Office of the Inspector General
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Audit Report

Social Security Administration's Telephone Metrics

December 22, 2025

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
United States Senate
311 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Warren:

In a July 24, 2025 letter, you asked that we conduct an audit of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) wait times for telephone services and determine (1) the current wait times for services and other key service metrics; (2) how SSA collected telephone data and calculated its service metrics; and (3) whether SSA provided the public with accurate and complete telephone information on wait times and other key service metrics.

My office is committed to combating fraud, waste, and abuse in SSA's operations and programs. Thank you for bringing your concerns to my attention. The report highlights various facts pertaining to the issues raised in your letter. To ensure SSA is aware of the information provided to your office, we are forwarding a copy of this report to the Agency.

If you have any questions concerning this matter, please call me or have your staff contact Jonathan Blyth, Congressional Affairs Advisor, at jonathan.j.blyth@ssa.gov.

Sincerely,

Michelle Anderson
Assistant Inspector General as First Assistant

Enclosure

cc:
Frank Bisignano

Social Security Administration's Telephone Metrics
032517

Objective

To determine (1) the accuracy of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) telephone service metrics and (2) the extent performance changed during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, including the factors that may have contributed to those changes.

Background

SSA's telephone services are an essential way for the public to obtain information and assistance with benefits, Social Security numbers, and other vital services. Callers to the national 800-number can choose automated services or request assistance from an SSA employee.

In June 2025, Senator Elizabeth Warren expressed concern over SSA's telephone performance. The Commissioner of Social Security agreed with the Senator and asked our office to conduct a review. On July 24, 2025, Senator Warren requested that we audit SSA wait times for telephone services and determine (1) the current wait times for services and other key service metrics; (2) how SSA collected telephone data and calculated its service metrics; and (3) whether SSA provided the public accurate and complete telephone information on wait times and other key service metrics.

Results

SSA's publicly reported national 800-number telephone metrics were accurate and its overall telephone service performance improved in FY 2025. In FY 2025, SSA served—either by an SSA employee or automation—68 million callers, a 65-percent increase from FY 2024.

The Agency improved performance because it used a new telecommunications platform and staff realignments. The new platform increased call volume capacity and expanded self-service and automated options. SSA also used the new platform's capabilities to identify in real-time ways to better serve callers, target training, and improve frequently asked questions.

One of SSA's performance goals was to improve customer experience by reducing the Average Speed of Answer (ASA) telephone metric. According to the Agency, ASA is the average amount of time callers actively wait on hold before they speak with SSA employees. In FY 2025, ASA was approximately 13 minutes in October 2024, peaked at 30 minutes in January 2025, and ended the year at 7 minutes in September 2025. This was an improvement over the FY 2024 peak of approximately 42 minutes in November 2023 and low of 12 minutes in September 2024. When calculating the ASA, SSA considers callers who accept an initial callback offering as not actively waiting on hold and counts the call as having zero wait time, which reduces the average. ASA does not include the time callers wait to receive callbacks.

In FY 2025, about 25 million calls ended without the callers receiving service either because the callers disconnected the calls, the callers did not answer SSA's callback, SSA could not call back the callers, or all telephone lines were busy. SSA's wait time metrics do not include the wait times associated with these calls.

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ABBREVIATIONS

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ASA	Average Speed of Answer
FO	Field Office
FY	Fiscal Year
IVR	Interactive Voice Response
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
Pub. L. No.	Public Law Number
SSA	Social Security Administration

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine (1) the accuracy of the Social Security Administration's (SSA) telephone service metrics and (2) the extent performance changed during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, including the factors that may have contributed to those changes.

BACKGROUND

SSA's telephone services are essential for the public to obtain information and assistance with benefits, Social Security numbers, and other vital services. Callers to the national 800-number can choose automated services or request assistance from an SSA employee. SSA's automated services are generally available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This allows a caller to complete certain requests by responding to an automated menu instead of waiting for an employee. The automated services offer benefit verification, replacement Medicare cards, claim status, and requests for certain forms and pamphlets. Callers during business hours (Monday through Friday 8 am to 7 pm local time) can elect to speak to SSA employees. Callers who want to speak with an SSA employee but encounter an estimated wait time over 5 minutes are given the option to hang up and receive a callback while they maintain their place in the queue. See Figure 1 for the national 800-number process flow.

Figure 1: National 800-number Flow Chart
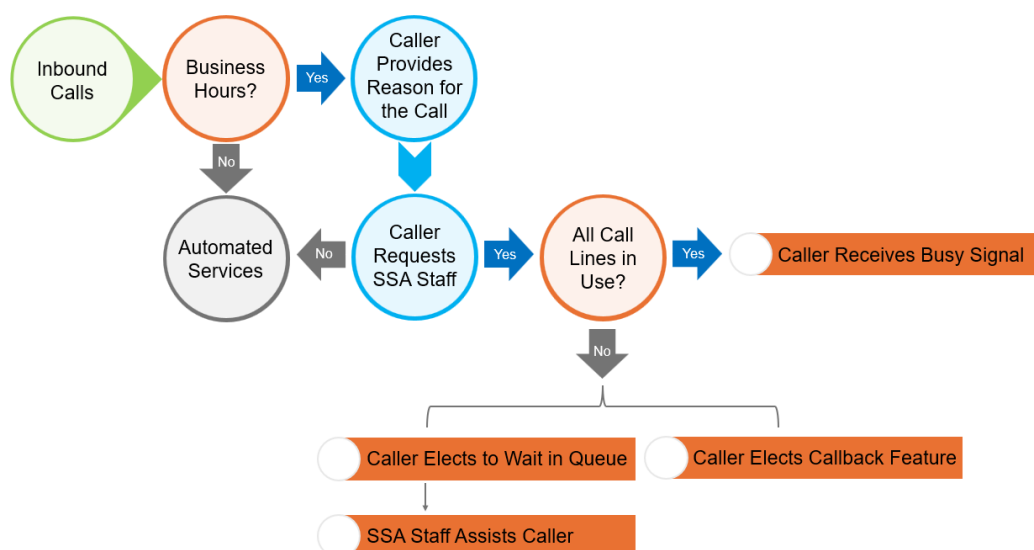
Since August 2024, SSA has used a cloud-based telecommunications platform that enables the Agency to increase call capacity and manage multi-channel customer interactions as well as integrate advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, automation, and analytics to enhance customer and employee experiences. SSA uses this platform to collect telephone data as well as calculate and report telephone performance metrics from the national 800-number.

In FY 2025, SSA served—either by an SSA employee or automation—68 million callers, a 65-percent increase from FY 2024 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Total Callers Served—FYs 2024 and 2025
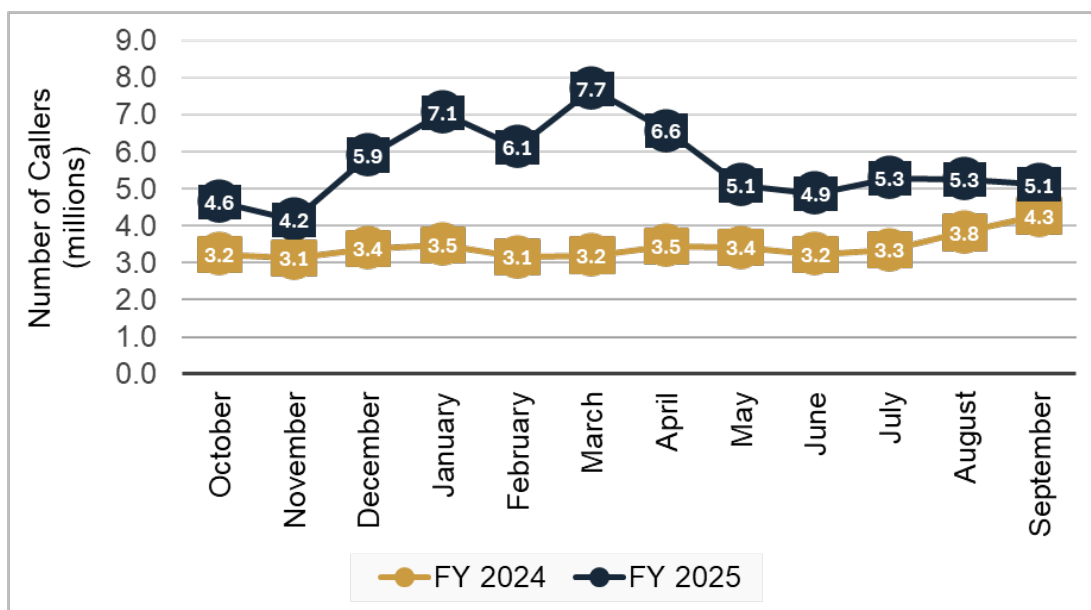
From January through March 2025, the Agency experienced a significant increase in national 800-number calls. SSA attributed this increase to Congress enacting the *Social Security Fairness Act of 2023*.[1] This Act affected over 3.2 million SSA beneficiaries.

SSA publishes information about its telephone service performance on its public website.[2] In FY 2025, SSA added and removed various telephone metrics. According to SSA's subject-matter experts, the telephone information published on the Agency's performance website reflected the decisions of its changing leadership and what that leadership believed were the most important metrics for the public. During FY 2025, SSA had five commissioners or acting commissioners. See Appendix C for examples of changes SSA made to telephone metrics SSA published on its website in FY 2025.

In June 2025, Senator Elizabeth Warren expressed concern over SSA's telephone service performance. The Commissioner of Social Security agreed with the Senator and asked our office to conduct a review. On July 24, 2025, the Senator requested that we audit SSA wait times for telephone services and determine (1) the current wait times for services and other key service metrics; (2) how SSA collected telephone data and calculated its service metrics; and (3) whether SSA provided the public accurate and complete telephone information on wait times and other key service metrics. See Appendix A for the Senator's request and Appendix B for FY 2025 telephone performance metrics.

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[1] Pub. L. No. 118-273, 138 Stat. 3232 (2025).

[2] Social Security Administration, *Social Security Performance*, https://www.ssa.gov/ssa-performance (October 2024 - September 2025).

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We obtained telephone service data for calls the public made to SSA's national 800-number for FY 2025—October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025. We identified the telephone service metrics reported on SSA's performance website during FY 2025 and tested whether the telephone service data were accurate and the metrics SSA reported to the public were complete. In addition, we reviewed changes to SSA's telecommunications platform, the methodology used to calculate telephone performance metrics, and other factors that affect SSA's telephone performance. Finally, we analyzed monthly staffing information for employees who answered calls to the national 800-number to determine whether FY 2025 staffing levels could have affected SSA's telephone service performance.

Our review did not include calls made directly to SSA's local field offices (FO). We included FY 2024 data for comparison purposes only; we did not evaluate the accuracy or completeness of SSA's FY 2024 telephone performance data. See Appendix D for more details about our scope and methodology.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

SSA's publicly reported national 800-number telephone metrics were accurate and its overall telephone service performance improved in FY 2025. The Agency improved performance because it used a new telecommunications platform and staff realignments.

Accuracy of the Agency's Telephone Performance Metrics

Using the FY 2025 telephone data from SSA's telecommunications platform, we re-calculated the monthly telephone performance metrics identified in the Senator's request. We determined the data were accurate.

To ensure the accuracy of its telephone data, SSA employees use a data-verification process that compares metric reports and raw data generated from within the telecommunications platform. When SSA employees identify variances with the telephone performance metrics, they meet with the telecommunications platform vendor to determine what caused the variance and develop a solution to accurately report the telephone metric. SSA employees stated variances noted during internal data verifications generally occurred when (1) telephone data were recorded at different times (timing variances) or (2) data were reported or calculated differently (methodology variances).

SSA employees informed us that, as they learned about the capabilities and features of the new telecommunications platform, they may update the methodology to calculate the telephone performance metrics as needed to ensure accuracy. For example, for Calls Handled by Interactive Voice Response (IVR), the Agency determined it counted the number of IVR responses rather than calls. In April 2025, SSA updated its methodology to accurately reflect a single call with multiple dispositions. Therefore, SSA accurately reported these metrics for May through September 2025.

Caller Wait Times

One of the performance goals in SSA's *Agency Strategic Plan for FYs 2022-2026* was to improve customer experience by reducing the Average Speed of Answer (ASA) telephone metric.[3] According to SSA, ASA is the average amount of time callers actively wait on hold before they speak with an SSA employee. In FY 2025, ASA was approximately 13 minutes in October 2024, peaked at 30 minutes in January 2025, and ended the FY at 7 minutes in September 2025 (see Figure 3). This was an improvement over the FY 2024 peak of approximately 42 minutes in November 2023 and low of 12 minutes in September 2024.

Figure 3: ASA—FYs 2024 and 2025[4]
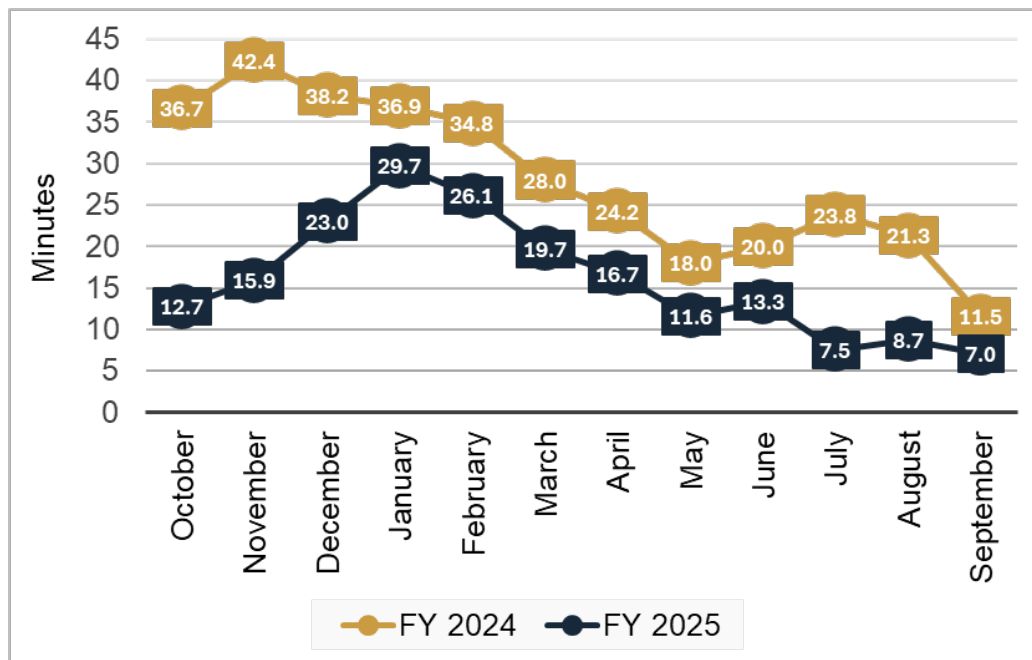
ASA includes the time callers actively wait on hold in queue after they have elected to speak with an employee and before (1) employees answer the calls or (2) the callers accept a callback offering. If the caller's estimated wait time to speak to an SSA employee is longer than 5 minutes, then SSA provides the estimated wait time and gives the caller the option to receive a call back. When a caller accepts an initial offering of a callback, SSA considers the caller as not actively waiting on hold and counts the call in the ASA calculation as having zero wait time, which reduces the average.

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[3] SSA, *Agency Strategic Plan FYs 2022-2026*, p. 14.

[4] SSA used a different telecommunications platform in FY 2024. We included FY 2024 data to compare SSA's telephone performance in FY 2025 with the prior year. FY 2024 was not within the scope of our review. Therefore, we did not evaluate the accuracy or completeness of SSA's FY 2024 telephone performance data.

In FY 2025, SSA employees answered 9.3 million calls where the callers did not elect to receive a callback. For these calls, SSA calculated the average queue wait time. This calculation does not include callers who accept an initial offering of a callback and have a zero-minute wait time. The average queue wait time was approximately 51 minutes in October 2024, it peaked at 1 hour and 40 minutes in January 2025 and ended at its lowest of 19 minutes in September 2025 (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Average Queue Wait Time—FY 2025
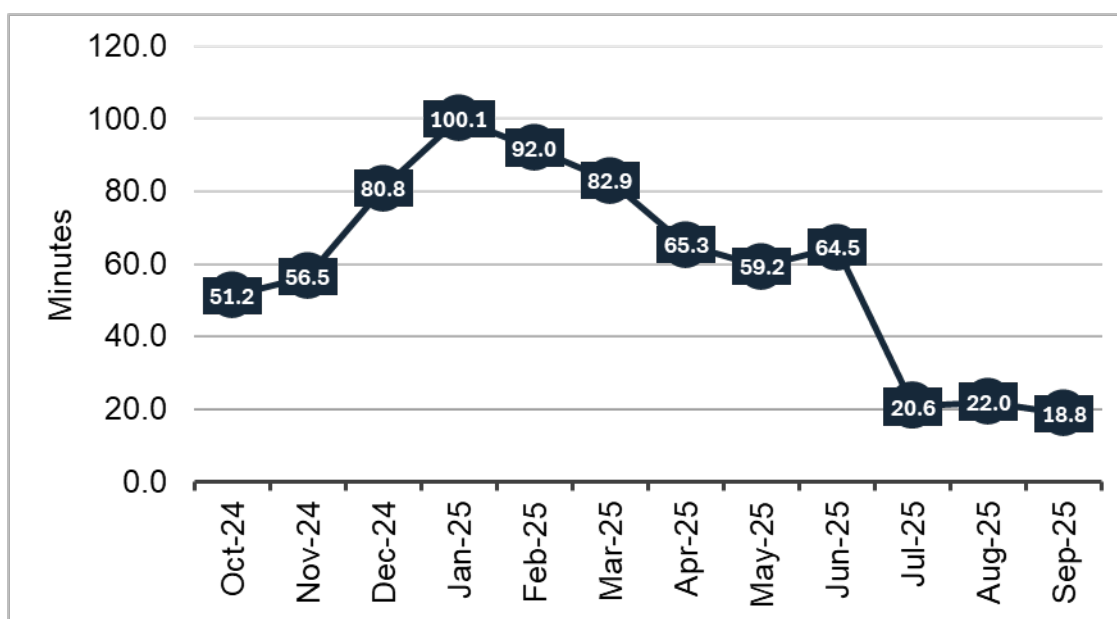
In FY 2025, 23.8 million callers received a callback rather than waiting on hold to speak with an SSA employee. When a caller accepts the offer of a callback, SSA does not provide the caller an estimated wait time for the callback, and the ASA calculation does not include the time callers wait to receive a callback. However, SSA tracks the average wait time for callers to receive a callback. In FY 2025, average callback time was approximately 1 hour and 49 minutes in October 2024, peaked at 2 hours and 32 minutes in January 2025, and reached approximately 1 hour and 2 minutes in September 2025 (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Average Wait Time to Callback—FY 2025
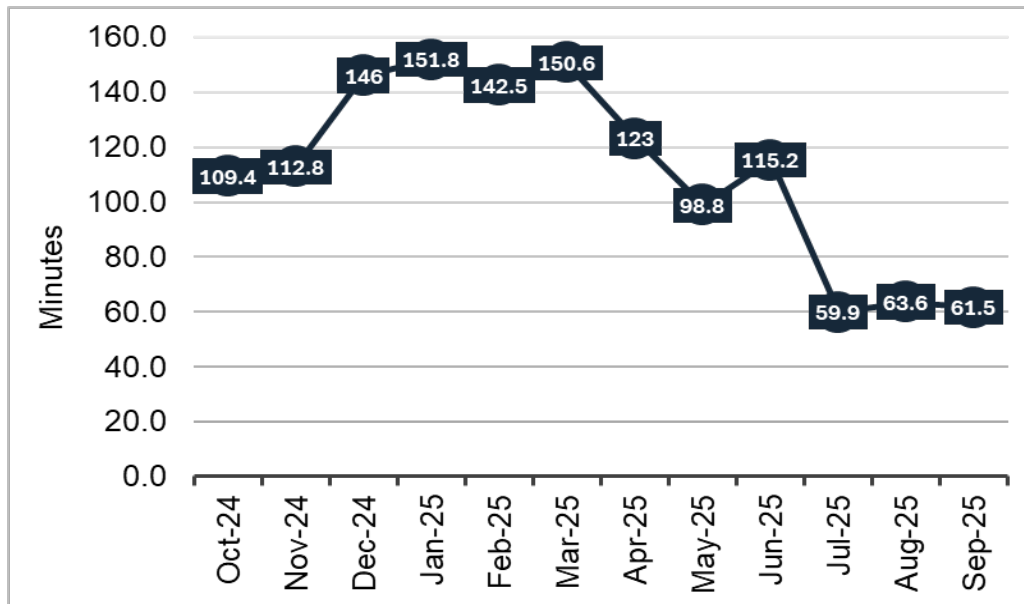
Callers Who Did Not Receive Service

In FY 2025, about 25 million calls ended without the callers receiving service either because the callers did not complete the call or the telephone platform could not connect the callers to an employee. SSA refers to these calls as abandoned in queue or busy messages. The average wait time metrics do not include the wait times associated with abandoned calls or calls that receive a busy message.

Abandoned Calls

Calls abandoned in queue includes

1. calls where the callers disconnected while actively waiting in the queue;

2. calls where the callers did not answer when the telephone system made three attempts to call them back; and

3. callbacks Agency employees did not return and were canceled at the end of the day. SSA cancels callback requests that are not completed by the end of the day and does not queue them for the next business day or any other day.

SSA reported approximately 1.6 million calls were abandoned in queue in October 2024, peaking at 3.4 million calls in January 2025 and falling to 911,000 calls in September 2025 (see Figure 6). In FY 2025, callers waited an average of 26 minutes before abandoning calls in queue in October 2024, peaking at 38 minutes in March 2025 and falling to 22 minutes in September 2025.

Figure 6: Calls Abandoned in Queue—FY 2025
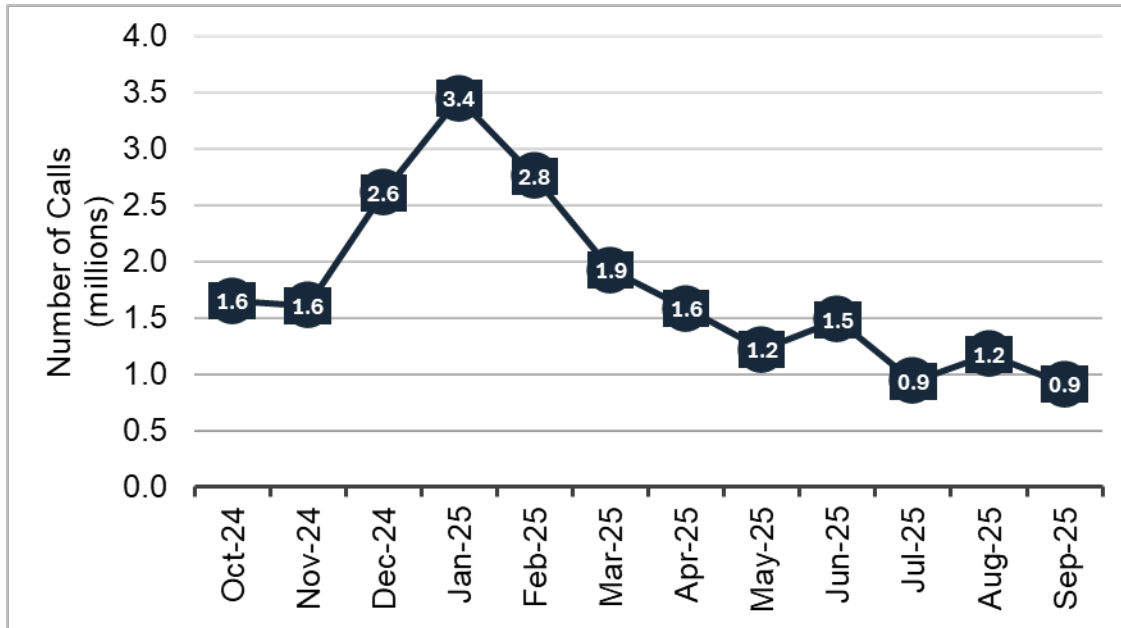
Busy Messages

A caller encounters a busy condition, or a "polite disconnect," when all queues are full and callers receive a message to call later. In FY 2025, the average agent busy rate was about 6 percent, though SSA experienced an increase in call volume in March and April 2025, which resulted in average busy rates of 29.4 and 15.4 percent, respectively (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: Agent Busy Rate—FY 2025
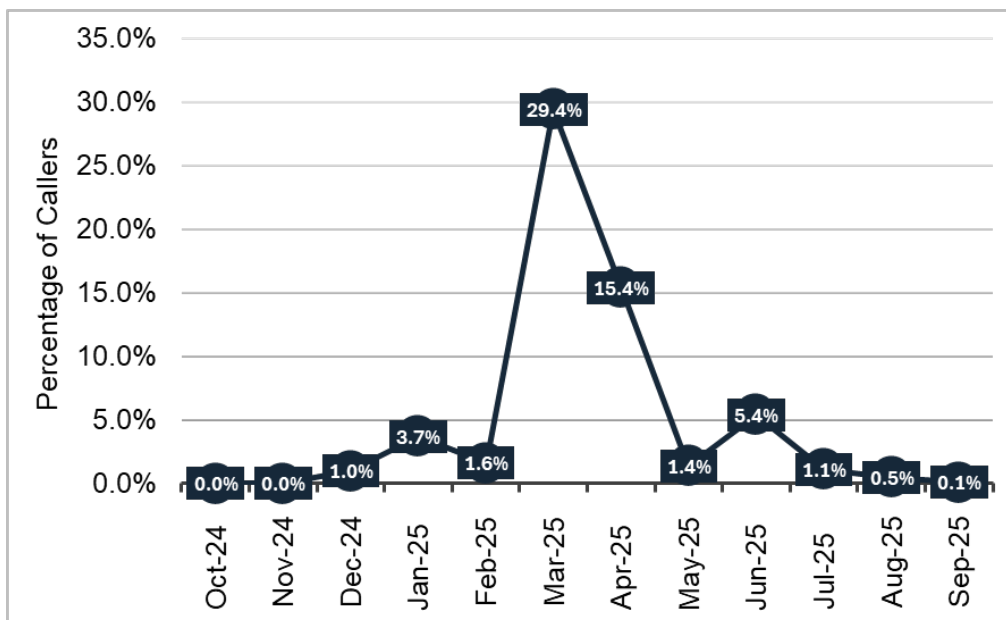
Agency Changes that Affected Telephone Service

SSA served 65 percent more callers in FY 2025 than in FY 2024 and improved wait times. These improvements occurred because of changes SSA made, which included a new telecommunications platform and staffing realignments.

New Telecommunications Platform

SSA attributed the ability to serve more callers to the implementation of its new telecommunications platform that was prompted by several limitations with its prior platform. While we did not audit the new platform, based on our discussion with SSA subject-matter experts, the new platform allowed the Agency to significantly improve the national 800-number, including increased call volume capacity and expanded self-service and automated options. SSA also used the new platform's capabilities to identify in real-time ways to better serve callers, target training, and improve frequently asked questions.

The national 800-number could receive more callers because its new platform increased its volume capacity. Specifically, the prior platform allowed about 12,000 calls across all queues before callers would begin to encounter busy conditions. With the new platform, SSA can set its own queue thresholds. For example, some of SSA's queues in the new platform allowed up to 40,000 calls.

The Agency also used artificial intelligence to enhance its self-service and automated options. Specifically, one of the new platform's features is a conversational question-and-answer chatbot that automatically provides responses to 74 frequently asked questions based on interactions with the callers. This feature allowed callers to obtain benefit and program information without speaking to an SSA employee, reducing the burden on live assistance. For instance, automation handled an average of approximately 300,000 calls per month in FY 2024 compared to almost 2.9 million calls per month in FY 2025 (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Calls Handled by Automation—FYs 2024 and 2025[5,6]
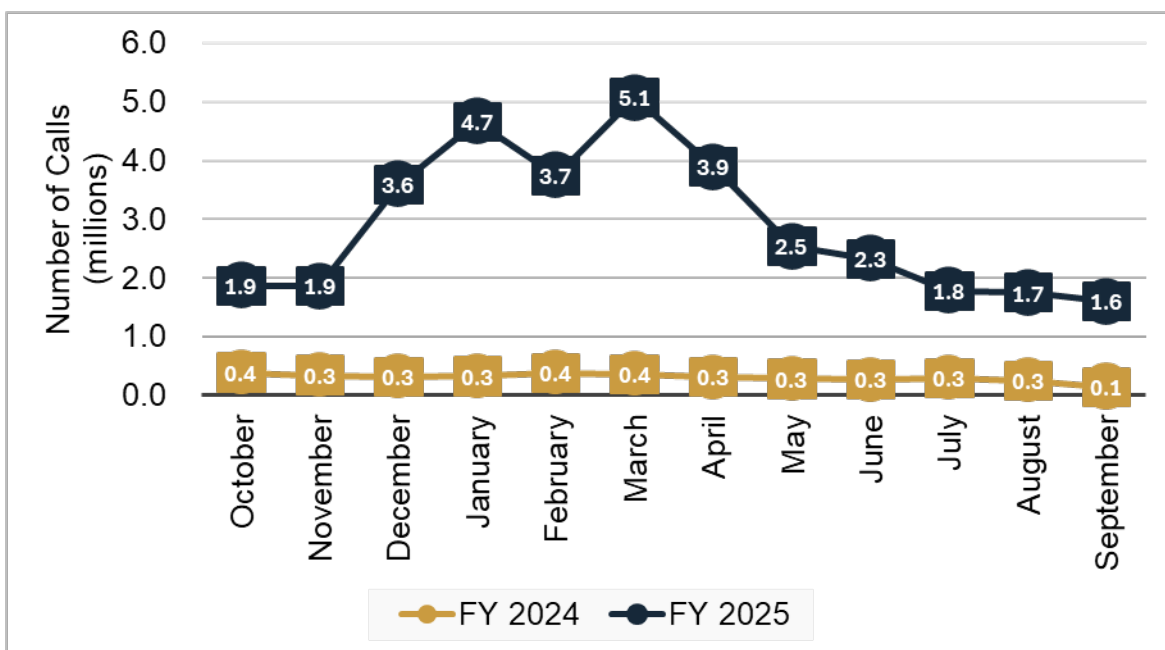
To assess telephone performance, SSA stated it routinely reviews transcripts of callers' interactions with SSA employees and automation to identify issues and target improvements. The Agency also provided callers the opportunity to complete a post-call survey that included questions about their level of satisfaction, the clarity and respectfulness of the SSA employee who handled the call, and the Agency's resolution of their issue.

In FY 2025, an average of 87 percent of callers who responded to the post-call survey indicated their issue was resolved on the first contact. However, post-call surveys are not available to callers who only receive automated service and do not speak with an employee. Rather, SSA collects feedback about automated services via its website, which collects information for all service channels, including calls to the national 800-number, whether the calls were handled by employees or automation.

Platform Transition to Field Offices and Staffing Changes

In FY 2025, SSA transitioned its 1,231 FOs to the new telecommunications platform, which marked the first time every FO operated on a unified platform and connected with the national 800-number. SSA also underwent Agency-wide organizational restructuring that included offers of voluntary separations, early retirements, and employee reassignments that resulted in a reduction in overall staffing.

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[5] SSA used a different telecommunications platform in FY 2024. We audited that telecommunications platform. See OIG, *The Social Security Administration's Administration of the Next Generation Telephony Project Contract, 022324* (April 2025).

[6] We included FY 2024 data to compare SSA's telephone performance in FY 2025 with the prior year. FY 2024 was not within the scope of our review. Therefore, we did not evaluate the accuracy or completeness of SSA's FY 2024 telephone performance data.

At the start of FY 2025, SSA employed approximately 4,700 employees available to handle national 800-number calls. By June 2025, there were just over 4,000 employees, a 13-percent decrease. In July 2025, the Agency began assigning FO employees to answer national 800-number calls. This made approximately 1,000 FO employees available to support the national 800-number each day. The addition of FO employees coincided with improvements in such metrics as ASA beginning in July 2025 (see Table 1). For example, ASA of 13.3 minutes in June 2025 improved to 7.5 minutes in July 2025.

Table 1: Select Telephone Metrics Compared to Number of Employees—FY 2025

Month	Total 800-number Callers Served	ASA (minutes)	Approximate Number of Employees[7]
October 2024	4,646,823	12.7	4,672
November 2024	4,165,378	15.9	4,642
December 2024	5,909,139	23.0	4,576
January 2025	7,066,781	29.7	4,518
February 2025	6,125,759	26.1	4,458
March 2025	7,707,584	19.7	4,361
April 2025	6,561,475	16.7	4,189
May 2025	5,098,069	11.6	4,099
June 2025	4,871,203	13.3	4,052
July 2025	5,287,387	7.5	5,032
August 2025	5,254,692	8.7	4,971
September 2025	5,107,771	7.0	4,899

According to SSA, FO employees do not work on their FO duties on the days they handle national 800-number calls, including serving customers in the FOs' lobbies. To assess impact on FO workloads and service, SSA management stated they have been actively monitoring such FO trends as wait times for appointments and walk-in service and thus far have not identified any major issues. During this review, we did not audit FO workloads or services and therefore did not determine whether FO staff assisting the national 800-number impacted FO workloads and services.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA reviewed our draft report. See Appendix E for the text of the Agency's response.

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[7] We did not audit the national 800-number employee staffing numbers SSA provided to us for this review. Beginning July 2025, we added 1,000 FO employees to the national 800-number total based on SSA's reallocation of FO employees to help answer national 800-number calls.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – CONGRESSIONAL REQUEST LETTER

ELIZABETH WARREN
MASSACHUSETTS

COMMITTEES:
BANKING, HOUSING, AND URBAN AFFAIRS

ARMED SERVICES

FINANCE

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

United States Senate

UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20510–2105
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SUITE 406
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
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www.warren.senate.gov

July 24, 2025

Michelle L. Anderson
Acting Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General
Social Security Administration
PO Box 17785
Baltimore, Maryland 21235
Dear Acting Inspector General Anderson:

I write to ask that your office conduct a thorough and expeditious evaluation of wait times for key Social Security services and determine: (a) the current wait times for services and other key service metrics—and whether those metrics have worsened over the past six months as staffing has been reduced and other DOGE-influenced policies have been put in place; (b) how Social Security Administration (SSA) Commissioner Bisignano and his team are collecting data and calculating caller wait times and other service metrics; and (c) if the Social Security Administration under President Trump and Commissioner Bisignano is providing the public with accurate and complete information on wait times and other key service metrics. We also request that the results of your audit be made public.

President Trump and Social Security Commissioner Bisignano have eliminated thousands of Social Security workers, closed regional offices, made SSA's website and online services less reliable, and implemented burdensome new requirements on the program.[1]

As a result of these changes, phone wait times for Social Security recipients who call seeking basic information about their benefits are extraordinarily long. A survey by my staff, conducted from June 12th though June 20th,[2] found that waiting times averaged nearly an hour and 45 minutes, with maximum waiting times exceeding three hours.[3] A review by the Joint Economic Committee Minority Staff revealed similar data of increased busy rates on the SSA phone hotline.[4]

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[1] Letter from Senators Elizabeth Warren, Ron Wyden, Chuck Schumer, and Kirsten Gillibrand to SSA Commissioner Frank Bisignano, May 7, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren_lawmakers_letter_to_ssa_re_unanswered_letters.pdf.
[2] Senator Elizabeth Warren, "Social Security War Room – Wait Times Report," June 26, 2025, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/social_security_war_room_-_wait_times_report.pdf.
[3] Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to SSA Commissioner Frank Bisignano, June 25, 2025, p. 1, https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/warren_letter_to_bisignano_on_call_wait_times.pdf.
[4] Letter from Joint Economic Committee Ranking Member Margaret Wood Hassan to SSA Commissioner Frank Bisignano, June 26, 2025, https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/2ed87e6f-2097-4ffd-8944-439ef7c63ac5/2025-06-26-mwh-to-ssa-final.pdf.

The challenges facing Social Security recipients are compounded by the evidently misleading information that SSA reports about wait times for basic services or the lack of any information at all.[5]

Yesterday, in order to fully understand the scope of the service problems at SSA and to investigate why the Trump Administration was providing incomplete and apparently inaccurate information to the public, I met with Commissioner Bisignano. During that meeting, he agreed that an independent Inspector General investigation was necessary to resolve this matter, and he committed to fully cooperate with this investigation. I am therefore writing to request that you undertake this work as rapidly as possible and release a public report on your findings.

Specifically, I ask that your review examine:

(1) Phone and in-person waiting times for key Social Security services, and the extent to which they have changed since January 20, 2025. This includes the following information:
   a. The number of calls received;
   b. Of the callers who choose to seek to resolve their issue with the AI 1-800 tool:
      i. The percentage of callers who resolved their issue on that call—as reported by the caller—using the AI 1-800 tool;
      ii. The percentage of calls that are dropped;
      iii. The percentage of callers who hang up because the AI 1-800 tool is unable to resolve their issue;
      iv. The percentage of callers who are transferred to a live customer service representative; and
      v. How long each caller spent on phone interacting with the AI 1-800 tool.
   c. The percentage of callers who choose to talk with a human customer service representative and, of those:
      i. The average time it takes to speak to a human representative;
      ii. The median time it takes to speak to a human representative;
      iii. The percentage of callers who request a call-back, and of those callers, the percentage who receive a call back within the assigned expected wait time;
      iv. The percentage of callers who hang up because it takes too long to be connected to a customer service representative;
      v. The percentage of calls that are dropped before they are connected to a customer service representative;
      vi. The percentage of callers who end the call without having their issue resolved by the customer service representative;
      vii. The percentage of callers who are able to resolve their issue after speaking to the first customer service representative with whom they are connected;
      viii. The percentage of callers who are transferred to another customer service representative and the following information:
         1. The average time it takes to speak to another human representative;
         2. The median time it takes to speak to a second human representative;

[5] USA Today, "How long will you wait for Social Security help? Why it's anybody's guess," Sarah D. Wire, June 26, 2025, https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2025/06/26/social-security-wait-times-controversy/84334688007/.

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3. The percentage of calls that are dropped;
4. The percentage of callers who hang up as a result of long wait times;
5. The percentage of callers who end the call without having their issue resolved by the subsequent customer service representative; and
6. The percentage of callers whose issue is resolved by the second agent.
   ix. The percentage of callers whose call is dropped after being connected to a customer service representative.
(2) How SSA officials are currently calculating key service metrics, such as wait time, successful completion, etc.;
(3) Whether SSA officials are providing complete and accurate information to the public on these metrics;
(4) The impact of key staffing decisions on waiting times and other service metrics for phone services and in-person services, including the impact of reassigning staff and cutting overall SSA staffing levels; and
(5) Any other matters that may be affecting service times for Social Security beneficiaries, and the reasons for any degradation of services since January 20, 2025.

Because of the critical importance of Social Security benefits for millions of Americans, I ask that you conduct this review and make your findings public as rapidly as possible.

I appreciate your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

CC: The Honorable Frank Bisignano, Commissioner, Social Security Administration

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Appendix B – FISCAL YEAR 2025 TELEPHONE PERFORMANCE

The Social Security Administration (SSA) tracks numerous metrics to monitor its national 800-number telephone service. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2025, SSA's national 800-number received about 94 million calls. Of these, automation handled 35 million (37 percent), SSA employees handled 33 million (35 percent)—after callers either waited on hold or received a callback, 23 million (25 percent) were abandoned—while callers either waited on hold or used automated services, and 3 million (3 percent) received a busy signal (see Figure B–1).

Figure B–1: National 800-Number Calls Received—FY 2025[1]

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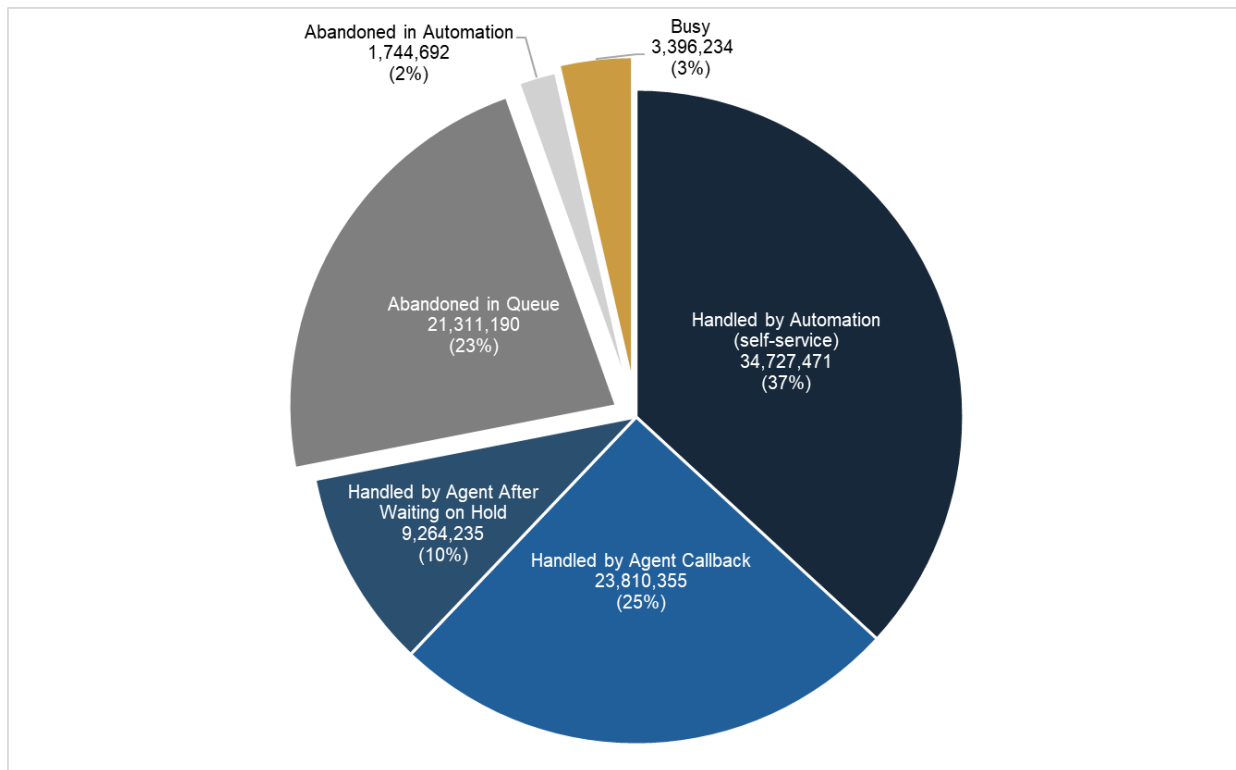
[1] Additional information about call dispositions is provided in the remainder of the appendix.

## Telephone Performance Metrics Requested by Senator Warren

Following are the monthly changes for the metrics Senator Elizabeth Warren requested (see Appendix A).

Abandoned in Queue

In FY 2025, callers abandoned 21.3 million calls. This included calls the caller disconnected while actively waiting on hold in the queue and abandons associated with callbacks. Generally, there are two ways SSA counts a callback as abandoned: (1) if the telephone system attempts to call the customer back three times and there is no answer (including no voicemail) and (2) if there are callbacks left at the end of the day and the callbacks are canceled. Figure B–2 shows the number of calls by month in FY 2025.
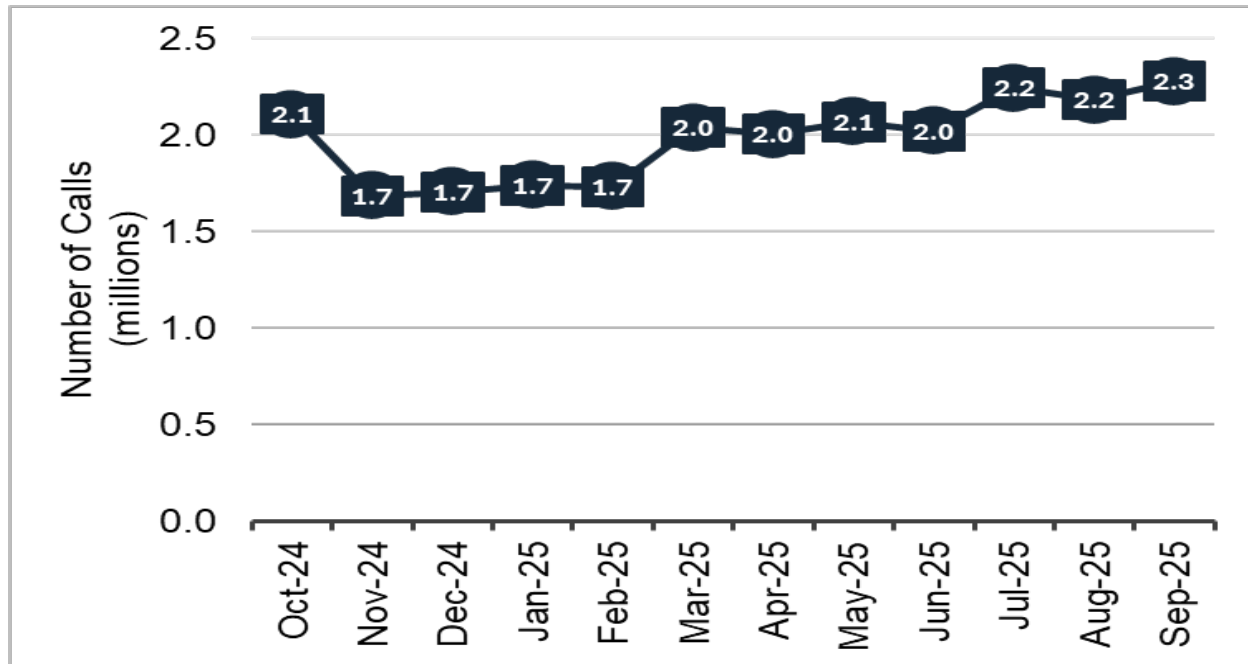
Figure B–2: Abandon in Queue—FY 2025
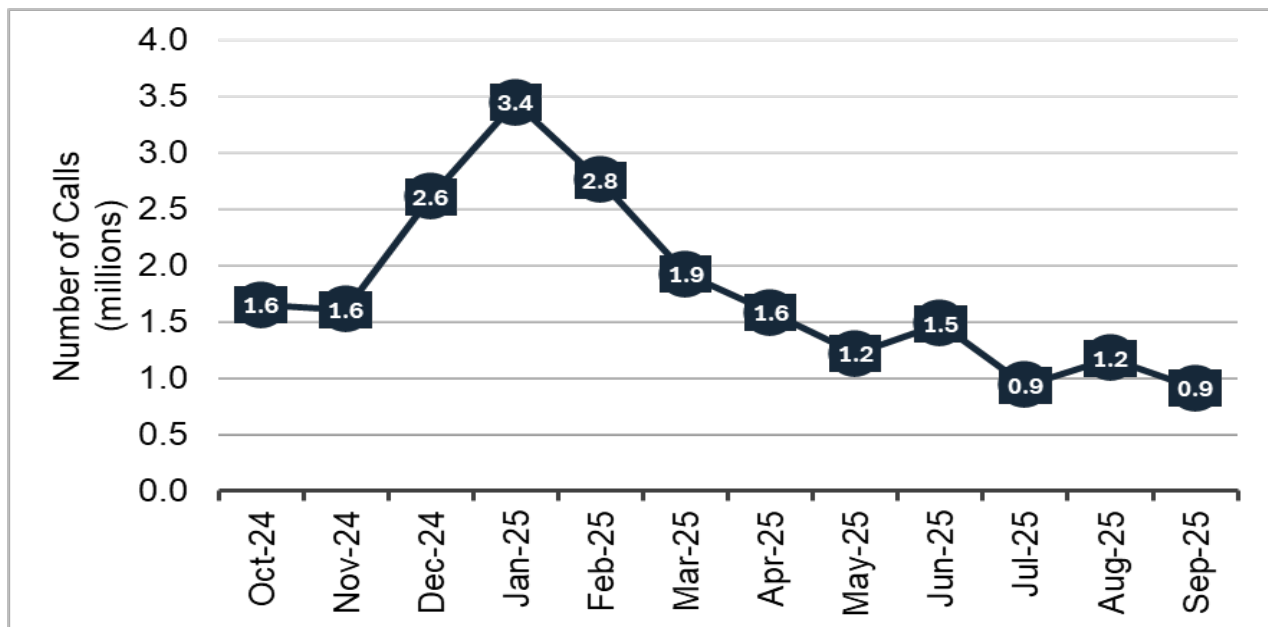
Agent Calls Handled Via Callback

In FY 2025, 23.8 million callers received calls back rather than waiting on hold to speak with an SSA employee. Figure B–3 shows the number of calls by month.

Figure B–3: Agent Calls Handled via Callback—FY 2025

Agent Calls Handled via Waiting on Hold

In FY 2025, SSA employees answered 9.3 million calls where the callers did not elect to receive a callback. These callers actively waited in queue while they waited for service from SSA employees. Figure B–4 shows the number of calls by month in FY 2025.

Figure B–4: Agent Calls Handled via Waiting on Hold—FY 2025
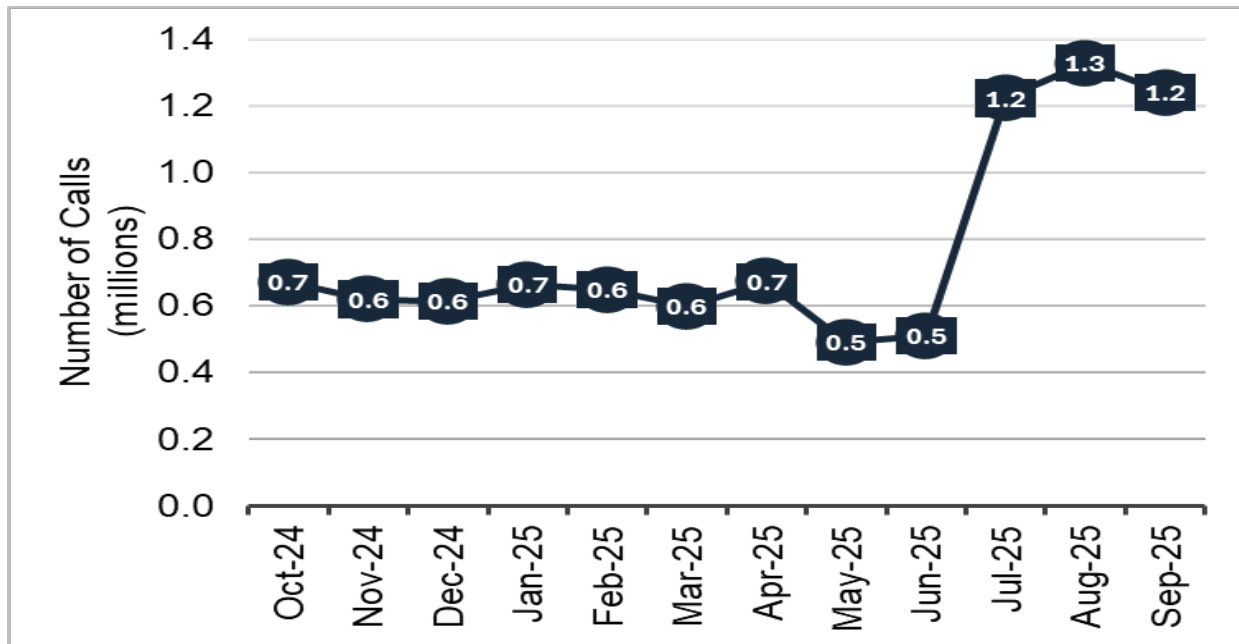
Average Interactive Voice Response Time

From May through September 2025, callers spent an average 2.6 minutes in interactive voice response (IVR). SSA updated its methodology in April 2025 to limit IVR counts of completions and responses to one per call. Therefore, Average IVR Time was not available before May 2025 as it does not accurately represent the number of successful completions. Figure B–5 shows the average time per month in FY 2025. Although SSA did not regularly publish this performance metric, we included it in response to Senator Warren's request.

Figure B–5: Average IVR Time—May Through September 2025
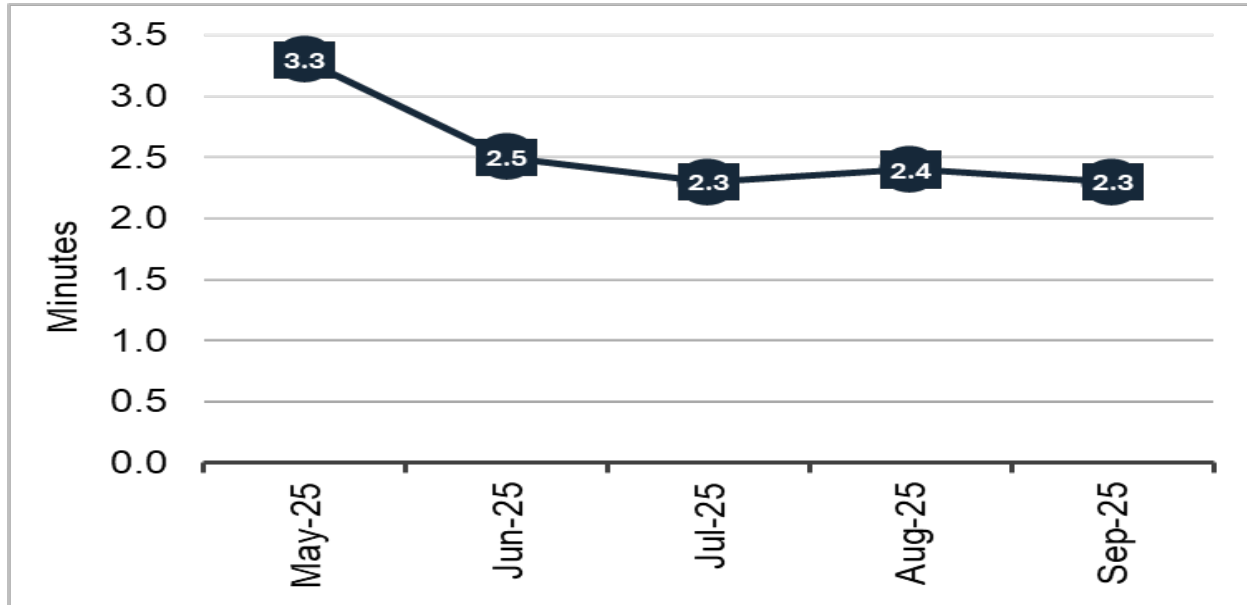
Average Speed of Answer

In FY 2025, callers waited on hold an average 15 minutes to speak to an SSA employee. If a caller accepted the initial offering of a callback and did not actively wait on hold, they were counted as having zero wait time. Any caller who actively waits on hold in queue, before accepting a subsequent offering of a callback, will have their active wait time counted toward the average speed of answer calculation. Figure B–6 shows the average speed of answer by month for FY 2025.

Figure B–6: Average Speed of Answer—FY 2025
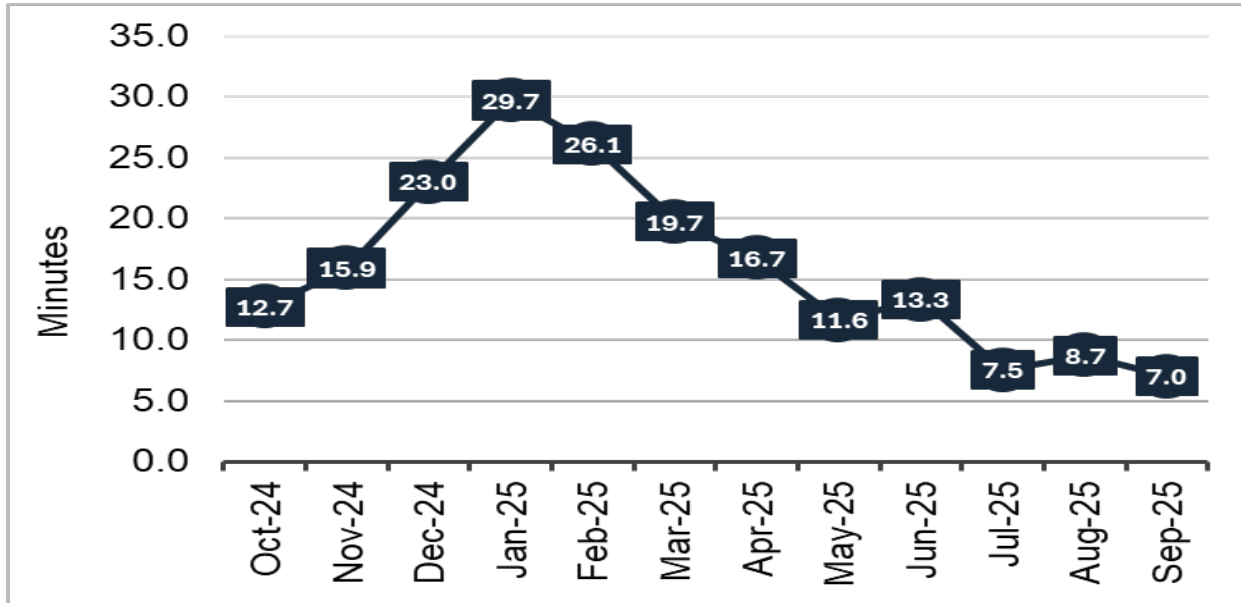
Average Wait Time to Callback

In FY 2025, callers waited an average 108.6 minutes to receive a callback from an SSA employee. This is also referred to as virtual wait time. Figure B–7 shows the average time per month in FY 2025. In June 2025, SSA noted its Average Wait Time to Callback calculation omitted some calls that should have been included, which caused the metric to be underreported by 0.1 to 1 minute for April through June 2025. Agency personnel informed us this issue had been corrected.

Figure B–7: Average Wait Time to Callback—FY 2025
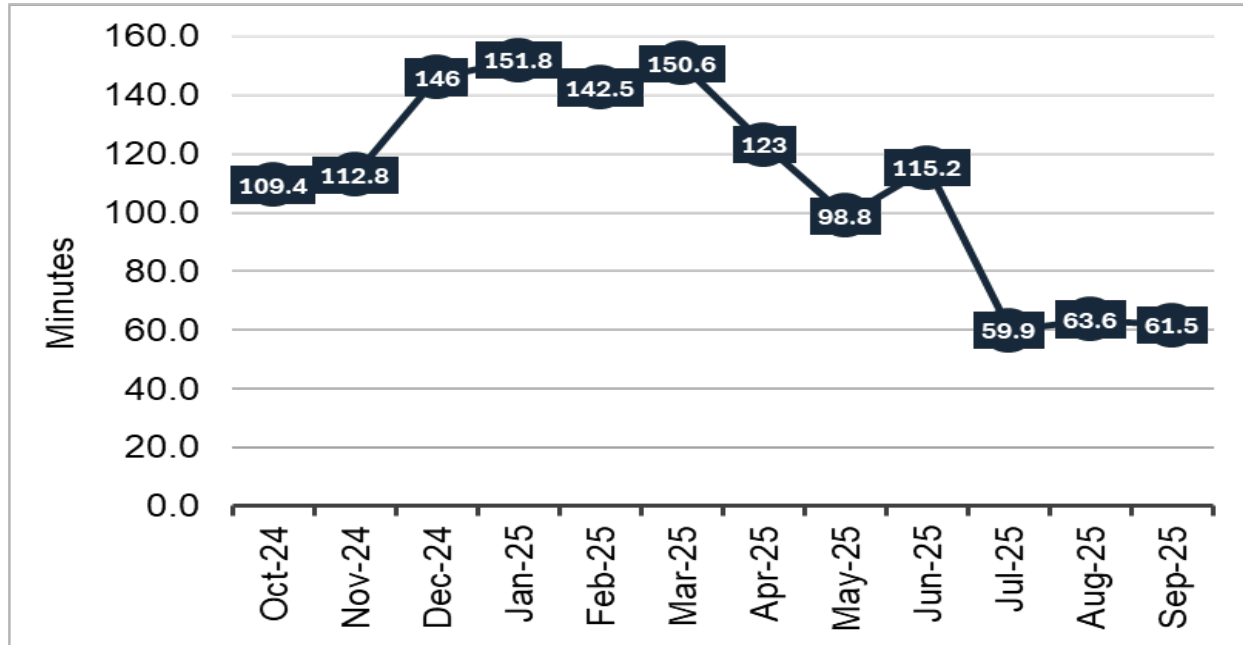
Calls Abandoned in Interactive Voice Response

From May through September 2025, 3.8 million callers abandoned their calls within IVR. These callers did not provide a response or complete a task in the IVR before they disconnected the call. Because SSA determined it counted the number of IVR responses rather than calls, its counts of IVR abandons were not accurate between December 2024 and April 2025. SSA updated its methodology to improve the accuracy of this metric. Figure B–8 shows the number of calls per month for May through September 2025.

Figure B–8: Calls Abandoned in IVR—FY 2025
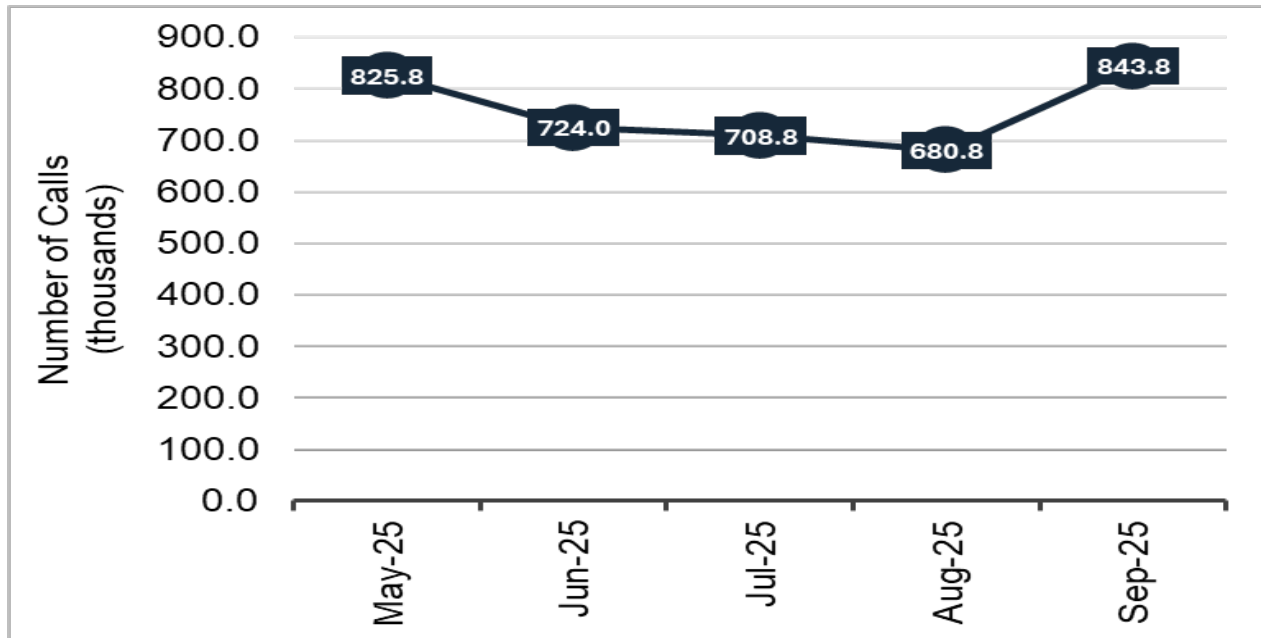
Calls Handled by Interactive Voice Response

In FY 2025, 34.7 million callers were served by automated IVR (self-service) and did not get routed to SSA employees for service. In April 2025, SSA updated its methodology to accurately reflect a single call with multiple responses or completions instead of counting each IVR response or completion as a call. For example, if a caller selected more than one option (such as, to obtain information about replacing a Social Security number card and a field office location), SSA counted each response, rather than counting the one call. SSA updated its methodology to improve the accuracy of this metric. Figure B–9 shows the number of calls per month in FY 2025.
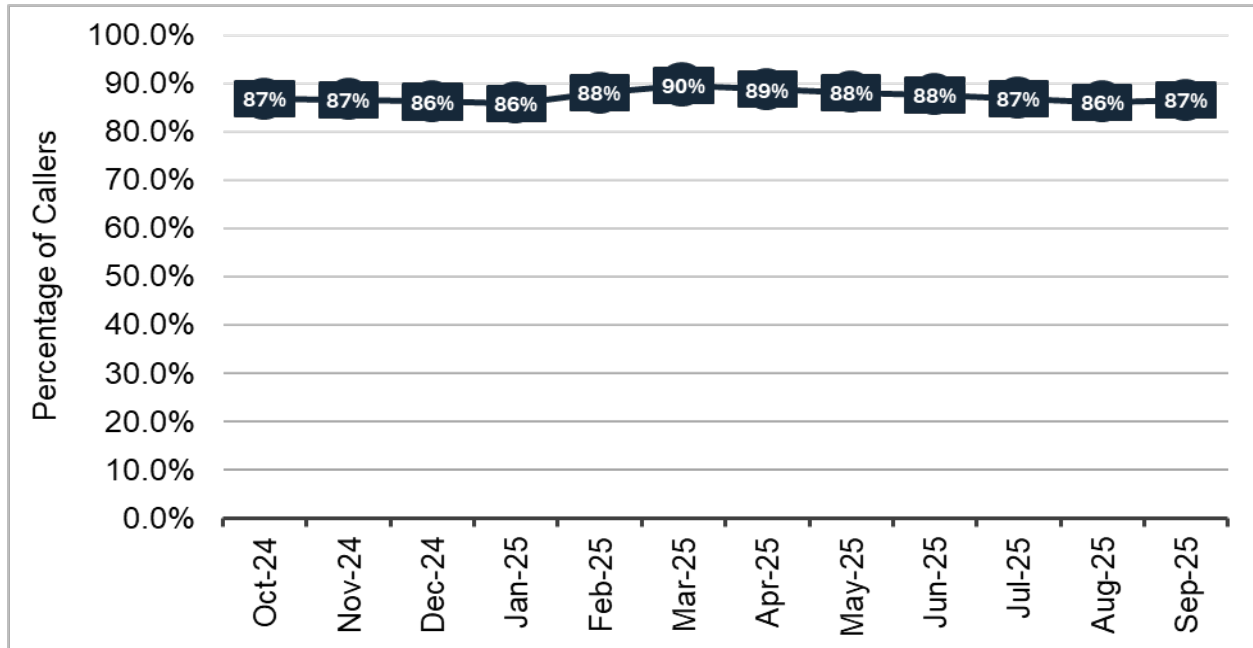
Figure B–9: Calls handled by IVR—FY 2025
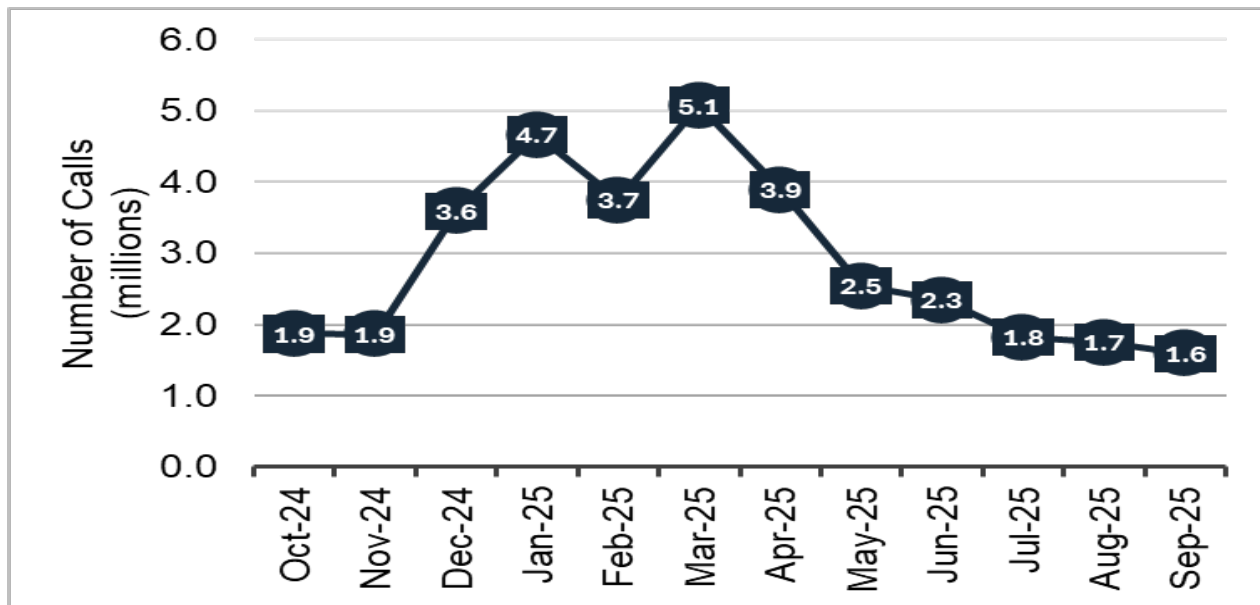
First Call Resolution

In FY 2025, 87 percent of callers who responded to the question on the post-call survey indicated their issue was resolved on the first contact. Figure B–10 shows the percentage by month during FY 2025.
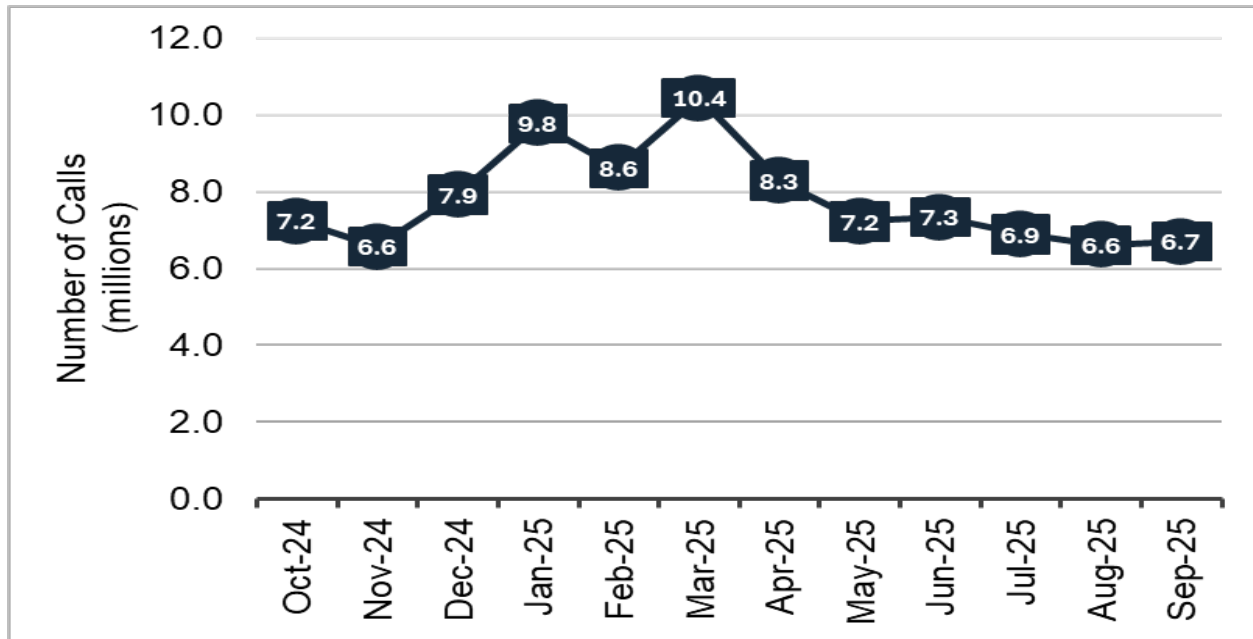
Figure B–10: First Call Resolution (Post-call Survey)—FY 2025

Network Calls Received

In FY 2025, SSA received 93.5 million total calls connected to the national-800 number. Figure B–11 shows the monthly number of calls during FY 2025.
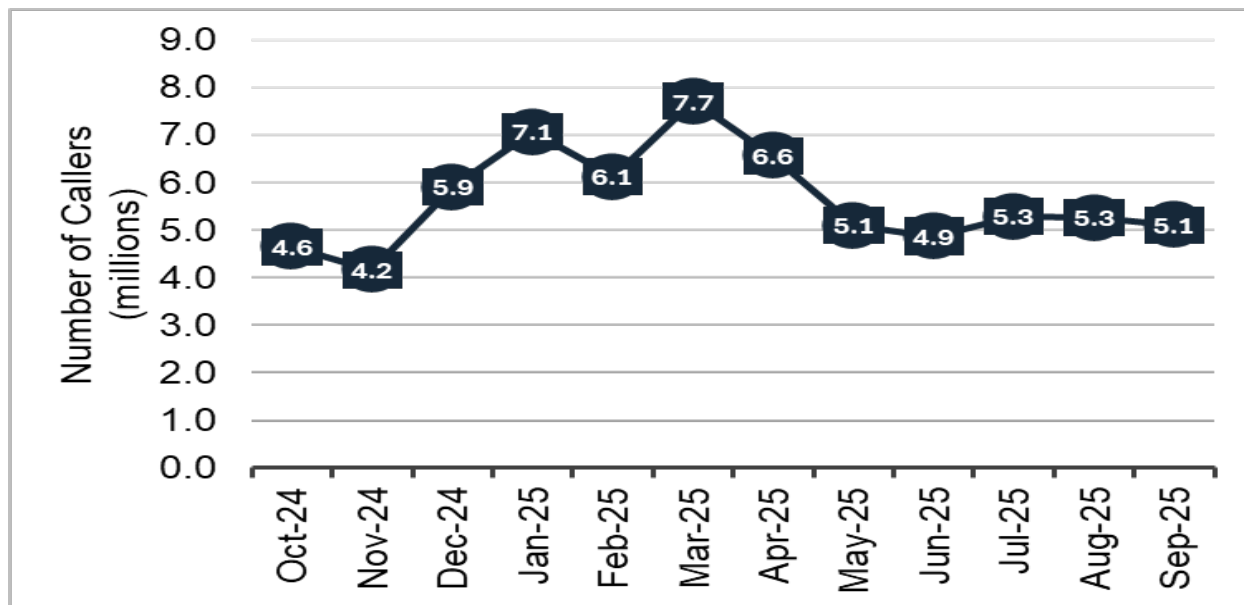
Figure B–11: Network Calls Received—FY 2025

Total Customers Served

In FY 2025, SSA served 67.8 million callers either by SSA employees or automation. Figure B-12 shows the number of callers by month in FY 2025.

Figure B–12: Total Customers Served—FY 2025

Call Data the Agency Did Not Track

Following are items Senator Warren requested we review that the Agency did not track.

1. **Dropped calls.** SSA did not have a metric for "dropped calls." However, SSA tracked the number of calls the caller disconnected either while they were waiting to speak to an agent (Abandoned in Queue) or while they were interacting with the automated services (Calls Abandoned in IVR).

2. **Callers who received a call back within the expected wait time.** SSA did not record the estimated wait time given to callers when they accepted a callback. SSA employees informed us they followed up with the vendor to determine whether it was possible to capture these data.

3. **Median time to speak with an SSA employee.** The Agency did not have information available related to median time.

4. **Callers who were transferred to another SSA employee.** SSA reported it did not transfer callers to other employees. Since this was not a part of the Agency's business process, it did not have any related data.

Appendix C – CHANGES TO THE AGENCY'S PERFORMANCE WEBSITE

Following are examples of changes the Social Security Administration (SSA) made to the telephone metrics published on its performance website during Fiscal Year (FY) 2025.

- **October 2024:** SSA published the average speed of answer (ASA).

- **November 2024:** SSA again published ASA and added percent of callers who reached SSA employees.

- **March 2025:** In addition to the ASA and percent of callers who reached employees, SSA published 13 year-to-date telephone metrics including, but not limited to, agent calls handled, average queue wait times, and average wait time to callback.

- **April 2025:** SSA only published three of the year-to-date telephone metrics it added in March 2025—agent answer rate, agent busy rate, and average handle time (that is, average duration of a call an SSA employee handled). In addition to ASA, SSA published

  o six new charts, including average daily call volume trend and average wait time to callback trend;

  o four live-data metrics that were updated every 2 minutes, including call wait time, callback wait time, calls in queue, and callback volume; and

  o three year-to-date metrics calculated through the last completed month, including total customers served, average daily call volume, and combined average hold time.

- **June 2025:** SSA published

  o nine charts, including average daily call volume, ASA, and total customers served;

  o four live-data metrics, including call wait time, callback wait time, number of callers waiting on hold, and number of callers waiting for a callback; and

  o four year-to-date metrics, including ASA, answer rate, average handle time, and agent busy rate.

- **July 2025:** SSA removed all metrics except ASA, the percent and number of calls handled through automation, total customers served, and percent of calls answered by time interval.

- **August 2025:** SSA published two metrics, including calls handled by an agent and ASA. The Agency also added five charts comparing year-to-date and prior years' results.

Appendix D – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed policies and procedures related to the Social Security Administration's (SSA) telephone services.

- Interviewed subject-matter experts to gain an understanding of the platform SSA used for its telephone services, how the Agency calculated and validated its telephone performance metrics, factors that affected SSA's telephone services, and steps the Agency had taken to strengthen its telephone services.

- Reviewed SSA's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 telephone metrics for its national 800-number (we did not review calls made directly to local field offices).

- Tested whether the telephone service information SSA reported to the public was accurate and complete by recalculating the monthly telephone metrics, evaluating access controls, and comparing published telephone metrics with information SSA provided for this audit.

- Compared the monthly telephone metrics to determine the extent to which telephone service performance changed during FY 2025.

- Compared FY 2024 and 2025 telephone metrics to identify natural monthly fluctuations.

- Reviewed recent changes SSA made to its methodology for calculating telephone metrics.

- Identified changes to the telephone service metrics reported on SSA's performance website during FY 2025 and determined why SSA removed and added metrics and whether it was still tracking the removed metrics.

- Analyzed monthly staffing information for employees who answer calls to the national 800-number to determine whether the changes made to staffing levels during FY 2025 could have affected SSA's telephone service performance.

We assessed the significance of internal controls necessary to satisfy the audit objective. This included an assessment of the five internal control components: control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, and monitoring. In addition, we reviewed the principles of internal controls associated with the audit objective. We identified the following components and principles as significant to the audit objective.

- Component 2: Risk Assessment
  - Principle 9: Identify, analyze, and respond to change
- Component 3: Control Activities
  - Principle 11: Design activities for the information system
- Component 4: Information and Communication
  - Principle 15: Communicate externally
- Component 5: Monitoring
  - Principle 16: Perform monitoring activities

We conducted our review between August and December 2025. The entity audited was the Office of Telephone Services. We assessed data reliability by (1) meeting with subject-matter experts to gain an understanding of the platform and data it uses for telephone services; (2) reviewed data documentation to identify whether information systems controls were appropriate; (3) tested formulas used to generate telephone performance metrics; and (4) traced/compared reported totals from SSA's public-facing website to the information reported in SSA's system.

We found the data used for this audit to be accurate and sufficiently reliable to meet our audit objective. We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Appendix E – Agency Comments

SOCIAL SECURITY

Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

Date: December 19, 2025

Refer To: TQA-1

To: Michelle L. Anderson
Acting Inspector General

From: Chad Poist
Chief Risk Officer

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report, "Social Security Administration's Telephone Metrics" (032517) -- INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. We remain committed to improving our 800-number services and continuing to provide accurate metrics to guide ongoing improvements. We will also continue to reengineer processes, enhance platforms, and realign resources to reduce wait times, improve call quality, and ensure a positive experience for all callers.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Amy Gao, Director of the Audit Liaison Staff, at (410) 966-1711.

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