

Bridging

The 2025 Digital Citizen Report:

What happens when citizens move
faster than digital government

publicis
sapient

the AI gap



From Digital Demand to Digital Trust

Citizens are asking for digital services that are simple, seamless, and increasingly AI-enabled. But concerns around data and a lack of general awareness of the services available are slowing adoption. By closing these gaps, leaders can unlock the full value of digital government.



67%
want simple digital
government services



55%
want government digital services
that use GenAI



Only 26%
use digital government services
during life events



76%
don't trust government with
their data



Executive summary

For the last four years, we have surveyed Australians to understand how they're engaging digitally with government. Our goal is to help government leaders understand how Australian citizens feel about digital services, prepare for change and adapt where needed. This year, we learned that many Australians are using generative AI (gen AI) tools to inquire about public services, despite their concerns about accuracy.

The overwhelming consensus is that government leaders should use these same tools, and regulate them, if it means better, faster and more proactive services. This includes sharing data across government departments to fuel AI-powered services.

While most people are satisfied with digital government services overall, there are several opportunities for improvement that leaders should take note of. For example, although access to digital services has improved for disadvantaged citizens, many are not using them—either because they're unaware the services exist or they believe the services will be too difficult to use.

At the same time, many Australians are worried about data sharing and security. They don't trust the government to use their data responsibly and are confused about the myID program.

We recognize that the legacy of [Robo-debt](#)—an unlawful automated debt recovery program that caused widespread harm—has left many Australians wary of government use of technology. Significant legislative and policy reforms are needed before AI can be safely and responsibly adopted in public services. While citizen concerns and leadership challenges remain, there is strong public support for generative AI when it delivers clear benefits and makes everyday interactions with government easier. Through this survey, we aim to highlight some of those opportunities.

AI won't work for citizens unless the systems behind it are ready

“ Governments can't deliver AI-enabled public services on top of outdated infrastructure. You need modern data platforms, modular systems and teams who understand both AI and the public. ”



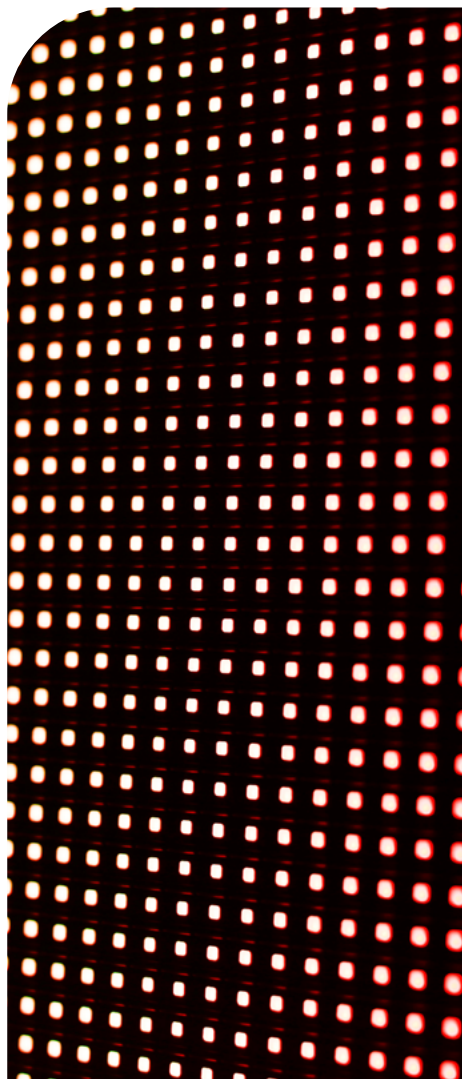
Gavin Seewoortuttun, Vice President,
AI and Data, Publicis Sapient



Gen AI can make or break digital services

Generative AI is quickly becoming the primary way people search for information. For government leaders, this presents a choice: they can proactively optimize their digital resources to work well with AI tools, or they can allow tools like ChatGPT to access and share information without oversight—risking incomplete, outdated or inaccurate responses.

While generative AI does pose risks around data sovereignty, bias, security and transparency, the potential benefits of using it in public services outweigh the downsides. As with past emerging technologies like social media, the key is putting strong governance and safeguards in place. Once that's done, generative AI can help government leaders better reach disadvantaged populations, communicate across languages and accessibility needs and modernise internal systems to deliver services faster and at scale.





Chapter 1

Gen AI is now the default interface, even if services are not ready

Gen AI is rapidly becoming a part of everyday life for many Australians. Over half of survey respondents (51 percent) are using gen AI tools every day, up from 40 percent in 2024.

From finding recipe ideas to writing work emails, the uses for gen AI tools are vast, and they include accessing and understanding public services. In fact, most citizens believe AI is being used in government services already (61 percent of all respondents and 71 percent of Gen Z respondents).

However, most government websites or digital resources are not optimized to be scraped by these gen AI tools, which increases the risk of citizens believing outdated or incorrect information from old webpages.

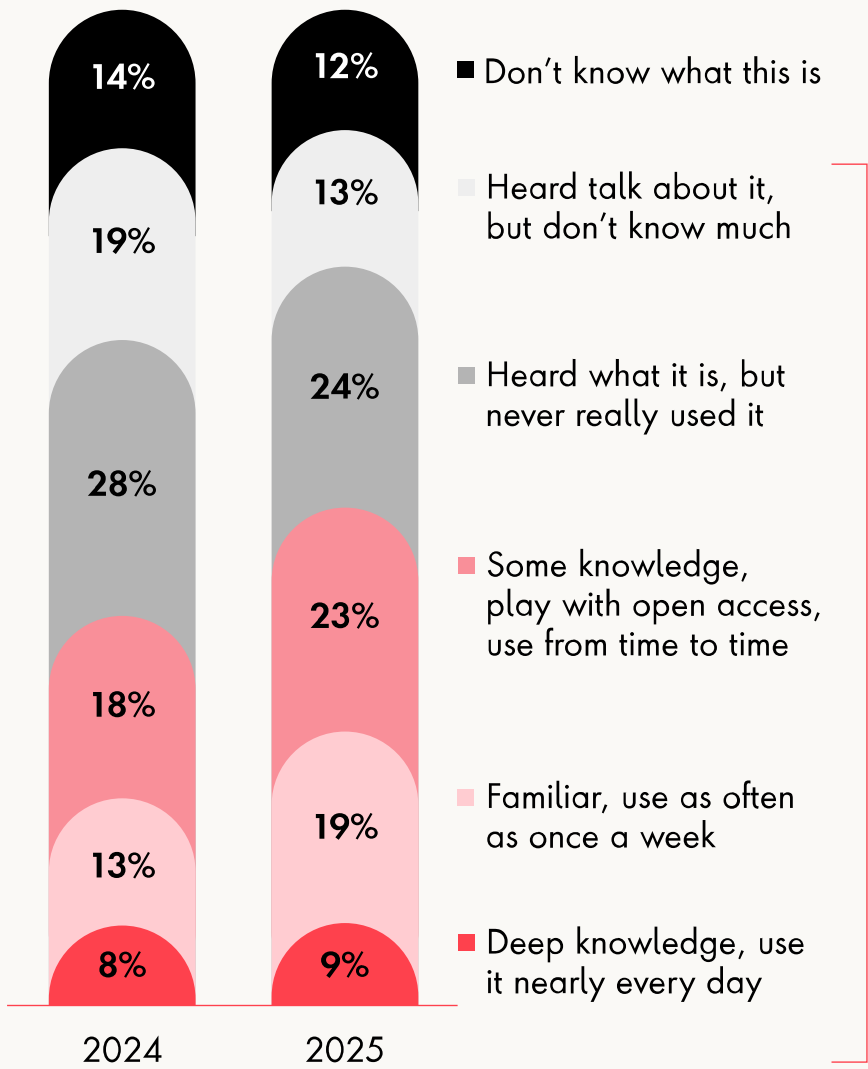
Generative AI is just the beginning. Government leaders should be ready for agentic AI: where bots, not citizens, become the main users of their websites.

For the first time ever, most citizens are using gen AI

Most Australians are now using gen AI (51 percent) and have at least some knowledge, having played or used it from time to time [Figure 1]. Twenty-one percent are using it to find out about government services, similar to the use of gen AI for news and current events (22 percent), education (21 percent) and image generation (24 percent) [Figure 2].

And when we look more closely, this average of 21 percent jumps to 29 percent for those using gen AI daily [Figure 3].

Figure 1
Familiarity with gen AI



Q. Rate your familiarity and use of using generative AI. N= 2024 (5,061), 2025 (5,250).

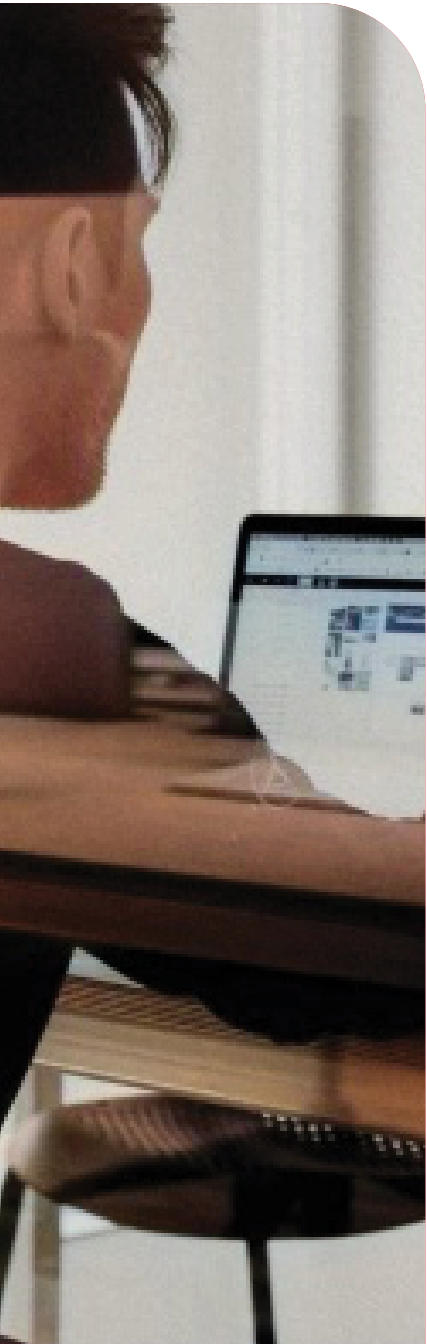


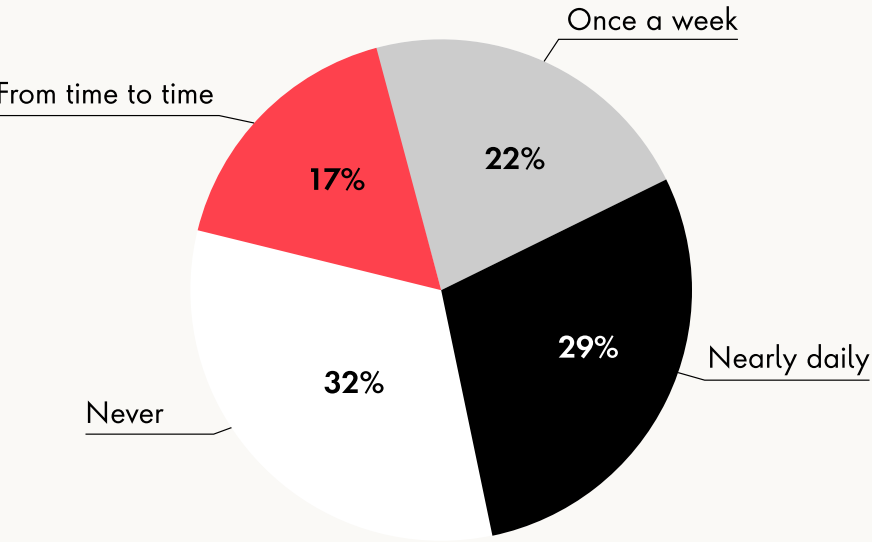
Figure 2
What have you used gen AI for?



Q. What have you used generative AI for? N=5,250.

Figure 3
Frequency of use of gen AI and purpose

Finding information and answering questions about government services

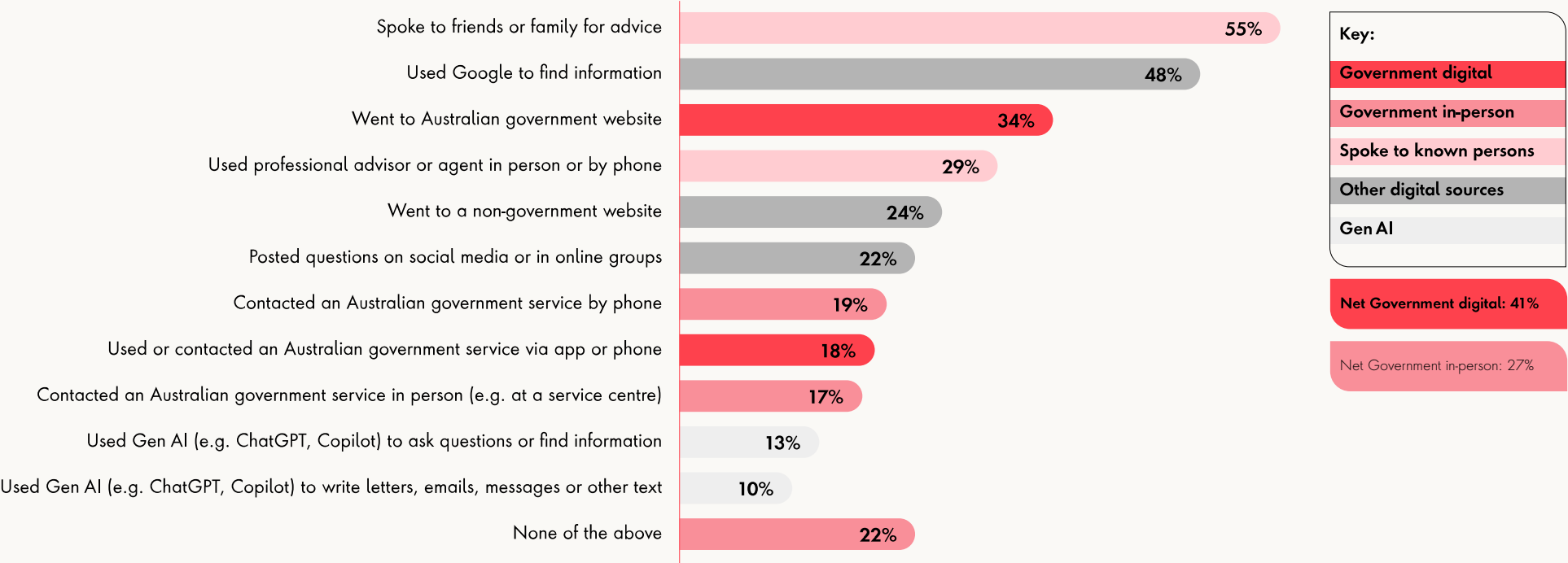


Q. How often do you use generative AI? N=5,250.

During major life events, gen AI plays a growing role in how people seek help

While people may not interact with government services daily, they do turn to them in important moments. According to this year’s survey, 41 percent of Australians sought out digital government services during times of need or major life events. And with gen AI now embedded in tools like Google’s AI Overviews, the 48 percent who used Google likely encountered gen AI-generated content whether they realized it or not [Figure 4].

Figure 4
How people seek information and support during life events



Q. Have you experienced any of the following events in the last 12 months? Did you do any of the following to help you manage this event / these events? N=3,445.

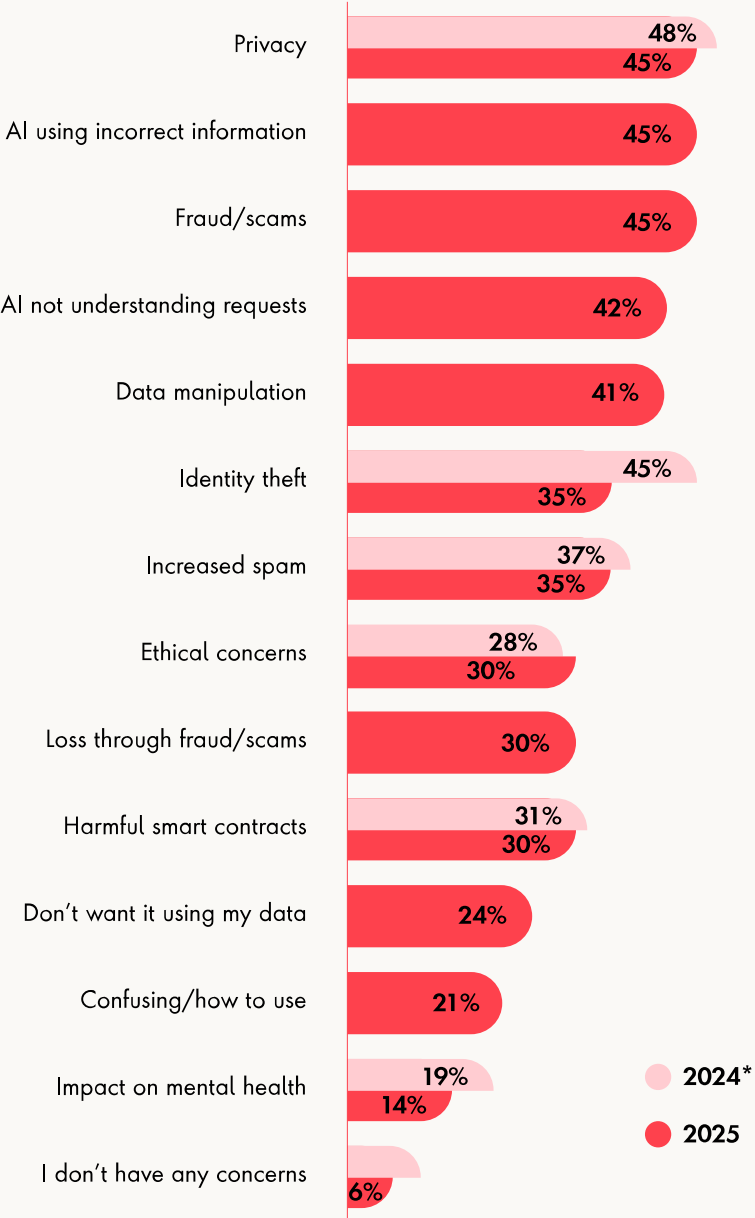
People distrust gen AI but still use it to find government information

Almost all respondents (94 percent) were concerned about gen AI tools as a whole, and 45 percent were specifically worried about AI tools using incorrect information to answer questions [Figure 5].

“ I’m OK if AI is used to provide some answers to basic questions. I’m not happy if AI determines the outcomes of complex issues. ”

Survey respondent

Figure 5
What worries people most about gen AI



Q. What are your key concerns regarding generative AI, if any? N= 2024 (5,061), 2025 (5,250). *Mixed reality (AR/VR/XR), Web 3.0, gen AI tools like ChatGPT were combined in 2024.

Low trust, but high expectations for gen AI in government

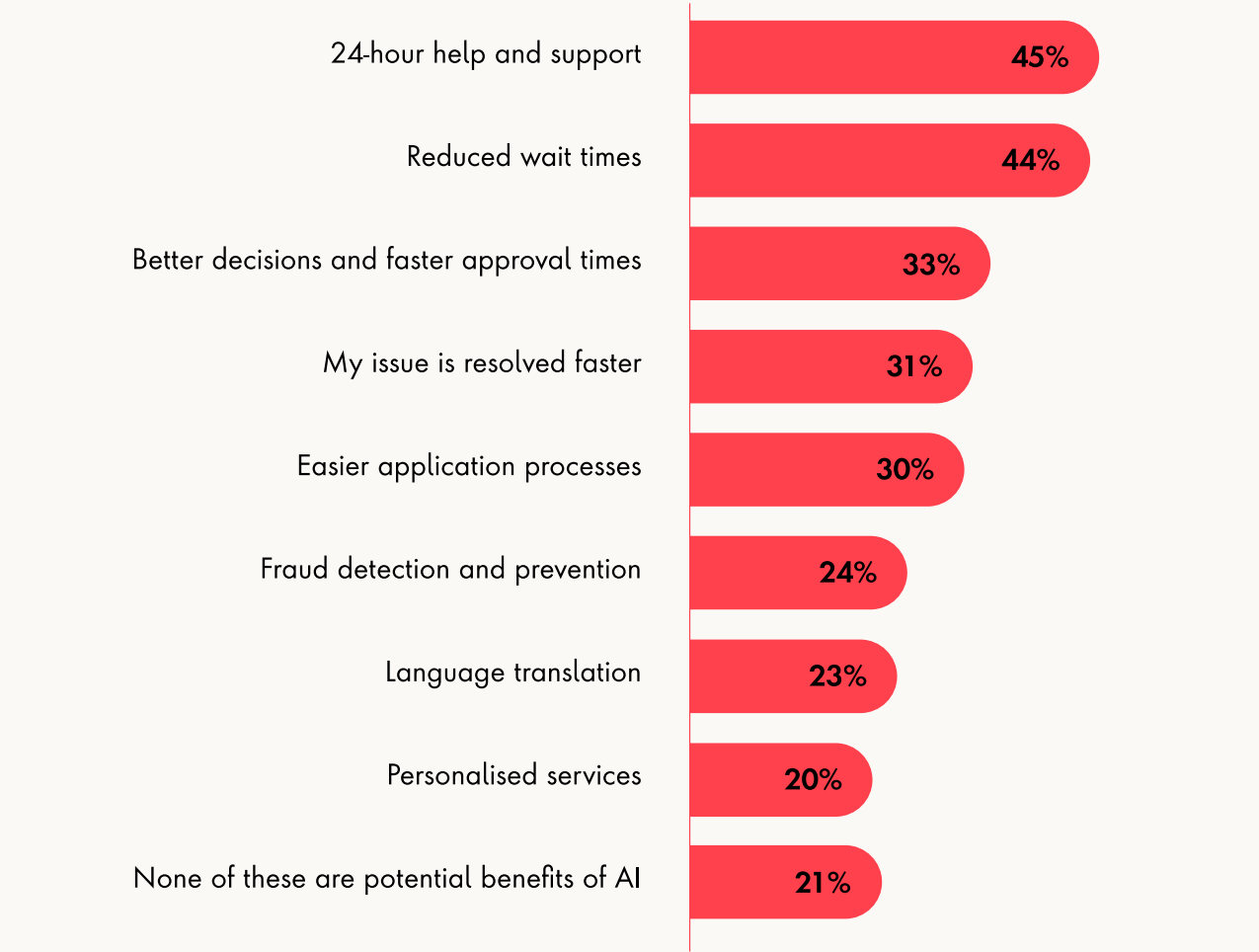
Despite the overwhelming distrust in gen AI technology 55 percent are open to governments using AI, especially if it will improve services. Some of the areas where it could help include 24-hour help and support (45 percent), reduced wait times (44 percent), and better decisions and faster approval times (33 percent).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) and regional participants expressed strong interest in AI for real-time translation and clearer service comprehension. In total, 23 percent of Australians identified language translation as a top benefit of AI in government reflecting both accessibility needs and growing linguistic diversity [Figure 6].

“ If it means I don’t have to wait as long or go through tons of paperwork, I’m all for it. ”

Survey respondent

Figure 6
How citizens think AI could improve government services

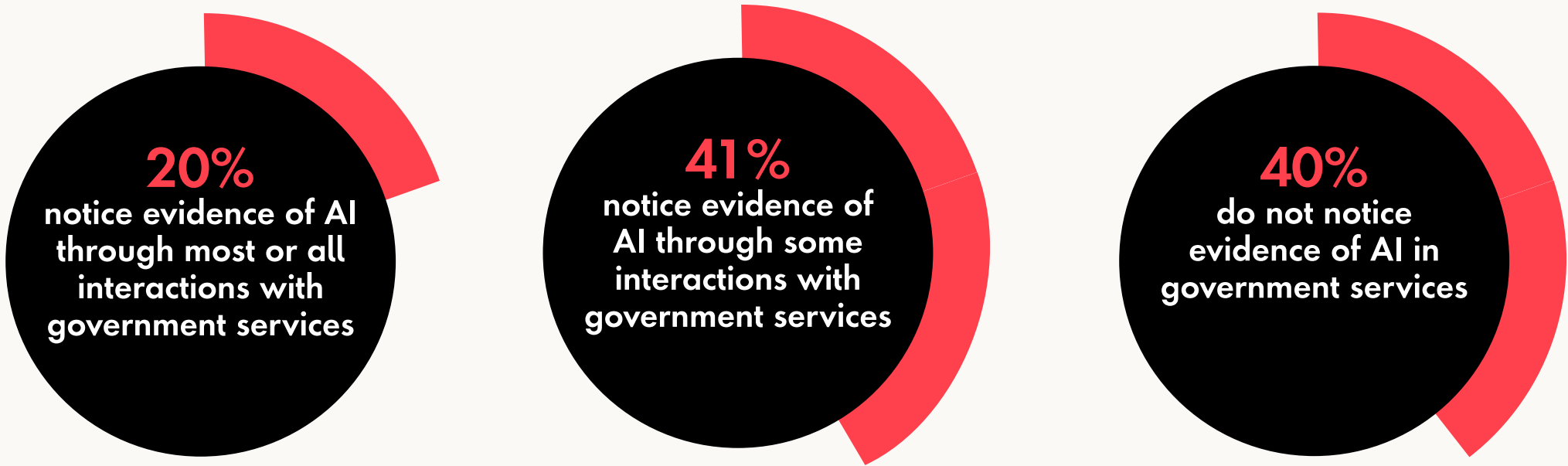


Q. Which of the following benefits would be the result of Australian government services using AI (artificial intelligence)? N=5,250.

Most Australians think AI is already part of public services

Even when AI is not explicitly visible, the public increasingly expects it to be there. Sixty-one percent believe government services already use AI whether or not they can see it. That perception shapes trust, behavior and expectations [Figure 7].

Figure 7
Do citizens notice AI in digital government services?

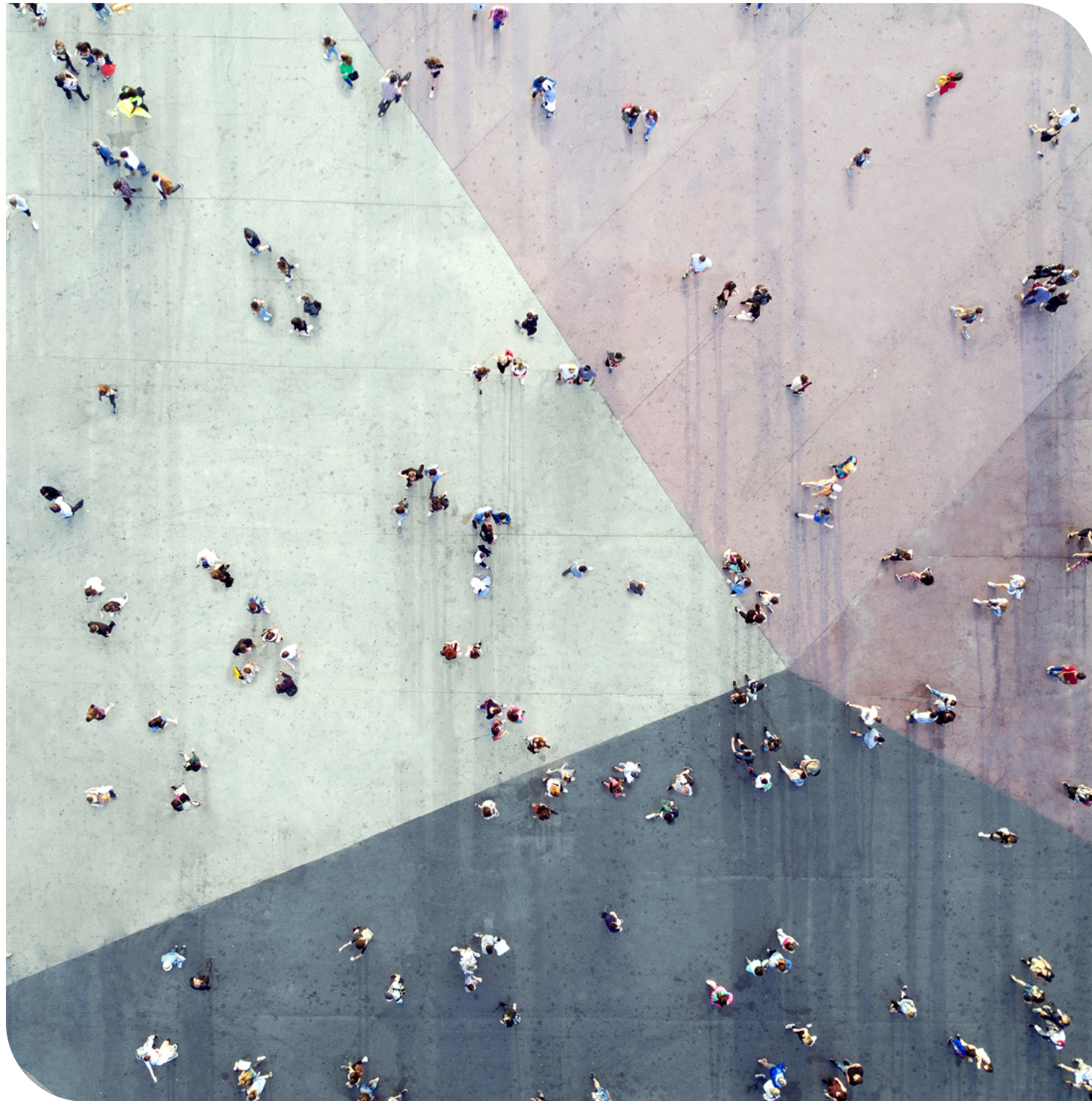


Q. Do you see the Australian government services using AI (artificial intelligence) on websites or Apps? Especially with regards to how you are served. N=5,250.



Regulation and transparency will increase gen AI trust

Almost all respondents (89 percent) requested some transparency in gen AI and government services, with 45 percent requesting source code made available to the public. Only 11 percent said they would completely trust an AI application in a government context and would prefer visible and tight regulations (49 percent).



AI agents will turn accuracy gaps into chasms, so how you prepare for them will define the future

As autonomous AI assistants begin to take over digital tasks for citizens, from checking financial submissions to submitting customer service complaints, these agents could very well lead to a widening gap between digital government services and those who most need them.

Without comprehensive, up-to-date digital information for agents to engage with, government websites could lead to misinformation or a lack of government digital access to AI assistant adopters.

AI agents are the new front door to government

“AI agents like ChatGPT, Gemini and custom applications are rapidly becoming the front door to government. Citizens are increasingly relying on them to find information and services.”



Elisa Berg, Public Sector
Experience Lead

Why government digital services need to be machine readable

AI systems and assistants don't browse; they extract information. Unlike human users, they skip menus and navigation to surface specific data points instantly.

This shift from user experience (UX) to agent experience (AX) has major implications. If government websites and applications can't be read by machines, they can present partial, incomplete or potentially inaccurate information.

This means websites and applications need to evolve from static information repositories to dynamic, discoverable data sources that AI systems can reliably interpret.

To work for both citizens and machines, digital services need structured, semantic, machine-readable content by default. This includes trust signals and accessible APIs.

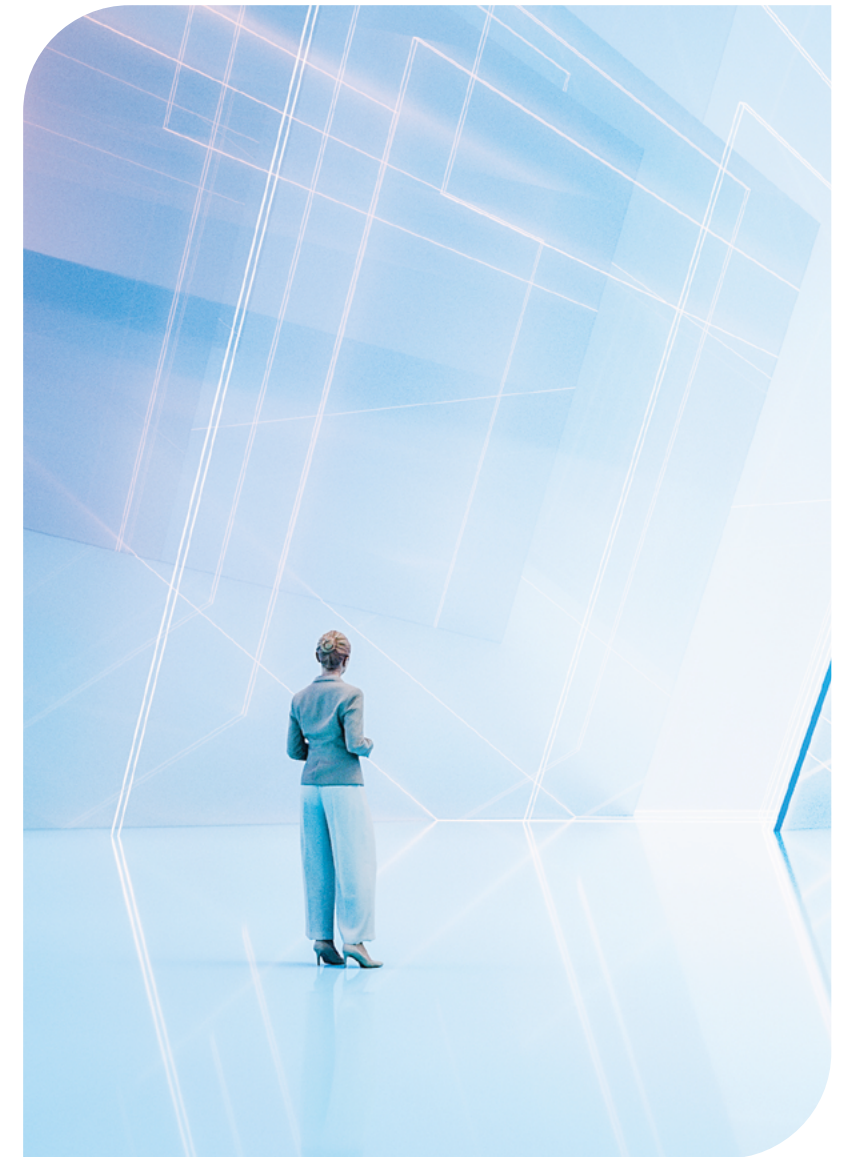
Strategic recommendations for agentic experiences in government

Treat AX as a strategic initiative: Don't relegate AX to SEO or technical teams. This is a strategic issue that touches brand visibility, service delivery, citizen engagement and institutional trust in an AI-mediated world.

Make service information machine readable: Ensure AI agents can discover, compare, trust and recommend your government services by implementing structured data that clearly articulates eligibility, processes, timelines and outcomes.

Evolve content for agent consumption: Review whether your content appeals to AI agents—does it include social proof, is it organized around citizen and business intent rather than bureaucratic structure and does it build trust through verifiable data points?

Build AI attribution and measurement: Even if you implement no other changes, instrument measurement systems to track agent interactions and ensure you can monitor the impact of AI systems on citizen service delivery.





Chapter 2

Low awareness and poor perceptions are the barriers to adoption

Australians who use digital government services report high satisfaction, and the digital divide is narrowing. However, low expectations and limited awareness continue to hold people back, particularly during major life events when many don't consider digital government options at all.

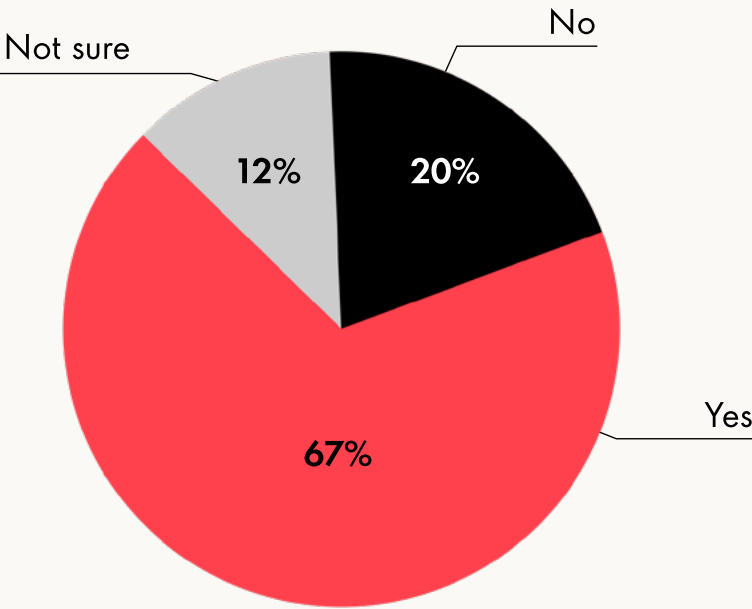
The more seamless the service, the more people stay

Australians report strong satisfaction with digital government services. Their satisfaction matches or exceeds in-person options and even private sector standards like banking. But satisfaction alone isn't enough: people want easier, faster access. Sixty-seven percent of Australians want a single, unified digital entry point for government services. Even in-person users (60 percent) say they want simple digital access.

Digital services are preferred for routine or administrative needs, while in-person options remain important for more complex or personal matters.

The biggest barriers to digital adoption include a preference for human interaction (40 percent) and difficulty navigating online options (29 percent). Young people, First Nations Australians, recent immigrants and AI users are among the most eager for digital integration.

Figure 8
Do you want mutiple services via one access point?





Disadvantage no longer drives the digital divide

Disadvantage doesn't seem to equal digital disengagement when it comes to government services. Vulnerable or minority groups (e.g. those facing mental health challenges, recent immigrants, etc.) had similar levels of digital engagement and literacy as the average citizen going through a significant life event. The same rings true for citizens in a precarious financial situation: they had nearly equal levels of engagement with gen AI tools and myID.

This means that disadvantage isn't necessarily driving the digital divide, but something else entirely.



Most Australians aren't using digital government services when it counts

Despite high satisfaction among digital users, most Australians aren't turning to government websites or apps during major life events. Only 22 percent visited a government website, and 11 percent used a government app. In total, only 26 percent engaged with government digitally, while 17 percent relied on in-person or phone-based support with the remainder relying on advice from friends or family.

Why the gap? Many simply don't think of using digital services (27 percent), expect the experience to be difficult (24 percent) or have concerns about security (14 percent). Awareness and expectations remain low—and until they shift, the promise of a single digital front door will remain just that, a promise.

Why many Australians still don't go digital

Digital government services remain underused. Not because people are dissatisfied or disadvantaged, but because many never consider them in the first place. More than one in four (27 percent) Australians say they simply do not think of using digital services during major life events. This rises to 37 percent among First Nations people. Among those who did consider going digital, many were deterred by practical concerns. They cited difficulty finding what they needed, a lack of trust in security or the perception that the process would be too hard. Nearly 40 percent preferred speaking to someone directly, and 19 percent tried to use a digital service but could not complete their task. Until awareness, ease of use and trust improve, digital will remain a secondary option for many [Figure 9].

When digital falls short, people still want a human. Sixty-six percent of people who chose in-person services said they did so to speak with someone directly. This reinforces the ongoing value of human interaction, especially when digital services feel confusing, impersonal or incomplete. To meet this need, governments must design seamless handoffs between channels. If people switch from online to in-person, they should not have to start over. In the private sector, AI tools are increasingly being used to support busy customer service staff in call centres and shops so that they can provide the right information every time.

Figure 9
Reason for not going digital amongst those interacting with services in-person



Q. You said you did not use government websites or apps for these events. Why was that? N= asked of all who used a government service in person and not digitally (564).

**Only one in 10
Australians
trust the
government
to fix a
data breach**

Chapter 3

Data-sharing fears and fixes

Australians don't share their data because they trust the institution. They share their data when they perceive some sort of value exchange. Data security is top of mind for many citizens, and after major, public data breaches, there's a lack of trust in the government to safely protect private information and securely store data in the future. There's a tension at play: Citizens want digitalID, but don't fully understand it. They want the government to share their data between departments to create a more seamless experience across services, but they don't really see potential benefits.

Overall, there's an opportunity for government leaders to show citizens how data-sharing can enable the more proactive, personalized services that they desire.



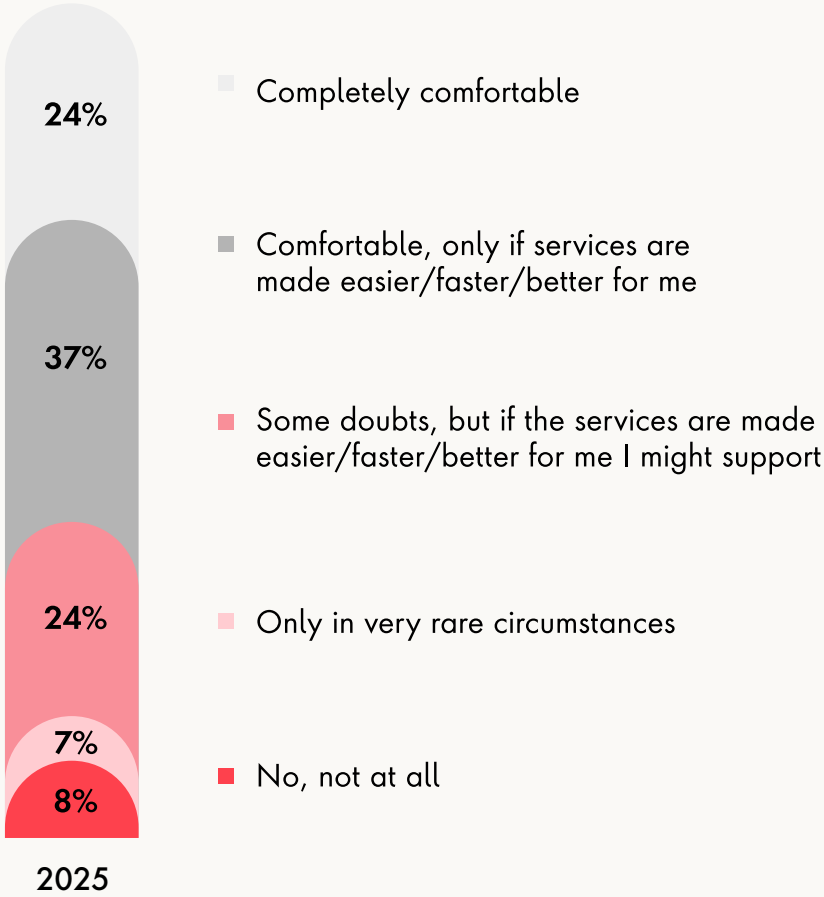
Data-sharing trust is low and falling fast, but people are hungry for the benefits

Less than 1/4 of Australians (24 percent) are completely comfortable with government departments exchanging their personal information. Forty-eight percent have lost trust completely, and 13 percent never trusted the government with their data in the first place. Interestingly, those most resistant to data-sharing are those that have interacted with the government after a life event. The majority of that group (59 percent) were more likely than the average person to say they lost trust [Figure 11].



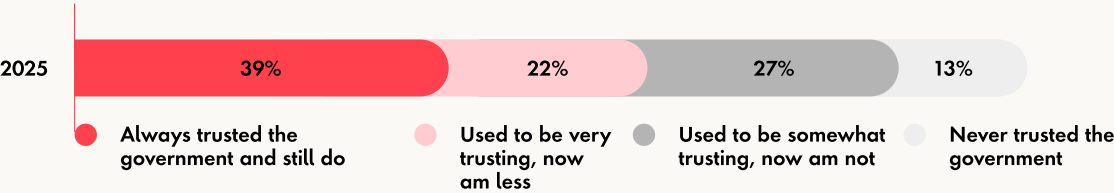


Figure 10
How comfortable are you with your data being shared across government departments?



Q. How comfortable are you with your data being shared across government departments? For example, to make a particular service easier / faster / More personalized. N=5,250.

Figure 11
Has your comfort level of trust changed in the past several years?

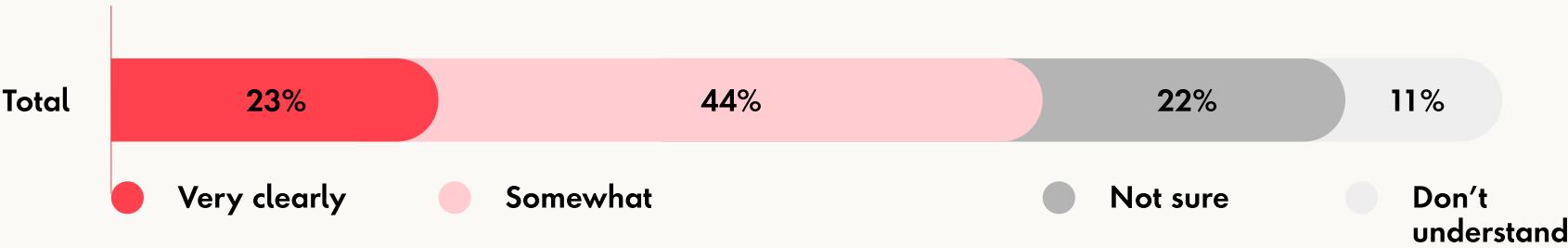


Q. Has your comfort level of trusting government with your personal data changed in the past several years? N= 5,250.

Clarity builds trust: Australians are still unsure about myGov vs. MyID

Understanding digital identity is foundational to trusting how data is shared. Yet one in three Australians say they’re unsure or don’t understand the difference between myGov and myGovID/myID. Younger generations (Millennials and Gen Z) show stronger understanding, while trust in data-sharing drops among those who’ve never used myGovID. Still, most Australians are open to expanded use: over half (54 percent) support digital ID for broader integration with banks, utilities and other services. But clearer communication will be key, especially as nearly a quarter (24 percent) want myID used across government, and 30 percent want it across all services.

Figure 12
How clearly do you understand the difference between myGov and myID /myGovID?



Q. How clearly do you understand the difference between myGov and myID /myGovID? N= 5,250.

“Digital identity must become more than proof of access. It should be the basis for contextual, automated support.”



Gavin Seewoortuttun, Vice President,
AI and Data, Publicis Sapient

The future of digital identity isn't just about access. It's about trust

Governments must lead not only by securing data, but by building infrastructure that citizens trust. That means making myID a persistent gateway across services, embedding transparency and owning the source of truth in a world of third-party platforms.



Conclusion

How to move at the speed of gen AI

Citizens are moving quickly. Many are already using generative AI daily—including to access government services—without waiting for policy, legislation or procurement to catch up. But they still want government to lead: to make gen AI safer, services easier to use and systems more connected. If government is to remain the first place people turn for support, assurance and opportunity, it must become the most discoverable, interoperable and personalised part of their digital lives.

Get your data AI-ready: AI doesn't make poor data better, it makes poor data more visible. Start by building high-trust, permissioned datasets that AI agents can access safely. Design for findability, auditability and context.

Modernise backend systems quickly using AI: Use gen AI as a bridge not a band-aid. Use enterprise grade gen AI tools to speed up the mapping and translation of legacy code improve service delivery now.

Reimagine the front door: Your new front door isn't your website. It's whatever gen AI interface your citizens are already using. Make sure you show up there with consistent, accurate, API-fed responses. Then give people the option to switch seamlessly to human support.



About the research

Through a survey of 5250 representative Australians, we investigated what citizens value in their digital experiences with government services. These insights are intended to help public sector leaders evolve their digital strategy, systems and services to help citizens get the support they need, when they need it in a secure, simple and connected way. The survey was fielded between 17th - 28th of April 2025.

Get in touch

Let's talk about how to apply these findings to your department or agency.



Steven Metzmacher

Public Sector Industry Lead, Australia,
Publicis Sapient

steven.metzmacher@publicissapient.com



Mark Williams

Senior Client Partner, Federal Government
Publicis Sapient

mark.williams1@publicissapient.com



Elisa Berg

Senior Director, Experience,
Publicis Sapient

elisa.berg@publicissapient.com