



NEWS RELEASE

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American Public Views Large Institutions' Security Capabilities as Not Too Big to Fail

A recent national opinion trend survey by InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. revealed that Americans continue to give low confidence ratings to the security and accuracy of information in most major civic institutions' computer systems.

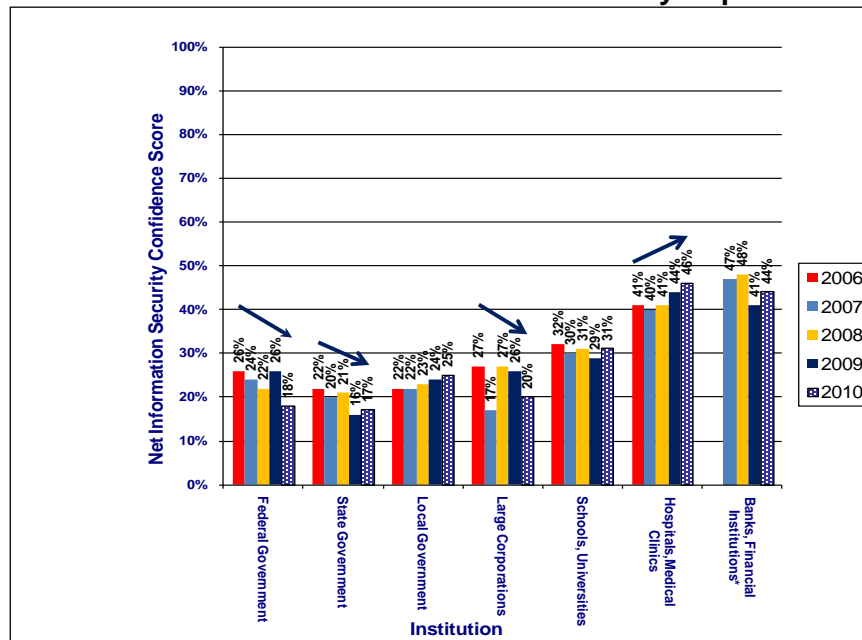
M. Glenn Newkirk, President of InfoSENTRY and research director for this annual national opinion survey, said, "Public confidence in the ability of the Federal government, state governments, and large corporations has declined over the past five years. During the period of our trend surveys, only the public confidence in information security capabilities of hospitals and medical institutions has increased significantly to the point of equality with public confidence in the information security capabilities of banks and financial institutions."

InfoSENTRY Services, Inc. contracted Opinion Research Corporation (ORC), a leading national opinion research company, to ask a random sample of adult respondents in the continental U.S. the following question in January CARAVAN® surveys from 2006 through 2010:

"Now I am going to read you some types of organizations and governments. As I read each one, using a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means very low confidence and 5 means very high confidence, please tell me how confident you are that the information in these organizations' computer systems is accurate and secure."

Figure 1 contains the net average information security public confidence levels for seven major civic institution groups covered in InfoSENTRY's national telephone survey over the past five years.

Figure 1
Net Confidence Levels in Information Security Capabilities



*The 2006 survey did not include banks/financial institutions as a response category.

Newkirk noted that, “The levels of public confidence in the information security and accuracy capabilities of banks and financial institutions have remained right on the borderline of a net positive (over 50%) level. The near collapse of these institutions’ very survival during the Great Recession of 2007 – 2010 has not damaged significantly the public’s confidence in their information security practices—yet.”

He continued, “On the other hand, public confidence in medical institutions’ information security and accuracy capabilities, now at 46%, has grown over the past five years to parity levels with those of banks and financial institutions, now at 44%. It is certainly possible that the public’s past decade of experience with HIPAA privacy and confidentiality notices, which have become commonplace in most medical offices, has taken hold. These reminders assure the public that someone is guarding the security and accuracy of the information in these institutions’ computer systems. There are few other parts of American life where we get such routine reminders.”

Newkirk commented, “Local governments and major educational institutions maintained their net levels of public confidence in their information security and accuracy capabilities, now at 25% and 31% respectively, over the five years of our surveys. These levels of confidence in information security practices are low, but have remained steady.”

Three clear trends in the surveys led Newkirk to note that, “Americans clearly do not believe that large institutions are too big to fail in their capabilities to keep information in their computer systems accurate and secure. First, public confidence in large corporations’ information systems’ security and accuracy has gyrated the most of any institution in the surveys, but overall has dropped from 27% to 20% over five years.”

He continued by pointing out that, “Second, in spite of the passage of the Federal Information Security Management Act in 2002, the public’s net confidence in Federal information systems’ security and accuracy has declined from an already low 26% in 2006 to 18% in 2010. In part, it is likely that this decline comes from the generally falling approval ratings for the Federal government. What might have been an ‘Obama bounce’ in the January 2009 survey after the General Election in 2008 has dissipated.

“Third, the challenge for state government information security practices is likely to get even more acute. The net public confidence in state government computer systems’ security and accuracy is now at 17%. And it is at the state level that budget cuts are likely to be felt directly by the information security professionals. With public confidence already declining in the state governments’ capabilities to assure the security and accuracy of the information in their computer systems, further cuts in state government information security and audit expenditures will make it even more difficult for state governments to take steps that will help stop the decline.”

Newkirk concluded by saying, “The Federal government, state government, and large corporations are simply failing to instill confidence in the American public that they can maintain the security and accuracy of data in their computer systems. This is the opinion environment regarding information security in which large government and corporate institutions will have to implement new systems and maintain current systems. They face the challenge of having to establish a solid support base upon which they can build public and customer trust in their information systems’ accuracy and security.”

Interviewing for this Opinion Research Center CARAVAN® Survey was completed during the period January 12 – 15, 2006, January 4 – 7, 2007, January 3 – 6, 2008, January 8 – 11, 2009, and January 7 – 10, 2010. All respondents were 18 years of age and older, living in private households in the continental United States. The margin of error is plus or minus three percentage ($\pm 3\%$) points. Opinion Research Center (ORC) is one of the best known and most established opinion research organizations in the United States.

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