Government Business Council

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accenture

High performance. Delivered.

Delivering on Digital Government

A Candid Survey of Federal Managers

April 2015

Government Executive Media Group

Purpose

Driven by the White House's 2012 Digital Government Strategy, agencies have begun implementing and utilizing digital tools and services over the past two years. Many of these technologies aim to improve collaboration within and across federal organizations, as well as to better the quality of service that government agencies provide to citizens, businesses, and others they serve.

Motivated in part by the August 2014 release of the *U.S. Digital Services Playbook,* a document detailing the latest digital recommendations from the current administration, Government Business Council (GBC) and Accenture undertook a research study to evaluate the current state of federal digital services.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of federal executives regarding digital collaboration and service delivery, GBC deployed a survey to a sample of *Government Executive*, *Nextgov*, and *Defense One* online and print subscribers in September 2014. 396 senior-level federal employees participated in the survey, including those of GS/GM-11 to 15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service. 58% of respondents are GS/GM-13 and above, with representatives from over 30 civilian and defense agencies.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Agencies are in the early stages of employing digital tools and services

The most common digital tool agencies currently use to provide customer service are websites, online knowledge bases/FAQs, telephone self-service, and social media. In addition, agencies have begun providing digital collaboration tools for their employees including live collaboration tools and internal employee chat/instant messaging. As a result of these tools and services, respondents report top outcomes of improved employee efficiency (49%) and making it easier for customers to receive service (48%). However, more than a quarter of respondents indicate that they do not yet observe any positive outcomes.

Opportunities exist for digital tools to better support collaboration and service delivery

Digital tools used for customer engagement, service delivery, and employee engagement are perceived to be better utilized than those leveraged for collaboration purposes. Only two out of five respondents describe their agency's use of digital tools to support internal collaboration or interagency collaboration as "good" or "excellent." Half (51%) of respondents grade their agency's use of digital tools for customer service delivery at the same level.

Though barriers remain, new federal guidance offers suggestions for improvements

According to respondents, the top barriers to incorporating digital tools and services are limited budget (63%) and security/privacy concerns (57%). The lack of a clear digital strategy and the conflicting perceptions of cost-effectiveness of such tools further complicate implementation efforts.

The administration's newly released *U.S. Digital Services Playbook* seeks to overcome these challenges with a number of 'plays' or best practices that agencies can follow. For instance, the Playbook recommends that agencies develop digital-related employee skillsets, which 81% of survey respondents identify as a gap in their organizations.

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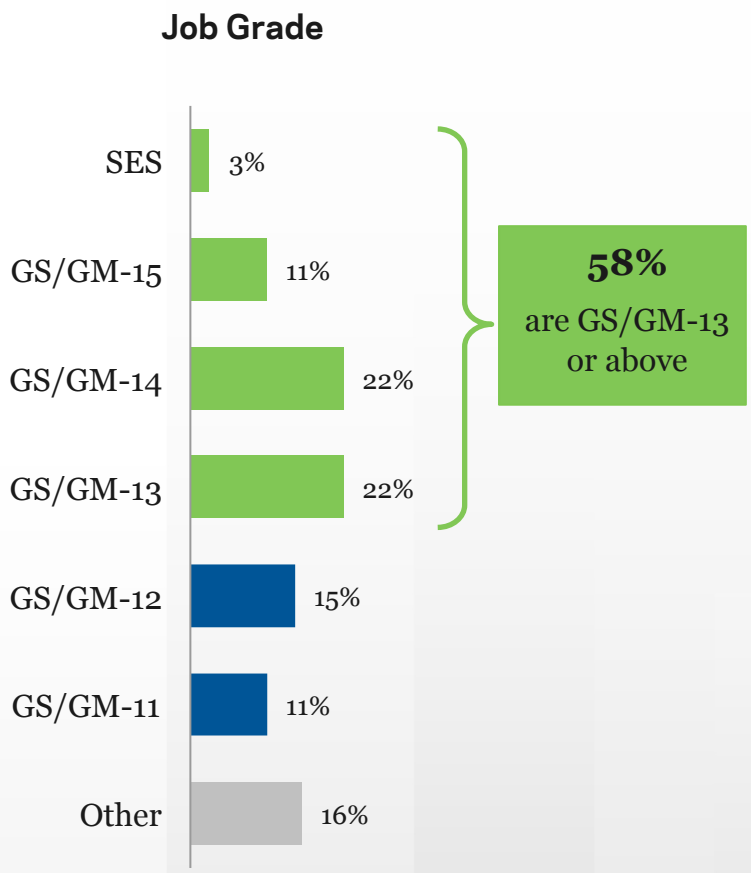
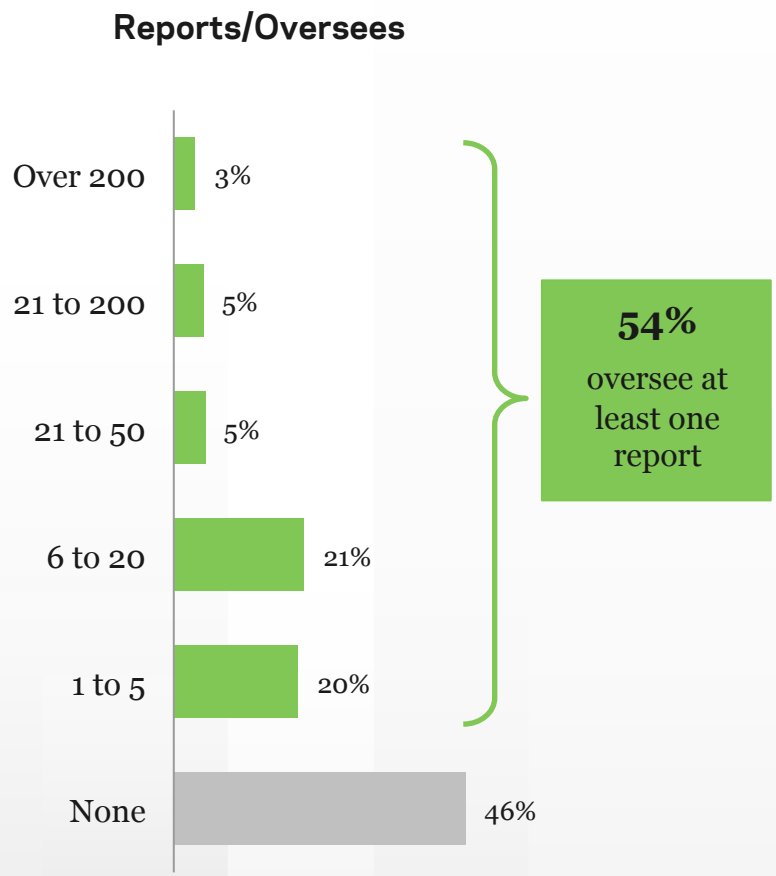
Respondent Profile

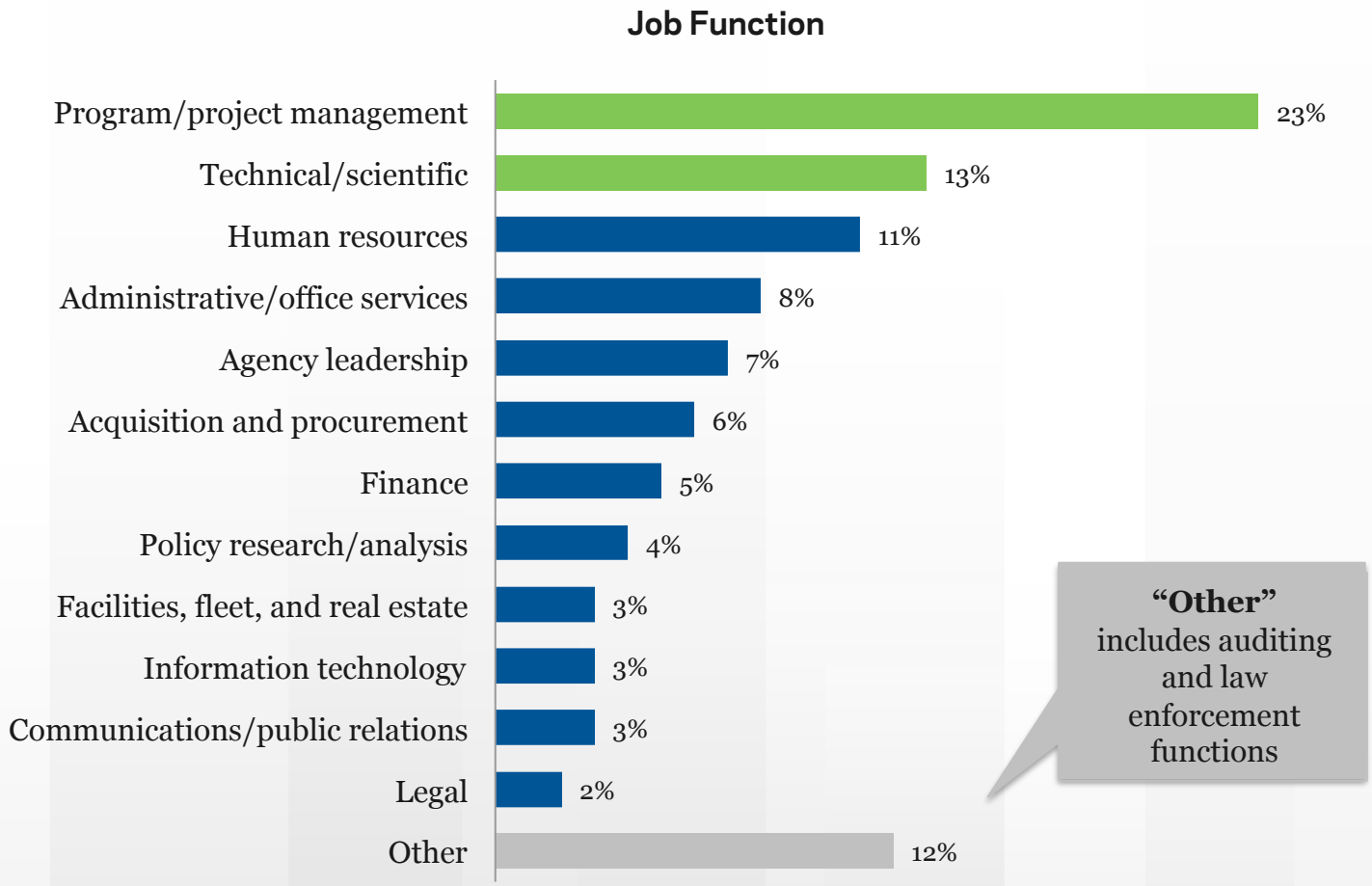
Respondents are largely senior federal executives





Percentage of respondents, n=368 and 319, respectively

Management and technical roles are the most represented job functions



Percentage of respondents, n=319

Agencies represented

Department of Agriculture
Department of the Army
Department of the Air Force
Department of the Treasury
Office of the Secretary of Defense
General Services Administration
Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Commerce
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Transportation
Social Security Administration
Department of the Navy
Department of the Interior
Department of Homeland Security
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Department of Energy
Environmental Protection Agency
Department of Justice
Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Labor
Department of State
United States Marine Corps
Government Accountability Office
Small Business Administration
United States Agency for International Development
Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Department of Defense Combatant Commands
Department of Education
National Science Foundation
Executive Office of the President
Other Independent Agencies

Agencies listed in order of frequency

3

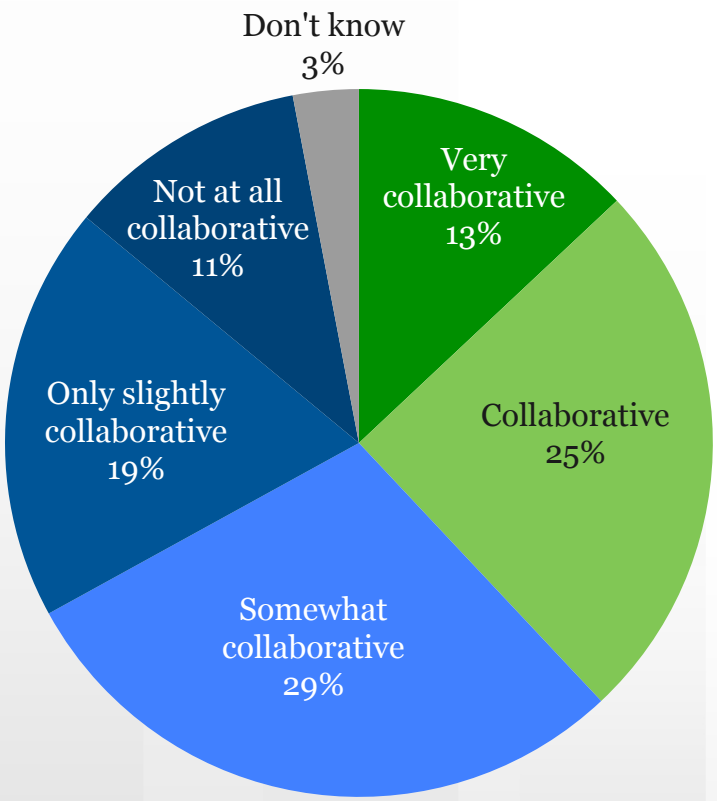
Research Findings

i.

Digital Collaboration and Service Delivery

Federal agencies could do better at promoting a collaborative work culture

How would you describe your organization's culture when it comes to collaboration, both within your department/agency and with other federal agencies?



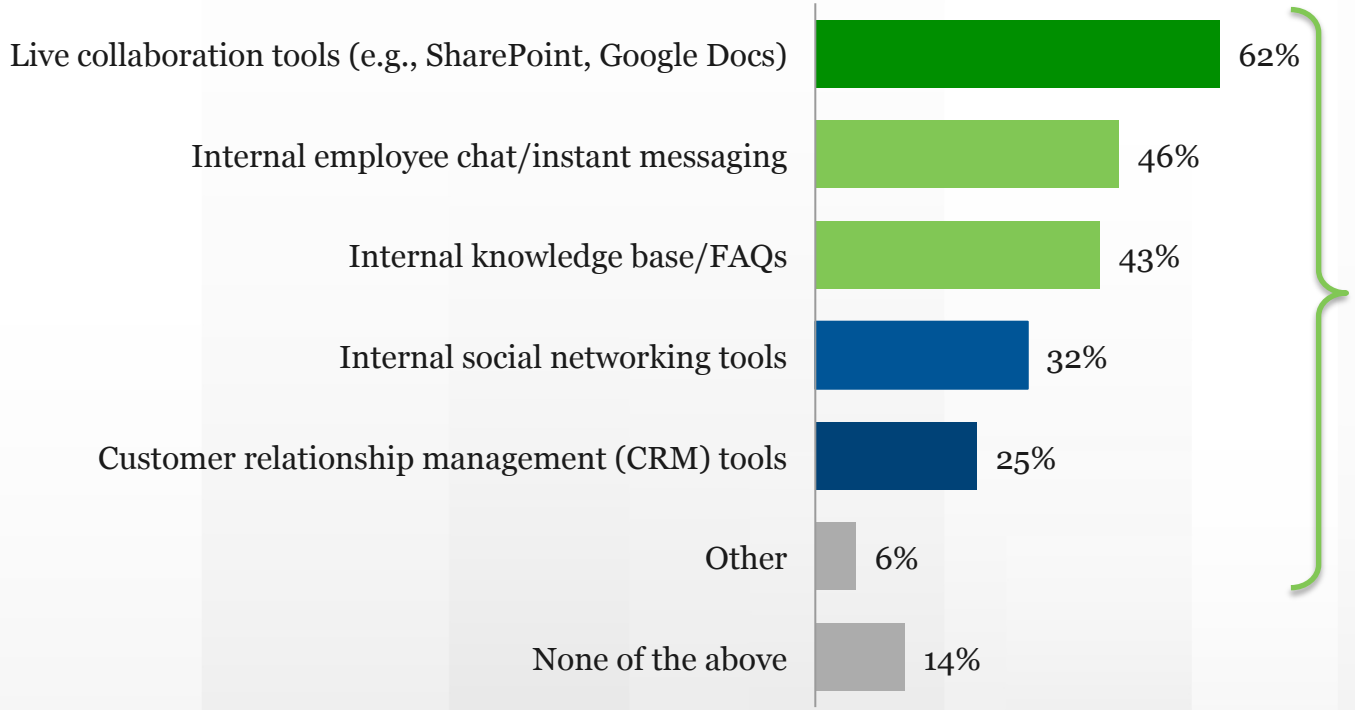
Only **38%**

of respondents describe their organization's culture as collaborative or very collaborative

Percentage of respondents, n=394

Most respondents employ at least one digital collaboration tool

Digital Tools Used to Collaborate, Internally or Externally



86%

of respondents use at least one digital collaboration tool listed here

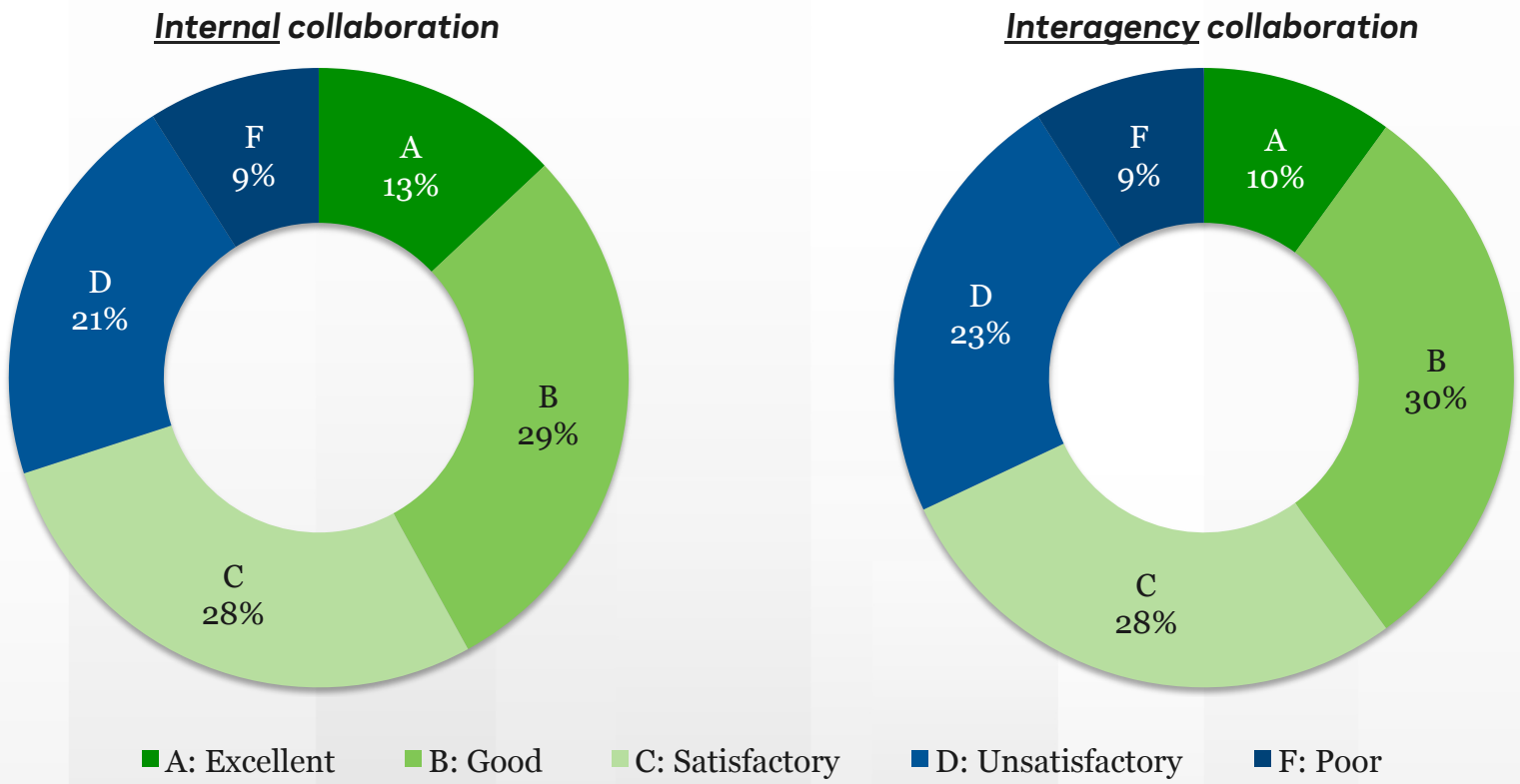
40%

of respondents use at least **three** digital collaboration tools listed here

Percentage of respondents, n=353
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Agencies receive mixed reviews on their use of digital tools to support collaboration

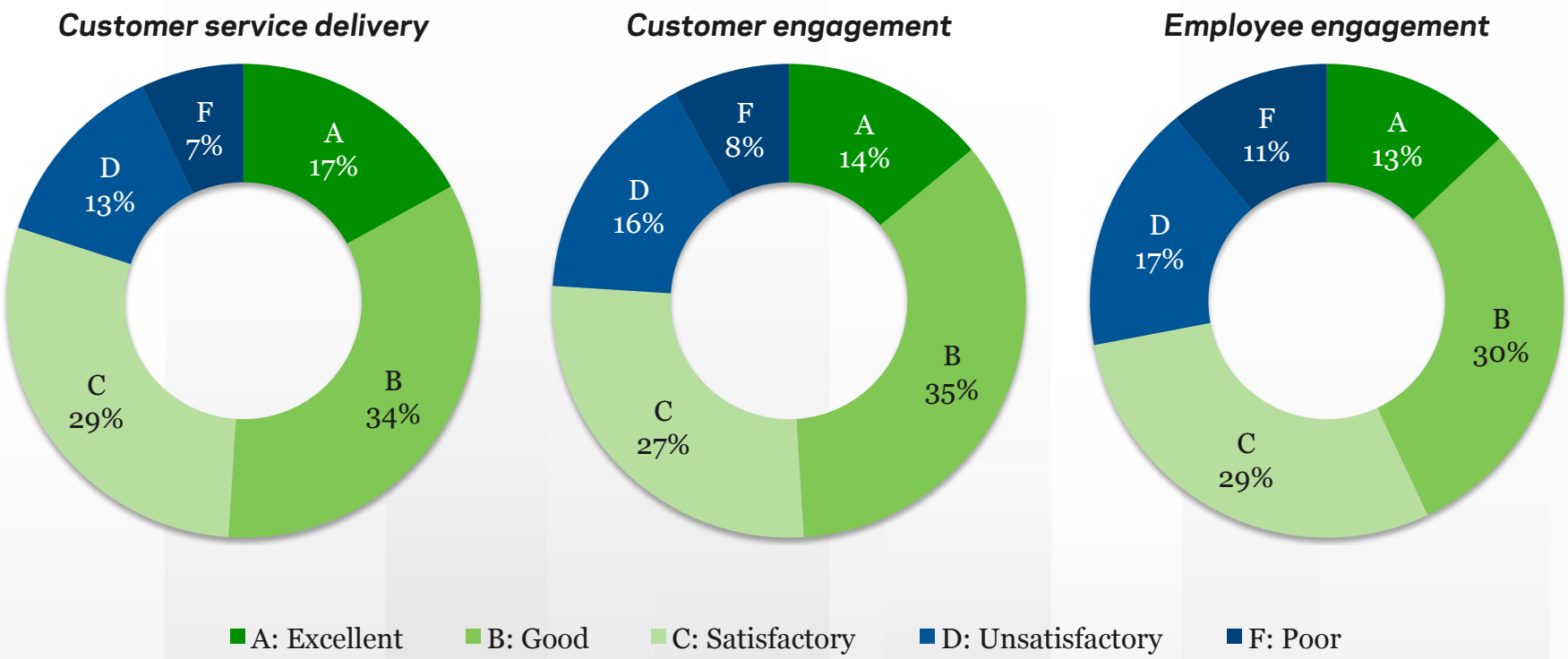
How would you grade your agency's use of digital tools to support…



Percentage of all respondents, n=370 and 342, respectively

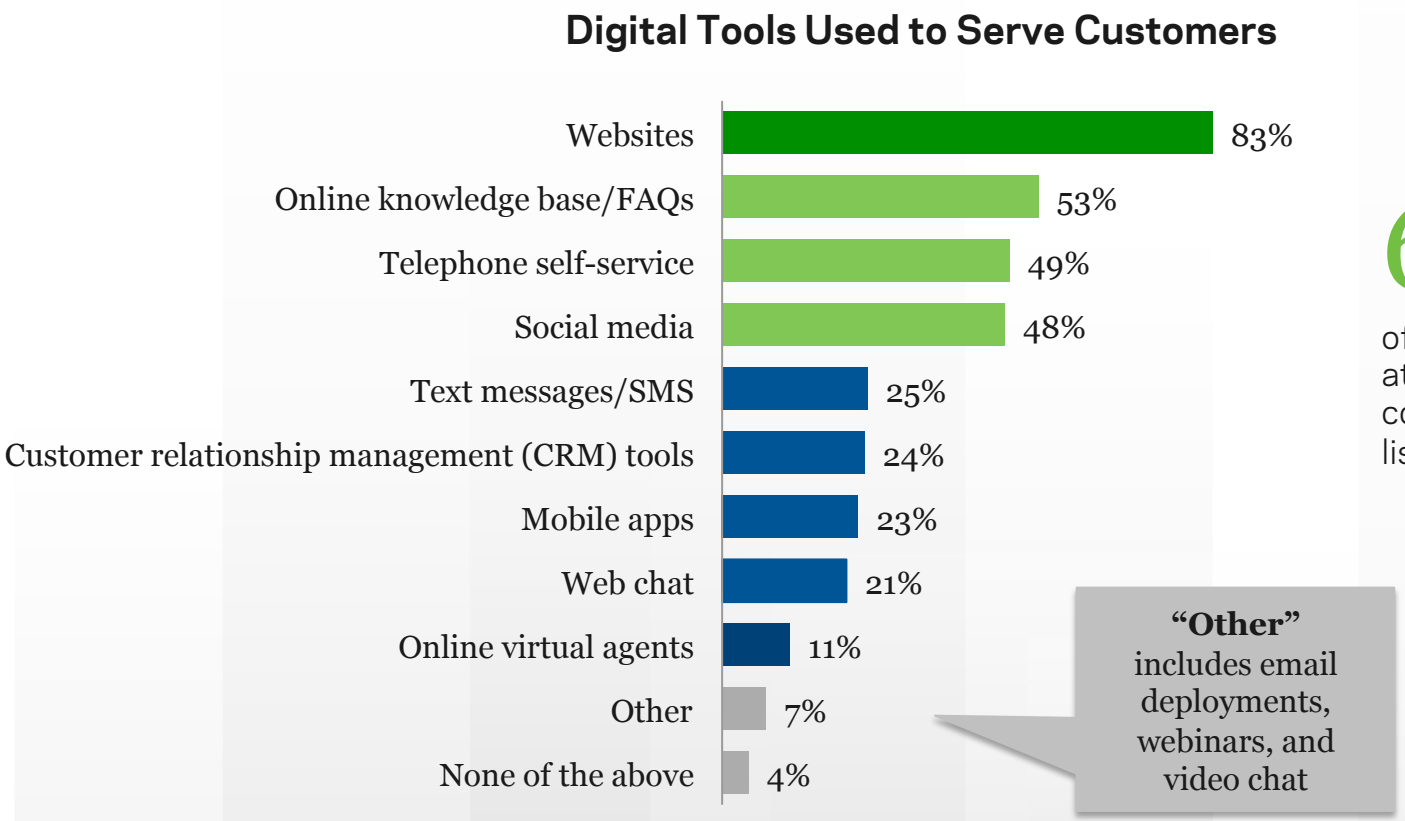
Digital service delivery and engagement tools fare slightly better, but could still be improved

How would you grade your agency's use of digital tools to support…



Percentage of all respondents, n=365, 367, and 375, respectively

Agencies have yet to fully diversify their use of customer-oriented digital tools and services

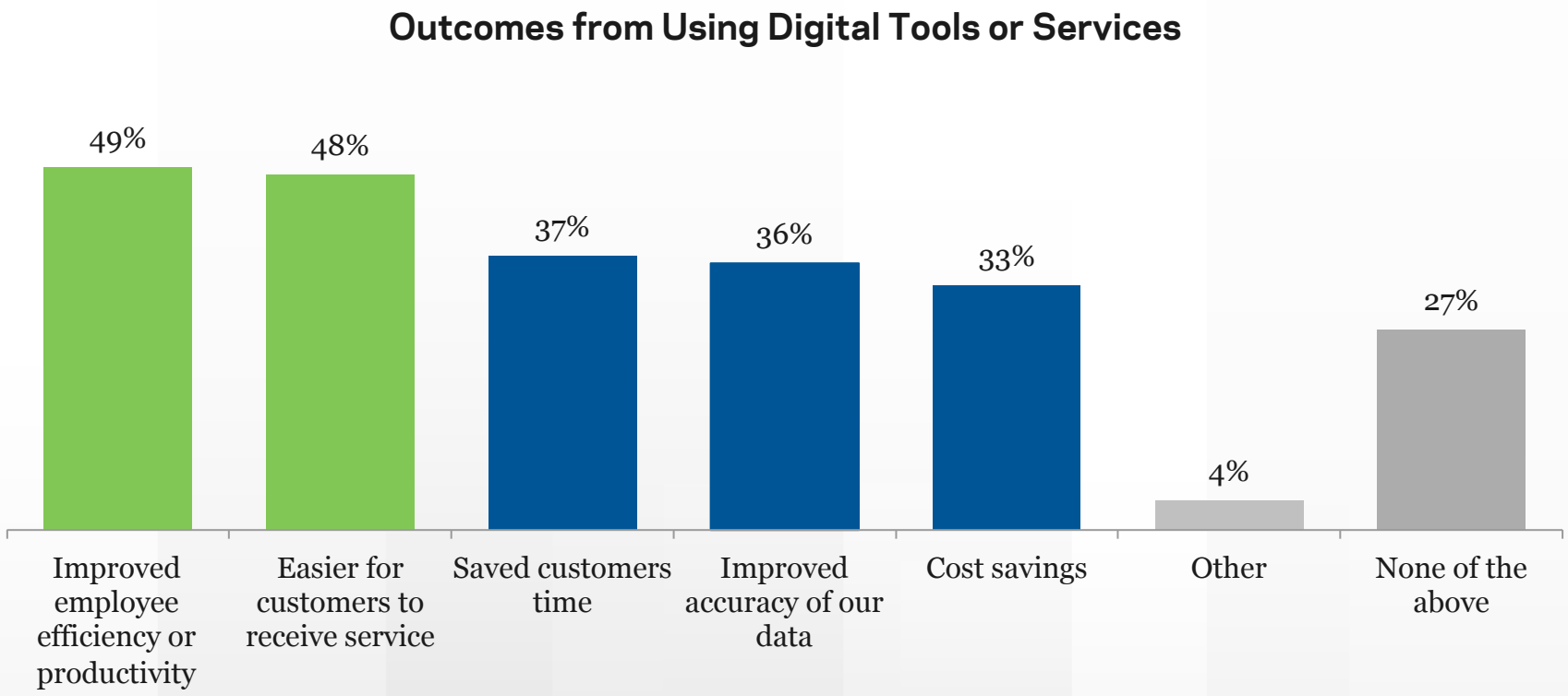


68%

of respondents use at least **three** digital collaboration tools listed here

Percentage of respondents, n=367
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

3 in 4 respondents identify positive outcomes from digital services, led by productivity gains



Percentage of respondents, n=326
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Some respondents share early successes with digital tools…

> *My team is in a fully mobile work environment and holds meetings virtually as a normal part of doing our work. We also use live collaboration tools to share working documents with those working remotely, enabling immediate delivery of documents and shortening review times.*

> *In my agency, we collaborate with our surrounding offices using an internal chat program and editing software that allows us to look at data from our other locations.*

Sampling of open-ended responses

… but others express concerns or frustrations with the lack of digital progress

> *The internal communication within my department is non-existent. There may be an attempt by some to use the available tools, but digital communication has not been a supported priority.*

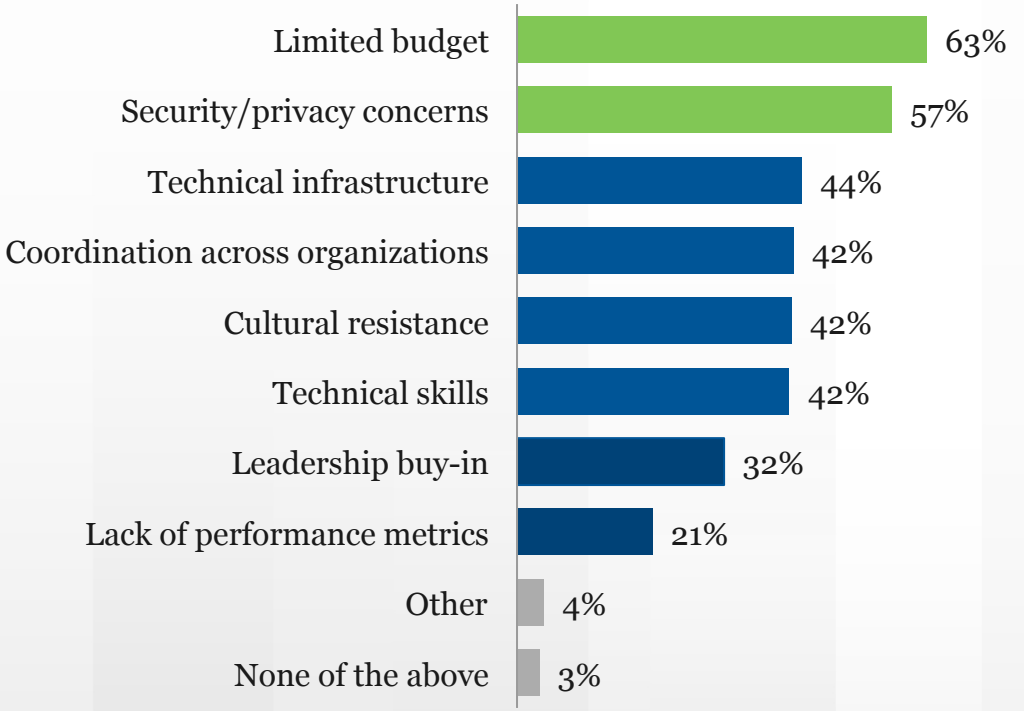
> *I know that [collaborative tools] are starting to be used in my agency, but training and marketing of the product should be solicited to employees. If no one uses it, what good is it?*

Sampling of open-ended responses

ii.

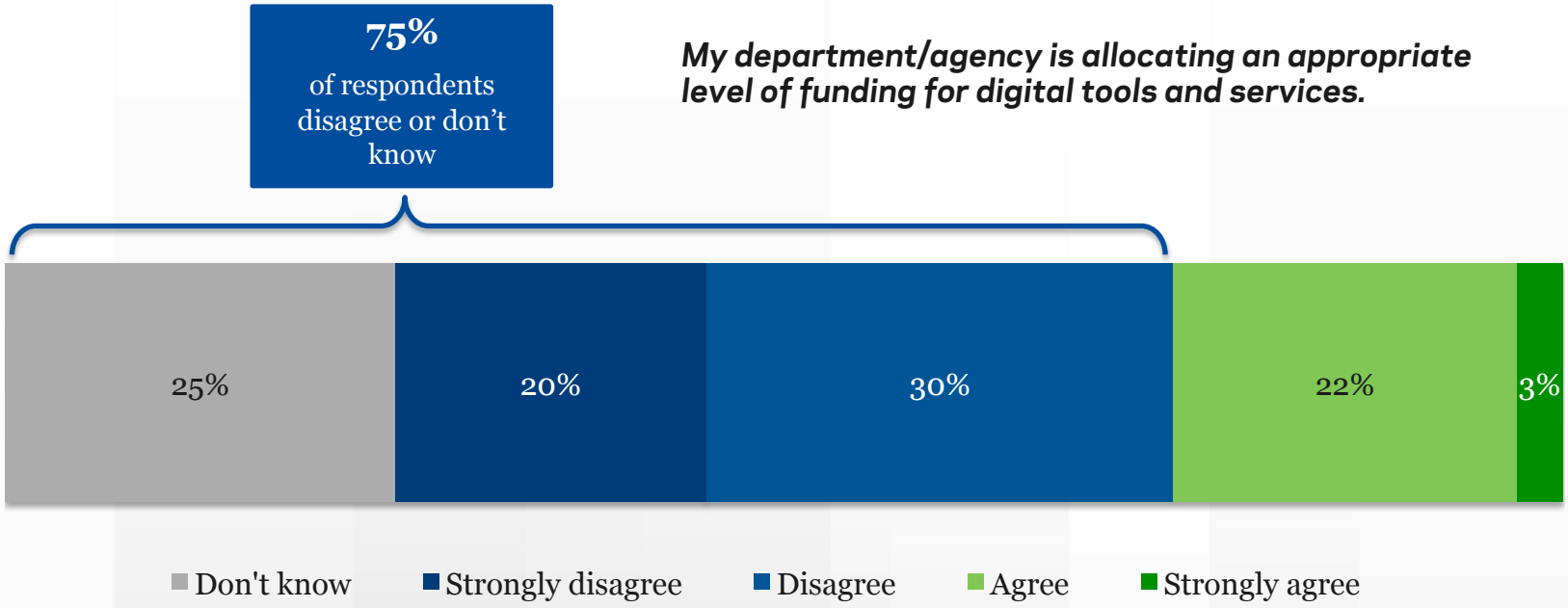
Addressing Current Challenges

Budget, security, and privacy issues are the top barriers to incorporating digital tools



Percentage of respondents, n=319
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

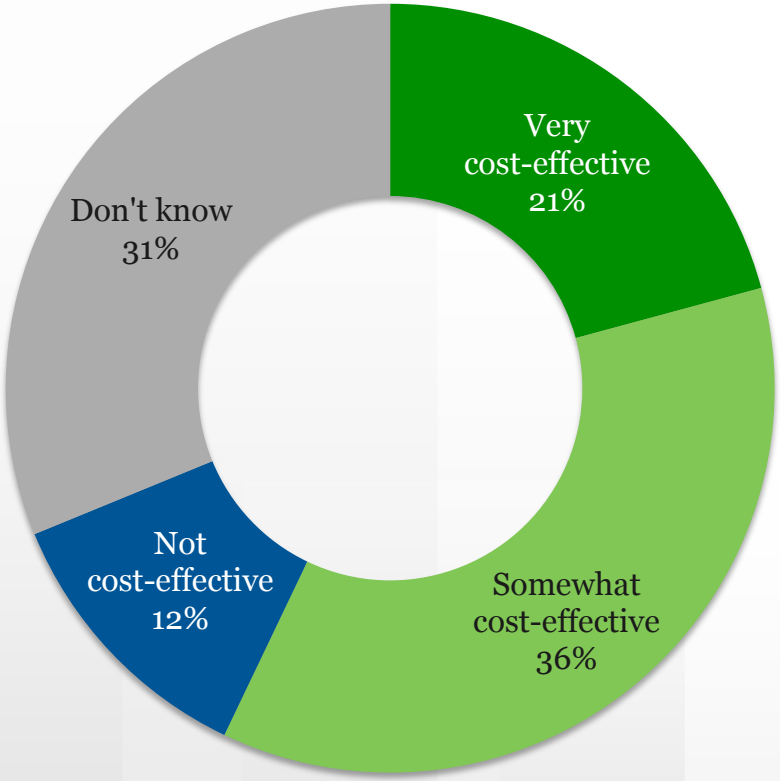
In light of budget challenges, few say their agency spends the right amount on digital



Percentage of respondents, n=319

Current perceptions of the cost-effectiveness of digital tools varies

How cost-effective are digital tools in supporting your organization's mission?



Percentage of respondents, n=317

The *U.S. Digital Services Playbook* provides best practices to overcome these obstacles

Released in August 2014, the White House's *U.S. Digital Services Playbook* lays out a number of best practices for digital delivery, including:

- How to think about end user needs to provide a comfortable and convenient experience for customers
- How to establish digital delivery teams and acquisition standards that make projects iterative and provide flexibility to technology procurement
- What types of employee skillsets agencies should look to recruit, hire, and develop to deliver digital services successfully
- How agencies can measure the progress and effectiveness of their services and all of the above, including specific types of metrics

U.S. Digital Services Playbook

The American people expect to interact with government through digital channels such as websites, email, and mobile applications. By building better digital services that meet the needs of the people that use our services, we can make the delivery of our policy and programs more effective.

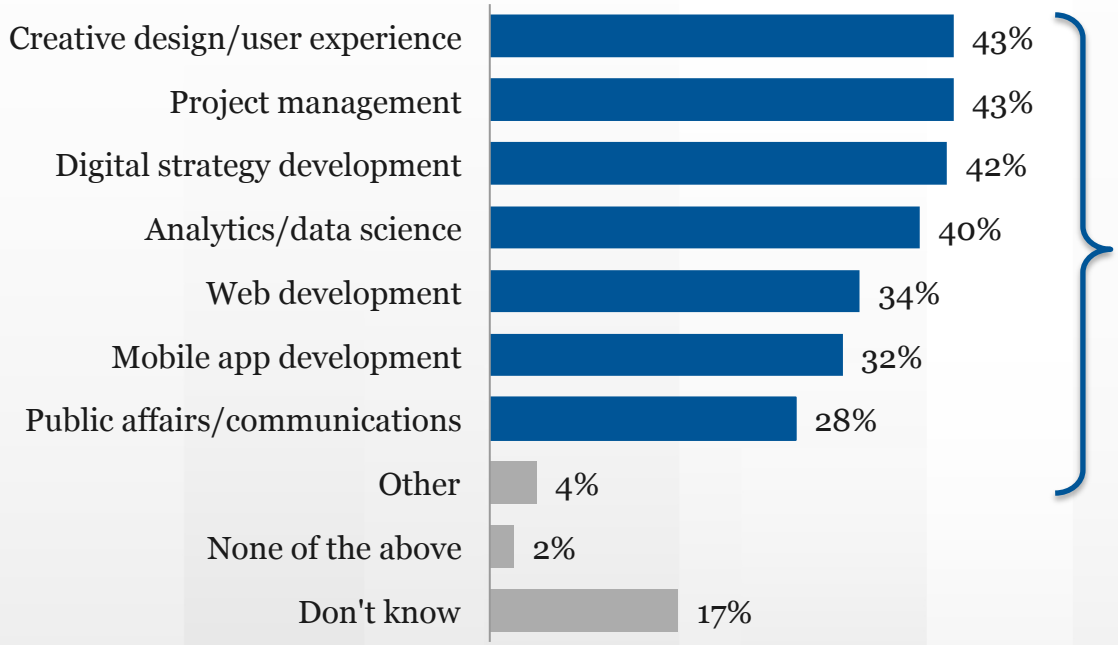
Today, too many of our digital services projects do not work well, are delivered late, or are over budget. To increase the success rate of these projects, the U.S. Government needs a new approach. We created a playbook of 13 key "plays" drawn from successful best practices from the private sector and government that, if followed together, will help government build effective digital services.

playbook.cio.gov

Per the Playbook, agencies can strengthen employee skillsets to improve digital delivery

The new U.S. Digital Services Playbook encourages agencies to seek out talented employees who have experience creating modern digital services.

In your opinion, which of the following skillsets could be strengthened or added in your department/agency?

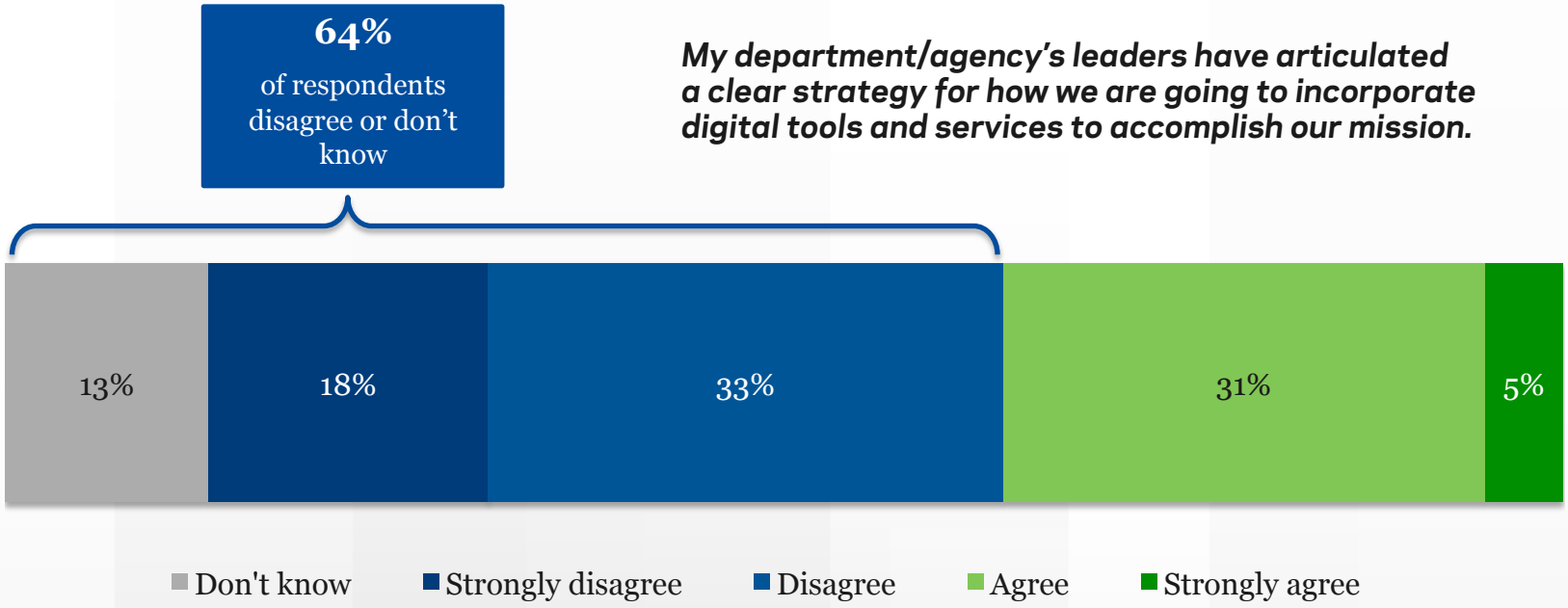


81%

of respondents indicate at least one digital-related skill deficit in their agency

Percentage of respondents, n=324
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Agency leadership can articulate clearer goals and objectives for digital delivery



Percentage of respondents, n=322

Some respondents report that their agency uses metrics to drive customer-facing decisions:

"Play 2" of the recently released U.S. Digital Services Playbook encourages the use of metrics and data to drive decisions at every step of the customer experience.

How does your department/agency measure customer satisfaction?

> *"Customer satisfaction is measured through interactive customer evaluation responses, trended by comment content and metrics on non-freeform responses which are supplemented by an Annual Customer Service Survey."*

> *"My agency uses a business plan that is updated every fiscal year that includes goals and core business measures, including metrics that we aim to hit."*

Sampling of open-ended responses

Other agencies can still improve on incorporating metrics into decision making:

> *In my agency, we do not measure customer satisfaction and make no changes to delivery to address issues.*

> *While we do use some scorecards, I haven't seen any quantitative measuring take place… zero.*

Sampling of open-ended responses

4

Final Considerations

When improving digital collaboration and service delivery…

Make digital the default

Though agencies have already made some progress in incorporating digital tools for both collaboration and customer service delivery, many have yet to fully diversify the ways in which employees and external customers can engage, interact, or utilize digital services. Doing so can help make digital the 'new normal' and accelerate the shift away from older, less efficient methods.

Develop the skillsets necessary for successful delivery

As agencies aim to diversify and improve the effectiveness of their digital tools, they should look not only at technological considerations but also ensure they have the skillsets internally to successfuly plan, build, and execute on new digital initiatives. The *U.S. Digital Services Playbook* offers specific suggestions on the types of skillsets and capabilities agencies should look for when recruiting new employees or seeking external assistance to fill the skill deficits indicated by survey respondents. Seeking and applying the experience of seasoned digital experts can help federal agencies more efficiently provide digital services to end users.

Articulate clearer strategic goals

While the common refrain of budget, security, and privacy concerns hamper digital implementation, agency leadership can start to overcome these obstacles by articulating a clearer vision for digital services. This includes not only specific goals and deadlines, but a variety of metrics that will allow decision makers to evaluate the effectiveness of the services and continuously improve the development and deployment process.

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