

Trust in Digital Government

Translation of the key findings-section in the publication 'Trust in Digital Government 2022'

Trust in the Danish digital government is generally high. 77 percent of the Danish population trust public digital services and 74 percent prefer to use digital services when they have to be in contact with the public sector. However, there are indications that the citizens who use public digital services have a more negative perception of the public sector's competences and intentions to develop digital services in 2022 compared to 2021. At the same time, fewer agree upon the fact that it is easy to get insight into data and that they have good experiences with using public digital services. The analysis also shows that approx. 17 percent of the population can be said to be challenged in the use of public digital services, as they either have few digital skills, little knowledge of the public sector or both.

In 2021, the Agency for Digital Government carried out an extensive analysis of the Danes' experience with and trust in public digital services. The analysis of 2022 builds upon the previous and revisits a number of issues as well as examines new themes related to the population's experience with and trust in the Danish digital public sector.

The analysis is based on a number of statements and questions from Statistics Denmark's annual survey *IT-usage in the Danish population 2022*. In addition, the results are compared with the results from 2021 to give an indication of the development over time for selected variables.

The publication contains a number of important insights, which are briefly summarized below. The insights are described in more detail in the publication.

First, trust in public digital services is high. 77 percent of the Danish population between the ages of 15 and 89 strongly agree or agree that they generally trust public digital services. At the same time, very few indicate that they do not trust public digital services. Only 8 percent disagree or strongly disagree that they trust public digital services. There has been a slight decrease in the overall level of trust from 2021, where 78 percent of the population between the ages of 15 and 89 strongly agreed or agreed that they generally trust public digital services. The drop of 1 percentage point is within the range of statistical uncertainty.

Second, the analysis examines the Danish citizens' view of a number of factors that have an impact on the citizens' trust in public digital services, including the citizens' competences to use digital services, the citizens' perception of the authorities' competences and intentions, as well as the citizens' assessment of the func-

tionality of the services. Compared to 2021, there has been a decrease in the population's assessment of the factors that deal with the authorities' ability to take care of data, the opportunity to gain insight into citizens' own information and the authorities' competence and intention to develop digital services.

The "legs" trust in public digital services "stand on" may therefore not be quite as strong as before. It cannot currently be determined whether this is a trend or a fluctuation, which may for example be due to a number of special circumstances regarding covid-19 and the public digital infrastructure in 2021 and 2022. This includes the transition to a new public Digital Postal service as well as the transition from NemID to MitID or the broader societal debate on e.g. digitalization, the use of social media and technology.

Third, the analysis shows that despite a minor decrease in both trust and Danish citizens' assessments of their experience with using public digital services and the authorities' competences, the proportion of the population that prefers to use digital services is virtually unchanged. There is even a slight increase in the proportion who prefer public digital services. Among the total population between the ages of 15 and 89, 74 percent agree or strongly agree that they prefer to use digital services in contact with the public sector in 2022. Only 5 percent disagree or strongly disagree, and 4 percent does not use digital services at all. In 2021, 72 percent strongly agreed or agreed with the same statement.

Fourth, the analysis shows that it is not only digital skills that are essential in order to be in contact with the Danish digital public sector. Knowledge of the public sector can also be decisive. The analysis therefore maps how the Danish population is distributed both in regards to digital skills and knowledge of the public sector. 17.2 percent of the Danish population between the ages of 15 and 89 can be said to be digitally challenged, as they assess that they either have few digital skills, little knowledge of the public sector or both. However, for a part of this group, contact with the public sector is a challenge regardless of whether it is digital or analogue. It is especially older citizens who have difficulty with the digital aspect.

Finally, the analysis looks at the need for digital inclusion in the Danish population. Digital inclusion is about adapting digital communication and taking specific measures that makes it possible for citizens who find it difficult to be in digital contact with the public sector, to use public digital services. Here the results confirms, that it is particularly the low educated, immigrants, the elderly and women who, to a greater extent than the rest of the population, state that they need help using digital self-service.

Citizens who most often need help turn to their private network e.g. family and friends to get help rather than official support from the authorities. At the same time, the survey shows that citizens who need help with digital self-service, have a lower level of trust in public digital services than citizens who do not need help. Of those who need help, 72 percent indicate that they trust public digital services,

while it is 82 percent among those, who do not need help. The difference in the level of trust is limited but nevertheless indicates that, for example, the experience of having to use extra resources in order to use the digital entrance to the public sector can negatively affect trust.

It is noted that the analysis is not an adequate mapping of all relevant conditions that can affect trust in the digital public sector. Trust can be difficult to measure and there may be conditions that this analysis does not cover or capture sufficiently. It is an attempt to investigate a phenomenon that must be a goal for a well-functioning digital society – and which can have a decisive influence on how digitization can be used to develop the public sector in the coming years.