

GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTER SATISFACTION INDEX

REPORT | 2021

*Contact Center Evolution
Accelerated*



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INTRODUCTION

After more than a year of COVID-19 lockdowns, Government offices continue to operate at limited capacities and Government contact centers continue to play a central role in delivering services to citizens across the country. In many instances, those needing assistance from federal, state, or local governments must still rely on the services available through contact centers and government websites to meet their needs.

At face value, the GCCSI improved four points in 2021. However, a deep dive into the data reveals some interesting dynamics at play. First, about half the 2021 respondents are customers that, prior to the pandemic, typically visited an office in-person to interact with their respective agencies. Second, it's the former office visitors that are responsible for driving the GCCSI score higher. In fact, if not for these former office visitors, the GCCSI would have declined to the lowest score in eight years.

The findings from this year's study raise some important questions regarding the future of government customer service models. In many ways, the pandemic accelerated the otherwise relatively slow evolution. For most agencies, it is unclear what permanent changes will result from the restrictions of the past year. Will customers return to their previous customer service preferences? If not, which customer service channels will customers gravitate towards? How has this time impacted the evolution of technology-based service channels? What will be the ultimate impact on customer satisfaction?

While this report doesn't provide all of the answers, the findings of our study do point to some of the critical questions that will need to be answered going forward. Additionally, it emphasizes the need to closely monitor the evolution of customer behavior in order to ensure customer service models are meeting expectations in the most efficient and cost-effective ways without allowing customer satisfaction to suffer.

CFI GROUP SOLUTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT



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Sheri manages offices across four continents from the CFI Group world headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



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David works with the Veterans Administration and other public sector clients to help measure and manage citizen and employee experience.



RODGER PARK
Director of Customer Analytics

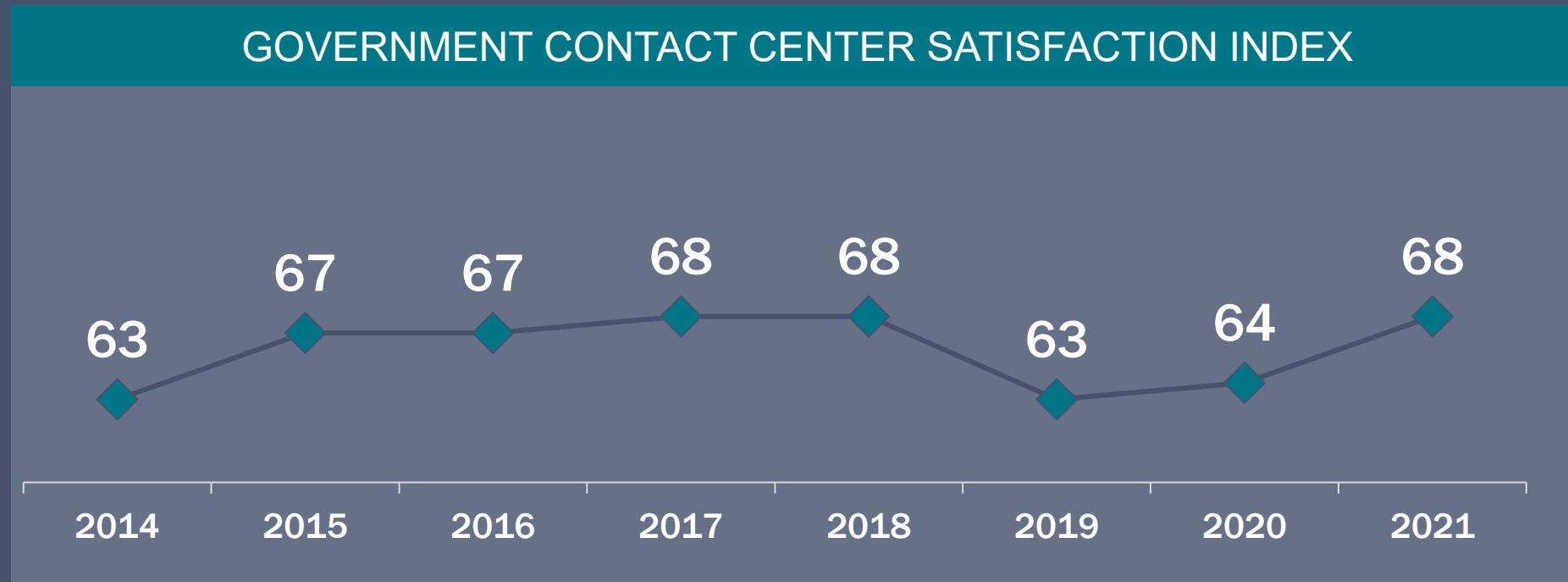
Rodger manages accounts in the public/military sector as well as others in both consumer and business-to-business contexts.



Overall Satisfaction

OVERALL SATISFACTION REBOUNDS AFTER TWO YEARS OF DIMINISHED SCORES

The Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI) for 2021 is 68, as measured on a 0-100 scale. Up four points compared to 2020, the GCCSI score has returned to a level that is more in line with the scores reported in 2015 through 2018. These results are based on a panel of 700 respondents who had contacted a government contact center during the 30 days prior to being invited to participate in the survey.

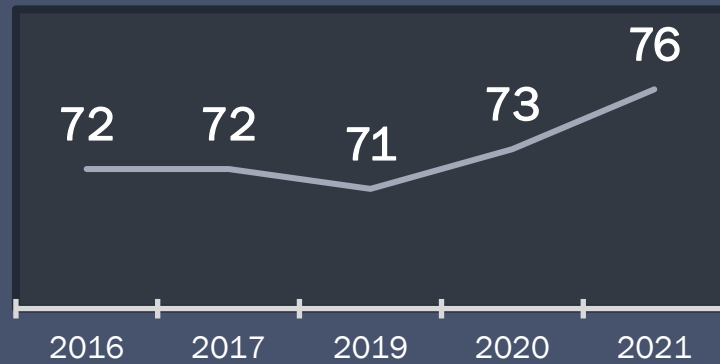


* See full GCCSI Report at <https://cfigroup.com/resource-item/gccsi-2019/>

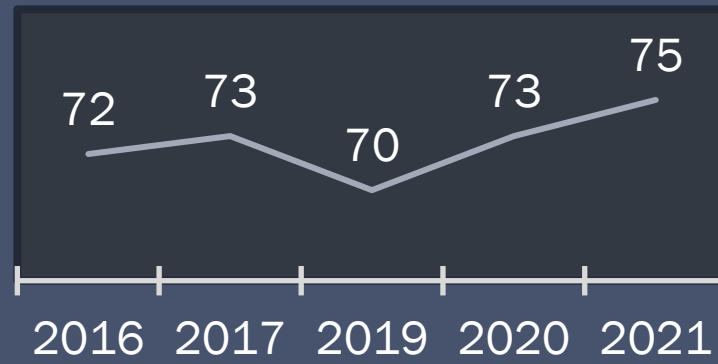
SATISFACTION DRIVERS CONTINUE TO TREND UPWARD

The measured contact center satisfaction drivers improved alongside the overall GCCSI score; most are even at five-year highs in 2021. This should be welcomed news for government contact center personnel who have struggled with the changing environment due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agent Effectiveness



Agent Knowledge



Agent Demeanor



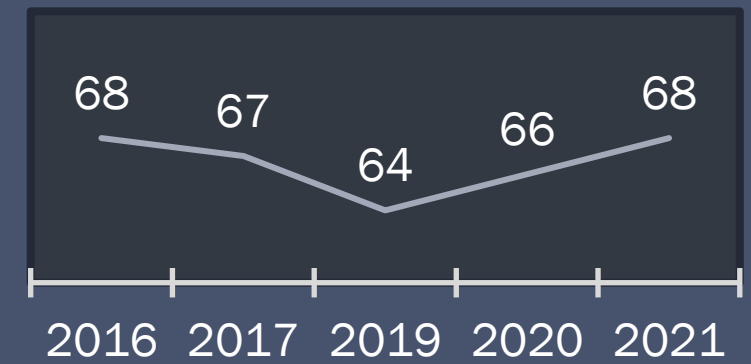
Agent Communication



IVR



Agent Empowerment



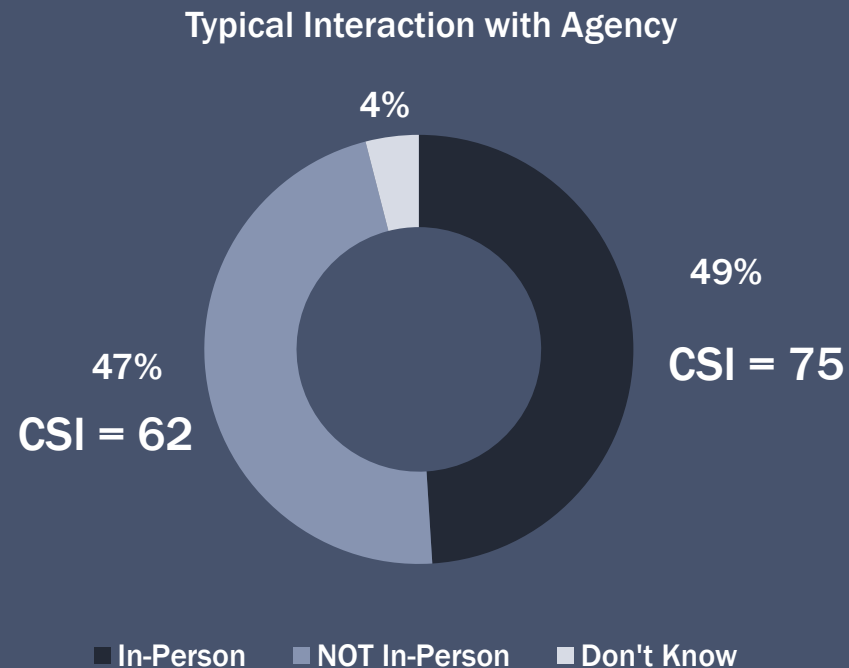
A-11 SECTION 280 METRICS ALSO REFLECT IMPROVED SATISFACTION AMONG CONTACT CENTER CUSTOMERS IN 2021

Do you agree with the following...	2020	2021	YOY change
	(% agree or strongly agree)		
Satisfied with service	63%	68%	+5 ppts
Increased confidence in agency	53%	61%	+8 ppts
Increased trust in agency	n/a	59%	n/a
Need addressed	66%	71%	+5 ppts
Easy to complete transaction	61%	67%	+6 ppts
Transaction took reasonable time to resolve	60%	62%	+2 ppts
Treated fairly	69%	71%	+2 ppts
Representative is helpful	70%	70%	no change
Representative understood my question/issue	67%	71%	+4 ppts

In recent years, OMB A-11 guidance on how to implement the Federal Government's customer experience framework has encouraged Federal entities, especially those who are citizen-facing, to establish plans to measure, monitor and improve the Federal Government customer experience. To facilitate comparable, government-wide scores, specific questions are suggested along with a five-point Likert scale. CFI Group incorporated these metrics into our GCCSI survey in 2020. Complimenting the results of the GCCSI, the data from the A-11 questions shows improvement in customer service from 2020 to 2021. Like the GCCSI data, these metrics reflect positively on the service being provided by government contact centers.

CALLERS WHO TYPICALLY INTERACT WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN-PERSON DROVE THE GCCSI UPWARD IN 2021

This year, about half of the callers surveyed indicated that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic they typically visited an office in-person to interact with the agency they recently contacted. Interestingly, it's those customers who are responsible for the improved performance in 2021 as their CSI score is notably higher than those who said they would not typically visit an office (75 vs. 62).

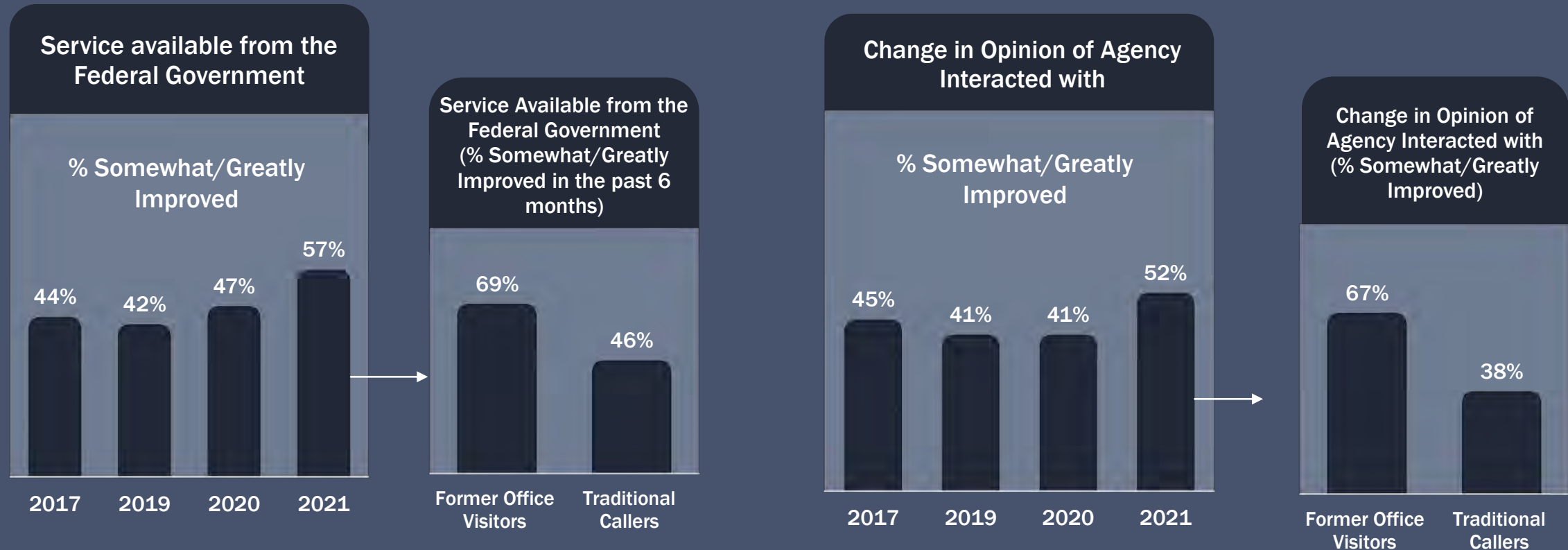


Those who would typically visit in-person were more likely to be:

- ✓ *Male*
- ✓ *Millennial (particularly the 35-44 age group)*
- ✓ *High Income*

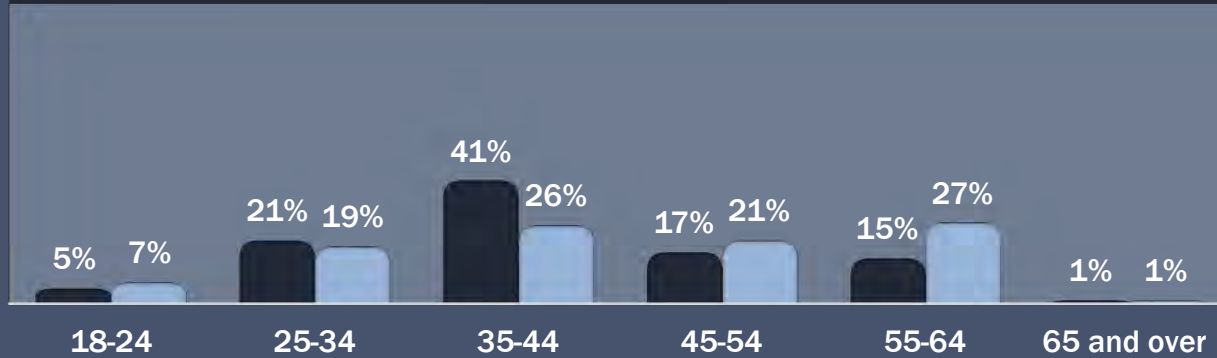
FORMER OFFICE VISITORS ALSO FUELED IMPROVED PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE AND OPINIONS REGARDING AGENCIES

Substantiating the improved GCCSI score, perceptions of how customer service has changed in the past 12 months reflect the opinion that service has, in fact, improved. Opinions of government agencies have similarly improved. Important to note, it was those who typically visited in-person when in need of service (former visitors) who are the driving force behind this positive sentiment.

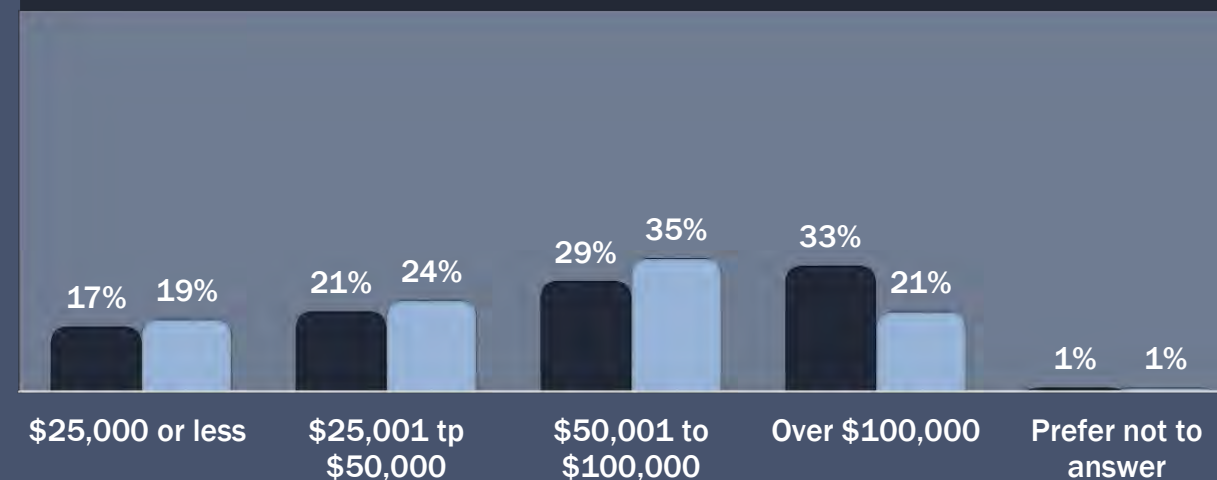


FORMER OFFICE VISITORS REFLECT SOME DIFFERENCES FROM A DEMOGRAPHIC STANDPOINT

Typical Channel Choice by Age



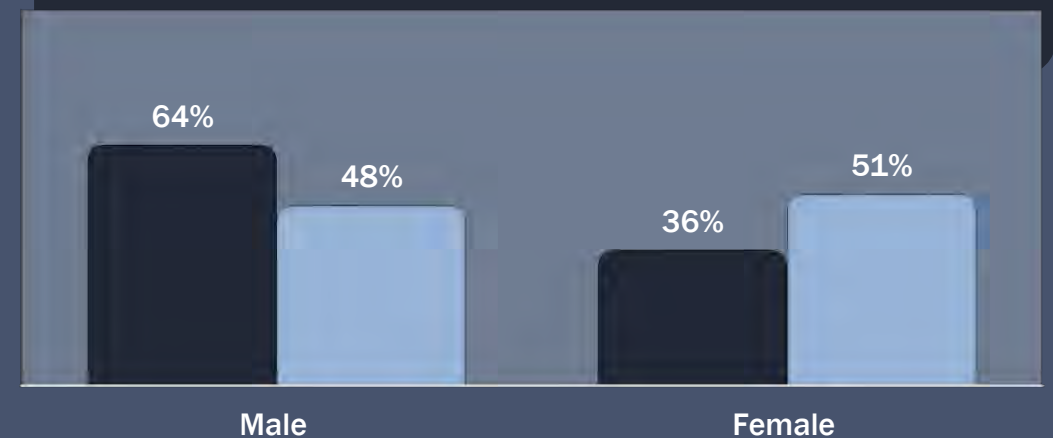
Typical Channel Choice by Income



In-Person Office Visit
 Contact Center

Exploring the possible causes for the differences in the 2021 CSI and the other measured performance metrics, some demographic differences emerge but none that provide specific answers as to why. Survey respondents that typically conducted their government business in-person were somewhat younger, reported higher household incomes and were more often male.

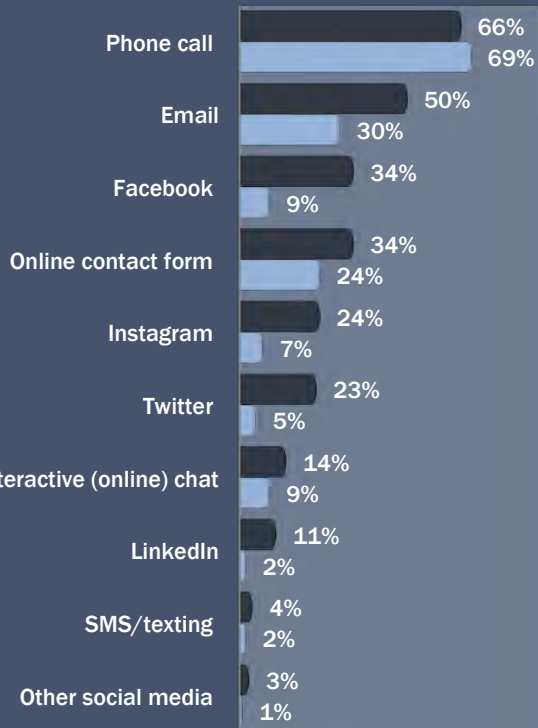
Typical Channel Choice by Gender



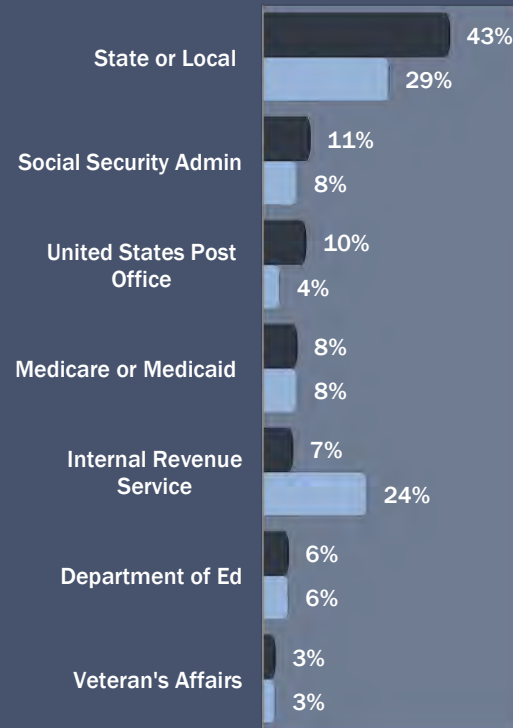
FORMER OFFICE VISITORS REPORT DIFFERENCES IN THEIR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES AS WELL

Those who typically visited an office reported a wider variety of contact methods for their most recent contact, were more often contacting state or local agencies, reported a somewhat different mix of reasons for contact and made more use of self-serve options.

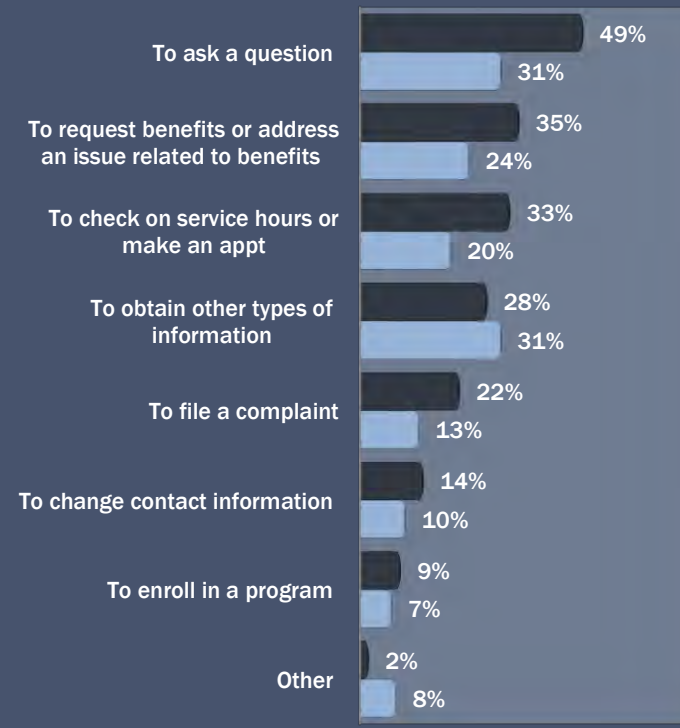
Most Recent Contact Methods



Government Agency Contacted



Reasons for Contact



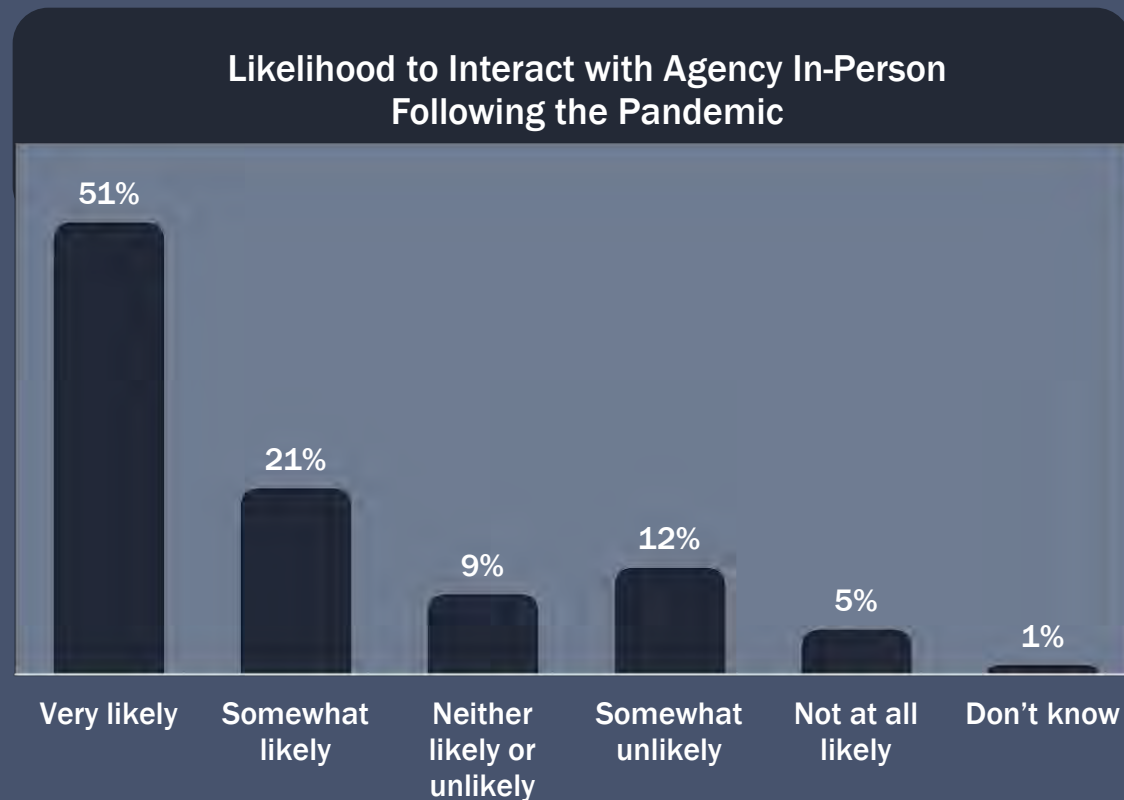
Self Serve Methods Tried



■ Not Office visitors ■ Typical office visitors

ABOUT HALF OF FORMER OFFICE VISITORS ARE NOT LIKELY TO CHOOSE IN-PERSON CUSTOMER SERVICE IN THE FUTURE

While about half of those who said they typically interact with government agencies in-person indicated they are very likely to resume that behavior in the future, the other half will adopt other service channels to meet their needs. As a result, agencies will need to adjust their customer service models in order to meet those needs. Doing so will require knowledge and understanding of which channels will be preferred and what types of services will be needed.



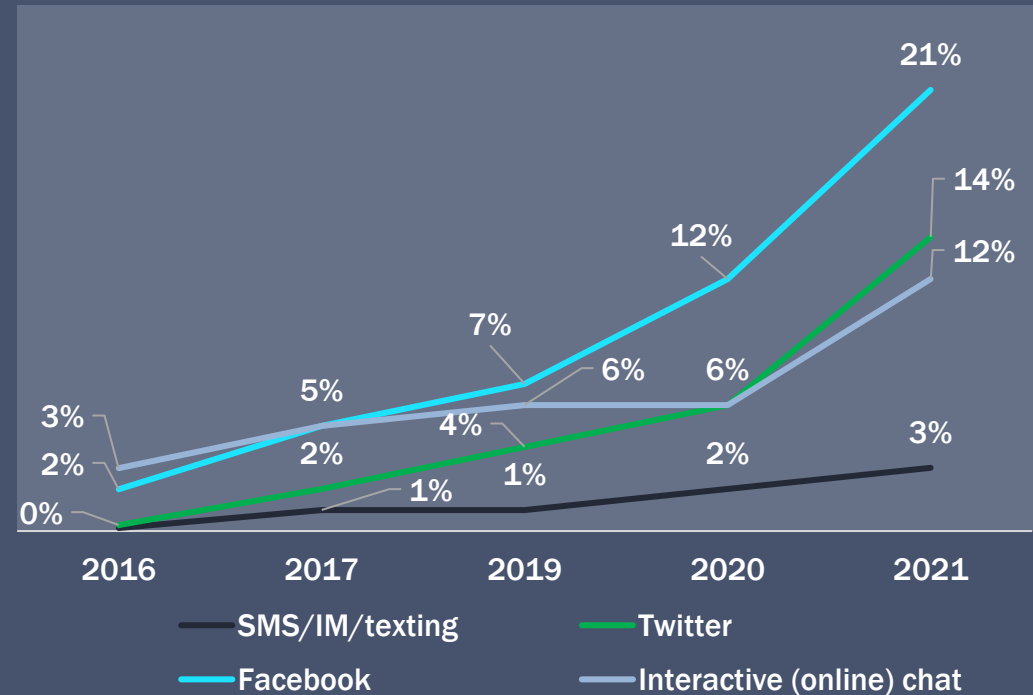
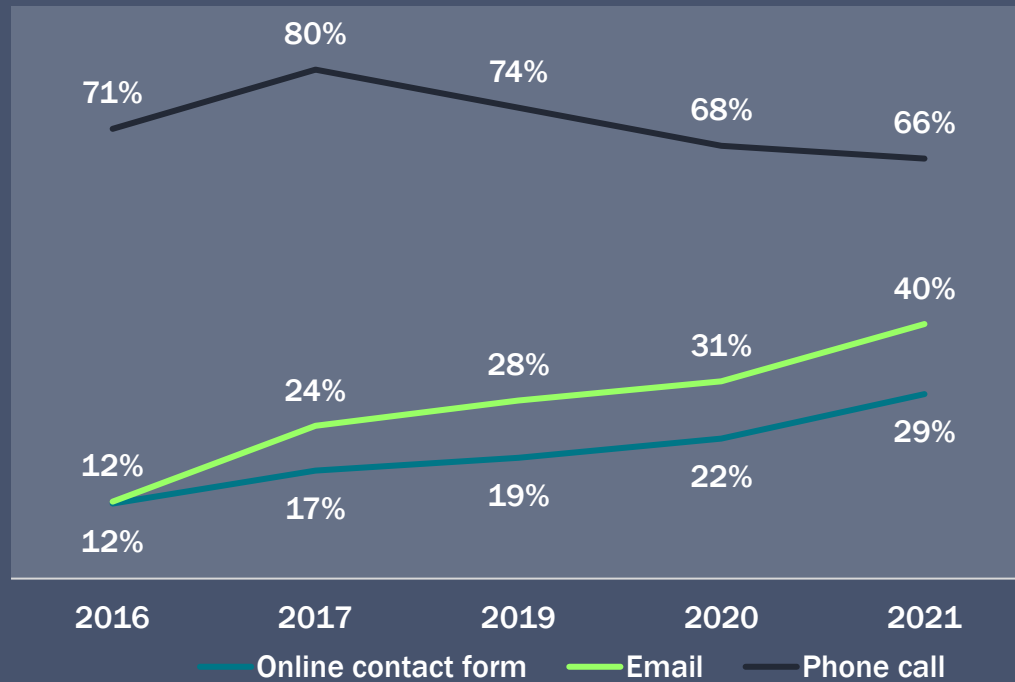


***The Changing Landscape of
Government Customer Service***

FIVE-YEAR TRENDS REFLECT CHANGE IN CONTACT METHODS

Notable changes in the methods customers use to contact government agencies are emerging over time. As use of technology-driven channels gain acceptance, opportunities for agencies to expand their customer service offerings continue to grow. In addition to usage and acceptance data, data on customer satisfaction will be important when making decisions about investments in the different channels. Determining which services are best provided by a certain channel will require strategic planning to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction and their trust in the agency to meet their needs

% using method to contact customer service for the most recent interaction (multiple mention)

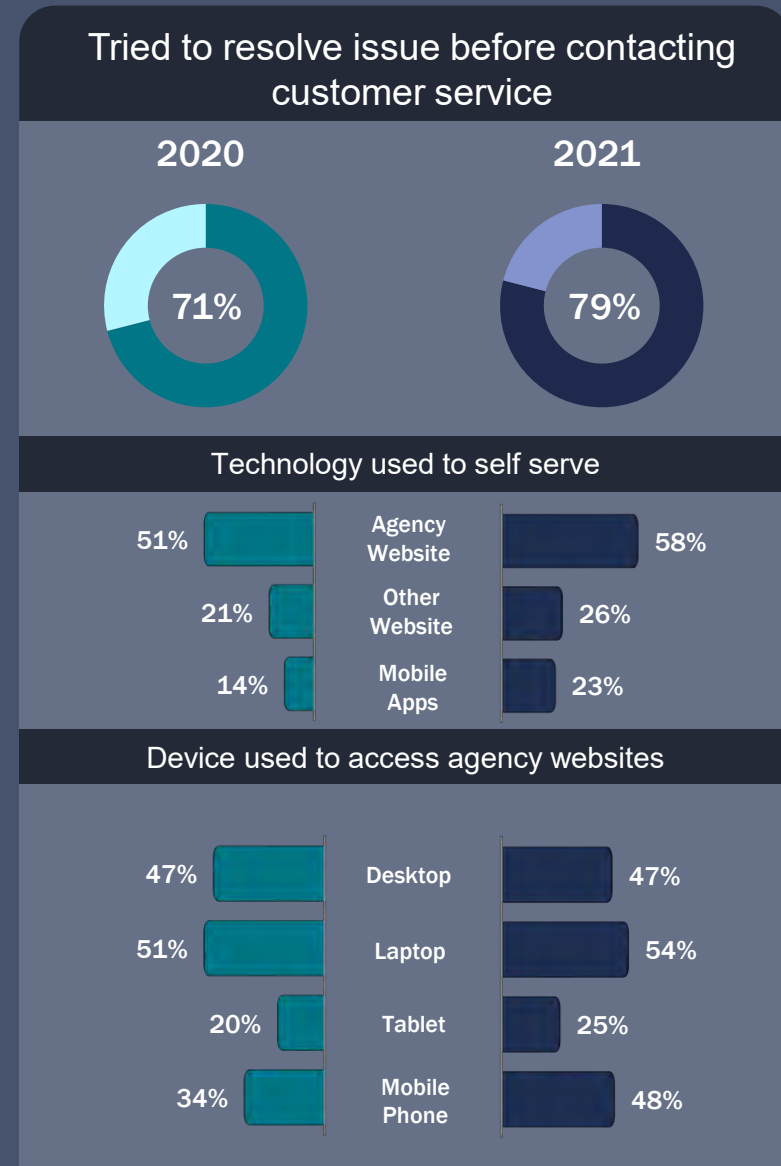


USE OF SELF-SERVICE OPTIONS IS AT AN ALL-TIME HIGH, PRESENTING QUESTIONS ABOUT PRIORITIZING CUSTOMER SERVICE FUNDING

Limited options for in-person services and the prospect of extraordinarily long wait times have increased the willingness of customers to at least attempt self-service before reaching out to a contact center. Nearly eight in ten survey respondents reported trying to resolve their issue prior to contacting the agency contact center for help. As in the past, the majority of these customers are turning to agency websites; although other websites and mobile apps are being used by increasing numbers of customers as well.

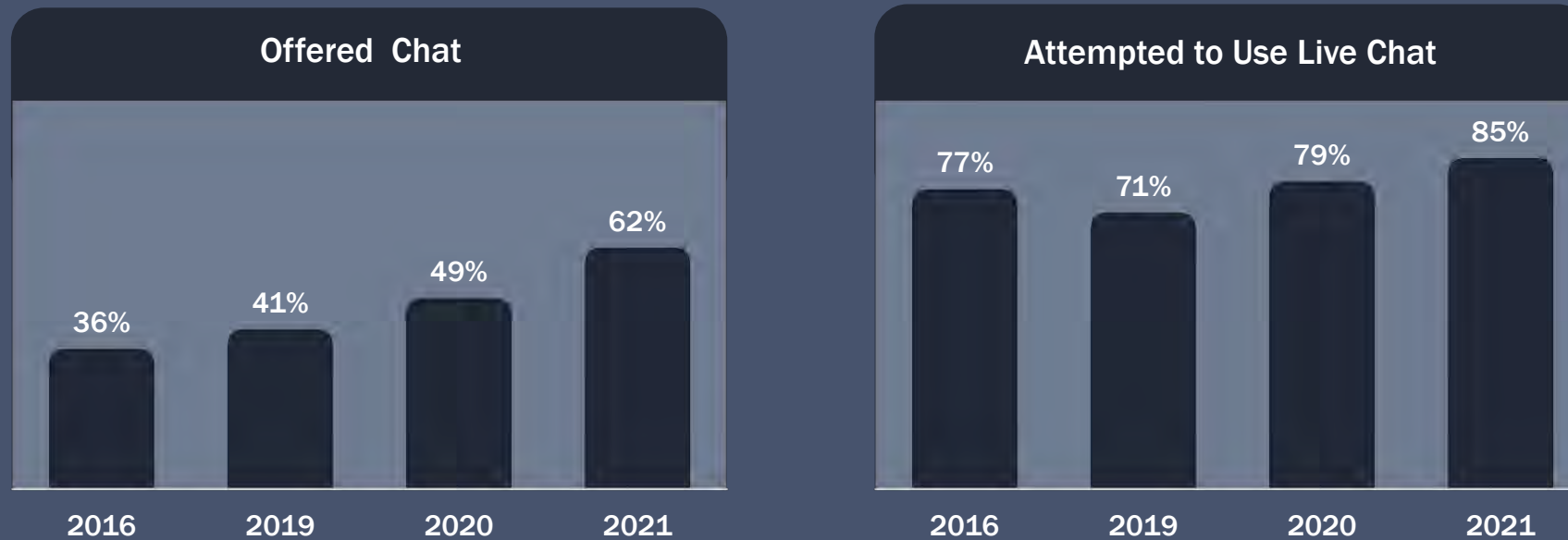
Also notable, but not surprising, customers are increasingly relying on tablets and mobile phones to access agency websites.

Uncertainty about the future desire or need for in-person customer service will challenge agencies to determine how to best prioritize their customer service budgets. While this set of competing priorities will not be new, anticipating the best way to fund them to meet the needs of customers in the “new normal” will pose critical questions that will need to be answered.



THE AVAILABILITY OF LIVE CHAT CONTINUES TO GROW

Previously viewed as a “nice to have” customer service offering, the availability of live chat continues to grow in importance in order to meet customer expectations. Although the availability of chat appears to be increasing, as do attempts to use the option to interact with government agencies, further expansion of the use of this customer service option is needed to keep pace with the customer service available in the private sector.

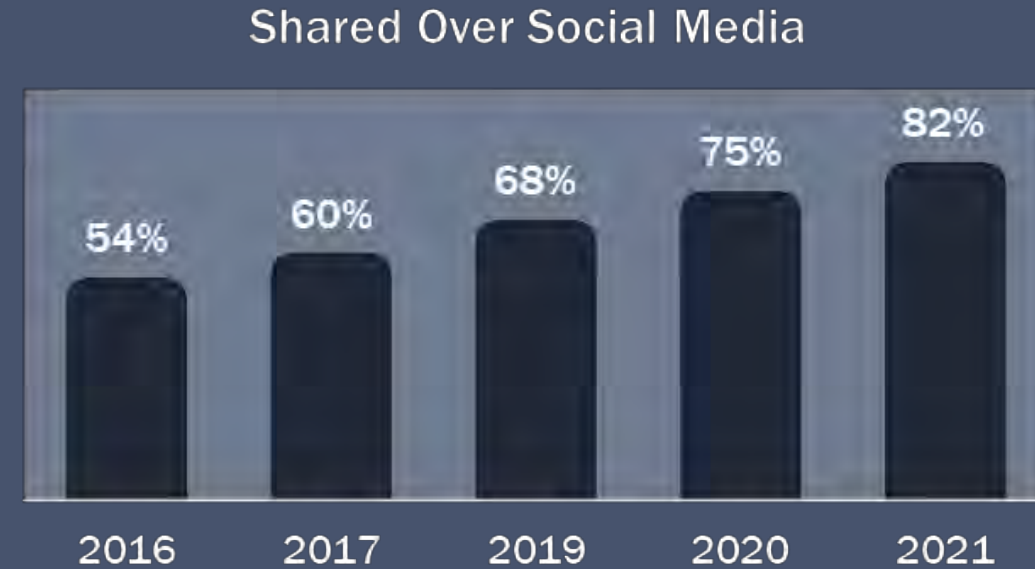
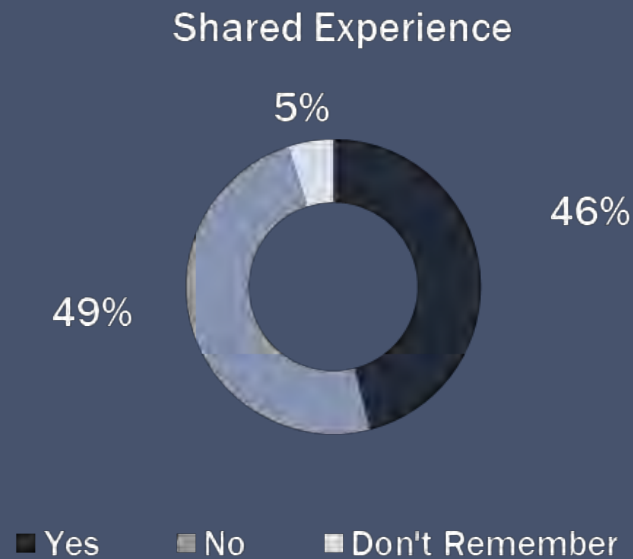




The Social Experience

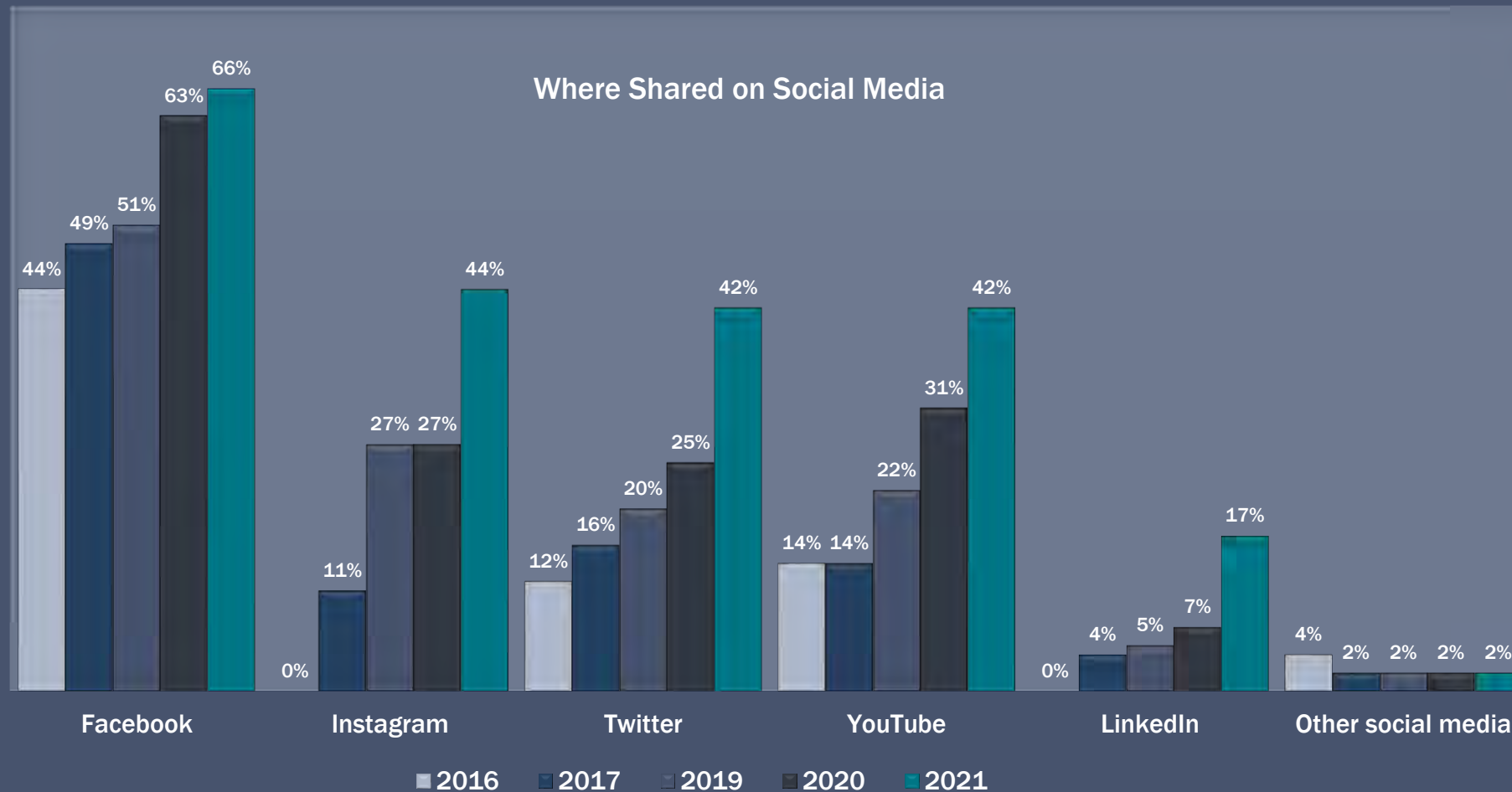
NEARLY HALF SAY THEY SHARE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES; INCREASINGLY OVER SOCIAL MEDIA

While the number of people who say they are sharing the details of their recent government customer experience hasn't dramatically changed in the past five years, the role of social media as a sharing mechanism has steadily grown.



USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA VENUES IS EXPANDING

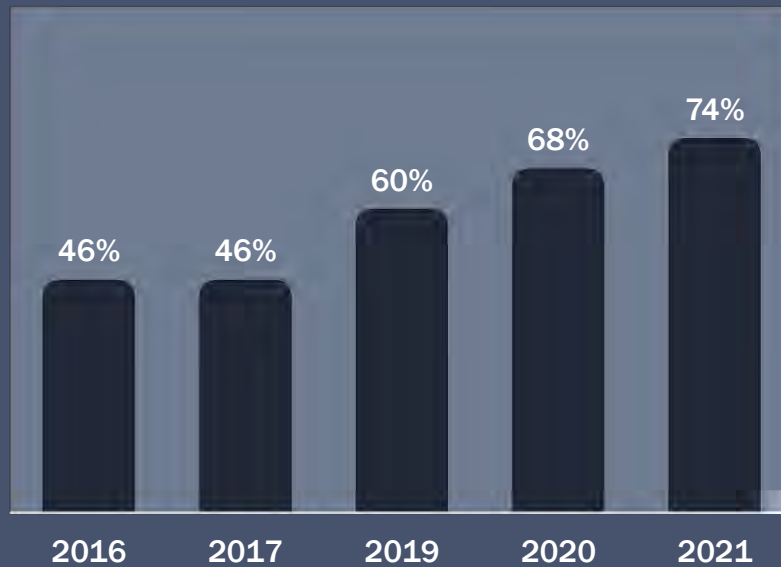
Facebook remains the most often mentioned social media venue for sharing government customer experiences. However, reported use of other platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn dramatically increased in 2021.



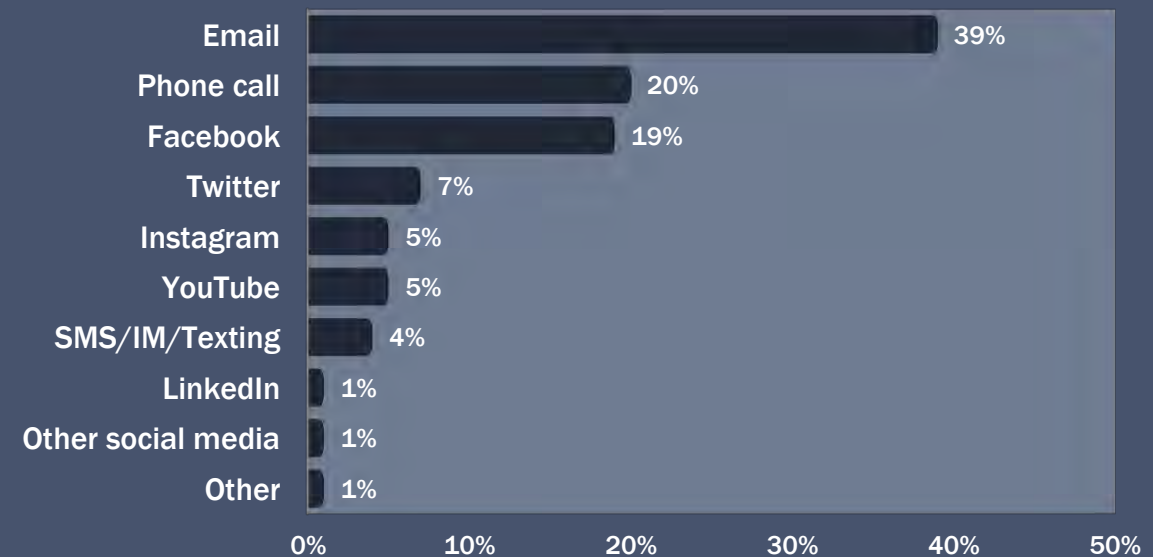
INCREASINGLY SHARING LEADS TO ADDITIONAL CONTACT, MOST OFTEN VIA EMAIL

The incidence of contact after sharing a government customer experience over social media continues to rise, reaching nearly 75% in 2021. This contact is handled in a variety of ways, but email is the most common followed by a phone call or Facebook activity. As social media continues to grow as a customer service channel, agencies will need to employ social media specialists to monitor and respond as appropriate to ensure that issues are addressed in a timely manner.

Received Contact after Sharing



How Agency Contacted Citizen

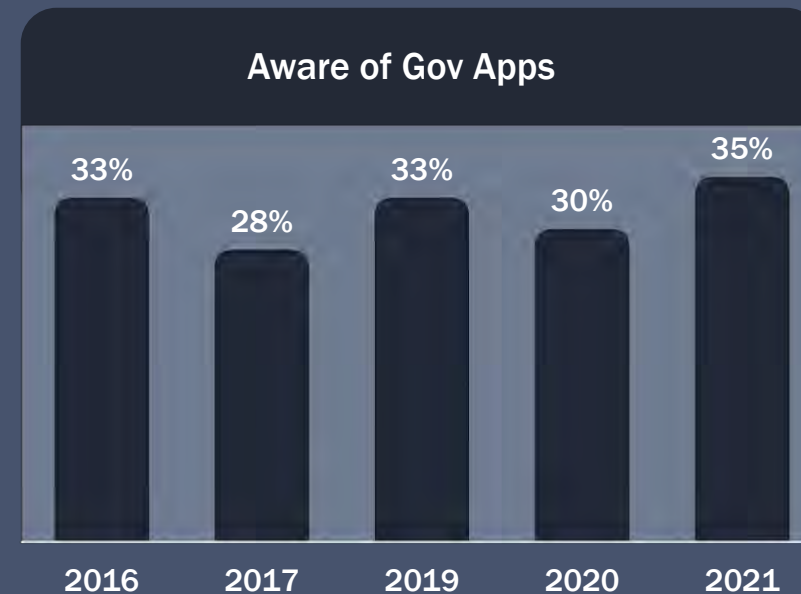
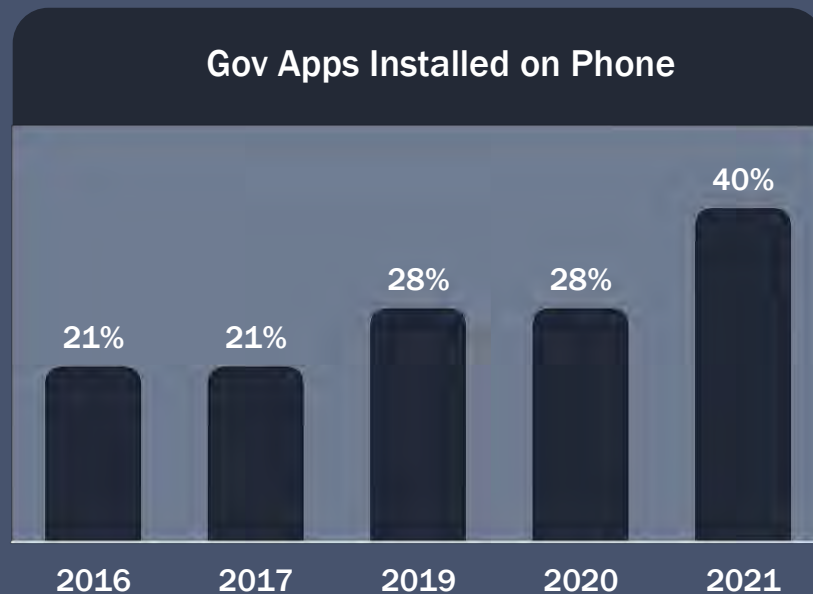




Contact Center Use of Advanced Technology

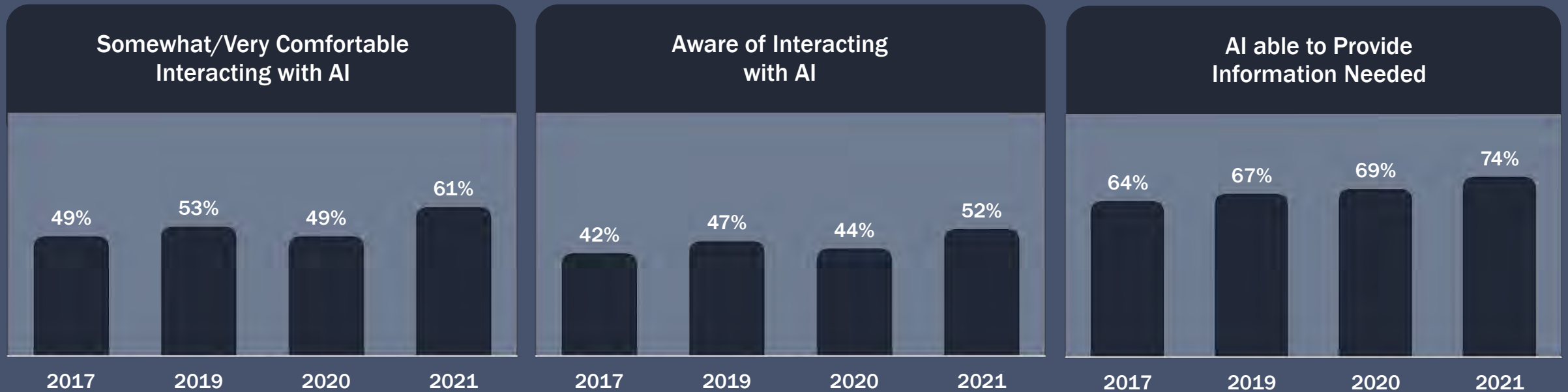
AWARENESS OF GOV APPS HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY STABLE BUT INSTALLATION HAS INCREASED SOME OVER TIME

This year saw a big jump in the percentage of customers installing government apps on their smart phones. While showing an increase from last year, awareness of government apps has experienced little growth during the past five years. In order for these investments to make their mark as a viable and effective customer service channel, agencies need to enhance communication about their availability.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) INTERFACES INCREASINGLY MEETING NEEDS

Most indicate a comfort with communicating via AI interface with contact centers in the future, reaching a four-year high in this metric. In fact, the majority of respondents report an awareness of circumstances in which they interacted with AI when calling a governmental agency. Substantiating the efficacy of AI as a customer service tool, nearly three quarters of respondents confirm that AI was able to meet their needs.





Federal Versus State or Local Agency Satisfaction

SATISFACTION WITH FEDERAL CONTACT CENTERS SLIGHTLY LOWER THAN STATE/LOCAL COUNTERPARTS

In 2021, customers who contacted a Federal agency report somewhat lower performance scores compared to those who contacted a State or Local Government agency. However, Federal performance scores are generally within four points of the State or Local scores. The Federal CSI score (67) is three points lower compared to the State or Local CSI of 70.

	Federal Government	State and Local Government	Difference
Sample Size	369	252	
IVR	56	58	-2
Ease of accessing information	55	61	-6
Degree to which the information met your needs	54	54	-
Order of the menu options	59	60	-1
Voice Recognition	67	67	-
Accuracy in understanding your voice	68	69	-1
Speed of response to your voice commands	70	68	+2
Able to navigate IVR to solution	63	59	+4
Overall speed of the transaction	68	68	0
Rep Knowledge	75	77	-2
Answer Qs in timely manner	74	75	-1
Able to understand your issue	75	77	-2
Able to provide accurate info	75	78	-3
Clarity	78	81	-3
Speaking/Writing clearly	79	81	-2
Explain things in useful way	76	78	-2
Use words that easy to understand	79	83	-4

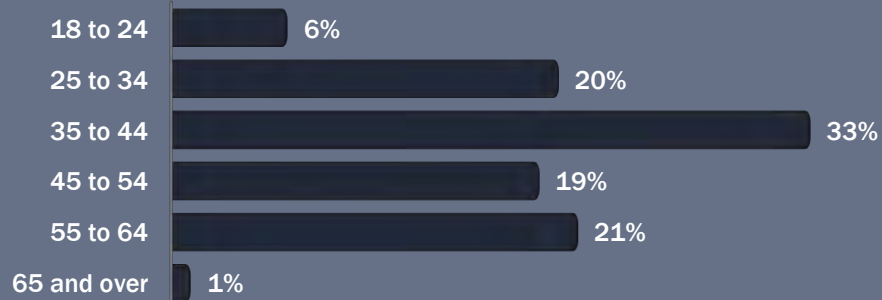
	Federal Government	State and Local Government	Difference
Sample Size	369	252	
Rep Demeanor	79	81	-2
Courteousness	79	80	-1
Friendliness	78	80	-2
Professionalism	79	81	-2
Contact Process	75	78	-3
Time required to address issue	71	73	-2
Explain the process	75	79	-4
Help you find info you need	76	79	-3
Successful completion of your transaction	77	79	-2
Policies and Procedures	68	71	-3
Policies that make sense	66	70	-4
Offer solution tailored to you	68	71	-3
Empowered to address your issue	69	72	-3
Customer Satisfaction	67	70	-3
Overall satisfaction	68	72	-4
Compared to expectations	67	69	-2
Compared to ideal	66	68	-2

A woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a vibrant red button-down shirt, is seated on a light-colored sofa. She is focused on a silver laptop in front of her, with her hands on the keyboard. The background is a bright, modern office space with large windows and blurred furniture. A semi-transparent blue horizontal bar is overlaid across the bottom third of the image, containing the text 'Respondent Detail'.

Respondent Detail

SURVEY RESPONDENTS AT A GLANCE

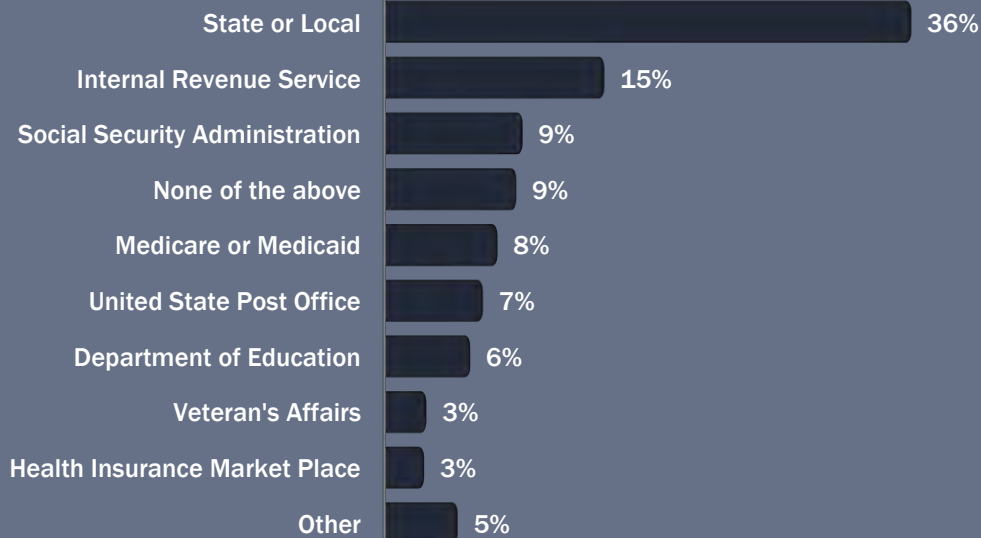
Age



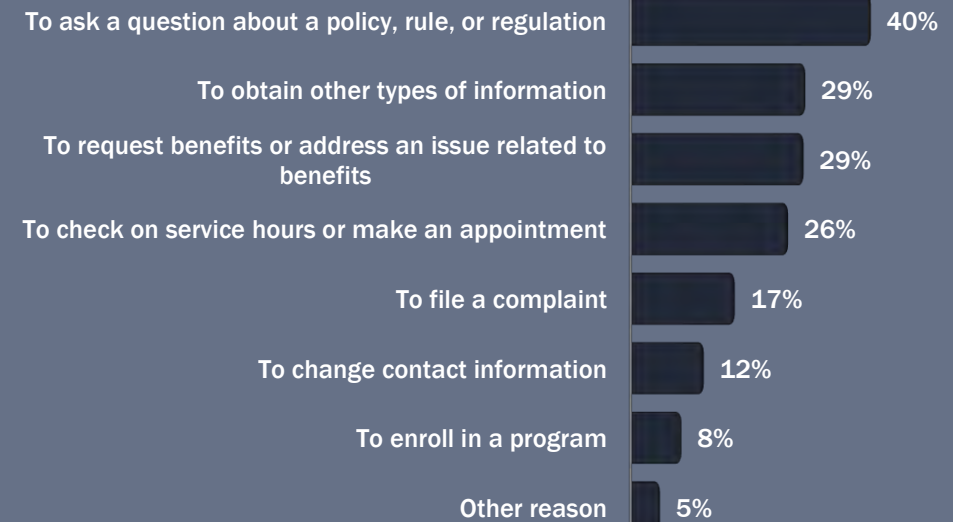
Income



Agency



Reason for Contact



ABOUT US



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Since 1988, CFI Group has delivered customer experience measurement and business insights from its Ann Arbor, Michigan headquarters and network of global offices. As founding partner of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), CFI Group is the only company within the United States licensed to apply ACSI methodology in the federal government. Using its patented technology and top research experts, CFI Group helps companies improve customer satisfaction with the experience.