

Open Government as a strategy to promote Citizen Participation in Kazakhstan

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Abstract

Over the last decade, Kazakhstan has implemented numerous open government initiatives to promote transparency, civic participation, accountability etc. One of the fundamental pillars of open government is citizens' participation which ensures the involvement of citizens in decision making, providing feedback etc. Therefore, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of open government portals, i.e, E-government portal (www.egov.kz) and Open Akimat to explore the level of citizens' engagement on these government portals focusing on the case of Astana. Citizen Participation is defined as the active involvement of citizens in government decision-making processes, including raising concerns, providing feedback, and engaging in governance through both online and offline means. Qualitative research method has been used for the evaluation purpose, which consists of surveys of Astana residents and content analysis of the government web portals. The surveys with Astana residents provide the ground realities of the level of citizens engagement with the open government portals and the content analysis sheds light on the up to date data regarding the citizens' engagement on portals. The study explores the difficulties faced by citizens regarding their engagement, their awareness level about government portals and potential recommendations on how the government can improve citizens' participation further. The results of our study reveal that although many citizens in Astana are aware of the existence of open government platforms, actual participation remains low. People generally do not engage actively on the web portals because of technical difficulties, lack of government responsiveness, and concerns about data security. Despite the presence of multiple digital platforms aimed at increasing transparency and civic involvement, citizens feel that these platforms are not user-friendly, and their input often goes unnoticed. The findings suggest that improving accessibility, responsiveness, incentives, and awareness efforts is crucial for fostering meaningful citizen engagement.

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1. Introduction

In 2013, the government of Kazakhstan officially inaugurated the open government project by launching the open data portal (Kassen, 2019). Later, in 2015, the government approved the law on “Access to Information”, which laid the foundation for publication on open government portals. The aim of promoting open government initiatives is to bring efficiency to the public sector, ensure transparency, promote citizens’ participation, and create an accountable state (Amanbek, 2020). Among these aspects of open government, civic participation is the focus of this paper. Gil-Garcia et al. (2020) and Lee et al. (2019) define it as the extent to which the public is able to freely express their concerns to officials and participate in the decision-making process of the government. One of the important open government initiatives in Kazakhstan include the introduction of the E-government portal and Open Akimat web portal. The E-government portal further consists of five sub-components such as open data, law-making, dialogue, budget, and assessment of government agencies. These portals provide opportunities for citizens to provide inputs, feedback and participate in decision-making. Although the government has implemented various open government initiatives, the participation of citizens on these portals has been a problem in Kazakhstan due to ineffective implementation, low level of readiness of the portals, technological readiness and awareness among citizens. The true essence of these initiatives will flourish when these portals incorporate citizens’ participation. Therefore, this study will focus on the evaluation of open government portals based on how they promote citizens’ participation.

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of open government portals in promoting citizens’ participation based on the case study of Astana. The objective of the study is mainly to focus on the E-government web portal and Open Akimat website, which promotes citizens participation as part of open government initiative. The purpose is to explore the participation level of citizens through these platforms. E-participation is becoming one of the most important features in measuring the progress and effectiveness of open government initiatives (Kassen, 2019). In addition, the study identifies the obstacles faced by citizens regarding their participation while engaging with the open government

portals in decision making and engaging with the government officials and provides recommendations from citizens' perspectives.

According to the OECD, the fundamental pillars of open government include transparency, accountability, and participation. This study mainly focuses on the participation aspect of open government. By analyzing citizen participation levels through surveys and content analysis of web portals, this study assesses the effectiveness of these platforms in fostering active civic engagement. The current study follows the theoretical framework proposed by OECD. The current study focuses on the case study of Astana by providing insights into the effectiveness of the web portals in promoting citizens' participation from the perspective of Astana residents through surveys and content analysis of the online portals. The study uses the qualitative research method including surveys and website analysis.

The research is significant because it sheds light on the ground realities of citizens' awareness and engagement on government portals. Since Kazakhstan has already implemented open government projects in the form of open government portals and promoting e-democracy, it is important to see the ground realities of the initiatives through citizens' perspectives. Another significance of our work is that it will potentially empower Astana residents by allowing them to actively and freely participate in government decision-making processes through the E-government portals. Our study is also important because it will highlight essential problems faced by citizens while engaging with e-government portals and at the same time it will highlight the recommendations from citizens' perspectives for further improvement. In practical terms, it will only benefit both parties, as civic participation will be gradually developing in Kazakhstan. It will lead to better cooperation between the government and the citizens, which will ensure the implementation of effective and necessary policies. Finally, the primary interested actors of our paper are citizens, government officials, and experts in the field. To satisfy the needs and wishes of the public, the officials will find it useful to see their existing mistakes and limitations in involving citizens in decision making.

This study is organized into several sections, beginning with an introduction that outlines the study's purpose and significance, followed by a literature review to contextualize

existing studies, a methodology section detailing research design, a findings section highlighting key findings, a discussion part analyzing the findings and their implications, a limitations section shedding light on the limitations of the study, concluding with a summary, and recommendations.

2. Literature Review

Open government has lately been seen as one of the most significant factors for democracy, good governance, sustainable economic growth, and development of any country in academic literature (Kassen, 2017). Firstly, the literature review will discuss the origins and various aspects of open government and, more importantly, civic participation, which is the focus of our research. Secondly, the literature review will provide and evaluate the cases from other countries that implemented open government initiatives. Finally, open government initiatives in Kazakhstan will be discussed.

2.1. Defining/understanding the concepts and history of open government

The idea of ‘open government’ was first introduced by Thomas Jefferson, the 3rd U.S. President, at the end of the 18th century, stating that people must be well informed about what the government is doing. Due to several important incidents (e.g., the Watergate scandal), people started to demand that the government be more transparent and efficient in the 20th century. The trend became even more influential with the development of e-government and the Internet at the end of the 20th century (Wirtz & Birkmeyer, 2015). Ingrams (2020) argues that this is the beginning of the 21st century, which moved the idea of open government to a new level by introducing specific reforms, such as international agreements on the openness of governments and big anti-corruption campaigns. Wirtz and Birkmeyer (2015) demonstrated the influential example of Obama’s 2009 Open Government Directive, which focused on the three main areas of open government: ‘transparency, participation, and collaboration between the state and the public’.

Open government enhances transparency, accountability, and citizen trust (Ingrams, 2020), (Wijnhoven et. al, 2015). By providing access to information and engaging the public,

it strengthens democracy and promotes civic participation. Through transparency and accountability, citizens can make informed decisions and hold officials responsible. Open government fosters collaboration, innovation, and responsiveness, building stronger and more resilient societies. While the aspects of open government Obama presented are enough to give a general understanding of the concept, it is important to fully understand what concepts have yet to be included. Gil-Garcia et al. (2020) and Ingrams (2020) have done an extensive review of the term ‘open government’ and found that it relates to the following key areas: transparency, access to information, civic participation, collaboration between the government and the public, information technologies, public trust, government performance and efficiency, democratic values, and the state’s legitimacy and accountability. Given this full list of aspects of open government, it was important to narrow it down, as the notion of openness becomes too vague and abstract. Therefore, there are valuable papers such as Wijnhoven et al.’s paper (2015) focusing on transparency and information availability and Lee et al.’s work (2019) addressing civic participation and access to information as the main specifications of open government. To produce meaningful work that will fill the gap in the existing literature on open governance in Kazakhstan, we decided to focus on one of its key aspects, which is civic participation.

There have already been numerous studies on the concept of civic participation. To put it simply, many authors like Gil-Garcia et al. (2020), Lee et al. (2019), and Wijnhoven et al. (2015) agree that it focuses on the interaction between the government and the public. Gil-Garcia et al. (2020) define public participation as the ability of the latter to participate in the decision-making process of the former. Lee et al. (2019) adds that participation also involves the ability of citizens to raise concerns about certain issues with government officials. There are two main types of participation: offline and online. The first involves activities like offline town meetings, appeals to the mayor’s office, referenda, and political elections (Gil-Garcia et al., 2020; Ingrams, 2020). Another one includes tools such as ‘citizen-sourcing’, ‘eGovernment’, ‘eDemocracy’, ‘Collaborative Public Management’, etc. (Wijnhoven et al., 2015). They allow citizens to interact with the government by sending their concerns, resentments, appeals, wishes, suggestions, etc. Online civic participation is especially important for our research because we will evaluate the participation of citizens on the E-government website, the Akimat website, and the smart Astana app. Citizen participation is

crucial in open government because it empowers individuals to actively engage in the democratic process. Citizen participation fosters transparency and accountability by providing checks and balances on governmental actions. It enhances trust between the government and its citizens and ultimately strengthens democracy by creating a more inclusive and responsive governance framework.

2.2. Open Government initiatives in Kazakhstan

The Government of Kazakhstan has implemented various open government initiatives to improve efficiency and empower citizens in various sectors. Various authors and experts in academia have worked on the effectiveness of these initiatives.[H3] Bhuiyan (2010) critically examines the progress and effectiveness of e-government initiatives and policies in Kazakhstan. The paper explicitly provides insights into the e-government initiatives taken by the government of Kazakhstan in various fields like education, health, the economy, and other public sectors. The author also highlights some of the obstacles and challenges in the way of implementation of e-government initiatives in Kazakhstan, whose roots are deeply connected to the Soviet Union, an authoritarian regime. The author argues that despite various e-government projects being implemented by Kazakhstan, the satisfaction of people is below a satisfactory level. People are not satisfied with the level of openness of the government and their interactions with government officials. Although the initiatives are being taken by the government, citizen involvement and participation are still a big challenge because, at the end of the day, all these initiatives are for the people and to promote democracy and ensure that people's voices are being heard.

The participation of citizens in decision-making is one of the key aspects of open government. Kassen (2017), in his book, *E-government in Kazakhstan: A Case Study of Multidimensional Phenomena*, emphasizes participatory democracy and the efforts of the government of Kazakhstan on this matter. He provides a three-dimensional model of open government, which includes open data projects, open lawmaking, and open dialogue, and he regards these as the three key pillars of the open government concept. The author's central argument was that the participation of citizens should be considered the most important aspect of the open government concept, which was also endorsed by O'Connor, Janenova, and Knox (2019). The authors argue that the central theme of democracy is to empower

people, and the main theme of open government should be promoting democracy through the voice of the people. Kassen (2017) provides the concept of a three-dimensional model of open government, which is an important starting point and benchmark to understand the importance of open government, but open government is a multi-dimensional concept that is not limited to three dimensions. Limiting the open government concept to only three dimensions can limit the scope of its multidimensionality. Kassen, like many other authors, highlighted the importance of participatory democracy and citizens' empowerment. That's why it is important to perform a thorough study of the citizens' participation aspect of the open government initiatives in Kazakhstan to understand the level of effectiveness of the open government projects in terms of people's participation.

The paper by Sabdenov and Abdrakhmanova (2023) provides a comprehensive overview of the development of e-government in Kazakhstan, focusing on its legislative, institutional, and technological aspects. The study emphasizes the government's commitment to digitalization and the creation of a robust framework for e-government, as evidenced by the establishment of the E-government portal and relevant laws. The methodology employed involves analysis of portals and document review, providing insights into the key features and dynamics of e-government development in Kazakhstan. Through analysis of international rankings and statistical data, the research highlights Kazakhstan's progress in e-government development, positioning it as a leader in Central Asia and among landlocked countries. Additionally, the study examines the usage patterns of public services offered through the E-government portal, indicating alignment with the population's needs and policy decisions. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of continual improvement and expansion of e-government initiatives to enhance accessibility, transparency, and efficiency in public service delivery.

A decent amount of literature highlighted the importance of citizens' participation in the successful implementation of open government. Like Bhuiyan (2009), Jussupova et al. (2019) also emphasize the lack of citizens' involvement in decision-making. Although Kazakhstan is in its third stage of implementing open government projects, the problem of incorporating citizens and their voice in decision-making still exists in Kazakhstan. Jussupova et al. (2019) assess the maturity level in terms of the implementation stages of the

open government initiatives through the Gartner model, and they also highlight the problems and future prospects of open government in Kazakhstan. This provides an opportunity to fill the gap in the literature by looking at the participation level now and throughout the history of the open government concept in Kazakhstan, which is the most important aspect of open government and democracy.

One of the important studies by Kassen Maxat (2019) in the area of open government in Kazakhstan highlights a different perspective on open government and provides a different angle to look at open government thoroughly. In his paper, he argues that open data provides a wide range of opportunities for citizens' participation, but it does not affect the fundamentals of the political system and does not advance the democratic institutions in a typical developing country. It is important to understand this notion because the essence of open government is to become more open and to promote democracy through the voice of the people. The author highlights the problems related to the implementation and effectiveness of open government initiatives in a post-totalitarian regime, but at the same time, Kazakhstan has shown an improved ranking in the open government arena. The study throughout the discussion realized the importance of the participation of people in the promotion of real democracy in Kazakhstan, which motivated us to dig deep into the participation aspect of open government initiatives in Kazakhstan.

Bokayev et al. (2021) discuss the digitization policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan from the perspective of e-government services, emphasizing how important a citizen-centered approach is to running such services. As it stands, due to the top-down policy-making approach used in the Republic of Kazakhstan, the government's digitization policy focuses on simplifying administrative procedures, optimizing public functions, and increasing openness and transparency regarding the activities of public institutions. The results suggest that the government's digitization policy achieves some of the government's intended objectives but does not always meet citizens' needs for improved public services.

The examination of open government done by Kurmanov and Knox (2022) in Kazakhstan demonstrates notable shortcomings in its implementation. Despite its purported goal of encouraging open participation and collaboration, the National Council for Public Trust, established under President Tokayev's regime, ended up operating as a tool for internal

co-optation. Initially designed to facilitate citizen engagement, the Council was instead utilized by the regime to portray an impression of openness and receptiveness while preserving the status quo. Its agenda, Kurmanov and Knox argue, seems to be controlled by presidential advisors, with meetings increasingly focused on progress reports from ministers rather than meaningful engagement with citizens. Thus, in practice, the regime exploited open government rhetoric to manage and influence citizen participation, particularly in response to growing public discontent. Fearing these populist sentiments, officials argued against direct citizen involvement in decision-making. Therefore, the priority was given to the expertise of professionals rather than to citizens and, especially, young citizens' input. From their perspective, citizen activists lacked the capability to offer meaningful contributions to policy change. According to Kurmanov and Knox (2022), by adopting Western open government practices, Kazakhstan's government aimed to emulate an image of openness while concurrently shaping and controlling the narrative to solidify its authority. Consequently, the motivations behind Kazakhstan's embrace of open government intertwine, reflecting both the regime's endeavor to manage dissent and to project an impression of contemporary governance (isomorphic mimicry).

"Smart Astana" application is part of a bigger project called "Smart City", which is an initiative to improve the efficiency of urban resources, services management, and infrastructure. Astana, being the capital city, plays a crucial role in setting an example for other cities in the country. Mendybayev (2022) used the concept of a "composite" citizen to monitor citizen participation levels and forms in Smart City management. His study, which gathered data through semi-structured interviews with city managers and analysis of official data on Smart City implementation, revealed deficiencies in citizen participation in Kazakh cities' Smart City initiatives. Although there's a formal legal framework for citizen involvement, it's mostly one-sided, initiated by city authorities and limited to document approval stages. Communication channels are rudimentary, with little actual engagement with citizens. Despite significant infrastructure development, there's minimal use of citizen data for management or involvement in planning processes.

2.3. International case studies on enhancing Open Government through citizen participation

The introduction of the principles of an open government is an important factor in the desire for democratization and openness. An important factor is the participation of citizens, which guarantees the control and constant accountability of the state to its citizens. In this section of the literature review, the experience of various countries that have implemented citizen participation initiatives in one way or another will be touched upon, and the difficulties that they encountered in the process will be considered.

As citizen participation is a key element of an open government, it is crucial to promote it. Evans and Campos (2013), in their works on the example of the USA, argue that before implementing initiatives that will promote citizen participation, policymakers need to deal with difficulties in finding credible information. They stress that the government, by giving comprehensive access to a credible information base, would not let citizens be influenced by interest groups, which sometimes distort information in order to lobby their private interests through false information. This scientific study emphasizes that such an initiative will allow the state to expand citizens' access to key decision-making at the state level. It will also allow government leaders to develop and evaluate initiatives that will comprehensively involve citizens in decision-making. Michels, A. M. B. (2006), in his work, also agrees that citizen participation is a fundamental aspect of promoting open government initiatives. The work provides similar findings in the context of the Netherlands. Access to credible sources of information is also an issue that has become an obstacle in terms of citizen participation. Also, the author claims that political elites in the Netherlands usually assume that citizen participation is only connected with constitutional reforms. Without taking into account the involvement of citizens in the formation of public policy as well as the definition of political directions. The importance of discussions and the availability of tools of the hearing state in government structures are also emphasized. The author emphasizes the crucial role of deliberative decision-making and claims that steps to promote it would enhance democratic practices.

Kazakhstan is an authoritarian regime, and it is crucial to consider the practices of authoritarian states that have at least tried to implement participation efforts. Saudi Arabia, as an authoritarian state, tried to promote the participation of its citizens through open data initiatives. But the main problem in such countries is that these kinds of initiatives usually

occur on a top-down basis, which is why such initiatives do not find a positive response from many citizens. Therefore, it is imperative to consider the opinions of all interested parties and consult with them. This is the essence of an open government. The political authorities used e-government to promote citizen participation and open data initiatives. The development of e-government has a direct connection with the improvement of the quality of the openness of the government (Mutambik, 2022). Similar theses can be noticed in the work of Alathur (2016). This author, conducting his research in India, was able to get similar results. He also emphasizes that the participation of citizens in government decision-making is determined by the availability of reliable information through electronic services. It is very important for the state to develop tools and websites for electronic participation, as this is much more convenient and not complicated for the citizens themselves. The author argues that the creation of such electronic tools affects the increase in citizen participation. The conclusions made in his work suggest that the effectiveness and values of citizen participation determine e-government. He also claims that e-government is the key to the interaction between citizens and the government.

Chen (2022) evaluated Taiwan's open government data policies. Taiwan's economic success was primarily made possible by its open data policy. The availability of important government information was able to encourage trust between the state and citizens, which subsequently increased their involvement in the process of making government decisions. In our case, it will be important to solve these potential problems. It is also worth noting that such a policy has led to the development of a conscious civic position, which has also contributed to the broad involvement of citizens in the development of Taiwan. In addition, confirmation of this judgment can be found in the work of Soh & Yuen (2006), which was conducted in Singapore. The authors stressed that the active participation of citizens in urban planning has allowed Singapore to play a positive role not only in encouraging public participation in planning but also in actively involving voluntary citizens in the formation of focus groups for interaction between the state and citizens in general. The above works show the importance of the impact of citizen participation to improve the initiatives of open government. Such initiatives also enhance the democratization of society and awaken its self-awareness, which has a positive effect on the overall picture of the concept of open

government. Evaluating the successes and failures of other countries will help us to form better recommendations in the Kazakhstani context.

3. Methodology

This study aims to explore the citizens' participation aspect of open government in Kazakhstan by analyzing the open government initiatives focusing on the case of Astana. This study analyzes the effectiveness of open government portals in terms Citizens' participation which is one of the essential components of open government that promotes citizens' empowerment, communication, and involvement in decision-making. In this regard, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are the people in Astana aware of open government initiatives/portals?
2. How do people engage/participate through these online open government portals?
3. What are some of the main problems faced by the citizens regarding their participation?

The study is based on the qualitative research method which consists of website content analysis and surveys of Astana residents to see the effectiveness of open government initiatives in promoting citizens' participation through the open government portals. It is the most suitable method since examining civic participation in Astana requires statistical data from the portals showing the engagement of citizens and surveys of Astana residents to analyze the citizens' awareness, participation level and problems they face regarding their participation. To be exact, our methodology includes (1) an content analysis of open government portals, namely the E-government website, and Open Akimat website as well as (2) surveys with Astana residents. This approach of the study provides different viewpoints on the issue and will help us understand it comprehensively. The reason behind choosing Astana residents for the survey is because Astana is the capital city of Kazakhstan. For this study, 213 survey responses of Astana residents belonging to different strata of the society

have been collected. The sample includes students from different universities, students who are doing part time jobs, employees from the private sector, employees from the public sector, unemployed people and retired people. The data has been collected through various ways, we targeted crowded public places like malls, cafes, parks to approach people to fill our survey, we use social media channels by providing link to our survey and we ask friends, relatives and ask them to forward the survey to those of their friends and people they know. The survey questionnaire includes 12 main questions with some questions having sub parts. In the survey questionnaire, some questions regarding the age, type of activity, questions regarding the effectiveness of open government portals/initiatives in terms of citizens' participation, problems citizens face regarding their participation while engaging with the open government websites, and regarding the recommendations from citizens perspective to improve or develop the citizens' participation further. In order to look further into the citizen's participation aspect of open government portals, this study analyses the content of online portals. The analysis of the e-government web portals provides statistics on inquiries, feedback, and discussions that will reflect the citizen's participation through the e-government portal. The portals are enriched with a variety of services and channels to communicate with relevant government officials in specific fields (e.g., education, healthcare, customs and taxes, etc.). In addition, the e-government websites have various statistics regarding the number of projects, service deliveries, number of citizens who are participating, number of responses to citizens' queries, etc., which can provide an opportunity to evaluate and assess the level of citizens' participation and the extent of implementation.

Furthermore, the surveys with residents of Astana sheds light on their awareness regarding the portals, their participation level, the problems they face and the recommendations for making the portals effective for the participation of citizens. The problems have been explored from the detailed literature review. After identifying certain problems citizens face with their participation through online government platforms, we included the identified problems in one of our survey questions. Based on their experience, the citizens select the relevant problems they face.

The data collected from the analysis of open government web portals and surveys with Astana residents has been analyzed using a qualitative approach to gain comprehensive

insights into citizens' participation in open government initiatives in Kazakhstan. Content analysis of the web portals and responses from surveys conducted with Astana residents have been analyzed qualitatively to answer the three main research questions. For that purpose, thematic analysis has been employed to identify recurring themes, patterns, and insights from survey responses. Then, the triangulation of finding qualitative data sources has been conducted to corroborate and validate results. Comparative analysis has been performed to identify consistencies, discrepancies, and patterns across different data sources.

4. Findings

4.1. Survey results

This section presents the key findings of the survey conducted among ordinary citizens residing in Astana to assess their awareness, participation, and experiences with open government platforms. In addition, it presents an evaluation of the e-government portal. The aim was to analyze it in order to extract information on the level of citizen participation, using online statistics related to citizen inquiries and the feedback system. The study has evaluated the level of citizens' participation through open government initiatives from the perspective of citizens only. The snowballing method, in which survey links were shared with friends and relatives who then further distributed them, was utilized, complemented by an offline survey approach conducted in public spaces such as shopping malls, streets, and Nazarbayev University. A total of 213 responses were collected. The survey contained 12 questions, covering aspects such as age, type of activity, and citizens' awareness level of open government portals. It also included questions about their participation through online portals, the challenges they face, and their recommendations for further developing these portals to enhance citizen engagement in decision-making.

4.1.1. Demographics of respondents

The survey captured a diverse range of participants across age groups, employment status, and sectors. The largest age group was 18–24 years old (51.6%), followed by 25–34 (23.9%), 35–44 (17.8%), and those 45 and older (6.7%). In terms of employment status,

42.3% were full-time employees, 36.2% were students, 8.9% worked part-time, and 7.5% were students with part-time jobs, while the rest were unemployed or pensioners. Regarding employment sectors, 76.4% of respondents worked in the private sector, while 23.6% were government employees.

4.1.2. Awareness and participation in Open Government initiatives

When asked whether they were informed about the existence of the open government platforms such as E-government, Smart Astana and Open Akimat, 93.9% of the people responded they heard about the E-government portal, 19.7% of the people were informed about Smart Astana website, 25.8% of the respondents were informed about the Open Akimat website, while 4.7% of the people had never heard of these portals. Then the survey sought to understand whether citizens had ever participated in any open government initiatives or events in Astana: 70.4% of respondents indicated that they had never participated; 19.2% responded they had engaged in some form of participation; while the rest expressed uncertainty in their answers. Among the respondents who indicated participation, the survey asked them to specify the types of initiatives they engaged in (see **Table 1**). One-fifth of respondents who chose "Other" provided additional details: nine admitted to not participating in any initiatives, while one had joined public forums and another had engaged in legal act discussions.

Table 1. Types of Open Government Activities in Which Respondents Participated.

Types of open government initiatives or activities	Percentage of respondents	No. of respondents
Public consultations on policy-making	19.2%	14
Community forums or town hall meetings	20.5%	15
Online surveys or feedback forms	56.2%	41
Citizen advisory committees or councils	15.1%	11
Participatory budgeting processes	11.0%	8
Other initiatives/activities	21.9%	16

The survey results show that 50.7% of respondents rarely visit government websites or online platforms for information or participation in decision-making. Additionally, 20.7%

never visit these sites, 19.2% do so monthly, 8% weekly, and only 1.4% daily. Regarding awareness of open government initiatives, respondents rated their awareness on a scale from 1 (very unaware) to 5 (very aware). The majority (28.6%) were neutral, 28.2% were somewhat unaware, 27.7% very unaware, 12.7% somewhat aware, and only 2.8% very aware.

Another open-ended question asked respondents to describe how they engage in decision-making through open government websites, particularly Open Akimat. Their responses were categorized as follows: 14 individuals indicated that they do not participate in any way; three respondents indicated occasional participation or minimal engagement, with one of them specifically mentioning using ikomek, an online citizen feedback system; another three respondents mentioned engaging in public discussions and commenting on initiatives; five participants use the platforms to report issues or provide feedback; and two respondents engage in voting for initiatives, with one of them mentioning voting on the time zone change in Kazakhstan through the E-government portal.

4.1.3. Problems encountered while using Open Government platforms

Respondents were asked about the difficulties they faced while using the online government portals when submitting their concerns or suggestions via open government websites. The results indicate several key barriers to engagement. Technical issues were the most common, reported by 114 respondents. Additionally, 106 respondents cited the lack of response from authorities as a major concern, while 59 expressed privacy concerns. Among the 21 respondents who selected "Other," a qualitative analysis revealed diverse concerns: six had no issues, two did not use the platforms, four lacked trust in the government, and one each mentioned bureaucratic difficulties, slow government responses, inadequate user training, frequent process changes, and a belief that open government websites are useless.

4.1.4. Factors that could encourage greater participation and recommendations

According to the survey, 65.3% of respondents stated that simplified, user-friendly platforms would encourage greater participation in open government initiatives. Furthermore, 51.2% emphasized the need for increased transparency and accountability, 46.5% valued opportunities for meaningful contributions, and 43.7% highlighted the

importance of clear communication about initiative goals and outcomes. For 30.5%, incentives or rewards were key motivators for engagement.

Lastly, based on responses provided in the last open-ended question, the key recommendations for improving participation can be categorized into five main areas:

- Increasing awareness (16 responses):
 - Using social media platforms to inform people in simple and accessible language.
 - Promoting these initiatives through newspapers, television, and online advertisements.
 - Conducting information campaigns and educational outreach, especially in regional areas where awareness is even lower.
- Improving platform usability and accessibility (10 responses):
 - Redesigning interfaces to make them more intuitive and visually appealing.
 - Providing multilingual support to cater to a diverse population.
 - Simplifying the registration and submission process so that participation is more accessible.
- Strengthening feedback and government responsiveness (10 responses):
 - Ensuring that public officials actively respond to citizen feedback and demonstrate that their opinions are valued.
 - Improving the speed and quality of responses from authorities to increase trust and participation.
 - Implementing a tracking system where citizens can see the progress of their submitted concerns or proposals.
- Providing more transparency (5 responses):

- Regularly publishing reports and statistics that show how citizen feedback has influenced decision-making.
- Encouraging engagement through incentives and offline participation (3 responses):
 - Organize town hall meetings and offline discussions.
 - Offer incentives for participation, such as rewards or recognition for active contributors.

4.2. Website evaluation

4.2.1. Evaluation of the dialog.egov.kz

The dialog.egov.kz website was created to organize direct communication between the government and citizens of Kazakhstan through the internet platform. Various government decisions are published by the state on this platform, on which citizens can leave their comments. Also, citizens are welcome to ask questions regarding policies, government services, and procedures; they can offer their suggestions and to write feedback on particular policies and decisions. It is important to notice that every response from the government is publicly available on the website and is open to be seen by everyone.

The dialog.egov.kz website functions as part of the e-government platform. Thus, contributing to the overall e-government user base number of 10,000 registered citizens across all services in 2023. The dialog.egov.kz website handles around 400.000 inquiries annually, and all government agencies respond to the inquiries within 30 days. Common inquiries touch on social topics such as health, education, ecological problems, and, in general, social assistance. When it comes to the internet conferences, according to the website itself they conducted 4303 internet conferences, where discussions of various matters from ecology to social help were taken place. All the internet conferences are recorded and can be rewatched and commented on by all users. 2474 surveys regarding policy evaluation of the policies were held, the citizens were asked about the effectiveness of the policies.

In addition to the fact that it is possible to join discussions, leave comments, and give feedback, this site published a list of quasi-governmental organizations and their directors. If

a citizen has a question or complaint, he or she can contact the director directly through the website dialog.egov.kz. When attempting to launch this request, the petitioner is redirected to eotinish.kz. It is also important that when writing a question, it is warned that all requests are reviewed not only by the director and the institution but also by the Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which contributes to transparency and openness. Many answers of directors and officials to questions are in the public domain, which means that they leave a digital footprint in the system that is visible to all citizens. This may also signal the importance of using dialog.egov.kz and its potential usefulness. The services are also offered in three languages: Kazakh, Russian and English. This ensures that every citizen of Kazakhstan regardless of what language speaks can use the portal to obtain the needed service.

4.2.2. Evaluation of the budget.egov.kz

The budget.egov.kz website has been created to provide detailed information about how government and governmental organizations use their budgets. The main objective of this online portal is to increase transparency and accountability in governmental organizations by providing financial information to the general public. This online portal receives approximately 1 to 2 million visits annually. According to the website itself, there were 182920 budget projects publicized by the government and governmental organizations and 81344 other materials regarding the government's financial activities.

The main downside of the platform is that this online platform is only informative, which means that this platform was only created to publish information, so citizens cannot in any way leave a comment or write a complaint. There is no possibility to start a discussion of any issue, as for instance in platform dialog.egov.kz. There is simply no opportunity for the public to influence through budget.egov.kz on how the budget should be spent. This fact is a big disadvantage, which reduces the great potential of this website in terms of citizen participation through e-government platforms.

4.2.3. Evaluation of the data.egov.kz

The data.egov.kz website is aimed at allowing citizens to easily access open government data, offering transparency of government operations, providing ground for

analysis and research, and raising government officials' efficiency. The public can conveniently access, download, and utilize datasets generated by state authorities. The government data is adapted to a machine-readable format that is often utilized for developing services and applications based on them. Moreover, analysts and journalists can utilize publicly available government data for social, economic, and scientific studies.

The data.egov.kz website presents a wide range of statistical data. The portal presents around 3900 datasets to choose relevant information from. The website has been viewed 7,5 million times since January 1, 2015. There have been around 240 thousand downloads till now. Also, 37 apps and services have been developed based on open data, with examples being Smart Astana, Go Sauda, etc. Citizens can see the percentage of published open datasets from central government agencies relative to the overall quantity approved in the list. As of November 1, 2024, the proportion ranges from 83% to 100%, with only one ministry having 0% and most of them scoring 100%. The same data is also available for local executive authorities (akimats), which are scoring from 87% to 100%. When it comes to quasi-public sector organizations, most of them are inactive at publishing data.

There are several ways to access open data. The first method is to find information by one of numerous categories ranging from public sector and healthcare to hunting and fishing. Another method is to access data through the actual owners - central governmental authorities, local executive authorities and quasi-public sector organizations. These methods enable a smooth and convenient search for the public.

4.2.4. Evaluation of the legalacts.egov.kz

The legalacts.egov.kz website offers a platform where citizens can join the process of development of the regulatory legal acts (RLAs). The public can discuss and share their opinion on draft bills and permits. The website is designed to facilitate user feedback through comments and voting, guaranteeing access to draft RLAs for users, supporting the formation of public viewpoints on the advancement of innovations within the regulatory legal domain and ensuring the preparation of final reports for further analysis. Overall, the portal is aimed at publishing draft legislative concepts and RLAs without restricted information, enabling citizens to engage in public discussions.

The legalacts.egov.kz website offers valuable statistical data. As of November 1, 2024, there are 138,134 open legal acts projects available on the portal. Out of them, there are 134,049 draft RLAs in the archives. Citizens currently engage in 749 draft RLAs that have an active status. Over the whole period of this website, the public left 295,182 comments on draft RLAs and the government officials left 278,095 responses to them. The majority of draft RLAs fall into the economy/economic activity category with 38,101 RLAs. The categories like agriculture, social security, taxes and finance and legal assistance present another big part with a range of 11,400 to 15,200 regulatory legal acts.

Overall, this portal offers the public a responsibility to influence the development of regulatory legal acts. After the publication of RLA projects, the public shares their viewpoints several times on various stages of formulation. This allows the citizens to have a continuous impact on the decision making process of RLA development. Each user can access RLAs through (1) different categories ranging from tourism and sport to economy/economic activity, (2) central governmental authorities and (3) local executive authorities.

4.2.5. Evaluation of the Open Akimat

The official website of the Astana city administration serves as a central tool for communication between the municipal authorities of the city and its residents. Here citizens have the opportunity to view all events organized by the city authorities, as well as to get additional information about the life of the city.

As for the participation of citizens in the activities of the city, there are certain restrictions. On the site, there is an “online reception,” which was created so that citizens could quickly contact representatives of the Akimat to discuss an issue or to solve any problem. Citizens have the opportunity to write an e-mail message directly to a certain public servant, with the ability to track the status of consideration of the appeal from the moment it is sent to receiving a response. It is also possible to make an appointment with civil servants and discuss a pressing issue in a personal meeting. There is also a citizens' reception center, but it has more of an advisory nature, and actively influencing decisions concerning the future of the city is not possible.

By asking to what extent the residents of Astana can influence the decisions of the city authorities, it becomes evident that there are practically no direct mechanisms for citizens to exert influence over the authorities. The only actions available to residents are writing petitions and attempting to influence decisions through appeals, personal meetings, and complaints. Only in this way can they bring problems to the attention of the authorities. This highlights that citizen participation is currently restricted and significantly limited by the lack of such mechanisms on official websites.

Table 2. Comparative table of Open Government websites

Website	Purpose	Visits	Main stats	Strengths	Weaknesses
Open Dialog	To establish direct communication with citizens	400,000 annual inquiries	4,303 conferences were held last year, all of them available in internet	Promotes discussion, allow to ask questions and leave comments	No direct instruments to affect the policymaking
Open Budget	To establish transparency over governmental expenses	1-2 millions annual website visits	82,920 budget materials, and 81,344 additional financial information	Provides comprehensive information regarding how government bodies spend finances	Do not have an instrument to provide feedback, comment or start a discussion.
Open Data	To provide accessible open data for public use	7.5 million views since 2015	240,000 dataset downloads, and 37 services developed	Wide dataset variety and high publication compliance by central/local authorities	Lack of awareness and no perceived need from public
Open Legal Acts	To engage the public in the development of RLAs	Not specified	138,134 total draft RLAs with 295,182 public comments	High transparency and two-way communication	Complex navigation of categories for casual users
Open Akimat	To provide a communication channel with municipal authorities	Not specified	Not specified	Direct communication with officials	Limited influence over decisions

5. Discussion

This section provides in depth discussions on the survey findings and website evaluation regarding the effectiveness of open government initiatives in promoting citizens' participation. The discussion part focuses on each research question. It is divided into three parts based on our three research questions and each part provides the discussion on the specified research question.

To what extent are the people in Astana aware of open government initiatives/portals?

The first research question of our survey was intended to explore the awareness level of people regarding the open government initiatives in Astana. From the obtained information, based on surveys and website evaluation, it can be concluded that the participation level of citizens through online platforms is low. Although there has been significant increase in the introduction of online platforms to make the government more open and engage citizens, the level of citizens' participation remains low.

Regarding our first research question, the findings indicate that even though the majority of the respondents (93.3%) have heard of e-government portal, yet the awareness level turned out to be very low. Other than e-government portal, only 19.7% and 25.8% of respondents are aware of Smart Astana and Open Akimat respectively. This indicates that while the majority of the people have heard of the E-government portal, other open government initiatives have not been as widely promoted or recognized. Interestingly, 4.7% of respondents had never heard of any of these open government portals, indicating that there is still a portion of the population that remains uninformed about such platforms.

Furthermore, as indicated in the survey findings, when asked to rate their awareness of these platforms on a scale from 1 to 5, the responses from the respondents reflected a general lack of engagement with the platforms. A significant portion of respondents (28.6%) were neutral, and a large proportion were either somewhat unaware (28.2%) or very unaware (27.7%). Surprisingly, only a small fraction (2.8%) reported being very aware of the open government web portals. This suggests that while citizens may have heard of these platforms,

they might not fully understand their functionality, lack the motivation to engage through these platforms or they might not have any substantial familiarity with the online portals. These findings indicate that the general level of awareness among Astana residents regarding the open government web portals is substantially low despite having known the existence of these online platforms (see **Appendix 1**).

How do people engage/participate through these online open government portals?

Our second research question was related to how citizens participate through these online portals and the survey results reveals that while many citizens have heard of the online open government platforms, awareness and actual engagement is substantially low. A significant portion of the respondents (70.4%) reported that they have never participated in any open government portals, which indicates a gap between knowing about the existence of the online portals and active participation through those portals. Among those who did engage, online surveys and feedback forms were the most common form of participation, with 60.3% of participants using these platforms for digital participation. This highlights the popularity of digital forms of engagement, as they are likely the most convenient and accessible option for many citizens. Other forms of participation included citizen consultation committees (11.3%) and participatory budgeting processes (8.3%).

Interestingly, a portion of respondents (16.3%) selected the “Other” category in follow-up questions, with some clarifying that they had not participated at all. Others mentioned occasional participation in public forums or discussions of legal acts. The survey further indicates that 50.7% of respondents rarely visit government websites or online platforms, and 20.7% never visit them. Only a very small portion 1.4% of the respondents visit these platforms daily, suggesting that consistent and regular engagement with open government portals is very low. This points to a need for strategies to increase both awareness and sustained engagement with these platforms. This indicates that only the formation of online platforms is not enough to promote citizens’ engagement, it is important that the government should initiate steps to attract citizens, initiate awareness about such initiatives and how to use such platforms, in this way the true essence of open government in promoting citizens’ participation will be achieved.

What are some of the main problems faced by the citizens regarding their engagement with open government platforms?

Regarding the third research question, the survey results reveal several challenges that hinder effective engagement of citizens with open government platforms. One of the most significant barriers was technical problems when using digital platforms, with 114 respondents reporting difficulties with technical aspects of the online platforms. These issues may include website glitches, slow loading times, complex outlook of the websites, or technical errors that disrupt the user experience, making the engagement of the people challenging for them. This indicates that the readiness of citizens in terms of technical knowledge and awareness regarding usage of online platforms is not up to the level. It is important that the government should take measures to improve technical knowledge of people to make the usage of online platforms more convenient. In this way the citizen participation rate will increase.

Another major concern was lack of response from responsible authorities or government officials, with 106 respondents indicating that they never received any feedback or acknowledgment after submitting their concerns or suggestions online. This lack of responsiveness from government officials can erode trust in the platforms and demotivate citizens from continuing to engage and participate via online platforms for various input purposes. Additionally, according to the survey results, privacy concerns were noted by 59 respondents, pointing to fears about data security when providing feedback or personal information through these platforms.

Other reported problems included a lack of belief in the effectiveness of the platforms, bureaucratic difficulties, slow government responses, and frequent changes in processes that made it difficult for citizens to keep up with how the platforms worked. These concerns reflect broader issues of trust, transparency, accessibility, and responsiveness that need to be addressed to improve citizen engagement.

According to the survey results, while a large number of people in Astana responded that they have heard of these open government platforms, the actual participation remains low, primarily due to issues such as technical difficulties, low trust level, lack of

responsiveness, and privacy concerns. To increase engagement, it is crucial to simplify platforms, improve transparency, spread awareness and offer meaningful ways for citizens to participate in providing input and contribute to decision-making processes. Additionally, strengthening feedback systems and providing incentives for citizens for participation can play a pivotal role in increasing citizen involvement because people respond to incentives.

Discussion on the findings from evaluation of digital platforms

The evaluation of the government websites in Kazakhstan that are aimed at fostering open government initiatives gives us crucial insights regarding the effectiveness and limitations of websites in terms of the promotion of citizen participation. Although the government has developed websites like dialog.egov.kz, budget.egov.kz, data.egov.kz, legalacts.egov.kz, and Open Akimat (see **Table 2 for comparative analysis**) and significantly promoted open data aspects, the impact on citizen participation and citizen engagement from websites generally remains weak.

One of the most promising digital platforms is dialog.egov.kz. Their citizens, using this platform, can directly communicate with government officials, offer their own thoughts regarding policies, and engage in internet conferences. The greatest benefit is that all comments and discussions are publicly available to any citizen, which adds transparency to the process. But despite such good features of the website, the platform faces bureaucratic delays, and as a consequence, government officials have 30 days to answer the comment or appeal from the citizens. These 30 days of legal delay severely erode the meaningful citizen engagement.

When it comes to budget.egov.kz, it faces even deeper limitations. However, it gives detailed insights into public expenditure and contributes to the government's financial openness. The potential of that website to promote active citizen participation is undermined by the fact that the website is used as an informational platform rather than interactive. The users, even those who are registered, cannot comment or start discussions regarding budget allocation. Citizens have no interactive options to influence budget distribution, thus severely diminishing opportunities for active citizen participation through the platform.

The citizen engagement is also supported by data.egov.kz website that mainly focuses on allowing citizens to easily access open government data, offering transparency of government operations, providing ground for analysis and research, and raising government officials' efficiency. The residents of Kazakhstan can conveniently access, download, and utilize datasets generated by state authorities. With averaging of around 700 thousand annual visits, the open data website is still not widely used compared to its potential.

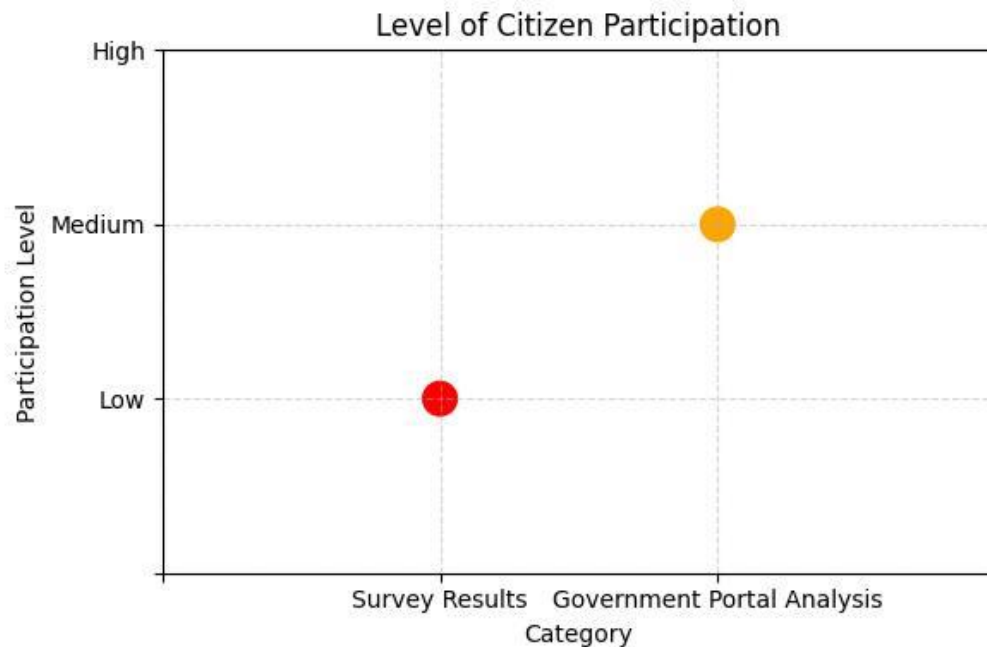
Moving to the legalacts.egov.kz website, the portal is aimed at publishing draft legislative concepts and RLAs without restricted information, allowing the public to engage in collective discussions. It is important to note that one complete cycle of the RLA development takes eight rounds of different decision-making processes. It results in the problem of prolonged approval timelines. Thus, despite enhancing openness and citizen participation, it comes with potential delays in decision-making. This tool also offers numerous ways on how citizens can contribute to the development of legal acts, e.g. voting and comments. However, the officials still fail to respond to around 6% of the public comments.

Finally, the Open Akimat website works as a primary communication tool between Astana's city administration and its residents. Through this platform, residents can write and track petitions addressed to certain government officials and schedule meetings. Even though on paper such a platform's functions are useful, in practice, the impact is limited. Citizen engagement through this portal remains advisory, and residents do not have a direct mechanism to influence urban planning. It can be said that, as with previous websites, this platform is more like an information desk; however, some features like scheduling meetings have the potential to grow into severe engagement tools.

Generally, the evaluation of such websites shows us that even though the Kazakhstan government has made severe steps toward open data and transparency through web platforms, there are significant barriers when it comes to active citizen participation. Most platforms are created as informational repositories where citizens can observe but are not able to influence or participate in decision-making processes. Figure 1 illustrates the level of citizens' participation based on the results of survey results and content analysis of

government web portals. The survey results indicate that the level of citizens' participation is low while content analysis reveals that there is a medium level of engagement.

Figure 1. Demonstration of level of citizens' participation in Astana.



6. Limitations of the study

There are some potential limitations to our study. Firstly, since we only focused on the evaluation of two open government portals and taking into consideration the perspective of citizens of Astana to evaluate the citizen participation aspect of open government portals, we cannot generalize this to all of Kazakhstan. Considering the perspective of government officials and expert groups can provide more insights into this topic, future research can take this into consideration. Additionally, during the collection of survey responses from the citizens of Astana, we faced several issues regarding encouraging people to participate. People were not willing to participate in our survey, probably due to the topic's relation to government initiatives. Therefore, it took a long time to collect the responses by targeting crowded places, social media platforms, and public places. We did not provide any incentive for the participants to participate in our survey. Providing certain incentives can potentially increase the response rate of respondents.

7. Conclusion

This study analyzed the effectiveness of open government initiatives in promoting citizens' participation by evaluating the online government web portals by conducting surveys among Astana residents and evaluating the portals by analyzing the online data available related to citizens engagement. Through qualitative analysis of the surveys from the residents of Astana, the study came to conclusion that although the government of Kazakhstan has made significant progress towards making the government more open through introduction of online portals and usage and internet, the participation of citizens remains low. The survey results indicate that despite knowing about the existence of portals, the awareness regarding the usage, their implications and practical usage by citizens is low. This shows that the government is not taking initiatives to promote awareness among people regarding these e-portals so that they can be involved in effective engagement with government officials for policy inputs and access of services through these online portals. This highlights the dire need to make citizens aware of these portals and encourage them to make full use of the opportunity to fully engage in policy making and accessing services. The evaluation of online portals on the basis of online statistics available there related to number of citizens' engagement annually, number of responses from government officials, availability of information and opportunities of engagement, show medium level of engagement as compared to what the survey results indicate. We categorize the participation indicated by surveys of Astana residents in the "low" category while the engagement level that we explore through the available statistics on online web portals was categorized as "medium" level. According to the survey results, the E-government (egov.kz) web portal turned out to be the most famous for citizen engagement due to its diverse features and availability of service provision. The study revealed that only a small fraction of respondents (2.8%) were aware of the web portals and the majority of the respondents were either unaware and very unaware. This shows that there is a low level of awareness campaigns to attract citizens towards these platforms. Government should make people aware of the features, how citizens engage through these platforms, how they can access different services and provide their input for decision making. Raising awareness can potentially lead to more engagement

from citizens. The surveys indicated that among those who were participating, online surveys and feedback forms (60.3%) are the most common, followed by citizen consultation committees (11.3%) and participatory budgeting (8.3%). Many respondents rarely or never visit government websites, highlighting the need for strategies to enhance awareness and sustained participation. Simply creating online platforms is insufficient; proactive government efforts are necessary to encourage citizen involvement and maximize the benefits of open government initiatives. The main challenges citizens face in engaging with open government platforms include technical issues (e.g., website glitches and complex interfaces), lack of response from government officials, and privacy concerns. Additional barriers such as low trust in platform effectiveness, bureaucratic hurdles, slow government responses, and frequent procedural changes further discourage citizens' participation. To improve the effectiveness of the platforms in order to improve citizens' engagement, recommendations from citizens include simplifying platform design, enhancing transparency, ensuring meaningful citizen input, improving communication, and offering incentives. Additional suggestions involve increasing awareness, strengthening feedback mechanisms, and promoting offline participation. Focusing on these recommendations from citizens can further improve the citizens' engagement.

8. Recommendations

The study intends to highlight the issues regarding the participation of citizens through online platforms, but at the same time our interest was to explore and shed light on the recommendations from the citizens to see what aspects of the citizens' participation through online platforms can be improved to make the platforms more efficient and convenient to engage with. Based on the survey findings, we concluded the following recommendations from the respondents side which were mentioned more frequently by the respondents.

1. Simplified and user-friendly platforms: A significant 65.3% of respondents expressed that simplified and more accessible platforms would encourage them to participate

more actively. Improving the design and functionality of the platforms could help increase user engagement.

2. Increased transparency and accountability: Over half of the respondents (51.2%) highlighted the importance of transparency in decision-making processes. Citizens need to see how their input is being used, and greater accountability from the government would foster trust and encourage more participation.
3. Meaningful contributions and impact: 46.5% of respondents emphasized the importance of opportunities for citizens to make meaningful contributions. Citizens are more likely to participate if they feel their input will lead to tangible outcomes.
4. Clear communication: Clear and transparent communication about the purpose and outcomes of initiatives (43.7%) was identified as essential for encouraging greater participation.
5. Incentives and rewards: 30.5% of respondents indicated that incentives or rewards for participation would motivate them to engage more with the platforms.

Additionally, respondents provided several recommendations for improving engagement, including:

- Increasing awareness through social media, advertisements, and public campaigns, especially in regional areas.
- Improving platform usability by redesigning interfaces, offering multilingual support, and simplifying the registration and submission processes.
- Strengthening feedback mechanisms, ensuring that citizens' voices are heard and that responses are timely and actionable.
- Providing more transparency by regularly publishing reports on how citizen feedback influences decisions.
- Encouraging offline participation through town hall meetings and offering incentives for active contributors.

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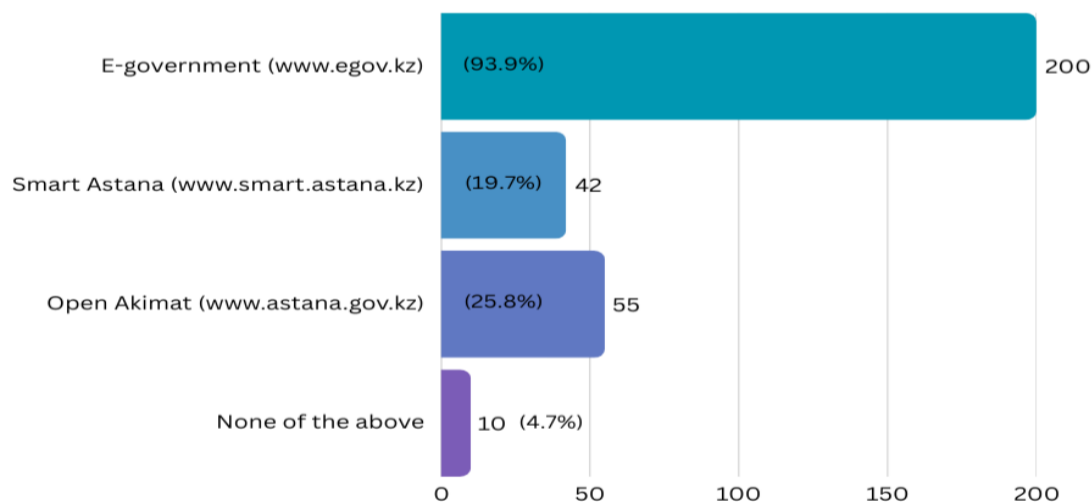
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Appendix 1

Analysis of survey findings

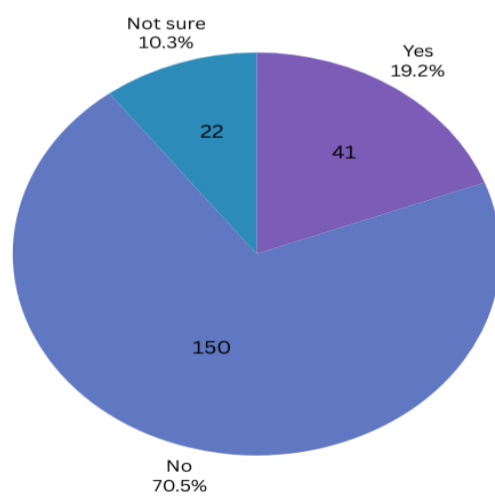
Bar graph 1

**Are you informed about the existence of the following open government websites?
Select all that apply.**



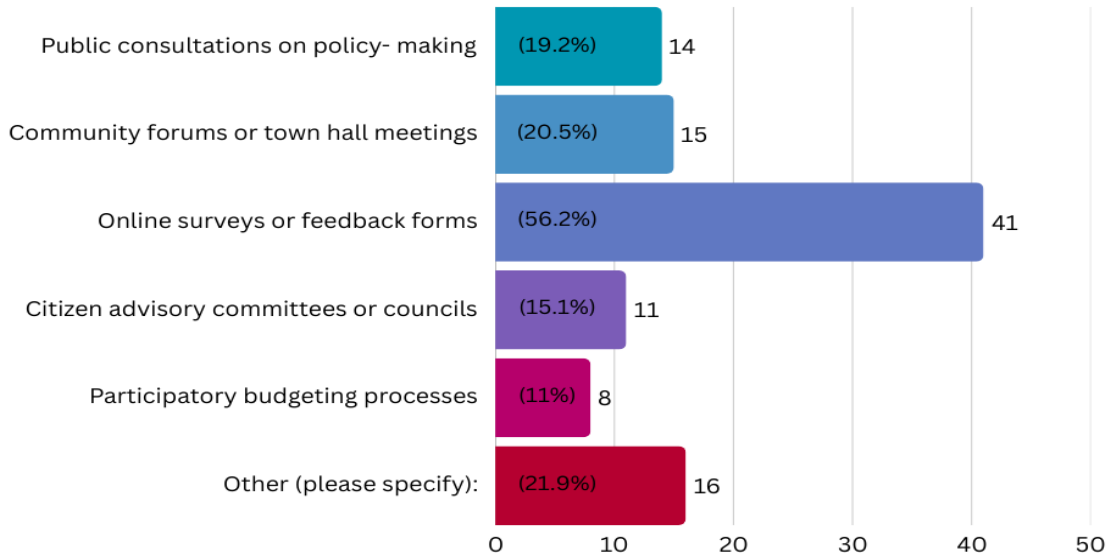
Pie chart 1

Have you ever participated in any open government initiatives or activities in Astana?



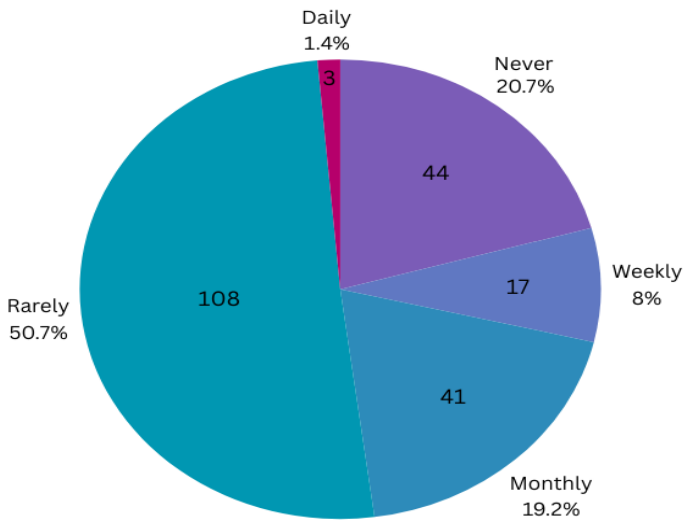
Bar graph 2

If yes, please specify the type of open government initiatives or activities you have participated in (select all that apply):



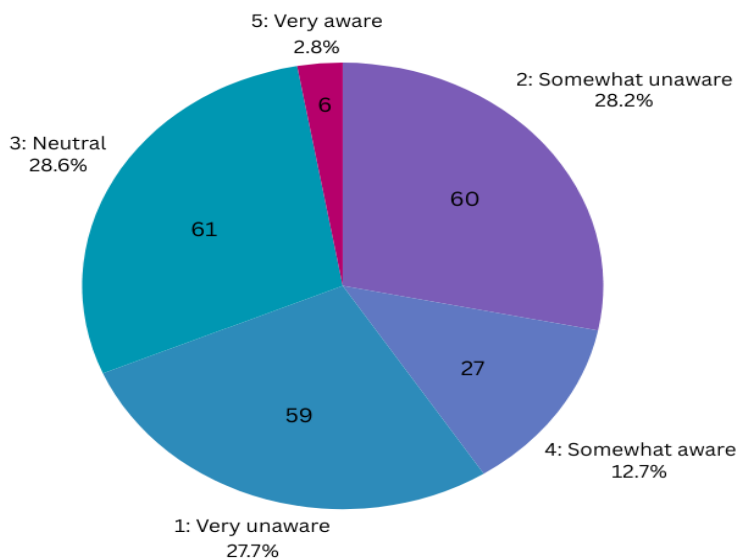
Pie chart 2

How often do you visit government websites or online platforms to access information or to participate in decision-making processes?

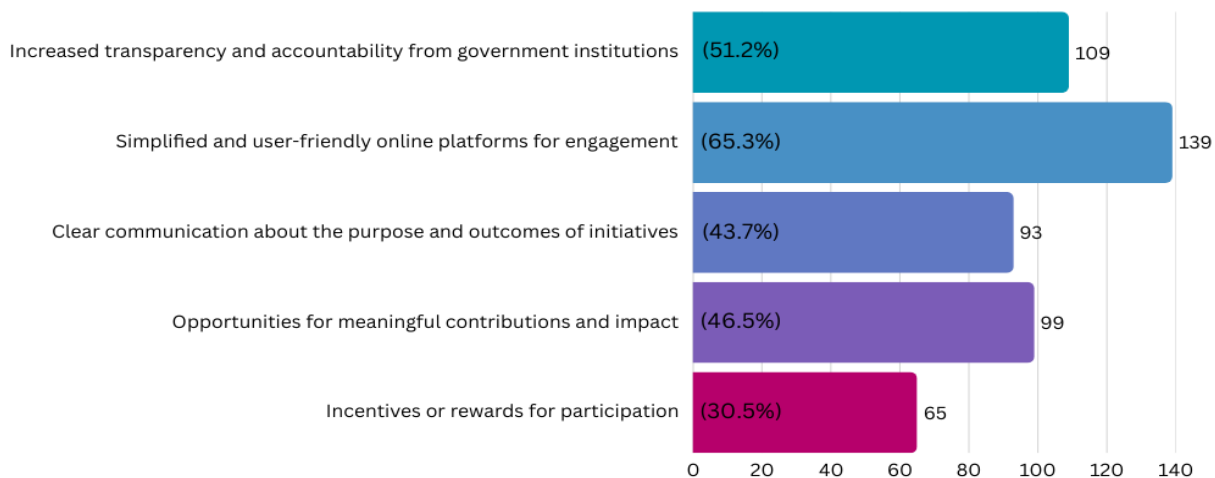


Pie chart 3

On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your awareness level of open government initiatives in Astana?

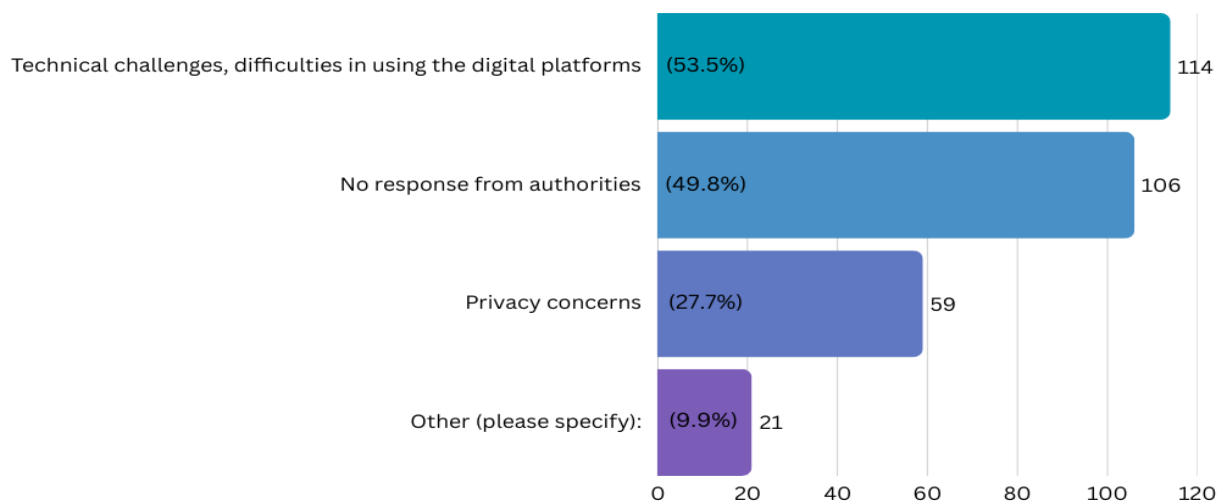
*Bar graph 3*

What factors would encourage you to participate more actively in open government initiatives? (Select all that apply)



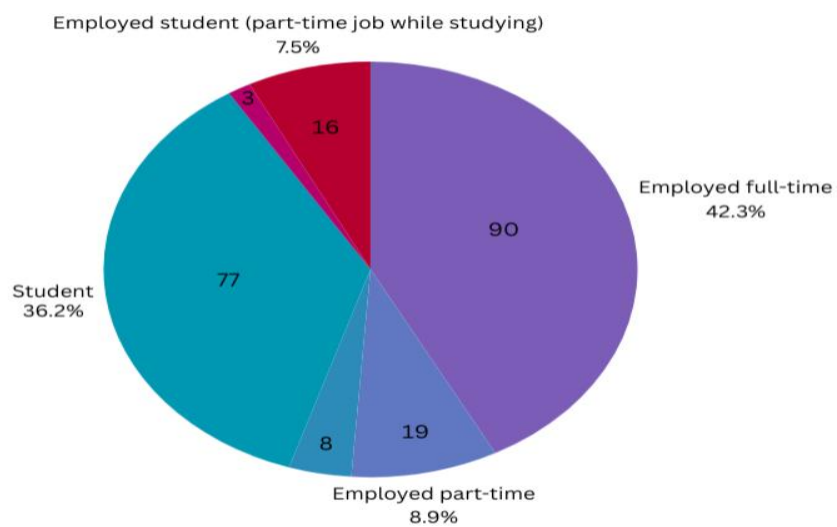
Bar graph 4

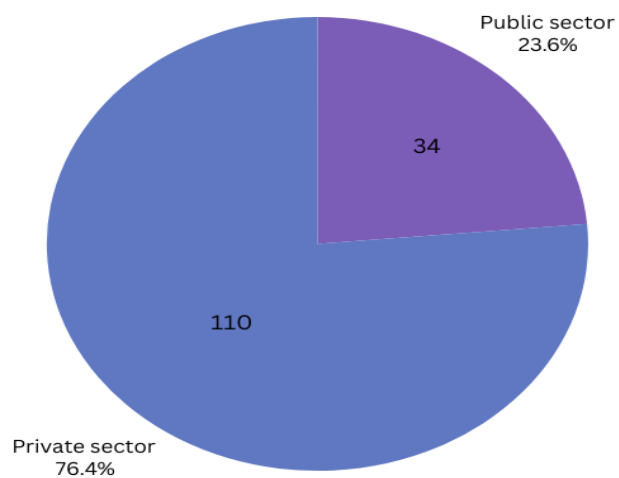
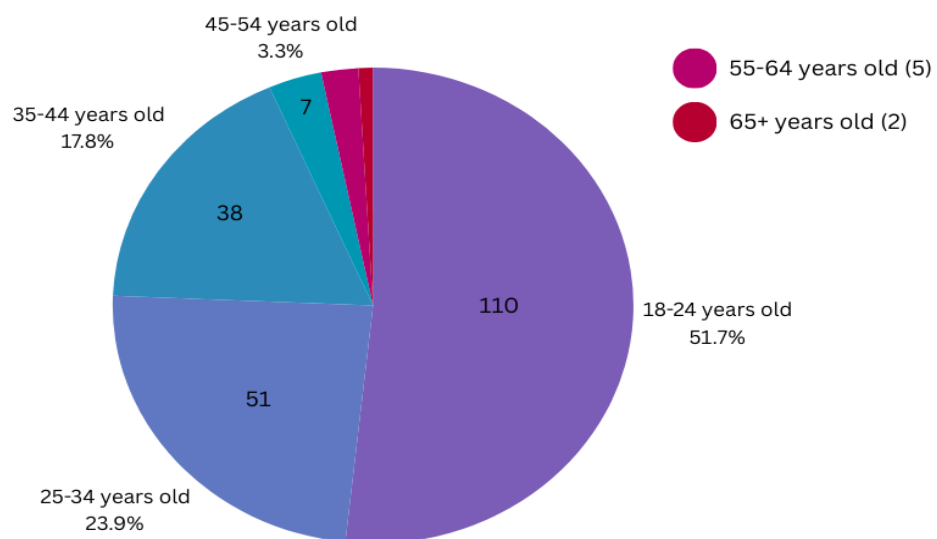
What are some of the challenges you face in delivering your concerns and suggestions via open government websites?



Pie chart 4

What is your current status?



*Pie chart 5***Do you work in the public or private sector?***Pie chart 6***What is your age?**

Appendix 2

Survey questionnaire

1. Are you informed about the existence of the following open government websites? Select all that apply.

- E-government (www.egov.kz)
- Smart Astana (www.smart.astana.kz)
- Open Akimat (www.astana.gov.kz)
- None of the above

2. Have you ever participated in any open government initiatives or activities in Astana?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

3. If yes, please specify the type of open government initiatives or activities you have participated in (select all that apply):

- Public consultations on policy-making
- Community forums or town hall meetings
- Online surveys or feedback forms
- Citizen advisory committees or councils
- Participatory budgeting processes
- Other (please specify): _____

4. How often do you visit government websites or online platforms to access information or to participate in decision-making processes?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Rarely
- Never

5. In what ways do you participate in decision making through open government websites, specifically Open Akimat? (Open-ended question)

6. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your awareness level of open government initiatives in Astana?

- 1: Very unaware
- 2: Somewhat unaware
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Somewhat aware
- 5: Very aware

7. What factors would encourage you to participate more actively in open government initiatives? (Select all that apply)

- Increased transparency and accountability from government institutions
- Simplified and user-friendly online platforms for engagement
- Clear communication about the purpose and outcomes of initiatives
- Opportunities for meaningful contributions and impact
- Incentives or rewards for participation

8. What are some of the challenges you face in delivering your concerns and suggestions via open government websites?

- Technical challenges, difficulties in using the digital platforms
- No response from authorities
- Privacy concerns
- Other (please specify): _____

9. What kind of recommendations can you provide to improve citizen participation in open government initiatives? (Open-ended question)

10. What is your current status?

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Unemployed
- Student
- Retired
- Employed student (part-time job while studying)

11. Do you work in the public or private sector?

- Public sector
- Private sector

12. What is your age?

- 18-24 years old
- 25-34 years old
- 35-44 years old
- 45-54 years old
- 55-64 years old
- 65+ years old