

Government Business Council

Underwritten by:

AcQUia®

Digital Government 2014: The Two-Year Progress Report

A Candid Survey of Federal
Leaders

July 2014

Purpose

On May 23, 2012, the Obama Administration launched the Digital Government Strategy, an effort to improve the way that agencies utilize digital tools and data to improve services for the American people. The strategy builds upon four principles: Information-Centric, Shared Platform, Customer-Centric, and Security and Privacy.

Two years later, government agencies vary in their progress toward many of the goals set forth in the Digital Government Strategy. To better understand how agencies are improving digital services, and to measure progress in each of the four strategy areas, Government Business Council (GBC) and Acquia undertook an in-depth research study.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of federal leaders regarding progress of Digital Government Strategy efforts, GBC deployed a survey to a random sample of *Government Executive*, *Nextgov*, and *Defense One* online and print subscribers on June 24, 2014. The pool of 357 respondents includes those from more than 30 defense and civilian agencies, including GS-11 through -15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service. N-values vary by question, reflecting the responses of those familiar with the subject matter.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Agencies have made modest progress in digital efforts, driven largely by compliance and cost

On average, federal leaders give their agencies a 'C+' grade in digital strategy efforts. Only 11 percent of respondents rate their agency's efforts as excellent, whereas 35 percent describe efforts as either unsatisfactory or poor. Respondents overwhelmingly indicate that compliance with mandates is the leading factor driving digital efforts in their agency, with 42 percent selecting it as the number one driver. Cost efficiency is seen as the second most important driver for agencies, while encouraging innovation ranks last.

Agencies prioritize security and privacy, but should work to achieve in other strategy areas

Of the four digital government strategy areas (Information-Centric, Shared Platform, Customer-Centric, Security and Privacy), respondents indicate that their agencies have made the most progress in Security and Privacy (53 percent). In contrast, progress in open data initiatives, open source CMS adoption, reducing IT duplication, and customer engagement varies across agencies and shows significant room for improvement.

Agencies may be able to navigate budget constraints with shared platforms

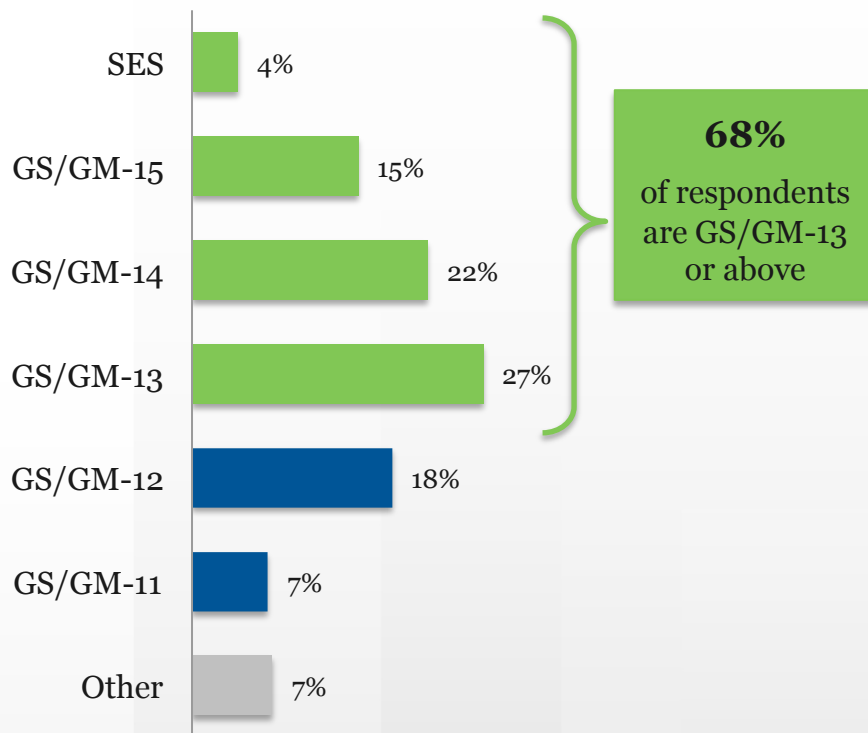
Respondents indicate that limited budget (63 percent), skills gaps (52 percent), and legacy systems (50 percent) are the biggest challenges to digital government. Agencies may also choose to take heed of recommendations within the Shared Platform strategy area that seek to maximize efficiency and cut costs. For instance, while the Digital Government Strategy explicitly encourages the use of open source technologies to improve efficiency, only 46 percent of agencies currently leverage such platforms. Furthermore, while 60 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that their agency has reduced duplicative IT systems internally, 58 percent do not believe their agency has done the same by working with other agencies.

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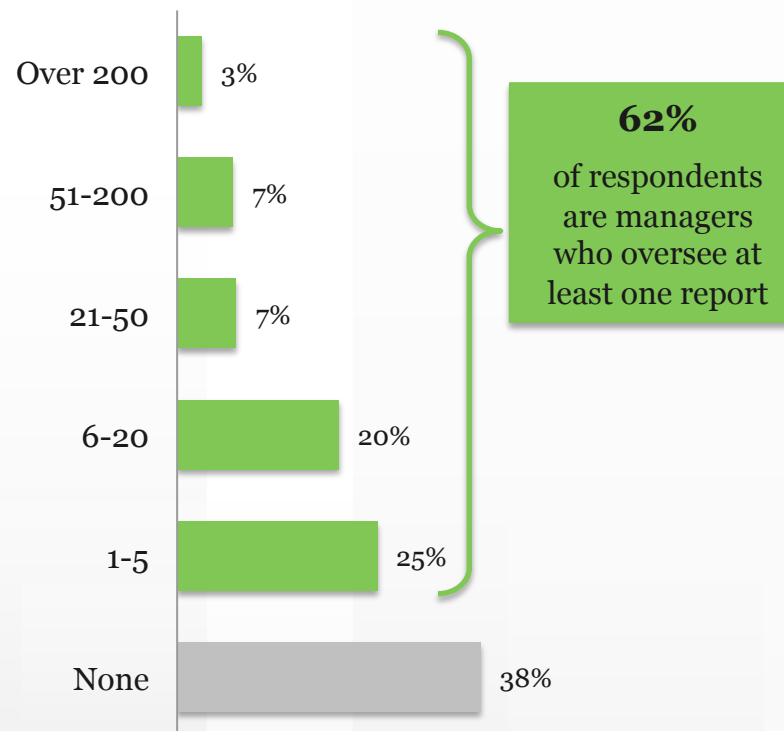
Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are largely senior federal leaders

Job Grade



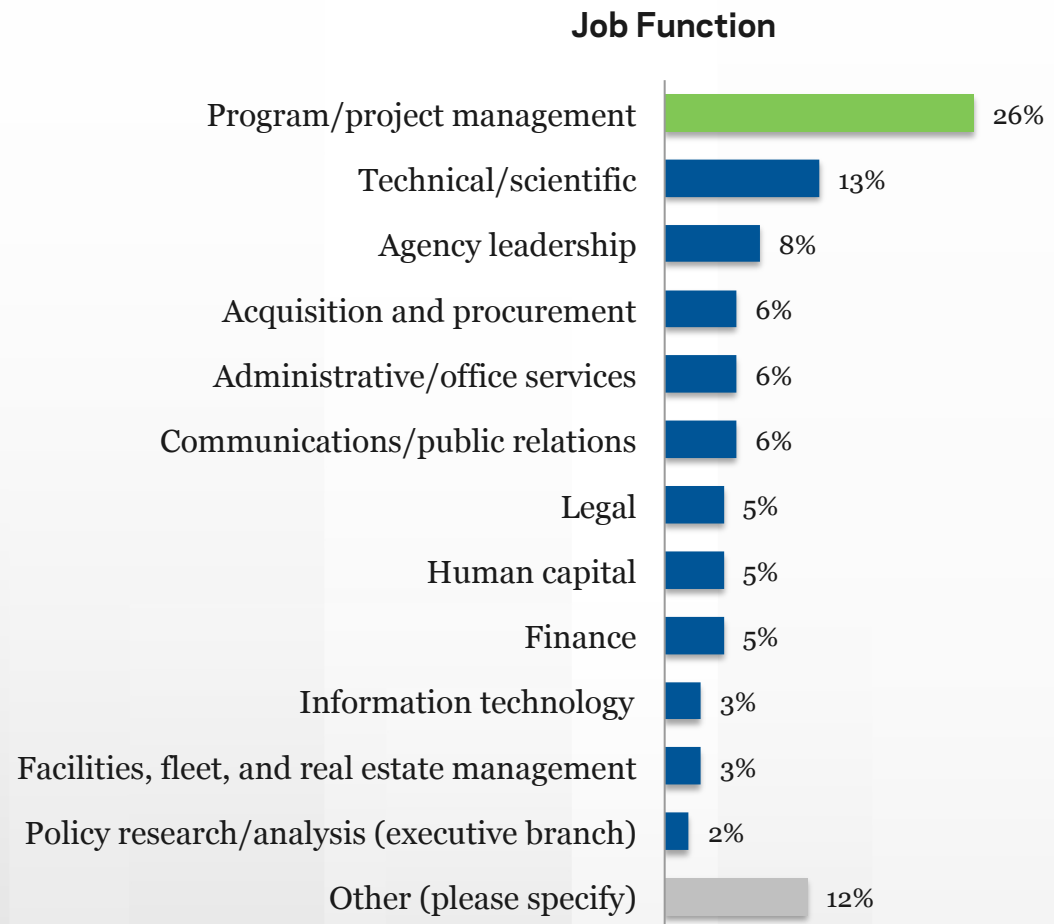
Reports/Oversees



Percentage of respondents, n=289

Program/project management is most common job function

- ▶ Over a quarter of respondents work in program/project management.
- ▶ “Other” includes categories such as auditors and investigators, logistics, public health, and law enforcement.



Percentage of respondents, n=289

Most Represented Agencies

Department of Agriculture	Department of Labor
Department of Veterans Affairs	Department of Justice
Department of Homeland Security	Department of Energy
Department of the Army	Department of Housing and Urban Development
Department of Health and Human Services	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Department of the Air Force	Department of State
Environmental Protection Agency	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
General Services Administration	Department of Education
Office of the Secretary of Defense (includes DISA, DIA, NSA, DLA, DARPA, etc.)	United States Marine Corps
Department of the Interior	National Science Foundation
Social Security Administration	Office of Personnel Management
Department of Transportation	Small Business Administration
Department of the Treasury	Government Accountability Office
Department of the Navy	Other Independent Agency
Department of Commerce	

Agencies listed in order of frequency

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Research Findings

i.

Digital Government Strategy

Digital Government Strategy

Launched in May 2012, the White House Digital Government Strategy sets out to accomplish three things:

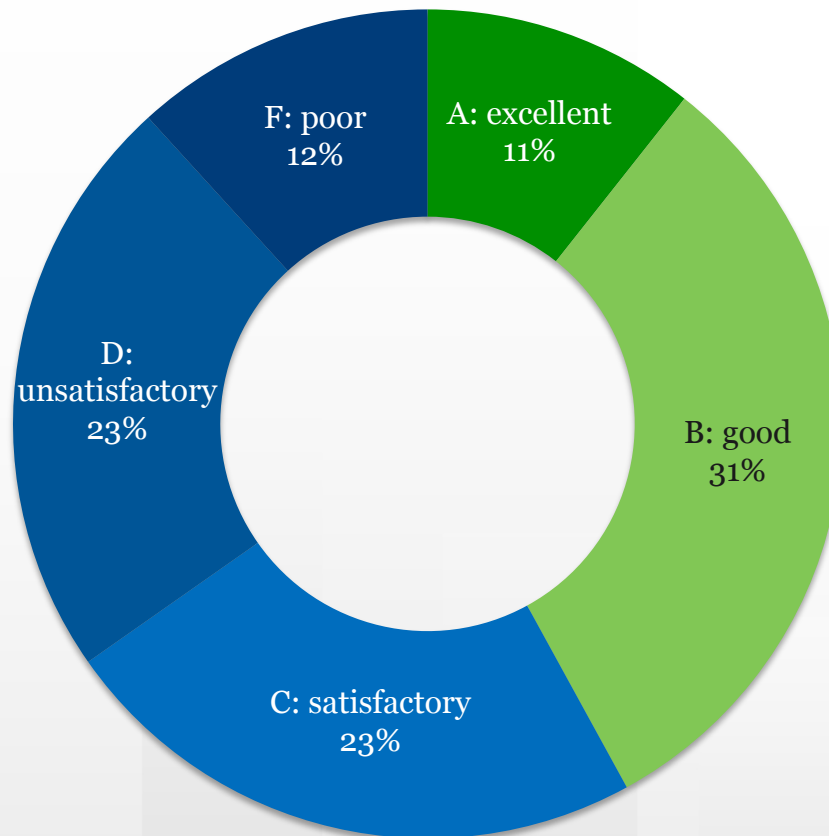
- ▶ Enable the American people and an increasingly mobile workforce to access high-quality digital government information and services anywhere, anytime, on any device.
- ▶ Ensure that as the government adjusts to this new digital world, we seize the opportunity to procure and manage devices, applications, and data in smart, secure and affordable ways.
- ▶ Unlock the power of government data to spur innovation across our Nation and improve the quality of services for the American people.



Source: [Digital Government Strategy](#)

Federal digital strategy efforts thus far have room for improvement

How would you grade your department/agency's digital strategy efforts?



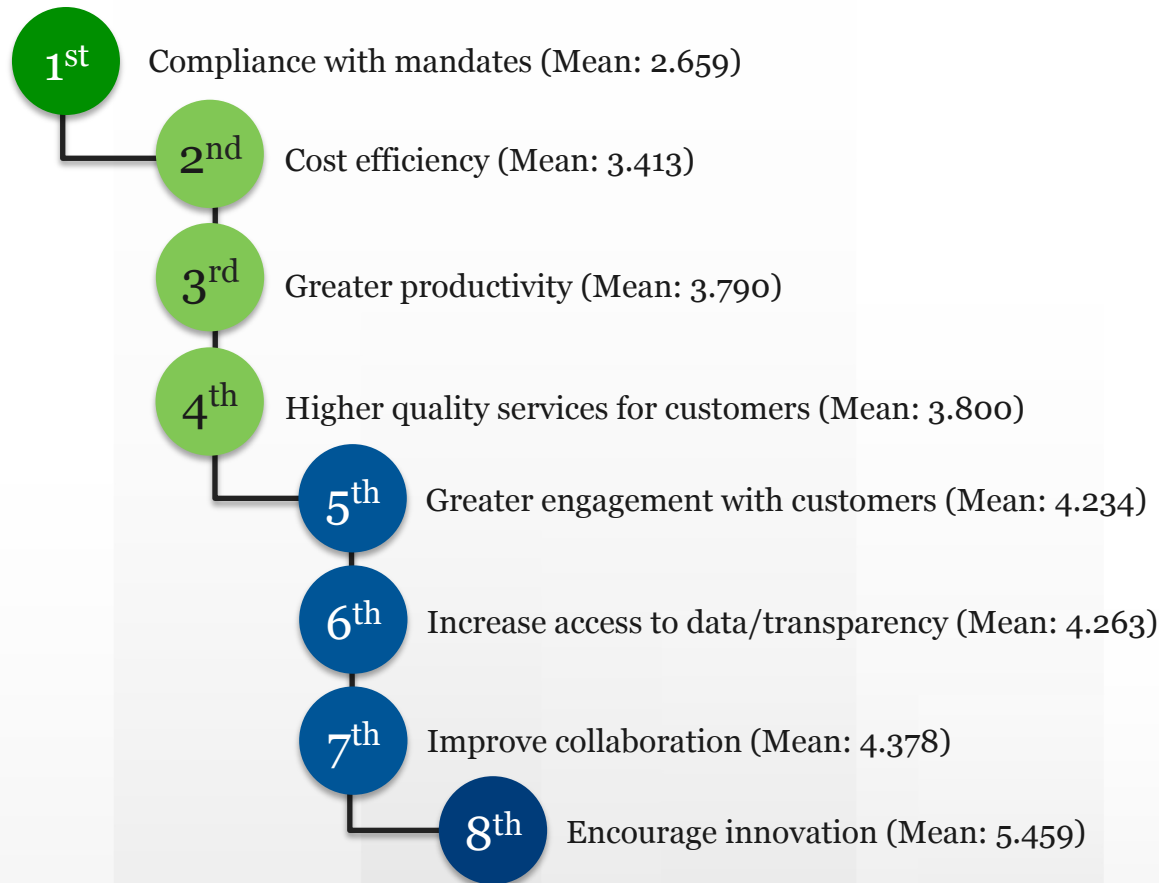
Average grade:

C+

Percentage of respondents, n=357

Compliance and cost drive agency digital efforts

Factors driving digital government efforts



Respondents were asked rank answer choices, n=285

Out of 285 federal leaders...

42%

indicate **compliance with mandates** is the number one factor driving digital government efforts in their agencies, followed distantly by **cost efficiency** (15% of respondents).

45%

do not identify **encouraging innovation** as a driving factor for digital government efforts in their agencies. In addition, fewer than 12% ranked it as one of the top three factors driving efforts in their agency, the lowest of all potential answer choices.

Percentage of respondents, n=285

The Digital Government Strategy is built upon four overarching principles:

“Information-Centric”

Managing data and content that can be shared, utilized, and presented in useful ways

“Shared Platform”

Shared services, collaboration, and standards within and across agencies

“Customer-Centric”

Using websites, mobile apps, and other modes of delivery to meet the needs of customers, both internal (e.g., employees) and external (e.g., citizens, businesses, state and local governments)

“Security and Privacy”

Secure delivery that protects information and privacy

ii.

Information- Centric

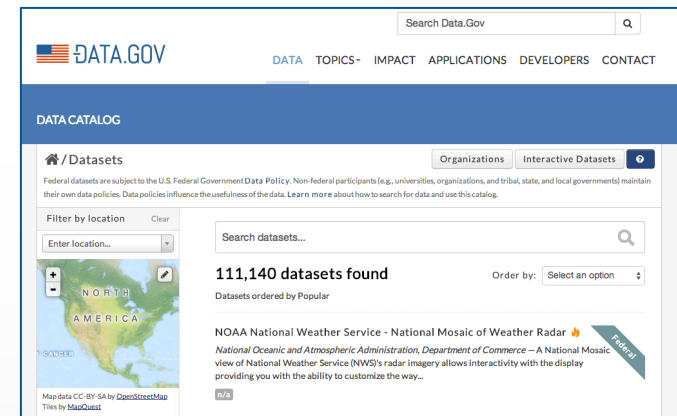
An Information-Centric approach...

...“moves us from managing ‘documents’ to managing discrete pieces of open data and content which can be tagged, shared, secured, mashed up and presented in the way that is most useful for the consumer of that information.”

This strategy area includes the following goals:

- ▶ Make Open Data, Content, and Web Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) the New Default
- ▶ Make Existing High-Value Data and Content Available through Web APIs

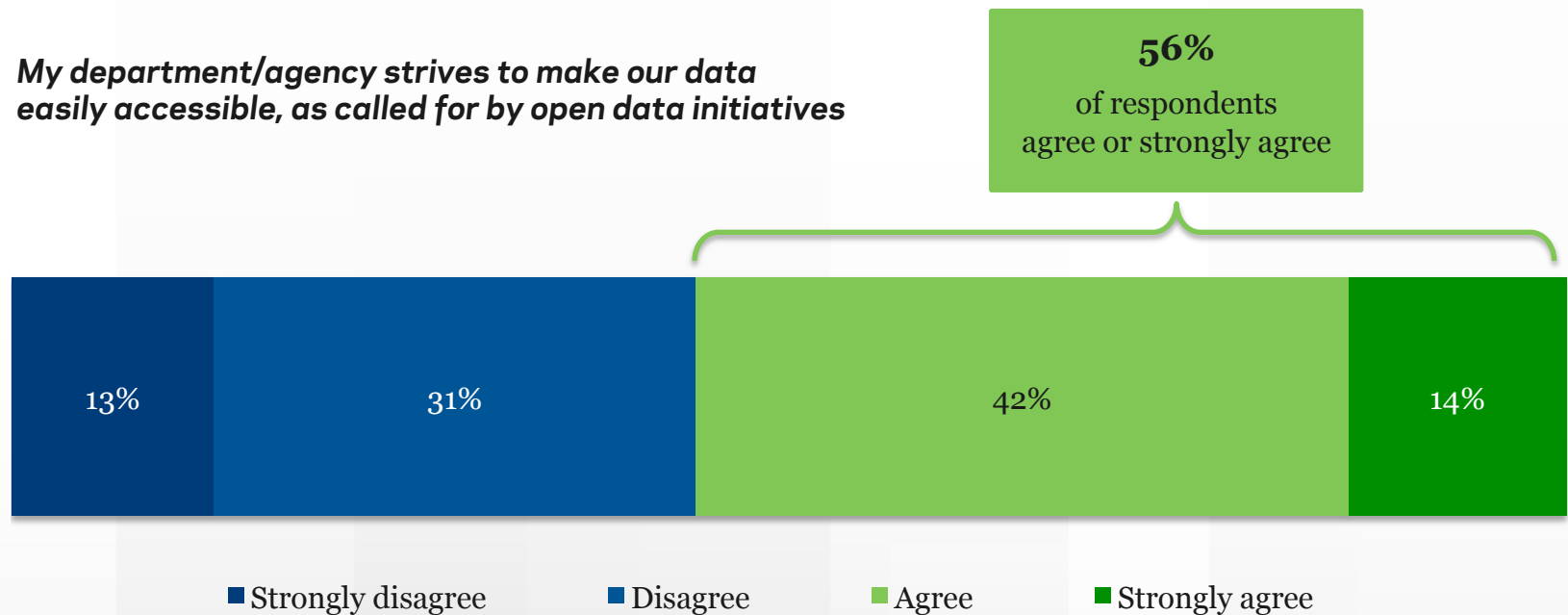
To assess progress in this strategy area, GBC asked questions about how agencies are currently making data and information more accessible and useable.



data.gov Official Website

Respondents are divided on whether their agency strives for accessibility of data

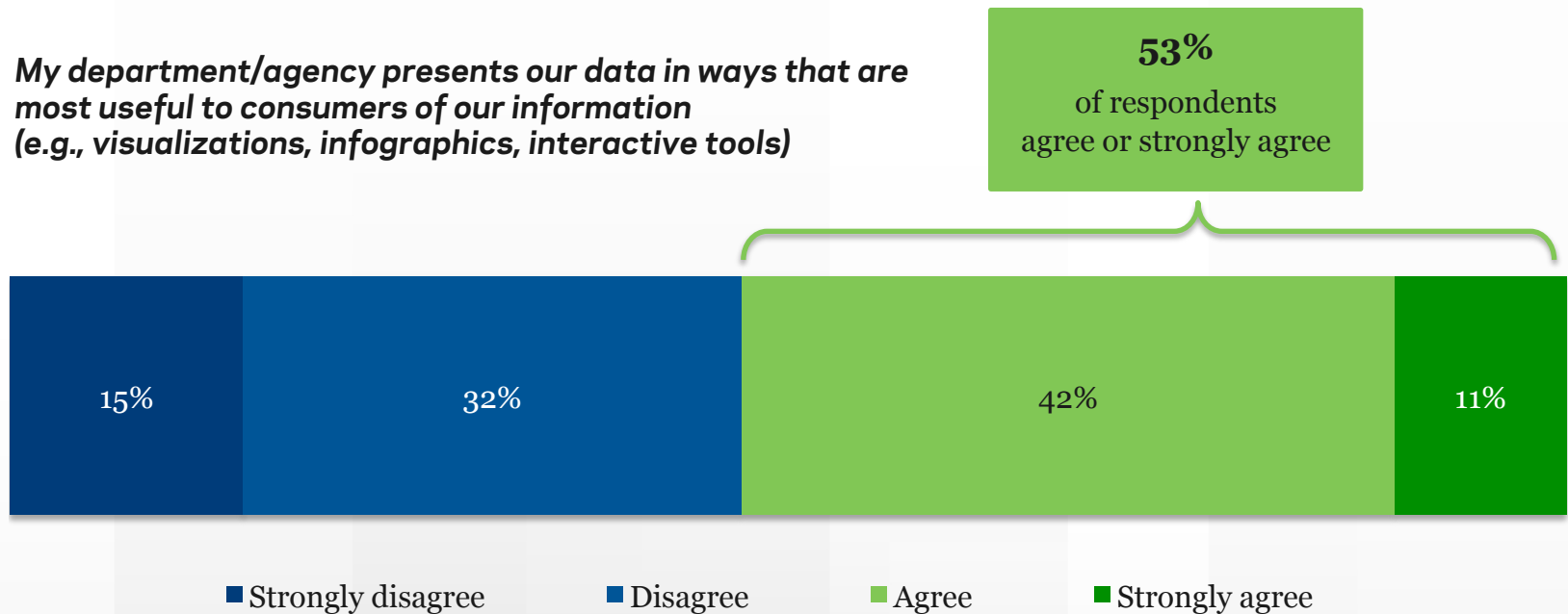
My department/agency strives to make our data easily accessible, as called for by open data initiatives



Percentage of respondents, n=274

Only half of respondents report their agency presents data in useful ways

My department/agency presents our data in ways that are most useful to consumers of our information (e.g., visualizations, infographics, interactive tools)

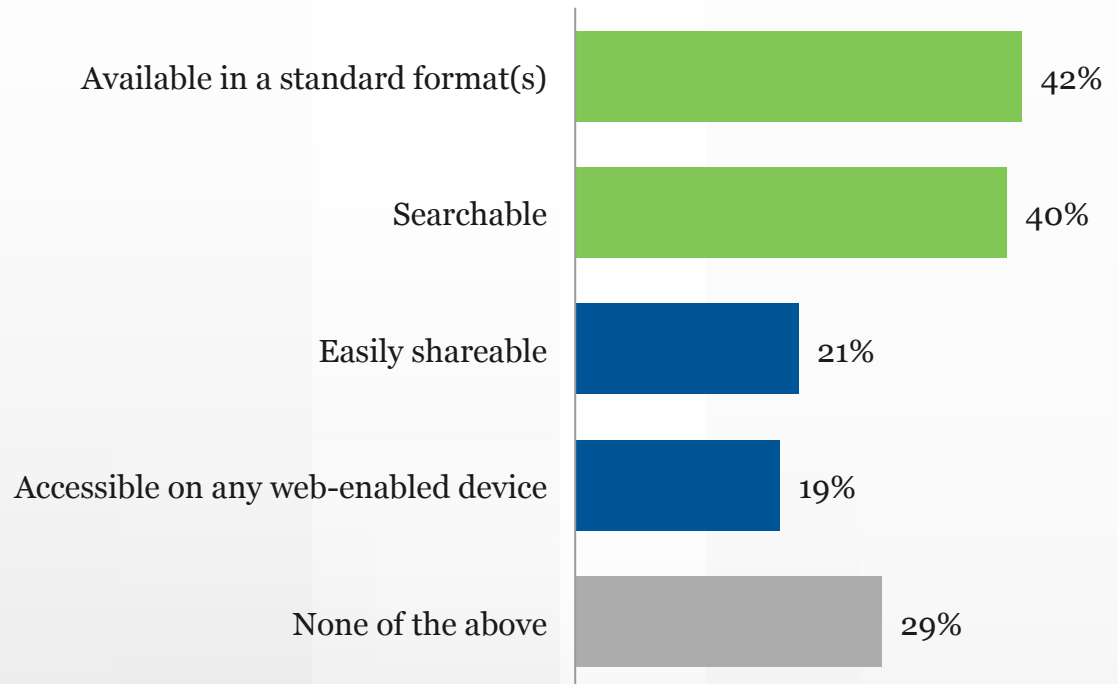


Percentage of respondents, n=282

Agencies still have much work to do to achieve open data goals

- ▶ Open data efforts like the Open Government Initiative encourage agencies to improve “transparency, public participation, and collaboration” through better use of data.
- ▶ While some agencies have made progress, **nearly one-third** of respondents selected “none of the above,” indicating that their agencies do not currently store or manage data in common ways that increase accessibility and usability.

Overall, my department/agency's data is stored or managed in a way that is...



Sources: White House Open Government Initiative; Quote from President Barack Obama, 2009. Percentage of respondents, n=282; Respondents were asked to select all that apply.

iii.

Shared Platform

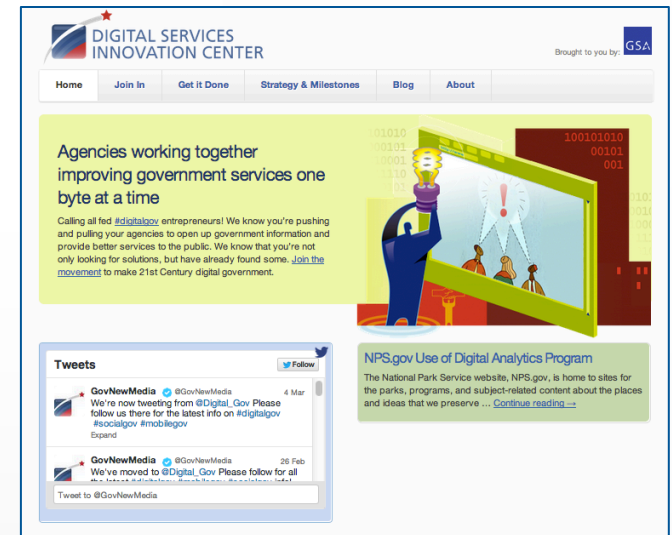
A Shared Platform approach...

...“helps us work together, both within and across agencies, to reduce costs, streamline development, apply consistent standards, and ensure consistency in how we create and deliver information.”

This principle area includes the following goals:

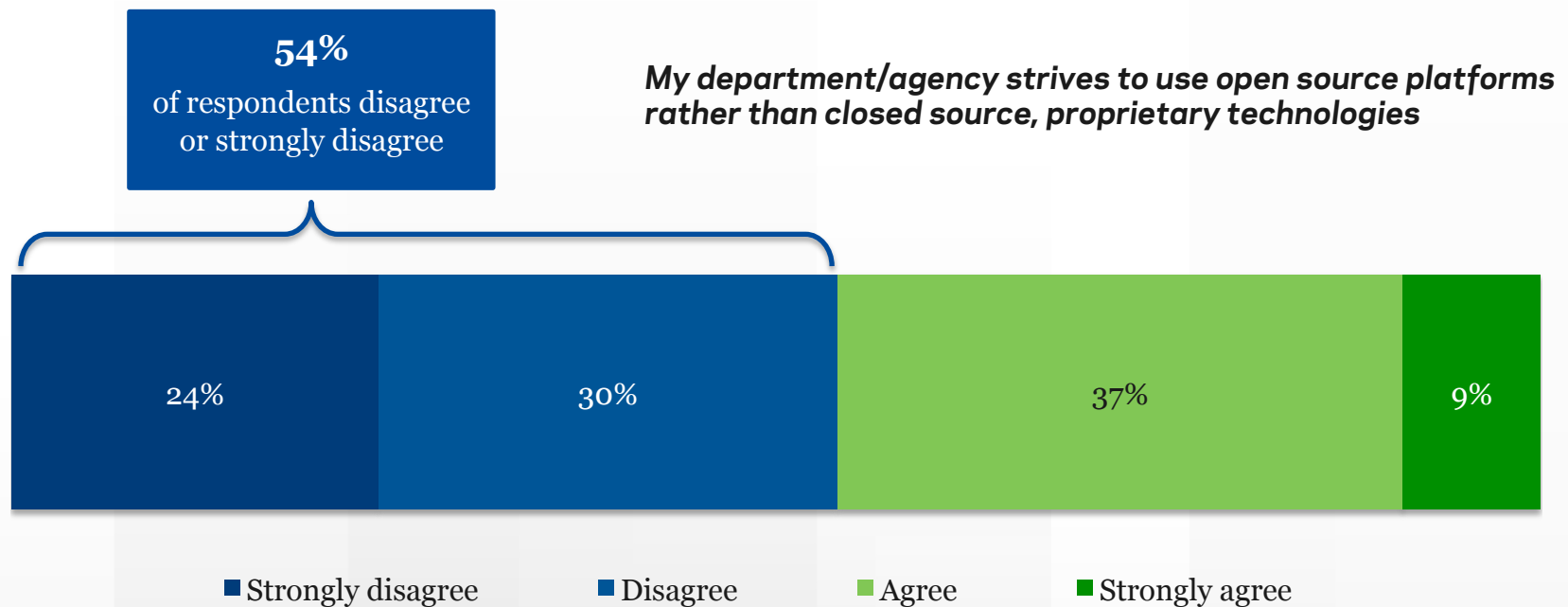
- ▶ Establish a Digital Services Innovation Center and Advisory Group
- ▶ Establish Intra-Agency Governance to Improve Delivery of Digital Services
- ▶ Shift to an Enterprise-Wide Asset Management and Procurement Model

To assess progress in this strategy area, GBC asked questions about agency use of open source solutions, as well as efforts to eliminate duplicative IT costs.



The Digital Services Innovation Center, managed by the General Services Administration

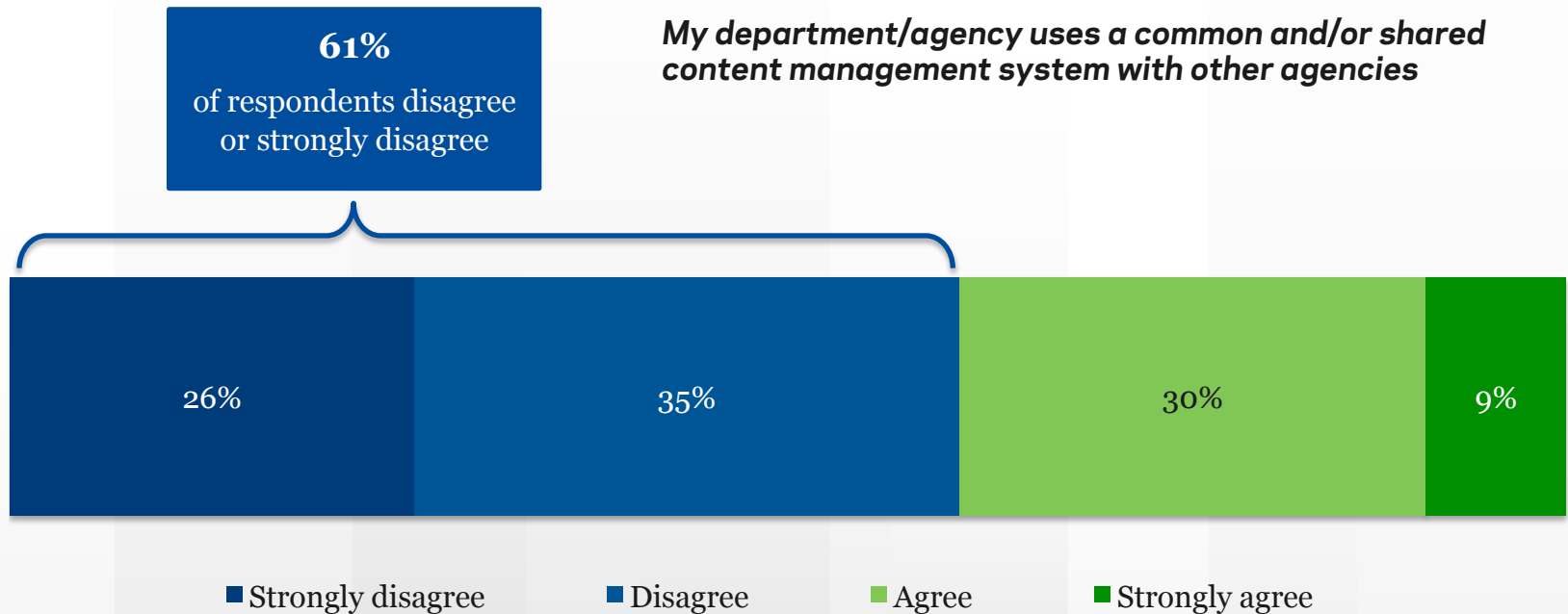
Respondents are divided on their agency's use of open source technology



Percentage of respondents, n=207

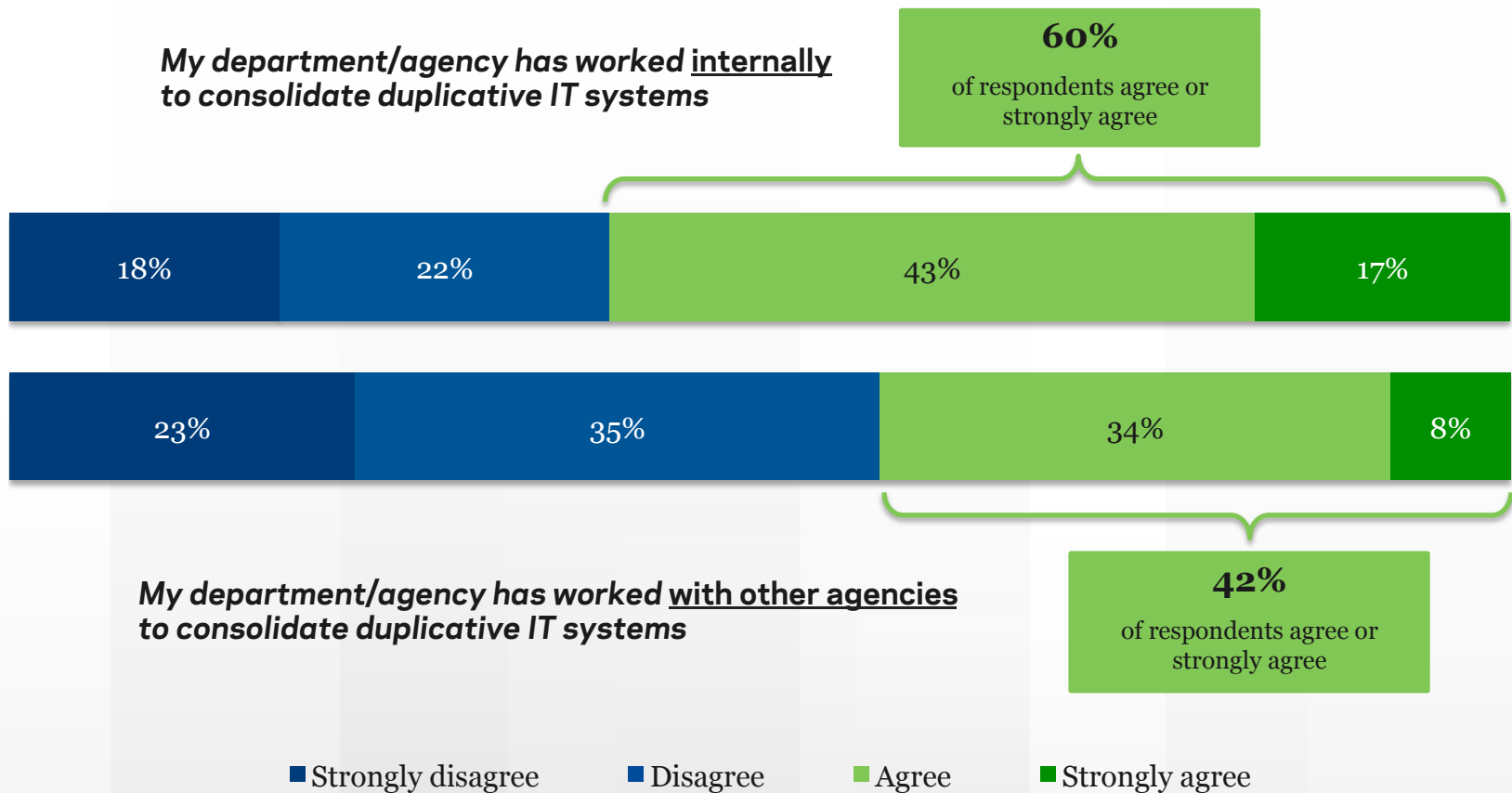
Less than half of respondents say their agencies use shared CMS platforms

The Digital Government Strategy directly encourages the federal government to make greater use of open source content management systems to “enable more sharing of data and make content more accessible.”



Percentage of respondents, n=203

Duplicative IT systems have been reduced within agencies, but less so across agencies



Percentage of all respondents, n=243 and 196, respectively

One survey respondent told us...

“ [My agency] needs to focus on building enterprise solutions in a timely manner that all offices can tap into and use. Redundant, parallel efforts are costly, but have been necessary to build capacity with a lack of enterprise solutions. ”

iv.

**Customer-
Centric**

A Customer-Centric approach...

...“influences how we create, manage, and present data through websites, mobile applications, raw data sets, and other modes of delivery, and allows customers to shape, share and consume information, whenever and however they want it.”

This principle area includes the following goals:

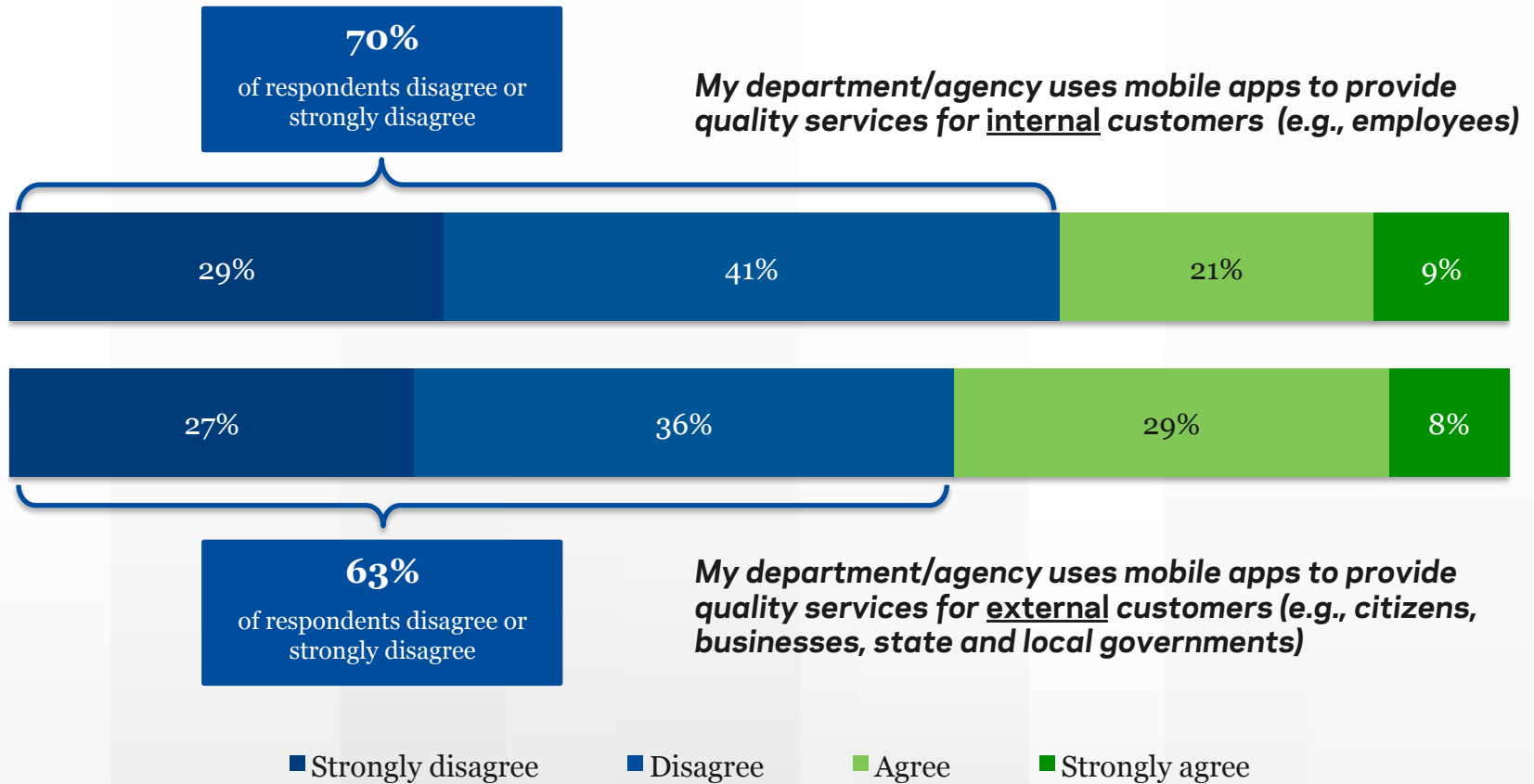
- ▶ Deliver Better Digital Services Using Modern Tools and Technologies
- ▶ Improve Priority Customer-Facing Services for Mobile Use
- ▶ Measure Performance and Customer Satisfaction to Improve Service Delivery

To assess progress in this strategy area, GBC asked questions about agency efforts in social media, mobile apps, and user satisfaction measurement.



Top to bottom: Official USA.gov Twitter page, White House YouTube channel, and NASA Flickr account image of agency-developed tablet apps

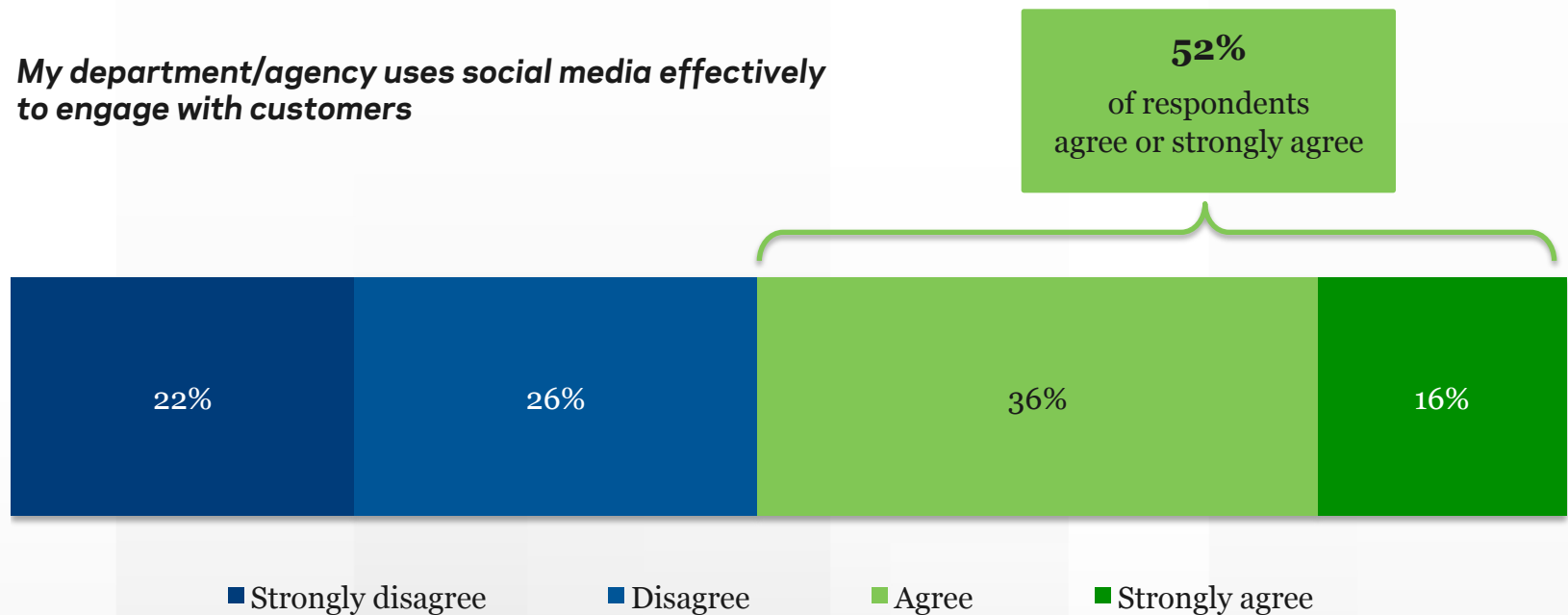
Agencies have yet to fully leverage mobile apps to provide quality customer service



Percentage of all respondents, n=271 and 254, respectively

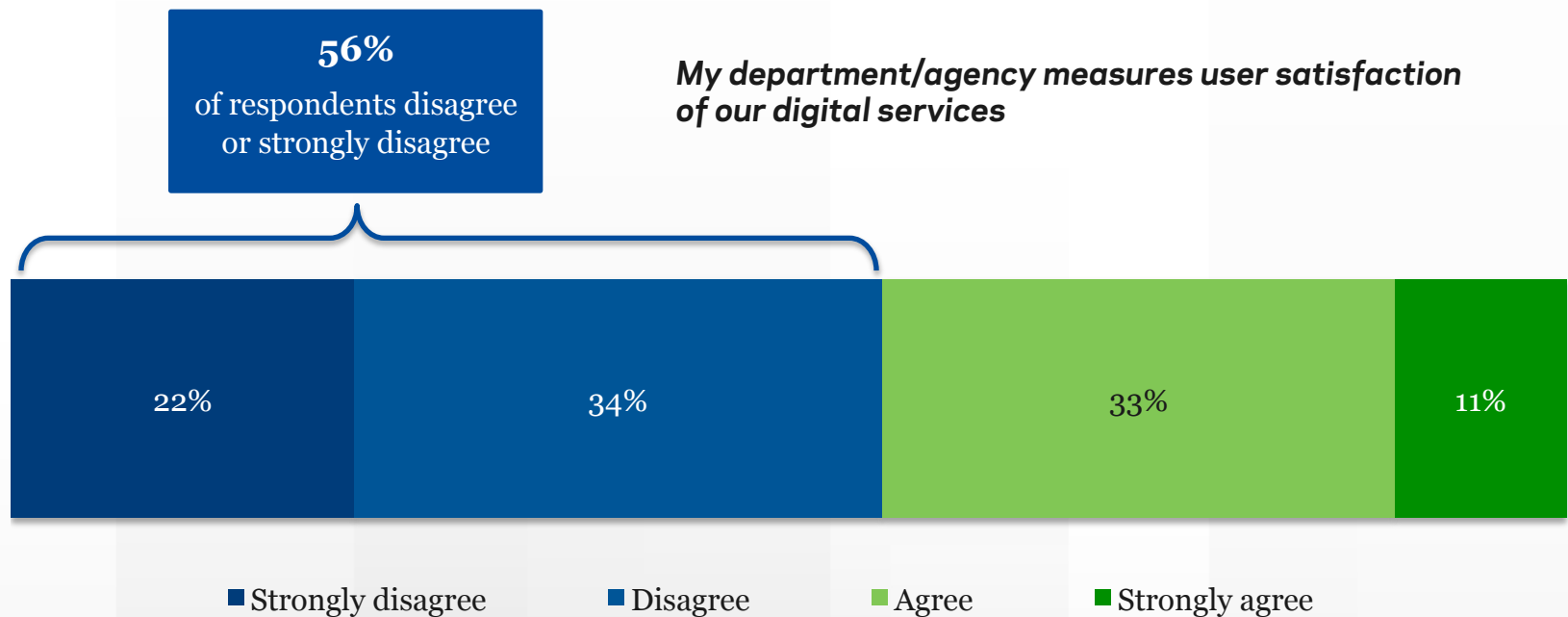
Only half of respondents believe their agencies utilize social media effectively

My department/agency uses social media effectively to engage with customers



Percentage of respondents, n=287

Fewer than half of respondents say their agencies measure user satisfaction



Percentage of all respondents, n=239

Respondents told us...

“ [My agency] needs to migrate into the mobile app world. Everyone is going that direction, we need to be too. ”

“ There are innovators across the agency, yet there are many strong pockets of "hold outs" who do not either understand or perhaps trust social media platforms. ”

V.

Security and Privacy

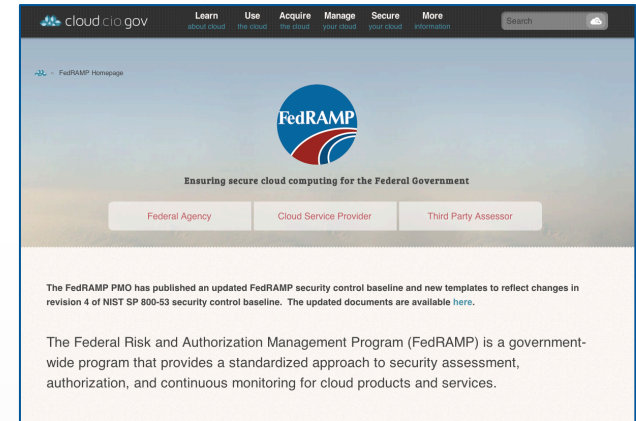
A platform of Security and Privacy...

...“ensures this innovation happens in a way that ensures the safe and secure delivery and use of digital services to protect information and privacy.

This principle area includes the following goals:

- ▶ Promote the Safe and Secure Adoption of New Technologies
- ▶ Evaluate and Streamline Security and Privacy Processes

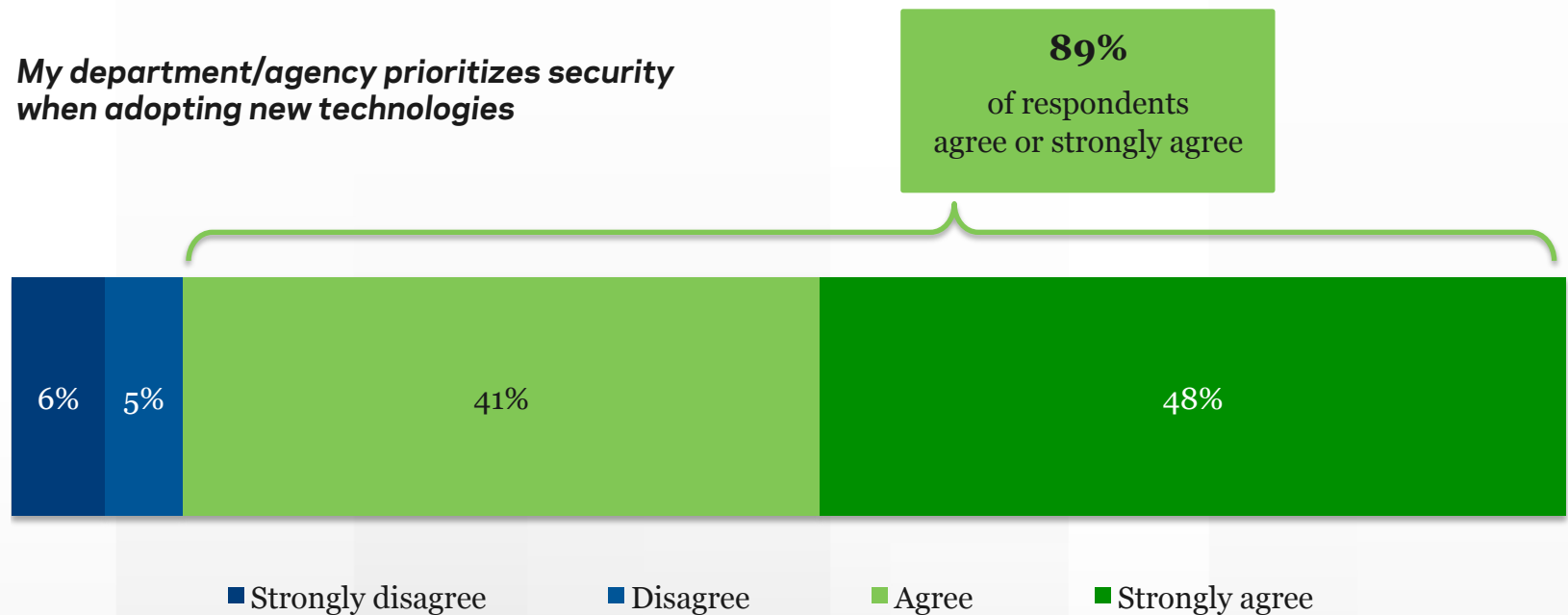
To assess progress in this strategy area, GBC asked questions about how respondents perceive their agency's prioritization of security and privacy.



Official website for FedRAMP, the GSA-managed program that provides security accreditations to federal cloud providers

Agencies prioritize security when adopting new technologies

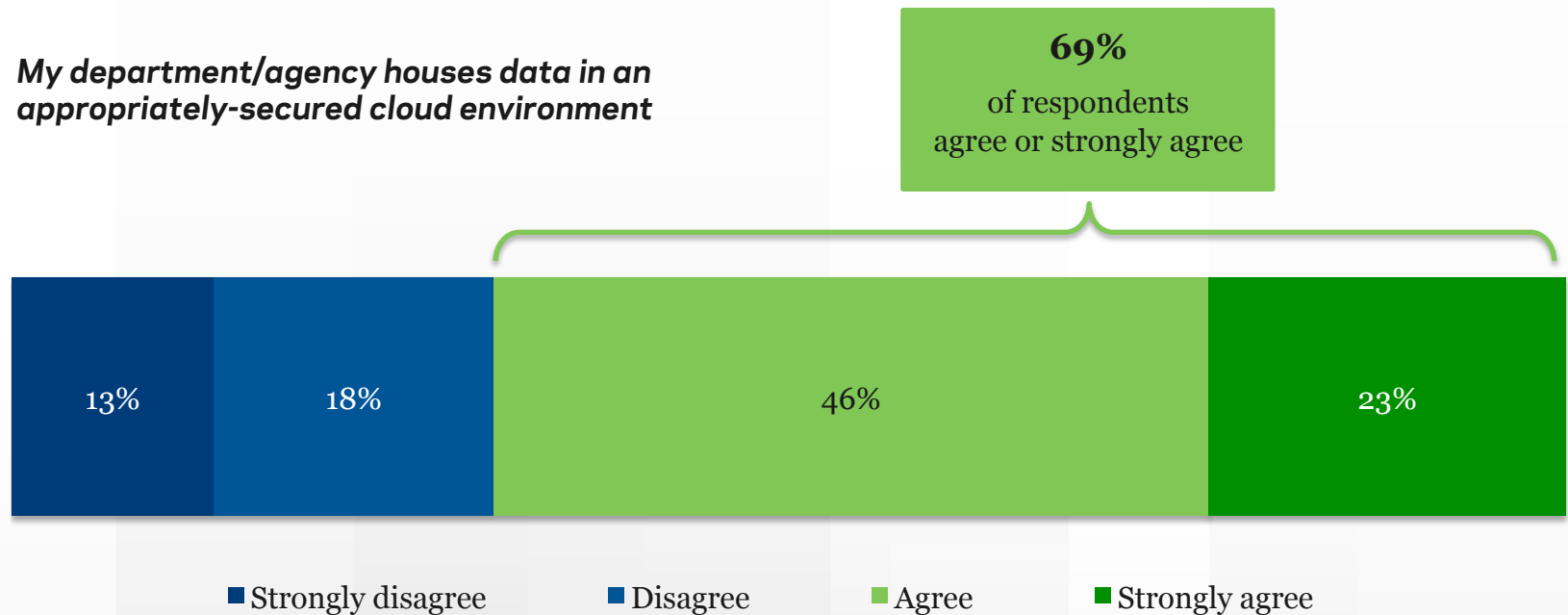
My department/agency prioritizes security when adopting new technologies



Percentage of respondents, n=296

Respondents are confident in the security of agency data stored in the cloud

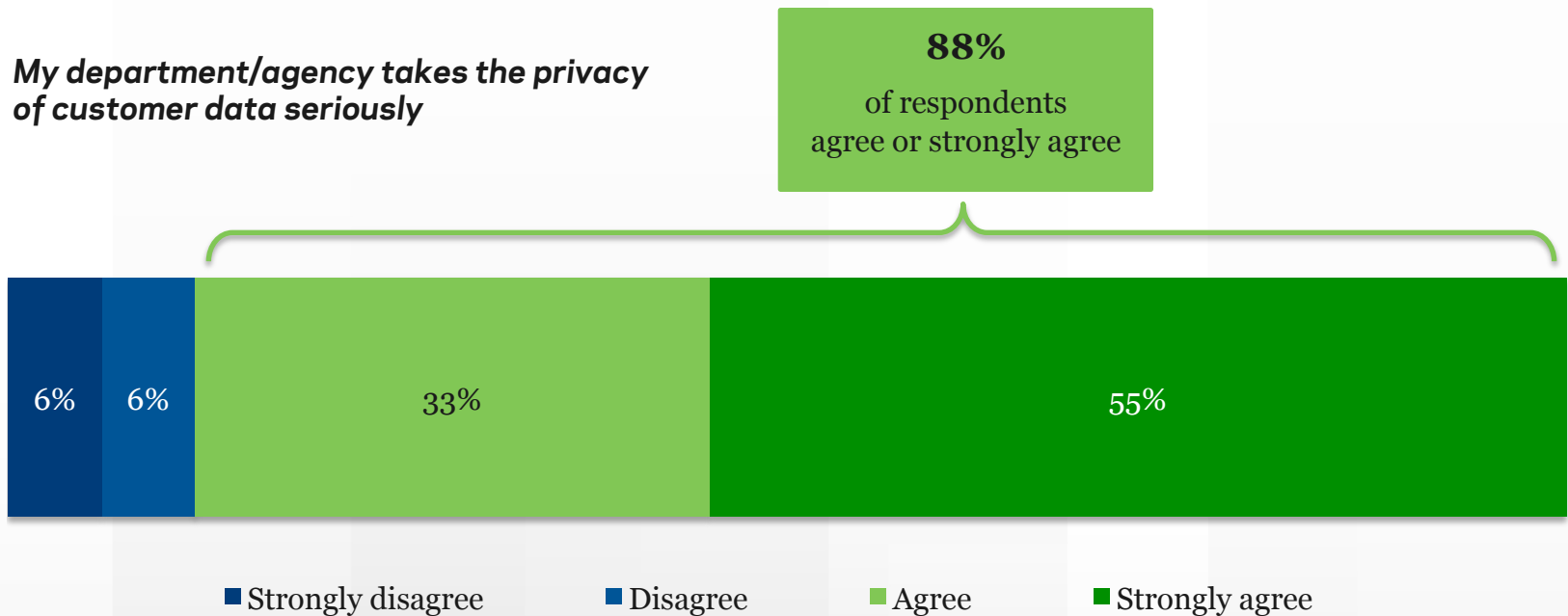
My department/agency houses data in an appropriately-secured cloud environment



Percentage of respondents, n=209

Agencies take the privacy of customer data seriously

My department/agency takes the privacy of customer data seriously



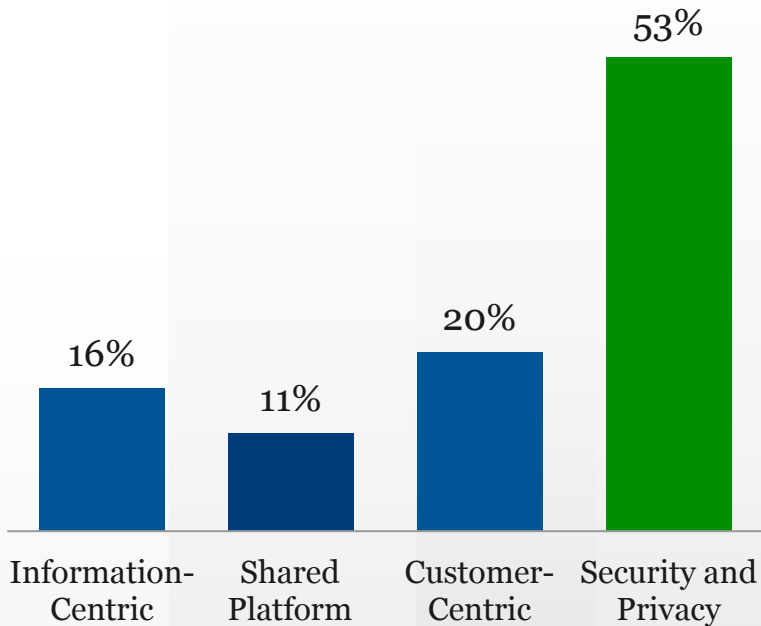
Percentage of respondents, n=314

vi.

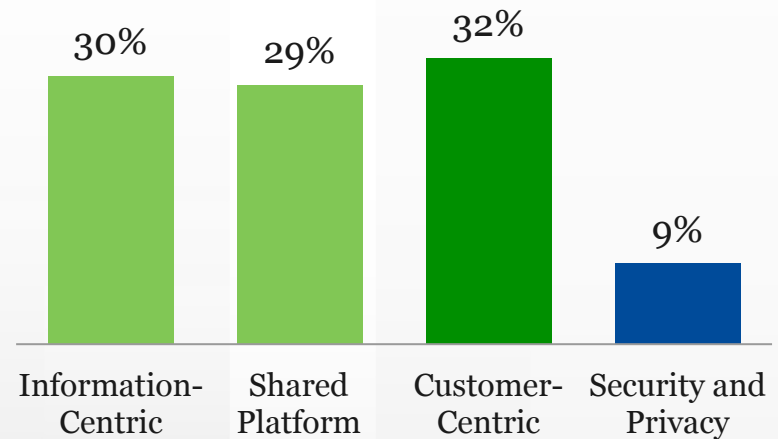
Moving Forward

Agencies have made strides in security and privacy, but other digital areas need attention

Areas of greatest progress



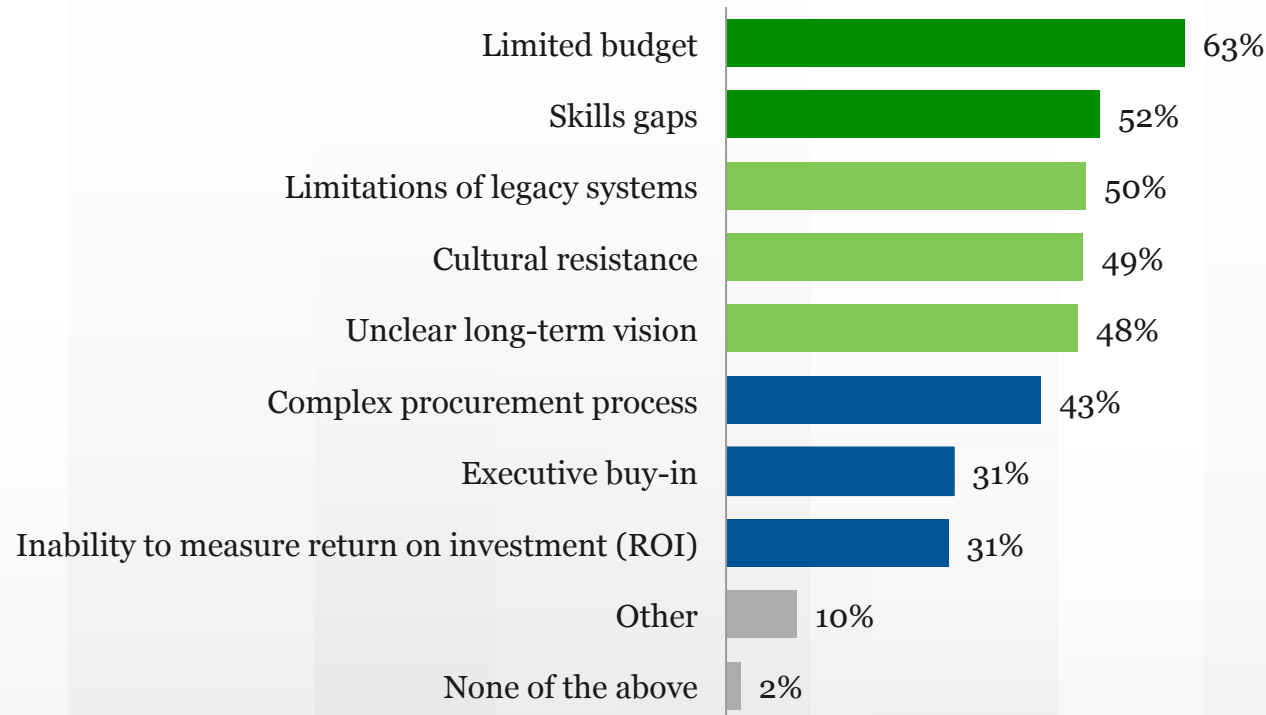
Areas most in need of improvement



Percentage of all respondents, n=209 and 236, respectively

Progress is most hampered by budget, skills gaps, and limitations of legacy systems

Challenges of executing digital government strategy



Percentage of respondents, n=258
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Respondents offer ways to better accomplish digital goals

- “ Real progress requires sustained resource commitment to technology, user support and security. Too many past efforts have failed to meet goals because the commitment could not be sustained. ”
- “ Share the strategy with employees - we can't adopt a new culture, goals, or strategy if we don't know what it is explicitly. ”
- “ Remember that the end purpose is to empower the user to do something. ”

Sample of open-ended responses

4

Final Considerations

When considering how to further digital government efforts...

Look beyond compliance and cost cutting when making digital decisions

Respondents indicate that collaboration, innovation, and increasing access to data are the least important drivers to current digital strategy efforts. This is reflected in the survey results: agency progress in areas managing risk (i.e., security and privacy) or direct cost savings (e.g., consolidating duplicative IT systems) is generally farther along than efforts to provide better customer service or data accessibility, possibly because of the difficulty of measuring return on investment. However, agencies should strive to fulfill goals articulated throughout all facets of the Digital Government Strategy.

Consider shared platform technologies, including open source

Many agencies have yet to fully implement recommendations from the Shared Platform section of the strategy, despite the potential to realize significant efficiency gains. Opportunities include adopting open source technologies, such as content management systems, as well as working with other agencies to reduce duplicative IT systems. This Shared Platform approach can allow technology managers to more easily collaborate and share IT resources, resulting in reduced operational, staffing, and skill requirements.

Articulate a clearer vision for how Digital Government Strategy can improve mission effectiveness

While perhaps not as directly limiting as budget or skills gaps, it is significant that nearly one half of respondents cite cultural resistance as a challenge to digital efforts. In addition, many respondents expressed skepticism toward the value of several components of the digital strategy. This may indicate that the end outcomes of the strategy are still unclear or unknown for many federal employees. To gain greater buy-in from within their organizations, CIOs and other digital leaders should consider how they can articulate a more defined vision for how digital efforts will benefit overall agency and federal government effectiveness.

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Acquia provides solutions that enable agencies to optimize digital government strategies and innovate to transform the business of government. We help agencies create secure digital experiences with greater scalability, flexibility, and reliability to deliver mission-essential information and citizen services faster and more efficiently.

About GBC

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