REPORT FROM THE FIELD

User Attitudes to E-Government Citizen Services in Europe

Jeremy Millard, Danish Technological Institute, Denmark

ABSTRACT

In 2005, the eUSER project undertook a questionnaire survey covering about 10,000 households in 10 European Union member states, the purpose of which was to provide some of the first systematic evidence in Europe of citizen user behaviour and their attitudes to the use of public services, and particularly the role of e-services in this context. The survey focused on a number of themes — the public’s use of government services, the different channels (or media) employed, the nature of potential future demand for e-government, the barriers and experiences in using e-government, and the socio-economic attributes of e-government users compared with non-users. The results provide important new information on the role that the Internet is now playing in the delivery and take-up of government services by European citizens. Face-to-face contact is still the most important channel for contacting government in Europe. In some countries (e.g., the UK), however, telephone and post have overtaken face-to-face. Results also show that potential demand for e-government services is about 50% of all government users and could be higher. One quarter of individual e-government users have acted as intermediaries for family members or friends, and one quarter have also done so on behalf of their employer. Most barriers that users anticipate they will meet when using e-government relate to difficulty in actually starting, with a feeling that face-to-face is better and the fear about data privacy important. However, once citizens have used e-government services, the barriers appear less, though still important, and relate mainly to the difficulty of feeling left alone with problems or questions.

Keywords: e-government services; eUser project; face-to-face contact

INTRODUCTION

In 2005, the eUSER project undertook a questionnaire survey covering approximately 10,000 households in 10 European Union member states, both old and new. In order to achieve as close to a random sample as possible, this was completed using either telephone or
rect interview, with the responses being keyed into a database. The purpose of the survey was to provide some of the first systematic evidence in Europe of citizen user behaviour and attitudes to the use of public services, and particularly the role of e-services in this context.

The eUSER project surveyed the use by citizens of, and their attitudes toward, three sets of e-services, in e-government, e-health, and e-learning. The e-government part of the survey focused on a number of themes – the public’s use of government services, the different channels (or media) employed, the nature of potential future demand for e-government, the barriers and experiences in using e-government, and the socio-economic attributes of e-government users compared with non-users. The results provide important new information on the role that the Internet is now playing in the delivery and take-up of government services by European citizens.

Some selected initial results of the eUSER survey are presented in this article. Fuller and final results became available at the end of 2005 from the author or the eUSER Web site.

**USE OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES**

As illustrated in Chart 1, across the 10 EU member states in the sample, almost 70% of all respondents had contact with the Public Administration (PA) in the last 12 months. There is, however, some variation between countries, with the more...
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