience continues to improve as government service delivery evolves. Support centres with limited hours are considered secondary to digital channels by many citizens who prefer to address their needs from anywhere, and at any time, rather than queueing for service. It's no surprise that the pandemic also saw citizens shifting to digital public services faster than ever.

Those who prefer digital government services mainly appreciated its ease of use, convenience, speed, and accessibility. In this report, respondents said they found digital platforms easy to navigate and efficient – enabling them to save time while growing confidence and trust in the public sector services. Other respondents noted that phone waiting times and unnecessary transfers to different departments were a thing of the past once they engaged in digital services. Overall, respondents expressed that government interactions should be transparent, efficient, user-friendly, and easy to access.

More people have been using digital services in the past 12 months with COVID-19 restrictions in place.

8 in 10 people have increased their use of digital services when interacting with government

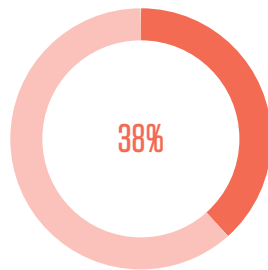|	
23%	**AUSTRALIA**
19%	**NEW ZEALAND**
21%	**TOTAL**
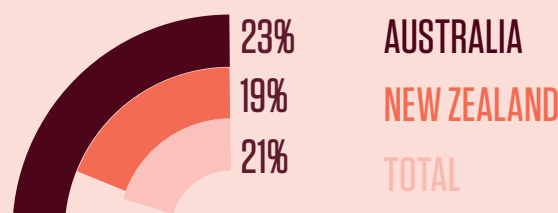
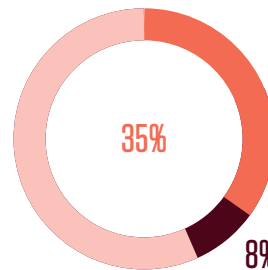21% only use digital services (Australia: 23%; NZ:19%)

Becoming tech-savvy

We asked citizens to share how their experience and perception of digital government service delivery has evolved. With a recent improvement in citizen-centric service delivery experience, people noticed they saved time and gained confidence using digital government services. By responding to citizen needs, governments have built more trust on the foundation of transparent, secure, and respectful services that enable superior engagement experiences.
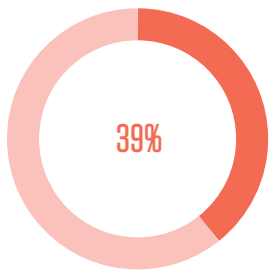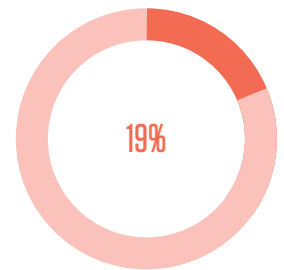
39%	38%	35% / 8%	19%
HAVE SAVED MORE TIME USING SERVICES DIGITALLY	HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN THEMSELVES TO USE THE DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES	MORE THAN A THIRD (35%) FOUND THE SERVICES EASIER TO USE (8% FOUND THE SERVICES MORE COMPLEX)	ALMOST A FIFTH (19%) HAVE MORE TRUST IN THE SERVICES

Public vs private

A quarter of respondents (27%) went so far as to say that digital government services are now better with the online experience of private companies when it comes to ease of use, communications and security measures, as well as accessibility.

Technology interfaces have been identified as a powerful lever for public sector interaction with citizens, so it's important they're reshaped to become 'one-stop' service destinations. By streamlining various touchpoints and enabling cross-communication between digital and physical channels, governments can take the experience journey to the next level.

The award for most improved goes to…

Renewing a license and **completing online tax** returns are the most improved online services in recent years, according to Australians.

This was the same in **New Zealand**, where **passport services and checking welfare entitlements closely followed.** Around a third of those born overseas, who are either now a citizen or currently on a temporary visa, also said they had noticed an improvement in **digital visa application processes**.

Why online?

- EASE OF USE
- CONVENIENCE
- AUTONOMY
- SPEED
- REDUCED WAIT TIMES
- ACCESSIBILITY

"

It's so much easier to just use an app or website to do things and it saves having to travel to in-person venues or wait a long time using a phone service. I think it's quicker to just log in and do things.

"

"

Quicker, easier and documented in real time.

"

MANY MISS IN-PERSON SERVICES

Australia's Centre for Social[2] Impact published that people's desire for social interaction had increased after the loneliness experienced during lockdowns during the pandemic. It's therefore no surprise that while online tools are progressively popular, some people still seek out in-person services. Human interaction at government support centres or via phone remains preferred by some citizens at all ages. Surprisingly, this is truer for respondents aged 18-24 than those over 54. This longing for human connection could partly explain why some citizens said they would initially return to using in-person services when possible. This finding also stresses the importance of considering how a personal touch could be integrated into digital technology to elevate the engagement experience.
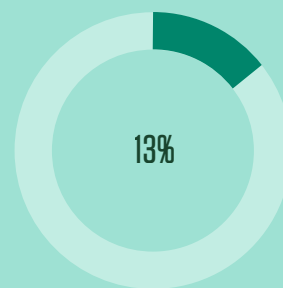
HUMANS STILL NEEDED

We explored why respondents were missing human interaction and whether this will continue going forward. We found:
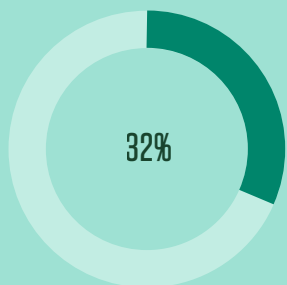
27%
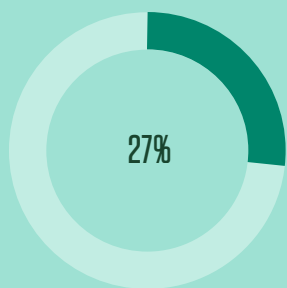
Will likely return to using government services on the phone or in-person at support centres once available
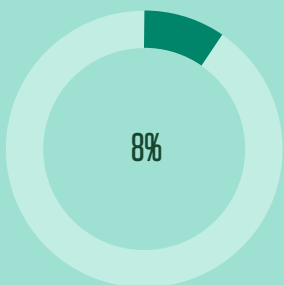
35%
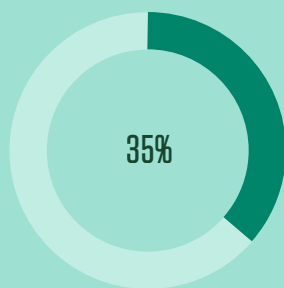
Younger people have missed human services most (35% of 18 to 24 year-olds)

13%

Prefer human interaction so used mostly phone services (16% in NZ)

32%

Prefer digital services, but had to use phone/in-person services if not available digitally

8%

Chose to exclusively use phone/in-person services (more popular with 54+ year-olds at 13%)

THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE DEBATE

The desire for personalised service and human brainpower that pushes people towards in-person and phone service is a crucial consideration when forging a digitally sustainable future. People reported that human interaction and empathy was particularly important. In certain cases, including when a person's abilities may differ due to disability or language. Others said they were comfortable addressing personal matters online to save time, prioritising "efficiency" over "attitude". So, what's the balance? We must go beyond digital strategies to enable a customer centric focus that's the foundation of human experience (HX), and hyper-personalised services to deliver best-in-class frontline technology. By looking at the problems from a citizen's perspective, platforms can incorporate their needs through creative human-centred design solutions. Public sector agencies across the globe are scaling efforts to develop citizen-centric services that deliver government services through insightful digital programs.

"We have a diverse community , with approximately 80% of citizens leveraging digital government services, so how do we keep that engagement while bringing the next cohort on this journey? Our expertise lies in finding better ways to connect citizens with government services, enriching citizen lives through data and reimagining the human experience (HX) of digital and physical touchpoints."
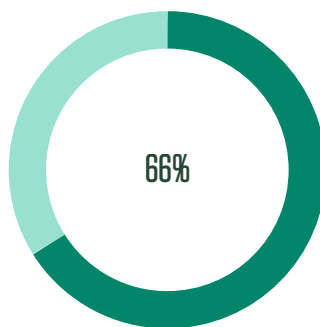
 - Matt Kain, APAC Regional Head, WONGDOODY an Infosys company
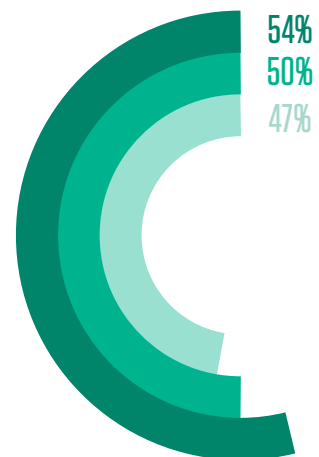
ATTITUDE COUNTS

Half of our respondents think it's important for digital experiences to feel "human" and show "empathy", with the younger cohort slightly higher:
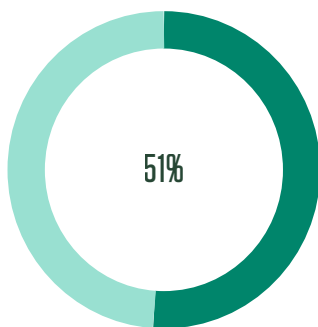
51% want their digital experiences to feel "human" and show "empathy"

More popular among those who identified as indigenous – 66%

Age groups differed in how much they desired empathy:

- 18-34: 54%;
- 35-44: 50%;
- 45+: 47%

Only 1 in 10 (13%) didn't want their digital services to feel human.

" Everyone's circumstances are personal to them and a level of empathy and respect needs to be given to each person involved. "

" Empathy and social interaction helps us feel better. Sometimes it just takes a smile to brighten someone's day or mood which in turn can brighten someone else's. "

THE INCLUSIVITY OPPORTUNITY

When optimising the future of digital government services, it's essential to consider the diverse abilities and needs of communities.

Digital inclusion is now recognised as one of the key social justice challenges facing policy makers and communities worldwide[3]. We also know that digital disadvantage coincides with other forms of social and economic barriers, meaning those who need support the most often face the greatest risk of being left behind on the digital journey. By integrating inclusivity into platform design, governments can avoid building barriers for people of various abilities and backgrounds.

Nearly 90% of people believe governments need to better service those with disabilities, as well as those living in remote regions of Australia and New Zealand. Those with low digital literacy skills could also benefit from simplified and modernised online platforms and more how-to guides.

86% of people think digital government services should be more inclusive to better service people with disability

100% 81 88 86
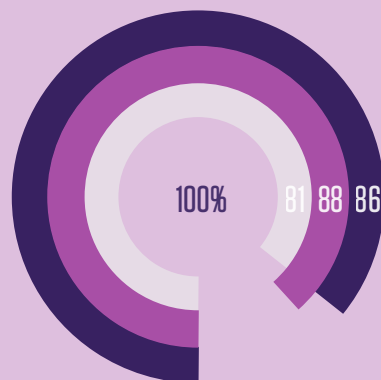
88% THINK BETTER ACCESS IS NEEDED FOR THOSE LIVING IN REMOTE AREAS

81% SAID IF THEY WERE EASIER TO USE, DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES WOULD APPEAL MORE TO PEOPLE WITH LOW DIGITAL SKILLS

"Digital government services and apps are central to how we deliver services to citizens. This past year has shown us that digital inclusivity is even more important as people with a disability and lower digital confidence are highly impacted by the pandemic and its associated economic impact. We continue to be committed to addressing their needs in services design and delivery."

- Darrin Bond, Assistant Director-General, Children and Youth Justice System Reform – Unify, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs

Digital service solutions are overwhelmingly popular amongst remote communities as well as people with disability, English as a second language, low digital skills, and those who identify as Indigenous.

People with a disability:

- 34% want more personalised information based on their circumstances/existing information
- 27% want more options to provide feedback and recommendations to improve the service
- 44% want medical history/healthcare info available to healthcare professionals to improve care
- 47% said we should engage experts in behavioural science or psychology to design more accessible and inclusive services

People where English is not their first language:

- 80% think services should be available in more languages

People who identify as indigenous:

- 35% want more options to provide feedback and recommendations to improve the service
- 84% think more govt services should be available online
- 84% think services should be available in more languages
- 74% think more online Q&As or forums would be helpful
- 80% said how to videos would help the better understand versus written guides
- 51% said we should extend partnership with companies with experience design capabilities for innovative ways to improve digital experience

"It's critical that government services are accessible as all people with disability will need to interact with the government in some capacity. While it's encouraging to see that most levels of government in Australia endeavour to follow the WCAG standard, most are still only aiming for WCAG 2.0 compliance rather than the most recent version of WCAG. As a result, important guidance relating to mobile accessibility and inclusion of disability groups such as cognitive disability are not as well supported in the current approach."

- Scott Hollier, CEO of Centre for Accessibility Australia

" I am almost deaf and although
I have hearing aids they can be
annoying so to do things online is
easier for me. "

" I believe it will do more good to offer
some initial orientation and online
training to seniors or First Nations
people to make them familiar with digital
government services and printed guides
distributed to them to help them grasp
the government digital services and help
them adopt the same later in the nearer
future - digital services will then not be
as deterring as they are now. "

PRIVACY IS KEY TO BUILDING DIGITAL CONFIDENCE

Transparency about how data is stored, shared and used will grow trust among citizens who use digital services and inevitably increase usage among the next cohort. Almost 75% of people will comfortably share their personal information if they know how it is being used by an agency. However, 36% of Australians and 44% of New Zealanders are calling for better disclosure about how data is used, stored and secured.

Both privacy and security are imperative as digital footprints increase, while trust in how data is shared and secured will build digital confidence. In response to mounting public pressure, development of a national data-sharing agreement[4] that navigates between government jurisdictions for key "life journey" records is underway in Australia. By addressing individual concerns about potential bias, agencies can improve user confidence and encourage them to use more digital services.

36% CALLING FOR HIGHER ONLINE SECURITY MEASURES TO PROTECT PERSONAL INFORMATION (HIGHER IN NZ AT 44%)

36%

AU

44%

NZ
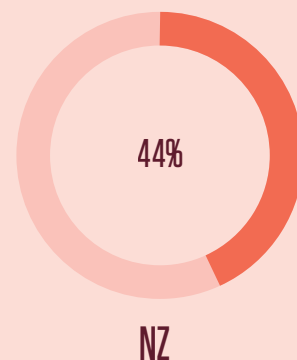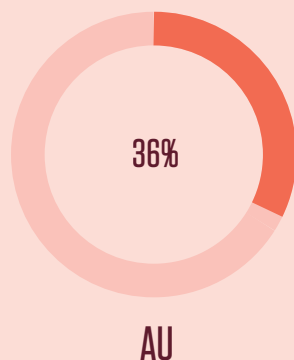
SHARING PERSONAL INFORMATION

73%

17%

56%

23% NZ

18%

25%
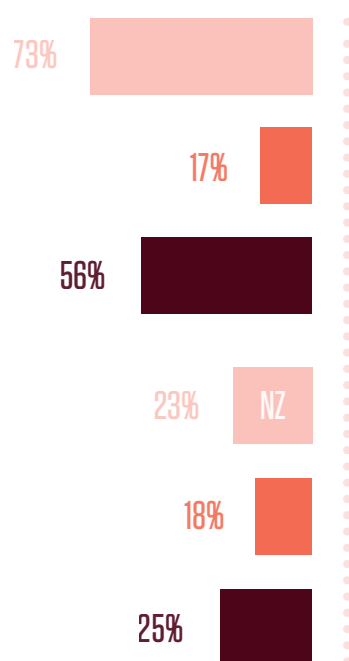
73% of people are comfortable with sharing personal information while using digital government services

- 17% of people are very comfortable
- 56% are comfortable if they know how their personal information will be stored and used.

A fifth are not comfortable due to concerns around how they store, protect or use personal information.

- This is the same in NZ - 23%
- Less than a fifth of younger people (18-34) were not comfortable - 18%
- Those aged 35-44 year olds were the most concerned – 25%

Less than 1 in 10 said they would rather not share personal information due to concerns the online security systems are vulnerable.

"Absolute and proven data security with the choice of which departments of the government I want to and will only share my personal information and data with."

"I find it less confrontational, it's easier to multitask and it's more convenient in general."

WHAT COMES NEXT?

While citizens find themselves empowered by digital government services, there is still more work to be done to motivate others to engage, while helping bring those less-digitally confident on the journey. Opening the doors to gain the trust and confidence of the next cohort of citizens could include the following:

- **Streamlined, seamless services:** Citizens have expressed enthusiasm in a single sign-on across services, potentially in the form of a digital identity, rather than jumping between multiple sites with multiple logins. By creating connected services with multiple capabilities, governments can reduce information siloes and the associated costs.

- **Painting the whole picture:** Citizen experience is optimised when data is securely shared across government platforms, creating cross-functional collaboration and technology reuse between public departments. It can also help governments form a single view of a person, their data and needs. Pre-filled forms can also encourage further engagement through seamless, synced experiences while improving public sector efficiencies and reducing expenditure.

- **National digital identity:** A self-sovereign identity that enables individual choices about how their data is shared between departments - and potentially associated private sector services – should be considered. By allowing Australian citizens to construct their own digital identity data without intervention from external authorities, more consumer confidence in these platforms can be built.

- **Optimising spend and reach:** Digital services and the associated integration can certainly minimise operating costs and provide efficiency for governments as they focus on economic recovery initiatives.
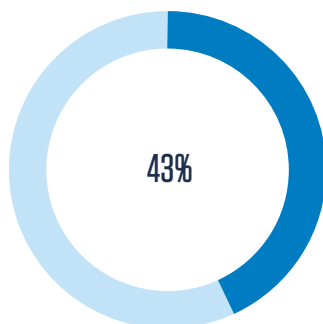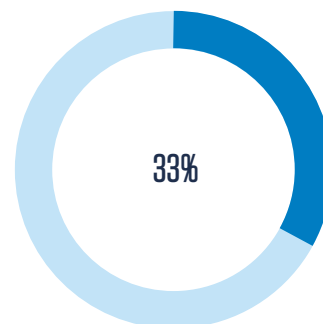
CITIZEN SOLUTIONS

We asked citizens to suggest their own improvements to digital government services. We found:

50%
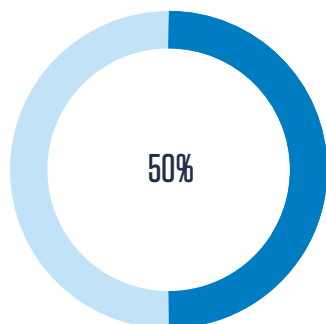
said they'd like **one central login** to access all digital government services as there are currently too many different platforms
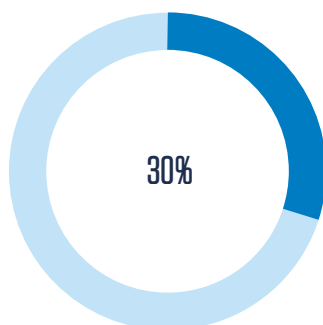
43%

said they'd like their info to be used to **pre-fill forms** so they don't need to find paperwork/repeat themselves
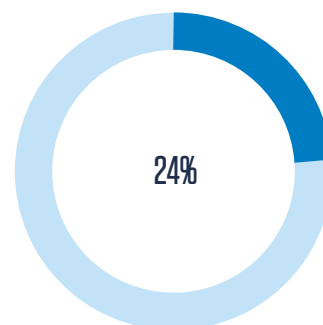
33%

would like more **real time notifications** or updates via SMS/email on things that impact them

31%
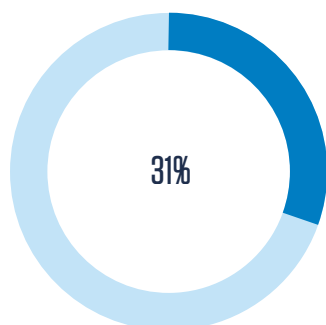
want to be able to control which aspects of **personal info** are shared across government agencies
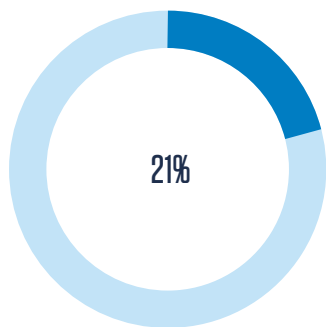
30%

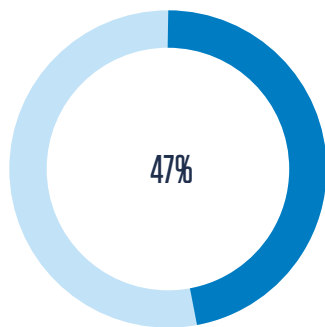want medical history and **healthcare data** available to healthcare professionals to improve care

24%

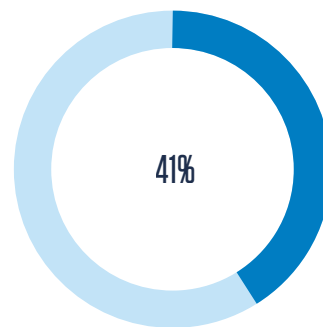want more **personalised information** based on their circumstances/existing information

CITIZEN SOLUTIONS CONTINUE...

21%

want more options to **provide feedback** and recommendations to improve the service

47%

want to enhance the look and feel to be **more like private sector** websites

41%

want to **work with universities** on innovative ways to enhance the experience while using digital government services

"With digital technology now an integral component of people's lives, there is rising expectation for better experiences. Putting the human back into digital experiences is paramount - leveraging artificial intelligence and augmented reality will be intrinsic to achieving this."

- Professor, Kim Marriott, Department of Human Centred Computing, Monash University

INFOSYS INSIGHTS

COMMERCIAL DIGITAL SERVICES ARE NOW AT THE CORE OF OUR LIVES, AND WHETHER PEOPLE ARE AT THE LOCAL SUPERMARKET OR ON A BANKING APP, THERE'S AN EXPECTATION THAT SERVICES WILL BE ENGAGING AND SECURE. GOVERNMENT SERVICES ARE NO EXCEPTION. INDEED, THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC HAS AMPLIFIED THE IMPORTANCE OF OPTIMISING INTERACTION WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR ACROSS MULTIPLE PLATFORMS, PARTICULARLY WHEN ACCESSING HEALTH AND AND WELFARE SERVICES.

Australian and New Zealand government agencies strive to improve people's experience of government services and focus on ensuring those services are simple, clear and fast to use. As investment continues to enable access to unbiased data, agility to rapidly adopt policy changes, and making government interaction seamless, here's what we see as the 'Next' steps for digital government services:

1. Reinvigorate foundations

Digital acceleration is often hindered by a dependency on data and processes associated with legacy systems. But throwing out all the critical data and policy detail they hold to start from scratch isn't always possible, or necessary. With the right approach, many systems can be reimagined and transformed for an online future, rather than replaced. Infosys can expertly evaluate and uncover whether legacy systems can be adapted. A key consideration is whether these systems can be digitised to agile and scalable cloud platforms, where modernisation can result in real time insights and policy updates.

2. Policy agility is key

In a sector where policy evolution directly impacts people's livelihoods, implementing legislated changes through technology can understandably become complex and time-consuming. With an agile, modular approach to policy change, implementation can be accelerated and enable iterative assessment of the impact of the change. The additional challenge here, and potential benefit, is that policy implementation typically rests with multiple government agencies. 'Policy agility' as an approach requires, but can also drive, tight collaboration between departments, agencies and partners.

3. Unbiased data forges trust

Unbiased, non-sensitive citizen data is a strategic asset, which governments across the world are leveraging and making evidence-based decisions that improve population livelihoods into the future. But policy, processes and communication addressing privacy and security concerns of citizens is imperative to achieving this goal. This is essential to successfully engaging more people, as well as increasing trust and usage of digital government services.

4. How to humanise digital services

Putting citizens at the core of every digital service – right from the design stage – is crucial, and our research clearly identifies that people want to be involved. This is an important ingredient in building more confidence in digital public services. Stepping into citizens' shoes to view their needs and challenges is crucial. This may include deep research, prioritising citizen feedback and integrating HX (Human Experience) design in evolving services. Combining Customer Experience (CX), User Experience (UX) and Employee Experience (EX) techniques – with a layer of creative thinking – can achieve better overall HX, and it's something WONGDOODY, an Infosys company, helps organisations do every day.

Agility in Action

A co-creation space that enables an agile approach to policy can be powerful – for example, a physical co-design lab with an agile technology capability, which can deploy new benefits to citizens rapidly. This strategy requires the platform, people, processes and technology to work seamlessly together.

5. Leave no one behind

Building more digitally inclusive services for citizens allows governments to address social and economic challenges for underrepresented groups. Inclusive digital services can help bridge the gap between governments and people from various cultures, languages and abilities, with a goal that nobody gets left behind in the digital evolution. Digital platforms will also help remote communities connect with public services to better address their unique needs. Integrating accessibility needs into the design process and gathering feedback throughout can optimise experiences for a broader set of the population.

6. Optimise the innovation ecosystem

An evolution as widespread as a digital government can't happen in silo. Continuing to foster collaboration between the public sector, private entities, not-for-profit organisations, and the academic world rewards governments and their constituents with fresher ideas, more robust approaches, and strategies. With a culture of innovation and lifelong learning, Infosys embodies these practises in our discovery, design, build, and continual optimisation of digital government solutions and services.

ABOUT INFOSYS

Infosys is a global leader in next-generation digital services and consulting. We enable clients in more than 50 countries to navigate their digital transformation. With nearly four decades of experience in managing the systems and workings of global enterprises, we expertly steer our clients through their digital journey. We do it by enabling the enterprise with an AI-powered core that helps prioritise the execution of change. We also empower the business with agile digital at scale to deliver unprecedented levels of performance and customer delight. Our always-on learning agenda drives their continuous improvement through building and transferring digital skills, expertise, and ideas from our innovation ecosystem. Visit our Australia and New Zealand Public Sector page to learn more.

Survey Methodology

Infosys commissioned independent market research conducted by Pollfish in early 2021, surveying 1,500 Australian and 1,000 New Zealand residents aged 18 and over.

Visit infosys.com.au to see how Infosys (NYSE: INFY) can help your enterprise navigate your next.

References:

1. Qantas - CommonPass digital health app
2. Centre for Social Impact: Loneliness, Social Connection and COVID-19 report
3. Australian Digital Inclusion Index
4. Australian Financial Review

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