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Survey Finds 61% Say They Receive Banned Calls

By REED ALBERGOTTI

A new survey found that 61% of Americans who signed up for the Federal Trade Commission's "do-not-call" list say they are still getting telemarketing calls that they believe violate the registry, eight months after the list went into effect.

Of those people, 39% said they were "extremely upset" or "very upset," according to the telephone survey of 851 people conducted by the Customer Care Alliance, a Virginia-based consortium of three customer-relations firms.

Though not all calls are banned by the list—nonprofits, pollsters and companies that consumers have already done business with are exempt—some companies have stopped calling people on the list altogether, says H. Robert Wientzen, chief executive of the Direct Marketing Association, because of the perception that callers are violating the law.

Not All Calls Are Banned

"The legitimate marketers are going out of their way so that they don't irritate anyone," he says. "They do know that people are a lot more emotional about this."

Still, 87% of the people surveyed said they had received fewer calls since signing up. "The list has had the impact that was intended," said Scott M. Broetzmann, a founder of the Customer Care Alliance.

Lois Greisman, the FTC's associate director of planning and information, said the Customer Care Alliance survey, coupled with a similar one conducted by Harris Interactive in January, shows the list has been a success.

FTC Complaints

"I'm not surprised consumers are receiving some calls," said Ms. Greisman, citing about 300,000 complaints since the law went into effect last fall. But with more than 60 million phone numbers registered, she says compliance has been better than expected. "That is a phenomenal achievement for a program that has been enforced for six to seven months," she said.

Mr. Wientzen of the Direct Marketing Association conceded that the Do Not Call Registry is, to an extent, forcing his industry to focus more on the "desires of customers," but added that "the problem is, there is going to be a significant loss of jobs."

Later this month, the FTC will announce recommendations on the viability of a similar registry to ban Internet spam.