

Byte-Sized Progress

Assessing Digital Transformation in the Government of Canada

Creig Lamb, Daniel Munro, Viet Vu
September 2023



What We Found

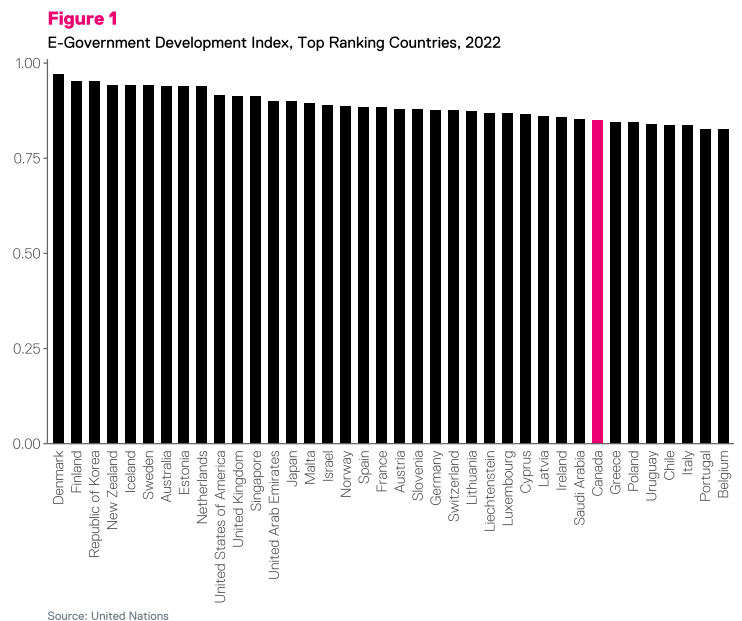
The Government of Canada’s digital maturity lags behind both peer governments and the private sector. Canada’s ranking on the United Nations’ E-Government Development Index has dropped from sixth in 2003 to thirty-second in 2022, with only 23 percent of government services available online end-to-end.

Existing digital infrastructure makes it difficult for the Government of Canada to put its robust policy guidelines for delivering digital services into practice. Outdated and siloed legacy digital systems hinder data-sharing and digital service delivery across departments, and prevent innovations from being scaled across the government.

Government culture is at odds with effective digital adoption. A heavy reliance on external vendors, antiquated project management methodologies, and inconsistency in approaches to IT projects across departments are standards, and often result in IT that is delayed, over-budget, and ineffective.

There is a digital skills deficit in the federal government. Despite having a strong pool of digital talent to draw from, the federal government fails to attract and retain top digital and design talent, and also lacks basic digital literacy and skills across all positions.

Canada faces a stark digital divide. A lack of basic digital infrastructure and a wide array of social and economic barriers contribute to gaps in the accessibility of digital services. These gaps disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples, older Canadians, those living in rural and remote communities, and those with lower income and education levels.



Strategies to Advance the Digital Agenda

The successful implementation of digital transformation requires a committed leadership cadre, clear strategies and focused execution. To build digital culture, talent and access in the Government of Canada, the report's recommended actions include:

- 1. Clarify management structures:** Clear ownership for government digital infrastructure projects, and **incorporation of risks** associated with sub-optimal digital infrastructure into management decision process.
- 2. Agile project management:** Clear expectations around agile project development, and **embracement of small, iterative pilots** that lead to large transformational digital projects.
- 3. Fix digital procurement:** Sufficient resources for digital projects, a move away from vertically-integrated systems, to a **shared infrastructure model**, and adoption of **modular contracting principles** in procurement contracts.
- 4. Build digital and design skills:** Digital literacy and user-centric design skills should be core competencies for public servants, as part of **hiring processes, skills-training programs** (inc. **microcredentials**), and informal **mentoring, coaching, and job-shadowing**.
- 5. Attract top talent:** Form a clear **articulation of the skills gap** in the federal government. Adjusting HR practices, including creating more **diversified role classifications** that fit tech workers better.
- 6. Bridge the digital divide:** acknowledge the unequal access to the internet and digital services among Canadians, investing to **ensure universal access**.

Read the full report at dais.ca

