



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Audit Report

Numident Verification Systems

042405 August 2026



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 20, 2026

Refer to: 042405

To: Frank Bisignano
Commissioner

From: Michelle L. Anderson *Michelle L. Anderson*
Assistant Inspector General for Audit as First Assistant

Subject: Numident Verification Systems

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration could increase verified matches for data from external parties and improve the administration of its programs by enhancing criteria in its Numident verification systems.

Please provide within 60 days a corrective action plan that addresses each recommendation. If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Jeffrey T. Brown, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment



August 2026

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) could increase verified matches for data from external parties and improve the administration of its programs by enhancing criteria in its Numident verification systems.

Background

To administer its programs, SSA uses data-exchange agreements to obtain information from such external parties as prisons, the Internal Revenue Service, and state agencies. For example, SSA uses external data to (1) reduce field office traffic, (2) prevent improper payments, and (3) maintain accurate records.

SSA verifies external data if the fields are an exact match to the Numident or discrepancies are within certain tolerances. The verification process helps ensure the Agency associates program information with the correct individuals' records and does not disadvantage individuals by placing incorrect information on their records.

We reviewed data from five Numident verification systems that processed external data that SSA used to administer its programs. We focused our review on approximately 1.3 billion external reports the systems did not verify between Fiscal Years 2021 and 2025. We analyzed 30 sampled reports to determine whether SSA could have matched the reports using tolerances allowed under its manual verification policy, criteria from other SSA systems, or advanced analytics.

Results

SSA could increase verified matches for data from external parties and improve the administration of its programs by enhancing criteria in its Numident verification systems. Our review of 30 judgmentally selected reports found SSA did not always program its Numident verification systems to match reports with minor name discrepancies. We determined SSA could increase verified matches if it programmed its systems using tolerances allowed under its manual verification policy, criteria from other SSA verification systems, or advanced analytics programs similar to those employed by other Federal agencies. With enhanced criteria, the Numident verification systems could have verified matches for all 30 sampled reports. If SSA increased matches by even 1 percent of the transactions it reported its systems could not verify during our audit timeframe, it would see millions of additional matches each year. These additional matches could potentially prevent improper payments, inaccurate records, and additional manual work for SSA employees.

Variations in SSA's internal matching criteria contributed to unmatched reports. The variations occurred because SSA components developed and managed their Numident verification systems independently and did not collaborate on the matching criteria their systems applied. In addition, SSA did not periodically assess risks and make necessary enhancements to respond to risks of not identifying a valid data match or incorrectly identifying a match as valid.

Conclusion

SSA has plans to coordinate and combine some of its Numident verification systems into a centralized application. However, systems owners have not enhanced, and have no plans to enhance, matching criteria in SSA's Numident verification systems. It is important that SSA take additional steps to enhance matching criteria based on risk assessments to optimize the organizational and program impact of data exchanges with other agencies.

Recommendations

We recommended SSA establish processes for components to collaborate on matching criteria and enhance criteria to increase verified matches where appropriate. SSA agreed to implement our recommendations.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DEVO	Data Exchange and Verifications Online
DIPS	Death Information Processing System
EVS	Enumeration Verification System
FY	Fiscal Year
MEF	Master Earnings File
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSN	Social Security Number
TY	Tax Year
U.S.C.	United States Code

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to determine whether the Social Security Administration (SSA) could increase verified matches for data from external parties and improve the administration of its programs by enhancing criteria in its Numident verification systems.

BACKGROUND

SSA uses data-exchange agreements to obtain information from external parties—such as prisons, the Internal Revenue Service, and state agencies—to administer its programs. For example, SSA uses external data as follows.

- Reduce field office traffic by automatically updating SSA records without public contact;
- Prevent improper payments by terminating payments to deceased beneficiaries and suspending payments to prisoners; and
- Maintain accurate records by updating its databases, such as the Numident and Master Earnings File (MEF). The Numident is a database that stores personally identifiable information for all individuals assigned a Social Security number (SSN), including their full name, date of birth, place of birth, sex, parents' names, and date of death, if applicable. The MEF is a database SSA uses to store earnings information it receives from employers and the Internal Revenue Service.

As of 2026, SSA had over 3,400 data-exchange agreements (some assist external parties in administering their programs, such as Federal and state benefits, and do not affect SSA programs). According to the *Agency Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years (FY) 2022-2026*, SSA plans to expand data exchanges with other Federal and state agencies to “. . . increase the accuracy of [its] records, improve the customer experience, and increase organizational effectiveness.”¹ As stated in SSA's *Operations Analysis, Data Exchange Product*, SSA expects the data exchange workload to continue to grow at an approximate rate of 10 percent per year. SSA managers must oversee data exchanges to ensure effective and efficient operations as required by Government Accountability Office and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) standards.²

SSA must also independently verify the external information it receives via data exchanges before it takes adverse actions on a beneficiary's payments.³ SSA uses various methods to verify information including electronically comparing external data with SSA records through its Numident verification systems. However, not all data-exchange agreements require Numident matching and the system SSA uses to verify external data against the Numident depends on which external party submitted the data and how SSA uses that data. See Appendix A for a list of program-related data exchanges and the Numident verification systems SSA uses to match the data to the Numident.

¹ SSA, *Agency Strategic Plan, FYs 2022-2026*, p. 22 (March 2022).

² Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-25-107721, pp. 16 and 34 (2025) and OMB, *Management's Responsibility for Internal Control*, A-123, p. 1 (2026).

³ 5 U.S.C. § 552a(p).

SSA considers external data to be verified if the fields are an exact match to the Numident or discrepancies between the external data and the Numident are within certain tolerances (the acceptable variation in data that will be considered a match). SSA's Numident verification systems automatically associate verified data with SSA records and, in some cases, automatically adjust payments to beneficiaries. For example, SSA's Death Information Processing System (DIPS) compares the SSNs, names, and dates of birth from electronic state death reports to the Numident. If the state data match the Numident within certain tolerances, SSA accepts the death reports and updates the decedents' Numident and relevant payment records.⁴

If SSA's Numident verification systems do not match the data, they will not automatically update the associated program information in SSA records. The verification process helps ensure the Agency correctly associates program information with the appropriate individuals' records and does not disadvantage individuals by placing incorrect information on their records. For example, if DIPS does not match state death data to the Numident, SSA will not post death information to its records to avoid disadvantaging individuals by erroneously terminating their benefits or adversely affecting their financial transactions (such as bank account closure or credit denial). Some Numident verification systems alert employees to manually review the data it could not match. For example, when SSA's Enumeration Verification System (EVS) determines data received about a prisoner do not match the individual's information on the Numident, the system adds the prisoner information to a list for employees to attempt to match to SSA records. However, other verification systems, such as DIPS, do not alert employees of the mismatched data.

For unmatched earnings reports, SSA systems make additional attempts to verify the data. When earnings reports do not match the Numident, the SSN Name Validation System places the wage information in SSA's Earnings Suspense File until SSA can associate the wage report with the correct individuals' earnings records. SSA will later re-submit wage reports in the Earnings Suspense File through the SSN Name Validation System to determine whether subsequent name changes on the Numident now match the wage reports. SSA also designed the enhanced wage verification program to reduce the size of the Earnings Suspense File by applying additional criteria to wage reports that the SSN Name Validation System did not match to the Numident. SSA runs its enhanced wage verification program annually to analyze wages from 3 years earlier (for example, in 2025, the program analyzed Tax Year (TY) 2022 wage reports) and posts matched wage reports to the MEF.

⁴ SSA does not include state death information in the publicly available Death Master File because it is restricted from disclosure. SSA, *POMS*, GN 03315.015, A (January 6, 2017).

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We reviewed available management information for FYs 2021 through 2025 for five Numident verification systems that processed external data that SSA uses to administer its programs: the Automated Enumeration Screening Process, Data Exchange and Verifications Online (DEVO), DIPS, EVS, and SSN Name Validation System. We focused our review on external data the systems did not match that could have affected SSA programs.

We identified approximately (1) 126,000 state death reports from DIPS, (2) 52 million wage reports from the SSN Name Validation system, and (3) 908,000 prisoner reports from EVS that the systems did not successfully match to the Numident. See Appendix B for more information about our scope and methodology.

We selected judgmental samples of 10 death reports, 10 wage reports, and 10 prisoner reports (30 total reports) from the identified populations. We analyzed the sampled reports to determine whether SSA could have matched the reports using tolerances allowed under its manual verification policy, criteria from other SSA verification systems, or advanced analytics programs similar to those employed by other Federal agencies. Additionally, we submitted 300 wage reports from the TY 2022 Earnings Suspense File—including the 10 judgmentally selected wage reports—to SSA for subject-matter experts to run through their enhanced wage verification program.

VERIFIED DATA MATCHES

We reviewed available management information for FYs 2021 through 2025 for SSA's DEVO, DIPS, EVS and SSN Name Validation systems and determined the systems' criteria verified matches for over 12.6 billion (91 percent) of the almost 13.9 billion transactions from external parties (see Table 1). These four systems determined the identifying information for individuals associated with 1.3 billion (9 percent) transactions did not match SSA's records. SSA could not provide information related to the Automated Enumeration Screening Process. Because our review was focused on external data that SSA systems did not match to the Numident, we did not independently verify the accuracy of the matched data. (See Appendix B for more information on data limitations.)

**Table 1: Numident Verification Systems Transactions for
FYs 2021 Through 2025**

Numident Verification System	Total Transactions	Verified	Percent	Not Verified	Percent
DEVO	4.001 billion	3.901 billion	98%	100 million	2%
DIPS (State Death Reports Only)	17 million	15 million	88%	2 million	12%
EVS	8.4 billion	7.3 billion	87%	1.1 billion	13%
SSN Name Validation System	1.471 billion	1.419 billion	96%	52 million	4%
Total	13.9 billion	12.6 billion	91%	1.3 billion	9%

Note: The data for the SSN Name Validation System are for TYs 2020 through 2024. SSA generally processed TYs 2020 through 2024 data in FYs 2021 through 2025.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

SSA could increase verified matches for data from external parties and improve the administration of its programs by enhancing criteria in its Numident verification systems. Based on our review of 30 judgmentally selected reports, SSA did not always program its Numident verification systems to match reports with minor name discrepancies. We determined SSA could increase verified matches if it programmed its systems using tolerances allowed under its manual verification policy, criteria from other SSA verification systems, or advanced analytics programs similar to those employed by other Federal agencies. With enhanced criteria, the Numident verification systems could have verified matches for all 30 judgmentally selected reports. If SSA increased matches by even 1 percent of the transactions it reported its systems could not verify during our audit timeframe, it would see millions of additional matches each year. These additional matches could potentially prevent improper payments, inaccurate records, and additional manual work for SSA employees.

Variations in SSA's internal matching criteria contributed to unmatched reports. The variations occurred because SSA components developed and managed their Numident verification systems independently and did not collaborate on the matching criteria their systems applied. In addition, SSA did not periodically assess risks and make necessary enhancements to respond to risks related to name discrepancies for any of its Numident verification systems. Risks include SSA (1) not identifying a valid data match and (2) incorrectly identifying a match as valid.

Enhancing Numident Verification Criteria

We reviewed a judgmental sample of 30 reports SSA's Numident verification systems did not match to the Numident and found the systems would have matched all of the reports if the Agency had incorporated other criteria from SSA's manual verification policy or other systems, or used advanced analytics similar to those used by other Federal agencies.⁵ However, Numident verification systems did not have tolerances that allowed SSA to verify matches with minor name discrepancies.

Variations in Agency Matching Criteria

Our analysis of 30 sample reports determined the Numident verification systems would have verified matches for additional reports if they had incorporated matching criteria and tolerances allowed in SSA policy or other verification systems. Specifically, we found the Numident verification system that processed the data could have matched

- 26 of the 30 reports (87 percent) had it used the same criteria employees used to manually verify matches.⁶ SSA's manual verification policy allows for, among other tolerances, minor spelling differences, names in a different order, and parts of a compound name. While all

⁵ We matched the 30 reports using criteria from (1) SSA's manual verification policy, (2) SSA's other verification systems, or (3) advanced analytics similar to those used by other Federal agencies. Some sampled reports matched the Numident using criteria from multiple categories, while others only matched using criteria from one of the three categories.

⁶ We could not establish confidence scores for reports we applied manual verification policies or other systems criteria.

the verification systems we reviewed incorporated some of the criteria in SSA's manual verification policy, none of the systems incorporated all the criteria.

- 22 of the 30 reports (73 percent) had it used criteria similar to those used by other Numident verification systems. None of the verification systems we reviewed used all the same criteria. For example, some of SSA's verification systems increase matching by checking additional fields, such as parents' names or other name fields, or by comparing different numbers of characters within a field when determining whether a reported name matches the Numident.

Additionally, for the 300 wage reports from the Earnings Suspense File we submitted to SSA subject-matter experts to run through SSA's enhanced wage verification program, 7 reports (2 percent) matched with at least 90-percent confidence.⁷ Some of the enhanced wage verification program's criteria recognize when the reported name includes a job title, such as RN (Registered Nurse), and evaluate names without limitations on the number of characters. The SSN Name Validation system would have matched these reports if it had used the same criteria as the enhanced wage verification program.

While programming the SSN Name Validation System using the same criteria as the enhanced wage verification program may result in a small percentage increase in timely matches, the impact is significant when applied to the approximately 52 million wage reports the SSN Name Validation System placed in the Earnings Suspense File in FYs 2021 through 2025. For example, a 2 percent increase in matches could have reduced the number of wage reports SSA's Name Validation System placed in the Earnings Suspense File by over 1 million. With enhanced criteria, the SSN Name Validation System could have posted the employer wage reports to the individuals' records when it received them, allowing SSA to include the wages in benefit entitlement determinations and payment calculations. Below are examples of variations in internal matching criteria from the populations that led to improper payments, inaccurate SSA records, or additional manual work for SSA employees.⁸

Manual Verification Policy. In January 2023, DIPS rejected a death report because of a slight variation in the spelling of the first name. For example, the first name on the Numident was "Ginnie" and the first name on the death report was "Jinnie." However, SSA's manual verification policy allows tolerances for similar first names that have minor spelling differences. Had SSA programmed DIPS using the same criteria provided to employees for manual verifications, DIPS would have automatically added the death information to the beneficiary's Numident and payment record. We referred this case to SSA, and, as of March 2026, it added the date of death to the beneficiary's Numident and payment record. SSA is attempting to recover the approximate \$46,908 overpayment.

⁷ Four of the 7 matches came from the 10 judgmentally selected wage reports included in the 300 unverified wage reports.

⁸ The names and scenarios used in the examples throughout this report are fictitious and are intended solely for illustrative purposes. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

Other Numident Verification Systems. EVS did not match a prisoner report because the last name on the Numident did not match the last name on the prisoner report. The last name on the Numident was a compound last name, while the prisoner report only included part of the compound last name. For example, the last name on the Numident was “Smith Johnson,” and the last name on the prisoner report was “Johnson.” EVS added the unmatched data to a list for employees to manually verify. The prisoner was released the day after his incarceration, so SSA employees did not have to suspend his payments. However, had SSA programmed EVS with the tolerances used in the SSN Name Validation System, EVS would have matched the prisoner report to the Numident. This would have prevented an SSA employee from manually verifying the report.

Enhanced Wage Verification Program. In August 2023, the SSN Name Validation System posted a beneficiary’s TY 2022 wage report to the Earnings Suspense File instead of the MEF because it did not match the partially reported name on the wage report with the full name on the Numident. For example, the first initial and last name on the wage report was “S John” and the first and last name on the Numident was “John Smith.” In September 2025, SSA’s enhanced wage verification program verified that the reported name matched the Numident and posted the TY 2022 wages to the beneficiary’s earnings record. This adjustment increased the monthly benefit rate for the beneficiary and his spouse, resulting in SSA paying approximately \$1,900 in retroactive benefits in October 2025. Had SSA incorporated the enhanced program criteria into the SSN Name Validation System, the beneficiaries could have received their correct payments when they filed their claims in September 2023.

Collaboration and Risk Assessments

According to Federal standards, SSA managers from different components should collaborate and coordinate efforts to ensure its Numident verification systems operate effectively.⁹ However, SSA employees responsible for the various Numident verification systems did not collaborate on the matching criteria their systems applied. Instead, the Agency managed its Numident verification systems in silos and did not coordinate their development, maintenance, or upgrades. As a result, SSA systems’ owners were not always aware of criteria other components used and could not explain most of the variations in the criteria for the Numident verification systems. For example, SSA subject-matter experts assigned to the SSN Name Validation System were not aware of the criteria that the enhanced wage verification program used and therefore had not considered incorporating it into the SSN Name Validation System.

While components should collaborate on the systems criteria, we recognize that the criteria for individual systems should be customized based on the intended uses of the data and risks to SSA programs. According to federal standards, SSA managers should perform and document periodic risk assessments for its systems. This includes identifying, analyzing, and responding to risks to SSA programs that rely on the Numident verification systems and establishing

⁹ Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-25-107721, pp. 15 and 46 (2025) and OMB, *Management’s Responsibility for Internal Control*, A-123, p. 25 (2026).

acceptable tolerances (such as confidence thresholds) for variations in the data.¹⁰ Risks include SSA (1) not identifying a valid data match and (2) incorrectly identifying a match as valid. For example, there is a risk SSA may improperly pay a deceased beneficiary if it does not match death report data to the Numident, but SSA may terminate benefits to a living beneficiary if it incorrectly identifies a match. Incorrect matches of death reports may result in improper payments, inaccurate records, and additional manual work for SSA employees to remove the erroneous death information from SSA records. However, SSA did not perform periodic risk assessments for any of the systems we reviewed and could not provide us with documentation of prior risk assessments or acceptable tolerance levels.

Without regular risk assessments, SSA cannot support the appropriateness of its matching criteria, which may contribute to the Agency not making necessary enhancements to respond to previously identified or new risks. For example, as early as July 2015, SSA employees became aware the EVS had a “defect” that prevented the system from matching surnames that contained exactly seven characters. As of August 2025, SSA had not corrected the system defect. Had SSA regularly assessed risks for its systems, it could have responded to the “defect” and avoided incorrectly determining external data did not match the Numident for at least 10 years.

Advanced Analytics

Advanced analytics programs match names from different sources despite imprecise or incomplete data. The programs calculate confidence scores that estimate how likely a match is based on the similarities between names. Agencies can set a threshold confidence score based on their risk tolerances and the programs will identify matches when they calculate scores above the threshold.

SSA has opportunities to use advanced analytics in its Numident verification systems’ matching criteria, which could increase the number of matches and enhance mission effectiveness, efficiency, and program integrity. We interviewed officials from three other Federal agencies that were already using advanced analytics to improve the quality of their identity-matching programs. For example, the Department of Homeland Security uses advanced analytics to verify identifying information submitted by employers against other sources to administer the E-Verify program (an Internet-based system that compares information an employer enters from an employee’s Form I-9, *Employment Eligibility Verification*, to records available to the Department of Homeland Security and SSA to confirm employment eligibility). According to matching statistics provided by Department of Homeland Security, using advanced analytics has increased automated processing of records and supports the reduction of manual workload processing.

We determined SSA could incorporate similar advanced analytics into its Numident verifications systems to increase verified matches. Specifically, we determined SSA’s Numident verification systems would have verified matches for 25 of 30 sampled reports (83 percent) with at least 90-percent confidence had SSA incorporated advanced analytics similar to those employed by other Federal agencies into its Numident verification systems. SSA had not established confidence levels for matching. We determined a 90-percent confidence level was reasonable

¹⁰ Government Accountability Office, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, GAO-25-107721, p. 40 (2025) and OMB, *Management’s Responsibility for Internal Control*, A-123, p. 9 (2026).

for testing purposes; however, we are not implying SSA used this threshold in its systems. Instead, SSA should establish confidence score thresholds based on its own risk assessments. The advanced analytics we tested included (1) edit distance (which counts how many single-character changes must be made to turn one name into another); (2) phonetic (which focuses on how a word sounds instead of how it is spelled); and (3) token-based (which split names into single words or initials for comparison) matching criteria.

Below are examples of advanced analytics used by other Federal agencies that could have prevented improper payments, inaccurate SSA records, or additional manual work for SSA employees, had SSA incorporated similar criteria into its Numident verification systems.

Edit Distance Matching. EVS did not verify that a prisoner report matched the Numident and sent the report to the Unverified Prisoner System. This occurred because the system did not identify that the first name on the Numident was a nickname for the name on the prisoner report. For example, the name on the Numident was “Gene” and the name on the prisoner report was “Eugene.” However, an edit distance matching program similar to one used by other Federal agencies matched the name to the Numident with a 94-percent confidence level. We verified the recipient’s incarceration dates and determined the dates he was ineligible for SSI payments while incarcerated. As of December 2025, SSA had overpaid the recipient approximately \$1,600 as he was ineligible for payments while incarcerated. Based on the date the facility reported the incarceration, SSA could not have entirely prevented the overpayment. However, SSA could have identified the overpayment and attempted to recover the funds, prevented future overpayments while the individual remained incarcerated, and reduced manual work for SSA employees had SSA incorporated criteria similar to those used by other Federal agencies.

Token-based Matching. In February 2023, DIPS rejected a death report because the first and last names on the death report did not match those in the Numident. We compared the reported names to the Numident and found they matched but were in reverse order. For example, the name on the Numident was “Jane Doe,” and the name on the death report was “Doe Jane.” However, token-based matching programs similar to those used by other Federal agencies matched the report to the Numident with a 100-percent confidence level. If SSA incorporated similar criteria into DIPS, it could have automatically added the death information to the beneficiary’s Numident and payment record. We referred this case to SSA and, as of March 2026, SSA employees added the date of death to the beneficiary’s Numident and payment record and initiated recovery of the approximate \$83,018 overpayment.

Phonetic Matching. In January 2023, The SSN Name Validation System posted an individual's TY 2022 wage report totaling \$5,245 to the Earnings Suspense File instead of the MEF because the reported last name did not match the last on the Numident. For example, the last name on the wage report was "O Donnel" and the last name on the Numident was "Odonno1." However, a phonetic matching program similar to one used by other Federal agencies matched the report to the Numident with a 100-percent confidence level. In September 2025, SSA's enhanced wage verification program matched the wage report to the Numident and posted the wages to the individual's earnings record. SSA did not issue any improper payments to this individual because they were not receiving benefits. However, delays in posting earnings to the MEF could result in SSA making incorrect determinations that applicants are not eligible for benefits or calculating payments incorrectly. If SSA programmed the SSN Name Validation System with the criteria used by the enhanced wage verification program or phonetic matching programs employed by other Federal agencies, it could have processed the report timely without requiring the additional system to take the action.

SSA acknowledged advanced analytics can improve the administration of SSA programs. However, subject-matter experts indicated gaps in computer programming skills have hindered the Agency's ability to implement advanced analytics programs.¹¹

CONCLUSION

In FY 2026, SSA coordinated and combined several data exchange systems into a centralized application. As part of those efforts, the Agency identified benefits in reducing silos and increasing efficiency. SSA has plans to incorporate some of its Numident verification systems into the centralized application, but systems owners have not enhanced, and have no plans to, enhance matching criteria in SSA's Numident verification systems. While improving coordination is a significant first step, it is important that SSA take additional steps to enhance matching criteria in its Numident verification systems based on risk assessments to optimize the organizational and program impact of expanding data exchanges with other Federal and state agencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend SSA:

1. Establish processes for components to collaborate on Numident verification systems matching criteria.
2. Conduct periodic risk assessments and enhance its Numident verification systems criteria to increase verified matches where appropriate.

¹¹ The Government Accountability Office found gaps in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics skills in the current Federal workforce as well as challenges attracting new employees who possess such skills. Government Accountability Office, *Fraud and Improper Payments: Data Quality and a Skilled Workforce Are Essential for Realizing Artificial Intelligence's Benefits*, GAO-26-108850, p. 17 (2026).

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA agreed to implement our recommendations (see Appendix C). SSA also provided technical comments in response to our draft report, which we incorporated into this final report as appropriate.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – PROGRAM DATA SUBMITTED THROUGH NUMIDENT VERIFICATION SYSTEMS

The external parties listed below submit program information through the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Numident verification systems. We could not confirm that we or SSA identified all such external parties or program information.

**Table A–1: Program Information from External Parties
Submitted through SSA's Numident Verification Systems**

External Parties	Program Information	Numident Verification System
50 states plus Puerto Rico, New York City, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands	Dates of death	Death Information Processing System
	Requests from parents for a Social Security number (SSN) for their newborns during the hospital birth registration process	Automated Enumeration Screening Process
Death reporters, such as employees from funeral homes, hospitals, and coroners' offices	Pre-verified SSNs, names, and dates of birth for deceased individuals before transmission of official death reports to SSA	Data Exchange and Verifications Online
SSA's totalization partners	Individuals believed to be deceased SSA beneficiaries	Enumeration Verification System
Employers	Wages	Social Security Number Name Validation System
Internal Revenue Service	Self-employment income	Social Security Number Name Validation System
Department of Homeland Security	Application for new and replacement SSNs	Automated Enumeration Screening Process
	Information on noncitizens who leave the United States voluntarily and noncitizens who are removed from the United States	Enumeration Verification System
State or local facility or institution	Individuals who are confined in a state or local facility or institution by court order in connection with a criminal offense	Enumeration Verification System and Data Exchange and Verifications Online
Federal prisons	Individuals who are confined in a Federal Bureau of Prisons facility by court order in connection with a criminal offense	Enumeration Verification System and Data Exchange and Verifications Online

External Parties	Program Information	Numident Verification System
Office of Personnel Management	Civil service benefit and payment data	Enumeration Verification System
Law enforcement agencies	Individuals in the source jurisdiction who are fleeing fugitive felons, parole violators, or probation violators	Enumeration Verification System
State foster care agencies	Information regarding children in foster care	Data Exchange and Verifications Online

Appendix B – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable Federal laws including sections of the *Social Security Act* and Social Security Administration (SSA) regulations, policies, and procedures related to Numident verification systems.
- Obtained copies of data-exchange agreements and determined which required Numident matching. The Numident the database SSA uses to store personally identifiable information for all individuals assigned a Social Security number (SSN). For those agreements that required Numident matching to assist in the administration of SSA programs, we identified the Numident verification system used to validate the information, and the SSA records updated based on the matching results. We excluded data exchanges and Numident verification systems that do not impact SSA programs or that involve SSA disclosing information to external parties from our review.
- Analyzed five Numident verification systems: the Automated Enumeration Screening Process, Data Exchange and Verifications Online (DEVO), Death Information Processing System, Enumeration Verification System (EVS), and SSN Name Validation System. We focused our review on external data the systems did not match which could have impacted SSA programs. To do so, we
 - compared Numident matching criteria among the SSA systems and assessed the sufficiency of the matching controls;
 - requested copies of risk assessments and risk tolerance levels; however, SSA subject-matter experts could not provide us with risk assessments for any of the systems we reviewed;
 - reviewed available management information reports for Fiscal Years (FY) 2021 through 2025; and
 - consulted with subject-matter experts to determine whether the Numident verification systems matching criteria properly account for name variations.
- Interviewed officials from the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Commerce, and the Securities and Exchange Commission to better understand their use of advanced analytics for their data-matching programs.
- Interviewed SSA subject matter experts to
 - determine whether SSA had considered the use of advanced analytics for its Numident verification systems and the status of any such proposals and
 - discuss the feasibility of implementing advanced analytics into its Numident verification systems.

- Identified approximately (1) 126,000 state death reports from the Death Information Processing System, (2) 52 million wage reports from the SSN Name Validation system, and (3) 908,000 prisoner reports from EVS that the systems did not successfully match to the Numident in FYs 2021 through 2025.
- Selected judgmental samples of 10 death reports, 10 wage reports, and 10 prisoner reports (30 total reports) from the identified populations. For each sampled report, we determined whether SSA could have verified the report using tolerances allowed under the following.
 - SSA's manual verification policy.
 - DEVO, Death Information Processing System, EVS, or SSN Name Validation System.
 - Advanced analytics similar to those employed by other Federal agencies. We tested the following types of advanced analytics (1) edit distance (which counts how many single-character changes must be made to turn one name into another), (2) phonetic (which focuses on how a word sounds instead of how it is spelled), and (3) token-based (which split names into single words or initials for comparison) matching criteria. We determined whether the programs would have matched the data with at least 90 percent confidence. While two of the five Numident verification systems we reviewed included numeric scoring thresholds, none established confidence levels for name matching. We determined a 90-percent confidence level was reasonable for testing purposes; however, we are not implying SSA use this threshold in its systems.
- Submitted 300 unverified wage reports—including the 10 judgmentally selected wage reports—to SSA for subject-matter experts to run through their enhanced wage verification program, which applies enhanced matching criteria to wage reports that the SSN Name Validation System did not match to the Numident.
- Calculated the improper payments that SSA could have prevented for beneficiaries if it had enhanced its matching criteria. We could not calculate improper payments on a larger scale due to the lack of automated programs capable of applying various criteria to match the Numident.

We identified the following limitations in the data SSA provided.

- We could not distinguish between program-related and non-program-related data for DEVO and EVS.
- We could not determine whether the systems rejected data for reasons unrelated to Numident name matching criteria.
- SSA provided tax year instead of FY data for the SSN Name Validation System but clarified that the system processed most of the tax year data for 2020-2024 during FYs 2021-2025.
- SSA could not explain the wide variations in DEVO statistics for the period reviewed.
- SSA could not provide management information reports for the Automated Enumeration Screening Process.

- SSA did not maintain complete, integrated management information such as volumes, counts, lists of partners, or copies of agreements.

We assessed the reliability of SSA's Earnings Suspense File, Unverified Prisoner System and rejected state death report data by (1) performing electronic testing, (2) reviewing information about the data and the system that produced them, and (3) tracing sampled data to source documents. While we identified and disclosed data limitations, we determined the data used in this report were sufficiently reliable given the audit objective and intended use of the data.

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 6: Define objectives and risk tolerances
 - Principle 7: Identify, analyze, and respond to risks
 - Principle 9: Identify, analyze, and respond to change
- Component 3: Control Activities
 - Principle 10: Design control activities
 - Principle 11: Design general control activities over information technology
- Component 4: Information and Communication
 - Principle 14: Communicate internally
- Component 5: Monitoring
 - Principle 16: Perform monitoring activities
 - Principle 17: Evaluate issues and remediate deficiencies

The principal entity audited was the office of the Chief Information Officer. We conducted our review between February 2025 and July 2026. 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 objective. We believe the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

Appendix C – AGENCY COMMENTS



SOCIAL SECURITY Office of the Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

Date: August 14, [2026](#)

Refer To: TQA-1

To: Michelle L. Anderson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit as First Assistant

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chad Poist".

From: Chad Poist
Chief Risk Officer

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Memorandum "Numident Verification Systems" (042405)
-- INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. We agree with the recommendations.

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.



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