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Digitization and digital literacy of the population in Latvia

Municipalities support adult education



Project IO # 1 and IO # 2 prepared by the Latvian Adult Education Association

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Digitization and digital literacy of the population in Latvia	3
The importance of digital skills.....	3
Latvia's situation in the European context	4
Municipal communication with the public and operation of customer service centers.....	6
Use of digital technologies in companies	7
Latvian Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021-2027	8
Analysis of digital skills of Auce and Jēkabpils region residents and residents' opinion about the municipal home page	9
Analysis of results.....	9
Characteristics of respondents	9
Digital skills at work.....	10
Websites and public electronic services of municipalities and their institutions	11
Information and data literacy.....	13
Communication and cooperation	14
Digital content creation.....	16
Safety	17
Problem solving.....	18
Summary.....	19
Conclusions.....	200
Used sources.....	20

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Introduction

This report on digitization and citizens' digital literacy is one of the intellectual results of the Erasmus + co-funded project "Municipalities Support Adult Education" (MSAE). The project is implemented from 2020 to 2022.

Local authorities are the closest support institution for local people, working closely with local adult education providers. This determines the special role of local governments in adult education.

The aim of the project is to develop and increase the role of local governments in supporting adult education in order to promote greater participation of adults in education.

This report provides an insight into digitization and the digital competence of the population in Latvia. Similar reports are prepared by all project partners, which allows comparing the situation in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Italy.

This report has several sections. The first chapter substantiates the importance of digital skills, analyzes the digitization situation in Latvia and partner countries in the European context, describes communication of Latvian municipalities with the population in the e-environment, operation of customer service centers, use of digital technologies in companies, as well as pays attention to the Latvian Digital Transformation Guidelines 2021-2027. action line for acquiring digital skills.

The second chapter analyzes the digital skills of the residents of Auce and Jēkabpils counties and the opinion of the residents about the home page of their municipality.

A summary and conclusions can be found at the end of the report.

Digitization and digital literacy of the population in Latvia

The importance of digital skills

In today's labor market digitalisation and technological development, workers need diverse and multifaceted competencies, flexibility, as well as the skills and ability to work in a constantly changing environment. Thus, in order for citizens to successfully adapt to these changes and maintain their ability to compete in the labor market, it is essential to continuously, throughout their lives, improve their knowledge and skills through participation in various educational activities.

Digital skills are now in high demand in all industries, so using them more effectively and understanding them, helps you to complete everyday tasks much faster and more easily. Digital competences are also needed in everyday life, for example, in communication on social networks, for using state and municipal services etc. Equally important are citizens' knowledge and skills in critical thinking and security aspects of the digital environment.

We can also acquire new knowledge by using information and communication technologies safely and responsibly.

Digital skills are cross-cutting skills on which depends an individual's ability to study, compete in the labor market and fully participate in society depends.

Digital competence is one of the key competences for lifelong learning recommended by the EU Council. In its turn, in the EC document “Digital Competence Framework for Citizens” (DigComp)¹ there are fixed 5 areas of digital competence needed for Citizens:

- proficiency in the use of information and data;
- communication and cooperation;
- digital content creation;
- online security;
- problem solving and critical thinking.

Medium and long-term labor market forecast of the Ministry of Economics² in Latvia is one of the tools for anticipating future labor market mismatches. Here, too, it is recognized that the labor market will be increasingly affected by economic digitalisation trends and job automation. In recommendations for reducing labor market mismatches there is mentioned the development of adult education:

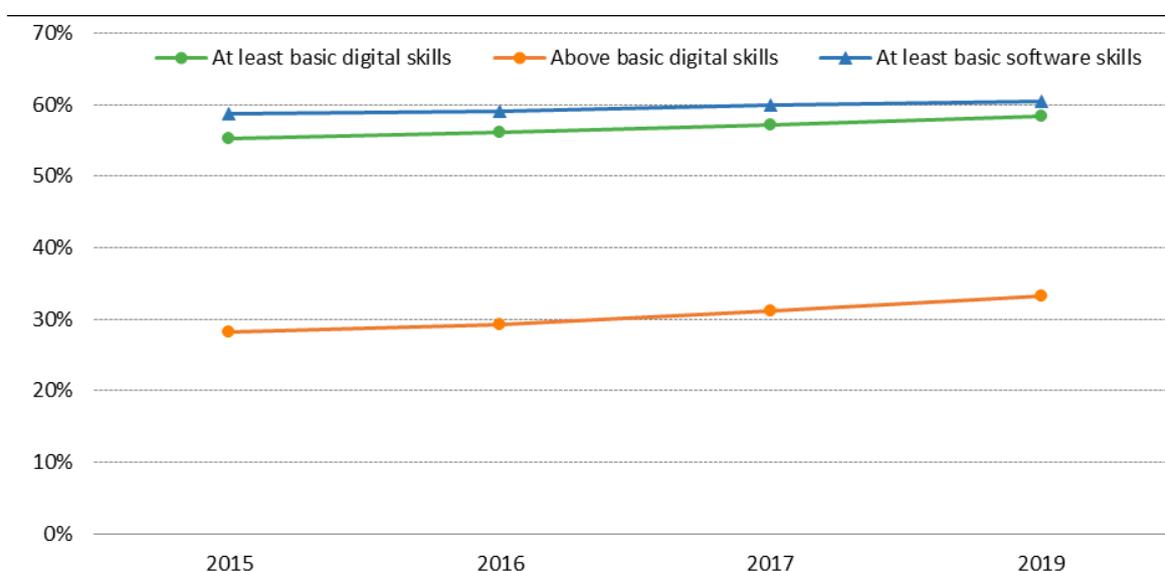
- Establishment of a skills fund - in the form of a pilot project, to consider the possibility of establishing a training fund for the needs of sectors, to which employers also make contributions and which would further serve for the preparation of missing specialists;
- introduction of a culture of continuous education in society, thus ensuring the renewal and development of the skills of the population in accordance with the rapid changes in the modern labor market.

Latvia's situation in the European context

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)³ monitors Europe's overall digital performance and tracks EU countries' progress on digital competitiveness by providing data on the state of digitalisation in each Member State, helping them to identify areas for priority investment and action.

According to the DESI index for 2020, only 58% of Europeans have digital skills at least at basic level and 33% above basic level. (See Figure 1)

1. Figure Level of digital skills of the population



¹ <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/3c5e7879-308f-11e7-9412-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>

² <https://www.em.gov.lv/lv/media/598/download>

³ <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/desi-latvia>

Figure 2 shows the ranking of Member States in the Digital Economy and Society Index in 2020, based on 2019 data, where we see that Finland, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands have the most modern digital economies in the EU, followed by Estonia. In Latvia and Lithuania these indicators are at an average level, in Italy - lower.

2. Figure. Ddigital economy and society index, 2020

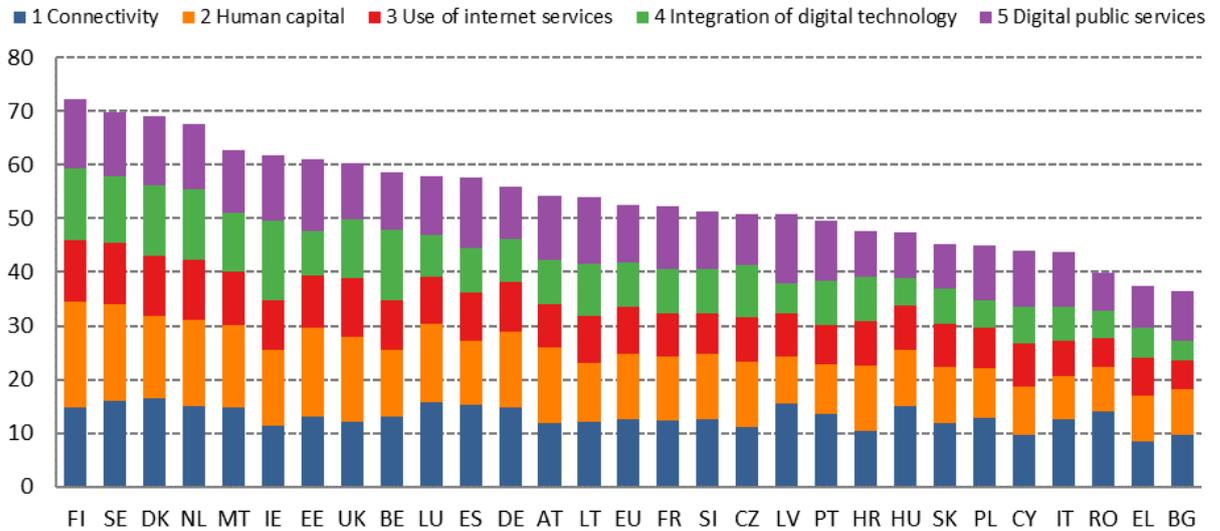
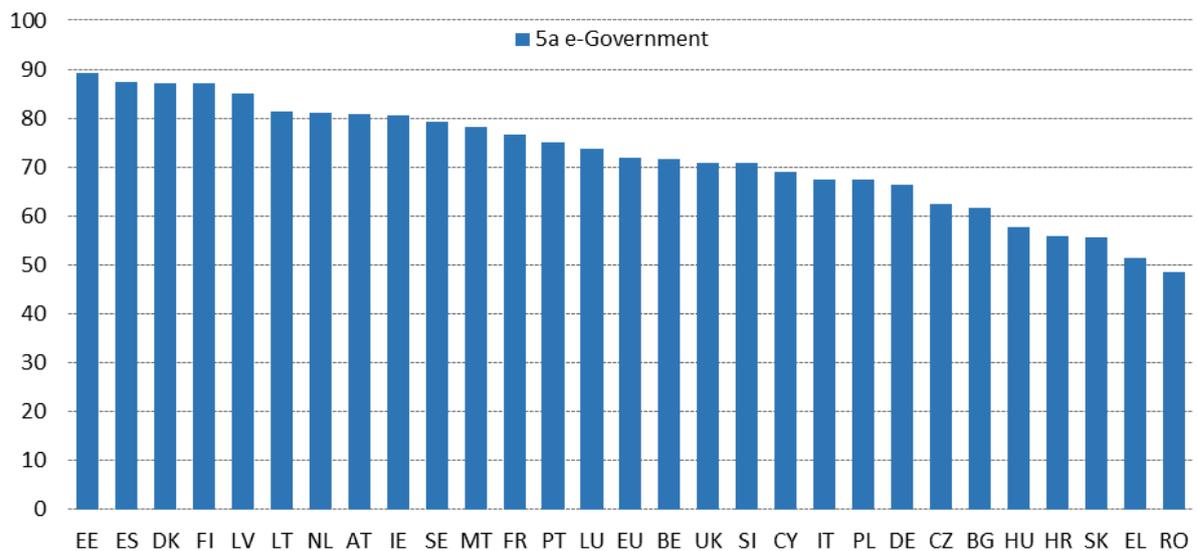


Figure 3 shows the level of digital public services in the EU countries. Effective e-Government can deliver greater efficiency and savings for governments, businesses and citizens. Estonia is the leader in this DESI indicator, Lithuania and Latvia are not far behind either. For Italy, the figures are medium.

Figure 3 Digital public services



The lack of basic digital skills hinders the wider use of ICT among the population, therefore it is important to increase the society's digital skills and knowledge of digital tools available to the public to work in the digital environment and to improve the professional competence of

public administration employees, to support customers in reaping the benefits of the digital environment.

In order to make full use of the opportunities of the digital economy, it is also necessary to promote the awareness and understanding of entrepreneurs about the use of digital opportunities, to provide consultative support to entrepreneurs for the practical use of digital opportunities. Entrepreneurial management skills needed to work in a digital transformation environment need to be promoted, including adapting daily work processes to the capabilities of the digital economy by encouraging the use of artificial intelligence, big data and cloud solutions, digital marketing and social media in businesses.

The impact of the Covid-19 infection crisis has also accelerated digital transformation. Although teleworking and education have become a reality for many, the existing digital skills gap has been highlighted, creating inequalities because many people do not have the required level of digital skills or their jobs and educational institutions are lagging behind in digitalisation.

OECD study⁴ highlighting the barriers to the wider use of digital technologies, stresses the high proportion of small businesses, which tend to have lower ICT take-up rates, lack of staff with the right skills to take full advantage of ICT and a lack of employees with additional skills, such as the lack of management needed to transform work practices in companies.

Municipal communication with the public and operation of customer service centers

Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development (MEPRD)⁵ has studied the communication of local governments with the public and the operation of customer service centers. The 2019 study highlights the passive attitude of municipalities to purposefully develop the usability of websites on mobile devices, which is especially important for the growing number of users who access the web via mobile devices. In 2019, according to expert assessments, almost half (49% or 51 municipalities) of municipal websites did not correspond to the mobile version.

On the positive side, 86% or 89 municipalities learn about the experiences of their website visitors, and four-fifths (70 municipalities) have made improvements over the past year based on the results of the website visitors' experiences.

The majority (54% or 56 municipalities) have a section on the website to encourage public participation. On the other hand (63% or 66 municipalities) do not use e-participation tools on their website (for example, asking a topical question, online survey, discussion forum, etc.) Municipalities also actively use their social network accounts, their addresses are posted on the website of the respective municipality and information is provided. regularly updated.

MEPRD encourages local governments to be more active in finding out the opinions of website users - not only by analyzing statistics on website visitors, but also by surveying website visitors and improving their website in accordance with their users' suggestions and suggestions.

⁴ <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/docserver/a58d1c1a-lv.pdf?expires=1620374621&id=id&accname=guest&checksum=736565901ECE4DD3BF1FC2B1626D5A6B>

⁵ <https://mana.latvija.lv/e-indeksa-rezultati/>

The fact that in most municipal customer service centers are available is to be welcomed computers and client can receive practical help from a municipal employee for the use of municipal e-services, however, only 3% of municipalities are able to receive online consultations on public administration services (chat or Skype, or other form of instant online communication). Given the growing popularity of e-services, the provision of such a function would be very important. Virtually all municipalities (98%) have free public WiFi available to their visitors.

Data submitted by local governments for 2018 indicate that approximately one third of the requested and received services are through the electronic channel, and this is the second most popular channel for receiving / issuing local government services. More than half of the service applications have been sent by mail.

On the other hand, regarding the awareness of the population about services, the MEPRD study concludes that the population is well informed about the services that most taxpayers face: annual income declaration, payroll tax book and sickness benefit. This includes a high level of awareness about applying for documents (passport or eID card) and declaring residence.

In general, the use of the Internet, e-services, as well as Internet banking is very widespread in Latvian society.

However, the latest public administration technology solutions are not widely used among the population - the eID card is 38% of the population, and about every tenth inhabitant uses the e-signature. Despite the overall high maturity of the population in using the Internet and e-services, three groups of the population are formed with lower awareness of e-services, and more often the representatives of these groups choose to search for information in person: seniors, low-income people (up to 350 EUR) and residents , who find it more convenient to communicate with state and municipal institutions in Russian.

One of the less informed groups about e-services, as well as the group that expressed the least desire to apply for services electronically or use other opportunities of new technologies, are seniors. Therefore, it is necessary to address seniors who are most open to technology. In parallel, general usability and accessibility improvements should be implemented for those services that are important for seniors or persons of pre-retirement age - consultations on SSIA services, declaration of value added tax taxation period, information on projected old-age pension and state funded pension scheme member's account. statement. Additional activities can be implemented through informal channels - both by addressing senior family members and senior acquaintances (incl.

Use of digital technologies in companies

Regarding the use of digital technologies in companies, MEPRD's 2020 surveys of Latvian entrepreneurs data show that almost all entrepreneurs use e-mail (99%) and the State Revenue Service Electronic Declaration System (99%). Most entrepreneurs also use: e-services on the portal Latvija.lv (77%); sends electronic invoices to customers that cannot be processed automatically (71%); place orders for goods or services electronically via websites or mobile applications (66%). Also, the majority of entrepreneurs (58%) indicate that company officials have signed documents with a secure electronic signature in the last year, as well as the fact that 54% of companies have a website or an account on social networks.

The main reason why some businesses do not send electronic invoices to their customers is not storing data in the cloud, do not have a website or an account on social networks, have not signed documents with an e-signature is such that there is no need to do so, do well.

Approximately $\frac{2}{3}$ entrepreneurs surveyed (67%) indicate that their company has not introduced new digital solutions or increased the use of existing digital solutions in their business as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been done by 29% of surveyed entrepreneurs.

Latvian Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021-2027

In the Latvian Digital Transformation Guidelines for 2021-2027⁶, One of the directions of action is to provide an opportunity to acquire digital skills for everyday life, business on a continuous basis and upon individual request, through coordinated cooperation of various institutions, NGOs and social partners in order to effectively use their competence, resources and capacity.

In the MSAE project, we conducted a study to find out exactly what digital skills the population lacks and areas where skills should be developed. the municipality to support the development of these skills as well as to improve its website in accordance with the interests of the population.

The survey of project partners was conducted in small municipalities. In Latvia, the survey was conducted in Auce and Jēkabpils counties.

⁶ <https://www.varam.gov.lv/lv/digitalas-transformacijas-pamatnostadnes-2021-2027gadam>

Analysis of digital skills of Auce and Jēkabpils region residents and residents' opinion about the municipal home page

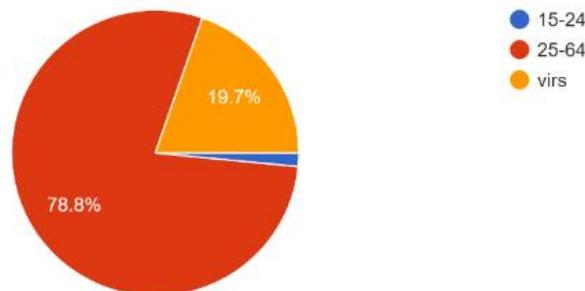
Analysis of results

Characteristics of respondents

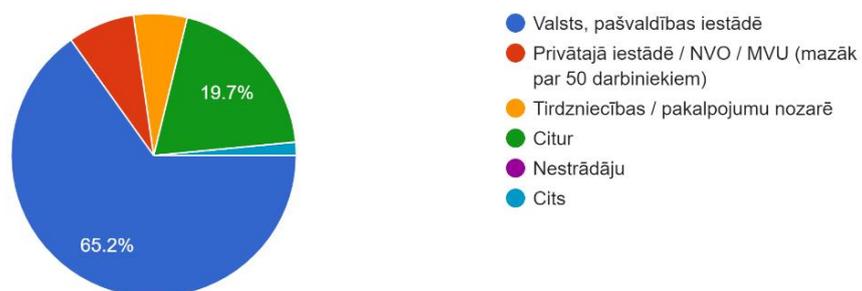
In Latvia, the survey was conducted in Auce and Jēkabpils counties. Here the results of the Auce municipality survey (diagrams) are considered and compared with the results of the Jēkabpils municipality survey.

Auces 66 respondents, both men and women, participated in the survey, of which 78.8% aged 25-64, 19.7% over 65, and 1.5% aged 15-24

1. Jūsu vecums
66 responses



2. Kur Jūs strādājat?
66 responses



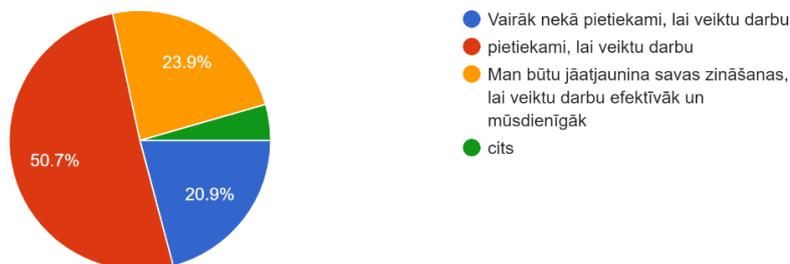
Slightly more than half (65.2%) of the respondents work in a municipal or state institution, the remaining 34.8% in the trade sector, SMEs, a private company, NGO or elsewhere.

Jēkabpils In the region, the vast majority of respondents (more than 80%) are 25-64 year olds working in a state or municipal institution.

Digital skills at work

3.Kā Jūs vērtējat savas IT prasmes darba vajadzībām.

66 responses



Auce

50.7% of respondents admit that their current skills are sufficient to do the job,

20.9% of respondents believe they are more than enough to get the job done

23.9% of respondents believe that they should be updated to make their work more efficient and modern.

In Jēkabpils, these figures are - 45.8%, 17.9%, 35.1%

The table shows what computer skills respondents in Auce and Jēkabpils counties should improve at their own discretion.

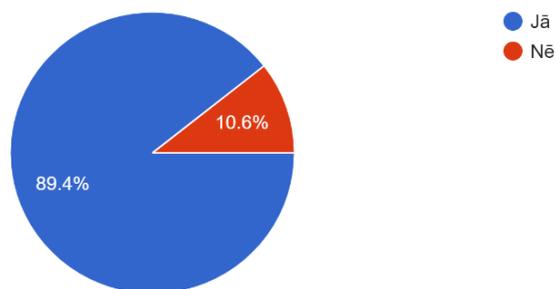
	Auce%	Jekabpils%
Communication and collaboration skills in e-environment	13.6	22
More skills in working with Excel	22.7	36.3
More skills in creating Google surveys	10.6	28.6
Skills in working with text, its editing, inserting images, tables	16.7	22
Technical problem solving skills when working with a computer	33.3	48.8
More skills in creating a web page and inserting information into it	15.2	44.6
More skills in creating video / audio files	27.3	51.8

In addition to these skills, respondents admit that they would like to learn how to create databases, IT systems, Zoom platform usage, digital marketing, shortcut usage, canvas and drawing programs.

Websites and public electronic services of municipalities and their institutions

5.Vai jūs izmantojat savas pašvaldības tīmekļa vietnes kā informācijas avotu?

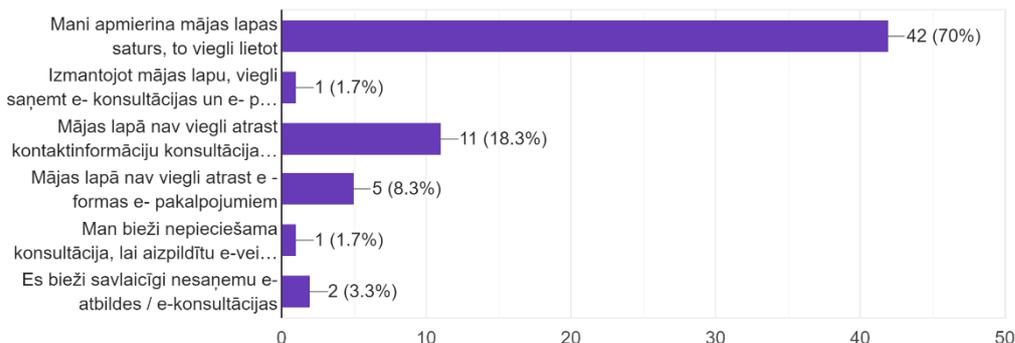
66 responses



In both counties, residents actively use the municipal website as a source of information (89.4% of respondents in Auce and 76.8% in Jekabpils). The majority of respondents are satisfied with the content of the website (70% in Auce and 58.4% in Jēkabpils), but only 1.7% of respondents in Auce municipality and 9.3% in Jēkabpils municipality admit that it is easy to use. We can conclude that municipal websites are an important source of information for citizens.

6.Kāds ir Jūsu viedoklis par Auces pašvaldības mājas lapu?

60 responses



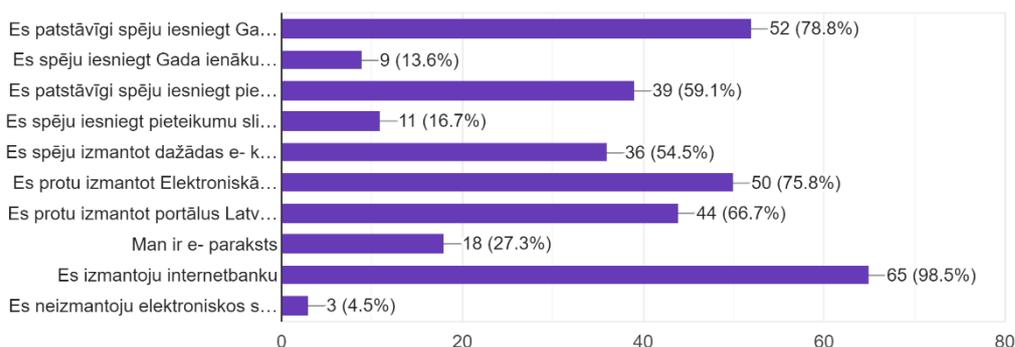
The results of the survey show that the majority of respondents (70% in Auce and 58.4% in Jēkabpils) admit that the content of the municipal website satisfies them and the site is easy to use. However, there are indications that municipalities could improve their websites by addressing the following issues:

- ✓ 18% of respondents in Auce and Jēkabpils state that it is not easy to find contact information for consultation on the municipal website;
- ✓ 8.3% of Auce and 16.1% of Jēkabpils respondents state that it is not easy to access e-forms of electronic services;
- ✓ 3.3% of Auce and 4.3% of Jēkabpils respondents state that they do not receive answers to e-consultations in time.

Only 1.7% of Auce and 9.3% of Jēkabpils respondents state that it is easy to receive electronic consultations, submit e-applications and receive e-services.

7. Vai protiet izmantot zemāk minētos elektroniskos sabiedriskos pakalpojumus?

66 responses



The answers to the question whether the respondents are able to use electronic public services show that the majority of respondents use them. In Auce municipality, 98.5% of respondents use Internet banking, 75.8% - electronic declaration system EDS, 66.7% - portal Latvija.lv, 59.1% of respondents are able to submit an application for sickness benefit, 54.5% are able to use various electronic consultations.

Respondents from Jēkabpils have also given very similar answers. It can be concluded that the respondents have good skills to use electronic public services.

8. Ja nē, kādi ir sabiedrisko pakalpojumu portālu vai bezmaksas publisko elektronisko rīku neizmantošanas iemesli

17 responses



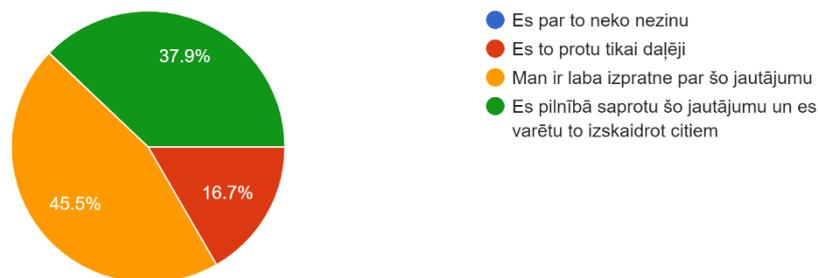
Reasons for not using public electronic services:

41.2% of Auce and 36.4% of Jēkabpils respondents prefer face-to-face services; 11.8% of Auce and 23.6% of Jēkabpils respondents' public electronic services are too complicated; 17.6% of Auce and 45.5% of Jēkabpils respondents do not need them.

Information and data literacy

9. Es zinu, kā izmantot meklētājprogrammu (Google, wiki vai citu), lai atrastu informāciju.

66 responses



45.5% of Auce and 49.4% of Jēkabpils respondents have a good understanding of how to use electronic search engines.

37.9% of Auce and 32.7% of Jēkabpils respondents fully understand this issue and can explain it to others. 16.7% of Auce and 17.3% of Jēkabpils respondents have a partial understanding of it and there are no respondents who would know nothing.

10. Es regulāri datus dublēju/ saglabāju USB vai mākoņos

65 responses



38.5% of Auce and 36.9% of Jēkabpils respondents - are able to store data in USB and / or data clouds. 15.4% of Auce and 14.9% of Jēkabpils respondents fully understand it and could explain it to others as well. Unfortunately, 10.8% of Auce and 4.7% of Jēkabpils respondents do not know how to do it and 33.8% of Auce and 43.5% of Jēkabpils respondents only partially understand this issue.

11. Es salīdzinu cenas dažādiem interneta veikaliem / pakalpojumu sniedzējiem

66 responses

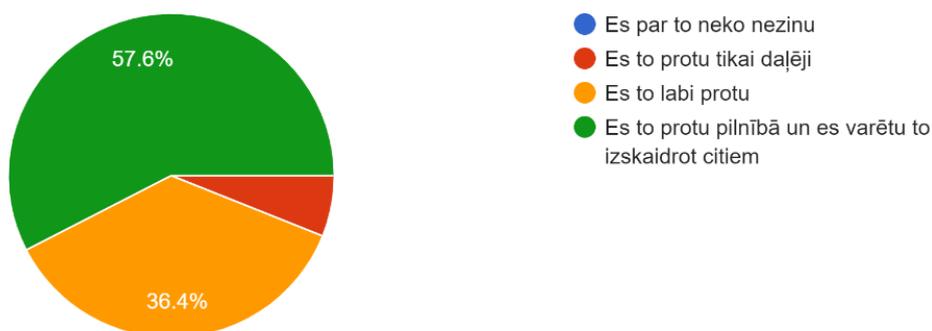


26.9% of Auce and 29.8% of Jēkabpils respondents can convincingly compare the prices of different online stores / service providers and explain it to others, 53.7% of Auce and 47.6% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to do it independently, with the help of others - 13.4% of Auce and 11.9% of Jēkabpils respondents. 6% of Auce and 10.7% of Jēkabpils respondents do not know how to do it.

Communication and cooperation

12. Es protu aizsūtīt, pārsūtīt un atbildēt uz e-pastiem.

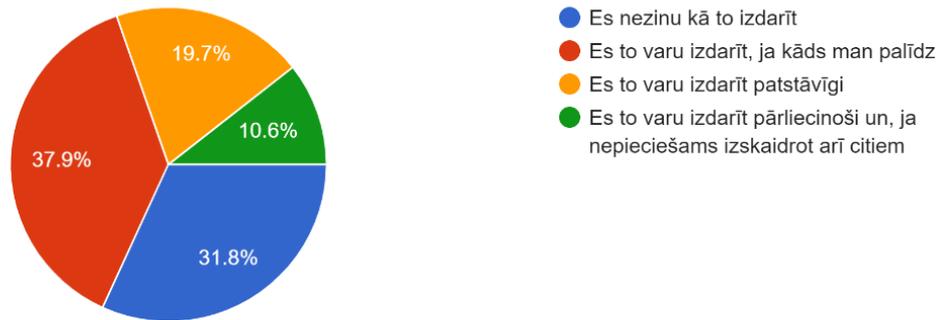
66 responses



The situation is better with the use of e-mail (send, forward, reply). 57.6% of Auce and 71.4% of Jēkabpils respondents know it well and are able to explain it to others, 36.4% of Auce and 24.4% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to do it independently. 10.9 percent of respondents in Auce and 4.2 percent in Jēkabpils have limited understanding and there are no respondents who would not know how to do it.

13. Es protu izveidot aptaujas veidlapas, dokumentus un sadarboties dokumentu izstrādē, izmantojot tiešsaistes platformu: google docs, dropbox, pbworks vai citas.

66 responses



Only 10.6% of Auce and 8.9% of Jēkabpils respondents can convincingly create questionnaires, documents and collaborate using online platforms and explain it to others. 19.7% of Auce and 29.2% of Jēkabpils respondents know how to do it independently, 37.9 percent of Auce and 39.3% of Jēkabpils respondents can do it with other help. Quite a significant number of respondents - 31.8 percent in Auce and 22.6 percent in Jekabpils - do not know how to do it.

14. Es protu vadīt grupas sanākumi/ videokonferenci Zoom/jitsi/team vai citā platformā.

66 responses

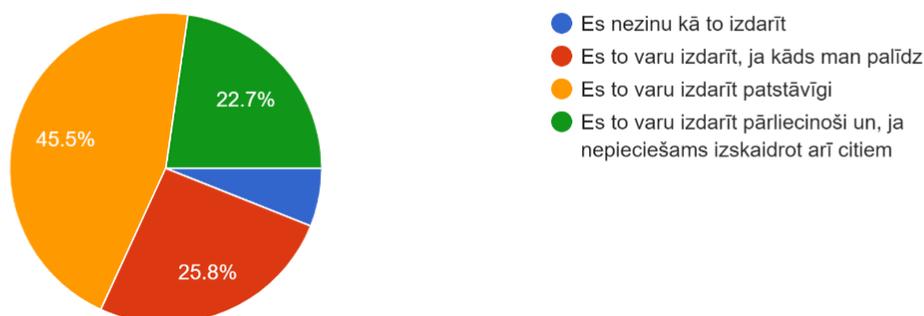


The answers to this question for Auce and Jēkabpils respondents are different. 9.1% of Auce and 15.5% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to conduct remote meetings using different platforms and explain it to others, 22.7% of Auce and 53% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to do it well, while 40.9% of Auce and 24.4% of Jēkabpils respondents can only answer video calls, but 21.2% of Auce and 7.1% of Jēkabpils respondents do not know how to answer video calls or conduct a meeting online.

Digital content creation

15. Es protu rediģēt tekstus, ievietot attēlus

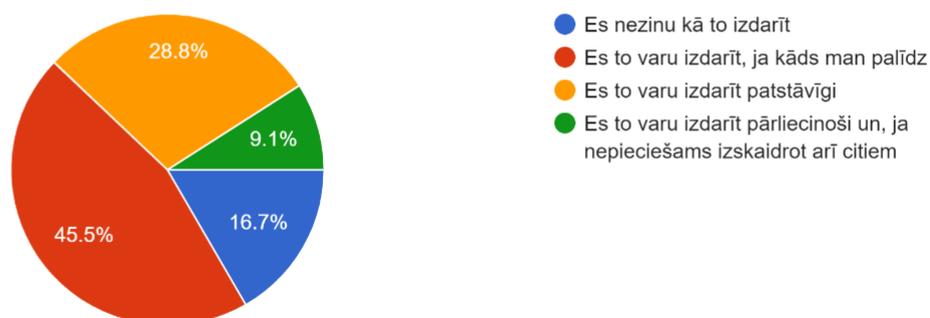
66 responses



22.7% of Auce and 29.2% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to convincingly create and edit texts and insert pictures, 45.5% of Auce and 55.4% of Jēkabpils respondents can perform this activity independently, 25.8% of Auce and 13.1% Jēkabpils respondents - with other help, but 6.1% of Auce and 2.3% of Jēkabpils respondents are unable to do so.

16. Es protu strādāt ar formulām un izmantot citas Excel rīkjoslas iespējas

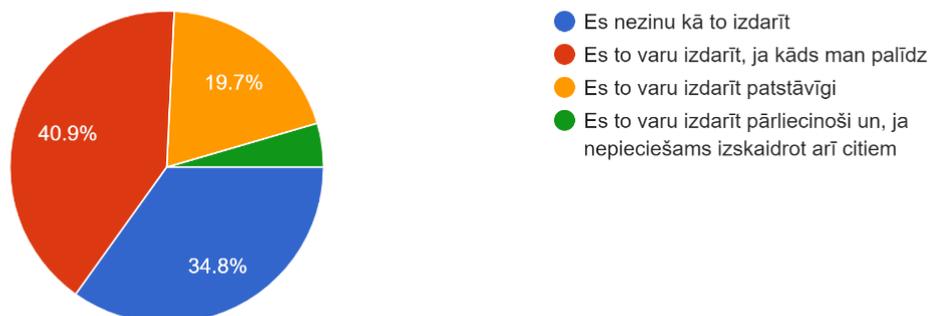
66 responses



45.5% of Auce and 42.9% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to use formulas and other Excel options with other help, 28.8% of Auce and 36.9% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to perform these activities independently, and only 9.1% of Auce and 10.7% of Jēkabpils respondents can make them convincing. A significant number of respondents, 7% of Auce and 9.5% of Jēkabpils respondents do not know how to use Excel toolbars.

17. Es protu izveidot audio and video failus

66 responses



The survey data show that only 4.6 percent of Auce and 8.9% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to convincingly create audio and video recordings. 19.7% of Auce and 23.8% of Jēkabpils respondents are able to do it independently, but the majority - 40.9% of Auce and 47.6% of Jēkabpils respondents - can do it with the help of other people. A significant part of the respondents (34.8% in Auce and 19.6% in Jēkabpils) do not know how to create audio and video recordings at all.

Safety

18. Es izmantoju profilakses pasākumus pret tiešsaistes uzbrukumiem datoram (antivīrusu programmas, ugunsmūri, https šifrēšana u.c.)

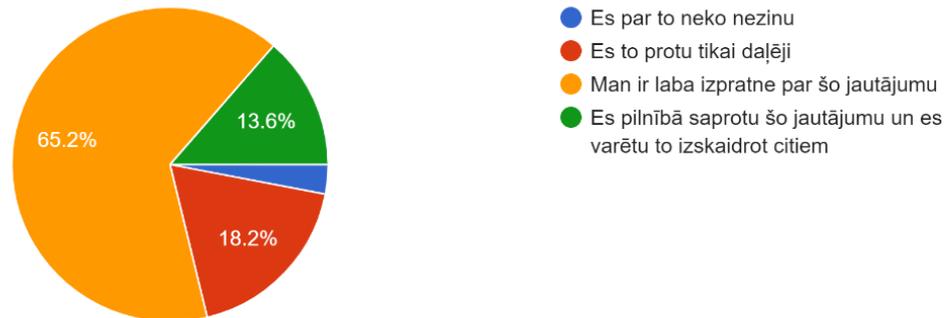
66 responses



The majority of respondents (47% of Auce and 51.2% of Jēkabpils) can protect their computer from cyber attacks only with the help of others, they are able to do it independently - 18.2% of Auce and 16.1% of Jēkabpils respondents and only 7.6 % Of Auce and 4.7% of Jekabpils respondents. A large majority of respondents (27.3% in Auce and 28% in Jekabpils) do not do so at all.

19. Es zinu, kurus personas datus man nevajadzētu kopīgot vai atklāt tiešsaistē (piemēram, sociālajos tīklos, atbildot uz surogātpasta e-pastiem utt.).

66 responses

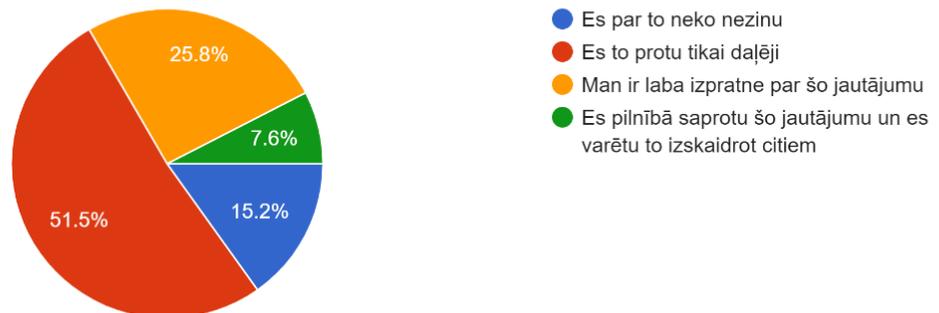


It is positive that the majority (65.2% in Auce and 58.3% in Jēkabpils) know what personal data should not be published online and in other online media, and another 13.6% in Auce and 23.2% in Jēkabpils not only knows but is able to explain it to others. 18.2 percent of Auce and 15.5% of Jēkabpils respondents only partially know the protection of personal data online. Meanwhile, 3% of respondents in both Auce and Jēkabpils know nothing about personal data protection.

Problem solving

20. Ja saskaros ar tehnisku problēmu, lietojot datoru, es risinājumus varu atrast internetā.

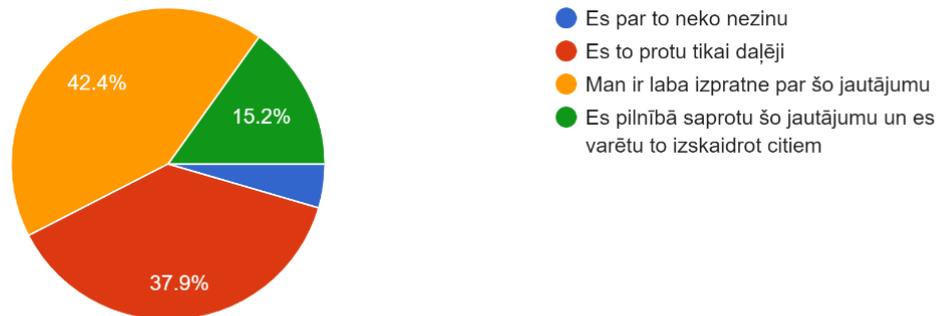
66 responses



A very small part (7.6% in Auce and 10.1% in Jēkabpils) is able to convincingly find solutions to technical computer problems, slightly more respondents are able to solve technical problems independently - 25.8% in Auce and 22% in Jēkabpils. The majority of respondents (51.5 percent in Auce and 56.5% in Jēkabpils) can do it with other help, however, 15.2 percent of respondents in Auce and 3% in Jēkabpils are not able to do it at all.

21. Ja nepieciešams, es varu mainīt dažādus datora iestatījumus (ievietot komentārus, zem svītras piezīmes, mainīt atstarpes starp rindām utt.)

66 responses



15.2% of Auce and 22.6% of Jekabpils respondents are able to confidently change computer settings and 42.2% of Auce and 31% of Jekabpils respondents have a good understanding of this issue, 28.8% of Auce and 22.6% of Jekabpils respondents are able to change settings with other help, and only 4.5% of Auce and 4.1% of Jēkabpils respondents do not know how to do it.

Summary

A survey of residents of Auce and Jēkabpils counties showed that 50% of respondents believe that they have good enough IT skills necessary for work activities. At the same time, however, they believe that some skills need to be improved. They would like to improve their skills in solving technical problems, working with computers, creating audio and video and web pages, and working in Excel.

The results of the survey show that municipal websites are an important and necessary source of information for the population. According to the majority of respondents, they are satisfied with the content of municipal websites and also note that they are easy to use. Most of the respondents use some public electronic service, the most popular of which are Internet banking services, electronic declaration system EDS, Portal Latvija.lv, application for sickness benefit, various e-consultations. And only 4.5% of respondents do not use e-services. Of which and half of the respondents think that they do not need them, ~ 35% prefer face-to-face services, but 15% are too complicated.

The results of the survey show that the vast majority of residents of Auce and Jēkabpils counties know how to use browsers and a third are able to explain it to others.

However, it should be noted that one third of the respondents have insufficient skills to store information in USB and / or data clouds and 10% do not know anything about it.

By communicating and collaborating through online / electronic media, respondents are good at sending, forwarding and replying to emails. Other skills - creating documents and questionnaires, using online collaboration platforms, managing remote events - are relatively weak. 1/3 of the respondents do not know anything about it and 38% are able to cooperate in the e-environment only with the help of others.

70% of respondents are confident in the ability to create, edit texts and insert images, comments, footnotes, etc. However, the ability to work in Excel is weaker - 40% are able to do it well or explain it to others. And only ¼ respondents are able to create digital audio and video recordings. These results correlate with the abilities that respondents want to improve.

The vast majority of respondents understand the importance of personal data protection, but less so about protecting computers against cybercrime.

Conclusions

1. Half of the residents of Auce and Jēkabpils counties have relatively good computer skills, but there are some specific computer skills, which the respondents admit that they should be improved. As the answers to most of the questions in both counties have been similar, it allows to conclude that in other regions of Latvia the computer skills of the population could be similar and local governments would be advised to support their inhabitants in improving these skills.

2. Specific computer skills should be improved (solving technical problems when working with computers, creating audio and video and web pages, working in Excel, collaborating on creating documents in the e-environment, creating audio and video, using data clouds, protecting computers against cybercrime, etc.), which are not used effectively in everyday activities and are understood by citizens themselves.

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