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State of Citizen Experience in the Public Sector in an AI-Driven World

A strategic guide to modernizing citizen services and digital governance



Foreword



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In the Public Sector, digital transformation is no longer simply about modernization, it's about efficient and effective mission delivery. As citizen expectations rise, governments are being challenged to provide services that are not only accessible and efficient, but also personalized and predictive. The foundation of public trust is shifting from procedural reliability to digital transparency, inclusion, and contextual relevance.

This report outlines ten strategic insights shaping how Public institutions are evolving to meet this moment. The message is clear: delivering better citizen experiences means rethinking how content is structured, how AI is deployed, and how trust is earned across every digital touchpoint.

At the same time, Public agencies face real constraints, tight budgets, legacy infrastructure, siloed operating models, and growing pressure to govern AI responsibly. Yet the opportunity is just as clear: governments that modernize around the citizen, unify their platforms, and scale personalization with integrity will lead the next generation of Public service.

Whether you're leading digital transformation, designing citizen experiences, or shaping AI policy, I hope this research helps you assess where you are and where your agency can go next.

About the research

This report is based on global research conducted by Incisiv on behalf of Adobe in Q2 2025 to assess the state of digital transformation in the Public Sector Industry.

This report provides Top 10 industry specific insights that focus on strategic priorities and operational readiness across five critical dimensions: AI adoption, data integration, content scalability, organizational structure, and technology implementation.

- 543 Public Sector leaders participated in the study
- 9 Markets (North America, South America, Western Europe, Central Europe, Middle East, India, South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand, Japan)
- 53% respondents were VP level or above

The citizen experience personalization gap

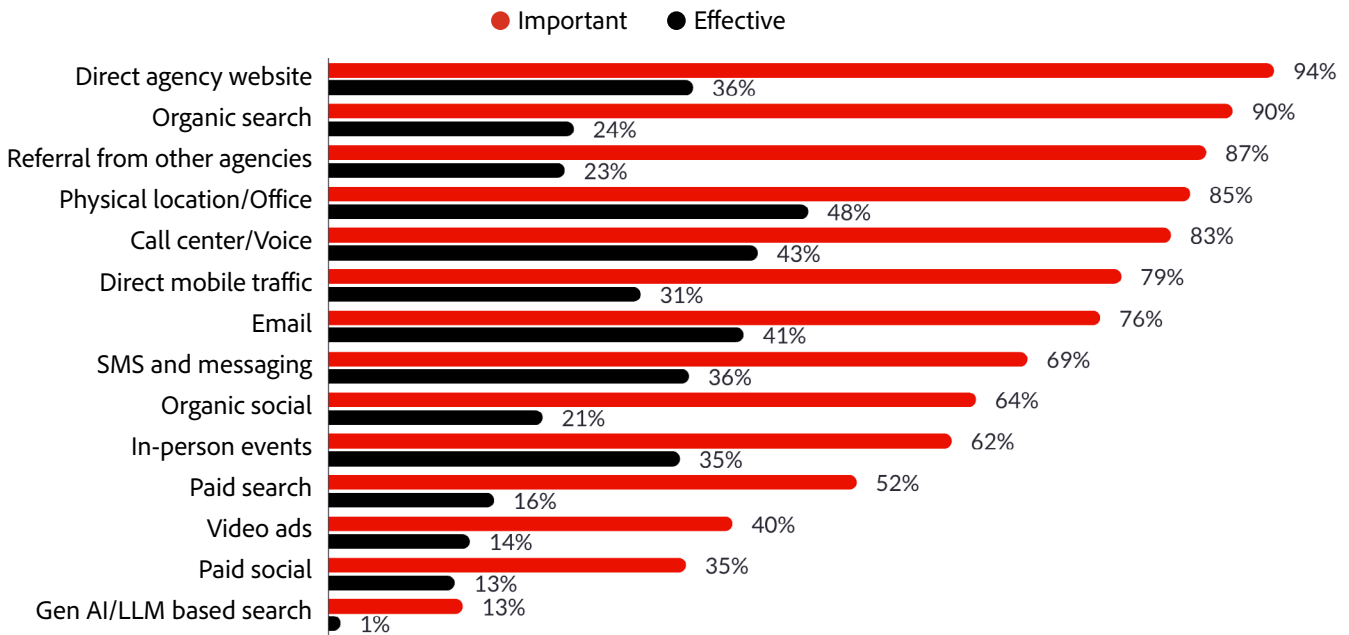
94%

rank agency websites as top engagement channels

Only

36%

say they are effective in personalization



Note: This chart compares the importance and effectiveness of customer channels



Citizens expect personalized public services, not generic portals

Governments worldwide are accelerating digital transformation to meet rising expectations around speed, equity, and relevance. As online services become the default access point for everything from tax filings to benefit applications, personalization is no longer optional it's foundational. Yet most agency websites and search pathways still offer static, one-size-fits-all experiences that overlook individual needs and context. This gap between expectation and experience signals a pressing need to shift from institution-centered delivery to citizen-centered design.



High-priority channels are underperforming on personalization

The channels citizens rely on most like agency websites and organic search—are the very ones falling short on personalization. These entry points are central to how people find and access services, yet they often deliver static, one-size-fits-all content. Other essential touchpoints, from mobile traffic to referrals and search, suffer similar disconnects between importance and effectiveness. Even as new discovery formats like GenAI-based search begin to emerge, they are still far from meeting citizen expectations. This persistent underperformance weakens the digital experience at its most critical gateways.

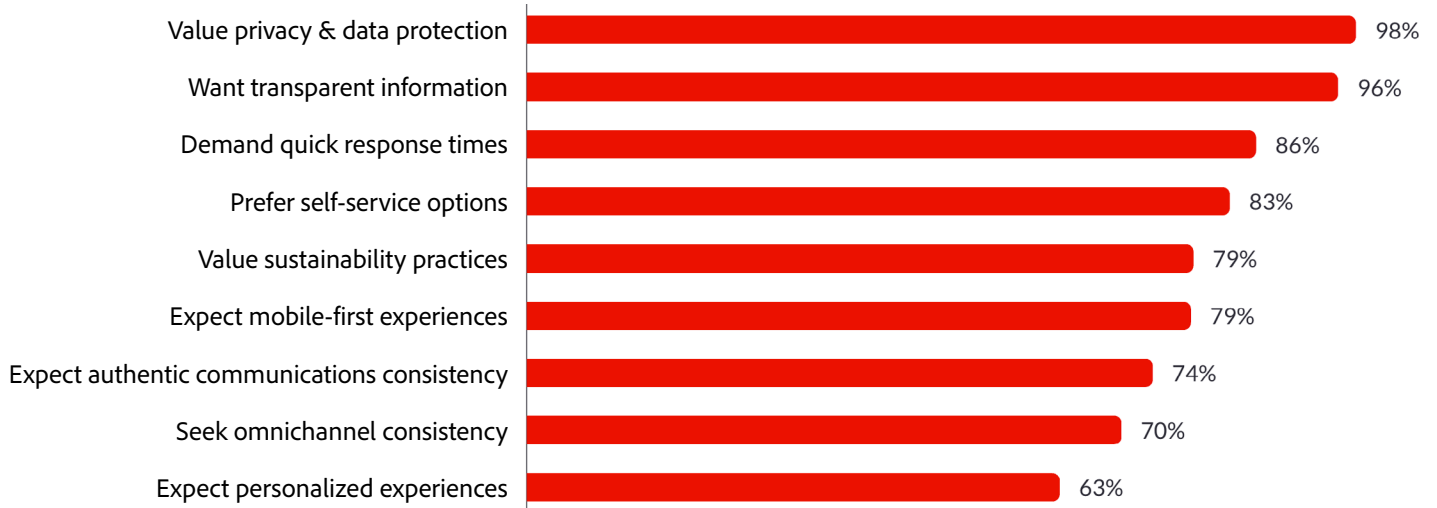


Reimagine agency websites as personalized, adaptive journeys

Public Sector leaders must reimagine digital experiences as personalized, adaptive journeys anchored in data ethics, operational simplicity, and citizen value. This starts with optimizing agency websites for contextual relevance, enriching organic and AI-based search with structured metadata, and embedding dynamic content delivery into foundational platforms. With the right personalization and orchestration tools, agencies can move from broadcast-style communication to experiences that feel responsive, inclusive, and secure. This isn't just about improving usability it's about transforming how governments connect with citizens in a digital-first era.

Trust, privacy, and transparency are the non-negotiables

98% of Public Sector leaders say privacy/data protection is the top citizen expectation	96% say citizens expect transparent access to information
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Note: This chart shows the % that agreed or strongly agreed with the statements



Trust is now a prerequisite for digital service success

In today's digital-first landscape, public trust is no longer a byproduct of service delivery—it's a precondition. Citizens expect government services to be not only accessible and inclusive but also private, secure, and transparent. This expectation is growing in complexity as agencies roll out more digital channels, adopt cloud infrastructure, and explore emerging technologies like automation and AI. At the same time, global policy frameworks continue to emphasize ethical data use, safeguarding citizen rights, and securing sensitive information in every interaction.



Fragmented systems and inconsistent consent undermine confidence

For Public institutions, this creates a dual mandate: improve service delivery while safeguarding trust. Digital service teams and policy leaders must operate within a narrow window—delivering faster, more efficient outcomes without compromising on transparency or privacy. Yet fragmented platforms, legacy infrastructure, and inconsistent consent models often undermine even the best-intentioned efforts. Citizens notice when a government experience feels opaque or when they're unsure how their data is used. In the Public Sector, a single breach of trust doesn't just harm one interaction it weakens the institutional trust citizens extend to government agencies.



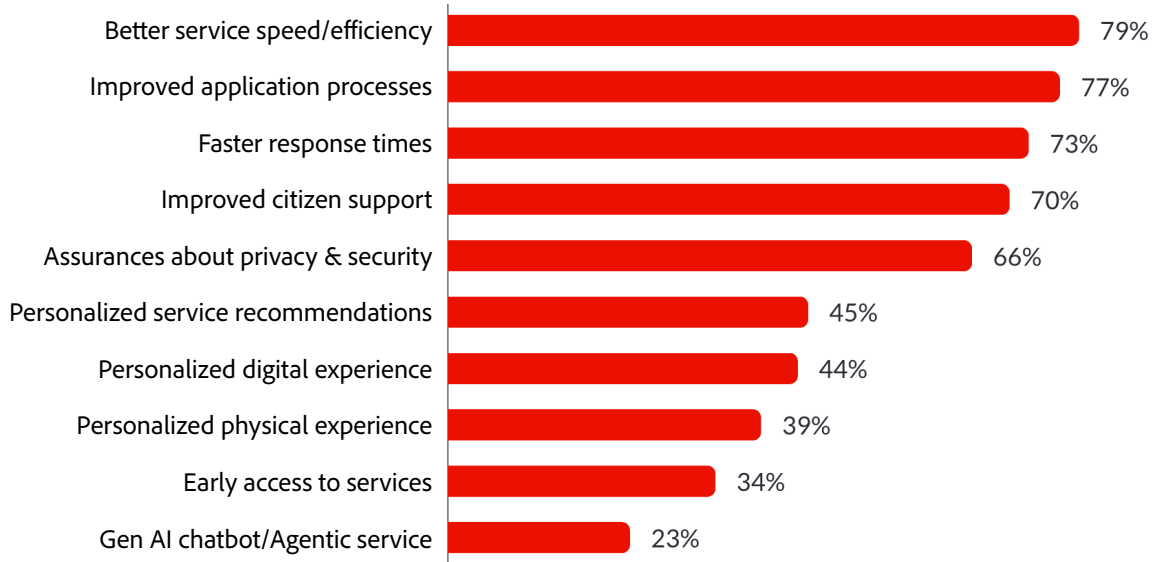
Make trust tangible through transparent, secure experiences

Trust must be built into digital services by design. That means deploying secure digital document workflows, standardizing consent and identity management across platforms, and ensuring content transparency from first click to final submission. It also means making trust visible through user control, clear language, and proactive communication. When privacy, transparency, and efficiency are orchestrated together, Public Sector agencies can deliver not just compliant services, but confident ones. The future of digital government depends not just on what is built but on how securely and transparently it serves.

Citizens share data when value is clear



79% Say citizens will share data for better service speed and efficiency



Note: This chart shows the % that said citizens would be willing to share data for the following outcomes



Trust is earned through clear, purpose-driven service design

Across the Public Sector, responsible data use is now inseparable from service design. While agencies are modernizing platforms to improve speed and efficiency, citizens remain cautious about how their information is used. Their willingness to share data rises sharply when outcomes are clearly beneficial and process-focused—like smoother applications or faster service delivery. But as governments explore AI, automation, and new channels, they must move beyond compliance and begin designing for trust making purpose, impact, and relevance transparent at every interaction.



Advanced technologies trigger hesitation without value transparency

What this trend reveals is a widening divide between what government systems are capable of and what citizens are ready to trust. Advanced technologies, especially those involving AI, automation, or data orchestration, often suffer from poor public perception—not due to inherent risk, but due to poor communication and opaque value narratives. Particularly those overseeing digital service teams and privacy governance, must recognize that service innovation and public trust are codependent. The roadblock is a communications and transparency challenge, not just a technical one.



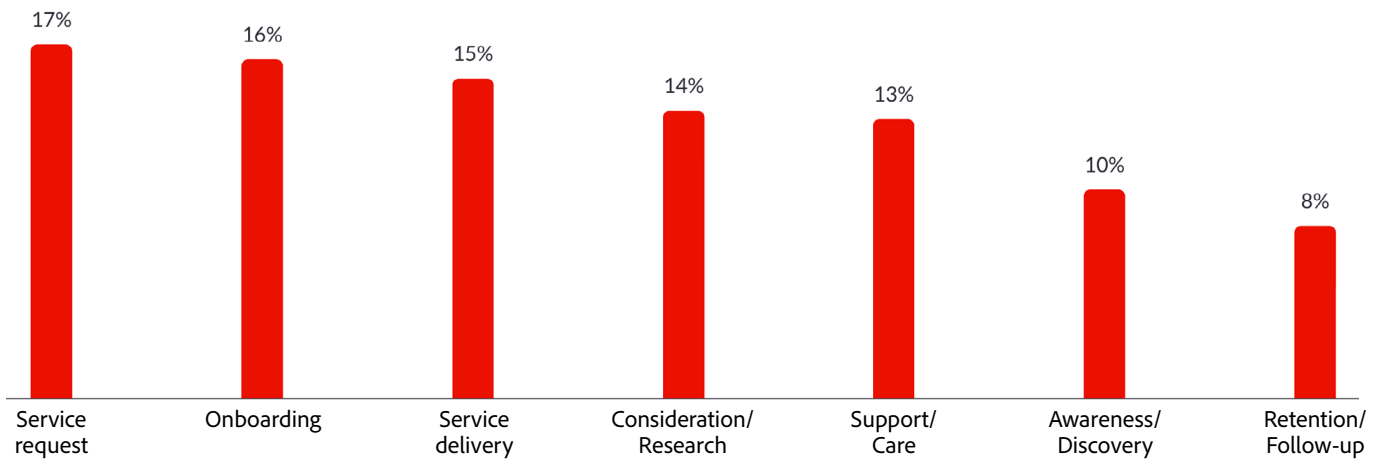
Communicate benefits proactively to build consent and confidence

To earn citizens' trust in AI-enhanced services, agencies must establish a consistent value proposition: "Here's what we're doing, why it matters, and how it benefits you." Embedding transparency across digital experiences from form fills to chatbots to AI-generated responses; is essential. That means rethinking how digital content, workflows, and consent mechanisms are delivered across platforms. For example, a service chatbot that visibly explains what data it's accessing, and why, can transform an interaction from suspicious to trusted. As GenAI adoption scales, proactive trust-building will determine which agencies lead the next era of citizen engagement.

Citizen journeys are long, but personalization drops off

17% say the service request phase is currently personalized	Just, 8% report personalization during retention and follow-up	With 10+ average interactions before accessing a service or making a service request
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Post-service personalization remains a missed opportunity



Note: This chart shows the % of the citizen journey phase that is personalised



Agencies focus on transactions, not ongoing citizen journeys

Public Sector agencies have made progress in simplifying access to services, but too often, personalization efforts end at the point of transaction. While onboarding and service delivery receive moderate personalization attention, the post-service experience is largely uniform. This imbalance sends the wrong message: that citizen relationships are transactional rather than continuous. For a sector built on trust and long-term engagement, ignoring the retention phase risks eroding the very impact digital transformation aims to deliver.



Lack of post-service personalization undermines engagement continuity

The limited personalization in later journey phases reflects deeper issues in how data, content, and service logic are managed across touchpoints. Service delivery teams often lack shared visibility into citizen interactions across departments, preventing contextual support or proactive follow-up. For digital service leaders, this gap undermines continuity, limits opportunities to guide citizens to complementary programs, and reinforces the perception of government as siloed and reactive.

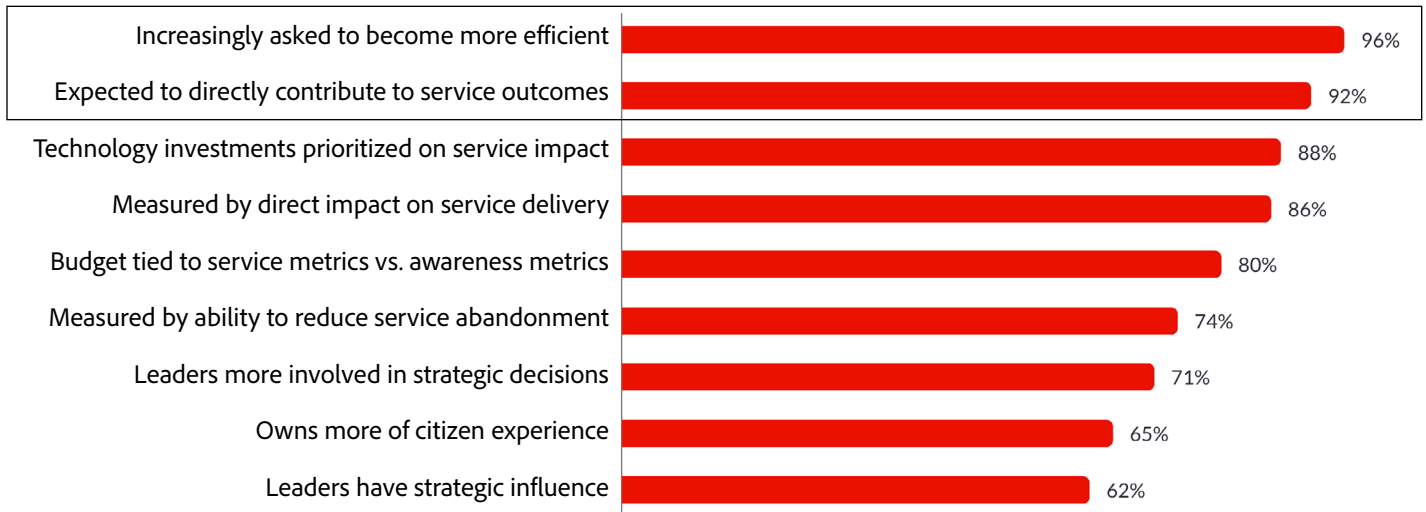


Extend personalization beyond the transaction

Personalization shouldn't stop once a service is delivered. Agencies must extend relevance into post-service care, offering tailored follow-ups, renewal reminders, feedback loops, or re-engagement pathways. This requires breaking data silos, linking content and workflow tools, and designing digital experiences that adapt to citizen history and preferences. With the right platforms, agencies can transform episodic services into connected relationships, making personalization a public value multiplier, not just an access enhancer.

Communication's evolution from awareness to impact

<p>96% rank agency websites as top engagement channels</p>	<p>While 92% are under pressure to directly contribute to service outcomes</p>
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Note: This chart shows the % that said they agreed with this statement



Communications is evolving from support function to strategic driver

In the Public Sector, communication is no longer just about building awareness; it is now tied to outcomes like service adoption, citizen satisfaction, and operational efficiency. As agencies face tighter scrutiny over resource allocation, these teams are expected to deliver improvements in public service delivery. This shift is driven by digital-first journeys where every communication, from eligibility information to outreach campaigns, must drive actionable engagement. The function now acts as both strategist and operator, bridging citizen needs with service innovation.



Strategic decision-making and cross-agency collaboration

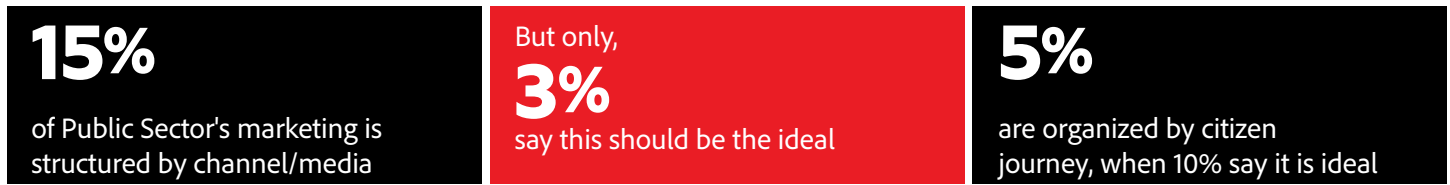
Communications teams are stepping into a more collaborative role, aligning closely with policy, technology, and service delivery units. The emphasis on data-driven strategy has placed marketers at the center of cross-agency decision-making. Whether optimizing outreach for critical programs or designing content for seamless access, communications is now a storyteller and strategist. Centralized citizen experience offices and performance dashboards highlight how marketing's influence has expanded beyond campaigns to shaping public trust and institutional credibility.



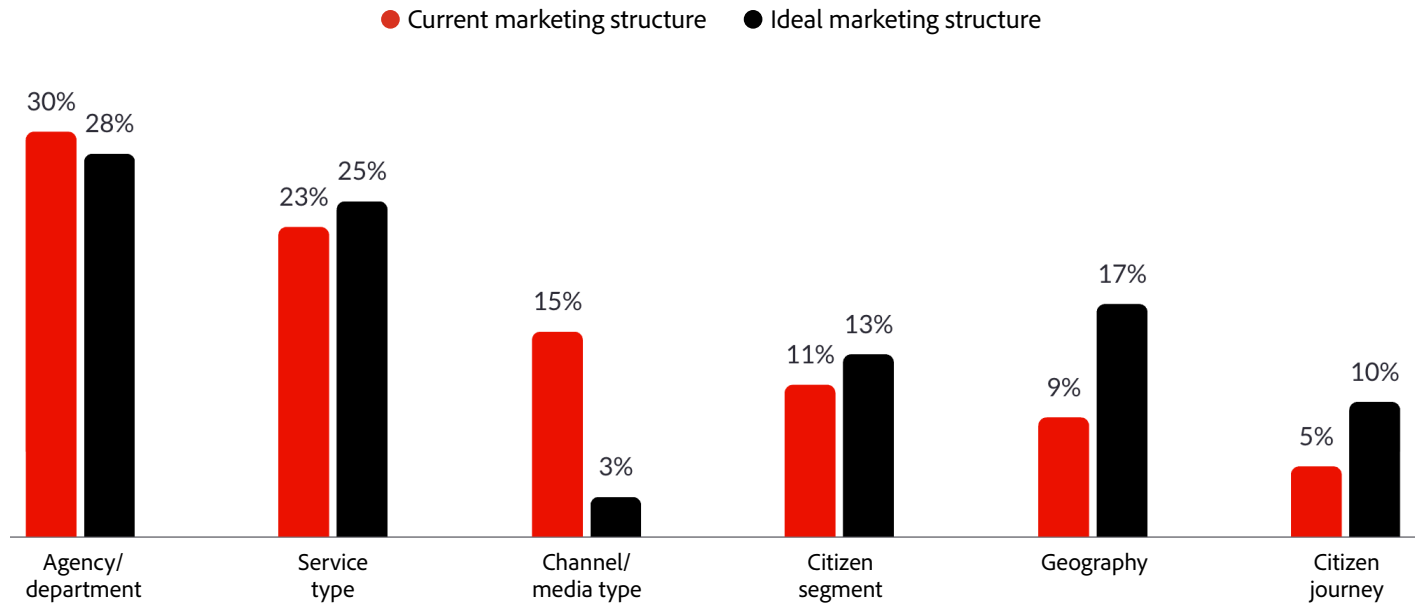
Building trust through digital-first engagement

As government services increasingly move online, marketing functions are tasked with ensuring communications are not just clear, but also personalized and inclusive. Leading agencies are adopting modular content strategies, advanced personalization tools, and AI-assisted engagement to better connect with diverse audiences. For example, digital campaigns for public health or education are now measured not just by reach but by participation rates, response times, and reduced service abandonment. Marketing, in this context, becomes a catalyst for trust-building, ensuring that citizens receive relevant, transparent, and timely information that directly impacts their service experience.

Engagement must shift from silos to citizen-first models



Agencies want to move from silos to citizen-aligned models



Note: This chart compares the current and ideal primary dimension along which the public information function is/should be structured



Most agencies still organize information around departments, not people

Despite growing demand for citizen-first experiences, many government organizations still structure their communications and public information efforts around internal silos, whether by department, service line, or jurisdiction. This model limits agility, fragments content delivery, and often results in duplication of effort across agencies. As citizens demand seamless, consistent, and personalized communication, function-centric structures no longer meet the bar.



Siloed structures undermine relevance and agility in communication

Government leaders are beginning to realize that meaningful service delivery starts with how information is organized. Shifting from function-based to citizen-aligned structures, based on life stages, geography, or service journeys creates opportunities to meet people where they are. Whether it's reaching rural populations with localized updates or segmenting outreach for first-time benefit applicants, rethinking structure is the first step toward relevancy at scale.



Shift from function-based models to journey- and geography-aligned structures

This is a moment to reimagine public information as a citizen enablement function not just a compliance tool. Agencies must adopt digital platforms that allow for dynamic, cross-channel content orchestration tailored to different segments and geographies. The goal isn't just better messaging, it's building a Public Sector that listens, adapts, and delivers with clarity and compassion. Structuring around the citizen journey is no longer aspirational, it's operationally necessary.

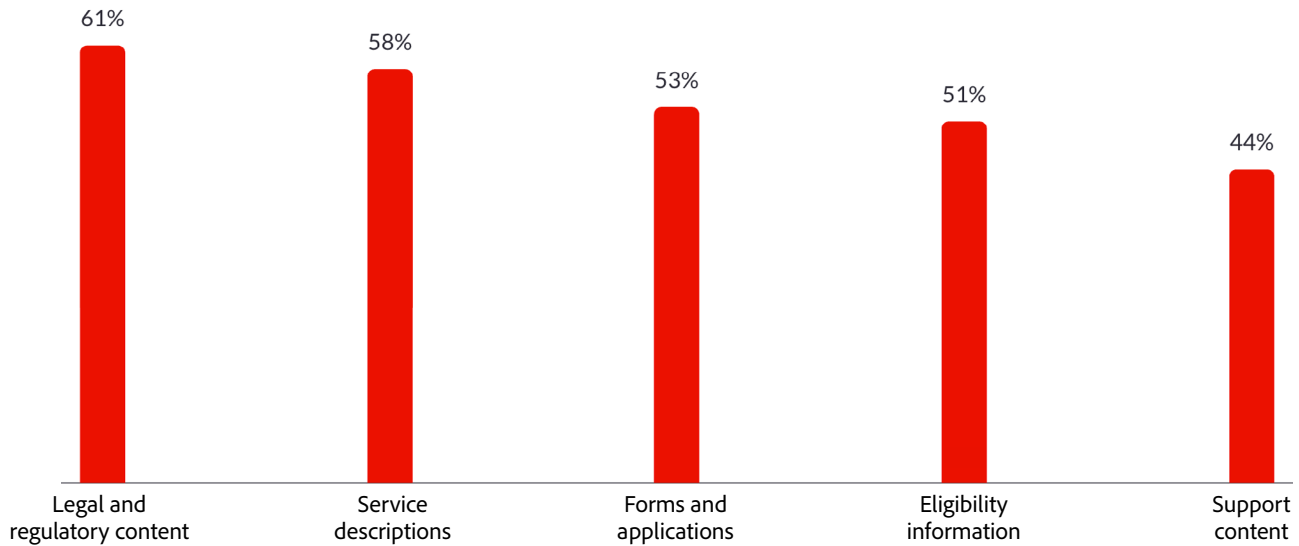
Accessibility gaps undermine inclusive digital service

96%

of digital properties meet accessibility standards, yet only 26% go beyond basic compliance

44%

say their support content is clear and effective, making it the weakest point in the digital experience



Note: This chart shows the % that said their content clarity was effective or very effective



Accessibility has become foundational to equity in digital services

Accessibility in digital services is no longer a compliance requirement, it's a mandate to ensure inclusive, equitable access for all citizens. While agencies meet baseline standards, limited investment beyond compliance signals a gap in inclusive design thinking. As digital services become the default mode of engagement, content clarity, particularly for support functions remains a persistent pain point. With rising expectations for self-service and usability, meeting the bare minimum is no longer enough. Accessibility must be treated as a pillar of digital trust and citizen equity, not a checkbox for legal adherence.



Content effectiveness and enhanced accessibility are critically underserved

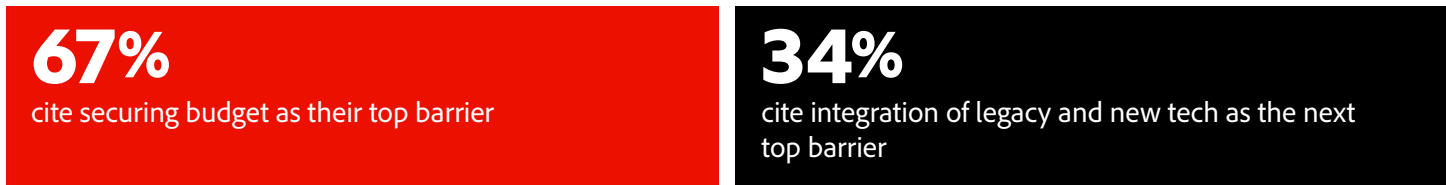
The gap between compliance and experience suggests public institutions often mistake technical adequacy for true usability. Only a small fraction of digital properties extend beyond minimum standards, revealing a lack of focus on empathy and accessibility in service design. Support content—essential for issue resolution—remains the least effective part of the journey. For citizens with impairments or those navigating services in a second language, these gaps can be exclusionary. As AI and automation expand in government portals, failing to prioritize inclusive design now risks deepening digital inequities.



Design for inclusion from day one, not as a post-launch patch

Government leaders must go beyond compliance and embed accessibility into every layer of service design from content to interface to experience. This means not only simplifying regulatory content and eligibility information, but also elevating the clarity and usability of support materials. Advanced personalization, adaptive content formatting, and intelligent accessibility tools should be treated as core design principles not optional upgrades. This shift requires integrated platforms that support content reusability, AI-powered readability enhancement, and multichannel accessibility from day one. Agencies that prioritize inclusive design will not only reduce service friction but also set the foundation for ethical AI deployments that work for everyone, not just the digital majority.

Public Sector is building AI foundations, but not deploying



Budget and integration remain the #1 roadblocks

Rank	Challenge	Public Sector
1	Securing budget/investment for transformation	67%
2	Integrating legacy and new technology systems	34%
3	Breaking down organizational silos	32%
4	Managing regulatory and compliance requirements	31%
5	Finding and retaining talent with right skills	27%
6	Managing channel complexity and coordination	23%
7	Driving organizational culture change	21%
8	Data integration and accessibility	19%

Note: This chart outlines the top challenges faced in transforming its public information function



Legacy infrastructure and flat budgets undercut transformation efforts

The modernization of Public Sector information systems depends not only on strategy and urgency, but on the ability to fund change. Despite mounting pressure to digitize, most agencies face a persistent fiscal ceiling. Budget constraints remain the single largest barrier to transformation. At the same time, many organizations are stuck managing two incompatible environments: legacy systems locked in compliance workflows, and new platforms meant for speed and agility. Without room to invest or integrate, the promise of digital-first public services often never leaves the planning stage.



Disconnected systems delay integration, interoperability, and personalization

These challenges don't just coexist, they reinforce each other. Limited budgets delay critical tech upgrades, while fragmented systems slow down delivery, weaken personalization, and make coordination across departments harder. As citizen data flows across disconnected tools, service quality, security, and efficiency all suffer. Meanwhile, AI-powered personalization and automation, once within reach, become sidelined. The cost isn't just operational drag. It's a missed opportunity to meet rising expectations for fast, intuitive, and equitable digital services.



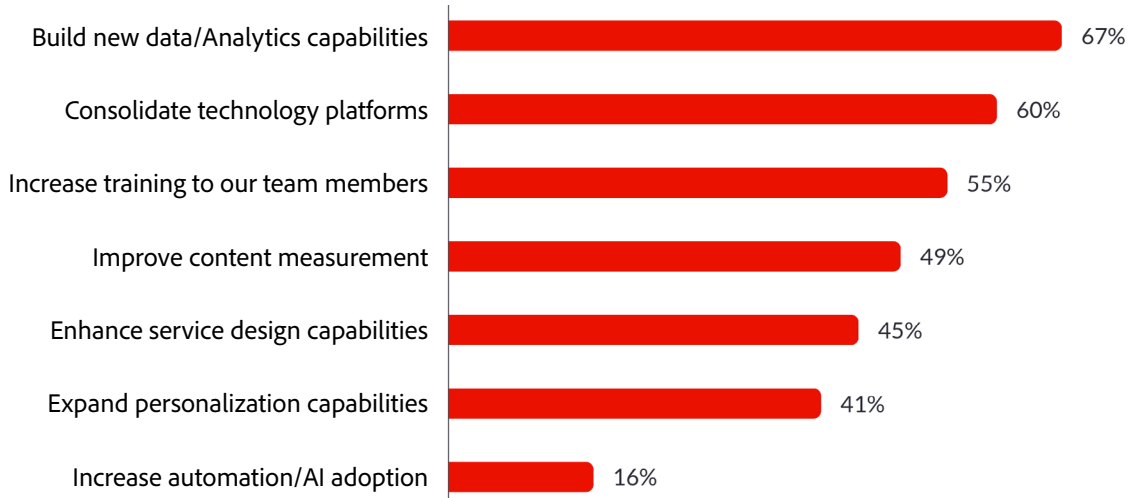
Prioritize high-ROI investments with modular, AI-ready platforms

To move forward, agencies must adopt a value-first investment mindset, prioritizing platforms that demonstrate quick, measurable impact. Modular, cloud-native technologies that support low-code integration and seamless interoperability can stretch limited budgets while reducing risk. But beyond selecting the right tools, agencies must rethink how they frame transformation itself: not as an expense, but as a policy instrument. One that unlocks data agility, boosts public confidence, and turns information delivery into a cornerstone of responsive governance.

AI opportunity outpaces Public Sector readiness



Public Sector is laying the groundwork, but AI transformation is barely underway.



Note: This chart shows the % that have implemented or are planning to implement these changes



Data and platform modernization is accelerating but AI is not yet following

Public Sector leaders are laying the technical groundwork for smarter digital services. Two-thirds are focused on strengthening data and analytics capabilities, and a majority are consolidating platforms to improve agility. Yet despite this momentum, AI transformation remains stalled. Only a small minority of agencies are actively scaling automation or AI capabilities—signaling a misalignment between infrastructure investment and innovation execution.



AI readiness gap is emerging between early movers and hesitant agencies

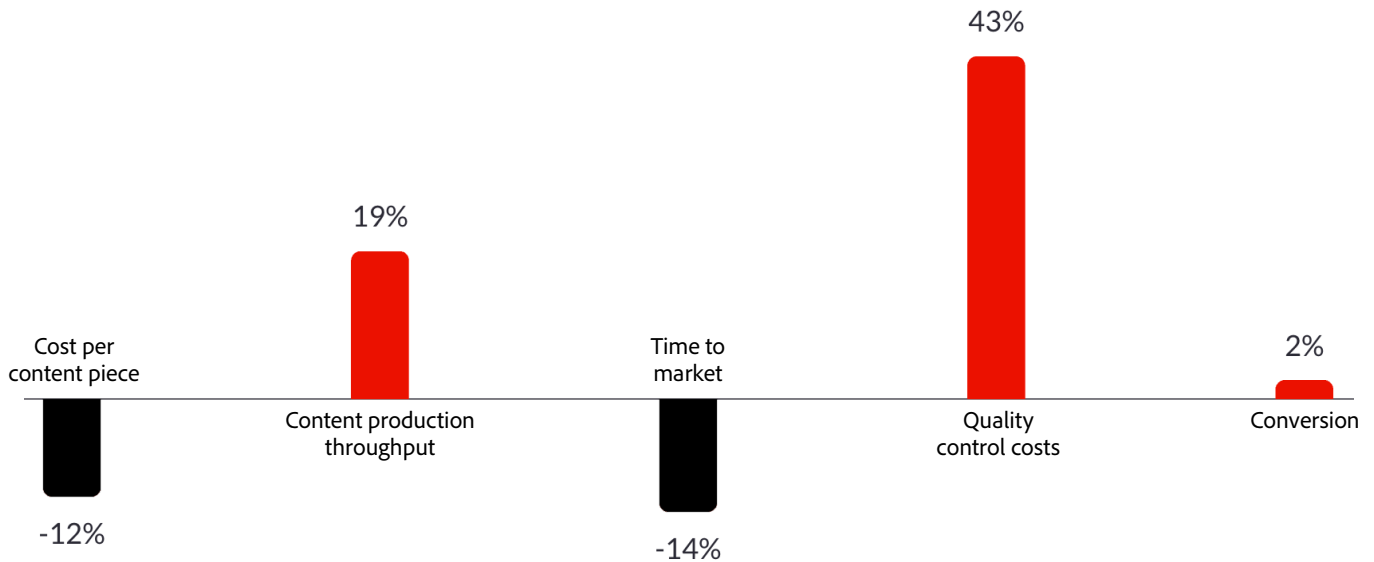
Many organizations are still focused on foundational improvements, but delay comes with cost. As citizen expectations grow for faster, more personalized digital interactions, agencies that postpone AI adoption risk falling behind. The early adopters are moving past pilots toward structured deployment, while others remain hesitant to operationalize new technologies. The longer this gap persists, the harder it becomes to close, not just technically, but in public confidence.



Align data modernization with parallel AI adoption roadmaps

AI should not be treated as a future endpoint, it must evolve alongside data modernization efforts. Agencies need coordinated roadmaps that connect infrastructure upgrades with AI experimentation and governance. This includes use cases like generative content creation, predictive service delivery, and real-time personalization. Leaders who build this bridge early will be best positioned to deliver intelligent, citizen-centered experiences at scale and shape the next generation of digital public services.

GenAI is transforming content production but increasing complexity



Note: This chart reflects how Generative AI has influenced content production efficiency and costs



AI is reshaping how Public content is produced but not how it's validated

In the Public Sector, GenAI is rapidly changing how content is created but traditional validation models haven't evolved to keep pace. While automation accelerates production, agencies still operate with fragmented review structures and legacy content governance frameworks. This disconnect introduces new risk: misalignment between speed and quality. Public institutions charged with upholding accuracy, accessibility, and equity must confront the reality that scaling GenAI isn't just a technical challenge. It demands a redesign of how communications are evaluated, approved, and trusted by diverse Public audiences.



Quality assurance has become the hidden bottleneck in GenAI workflows

As AI-generated content flows into more citizen-facing channels, the strain on review processes is intensifying. Manual reviews, unclear ownership, and siloed workflows are slowing delivery and increasing inconsistency. For mission-critical content such as benefit eligibility, emergency alerts, or healthcare communications, this lack of coordination can compromise clarity and trust. What was once a static compliance step is now a dynamic quality challenge. Agencies must move from ad hoc checks to integrated, policy-aligned validation systems that uphold both speed and content integrity.



Public sector content systems must be redesigned for trust at scale

To lead with confidence, government agencies need to embed trust into the core of content operations. This requires building intelligent workflows that combine automation with accountability, where validation rules, user roles, and output logic are clearly defined and enforced. Institutions must treat GenAI not as a content shortcut, but as a strategic asset governed by clarity, consistency, and Public service principles. Agencies that modernize their content pipelines with trust-by-design will be best positioned to scale AI responsibly, and credibly with their constituents.

Conclusion & recommendations

The future of Public Sector service delivery will not be defined by digitization alone, it will be defined by how responsibly, equitably, and intelligently governments connect with their citizens.

This research reveals a directional shift:

- Personalization must extend beyond transactions. Citizen journeys should be context-aware, consistent, and responsive, from discovery to post-service care.
- Trust is not just a value, it's a system. Agencies must embed transparency, consent, and privacy into every layer of digital experience.
- AI adoption must be governed with purpose and clarity. GenAI and automation should scale with built-in oversight, ethical frameworks, and citizen benefit as the priority.
- Operating models must center around citizen journeys, not agency silos. Structuring teams and platforms around life stages, service needs, and regional priorities is critical to responsiveness.
- Infrastructure modernization is essential, but it must align with citizen outcomes. From accessibility to data intelligence, investment should target measurable improvements in equity, efficiency, and trust.

Strategic priorities for Public Sector leaders

1. Reimagine citizen experiences with contextual personalization:

Move from static portals to adaptive journeys tailored to intent, identity, and need.

2. Make trust visible across every interaction:

Standardize consent, simplify privacy language, and make secure data use a visible feature of your digital services.

3. Govern AI with integrity, not just compliance:

Embed review workflows, output validation, and transparent logic into all AI-generated content and decision-making.

4. Modernize operating models around citizen journeys:

Shift from function-first to people-first design, align teams, content, and tech around real-world citizen pathways.

5. Invest in interoperable, modular, AI-ready infrastructure:

Prioritize systems that enable quick wins, scalable personalization, and low-friction integration with legacy environments.



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