

# 2021 FRTIB Participant Satisfaction Survey

Presented By  
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**Thrift Savings Plan**

FEDERAL RETIREMENT THRIFT INVESTMENT BOARD  
tsp.gov

tsp4gov @



# Agenda



**Survey Overview**



**Participant Satisfaction**



**Contributions**



**Withdrawals, Transfers and Roll-ins**



**Communications and Interactions with TSP**



**Potential Features**



**Recommendations**



**Appendix**

# 2021 Survey Overview

## Year prior surveys conducted

2006, 2009, 2013, 2017, 2020, 2021

## Fielding dates of survey

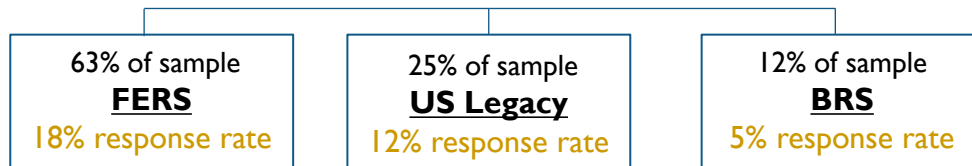
2 Mar -10 May 2021

## Participant Groups Surveyed

FERS, US Legacy, BRS

## Overall response rate

15%

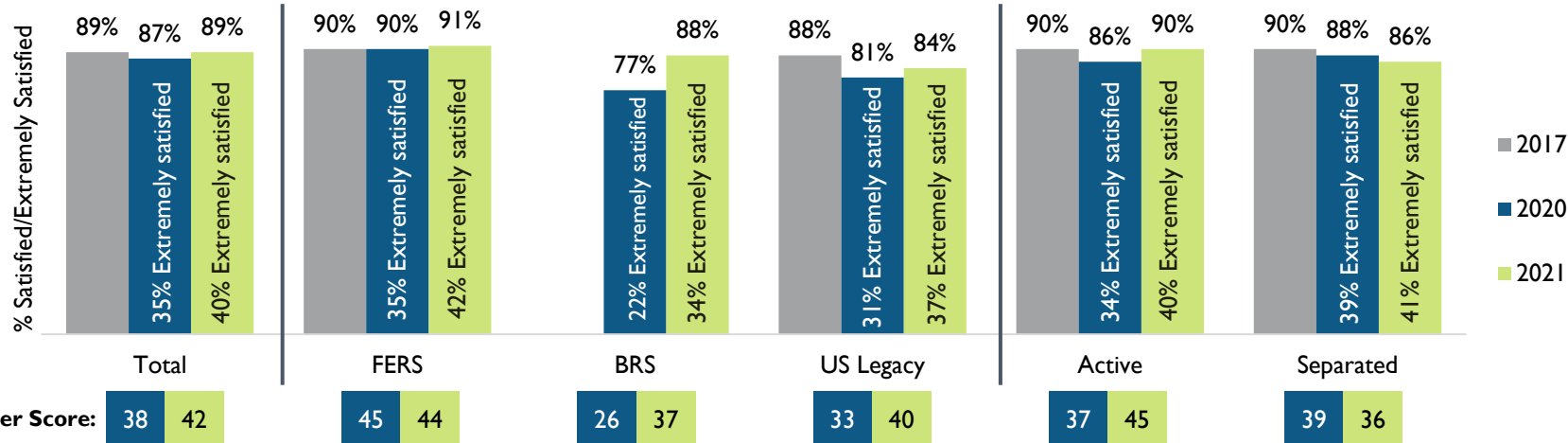


## Key Takeaways

- The 2021 survey is the seventh since 2006
- Growing BRS population
- Focus of survey was feature satisfaction (with some emphasis on withdrawals behaviors in retirement)

# Participant Satisfaction: Trend 2017-2021

How satisfied are you with the TSP overall?



## Key Takeaways

- For the past five years, participant satisfaction remains above 87%
- Uniformed Services participants show increase from last year, both lag FERS satisfaction.
- TSP satisfaction remains above the 84% of American workers satisfied with their retirement plan.\*

# Satisfaction With Aspects of TSP

How Satisfied Are You With Each of The Following?			Net Satisfied (Sat/Ext Sat)		
		■ Satisfied ■ Extremely Satisfied	2021	2020	2017
<b>Overall</b>	The Thrift Savings Plan overall	49% 40%	89%	87%	90%
<b>Investments/ Withdrawals</b>	Security of your account on tsp.gov	44% 45%	89%	89%	87%
	Variety of investment options**	47% 30%	77%	76%	77%
	Ability to take a loan from TSP account (Active only)	37% 37%	74%	72%	75%
	Flexibility of withdrawal options**	40% 27%	67%	67%	62%
	Ability to transfer money FROM other retirement plans	36% 25%	61%	63%	64%
	Ability to transfer money TO other retirement plans	34% 22%	56%	58%	N/A
<b>Comm- unication</b>	Annual account statement	47% 41%	88%	89%	89%
	Plan Information on TSP website (tsp.gov)**	50% 32%	82%	80%	83%
	Access to My Account**	43% 35%	78%	84%	81%

\*\*Indicate top drivers of satisfaction



## Key Takeaways

- Satisfaction with most aspects of TSP remained stable; access to My Account declined in 2021.
- Security, statements & info on TSP.gov rated highest while ability to transfer money in/out & flexibility of withdrawals rated lowest.
- Ability to take a loan satisfaction recovered from a drop in 2020 satisfaction.
- Access to My Account, investment options, flexibility of withdrawals and the tsp.gov remain most influential in overall TSP satisfaction.

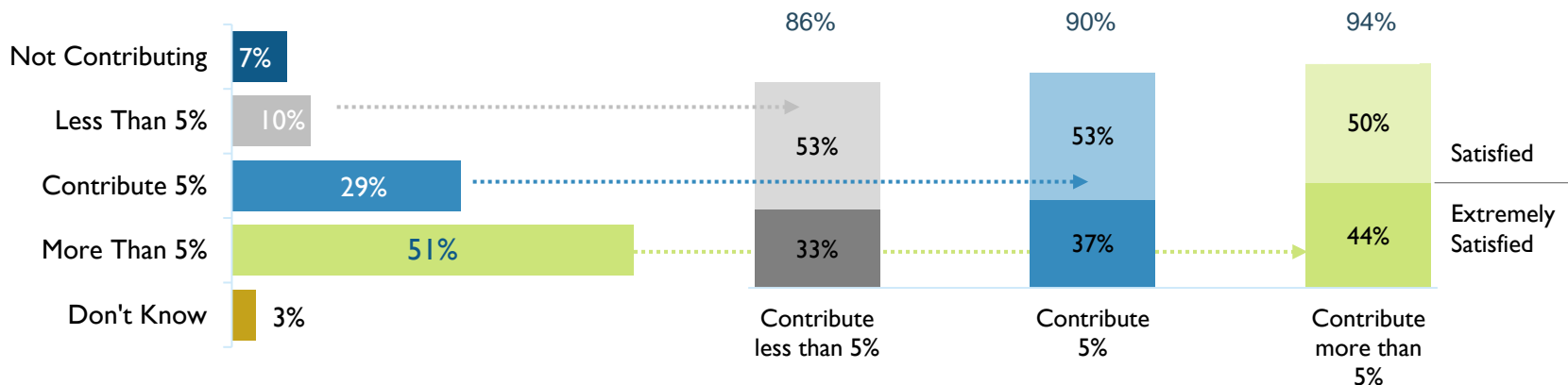


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# Contributions and Satisfaction

Which of the following best describes how much you contribute to the TSP? \*  
(Among Active Participants)

How satisfied are you with the TSP overall?  
By self-reported contribution amount  
(Among Active Participants)

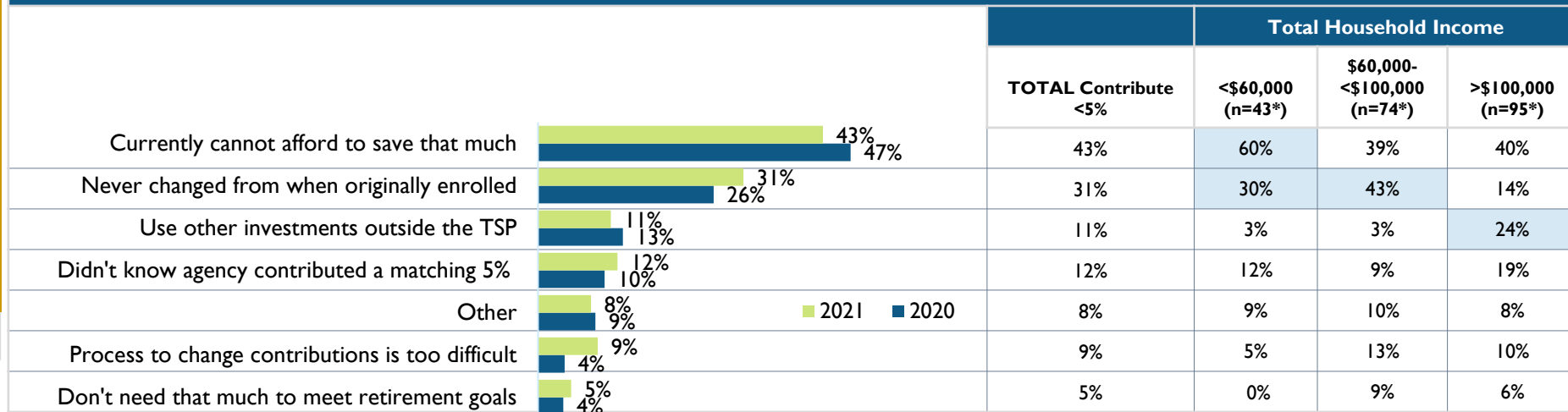


## Key Takeaways

- Participants who contribute more than 5% are most satisfied overall with TSP.
- 44% contributing more than 5% of basic pay are extremely satisfied vs. 36% of those contributing lower amounts.
- Participation rates continue to climb.

# Reasons for Not Contributing at Least 5% of Basic Pay

Please explain why you are currently contributing less than 5% of your basic pay?  
(Active Participants who do not contribute at least 5%)

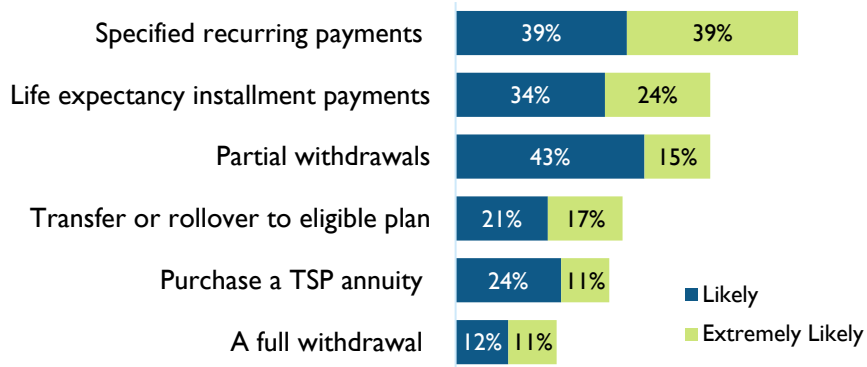


## Key Takeaways

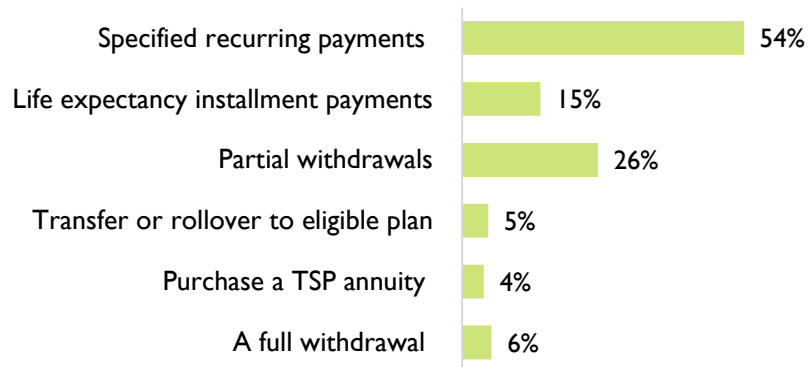
- Majority of the 10% contributing less than 5% of basic pay cite affordability and inertia as reasons.
- Affordability is trending down from 2017 when 53% said they couldn't afford to save 5%.
- 31% said they just never changed the amount — providing support for decision to increase default contribution rate.

# Withdrawals Options: Planned Versus Do

**% Extremely/Likely TO USE Withdrawal Option**  
(Among Active and Separated participants who have not begun withdrawal process)



**Which one or combination of the following withdrawal options DID you use to make withdrawals?**  
(Among Separated participants who have begun withdrawal process)



## Key Takeaways

- Participants say they are likely to use recurring specified payments, partial payments & life expectancy installments as the top three planned choices.
- What participants say they will do and actually do are similarly ranked.
- Significantly more participants think they will transfer, buy an annuity or take a full withdrawal than actually do.

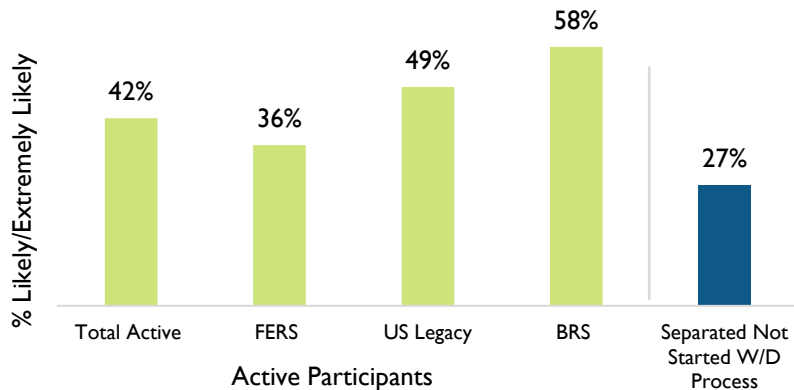


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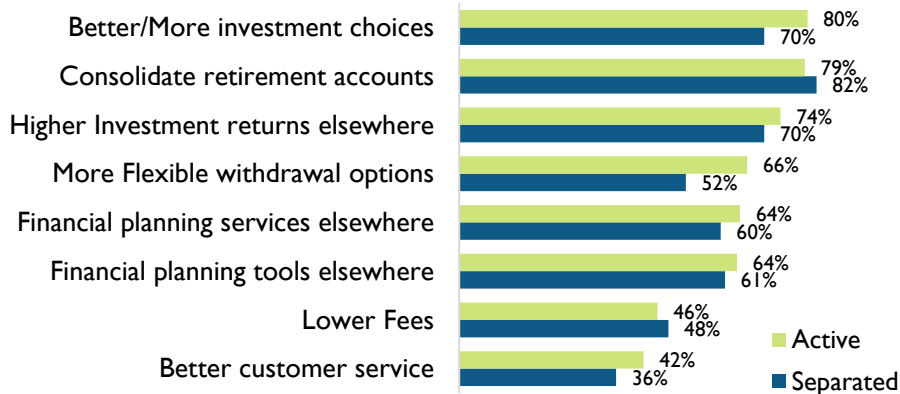


# Transfers: Likelihood and Reasons

How likely are you to transfer or rollover your balance into an IRA or other eligible retirement plan?



What reason do you plan to transfer money from your TSP account into other eligible account?  
(Active and Separated Participants Likely to Transfer)



## Key Takeaways

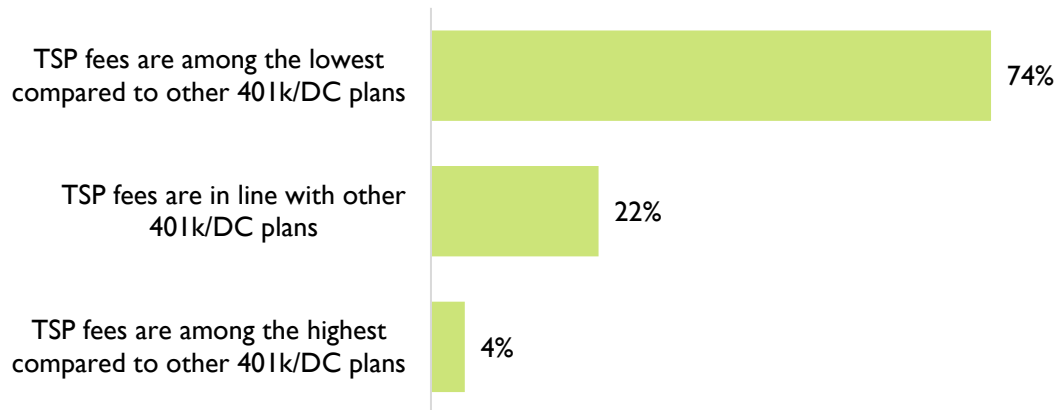
- About 4 in 10 active participants plan to transfer money from the TSP after retirement. Likelihood higher among Uniformed Services.
- 27% of separated participants indicate they are likely to transfer.
- Consolidation of retirement accounts, more investment choices and higher returns remain top reasons for moving funds out of the TSP.



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# Perceptions of TSP Fees

How do you think TSP administration fees compare to those of other 401k/Defined Contribution (DC) retirement plans?  
(Among 40% with an opinion)



FERS	US-Legacy	BRS
76%	69%	71%
21%	23%	22%
2%	7%	7%

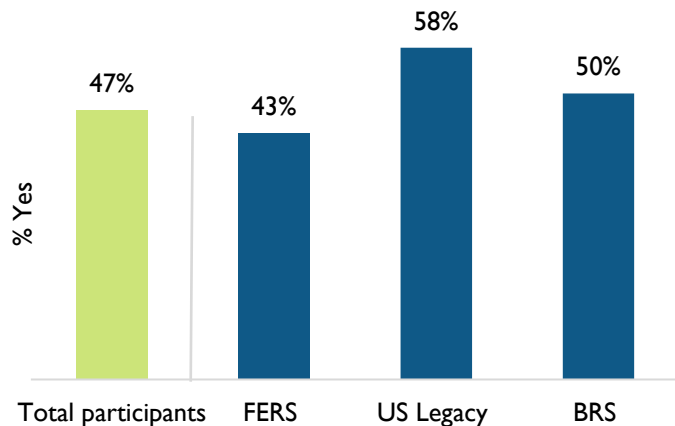


## Key Takeaways

- Of those with an opinion, about 75% think our fees are low.
- US Legacy and BRS participants are more likely to view TSP fees as the highest compared to other retirement plans.
- Educational opportunity for those not realizing our fees among the lowest.

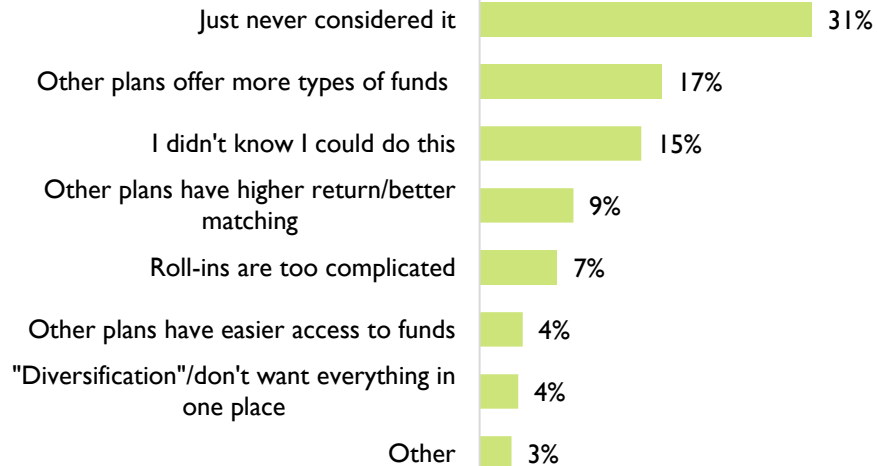
# Other Qualified Plans: Reasons Not Rolled in

Do you have any other qualified retirement plans or Traditional IRAs outside of the TSP?



What is the primary reason you have not considered rolling these qualified plan funds into the TSP?

(Among those with outside plan)



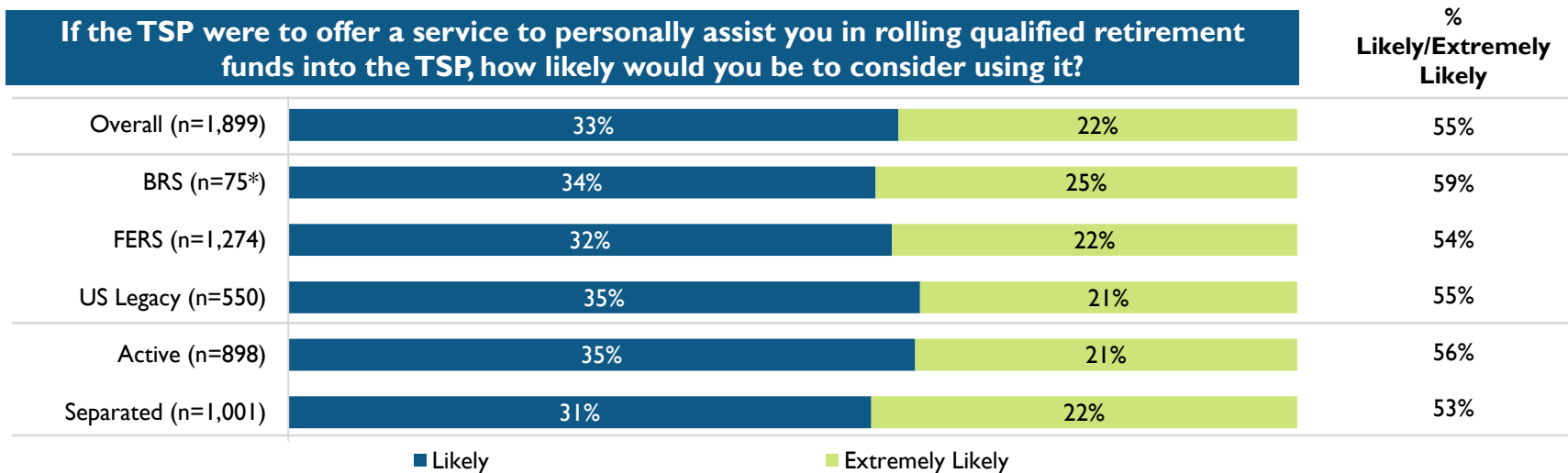
## Key Takeaways

- Nearly half (47%) of participants have another qualified retirement plan, higher for US Legacy and Separated (58% each).
- Just under a half (46%) have just never considered it (31%) or didn't know they could (15%).
- Others say other plans offer more flexibility (17%), higher returns (9%) or the process to roll over is too complicated (7%).



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# Likelihood to Use TSP Assistance for Roll-ins



## Key Takeaways

- Slightly more than half (55%) of participants with outside retirement plans would be likely (22% extremely) to use TSP assistance to roll other retirement funds to TSP.
- Likely usage is similar across most subgroups (including system, Active/Separated).

# Usefulness of the TSP Communication Channels

Considering each of the following ways you have heard from or interacted with the TSP in the past 12 months, rate the overall usefulness of each:

Net Useful

	% used	Not at all useful	Not very useful	Somewhat useful	Extremely useful	2021	2020
Annual statement	90%	30%		66%		96%	97%
My Account access on tsp.gov	83%	27%		68%		95%	96%
General plan information on tsp.gov	75%	5%	44%	50%		94%	96%
Secure emails/e-messaging	38%	7%	39%	51%		90%	92%
ThriftLine to speak live to a representative	31%	8%	31%	57%		88%	91%
Informational emails from the TSP	64%	10%	51%	36%		86%	91%
TSP booklets/brochures	58%	12%	48%	36%		84%	88%
ThriftLine to access automated telephone system	30%	5%	12%	38%	45%	83%	86%
Information from the TSP on social media	21%	15%	20%	37%	29%	65%	78%



## Key Takeaways

- Annual statements, My Account and TSP.gov continue to be most used and most useful.
- While used by smaller proportions of participants, secure emails/e-messaging and live ThriftLine interactions are also useful for nine of 10.
- Many channels were seen as slightly less useful — Social media was moderately less useful than in 2020.

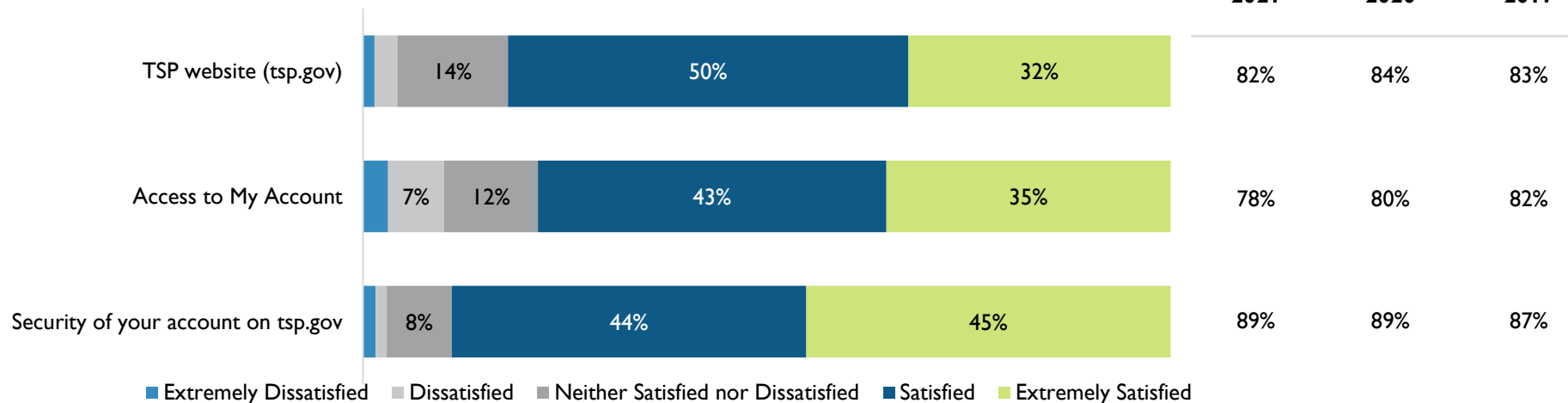


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# Satisfaction With tsp.gov

Considering all aspects of your experience with the TSP,  
how satisfied are you with each of the following?  
(Among past-year users)

Net Satisfaction  
(Sat/Ext Sat)



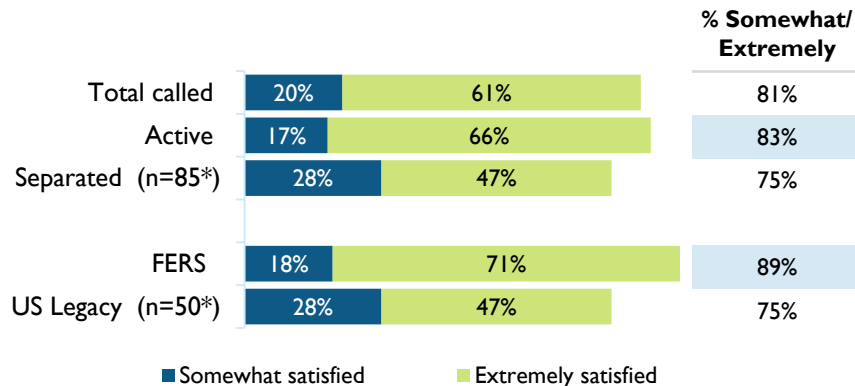
## Key Takeaways

- Eight of 10 (82%) are satisfied with tsp.gov and access to My Account.
- Nearly all (89%) remain satisfied with the security of account on tsp.gov.

# Satisfaction: Call Response and Issue Resolution

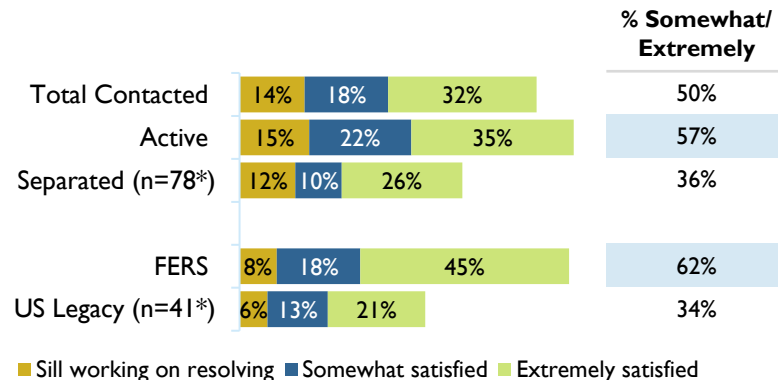
## Satisfaction with the amount of time it took for your call to be answered

(Among the 5% Past 3 Month Callers to ThriftLine)



## How satisfied were you with the amount of time it took for your issue to be resolved?

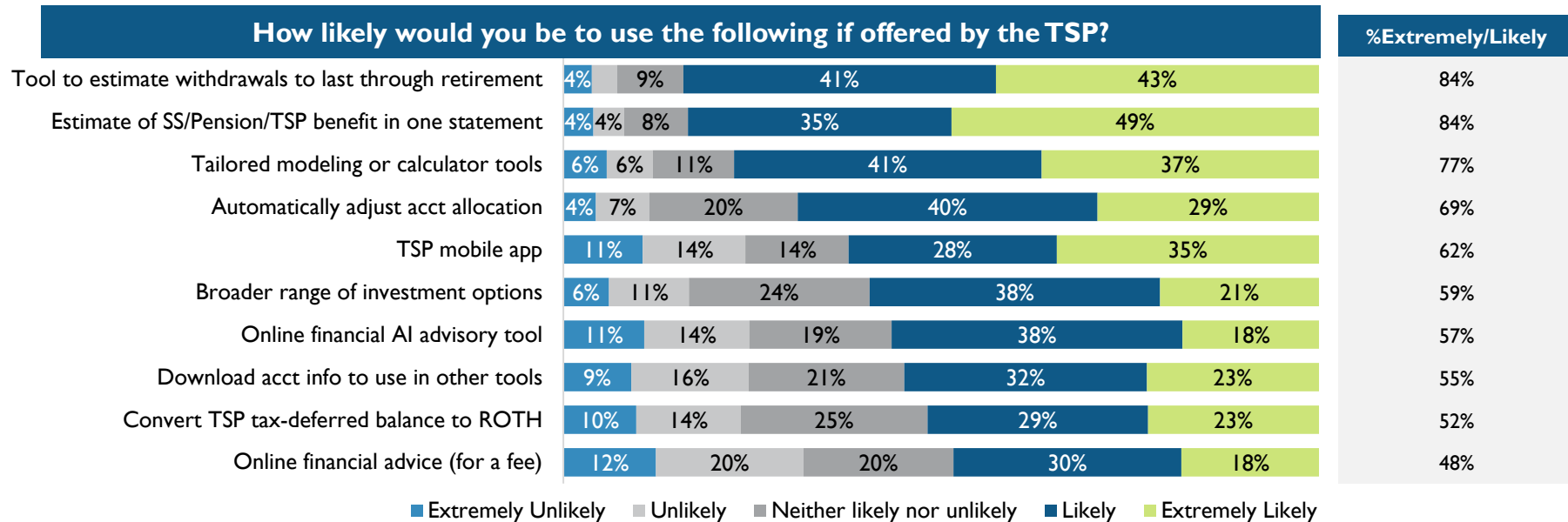
(Among the 5% Who Brought Issue to TSP in Past 3 Months)



## Key Takeaways

- Eight in 10 callers are satisfied with the time it took for their call to be answered — similar to 2020.
- Half of those who contacted TSP about a problem are satisfied with the amount of time to resolve- but varies greatly, with just one-third of Separated and Legacy satisfied.

# Likelihood to Use if Offered by TSP



## Key Takeaways

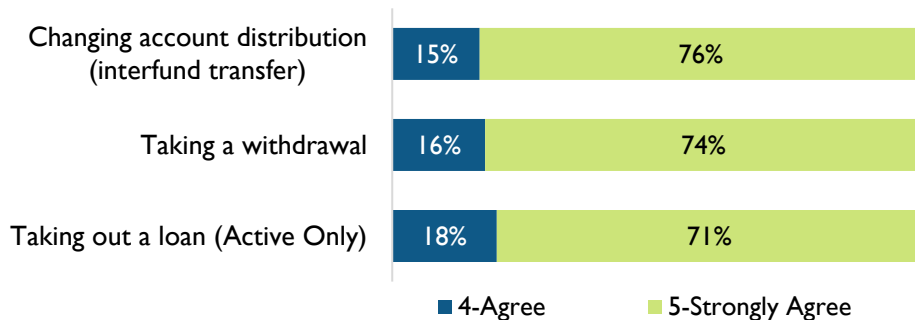
- Vast majority are likely to use a tool to help with retirement draw down, combined federal benefits statement and individually tailored modeling tools.
- 62% of participants are likely to use a mobile app.
- About half would be likely to use the other potential offerings.



# Using Specific Funds/Balances for Transactions

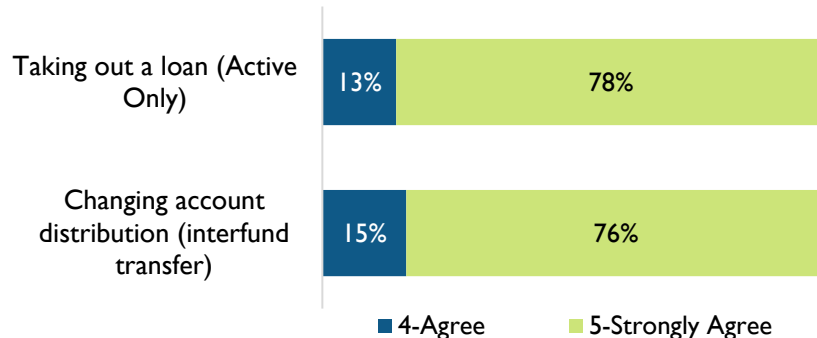
How much do you agree or disagree that you want the ability to specify from which investment fund(s) dollars are moved or taken for:

(Among those to which this applies / with opinion)



How much do you agree or disagree that you want the ability to specify from which fund balances (Traditional or ROTH) you want moved or taken for:

(Among those to which this applies / with opinion)



## Key Takeaways

- Nearly all participants want the ability to specify individual funds for interfund transfers, withdrawals and loans.
- Nearly all participants want the ability to specify which types of balances are used for loans and interfund transfers.



# Participant Suggestions: Retirement Planning

What **ONE** thing could the TSP do to better meet your retirement planning needs?  
(Among 38% with comment)

		2020
Better instructions/information/tutorials	14%	18%
Easier access/log-in/CAC capability/easier password re-set	9%	9%
More investment options	7%	8%
Provide investment advice /retirement plan	7%	10%
Have more tools/calculators/prediction capabilities	6%	3%
Improve website/interface/make it more user-friendly	6%	3%
Easier roll-overs & ROTH Conversions	6%	3%
More transaction availability/transfers/deposits/withdrawals	5%	7%



## Key Takeaways

- Participants with a suggestion for the TSP to better meet retirement planning needs most request better instruction/information and advice; followed by My Account access.
- Participants are more likely to ask for tools/calculators, better website interface and better rollover capabilities than in 2020.



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Note: ↑↓ indicate significant increase/decrease from 2020; Only responses 5% or greater are shown 18

# Recommendations

Findings – Participant Engagement	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• BRS and US-Legacy report lower overall satisfaction rates with account access.</li><li>• The survey asked respondents about how they thought TSP administration fees compared. 74% of the respondents to this question stated that TSP fees were among the lowest compared to those of other 401k/DC plans.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A TSP mobile app and new authentication methods will be part of future enhancements which will address account access concerns.</li><li>• Continue educational campaign using TSP “Scorecard” and other materials emphasizing how our fees compare and the long-term benefits of lower fees.</li></ul>
Findings – Contributions	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants cite affordability &amp; inertia as two leading reasons for not contributing 5%. Roughly a third (31%) cite never changing from default deferral rate</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• While the increase in the default deferral rate will help address this issue, continue outreach and targeted messaging emphasizing the importance and advantages of saving at least 5% of income to new participants auto-enrolled at 5%.</li></ul>

# Recommendations

Findings – New Features	Recommendation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Participants want the ability to designate individual funds for allocation, loans and withdrawals. Likewise, participants want to designate Traditional or ROTH balance for account allocation and loan withdrawals.</li><li>• Nearly half of all participants say they have an IRA/401k outside of the TSP and nearly 60% of US-Legacy and separated participants. Never considering it, didn't know they could, and thinking the process is too complicated account for over half of reasons for not rolling into TSP. Over half also say they would be likely to use roll-over assistance.</li><li>• 62% of participants want a mobile app.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evaluate providing these options after implementation of the new recordkeeper.</li><li>• After the new recordkeeper contact is live, emphasize new concierge roll-in service; continue messaging around benefits of consolidating retirement accounts and low TSP fees.</li><li>• The new recordkeeper will offer a TSP mobile app.</li></ul>

# Questions?

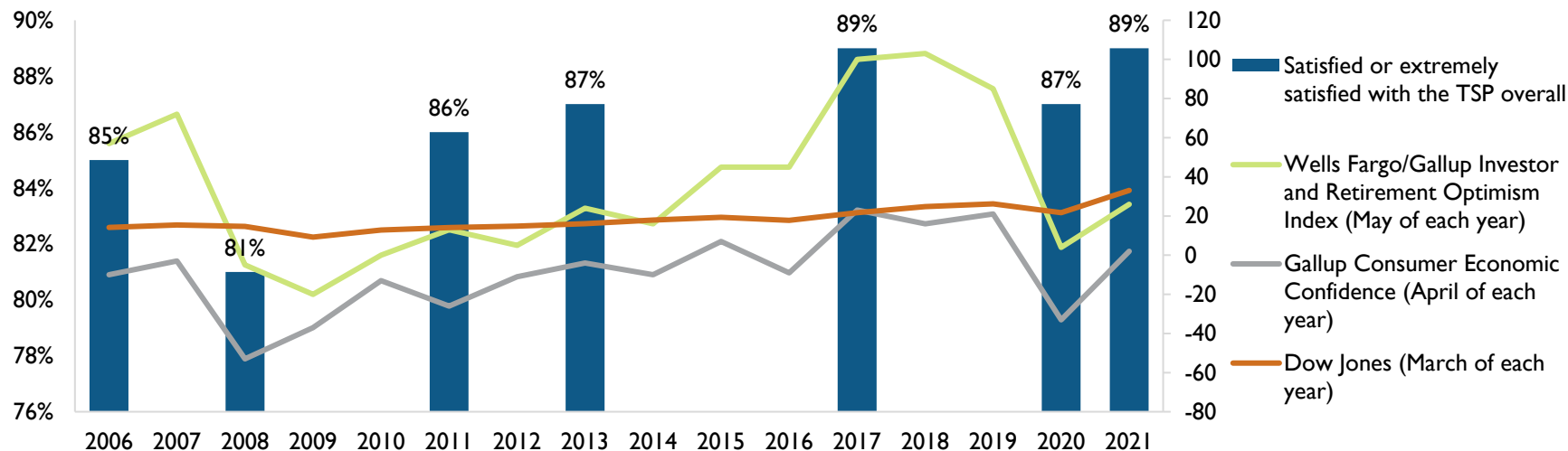
# Appendix

## Additional Data Findings



# Satisfaction With TSP Correlates to Third-Party Economic Trend Indexes

*Satisfaction With TSP Tracks National Economic and Investment Confidence*



**Correlation of Overall Satisfaction to 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Metrics**

Pearson R Correlation	Investor & Retirement Optimism Index	Consumer Economic Confidence Index	Dow Jones Industrial Average
Overall Satisfaction with TSP	.61	.81	.65

# Satisfaction: Active vs. Separated

## Considering All Aspects of Your Experience, How Satisfied Are You With Each of the Following?

** indicate top drivers of satisfaction		% Extremely Satisfied/Satisfied			
		(n)	2021 (n=5,062)	Active (n=2,917)	Separated (n=2,145)
Overall	The Thrift Savings Plan Overall	5,062	89%	90%	86%
Investments/ Withdrawals	Security of your account on tsp.gov	4,873	89%	90%	87%
	Variety of offered investments**	4,817	77%	78%	76%
	Ability to take a loan from TSP account (among active participants)	2,014	74%	74%	N/A
	Flexibility of withdrawal options**	3,559	67%	68%	66%
	Ability to transfer money from IRA/other eligible retirement plan into TSP	2,348	61%	63%	56%
	Ability to transfer money out of the TSP into IRA/other eligible retirement plans	2,211	56%	57%	53%
Com- munication	Annual account statement	5,014	88%	88%	88%
	Plan information on TSP website (tsp.gov)	4,786	82%	84%	77%
	Access to My Account**	4,971	78%	79%	77%

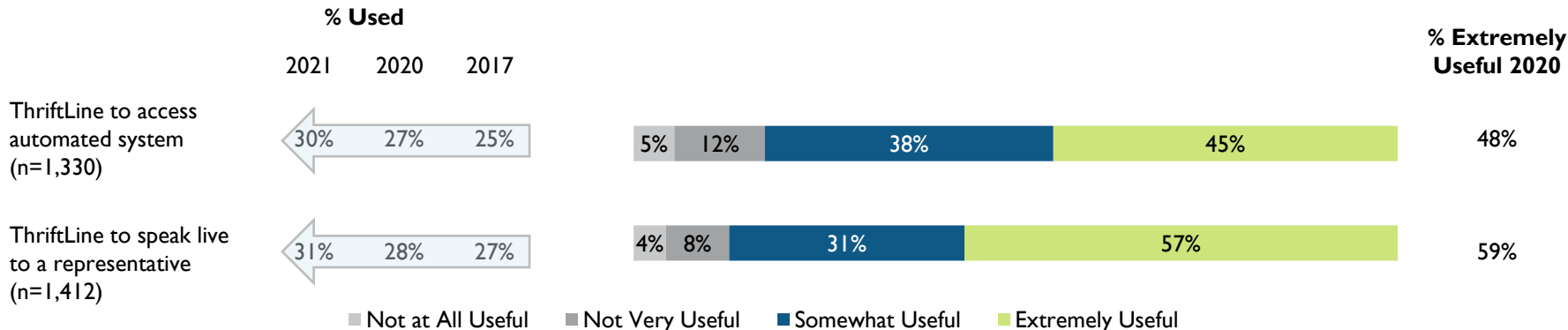
## Key Takeaways

- Relatively small differences exist between Active and Separated participants' satisfaction with TSP.
- Separated participants are slightly less satisfied with ability to transfer in and out of the TSP, plan information and security on tsp.gov.
- Both groups saw declines in access to My Account.



# ThriftLine Use

If you have used in the past 12 months, rate the overall usefulness of each:

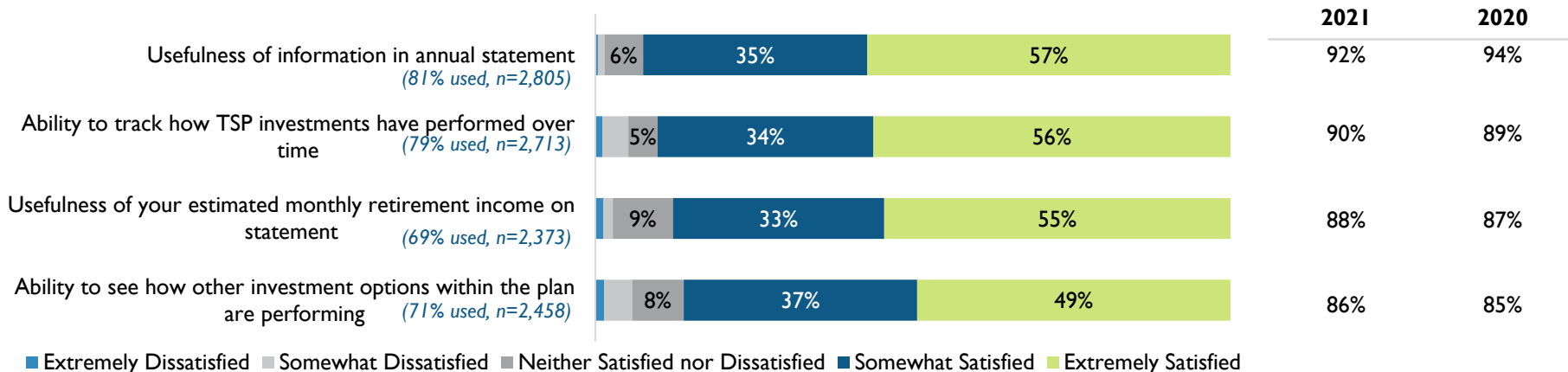


## Key Takeaways

- Participants are increasingly using the ThriftLine automated and live representative resources in a 12-month period — both up in 2021.
- ThriftLine users continue to find access to live representatives more useful than the automated system.
- FERS users find both resources more useful than Uniform Services.

# Annual Statement

**How satisfied are you with each of the following on your annual statement?**  
(Among 78% of respondents who have read their annual statement)



## Key Takeaways

- Slightly more than three in four (78%) participants read their annual statement, with half or more extremely satisfied with the information provided.
- US Legacy (82%) and mid-career (83%) participants are more likely to have read their statement.
- Just 69% of auto-enroll participants have read their statement — but readers are as satisfied as other participants.

# Usefulness of the TSP Comm Channels: Career Stage

Considering each of the following ways you have heard from or interacted with the TSP in the past 12 months, rate the overall usefulness of each:

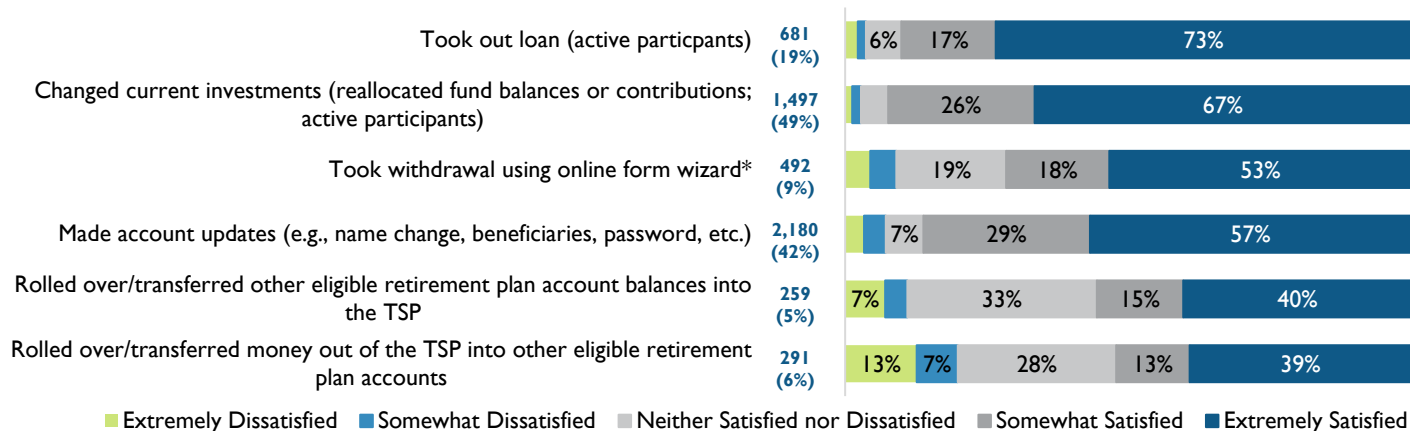
% SOMEWHAT/EXTREMELY USEFUL				Early-Career	Mid-Career	Late-Career
	n size	% used	Total	(n=394)	(n=1,090)	(n=1,662)
Annual statement	(4,580)	90%	96%	95%	96%	97%
My account access on tsp.gov	(4,384)	83%	95%	92%	95%	96%
General plan information on tsp.gov	(3,881)	75%	94%	93%	96%	95%
Secure emails/e-messaging	(1,794)	38%	90%	92%	92%	92%
Thriftline to speak live to a representative	(1,412)	31%	88%	87%	88%	88%
Informational emails from the TSP	(3,351)	64%	86%	79%	85%	90%
TSP booklets/brochures	(2,827)	58%	84%	75%	80%	90%
Thriftline to access automated telephone system	(1,330)	30%	83%	79%	83%	86%
Information from the TSP on social media	(911)	21%	65%	71%	67%	68%

## Key Takeaways

- Little difference in perceived usefulness of communications channels by participant age.

# Satisfaction With Transaction Timeliness

If done within the last 12 months, please rate your overall satisfaction with the time it took to complete the following transactions:



2020	
Completed	% Extr. Satisfied
20%	63%
46%	56%
11%	53%
36%	53%
8%	37%
7%	38%

## Key Takeaways

- Vast majority of participants are extremely satisfied with the timeliness of taking loans and changing investment allocation — both rebounding from declines in 2020.
- Over half are extremely satisfied with the timing of taking withdrawal and making account updates.
- Fewer participants are satisfied with rollovers into and out of the TSP which are more manual than other transactions.
- More participants made account updates in 2021.