

# Government Websites

## Demand Surges, Satisfaction Declines

Report 2022



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# INTRODUCTION

During the last two years, U.S. government websites have remained an essential conduit between federal agencies and the general public. Due to the lingering COVID-19 pandemic, other service channels such as call centers and local offices have struggled to meet the demands of those seeking information and/or needing to interact with federal agencies. Left with limited options for conducting business with the federal government, many turned to agency websites; increasing the pressure on these websites to deliver.

Unfortunately, visitor feedback from the past two years reflects a dramatic decline in satisfaction with federal government websites. After four years of stable performance, the current CSI score among website visitors has fallen to a level near where it was in 2016, which is the lowest score since the study's inception.

The CFI Group Government Website Benchmark study measures website performance among visitors interacting with the federal government online. Representing the voices of 801 website visitors, this year's report provides the latest information on visitor satisfaction, their ability to accomplish tasks, the actions most often taken when failed by federal websites, trends in mobile access, and the implications for those at lower income levels.

Notable differences in access and website experience were uncovered when comparing the results from respondents of lower income households versus their higher income counterparts. These disparities provide significant insights into the steps needed to ensure a positive experience for all people of the United States visiting federal government websites. These results also underscore the importance of including people from all income levels in usability testing and other activities designed to collect feedback on government websites going forward.

## CFI GROUP SOLUTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT



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Sheri manages offices across 4 continents from the CFI Group world headquarters in Ann Arbor, Michigan.



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Kelly manages CFI Group's practice for Citizen Satisfaction, Website Satisfaction, and Contact Center Satisfaction for public sector clients.



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

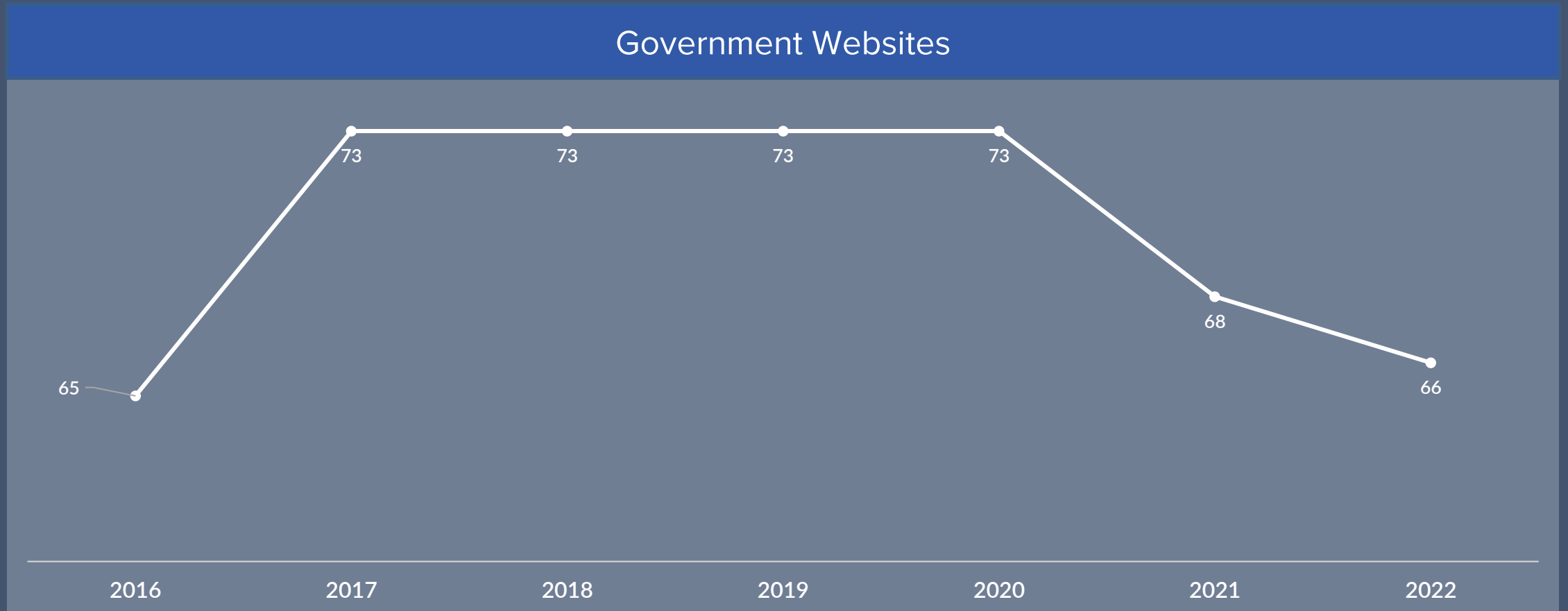


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## OVERALL SATISFACTION AND PERFORMANCE

## Overall Satisfaction Declines in Each of the Past Two Years

After four years of stable performance, the Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score for federal government websites dropped five points in 2021 and fell an additional two points in 2022. This decline comes at a time when reliance on federal websites to serve the public is at an all-time high with understaffed call centers and local offices closed.

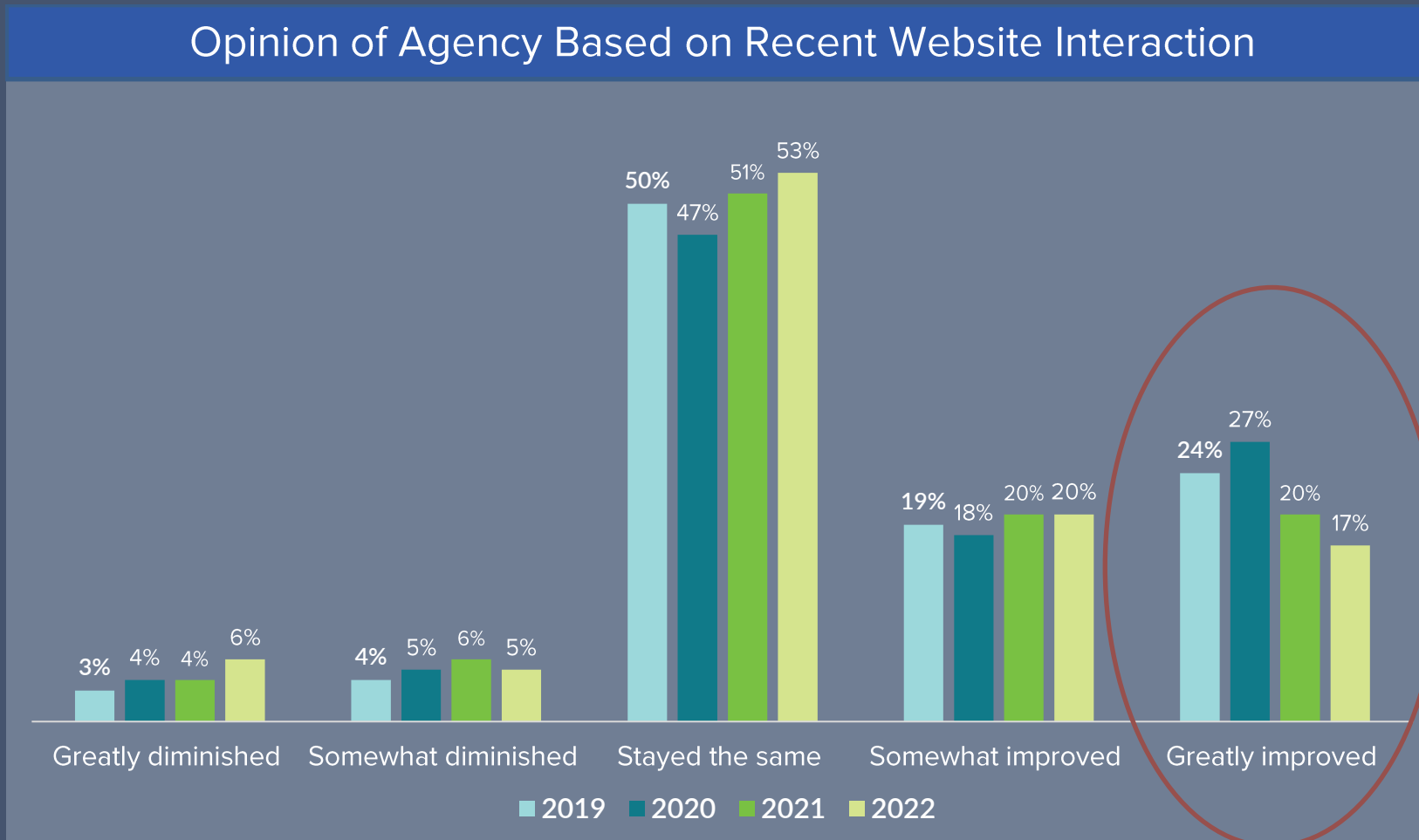


# Performance for all Drivers of the Website Experience Diminished

- Generally, performance among the drivers of website satisfaction took an initial fall in 2021 and then either inched down further or remained stable in 2022.
- Navigation and Search remain among the lowest scoring drivers, reflecting five- or six-point changes since 2020.

Seven Elements of the Website Customer Experience						
2020	2021	2022		ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION	
91	74	79		CHAT	Accessible Agents who are knowledgeable, effective, and empowered	
78	75	75		PERFORMANCE	Quick-loading pages and apps that are consistent and error-free	
77	73	73		CONTENT	Quality, engaging information that is accurate and up-to-date	
75	71	70		FUNCTIONALITY	Useful features/services helping the visitor accomplish their specific task	
74	69	68		LOOK AND FEEL	Visually appealing layout that makes information clear and accessible	
73	70	68		SEARCH	Easy search tool with results that are relevant, organized and filterable	
72	68	67		NAVIGATION	Intuitive navigation that allows a visitor to easily find what they need	

# Fewer Say Recent Website Interaction Positively Impacted Opinion of the Agency



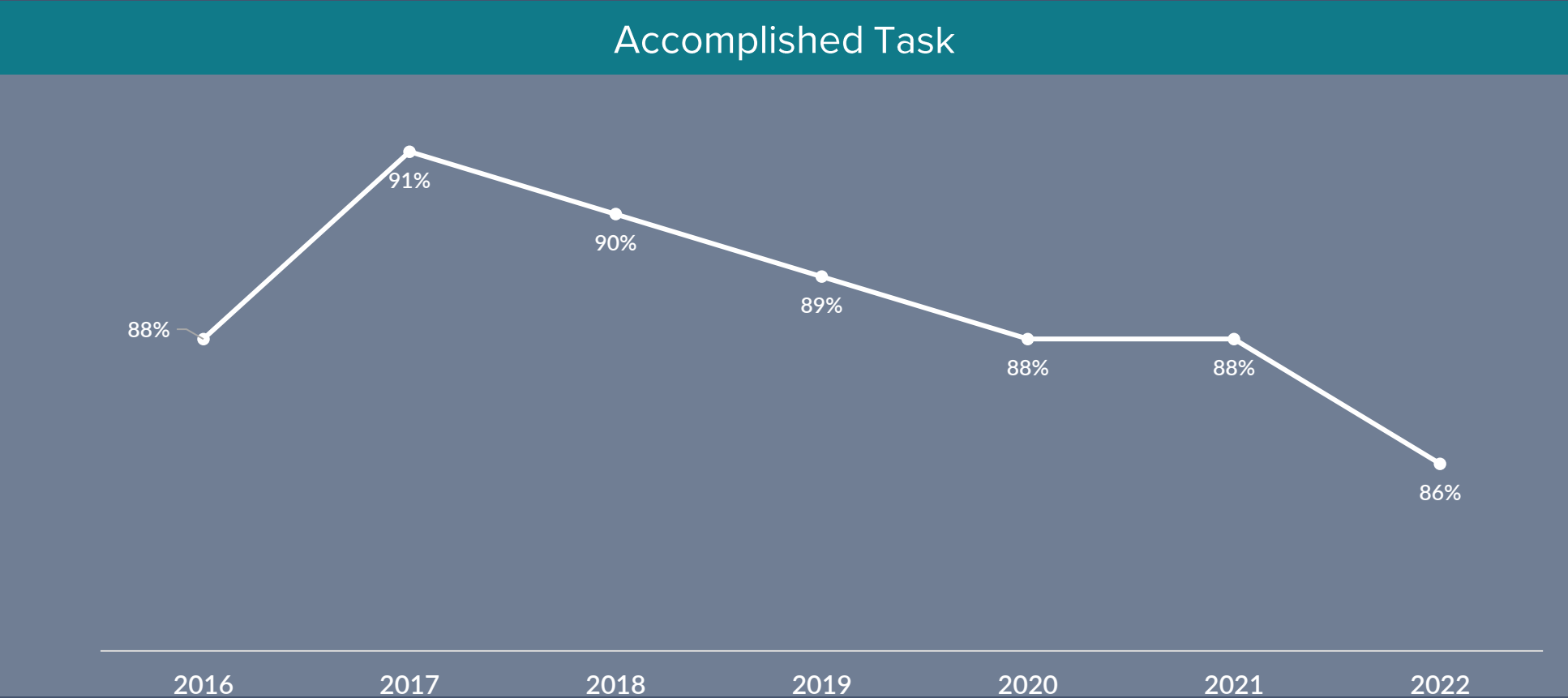


## ② ABILITY TO ACCOMPLISH TASKS ON GOVERNMENT WEBSITES



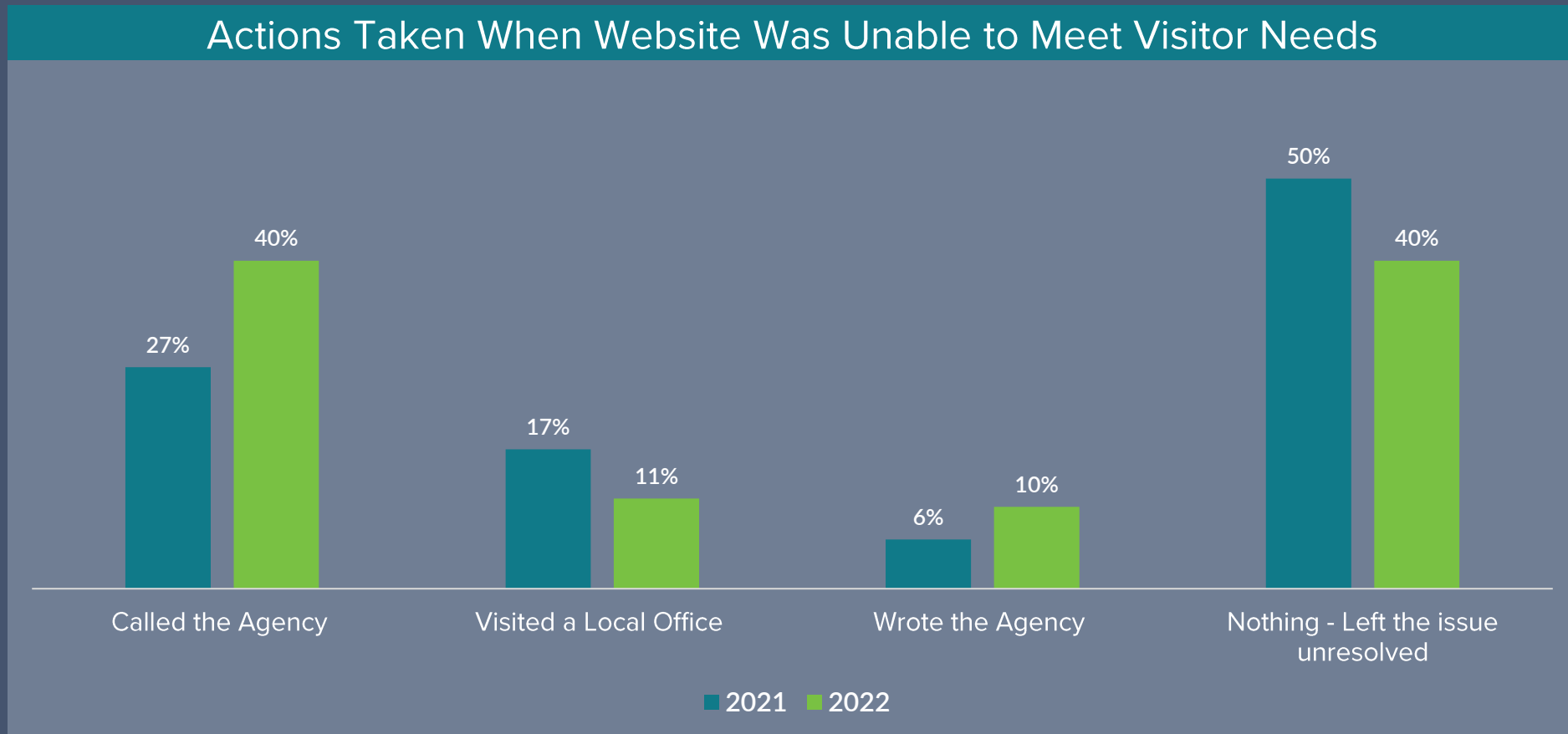
# Fewer Visitors Are Able to Accomplish Their Task

While most website visitors are able to accomplish their tasks, the success rate in doing so shows a downward trend at a time when options are limited due to the lingering COVID-19 pandemic.



# Unresolved Issues Are Driving Traffic to Government Call Centers

With local agency offices remaining closed, unmet needs are driving traffic to agency call centers at a higher rate than in 2021 as visitors are unwilling or unable to leave their issues unresolved.



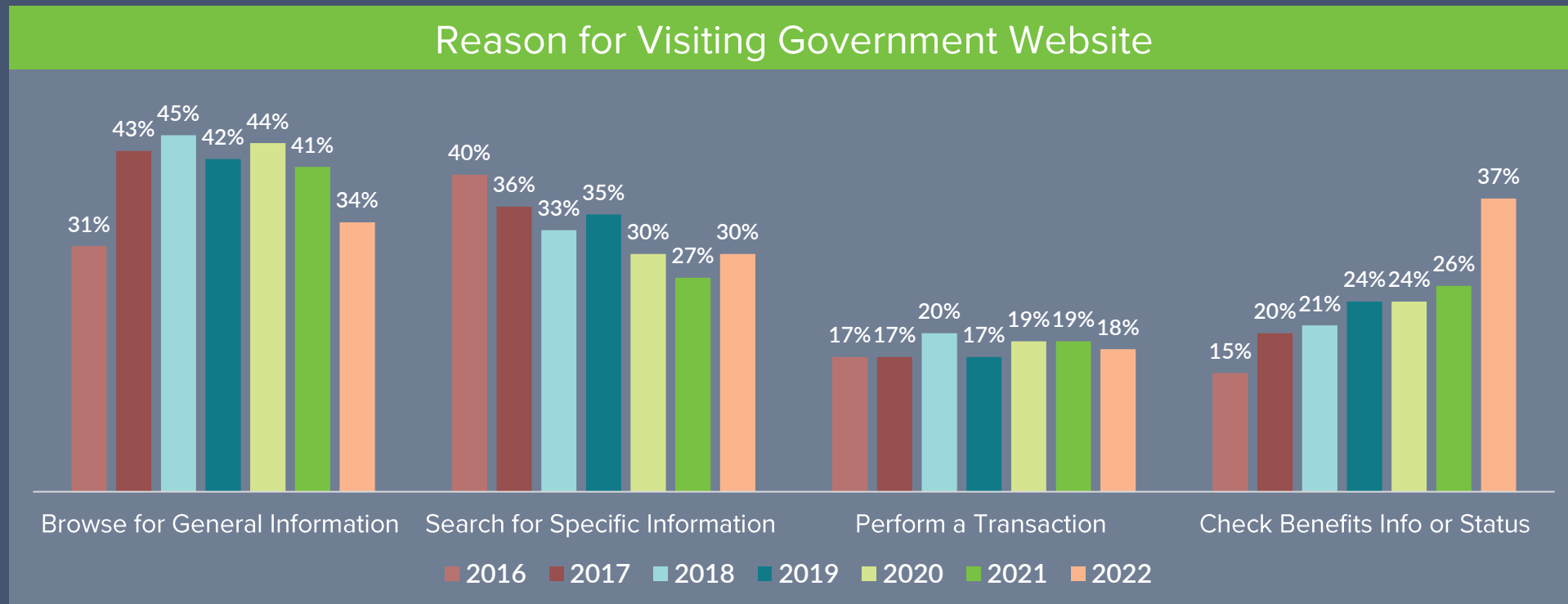


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## USE OF WEBSITES FOR CHECKING ON BENEFITS

# Visitors Increasingly Rely on Websites for Benefit Status Information

- The percentage of government website visitors visiting to check benefits information or status has been on an upward trend since 2016.
- In 2022, the percentage of visitors who indicated their most recent visit reason was to check benefits information or status jumped to 37%, making it the most often cited visit reason for the first time since this study's inception.



## Some of the Most Common Visit Reasons Produce the Lowest Satisfaction

Those checking on benefits or status and/or searching for specific information about available programs, policies or procedures have among the lowest success rates for accomplishing their goal and the lowest Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) scores.

Visit reasons	Percent of visitors	Percent able to accomplish goal	CSI
Check benefits information or status	37%	85%	64
Browse for general information	34%	90%	72
Search for specific information about available programs, policies or procedures	30%	86%	66
Perform a transaction (e.g., submit a form, make a payment, etc.)	18%	90%	70
Download a document	8%	89%	70
Other	8%	81%	59
Find contact information	6%	86%	68

## Those Checking Benefits are Least Satisfied and Least Likely to Recommend

- Those visiting to check on benefits information or status report the lowest satisfaction and, for several drivers, the lowest performance scores relative to other visit reasons.
- Although the score for likelihood to return to the site remains relatively high among those checking on benefits, the score for likelihood to recommend the site is one of the two that fall below 70.

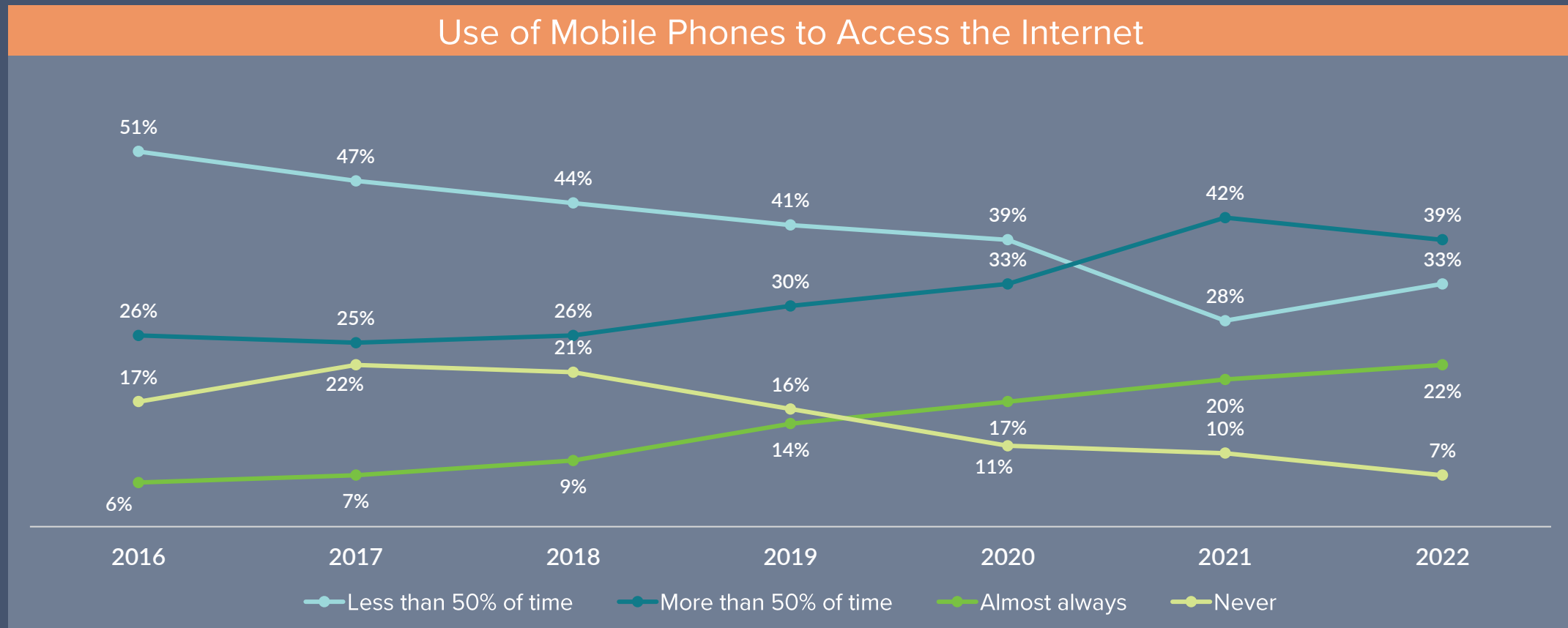
	Browse for general info	Search for specific info	Perform a transaction	Find contact info	Check benefits	Download document	Other
Sample size	268	238	140	44	290	66	62
Look and feel	73	67	69	66	67	71	61
Navigation	71	65	69	68	66	70	60
Search	73	67	69	69	67	72	62
Functionality	74	70	73	74	69	74	63
Content	77	74	76	78	72	80	67
Site performance	78	76	76	79	74	79	71
chat	81	75	77	79	82	86	-
Customer Satisfaction Index	72	66	70	68	64	70	59
Return to site	79	79	81	84	80	86	78
Recommend site	73	71	73	76	69	79	65



## 4 MOBILE ACCESS

# Exclusive Use of Mobile Phones to Access the Internet Continues to Climb

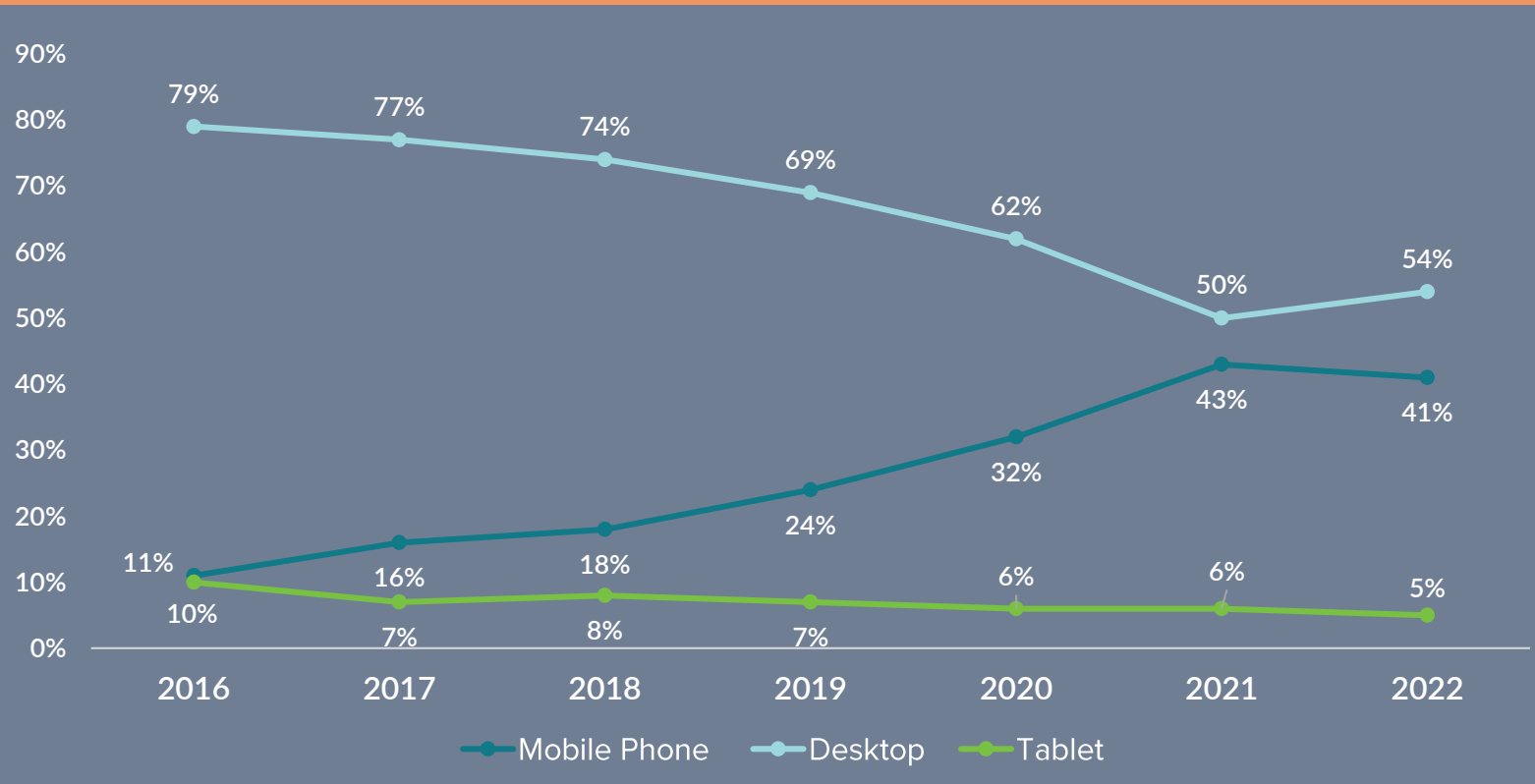
Rising to 22% in 2022, the percentage of website visitors reporting they almost always access the internet using their mobile phone has more than tripled since 2016. While not as dramatic, the percentage of those saying they access the internet using their phone more than 50% of the time has shown a steady increase as well.



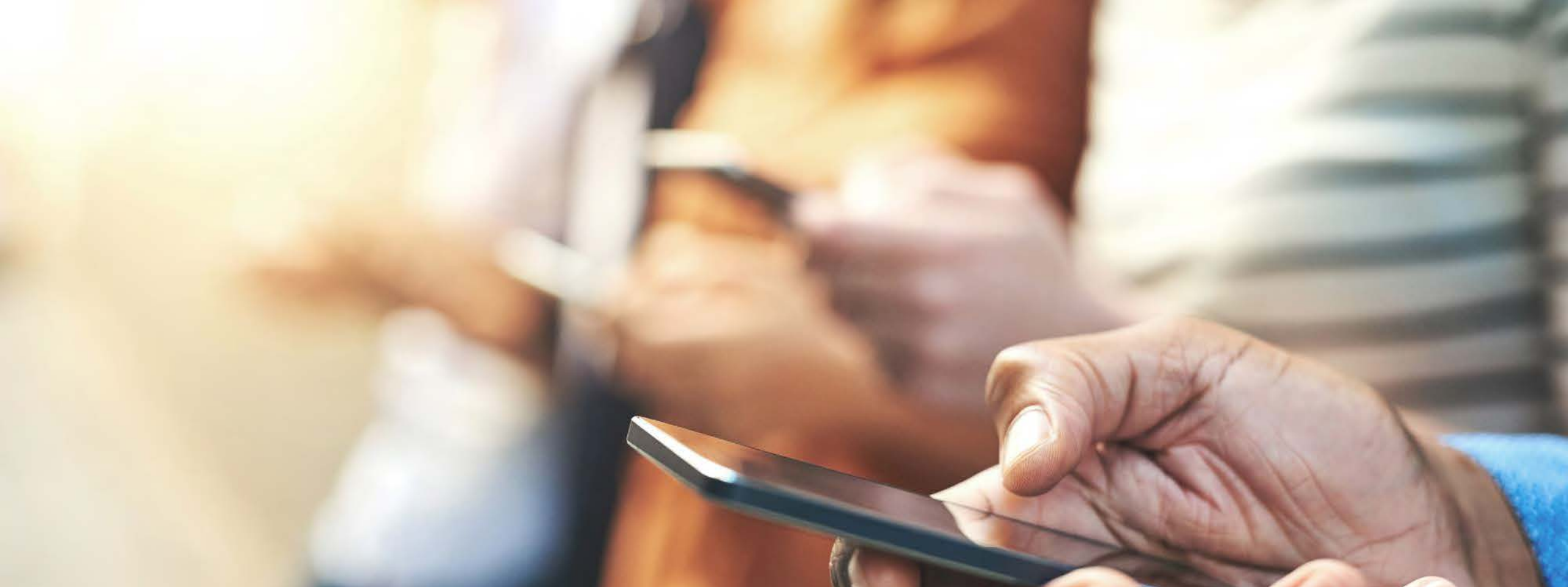


# Use of Mobile Phones to Access Websites Appears to Have Levelled Off

## Most Frequent Method for Accessing Government Websites



- Prior to 2021, use of mobile phones to access websites increased while use of desktop computers decreased. However, during the past two years both have leveled off with about four in ten accessing via mobile phone and about five in ten accessing via desktop.
- Use of tablets to access government websites has slowly declined since 2015 and is down to just 5% in 2022.



5 THE EXPERIENCES AND STRUGGLES OF LOWER INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

# Executive Order Requires that Government Services be Accessible to All

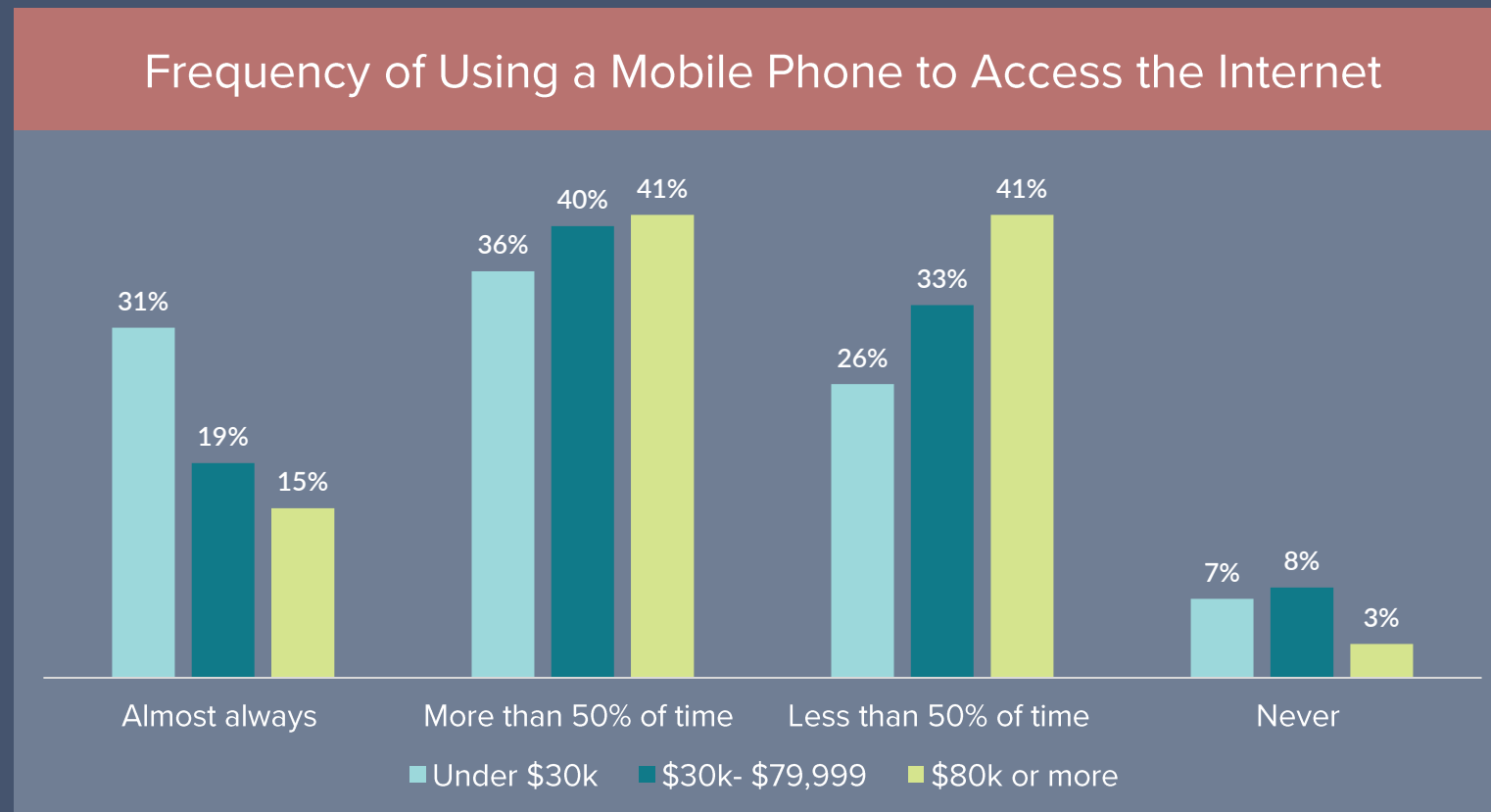
The Executive Order on Transforming Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government was signed by the President on December 13, 2021. This order specifies the need to use technology to modernize government and implement services that are simple to use, accessible, equitable, protective, transparent, and responsive for all people of the United States.

In the spirit of this Executive Order, the 2022 CFI Group government Website Benchmark survey results were analyzed to determine what, if any, differences in the government website experience exist based on a variety of demographics.

Notable differences in access and the website experience were uncovered when comparing the results from respondents of lower income households versus their higher income counterparts. These differences provide important insights into the steps needed to ensure all people of the United States have positive experiences when visiting federal government websites. These results also underscore the importance of including people from all income levels in usability testing and other activities designed to collect feedback on government websites going forward.

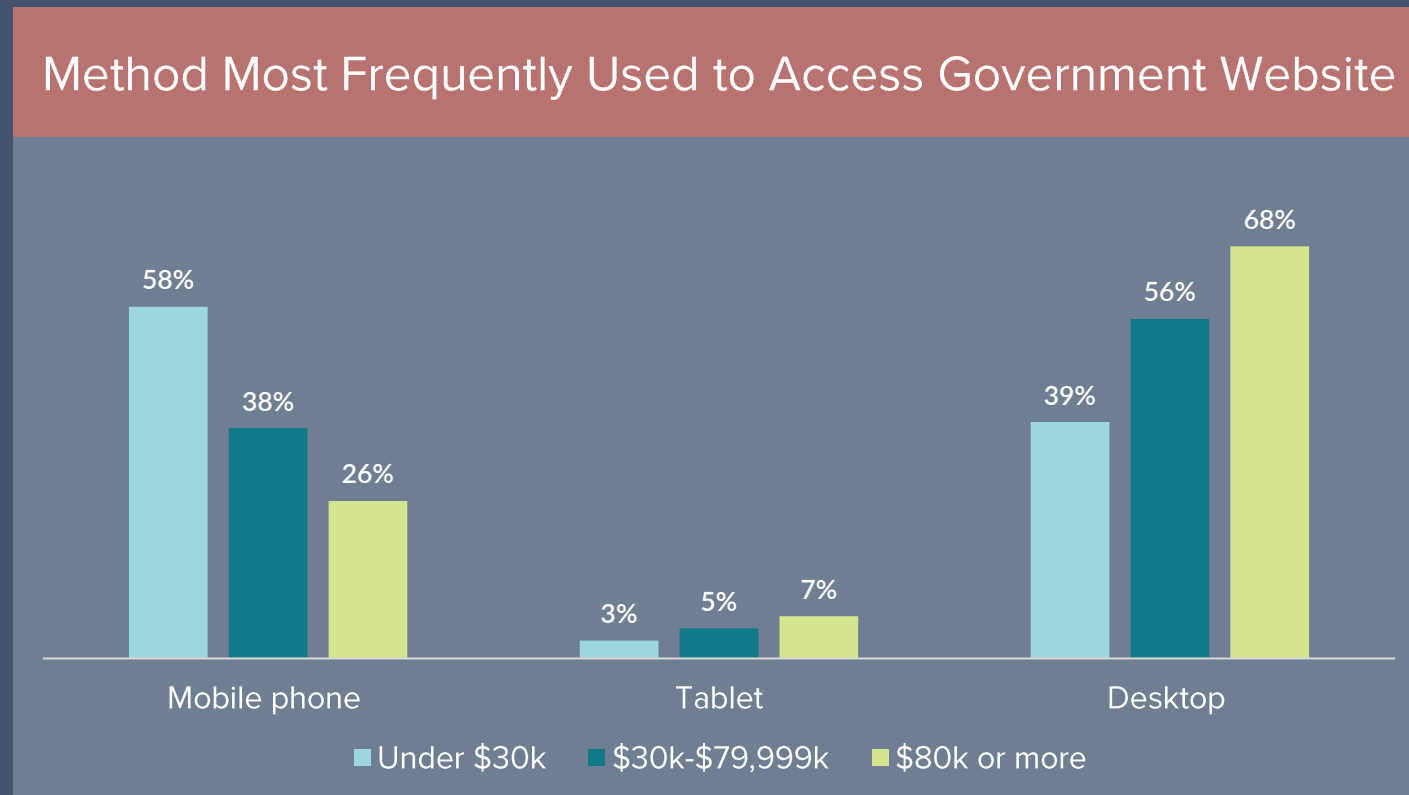
# Lower Income Households Rely Heavily on Mobile Phones for Internet Access

Lower income households report the greatest reliance on mobile access to the internet, with 31% 'almost always' using their mobile phone and an additional 36% using their phone 'more than 50% of the time'. Websites must be optimized for mobile access to effectively reach this group.



# Mobile Phone Access Is Particularly Important for Lower Income Households Accessing Government Websites

Consistent with their heavy reliance on mobile internet access, lower income households use mobile phones the most frequently to access government websites, making it clear that government websites must be mobile-friendly to provide equitable service to visitors of all economic means.



# Government Website Experience Falls Short for Lower Income Households

Those in lower income households visit a government website most often to check on benefits, yet one in six leave unable to accomplish their task. For nearly half of these visitors, their issue was never resolved. While agencies have made great strides in creating mobile-friendly websites, these results suggest more still needs to be done.

	Lower income (under \$30k)	Medium Income (\$30k-79,999)	High income (\$80k or more)
Visiting to check on benefits	40%	38%	30%
Unable to accomplish their task	16%	14%	10%
Left Issue unresolved	46%	37%	33%



# Implications and Recommendations

# Implications and Recommendations for Federal Agencies

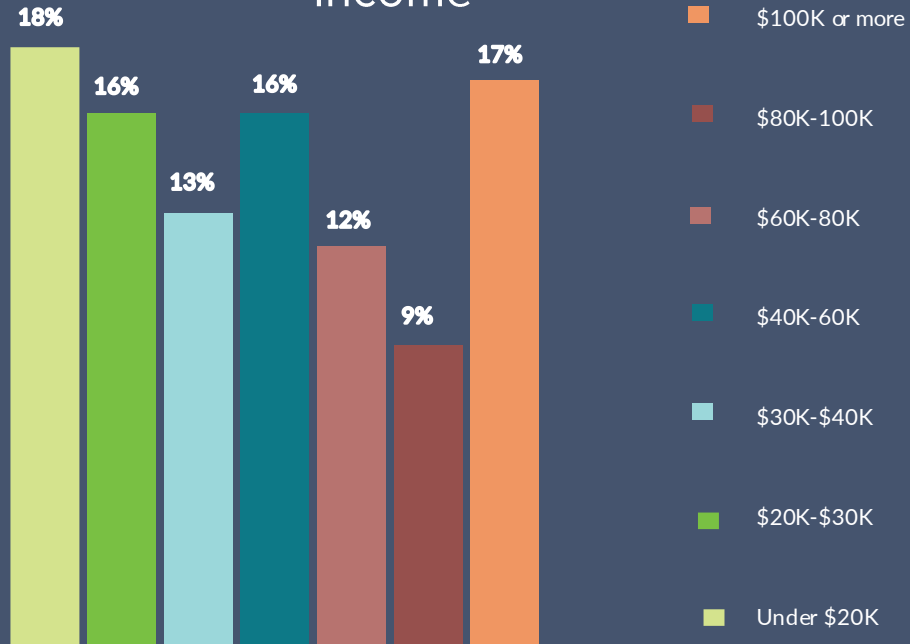
- The COVID-19 pandemic fueled an increase in use of federal government websites.
- At the same time, satisfaction with federal government websites notably declined.
  - ✓ Improving access to information regarding federal benefits, including the status of applications and/or payments, should be a priority.
  - ✓ Agencies need to provide options for handling most, if not all, interactions online including tasks that have historically been exclusively achievable in person or over the phone.
  - ✓ Ongoing measurement of website satisfaction is necessary to identify weaknesses in the website experience and ensure visitor priorities are met.
- Federal government websites are failing to meet the needs of the most vulnerable populations.
  - ✓ The mobile website is a critical means of delivering services to lower income households.
  - ✓ Agencies should measure and monitor website satisfaction on mobile phones, as well as desktops, to ensure services are accessible to everyone.
  - ✓ Usability testing should include participants from vulnerable populations, including lower income households.





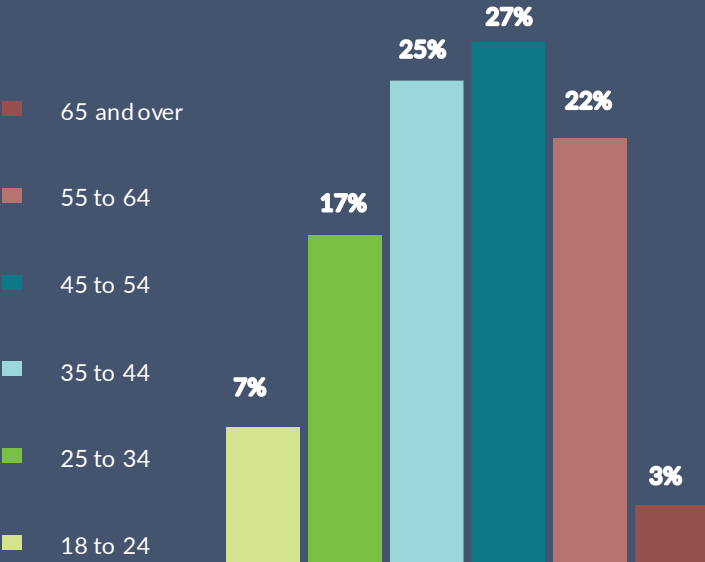
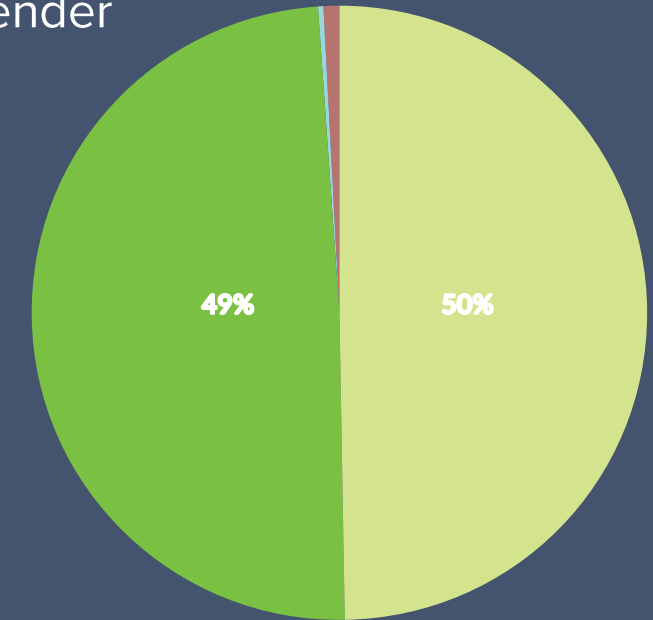
# Survey Respondents at a Glance

# Income

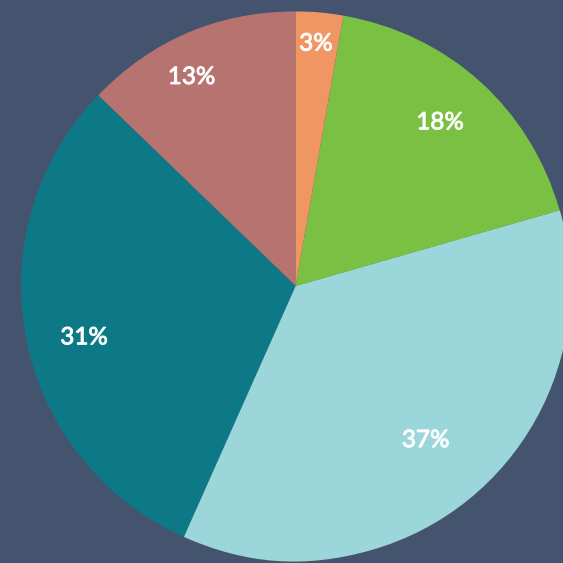


# Gender

- Non-binary
- Transgender female
- Transgender male
- Female
- Male



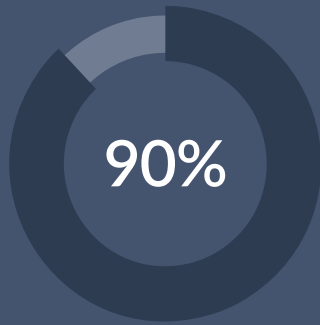
# Age



# Education

- Post-graduate
- College graduate
- Some college or associate degree
- High school
- Less than high school

# SURVEY RESPONDENTS AT A GLANCE



90%  
of respondents primarily interact with an agency via website

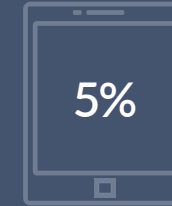


54%  
use desktop or laptop

41%



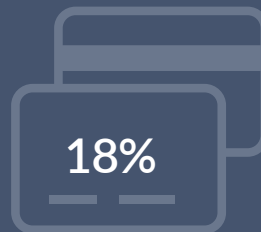
41%  
use mobile phone



5%  
use tablet



49%  
visit every few months



18%  
visit to perform a transaction



39%  
visit outside of regular business hours



37%  
say their opinion of the agency improved based on interaction

## ABOUT THE APPROACH

In 2016, CFI Group released its inaugural Government Websites report in partnership with the American Customer Satisfaction Index® (ACSI). This study is unique in that it measures not only the performance of the agency websites, but also the respondent profile of government website users.

Understanding who is using government websites and for what purpose is the first step for agencies tailoring content and features strategically to improve website user satisfaction. This report identifies insights from the respondent base that will help government executives to better manage agency websites. The results are based on analysis using the proven methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index®, the only national indicator of customer satisfaction.

In order to provide an accurate representation of the state of government websites as a whole, CFI Group collected data from users of a wide array of government websites.

Respondents to this year's survey were chosen at random using a market research panel. In order to be eligible for the survey, individuals needed to have accessed a federal agency's website within the past year.

## ABOUT US

Since 1988, CFI Group has delivered customer experience measurement and business insights from its Ann Arbor, Michigan headquarters and a 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 customized ACSI methodology in the federal government. Using this patented technology and top research experts, CFI Group helps agencies improve the citizen experience with the federal government.

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