#eGovMON
A study by Initiative D21 and the Technical University of Munich, conducted by KANTAR

eGovernment MONITOR 2023

Use and acceptance of digital administrative services from the citizens' perspective: A Comparison of the German federal states, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

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At a glance

Why are we doing this study?

The eGovernment MONITOR assesses the success and reach of digital transformation in administrative services for citizens in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Published annually since 2010, it supports decision-makers in measuring progress and identifying areas for improvement. This knowledge can be utilized to take well-aimed measures to improve digital administrative services.

How are we conducting the study?

The eGovernment MONITOR 2023 is a representative study by the Initiative D21 e. V. and the Technical University of Munich, conducted by Kantar.

Country coverage
Germany, Austria, Switzerland

Sample size
Germany n = 8,034 (approximately n = 500 per federal state),
Austria n = 1,003 and Switzerland n = 1,001

Population
Persons in private households in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, aged 16 and over, and who use the Internet privately

Survey method
Online survey (CAWI)

Survey period
5 to 30 May 2023

Content

Foreword

Nancy Faeser
Federal Minister of the Interior
and Community

Dear Readers,

The trend continues: more and more people in Germany are using digital administrative services. This is a pleasing result of this year's eGovernment MONITOR. Compared with Austria and Switzerland, Germany still has some catching up to do, but usage figures are rising steadily here, too. It is particularly pleasing that some services are even being exceptionally well received – for example, the digital income tax return stands out in all three countries. In Germany, 90 percent of the energy price allowance for students was processed digitally. Users are satisfied with these services. This underscores the fact that if administrative services are offered digitally, they are not only used with satisfaction but are generally perceived to be good.

People are dissatisfied when particular services are missing or existing online services are not sufficiently known. Here, too, Germany shows potential for improvement compared with Austria and Switzerland. This is illustrated, among other things, by the figures regarding the online ID: while its usage has increased among German citizens, many still remain unaware of its functions and ease of use. We are committed to changing this and will intensify our public awareness efforts on the matter.

The topic of artificial intelligence (AI) is as exciting as it is challenging. Half of the respondents can already imagine communicating with the administration via chatbot. In addition, almost half of those surveyed are open to using AI in digital administrative services – as long as fundamental decisions remain with humans. This clearly shows that the population is ready for digital and automated public administration services.

To do this, we also need to strengthen people's e-government skills. A considerable proportion of respondents feel insecure about finding information using search engines or filling out online forms without assistance. Many are worried about doing something wrong when applying online and fear negative consequences. This shows how important it is for the administration in our country to act in a citizen-friendly, understandable, and reliable manner and open to new approaches at all levels. The digital state is a learning state.

The eGovernment MONITOR reveals that there's still a lot of work to be done. At the same time, it shows how much progress has already been made. That is good news: when progress is noticeable, the public's confidence in the state also increases. Digitalizing the administration is a matter close to my heart, and we are working at full speed to address many of the challenges I've noted. I, therefore, look to the future with confidence and see the results as an incentive to continue driving digitalization forward with full commitment.

Federal Minister of the Interior
and Community

Preface

Marc Reinhardt
President of the Initiative D21

Prof. Dr. Helmut Krcmar
Professor of Information Systems
and Delegate Officer of the President
- TUM Campus Heilbronn

Dear readers,

Digitalizing government is and will remain a Herculean task for the foreseeable future. Despite extensive efforts in recent years, the tangible achievements recognized by the public are limited: from the citizens' perspective, digital touch points and tangible benefits remain low. This is partly because key projects such as digital identities have yet to make a breakthrough. For example, although the use of online IDs has increased to 14 percent (+4 percentage points), it is still far too low to have a significant impact.

Politicians and administrators face further complex challenges: the provision of self-explanatory and consistent digital administrative services that meet the diverse needs of citizens, as well as the successful modernization of registers to reduce the burden on administrative staff. In addition, EU-wide interconnectivity should be promoted. The shortage of skilled workers in the public sector is becoming a real challenge for maintaining the efficiency of administrative services. Digitalization and the automation of processes are a cornerstone for mitigating the consequences: comprehensive, standardized and user-friendly digital administrative services are not only increasingly demanded by citizens, but would also noticeably relieve existing staff.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can and will play a crucial role in automation. With the success of generative AI, such as ChatGPT and the like, the topic has now reached the masses. On the one hand, this is a source of fascination, but on the other hand, it also creates uncertainty among the population. While about one-fifth of respondents categorically reject the use of AI in government, the rest are in favor. The majority accepts its use under certain conditions. Our study examines the experiences and attitudes of citizens and shows what conditions need to be met to achieve acceptance. The challenges of digital administration are many and varied, but they are also surmountable. With the eGovernment MONITOR, we provide decision-makers in politics and administration with a powerful tool for identifying the need for action and deriving targeted measures.

One important message we would like to share with you at this point is that the majority of citizens are still open and believe in the benefits of digital administrative services. So the determination is there on all sides: it is a matter of achieving measurable success and impact. We wish you an inspiring read!

Marc Reinhardt and Helmut Krcmar

Key findings

Competencies

Simple and comprehensible services are important because not all citizens in the D-A-CH countries consider themselves competent to use e-government.

»I am able to use the online services of public authorities and offices (e.g., making appointments, downloading forms, filling out applications online) if available.«

▸ Page 12

Attitudes to public administration

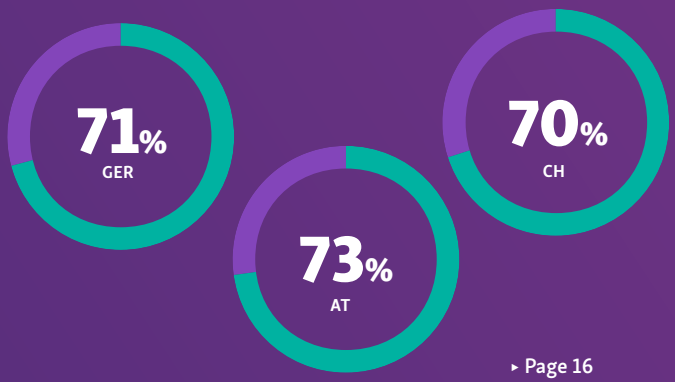
The majority of people in Germany find contact with management stressful, and the trend is rising.

»Contact with authorities and offices is usually very stressful.«

▸ Page 15/16

Added value of e-government

In the eyes of citizens, the digital handling of public services is a real advantage over the analog way.



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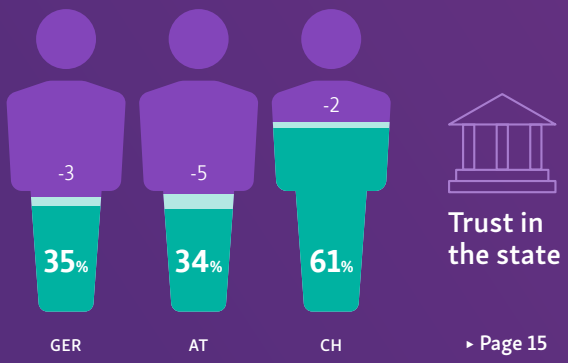
Attitude towards the state

Current developments give cause for action: Trust in the state is falling compared with the previous year. Only one-third of the population in Austria and Germany still trusts the state.



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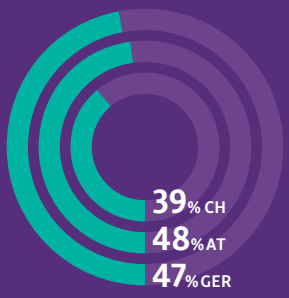
Use of artificial intelligence (AI) in administration

The majority of citizens would agree to the use of AI in administration under certain conditions, while only 21 percent reject it in principle. The most important matter to them is that fundamental decisions continue to be made by humans.

»The use of AI would be fine with me if basic decisions continue to be made by humans.«



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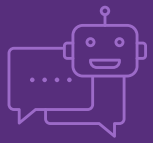
Impact and benefits of AI

56% of people in Germany expect processing times to be shortened by the use of AI.



50% of people in Germany can imagine using chatbots to communicate with public administration in the future.

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Use of the online ID card

Almost 13 years after the introduction of the online function, 14 percent of Germans use the online ID card. Many citizens are not aware of the benefits, they need more use cases.

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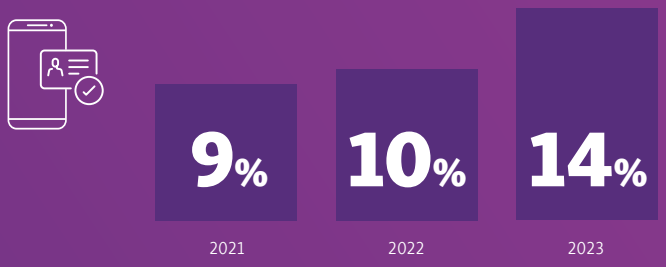
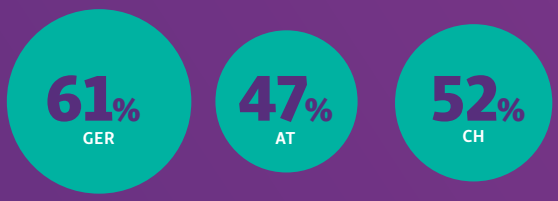


Awareness as a barrier

For many citizens, the use of e-government already fails due to a lack of awareness of the services.



»It's often not clear to me whether the service I need is even offered online.«

▸ Page 30

Mobile usage

Mobile usage of e-government is increasing in all 3 countries in 2023. The majority of e-government users now also use smartphones and tablets for digital government matters.

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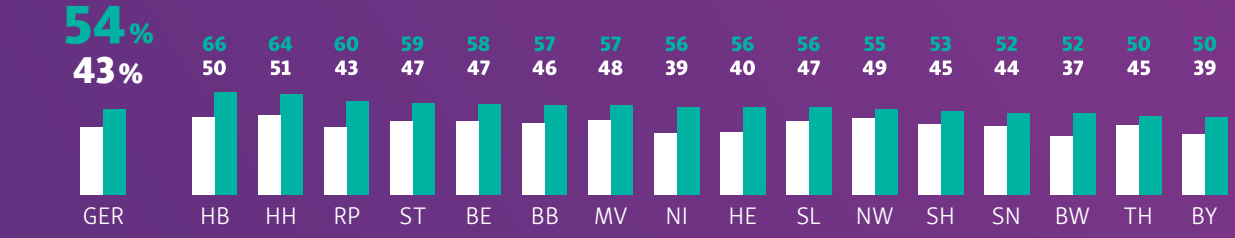
Mobile usage in Germany

This development can be observed in all German federal states: Mobile usage of e-government has increased across the board.



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Satisfaction

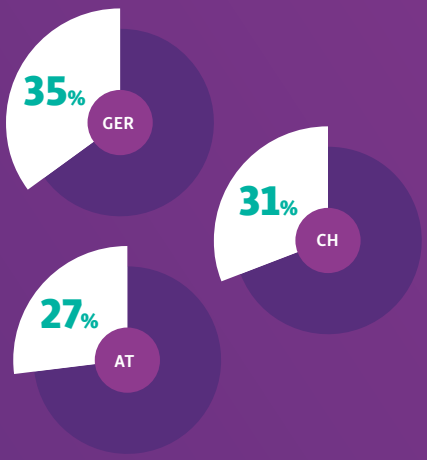
For the long-term success of digital transformation in administration, digital offerings must be user-oriented so that citizens can easily find and use them - this has not yet been achieved everywhere.

42%
of Germans who know the services of their city or municipality are not satisfied with them.

▸ Page 37

The digital usage gap

The digital usage gap - a key indicator of the success of the digital transformation in administration - shows the proportion of citizens who still contact the authorities offline instead of choosing the digital route.



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Executive Summary

The eGovernment MONITOR assesses the success and reach of digital transformation in administrative services for citizens in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Published annually since 2010, it helps decision-makers to measure progress and identify weaknesses. As a result, measures can be taken to improve digital administrative services.

User-centeredness remains a particular challenge in the development of digital administrative services, as the target group is heterogeneous, and ALL citizens need to be reached.

59%

find contact with authorities very stressful (+ 5 percentage points compared to 2022).

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

The quality of government services plays a crucial role in the perception of government performance. Public administration services play a key role as the only direct point of contact between the state and its citizens. The administration must reach all citizens; however, few are satisfied: 59 percent find dealing with authorities and government offices very stressful – even more than last year. Additionally, trust in the government has fallen to 35 percent.

There is an opportunity for the government to invest in demonstrating its capabilities. To do this, it must go beyond the formal fulfillment of administrative obligations and effectively address the real needs of citizens. There is a need for user-oriented services that are intuitive and self-explanatory, as well as support services for those who have to deal with digital services - so that attitudes are influenced not only towards e-government services, but also towards the state itself.

Just under half are open to the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in administration as long as fundamental decisions continue to be made by humans.

The use of AI is becoming more widespread - especially in the private sector, but also in administration. The opportunities are obvious: AI can take over routine tasks and free up administrative staff. Ideally, this will make administrative action more efficient and more responsive to the individual needs of citizens. Given the increasing shortage of labor, it is important to take advantage of these opportunities.

Citizens' attitudes toward the use of AI in administration play an important role in its acceptance. The majority of people in all 3 D-A-CH countries are generally open to it - under certain conditions. For them, it is particularly important that fundamental decisions continue to be made by humans. Nevertheless, every fifth person categorically rejects its use. This is often due to the fact that the actual areas of application and effects are not tangible. Although more than half of citizens believe that AI can reduce the processing time of administrative procedures, they are often uncertain about its objectivity and susceptibility to error.

In this early phase of AI adoption, government agencies have the opportunity to address citizens' concerns about this technology and explain its benefits. Chatbots as AI-assisted support systems are an example of the use of AI in public administration that is already in use. Every second citizen can imagine using them for research and communication on administration websites. This is an opportunity to make the added value of AI in administration tangible.

With a very low proportion of users, the online ID card cannot achieve its leverage effect for the state, economy, and citizens.

The online ID card is intended to enable secure and seamless use of digital services. For this to happen, however, it must be accepted by citizens. In the almost 13 years since its introduction in Germany, this goal has not been achieved.

14%

of citizens have experience using the online ID card.

BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card - GER (n= 7,450)

Although every ID card has an online function, only 62 percent of the population knows about it and only 14 percent use it. Austria and Switzerland are much more successful. Progress has been made over the past year: Particularly among the youngest generation, there has been a significant increase from 18 to 28 percent of users. This is probably due to the integration of the online ID card in the payment of the energy price subsidy for students.

This is an opportunity for government and business to work together effectively. The discrepancy between awareness and use of the online ID card is mainly due to the fact that many citizens are not aware of its added value. This needs to be demonstrated and communicated. The majority would like to see a single solution for all services instead of many different ones, preferably the online ID card.

This will require a joint effort from business and government. Only through a wide range of applications can its use become habitual.

For the digitalization of public administration to be successful, online services must become better known and more widely used, and satisfaction with the user experience must increase.

Digitalization is not an end in itself, but a means to reach people and provide modern services that make their lives easier. The comprehensive availability of digital services provided in the Online Access Act (OZG) is a basic prerequisite for this - but it is not enough on its own. Three consecutive goals must be achieved. First, people must know that an online service exists and be able to find it. Second, they must want to and be able to use the service. Third, the user experience must be satisfactory. Only then will government be perceived as efficient, and only then can long-term trust be achieved among the population.

In many cases, the provision of digital services is the responsibility of federal states or municipalities. As a result, the level of usage and satisfaction varies from state to state. Compared to the previous year, the level of usage has improved in most federal states and the differences have narrowed. Usage rates range from 51 to 63 percent.

The satisfaction benchmark helps to understand how digital administrative services are perceived compared to other digital services. Unlike public administration, most things in the business world can be done “on the move.”

Simple measures such as optimizing services for mobile devices can go a long way toward improving user satisfaction.

There is a need for impact-oriented indicators that start with users and identify weaknesses at the service level.

The study proposes the Digital Usage Gap as a powerful indicator. At a glance, it shows the difference between the demand for a service and the actual digital usage. The value takes into account various factors, such as digital usage barriers, allowing for efficient optimization of digital administrative services.

For policy makers, the Digital Usage Gap is of interest as an aggregated value for several OZG-relevant services. It shows the extent to which the population uses a digital service compared to its analog counterpart. This metric helps policymakers assess the overall progress of digitalization in the public sector. The gap is 35 percent in Germany, 31 percent in Switzerland and 27 percent in Austria. This gap must be closed if digital administration is to become the norm.

However, for local optimization, e.g. at the municipal level, it is important to look at the digital usage gap for individual services. In Germany, the gap is 17 percent for tax returns. It is 36 percent for child benefits and 58 percent for vehicle registration. A closer look reveals who is still using analog methods and why. These empirical findings are important for decision-makers within the administration, service providers, customers and external consultants to fully explain and implement the need for optimization.

Efficient government is in everyone's interest.

Not only does it facilitate the seamless interplay of processes within the country, it also has significant democratic relevance, helping to strengthen trust in the government's ability to perform at all levels. This year's eGovernment MONITOR once again offers numerous concrete starting points on how government and administration can engage citizens more effectively through digital services.

35%

Digital usage gap in Germany

BASIS: All respondents who used the respective service in the last 3 years; average across all queried services in GER

▸ **Fig. 01: E-government competence**

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

»I am able to use the online services of public authorities and offices (e.g., making appointments, downloading forms, filling out applications online) if available.«

66%

70%

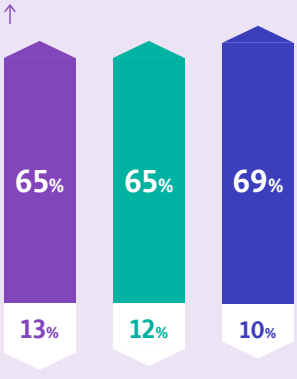
58%

Focus on users

RELEVANCE

Why is user-centeredness essential for government?
Because interaction with the administration is one of the central points of contact between citizens and the state. This is where they experience the government in action. The experiences that citizens make have a direct impact on how they perceive the performance of the government. The digitalization of administration ideally leads to citizens perceiving government action as faster and more efficient. This also strengthens their confidence and trust in the state. A digital service that is difficult or impossible to use from the citizens' point of view, on the other hand, will have the opposite effect: it will lead to frustration, and instead of making people's lives easier, it will weaken their confidence in the government's ability to deliver.

»As soon as things can be done online, I prefer that way.«

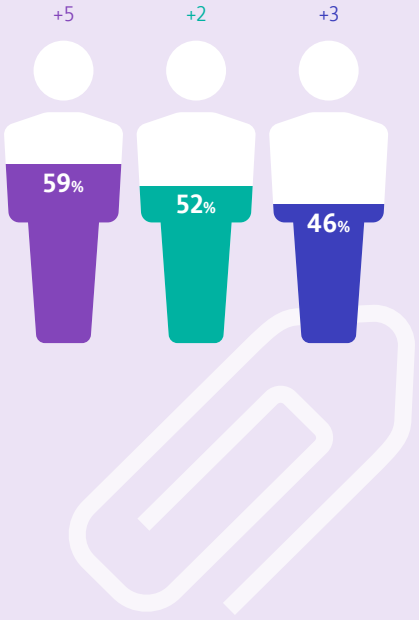


»I avoid doing things digitally.«

▸ **Fig. 02: Digital affinity**

QUESTION: Please indicate which tends to apply to you. | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); missing to 100% percentage points = undecided

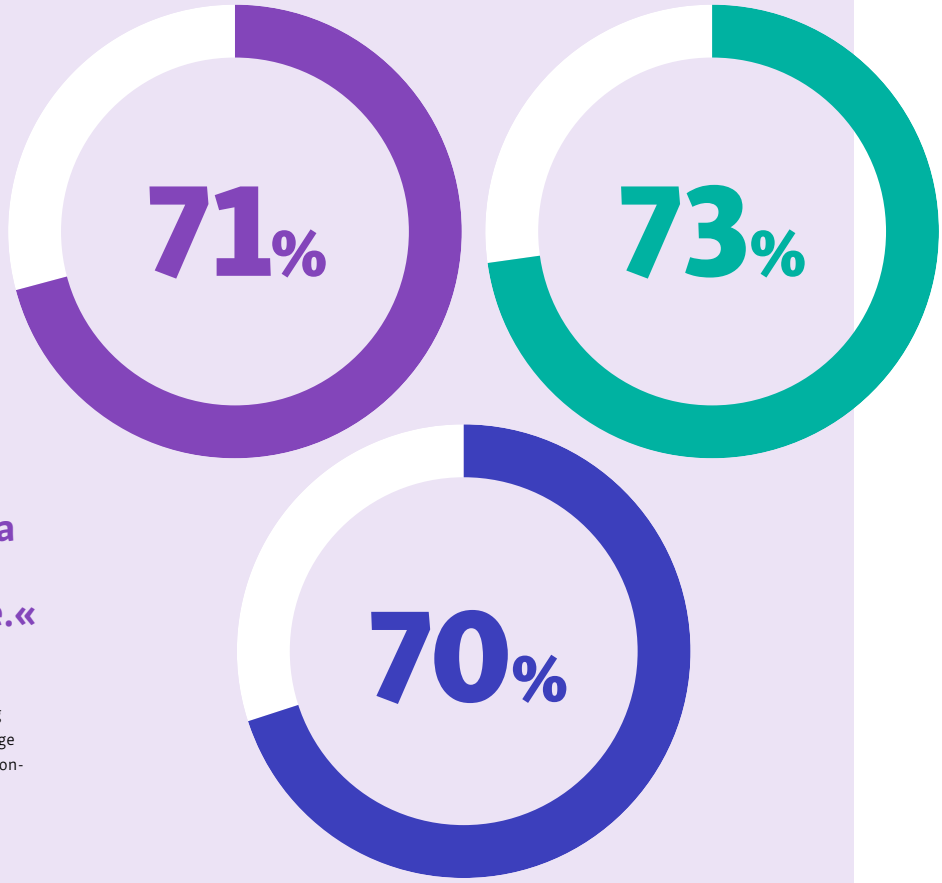
Germany Austria Switzerland



»Contact with authorities and offices is usually very stressful.«

▸ Fig. 03: Perception of the administration

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree); deviations from the previous year in percentage points



»Digital handling of government services is a real advantage over the traditional analog route.«

▸ Fig. 04: Added value of e-government

QUESTION: Do you think that the possibility of handling government services digitally represents a real advantage over the traditional analog route? - Yes. | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001)

▸ Fig. 05: Barriers

QUESTION: Which of the barriers listed below generally speak against a (more intensive) use of online government services for you personally? BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); Top3 (strongly agree / agree / rather agree)

Digital competencies: Can citizens use digital administrative services?

»I am able to use the online services of public authorities and offices* if available.«

53% Lower education

67% Medium education

80% High education

▸ **Fig. 06: E-government competence by education**

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree); *e.g., making appointments, downloading forms, filling out applications online

To be able to use digital administrative services, people need to be sufficiently skilled in using digital devices and content. Only those who know how to find and use services in the digital space can also make satisfactory use of the available e-government services.

These digital competencies are at an average level in Germany. ↘ Fig. 01 This is also confirmed by other surveys, such as the D21 Digital Index. Two-thirds of the population in Germany see themselves as generally able to use the online services of public authorities and offices, e.g., to fill out applications online, make appointments, or download forms.

People in Switzerland rate themselves as somewhat less competent, while Austrians rate their digital skills somewhat better. There are clear differences between the various population groups in all three countries. In Germany, these differences can be seen along the lines of formal education level and age: people with a high level of formal education are much more likely to be confident in their use (80 percent) than people with a low level of formal education (53 percent). ↘ Fig. 06 The so-called digital natives, i.e., people from generations Y and Z, also consider themselves more confident in using online services than members of older generations. These differences mean that not everyone is benefitting equally from digital services.

Using the online services of public authorities and offices requires specific skills, which remain at a medium level in Germany. ↘ Fig. 07 Again, the pattern of lower competence attribution in Switzerland and higher perceived competencies in Austria is evident.

As noted, a user must first be able to find an online service before it can be used. In Germany, 63 percent of citizens are confident that they can find information on the internet using a search engine. After finding the information, additional steps are often necessary. In Germany, only slightly more than half of people feel confident filling out an online form without help. Moreover, not everyone feels comfortable paying fees online (e.g., only 59 percent of people feel comfortable paying administrative fees online). The use of government websites and the available services are still a relatively new development for most. Hence, most people have little experience and have not yet used such services habitually. Only 43 percent of the population say they have been accessing such sites for a long time.

▸ **Fig. 07: Digital competencies**

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

63% I feel confident **searching** for information **using a search engine**.

59% I feel confident **paying online** without assistance.

55% I feel confident filling out **online forms** without assistance.

43% have been using the Internet to access government websites for a long time.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

Thus, as the necessary skills to use digital administrative services are not yet widespread among the population, and people have not yet made their use habitual, there are two promising starting points: simpler services and assistance with processing provided by the state and the acquisition of skills on the part of citizens. But not all citizens are ready for this – more than a third see no need to acquire new skills for using digital administrative services. More than a quarter (27 percent) say they have not acquired any new knowledge on digital topics in the last 12 months – and if they have, it is more likely to be through trial and error (50 percent) than through formal support services (7 percent). In the Baby Boomer generation, almost one in three (32 percent) have not acquired any new digital knowledge in the last 12 months, as is the case in the two oldest generations (31 percent) and among people with a low income (32 percent) and low formal education level (30 percent).

36 %

see no need to acquire new skills for additional digital processing of government services.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

This means that digital administrative services must be much easier to use, and citizens need help to increase usability even further. The responsibility for using (digital) administrative services is not up to the citizens alone. Rather, a user-centred administration must grasp people's competencies, accept them as a reality, and respond to them accordingly with appropriate services.

How can this be achieved? In addition to an intuitive and self-explanatory design of digital services, support services for their use can be integrated: 37 percent of citizens would like to have a direct digital exchange with the employees of the relevant authorities, for example, and 34 percent find the integration of short explanatory videos motivating for the use of online services. ↘ Fig. 08

PARTNERS

Grandma and Grandpa also use e-government

Provided that they exist and can be found, the use of digital services must be increased extensively. Search engines and online forms are still a challenge for many. With all citizens in mind, developing skills must be addressed as a key task. Only in this way senior citizens, as empowered citizens, will choose to apply for their new ID card directly on their smartphone.

Marie Jansen, Offer Lead Data, Capgemini

37 %

say they would welcome the opportunity to interact with government employees over the Internet, e.g., via chat.

34 %

say that short explanatory videos on government websites demonstrating the process would encourage them.

▸ Fig. 08: Drivers for the use of e-government

QUESTION: What would personally encourage you to use (more) government services digitally? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

Attitudes: Do citizens want administrative digitalization?

65 %

prefer to do things online when that option is offered.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

Attitudes toward digitalization

The affinity for technology is a key driver for the use of digital services, and at the same time, a lack of affinity represents a significant barrier. In Germany, almost two-thirds of citizens prefer to do things digitally, while 13 percent even (tend to) avoid the digital path. ↘ Fig. 02 Digital competencies and attitudes toward digitalization influence each other: people with high digital competencies have more confidence in technologies and also use them more frequently. Those who are open to new technologies and frequently use and experiment with them acquire new competencies. Conversely, it is likely that people who tend to avoid the digital path are also less likely to try out digital administrative services and consequently develop fewer skills in using them.

The affinity for using a digital pathway is particularly strong in the two youngest generations (Gen Z: 76 percent, Gen Y: 70 percent). The older generations are much less likely to prefer digital solutions (post-war generation: 58 percent, generation up to 1945: 51 percent). People with a high level of formal education are also more inclined to choose a digital solution (79 percent) than those with a low level of formal education (52 percent). This is also because the younger generations' representatives and people with a higher education level are more likely to have high digital skills (see above). Since they can use digital services more easily, they are more likely to feel they benefit from them.

PARTNERS

Digital government - now!

The declining confidence in the government's ability to act must be a warning sign for all those with political responsibility. If citizens doubt the reliability of their government, there is a risk that they will sooner or later also question the democracy itself.

Therefore, the message is clear: Make the state fit for the future with a digital administration – that's what a service-oriented government is all about!

Friedhelm Schäfer, Second Chairman, dbb civil service and collective bargaining union

Trust in digital technologies

Overall, not even half of the population in Germany (45 percent) and Austria (46 percent) trust digital technologies, while in Switzerland, there is a slight majority (54 percent).

The age differences that are evident looking at competence in dealing with technologies and in digital affinity, also exist regarding trust in technologies. Even among digital natives, trust in digital technologies is low. Generation Z has the highest trust (53 percent), while the generation up to 1945, whose members have spent a large part of their lives without digital media, has the lowest trust (24 percent). A high percentage of explicit distrust (over 20 percent) in digital technologies is found among baby boomers, the post-war generation, and the generation up to 1945, among people with a low level of formal education and people with low incomes.

Here, too, digital skills play a role as those who are digital professionals, meaning they have a high level of competence, are more likely to trust digital technologies (60 percent). Overall, there is a positive correlation between digital skills, digital affinity, and trust in digital technologies: the more digital skills a person has, the higher their affinity for and trust in digital technologies.

PARTNERS

Security, transparency, and sovereignty

The eGovernment MONITOR shows that when it comes to citizens' trust in digital technologies, Germany still has some catching up to do, including in international benchmarking. The good news is that there is no pronounced mistrust in Germany but rather uncertainty. Digital solutions must, therefore, be developed to meet people's needs. Good usability of digital technologies, transparent use of data, and high reliability are essential for widespread acceptance. This is not only the responsibility of policymakers but also of all technology providers for public administration and the corresponding interfaces between citizens and government offices. Safety, transparency, and sovereignty should become a given and gain even more importance.

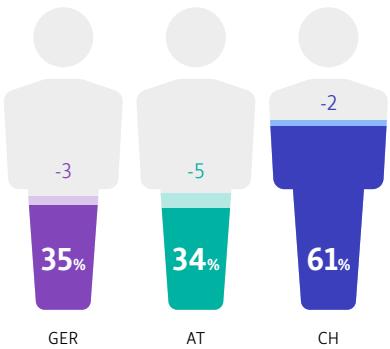
Juan Perea Rodríguez, General Manager & Chief Commercial Officer of Wire

Trust in the government is declining

In Germany and Austria, only one in three citizens still has confidence in the government, and the trend is falling.

▸ Fig. 09: Trust in the government

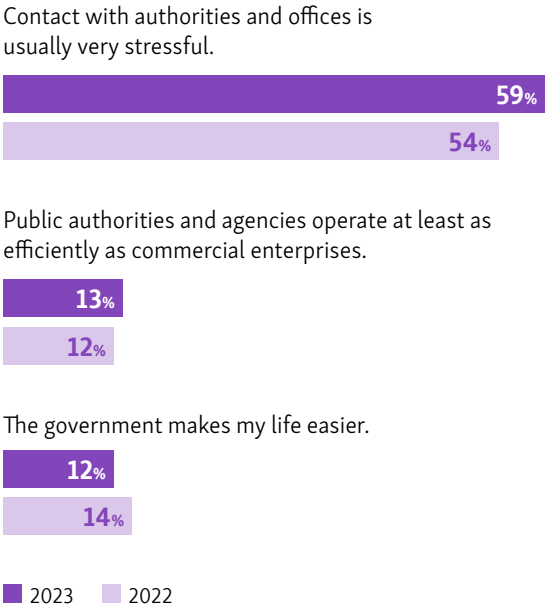
QUESTION: Asked in general terms, how much trust do you have in the government? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); Top2 (very) high trust; deviations from the previous year in percentage points



Attitudes towards government and administration

There is a correlation between the evaluation of digital administrative services and the general attitude toward the administration and the government. In the eGovernment MONITOR 2022, it was shown that people who are satisfied with digital administrative services also rate the performance of the state higher. This, in turn, means that they are more likely to trust the state.

Compared with the previous year, trust in the state declined in Germany (- 3 percentage points) and Austria (- 5 percentage points). ↘ Fig. 09 Additionally, the performance of the state is perceived as low; compared with 2022, the level of perception has even decreased in some facets. ↘ Fig. 10



▸ Fig. 10: Attitude toward the administration

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034);
Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

Only 13 percent consider authorities to be just as efficient as companies, and only 12 percent believe that the state makes life easier. On the contrary, most people find contact with government offices very stressful (59 percent). This perception has increased compared to the previous year (+ 5 percentage points).

Attitudes toward the digitalization of government and administrative services

The fundamental attitude toward the digitalization of administrative services also influences the use and acceptance of e-government.

The majority of citizens in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland see real added value in e-government. ↘ Fig. 04 However, not all population groups are equally convinced of the benefits of digital administrative services. The greatest gap is between people with a formally high level of education (85 percent) and a low level of education (58 percent). People with a high affinity for digital technologies (87 percent) and those who have great confidence in these technologies (88 percent) are significantly more likely to see added value in e-government. There are also differences between the generations: Baby Boomers are the least convinced (65 percent), while people from Generation Y are the most convinced (75 percent). The difference between the genders is also significant: Women (66 percent) are less likely to believe in a real advantage than men (76 percent).

For the option to handle administrative tasks digitally to actually offer an advantage over the conventional way, it must also be easy to use. This is what citizens are used to in the private sector. Accordingly, almost two-thirds expect to be able to use the services of the administration as easily and conveniently.

63 %

expect the administration in the 21st century to offer its services online as easily and conveniently as private companies.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034);
Top2 (strongly agree / rather agree)

PARTNERS

E-government: Factors for social acceptance

E-government solutions increase efficiency and save resources in administration. Many citizens are unaware of the fact that many digital services can be done from home. To achieve broad acceptance, various aspects should be considered: 1. services should be optimized for search engines so that they can be found easily on the internet. 2. the user experience should be better than with the offline option. 3. intuitive communication and support services can strengthen usage. Citizen-centered information campaigns show which digital services are available and their added value. Central portals help to quickly find relevant applications.

Patricia Kretschmer,
Team Lead Digital Transformation of the Public Sector (eGovernment); atene KOM

52 %

cite the habit of going to the office as a reason against (more intensive) e-government use.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); Top3 (strongly agree / agree / rather agree)

Half of the population still prefers personal contact for their concerns and visits public administrative offices out of habit. Among those who avoid doing things digitally, the figure is as high as 78 percent. Especially in the generation up to 1945 (70 percent) and for people with a formally low level of education (63 percent), habit is a reason for not using e-government (more intensively).

Habit is also the most frequently cited reason why people deliberately complete a government service offline, even though they know this would also be possible online. This aspect is examined in more detail in the chapter "The usage gap."

PARTNERS

An end to pseudo-digitalization

Citizens feel the benefits of e-government when processes are fully digital, from the application to the decision. Too often, there are still offline interim solutions and "human interfaces." Processing takes too long, is inefficient, and lacks transparency.

We need end-to-end digital and (partially) automated processes to provide tangible relief for citizens, companies, and administrations.

Matthias Kohlhardt, CEO, MACH AG

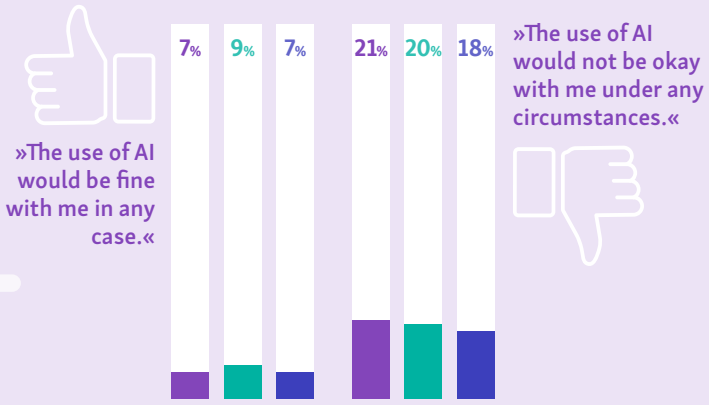
INTERIM SUMMARY

Citizens need to see the benefits of e-government

#1 Current developments call for action: While the state and its offices are becoming more and more digital (albeit slowly), citizens' trust in public administration, in their local governments, and in the state as a whole is declining. The government's performance is rated worse and worse, and more people find dealing with public administration very stressful. In order to strengthen citizens' trust in government, the focus should be not only on fulfilling obligations, but also on investing to demonstrate performance. This can be achieved by focusing more and consistently on the needs of citizens (user-centricity) and strengthening trust in government.

#2 A user-centered digital administration designs services and processes that reach all socio-economic backgrounds and generations. Digital skills for using e-government are unevenly distributed across the population: Far from all citizens are confident enough to use it. This makes it all the more important that services are intuitive, self-explanatory, easy to find and supported. Digital contact with public authorities could become a positive experience in dealing with the state.

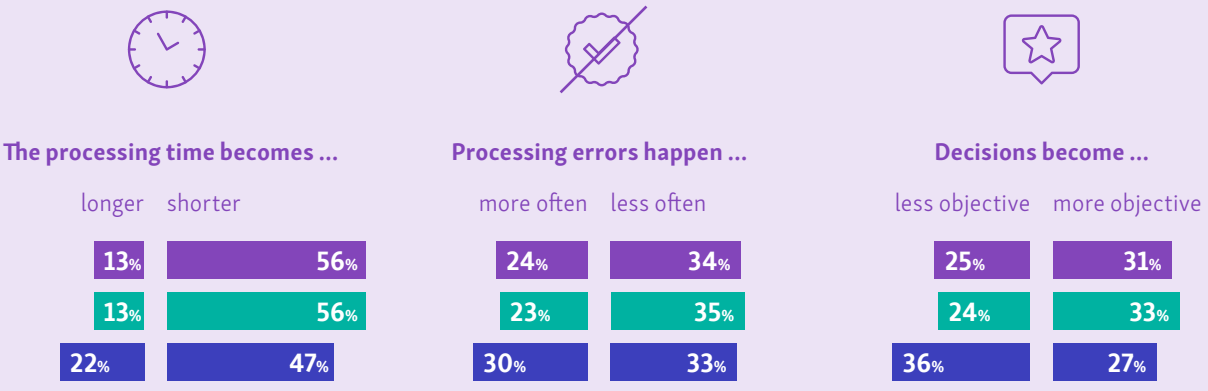
#3 There is a reciprocal relationship between digital competency and attitudes toward technology and digital government services. People with higher levels of digital competency have more confidence in technology and use digital administrative services more often. However, if users do not feel competent to use digital administrative services, they will avoid them. This is compounded by the fact that for many, visiting a government office in person is primarily a matter of habit. The low level of usage means that citizens have not yet developed a routine for dealing with e-government. This makes it all the more important to make it as easy as possible for them to use it. The more often citizens use services, the easier it is for them to use e-government. And the easier it is for them, the more likely it is that the digital way will become a habit.



Artificial intelligence

RELEVANCE

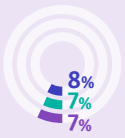
It is important to know how citizens think about artificial intelligence (AI) in administration. A rejective attitude can be a big obstacle to the use of AI, even though it is important for the administration to be able to overcome acute challenges. The public sector is suffering from a significant shortage of skilled workers. This will be exacerbated by demographic change: By 2030, there could be a shortage of up to one million employees. Technologies such as AI can help mitigate the effects of this development and improve administrative efficiency. It is therefore important to understand and address the concerns and fears of citizens, whether justified or not.



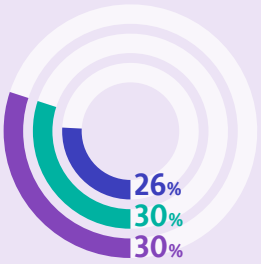
▸ Fig. 12: Assumed impact of AI deployment

QUESTION: What impact will AI have on the delivery of government services? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); missing percentage points to 100% = undecided

»The use of AI would be fine with me if ...

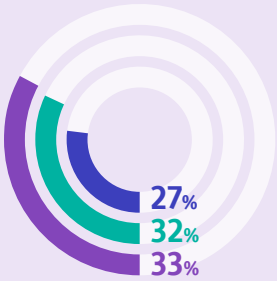


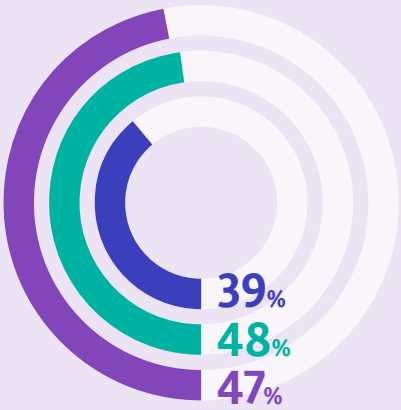
... my social circle had no objections to the use of AI in government services.«



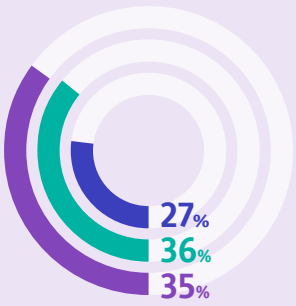
... it was explained to me exactly in which processing steps AI would be used.«

... the AI system was regularly reviewed by an independent organization.«





... basic decisions continue to be made by humans.«



... I can optionally object to the use of AI.«

▸ Fig. 11: AI acceptance

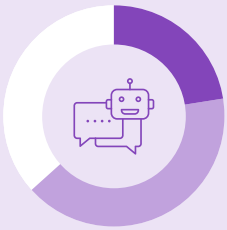
QUESTION: See below. | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001)

Think of an application that you submit online to a government agency. Imagine if the clerks were now supported in individual tasks by a system with AI.

According to current research, AI can take over individual tasks, such as automatically reading documents or sending e-mails. However, the technical possibilities are insufficient to take over an entire application's independent processing; this would also not be legally permissible.

Under what circumstances would you agree to the use of AI in government services?

23%
have already communicated with a government agency via a chatbot.



63%

are familiar with chatbots in digital administration.

41%
are familiar with chatbots in digital government, but have not yet used them.

▸ Fig. 13: Chatbots in digital administration

QUESTION: With the help of digital assistants, you can communicate online with some authorities around the clock: So-called chatbots answer your questions automatically in a dialog box. Are you familiar with such digital assistants in the administration, or have you ever communicated with a government digital assistant? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); the sum of individual percentages differs from the total due to rounding

What is the level of acceptance?

Most of the population would agree to the use of AI in administration, provided that a number of basic requirements are met. A decisive prerequisite for citizens is that fundamental decisions continue to be made by humans. ↘ Fig. 11 This opinion is very similar across the three D-A-CH countries.

Algorithmic decision-making support tools and other AI applications in public administration are already being used (selectively) in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This relates to different application areas, such as text recognition for digital incoming mail or full-text recognition of old handwritten records, translations, or early warning systems, such as those regarding groundwater levels. Nevertheless, the use is not a widespread norm in all three countries. Citizens are often unaware of where AI and algorithmic systems are already being used. This applies to both the public and private sectors. Their opinion is mainly based on the public discourse and their limited experience with AI.

21 %

do not agree at all with the use of AI in administration.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); for more detailed question text, see page 19

While only a very small proportion (7 percent) favor using AI in government services unconditionally, around one-fifth of respondents strongly disapprove. The greatest disapproval is found among groups that generally have lower skills in dealing with digital administration (43 percent), and those who neither trust nor want to use digital solutions in principle (61 percent). For more information on competencies and attitudes, see the “Focus on users” section, p. 10 ff. Conversely, a high level of digital competence, affinity, and trust in digital technologies also means that the use of AI is more likely to be accepted under certain conditions.

In addition, the population's lack of experience and knowledge about AI contributes to a cautious negative attitude toward introducing AI in public administration.

56 %

suspect that processing time will be reduced by AI.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

What are people’s expectations?

Which advantages of AI in public administration do citizens already see, and which ones might need to be communicated better?

The citizens will most likely be convinced by the increased speed in completing administrative processes. When asked about the possible influence of AI, more than half of the citizens believe that it can decrease the time it takes to get things done; only 13 percent believe it will take longer. ↘ Fig. 12

The potential effects of AI on the objectivity of decisions and error rates in government processes are less clear to citizens. The majority is undecided as to whether AI has a positive or negative influence (44 and 42 percent, respectively). The older generations (baby boomers and older) are more uncertain than digital natives. People with a low level of formal education are also more likely to be undecided than people with a high level of education. About one-third of citizens believe that AI will positively affect the objectivity of decisions (31 percent) and reduce the number of processing errors (34 percent).

The majority of the population does not yet recognize the potential benefits of using AI in administrative procedures. High transparency about the use of AI and clear communication of its advantages for the citizens is therefore important, as is gaining experience with practical everyday applications.

Chatbots in administration

As AI-supported digital assistance systems, chatbots are a tangible example of the use of AI in public administration. A considerable proportion of the population (63 percent) is familiar with the concept, and just under a quarter (23 percent) have already experienced its use. ↘ Fig. 13

Outlook: Every second person can imagine using chatbots in public administration (either for the first time or in the future) for researching and communicating on websites. This is an opportunity to directly demonstrate the added value of AI in administration and make it tangible for citizens.

50 %

can imagine communicating with the public administration (again) in the future via digital assistance systems or searching for topics on their websites.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

PARTNERS

Chatbots provide help

A rising number of public authorities are offering their citizens digital services and assistance to answer citizens' questions digitally around the clock. At the Bavarian Ministry for Digital Affairs, we see a lot of potential in using and developing chatbots as well. For us, in addition to the often-discussed issue of data privacy, two issues are particularly important: First, the content, often generated with the help of AI, must of course have all the facts right. The sources of the information must be correctly indicated. On the other hand, chatbots must clearly identify that their content originates from a machine or an AI. Generally speaking, applications such as chatbots can help breaking down digital barriers, which, in turn, can contribute to digital participation. This potential must be exploited to create more user-friendly administrative services.

Minister of State Judith Gerlach, MdL, Bavarian State Ministry for Digital Affairs

EXPERTS

Design matters: AI as a Design and Innovation Challenge

The opportunities and risks of AI for public administration in Germany and Europe are not exclusively determined by technology. As general-purpose technologies, AI and in particular machine learning are open to various applications and use cases. AI is an innovation challenge that requires a proactive approach. The potential of AI in public administration is already visible in practice: Chatbots are always available, automation in tax administration increases process efficiency, and large language models enable better knowledge management.

On the other hand, the risks of AI are not inherent to the technology. Rather, they are determined by the design and implementation of AI solutions. Recent regulatory developments, such as the EU's AI Act, promise significant opportunities for the trustworthy and democratic development of AI. Societal concerns need to be taken into account at an early stage, for example through law-by-design approaches. Evaluations, oversight and staff training are essential elements in this context.

We need to establish assessment procedures and methodological skills that we can draw on as the technology evolves.

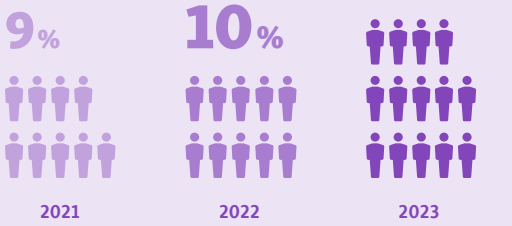
However, training and upskilling initiatives alone will not be sufficient if processes are not designed to allow for effective human oversight and intervention.

Some respondents are opposed to the use of AI in government. It would be important to find out what concerns or needs are behind their opposition. This knowledge will provide valuable guidance for the further development of AI applications. If stakeholders and civil society are effectively involved in the development of AI systems, quality and acceptance can be improved at the same time. The fact that about 80 percent of people would accept the use of AI systems under certain conditions is, in my opinion, a leap of faith that in turn implies the responsibility to carefully design society-centered, human-centered, and trustworthy systems.

Prof. Dr. Christian Djeffal

Holder of the Professorship for Law, Science, and Technology at the Technical University of Munich

You can find the detailed interview under this QR code



▸ Fig. 14: Use of the online ID card

QUESTION: Have you ever used your online ID card? | BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card - GER (n = 7,450)

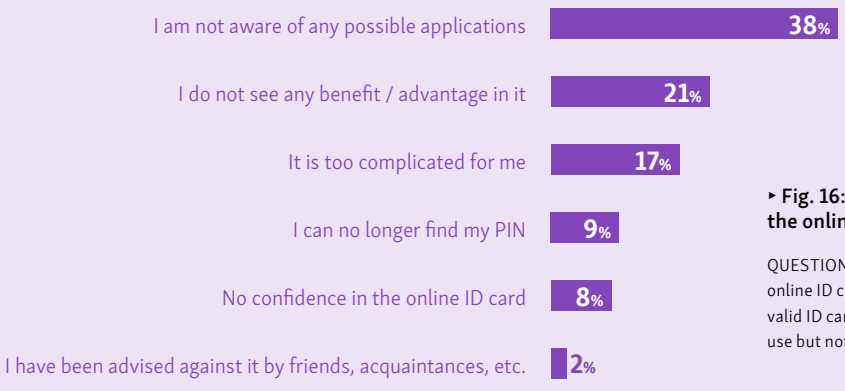
Digital identification

RELEVANCE

Establishing identity beyond doubt is the foundation of all digital business and administrative processes. User-friendly digital identities are therefore a prerequisite for citizens to securely use digital services at all levels of government and in the private sector. In addition, digital identities mitigate discontinuities in the transfer of information between different stakeholders/systems. They are successful when they are used and accepted by citizens. In addition to simplifying these processes, widespread use also contributes to greater efficiency in administration and better value creation, since it eliminates the previous, often paper-based, intermediate steps of identification. In the future, everything could be collected in one (electronic) place and exchanged directly, transparently, securely and independently of time and place between citizens, companies and public institutions.

▸ Fig. 15: Term awareness

QUESTION: Please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with these terms. | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); figures in percent



▸ Fig. 16: Reasons against using the online ID card

QUESTION: For what reason have you not used your online ID card so far? | BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card for whom the online ID card is ready for use but not used - GER (n = 1,230)

Citizens' familiarity with the online ID

On 1 November 2010, the credit-card-sized ID card was introduced. The chip in the ID card enabled electronic identification for the first time. Almost 13 years later, just 14 percent of citizens with an ID card use this online function; by 2022, it was only 10 percent (an increase of 4 percentage points). ↘ Fig. 14

Even in the digitally very affine population groups, users are in the minority: in Generation Z, the share is 28 percent, and in Generation Y, 16 percent. The two oldest generations hardly use the online ID function at all (post-war generation: 8 percent, generation up to 1945: 1 percent). ↘ Fig. 17

Most citizens (62 percent) are familiar with the online ID card: one in four is confident enough to explain what it is. Another 37 percent say they at least have a general idea about it. ↘ Fig. 15 Thus, this means that an essential prerequisite for its use – awareness – is met.

The first hurdle to using the online ID card is that the online function must be ready for use: Today, every ID card is issued with an activated online ID function, which is only ready for use when a PIN is entered. Thirty percent have done so and thus have an online ID card ready for use. On the other hand, one in two citizens has not taken this step, and another 21 percent say they do not know the status of their ID card.

50 %
of citizens do not have an operational online ID card.

BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card - DE (n = 7,450)

Why are so many citizens not ready to use the online ID card? More than one in four citizens see no benefit for themselves (27 percent). Twenty-one percent say that the activation process is too complicated or that they don't know how to use it.

If so many citizens are familiar with the Online ID and the online ID function is ready for use for as many as 30 percent of people with a valid ID card, why do so few use this feature? The primary reason is that they are unaware of possible applications (38 percent). ↘ Fig. 16 Closely related to this is the fact that 21 percent state that they do not see any advantage in using it.

PARTNERS

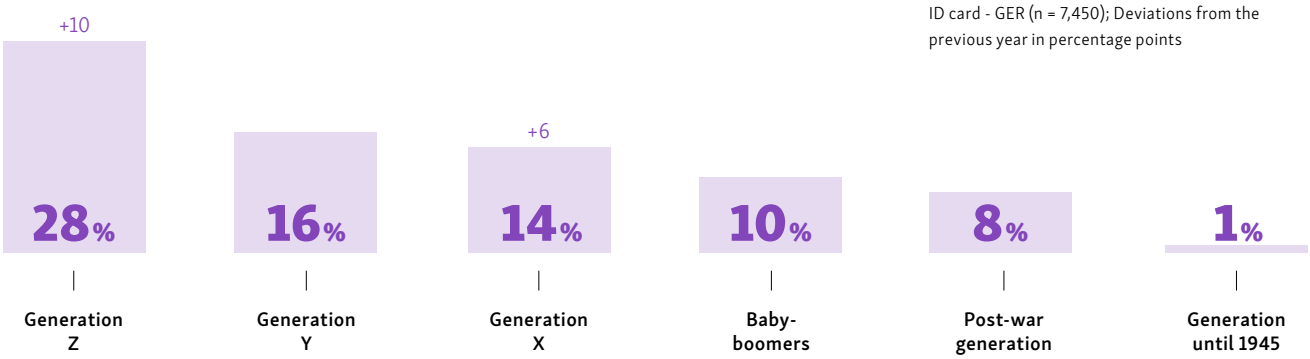
The eID function is powerful

The eID function of the German ID card is crucial for the digitalization of public administration. Current examples, such as the one-time payment for students or the culture pass, are increasing the usage rate of the eID function. We need more use cases like these to raise awareness of the eID function and advance digitalization in Germany.

Antonia Maas, Head of Corporate Communications & Public Affairs, Bundesdruckerei

▸ Fig. 17: Use of the online ID card by generation

QUESTION: Have you ever used your online ID card? | BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card - GER (n = 7,450); Deviations from the previous year in percentage points



The low proportion of online ID users in the population is, in turn, a barrier to the use of online government services. The (individual) lack of digital identification is one of the most frequent reasons why people have not completed a digital visit to the authorities. ↘ Fig. 32 Many people often only become aware of the need for digital identification when they want to use a digital government service in a very concrete way.

The third most frequent reason (17 percent) cited by people with a ready-to-use online ID card is that it is complicated to use. In recent years, measures have been taken to simplify the process, most notably the establishment of smartphones as an interface for the electronic use of ID cards via the NFC interface. However, only very few ID card holders (24 percent) are aware of this simple usage option. Among online ID card users, on the other hand, the smartphone has now replaced the reader as the preferred interface (81 percent).

24 %

know that the online ID card can be used with a smartphone.

BASIS: All respondents with a valid ID card - GER (n = 7,450)

Variants of digital identification in Germany

In Germany, there are various ways of identifying oneself digitally in contact with the administration. One example is the online processing of income tax returns. Here, you must identify yourself digitally and have various options for doing so. Online identification here has not yet become established: Only 8 percent use it; the majority use the ELSTER certificate file (66 percent). Other identification methods include Elster Secure (7 percent), a security stick, and a signature card (2 percent each).

This means five different digital identification options are available for digital income tax returns. However, 50 percent of citizens would like to see a uniform identification option for all applications – especially those who expect the administration of the 21st century to provide their services just as easily and conveniently online as they do with private companies (62 percent).

53 %

would like to see a uniform means of identification.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

PARTNERS

Simply smart identification

Having a choice and enjoying a variety of options is an enrichment in many areas of life. But not when it comes to identifying yourself in the digital world. The majority sees the added value not in variety but in uniformity. The study results are clear on this.

It seems reasonable to assume that the respondents are transferring their experiences from the real world to the digital world. After all, people identify themselves outside the internet almost exclusively with their ID cards. It is, therefore, not surprising that the majority would also like to only use this medium to access administrative portals. This is backed up impressively by the fact that a good half of the people in favor of uniform identification prefer the online ID card.

Uwe Sander, Senior Director Strategic Alliances, adesso

When asked which option is favored as the sole means of digital identification in Germany, around one in two participants voted for the online ID card. Among the online ID card users, the figure is as high as 85 percent – which indicates that they have recognized a benefit for themselves in the online ID card.

One solution for consolidating and streamlining the online identification landscape is the BundID portal, which also became significant at the beginning of the year due to handling the energy price allowance for students. The BundID is designed as a central user account for digital administrative services. Every citizen can create an account by specifying a password and login name. In order to be able to use the full range of functions (identification for online applications, pre-filling of forms, receipt of notices and messages), account holders must confirm their identity when registering. This is currently possible with the online ID, the ELSTER certificate, or the European ID.

PARTNERS

Citizens demand an extended BundID with integrated functionalities

The eGovernment MONITOR clearly shows that citizens have a strong need for a functionally enhanced BundID that also has an integrated payment option. This logical addition would not only increase the efficiency and user-friendliness of e-government directly in the online application process but also advance the digitalization of public administration and better meet the needs of citizens. The eGovernment MONITOR is a valuable insight for all and inspires the further expansion of BundID towards an attractive e-government ecosystem.

Manfred Neidel, eGovernment Office, AKDB

In addition to digital identification, citizens can imagine other functions for the BundID that they find useful. The most frequently mentioned function is the ability to use the BundID as a mailbox to receive messages and notifications from public authorities (43 percent). The document safe (34 percent) and payment service (33 percent), currently not implemented, came in second and third place.

So far, the portal is still in its infancy, both in terms of what it offers (the Bund ID has not yet been integrated into all online services) and awareness. While the ELSTER certificate and online ID are generally familiar terms (69 and 62 percent, respectively), only 16 percent of citizens know the Bund ID. ↘ Fig. 15 Only 7 percent of citizens have used the BundID.

EXPERTS

Online identification is not an end in itself

We cannot be satisfied that, after more than ten years, a product as central to the digitalization of administration as the online ID card has only achieved a market penetration of 14 percent. The fact that citizens do not consider using the online ID function, even though it is actively offered and has very tangible benefits, should also raise a flag.

In the study, citizens give three main reasons for not using the online ID card: lack of use cases, lack of benefits, and complexity of use. Online identification is not an end in itself. Ultimately, identification is only a necessary intermediate step when using other government services online. It would therefore be important to integrate identification seamlessly and smoothly with these online services as well as with private sector applications. In addition, a government identification solution should have a recognition value for citizens, since the government usually has a trust advantage over other actors. Both could be achieved, for example, through centrally deployed modules with a consistent, intuitive design.

A clear pattern emerges in countries that have already implemented successful government digital identity solutions: there are many opportunities for citizens to use this solution - in the administrative context, but also in the private sector, for example for online banking.

Government digital identities are proven to be more successful when they become a constant companion in everyday life.

Secure identification in the digital space creates real value for both citizens and government. We already have many of the tools we need. We also know where to start to improve them. Now we need to reach the large group of people who have not yet identified themselves online - by offering easier access, more use cases, a consistently good user experience, and clear, targeted communication.

Christina Lang

Chief Executive Officer, DigitalService of the German Federal Government

You can find the detailed interview under this QR code

Digital identification in Austria

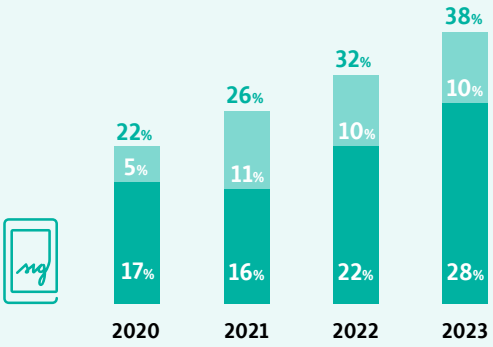
64 %

of Austrians say they have the mobile signature, ID Austria or a card-based E-ID.

BASIS: All respondents - AT (n = 1,003)

In Austria, there has been a steady increase in the number of citizens who report possessing electronic proof of identity. Since 2022, the proportion has now remained stable at 64 percent. This includes holders/users of cell phone signatures, ID Austria, and card-based e-IDs. As a further development of the cell phone signature ID Austria also enables digital ID services such as the digital driver's license or the recently implemented digital age verification.

Accordingly, there has been an increase in mobile usage this year – a trend that is also evident in e-government overall. ↘ Fig. 29 A total of 38 percent of Austrians with smartphones use the "Digitales Amt" administration app (oesterreich.gv.at). The good news regarding digital identification is that most users have also activated the app's mobile signature or ID Austria, which significantly expands the range of application functions to the authorities. This also shows a clear increase in users compared to the previous year (2023: 28 percent, up six percentage points compared to 2022). ↘ Fig. 18



▸ Fig. 18: Use of the "Digitales Amt" app (oesterreich.gv.at)

QUESTION: Do you already use oesterreich.gv.at as an app on your smartphone? | BASIS: All respondents who own a smartphone - AT (n= 977); the sum of the individual percentages deviates from the total due to rounding

PARTNERS

Digitalization brings public administration to the citizens

With the Digital Austria Act, Austria has a clear strategy: convenient, simple, and secure access to digitalization. The figures show that our e-government services are well received. With the digital skills initiative, we are laying the foundation for all citizens to be able to use modern services in the future. Thanks to digitalization, we are bringing the public administration to where the people are.

Florian Tursky, MSc MBA, State Secretary for Digitalization and Telecommunications, Federal Ministry of Finance in Austria

28 %

of citizens currently use a wallet on their smartphone.

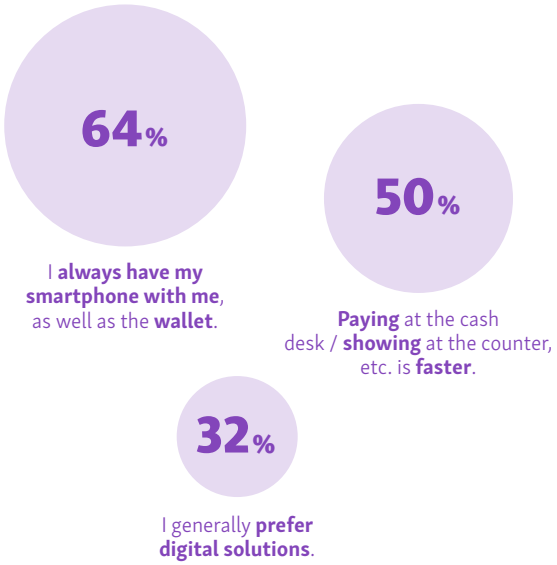
BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

Excursus: Experiences with the digital wallet

Citizens' expectations of government digitalization often align based on their experiences with the private sector. ↘ Page 16 It is therefore worth looking at so-called "wallet apps" when it comes to digital identification. "Wallet apps" are digital wallets that bundle documents, such as credit cards, airline tickets, etc., on a smartphone or tablet.

In Germany, significantly more people use such wallet apps (28 percent) than online ID cards (14 percent). This means that more than one in four people are willing to store sensitive documents on their smartphone – mostly for convenience because the smartphone is always with them anyway (64 percent). This rationale can potentially attract more users to the online ID card. The Federal Ministry of the Interior is currently working on enabling mobile use with the smart eID. The smartphone should then store the online ID card after the ID card has been scanned once.

However, 2 out of 3 citizens also state that they do not yet use a wallet on their smartphone. As with the online ID card, the most common reason for this is the lack of opportunities to use it (38 percent).



▸ **Fig. 20: Reasons for using a wallet**

QUESTION: Why do you use a wallet?
BASIS: All respondents who use a wallet - GER (n = 2,176)

PARTNERS

The potential for digital wallets is huge

ID cards, health cards, money – more and more things are moving from physical wallets to digital wallets on smartphones. Today, more than a quarter of respondents already use such wallet apps. This is no surprise since digital verification offers enormous advantages in terms of convenience and security. Those who do not yet use a wallet state that they simply lack the occasion to use it. Therefore, promoting digital verification's relevance through tangible use cases is essential. Payments can be an important building block. It is only through the interaction of digital certificates and payment methods that wallets unfold their full potential. Throughout all of this, there needs to be a consistent focus on users. This includes the freedom to choose between public and private digital wallets – this promotes competition and innovation.

Valerie Schürenkrämer, Designated Head of Public Affairs, ING Germany

Digital identification in Switzerland

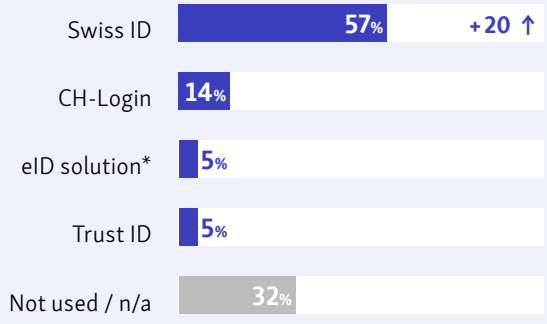
In contrast to the standardization of digital identifications in Austria, the choice between different procedures persists in Switzerland. However, consolidation has also occurred here in recent years due to the consolidation of services. SwissID is now, by far, the most widely used ID solution, as over half (57 percent) of Swiss citizens use it. The increase of 20 percentage points compared with the previous year indicates successful consolidation. ↘ Fig. 19 The usage behavior among SwissID users also indicates established use: Most use their SwissID "sometimes" (49 percent), and 17 percent also "more frequently."

Across all services, the use of government digital identification options in Switzerland has increased.

68%

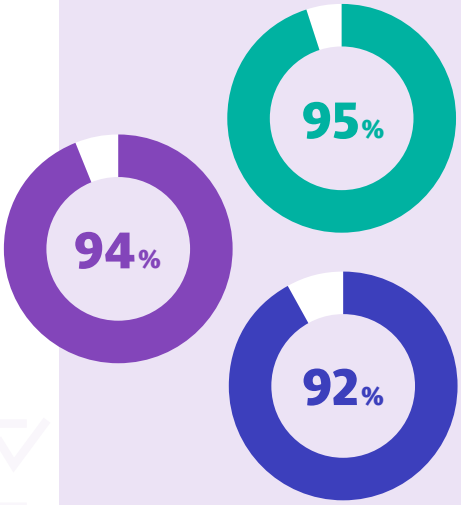
of the Swiss use at least one digital identification method, which is 5 percentage points more than last year.

BASIS: All respondents - CH (n = 1,001)



▸ **Fig. 19: Authentication methods used**

QUESTION: Which of the following electronic identities do you use for digital administrative services? | BASIS: All respondents - CH (n = 1,001); deviations from the previous year in percentage points; *eID solution of the authority (e.g., Schaffhausen eID)



»I would also like to use this government service over the Internet next time.«

▸ Fig. 21: Usage potentials

BASIS: All respondents who have used the respective government service online in the past 3 years; average value across all services queried

61% **47%** **52%**

» It's often not clear to me whether the service I need is even offered online.«

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001)

Usage perspective

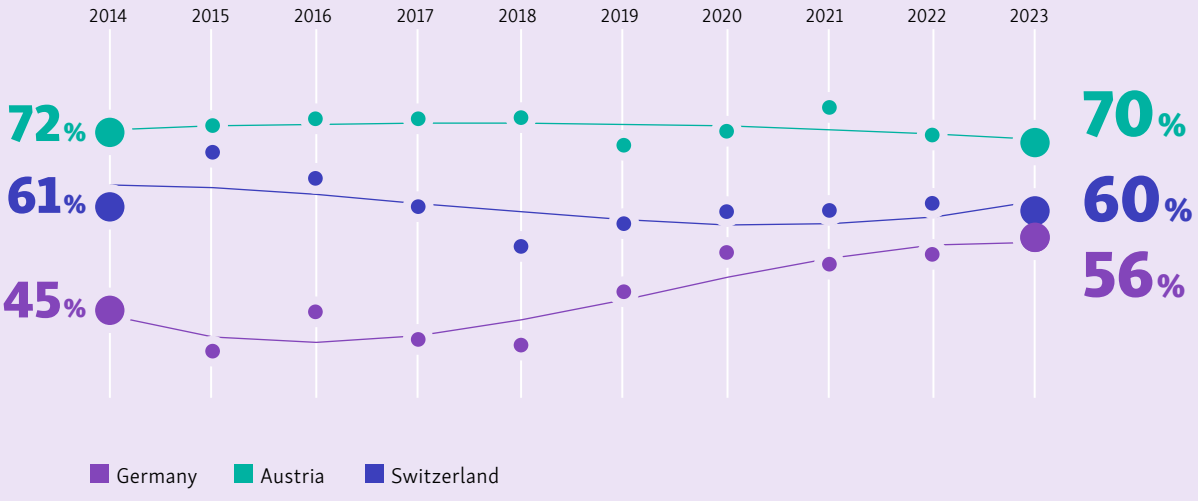
RELEVANCE

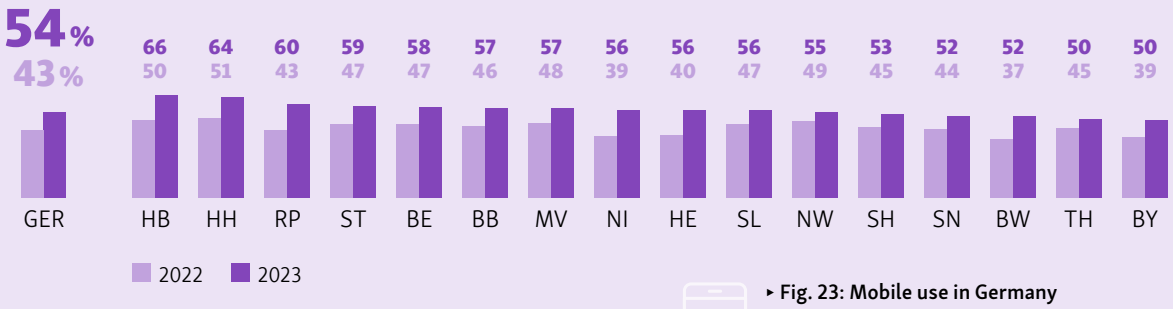
The digitalization of government is not an end in itself. The government's objective is to make people's lives easier by providing simple and fast digital administrative services. However, these efforts will only be effective if they reach the citizens - because the mere availability of online services is not a success in itself.

The state can only achieve the desired effect if the online services are better known, more frequently used and the satisfaction with the user experience increases. For this, a regular and structured collection of needs-oriented indicators at the level of specific services is indispensable. Such data will reveal the strengths and weaknesses of services from the perspective of citizens. If decision-makers take these findings into account, this will contribute to the success of e-government.

▸ Fig. 22: Current use of e-government

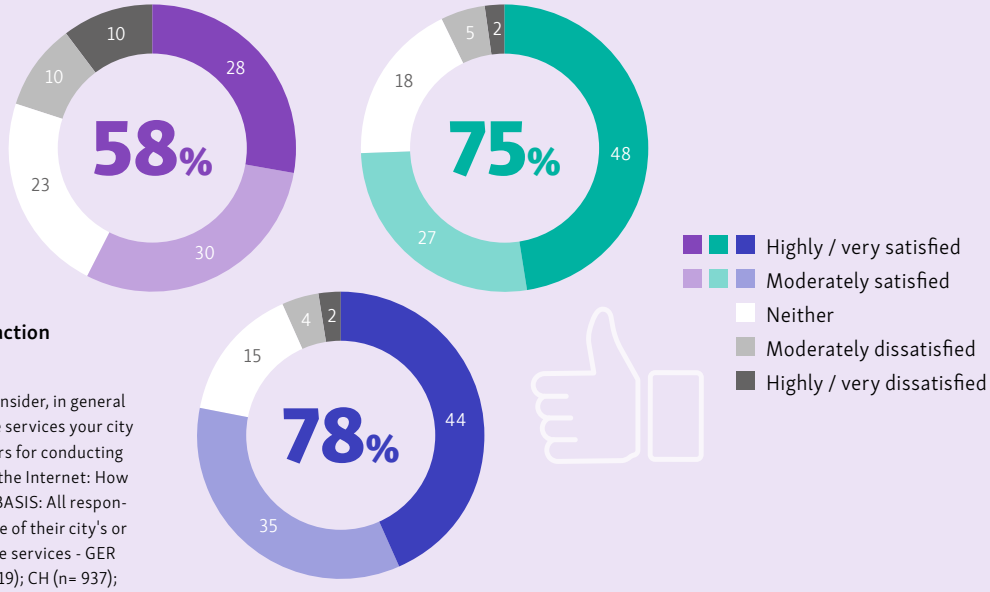
QUESTION: Have you used e-government services in the last 12 months? (for detailed question text, see Fig. 27) | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001)





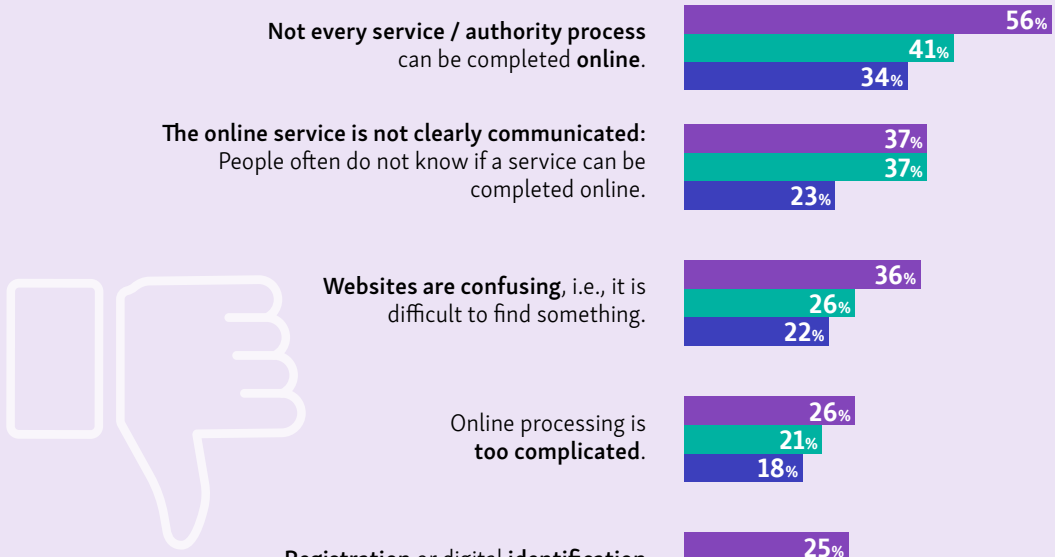
▸ **Fig. 23: Mobile use in Germany**

QUESTION: Have you ever used a smartphone or tablet to access an online government service? BASIS: All respondents who have already used e-government - GER (n = 7,200); figures in percent



▸ **Fig. 24: Satisfaction in general**

QUESTION: Now consider, in general terms, all the online services your city or municipality offers for conducting official business on the Internet: How satisfied are you? | BASIS: All respondents who are aware of their city's or municipality's online services - GER (n= 6,930); AT (n= 919); CH (n= 937); figures in percent



▸ **Fig. 25: Reasons for dissatisfaction**

QUESTION: You have indicated that you are not satisfied with your city or municipality's online service for conducting official business online. Please indicate the reasons why. | BASIS: All respondents who are not satisfied - GER (n = 3,039); AT (n = 234); CH (n = 205)

Awareness of services

An important prerequisite for using e-government is knowing that government services can be completed online - no awareness, no use. 61 percent of citizens in Germany state that they are often unfamiliar with the online alternatives of a required administrative service and that they, therefore, do not use e-government more often.

61 %

do not use any or only a few government services because they are unsure whether the service they need is even offered online.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

Most people in Germany fail to use e-government because of this basic hurdle. This applies to all population groups equally, with minimal differences based on sociodemographic characteristics such as gender or urbanity. Those hurdles also exist in Austria (47 percent) and Switzerland (52 percent), but to a lesser extent.

Findability of services

The second fundamental requirement for using e-government is the easy discoverability of services. Only when people can find an online service when needed can they use it. This is a challenge for many people: almost half of them (47 percent) cannot find their way around online services. To a slightly lesser extent, this problem also exists in Switzerland (42 percent) and Austria (37 percent). ↘ Fig.26

One-third of those unsatisfied with e-government services justify their dissatisfaction by saying that the websites seem confusing and find it difficult to find anything (Germany: 36 percent). Generation Z is particularly critical of this (46 percent). The issue seems to weigh less heavily in Austria (26 percent) and Switzerland (22 percent). ↘ Fig.25

PARTNERS

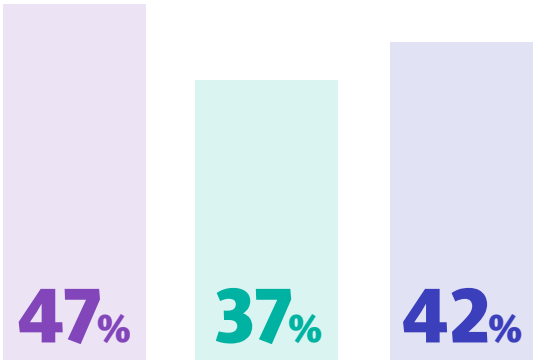
Benefits as a prerequisite for awareness of digital services

For a digital service to become known, it must provide value. A good example is the German Federal Employment Agency's virtual assistant: The Chatbot responds to individual questions about unemployment, short-time work and financial aid in real time, and offers tools such as eligibility checks or calculators to determine the amount of financial assistance.

Surveys show high user satisfaction, with 30 percent above the industry average. In addition, CO_2 emissions per request are reduced by 94 percent.

This virtual assistant is a good example of how innovative technologies can help citizens in difficult circumstances. It facilitates access to important information and services, strengthens trust in government institutions, and motivates the administration to continuously develop their services.

Corinna Krezer, Managing Director, Head of Public Administration & Healthcare, Europe & Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Accenture



»I can't find my way around the various online services, portals, etc.«

▸ Fig. 26: Lack of overview as a barrier to (more intensive) use of e-government

QUESTION: Which of the barriers listed below generally speak against a (more intensive) use of online government services for you personally? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001); Top3 (strongly agree / agree / rather agree)

10%
searched for a service online in vain.

BASIS: All respondents with a need for the respective government service, average across all queried services in GER

Those who can't find what they're looking for online ultimately have to resort to offline use. The percentage of people who do their administrative business offline because they can not find anything online varies by government service. The individual results are presented in the chapter "The usage gap." ↘ Fig. 37

On average, 10 percent of all people who needed a service in the past three years searched for it online in vain and, therefore, used it offline. This represents a valuable missed opportunity for citizens.

Faster search success would increase many people's motivation to use e-government at all, or at least more frequently. Currently, younger people, in particular, use search engines as their preferred starting point when looking for administrative services before they search on the pages of the authorities (Generation Z and Y: 67 percent each). On average, one in two Germans chooses this route, which is unchanged from the previous year (see eGovernment MONITOR 2022, p. 11 f.).

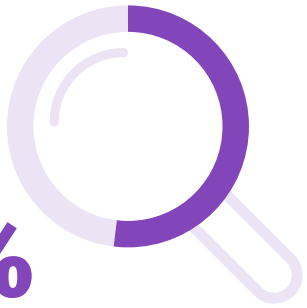
Details on the search entry can be found in the eGovernment MONITOR 2022

PARTNERS

Intelligent guides

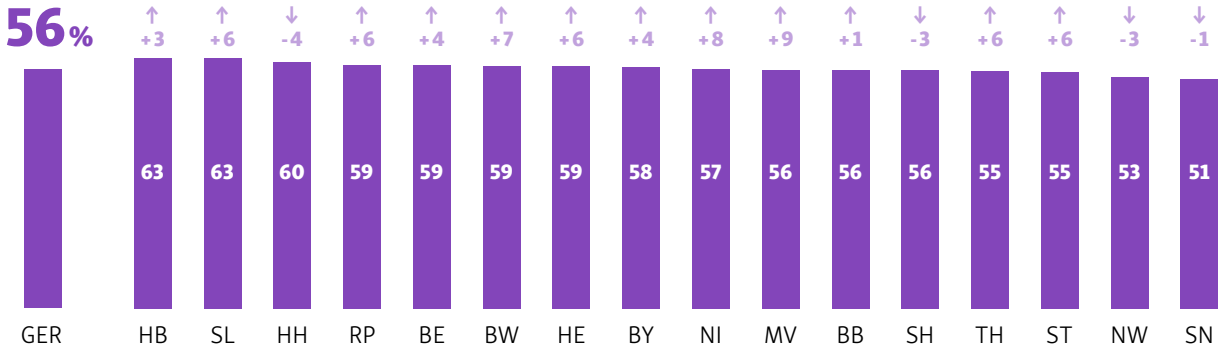
Imagine there exist digitally offered administrative services, but nobody can find them. To successfully implement the digitization of public administration, it needs to be thoroughly thought through – right down into the everyday lives of citizens and public agencies. This includes ensuring that digital services are easily discoverable. After all, even the best solution won't be utilized if it can't be found. What would help? An AI assistant in the frontend of administrative portals, acting as a chatbot. This assistant guides users on the website in real-time, accessible and with voice control, leading them to the desired service and providing support in application processes. Additionally, AI assistants can also be effectively used in the backend to simplify application processing and relieve administrative staff.

Felix Dinnessen,
Head of Government & Public Services, Deloitte



52%
would use (more) digital government services if they could get the service they want faster online.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)



▸ Abb. 27: Current use of e-government in Germany

QUESTION: Have you used e-government services in the last 12 months? By this, we mean information and services provided by public authorities and public institutions (municipality, city, state) that can be used via the Internet, e.g., electronic tax returns, information on the responsibilities of offices, downloading forms, or online appointments. | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); figures in percent; deviations from the previous year in percentage points

Use of e-government

The proportion of those who have used e-government in Germany in the last 12 months stands at 56 percent in 2023. The long-term trend shows that the use of e-government has increased by 11 percentage points during the previous 10 years. If this trend continues, it will be another 40 years before everyone in Germany uses e-government services.

Compared with Austria and Switzerland, Germany continues to lag behind, despite the long-term upward trend. ↘ Fig. 22

In Germany, one sociodemographic pattern has remained the same over the years: E-government is becoming more popular among younger than older generations. However, what initially seems to be in line with other digitalization developments does not necessarily have to be so: A different pattern has emerged in Austria and Switzerland. Here, the usage rate across all age groups is largely constant and even highest in the middle age group.

56%

of the population in Germany currently uses e-government.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

From the people's point of view, where they live should not matter when it comes to the availability and use of e-government services. Recently, the differences between the German states concerning e-government usage decreased (see eGovernment MONITOR 2022, p. 14). This year, the disparities are significantly smaller, with the difference between the state with the lowest usage (Saxony at 51 percent) and the one with the highest usage (Bremen at 63 percent) being smaller.

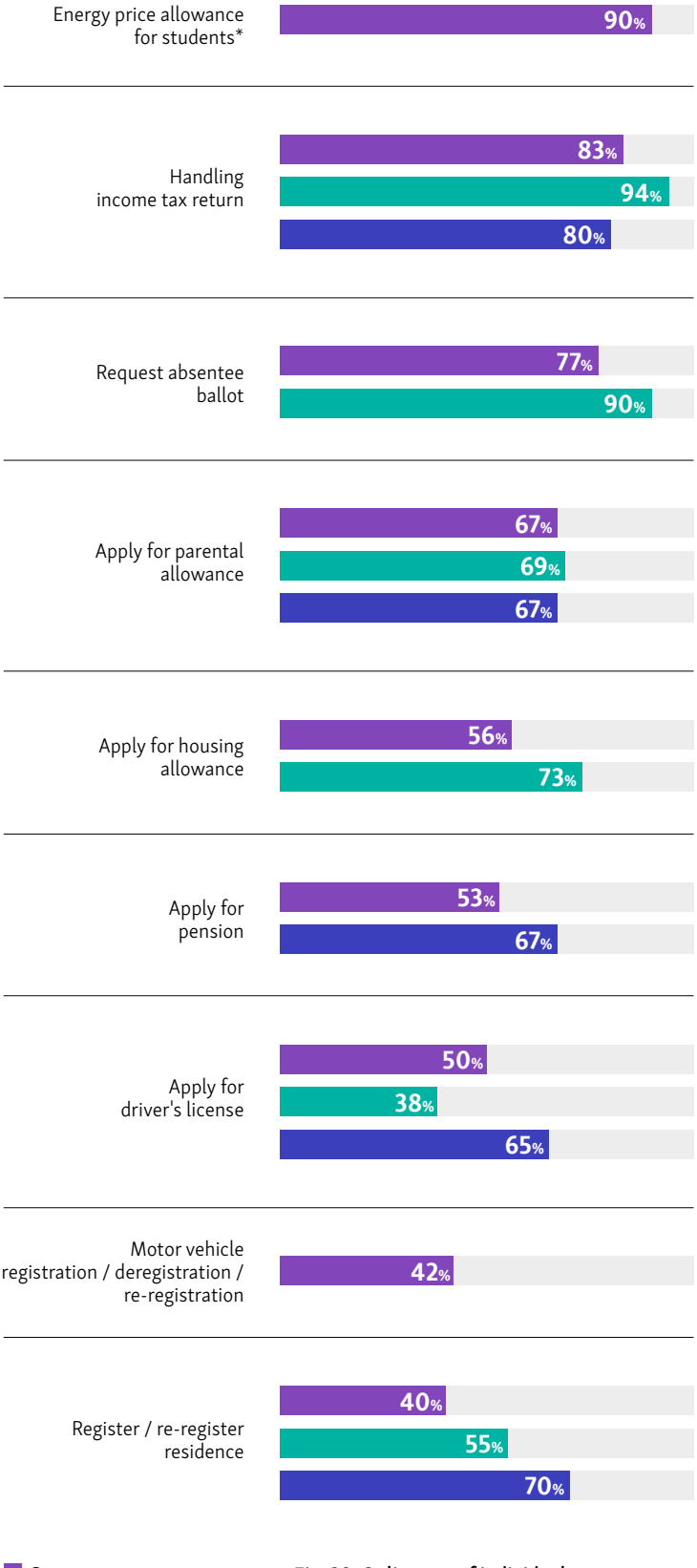
The use of e-government has increased in most states. This is particularly true of Lower Saxony (+8 percentage points) and Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (+9 percentage points). As in the previous year, Bremen, Hamburg, and Saarland, the smallest state in Germany, are among the five states with the highest use of e-government, although Rhineland-Palatinate and Berlin have moved up into the top group this year. Schleswig-Holstein and North Rhine-Westphalia are now in the bottom five places, having slipped out of the top 5. Also at the bottom of the rankings are Thuringia, Saxony-Anhalt, and Saxony. ↘ Fig. 27

The usage rates in the states must be considered in their respective contexts, considering limiting conditions and ongoing projects.

One reason for the increasing use of e-government is the growing number of online services the administration offers. Therefore, it makes sense to examine (partial) online use at the level of individual services, at least for the most common services in the D-A-CH region. In the last three years, the implementation of the Online Access Act has, in particular, led to a significant increase in the availability of digital administrative services. Therefore, this is the reference period of this study.

How many people have used a government service they needed online in the last three years? The answer to this question varies greatly depending on the specific service. ↘ Fig. 28 The two most frequently used online services in Germany are the one-time payment of the energy price allowance for students and the processing of income tax returns (over 80 percent online use in each case). Three-quarters of all absentee ballots were also requested online in the last three years. Applications for parental allowance, housing subsidies, pensions, and driver's licenses were processed online by more than half of the citizens who wanted to make such an application during this period. Comparatively few people used municipal services for registering or re-registering their place of residence or motor vehicles online.

As with the general question on the use of e-government, Austria and Switzerland are also ahead of Germany in the online use of some individual government services. However, many of the services offered cannot be compared between the D-A-CH countries. As in Germany, processing income tax returns is one of Austria and Switzerland's most frequently used online services. In Austria, the request for absentee ballots is also frequently used online – in the last three years, 90 percent have done this online. In Switzerland, the frequent registration or change of residence stands out in the international comparison, with Switzerland significantly ahead of Germany and Austria, with an online usage rate of 70 percent.



▸ Fig. 28: Online use of individual services (selection)

QUESTION: Have you done (all or part of) ... online in the last 3 years? | BASIS: All respondents with a need for the respective government service in the last 3 years; *Difference to 100 percent online application is due, among other things, to help from others and/or misunderstandings in the application process

EXPERTS

Making the benefits of digital access tangible

"DigitalFirst" means that we view government services as a portfolio of products for citizens and businesses. The benchmark for design is to meet user needs in a cost-effective way. We want to offer digital access in a way that is more attractive than analog access to the target group.

Together with our partners at the federal, state and local levels, we will start at all stages of the user journey to increase the digital use of administrative services: We will roll out even more relevant services that have emerged nationwide thanks to the One for All (EfA) model, and communicate more about their availability and benefits.

We want to create a consistently positive digital user experience and analyze user feedback to continuously improve our services - because digital services are not yet attractive enough.

With the "Portalverbund Online-Gateway" initiative, in which Hamburg played a key role, the federal and state governments have taken measures to ensure that digital access to administrative services is easy to find. The eGovernment MONITOR 2023 encourages us to intensify user research. By better understanding how citizens search for digital administrative services and where the challenges lie, we can work more effectively to ensure that more people find the available digital access points directly.

The modernization of registers will significantly speed up the processing of administrative services while improving the quality of service. It will enable government agencies to share data and records with each other once they have been submitted, always with prior consent. With the help of the new data protection cockpit, citizens will be able to track which of their data have been exchanged between authorities in a simple, comprehensible and reliable way, regardless of time and place.

Dr. Brigitte Klamroth

Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Head of Program Governance, Finance and Communication, Overall Control of Register Modernization

Mario Pahl

Senate of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Digital First Program Management

You can find the detailed interview under this QR code

Mobile usage

For many people, mobile devices have become an indispensable part of everyday life. In Germany, 84 percent of the population currently use mobile Internet. Smartphones are used much more frequently than laptops or desktop computers, as shown in the D21 Digital Index. To reach people where they already spend their time, government agencies should also provide for mobile services in the long term.

Currently, not all digital government services are suitable for mobile devices or optimized for mobile devices. This is a problem: Since people have been using mobile applications in their daily lives for a long time, they increasingly expect digital government services to be available anytime and anywhere as well.

34 %

find it a barrier to use that the processes are not optimized for mobile devices.

BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034)

Many people even express their displeasure that e-government services are not optimized for mobile devices. One-third of citizens state that this prevents them from using the services. Representatives of the younger generations see themselves, in particular, affected by this hurdle (Gen Z: 40 percent, Gen Y: 41 percent).

PARTNERS

Online services still in need of improvement

There is no way around offering mobile administrative services. This applies both to access to specialized procedures for administrative staff and to service offerings for citizens and business stakeholders. Overall, the user experience must be the focus. It must be free of security and privacy concerns, suitable for all digital and language skills, and accessible on mobile devices as well as for people with disabilities.

Nadja Kwaß-Benkow, Director Digital Government, Materna Information & Communications SE

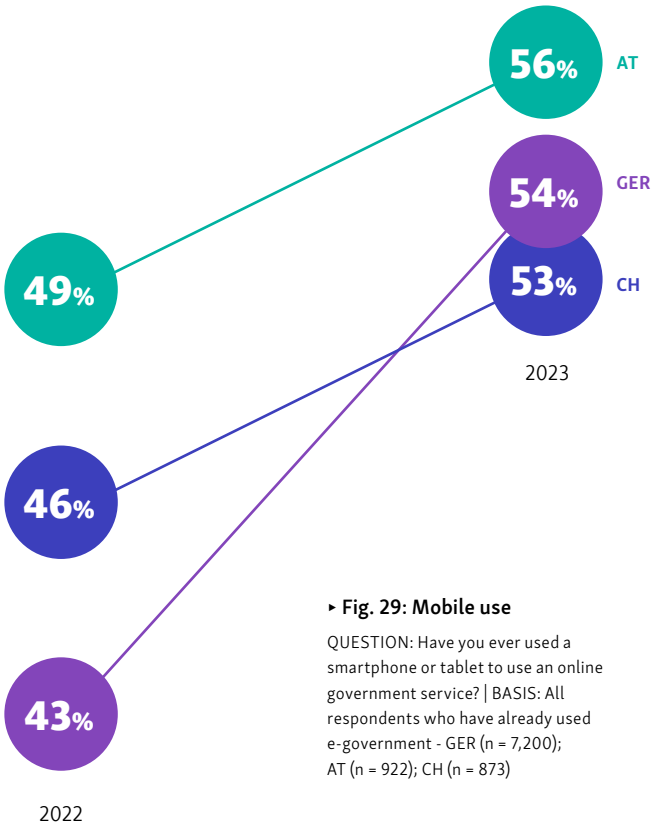
The inadequate adaptation of online services to mobile devices is also a reason for the premature termination of a process, even when a citizen has already started using a digital service. ↘ Fig. 32

The potential for mobile use of administrative services on devices such as smartphones or tablets is significant. Mobile devices offer a range of applications, such as filling out forms independently of time and location, signing applications, or opening QR codes, e.g., when applying for absentee ballots. The significant increase in the use of mobile devices to complete administrative tasks for the first time this year shows that these services are popular with users. For the first time, more than half of e-government users also used mobile services. ↘ Fig. 29

The trend is surprisingly consistent across the federal government: the use of e-government via mobile devices has increased in all federal states compared with the previous year – in some states by more than 15 percentage points: Rhineland-Palatinate and Lower Saxony both showed an increase of 17 percentage points, and Hesse an increase of 16 percentage points. ↘ Fig. 23

While the increases in the two neighboring countries are attributable to catch-up effects in the middle and older age groups, mobile communications usage in Germany is increasing strongly across all generations. ↘ Fig. 30

In all 3 countries, mobile use of e-government is getting a significant push forward this year.

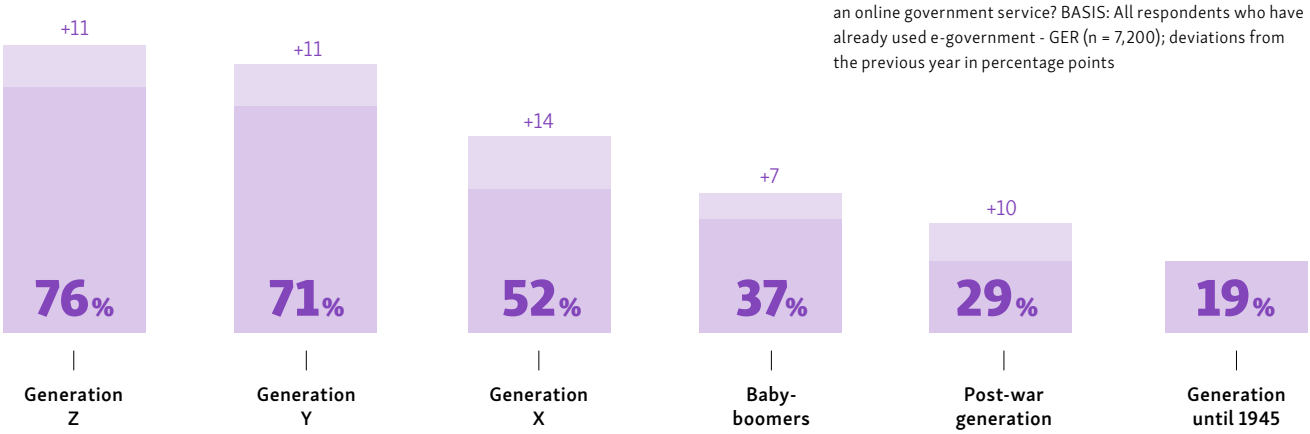


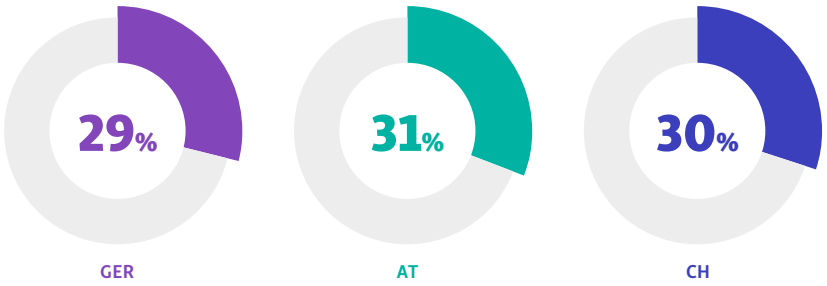
▸ Fig. 29: Mobile use

QUESTION: Have you ever used a smartphone or tablet to use an online government service? | BASIS: All respondents who have already used e-government - GER (n = 7,200); AT (n = 922); CH (n = 873)

▸ Fig. 30: Mobile use by generation

QUESTION: Have you ever used a smartphone or tablet to use an online government service? BASIS: All respondents who have already used e-government - GER (n = 7,200); deviations from the previous year in percentage points





▸ Fig. 31: Experience with dropouts

QUESTION: In the past 3 years, have you ever started the process of using a government service (any service) online but then canceled it? | BASIS: All respondents - GER (n = 8,034); AT (n = 1,003); CH (n = 1,001)

Dropouts

The fact that more and more public services are being offered digitally is not enough for the successful digitalization of public administration – it also depends on whether users complete the processes or decide to abandon them before successful completion.

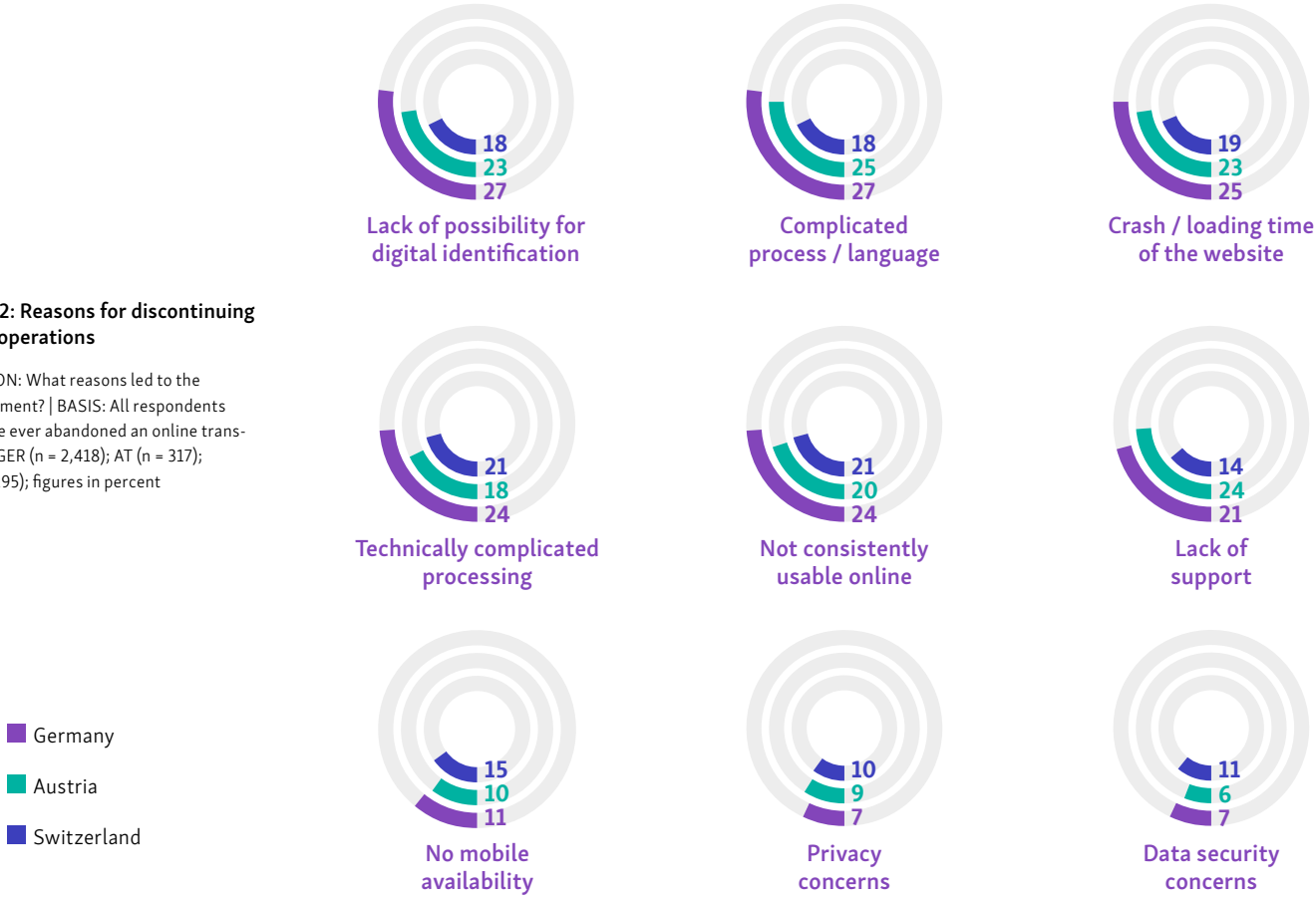
Nearly three in 10 people in Germany say they have abandoned their use of an online government service in the last three years. ↘ Fig. 31 Most have given up because they had to identify themselves digitally but were unable to do so or because the entries were too complicated, e.g., because of difficult terminology (Germany: 27 percent). Technical problems or the need to continue offline at one point in the process due to manual data transfer ("Medienbrüche") are also cited by around a quarter as reasons. ↘ Fig. 32

PARTNERS

Too much frustration

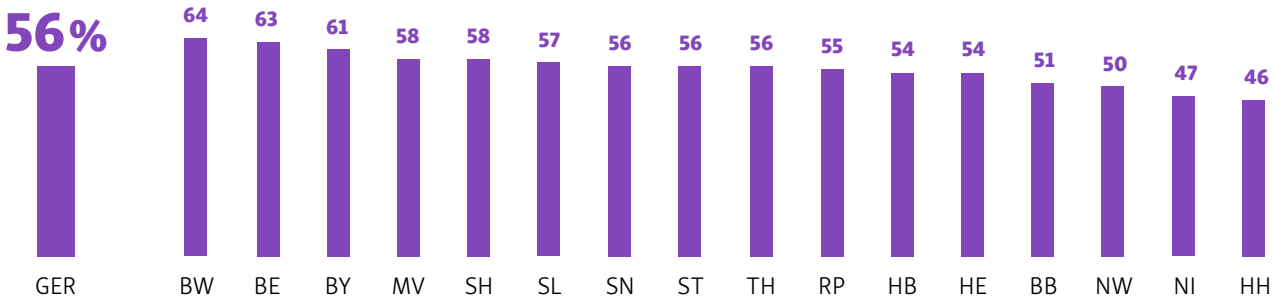
The abandonment of online services for technical reasons or because of too much complexity has consequences. It not only prevents the current success but also damages trust and willingness to use e-government services in the future. Furthermore, non-technical reasons for discontinuation indicate that there is still a long way to go towards citizen-centric services.

Thomas Langkabel,
National Technology Officer, Microsoft



▸ Fig. 32: Reasons for discontinuing online operations

QUESTION: What reasons led to the abandonment? | BASIS: All respondents who have ever abandoned an online transaction - GER (n = 2,418); AT (n = 317); CH (n = 295); figures in percent



▸ **Fig. 33: Incomplete online offering as a reason for dissatisfaction**

QUESTION: You have indicated that you are not satisfied with your city or municipality's online offering for conducting official business on the Internet. Please indicate the reasons why. | BASIS: All respondents who are not satisfied - GER (n = 3,039); figures in percent

Satisfaction

Another important metric is users' satisfaction with the digital service. This metric shows how positively or negatively users rate the services offered by the administration. The degree of satisfaction among users can also influence their general attitude toward the state and administration (see also Chapter 1, "Focus on users," p. 10 ff.). Therefore, it is even more critical for the administration to take up this feedback on the strengths and weaknesses of its online service and consider it when designing and optimizing it (see also Chapter 5, "The usage gap," p. 44 f.).

In Germany, fewer people are satisfied with the online services offered by the authorities (58 percent) than in Austria (75 percent) or Switzerland (78 percent). However, the level of satisfaction has risen significantly in all three countries compared with 2021 and is again similar to the level in 2020*.

Four out of 10 people in Germany are unsatisfied with the e-government services their city or municipality offers. The main reason cited by more than half of those dissatisfied (56 percent) is that not all administrative services can be completed online. Two other reasons for dissatisfaction are that the online services are not communicated clearly enough and are difficult to find online (37 and 36 percent). ↘ Fig. 25

The federal states implement online services at different rates. In Baden-Württemberg, Berlin, and Bavaria, the lack of online availability is a particularly frequent cause of dissatisfaction. In Hamburg and Lower Saxony, on the other hand, this problem is less prominent. ↘ Fig. 33

PARTNERS

Citizen-oriented digitalization - Opportunities for administration and public authorities

Administrations must expand their digital services, make them more user-friendly, and raise awareness of them in order to increase user satisfaction. By involving citizens, their needs and wishes can be better understood. User experience experts should ensure an intuitive user interface. Communication strategies can help to better inform about digital opportunities. Online tutorials, citizen support, etc. help users with their difficulties. A regular review of digital services is necessary for continuous improvement. The goal is a citizen-centric digital administration that is efficient, fast, and streamlined.

Isabel Netzband, Director Governmental Relations & Public Policy, Fujitsu

*Methodological note: The results over time are comparable except for the 2022 result. The value for 2022 cannot be included due to a different order of questions in this particular year.

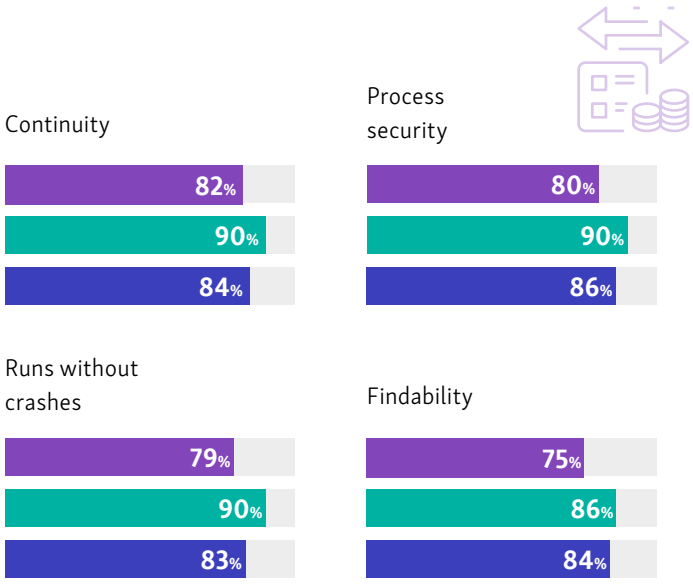
A citizens' assessment of an e-government service is an important indicator of challenges such as lack of availability, insufficient awareness, and difficulty in finding information. However, e-government services encompass a wide range of digital services provided by the administration that citizens use and may be satisfied or dissatisfied with.

To ensure that citizens gain a more positive image of digital administrative services, removing barriers to use and achieving the most satisfactory user experiences possible when using individual services is necessary. Therefore, knowing the strengths and weaknesses that citizens perceive when using specific services is essential. This is the only way to enhance the user experience.

Processing electronic tax returns is a good illustration of this: it is widely and regularly used by citizens in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Satisfaction with this service is high in all three countries. It is among the five best-rated services in Germany, although the subject is very complex. In Switzerland and Austria, it is rated even better than in Germany. Citizens particularly appreciate that the entire process is online from start to finish (82 percent) and that it is very secure (80 percent). The website's ability to function without crashes, error messages, excessively long loading times, etc. (79 percent) and the ease with which the desired services can be found (75 percent) are also seen as **strengths**. ↘ Fig. 34

The biggest **drawback** for citizens is that the process does not work well on smartphones or tablets (only 43 percent are satisfied with it). Not even 2 out of 3 citizens in Germany are satisfied with the information provided, such as explanatory videos or helpful comments (62 percent). The same applies to the comprehensibility of the terminology (66 percent). Above all, there is a big difference between this rating and that of neighboring countries.



▸ Fig. 34: Processing income tax returns: Satisfaction - Top 4 Aspects

QUESTION: How satisfied are you with the following aspects? - Top3 (extremely satisfied / very satisfied / somewhat satisfied) | BASIS: All respondents who have used online "income tax return processing" in the last 3 years and were asked about it (random selection) - GER (n = 2,737); AT (n = 470); CH (n = 332)

PARTNERS

Optimization potential for digital infrastructure, offerings, and complexity

Even in 2023, the results of the eGovernment MONITOR highlight significant potential for improvement in online services in Germany in terms of mobile compatibility, language comprehensibility, effort required, and usability.

Industry and government can jointly address these challenges. The key priorities are: 1) avoid further delays in expanding digital infrastructure, such as the establishment of high-speed broadband networks and comprehensive, high-quality mobile networks, 2) ensure that government services, in accordance with the Online Access Act, are consistently available nationwide, and 3) guarantee easily understandable processes and IT solutions at all levels of administration. If we succeed in this, the generally positive trend in e-government can be further promoted.

Ingobert Veith, Vice President,
Head of Public Affairs & Communications,
Huawei Technologies Deutschland GmbH

Usage potential

Satisfactory experiences when using online administrative services are important (see chapter "Focus on users," page 10 ff.). In general, the fact that someone has tried an online service at least once contributes to the likelihood of them choosing it in the future. Habit plays a major role here: once the barriers to use have been overcome, there is great potential that these individuals will continue to take the online route. In particular, older people who have rarely used e-government (the post-war generation and the generation up to 1945) can be motivated to continue using these services through positive online experiences.

94 %
of those who have used a government service via the Internet would like to do so again online the next time.

BASIS: All respondents who have used the respective government service online in the past 3 years; average value across all services queried in GER

PARTNERS

Attractive e-government offerings as a sustainable investment

It pays to offer mature, technically well-thought-out, and reliably functioning e-government services. Once citizens are convinced of the benefits of following the online approach, they stick with it. This is demonstrated by the high level of willingness to use the service again. So, it pays off when online services are familiar, easily accessible, and intuitive. To further increase the usage rate and enable and convince offline users, the existing online services must be further optimized in terms of their quality. Additionally, the offering should be expanded to cover all existing government services and be promoted through transparent information channels.

Cornelia Gottbehüt, Leader Government & Public Sector Germany, EY

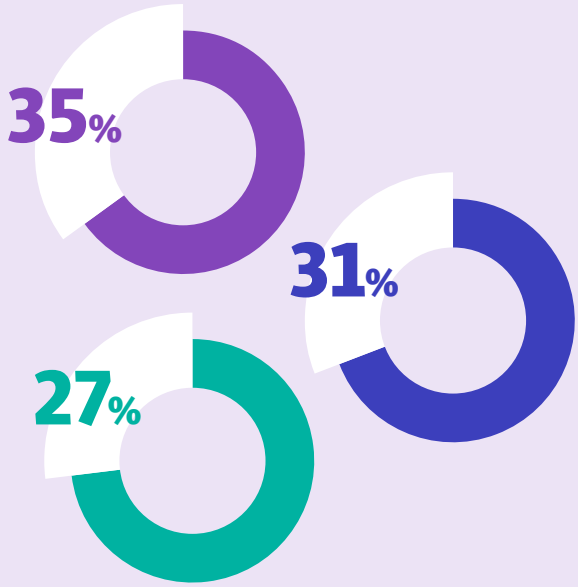
INTERIM SUMMARY

Online services need to be better known, used more frequently and the user experience needs to be more satisfying.

#1 The use of e-government services is slow to catch on with the population. While it has been growing steadily for 10 years, progress is so slow that at the current rate it would take another 40 years to reach all citizens with digital administrative services. Often, people fail to take advantage of these services simply because they are unaware that certain things can be done online. Therefore, it is not enough for governments to offer online services; they must also be widely promoted, easy to find on websites, and user-friendly.

#2 From the citizen's perspective, the biggest barriers to using e-government are the incomplete range of services, lack of awareness, and poor discoverability. In addition, insufficient focus on user needs in the design of these services hinders the success of government digitalization efforts. For citizens, online administration is not an end in itself. They want to be able to conduct their affairs quickly and effortlessly, preferably from anywhere and at any time. To achieve this, they need seamless services in simple language, intuitive processes and interfaces, a reliable digital infrastructure, and user support.

#3 Eventually, all citizens will need to interact with government services. For most of them, this contact is currently very stressful. Public administrations have to cope with decreasing human resources and increasing demands. Successful digitalization of government services and administrative processes can make life easier for both sides. If successful, it can significantly strengthen citizens' trust in the government's ability to deliver. Simple measures, such as adapting digital administrative services for mobile devices, can make a big difference. This allows citizens to conduct government business anytime, anywhere.



▸ Fig. 35: The digital usage gap (last 3 years)

BASIS: All respondents with a need for the respective government service in the last 3 years; average across all services queried in the respective country

The usage gap

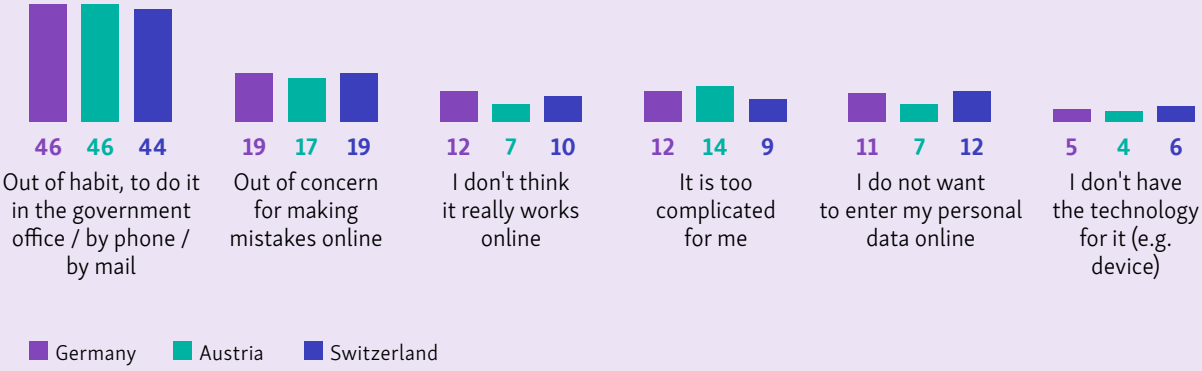
RELEVANCE

The German government measures the success of the Online Access Act (OZG) by the digital availability of a total of 575 administrative services. In this assessment, it is irrelevant whether the services are still used primarily offline despite their online availability.

But what is the point of having online services if the citizens do not make use of them? What is needed are outcome-oriented metrics that focus on users and answer the question of why current usage of digital administrative services falls short of expectations. The Digital Usage Gap is the key metric in our study that provides such detailed insight into the reasons for untapped online potential.

▸ Fig. 36: Reasons for deliberate offline use

QUESTION: To your knowledge, you could do [government service] online. For what reason have you not yet done it online? | BASIS: All respondents who had performed at least one government service offline in the past 3 years, although they were aware that an online version was available - GER (n = 4,045); AT (n = 420); CH (n = 495); figures in percent



Why don't all citizens meet their needs online?

35 percent of citizens still use the most common German administrative services offline – that's more than a third of the population (period under review: last three years, average across all services). In Austria and Switzerland, the average offline use of the corresponding services is somewhat lower (31 percent in Switzerland, 27 percent in Austria). ↘ Fig. 35

The digital usage gap was already established in eGovernment MONITOR 2022 as a central indicator for the use of digital administrative services among the population. It is defined as the gap between the proportion of people who need a service and those who have used it online – without specifying a concrete reference period. This gap has narrowed somewhat this year compared to 2022 in all three countries (average across all services queried).

In this edition of the study, the informative value of this important indicator is further improved. From now on, the reference period for the digital usage gap will be limited to the last three years. This provides respondents with a current, tangible framework and ensures that the result is not based on an unspecific, outdated status quo of the landscape of digital administrative services.

The fact that more administrative services have been made available digitally (at least in part) in the last three years (for example, because of the OZG) is also reflected in the data: the newly defined digital usage gap is significantly smaller (than the unspecified usage gap without a reference period).

PARTNERS

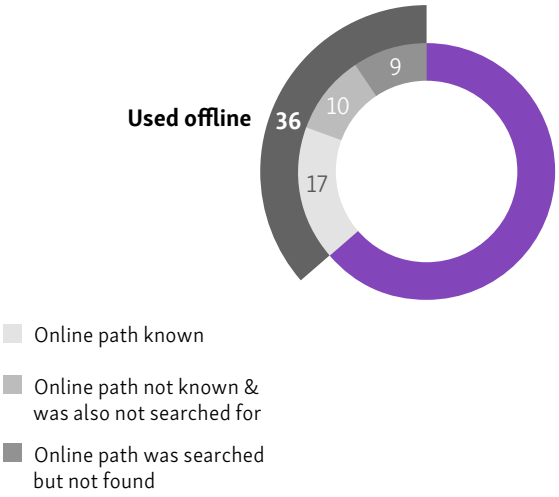
Dare more digitalization

The fact that two-thirds of citizens already use digital administrative services is initially a positive sign! However, in order to further close the digital usage gap, awareness, availability, and user-friendliness must be consistently improved. In addition, administrative services that primarily affect digitally affine user groups (e.g., BAföG) should be offered exclusively online in the future.

Tim Lange, Director, PwC Strategy&

▸ Fig. 37: The digital usage gap of individual services (selection)

QUESTION: Have you done (all or part of) ... online in the last 3 years? If offline: To your knowledge, is there an option to do it online? If no: Which applies to you? - I have not looked for an online opportunity yet / I have already looked for an online opportunity but have not found anything. | BASIS: All respondents in GER with a need for the respective government service in the last 3 years; figures in percent



64 %
of all citizens who applied for child support in the last 3 years did so online.

▸ Fig. 38: The digital usage gap using the example of applying for child benefits

QUESTION: Have you done (all or part of) ... online in the last 3 years? If offline: To your knowledge, is there an option to do it online? If not: Which applies to you? - I have not looked for an online opportunity yet / I have already looked for an online opportunity but have not found anything. | BASIS: All respondents with a need to apply for child support in the last 3 years - GER (n = 574); figures in percent

Taking all the administrative services covered in this study into account, it becomes apparent that more than one-third of citizens in Germany have handled their concerns offline in the last three years (35 percent). However, this percentage varies significantly between individual services. For example, the majority of citizens who needed to register, modify, or deregister their vehicles in the last three years did so offline (58 percent).

In contrast, only 17 percent of people have submitted their income tax returns offline in the last 3 years. ↘ Fig. 37 In between is the application for child benefit, here the digital usage gap in the last 3 years amounts to 36 percent.

To successfully implement administrative digitalization, knowing why people do not use the administration's online services is important. One reason is that they are not aware that online implementation of government services exists. This is illustrated very clearly by the example of applying for child benefits: Of the 36 percent who have applied for this benefit offline in the last three years, 19 percent did not even know that this is also possible online. These people either did not look for an online service (10 percent), for example, because they did not want to use one or assumed that there was none, or they searched for the online service but did not find it (9 percent). ↘ Fig. 38

While a higher level of digital literacy does not automatically mean that offline users of the child support application know about the online availability, digital affinity and trust in technologies play a role in whether people search for online services at all: If these characteristics are low, users are less likely to search for online services.

The lack of awareness of an online service is not the sole cause of offline use of government services. For example, in the case of child benefit applications, 17 percent of those who needed the service knew that child benefit could be applied for online but still chose the offline option.

PARTNERS

Strong leverage against offline

To win over "offliners," digital government processes must be offered quickly, easily and seamless. For the latter, the modernization of registries is a critical key, creating the conditions in the administration's backoffice so that information only needs to be collected once. Only then will everyone benefit: citizens, businesses and the administration itself.

Dr. Johann Bizer, Chairman of the Board, Dataport

46 %

of all respondents who used a government service offline despite being aware of the online version did so purely out of habit.

BASIS: All respondents who had used at least one government service offline in the last 3 years despite knowing that an online version was available - GER (n = 4,045)

The most commonly cited reason for consciously choosing not to use government services online, across all population groups, is the habit of doing things in person at the office. Nearly half of the conscious offline users cite this as a reason, with all other reasons lagging far behind. ↘ Fig. 36 This corresponds with the finding that the use of e-government is not yet customary for most users (see Chapter 4, "Usage perspective," p. 28 ff.). Habits can change, however. Therefore, it is even more important that initial experiences with e-government are positive and motivate people to choose the digital way in the future as well.

These more personal reasons, which are often based on people's attitudes (see also Chapter 1, "Focus on users," p. 10 ff.), are slow and difficult to change. Other obstacles are much easier to overcome. If the administration can achieve this and improve citizens' satisfaction with e-government services, the long-term use of digital administrative services will also increase.

Why is it not enough to use services online?

The widespread provision of digital administrative services is an important step toward realizing the potential of digital administrative services, for example, through efficiency gains on the part of internal processes and of citizens themselves. To achieve this, however, it must be ensured that citizens also use these services, i.e., that the digital usage gap is closed. However, to convince citizens of the benefits of digital administrative services in the long term, it is not enough to just look at usage.

Another key indicator of the success of digital transformation in administration is the satisfaction of those who use administrative services online. Behind every online usage rate, there is also a percentage of dissatisfied users.

Citizens' dissatisfaction often has multiple reasons and varies depending on the different services. Important criteria that can be used to determine dissatisfaction are usability without interruptions in information flows or processes (consistency), mobile capability, user-friendliness, or the ease with which the services can be found. Weaknesses perceived by users must ideally be avoided during development or remedied in existing services in order to ensure satisfactory use by citizens and companies alike. Only then can we speak of user-centric digital administration.

The reasons why user-centeredness is important have already been outlined in Chapter 1, "Focus on users": Only when a digital service can be satisfactorily used does it have the expected positive effects on the perceived government performance, which significantly influences trust in the government and democracy. Therefore, it is essential to not only examine the reasons for the non-use of digital administrative services but also to look at online usage, particularly user satisfaction with various aspects of the services, and identify strengths and weaknesses in the services.

PARTNERS

Radically simple public services - with a tangible value

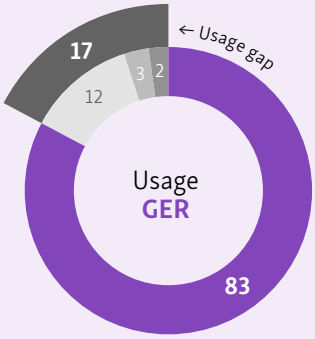
Interestingly enough, it's not data protection considerations or technology that seem to prevent people from using digital public services. Rather, these services are perceived as too complicated, too time-consuming, and too confusing. The good news is that we can make real progress by consistently simplifying and tailoring digital services to users' needs and language. This approach promises to help gain ground and win people over to a digital public administration.

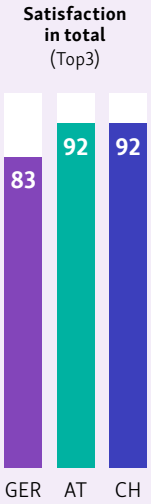
Jan-Lars Bey, Senior Partner, Cassini

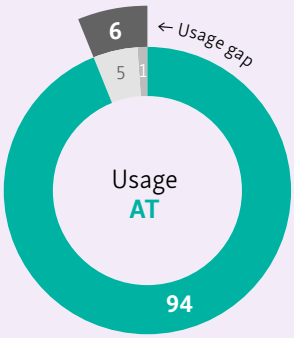
The path to successful e-government

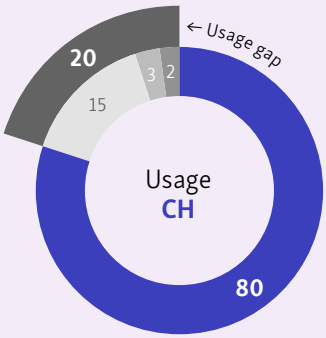
The comprehensive provision of digital services is a prerequisite for administrative digitalization, but it is not yet an indicator of its success. The indicators of success relevant to the impact noted in this chapter are presented below for selected services. This is intended to serve as an orientation and to show by way of example how even a few indicators can help to improve digital administrative services in a targeted manner and to increase usage and user satisfaction. The approach, broken down into individual steps, can be applied to digitalizing all administrative services. For each service, relevant adjustments must be made. Such targeted measures not only conserve the limited resources of public administrators to enable them to work as efficiently as possible but also significantly improve the user experience compared to a "one size fits all" approach.

Handling income tax return

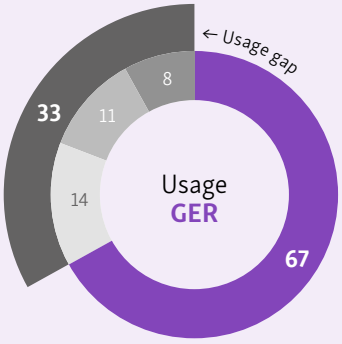


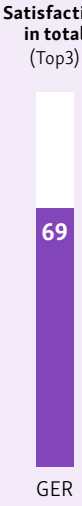




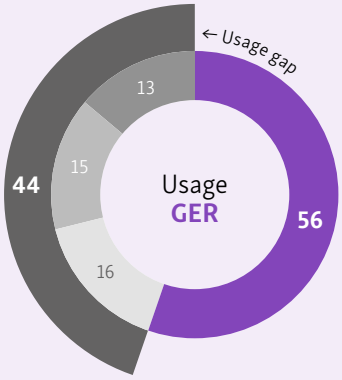


Apply for education funding



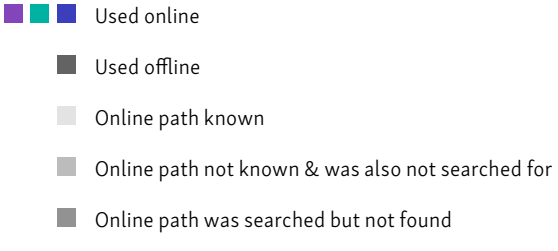


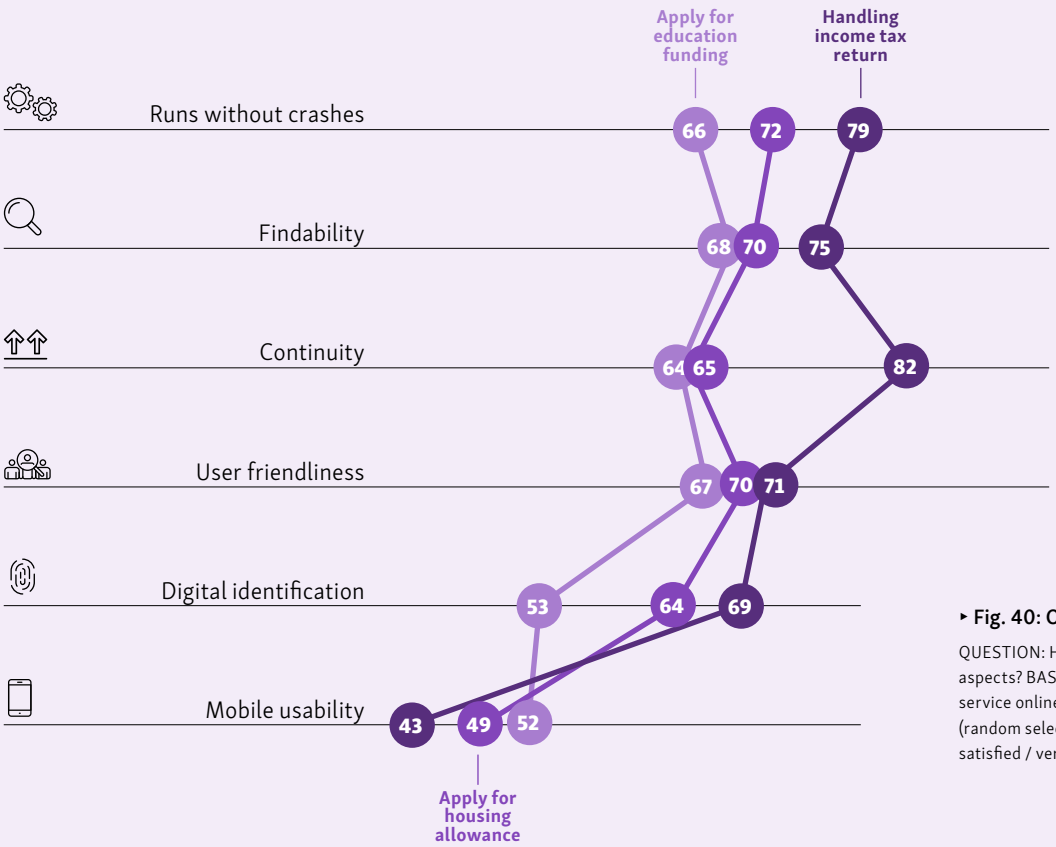
Apply for housing allowance



▸ Fig. 39: Overview of online use

QUESTION: Have you done (all or part of) ... in the past 3 years? If offline: To your knowledge, is there an option to do this online? If not: Which applies to you? - I have not looked for an online opportunity yet / I have already looked for an online opportunity but have not found anything. | BASIS: All respondents in GER with a need for the respective government service in the last 3 years; / All respondents who have used this service online; figures in percentage; Top3 (Extremely satisfied / very satisfied / somewhat satisfied)





▸ **Fig. 40: Overview of satisfaction aspects**

QUESTION: How satisfied are you with the following aspects? BASIS: All respondents in GER who have used the service online in the last 3 years and were asked about it (random selection); figures in percent; Top3 (extremely satisfied / very satisfied / somewhat satisfied)

INTERIM SUMMARY

Service providers need to collect and use service-level user metrics to systematically improve their services.

#1 The Digital Usage Gap shows that some citizens still carry out administrative tasks offline instead of choosing the digital way. Progress in the implementation of the OZG alone is not sufficient to assess the success of administrative digitalization: The number of (partially) digital administrative services does not provide insight into their usage. What is needed are indicators that focus on users and provide a better understanding of citizens' behavior in relation to digital services. Is a service widely used online or not? And if not, why? The Digital Usage Gap provides answers to these questions and serves as a useful tool for administrations to systematically identify and address weaknesses.

#2 The Digital Usage Gap reveals whether an administrative service is being used offline because a digital service was not known or could not be found by the target group. This allows targeted action to be taken to increase awareness and findability of specific services. **At the same time, the indicator also shows whether an online service is known and deliberately not used.** Combined with other indicators, such as the reasons for deliberate offline use or general barriers, skills and attitudes, measures can be taken to convince individuals of the benefits of going online.

#3 "Digital administrative services must be as easy as possible for all citizens and businesses to use, accessible to all people with disabilities, secure, available at all times, transparent, and usable from anywhere by all citizens and businesses, leading to tangible benefits in everyday life." This is the commitment made by the government in its coalition agreement. **To achieve this, local service providers need to use data-driven tools that measure performance indicators, such as the Digital Usage Gap, and break them down by service.** This will enable them to take targeted action to improve their services and measure progress.

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