ITRC | IDENTITY THEFT
RESOURCE CENTER

IDENTIFICATION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD

THE VIEWS OF CONSUMERS, VICTIMS & GOVERNMENT EXECS

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RISK SOLUTIONS

Table of Contents

Summary

In connection with the *2023 Identity + Innovation Identivation Conference* hosted by the Identity Theft Resource Center (ITRC) and supported by LexisNexis® Risk Solutions, the ITRC sought input from consumers and government executives about what it's like to verify someone is who they claim to be. Failures in identity verification have been found at the root of government benefit and services fraud during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The responses from three groups – general consumers, self-reported victims of identity crimes, and government executives responsible for identity verification – painted an improved landscape from 2022 when the scope and scale of identity-related benefit fraud were just coming into focus.

Specifically, we saw:

Identity-related benefit fraud returned to pre-pandemic levels for most government agencies by early 2023.

A majority of government agencies modernized identity verification processes.

General consumers expressed few concerns about new ID verification tools and processes.

Identity crime victims had more concerns about personal information collection/sharing required to verify their identity compared to general consumers.

In the following pages, you will see the responses of the three groups surveyed, along with analysis from the ITRC. For more information about the ITRC and how you can get involved in support of the Center's mission or take advantage of its research and business services, please visit our website or contact us here.
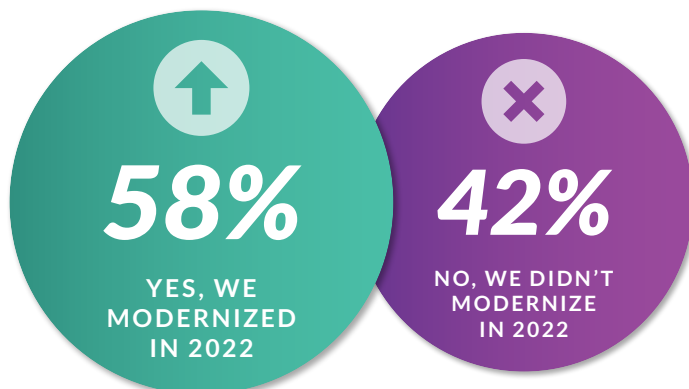
Identification in a Post-Pandemic World
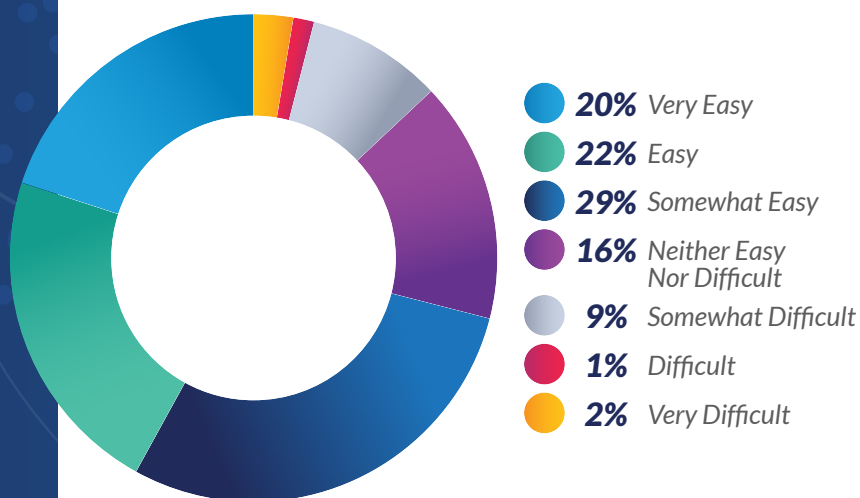## The Views of Consumers, Victims & Government Executives

ITRC | IDENTITY THEFT RESOURCE CENTER

Supported by **LexisNexis RISK SOLUTIONS**

Modernizing Government Agency Technologies

58%
YES, WE MODERNIZED IN 2022

42%
NO, WE DIDN'T MODERNIZE IN 2022

53% of Modernizations
WERE TO IMPROVE SECURITY, INCLUDING IDENTITY VERIFICATION

Ease of Identity Verification Process

- **20%** *Very Easy*
- **22%** *Easy*
- **29%** *Somewhat Easy*
- **16%** *Neither Easy Nor Difficult*
- **9%** *Somewhat Difficult*
- **1%** *Difficult*
- **2%** *Very Difficult*

User Concerns of Sharing Personal Identity Information

	GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
RISK OF A DATA BREACH OF PERSONAL INFORMARION	47%	29%
RISK OF AN EMPLOYEE MISUSING INFORMATION	10%	30%
RISK OF GOVERNMENT VIOLATING PRIVACY/TRACKING	13%	21%
RISK OF PROFILING OR DENYING BENEFITS	8%	11%
RISK OF INFORMATION BEING CONFUSED WITH ANOTHER	5%	7%

Information Users are Most Comfortable Sharing

DRIVER'S LICENSE OR ID
GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
62%	34%

DATE OF BIRTH
GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
43%	23%

SELFIE PHOTO
GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
11%	29%

HOME ADDRESS/PHONE
GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
24%	12%

LIVE VIDEO CALL
GENERAL CONSUMERS	SELF-REPORTED VICTIMS
10%	26%

Analysis

During 2020 and 2021, agencies at all levels of government reported unprecedented amounts of identity-related benefit fraud. The result was equally unprecedented levels of effort to rapidly improve the processes for verifying the identity of a person seeking new government benefits or services or access to existing accounts.

In connection with the ITRC's annual government identity protection conference, with the support of LexisNexis® Risk Solutions, the Center sought to find out the results of the government's effort to improve ID verification and how two sets of consumers viewed those actions: general consumers, one-third of whom had interacted with a government agency in the past year, and victims of identity crimes who often have difficulty proving they are who they claim to be or are fearful of sharing their already compromised personal information.

The vast majority of agencies who participated in the research had modernized their identity verification processes and/or tools in 2022 or early 2023. More than half (53%) did so to improve security, including ID verification. The most common improvements were increased verification at account set-up (20%), hiring a vendor to assist in verification (16%), and verifying identity each time someone logs onto an account (14%).

As a result of these and other changes, agencies generally reported reduced levels of fraud as well as blocking more fraudulent account set-up or takeover attempts. Agencies reported a mixed bag on the impacts of the increased ID verification efforts on the customer experience, with an equal number of respondents claiming the experience was better and worse.

However, both general consumers and identity crime victims generally support the changes made to improve identity security and protection. Approximately 94 percent (94%) of victims and general consumers believe it's important for government agencies to verify a person's identity. More than 70 percent (70%) of both groups also believe the identity verification process is easy.

Where the groups – general consumers and ID crime victims diverge is in the area of data collection/sharing required to verify an identity. Most general consumers are afraid their personal information will be compromised in a data breach at a government agency (56%) or misused by a government employee to a far lesser degree (14%).

ID crime victims, though, were far more likely to be concerned about the risk of their information being misused by a government employee (30%) than a data breach (29%). Victims were also more likely to be concerned about government surveillance or profiling (21%) than general consumers (13%).

Large groups of consumers and ID crime victims believed their information was at risk when they shared it as part of an identity verification process, but equally large groups provided the information without reservation. General consumers were overwhelmingly concerned about turning over their Social Security Numbers (61%) to verify their identities, but ID crime victims experienced a heightened sense of concern about sharing across all types of information.

ID crime victims and some general consumers expressed concern about sharing information required by new and emerging identity verification technologies in use or under consideration by government agencies. However, the vast majority of respondents did not express any concern.

The biggest complaint both consumers and ID crime victims had about ID verification was the length of time it took to complete the process, with more than 30 percent (30%) saying the process took too long. A slightly smaller group said unclear instructions were their primary objection.

Methodology

In March 2023, the ITRC sought responses from three groups – general consumers, self-reported victims of identity crimes, and government executives responsible for identity verification – to a series of questions in three separate online surveys. A total of 986 individuals who met the selection criteria responded.

Government Executives were selected at random to participate, and 61 responded, representing all levels of government, including State agencies (47%), Federal agencies (22%), Local agencies (22%), and Other (9%).

A total of 566 General Consumers participated in the survey, 39 percent (39%) of whom self-reported an interaction with a government agency in the past 12 months.

A separate group of 1,081 consumers was asked if they had been the victim of an identity crime in the past twelve (12) months. Approximately one-third (359 individuals) responded that their identities had been misused.

Key Findings

+ *Government Benefit Services Consumer Survey*

+ *2023 Government Identity Verification Survey – Identity Fraud Victims*

+ *Government Executives: Identity Verification in a Post-Pandemic Environment*

Government Benefit Services Consumer Survey

Have you contacted a government agency because someone applied for a government benefit in your name? (*Example: unemployment benefit, small business loan, food or health care assistance*)

No
74%

Yes
26%
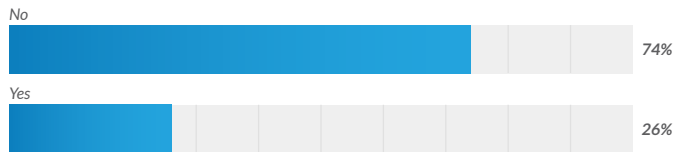
How did you interact with the government agency you contacted?

On the Telephone
48%

Website
29%

In-Person
21%
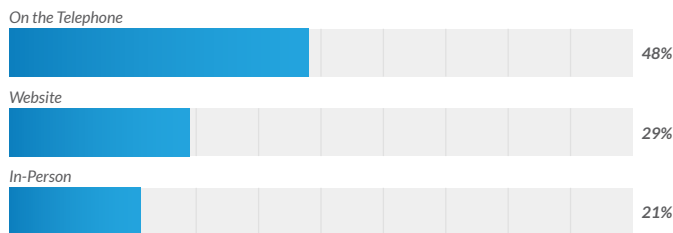
How many times did you contact the government agency to resolve your issue before it was resolved?

1
19%

2 – 5
60%

6 – 10
14%

More than 10
7%
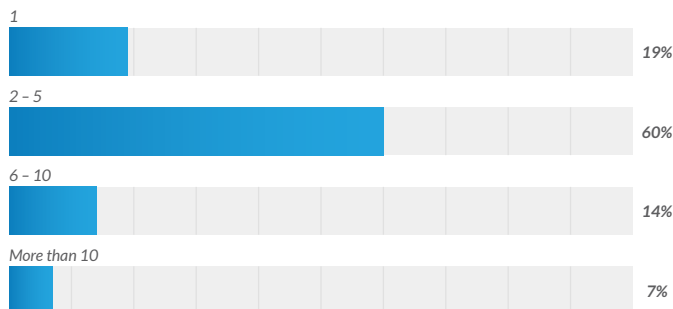
How long did it take to resolve your issue?
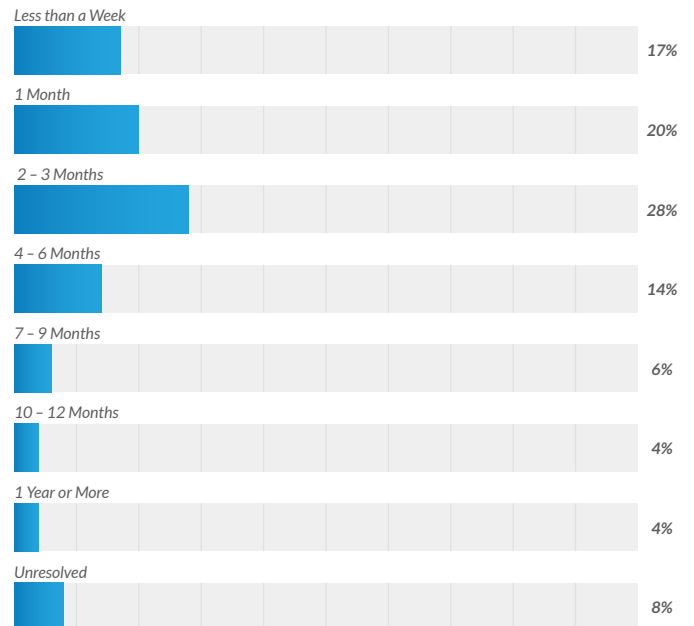
Less than a Week
17%

1 Month
20%

2 – 3 Months
28%

4 – 6 Months
14%

7 – 9 Months
6%

10 – 12 Months
4%

1 Year or More
4%

Unresolved
8%

Were you asked to verify your identity by the government agency at any time?

Yes
86%

No
14%

What information were you asked to provide or verify to prove your identity? *(Select all that apply)*

State Driver's License/State ID/Military ID
58%

Date of Birth (DOB)
51%

SSN
49%

Home Address/Phone
38%

Passport/Visa/Permanent Resident Card
30%

Mobile Phone
26%

Birth Certificate
20%

Personal Information – Current/Previous Vehicles, Previous Addresses, Place of Employment, etc.
15%

Selfie Photo
15%

Live Video Call
11%

Location Data
8%

Biometric – Fingerprint, Facial Recognition, Eye Scan, or Voice Recognition
3%

Other
2%

What's the strongest reaction you had to the process or experience of verifying your identity? *(Select all that apply)*

Info is at Risk
35%

Info is Secure
30%

Reluctant to Share
30%

Curious How Info is Used
27%

No Reaction, I Just Did It
21%

Good Experience
15%

Poor Experience
8%

Refused to Provide
8%

Other
1%

How do you prefer to interact with government agencies?

On the Telephone
33%

Website
28%

In Person
23%

Mobile Application
7%

Chat
5%

Text to Chat
2%
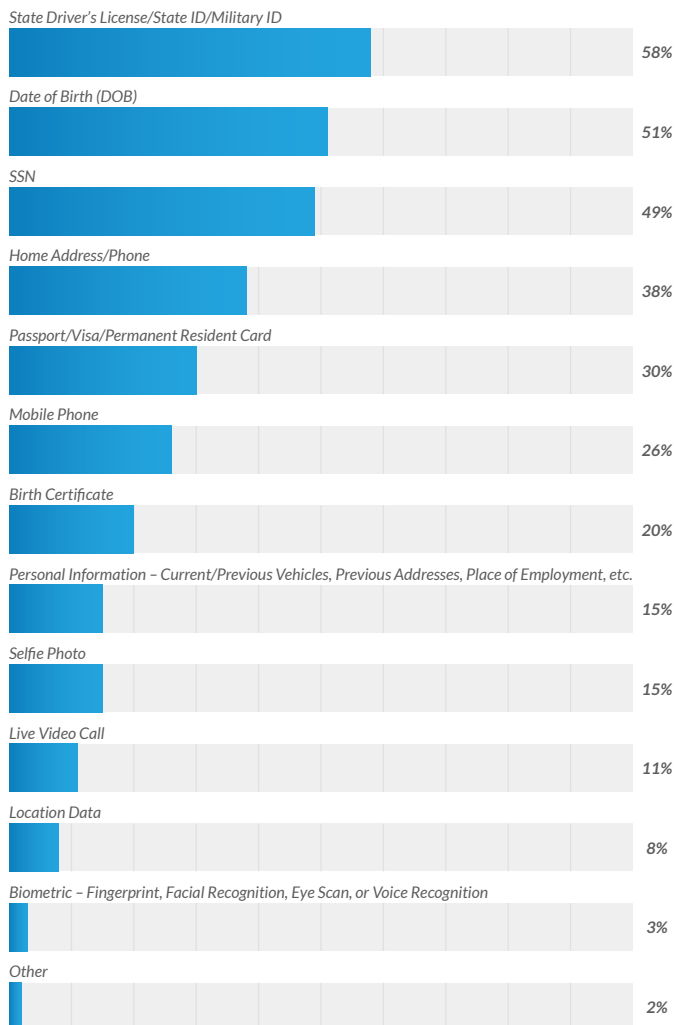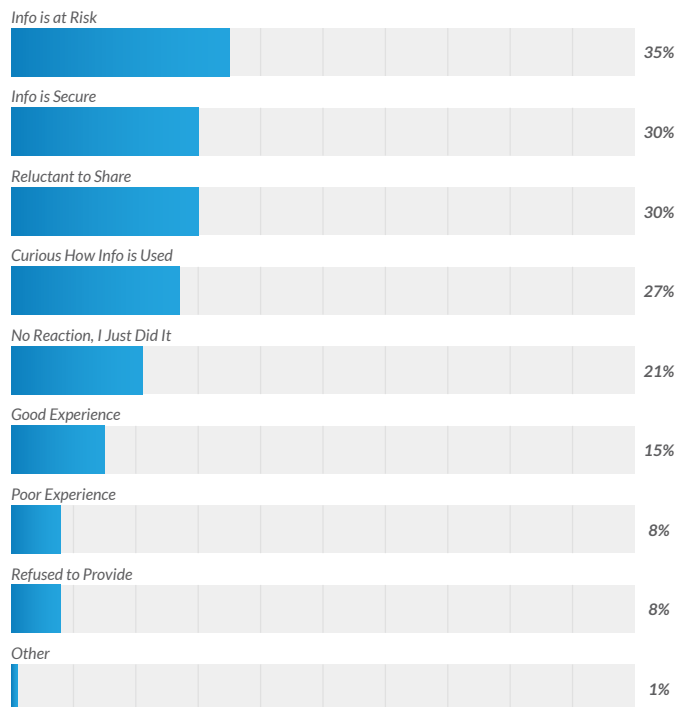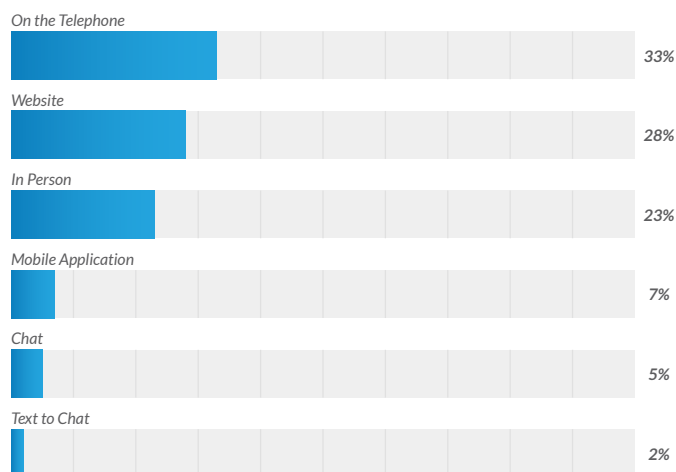
What concerns you most, if anything, about sharing identity information with government agencies that provide benefits you need or want?
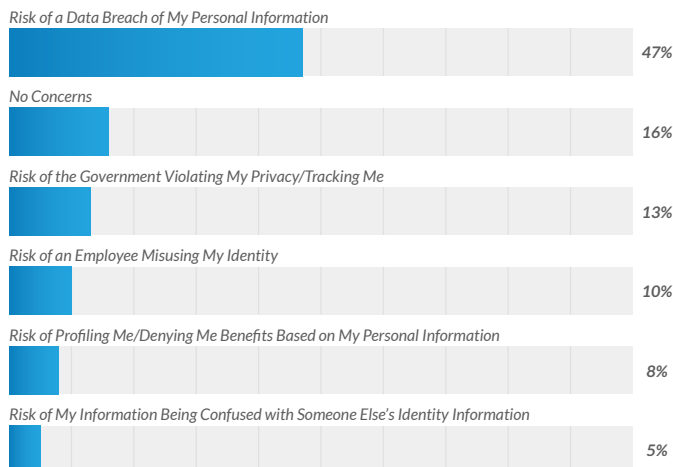
Risk of a Data Breach of My Personal Information
47%

No Concerns
16%

Risk of the Government Violating My Privacy/Tracking Me
13%

Risk of an Employee Misusing My Identity
10%

Risk of Profiling Me/Denying Me Benefits Based on My Personal Information
8%

Risk of My Information Being Confused with Someone Else's Identity Information
5%

Given the dramatic rise in identity fraud using stolen and compromised personal information, what types of information are you comfortable sharing to prove you are who you say you are to receive government benefits and services you want or need? (List up to three)

State Driver's License/State ID/Military ID
62%

Date of Birth (DOB)
43%

Home Address/Phone
24%

SSN
20%

Passport/Visa/Permanent Resident Card
19%

Mobile Phone
17%

Biometric – Fingerprint, Facial Recognition, Eye Scan, or Voice Recognition
11%

Selfie Photo
11%

Live Video Call
10%

Birth Certificate
9%

Personal Information – Current/Previous Vehicles, Previous Addresses, Place of Employment, Etc.
6%

Location Data
3%

Other
3%

Household Income

$0 – $9,999
6%

$10,000 – $24,999
10%

$25,000 – $49,999
20%

$50,000 – $74,999
20%

$75,000 – $99,999
15%

$100,000 – $124,999
9%

$125,000 – $149,999
4%

$150,000 – $174,999
3%

$175,000 – $199,999
1%

$200,000 or More
4%

Prefer Not to Answer
8%

Device Type

iOS Phone/Tablet
54%

Android Phone/Tablet
35%

Windows Desktop/Laptop
8%

MacOS Desktop/Laptop
3%

Other Phone/Tablet
0%

Other
0%

Region

South Atlantic
21%

Pacific
16%

East North Central
15%

Middle Atlantic
15%

West South Central
10%

East South Central
6%

Mountain
6%

New England
6%

West North Central
6%

Age

Under 18
0%

18 – 29
22%

30 – 44
26%

45 – 60
28%

Over 60
24%

Gender

Female
52%

Male
48%

2023 Government Identity Verification Survey – Identity Fraud Victims

Has your identity information been misused in an identity crime (identity fraud, identity theft, new accounts opened in your name, etc) in the past 12 months?

No
67%

Yes
33%

How did you learn your identity information was compromised? *(Select all that apply)*

Bank Security Notice
23%

Credit Monitoring/Checked My Credit Report
23%

Data Breach Notice
23%

ID Theft Protection Service
12%

Government Notice (Tax Form, Loan Repayment Notice, Benefit Payment, Etc.)
7%

Law Enforcement Officer
2%

Other
10%
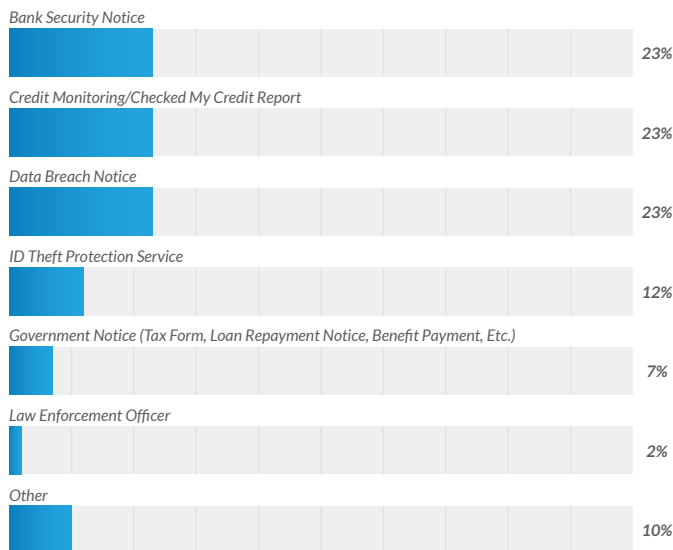
How was your identity misused?

Existing Bank/Credit Card/Loan Account Taken Over
26%

New Bank/Credit Card/Loan Account Opened
24%

Social Media Account Taken Over
13%

I Don't Know
13%

Government Benefit Obtained in My Name (Unemployment, Small Business Loan, Tax Refund, Food Assistance, Etc.)
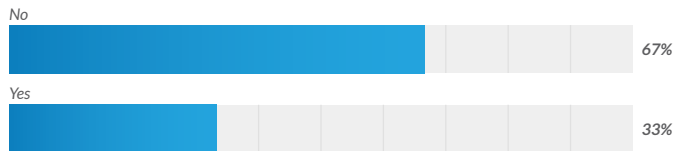**9%**

Driver's License Information Used by Identity Criminal
4%

Other
10%
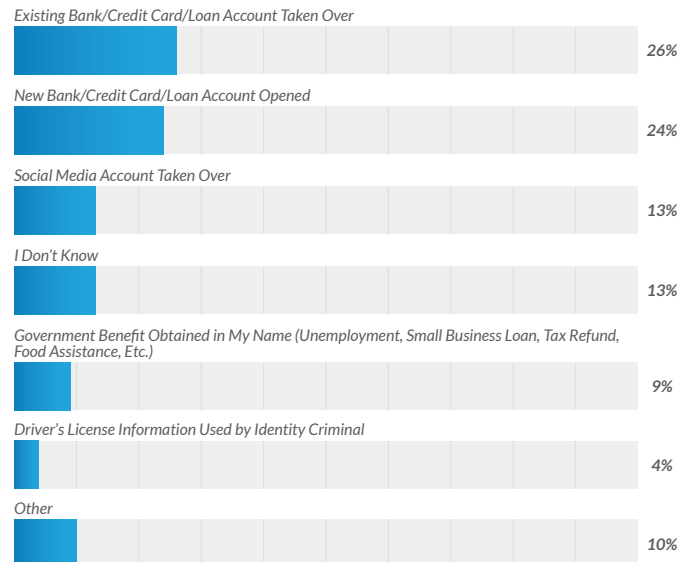
Did you apply for a new government service or access an existing government account in the past 12 months?
(Example: unemployment benefits, small business loans, food or health care assistance, local utility services, state or federal taxes)
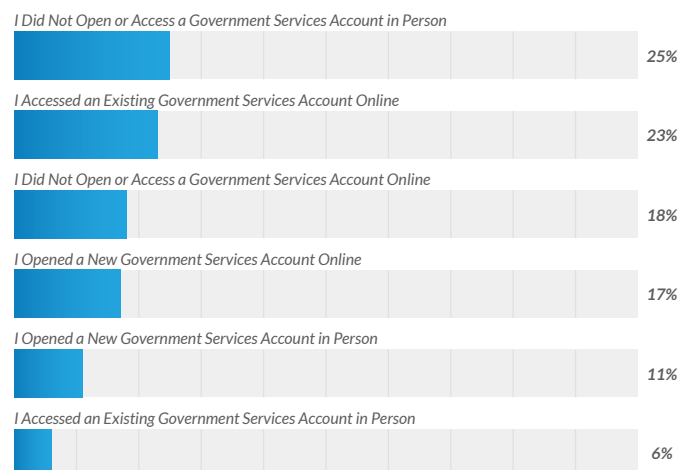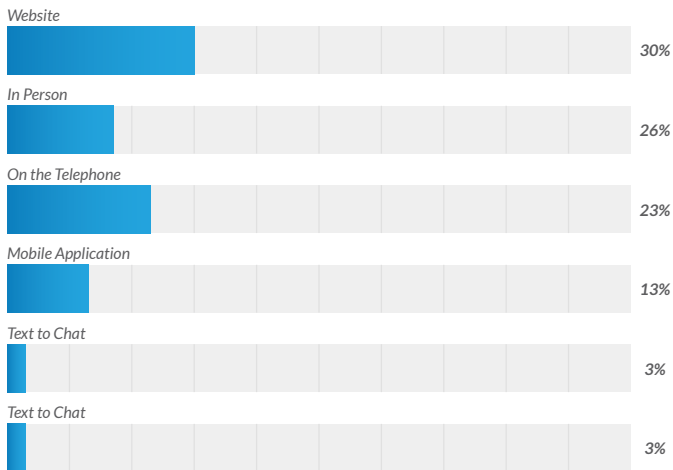
I Did Not Open or Access a Government Services Account in Person
25%

I Accessed an Existing Government Services Account Online
23%

I Did Not Open or Access a Government Services Account Online
18%

I Opened a New Government Services Account Online
17%

I Opened a New Government Services Account in Person
11%

I Accessed an Existing Government Services Account in Person
6%

How do you prefer to interact with government agencies?

Website
30%

In Person
26%

On the Telephone
23%

Mobile Application
13%

Text to Chat
3%

Text to Chat
3%

Were you asked to verify your identity by the government agency at any time?

Yes
83%

No
17%

How important do you believe it is for government agencies and private businesses verify your identity before opening a new account or accessing an existing account?

Extremely Important
42%

Very Important
32%

Somewhat Important
20%

No So Important
5%

Not at All Important
1%
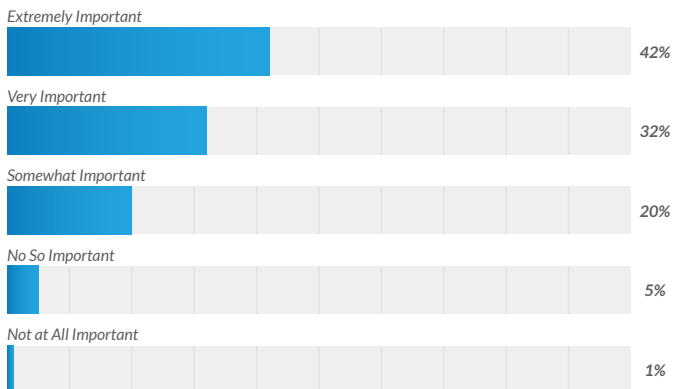
How difficult was it to complete the identity verification process?
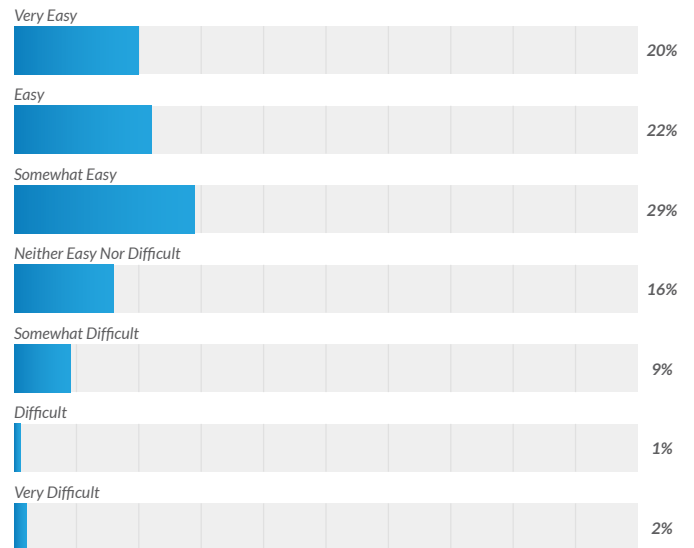
Very Easy
20%

Easy
22%

Somewhat Easy
29%

Neither Easy Nor Difficult
16%

Somewhat Difficult
9%

Difficult
1%

Very Difficult
2%

What information were you asked to provide or verify to prove your identity? *(Select all that apply)*

State Driver's License/State ID/Military ID/Passport/Permanent Resident Card
46%

SSN
44%

Date of Birth (DOB)
38%

Selfie Photo
36%

Birth Certificate
26%

Mobile Phone
25%

Home Address/Phone
22%

Live Video Call
21%

Personal Information – Current/Previous Vehicles, Previous Addresses, Place of Employment, Etc.
16%

Fingerprint, Eye Scan, or Voice Recognition
12%

Live Face Verification at a Kiosk or Video Call
8%

Location Data
6%

Other
2%
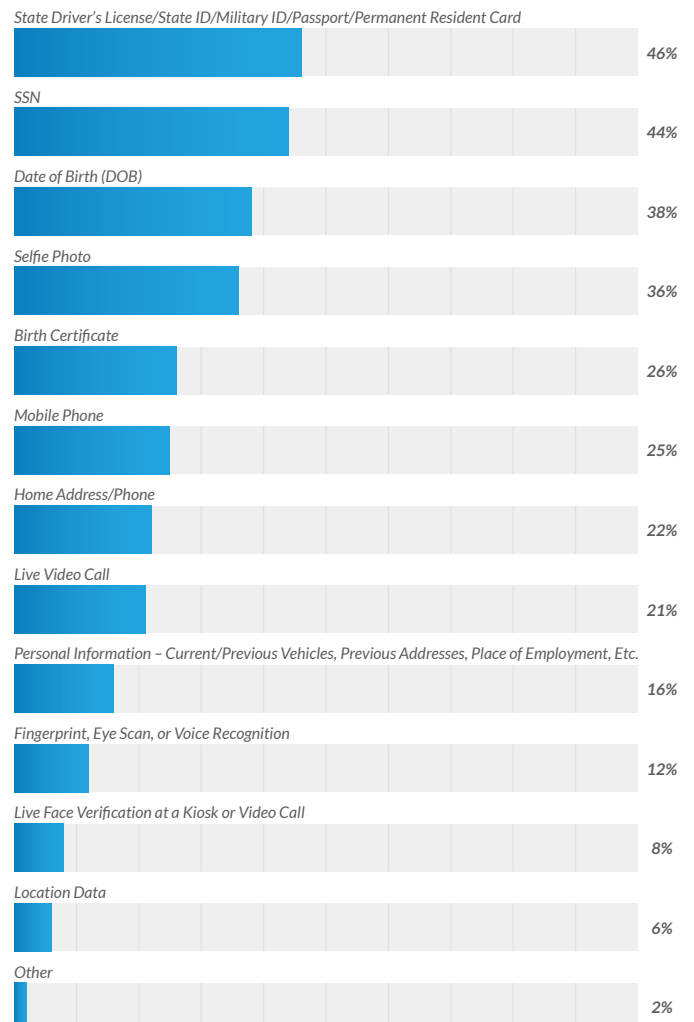
What concerns you most, if anything, about sharing identity information with government agencies that provide services you need or want?
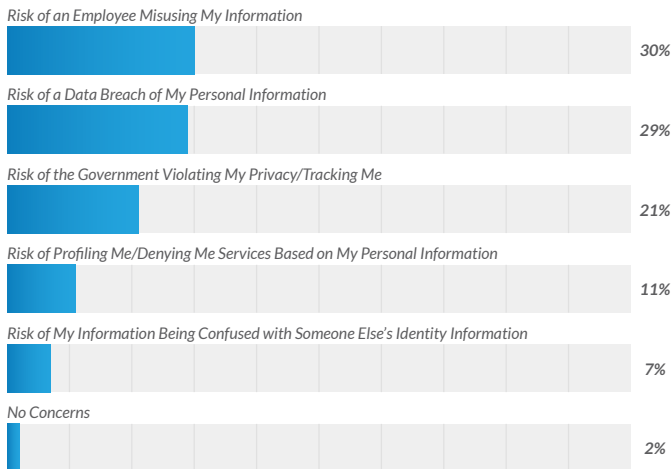
Risk of an Employee Misusing My Information

30%

Risk of a Data Breach of My Personal Information

29%

Risk of the Government Violating My Privacy/Tracking Me

21%

Risk of Profiling Me/Denying Me Services Based on My Personal Information

11%

Risk of My Information Being Confused with Someone Else's Identity Information

7%

No Concerns

2%

What's the strongest reaction you had to the process or experience of verifying your identity? *(Select all that apply)*

Info is at Risk

35%

Reluctant to Share

32%

Curious How Info is Used

28%

No Reaction, I Just Did It

24%

Info is Secure

19%

Refused to Provide

9%

Other

1%
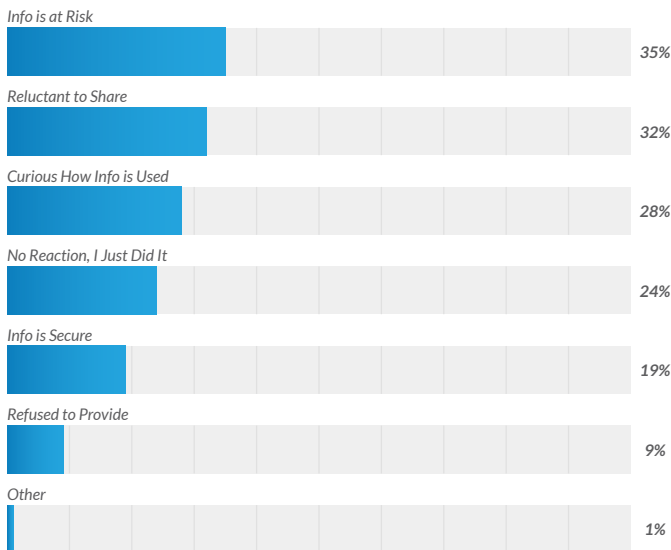
Given the dramatic rise in identity fraud using stolen and compromised personal information, what types of information are you MOST comfortable sharing to prove you are who you say you are to receive the government services you want or need? *(List up to three)*

State Driver's License/State ID/Military ID/Passport/Permanent Resident Card

34%

Selfie Photo

29%

Live Video Call

26%

SSN

25%

Date of Birth (DOB)

23%

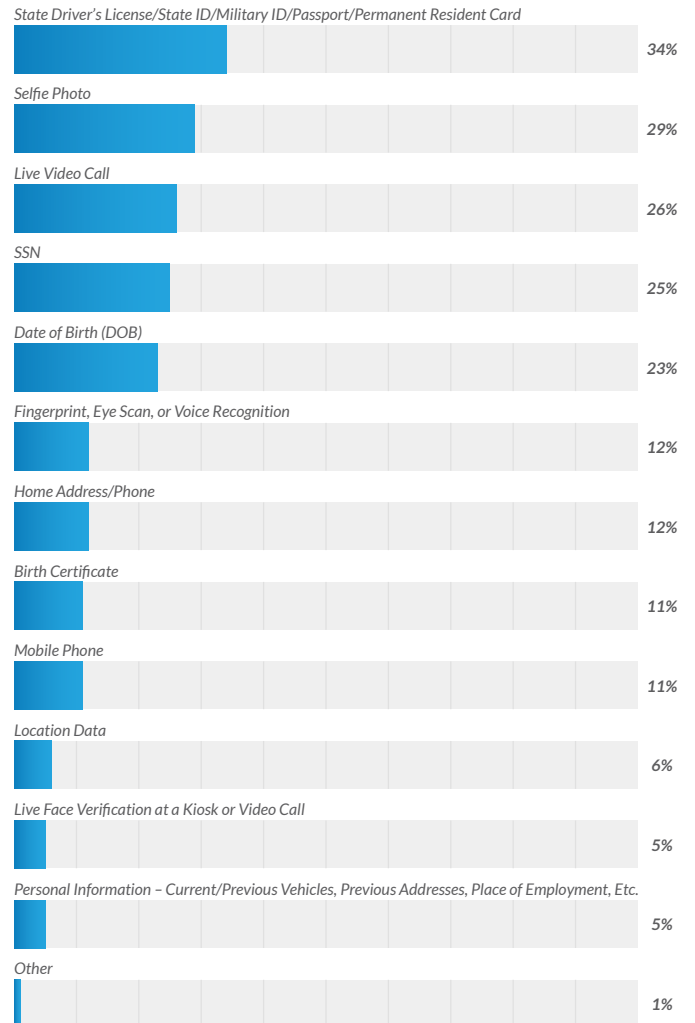*Fingerprint, Eye Scan, or Voice Recognition*

12%

Home Address/Phone

12%

Birth Certificate

11%

Mobile Phone

11%

Location Data

6%

Live Face Verification at a Kiosk or Video Call

5%

Personal Information – Current/Previous Vehicles, Previous Addresses, Place of Employment, Etc.

5%

Other

1%

What types of information are you LEAST comfortable sharing to prove you are who you say you are to receive the government services you want or need? *(List up to three)*

SSN
37%

State Driver's License/State ID/Military ID/Passport/Permanent Resident Card
30%

Selfie Photo
26%

Live Video Call
22%

Birth Certificate
21%

Date of Birth (DOB)
19%

Fingerprint, Eye Scan, or Voice Recognition
13%

Location Data
10%

Home Address/Phone
8%

Personal Information – Current/Previous Vehicles, Previous Addresses, Place of Employment, Etc.
6%

Mobile Phone
5%

Other
1%
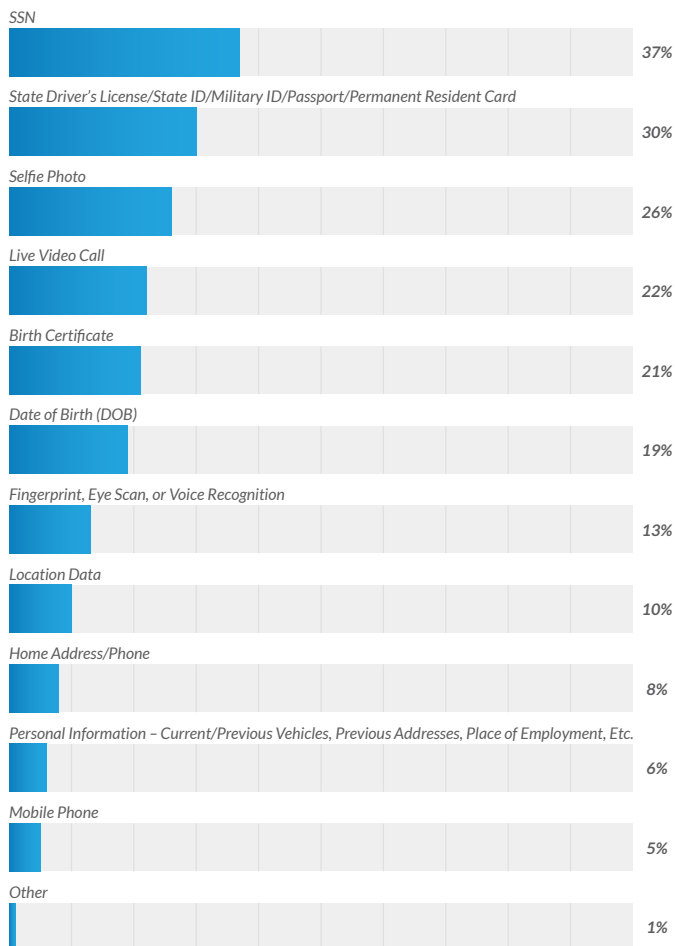
How would you rate your experience verifying your identity?
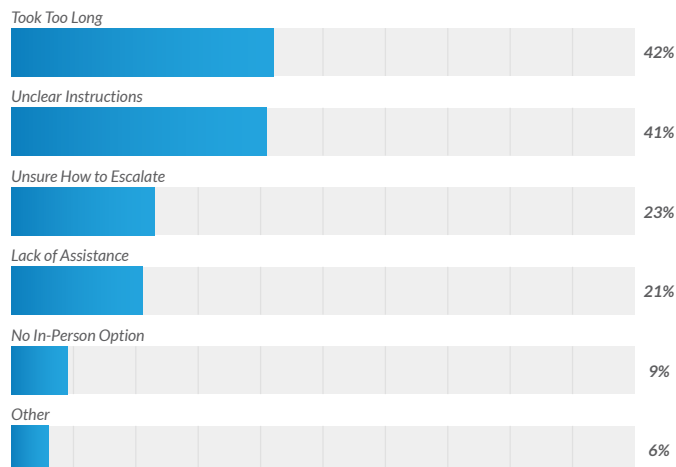
Very Easy
20%

Easy
32%

Neither Easy nor Difficult
25%

Difficult
15%

Very Difficult
5%

Other
1%
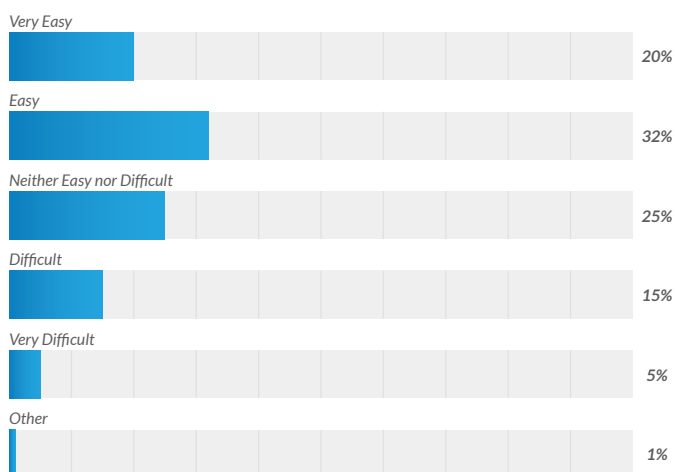
You described your experience as difficult. What was the primary reason you found the process difficult?

Took Too Long
42%

Unclear Instructions
41%

Unsure How to Escalate
23%

Lack of Assistance
21%

No In-Person Option
9%

Other
6%

Age

Under 18
0%

18 – 29
21%

30 – 44
25%

45 – 60
29%

Over 60
25%

Device Type

iOS Phone/Tablet
56%

Android Phone/Tablet
36%

Windows Desktop/Laptop
5%

MacOS Desktop/Laptop
2%

Other Phone/Tablet
0%

Other
0%

Gender

Female
53%

Male
47%

Household Income

$0 – $9,999
8%

$10,000 – $24,999
10%

$25,000 – $49,999
19%

$50,000 – $74,999
18%

$75,000 – $99,999
16%

$100,000 – $124,999
8%

$125,000 – $149,999
5%

$150,000 – $174,999
3%

$175,000 – $199,999
1%

$200,000 or More
4%

Prefer Not to Answer
7%

Region

South Atlantic
19%

Pacific
16%

East North Central
15%

Middle Atlantic
15%

West South Central
10%

East South Central
7%

Mountain
7%

West North Central
6%

New England
5%

Government Executives: Identity Verification in a Post-Pandemic Environment

Has your agency returned to pre-pandemic (March 2019) levels of identity related benefit/services fraud?

Yes	63%
No	37%

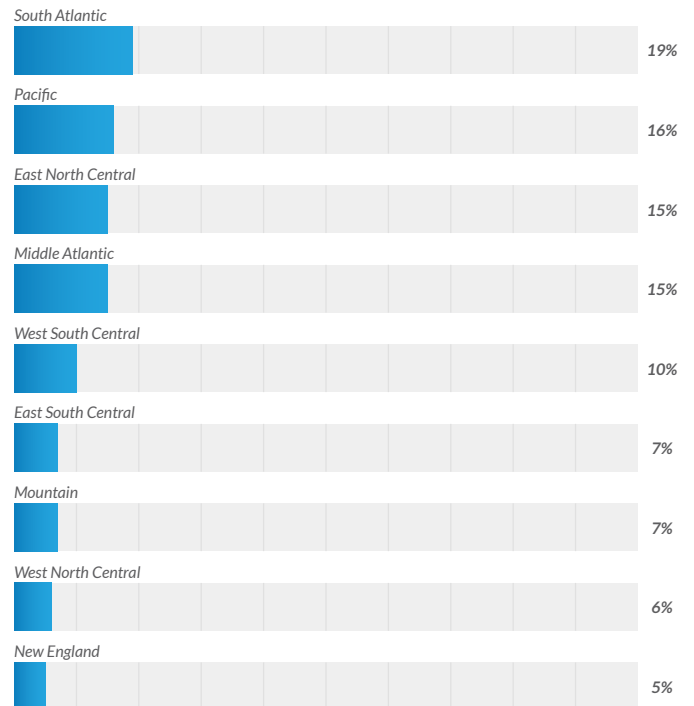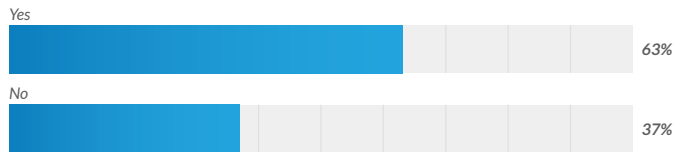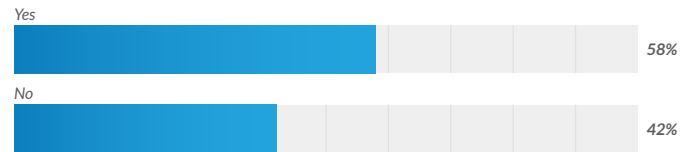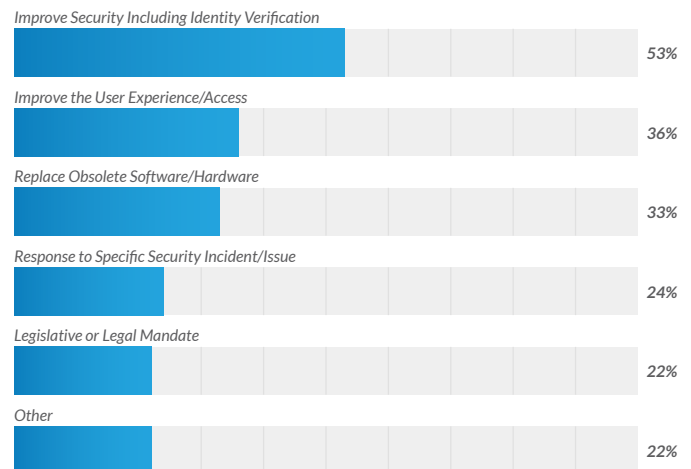## By number of users, please rank the ways recipients access your agency's services & benefits?

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Telephone/Contact Center	23%	30%	34%	11%	2%	0%
Secure Website	38%	10%	25%	23%	2%	3%
Mail	11%	28%	20%	23%	16%	2%
In-Person	25%	13%	16%	23%	16%	7%
Mobile Application	0%	20%	5%	16%	51%	8%
Other	3%	0%	0%	3%	13%	80%

Where do you see the most identity risk and/or fraud in your processes? (Select all that apply)

Online Access	48%
New Account Creation/Application	13%
Account Updates/Changes (Address, Bank Account, Etc.)	7%
Mobile Application	5%
Mail	5%
In-Person Access	3%
Telephone/Contact Center	3%
Urgent Requests/Exception Processing	2%
Other	15%

Have you modernized the technologies that allow recipients to access services since January 2022?

Yes	58%
No	42%

What was the primary reason you modernized technologies that allow recipients to access services?

Improve Security Including Identity Verification	53%
Improve the User Experience/Access	36%
Replace Obsolete Software/Hardware	33%
Response to Specific Security Incident/Issue	24%
Legislative or Legal Mandate	22%
Other	22%

What primary change, if any, have you made to your identity verification process(es) since January 2022?

We Made No Changes	29%
We Verify Identity During Access	20%
We Engaged a Private, Third-Party to Provide Identity Verification	16%
We Verify Identity Each Time a Person Logs in to Their Account	14%
We Joined a Multi-Agency Single Sign-On (SSO) Platform	6%
We Added an Escalation Process	2%
Other	14%
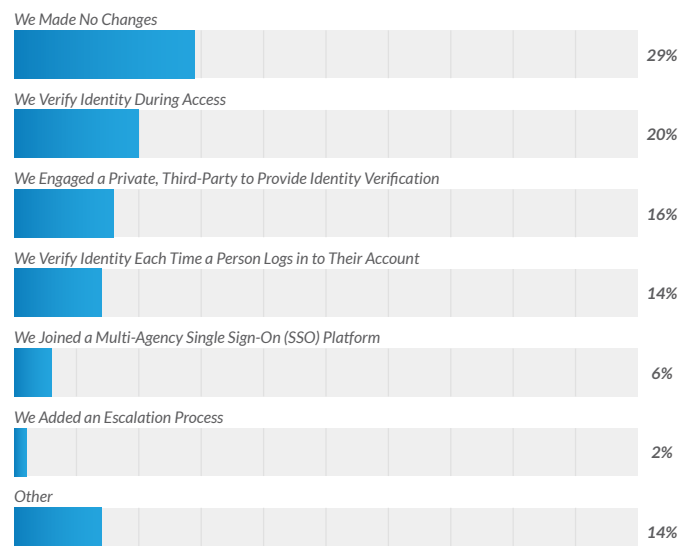
What resulted from the changes made to your technology and identity verification process(es)? *(Select all that apply)*

ID Rejection Up
23%

Fraud Apps Down
20%

ATO Decreased
17%

No Change
17%

CX Declined
15%

CX Improved
15%

ID Acceptance Up
12%

Fraud Apps Up
7%

ATO Increased
2%

Other
20%
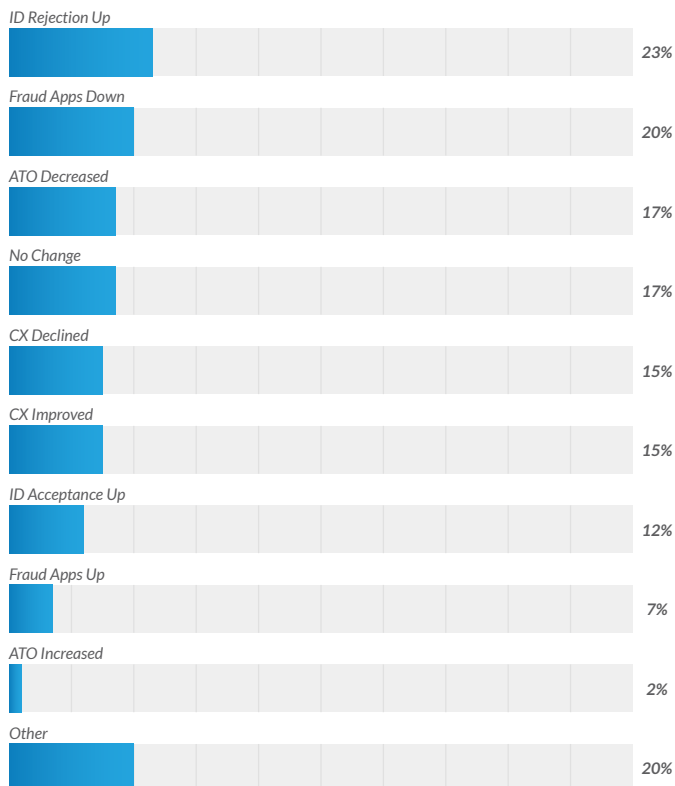
What identity information is required for recipients to verify their identity? *(Select all that apply)*

Driver's License. Etc.
76%

DOB
70%

SSN
70%

Passport, Etc.
51%

Home Address/Phone
49%

Birth Certificate
35%

Mobile Phone
30%

Personal Information (KBA)
19%

Biometric (Non-Facial)
14%

Selfie
14%

Live Video
8%

Location Data
8%

Live Facial Verification
3%

Other
16 %
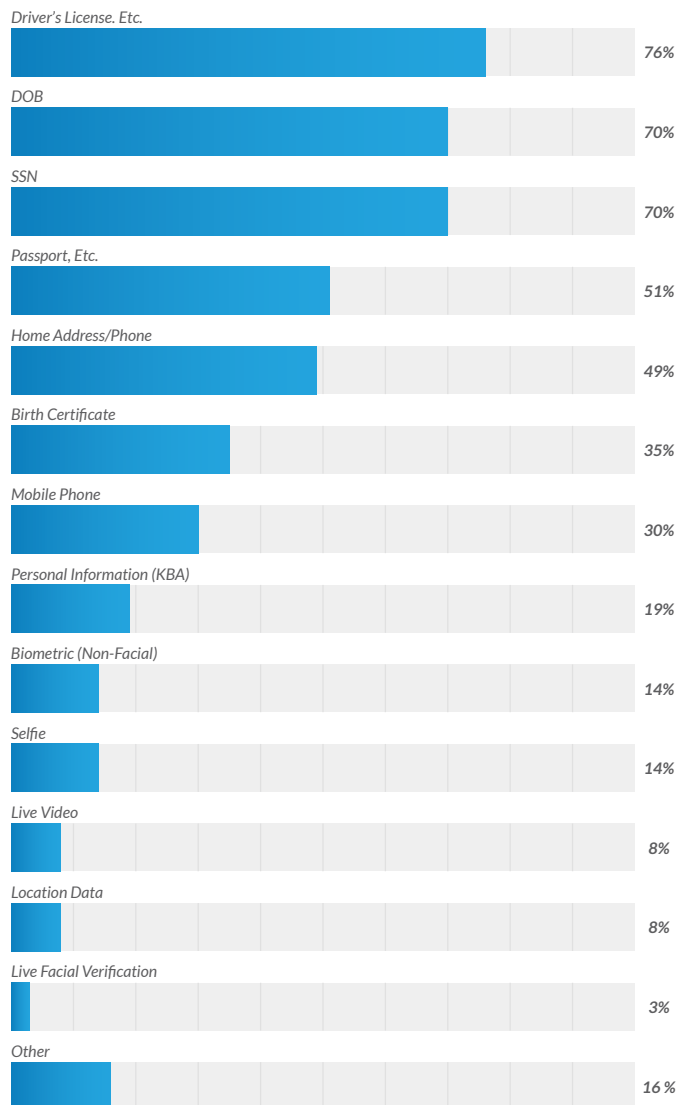
Which technologies does your agency currently use or is considering adding to enhance information security and/or recipient experience?

Currently Use

Credential Verification
	100%

Behavioral Biometrics
| 100% |

Facial Verification
| 100% |

Facial Recognition
| 100% |

Liveness Checks
| 100% |

Device Possession
| 100% |

Considering Use

Credential Verification
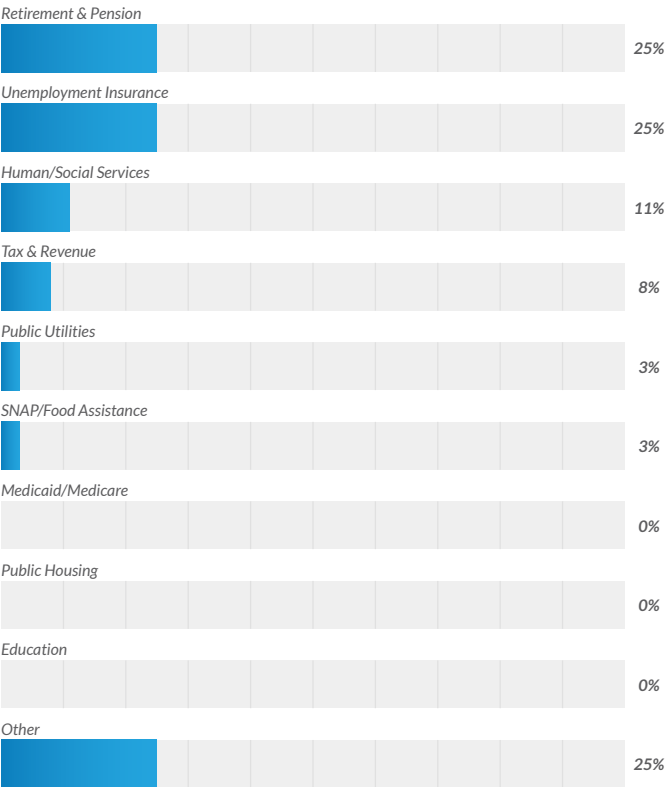| 25% | 25% | 50% |

Behavioral Biometrics
| 33% | 67% |

Facial Verification
| 100% |

Facial Recognition
| 100% |

Liveness Checks
| 100% |

Device Possession
| 33% | 67% |

Legend:
- In Use
- Next 3 Months
- Next 6 Months
- Next 9 Months
- Next 12 Months
- More Than 1 Year

Please rank the following in order of priority for your agency.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Cyber Security	50%	27%	14%	9%	0%	0%
Victim Assistance	14%	23%	36%	9%	18%	0%
Recipient Experience	18%	27%	27%	27%	0%	0%
Equitable Access	14%	9%	18%	41%	14%	5%
Resource Management/Allocation	5%	14%	5%	14%	64%	0%
Other	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	95%

Please select your agency type from the list below.

Agency Type	Percentage
Retirement & Pension	25%
Unemployment Insurance	25%
Human/Social Services	11%
Tax & Revenue	8%
Public Utilities	3%
SNAP/Food Assistance	3%
Medicaid/Medicare	0%
Public Housing	0%
Education	0%
Other	25%

Please select the level of government you represent.

Level	Percentage
State	47%
Federal	22%
Local	22%
Territorial	0%
Tribal	0%
Other	8%