



REPORT | 2017

# GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTER SATISFACTION INDEX



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# INTRODUCTION

The past decade has brought dramatic improvement in the technology and systems available to contact center managers providing multi-channel service and support to US citizens. Even with these gains, the primary driver of citizen satisfaction with contact centers continues to be the interaction with a professional representative. Technology must work to enhance the rep's ability to carry out the agency mission, not replace that 1:1 interaction citizens demand.

CFI Group's Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index 2017 shows that satisfaction with the experience for those contacting government agencies has held steady at moderate levels over the past ten years, as has the view of government transparency.

As government executives invest in new technology designed to enhance the customer support experience for citizens, the imperative is to simultaneously emphasize hiring, developing, and retaining professional contact center staff.

We see the need for two points of emphasis for government executives to improve the citizen experience with contact centers.

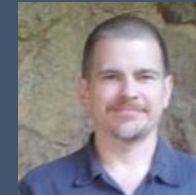
1. **EXPERIENCE MATTERS**  
Collect customer perception data in addition to operational metrics
2. **EMPOWER THE FRONTLINE**  
Balance technology with representatives to deliver optimal results

The pieces of the puzzle for contact center excellence are all there: sophisticated systems, dedicated contact center professionals, and e-government resources dedicated to supporting contact center development. An agency that can leverage these components while providing live rep excellence can deliver an excellent contact center experience that is so critical to fulfilling its mission.

## CFI GROUP SOLUTIONS FOR GOVERNMENT



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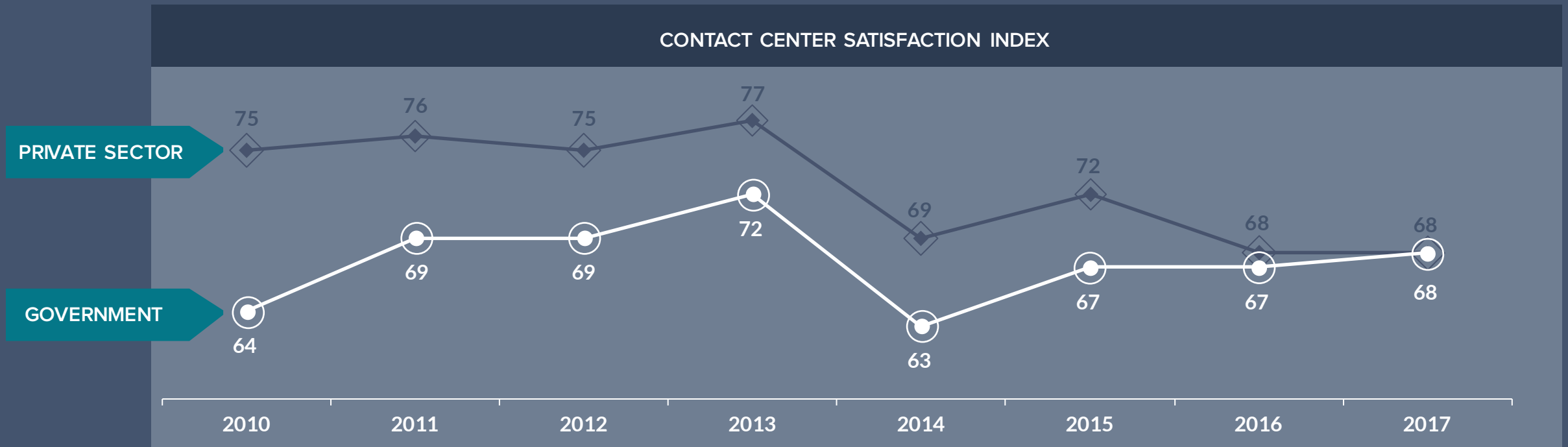


## GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTER SATISFACTION INDEX

# GOVERNMENT CONTACT CENTER SATISFACTION HOLDS

The Government Contact Center Satisfaction Index (GCCSI) is 68, as measured on a 0-100 scale, up a point from 2016. This year's GCCSI score of 68 has held relatively steady since 2015, and is up 5 points over the 2014 low point of 63. This Q1 2017 study involved a panel of 703 respondents who had contacted an agency or organization within the federal, state or local government for customer service in the prior 30 days.

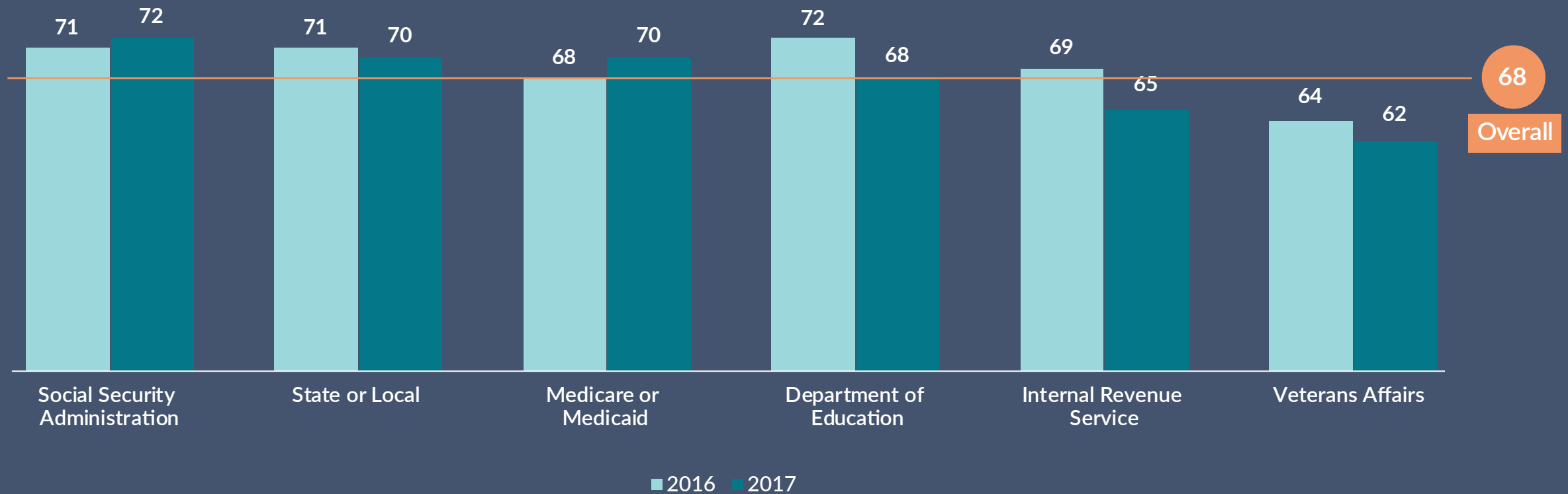
GCCSI historically has run a few points lower than the private sector **Contact Center Satisfaction Index (CCSI)**. For 2017, both indexes are even at 68. Despite gains in technology, the contact center experience remains flat. This report looks at factors that influence the satisfaction of those contacting the government and provides executives with insight into where to focus improvement efforts.



## SATISFACTION CHANGE VARIES BY DEPARTMENT

Year-over-year changes by department are mixed. Satisfaction with the contact center experience is up for some individual departments but down for others. GCCSI for the Social Security Administration and Medicare/Medicaid, for example, are up 1 and 2 points, respectively. Both departments maintain above-average satisfaction levels with their contact centers.

Other departments saw a decline in contact center satisfaction. GCCSI for Department of Education (-4), the Internal Revenue Service (-4) and Veterans Affairs (-2) is down. Particularly concerning is the decrease in score for VA, since contact center satisfaction was low in 2016 and slips even more in 2017.



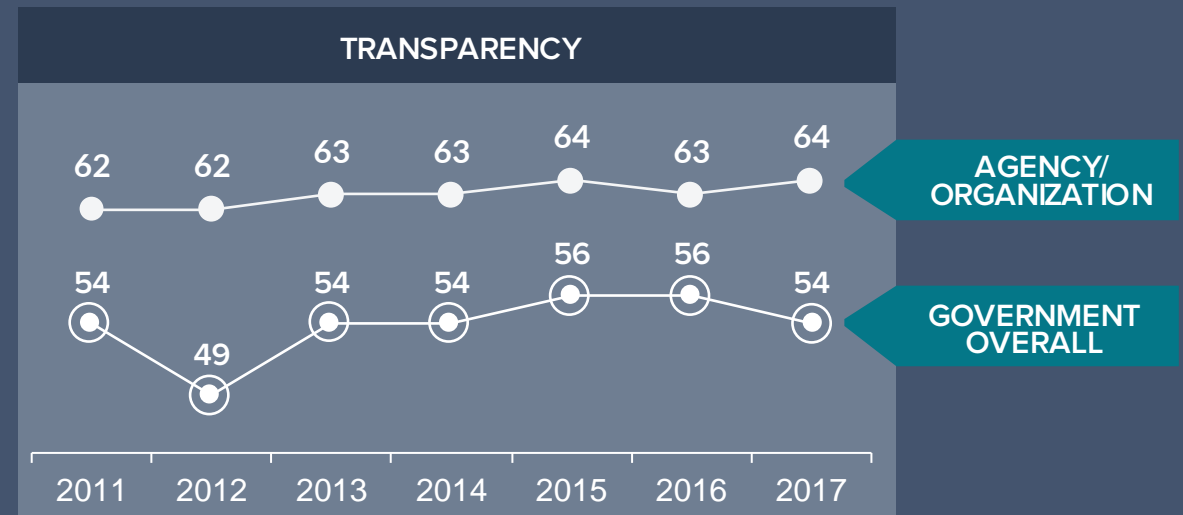
# EXPERIENCE SATISFACTION DRIVERS REMAIN STABLE

The overall contact center experience was steady from 2016 to 2017, with the exception of IVR Voice Recognition, which dropped 5 points. IVR Voice Recognition for the private sector also fell several point from 2016 to 2017, suggesting that technological improvement and implementation in both the government and public sectors are not addressing the needs and expectations of citizens and customers who call for customer support.

| YEAR-OVER-YEAR CHANGE IN SATISFACTION DRIVERS |      |    |      |
|-----------------------------------------------|------|----|------|
| DRIVERS                                       | 2016 | Δ  | 2017 |
| REP EFFECTIVENESS                             | 73   | -1 | 72   |
| REP EMPOWERMENT                               | 69   | -1 | 68   |
| REP KNOWLEDGE                                 | 73   | -1 | 72   |
| IVR                                           | 55   | -1 | 54   |
| REP DEMEANOR                                  | 77   | +1 | 78   |
| IVR VOICE RECOGNITION                         | 59   | -5 | 54   |
| REP EASE OF UNDERSTANDING                     | 78   | -1 | 77   |

A key desired outcome from the contact center experience is a citizen's sense that the agency and government overall are transparent. Transparency became an emphasis in 2012 under the Open Government Initiative. Under this initiative, agencies are encouraged to be more transparent, publicly accessible, and collaborative.

Low transparency scores for agencies (64) and government overall (54) indicate that there is a good deal more work to be done to demonstrate government transparency.



Contact center representatives can play a key role in communicating a sense of trust and transparency to the public. To help ensure that reps play this important role in 2017, contact center executives need to focus on two priorities: implementing a system to assess the experience, and empowering the reps to deliver that experience.



A close-up photograph of a woman with long, dark, wavy hair, smiling and holding a white smartphone to her ear. She is wearing a red jacket. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting. A semi-transparent blue overlay covers the bottom portion of the image, containing white text.

## 1. EXPERIENCE MATTERS

*Collect customer perception data in addition to operational metrics*



# ONLINE SELF SERVICE HAS CHANGED THE EXPERIENCE

People often try to address their issue prior to contacting customer service. About 1 out of 3 (37%) go online using a desktop or laptop to try to resolve the issue prior to contacting customer service. And 1 of 5 (20%) try to resolve the issue on their tablet or phone before reaching out to the contact center.

There are even 5% who give the mobile app a try in order to resolve the issue prior to calling for assistance. Citizen use of government mobile apps is growing as a self-service option for citizens. Half (56%) of those who have contacted government customer service are aware that the government now has a variety of apps available to support citizens. And 1 out of 5 (21%) people have a government app installed on their phone.

The good news is that people are finding help from these online tools. The **CFI Group Government Websites 2017** report shows that citizen satisfaction with the government website experience improved dramatically from 2016 to 2017. People are increasingly able to self serve online to find answers to their questions. For government contact centers, the implications are that those who contact the contact center now tend to have more complex issues that cannot be handled online or through the app, making the average inquiry more difficult to handle.

## TRIED TO SELF-SERVE ONLINE



Tried to resolve their issue before contacting customer service

## METHODS TRIED TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE BEFORE CONTACTING CUSTOMER SERVICE



INTERNET SEARCH



ONLINE – DESKTOP/LAPTOP



ONLINE – TABLET/MOBILE DEVICE



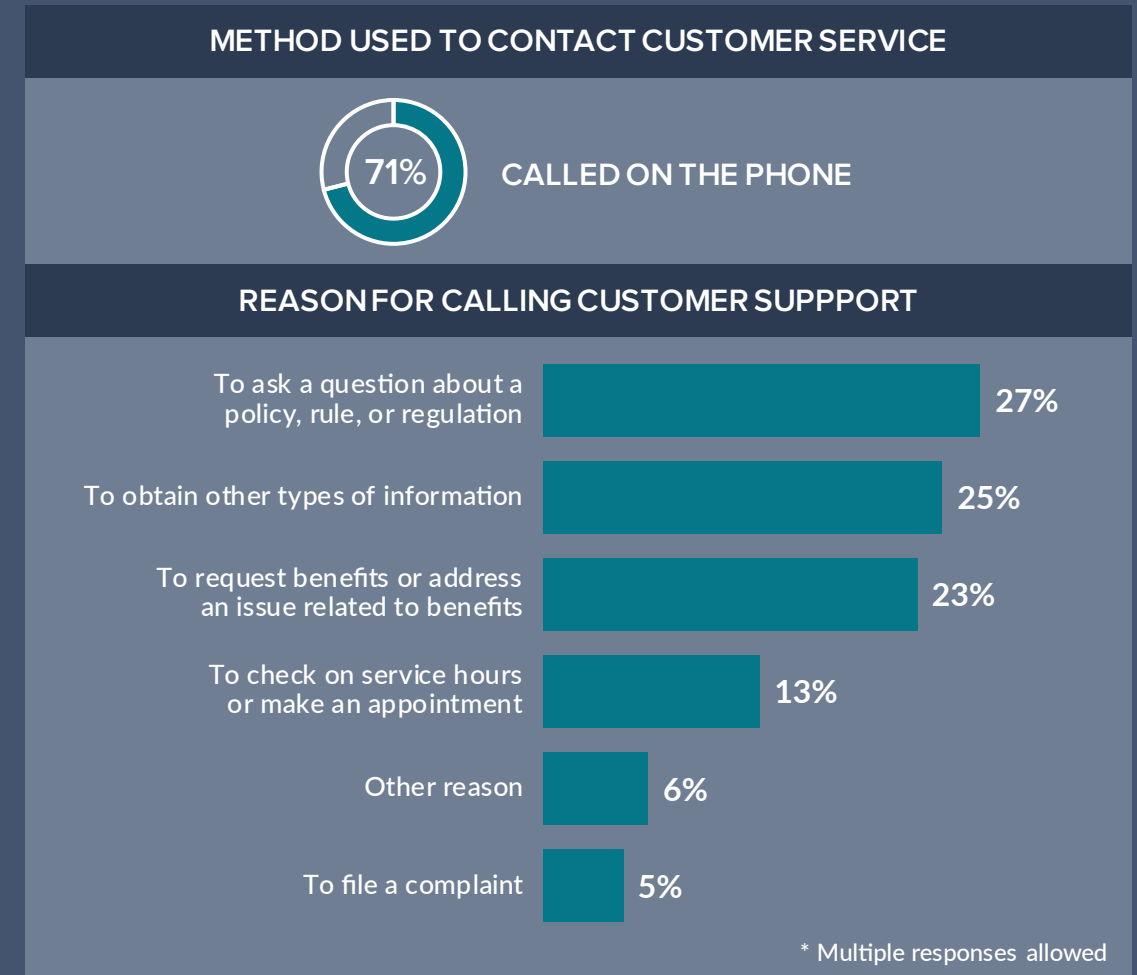
MOBILE APP

\* Multiple responses allowed

# PHONE CALLS STILL MAKE UP THE MAJORITY OF CONTACTS

For those who were not able to self serve, or did not even try, the phone still dominates as the channel of choice for citizens who contact government customer service. Roughly 7 out of 10 (71%) people who contacted customer service most recently used a phone.

Those making a phone call most frequently call to ask a question about policy (27%), to get other information (25%), or to address a benefits issue (23%). Surprisingly, 13% of callers are seeking simply to check on the hours of service or make an appointment. Enabling and encouraging citizens to access these basic inquiries through other channels (e.g., website) presents contact centers with an opportunity to improve on the experience while reducing operational costs.



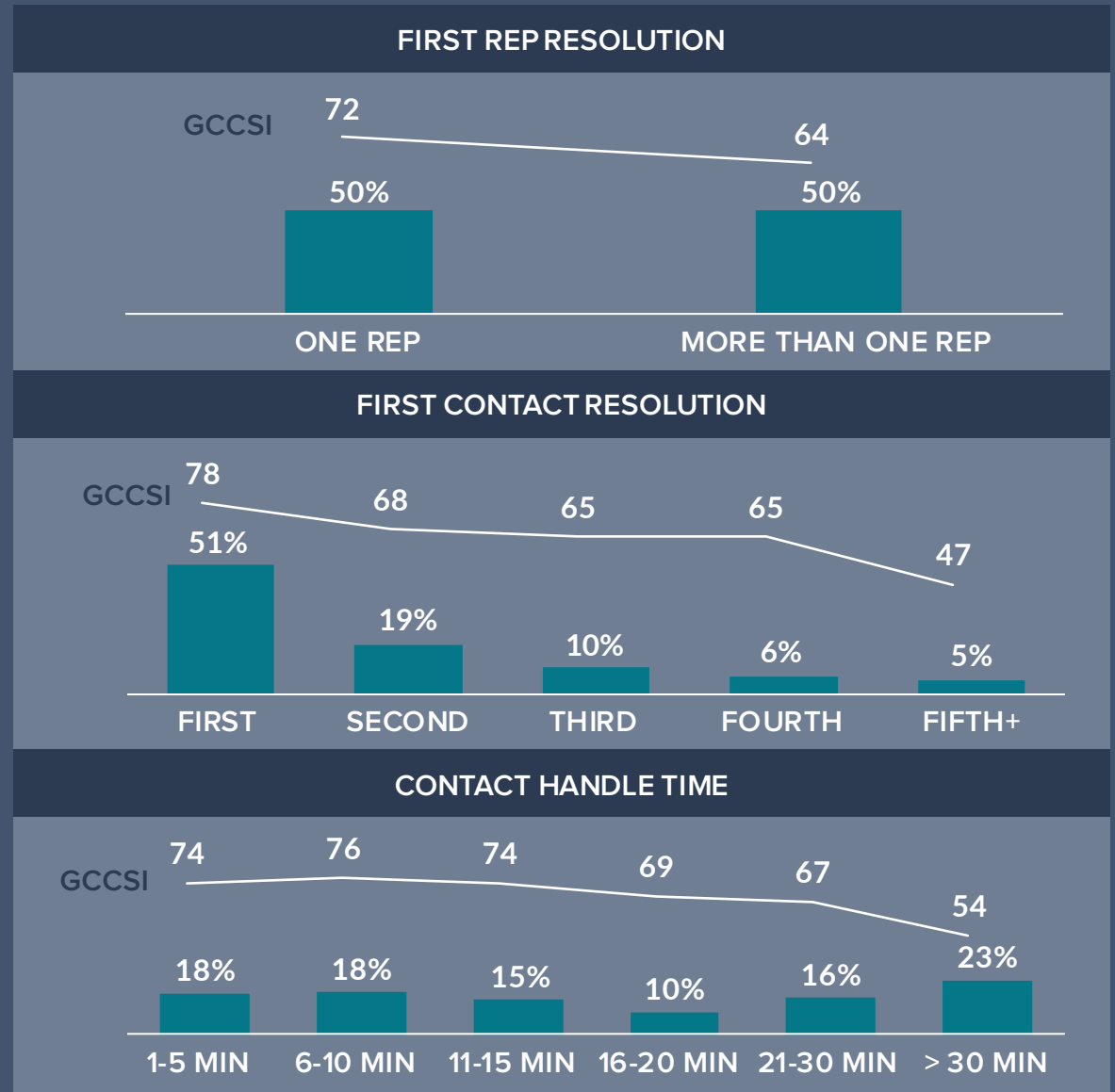
# PROFESSIONAL CONTACT HANDLING LEADS TO GREAT EXPERIENCE

First rep resolution, first contact resolution, and contact handle time are key measures for ensuring a great contact center experience. These measures are managerially handy because they are relatively easy to track and address, and they often correlate well to the overall contact center experience. However, contact centers often track these metrics using only internal metrics to monitor performance. To complement the internal metrics, measures of the experience should also be taken to capture the perspective of those contacting the contact center.

**FIRST REP RESOLUTION** – Half (50%) of those contacting a government contact center say that the issue is resolved with the first rep, with an average satisfaction (GCCSI) score of 72. For issues that require multiple reps, GCCSI dips to 64.

**FIRST CONTACT RESOLUTION** – Just over half (51%) say the issue is resolved with the first contact, resulting in a GCCSI of 78. GCCSI continues to fall as the number of contacts needed to resolve the issue increases.

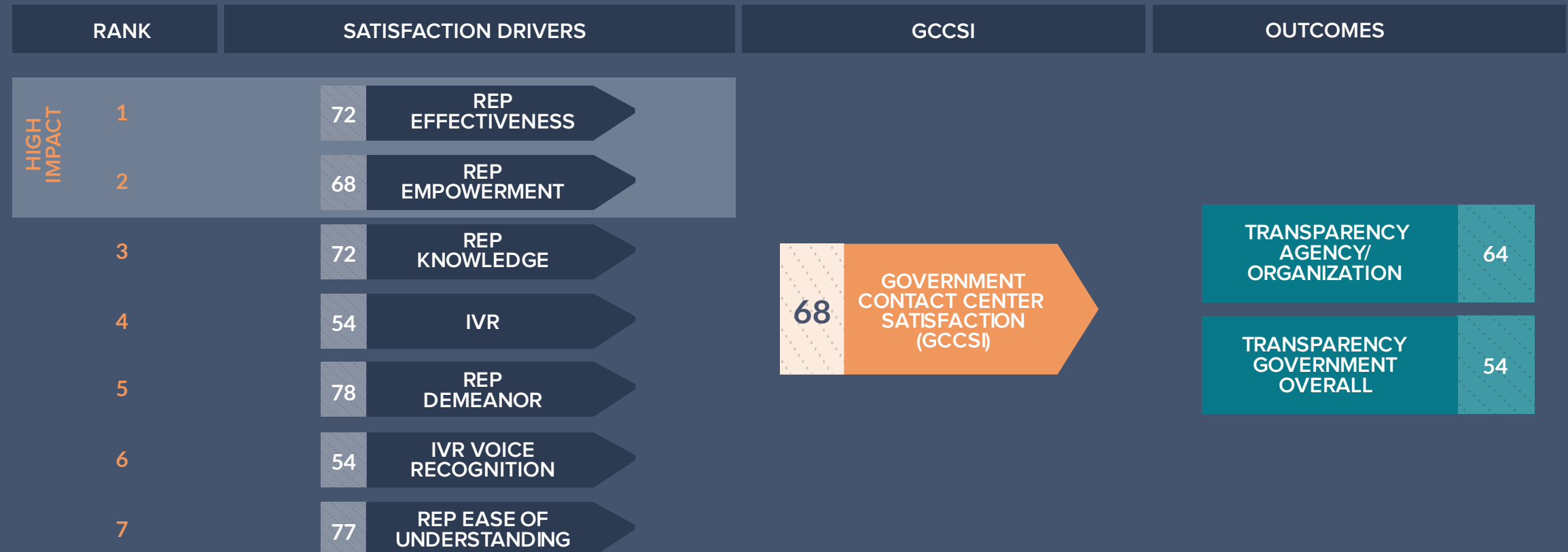
**CONTACT HANDLE TIME** – About 1 out of 5 (18%) people say the contact was handled in 5 minutes or less, and half (51%) are handled within 15 minutes, with GCCSI between 74 and 76. After 15 minutes, however, GCCSI drops.



# ASSESS AND MODEL THE EXPERIENCE

To complete the picture of the customer experience, operational metrics should be complemented with perception metrics using a rigorous method to measure and model the experience. The CFI Group Government Contact Centers Satisfaction Index uses the **American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI)** method to identify seven key drivers of satisfaction. The model demonstrates the relationship between the experience drivers, satisfaction, and future behaviors.

For example, IVR Voice Recognition (54) has, by far, the lowest score. However, it has a relatively low impact on satisfaction. Meanwhile, the Rep Effectiveness score (72) warrants more attention, since Rep Effectiveness is the top-ranked driver on satisfaction with the contact center experience.



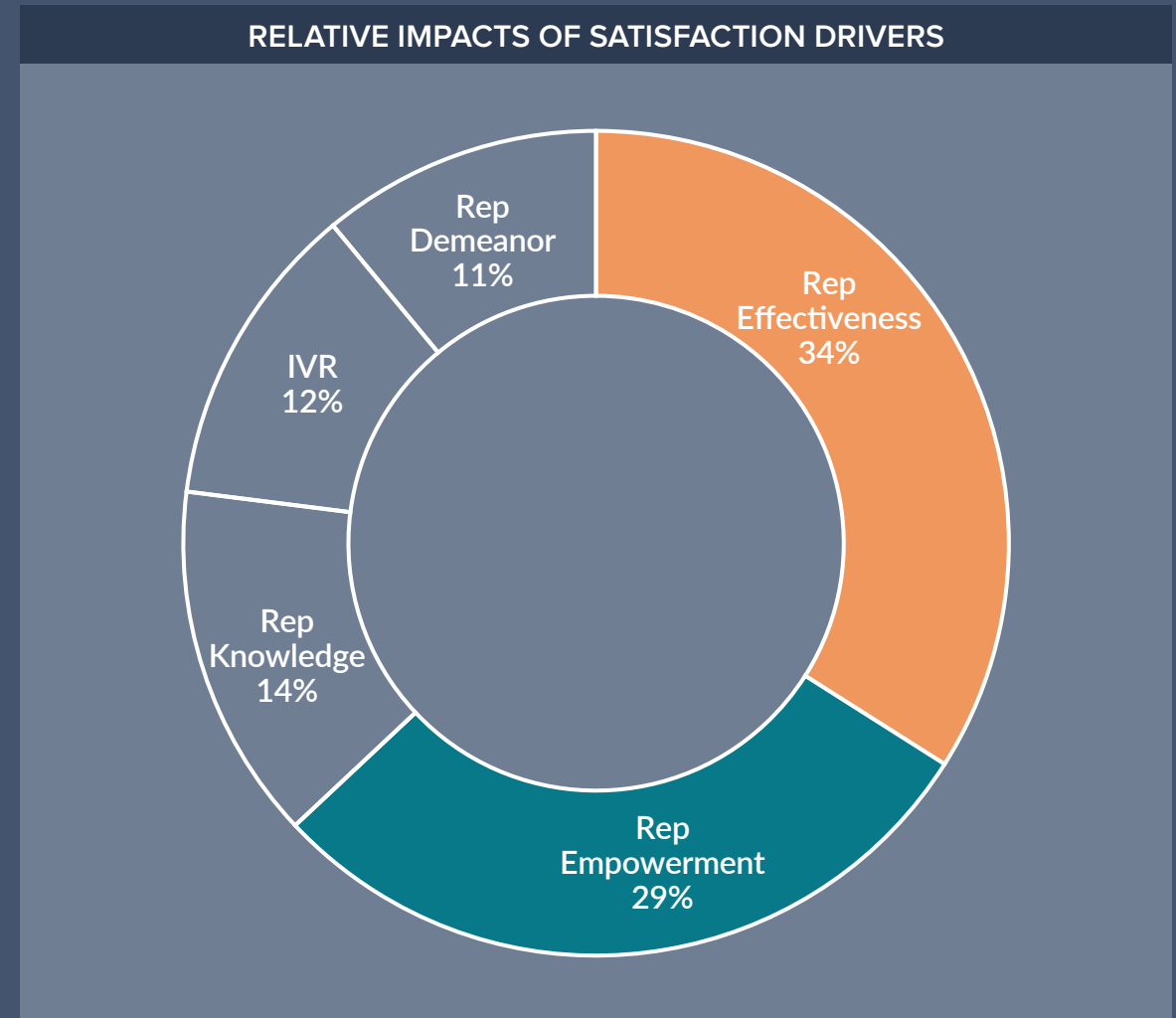


# USE MODEL IMPACTS TO DRIVE STRATEGY

In order to understand where best to allocate contact center resources to improve performance, use the model to determine which drivers have the largest influence on satisfaction. For government contact centers in 2017, empowered and effective representatives have the largest influence on satisfaction.

**REP EFFECTIVENESS:** Reps must be able to explain the process, help citizens find information, and complete the transaction successfully in a short amount of time.

**REP EMPOWERMENT:** Reps should be given the authority to offer a tailored solution, empowered to address the issue, and equipped to help citizens understand and navigate applicable policies and procedures.





## 2. EMPOWER THE FRONTLINE

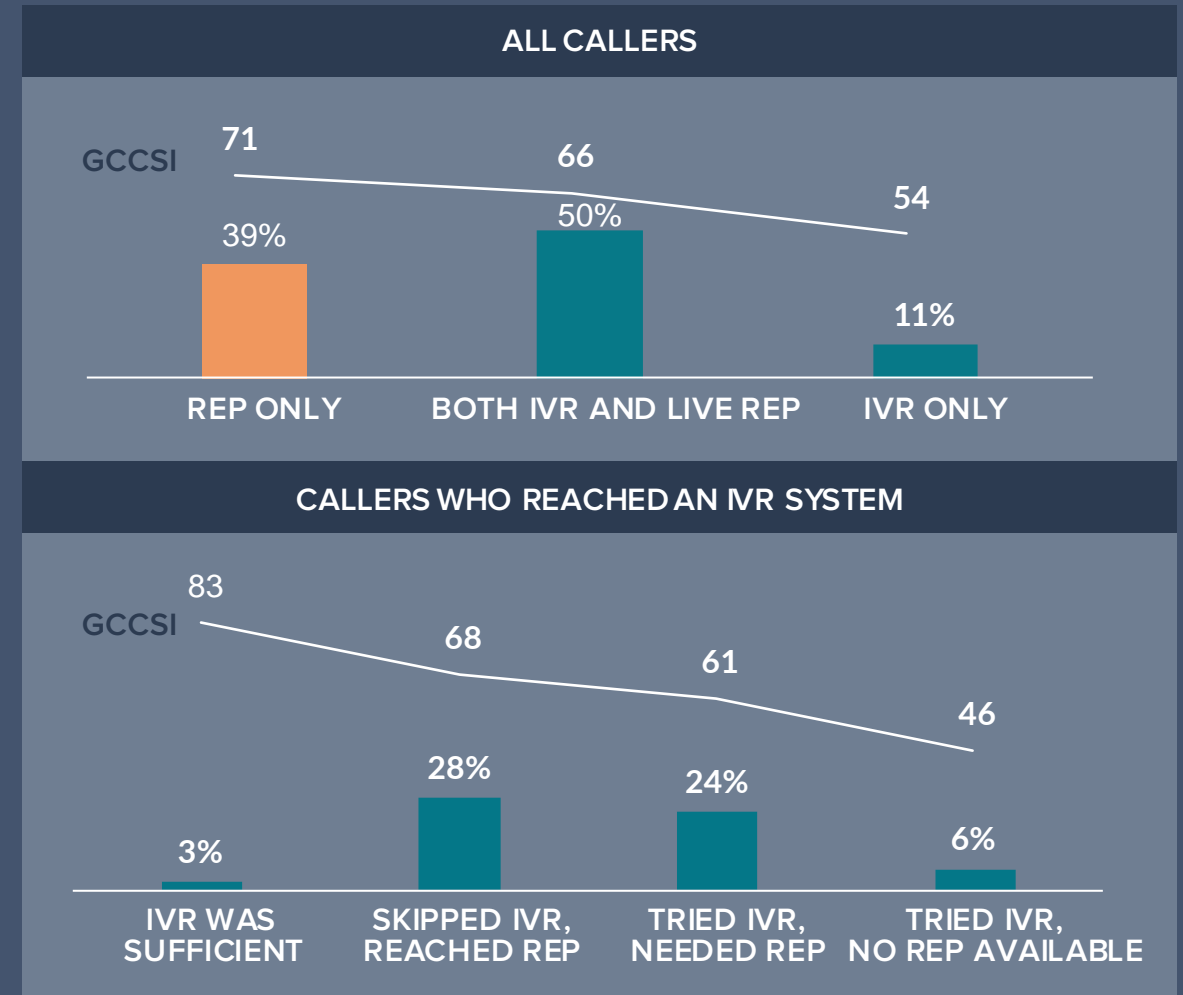
*Balance technology with representatives to deliver optimal results*

# PEOPLE WHO SPEAK WITH A REPRESENTATIVE ARE MORE SATISFIED

Live representatives continue to play a vital role in delivering on a great contact center experience. GCCSI is 71 for the 2 out of 5 (39%) callers who get connected directly to a live rep. For the half (50%) who first get an IVR but are then connected to a live rep, GCCSI is a bit lower (66), due in part to the time and effort required to get past the IVR and get to a live person who can help.

For the select few who say the IVR alone was sufficient to answer their issue, GCCSI is a high 83. Unfortunately, this high score only applies to 3% of all callers. For all other callers who reached an IVR, GCCSI is below the GCCSI of those who interact with a live rep only. The trouble of navigating the IVR takes a toll on satisfaction with the experience.

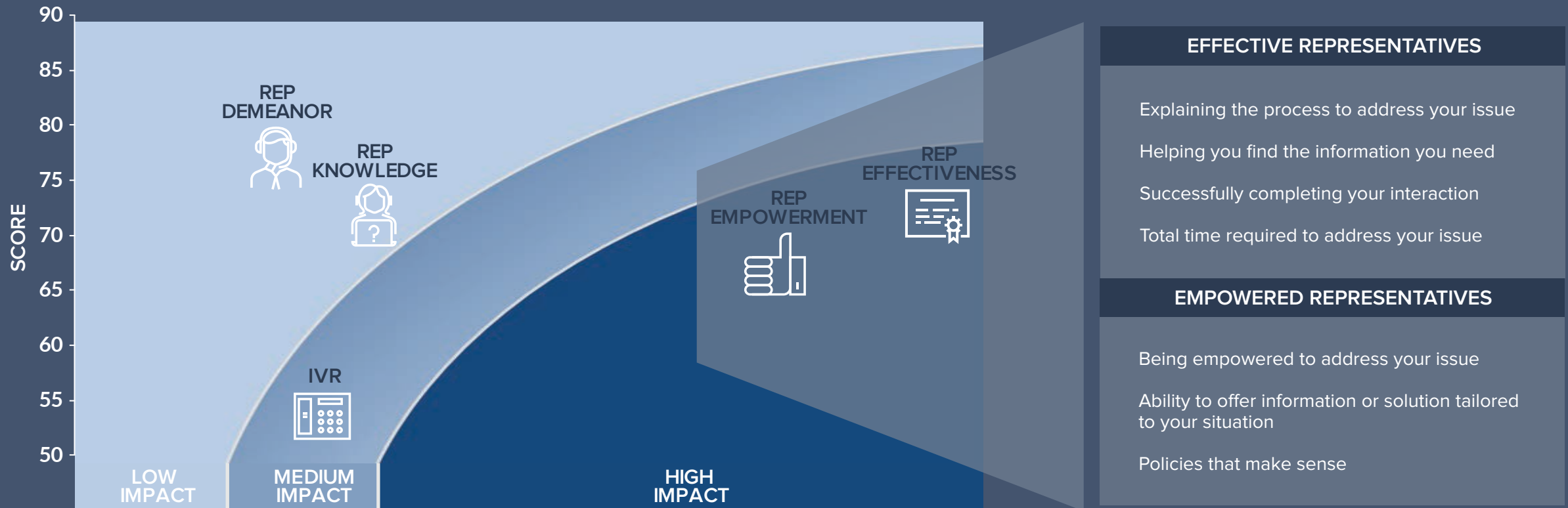
One quarter (28%) of all callers reach an IVR but just skip right past it making no attempt to use it. The GCCSI for this group is 68, well above the 61 for another quarter (24%) who try to navigate the IVR but have to speak to a live rep to resolve the issue. Perhaps most concerning are the 6% who cannot resolve their issue with the IVR but have nowhere to go; there are no reps available to help. Having live reps available to respond could rescue those experiences.



# EMPOWERED REPRESENTATIVES DRIVE SATISFACTION

Reps must be empowered to be more than just responders; they need to be equipped to act as representatives of the agency. For people calling in for support, the reps are the face of government. Our ACSI data modeling shows that the government contact center experience is driven largely by two key drivers: Rep Empowerment and Rep Effectiveness. Improving these metrics will drive overall contact center scores higher.

The key functions of live reps is clear: explain the process, help the person find what they need, and make sure the issue is resolved completely in a timely manner. To do this, reps must be empowered to take action. Executives must give them the authority to take the action needed to resolve the issue, provide them the tools and training to do their job well, and offer more training and resources to equip reps to help citizens understand and work with applicable policies.

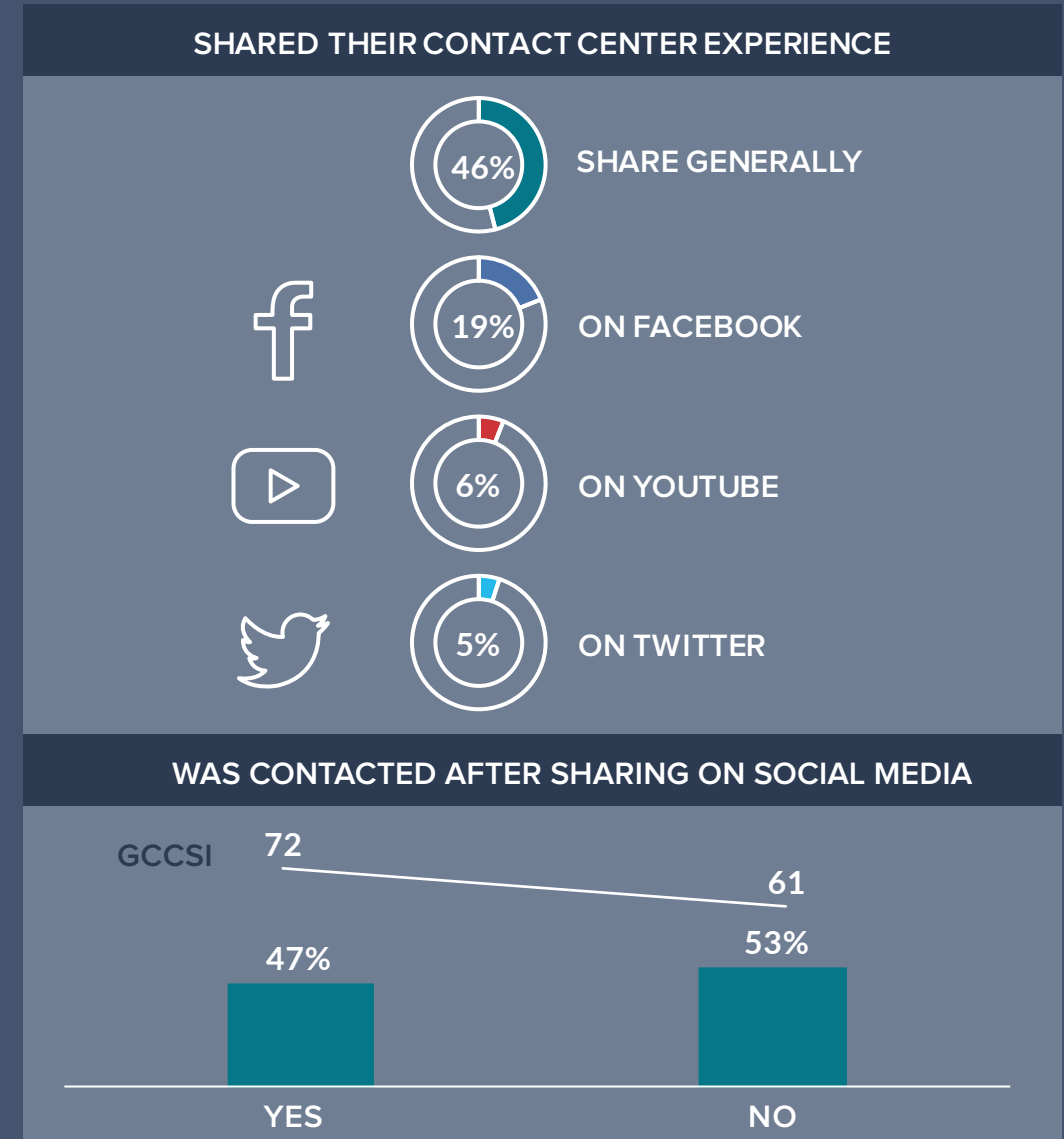




# CONSIDER THE IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Citizens who contact a government contact center tend to share their experience. Almost half (46%) say they shared their most recent government contact center experience with others. Perhaps more surprisingly, 1 out of 5 (19%) share that experience on Facebook, with 5%-6% doing so on YouTube or Twitter.

Executives should consider how they might be able to empower contact center representatives to act after the initial contact. Roughly half (47%) of those who shared their experience on social media were subsequently contacted by the contact center, either in response to the social media post or for some other reason. And those who were contacted had a GCCSI of 72, which is 11 points higher than those who were not contacted by the contact center. Reps empowered to take ownership of connecting with the public to resolve issues will have a positive impact on overall satisfaction with the contact center experience.





# CONCLUSION

# CONCLUSION

Government executives responsible for a contact center have two clear takeaways: assess the experience that people have with the contact center, and empower the frontline representatives with the authority and resources needed to help citizens understand policies and completely resolve the issue.

Cost control guidance generally tends to focus on four important cost drivers: contact volume, handle time, labor costs, and telecom costs. But cutting costs may create greater dissatisfaction for those contacting a contact center. If these experiences are not measured from the citizen's perspective, the drawbacks of cost-cutting are more difficult to see and manage. Without an emphasis on citizens and the problems they are trying to solve, a contact center can miss the point entirely.

Representatives should not simply respond to information and issue requests from the public; they represent the face of government to individuals. Government executives must equip and inspire reps to embrace and fulfill the mission of the agency. Executives can draw contact center staff into the noble mission of the agency, then give them the training and resources they need to carry out that mission and create great experiences for the public.

# ABOUT THE APPROACH

This is the eighth year CFI Group has conducted an extensive study of customer satisfaction with call or contact centers using the proven methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The panel approach has been used throughout the nine years of this study. All respondents to the survey had recent contact with a federal agency service center. The purpose of this study is to provide managers with a better understanding of how to meet the needs of their contact center users.

This report analyzes the aggregate set of respondents across the mix of government agencies measured. Given the scope of services provided by government, CFI Group focused its contact center study on those agencies with which a typical citizen would most likely have an interaction.

Contact centers measured in the GCCSI include:

- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
- Social Security Administration (SSA)
- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Service (CMS)
- Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
- Department of Education (DOE)
- Other Federal Agencies
- State or Local Government

Within this select group, the range of functions the contact center must perform is far-reaching. Centers must provide technical support, give policy information, handle complaints, and potentially play countless other roles. Contact centers are often the initial and primary point of contact with citizens.

This year's GCCSI study continues the exploration of how well government contact centers are delivering services to citizens and resolving their issues. It examines trends and offers recommendations to improve satisfaction with the services provided by government contact centers.



## 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 ACSI methodology in the federal government. Using its patented technology and top research experts, CFI Group helps agencies improve the citizen experience with the federal government.

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