

# Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index 2010

## Measuring Government Agency Contact Center Performance

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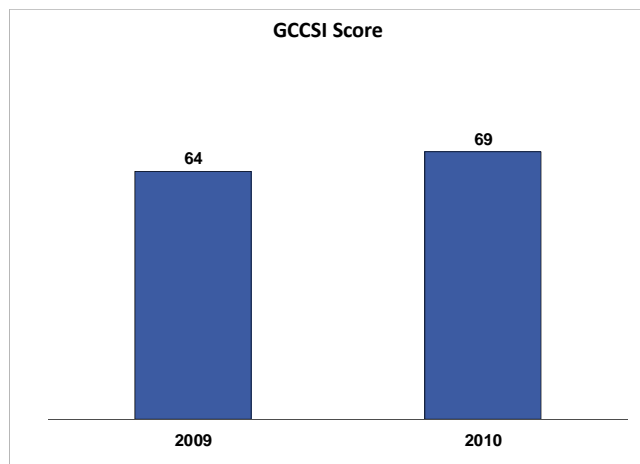
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Government contact centers play an important role during these difficult economic times. U.S. GDP in 2009 decreased 2.4%<sup>1</sup>, U.S. unemployment has remained above 9% since May 2009, and 12-month average hourly earnings have increased just 1.7% since August 2009.<sup>2</sup> With increased economic pressures for most U.S. citizens, people rely all the more on government contact centers to provide the service and support citizens need.



Fortunately, government contact centers have risen to the occasion to deliver higher satisfaction scores among citizens who contact a government contact center. CFI's Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI) rose a significant 5 points from 2009. Although the private sector satisfaction (CCSI) is 77, 8 points higher than the GCCSI of 69, the GCCSI improvement of 5 points from 64 in 2009 to 69 in 2010 is a significant performance jump.

This GCCSI bump reflects the intentional improvements government agencies enacted in 2009 to deliver a better citizen experience.

Government agencies improved in their efforts to fulfill their mission with the contact centers. This is an encouraging finding, given that a slower economy generally increases call center volumes and makes service quality levels difficult to maintain.

Using the widely respected American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) methodology, the GCCSI study finds that there are four overarching factors that affect satisfaction with a government contact center experience:

1. The customer service representative (CSR) who handles the call.
2. The capability of the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system to either handle the issue completely or route the customer to an agent.
3. The process the customer goes through to handle this or her inquiry.
4. The other channels citizens use to interact with government agencies, such as websites or social media.

Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI) measurements	Score
Overall CSI	69
Satisfaction Driver - Customer Service Representative	80
Satisfaction Driver - Customer Service Process	71
Satisfaction Driver - IVR	57
Satisfaction Driver - Other Channels/Social Media	65

These measures stack up fairly well against private sector numbers. Although the IVR measure is a low 57, IVR for the private sector is also low at 61, demonstrating that both government and the private sector have work to do in this area. The private sector does perform better in the area of Customer Service Process with a 78, compared to government's 71. But in the high-impact area of Customer Service Representative, the government score is 80, just 3 points below the private sector score of 83.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

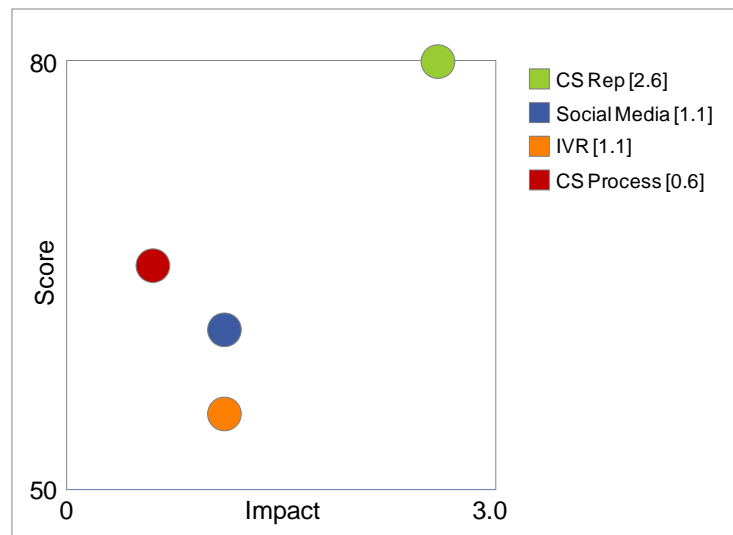
<sup>2</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

<sup>3</sup> Note: Other Channels/Social Media was not measured in the private sector study

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *(continued)*

The solid government score for Customer Service Representative is important because, of the four areas measured, Customer Service Representative has the largest impact on customer satisfaction. Our country faces a good deal of uncertainty: a rocky economy; high unemployment; large federal, state, and local budget deficits; environmental issues; and new financial and immigration legislation. In such difficult times it is understandable that people want to speak with a live person to resolve their issue.

### Impacts on Customer Satisfaction for the Contact Center



The Social Security Administration (SSA), for example, recognized this and added 1,400 new employees in 2009, including 260 to handle the National 800 Number teleservice centers. As a result, the average speed in answering the National 800 Number calls improved 25% over 2008 performance.<sup>4</sup> Less time on hold means more customers satisfied with the call.

Findings indicate that for 2010, customer service representatives have a higher impact on satisfaction for government contact centers (impact of 2.6) than in the private sector (impact of 1.5).

In other words, improvements in CSR performance in public sector call centers will have nearly twice as much affect on customer satisfaction, as compared to the private sector<sup>5</sup>.

Why might this be? If a cellular phone customer calls a contact center regarding a billing issue, for example, it might be an inconvenience. If a Social Security recipient calls about a benefit delay, it might be the difference between being able (or not being able) to make a rent payment. In the former scenario, process may be the most important driver of satisfaction. In the latter scenario, the empathy and ability of the CSR may be most critical.

While satisfaction levels are higher for 2010, it is important to understand that customer expectations will likely shift as the means of contact/access to technology evolve. The relatively high performance in the government contact centers today may or may not translate into successful overall service across channels in the future. Contact center managers must continue to develop agent skills sets to effectively engage customers in these various mediums.

<sup>4</sup> Social Security Administration's "Summary of Performance and Financial Information Fiscal Year 2009".

<sup>5</sup> The impact measure is at the heart of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) methodology. Statistically speaking, an impact is a predictive measure. If the given service aspect improves by five points, the impact predicts how much customer satisfaction will improve. In this case, the impact of the customer service representative is 2.6. This means that if the rating of the CSR improves by 5 points (from 80 to 85), the GCCSI score is predicted to increase by 2.6 (from 69 to 71.6). In a practical sense, the impact is a measure of leverage. The greater the impact, the more leverage to drive improvement in customer satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

### BACKGROUND ON THE ACSI

Government contact centers play an increasingly important role in worldwide commerce. In the private sector, contact centers represent a global industry conservatively estimated at \$250 billion. *The Wall Street Journal* estimates in-house contact center operations at \$200 billion, with the other 20%, or \$50 billion, of the market composed of outsourced contact center firms. This outsourced contact center industry is diverse. IBISWorld counts over 15,000 firms making up this \$50 billion market, with approximately 20% of the market generated by six of the largest contact center firms: Convergys Corp., Teleperformance, Sitel Worldwide Corporation, TeleTech Holdings Inc., Sykes Enterprises Inc., APAC Customer Services, Inc.

The government sector is no less significant. Contact centers are no longer simply customer service touch points managed by staff that is separated from primary operations. Rather, contact centers are now key instruments for fulfilling the mission of effective government. The inherent strategic nature of customer contact centers demands solid success metrics using sophisticated tools and methods.

Managing a contact center effectively involves the pursuit of at least two key objectives that remain in constant tension with one another: maintaining high customer satisfaction and operating the center within budget constraints. Virtually any manager can achieve excellent support if given unending resources. The challenge is to learn to focus and improve aspects of the center that have the greatest impact on the customer experience. Understanding what drives customer satisfaction in the contact centers is, therefore, a critical element of successful contact center management.

This study provides insights that are helping in understanding the customer experience. CFI Group and Federal Consulting Group (FCG) have conducted an extensive study of customer satisfaction with contact centers: the 2010 Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI). The purpose of this study is to aid executives as they navigate this new business climate and changing role of contact centers. This is the third consecutive year that CFI Group and FCG have administered this study using the proven methodology of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI).

#### About the ACSI Methodology

The American Customer Satisfaction Index ([www.theacsi.org](http://www.theacsi.org)) is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. A key distinguishing feature of the ACSI methodology is its patented scientific approach to customer satisfaction measurement.

When applied to your organization, the unique cause-and-effect methodology of the ACSI shows how satisfied customers are today, and how satisfaction leads to desired results. This one of a kind methodology also gauges satisfaction with specific elements of the customer experience that influence overall satisfaction and future success.

The ACSI is an important indicator of economic performance, both for individual firms and for the macro economy. As such, the national ACSI score has been shown to be predictive of both consumer spending and stock market growth, among other important indicators of economic growth. Perhaps most revealing, however, have been the linkages discovered between aggregate ACSI growth, aggregate corporate earnings growth (among S&P 500 companies), and average Market Value Added (MVA), which measures a firm's success in creating wealth for shareholders.

**INTRODUCTION (continued)**

**THE GCCSI MEASUREMENTS**

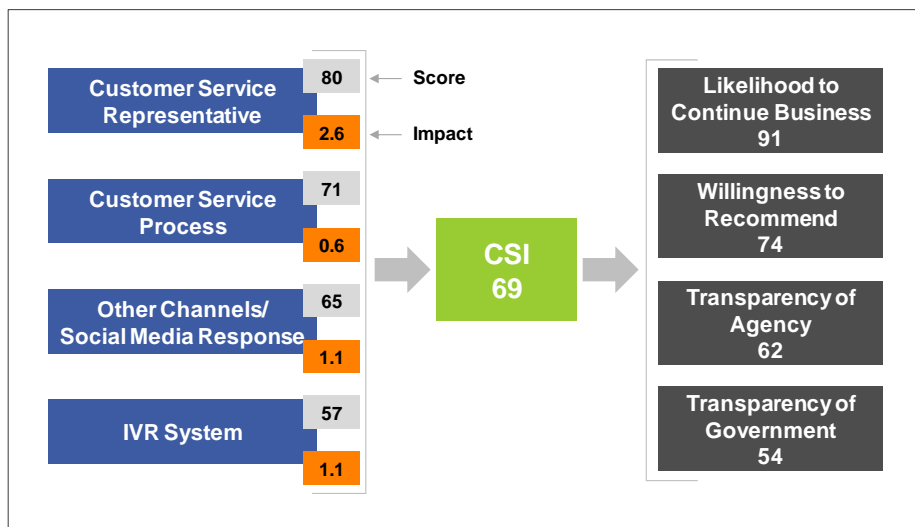
The 2010 GCCSI quantifies the impact contact centers have on customer satisfaction, word-of-mouth referrals, and perceived transparency across several federal agencies plus state and local governments, including:

- Internal Revenue Service
- Social Security Administration
- Medicare or Medicaid
- Department of Education
- State or Local
- Veterans Affairs

The GCCSI uses the proven and predictive methodology of the ACSI. The ACSI methodology quantifies how improvements to different aspects of the contact center experience lead to improvements in customer satisfaction.

As shown in the graphic below, the GCCSI is 69 out of 100. There are four drivers of satisfaction with the contact center experience: Customer Service Representatives (CSR), the IVR system, the Customer Service Processes, and Other Channels/Social Media. Government contact center customers are most satisfied with CSRs (score of 80), followed by Customer Service Process (71), Other Channels/Social Media (65), and the IVR system (57). Customer Service Representatives, with an impact of 2.6, are the strongest driver of customer satisfaction (see page 5 of this report for an explanation of impacts).

**GCCSI 2010 Model**



**1. Customer Service Representative (CSR)**

Obviously, the most important aspect of the contact center is the CSR and how he/she engages the customer. Knowledgeable CSRs who are courteous and genuinely interested in helping the customer are the most critical aspect of delivering an excellent contact center experience for customers.

People often want to speak to a CSR because the issue is complicated, they want immediate resolution to the problem, or they simply enjoy dealing directly with a live person rather than navigating through a website or IVR automated menu.

## INTRODUCTION *(continued)*

The cost implications for handling Other Channels/Social Media are significant. A full 37% of our respondents tried some other contact method.

Consider the contact centers for the Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSA receives roughly 60 million calls a year. If the SSA initiated a project to provide best-in-class systems to handle individual data and information requests, what would be the outcome? Below are some general estimates.

Estimated average SSA Cost per call	\$	5
Annual Calls	\$	60,000,000
37% using other method first	\$	22,200,000
25% of those who get question answered	\$	5,550,000
Annual cost reduction from fewer calls	\$	27,750,000
3-year cost reduction	\$	83,250,000
Estimated 3-year increase in IT budget	\$	(30,000,000)
Net 3-year savings	\$	53,250,000

If a 3-year \$30 million IT project can answer 25% of Other Channel requests that currently turn in to calls to the contact center, then the \$5 per call for the roughly 5.6 million contacts would generate \$28 million in savings each year, with a total net savings of \$53 million over a three-year-period.

### 2. IVR

The IVR system can be an effective and efficient method for delivering information to customers. Many times, however, IVR systems do not provide the easily accessible information customers are looking for to solve their problems.

### 3. Customer Service Process

In addition to great front-line people, a contact center needs the supporting process to resolve customer issues. In short, contact centers need to be able to route customers to the CSRs easily, provide appropriate hours of accessibility, and follow through on commitments made to customers.

### 4. Other Channels/Social Media Response

As customers interact with business or government agencies in varied ways, call centers have evolved into contact centers. As the web and social media continue to grow,

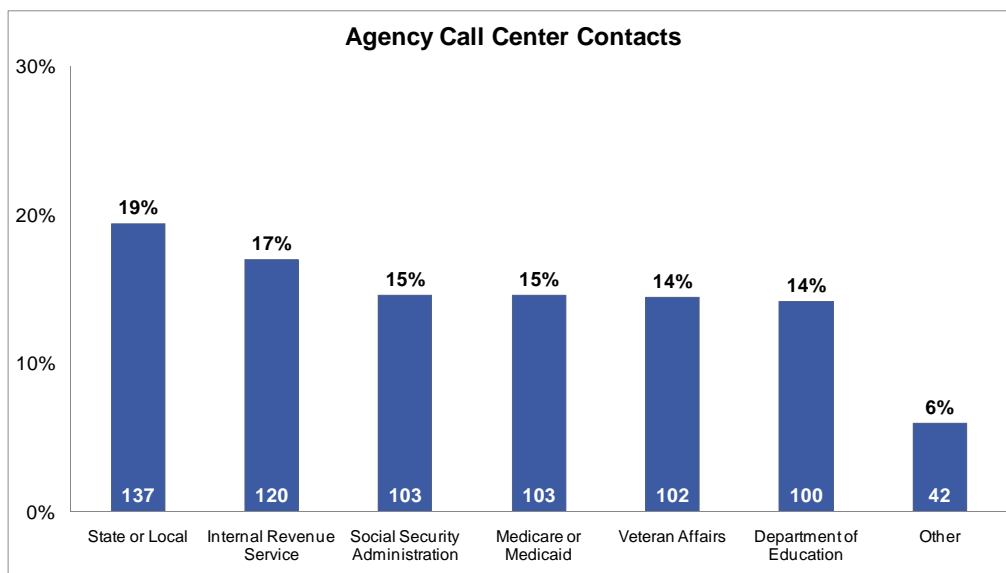
these channels become expected by customers as a viable interaction sphere. For contact other than traditional phone calls, the area is currently dominated primarily by email, website, and chat, but is quickly growing to add Facebook, Twitter and a host of other growing applications.

The mix of customers who use various contact tools varies, however, from agency to agency. The Social Security Administration, for example, is more likely to have customers use a contact method other than phone than the IRS, which, on average, receives more complex questions from its customers. There is also a difference across the income spectrum. When not using the phone as a method of first contact, higher income customers tend to use the web to contact the agency and gather information. Lower income customers, on the other hand, are more likely to prefer email. A similar distribution is seen with age. Younger customers are more comfortable with a web interface, perhaps on an iPhone or other smart phone. Older customers tend to prefer email contact over contacting the agency by the website.

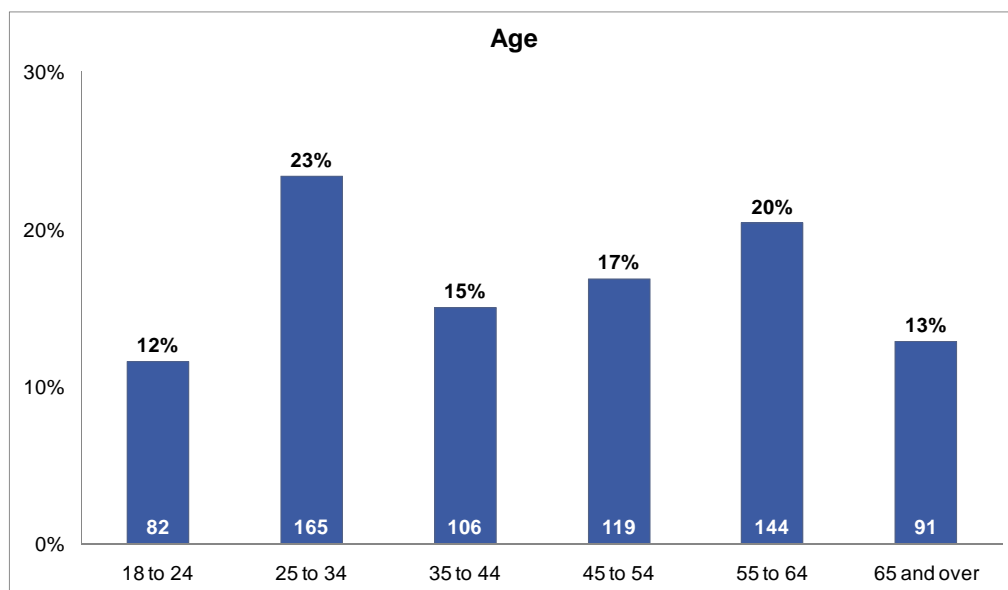
Government contact centers should determine the proper contact mix based on its customer base while striving to deliver optimal customer satisfaction measures no matter which contact method is selected by the customers.

## WHO IS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY?

In April and May of 2010, CFI Group surveyed a panel of 707 citizens after they contacted a government agency to ask a question or resolve an issue. 81% had contacted a federal government agency and 19% a state or local agency. Federal agencies measured were the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), Social Security Administration (SSA), Medicare/Medicaid, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and the Department of Education (DOE). Each agency has a sufficient number of respondents that allows CFI Group to conduct future in-depth analysis for each agency. This report will concentrate on the aggregate set of respondent across the mix of government agencies measured.

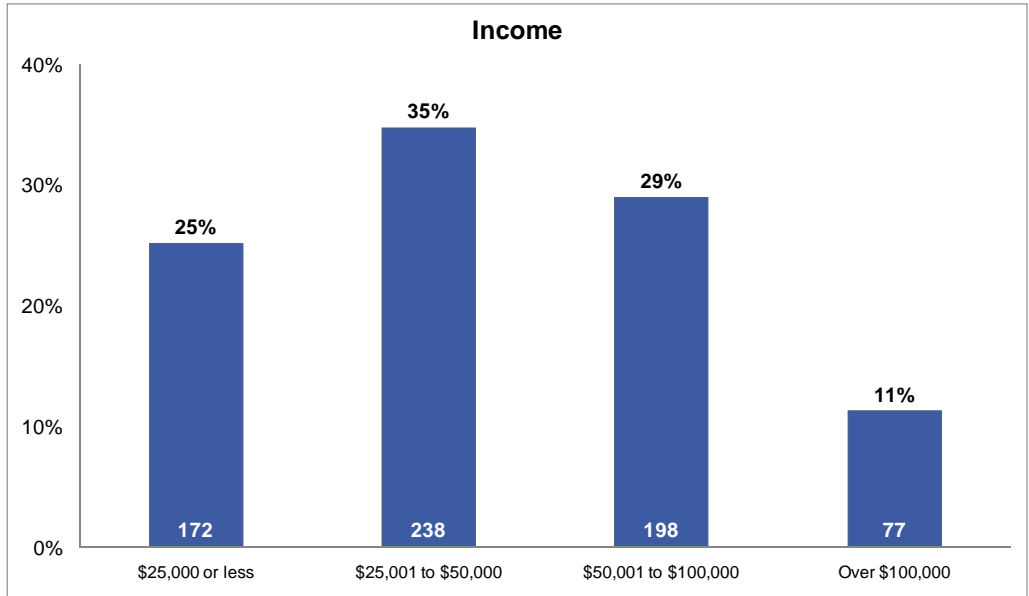


Survey respondents varied across the age spectrum. The greatest share of respondents (23%) is between 25 and 34 years old. However, we have a good distribution of participants in each of the age categories, reflecting a good cross section of citizens in the U.S. who are contacting government agencies for assistance.



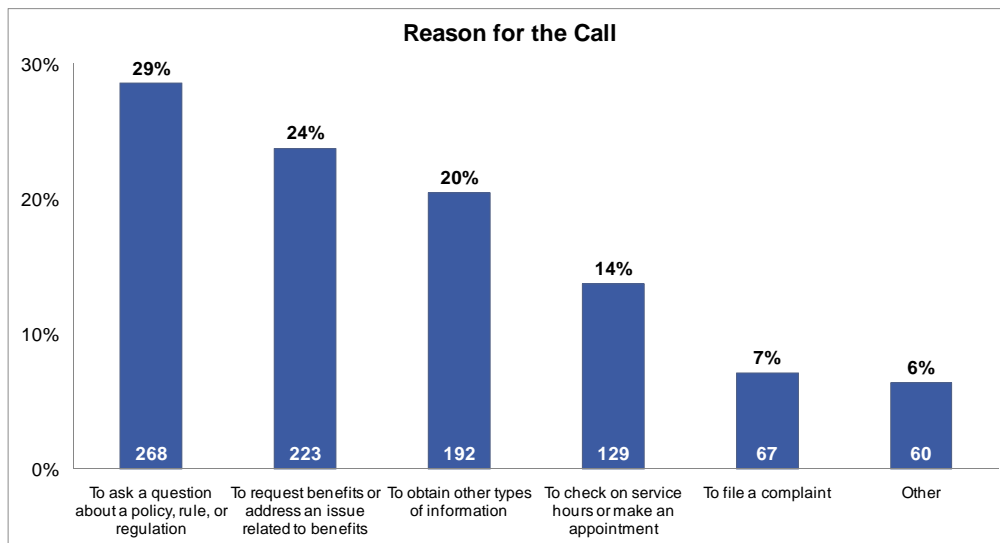
**WHO IS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY? (continued)**

Most (60%) of the citizens surveyed have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less. This distribution may be below the national average due in part to the inclusion of the SSA and Medicare and Medicaid categories. However, the sample still distributes well, with 11% of the respondents earning \$100,000 or more per year.

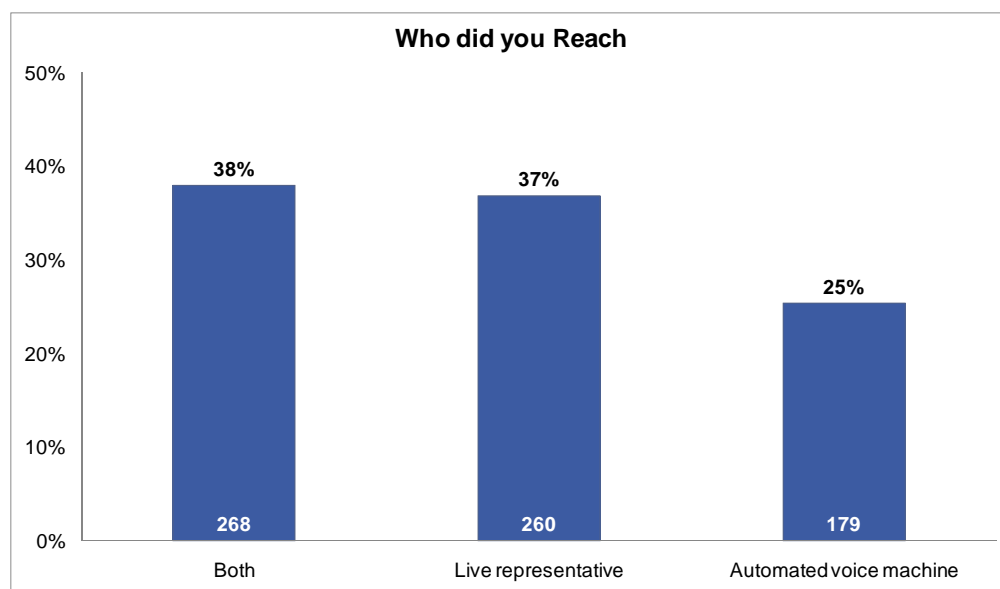


## HOW DO PEOPLE ENGAGE GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTERS?

The largest set of respondents (29%) called the contact center to simply ask a question about a policy, rule, or regulation. Many (24%) were requesting benefits or addressing an issue, a category that represents the core of the contact center work. Thirty-four percent were simply calling to obtain information (20%) or to check on hours or make an appointment (14%). A full 7%, though, were calling to lodge a specific complaint.

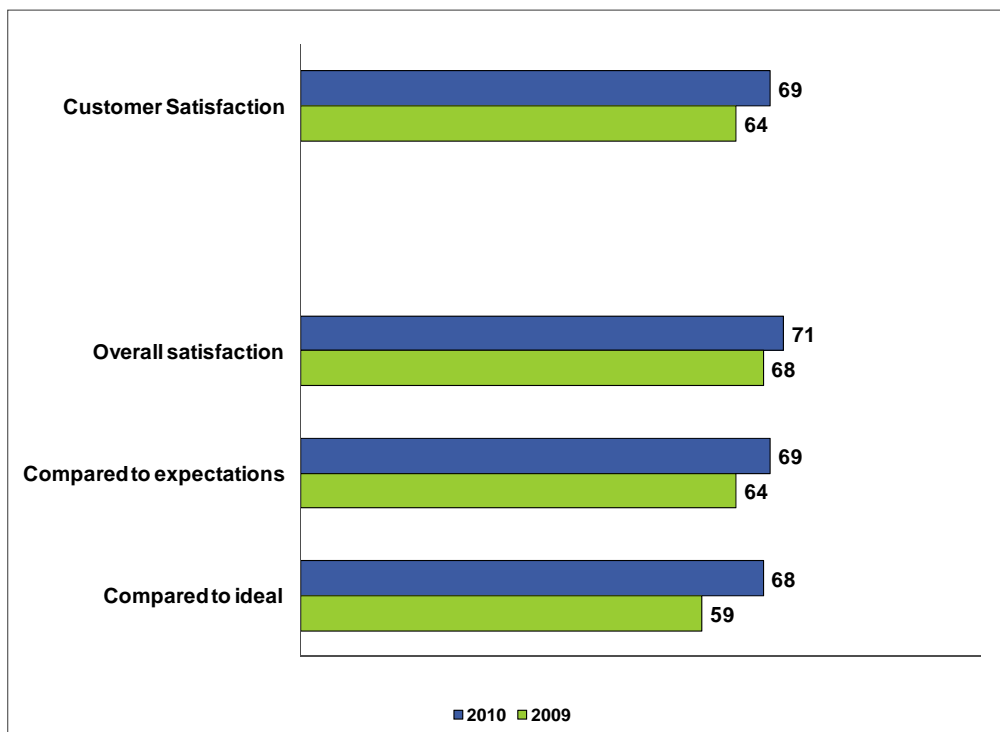


A good portion (25%) of our panel reached an IVR system and never spoke to a live representative. Just over one in three (37%), however, said they spoke only to a live representative. Many (38%) said they both used the IVR and spoke to a live representative, suggesting that their issues could not be resolved by the IVR alone.

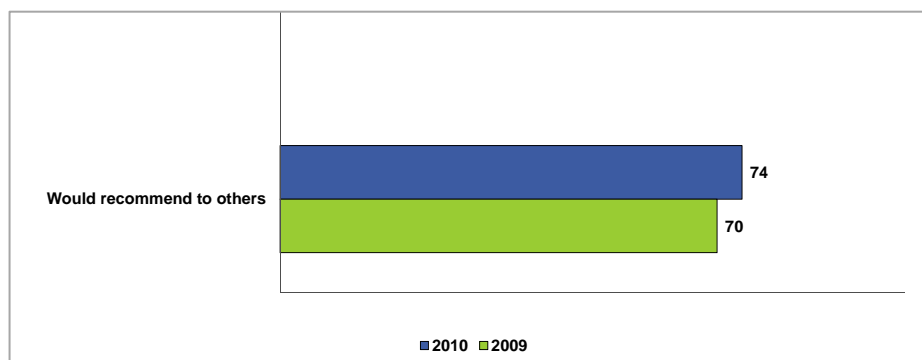


## HOW DO PEOPLE VIEW GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTERS?

Citizen satisfaction with government contact centers has improved over the past year. In 2010, customer satisfaction (CSI) with government contact centers is at 69, up 5 points from the 2009 CSI of 64. CSI is composed of three measures: overall satisfaction, satisfaction compared to expectations, and satisfaction compared to the respondent's idea of an ideal contact center. This measure of an ideal contact center showed a large increase from 2009, gaining 9 points from 59 to 68.

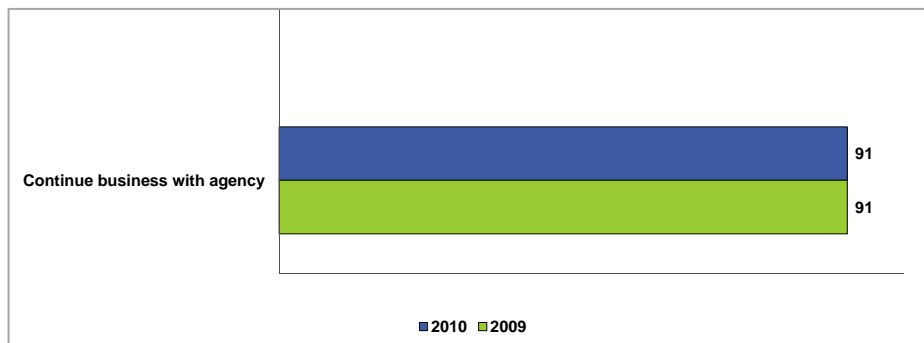


The willingness to recommend a government agency's service is a key behavioral outcome of satisfaction with the experience. Our study shows that citizen likelihood to recommend the agency is up four points from 2009, rising in 2010 from 70 to 74.

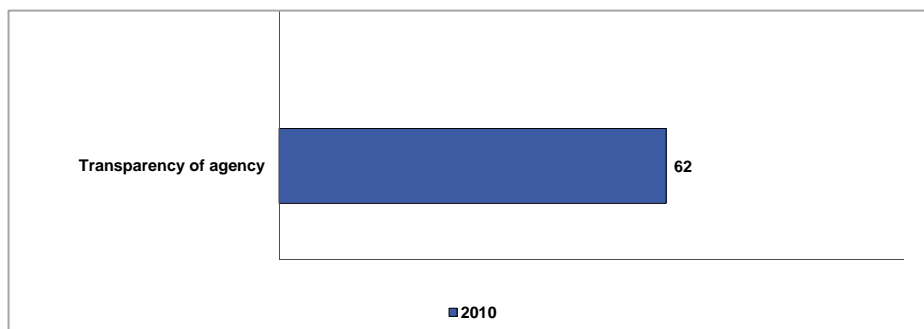


**HOW DO PEOPLE VIEW GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTERS? (continued)**

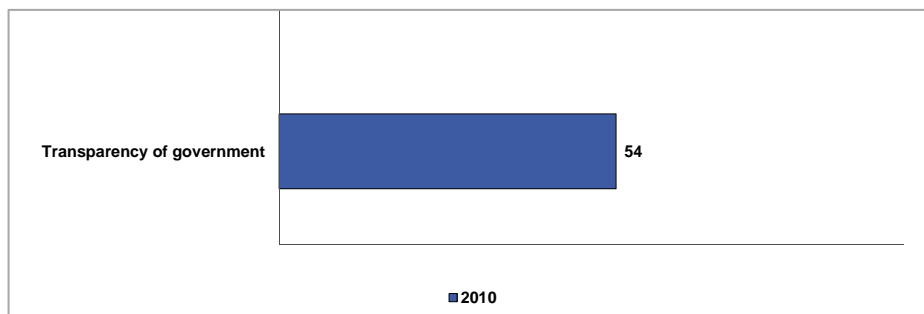
The likelihood of continuing to do business with the agency is also a measure of future behavior. As might be expected, the high 91 rating for this measure did not increase from 2009 to 2010. Unlike private enterprise, where customers have choices and may opt to switch providers of a particular service, government agencies are often the sole sources for their respective services.



A better outcome measure for government agencies is transparency. With the current administration’s emphasis on government transparency, we added this measure as a way of determining if the agencies are fulfilling the mission of serving citizens. Although this is the first year of this measure, the agency-specific rating is a low 62. Clearly government agencies have room to improve with regard to providing transparency to customers.

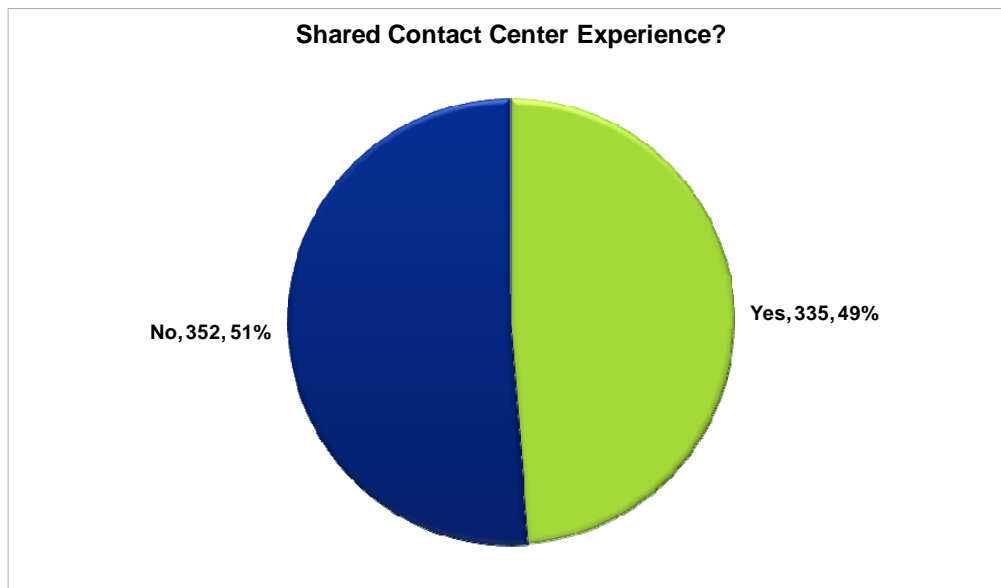


Even lower is the score for government transparency overall. A rating of 54 is a very low overall score for government overall. In short, government agencies have an opportunity to increase transparency and deliver value to those who need customer support.



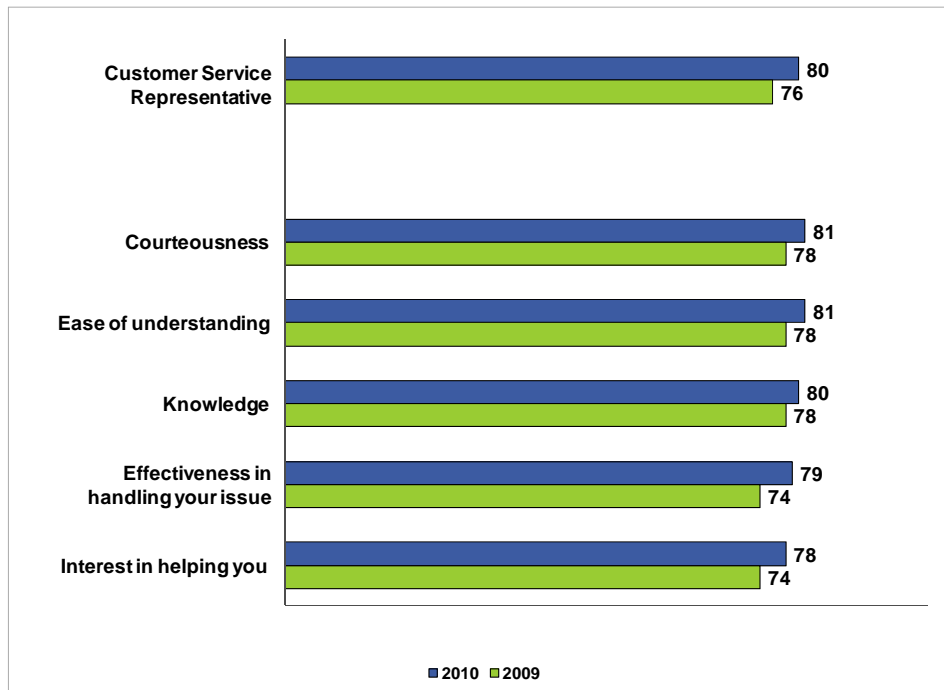
**HOW DO PEOPLE VIEW GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTERS? (continued)**

These overall measures matter for two reasons. First, they represent a summary view of how well the agencies are delivering value to citizens. Secondly, these measures matter because people tend to discuss their experiences with others. If many are receiving poor service, or have a poor view of government transparency because of their agency experience, they will actively share this experience with family, friends, and neighbors. In our study almost half (49%) of the respondents said they had shared with others their recent experience with the agency contact center. A key part of delivering on the agency mission, then, is delivering great service to ensure the stories shared by people receiving service are positive and affirming of the agency's work and mission.

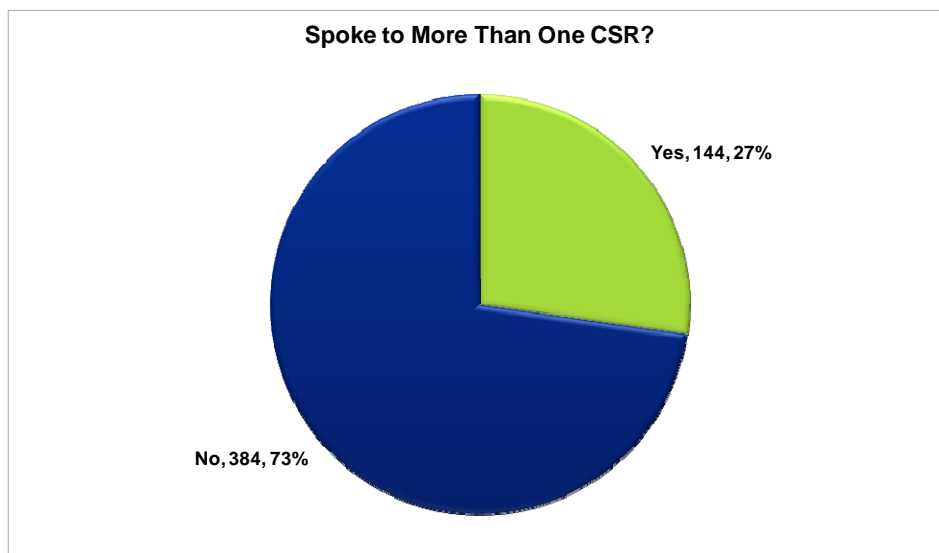


## HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES?

For many citizens, they key point of contact with the agency is the customer service representative (CSR). According to the Priority Matrix shown on p. 5, the role of the CSR is clearly the largest driver of customer satisfaction with government contact centers. This is natural, since the CSR becomes the face of the agency to the citizens and provides the citizens with the tangible service of answering questions and resolving problems. Scores for CSRs are solid, up from 76 in 2009 to 80 in 2010. Much of this bump can be attributed to the CSRs' aggregate increase in the effectiveness in handling customer issues (up 5 points) and interest in helping customers (up 4 points). Basically, CSRs are generally more interested and able to solve customer problems in 2010 than in 2009.

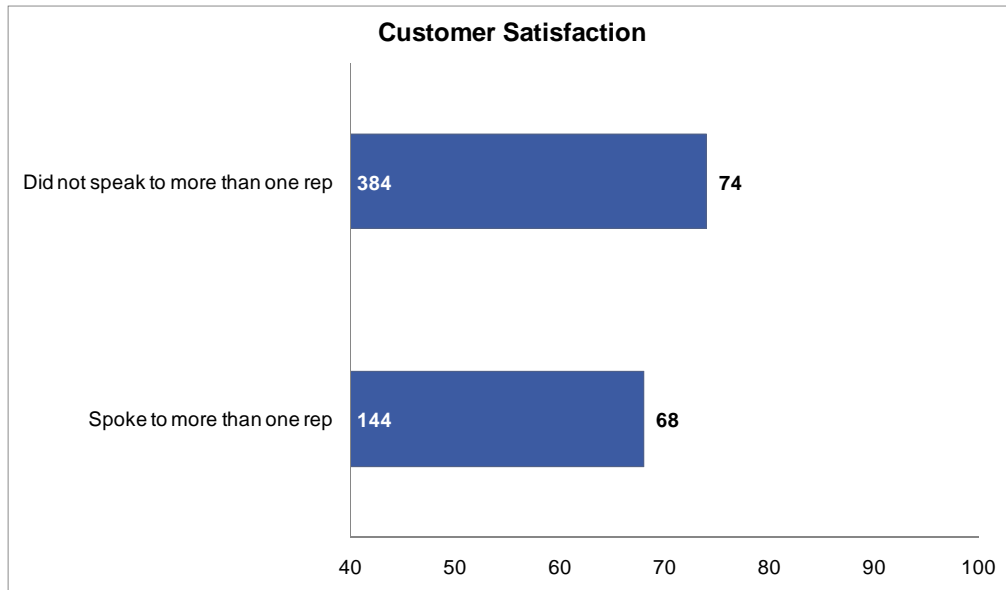


One key problem that still remains is the fact that citizens often have to speak to more than one CSR before getting an issue resolved. More than a quarter (27%) of the respondents said they had to speak to more than one CSR in resolving the problem or issue.

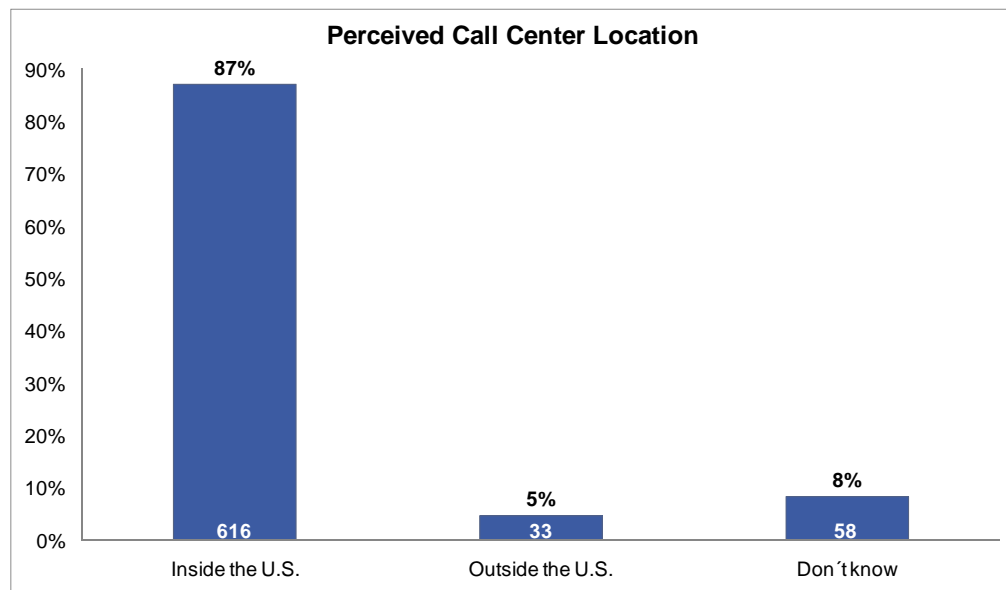


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES? (cont'd)**

Solving a customer's issue with one CSR goes a long way in satisfying citizens who contact the agency. Citizens who spoke to only one CSR have a CSI of 74, while those who spoke to more than one CSR have a CSI 6 points lower at 68.

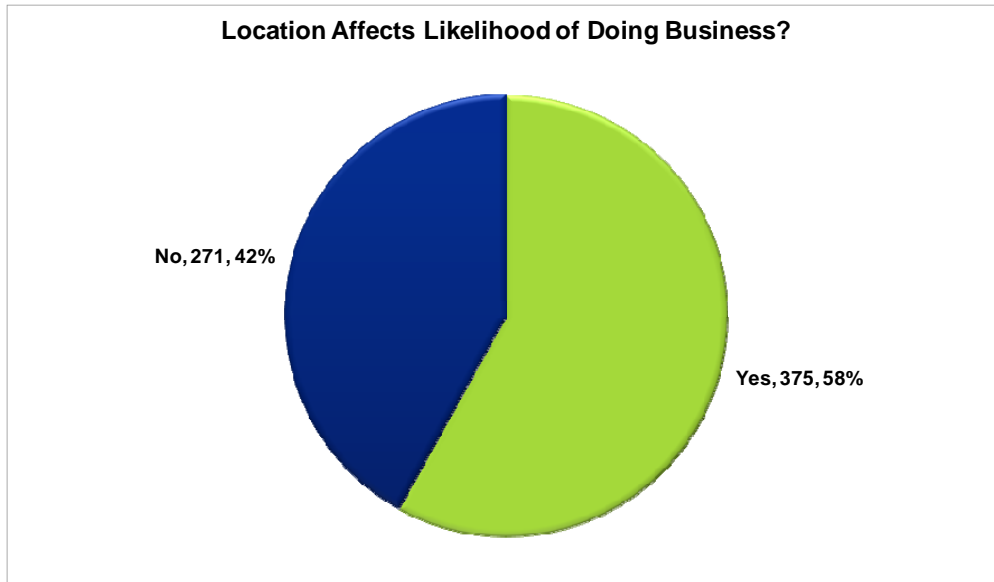


The location of the contact center is an ongoing issue. Offshore contact centers can be cost effective but are controversial for the jobs that are “taken overseas” by these contact centers. More importantly, perhaps, is the fact that offshore agents may not be effective at delivering great customer service. For government agencies, few centers are located offshore. Still, 5% of our respondents thought the contact center was outside the U.S.

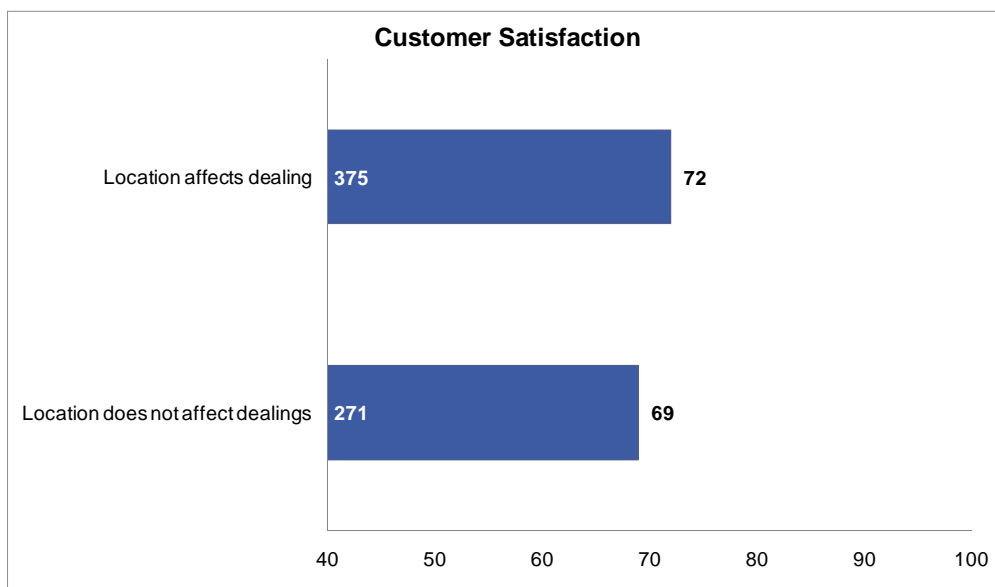


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES? (cont'd)**

This perceived location of the contact center is important because over half (58%) of the respondents say that the location of the contact center affects the likelihood of doing business with the government agency.



For some agencies, the threat of leaving is an empty threat, since only that particular agency can provide the service. However, those that say the location of the contact center is important have a higher CSI than do those who say the location is not important. When customers perceive that they are calling a U.S.-based contact center, they are more satisfied with the contact center experience.



**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE CUSTOMER SERVICE REPRESENTATIVES? (cont'd)**

Summary customer quotes regarding the CSR experience:

*I don't like using chat on the site or email so I called the company directly to get the information I needed.*

*Long conversations person-to-person help to know the customers better, which will improve business.*

*[I like] to talk to an individual for better understanding.*

*Sometimes the replies by mail are made by system and can't answer my request directly [as a CSR can].*

*Email couldn't resolve the issue.*

*I'd rather speak to someone than type it.*

*It takes longer to search the site for information than a call the person knows right away.*

*I feel that [a CSR] can understand my question better.*

*I would much rather speak to someone in person.*

*I feel like you can communicate best by speaking with individuals personally, than through a computer. For some reason it's never as efficient and as useful. In fact, I'm tired of the automated world we live in today.*

*I prefer human contact as oppose to the automation. I really can't stand the automation; too many buttons to push and still I may not be routed to the right place.*

*Prefer talking to a live person particularly when the issue is a grey area and somewhat unique.*

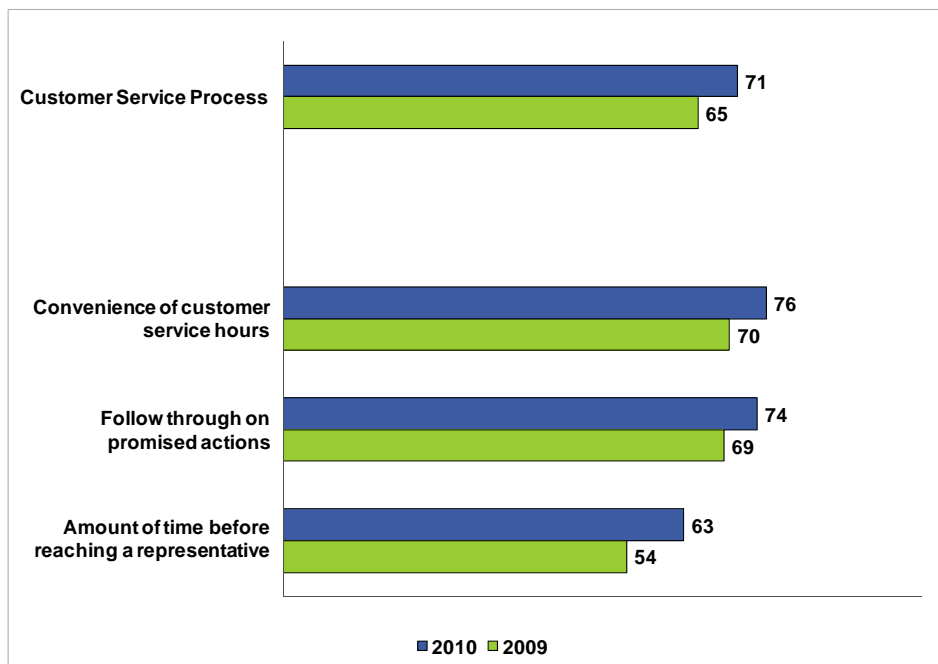
*When discussing medical issues, it is more effective if you can get responses from a person.*

*This way I can ask my question and not have to wait for an immediate answer either online or on the phone. I assume that if the individual receiving the question is unsure of an answer they would check their facts before responding thus insuring I get accurate information.*

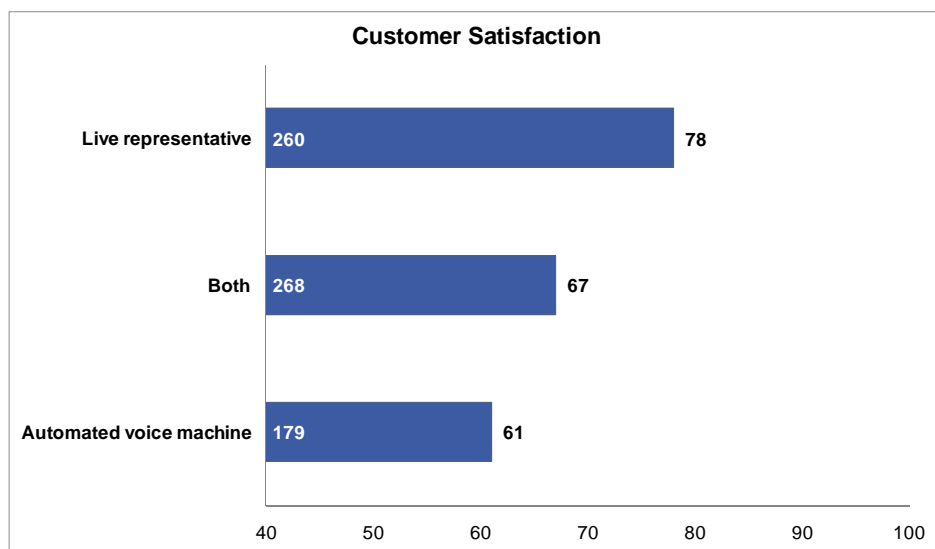
*I can explain myself to [a] live person better and get some kind of answer-sometimes.*

## HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE OVERALL CALL PROCESS?

The role of the CSR is the largest driver, but the Customer Service Process (CSP) affects how customer inquiries are handled. This area involves convenient customer service hours, following through on promised actions, and the time it takes to reach a CSR. As with CSR, the area of CSP has improved, increasing 6 points from 2009 to 2010. Most notable is the improvement in the time before reaching a representative, an attribute that has jumped 9 points from 54 to 63.

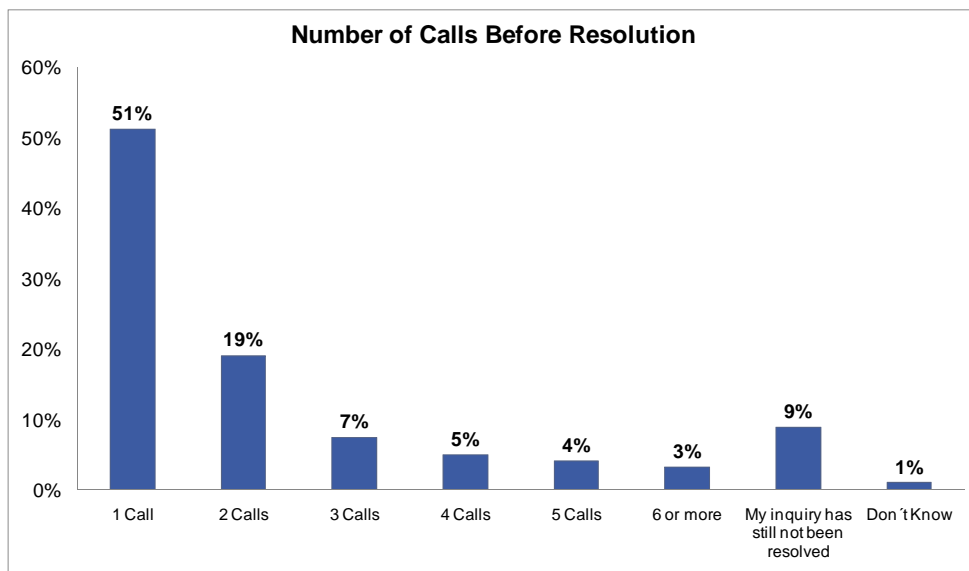


Conducting the process well is a tricky balance. Providing helpful tools online, through email, and by IVR can significantly reduce the overall contact center costs while providing quick help to the person seeking a resolution. However, erecting a barrier for customers trying to reach a live CSR when needed can cause a dramatic reduction on the agency’s overall CSI. If a customer reaches a CSR, the CSI is 78. That’s a full 11 points higher than for those who had to navigate an IVR system first and 17 points higher than for those who only used an IVR system.

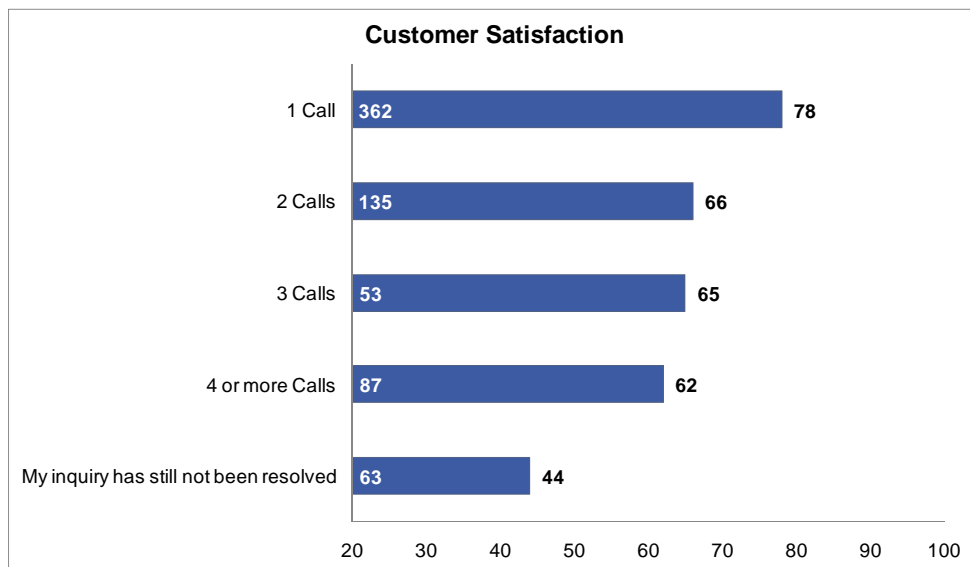


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE OVERALL CALL PROCESS? (continued)**

First call issue resolution is also a key to maintaining or improving CSI levels. Roughly half (51%) of those who contacted the agency were able to resolve the issue in the first call, and 19% were able to have the issue addressed completely after the second call. A full 38%, however, had to make 2 or more contacts in order to get the issue resolved, incurring extra costs for the agency.



In addition to the extra costs, multiple contacts with the agency also add to the frustration level of the customer. Customers who resolved the issue in the first call had a CSI of 78. If it takes more than one contact, the CSI quickly drops to 66, 65, or 62 for 2, 3, or 4 or more contacts, respectively. And the CSI drops to a low 44 for issues that remain unresolved. Addressing the issue completely on the first contact is an important measure that should be incorporated into any contact center's portfolio of measurements.



**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE OVERALL CALL PROCESS? (continued)**

Summary customer quotes regarding the process experience:

*It came to my attention [that] I needed to get the problem handled immediately and phone was the quickest way.*

*They put you on hold for a long period of time and then they usually hang up before they talk to you.*

*I was asked to call to provide additional information but could never get through to a person to talk to.*

*I was attempting to get a more immediate response.*

*I was in a hurry to get this information so I felt a phone call would be quicker than an email.*

*Sometimes there is no wait.*

*I thought the information I needed would be easier to obtain by calling.*

*I like to talk to a live representative about problems; makes it more understandable and quicker answers.*

*It is normally is faster than the telephone.*

*I liked to talk to a person because if I have other question that come up during the conversation I can ask then. E-mail takes up to 24 hours before I receive an answer.*

*To be unsure of an important coverage of insurance as an example, and not be able to speak to the person in charge, waiting 4 or 5 days weighs heavily on one's soul, causing stress and anxiety.*

*When I attempt to email it takes too long to get a response back, and when I do it always says "please do not reply back to this email". It's just easier to suffer through the waiting to talk to a real person.*

*Trying to reach EDD via the telephone is truly a nightmare. The average caller could easily make 100-300 phone calls per day for several days in an attempt to reach a live person.*

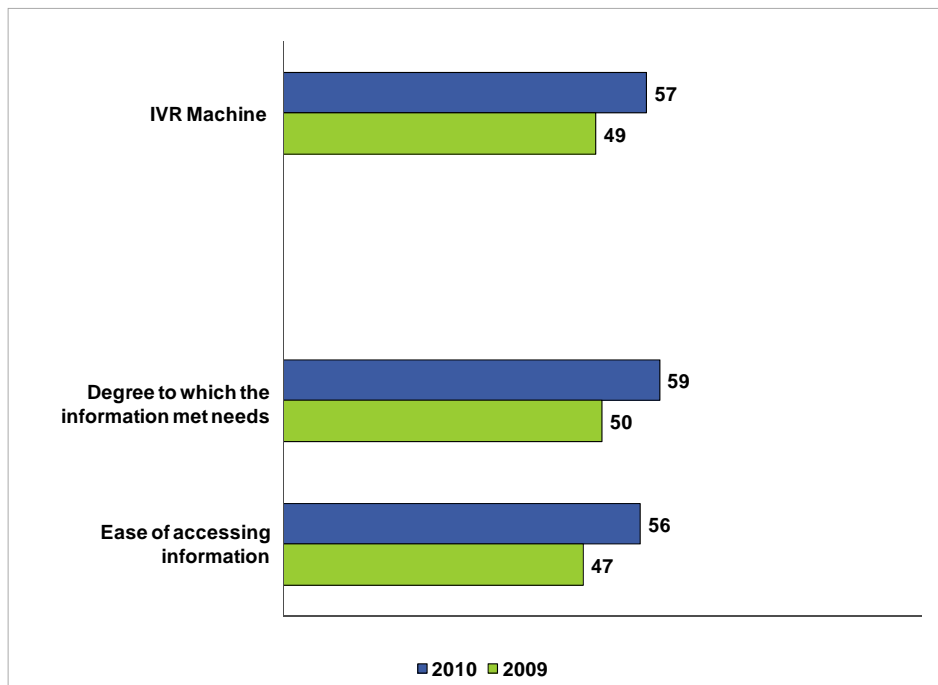
*I know I will get an immediate answer by calling.*

*Fastest response time; easiest way to access information.*

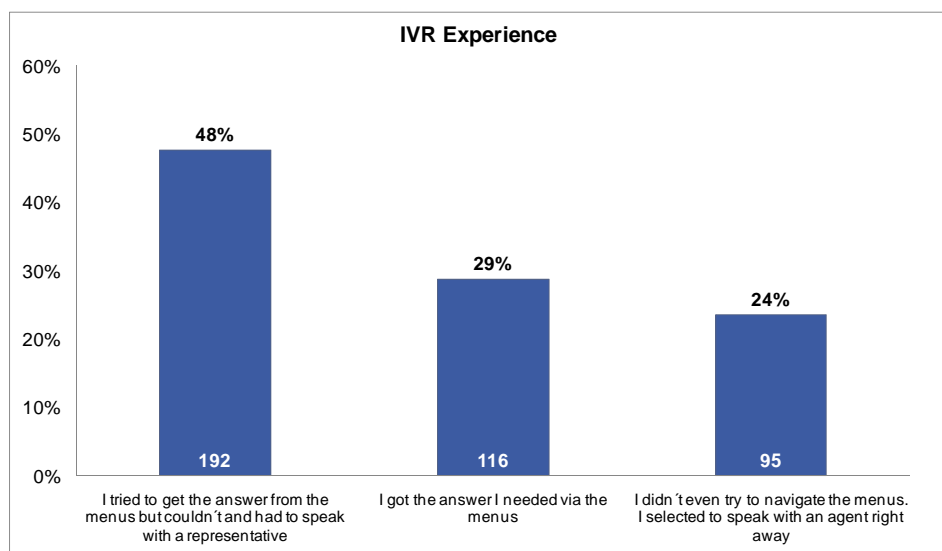
*It is easier to talk with someone when you want your issue resolved quickly.*

## HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE IVR SYSTEM?

The IVR system can be an effective method for resolving customer issues on the first contact. Contact centers are growing more sophisticated with the systems used, the menu choices offered, and the ease of accessing the needed information. Scores for the IVR system improved significantly from 2009 to 2010, increasing 8 points from 49 to 57. Both the degree to which the information meets customer needs and the ease of accessing the information are up 9 points from 2009.

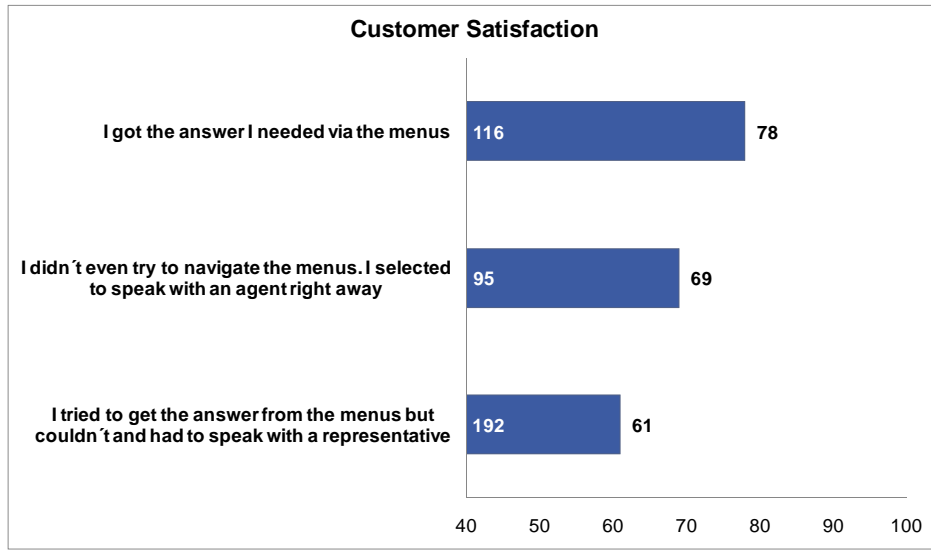


Clearly, though, the IVR systems used by government agencies have room for improvement. While 29% of the respondents were able to get the answer they needed from the IVR menus, almost half (48%) said that they tried to use the IVR system to answer a question or resolve an issue but were unable to do so through the IVR system; they had to request speak to a CSR. Almost a quarter (24%) indicated that they didn't even try to use the IVR system but immediately selected to speak with a CSR.



**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE IVR SYSTEM? (continued)**

The satisfaction levels of each category are telling. Those who got the answer they needed via the menus have a CSI of 78. Those who selected to speak with an agent right away have a CSI of 69, suggesting that the issue is complicated and the customer is somewhat frustrated. However, the category with the lowest CSI is that of those who tried but were unsuccessful in getting the answer from the menus. The low CSI of 61 suggests that a poor experience attempting to navigate the IVR system can cause anger and dissatisfaction with the overall experience.



**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE IVR SYSTEM? (continued)**

Summary customer quotes regarding the IVR experience:

*I couldn't find the information that I wanted, so I called.*

*It was an easy call, didn't need a response from anyone.*

*An online person was not available or an option for the information I currently needed.*

*I want specific information and I have questions that are not answered with the automated system.*

*Instant answers; I do not have to go back and forth*

*It's generally faster than waiting to speak with someone, and I can access it at all hours of the day.*

*No wait and contact can be made after business hours.*

*It is faster and can do it at your convenience.*

*I can take care of the issue at my leisure.*

*I hate to talk to the automated system, anywhere at any time.*

*It's fast and reliable.*

*Automated call centers are often hard to understand and don't always have the options to get the best help quickly.*

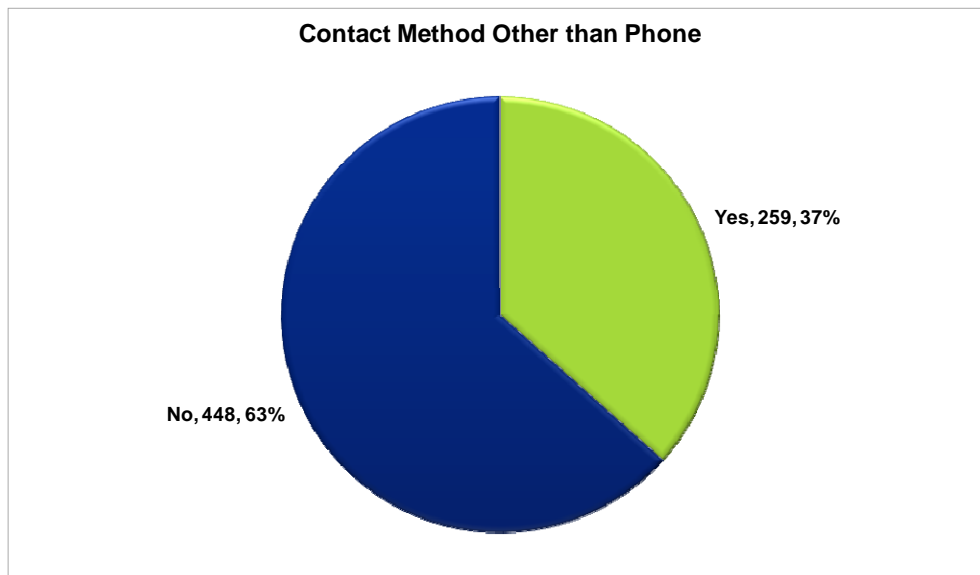
*Often, the exact problem is not among the choices you get on recorded messages.*

*It doesn't waste my time.*

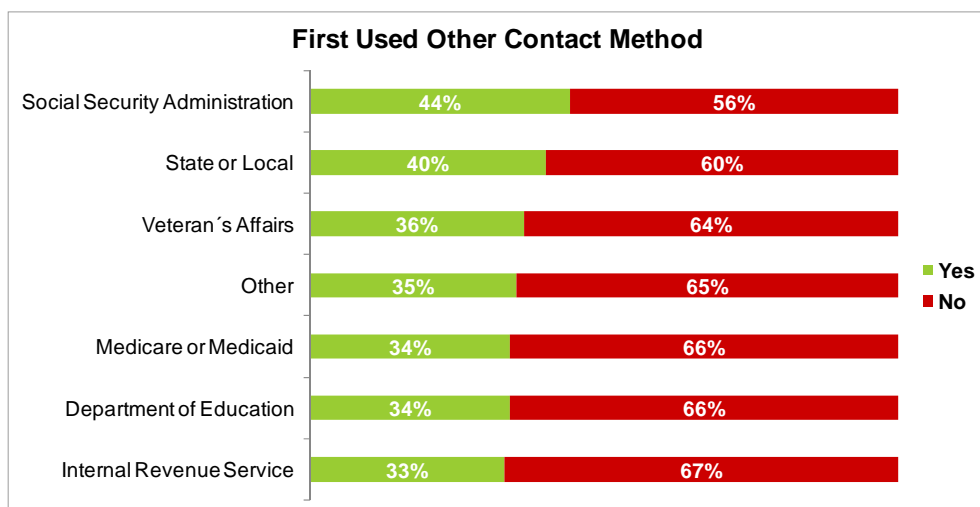
*I can go directly to what I want and don't have to wait through toneless robot voices chiming off lists of things that I don't need to get to the thing that I do need.*

## HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE ONLINE TOOLS?

IVR and contact methods other than phone (e.g. web, email, Facebook) should be carefully managed. Over a third (37%) of people who called a government agency tried to contact the agency by means other than the phone.

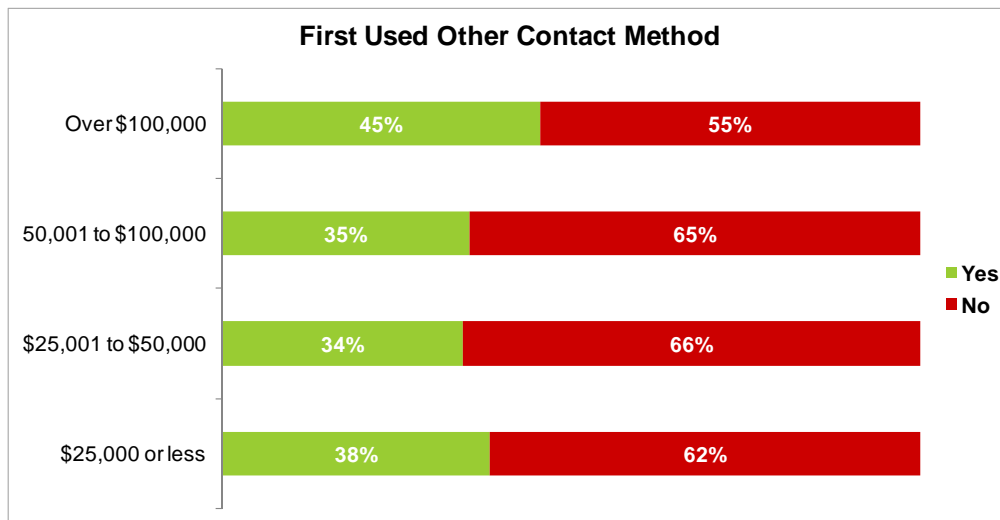


As might be expected, the percentage of people who use a first contact method other than phone varies depending on the government agency contacted. The Social Security Administration (SSA) has 44% of people using a contact method other than calling, while the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has a smaller 33% for that category. Because the average IRS call is perhaps more complicated than the average SSA call, naturally fewer people feel they can resolve their issue by turning to channels other than calling.

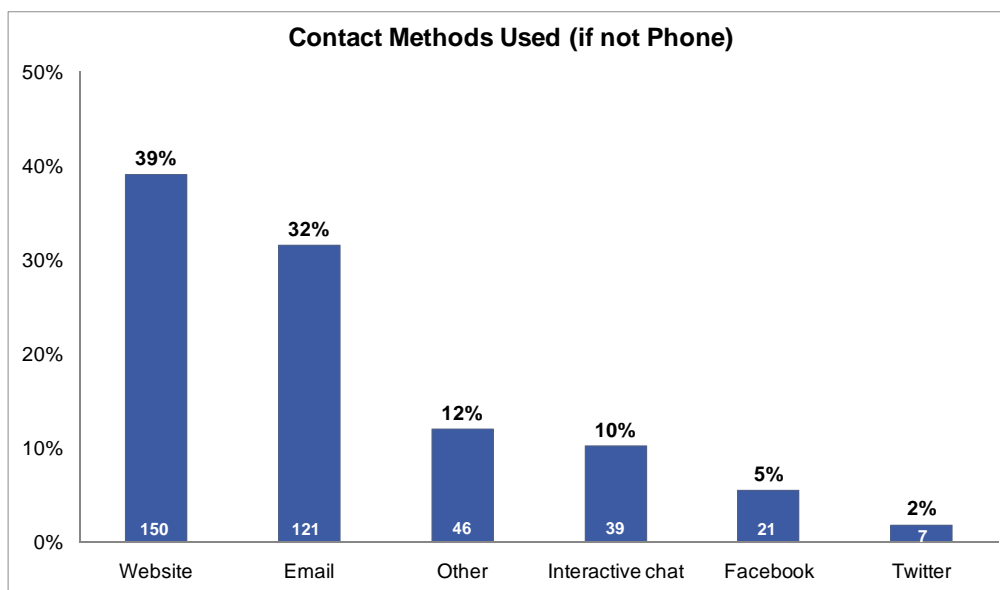


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE ONLINE TOOLS? (continued)**

In addition to issue complexity, there seems to also be some degree of a digital divide. 45% of those with an annual household income of \$100,000 or more contact the agency by means other than the phone, compared to 38% of those with a household annual income of \$25,000 or less.

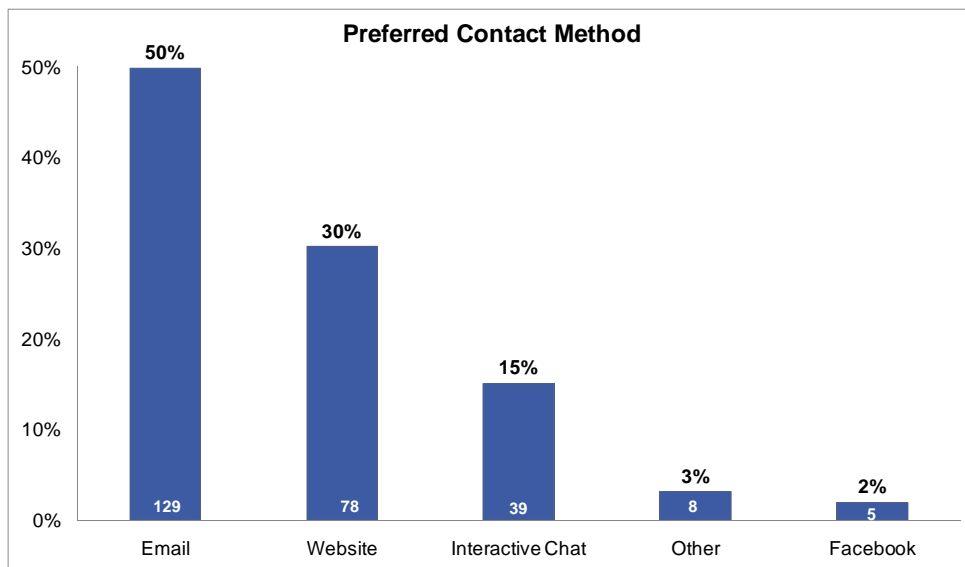


The non-call methods of contact most often used are website (39%) and email (32%), so agencies can go a long way by integrating those channels into contact center operations. However, 29% sought information from other channels, such as interactive chat (10%), Facebook (5%) and Twitter (2%).

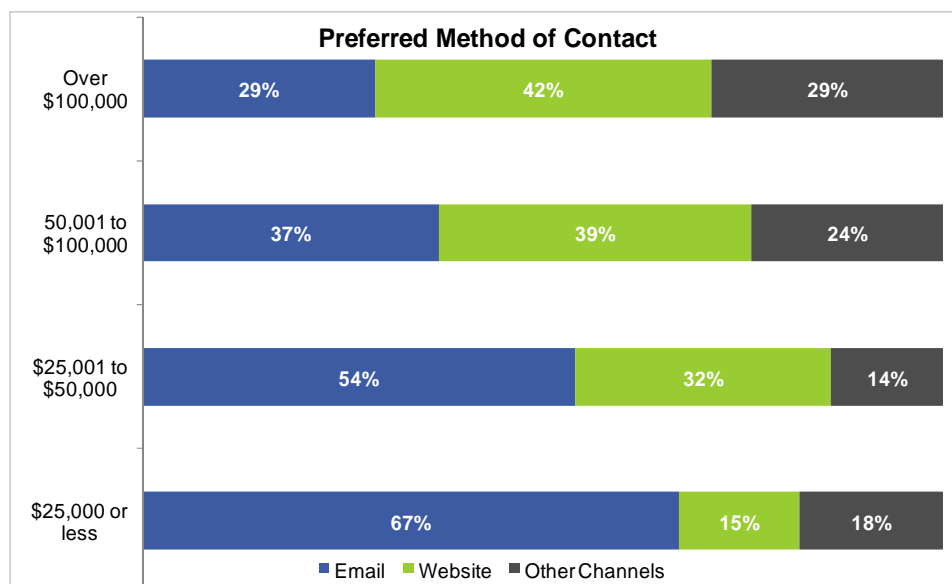


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE ONLINE TOOLS? (continued)**

For those who choose a contact method other than phone, the most preferred method of contact is email (50%) followed by the website (30%) and interactive chat (15%). Agencies should be prepared to engage customers using whichever method is most effective in satisfying the customer’s needs. While many (50%) prefer to use email, we saw earlier that only 32% used email for the first contact with the contact center. This preference/use gap suggests an opportunity for government contact centers to make an email option readily available to customers and to put in place systems and processes to reply to emails quickly with helpful information and assistance.

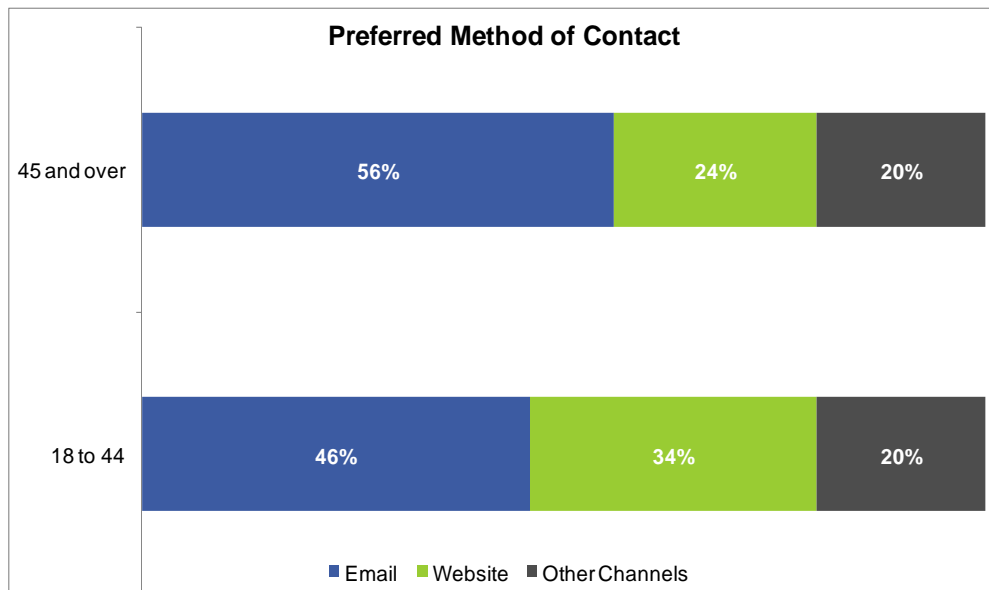


We also asked what method is preferred by the individual if phone is not used. Email and website are the two most popular methods of contact if phone is not used. Here we see a clear difference based on annual household income. People with higher income tend to look to the agency website for information or to contact the agency. The lower the annual income, the more likely the person is to prefer using email for the first agency contact.

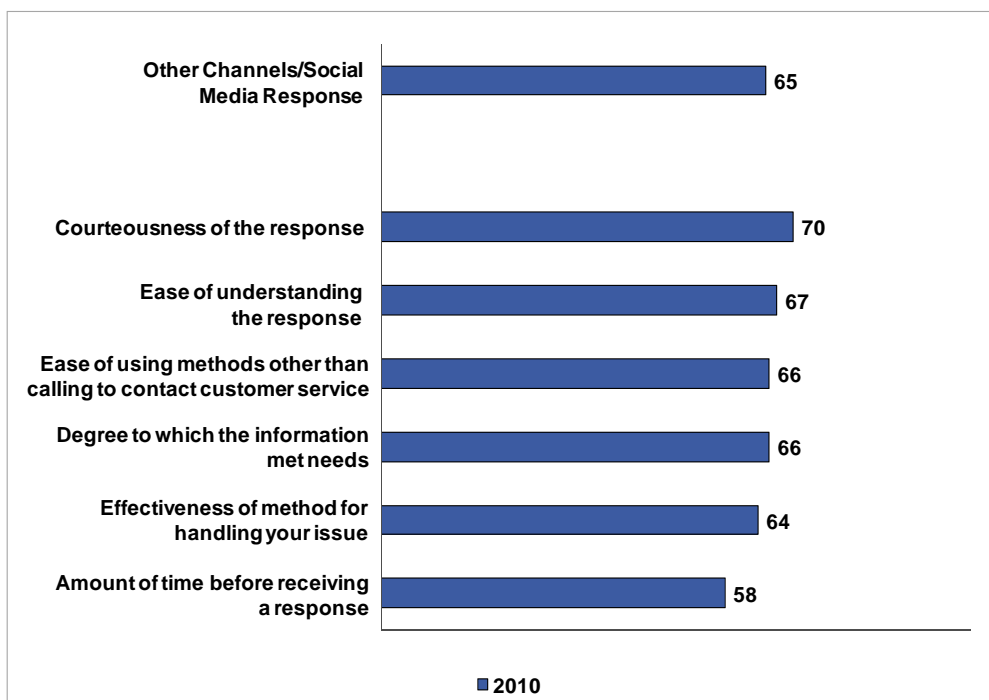


**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE ONLINE TOOLS? (continued)**

Similar patterns were noted by age. Younger respondents (under age 45) appear more willing to seek out information via the web, as compared to older respondents who have a much stronger preference for email support.



One caveat for agencies is to maintain quick response times. When considering the response received from an agency via other channel/social media, customers rate government agencies relatively high on courteousness but low on the amount of time it takes before receiving a response. The challenge for government contact centers, therefore, is to provide an effective response in a timely manner while keeping costs down.



**HOW DO PEOPLE RATE THE ONLINE TOOLS? (continued)**

Summary customer quotes regarding the experience with email, websites or social media:

*The website could not provide me with the information I needed.*

*The website was down.*

*I was looking for more specifics that I couldn't get via the website.*

*I'm not getting the answer I need through e-mail.*

*Could not find the answer on their website.*

*Couldn't get answer on the web site.*

*I had trouble locating the form I needed online.*

*Couldn't locate email address!*

*I could not resolve my issue through the website.*

*There is no way to email them at this time to find out why something happened.*

*I called because I was unable to locate the form I needed at the website.*

*I only call if I have a complicated question and the ability to explain my problem generally is faster than wading through FAQs.*

*Sometimes when one emails customer service ignores the email and either takes many days such as a week or just does not respond back.*

*Anytime and anywhere I can use the internet always, and I am always online on my email.*

*It is easier to be able to speak with someone rather than trying to navigate a website.*

*I find that I get a faster response when I send an e-mail compared to phone.*

*Websites and online chat tend to be misleading.*

*I feel [calling] is more accurate and up to date info then what the website might have.*

*I think it is a lot easier because i have an iPhone.*

*I am Asian. I can't speak or listen English very well sometimes and might miss important message in calling.*

*The website did not give a clear answer to may question.*

## LOOKING AHEAD

Better customer relationships create more satisfied customers that cause a greater sense among citizens that the agency is transparent. With a commitment to incorporating social media, integrating all channels of the contact center, offering efficacy in issue resolution with clear paths for customers to reach a CSR, and providing new training for CSRs to engage this new and broadened role, one would expect an impact on customer behavior that improves the overall view of government agencies as providing effective, transparent services that fulfill the mission of good government.

Conceptually, there is no argument to this idea. What becomes difficult, however, is figuring out how to clarify such practices and implement them systematically within the contact center. This is why the contact center executive is crucial in executing today's contact center operations within the overall context of company performance. Only when operating with this strategic view of the contact center, and optimizing customer interactions accordingly, can any agency truly achieve its mission.

## ABOUT THE RESEARCH

### About the Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index

CFI Group conducted the Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI) research through online surveys of over 700 participants. Qualified respondents had called a contact center within the previous month and had interacted with an IVR system, a customer service representative, or both. The respondents evaluated their most recent contact center experience through their answers to approximately thirty questions.

CFI Group used the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) methodology (the "gold standard" in customer satisfaction measurement) to evaluate customer satisfaction and to determine the key drivers of satisfaction with contact centers. The methodology also quantifies the link between satisfaction and key future customer behaviors. Customer satisfaction as measured by ACSI has a statistically proven connection with desired operational outcomes such as positive word of mouth, customer loyalty and retention, and agency transparency.

### About CFI Group

CFI Group ([www.cfigroup.com](http://www.cfigroup.com)) provides its measurement solutions worldwide, through offices on four continents. Launched in 1988, by University of Michigan professor Claes Fornell, CFI Group is headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It uses rigorous measurement science to diagnose its clients' customer relationships, resulting in exacting advice on actions that strengthen these relationships and improve clients' overall financial performance. CFI Group methodology is used as the basis for calculating the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) via the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. CFI Group clients include British Telecom, DirectTV, the U.S. Federal Government, UPS, Yahoo! and other leading companies around the world.

### About Federal Consulting Group

The Federal Consulting Group ([fcg.nbc.gov](http://fcg.nbc.gov)), a franchise of the Department of the Interior, serves as the agent in the government for the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), and holds a generic clearance from the Office of Management and Budget that enables agencies to utilize the ACSI without having to obtain a separate clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act to conduct customer satisfaction surveys. Agencies can participate in the ACSI through an arrangement between the Federal Consulting Group and CFI Group.

### About the ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index ([www.theACSI.org](http://www.theACSI.org)) is a national economic indicator of customer evaluations of the quality of products and services available to household consumers in the United States. It is updated each month with new measures for different sectors of the economy replacing data from the prior year. The overall ACSI score for a given quarter factors in scores from about 200 companies in 43 industries and from government agencies over the previous four quarters. The Index is produced by the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business in partnership with the American Society for Quality and CFI Group.