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American Customer Satisfaction Index

E-Government Satisfaction Index

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Executive Summary: Slight Increase in Citizen Satisfaction Marks Reverse of Declining Trend

Recent research by the Pew Internet & American Life Project reported that 70% of Americans expect to be able to get information or services from government websites when they need it.* While it's too soon to say what a change of administration might mean for future e-government funding and focus, it's clear that e-government is no longer just an option, it's a necessity.

After reporting its lowest score in three years last quarter, the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) E-Government Satisfaction Index shows a slight increase in aggregate citizen satisfaction with federal government websites this quarter. The second quarter 2008 aggregate score of 72.9 is up 0.7% from last quarter's 72.4. Several factors indicate that this quarter may mark the start of a positive trend for e-government:

- There are 23 sites categorized as top performers (with satisfaction scores of 80 or higher on the ACSI's 100-point scale), more than ever before. This number includes both perennially high-scoring sites like the Social Security Administration's Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs, Internet Social Security Benefits Application and MedlinePlus, and new entrants to the index like the Department of Defense's America Supports You website and the main website of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

- Forty-five percent of measured sites had quarter-over-quarter score increases, the highest percentage since Q1 2006. Twenty-four percent of sites had no change quarter-over-quarter, and 30% of sites saw their scores decrease. As more sites focus on better meeting citizens' needs and improving site-specific satisfaction, the aggregate e-gov score should continue to increase.

When comparing citizens who are highly satisfied with a federal government website (scores of 80 or higher) to those who are dissatisfied (scores under 70), the highly satisfied group is 84% more likely to use the site as a primary resource; 82% more likely to recommend the site to others and 56% more likely to return to the site. These figures are an amazing testament to the power and cost-saving ability of a website that is effectively serving citizens. Successful government websites are therefore a "win-win" situation for agencies and departments. The federal government can be more inclusive and responsive to its constituents while also saving money that might be spent interacting with citizens through more expensive contact channels.

This quarter, there are 108 websites in the ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index. To enable federal government websites to benchmark against their peers, scores in this report are categorized both by function (news/information, portals/department main sites, e-commerce/transactional sites and careers/recruitment) and organizationally (departments, agencies and programs). From a functional perspective, e-commerce/transactional sites have the highest category score of 77, although the portals/department main sites category had the highest quarter-over-quarter aggregate score increase of 2.5%. When comparing the three organizational categories, program sites lead the other two categories with a score of 73.6.

On aggregate, search, navigation and functionality (which measures how well site users can accomplish desired tasks online) are top priorities for improvement, meaning that enhancements to these

elements will lead to higher satisfaction, more return site visits, more recommendations and increased usage of the site as a primary resource. It's telling that top-performing sites have figured out how to satisfy citizens in these key areas: sites with scores of 80 or higher outperform the aggregate by 10 points in each of these elements. However, there is no general prescription for success; each site must listen to the voice of its own constituents to determine where to focus improvement efforts.

Key Findings:

- A record number of sites (23) are top performers with scores of 80 or higher

- Almost half (45%) of sites saw quarter-over-quarter score increases

- Highly satisfied citizens are significantly more likely than dissatisfied citizens to use a government website as a primary resource, recommend it to others and return to the site, which helps government operate more cost-efficiently

"Hard work pays off." says Anne Kelly, Federal Consulting Group CEO, pointing to these latest Index results as a significant turnaround. "We can give credit to those website managers who gave their customers a welcome boost in satisfaction."

The Federal Consulting Group is a franchise of the Department of the Treasury that acts as an executive agent for the ACSI.

- Search, navigation and functionality remain top priorities for improving many government websites, although some top performers do well in these areas

- Citizens are most satisfied with the functional category of portal/department main sites and with the organizational category of program sites

Each of these findings is discussed in more detail in the following report.

About the ACSI E-Government Index

The ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Index is a special quarterly report of the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), which is produced by the University of Michigan in partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ), ForeSee Results and the CFI Group.

The ACSI is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States, both in the private and public sector. In 1999, the Federal government selected the ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring citizen satisfaction. Over 100 Federal government agencies have used the ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction of more than 200 services and programs and more than 100 websites. The report on offline Federal government services is released annually in December. The E-Government Index is released quarterly. The ACSI is produced by the University of Michigan, in partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ) and CFI Group, an international consulting firm. ForeSee Results sponsors the e-commerce, e-business and e-government indices.

ForeSee Results collects and analyzes the data for the e-government websites included in the report. ACSI e-government scores were calculated based on data gathered from voluntary online surveys of randomly selected site visitors. Each government website was rated by its visitors on various components of overall satisfaction. The ratings were converted to a score on a 100-point scale using the ACSI methodology.

The ACSI methodology identifies key drivers of online satisfaction (such as navigation, look and feel, search, site functionality, etc.) and quantifies their relationship to overall citizen satisfaction. This cause-and-effect methodology demonstrates the impact of website enhancements in these areas on overall customer satisfaction. In turn, customer satisfaction, as measured by the ACSI, has been proven to predict how citizens will behave in the future. Improvements to customer satisfaction will make citizens more likely to choose to interact with an agency online (the more cost-effective channel), return to the site, and recommend it to others. Monitoring and improving customer satisfaction has tangible impact on citizen usage of the web channel and on the bottom line.

Note: This quarter marks the start of a move to calendar-year quarters to make it easier for government agencies and departments to monitor citizen satisfaction in line with government reporting periods. Data was collected from April 1 – June 30, 2008.

So that federal government websites can benchmark against their peers, scores in the following report are further organized by both functional category and organizational structure. The functional categories include:

- News and information sites
- Portals and department main sites
- E-commerce and transactional sites
- Career and recruitment sites

The ACSI E-Government Index also analyzes scores according to three organizational categories that match the way the federal government is structured:
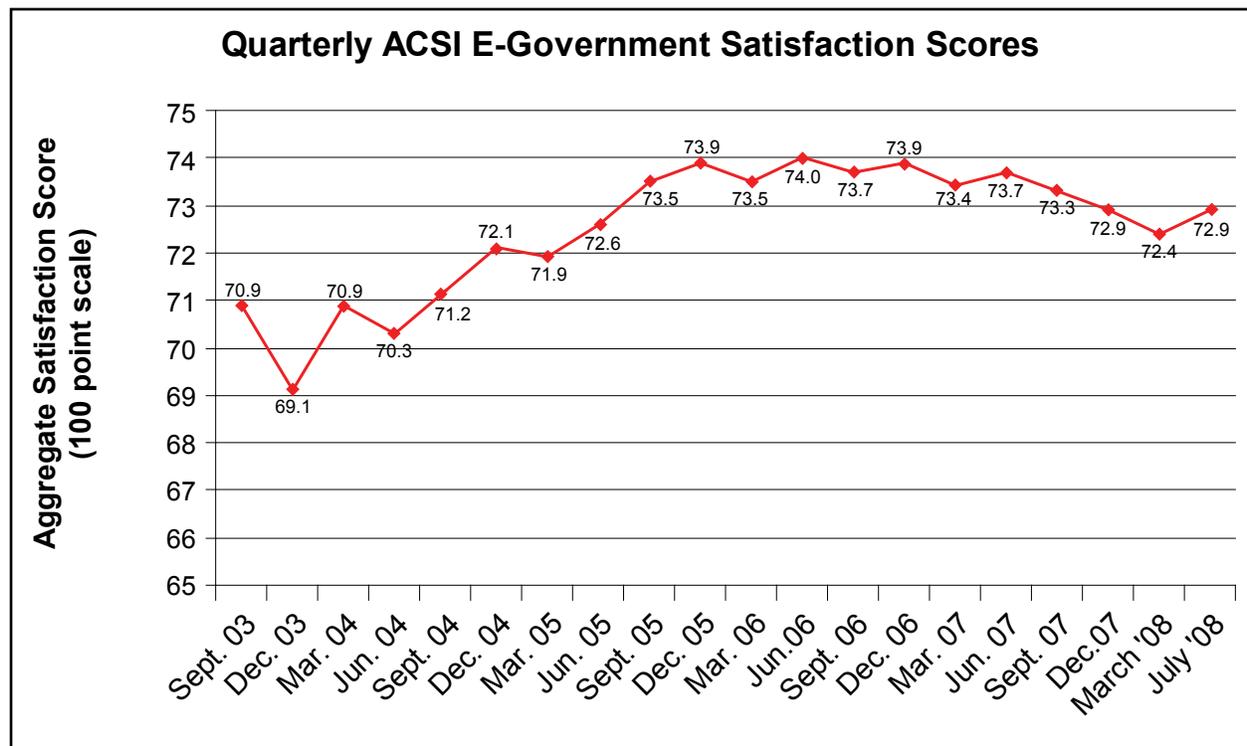
- Department sites, which includes independent agencies, corporations, administrations, etc.
- Agency sites, including all entities that fall directly below a department or equivalent organization
- Program sites, which includes all other sites

The ACSI methodology assesses satisfaction with specific elements of a website, including:

- Navigation
- Functionality
- Search
- Look and feel

Satisfaction Up Slightly From Last Quarter

The chart below shows the trend in citizen satisfaction with government websites from 3rd quarter 2003 (when the first E-Gov Index was published) through 2nd quarter 2008.

Quarterly ACSI E-Government Satisfaction Scores

Aggregate Satisfaction Score (100 point scale)

Quarter	Score
Sept. 03	70.9
Dec. 03	69.1
Mar. 04	70.9
Jun. 04	70.3
Sept. 04	71.2
Dec. 04	72.1
Mar. 05	71.9
Jun. 05	72.6
Sept. 05	73.5
Dec. 05	73.9
Mar. 06	73.5
Jun. 06	74.0
Sept. 06	73.7
Dec. 06	73.9
Mar. 07	73.4
Jun. 07	73.7
Sept. 07	73.3
Dec. 07	72.9
March '08	72.4
July '08	72.9

Citizen satisfaction for many sites has increased, compared to both last quarter and to last year.

Quarter-over-quarter:

- 45% of sites now have higher scores
- 30% of sites now have lower scores
- 24% of sites have the same scores as last quarter

This is a positive reversal from the first quarter of this year, when 42% of sites had a score decrease and only 33% had increases.

The percentage of sites with quarter-over-quarter score increases is the highest since Q1 2006, when 49% experienced increases.

The trend is also positive year-over-year:

- 44% of sites have higher scores now than last year
- 32% of sites' scores are lower
- 24% of sites saw their scores stay flat

The upshot: more sites are increasing citizen satisfaction, which reflects increased government attention to citizens' online needs. As more sites increase satisfaction, more citizens will choose to interact with the federal government online, thereby defraying the costs of more expensive communication channels and also giving citizens easier, more convenient access to information.

E-Gov Lags Behind Private Sector in Terms of Satisfaction

Citizens' perceptions of government sites are shaped by the sum total of their online experiences, so it's important to compare federal government sites to private sector sites. The chart below shows how satisfaction with e-government compares to satisfaction with e-commerce (including e-retail, online travel, online brokerage) and e-business (news/information sites, search engines and portals), two online sectors also measured by the ACSI.

Comparison of ACSI E-Government and Online Private Sector Scores	Aggregate Satisfaction Score
E-Government Q2 2008	72.9
E-Commerce Q4 2007	81.6
E-Business Q2 2007	75.2

The e-retail and e-business sectors are measured once a year; e-government is measured every quarter.

E-commerce sites significantly outperform e-government. However, with this quarter's turnaround in e-government satisfaction, it's conceivable that the aggregate e-government satisfaction score could someday catch up to the aggregate e-business score, which declined from last year. Because so many government websites are informational in nature, they are serving the same functions as the private sector sites included in the e-business category and face the same challenges. As the government learns from the private sector and adapts the most successful online practices, the gap between private sector and public sector satisfaction online could begin to narrow.

In addition to comparing satisfaction with e-government to other online industries, it can also be instructive to compare satisfaction with government websites to satisfaction with offline government, measured by the ACSI once a year. As shown below, citizens are considerably more satisfied with government websites (72.9) than they are with the government overall (67.8).

Comparison of ACSI E-Government and Offline Government	Aggregate Satisfaction Score
E-Government Q2 2008	72.9
Offline Government Q4 2007	67.8

Doing business with the government online delivers convenience that is unparalleled in the offline world. Citizens can access a wide variety of information and documents with the click of a mouse, and they don't have to wait in long lines at a brick and mortar location or in long queues in a call center. Online service quality is also more consistent. This disparity in scores shows that citizens consider interacting with the government online to be a good alternative in most cases. However, there is clearly room for improvement.

Top Performers Hit All-Time High

This quarter, 23 of the 108 measured sites (21% of the total) are in the "top performers" category with scores of 80 or higher, marking an all-time high for the number of sites in this category. Any website, whether in the private or public sector, with a score of more than 80 is clearly doing a superior job in meeting site visitors' needs and expectations. It's arguable that meeting this high standard is an even greater achievement for federal government websites, which typically don't have the same level of available resources as the private sector.

Some of these sites, such as top-scoring Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs (88) and another Social Security site, Internet Social Security Benefits Application (87), are perennial high scorers – proving that ongoing measurement provides a way to ensure that these sites meet the needs of their site visitors. Other sites, such as the Department of Defense's America Supports You (87) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's main website (81) enter the e-gov index for the first time this quarter with strong scores.

Ten of the sites in the top-performers category are part of the Department of Health & Human Services, three are Social Security Administration Sites, while the General Services Administration, Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation and Department of Justice each have two top performers.

Top Performers

Department	E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
SSA	Social Security Administration	Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs http://www.socialsecurity.gov/i1020/	88
SSA	Social Security Administration	Internet Social Security Benefits Application http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyforbenefits	87
DOD	Department of Defense	America Supports You http://www.americasupportsyou.mil	87
HHS	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus http://medlineplus.gov	85
HHS	National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive & Kidney Diseases, NIH	NIDDK http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/	85
HHS	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus en español http://medlineplus.gov/esp/	84
DOJ	Department of Justice	President's DNA Initiative http://www.dna.gov	84
HHS	National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	AIDSinfo http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/	84
SSA	Social Security Administration	Social Security Business Services Online http://www.ssa.gov/bso/bsowelcome.htm	84
PBGC	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	MyPBA https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypba	83
HHS	National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIAMS Public Website http://www.niams.nih.gov/index.htm	82
HHS	Office on Women's Health	National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) www.4woman.gov	82

Top Performers   **Search, Functionality and**

Department	E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
HHS	National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	National Cancer Institute Site en Español www.cancer.gov/espanolwww.cancer.gov/espanol	82
GSA	General Services Administration	Federal Citizen Information Center www.pueblo.gsa.gov/	82
Treasury	United States Mint, Treasury	Online Catalog http://catalog.usmint.gov	82
PBGC	Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	MyPAA https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypaa	82
DOJ	Federal Bureau of Investigation	FBI main website www.fbi.gov	80
HHS	Office of Science Education, National Institutes of Health, HHS	OSE main website http://science-education.nih.gov/	81
HHS	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC main website www.cdc.gov	81
GSA	General Services Administration	GobiernoUSA.gov website www.gobiernousa.gov	80
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency	Recruitment website http://www.cia.gov/employment	80
HHS	National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	National Cancer Institute main website www.cancer.gov	80
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA main website www.nasa.gov	80

Navigation Are Priorities for Improving E-Gov

The ACSI methodology identifies which elements are "top priority" for improvement – meaning that improvements in these areas will result in increased satisfaction, return site visits, recommendations and use of the site as a primary resource. Priorities differ for each website, but we are able to make some generalizations for e-government as a whole.

Search remains the biggest priority for improvement for most government websites: 88% of sites that measure Search as an element named it as a top priority element. It's not surprising that public sector sites continue to struggle with search; even their better-funded private sector counterparts face challenges with this key driver of satisfaction.

Functionality, which assesses how well citizens accomplish what they set out to do, is a top priority element for 59% of sites that measure it, up from 47% last quarter. If citizens cannot get the information they need or complete the task they set out to do, they may turn to costlier offline channels, so it's imperative that government websites improve functionality.

This quarter, Navigation, which assesses ease of moving through the site, is a top priority for 41% of sites that measure it, down from 51% last quarter.

While many sites struggle with these key drivers of online satisfaction, some sites have figured out the winning formula. Top-performing sites (those with scores of 80 or higher) consistently outperform low-performing sites (scores below 70) in this important areas, which are part of the reason that they are more successful in meeting citizens' online needs.

Element	Score for Bottom Performers*	Score for Top Performers+	Top Sites Outperform Bottom Sites By...
Navigation	64	83	30%
Search	65	83	28%
Functionality	68	86	26%

* Top-performing sites are those with satisfaction scores of 80 and above.
+ Bottom-performing sites are those with satisfaction scores under 70.

Government Sites Reap Rewards from Citizen Satisfaction

To illustrate the value of high citizen satisfaction, we've compared two groups of citizens: highly satisfied citizens (scores of 80 or higher) and dissatisfied (below 70). As shown in the table below, there are significant differences in average scores for all three measured behaviors as highly satisfied citizens are:

- 84% more likely to use the website as a primary resource
- 83% more likely to recommend the website
- 57% more likely to return to the site

	Highly Satisfied Citizens (80+)	Dissatisfied Citizens (below 70)	Difference in Scores	The Impact of Higher Satisfaction
Satisfaction	93	42	121%	
Use Site as Primary Resource	92	50	84%	• Cost-savings for departments and agencies as citizens are right channeled to web • Citizens get information from credible government source, rather than another online/offline source (in cases where options exist, e.g., health-related information)
Recommend Site	95	52	83%	Use of government websites will grow as citizens recommend them to their friends, families and colleagues
Return to Site	96	61	57%	Government departments and agencies have ongoing channel to provide information and services to citizens via web channel

Providing a satisfying online experience makes sense for government departments and agencies. Citizens are able to easily connect with government and receive information and conduct transactions 24/7 from their homes or offices. For government, the web channel provides a high level of service at a fraction of the cost of phone support, e-mail communication or staffing branch offices.

E-Commerce/Transaction Sites Continue to Top Functional Categories

The table below shows aggregate citizen satisfaction with each of the four functional categories of sites. The e-commerce/transaction category, the highest-scoring category at 77 had a quarter-over-quarter aggregate score increase of +1.7%. The portals/department main site category is up 2.5% from last quarter. The aggregate score for the news/information category remains flat while the score for career/recruitment sites falls slightly.

Category	Q1 2008	Q2 2008	Quarter-over-Quarter Percentage Change
News/Information (64 sites)	71.7	71.7	0
Portals/Department Main Sites (26 sites)	71.9	73.7	2.5%
E-commerce/Transactions (13 sites)	75.7	77.0	1.7%
Career/Recruitment (4 sites)	77.1	76.6	-.6%

Note: One measured site, Buscador.gov, is not included in any of the four categories. As a site-specific search engine, it does not fit into any of the categories.

News/Information Sites

Aggregate citizen satisfaction with the 64 sites in the news/information category remains flat at a score of 71.7. While the score for the category hasn't changed, several sites have experienced significant score increases from last quarter.

Case Study: US Treasury's Tax and Trade Bureau (www.ttb.gov). The main website of the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau is a regulatory site charged with disseminating information about requirements and policies, and achieving voluntary compliance in support of a small field staff. The USTTB site experienced a five-point increase in satisfaction by adding a number of new features driven by "voice of customer" satisfaction data, including: search/navigation help to make the site more user-friendly; a consumer corner targeted at the public; a "new visitor" guide for people unfamiliar with the site; a calendar of events and an A-Z index to help site visitors search for specific information.

In addition to generating a five-point aggregate satisfaction increase since last quarter, TTB.gov found that satisfaction of regular visitors and those falling into the site's three most common visitor personas rose significantly. And, the satisfaction of people visiting the site for regulatory compliance information, an important mission of the site, rose by 12 points, a very significant increase.

News/Information Sites

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Department of Defense	America Supports You http://www.americasupportsyou.mil	87
National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus http://medlineplus.gov	85
National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive & Kidney Diseases, NIH	NIDDK http://www2.niddk.nih.gov/	85
National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	MedlinePlus en español http://medlineplus.gov/esp/	84
Department of Justice	President's DNA Initiative http://www.dna.gov	84
National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	AIDSinfo http://aidsinfo.nih.gov/	84
Office on Women's Health	National Women's Health Information Center (NWHIC) main website www.4woman.gov	82
National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	National Cancer Institute Site en Español www.cancer.gov/espanolwww.cancer.gov/espanol	82
General Services Administration	Federal Citizen Information Center www.pueblo.gsa.gov/	82
Office of Science Education, National Institutes of Health, HHS	OSE main website http://science-education.nih.gov/	81
National Library of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, HHS	TOXNET http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov	79
NIH Senior Health, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIH Senior Health http://nihseniorhealth.gov	79
Bureau of Labor Statistics	BLS Occupational Outlook Handbook http://www.bls.gov/oco/	79
National Women's Health Information Center	Girls Health www.girlshealth.com	78
National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIDA main website www.drugabuse.gov	77
National Institute of Justice, Justice	NIJ main website http://www.ojp.gov/nij	77
National Criminal Justice Reference Service, Justice	NCJRS website www.ncjrs.gov	77
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration	FMCSA Protect Your Move www.protectyourmove.com	76
General Services Administration	Consumer Action Website, Federal Citizen Information Center www.consumeraction.gov	76
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, State	U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs https://alumni.state.gov	75
Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, HHS	Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality www.ahrq.gov	75
Department of Justice	Office of Community Oriented Policing Services http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/	74

News/Information Sites, Continued

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC Applications www2.fdic.gov	73
U.S. Department of Commerce	National Geodetic Society, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration http://www.ngs.noaa.gov/	73
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Nigeria http://abuja.usembassy.gov/	73
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Argentina http://spanish.argentina.usembassy.gov/	73
National Archives & Records Administration	NARA Presidential Library websites http://archives.gov/presidential_libraries/index.html	72
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Kenya http://nairobi.usembassy.gov/	72
Department of the Treasury, Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau	USTTB website www.ttb.gov	72
Food Safety and Inspection Service, Agriculture	FSIS main website www.fsis.usda.gov	72
National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIDA for Teens website http://teens.drugabuse.gov/	72
Economic Research Service, Agriculture	ERS main website www.ers.usda.gov	71
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission website www.nrc.gov	71
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in China http://beijing.usembassy-china.org.cn/	71
Small Business Administration	Business Gateway www.business.gov	71
International Information Programs, State	IIP main website www.america.gov	71
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Turkey (in Turkish) http://turkish.turkey.usembassy.gov/	71
Office of National Drug Control, White House	Above the Influence www.abovetheinfluence.com	70
Foreign Agricultural Service, Agriculture	FAS main website www.fas.usda.gov	70
Social Security Administration	Social Security Online: Answers to Your Questions http://ssa-custhelp.ssa.gov	70
Office of National Drug Control, White House	Parents: The Anti Drug www.theantidrug.com	70
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Perú (in Spanish) http://spanish.peru.usembassy.gov/	69
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Saudia Arabia http://riyadh.usembassy.gov/saudi-arabia/	68

News/Information Sites, Continued

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in India http://india.usembassy.gov/	68
Bureau of Economic Analysis, Commerce	BEA main website http://www.bea.gov	68
Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS	Health Resources and Services Administration main website http://www.hrsa.gov/	67
National Agricultural Library, Agriculture	NAL main website www.nal.usda.gov	67
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, State	U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs http://exchanges.state.gov/	66
Environmental Protection Agency	ENERGY STAR Building & Plants Website http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=business.bus_index	66
U.S. Census Bureau, Commerce	U.S. Census Bureau main website http://www.census.gov	66
Financial Management Service, Treasury	Financial Management Service www.fms.treas.gov	65
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Germany (in German) http://german.germany.usembassy.gov/	65
Office of National Drug Control, White House	Free Vibe www.freevibe.com	65
Department of State	U.S. Embassy in Pakistan http://islamabad.usembassy.gov/	65
Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Agriculture	CSREES main website www.csrees.usda.gov	64
Military Health System, Defense	Force Health Protection & Readiness Policy and Programs http://fhp.osd.mil/	64
Forest Service, Agriculture	Forest Service main website http://www.fs.fed.us	63
National Archives & Records Administration	NARA AAD - Access to Archival Databases www.archives.gov/aad/index.html	63
Military Health System, Defense	TRICARE www.tricare.osd.mil/	61
Military Health System, Defense	Military Health System main website http://www.health.mil/	61
General Services Administration	GSA E-Library http://www.gsaelibrary.gsa.gov/ElibMain/ElibHome	59
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security	National Flood Insurance Program http://www.fema.gov/business/nfip/	59
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Agriculture	NRCS website http://www.nrcs.usda.gov	57
Federal Emergency Management Agency, Homeland Security	FEMA Map Service Center http://store.msc.fema.gov	57

Case Study: With a score of 87, the Department of Defense's America Supports You website has the highest score in this largest category in its first time in the e-government index. This site, which provides opportunities for citizens to show their support of US troops, incorporates some elements of social media, such as videos of celebrities with messages for the troops and an online form for citizens to send electronic messages to troops. While government sites lag the private sector when it comes to using interactive and community-building features and tools, we expect to see increased use of these web 2.0 features as government websites continue to evolve.

In the news/information category, MedlinePlus (85) and the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive & Kidney Diseases (85), follow close behind America Supports You with strong scores in the high 80s. Sixteen percent of news/information sites are top performers with scores of 80 or higher.

The gap between top- and lower-scoring sites is 30 points, with scores ranging from 87 to 57.

Portals/Department Main Sites

The aggregate citizen satisfaction score for the 26 portals/department main sites included in the Index is 73.7, up 2.5% from last quarter. The main website of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Diseases leads this category with a score of 82. Five additional sites also are considered top performers, all with scores of 80 or above: the main sites for the CDC, the FBI and NASA, along with Cancer.gov and GobiernoUSA.gov.

Case Study: The main website for the General Services Administration experienced an impressive nine-point year-over-year increase in its satisfaction score. Based on "voice of customer" data, GSA made a number of changes to GSA.gov, including improving the search engine to make it easier for site visitors to find the products and services they need from GSA and enhancing the information on per diem rates, one of the key reasons government employees come to the site.

Twenty-three percent of portals/department main sites have scores of 80 or higher, making them top performers.

Portal/Department Main Sites

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases, National Institutes of Health, HHS	NIAMS Public Website http://www.niams.nih.gov/index.htm	82
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	CDC main website www.cdc.gov	81
National Cancer Institute, National Institutes of Health, HHS	National Cancer Institute main website www.cancer.gov	80
General Services Administration	GobiernoUSA.gov website www.gobiernousa.gov	80
Federal Bureau of Investigation	FBI main website www.fbi.gov	80

Portal/Department Main Sites, Continued

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA main website www.nasa.gov	80
National Park Service, Interior	National Park Service main website www.nps.gov	79
United States Mint, Treasury	U.S. Mint main website www.usmint.gov	78
General Services Administration	GSA main website www.gsa.gov	78
National Library of Medicine, HHS	NLM main website www.nlm.nih.gov	75
U.S. Small Business Administration	SBA main website www.sba.gov	74
National Institute for Standards and Technology	National Institute for Standards and Technology main website www.nist.gov	74
Government Accountability Office	GAO main public website www.gao.gov	74
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC main website www.fdic.gov	73
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HHS	SAMHSA website www.samhsa.gov	73
Department of Veterans Affairs	VA Main website www.va.gov and www.myhealthva.gov	72
Department of the Treasury	Treasury main website www.treasury.gov	72
Social Security Administration	Social Security Online (Main Website) www.socialsecurity.gov/	72
Department of State	Department of State main website www.state.gov	71
Internal Revenue Service, Treasury	IRS main website www.irs.gov	71
United States Access Board	U.S. Access Board http://www.access-board.gov	70
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	PBGC main website www.pbgc.gov	70
General Services Administration	Federal Asset Sales (GovSales) www.govsales.gov	69
National Archives & Records Administration	NARA main public website www.archives.gov	66
Office of Disability Employment Policy, Labor	DisabilityInfo www.DisabilityInfo.gov	63
United States International Trade Commission	U.S. International Trade Commission main website http://www.usitc.gov/	58

E-commerce/Transaction Sites

An impressive 46% of the 13 sites in the e-commerce/transactions category have scores of 80 or higher, making them top performers. This is the highest percentage of any functional category. Scores in this category range from 88 to 67. The three highest-scoring sites in this category are part of the Social Security Administration, including Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs, which is the top-scoring site in the entire index. Impressively, this site has held or been tied for the top spot in the index for the past two years, since second quarter 2007.

Case Study: Recreation.gov, which enables citizens to make online reservations for select federal recreation sites, has seen an impressive eight-point increase in customer satisfaction from last quarter, the largest quarter-over-quarter increase of all measured sites. As one of the E-government initiatives in the President's Management Agenda, Recreation.gov is firmly committed to improving customer satisfaction and uses satisfaction data as part of its vendor evaluation program. By tying vendor performance to citizen satisfaction, Recreation.gov ensures that everyone involved in the site - both internal and external - shares a commitment to meeting the needs of citizens. Over the past several months, Recreation.gov has made a series of incremental improvements, along with changes to ensure that it's gathering representative "voice of customer" feedback across the site.

E-commerce/Transaction Sites

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Social Security Administration	Help with Medicare Prescription Drug Plan Costs http://www.socialsecurity.gov/i1020/	88
Social Security Administration	Internet Social Security Benefits Application http://www.socialsecurity.gov/applyforbenefits	87
Social Security Administration	Social Security Business Services Online http://www.ssa.gov/bso/bsowelcome.htm	84
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	MyPBA https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypba	83
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	MyPAA https://egov.pbgc.gov/mypaa	82
United States Mint, Treasury	Online Catalog http://catalog.usmint.gov	82
SSA Retirement Planner	Social Security Retirement Planner www.socialsecurity.gov/r&m1.htm	76
Social Security Administration	Social Security Internet Disability Report http://www.ssa.gov/applyfordisability/	73
Forest Service, Agriculture	Recreation One-Stop www.recreation.gov	72
General Services Administration	GSA Global Supply website https://www.globalsupply.gsa.gov	70

E-commerce/Transaction Sites, Continued

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
General Services Administration	GSA E-Buy http://www.ebuy.gsa.gov	70
General Services Administration	GSA Advantage website https://www.gsaadvantage.gov	69
Department of the Treasury, Bureau of the Public Debt	TreasuryDirect www.treasurydirect.gov	67

Career/Recruitment Sites

Citizen satisfaction with the four sites in this category falls 0.6% this quarter to an aggregate score of 76.6, with scores ranging from 80 to 75. The government has put a lot of effort into increasing satisfaction with recruiting sites, and efforts have clearly paid off. The Central Intelligence Agency's recruitment website has the highest score, 80, and is the only career/recruitment site ranking at or above 80.

Career/Recruitment Sites

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Central Intelligence Agency	Recruitment website http://www.cia.gov/employment	80
Department of Labor	Department of Labor Job Listings www.doors.dol.gov	76
Department of State	Recruitment website www.careers.state.gov	75
Office of Personnel Management	Recruitment website www.usajobs.opm.gov	75

Site Search Engine

BuscadorUSA.gov is the search function on the Spanish-language portal to the federal government, GobiernoUSA. As a site-level search engine, this site doesn't fit into the four standard categories, so is reported separately.

Site Search Engine

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
General Services Administration	BuscadorUSA.gov (Spanish-language search) http://www.buscadorusa.gov	67

Citizens Remain Most Satisfied with Program Sites

In addition to looking at sites by the four functional categories, we also analyze customer satisfaction data by three organizational categories that match the way the federal government is structured: department sites (which includes independent agencies, corporations, administrations, etc.) agen-

cy sites (all entities that fall directly below a department or equivalent organization) and program sites (all others). This second method of categorization further allows federal websites to benchmark against their peers.

Citizens continue to be most satisfied with program sites, which often have the advantage of providing more targeted information or functionality than broader department or agency sites. However, while aggregate satisfaction with program and agency sites remained at the same level as last quarter, citizen satisfaction with the group of department sites rose by 2%.

	Q1 2008	Q2 2008	% Change
Department Sites (15 sites)	70.8	72.2	2%
Agency Sites (55 sites)	72.2	72.3	0
Program Sites (38 sites)	73.6	73.6	0

Citizen Satisfaction Starts at the Top

Online citizen satisfaction often starts with providing a satisfying online experience at the department level. The table below shows the satisfaction scores for the 15 department and department-level sites included in the benchmark. Two department-level sites are in the top performers category: FBI.gov and NASA.gov, both with scores of 80.

Online Citizen Satisfaction

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 008
Federal Bureau of Investigation	FBI main website www.fbi.gov	80
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	NASA main website www.nasa.gov	80
General Services Administration	GSA main website www.gsa.gov	78
U.S. Small Business Administration	SBA main website www.sba.gov	74
National Institute for Standards and Technology	National Institute for Standards and Technology main website www.nist.gov	74
Government Accountability Office	GAO main public website www.gao.gov	74
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	FDIC main website www.fdic.gov	73
Department of Veterans Affairs	VA Main website www.va.gov and www.myhealth.va.gov	72
Department of the Treasury	Treasury main website www.treasury.gov	72
Social Security Administration	Social Security Online (Main Website) www.socialsecurity.gov/	72
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission	U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission website www.nrc.gov	71

Online Citizen Satisfaction, Continued

E-Government US Agency/Department/Office	Website	Score Q2 2008
Department of State	Department of State main website www.state.gov	71
United States Access Board	U.S. Access Board http://www.access-board.gov	70
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	PBGC main website www.pbgc.gov	70
National Archives & Records Administration	NARA main public website www.archives.gov	66

This quarter, there are six departments with five or more sites in the index. The department of Health & Human Services has the highest aggregate score for departments with five or more sites in the index.

Department Comparison	Score Q2 2008
Department of Health and Human Services	79
Social Security Administration	78
Department of the Treasury	72
General Services Administration	71
Department of State	70
Department of Agriculture	66

Conclusion

Several factors indicate that citizen satisfaction may be turning around and that we are at the beginning of an upward trend, which is positive for both government organizations and citizens. When it effectively provides necessary services and information online, government is more accountable to citizens because it is making better use of taxpayer dollars. Citizens respond to a satisfying web experience by coming back to government sites, using them as primary resources and recommending them to others.

As the November election approaches, it's unclear how much of a focus e-government will be for the next administration. However, it's certain that citizens want and expect to be able to interact with government via the web channel…and that agencies and departments that are able to meet citizens' needs online will continue to reap the rewards.

About the Author

Larry Freed is an expert on web effectiveness and web customer satisfaction. He is also President and CEO of ForeSee Results, a market leader in customer satisfaction measurement on the web, which utilizes the methodology of the American Customer Satisfaction Index.

About the ACSI

The American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) is the only uniform, national, cross-industry measure of satisfaction with the quality of goods and services available in the United States. In 1999, the Federal government selected the ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring citizen satisfaction. Over 100 Federal government agencies have used the ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction of more than 200 services and programs. The Index is produced by the University of Michigan, in partnership with the American Society for Quality (ASQ) and CFI Group, an international consulting firm. ForeSee Results sponsors the e-commerce, e-business and e-government indices.

About ForeSee Results

As the leader in online customer satisfaction measurement, ForeSee Results captures and analyzes online voice of customer data to help public and private sector organizations increase loyalty, recommendations and website value. Using the methodology of the University of Michigan's American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), ForeSee Results identifies improvements to websites and other online initiatives that drive customer satisfaction. With over 28 million survey responses collected to date and benchmarks across dozens of industries, ForeSee Results offers unparalleled expertise in customer satisfaction measurement and management. ForeSee Results works with clients across the public and private sectors. ForeSee Results, a privately held company, is located in Ann Arbor, Michigan and on the web at www.ForeSeeResults.com.

About the Federal Consulting Group

The Federal Consulting Group, a franchise of the Department of the Treasury, serves as the executive agent in the government for the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI), and holds 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 ForeSee Results.

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