

Executive Summary

The present report provides a comprehensive overview of e-government development from global, regional and national perspective. It analyses regional performance and identifies major trends using the United Nations E-Government Development Index (EGDI).

The development of digital government has seen a significant upward trend worldwide, with all regions leveraging technology to enhance government services and improve people's engagement. This shift has accelerated during the post-pandemic recovery period, with increased investment in resilient infrastructure and cutting-edge solutions such as cloud computing and broadband.

The rapid digitalization of services, the shift towards remote work, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI), the emphasis on digital identity and data management, and the increased use of data and emerging technologies for policymaking are key global megatrends.

These transformations have catalysed innovation in the private sector, particularly for micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises, which are increasingly integrating digital technologies and standards that align with those applied in government platforms. Venture capital investment has significantly expanded, with increased funding directed towards AI startups.

Concurrently, public sector digitalization has driven crucial improvements in infrastructure, including the expansion of affordable broadband access and the enhancement of cybersecurity, contributing to the evolution of a thriving digital economy.

A new Digital Government Model Framework

The Digital Government Model Framework has been introduced in this edition, providing countries with a comprehensive methodological road map for the effective planning, implementation and assessment of digital government initiatives. Embodying the ecosystem approach and focusing on principles of good governance, inclusivity, and security, the Framework emphasizes the importance of leveraging digital technologies to enhance public services delivery, promote inclusivity, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Digital government development at the global level

The global average value of EGDI, as a proxy for measuring the digital divide, reflects substantial improvement over the past two years, with the proportion of the world population lagging in digital government development decreasing from 45.0 per cent in 2022 to 22.4 per cent in 2024. This improved ratio primarily derives from the positive performance of Asia, in particular the positioning of India and Bangladesh above the global average EGDI value. The Americas have also shown steady improvement, with an increased proportion of countries in the very high EGDI group. Africa and Oceania have made some progress but remain below the global average.

Despite the advances made, 1.9 billion people remain on the wrong side of the digital divide. The gaps in digital development are particularly wide in Africa and Oceania.

Significant challenges remain in bridging the digital divide, securing adequate financing, bolstering cybersecurity, and aligning digital strategies with effective implementation. Uneven access to technology and information creates disparities among countries and communities in the same region, leading to migration and brain drain in digitally underserved areas.

Digital government development at the regional level

Europe leads in e-government development, followed by Asia, the Americas, Oceania and Africa. While all regions have achieved progress in various areas, the pace of development has been uneven, and regional disparities in digital development persist.

Europe continues to be the top performer in e-government, with most of the region's countries falling into the very high EGDI group.

Asia has made impressive strides since 2022, with Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Japan and Bahrain leading in digital government development. Strong upward trends have also been driven by significant advancements in digital transformation in China and Western and Central Asia, with strategic government initiatives focusing on the integration of cutting-edge technologies in public services.

In the Americas, digital leaders such as the United States of America, Uruguay, Chile, Argentina, Canada, and Brazil drive progress, supported by regional collaboration and international partnerships. All of the Caribbean small island developing States (SIDS) except Cuba and Haiti have shown commendable progress in digital development and are in the high EGDI group.

In Africa, Mauritius and South Africa have moved up to the very high EGDI group, marking the first time countries from this region have reached the highest level. However, most African countries have EGDI levels below the global average. Significant disparities in digital infrastructure, connectivity, digital skills, and e-government readiness persist within the region. An analysis of past and present EGDI indicators confirms that even with the most optimistic projections, Africa will not bridge the digital gap with other regions by 2030. This underscores the urgent need for accelerated efforts and innovative solutions to address the digital divide.

Oceania is characterized by significant variability in digital development. Australia and New Zealand remain regional and global leaders, while SIDS face substantial challenges in digital advancement.

The overall positive trends in digital government development highlight the potential for technology to drive sustainable and inclusive growth. Ongoing national and regional efforts, along with international support, are essential to address the challenges and achieve comprehensive digital transformation worldwide.

Digital government development at the local level

At the local level, digital government can significantly impact people's daily lives through the provision of accessible, efficient and transparent services. Local government is often the first point of contact between citizens and public services. By leveraging digital tools, local authorities can improve services delivery, enhance citizen engagement, and promote inclusive development, directly contributing to the realization of the SDGs.

The Local Online Services Index (LOSI) was introduced by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) in 2018 to assess the digital government capabilities of cities worldwide. For this edition, the most populous city in each of the 193 United Nations Member States has been assessed.

A comparative analysis of EGDI and LOSI results indicates that national portals continue to outperform city portals. There are significant disparities between the two in terms of development and performance, indicating the need for focused efforts to improve local e-government and support digital transformation at the municipal level.

The more populous cities tend to have relatively high LOSI values, as they are able to benefit from superior resources and a higher demand for online services. However, around 22 per cent of the cities assessed do not offer evidence of an operational official website. This finding suggests that there are a substantial number of cities lacking an online presence, which can hinder access to essential digital services. Barriers to creating and maintaining municipal websites include budget constraints, a lack of technical expertise, and infrastructure limitations.

These findings underscore the importance of implementing targeted initiatives to bridge the gap between national and local e-government, enhance the digital presence of all cities, and ensure that smaller municipalities are not left behind in a world that is rapidly becoming digitalized.

The role of AI in digital government development

The integration of AI in the public sector has garnered considerable global attention. As AI can be used to automate processes, enhance efficiency, and reduce redundancies, it has the potential to revolutionize public administration. However, the rapid advancement of AI technology, particularly the development of large language models (LLMs), has outpaced the adoption of relevant regulatory frameworks, and there is an urgent need for effective governance to mitigate associated risks, such as data bias. The United Nations has emphasized that AI has the potential to support or hinder the achievement of the SDGs and that international cooperation and robust regulatory measures are needed to ensure that AI and other emerging technologies are utilized responsibly and productively.

The addendum to the present Survey explores the opportunities and challenges associated with AI integration in the public sector, offering insights into current trends and the regulatory landscape. It emphasizes the need for a balanced approach that maximizes the benefits of AI while minimizing its risks. It also calls for integrated AI governance frameworks, substantial investment in AI capacity-building, and collective international action to ensure that AI technologies contribute positively to sustainable development.