Reinventing the **Government Call Center** for Mission Impact

By prioritizing secure phone communications and embracing modern tools and technologies, agencies can help rebuild trust, reduce fraud and improve the constituent experience.

A Scoop News Group Report

While government services are increasingly moving online, the phone channel remains vital. For millions of Americans, especially those navigating complex benefit systems like Social Security or SNAP or getting help with state unemployment services, the phone is the most personal and direct way to engage with government agencies managing those programs. But trust in that channel is fraying.

Spoofed calls, impersonation scams and rising volumes of robocalls have made it harder for constituents to distinguish legitimate calls from malicious ones. Meanwhile, agencies continue to rely on phone outreach to deliver essential updates, verify identity and respond to urgent constituent needs. The challenge lies in restoring trust to the phone channel, improving its reliability, and ensuring it delivers on both constituent experience and program integrity.
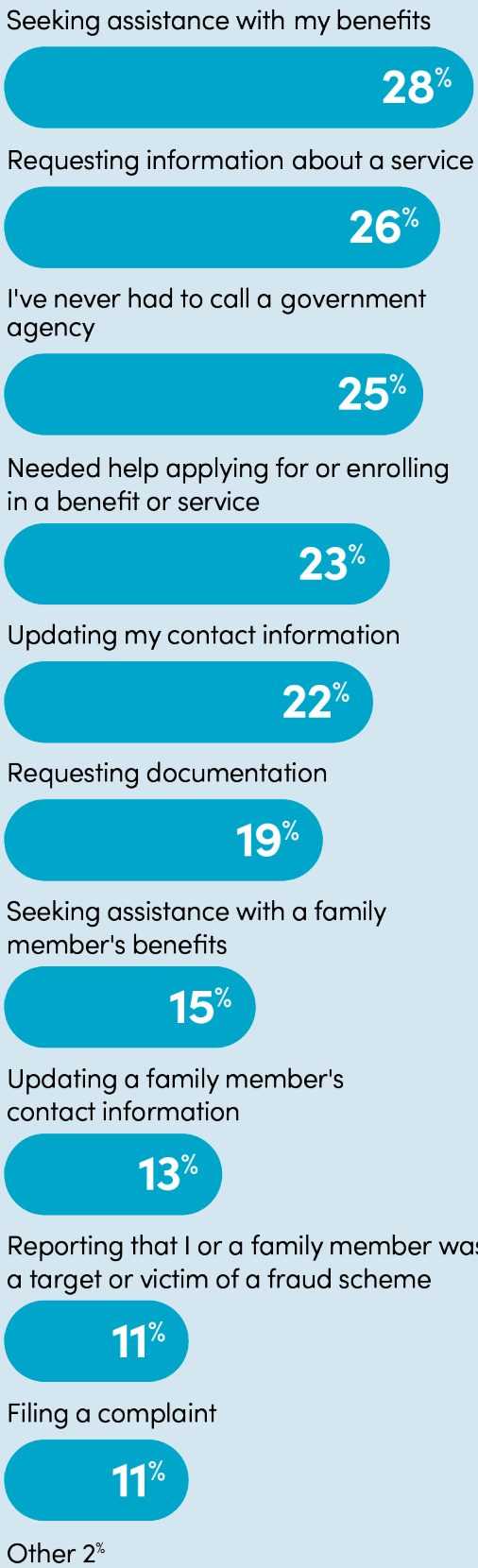
To accomplish this, experts say government agencies should embrace new technologies, standards-based protocols and risk intelligence to modernize their call center operations and restore trust in phone-based communication.

A lack of confidence in government phone calls

Public skepticism around unknown calls is well documented. TransUnion's **2025 Government CX Consumer Report** found 74% of consumers won't answer phone calls from numbers they don't recognize. And even when they expect a call from a government agency, 62% said they won't answer a call from an unidentified number because they mistakenly believe legitimate calls from the government are always identified on caller ID. This reluctance undermines agencies' abilities to deliver timely services or verify eligibility.

Compounding the issue are impersonation scams: 32% of consumers surveyed reported receiving a scam call from someone claiming to be a government official, while 18% weren't sure

Reasons for Calling Government Agency

Seeking assistance with my benefits
28%

Requesting information about a service
26%

I've never had to call a government agency
25%

Needed help applying for or enrolling in a benefit or service
23%

Updating my contact information
22%

Requesting documentation
19%

Seeking assistance with a family member's benefits
15%

Updating a family member's contact information
13%

Reporting that I or a family member was a target or victim of a fraud scheme
11%

Filing a complaint
11%

Other 2%

Source: TransUnion Public Sector consumer survey

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they were targeted. Among those, one in four reported falling victim to identity theft, direct payment fraud or account takeover.

"This isn't just a constituent problem anymore," says Greg Schlichter, Director for Public Sector Research and Consulting at TransUnion. "These scams are evolving into vectors for account takeover. Once criminals gather enough data from impersonation schemes, they can call back posing as that individual and divert benefits or payments. That's now a direct threat to agencies."

Why the phone channel still matters

Despite efforts to expand online self-service tools and chatbots, the phone remains the go-to channel for many interactions. Constituents use agency call centers to learn about and apply to programs and get help managing benefits. The decision to call versus using another channel like email is because consumers prefer speaking to people — often believing human contact is the quickest, most effective way to address an issue.

Although constituents rely on the phone, a 2024 TransUnion survey of government call center officials also revealed a critical gap: While improving constituent experience was ranked as a top priority, many agencies placed far less emphasis on foundational phone channel elements like caller authentication, branded calling and data hygiene practices. However, improving call authentication and answer rates can reduce that burden, increase efficiency and help agencies meet customer service benchmarks.

New tools and protocols for a trusted call experience

Technologies now exist to provide both outbound caller transparency and inbound fraud detection. By engaging with TransUnion, an agency can, for example:

- **Use branded caller ID** to display their agency name and call reason on recipients' phones, helping to improve answer rates.

- **Ensure caller name optimization (CNO)** across devices and carriers to maintain consistency and reduce confusion.
- **Monitor outbound number reputation,** identifying when a number is being misused or mischaracterized.
- **Analyze inbound call risk signals,** including call origin, device behavior, VoIP routing and fraud association.
- **Route high-risk calls to specialized agents,** allowing faster resolution for low-risk calls and additional scrutiny where needed.
- **Authenticate inbound callers** with identity verification tools that don't rely solely on personal information.

"Agencies aren't fully leveraging these capabilities," says Schlichter. "They're not analyzing available risk signals or routing calls based on risk level, which is a missed opportunity to both reduce fraud and improve customer service."

According to an analysis of call traffic conducted by TransUnion, only 25% of calls purporting to be from US government numbers are signed as legitimate. That leaves a significant gap in public confidence.

"It's a credibility problem," says Scott Straub, Senior Director for Public Sector Market Planning at TransUnion. "If a constituent gets a call from a number labeled 'US Government,' but it's unsigned [number is not shown on the phone screen], they have no way of knowing it's authentic. That undermines trust in the entire system."

That's why Straub advises agencies to provide a list of **inbound-only** (e.g., helpdesk numbers that the public calls) and **outbound-only** (e.g., numbers used for call-backs or verifications) numbers to a trusted telecom provider like TransUnion. By taking this step, agencies can:

1. **Stop spoofed calls:** TransUnion can help block attempts to use an inbound-only number for

an outbound call. This prevents scammers from using agency numbers to impersonate government representatives

2. **Enhance public trust:** Legitimate agency calls can be authenticated and display proper caller information, helping constituents recognize real communications and avoid scams.

More importantly, this step doesn't require agencies to overhaul their systems. They provide a list of phone numbers — TransUnion does the rest using its deep integration across more than 90% of the US telecom network.

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Senior Director for Public Sector Market Planning, TransUnion

Results in action

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) faced a significant challenge in reaching veterans by phone due to issues like spam tagging, call blocking and mislabeled caller IDs. As a result, many veterans missed critical calls about their benefits, leading to reduced service effectiveness and increased operational costs. To address this, the VA worked with TransUnion to enhance trust in the phone channel and improve communication efficiency.

TransUnion audited the VA's phone outreach strategy and deployed its Trusted Call Solutions, including Caller Name Optimization (CNO) and Branded Call Display (BCD). These tools helped

Awareness is important — but it's not enough

Awareness campaigns like the Social Security Administration's and the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency's annual "Slam the Scam" Day help raise public consciousness around impersonation threats. But relying solely on consumer vigilance isn't sufficient.

"There's this mindset that because the agency isn't directly harmed when a scammer impersonates it, it's not the agency's problem," says TransUnion Senior Advisor for Federal Market Planning Michael Barnes. "But these scams damage public trust, degrade service experiences and open the door to more sophisticated fraud."

He says while educating the public is helpful, the bigger opportunity is strengthening the call center infrastructure of state and federal agencies by taking proactive steps, such as conducting an audit of inbound and outbound phone numbers and incorporating risk intelligence into call flows.

verify and correctly label the VA's outbound calls, minimizing spam tags and ensuring calls displayed recognizable and trusted caller information across mobile and landline devices. TransUnion also provided real-time monitoring and alerts on call reputation to mitigate issues proactively.

Within six months of implementation, the VA saw a 20% increase in answered calls and 35% reduction in overall outbound call volume for one program. In addition, spam tagging was mitigated on nearly 7 million calls. These improvements allowed the VA to reach more veterans more quickly, improving engagement and care delivery, and making better use of agency resources.

Reducing waste, improving experiences

As the VA case study highlights, improving trust in the phone channel isn't just about fraud — it's also about reducing friction and inefficiencies that weigh down agency operations.

When calls are mischaracterized as spam or go unanswered, agencies spend more time redialing or processing duplicate inquiries. Similarly, staff may spend extra time authenticating legitimate callers when inbound calls aren't properly screened, adding time and frustration on both ends.

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"It's about enabling low-friction, high-confidence interactions," says Michael Barnes, Senior Advisor for Federal Market Planning at TransUnion. "When the system knows it's me calling, the process is faster, the experience is better, and staff can focus on higher-risk cases."

According to Barnes, even a modest time savings (say, 30 seconds per call) can yield significant efficiency gains at scale. For high-volume agencies, these improvements can translate into thousands of saved staff hours annually.

Recommendations for call center leaders

To begin strengthening their phone channel, government agencies should consider taking these steps:

1. **Conduct an audit of current phone numbers.** Determine which are used for inbound vs. outbound calls and register them accordingly to prevent spoofing.

2. **Implement branded caller ID where available.** Display the agency name and call reason to improve answer rates and establish credibility with constituents.

3. **Monitor call reputation and tagging trends.** Use analytics to detect when legitimate numbers are mislabeled or marked as spam

4. **Incorporate risk-based routing into call flows.** Direct high-risk inbound calls (e.g., an incoming phone call flagged as potentially malicious or fraudulent, often due to unusual call patterns, suspicious caller ID or known fraud destinations) to specialized agents and streamline authentication for low-risk ones

5. **Use multiple data signals for authentication.** Combine call metadata, device intelligence and behavioral risk indicators to assess identity, not just PII.

6. **Coordinate across departments.** Align call center, fraud prevention, CX and IT teams around shared goals for program integrity and constituent trust.

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7. **Track performance.** Monitor metrics like answer rates, call volumes, resolution times and fraud mitigation outcomes.

As agencies expand digital services and push toward omnichannel engagement, it's easy to overlook the phone. However, research and operational realities suggest the telephone remains one of the most critical touchpoints for government programs. "The phone channel is still the most important channel," says Barnes. "It's not going away — and it shouldn't be ignored."

Modernizing this channel also doesn't require a massive overhaul. It starts with better visibility, clearer branding and smarter data use. With agencies facing growing mandates to improve constituent service, reduce fraud and operate more efficiently, strengthening call center operations may be one of the most impactful and achievable steps they can take.

Learn how to achieve your mission more efficiently with identity solutions designed for the public sector.

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