

Special Feature:

The United Nations E-Government Survey 2020

September 2020

Developed by the Research Committee



1. Introduction

The United Nations recently released the [2020 E-Government Survey](#), a study used to assess E-Government development in countries worldwide.

What is the UN E-Government Survey?

- ❖ *The UN E-Government Survey was first published in 2001. Each report is prepared over a 2-year period. The methodology focuses on 19 key metrics, 13 of which deal with strategic, legal and institutional frameworks.*
- ❖ *The Survey measures e-government performance of UN Countries relative to one another. It takes an in-depth look at global, regional and local level trends, including a focus on thematic areas such as e-participation, data governance and capacities for digital transformation.*
- ❖ *“The UN E-Government Survey has become an indispensable “ranking, mapping and measuring” tool for countries to learn from each other, identify areas of strength and challenges in e-government and shape their policies and strategies in this area.”¹*



Why is this report important?

The 2020 UN e-Government Survey merits a highlight for the following reasons:

- The Survey is extremely topical (published on July 10, 2020).
- There is growing shift toward digital government worldwide.
- Governments worldwide are increasingly offering online services, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is covered in this executive report?

This executive report is a concise snapshot of the [2020 E-Government Survey](#). It includes an **introduction**, an analysis of the **global trends**, and a synopsis of some areas including **Canada’s comparative e-government performance, data-centric government and capacity, opportunities for digital government transformation, issues for the attention of policy makers/service delivery/CIOs and E-Government during the COVID-19 pandemic.**

1. [“E-Government Survey 2020”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

2. Global trends

Recent trends in e-government development are based on values reflected in the E-Government Development Index (EGDI), an index with three components: the Online Services Index (OSI), the Telecommunications Infrastructure Index (TII) and the Human Capacity Index (HCI). The composite value of each index is normalized to fall within the range of 0 to 1, and the EGDI is derived from the average of the three component indices.¹



Denmark has the highest e-government development for the second consecutive Survey. Republic of Korea, Estonia, Finland and Australia are also in the top five. Sweden, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, United States and Netherlands round out the top ten countries in e-government development.



EGDI levels appear to be positively correlated with national income levels. Financial resources are only one critical factor, as often, countries that have committed to improving online services provision can overcome constraints from inadequate levels of infrastructure and human capital development.



The number of countries offering at least one online transactional service increased from 140 in 2018 to 162 in 2020. The online services most offered include registering a new business, applying for a business license, requesting a birth, death or marriage certificate, and paying for utilities.



Close to 90 per cent of Member States have advanced e-government portals featuring a one stop-shop, social networking opportunities, and an interactive design with feedback options.



Governments are increasingly sharing public information and providing online services through emails, SMS/RSS feed updates, mobile apps and downloadable forms. The number of countries offering updates via SMS or mobile apps has increased by an average of 38 per cent since 2018.

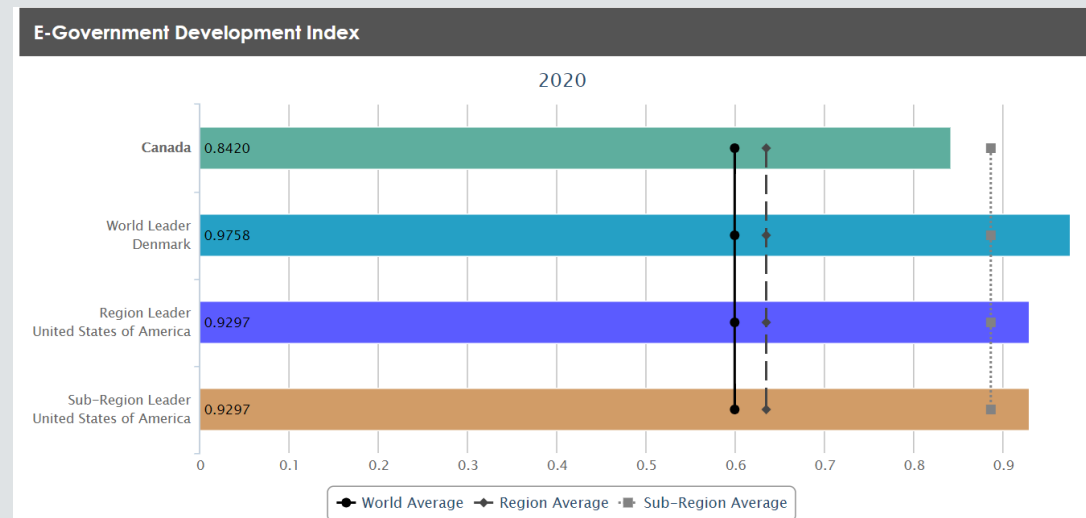
1. [“E-Government Survey 2020”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

3. Canada's comparative e-Government performance

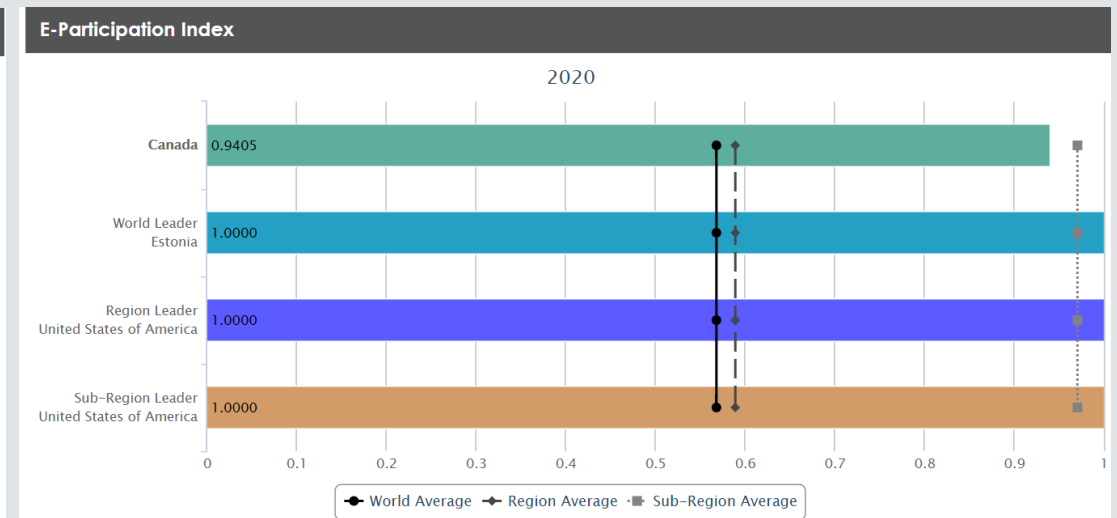
- Canada ranks 28th for its EGDI* (down from 23rd in 2018), and 16th for its EPI* (up from 27th in 2018).
- Canada's e-government performance ranks above the world average for both EGDI and EPI rankings.
- Canada ranks 3rd highest in the Americas, behind the United States and Uruguay.

*Note: The UN's E-Government Survey ranks 193 UN Member States in terms of digital government, based on the following indicators:

- The **E-Government Development Index (EGDI)**: “used to measure the readiness and capacity of national institutions to use ICTs to deliver public services”.
- The **E-Participation Index (EPI)**: measured based on (i) “e-information- availability of online information; (ii) e-consultation – online public consultations; and (iii) e-decision-making – directly involving citizens in decision processes”.¹



EGDI Rank	2020	2018	2016	2014	2012	2010
Canada	28	23	14	11	11	3



EPART Rank	2020	2018	2016	2014	2012	2010
Canada	16	27	8	14	15	8

4. Data-centric government and capacity

Routine interactions between people and government are constantly translated into government data in a multitude of ways; examples include:

- ❖ filling out online forms
- ❖ clicking links in government portals
- ❖ transacting e-services

Given the importance of data in advancing digital government, observations from the Survey on data-centric government and capacity may be of interest.

Key observations from the survey relevant to data-centric government include¹:

Barriers to progress

- Lack of understanding of data/ data science
- Low political priority and absence of data leadership
- Inadequate data competencies
- Resource constraints
- Concerns about data quality
- Security & privacy

Pillars for an effective national data governance Framework for e-government

- Policies and regulations
- National data strategy
- Supportive data ecosystem
- Investment in data technologies

Long-term approach to harvest public value from data

- Consider economics and politics of data governance/management
- Navigate the evolving data security and privacy landscape

Digital government transformation

• Governments must:

- Develop an institutional/regulatory ecosystem for deployment
- Use systems thinking and an integrated service model approach
- Establish a central coordinating mechanism for management implementation
- Recruit and retain the best talent, develop critical mindsets, and promote safe spaces for experimentation
- Promote digital inclusion and ensure that all people, including vulnerable groups, can access new technologies and e-government services
- Ensure capacity for iterative feedback

Capacities that support effective digital government transformation are required at the **societal, institutional, organizational** and **individual** levels.

1. [“E-Government Survey 2020”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

5. Opportunities for digital government transformation

There are aspects of e-government development and digital transformation that are global focal points; virtually all Governments have identified these as areas requiring or receiving attention within the framework of national and/or regional plans and strategies.

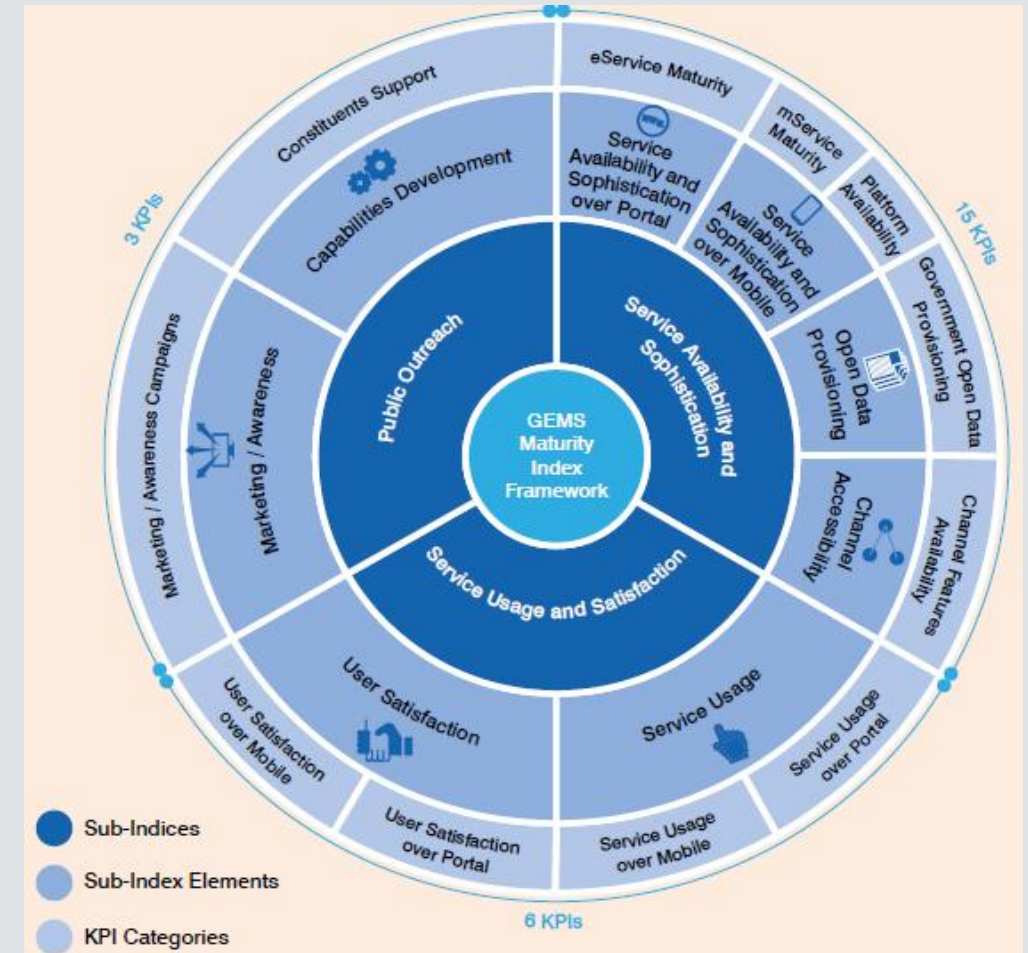
Areas associated with digital development challenges or opportunities include:

- political will (leadership commitment) and institutional capacities
- technology diffusion and connectivity
- digital trade and digital economy
- open data, data inclusiveness, engagement of the population
- digital skills
- economic empowerment and the gender divide
- smart cities and urbanization

Regional initiatives and partnerships can accelerate digital government transformation. In one example, Arab region e-government directors established an e-leaders network that developed a framework to assess the potential/challenges of open data and open government in that region. The GEMS Maturity Index is measured across three sub-indices: Service Availability and Sophistication; Service Usage and Satisfaction, and Public Outreach¹.

1. [“E-Government Survey 2020”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

Government Electronic and Mobile Services (GEMS) Maturity Index¹



6. Improving E-participation

The report provides several recommendations for Governments committed to developing e-participation in the coming years.¹

Project-level aspects

- Have clear objectives for e-participation activities; understand the needs, interests, motives and incentives of e-participation.
- Institutionalize e-participation processes within government departments.

Social aspects

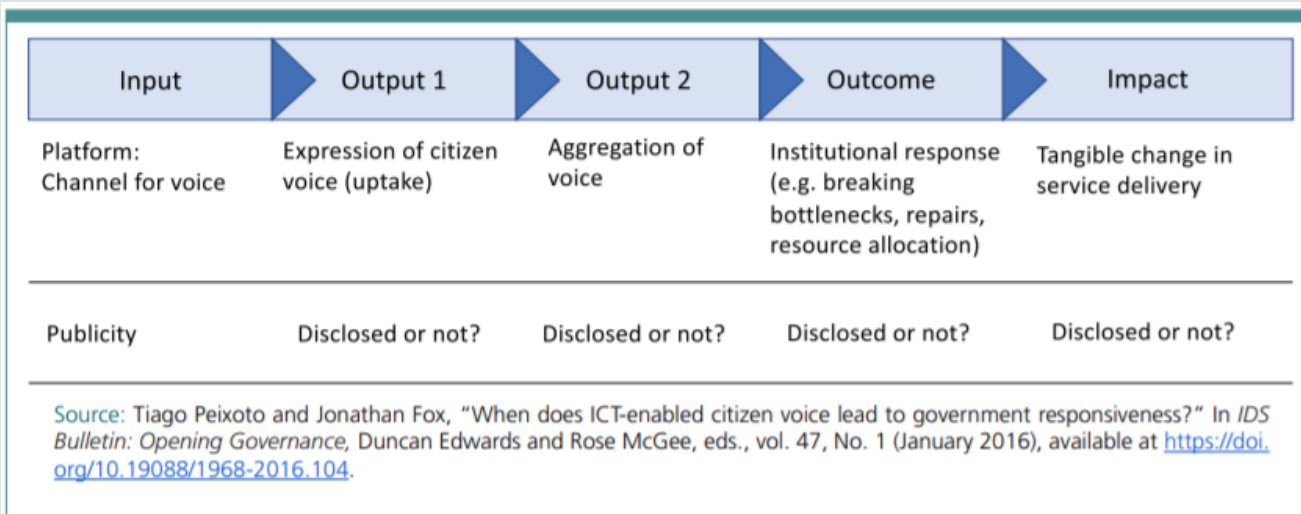
- Support the population's acquisition of e-participation skills.
- Understand how e-participation is affected by people's trust in public institutions, the Internet and social media.
- Strengthen the assessment of e-participation initiatives

Institutional aspects

- Pay attention to the legal, regulatory and administrative environment in which e-participation takes place.
- Establish clear linkages between e-participation activities and formal decision-making processes.

From e-participation processes to accountability: the case of public services

The figure below highlights the steps that can occur between citizen e-participation and increased government responsiveness.¹



E-participation: E-Participation is about fostering civic engagement and open, participatory governance through Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). Growing evidence points to the rapid expansion of e-Participation as a tool for engagement and strengthened collaboration between governments and citizens. Its objective is to improve access to information and public services as well as to promote participation in policy-making, both for the empowerment of individual citizens and the benefit of society as a whole.²

1. "E-Government Survey 2020", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

2. "Citizen Engagement", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

7a. E-Government during the COVID-19 pandemic: Selected key applications

Everyday life has changed amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.¹

With social distancing and quarantine orders underway to 'flatten the curve', existing e-government national visions, tools and applications have been put to the test, while some innovative ones have emerged in response to the crisis.

Examples of some innovative applications from around the world described in the graphic include online dashboards detailing the emergency response in Vancouver and online access to films, operas, recitals and museums on Buenos Aires.

1 DASHBOARDS
Vancouver, Canada introduced an online dashboard to enable citizens to track the city's emergency response to curb the spread of Covid-19.

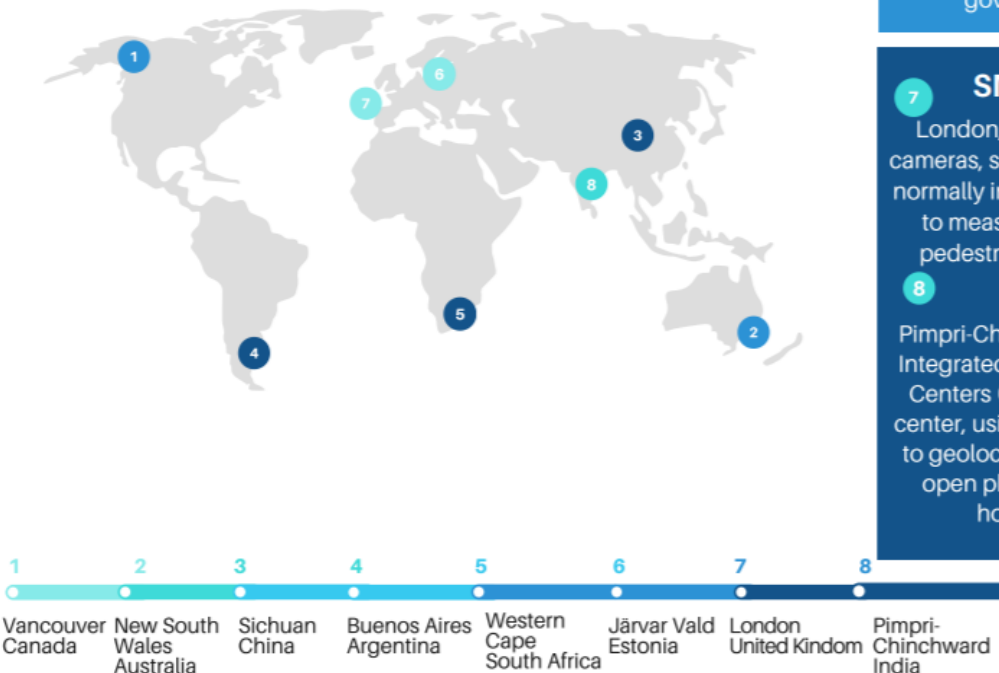
2
New South Wales State, Australia developed a dashboard that offers information of confirmed cases by postcode and recommendations to slow spread of Covid-19.

3 CHATBOTS
Sichuan, China launched a triage Chatbot to assess patients' risk of being infected and to provide information related to Covid-19.

4 ONLINE SERVICES
The City of Buenos Aires, Argentina provided online access to films, operas, recitals, and museums virtual tours as strategy to ease effects of quarantine.

5
The Western Cape Government, South Africa established an online platform to strengthen remote teaching and learning practices.

SOME EXAMPLES OF LOCAL E GOVERNMENT APPLICATIONS IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC



6 MOBILE APPS
Järvar Vald in Estonia developed a community engagement app to share COVID-19 information, post social events and encourage people to provide feedback to local government officers.

7 SMART CITIES
London, United Kingdom used cameras, sensors and AI algorithms, normally intended to control traffic, to measure distance between pedestrians and control social distance.

8
Pimpri-Chinchwad, India used the Integrated Command and Control Centers (ICCS) as Covid Control center, using monitors and drones to geolocate Covid cases, identify open pharmacies and control hospitals' capacity.

1. [“E-Government Survey 2020”, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)

Source: UN DESA. This graph represents a sample of e-government initiatives at the local level. Additional initiatives from United Nations Member States can be found in the UN DESA, COVID-19 & Digital Government Compendium (2020), Available at https://bit.ly/EGOV_COVID19_APPS.

7b. E-Government during the COVID-19 pandemic: The way forward

Increasing the use of technology for the provision of critical public services is more important than ever. As suggested by the Survey¹, successfully achieving e-government transformation will require:

- Continuing to adopt an **open government approach** and using digital communication channels to provide reliable public information to citizens
- Using **multi-stakeholder partnerships** to share technologies, expertise and tools
- Ensuring **cities and local governments** have the necessary support structures to help their people
- Accelerating the **implementation of new digital technologies** such as AI, blockchain and drones



For further reading

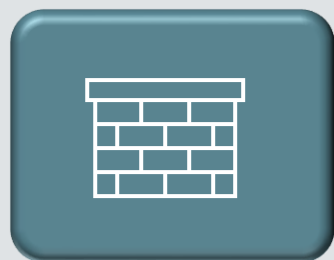
- [COVID-19 Pushing More Government Activities Online Despite Persistent Digital Divide, Annual E-Government Survey Finds](#)
- [Welcome Remarks and Substantive Key Messages Launch of the 2020 United Nations E-Government Survey](#)
- [2020 United Nations e-Government Survey Global Launch](#)
- [Libraries Supporting Digital Governance: Insights from the 2020 UN E-Government Survey](#)
- [Comment-la-covid-19-pourrait-remodeler-la-fonction-publique-federale](#)

1. ["E-Government Survey 2020", United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs](#)



Daily Newsletter: Trends This Month

August 2020



Digital Divides

The pandemic has highlighted the significance of digital infrastructure, all whilst [accentuating the global digital divide](#).

This finding was also echoed in the [2020 UN E-Government Survey](#).



COVID Alert

The [Canadian government's COVID-19 free tracing app](#) has been launched in Ontario. Although privacy- and security-compliant, it has faced criticism over its device compatibility concerns.

Read more [here](#).



US-China Tech War

The US and China are competing for supremacy of advanced tech. The US has made [efforts to curtail China's access to American tech](#), for instance by [banning TikTok and WeChat](#).

Will this impact Canada? Read more [here](#).

Other noteworthy articles this month:
[COVID-19: Why we must take the widescreen view of workforce uncertainty](#)

[Government of Canada announces project to bring high-speed internet to rural parts of Quebec](#)

[New Zealand launches government algorithm standards](#)

[Trudeau reveals plan to end CERB, transition recipients to EI in September](#)

[Le Japon se met au diapason du télétravail, malgré les réticences](#)

Research Repository

Access the Citizen First Research Repository [here](#).



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