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Transforming tomorrow: AI as the catalyst for enhanced public services in the UK

AUGUST 2024

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Background

Government organisations are decisively transitioning to digital data storage to enhance efficiency and productivity. They embrace modern technologies like cloud-based solutions and artificial intelligence (AI) to facilitate access to real-time data, improve decision-making, and deliver better services to citizens and residents. While departments continue to make progress in their digital transformation, challenges remain.

In May 2024, mere weeks before former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called a general election for 4 July, Total Politics conducted an extensive survey involving 341 civil servants to gain a better understanding of the current state of digital transformation across government, with a particular focus on the challenges associated with delivering cohesive and integrated digital experiences to citizens.

The research, in partnership with Iron Mountain, sought to explore familiarity among civil servants with AI-driven services, their AI implementation plans and the challenges they face in effectively using AI technologies to improve service delivery. The findings offer insight into how civil servants view the advantages of digitalisation and the barriers to implementing current digital transformation strategies. With the new Labour government in place, this report provides valuable recommendations and key considerations to help civil servants prepare for the future.

Finally, the results of this survey are compared with the findings of our 2023 research, also in partnership with Iron Mountain, which sought to understand data access, challenges in delivering integrated public services, and government's IT modernisation plans.

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Chapter 1: Data: The key to better public services

The decision to relocate Whitehall's core tech units — Government Digital Service (GDS), Central Digital and Data Office (CDDO), and the Incubator for Artificial Intelligence — shows that the new government has a keen focus on digital and is prepared to take radical action to deliver transformation. All eyes will now be on how the new government's digital experts approach the technology that presents the biggest opportunities — and potential pitfalls — for reform: artificial intelligence.

While a specific timeline for the switchover has not yet been established, government departments and organisations continue to work on the six missions outlined in the [three-year roadmap for digital and data](#). By 2025, they intent to elevate at least 50 of the top 75 identified services to a 'great' standard, against a consistent measure of service performance. The missions are supported by 21 action points, spanning transformed public services, a single sign-on, better use of data, modernised technology, digital skills and creating an environment to enable the digital transformation of public services.

Data has become an enabler and a challenge in realising government's ambition. Most of the data across the civil service is inconsistent and stored across incompatible systems, making it difficult to use, access and share. This is a challenge which Mission Three of the roadmap seeks to overcome. The policy calls on government organisations to improve the quality of data, usage, and access to relevant datasets, and promote ethical, reliable, and compliant cross-departmental data sharing.

In this chapter, we look at how government departments and organisations collect and store data while improving and integrating datasets to provide citizens with a unified service experience.

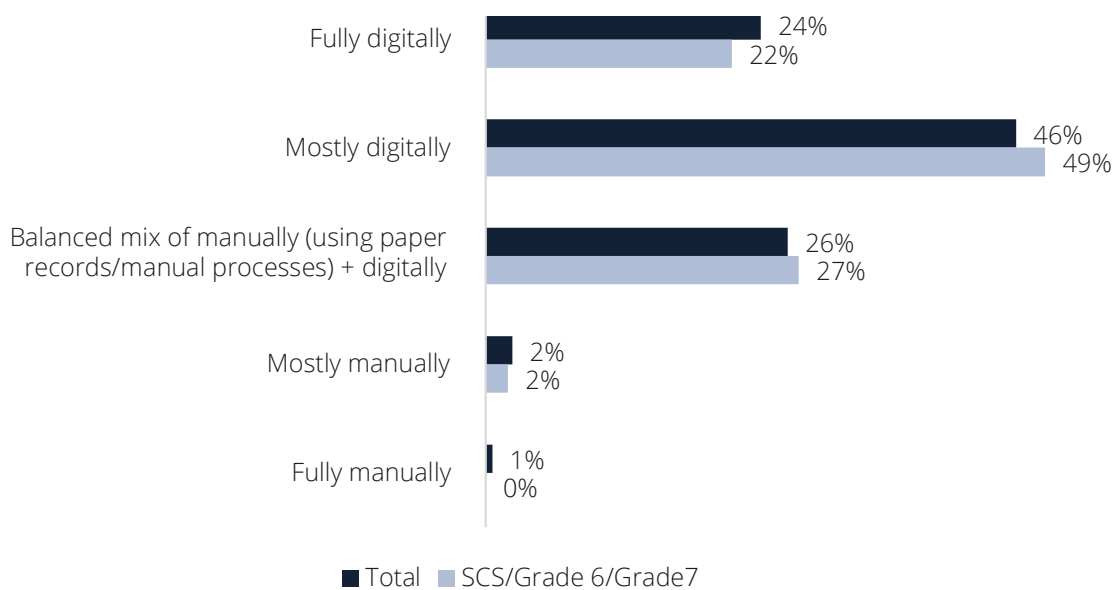


Storage and data processing

Our research reveals a significant shift within government departments towards digital processing and data storage, illustrating a widespread recognition of the importance of digital technology in enhancing efficiency and security.

A substantial majority—70% of civil servants overall and 71% of senior civil servants—report that their departments process data predominantly or entirely digitally. Within these groups, 24% of civil servants and 22% of senior civil servants operate entirely digitally, indicating a strong consensus on the benefits of digital systems.

Data processing and storage methods



Q. Which of the following best describes how your department/organisation collates, processes, and stores public service data?

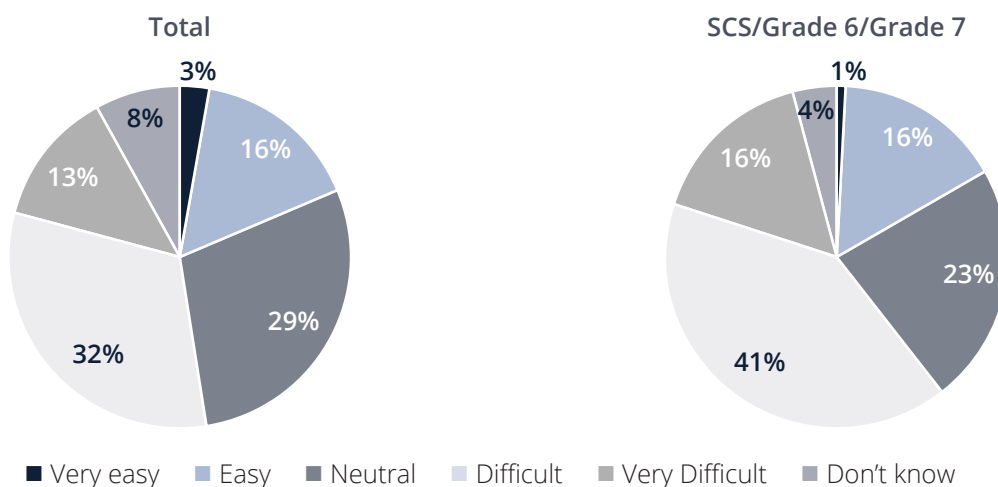
However, the persistence of a hybrid approach in a minority of departments suggests that while the move towards digital is robust, there are still practical or transitional reasons for maintaining some manual processes.

About 26% of civil servants and 27% of senior civil servants say their departments use a balanced mix of digital and manual data processes. The minimal reliance on manual data storage—only 3% of civil servants and 2% of senior civil servants—further emphasises the overall trend towards digital solutions, but also hints at lingering challenges or preferences that prevent a complete digital transformation.

Enhancing citizen experience through data integration

While most public services are now offered digitally, there remains a significant challenge in cross-referencing information and integrating datasets for comprehensive analysis. Nearly half of civil servants, and an even higher percentage of senior civil servants, find it difficult to manage and analyse data effectively, indicating that there are still considerable obstacles to overcome in terms of data quality and consistency.

Ease of cross-referencing data for analysis



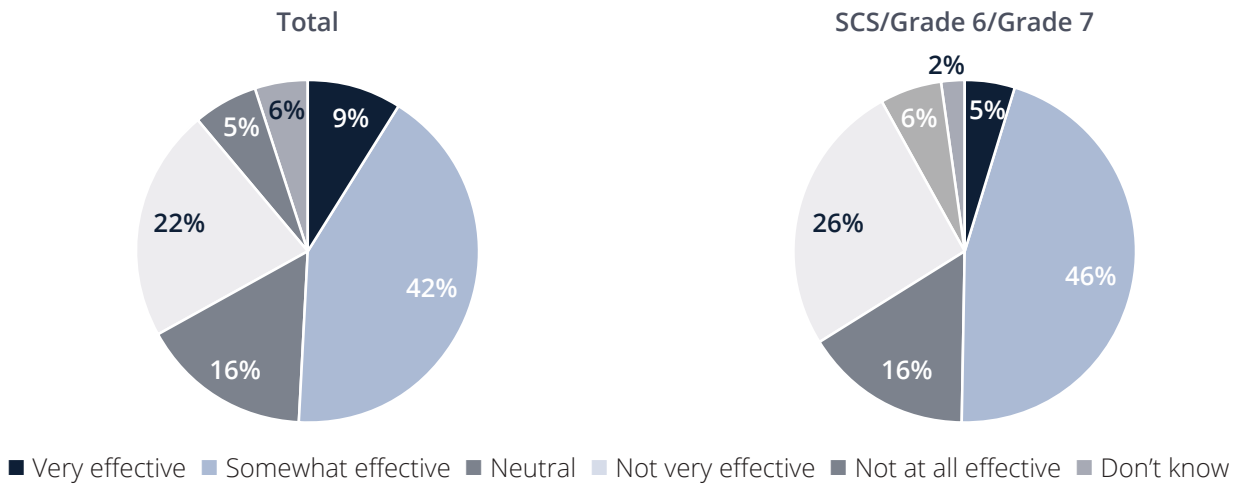
Q. Within your department/organisation, how easy is it to cross-reference information, or join up datasets for analysis?

The establishment of the 'Data Workspace' by the Department for International Trade is a proactive step towards addressing these issues. This platform facilitates seamless data sharing and collaboration within and between departments, ensuring secure storage and potentially paving the way for more efficient data handling practices.

Integrating datasets not only empowers organisations to identify patterns, generate valuable insights, optimise processes, and uncover opportunities for improvement but also holds the potential to revolutionise the quality of services, instilling a sense of optimism about the future of public services.

Furthermore, the new government's commitment to creating a National Data Library, as outlined in Sir Keir Starmer's manifesto, reflects a strategic move towards enhancing data-driven public services. This initiative aims to consolidate existing research programmes and support the artificial intelligence sector, signalling a forward-thinking approach to the modernisations of public service delivery.

Effectively using joined-up data to enhance services



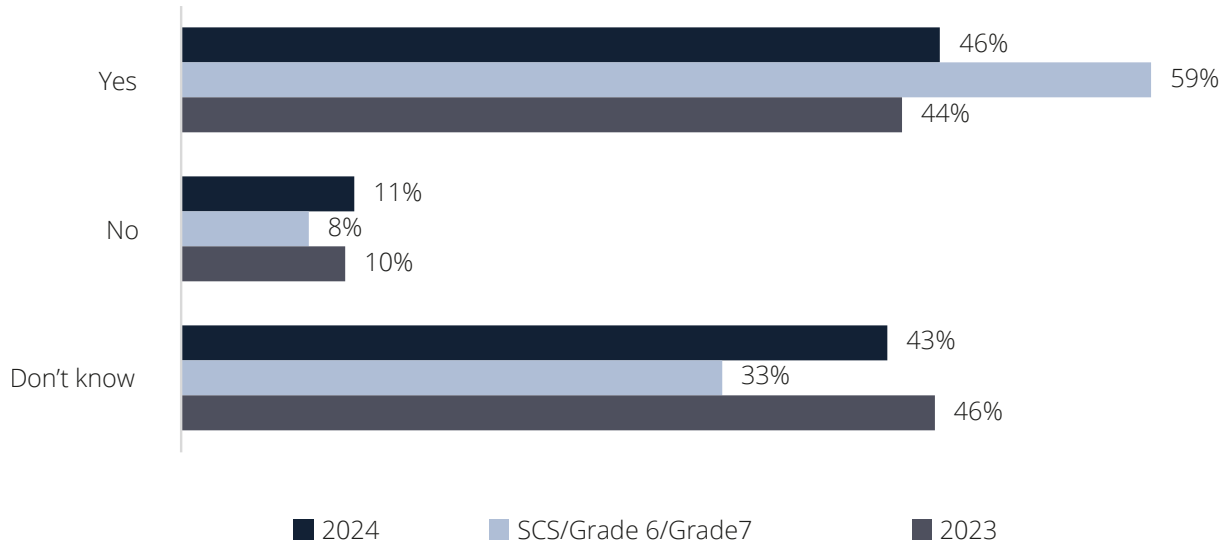
Q. How effective is your department/organisation at utilising joined-up data from various sources to improve the delivery of public services for citizens?

Despite these initiatives, only half of civil servants feel their organisations are effective in using data from various sources to improve public services, with a mere 9% rating their efforts as “very effective”. Senior civil servants share similar sentiments, highlighting a need for more robust measures to harness the full potential of integrated data.

Encouragingly, there are successful examples of data integration in practice, such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) database used by the NHS to verify eligibility for free prescriptions and by broadband companies to offer discounts to eligible citizens. This collaboration illustrates how effective data integration can streamline processes, reduce fraud and errors, and ensure timely delivery of benefits to citizens.



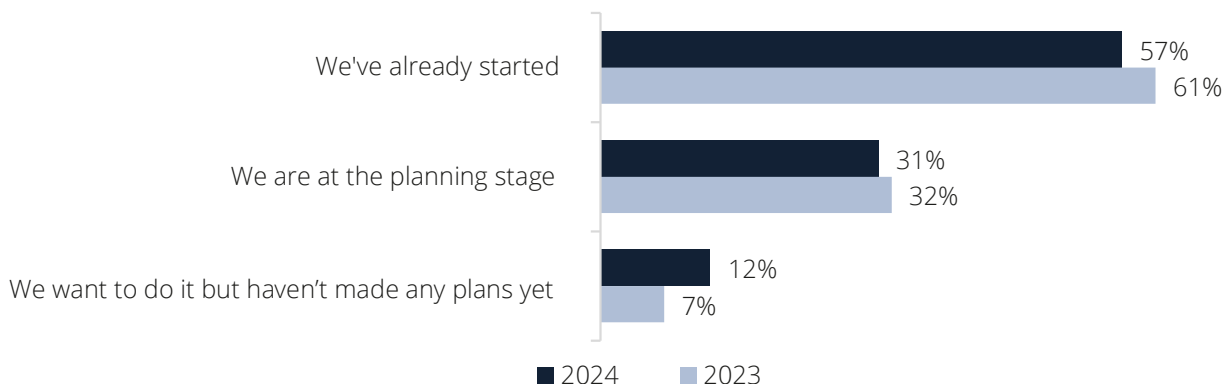
Joining datasets with other relevant departments



Q. Is your department/organisation looking at joining datasets with other relevant departments to improve processes and create seamless public service experiences for citizens?

There has been a slight increase in collaboration between departments to integrate datasets compared to last year, with 46% of civil servants reporting such efforts in 2024, up from 44% in 2023. This is even more pronounced among senior civil servants, with 59% recognising and engaging in these initiatives.

Stage of joining up the datasets



Q. How far through this process are you?

Remarkably, our research shows a significant drop in the number of departments starting data integration, falling from 61% in 2023 to just 51% in 2024. At the same time, the proportion of civil servants eager to integrate datasets without any concrete plans has almost doubled.

This shift highlights a growing awareness of the importance of data integration, coupled with a pressing need to fast-track these initiatives.

“Most of the feedback is gathered online but there are focus groups, which include public representation and they work to improve customer journeys and experience.”

- Senior Executive Officer (SEO), HMRC

“Online and digital feedback, both planned (via structured feedback and surveys) and random, both used regularly.”

- Grade 7, HMRC

“Varies methods, direct feedback contact, surveys and portals.”

- SCS, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

“We use ‘get help with this service’ button. The customer clicks on this and provides useful information. It is reviewed and escalated, as appropriate.”

- Higher Executive Officer (HEO), HMRC

“We drill down into the data to identify trends and use the data to support decision making processes.”

- Higher Executive Officer (HEO), Department for Work & Pensions

“QR codes and survey links/feedback forms provided for the public to use.”

- Grade 6, Home Office

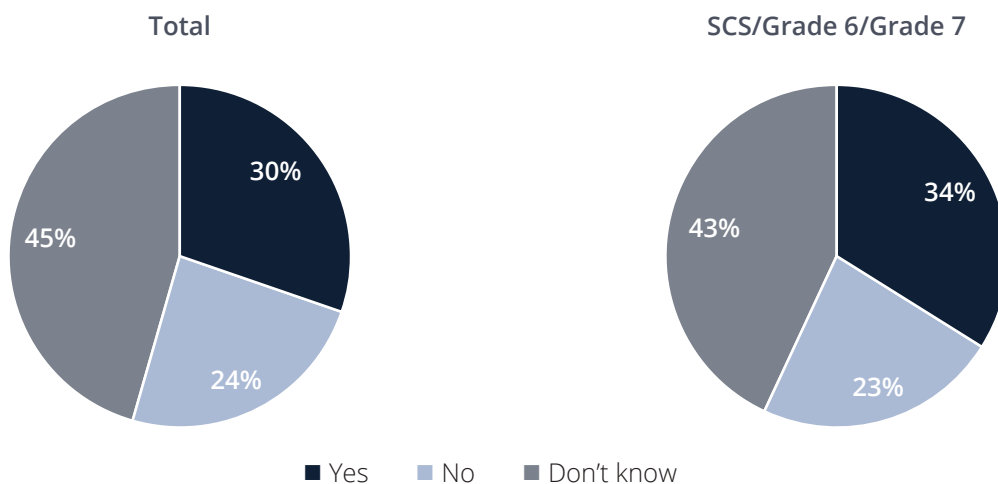
Public feedback: the missing link

Understanding citizens’ needs is essential for enhancing service delivery. Implementing feedback platforms allows departments and organisations to harness user data effectively, pinpointing needs and tailoring solutions to provide a more personalised and responsive service. However, around a third (30%) of civil servants report their department or organisation has a public feedback platform to enhance the digital service experience for citizens, with this figure rising to 34% among senior civil servants.

The absence of a user feedback platform can significantly hinder the identification and resolution of challenges that users might face while using public services. Notably, over four in ten (45%) civil servants “don’t know” if their department or organisation has such a platform, with a slightly lower percentage (43%) among senior civil servants. This lack of awareness suggests a gap in communication and implementation of feedback mechanisms across the civil service.

For those departments and organisations that do collect user feedback, the primary methods include user research, online and digital surveys, as well as face-to-face studies and focus groups. Some also have dedicated portals or websites to gather feedback. By analysing data from these interactions, they can make informed decisions to improve the overall customer experience.

Availability of Public feedback platform



Q. Does your department/organisation have a platform for public feedback to help in developing/improving the digital service experience for citizens?

While the implementation of feedback platforms is a positive step towards understanding and meeting citizens' needs, there is a clear need for broader adoption and better communication within departments to maximise their potential. By leveraging user feedback more effectively, the government can enhance service delivery and ensure that public services are more attuned to the needs of the citizens they serve.



Challenges to delivering seamless, integrated citizen experience

Mission Four: Efficient, Secure, and Sustainable Technology – a key component of the digital and data roadmap – is dedicated to tackling the challenge of outdated and high-risk legacy IT systems. In response to this, government has introduced a legacy IT framework, which is currently being implemented by 26 organisations. This initiative is designed to address ‘red-rated’ legacy systems, which pose significant risks to efficiency and security.

A notable success story is the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), which has recently deployed ‘Hera’, a new finance and workforce system. Hera has effectively replaced several outdated IT systems, consolidating over 20,000 users onto a single, more secure platform. This transition has markedly enhanced data-driven decision-making and improved service delivery.

Additionally, Mission Two of the digital and data roadmap highlights the rollout of GOV.UK One Login, which aims to simplify and modernise access to government services. Over the past year, 23 central government services have integrated with this platform, allowing over 2.5 million citizens to access public services more seamlessly through a single app.

Despite these initiatives, our research indicates that challenges remain. A growing proportion of civil servants—58% in 2024 compared to 46% in 2023—now identify ‘Legacy IT systems and lack of IT modernisation’ as the foremost barrier to delivering a seamless, integrated citizen experience. Furthermore, ‘Lack of data sharing and collaboration within and between departments’ remains a significant barrier, with 45% of respondents citing it as a key issue in 2024, up from 36% the previous year.

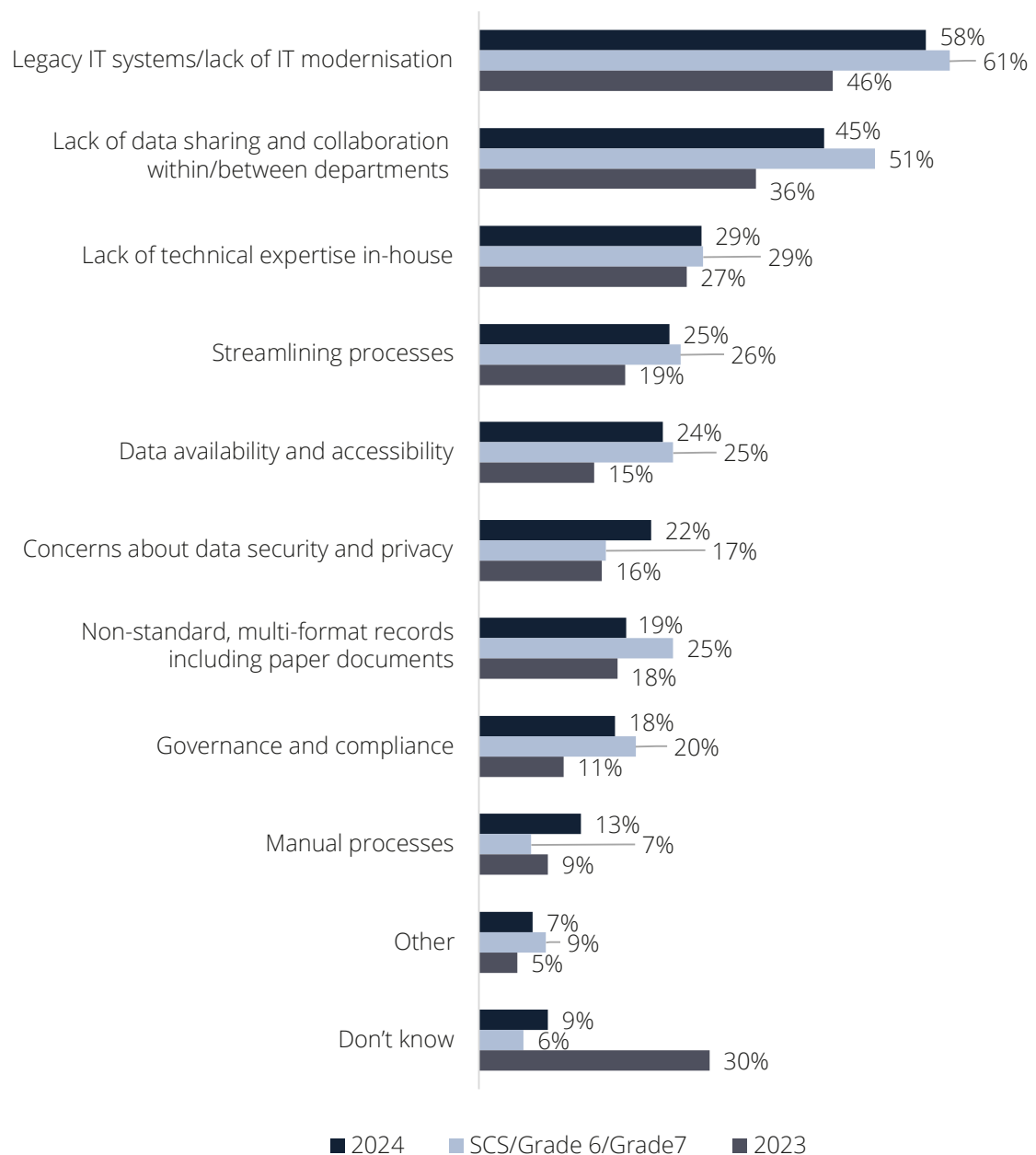
These insights underscore the need for continued focus on modernising IT infrastructure and fostering interdepartmental collaboration to enhance the effectiveness of public services.

To address these issues, there has been a focus on upskilling civil servants with the necessary digital and data skills, as defined in ‘Mission Five’ of the digital and data roadmap. According to the latest update from the CDDO, approximately 600 civil servants have been trained in digital and data essentials, and the Digital and Data profession has expanded by 19%.

Despite this progress, ‘Lack of technical expertise in-house’ continues to be a significant barrier to service delivery, with 29% of civil servants citing this issue in 2024, a slight increase from 27% in 2023. Other notable barriers include ‘Streamlining processes’, which has risen to 25% from 19% in the previous research, and ‘Data availability and accessibility’, which has increased to 24% compared to 15% in 2023.

For senior civil servants, ‘Legacy IT systems and lack of IT modernisation’ is the most pressing concern, reported by 61% of them. This is followed by ‘Lack of data sharing and collaboration within and between departments’ at 51%, and ‘Non-standard, multi-format data’, which has climbed to 25% and now ranks fifth in terms of challenges.

Challenges in providing a seamless, integrated citizen experience



Q. What are your department/organisation's biggest challenges related to providing a seamless, integrated citizen experience? Please select TOP THREE.

Our findings also reveal a significant shift in awareness among civil servants. There has been a notable decrease in those unsure, with the proportion of 'Don't know' responses dropping dramatically from 30% in 2023 to just 9% in 2024. This suggests a growing recognition of the barriers to effective service delivery, underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to address these challenges and enhance the digital capabilities of the public sector.

Chapter 2: From strategy to implementation: Overcoming barriers to effective AI in government

The transformative impact of AI in delivering better public services is widely recognised in government. Committed to realising AI's potential, government has developed an AI framework to help officials understand the technology, to guide anyone building AI solutions, and lay out what must be taken into account to use AI safely and responsibly.

In this section, we explore civil servants' understanding of AI-driven services, as well as their implementation plans, and the challenges departments and organisations face in deploying AI initiatives effectively.

AI uses in government

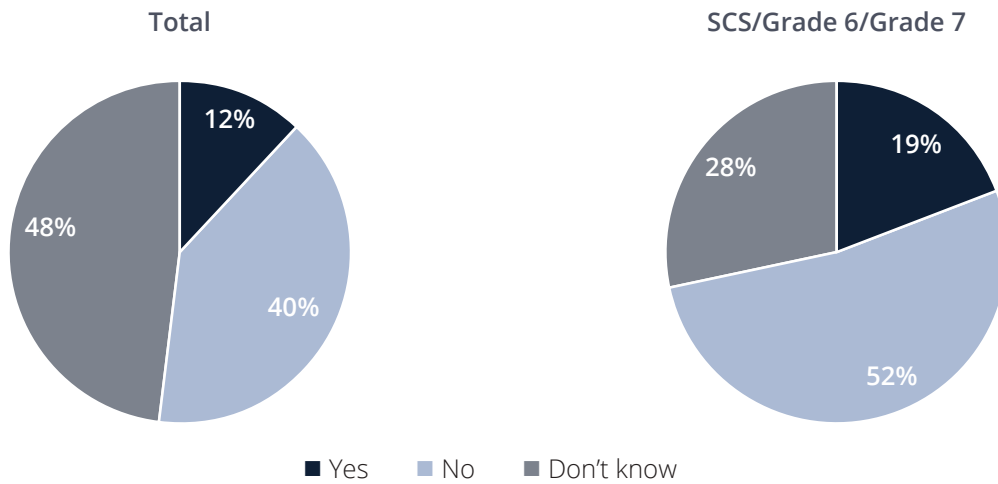
A well-defined AI strategy is pivotal for organisations aiming to streamline operations, boost productivity, and enhance the citizen experience with public services. However, our research reveals a significant gap in this area: 40% of civil servants report that their departments or organisations lack a clear AI strategy, and this figure rises to 52% among senior civil servants.

Navigating the complexities of AI-driven solutions involves addressing significant legal, ethical, and regulatory challenges. A comprehensive AI strategy is essential to overcome these issues, ensuring that AI initiatives are managed effectively. Without such a strategy, organisations risk missing out on AI's transformative potential, which is increasingly vital for advancing public service delivery.

As the government's core digital units transition to the DSIT under the leadership of Feryal Clark, the new Minister for AI and Digital Government, there is an opportunity to tackle these challenges head on. Clark will oversee critical areas including cybersecurity, digital public services, and digital identity policy, with a mandate to develop a cohesive digital and AI strategy.

In the meantime, our findings reveal a pressing concern: nearly half (48%) of civil servants are uncertain whether their department or organisation has a well-defined AI strategy. This uncertainty is even more pronounced among senior civil servants, with 28% remaining unclear about the existence of such a strategy in their organisations. This situation underscores an urgent need for improved communication and strategic development concerning AI at all levels of the civil service.

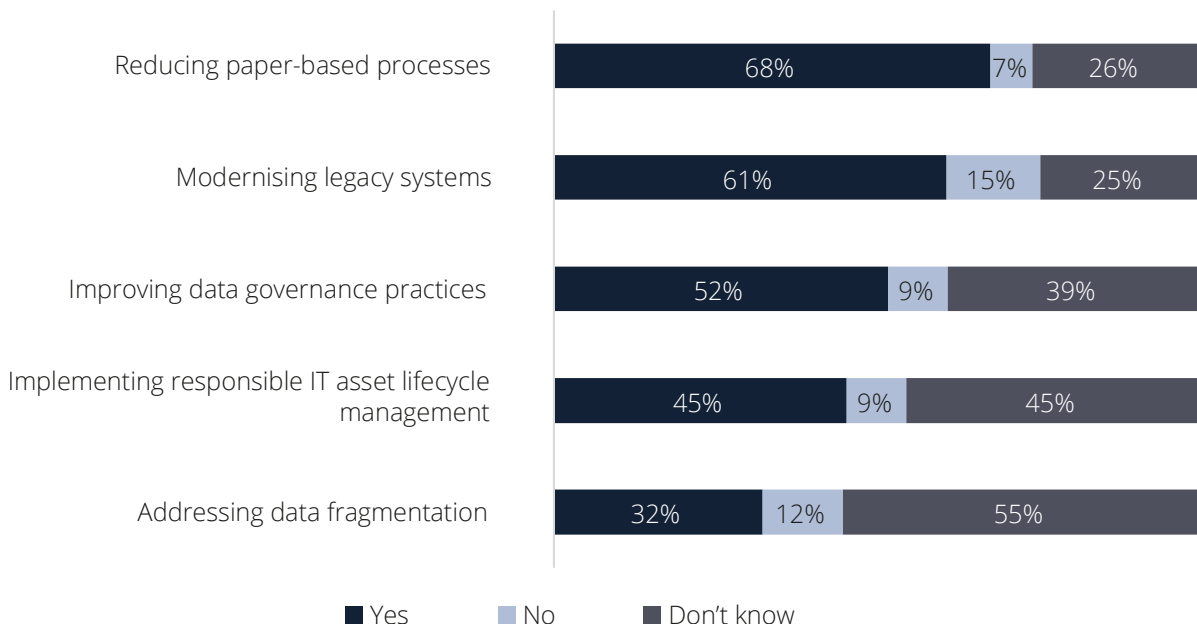
Availability of AI strategy



Q. Does your department/organisation have a well-defined strategy for utilising AI?

Addressing this awareness gap is essential to ensure that AI initiatives are not only strategically planned but also effectively implemented. Such steps are crucial for enhancing public service outcomes and leveraging emerging technologies to their fullest potential.

Availability of digital transformation strategy

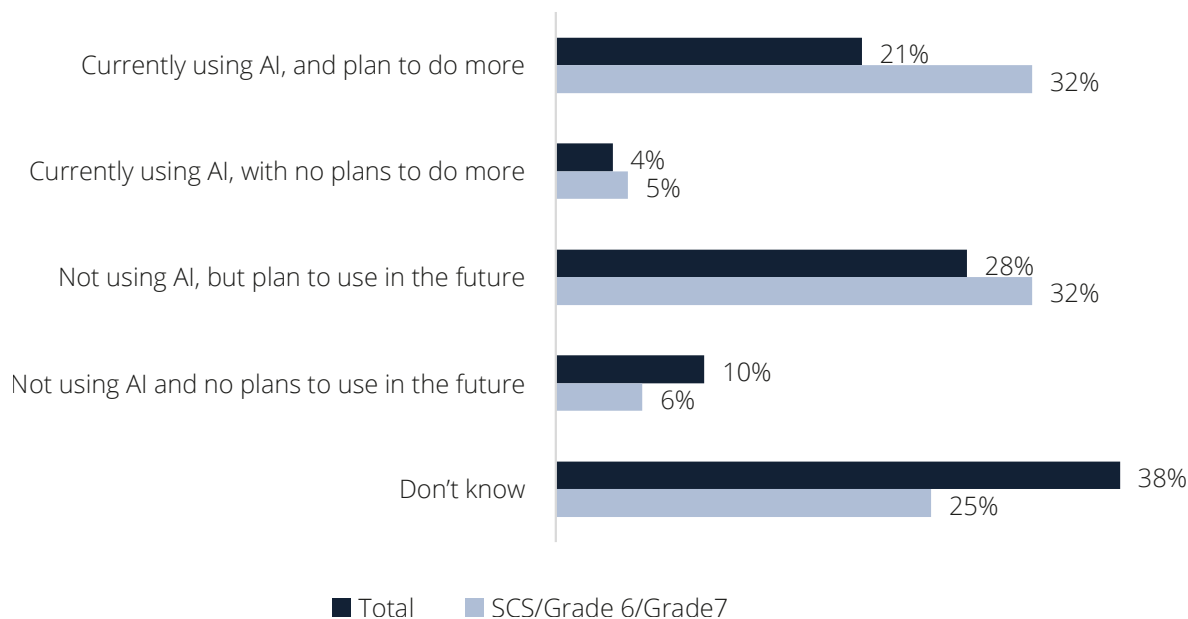


Q. Does your department/organisation have a strategy for any of the following?

The path to effective implementation

Moreover, our findings show a clear distinction in AI engagement between civil servants. While 21% of respondents report their departments are actively using AI and plan to expand its use, this figure jumps to 32% among senior civil servants, indicating their higher level of involvement and strategic foresight in AI initiatives.

AI implementation plans



Q. Which of the following best describes your department/organisation's use of AI-driven initiatives/ services for delivering public services?

Conversely, 25% of civil servants indicate their departments are not yet using AI but plan to in the future, with this number also rising to 32% among senior officials. This suggests that while AI adoption is currently limited, there is a notable intent and planning for future integration, particularly among senior officials who are more proactive in both current and forthcoming AI strategies. This gap highlights a disparity in AI adoption and planning across different levels of the civil service, reflecting a greater commitment to harnessing AI's potential among senior leaders.

The benefits of implementing AI initiatives are substantial, ranging from increased productivity and efficiency to cost reduction through automation, enhanced decision-making, and improved customer experience. Furthermore, AI can aid organisations in identifying patterns and mitigating potential risks. It is therefore imperative for organisations to accelerate their AI implementation plans rather than delaying them.

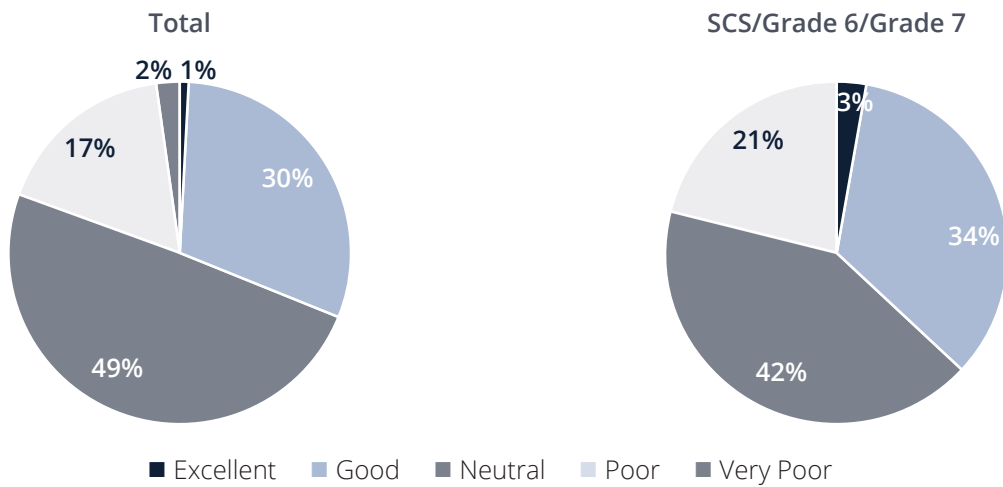
AI use in government is on the rise, with a majority of applications centred around fraud detection and immigration decision-making. Almost half of the UK’s local councils are utilising AI to oversee and prioritise housing benefit. In the criminal justice sector, prison officers are applying algorithms to assess the risk levels of newly convicted inmates, while several police forces are either deploying AI for risk evaluation or testing AI-powered facial recognition systems. Recently, DWP revealed plans to partner with suppliers to explore the ‘unprecedented opportunities and challenges’ presented by generative AI.

A strategic approach to AI is not just beneficial but essential. Organisations that embrace AI with a clear, well-communicated strategy stand to gain significantly in terms of operational efficiency and public service quality.

Progress, challenges, and the path to effective implementation

Our survey of AI-driven services within the civil service reveals a mixed picture. Among civil servants whose departments are actively using AI, 30% rate the services as ‘good’ for user experience, though only 1% consider them ‘excellent’.

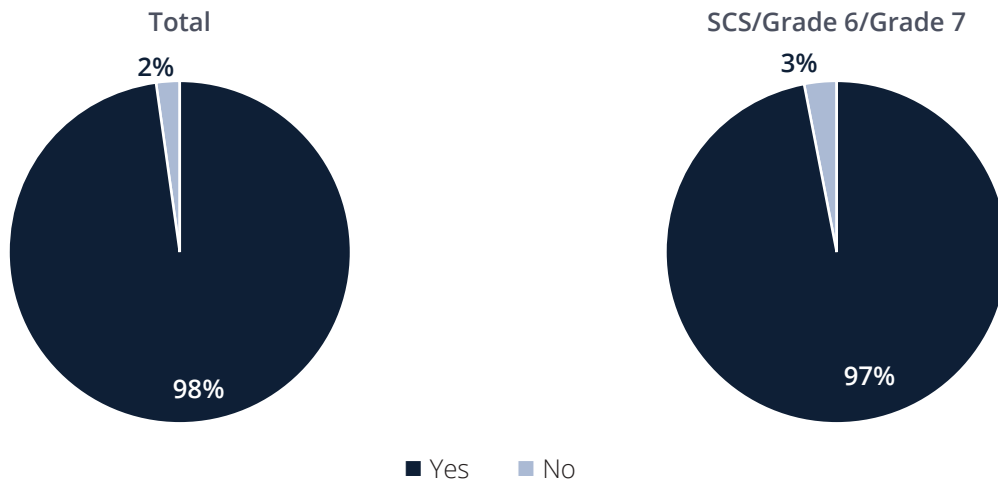
Quality of AI services in terms of user experience



Q. How do you rate the quality of your department/organisation’s services using AI in terms of the user experience?

The sentiment improves slightly among senior civil servants, with 34% rating the services as ‘good’ and 3% as ‘excellent’. Despite these positive ratings, a striking 98% of civil servants—and 97% of senior officials—recognise significant room for improvement in the citizen experience of AI services.

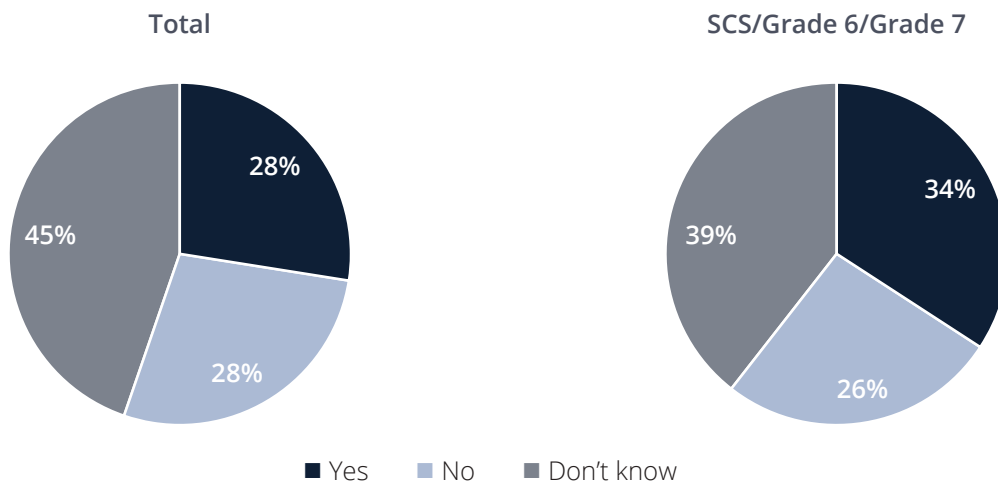
Scope for improving AI services



Q. Do you feel there is room to improve the AI public service experience provided by your department/organisation?

This widespread recognition of AI's potential benefits, such as increased efficiency and enhanced service delivery, contrasts with the limited extent of current AI adoption. Over a quarter (28%) of civil servants feel their organisations have seen measurable success with AI, rising to 34% among senior officials. However, 45% of civil servants remain uncertain about their departments' AI successes, with senior officials slightly less uncertain at 39%. This uncertainty underscores a notable awareness gap regarding the effectiveness of AI initiatives.

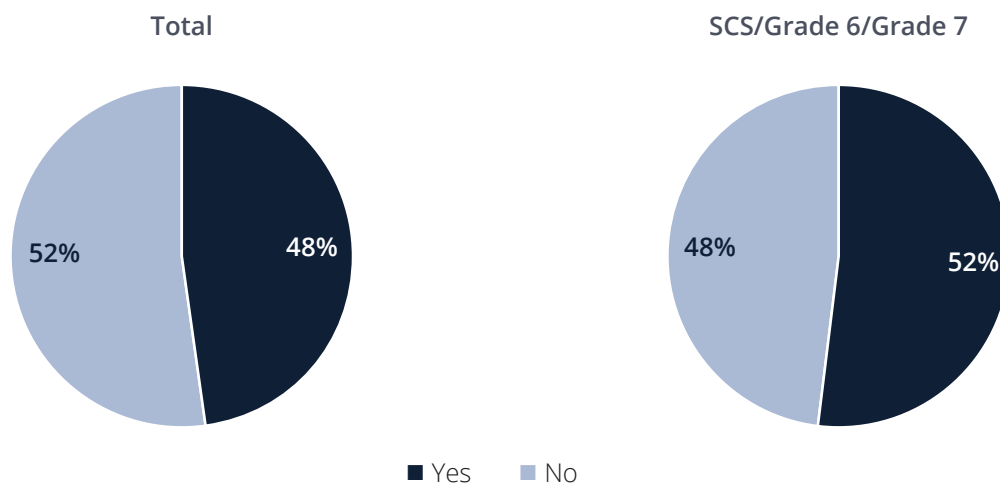
Measurable success of AI driven services



Q. Have you had any quantifiable successes to date with AI initiatives?

Successful AI implementations, such as automating tasks like summarising emails and meetings, demonstrate significant gains in efficiency and resource management. Despite the UK government's ambitious 'National AI Strategy' to establish the country as a global AI leader, 40% of civil servants report their departments lack a clear AI strategy. Aligning with these strategic frameworks is essential to fully harness AI's potential and enhance service delivery.

Measuring the Success of Implemented Digital Transformation Initiatives

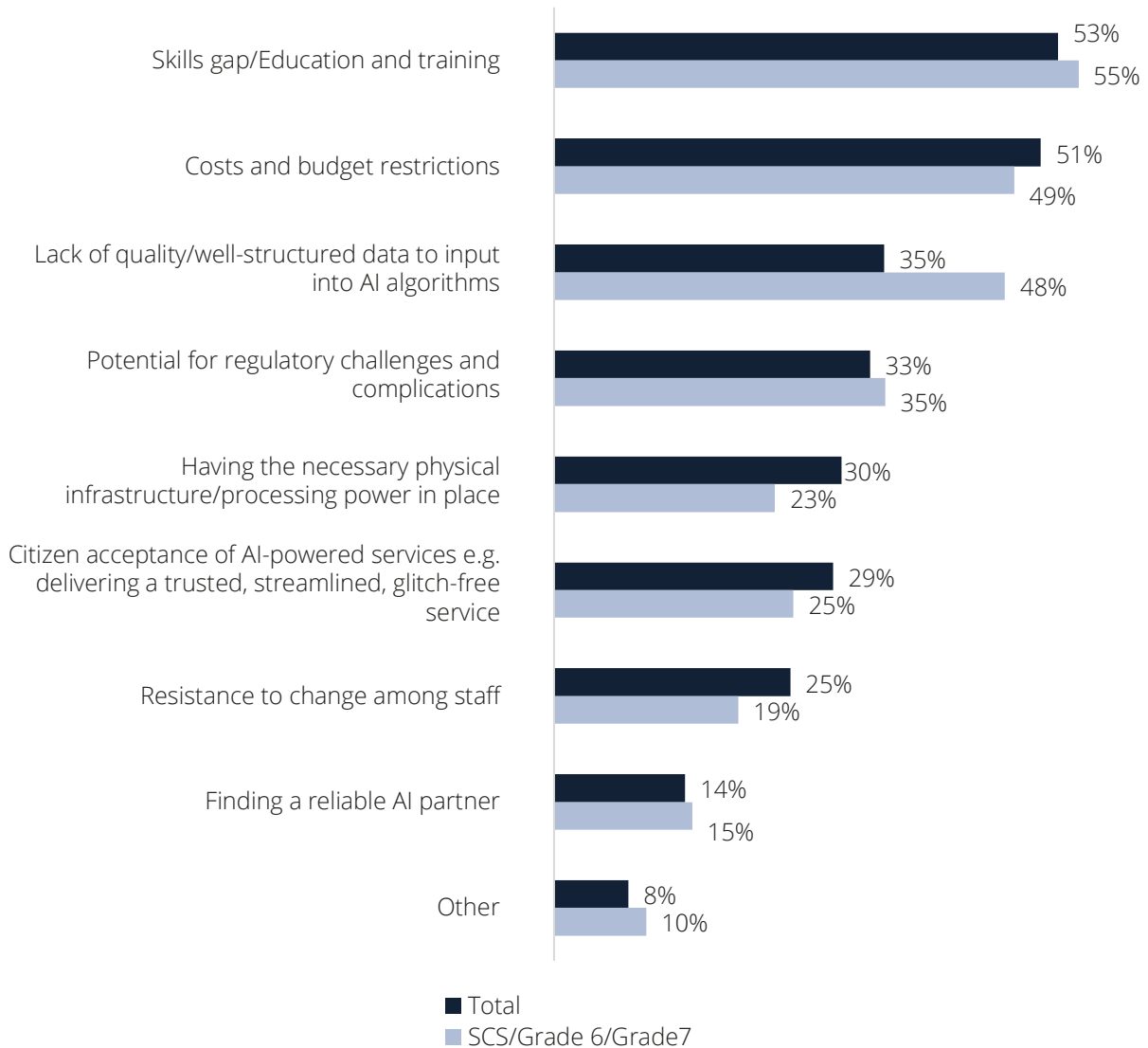


Q. Can your department/organisation effectively measure the success of the digital transformation initiatives implemented?

A major challenge in implementing AI across government departments, identified by 53% of civil servants, is the 'Skills Gap/Education and Training'. This issue is even more pronounced among senior civil servants, 55% of whom consider it a significant barrier. The CDDO, DSIT, and HM Treasury are developing a comprehensive AI adoption strategy focused on equipping civil servants with the necessary skills, knowledge, and tools for effective AI deployment.



Challenges to effectively implementing AI initiatives



Q. What do you think are the key challenges to effectively implementing AI initiatives within your department/organisation? Please select UP TO THREE

‘Costs and Budget Restrictions’ also pose a significant challenge, affecting 51% of civil servants, though this figure is slightly lower at 49% among senior officials. In response, the UK government has allocated funding in the Spring Budget 2024 to alleviate these financial constraints and support AI initiatives.

Moreover, 45% of civil servants struggle with integrating information or datasets due to inconsistent data quality, and 35% highlight ‘Lack of Quality/Well-Structured Data for AI Algorithms’ as a major obstacle. This issue is more severe among senior civil servants, 48% of whom view it as a critical issue.

These findings highlight the urgent need to improve data quality and standardisation to enable successful AI integration throughout government departments.

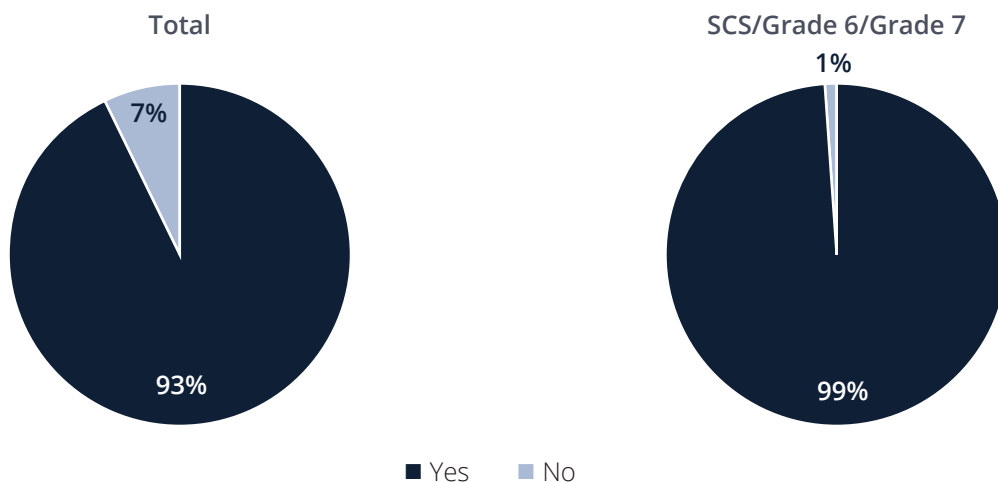
Chapter 3: Shaping the Future: Addressing Challenges and Advancing Digital Transformation in Government

As the UK government continues to navigate its digital transformation journey, our research offers a comprehensive look into the strategies and outcomes of various initiatives leading up to July's general election. We delve into the effectiveness and impact of these digital efforts and provide a detailed examination of digital asset management within the civil service.

Strategies and progress

Digital transformation is widely acknowledged as essential for modernising government operations. An impressive 93% of civil servants agree that it is critical for their departments or organisations, with this view even more pronounced among senior civil servants at 99%. This broad consensus underscores the transformative role digital technologies have played, particularly in overcoming challenges such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Is digital transformation essential?



Q. Do you believe that digital transformation is essential/necessary for your department/organisation?

Despite this widespread recognition, a minority still views digital transformation as non-essential, with 7% of civil servants and just 1% of senior civil servants holding this perspective. This divergence suggests that some areas may be lagging in their appreciation of digital transformation's benefits or are experiencing resistance to change.

Key challenges identified include 'Non-standard, multi-format records' (25%), which senior civil servants cite as a significant barrier to a seamless citizen experience. Yet, 68% of civil servants report having strategies in place to reduce paper-based processes, demonstrating proactive efforts to overcome this obstacle.

Another major challenge is 'Legacy IT systems and lack of IT modernisation,' reported by 51% of respondents. However, 61% say their departments are actively working to modernise these systems.

Notably, there is a pronounced gap in responsible IT asset lifecycle management, with only 45% of civil servants confirming the presence of such strategies and a similar percentage unsure. This gap highlights the need for improved focus on managing digital assets to ensure efficiency and compliance.

Perceived vs. real benefits of digital transformation

The advantages of digital transformation are widely recognised. Over 80% of civil servants highlight 'Improved efficiency and productivity' as a significant benefit, which increases to 88% among senior civil servants. This aligns with the observed progress in 'Modernising legacy systems,' reported by 70% of respondents.

Other noted benefits include 'Improved data for better decision-making' (58%) and 'Better use of data in analysis' (54%), with higher percentages among senior civil servants. However, while 30% of civil servants report the existence of public feedback platforms to enhance citizen service experiences, the actual outcomes reveal a more nuanced picture. The top reported outcomes are 'Improved efficiency and productivity' (52%) and 'Enhanced customer experience' (39%). Yet, 'Better decision-making' (33%) has not met the high expectations set by perceived benefits.

“Mailboxes are now being monitored and condensed so customers can get quick responses and more specific queries can be directed quickly to subject matter experts when required.”

- Grade 7, HMRC

“Reducing telephony intake and automation of work items.”

- Administration, Department for Work & Pensions

“Summarising emails and meetings which will be time saving.”

- Higher Executive Officer (HEO), Department for Transport

“Created a fraud identification system with an ai interface to produce bespoke output.”

- Grade 7, Cabinet Office

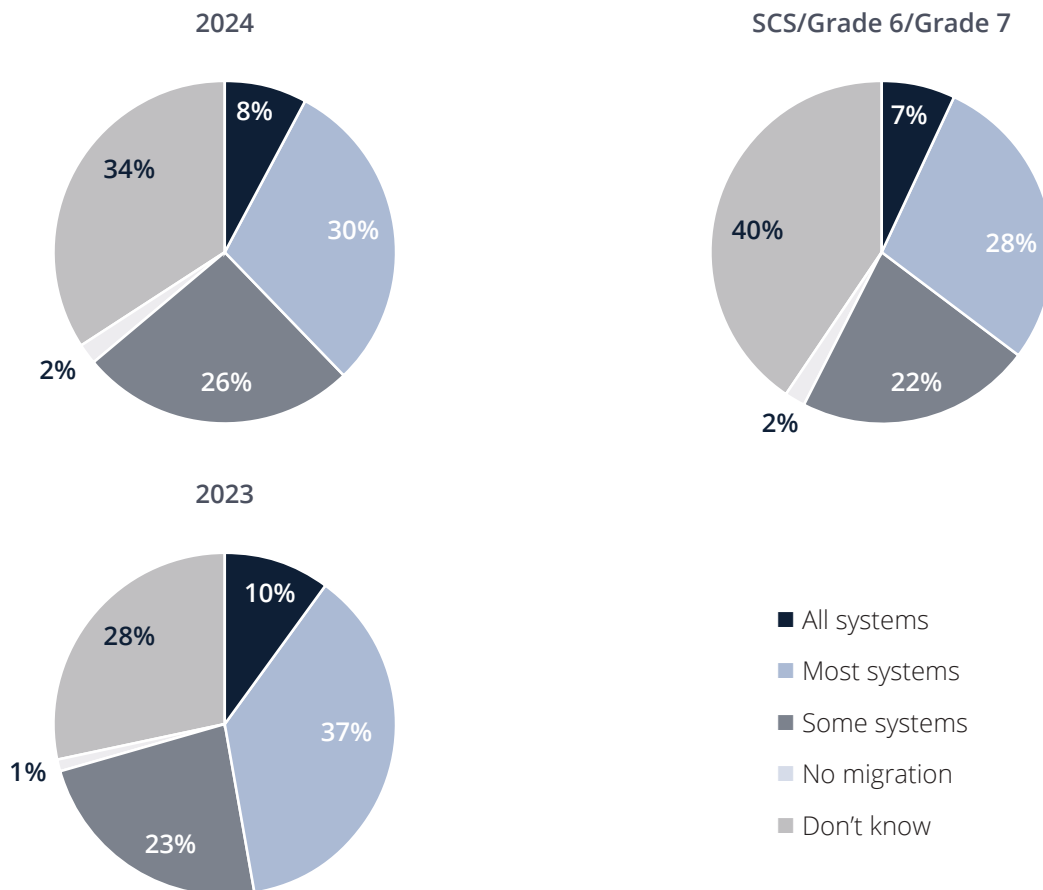
“Automated HR functions.”

- Grade 6, Scottish Government

Modernisation and migration to cloud-based services

The journey towards modernisation shows progress, with 76% of civil servants reporting partial modernisation of their departments or organisations, and 83% among senior civil servants. However, only 9% report complete modernisation of legacy systems, down from 13% in 2023, indicating a need for accelerated efforts.

Migration to cloud services



Q. Approximately how many of your department/organisation's IT systems have migrated to the cloud from on-premises?

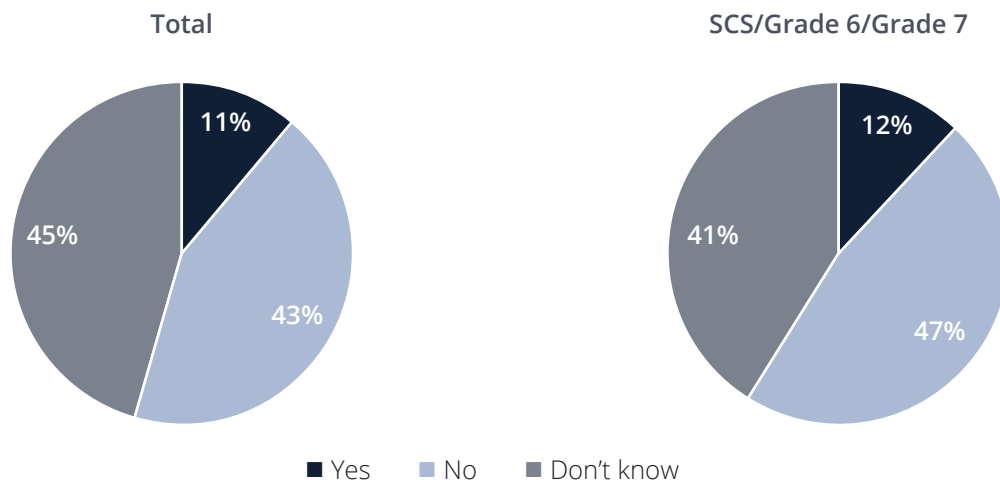
Cloud migration remains a challenge, with only 8% of civil servants and 7% of senior civil servants reporting full migration of systems to the cloud, a drop from 10% the previous year. Approximately 30% report that most systems have been migrated, down from 37% in 2023. This slowdown may be attributed to system incompatibility, lack of technical expertise, and budget constraints.



Managing the lifecycle of digital assets

Managing the lifecycle of digital assets is a critical concern. Only 11% of civil servants and 12% of senior civil servants are aware of their department's practices for handling end-of-life digital assets, with nearly half (45%) uncertain about these practices. This lack of clarity highlights the need for better awareness and adherence to IT asset management policies to mitigate cybersecurity risks and manage maintenance costs effectively.

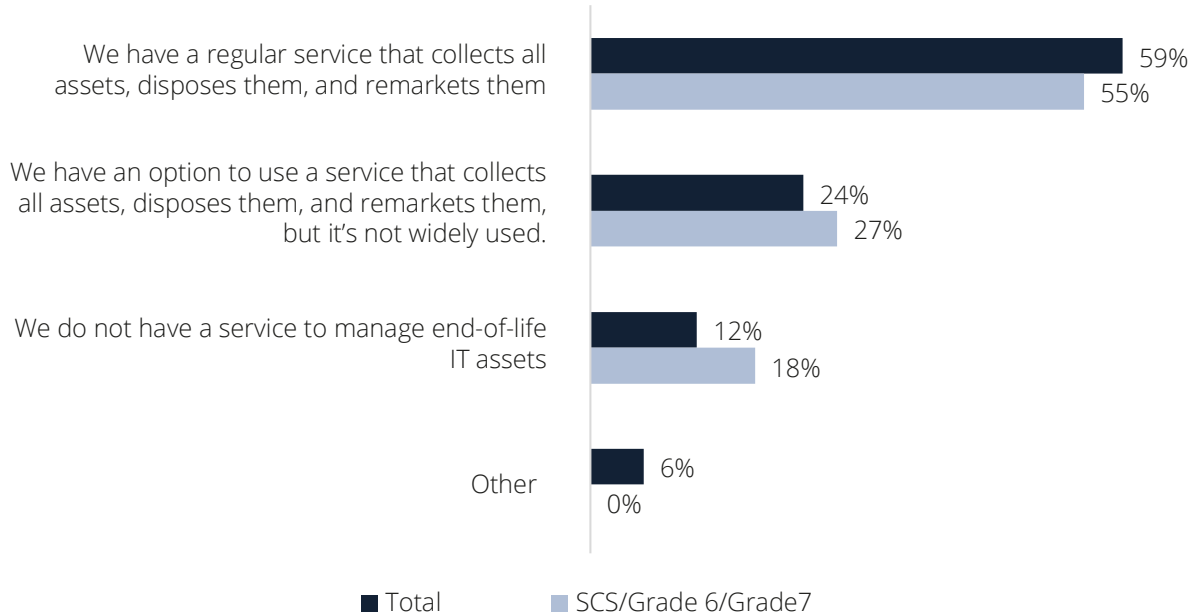
Disposal of end-of-life IT assets



Q. Now turning to end-of-life IT assets, do you know what happens with your department/organisation's end-of-life assets?

Currently, only 45% report having a strategy for responsible IT asset management, with an equal percentage unsure. Among those who are aware of their department's asset management practices, 59% use regular services for asset collection, disposal, and remarketing, although this is slightly lower among senior civil servants (55%).

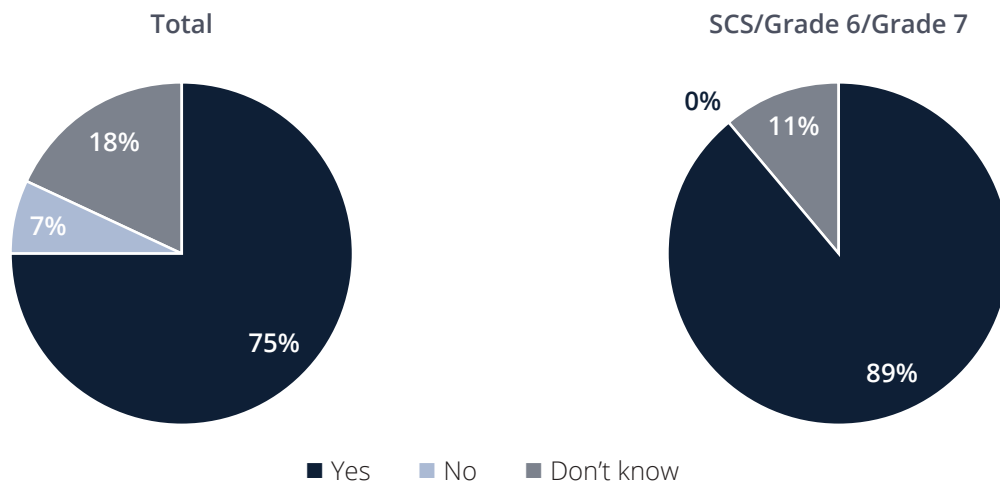
Managing end-of-life assets



Q. Which of the following relates to your department/organisation's management of end-of-life assets?

The journey towards comprehensive digital transformation within the civil service is marked by significant achievements and ongoing challenges. While there has been notable progress in modernising legacy systems and reducing paper-based processes, challenges persist in addressing data fragmentation, managing IT asset lifecycles, and fully leveraging AI's potential.

Compliance to policies, government principles or standards when using ALM service



Q. Does your department/organisation follow any policies, government principles or standards when using a service that collects, disposes of, or remarkets IT assets?

Continued focus on these areas, combined with improved awareness and strategic planning, will be crucial for achieving a fully integrated and efficient digital government, ultimately enhancing service delivery to citizens.

The digital transformation of public services is crucial for government departments and organisations aiming to improve efficiency, productivity, and citizen satisfaction. Switching to digital data storage and incorporating advanced technologies such as AI and cloud-based solutions holds the promise of significant enhancements in public service delivery.

But this journey is riddled with challenges which the new government is committed to tackled head-on, and by unifying digital, data and AI expertise under the roof of one dedicated department has sent a strong signal of a new direction. Our research finds civil servants positive about the progress to date, but still challenged by stubborn barriers.

Survey insights reveal a significant portion of civil servants are engaging with AI initiatives, recognising its potential to revolutionise public services. Senior civil servants, in particular, exhibit a stronger inclination towards AI adoption, indicative of a top-down drive for innovation.

The benefits of AI are broadly recognised and diverse: from automating routine tasks and improving decision-making to identifying patterns and mitigating risks, AI stands as a cornerstone for modern public service. The Home Office's Automation Centre serves as a prime example of AI's impact, automating 45 processes and significantly reducing operational costs while enhancing service efficiency. Such initiatives underscore the necessity for a strategic, well-communicated AI implementation plan to maximise benefits across all levels of government.

Despite the clear advantages, only a minority of departments have fully migrated to cloud-based systems. This slow pace hampers the realisation of the scalability, flexibility, and security benefits that cloud solutions offer. Accelerating this migration is critical for achieving a comprehensive digital transformation.

Effective data governance remains a top priority. Ensuring high-quality, well-structured data is crucial for the successful implementation of AI and other digital transformation initiatives. Strengthening data governance practices will foster a culture of transparency and innovation, crucial for sustainable progress.

The path to a digitally transformed public service landscape is clear but demands concerted efforts in AI adoption, cloud migration, and robust data governance. By addressing these challenges head-on, government organisations will be in a better position to unlock the full potential of digital technologies, delivering superior services to citizens and setting a benchmark for public service excellence in the digital age.

Looking ahead

From our research, we identified five key areas for the for the new government to prioritise as they set out their digital strategy. These areas remain largely unchanged from our previous research. However, the need for addressing the skills gap is now more urgent than ever before.

1 Legacy IT Systems as a Major Barrier

Finding: A significant barrier to delivering seamless and integrated citizen experiences is outdated and high-risk legacy IT systems. The percentage of civil servants identifying this as a major issue increased from 46% in 2023 to 58% in 2024.

Consideration: Prioritise the modernization of IT infrastructure. Implement the legacy IT framework rigorously and consider expanding support to more organizations. Focus on identifying and replacing critical 'red-rated' systems that pose the highest risks to efficiency and security. Address the skills gap by providing specialized training for civil servants in managing and transitioning from legacy systems to modern platforms.

2 Lack of Data Sharing and Collaboration

Finding: Lack of data sharing and collaboration within and between departments is a persistent issue, cited by 45% of respondents in 2024, up from 36% in 2023.

Consideration: Foster a culture of data sharing by establishing clear guidelines and incentives for interdepartmental collaboration. Invest in technologies and platforms that facilitate seamless data integration and ensure compliance with data protection regulations to build trust among departments. Equip civil servants with data management and integration skills through targeted training programs to enhance their ability to share and collaborate effectively.

3 Digital Processing and Data Storage Adoption

Finding: A significant shift towards digital processing and data storage is observed, with 70% of civil servants overall and 71% of senior civil servants reporting their departments process data predominantly or entirely digitally.

Consideration: Continue to drive the transition towards full digital adoption. Address the challenges faced by departments maintaining hybrid processes by providing targeted support and resources to facilitate complete digital transformation. Ensure robust cybersecurity measures are in place to protect digital data. Bridge the skills gap by offering training in digital data processing and cybersecurity to ensure civil servants can effectively manage and protect digital information.

4 Challenges in AI Implementation

Finding: Significant barriers to effective AI implementation include a skills gap, with 53% of civil servants and 55% of senior officials identifying it as a major issue, and costs and budget restrictions affecting 51% of civil servants.

Consideration: Develop comprehensive training programs to equip civil servants with the necessary AI skills. Allocate sufficient funding and resources to support AI initiatives. Establish clear AI strategies and frameworks to guide departments in deploying AI solutions effectively and responsibly. Focus on upskilling civil servants to bridge the AI knowledge gap, ensuring they are prepared to implement and manage AI technologies.

5 Importance of Public Feedback Platforms

Finding: Only 30% of civil servants report that their department has a public feedback platform, with 45% being unaware if such a platform exists within their department.

Consideration: Implement and promote the use of public feedback platforms across all departments. Ensure that civil servants are aware of these platforms and trained to utilize them effectively. Regularly analyse feedback to identify areas for improvement and tailor services to better meet citizen needs. Address the skills gap by providing training in customer service and feedback analysis, enabling civil servants to interpret and act on public feedback effectively.

Addressing the skills gap is a major challenge going forward, and crucial to ensure that civil servants are better prepared and equipped to handle the challenges identified in the report.



Survey Profile

Any involvement in decision making (areas)	%
Procurement	34%
Service delivery	73%
Project management	65%
Finance	32%
Strategy/Policy	56%
Operations	66%
Analysis/Analytics	60%
Programmes/Transformation	52%
Information security/ DDAT	40%
Any Involvement in Decision Making	95%

Civil service grades of respondents	%
SCS	2%
Grade 6	9%
Grade 7	19%
Fast Stream	1%
Senior Executive Officer (SEO)	18%
Higher Executive Officer (HEO)	21%
Executive Officer (EO)	16%
Administration	10%
Other	4%

Top 5 departments worked for	%
Department for Work & Pensions	24%
HMRC	15%
Ministry of Defence	10%
Home Office	9%
Ministry of Justice	8%
Other	10%



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