

# The New E-Government Equation:

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**EXCELLENCE**  
IN GOVERNMENT

*Ease, Engagement, Privacy and Protection*

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Prepared by Hart-Teeter for the Council for Excellence in Government

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April 2003

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Today's global citizen lives in a world where communications technology offers revolutionary opportunities for new interactions. Citizens worldwide are beginning to translate this opportunity into online citizenship. E-government already has changed the way that governments operate. Clearly, e-government also is changing the way that citizens relate to their government. Citizens are stepping out of line and moving their interactions with government online.

This report presents the findings of a five-part study on the issue of e-government conducted by Hart-Teeter on behalf of the Council for Excellence in Government and Accenture. The study consists of survey research conducted among a cross section of Americans, Americans with experience using e-government services ("e-government users"), Internet users living in cities identified as "best practice" areas, government employees, Internet users in five other countries (Spain, Singapore, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia), and focus groups among Internet users. A complete explanation of the study's methodology is included in the conclusion of this report. A brief summary of results follows.

**Americans are online, e-savvy, and exploring e-government.** Americans today are exploring the Internet in large numbers. Nearly seven in 10 survey respondents have Internet access in their home, at school, or at work, and seven in 10 of those Internet users access the Internet at least once a day. These online Americans are not only using the Internet for information searches and e-mail: two-thirds have used a credit card to conduct online transactions and seven in 10 have submitted personal information to a commercial website in exchange for goods or services.

Americans are using and appreciating e-government services offered by their federal, state, and local governments. Half of all Americans and three-quarters of American Internet users already have used a government website to find information or conduct a transaction. Among international Internet users, at least half in each country say that they have used a government website, with the exceptions of Spain and the United Kingdom.

People in both the United States and internationally generally use e-government services to find information: at least two-thirds of e-government users in each of the five foreign countries surveyed say that they usually use e-government to find an office address or a list of services offered by an agency. Indeed, when people are asked to report their experience with

specific types of e-government, informational services garner the most responses, however, many people think that they would be very interested in using e-government for transactional services.

Citizens with e-government experience already report enjoying tangible benefits from the services available. In the United States, three-quarters of e-government users believe that e-government has made it easier and more convenient for them to stay informed about government services, and two-thirds think that it has made it easier and more convenient for them to conduct transactions with the government. International e-government users agree, as majorities or pluralities of them say that e-government has made interacting with their government easier and more convenient.

Senior government employees also report high levels of e-government experience and optimism about its potential. Four in five senior government employees report that they are at least somewhat familiar with e-government, and the same proportion say that e-government is having at least a somewhat positive effect on the way government operates.

**Striking a balance between convenience and security.** While Americans are optimistic about e-government, there is a caveat. Americans value the ease and efficiency of better e-services from government, but they also express concerns that dealing with government over the Internet may compromise their privacy. Nearly forty-five percent of Americans strongly agree that if they submit personal information about themselves to government websites, government will be able provide them with better services. However, nearly the same percentage believes that if they submit personal information to government websites, it may risk the security and privacy of their personal information.

This concern about privacy and security translates into a cautionary tone from Americans: a 54% majority think that government should proceed slowly in relying on the Internet for communication between citizens and government. A 35% minority of senior government employees believe the government should move slowly.

**A tool to strengthen homeland security.** The survey findings reveal that some Americans see e-government as a potential weapon in the fight against terrorism. A slim majority (52%) of Americans believe that investing in e-government will help homeland security because it will

enable government officials to share information and coordinate responses to public emergencies. Only a third believe that e-government will hurt homeland security because it will require resources that would be better used elsewhere and uses technology that might be vulnerable to terrorists.

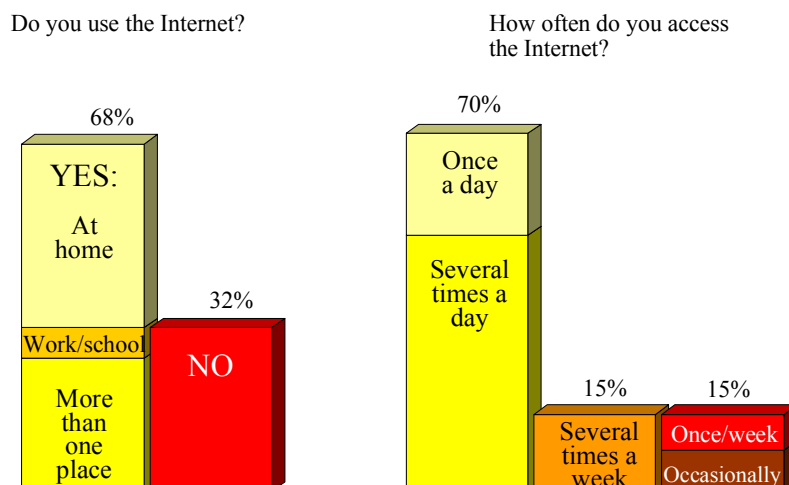
Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, some people have proposed instituting a voluntary national identification card as another means of preventing terrorism. These national identification cards prove controversial, as a majority of Americans oppose this idea. International support is stronger, with majorities or pluralities in each country surveyed except Canada supporting such a card.

**Engaging government online.** Americans believe that the potential of e-government extends beyond better government services. They also believe that e-government can be a means to engage as citizens and make the government more accountable. The survey measures Americans' reactions to an online service called "My Government," which is a portal that operates much like a customized Yahoo! or Amazon.com webpage. Americans react favorably to "My Government", particularly younger Americans, but overall they stop short of fully embracing the idea. This hesitation again comes from concerns about privacy and security. The message that respondents send is that Americans believe that e-government can improve the way that government operates and empower citizens to be more involved in government. The burden, however, is on the federal, state, and local governments to inform citizens about their e-government opportunities and to address citizens' concerns about the security of their personal information online.

## I. AMERICANS ARE ONLINE, E-SAVVY, AND EXPLORING E-GOVERNMENT.

Today, most Americans are plugged in to the Internet and active online. Nearly seven in 10 (68%) respondents have Internet access in their home, at school, or at work. Among Americans with Internet access, seven in 10 (70%) access the Internet at least once a day, and only 8% log on less than once a week. Clearly the Internet is becoming an important part of daily life. As one focus group participant said, “I use it for everything. I use it to take the place of using the telephones if I want to book tickets for the performing arts. It is easier to go on the computer and book my reservations. You don’t have to worry about talking with anyone.”

### Online America

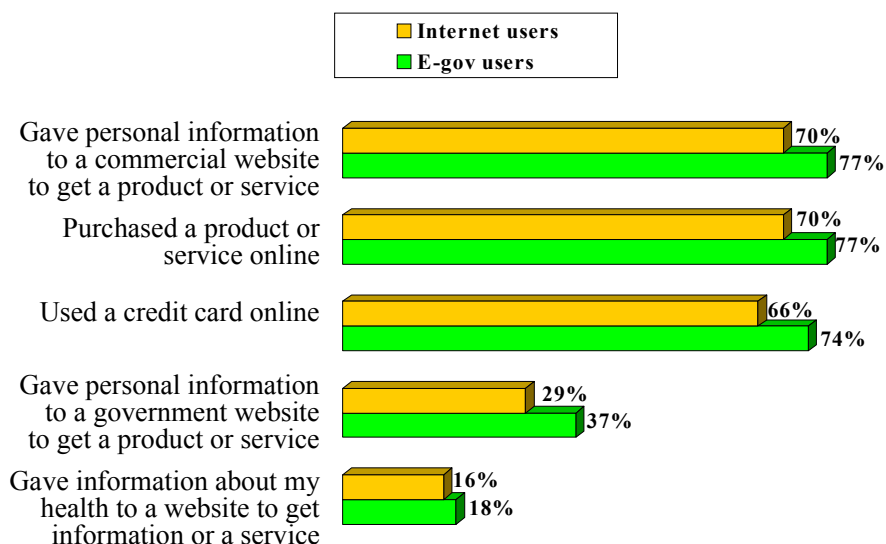


A striking digital divide, however, still confronts government leaders hoping to translate e-government into citizenship online. Internet access in America is widespread, though disparities of age, education, profession, and race persist. Access still is more common among college graduates (87%, compared with 48% with only high school degrees), professionals (86%, compared with 58% of blue-collar workers), young adults (78% of 18- to 34-year-olds, compared with 43% of those age 65 and over), and Caucasians (70%, compared with 59% of blacks). The once significant gender gap in Internet access appears to be closing, however, with 68% of men and 69% of women reporting Internet access.

The large majority of Americans who are online use the Internet for activities that extend beyond e-mail or simple information searches, and are showing a growing confidence in the

Internet through these activities. Two-thirds (66%) of online Americans report having conducted a credit card transaction online. Seven in 10 (70%) online Americans report purchasing a product or a service online, and the same proportion of Americans have submitted personal information such as their name or address to a commercial website to obtain a product or service. Fewer online Americans (29%), but still significant proportions, report having already submitted personal information to a government website to obtain a product or service. This level of online sophistication is an important indicator of e-government's potential. Although older Americans are joining the online community in record numbers, younger Americans still appear much more comfortable online and are more e-savvy than are their older counterparts.

## Americans Are E-Savvy



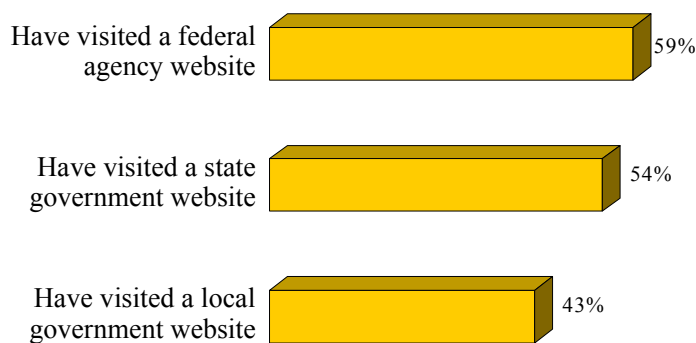
The American public rates government websites high among various types of websites in terms of trust and reliability. Although one in three (32%) Americans say that they do not know enough about government websites to rate their reliability, three in five (61%) say that the information provided by government websites is either very or somewhat reliable. Business websites rate slightly higher in reliability (69%), but a greater public familiarity with business websites may account for much of this difference (only 24% cannot rate business websites). A similar proportion (64%) of Americans rates the websites of media organizations as very or somewhat reliable. Confidence in the reliability of information on the Internet and on

government websites in particular provides an important building block for the advancement of e-government.

**E-government is not just a concept for the future—it already is a reality.** American citizens already are using and appreciating the e-government services offered by their federal, state, and local governments. The survey defines e-government as “government agencies’ use of the Internet and other information technologies. This includes making information available to the public on websites, improving communication between government agencies, and allowing people and businesses to conduct government business online, such as filing taxes, requesting a form, making a transaction, receiving a service, or commenting on proposed legislation.”

Half (50%) of all Americans and three-quarters (74%) of American Internet users already have some experience with government websites. Most Americans with experience using e-government have used services offered by the federal government, but significant proportions have also taken advantage of services offered by their local and state governments.

## Half Of Internet Users Have Visited A Government Website



From a demographic perspective, the segment of the American population who uses e-government services looks much like the rest of Internet users. Four in five (80%) e-government users are Caucasian, seven in 10 (68%) are under age 50, nearly half (47%) hold at least a four-year college degree, and 44% earn household incomes of at least \$50,000. As with all Internet

users, however, a gender gap is not evident when it comes to use of e-government services. This demographic breakdown is significant because it highlights the digital divide.

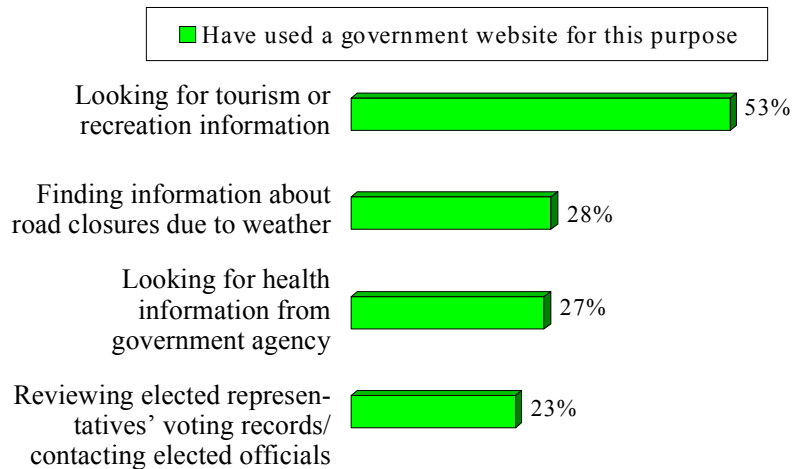
Although Americans already are using e-government services in large proportions, the level of self-assessed familiarity with e-government still is relatively low, as fewer than one in 10 (8%) report that they are very familiar with it. Nearly three in 10 (29%) Americans say that they are somewhat familiar, and a quarter (24%) are only slightly familiar with e-government. These proportions have not changed since 2001, meaning that Americans know little more about the services available now than they did two years ago. Even among e-government users, barely half (53%) say that they are very or somewhat familiar with the idea. This indicates that although e-government users may be aware of specific, individual online services, they do not relate those services to the broader concept of online government.

**Americans now are using e-government for information, but express strong interest in using e-government to conduct transactions.** For the most part, Americans visit e-government websites to get information. Certainly, many citizens may be using e-government for both information and to conduct transactions, but when asked to identify their e-government activities overall, most think that they tend to search for information rather than conduct transactions.

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of e-government users report using government websites generally to find information such as an office address or a list of services provided by an agency, whereas only a quarter (23%) log on to conduct a transaction such as filing their taxes or renewing their driver's license. Even in best practice areas, where more transactional options are available, only one in four (28%) e-government users say that they tend to conduct transactions rather than just search for information.



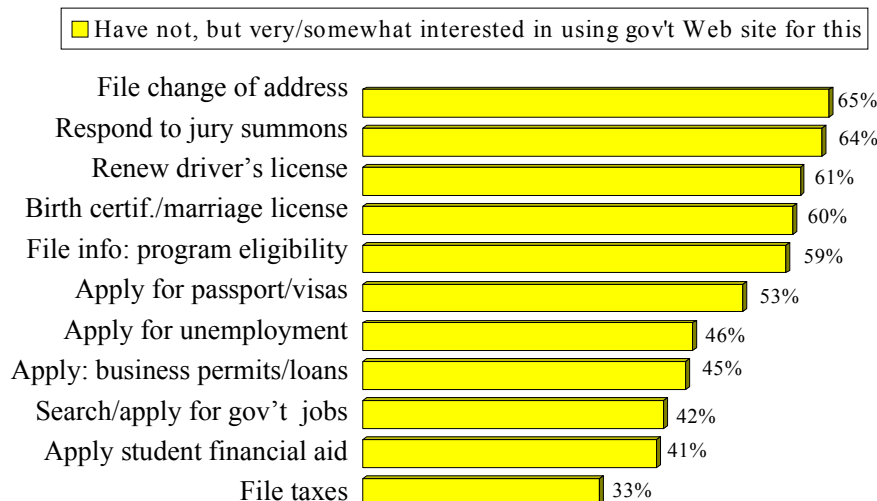
## Most Use E-gov For Information



The survey asks respondents for their experience with a variety of specific e-government services. As the previous self-reported data indicate, the most commonly used services are mainly information resources. Half (53%) of all American Internet users have used a government website to find tourism or recreation information, 28% have looked for road closures from government agencies, 27% have searched for health information from government agencies, and 23% have reviewed the voting records of their elected officials online.

When respondents are asked whether they are interested in using transactional and informational services that they had not already used, however, their interest is extremely high. For example, two-thirds (65%) of American Internet users believe that they would be very or somewhat interested in changing their address online with one government agency and having that change automatically disseminated to other government agencies that they specify.

## High Interest In Using E-gov For Transactions



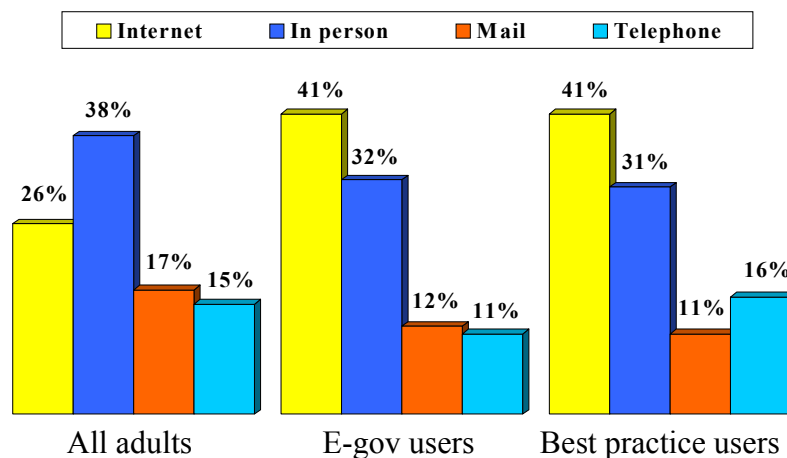
Other transactional services that hold the same interest among American Internet users include responding to a jury summons online (64%); renewing a driver's license (61%); applying for a birth certificate or a marriage license (60%); submitting personal information to determine eligibility for government programs (59%); and applying for passports or visas (53%). The high interest level expressed in such e-government services represents another step toward moving citizens out of line and onto the Internet. The transition from informational e-government to transactional e-government is significant because it requires an information exchange between citizens and government.

**E-government is part of an evolving relationship between government and citizens—a relationship that is moving citizens out of line and onto the Internet.** When asked to rate their satisfaction dealing with federal agencies, Americans are most satisfied with mail interactions, as two in five (43%) Americans are very or fairly satisfied with their personal experience dealing with federal agencies through the mail. This is about the same as the proportion who are satisfied with their dealings in person (39%), and higher than the proportion who are satisfied with dealings over the telephone (27%). One quarter (26%) of all Americans, however, are very or fairly satisfied using the Internet to interact with federal agencies.

More significantly, current e-government users give the highest marks to Internet interaction with the government, as half (49%) report that they are very or fairly satisfied with their interactions online. Thirty-seven percent say that they are very or fairly satisfied with their interactions online. Thirty-seven percent say that they are very or fairly satisfied with their interaction through the mail, 36% in person, and 26% over the telephone. The same is true among e-government users for their interaction on local and state levels, with 47% of e-government users saying that they are very or fairly satisfied with their interaction with government online. As one focus group participant said, they use the Internet because they will do “anything to keep from finding a parking space.”

## E-gov Users Prefer Internet For Interaction With Government

*Preferred method for information/transactions with government*

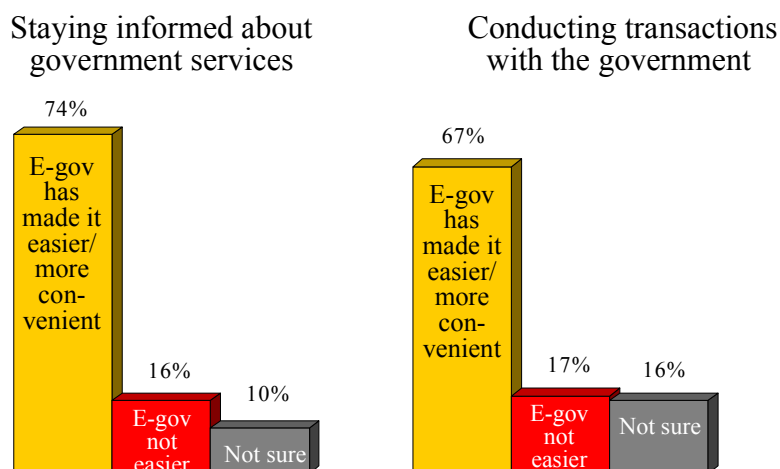


As to Americans' preferred means of interaction with the government, a quarter (26%) think that they would prefer to use the Internet over other means. Although dealing in person with the government remains the top choice among all Americans (38%), e-government users choose the Internet as their top choice of interaction (41%). Internet users in best practice areas agree, with two in five (41%) preferring to get information or conduct a transaction online rather than in person, by mail, or by telephone. Another focus group participant said, “If you’ve ever tried to call one of the governments, you can be on hold for three days. If you have the Internet, your answer might not be there, but it might. You have another place to go.”

**The American public is not ready for online voting.** In some areas, Americans simply do not believe that more Internet technology means better government. Once again in 2003, Americans reject the concept of online voting for public offices. Only three in 10 (30%) Americans favor the idea, whereas 13% say that they somewhat oppose online voting, and a majority (54%) strongly oppose the idea. E-government users also reject online voting. Within both groups, the proportions are very similar to those reported in 2001.

**E-government users are realizing tangible benefits from e-government services and believe that these benefits will only grow with time.** American e-government users believe that e-government already is having a positive effect on the way that government operates. Nearly three in five (58%) e-government users feel that e-government is having a positive effect now and an additional quarter (23%) think that the effect so far has been neutral. Fewer than one in 10 (9%) say that e-government is having a negative effect on the way government operates.

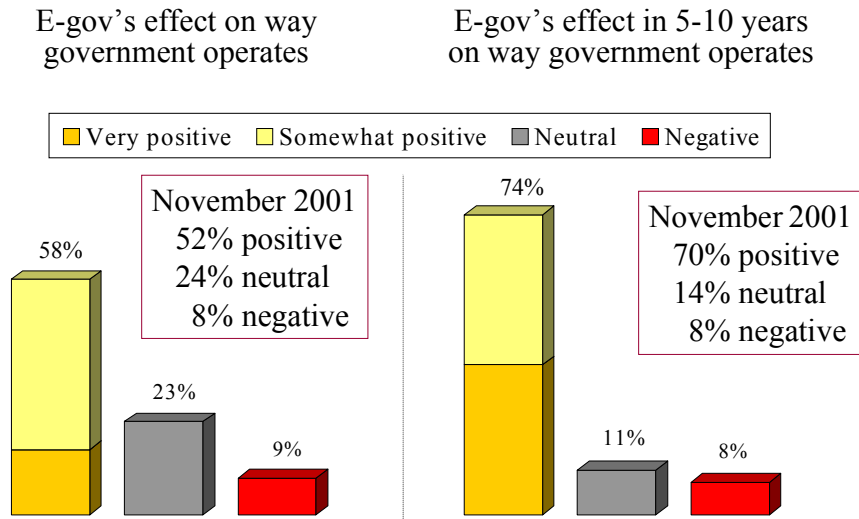
## E-gov Users Say It Makes Information And Transactions Easier



In fact, American e-government users already report that e-government services have benefited them in personal and tangible ways. Three-quarters (74%) of all e-government users and nearly four in five (78%) best practice area e-government users say that it has made it easier and more convenient for them to stay informed about government services. Similarly, two-thirds of all e-government users (67%) and best practice area e-government users (68%) feel that e-

government has made it easier and more convenient for them to conduct transactions with the government. These proportions represent strong majorities who believe that e-government is making their lives easier and more convenient. E-government is making an impact on the citizens who are taking advantage of its opportunities.

## E-gov Users Already See Benefits, More Future Potential



American e-government users believe that e-government benefits will only grow with time. Asked to look ahead five to 10 years, the proportion of e-government users who say that the impact of e-government on government operations will be positive grows from 58% to 74%. This outlook is even more optimistic than in 2001, when 70% of e-government users predicted a positive impact.

## II. STRIKING A BALANCE BETWEEN CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY

Americans are increasingly comfortable on the Internet and they are using it in increasingly savvy ways. Many still worry about personal information security while online, however, particularly the information they submit to government websites. When non-e-government users name the reason why they have not yet moved their interaction with government online, two of the top three reasons involve concerns about privacy and security, with 22% saying that they are not confident about protection of their privacy online, and 20% reporting that they are not confident that the Internet is secure. They worry about conducting transactions with the government and about third party access to their information. As one focus group participant said, “I would not want my personal information to be shared or sold to any third party. And also, I would not like a record of the transactions or my specific inquiries on the site to be accessible to a third party.” This is only one of the types of concerns expressed within this research.

### Trade-Off Between Convenience and Security

Why don't you use government online services more often?	Percentage	What should be government's top priority for its websites?	Percentage
Can't find right website	24%	More secure for conducting business	33%
Not confident my privacy protected online	22%	Easier to use/understand	22%
Not confident Internet is secure	20%	Links to other agencies to better serve people	15%
Easier in person	19%	More information/services	13%
Easier over phone	12%		
Internet too complicated	6%		
No Internet access	3%		

The survey results show that the public is conflicted about the trade-off between better service and questions about online security. Respondents rate their agreement with each of the following two statements on a five-point scale, on which a five means that they are in total agreement, and a one means that they do not agree at all.

*(Statement #1) If people submit information about themselves to government websites, it could enable government agencies to provide faster and more extensive services to citizens.*

*(Statement #2) If people submit information about themselves to government websites, it could enable the government to invade people's privacy and risk the security of their personal information.*

Statement #1 speaks to the better service side of the trade-off, and 44% of Americans strongly agree (rating the statement a four or a five) that if they submit personal information to government websites, government will be better able to provide them with services. Statement #2 speaks to the security concern side of the trade-off, and on this measure, 46% of Americans strongly agree that if they submit personal information to government websites, government may be able to invade people's privacy.

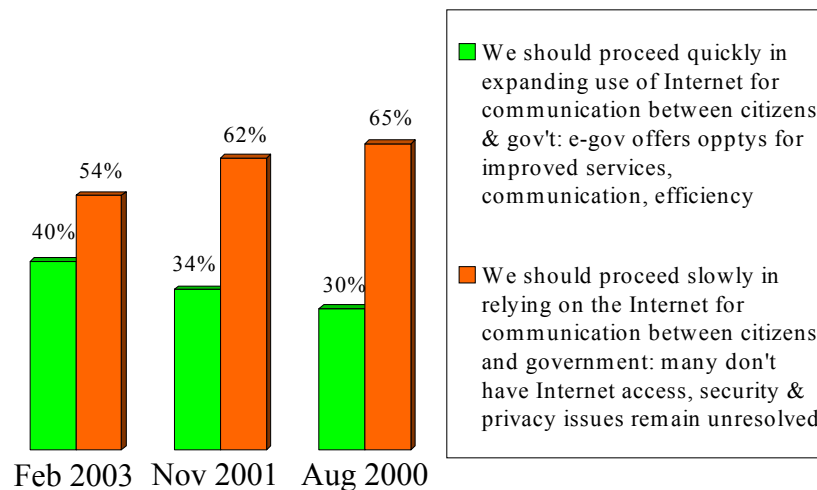
The conflict becomes clear when considering the proportion of citizens who agree that e-government may both provide better services and invade people's privacy, as two in five (43%) of those who see benefits also have concerns. This is an unmistakable recognition of the fact that Americans understand that easier and more convenient service comes at a cost, which in this case, is a potential breach of privacy and security. Only a quarter of all Americans strongly agree that better service will result and disagree that privacy could be compromised. This conflict must be resolved before e-government can be fully realized.

**Americans' enthusiasm for e-government is tempered by a desire to move slowly in its development.** Americans clearly believe in e-government's potential and are enthusiastic about the opportunities it offers. They are divided, however, when deciding how government should proceed with the development of new e-government technology. Not all Americans believe that e-government development should proceed at the most rapid pace possible. In fact, a majority believe that e-government development should proceed at a tempered pace. When asked how high a priority it should be for government to invest tax dollars in making information and services available over the Internet, only 6% of Americans feel that it should be the government's top priority, and only 19% think that it should even be a high priority.

Fifty-four percent of all Americans and even 44% of e-government users say that we should proceed slowly in relying on the Internet for communication between citizens and their

government. Many people see the digital divide as a significant challenge to moving citizens out of line and online, but the concerns that Americans express most strenuously are those of privacy and security on the Internet. Although the proportion of Americans who believe we should move slowly has declined since 2001 (62%), it is still a majority and a position that senior government employees must take seriously.

## Americans Urge Caution In E-gov Development



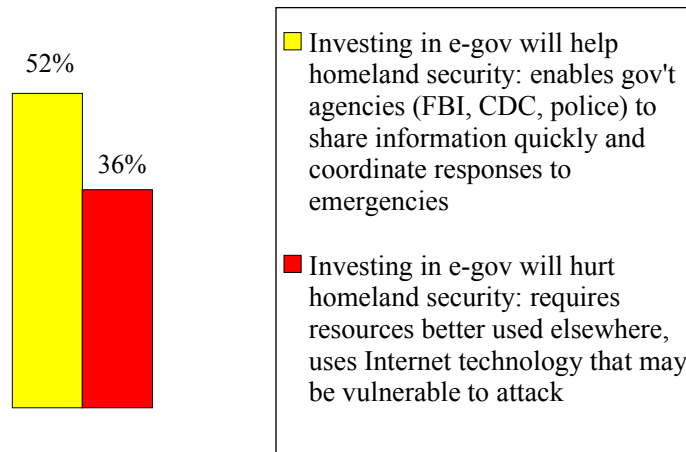
### III. E-GOVERNMENT IS A TOOL WITH WHICH TO FIGHT TERRORISM AND STRENGTHEN HOMELAND SECURITY.

In these uncertain times, Americans expect their government to keep their homeland secure and stop those who seek to terrorize. E-government is emerging as an important tool in the American government's efforts to combat terrorism, and citizens express cautious optimism in the potential of e-government to keep them safe.

This survey was conducted before the launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, but concern about terrorism and homeland security has been a priority for Americans since September 11, 2001. The survey findings show that half of Americans believe in e-government's potential to combat terrorism and keep Americans safe. Respondents chose between the following opposing statements.



## A Majority of Americans Believe E-gov Can Strengthen Homeland Security



Half of Americans (52%) and e-government users (54%) believe that investing in e-government will help homeland security because it will enable senior government employees to share information quickly and to coordinate responses to public emergencies. Only a third of the public (36%) and e-government users (33%) say that investing in e-government will hurt homeland security because it will require resources that could be better used elsewhere and because it uses technology that may be vulnerable to terrorist attack.

The proportion of Americans who believe that investing in e-government will help prevent terrorism has declined significantly since 2001, but this is not entirely surprising, and should not be read as a lessened commitment to the cause. The 2001 survey was conducted only two months after September 11. Since then, Americans' confidence has declined across a broad range of measures when it comes to keeping safe. There is no reason to believe that the public has lost confidence in e-government in particular.

Respondents also rate their agreement with two other statements that focus on the trade-off between personal liberty and national security. Half (49%) of Americans believe that it is appropriate for the government to search its existing databases for information that could help it track down and catch terrorists, because preventing terrorism should be a top priority. Two in five (42%) Americans take the opposite side, saying that it is not appropriate for the government to search its existing databases for information, because the databases contain personal

information and protecting privacy should be a top priority. The nearly equal division of opinion on this question is remarkable considering the values at stake and the volume of current debate. Americans might not be in total agreement about the use of e-government to fight terrorism, but clearly a significant proportion believes in its potential to keep America safe.

**A voluntary national identification card is a controversial extension of e-government in the United States.** In the United States, a majority oppose a voluntary national identification card—the only country of the six surveyed in which this is the case. Aside from Canada, where a modest plurality oppose the identification card, a majority or plurality of Internet users in other countries favor a national identification card.

In the wake of the September 11 attacks, a debate emerged in the United States and around the world about the possibility of instituting a voluntary national identification card program. Unlike many current forms of identification, this card would contain the holder's personal information in digital form. Americans consider this concept controversial, and even with voluntary participation, a majority reject the idea. After hearing reasons to both support and oppose such a card, a majority of Americans (54%) and e-government users (51%) oppose the idea, and about a third (35%) of all Americans and two in five (39%) e-government users support the idea.

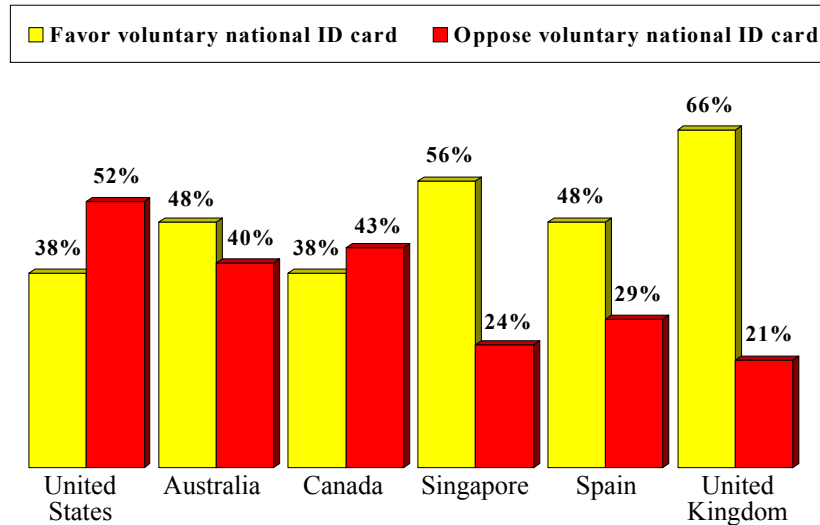
Among the reasons to support a voluntary national identification card, the ease with which it would allow citizens to verify their identity at airports or government buildings emerges as the most compelling benefit (50%). Other, much less compelling benefits are making electronic transactions easier (12%) and more secure (12%). One in five (18%) respondents volunteer that a national identification card would have no benefits.

One reason to oppose a voluntary national identification card is the belief held by 57% of Americans that such a card would be just as easy for criminals or terrorists to forge or abuse as any other form of identification. Other disadvantages of a national identification card are that it may be an easier way for the government to monitor people (23%) and that it may make it harder for people who choose not to get the card to prove their identity (12%).

**Internationally, citizens broadly support the idea of a voluntary national identification card.** Internet users in five other countries have similar views of the advantages and disadvantages of a

voluntary national identification card. For instance, when choosing the biggest benefit of a voluntary national identification card from a list of commonly discussed advantages, a majority of Internet users in every country except Spain select the same benefit: the ease of verifying one's identity at official checkpoints.

## More International Support For National ID Cards



The drawbacks are perceived similarly across national borders, as well. Again, except in Spain, pluralities or majorities of Internet users in each country choose the same problem as the biggest disadvantage of a voluntary national identification card: its susceptibility to forgery. Thus, even if Spain's first choices tend to be second in every other country, the international survey results reveal broad similarities in people's evaluation of national identification cards.

Another idea that Americans are not ready to accept is airport "smart cards" because of their concerns about the privacy of their personal information. Respondents were read the following description of "smart cards:"

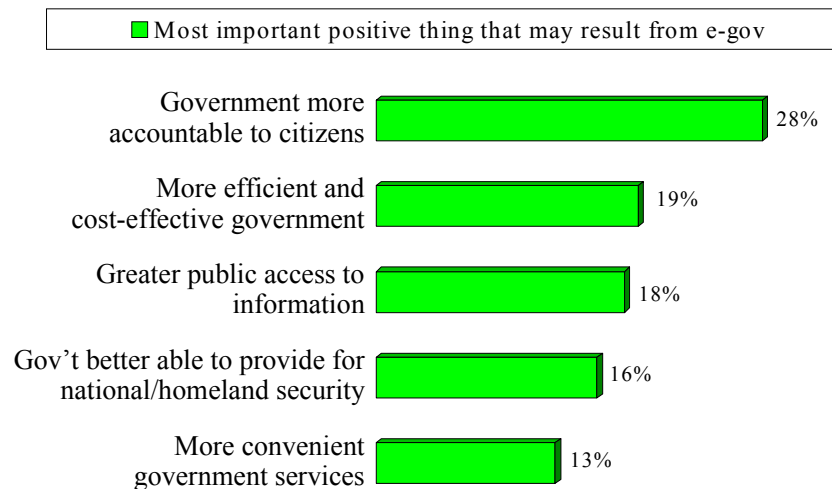
*Some people favor setting up a system that would allow frequent travelers to check in at airports by showing security screeners a "smart card." This card would store information digitally about the individual. The benefits of a smart card would be that people could check in quickly and be easily cleared for boarding by security. The concerns about a smart card would be that the personal information stored on the cards could be abused by senior government employees who want to monitor or harass particular citizens.*

By nearly three to two, Americans say that the concerns about such a smart card would outweigh the benefits. A majority (54%) say that concerns outweigh benefits, whereas 37% say that benefits outweigh concerns.

#### **IV. ENGAGING CITIZENS ONLINE**

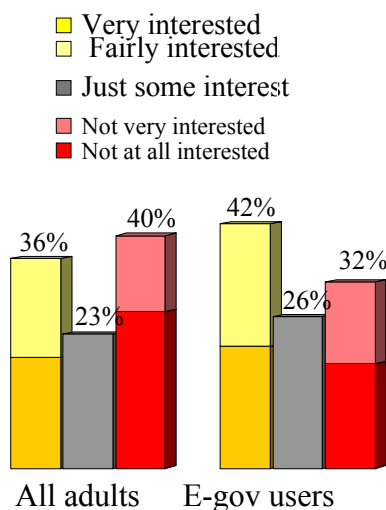
**E-government has the potential to make government more accountable to citizens.** Americans believe that e-government brings potential that goes beyond better government services. Americans see e-government as a tool to improve government operations in ways that can potentially improve public perceptions of government. When asked to name the most important potential benefit of e-government, 28% of Americans cite a government that is more accountable to its citizens, 19% say a government that is more efficient and cost-effective, 18% think greater access to public information, and 13% say more convenient government services. If the development of e-government realizes these benefits, the changes could significantly alter the way that Americans think about their relationship with government. Americans unmistakably see e-government as a way to play a greater role in democracy and in the process of governance, and those types of personal investments can only make government assessments more positive. As a predictor, individuals who are very interested in e-government services rate the federal government's ability to solve problems and help people as higher than do those who are not interested in the services (42% very/fairly satisfied, compared with 28%).

## Greater Accountability Viewed As Main Benefit of E-Gov



**“My Government” is well received, especially by young Americans.** The survey also proposed another extension of e-government, which already is in use in some areas. The “My Government” concept is one of the most obvious applications of e-government in which citizens enter personal information about themselves in exchange for enhanced services. “My Government” is similar to the customizable website that Yahoo!, Amazon, Earthlink, and other Internet service providers and retailers have made famous. A “My Government” webpage would provide people with ready information about government agencies for which they have expressed an interest, remind people of important government deadlines for renewing driver’s licenses or filing taxes, and provide a general portal for personal transactions with federal, state, and local government.

## Stronger Support For “My Gov” Among Public, But Still Concerns



Younger Americans Much  
More Supportive:

18-34: 46% very/fairly

35-49: 39%

50-64: 29%

65 and over: 25%

Americans' reactions to “My Government” are favorable, but stop short of fully embracing the idea. On a scale from one to five, on which a five means that they are very interested in the idea, only one-third (36%) of Americans rate their interest in “My Government” as a four or five. E-government users (42%) and best practice area Internet users (45%) rate their interest as slightly higher, but still short of a majority.

Interestingly, in another question, 86% of e-government users say that it is either very or fairly important to them that there be one website or easy links to other websites where they can find the answers to all their questions about government services and get access to the services they need. Clear support exists for a portal that puts all available information about government services in one place. Support drops off, however, when the public is asked to submit personal information to aid in tailoring a website like “My Government”.

Younger Internet users are more apt to embrace the idea of “My Government”. Nearly half (46%) of 18- to 34-year-old Americans rate their interest as a four or five, compared with only a quarter (25%) of Americans age 65 or older who rate their interest similarly. The focus group observations confirmed this finding. Said one man under age 40,

*“Personally, I think it’s a great option because of the fact that it’s an online service that you can use every day. I mean, to be able to customize it the way you want it and to be able to access the things you want all the time instead of having to click around. I like*

*having the convenience of setting it up the way I want. Besides, this is an option. It's not mandatory. That's how I look at it."*

**To realize the full potential of e-government, the American government must better inform citizens about their opportunities for engagement and assuage their concerns about security.** American citizens are interested in e-government opportunities. They believe that e-government can improve the way government operates and empower them to be more involved in government. But their concerns are clear, and their familiarity still is relatively low. Currently, 24% of non-e-government users say that the reason that they do not interact with the government online is that it is hard to find the website for what they want. A third (33%) of Americans think that the government's top priority for its websites should be making them more secure for conducting business. The burden is on the federal, state, and local governments to inform citizens of their opportunities, and to reassure them about the security of their personal information online. As a focus group participant explained, "I think more people would use this information if they knew about it. I'm definitely going to look at some of these things. It's just a matter of people being informed."

## **V. AMERICA'S SENIOR GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES SPEAK ABOUT E-GOVERNMENT.**

As part of this study, Hart Research interviewed a total of 400 senior government employees, 200 in federal service, 100 hundred in state service, and 100 in local service.

**Government employees are invested in e-government, but the revolution may be slowing.** The research findings show that e-government has become an integral part of American governance. The survey results among senior government employees indicate that vast majorities of these employees are at least somewhat familiar with e-government (83%), are at least fairly involved in its implementation (83%), and work in an agency or division that has a public website (91%). The public's substantial and growing use of e-government only confirms its place within the fabric of American society.

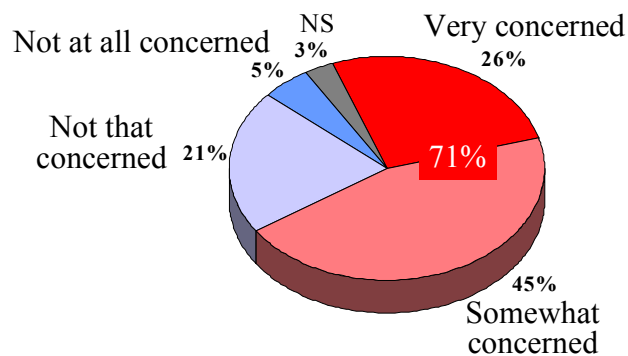
Yet, survey findings indicate that the expansion of e-government may be slowing. Although 74% of senior government employees report that their agency or division has made "significant additions or changes" to their public website in the past year, this figure is down somewhat from the 87% of senior government employees who made the same claim in

November 2001. Moreover, nearly half (46%) of all government employees say that their agency or division is not “currently working on a major project in which the Internet or other information technologies play a central role.” This figure is up from the 31% who said the same in November 2001, even as the proportion saying that their department is engaged in such a project dropped from 57% to 46% in the same period.

**Senior government employees express deep concern about the effects of the state budget crises on e-government development.** These signs of a decrease in the pace of e-government’s advance are complicated by senior government employees’ worries about money. Although most officials expect their department to increase the resources it devotes to information technologies in the coming year, more than a quarter (26%) are very concerned that “the current budget crisis in some states will lead to a slowdown in the development of new technologies and investment in e-government,” and an additional 45% are somewhat concerned. This 71% total dwarfs the 26% who are not that or not at all concerned about the impact of state budget crises.

## Government Leaders’ Concern Comes From State Budget Crisis

How concerned are you that the budget crisis in some states will lead to a slowdown in development of new technologies and investment in e-government?





In fact, a “lack of financial resources” is the obstacle that a 44% plurality of senior government employees cite when they choose one or two items from a list of common obstacles to e-government. A similar 44% plurality pointed to money obstacles in November 2001, prior to the decline in e-government projects suggested by the current survey. Yet as recent as August 2000, a lack of funds was a considerably lower concern (26%).

Noticeable differences exist in what officials at various government levels think about the issues previously discussed. State and local officials report having more worries about state budget crises and a lack of money than do federal officials. And while the survey data do not generally show a clear link between financial worries and decreased e-government activity, state and local officials also report less website, Intranet, and major e-government activity than do federal officials.

**Despite budget concerns, senior government employees share the public’s enthusiasm for e-government.** Citizens who use e-government generally have a positive view of its efficacy, but the opinion of America’s public officials is even more upbeat. Not a single public official surveyed says that e-government is affecting negatively the way government operates, and just 11% feel that the effect is merely neutral. Eighty-two percent of senior government employees think that e-government’s impact on government operations is somewhat (46%) or very (36%) positive.

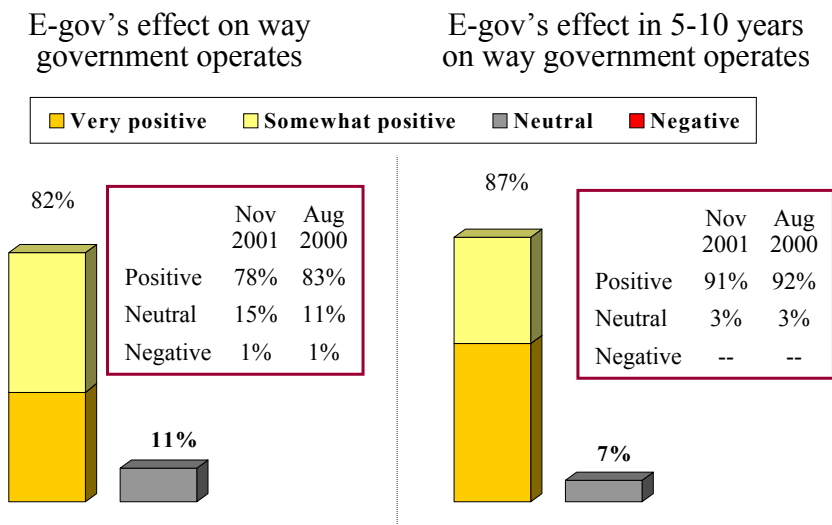
Views of E-Government’s Effect on The Way Government Operates				
	E-Government Users		Government Employees	
	%		%	
Very Positive	16	58	36	82
Somewhat Positive	42		46	
Neutral	23	23	11	11
Somewhat Negative	7	9	-	-
Very Negative	2		-	
Not Sure	10	10	7	7

Government officials also are enthusiastic about the job that government is doing using the Internet to improve the efficiency and quality of government services. They generally save their highest ratings for their own agency or division (85% rate their own agency or division as excellent or good), followed by federal, state, and local governments respectively. Similarly, 89% feel that their agency has made a lot or a fair amount of progress in using e-government to improve coordination across all levels of government.

**As do the public, senior government employees see heightened benefits in the future.** As highly as government employees esteem the current benefits of e-government, they believe that its impact will be even more positive in coming years. A 52% majority think that e-government will have a very positive effect on the way that government operates in five to 10 years, and another 35% believe the effect will be somewhat positive.

A majority (55%) of government employees believe that the biggest benefit of e-government is better information for citizens. Furthermore, a quarter (24%) feel that e-government will save citizens time and 14% think that e-government will make it easier for them to conduct transactions.

## Government Leaders Share Public Optimism About E-gov



This pronounced optimism about future returns from e-government is consistent with the far greater willingness of senior government employees than the public to proceed quickly with expanding the use of e-government services. A 51% majority of senior government employees anticipate a positive future *and* favor proceeding quickly. The public, by contrast, prefers a slower approach.

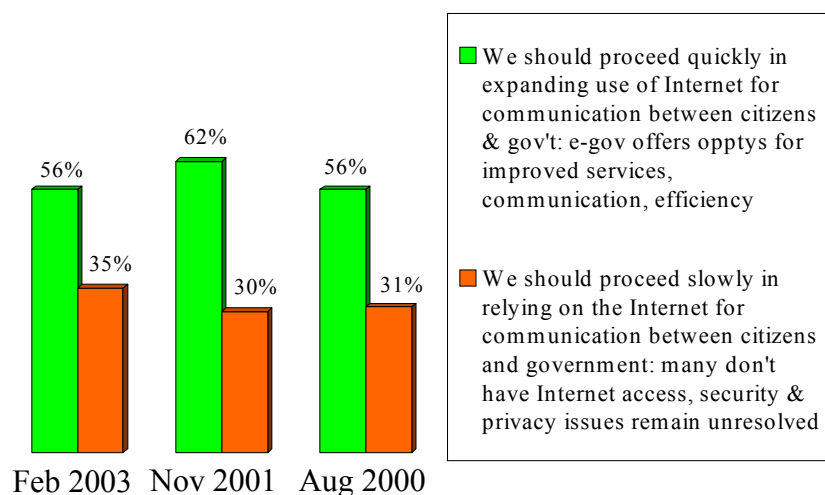
**Government officials share the public's concern about privacy and security, but express more confidence about their ability to keep private information secure.** The views of government employees and the public about e-government typically differ more in degree than in kind. Still, persistent differences matter, and the survey findings suggest that senior government employees may need to pay greater attention to public concern about online privacy and security issues.

When asked to choose what the government's top priority should be for its websites, a 33% plurality of the public choose "make them more secure for conducting business" from a list of four options. By contrast, just 20% of government employees choose making the websites more secure, placing it a distant third, not first as with the public, on senior government employees' list.

Government employees' top priority, chosen by 34%, is to make government websites easy to use and understand, which corresponds to the public's concern in November 2001. There has been subsequent growth, however, in the proportion of people who worry about the security of personal information (from 25% to 33%) and the relative decline in the proportion of people whose primary concern is having websites that are easy to use and understand (from 28% to 22%).

Different perceptions of the online security issue also lead the public to be less likely than senior government employees to embrace the idea of submitting personal information to a government website. The public survey results show that on average, Americans may be willing to accept that divulging their personal information online could lead to faster, more extensive government services. But people are just as willing to believe that submitting this personal information will enable the government to invade their privacy and will risk the security of their personal information. Government employees, on the other hand, are far more inclined to agree with the benefits of faster and better service than they are to agree with the possibility of a loss of privacy (an average of 3.8 versus an evenly divided 3.0 on a five-point scale).

## Government Leaders Don't Share Public's Caution About Moving Too Quickly



Arguably, this disparity between the public and government employees on submitting personal information to government websites is the product of senior government employees' greater belief in improved services and their lesser concern about risking privacy or security. Since August 2000, senior government employees have repeatedly said that e-government would improve government operations and the quality of government services. During that same period, government employees have downgraded "security issues" as the biggest obstacle to e-government (37%) to a distant second behind "a lack of financial resources" (27% vs. 44%).

On the other hand, senior government employees may care just as much as the public about online security and privacy. Fully 86% say that it is very important to communicate clearly the privacy and security issues that apply to their website; another 11% feel that it is fairly important. This report shows that senior government employees' perception of their websites' safety is not in line with that of the public. If they want to ensure that Americans use e-government's powerful tools, they must do more than post their security policy.

**Senior government employees show somewhat more enthusiasm for “My Government”.** Government employees are favorably disposed to the concept of a “My Government” webpage. By contrast to the issue of proceeding slowly or quickly with using the Internet to provide a link between citizens and government, Americans, like senior government employees, are interested in using a “My Government” site. Once again, however, government employees appear even more attracted to the idea.

## **VI. E-GOVERNMENT IS GLOBAL.**

The international portion of this survey involved random telephone interviews with Internet users in Australia, Canada, Singapore, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The results suggest that International Internet users often have views of e-government that are similar to those of American Internet users. Some differences exist, however, particularly about national identification cards.

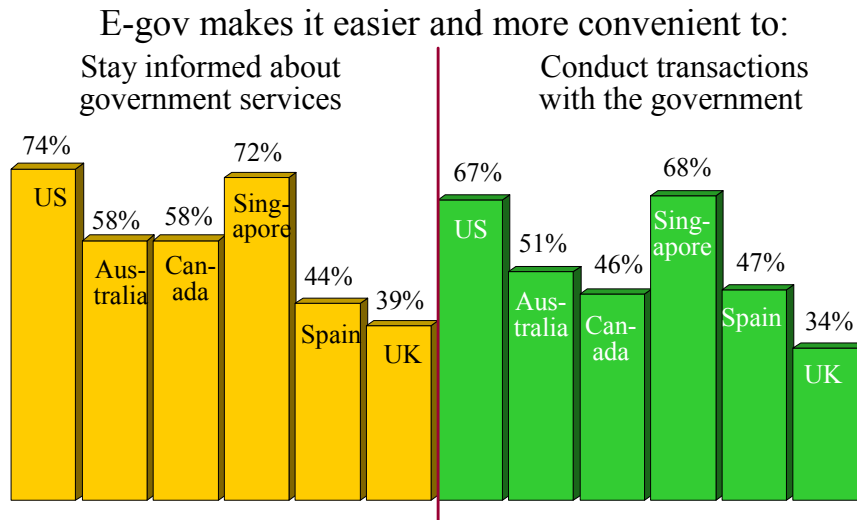
**E-government is an international phenomenon.** Internet users in the United Kingdom are the exceptions when it comes to accessing e-government, since they alone report that fewer than half of them have visited a government website. Elsewhere, including the United States, roughly 50% to 60% of Internet users have visited a government agency website, and 35% to 40% have visited a government website at least occasionally.

**Internationally, e-government already is making government interaction easier.** With the exceptions of Spain and the United Kingdom, a plurality or majority of Internet users in each country think that their government is doing a good or excellent job of developing online resources that allow them access to information and conduct online transactions with the government. This finding suggests that in four of the six countries, e-government is being used and is considered a helpful tool for government interaction.

Moreover, pluralities or majorities in every country except the United Kingdom say that e-government has made it “easier and more convenient” for them to stay informed about government services, as well as to conduct transactions with the government. There is a caveat, however: in half the countries—Canada, Spain, and the United Kingdom—more than a quarter of all Internet users report that they are not sure about the effectiveness of e-government in improving their government information services and transactions, suggesting a possible

breakdown in communication between senior government employees and Internet users.

## International E-gov Users Agree Information And Transactions Easier



**E-government offers an international information booth.** As in the United States, but to an even greater extent, international e-government users report that they usually log on to a government website to get information, rather than to complete a transaction. Only Singaporean e-government users are as likely as U.S. e-government users to employ e-government to conduct a transaction or to obtain information *and* complete a transaction (30% in Singapore, compared with 31% in the United States). This finding dovetails with the relatively higher proportion of American (67%) and Singaporean (68%) Internet users who say that e-government makes it easier and more convenient for them to conduct transactions with the government.

**As in the United States, there is international potential for expanding e-government to online transactions between citizens and government.** Although no more than 31% of each country's e-government users say that they usually log on to conduct business with the government, the potential demand for online government transactions appears to be higher than this. In the case of the four specific e-government transactions of renewing a driver's license online, responding online to jury summons and answering preliminary questions, changing an address online with a government agency, such as the post office, and having it disseminated automatically to all specified government agencies, and filing taxes online, 50% or more Internet users in nearly

every country say that they have used the service or that they would be very interested in it were it available.

Other e-government transactions mentioned in the survey do not prompt as much interest. Still, this does not imply only a limited growth in future e-government business activity. As time passes, more citizens will become more familiar with the Internet and with e-government services; e-government will become more user-friendly; and the telecommunications industry will improve the Internet's speed, reach, and convenience. Each of these developments will lower the barriers to people's use of e-government and increase the likelihood that even the smallest increases in demand that appear in this survey will be transformed into new e-government activity and a more effective relationship between citizens and government.

## **VII. METHODOLOGY**

This study on e-government was conducted by the research firms of Peter D. Hart and Robert M. Teeter for the Council for Excellence in Government. The study comprised five parts: 1) A survey among a representative cross section of 1,023 adults nationwide; 2) a survey among Internet users living in cities identified as "best practice" e-government areas; 3) a survey among 408 senior government employees; 4) a survey among 2,000 international Internet users, and 5) two focus groups in Tampa, Florida.

This research explored all five populations' direct attitudes toward, experience with, and expectations for e-government. The methodology for each component of the study is described in greater depth in the following paragraphs.

### **1) Public Survey**

Hart-Teeter conducted a survey among 1,023 randomly selected adults in the United States, including an oversample among 202 government website users, from February 19 to 25, 2003. The survey was conducted by telephone using the random-digit-dial (RDD) sampling technique while stratifying by geographic area to ensure a nationally representative sample. The data were weighted in line with the demographic makeup of the U.S. population. The margin of error (MOE) for results among all adults is  $\pm 3.1\%$ .

### **2) Best Practice Area Internet Users**

For the survey among Internet users in best practice areas, Hart-Teeter selected nine cities in consultation with the Council for Excellence in Government from the Digital Cities 2003 report. These cities are identified as providing citizens with high levels of online services. The following cities were selected: Tampa, Florida; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Tucson, Arizona; Torrance, California; Richmond, Virginia; Salt Lake City, Utah; Independence, Missouri; Beaumont, Texas; Winston-Salem, North Carolina; and Boston, Massachusetts. The data were weighted in line with the demographics of Internet users nationally. Hart-Teeter conducted a survey among 254 randomly selected Internet users living in those cities from February 21 to 24, 2003. The survey was conducted by telephone using the random-digit-dial (RDD) sampling technique.

### **3) Government Officials**

For the survey among senior government employees, Hart-Teeter drew a random sample of senior government employees from the Leadership Library database, which includes the Yellow Books for federal, state, and municipal governments. The sample was stratified by three levels of government; federal, state, and local. Hart-Teeter conducted telephone interviews among 200 officials in the federal government (randomly selected from the 70 or more federal agencies), 100 state senior government employees, and 100 local officials in city and county governments across the country from February 20 to 28, 2003. It should be noted that the sample is too small to be representative of the larger population of senior government employees.

### **4) International Surveys**

Hart-Teeter conducted a survey among 2,000 randomly selected Internet users in Australia, Canada, Singapore, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The survey was conducted by telephone using the random-digit-dial (RDD) sampling technique while stratifying by geographic area to ensure a nationally representative sample within each country. The margin of error (MOE) for results among Internet users in each individual country is  $\pm 5\%$ .

### **5) Focus Groups**

Hart-Teeter concluded this research program with two focus groups in Tampa, Florida. Tampa has been identified as having exemplary e-government services available to citizens, and also is



included in the best practice areas survey. The focus groups comprised Internet users only, and were divided by age, with Internet users age 40 and over in the first session, and Internet users under age 40 in the second session. Both groups included a cross section of ethnicities and men and women.