

National eGovernment Study 2019

E-Government in Switzerland from
the Perspectives of the General Public,
Businesses, and Public Administration



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Foreword

Digitalization increasingly determines our lives today. With its stable political system and proven high innovative capability, Switzerland is very well positioned to continue to apply the successful model of a liveable, open, and modern Switzerland in the digital future. For this reason, the Federal Council wants Switzerland to make optimal use of the opportunities that digitalization offers. The aim of the guiding principles of the eGovernment Strategy Switzerland 2020–2023, approved by the Federal Council in November 2018, is for the Confederation, the cantons, and the communes to offer digital services to the public and the economy that are as user-friendly, target group-friendly, standardized, and resource-saving as possible. The building of national infrastructures for sustainable establishment of digital administrative processes must be made a priority, and open interfaces and services that can be used by all need to be set up. eGovernment Switzerland has an important hub function here; it is the organisation of the Confederation, the cantons, and the communes for the expansion of electronic government services. And although the Swiss authorities have recognized the importance of digitalization, there is still a lot of potential for expansion.

The present study shows that the current demand for electronic government services by the public and especially by businesses is only partially met by the existing offerings. A look at individual services shows that user demand is high but that far from all communes and cantons offer the services online. The wish for an expansion of online services is especially strong at the level of the communes: Nearly half of the survey respondents are of the opinion that the online offerings of the communal administrations should be expanded. Basically, among businesses in Switzerland and the general public, satisfaction with the online offerings of the authorities is high. This is a surprising finding, and it indicates that also the degree of digitalization in businesses and among the general public can be further increased and is in continuous development.

Switzerland may certainly choose to follow the example of other countries in the area of e-government. For instance, countries like Denmark or Norway score points with basic services, simple e-services for the general public, and strongly service-oriented portals for businesses. These countries offer government services from one provider and make possible electronic data exchange between businesses and the authorities. In Denmark, for example, algorithms are used that autonomously handle the greater part of the standard processes without human intervention. After submission of a request, there is a legally binding decision within seconds. Switzerland has not yet achieved such a high e-government standard. With this, e-government becomes an important factor in the choice of location, which is gaining more and more influence on businesses' investment decisions and competitiveness.

This study takes a look at the increasing affinity of the public and the economy towards digitalization. More and more businesses are taking digitalization seriously and have firmly anchored it in their business strategy. Why? Because a connection has become evident between digital maturity and business success. Businesses therefore expect added value from the digital transformation. There is growing acceptance and use of digital services also by the general public. In many areas, the public in Switzerland is already showing good frequency of use. However, the demand for online government services is generally higher than what the Confederation, the cantons, and the communes offer. This is especially the case for e-voting: Only 2% of the voters can use e-voting. This explains the low number of survey respondents stating that they vote electronically; just 1% of the respondents vote electronically in voting

and elections. Just under half of the respondents state that they would participate in votes and elections more often if they could vote online.

The general public and the economy have a favourable view of the digitalization of public administration, and for the authorities themselves, it has great potential. Let us seize this opportunity so that Switzerland remains an attractive place to live and to locate a business.



Cédric Roy
Head of Programme Office eGovernment Switzerland



Martin Godel
Deputy Head of the Promotion Activities
Directorate
Head of Division SME Policy

Introduction



In early 2016, the Swiss Confederation, cantons, and communes started their e-government co-operation on new foundations. Since then, they have followed a new eGovernment Strategy and a strategic plan as the implementation instrument. In the course of the revision, it was decided to conduct a National eGovernment Study. The study simultaneously surveys the Swiss general public, businesses located in Switzerland, and the public administration on e-government. The general public and businesses are the users, and the public administration is the provider of electronic government services. The purpose of the study is to produce a basis for review and updating of the strategy.

The National eGovernment Study is planned to be repeated regularly, so that it can identify developments over a longer period. This second study, launched by the Programme Office of eGovernment Switzerland and the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), is based on simultaneously conducted quantitative surveys of the general public, businesses, and public administration and qualitative interviews with 19 members of the public.

A mixed mode approach was chosen for the quantitative surveys, meaning that the target persons were free to choose to participate in the survey either online or by telephone. During the 8-week field time in the fall of 2018, 5,000 valid interviews were conducted. The table just below shows the number of interviews conducted with each target group:

Populations and Response Rates			
Target group	Population	Valid interviews	Response rate
General public			
Language-assimilated ¹ resident population of Switzerland aged 18 to 70	5125	2606	Gross ² : 50,9 % Net ³ : 51,4 %
Businesses			
Located in Switzerland and active businesses in the secondary and tertiary sectors according to BER	4000	1331	Gross: 33,3 % Net: 34,8 %
Public administration			
All departments and offices of the Federal Administration	80 ⁴	27	33,8 %
All cantons of Switzerland	26	26	100 %
All communes of Switzerland	1600	1010	63,1 %
<i>Note</i>	Table by Interface, based on DemoSCOPE survey. BER = Business and Enterprise Register of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO); secondary sector = industry and construction; tertiary sector = services.		

This summary report is a short version of the report on the National eGovernment Study 2019⁵. It summarizes the most important results of the surveys conducted on demand and supply in the area of e-government in Switzerland. The 'Overall conclusion' section indicates where there is a need for action and what can be done about it.

¹ All persons able to participate in the survey in German, French, or Italian.

² The gross response rate is the number of achieved interviews divided by the number of people in the gross sample, expressed as a percentage.

³ The net response rate is based on the gross sample minus all addressees not reached (letters undeliverable) and the achieved net sample per target group.

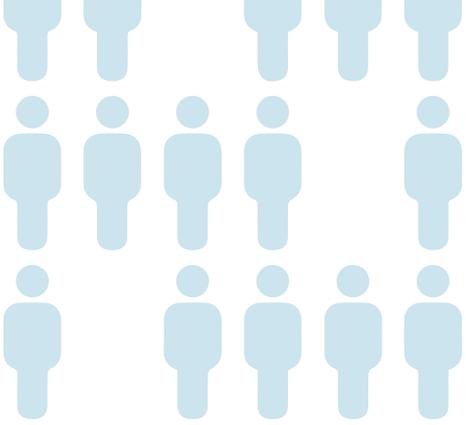
⁴ A total of 78 federal departments/offices. For some, more than one contact person was written to; for this reason, there were a total of 80 addresses available for the gross sample.

⁵ Buess, M.; Ramsden, A.; Bieri, O. (2019): National eGovernment Study 2019: eGovernment in Switzerland from the Perspectives of the General Public, Businesses, and Public Administration. Demo SCOPE AG/Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung GmbH, Adligenswil/Luzern.

Survey results



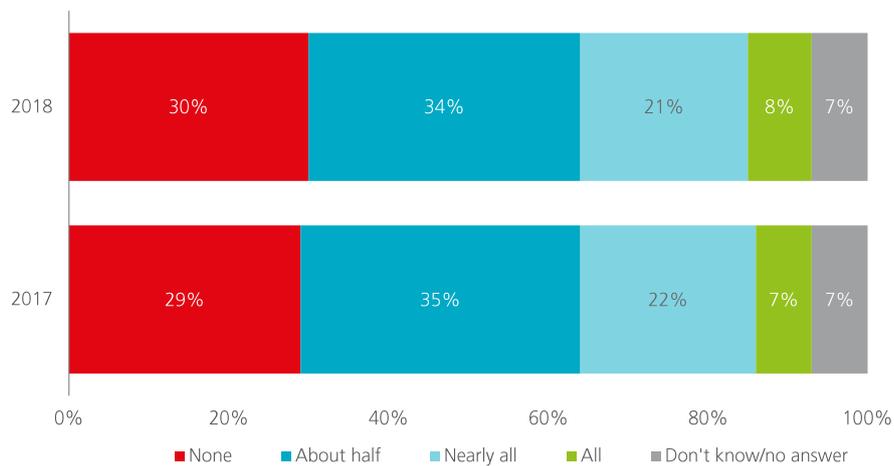
This section presents a summary of the most important results of the surveys of the three target groups. Figures illustrate selected main results.



Target group: general public

The general public communicates with cantonal and communal authorities mainly in person or by telephone and with federal authorities electronically. The general public makes rather seldom active use of government services⁶. Just under half of the public use one to two government services per year; 18% use no services at all. When services are used, they are used exclusively electronically⁷ in just under 30% of cases. In 30% of cases, no services are used electronically. A slightly higher number of persons (34%) report using at least half of the services electronically. There has been little change in these figures since 2017.

Of the services provided by the authorities that you use, how many do you use electronically?⁸



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: general public, DemoSCOPE.

Note *Basis:* All respondents who use government services (n = 2,080).

⁶ A distinction is made between services that are used actively or passively. Making active use of services is, for example, using the online process for reporting change of address. Making passive use of services is using rubbish removal services.

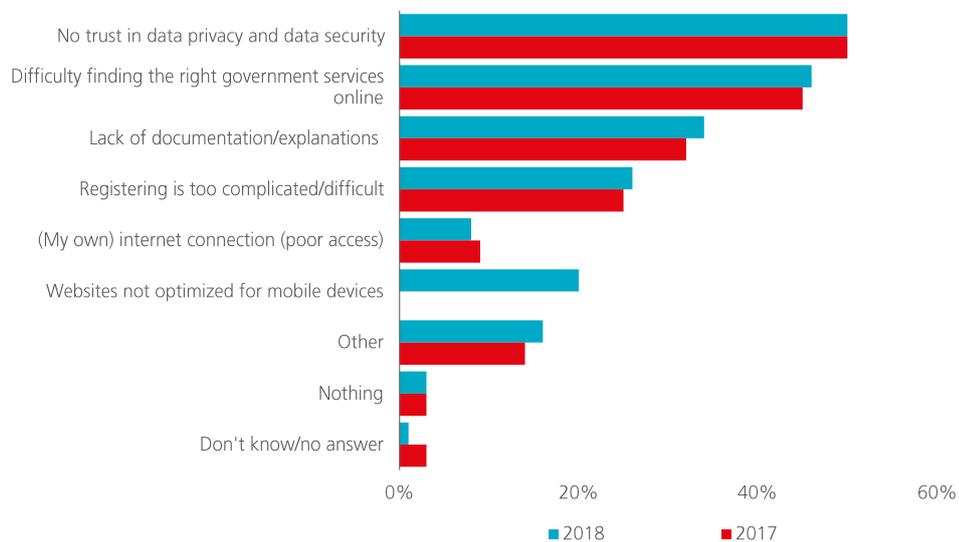
⁷ In this report, the terms digital, online, and electronic are used synonymously.

⁸ Due to rounding differences, the numbers in the figures do not always add up to 100%.

Technical difficulties when using the online services are rather seldom; 90% of the survey respondents report that they are able to successfully use services/carry out transactions online. The most important arguments for using government services electronically are *geographical flexibility* and *time flexibility* and the resulting *time savings*.⁹ The most frequently used e-government service by far continues to be *fill out tax return*. Also used frequently are *apply for extension of time to file tax return* and *e-payment*. Respondents access *information on maps or statistical data* online and receive *e-invoices from the authorities* online. The respondents would like to use many government services electronically that are not yet available online. There is interest particularly in *registering/deregistering with the communal authorities of the place of residence*; *ordering vehicle number plates, certificates of origin, birth certificates, replacement driving licences, and parking permits*; and *reporting petty offences and reporting lost property*.

Obstacles to using e-government services are seen by 23% of the survey respondents. The greatest obstacle to using services online is *lack of trust in data privacy and data security*, followed by *difficulty finding the right government services online*. Another hindering factor mentioned frequently in this study is websites not optimized for mobile devices; a response option that was not yet offered in the 2017 study.

What makes it the most difficult for you to use online services offered by the authorities?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: general public, DemoSCOPE.

Note This question was asked only of persons that stated that there were problems using online services (n = 560).

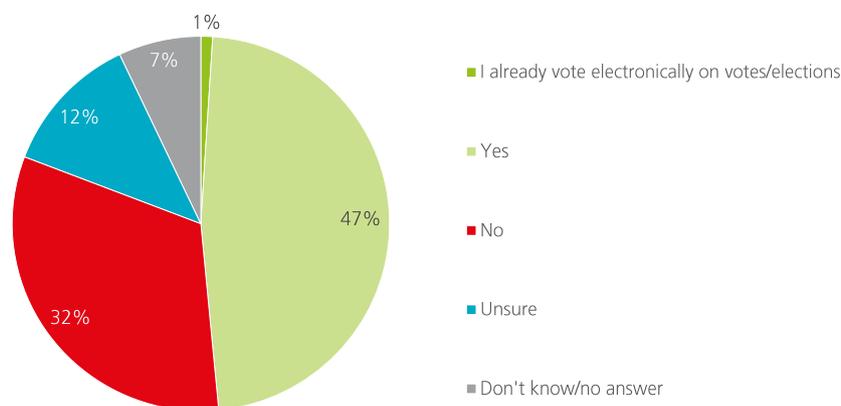
⁹ Survey response options are shown in italics in this report.

Concerning user support from the authorities, the respondents most frequently wish for a *telephone hotline* to call if they encounter problems using online services. In addition, when using online services, they want fast support that is independent of opening hours. Members of the public who participated in the personal interviews see potential for improvement in the following areas: support from the authorities, even better ease of use of online services, transparency in use of online services, and the number of services offered electronically.

Most members of the general public are aware of the authorities' websites.

New in this study were questions on electronic voting behaviour among the general public. Over two thirds of the respondents are of the opinion that e-voting should be available to all voters. Only a minority thinks that e-voting should be prohibited. Just under half of the respondents state that they would participate in votes and elections more often if they could vote online. Currently, only 2% of voters across Switzerland have the possibility for e-voting. This is reflected in the low number of respondents that report voting electronically (1% of respondents *already vote in votes and elections electronically*).

Would you vote in votes and elections more often if you could vote online (e-voting)?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: general public, DemoSCOPE.

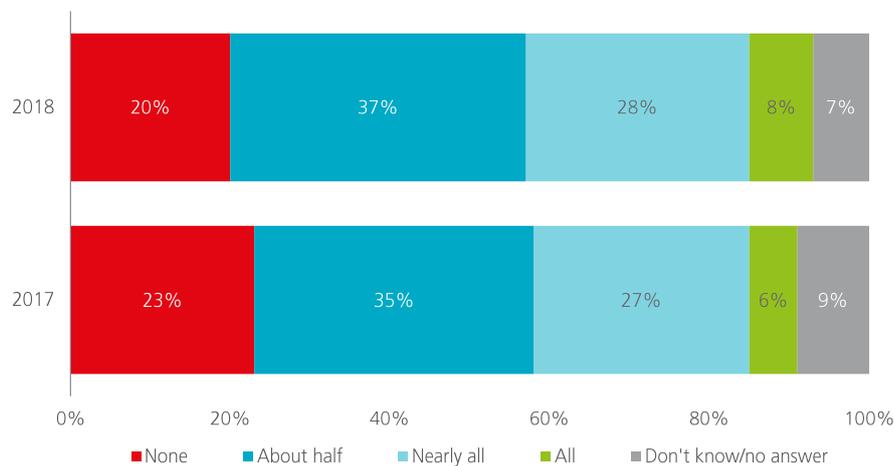
Note *Basis:* All survey respondents that use the internet (n = 2,549).



Target group: businesses

Businesses communicate with cantonal and communal authorities mainly by *email* or *by telephone*. They communicate with the federal authorities mainly by *email* or *via electronic portals*. Businesses make active use of government services somewhat more frequently than the general public. Nearly half of businesses actively use services/carry out transactions with the authorities at least three times a year. Businesses that use services/carry out transactions with the authorities use or carry out half or nearly all of the services or transactions online.

How many of the services/transactions with the authorities has your business used/carried out online?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: businesses, DemoSCOPE.

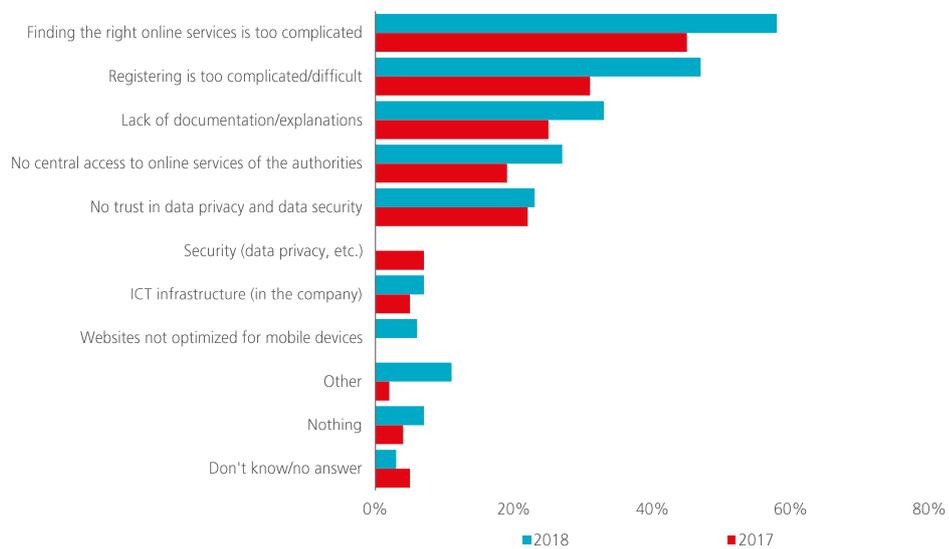
Note Basis: All businesses that use government services (n = 1,226).

The most important reasons for businesses preferring online services/transactions are the same as for the general public: *time flexibility and time savings*.

The most often, businesses take part in *statistical surveys* of the authorities electronically. Just under half of businesses *fill out and submit tax return online, report change of address online, or apply online for extension of time to file tax return*. Over 40% of businesses *register with the Social Insurance Office online*, and just under 40% *make online payments to the Social Insurance Office*. The majority of the businesses surveyed that have not previously carried out transactions online would like it to be possible to carry out all transactions online. This request is the most frequent for online *registering with the commercial register and online reporting of changes to the commercial register*.

Only 8% of the responding businesses mention problems that make it difficult to use e-government services offered by the authorities, a percentage that is a lot lower than in the general public (23%). The greatest obstacles to using online services mentioned are: *finding the right online services is too complicated* and *registering is too complicated/difficult*.

What makes it the most difficult for you/your business to use online services offered by the authorities?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: businesses, DemoSCOPE.

Note This question was asked only of businesses that stated that there were problems using online services (n = 121).

Most of the businesses are aware of the authorities' websites and use them with varying intensity.

Target group: public administration

The communes and cantons offer contact options via *email*, *telephone* and *letter*. Cantonal authorities are the most active in offering communication options via *social media* or *online portals*, followed by the federal authorities.

Most of the services asked about in the survey are offered by more than half of the cantonal authorities electronically in one way or another (fully transactional, partly transactional, or not transactional). The fully transactional services offered the most frequently by the cantons are *apply for extension of time to file tax return* and *e-payment*. File tax return is offered equally frequently as a fully transactional online service and as a partly transactional online service. The most frequently offered partly transactional online service is *order an excerpt from the commercial register*. *Application for and issuance of residence permit* and *receive electronic invoice* are also frequently offered as partly transactional services.

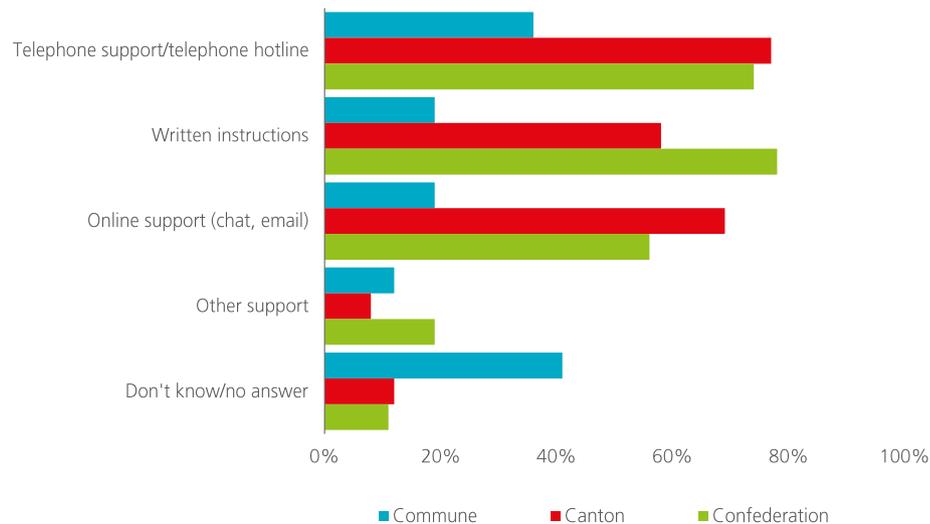
In contrast to the cantonal authorities, the communal authorities offer fewer fully transactional online services. The most frequently offered fully transactional service is *registering with the communal authorities of the place of residence*, followed by *e-payment* and *receive electronic invoice*. Some partly transactional online services are offered, such as *issuance of event permit* and *registering with the communal authorities of the place of residence*. Many services are not offered electronically by the communal authorities. *E-voting* is not at all widespread, but also *e-payment*, *receive electronic invoice*, and *naturalization*¹⁰ are not offered electronically in a majority of the communes.

The survey question asking about online services offered by the federal authorities was open-ended. As this resulted in individual mentions by the respondents, it is not possible to determine which online services the federal authorities offer the most frequently.

The order of the different types of support for users of e-government services is similar at the three levels of public administration. Cantonal and communal authorities most frequently offer *telephone support*. As the second most frequently offered support service for users, communal authorities offer *written instructions or online support*, followed by *other support services*. As the second most frequently offered support service for users, cantonal authorities offer *online support*, followed by *written instructions*.

¹⁰ Here, naturalization means the internal administration process between the Confederation, cantons, and communes.

What support do you offer users of your online processes and e-government services?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: public administration, DemoSCOPE.

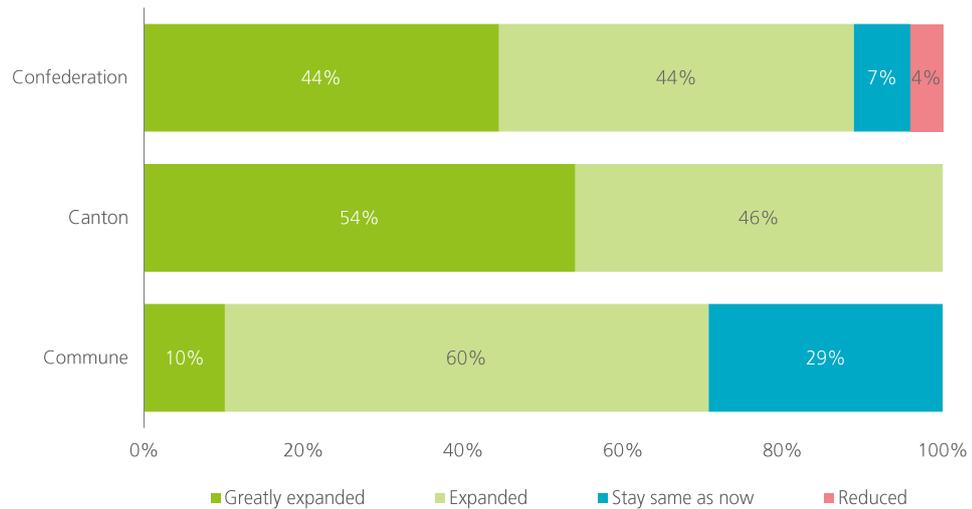
Note *Basis:* All authorities surveyed at the level of the Confederation (n = 27), the cantons (n = 26), and the communes (n = 1,010).

The cantonal and communal authorities are motivated to launch online services mainly by the *needs of the public* and the opportunity to *improve the quality of services*, such as for example *administrative services that are independent of time*. In addition to *improving the quality of services*, the main concern of the federal authorities is also *optimization of the federal authorities' own processes*.

In connection with e-government services, the priority goal of the Confederation and the cantons is: *'An electronic identity that is valid nationally and internationally will be established by 2019'*. As the highest priority goal for the communes, the communes surveyed agreed most (with over 50% agreeing) with: *'By 2019, it will be possible to seamlessly report changes of address (arrival and departure) electronically throughout Switzerland'*.

The respondents in the Federal Administration are clearly of the opinion that online services must be expanded. More than half even think that the services must be greatly expanded. Respondents in the cantonal authorities have an even stronger preference for expanding online services; all persons responding to this question favour expansion of online services. Respondents at the communal authorities are more satisfied with the status quo, but here, too, the majority of them want to see online services expanded.

With regard to current needs of residents of Switzerland/your commune/your canton: In your opinion, should online government services be expanded?

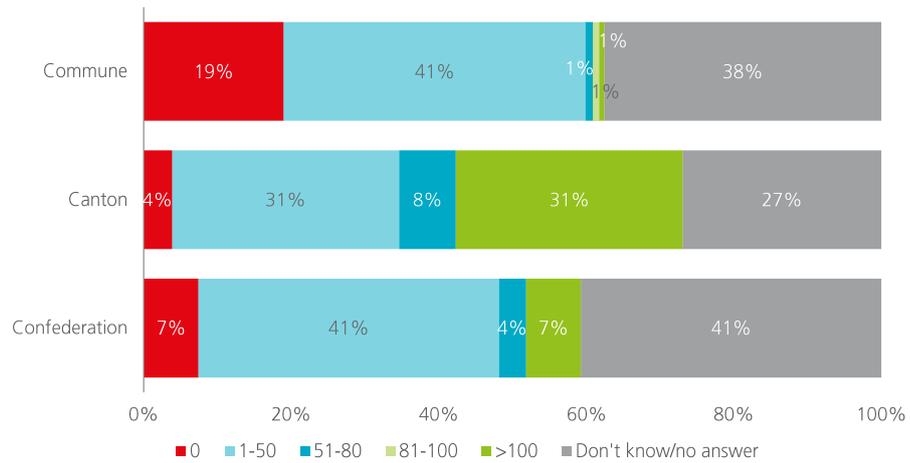


Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: public administration, DemoSCOPE.

Note *Basis:* All authorities surveyed at the level of the Confederation (n = 27), the cantons (n = 26), and the communes (n = 1,010).

According to the authorities surveyed, implementation of online services is hindered the most by a *lack of legal bases, a lack of human resources, and budget restrictions*. Also mentioned frequently are *ICT infrastructure, a lack of strategies or the wrong strategies, position of the political authorities, and the time required*. And in fact, few human resources are available to the authorities for e-government matters, especially in the communes. In one fifth of the communes, there are no resources available at all. In comparison, the cantons are more generously provided, but this does not result in greater satisfaction with the available resources on the part of the cantonal authorities.

What percentage of full-time positions are available in your federal department/office, your canton, or your commune for e-government matters?¹¹



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, target group: public administration, DemoSCOPE.

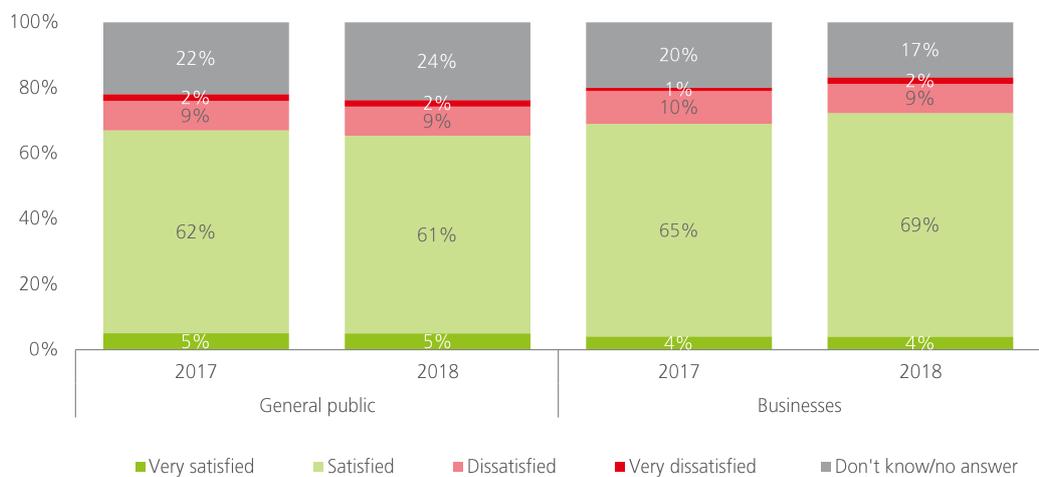
Note *Basis:* All authorities surveyed at the level of the Confederation (n = 27), the cantons (n = 26), and the communes (n = 1,010).

¹¹ E-government-related projects were not included under e-government matters, which could be one explanation, among others, for the low percentages of full-time positions.

Comparison between supply and demand

The majority of users are satisfied with the e-government services offered by the authorities.

How satisfied are you/is your business in general with the Swiss authorities' online offerings (also called e-government services)?



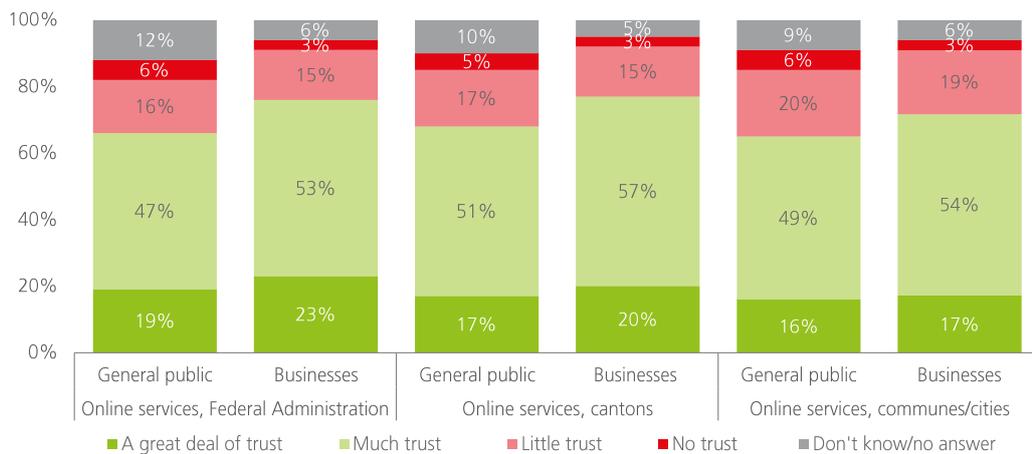
Source National eGovernment Study 2019, Target group: general public and businesses, Demo SCOPE.

Note *Basis:* All persons surveyed that use the internet (n = 2,549) and all businesses (n = 1,331).

The authorities rate user satisfaction positively; their estimation is therefore accurate. However, staff members at the federal authorities are more critical than staff members at other levels of public administration. The communal authorities rate user satisfaction the most positively.

The authorities also rate the trust of the general public in online services positively. The most self-critical here are the respondents at the communal authorities, whereas the staff members surveyed at the cantonal authorities rate the general public's trust especially positively. The responses of the general public and of the businesses surveyed to the question on how much trust they have in online services regarding personal privacy and data protection confirm the authorities' estimation: Over 50% of the members of the general public surveyed have a lot of trust in the authorities; the percentage is even higher for the businesses surveyed, with over 70% of the businesses reporting a high level of trust. But there are also criticisms regarding security, especially on the part of the general public, as the question on factors making it difficult to use online services as well as the qualitative interviews with individual members of the public show.

How much trust do you have in online services provided by the authorities at the communal, cantonal, and national level regarding data privacy and data protection?



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, Target group: general public and businesses, Demo SCOPE.

Note Basis: All persons surveyed that use the internet (n = 2,549) and all businesses (n = 1,331).

The majority of users rate the current e-government services provided by the federal and cantonal authorities as sufficient. The need to expand online services is seen as greater at the level of the communes, with about 40% of the users seeing a need for more online services. At the level of the federal authorities and the cantons, the general public sees the greatest need for expanding in e-voting. Federal authorities and businesses showed the highest agreement with the following statement: *'The Federal Administration should offer all services online'*. Cantonal authorities and businesses see the greatest need for expanding online services at the cantonal level in *digital tax returns*. The general public sees the greatest need for expansion at the level of the communes in *eUmzug [e-moving]*¹², *e-voting*, and *general information*. Businesses are most frequently of the opinion that the communal administrations should offer all services online.

Supply meets the general public's current demand for online services when it comes to the transaction most frequently carried out online, *fill out tax return*¹³. This service is offered by nearly all of the cantonal authorities surveyed, at the least as a partly transactional service. A look at individual services such as *ordering certificate of origin*, *ordering replacement driving licence*, and *reporting lost property* shows that user demand is high but that nowhere near all communes and cantons offer these services online; here there is potential for development.¹⁴

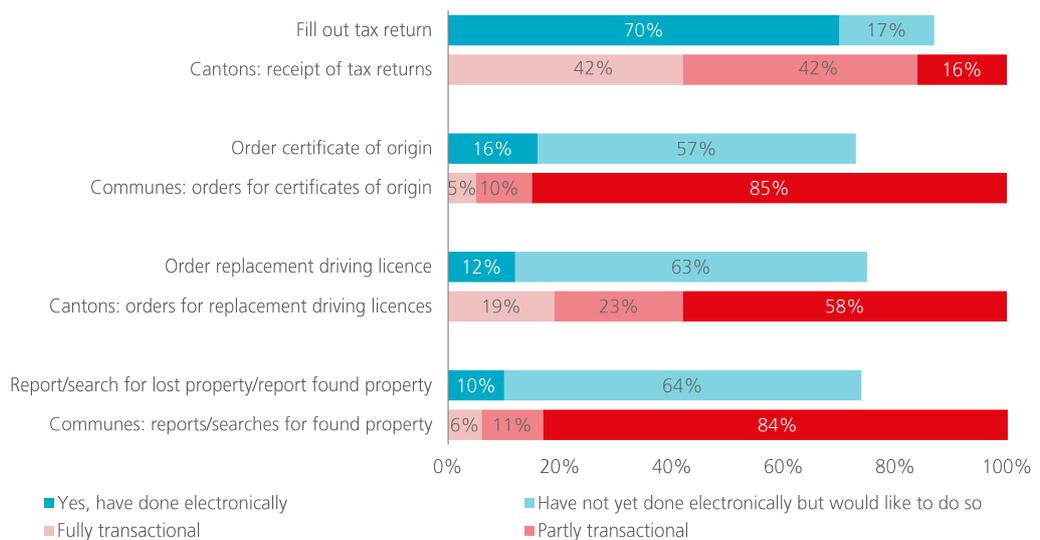
¹² Electronic reporting and processing of change of residence.

¹³ To determine demand, the response categories Yes, have used/carried out services/transactions electronically and Have never used/carried out electronically but would like to were summed to calculate a total of the demand per service.

¹⁴ This question in the survey did not include e-voting, as there was a separate question on e-voting; see section 'Target group: general public' above.

Supply and demand of the general public for e-government services

(Demand = blue, supply = red)



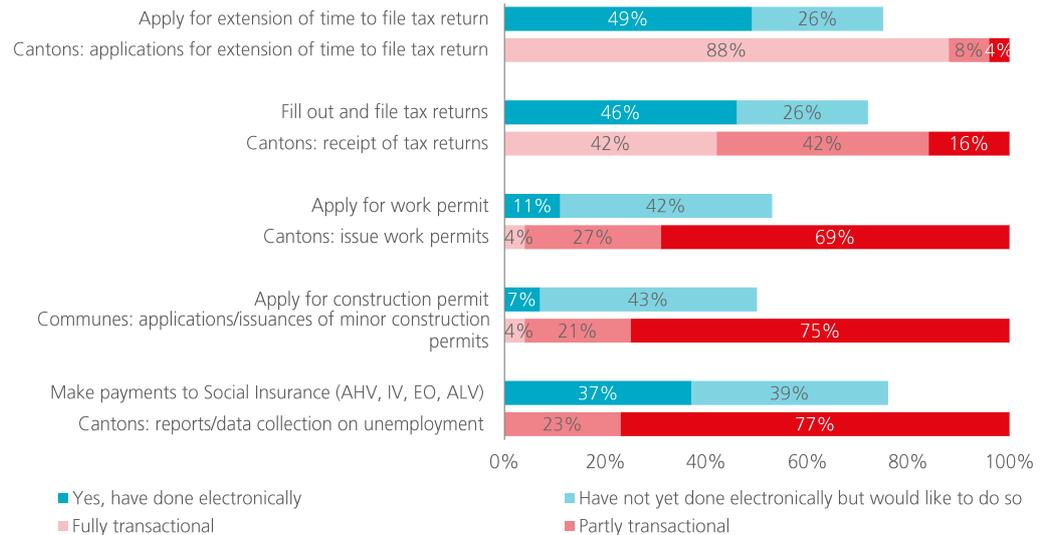
Source National eGovernment Study 2019, Target group: general public and public administration, DemoSCOPE.

Note *Basis:* All persons surveyed that use the internet (the queried services were split, n = 768 and n = 741), and all authorities at the level of the cantons (n = 26) and the communes (n = 1,010).

For the services *apply for extension of time to file tax return and fill out and file tax return*, the online services offered by the authorities meet demand on the part of businesses, at least when for *fill out tax return*, partly transactional services are also included. However, for *apply for work permit* and *apply for construction permit*, the demand for online services exceeds what is offered, even when partly transactional services are taken into account.

Supply and demand of businesses for e-government services

(Demand = blue, supply = red)



Source National eGovernment Study 2019, Target group: general public and public administration, DemoSCOPE.

Note *Basis:* All businesses surveyed (n = 1,331) and all authorities at the level of the cantons (n = 26) and the communes (n = 1,010).

In both groups of users, more than half of the respondents do not approve of the lower fees charged for using online rather than non-online services. Indeed, more than one third strongly disapprove. The authorities are more in favour of the lower fees. The fact that the users surveyed do not fully agree with the reduction in fees indicates that they do not intend to use more online services. In contrast, the authorities as providers are more interested in moving towards further expansion and anchoring of online services.

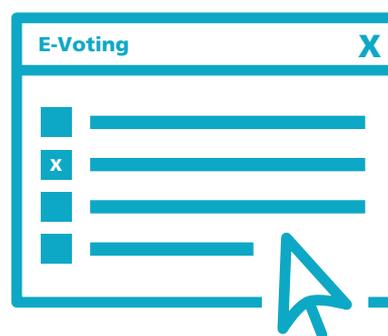
Overall conclusion



Overall, general availability of fully transactional e-government services is not well developed in Switzerland. The communal authorities offer fewer fully transactional services than the cantonal authorities do.

From the viewpoint of the authorities, this is mainly due to a lack of human resources and a lack of legal bases. There is therefore potential for development at the level of the authorities through providing the necessary legal bases for offering online services and through allocating sufficient resources for handling online services.

The current demand for online services on the part of the general public and especially on the part of businesses is being met only partially. Although a look at different services reveals that user demand is high, far from all communes and cantons offer these services online. Survey respondents' ratings of the online offerings depend on how the questions are asked, however. When surveying the need for electronic government services, if the questions mention specific, individual online services, respondents report a greater need than if they are asked generally about a need for expanding e-government services. Accordingly, there is a wish for additional, fully transactional online services that the authorities currently offer only to a limited extent. This observation relativizes the survey finding of users' low general need for expansion of online services. This is because users can only rate offerings that they are aware of or offerings that they can at all imagine existing. Regarding expanding e-government services, the general public sees the greatest need for e-voting.



Personal interviews conducted with members of the general public reveal that they see a need for government services that they can use wherever and whenever they wish, as this saves time. The persons interviewed place a high value on internet security and view it with a critical eye.

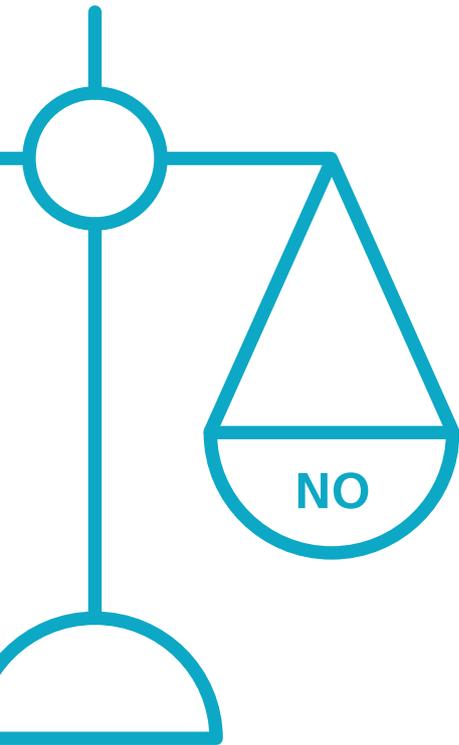
Users usually have no difficulty using an online service, and 90% of the members of the general public surveyed use online services successfully. That speaks for speed, simplicity, and user friendliness of the online services, which the general public also rate favourably in the personal interviews. The interviews reveal that problems experienced using online services are primarily content problems and secondarily technical problems. As the interviews make clear; users want (even) better support when problems arise; in particular, they want prompt assistance. Since what the authorities

most often offer is telephone support during office hours, there is potential for development on the part of the authorities through offering immediate support. The authorities themselves want to improve service quality and to offer administrative services that are independent of time.

The qualitative interviews show that the general public tends to view with a critical eye the lack of personal contact with the authorities through using services/carrying out transactions online. This is different from businesses, which prefer other forms of communication over personal contact. The importance of social media as a contact option is overestimated by the authorities; only a small part of users choose social media for contact with the authorities.

One fifth of the general public does not want to use services/carry out transactions with the authorities online now or in the future, in contrast to businesses, which somewhat more frequently want the option to use services /carry out transactions online. Also, the fact that users do not fully approve of the reduction in fees for online services indicates that they do not necessarily intend to use online services more often in the future. Nevertheless, the conclusion of the report on the first National eGovernment Study—that users do not intend generally to use more digital services—is no longer quite accurate for this second study. When asked whether they want to use certain services/carry out certain transactions with the authorities in the future online, the 'yes' and 'no' responses of the general public are about even. But generally, it can be said that the changes in comparison with the first study are minor.





Publication details

Authors

Dr Michael Buess, DemoSCOPE
Dr Alma Ramsden, Interface
Dr Oliver Bieri, Interface

Demo SCOPE AG
Klusenstrasse 17/18
CH-6043 Adligenswil
Tel +41 (0)41 375 40 00
demoscope@demoscope.ch
www.demoscope.ch

Interface Politikstudien Forschung Beratung GmbH
Seidenhofstrasse 12
CH-6003 Luzern
Tel +41 (0)41 226 04 26
luzern@interface-pol.ch
www.interface-pol.ch

Contracted by

eGovernment Switzerland Programme Office
Schwarztorstrasse 59
CH-3003 Bern
Tel +41 (0)58 464 79 21
info@egovernment.ch
www.egovernment.ch

State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO)
Promotion Activities Directorate
SME Policy Division
Holzikofenweg 36
CH-3003 Bern
Tel +41 (0)58 462 56 56
communication@kmu.admin.ch
www.seco.admin.ch

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