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For Two Thirds of Americans, the U.S. Government Does Not Communicate Well about Its Agencies' Benefits and Services

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Washington, DC – Two thirds of adults (65%) feel that the U.S. government does not do a good job of communicating what benefits and services its agencies provide to its citizens, according to a new telephone poll of 1,000 adults conducted by Ipsos Public Affairs on behalf of Siegel+Gale. Only one third (34%) rate that the government's performance in this area as good.

- Majorities across gender and age lines and in nearly all demographic groups – with the notable exception of Hispanics (46%) – have a negative view of the way the Federal communicates with the public about the benefits and services offered by the various federal agencies.

However, when asked about six specific federal agencies – the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid (CMS), the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA), the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – opinions tend to be more positive. Yet while awareness of these agencies is high (at least eight in ten have heard of each), the survey results suggest that few have a good understanding of the wide range of services that they offer.

- Among the six agencies, the FDA and the EPA are those that are best known, best liked, and most perceived as having an impact on Americans' daily lives.
- The agency viewed least favorably among the six is the FTC and there appears to be a good deal of confusion around the role that the FTC plays.
- The CMS enjoys higher levels of familiarity and favorability among its beneficiaries than it does among the general public.
- While those who have a driver's license tend to have a better opinion of the NHTSA and to know it better in general than those who do not drive, awareness levels for specific NHTSA services are similar among drivers and non-drivers.
- Majorities view the TSA favorably and feel that it has an impact on their daily lives, though this is more common among more affluent adults. Few seem to recognize that the TSA's responsibilities extend beyond airport security.

The survey shows that Americans tend to understand the basic functions of each agency, but many are unaware of the breadth of services provided by these federal agencies. Upon learning more about the agencies, respondents were much more likely to recognize the impact that the agencies have on their day-to-day living as well as to view these agencies in a more positive light.



These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted March 11-15, 2010. For the survey, a nationally representative, randomly selected sample of exactly 1,000 adults aged 18 and older across the United States was interviewed by Ipsos. With a sample of this size, the results are considered accurate within 3.1 percentage points, 19 times out of 20, of what they would have been had the entire adult population in the U.S. been polled. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error, and measurement error. These data were weighted to ensure that the sample's composition reflects that of the actual U.S. population according to U.S. Census figures. Respondents had the option to be interviewed in English or Spanish.

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