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Citizen Satisfaction Declines Slightly, While Overall Trust in Government Improves, According to ACSI

Satisfaction with Government Websites at an All-Time High

Ann Arbor, Mich. (January 26, 2010)—Citizen satisfaction with federal government services declined slightly in 2009, according to the annual federal government report from the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The federal government index drops 0.3% to 68.7 on the ACSI 100-point scale. But this small decline does not erase the improvement from a year ago, when satisfaction rose 1.6% to 68.9.

The new ACSI data indicate that although Americans' trust in Government remains low, it is not getting worse and has actually improved somewhat, in part as a result of the higher satisfaction with federal government services in the past two years.

"ACSI results show that citizens do not have a great deal of trust in Washington, but that trust can be rebuilt through better government services," said Professor Claes Fornell, head of the ACSI and author of *The Satisfied Customer*. "Citizens often form negative opinions of the federal government even though they may not have had any real experience with its services. Agencies can go a long way toward improving citizen perceptions and correcting misperceptions by offering high-quality services."

Among federal departments, the Department of Interior registers the highest user satisfaction for a third straight year with an ACSI score of 81, a 4% improvement from last year. The Social Security Administration also is above average with an ACSI score of 73, unchanged from last year.

While the Department of Homeland Security rests at the other end of the spectrum and well below the government-wide average, its score has improved dramatically during the past two years. Up 2% to a score of 58 this year, Homeland Security has seen its satisfaction leap 18% in total, from a low of 49 in 2007. These improvements are especially impressive given that the Transportation and Security Administration (TSA) is the dominant customer-facing agency within Homeland Security, and is known primarily for airport security screening.

Similar to the private sector, citizens are generally more satisfied with federal government websites than with government services overall. The ACSI index of 100 websites registers an overall satisfaction score of 75.2—an all-time high and well above the federal government average of 68.7.

"It's no surprise that citizens are happier to interface with the government utilizing the online channel," said Larry Freed, president and CEO of ForeSee Results, the ACSI's e-Government partner. "Being able to access information and perform transactions at

one's own leisure is far more preferable to waiting in long lines at customer service centers or long queues using a call center. Conducting business online also means cost savings for agencies. Putting government information and services online achieves consolidation and integrates systems and databases to increase efficiency, enabling government to operate more responsively and effectively."

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 ACSI to be a standard metric for measuring citizen satisfaction. Over 100 Federal government agencies have used ACSI to measure citizen satisfaction with more than 200 services and programs. The Index was founded at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business and is produced by ACSI, LLC. ForeSee Results sponsors the e-government index.

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