**Digitally Indexing Trust in Government Services**

In many countries, digital government units have taken on central roles in the co-ordination of service-improvement strategies across various government departments, guided by a *user experience* approach to design and delivery (Baredes, 2022).

**Digital Life Events Service**

First, the public sector provides a wide range of services. As a result, it is challenging to ensure

performance is consistent among all services provided, especially given the fact that many services are

provided at the local level and are beyond the control of the central/federal government. For this reason, some policies make an explicit choice to focus on a subset of them, in order to monitor their performance

on a regular basis and ensure that they provide a seamless and integrated experience to citizens and

users.

making services comparable in order to benchmark their performance and to identify good

practices that can be reapplied (with the objective of providing a seamless experience to citizens and

users) is one of the main challenges for practitioners2

The comparability of services could be enhanced

by classifying them by the type of need they address and/or how users come into contact with the service

In many countries, digital transformation strategies have been oriented around a user experience approach to service-improvement, with digital government units

central agencies are required to provide advice and support to the agencies

that deliver public services at the central/federal level on how to gather feedback from users and how to

improve their services following citizens’ and users’ feedback. They must also provide tools that can be

reapplied by several services (this can be anything from modules to gather feedback that can be reused

in agencies’ websites to templates to assess the agencies’ capacity to deliver services). The key idea is to

support agencies in embedding citizens’ and users’ feedback in their decision-making processes to ensure

that they deliver on the aspects that matter the most to citizens and users

there are issues in using an overall satisfaction indicator to compare the performance of services

at the central/federal level. First, a single overall satisfaction judgement does not indicate what standards

an individual is using to assess their experience or whether they are comparable across services. For

example, to assess their satisfaction with health care, a person may focus on how clean the health care

facilities were, while for education the same individual may emphasise their child’s grades when evaluating

their satisfaction with education..

Australia’s Citizen Experience Survey

Switzerland’s National eGovernment Study that supports the monitoring of the eGovernment Strategy of

Switzerland8. It seeks to monitor the penetration of digital government in society and businesses, and

assess users’ level of trust and satisfaction with online services.

Expectations are highly subjective and may vary

between individuals, even when they receive a similar service. For example, respondents who interact

more frequently with the government (and who possibly have higher awareness of their own rights and of

their government’s obligations) have higher expectations of what constitutes good quality compared to the

rest of the population

Table 1. Countries’ surveys on satisfaction with services

81% of the change in satisfaction across countries and years can be

associated with a change in the objective performance of services as measured by the 22 indicators

from Government at a Glance.

**Designing a monitoring system including satisfaction indicators alongside other more objective**

**measures of the performance of services,**

A performance monitoring system should have a distinct user focus, which entails being clear about what

characteristics users (of the service and of performance information) value and the standards they expect

(Pidd, 2012[39]). ‘Value’ involves what matters to individuals as well as the wider society or institution. Most

public agencies at the central/federal level have a dual monitoring system. One system is specific to them,

to track the achievement of their own key objectives for which they have expert knowledge (e.g. increasing

tax compliance and enhancing tax collection for the tax authorities). The other is related to the experience

they deliver to citizens and users, for which they need to cooperate with other agencies (e.g. the tax

administration’s would need to cooperate with the motor-vehicle registration in the journey of selling a used

car to ensure that citizens and companies do not need to provide the same information several times).

These two monitoring systems are not mutually exclusive, as long as their contribution to the work of each

agency responsible for delivering services is clear.

Satisfaction is one of the most common indicators of service performance because it reflects citizens’ and

users’ experience with services, and it is faster (and cheaper) to collect and disseminate than objective

measures of performance. For this reason, satisfaction surveys have proliferated in the public

administration. Most countries now have two types of surveys. One type is conducted by individual service roviders (e.g. the health insurance administration) and can focus on each individual service they provide.

The second type is conducted by the central government (as shown in the example of Norway

Surveys by individual service providers can be useful to describe the profile of users (e.g. socio-economic

background) and their recent experience with the service. Typically, these surveys ask citizens and users

about the accessibility (e.g. affordability, availability of channels, access to information and clarity of

procedures), responsiveness (e.g. courtesy of staff and timeliness) and quality (e.g. quality of

infrastructure, competence of staff and outcome) of services that they have used. These surveys target

service users: thus, only individuals who have successfully accessed (and likely, used) the service are

included

Central surveys can address the population in general and explore the barriers of access to services,

identifying groups that struggle to have their needs met by the public administration. Central surveys can

focus on user journeys or life events (e.g. losing the ability to work, getting married), asking citizens and

users how they solved their needs (e.g. how many agencies they interacted with, what for, etc.)

Yet, while these surveys can provide an accurate account of the trends in the performance of public

services, overall satisfaction ratings summarise a wide range of aspects of service performance (e.g.

accessibility, responsiveness and service quality) that need to be unpacked to inform decision-making.

Satisfaction data can contribute to stimulating discussions about service performance trends and alert

decision-makers to take action.

However, without other indicators or sources of data, such data may not

provide insight into what specific aspects are underperforming or what improvements are needed (e.g. if

certain groups of the population are not able to access a service because it is not affordable for them,

should they receive a subsidy? should fees be reduced? are there any other reasons why the service is

so costly?).

A complete performance measurement system for public services should include process (e.g. waiting

times in hospitals), output (e.g. survival rates), service quality (e.g. satisfaction with the service), and

outcome (e.g. are people better off as a result of the service?) measures to give a balanced view of the

performance of the institution, reflecting the most important aspects of the mission of an organisation (Pidd,

2012[39]). However, different sources of data (and indicators) can provide diverging pictures of the actual

performance of the agency. Therefore, more time is needed to analyse and reconcile these sources of

information and to draw insights that can help in improving services.

Usually, quantitative data allow governments to identify the areas where there is a problem that needs

attention but are not the best when it comes to providing solutions, especially as they pertain to citizens’

and users’ experience with a service. Indeed, qualitative research provides a better understanding of the

feelings, motivations and experiences of users, which can more easily provide insights into user pain

points. It is important to bear in mind that while qualitative research methods and direct user feedback

usually provide more actionable insights, quantitative data are needed to understand the extent to which

the data coming from non-representative samples can be generalised to the whole population

Transforming data into insight requires using service performance data from various sources (e.g.

satisfaction surveys, user research, citizens’ and users’ feedback, objective performance indicators, etc.)

to model the experience of a user with a service.