



# Demanding Digital:

## Local Government in focus

How should local government meet the digital needs of its citizens?

Digital transformation has been on the agenda of local authorities for many years, and the pace of transformation has varied greatly across the sector. Devolution, alongside an ever-increasing demand from citizens who want to engage with their local authority in the same way as they engage with other organisations, has forced local governments to implement new ways of interacting with citizens and delivering services.

Atos has commissioned an independent study of 3,150 citizens to find out what citizens think of the digital services local government currently provide to them. We wanted to know what their experiences have been like, how these interactions compared to other industries and crucially, what makes them walk away and disengage from a digital service.

A hugely positive finding is that there is an appetite among citizens to both embrace, and more importantly, trial digital services. Of those surveyed, 42% are willing to try a new digital service from local government, and help in developing and refining that service. Interestingly, this willingness is equally present in those aged over 55 and those aged below 25. The findings highlight that age is no longer a barrier to digital adoption; dispelling the myth that a demand for such digital services is only held by millennials.



A significant finding from our research is that one fifth (21.8%) of citizens surveyed would say their experience of local government digital services was either 'poor' or 'very poor'.

The challenge this creates is that there is a strong correlation between citizens' online experience and how they then perceive the offline elements of local government. In fact, a quarter of respondents stated:

"The digital experience is not good and I expect more in my dealings with them on other channels".

Online interactions impact assessment of offline services, and a citizens' digital experience has a significant effect on their perception of the organisation overall. This highlights that local authorities must look at all channels of communication with the public as a collective and not in silos. Citizens ultimately need to have a consistent and good experience across all touchpoints with their local authority.

Today we live in a society where all segments are increasingly engaging digitally, it is crucial that local government implement the appropriate services to meet this demand.

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### What do citizens want from Local Government digital services?



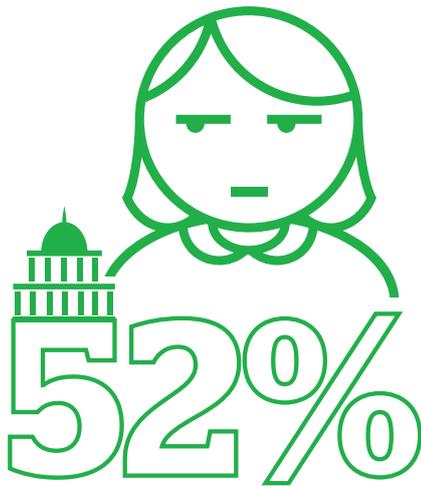
Want a simpler, cleaner experience



Would like local government to make things faster for them



Want an upgrade to improve stability



Citizens had to abandon a digital service part way through without completing what they needed to do.

Citizens are open to the idea of smart digital technology, but they want the basics to be right first. Nearly half (48%) want a simpler, cleaner experience, 37.8% would like local government to make things faster for them and 29.7% want an upgrade to improve stability. This is perhaps unsurprising since over half (52.2%) have had to abandon a digital service part way through without completing what they needed to do. Local government must focus on delivering a simple and straightforward experience for key services to allow citizens to quickly, easily and successfully complete their digital journey.

The risk of digital exclusion has long been an inhibitor to digital transformation, but in general citizens are open to digital channels and are willing to embrace new services. Importantly, our research revealed that citizens generally have a 'three strike' rule before they are likely to step away from a digital service for good.

Good quality digital services are now a must for local authorities, not an option. Local government has the opportunity to be bold and trial new digital services, and to let citizens take a lead role in defining how these digital services should work. Local government has a mandate from citizens to innovate, and must grasp this opportunity to work with the community to design citizen-centric services to meet the digital demands of today and tomorrow.

"The findings from the Atos research piece certainly fall in line with our own research amongst Socitm's local authority membership. The relatively high numbers of citizens reporting poor experiences of digital services and demanding a simpler and cleaner interface highlight one of the major problems of early attempts at digital transformation - namely the flawed approach of simply bolting a web front end onto existing offline service models. Our recent research indicates that the new, and necessary approach from many local authorities is to totally redesign services to be citizen-focused and digital from the ground up, and to engage digital natives to oversee effective delivery of these new service models."

Adrian Hancock  
CEO, Socitm