



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Informational Report

Comparing the Social Security Administration's Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years

A-05-21-51062 | July 2022



Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

MEMORANDUM

Date: July 14, 2022

Refer To: A-05-21-51062

To: Kilolo Kijakazi
Acting Commissioner

From: Gail S. Ennis, 
Inspector General

Subject: Comparing the Social Security Administration's Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to summarize information about the Social Security Administration's workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic period of April 2020 to March 2021 and compare it to Agency workloads in prior years.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Michelle L. Anderson, Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment

Comparing the Social Security Administration's Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years

A-05-21-51062



July 2022

Office of Audit Report Summary

Objective

To summarize information about the Social Security Administration's (SSA) workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic period of April 2020 to March 2021 and compare it to Agency workloads in prior years.

Background

Each year, SSA receives and processes millions of claims and post-entitlement reviews. These workloads, which are addressed by SSA's nationwide network of field offices, teleservice centers, and processing centers, were significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. On March 17, 2020, SSA began limiting in-person services and redirecting customers to online and telephone service channels.

From SSA's management information systems, we obtained workload information for Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims and post-entitlement workloads including continuing disability reviews (CDR), SSI redeterminations, and limited issue cases (development of a specific issue or event without conducting a redetermination).

Results

Overall, SSA received and processed fewer OASDI and SSI claims during the COVID-19 period of April 2020 to March 2021 compared to the prior-year period (April 2019 to March 2020). At the same time, pending levels for these workloads increased. In April 2021, SSA's Commissioner reported that bottlenecks and service deterioration occurred because of the abrupt changes in SSA's operations.

SSI claims for aged applicants had the most significant changes, with 24.3 percent fewer receipts, 25.6 percent fewer claims processed, and 27.8 percent more pending claims. In addition, SSA received 15.2 percent fewer SSI disability claims and processed 12.5 percent fewer claims. To address the decline in SSI receipts, in June 2020, SSA formed a workgroup to work closely with other Federal, State, and local government agencies and third-party organizations to reach at-risk persons, including individuals facing homelessness or having low income, limited English proficiency, or mental illness.

SSA processed 9.8 percent fewer SSI redeterminations and limited issue cases and 41.2 percent fewer full medical CDRs compared to the year before the pandemic. This occurred because, from March 17 through August 31, 2020, SSA temporarily suspended the medical CDR workload and deferred processing actions that would have resulted in a reduction, suspension, or termination of benefits. SSA stated it was also affected by reduced availability of medical providers and consultative examinations at disability determination services along with delays in mail and document processing. While pending levels for SSI redeterminations and limited issue cases decreased 5.9 percent, the reduction in full medical CDRs resulted in the recurrence of a backlog that had been eliminated since September 2018.

We plan to conduct an additional review to determine why pending levels increased while receipts decreased for some SSA workloads in the COVID-19 period compared to prior years. We will also identify best practices from SSA's outreach efforts to inform certain individuals about their potential eligibility for SSI and methods to apply.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CDR	Continuing Disability Review
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
DI	Disability Insurance
DDS	Disability Determination Services
FO	Field Office
OASDI	Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
PC	Processing Center
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
SSA	Social Security Administration
SSI	Supplemental Security Income
TSC	Teleservice Center
WSU	Workload Support Unit

OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to summarize information about the Social Security Administration's (SSA) workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic period of April 2020 to March 2021 and compare it to Agency workloads in prior years.

BACKGROUND

SSA provides Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance (OASDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments to eligible individuals.

- The OASDI program provides disability benefits to workers and their families to protect against the economic consequences of prolonged and severe disability.¹ The program also provides retirement and survivors benefits to retired workers, including their dependents, and survivors of deceased workers.²
- The SSI program provides cash assistance to people who are aged, blind, or disabled and who have income and resources below specified amounts.³

SSA's nation-wide network of 1,235 field offices (FO) accepts new claims, answers questions from the public, and updates beneficiary information. SSA's 24 teleservice centers (TSC) answer calls to the national 800-number⁴ to assist callers with questions and address various business transactions. SSA's eight processing centers (PC) handle complex claims and support the national 800-number and FOs. Claimants can file applications for most benefits online or by scheduling a telephone or in-person appointment with their local FO. Workload Support Units (WSU) handle online OASDI claims and some SSI initial claims.⁵

¹ The OASDI program defines disability as the inability to engage in any substantial gainful activity (for adults) or causes marked and severe functional limitations (for children under age 18) by reason of any medically determinable physical or mental impairment(s) that can be expected to result in death or has lasted, or can be expected to last, for a continuous period of not less than 12 months. 42 U.S.C. §§ 416(i) and 423(d); 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1505. Our analysis of OASDI disability claims included applications by wage earners for disability benefits, including blindness; by the disabled child of a disabled, retired, or deceased wage earner; for health insurance benefits as disabled Medicare Qualified Government Employees; and for health insurance benefits based on kidney failure (End-Stage Renal Disease).

² Disabled survivors of deceased workers are included with OASDI disability claims above.

³ 42 U.S.C. §§ 1382(a) and 1382c; 20 C.F.R. § 416.110.

⁴ The national number is 1-800-772-1213.

⁵ SSA's management information systems list received, processed, and pending workloads handled by WSUs under the component that provides administrative oversight for the WSUs. We report on workloads at FOs, TSCs, and PCs, but some of these workloads were handled by WSUs.

Once individuals begin receiving benefits, SSA conducts periodic reviews to determine whether they remain eligible.⁶

- For OASDI and SSI disability beneficiaries, SSA is required to conduct periodic continuing disability reviews (CDR) to determine whether the disability continues.⁷ SSA employs a profiling system that uses data from its records to determine the likelihood of medical improvement. SSA selects beneficiaries profiled as having a high likelihood of medical improvement for a full medical review. Beneficiaries profiled as having a medium or low likelihood of medical improvement are sent a mailer questionnaire. The questionnaire requires that beneficiaries provide information about their medical conditions and recent treatments.⁸ If the completed questionnaire indicates medical improvement, SSA sends the case for a full medical review.
- SSA periodically reviews SSI recipients' income, resources, and living arrangements to ensure their continued eligibility for SSI and receive the correct payment. Redeterminations require a face-to-face or telephone interview. In addition, SSA selects and tracks certain cases for limited issue development.⁹

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic. On March 17, 2020, SSA began limiting in-person services and redirecting customers to online and telephone service channels in response to the pandemic. SSA stated the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to workloads and customer service delivery. From March 17, 2020 through August 31, 2020, SSA temporarily suspended some workloads, including certain program integrity workloads and actions that relied on evidence from the claimant, third parties, and medical service providers. Additionally, SSA deferred final determinations that resulted in a reduction, suspension, or termination of benefits. According to SSA, it suspended certain workloads and deferred adverse actions to protect beneficiaries' income and healthcare during a critical time in the pandemic. SSA resumed processing most adverse actions in September and October of 2020. On April 7, 2022, SSA reopened Social Security offices to walk-in service.

⁶ 42 U.S.C. 421(i).

⁷ 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.1590 and 416.990.

⁸ SSA mails a Form SSA-455, *Disability Update Report*, to solicit key information from disabled beneficiaries about their medical conditions and treatment within the last 2 years. The mailer form also asks for information about recent education or training and recent attempts to work. SSA, *POMS*, DI 28001.003, B.1 (August 31, 2016). In October 2020, SSA began allowing beneficiaries to complete this update online. According to SSA, this new process alleviates the need for the public to submit a paper form and reduces the administrative burden of receiving the paper document.

⁹ SSA, *POMS*, SI 02305.024, A (November 2, 2006). A limited issue case requires development of a specific issue or event without conducting a redetermination. SSA, *POMS*, SI 02305.015, A.1 (November 7, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

We summarized and compared SSA workload management information for the period April 2020 through March 2021 (week ended April 3, 2020 to March 26, 2021) and the following prior 4-year periods:

- April 2019 through March 2020 (week ended April 5, 2019 to March 27, 2020);
- April 2018 through March 2019 (week ended April 6, 2018 to March 29, 2019);
- April 2017 through March 2018 (week ended April 7, 2017 to March 30, 2018); and
- April 2016 through March 2017 (week ended April 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017).

For each workload we reviewed, we summarized receipts, processed, and pending¹⁰ counts. See Appendix A for our scope and methodology.

RESULTS OF REVIEW

Overall, SSA received and processed fewer claims and had increased pending levels for many workloads during the COVID-19 pandemic period of April 2020 to March 2021 compared to the prior 4 years (see Appendix B). When we compare the COVID-19 period to the prior-year period, SSA received fewer initial claims for OASDI and SSI, yet pending levels increased. Furthermore, SSA processed fewer CDRs, redeterminations, and limited issue cases. In April 2021, the Commissioner of Social Security reported to Congress that "...the abrupt changes to the way we do our work has caused bottlenecks in certain workloads and service deterioration beyond our control."¹¹ Although SSA hired staff during the COVID-19 period (see Appendix C), new staff had to be trained and mentored before they became proficient to affect workload processing counts.

¹⁰ The pending levels are counted at a specific point in time, not annually, so we obtained the pending claim totals as of the end of March for each year from 2017 through 2021.

¹¹ SSA, *Commissioner Saul Communicates to Congress about the State of Social Security Services*, ssa.gov/news/press/releases/2021/#4-2021-2 (April 26, 2021).

Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims

As seen in Table 1, SSA received and processed fewer OASDI disability claims¹² during the COVID-19 period compared to the prior-year period while the number of pending claims increased. While overall receipts decreased 11.3 percent compared to the prior-year period, online receipts increased 4.7 percent.¹³

Table 1: OASDI Disability Claims Summary

Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Percent Change from Prior Year to COVID-19 Year
Total Receipts	2,137,231	2,410,348	-11.3%
Processed	2,050,600	2,347,532	-12.6%
Pending	833,006	746,942	11.5%

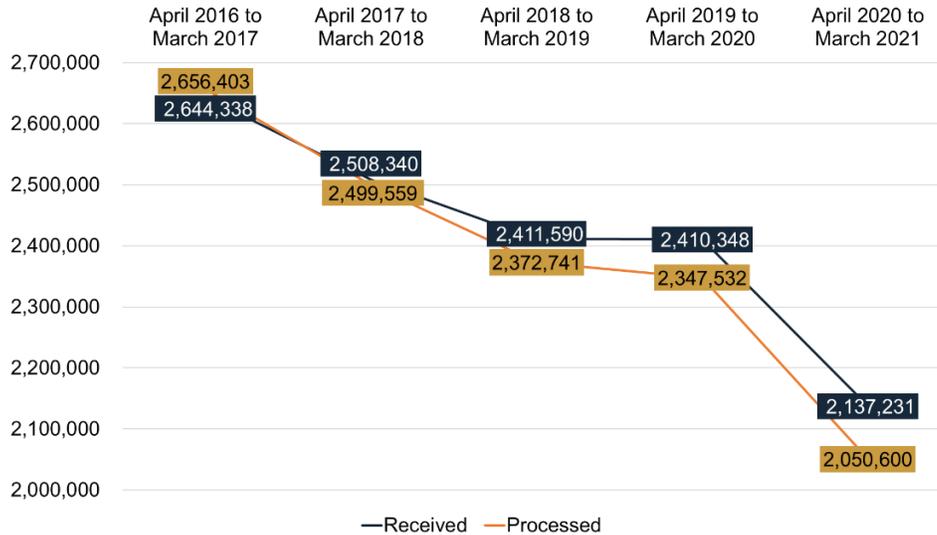
Note: Total Receipts includes Online Receipts.

Figure 1 shows the decrease in the number of OASDI disability claims receipts and processed from April 2016 through March 2021; and the largest decreased occurred between the COVID-19 period and the year before the start of the pandemic.

¹² Our analysis included all disability claims received and processed by components that review the non-disability aspects of the claims before referring them to the disability determination services (DDS), if the non-disability requirements are met. We issued a separate report on DDS workloads during COVID. SSA, OIG, *Comparing the Social Security Administration's Disability Determination Services' Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years, A-01-21-51038* (December 2021).

¹³ The number of online receipts from April 2020 through March 2021 was 1,115,972—a 4.7-percent increase from the 1,066,052 receipts during prior period of April 2019 through March 2020.

Figure 1: OASDI Disability Claims Received and Processed



Retirement and Survivors Insurance Claims

As seen in Table 2, retirement and survivors claims receipts and processed dropped slightly during the COVID-19 period but the number of pending claims increased 10.7 percent. While overall receipts decreased 1.8 percent compared to the prior-year period, online receipts increased 14 percent.¹⁴

Table 2: Retirement and Survivors Claims Summary

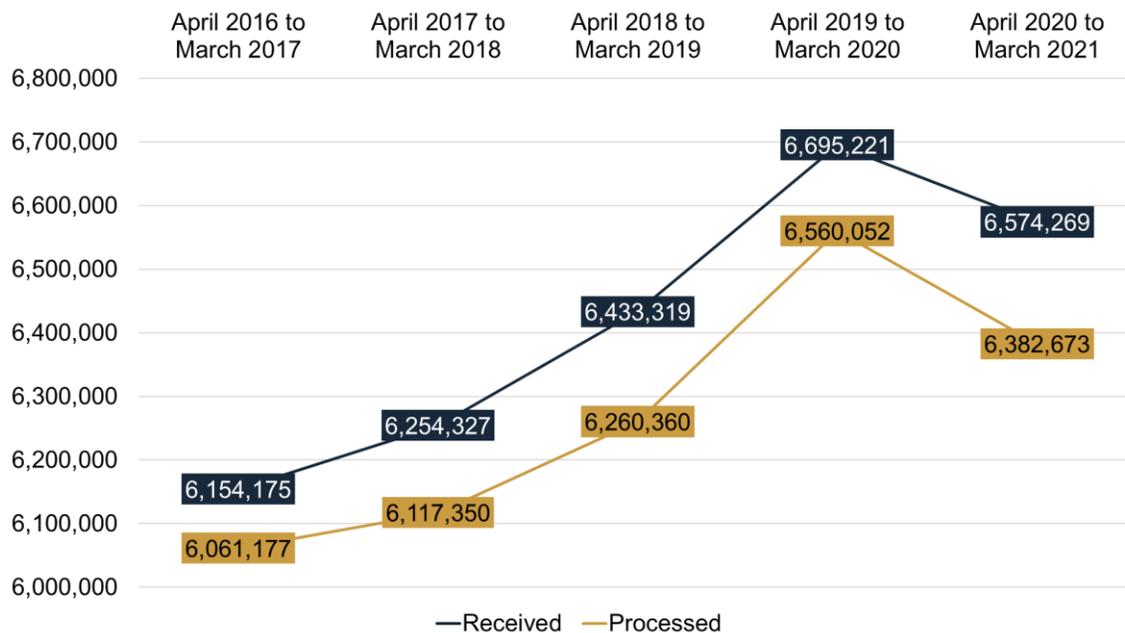
Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Percent Change from Prior Year to COVID-19 Year
Total Receipts	6,574,269	6,695,221	-1.8%
Processed	6,382,673	6,560,052	-2.7%
Pending	1,987,387	1,795,821	10.7%

Note: Total Receipts includes Online Receipts.

¹⁴ The number of online receipts from April 2020 through March 2021 was 1,711,961—a 14-percent increase from the 1,502,042 receipts during prior period of April 2019 through March 2020.

Figure 2 shows received and processed retirement and survivors claims increased from April 2016 through March 2020 but declined during the COVID-19 period.

Figure 2: Retirement and Survivors Claims Received and Processed



Supplemental Security Income Disability Claims

As seen in Table 3, the number of SSI disability claims receipts in the COVID-19 period decreased by 15.2 percent from the prior year. In response to the decline in SSI applications, the Agency initiated an outreach effort to inform certain individuals about their potential eligibility for SSI and methods to apply. SSA stated that, in June 2020, it formed the People Facing Barriers Workgroup to work with other Federal, State, and local government agencies and third-party organizations to reach at-risk persons, including individuals facing homelessness, with low income, limited English proficiency, or mental illness.¹⁵ Since SSA also processed fewer SSI disability claims during the COVID-19 period, pending claims increased by 2.8 percent.

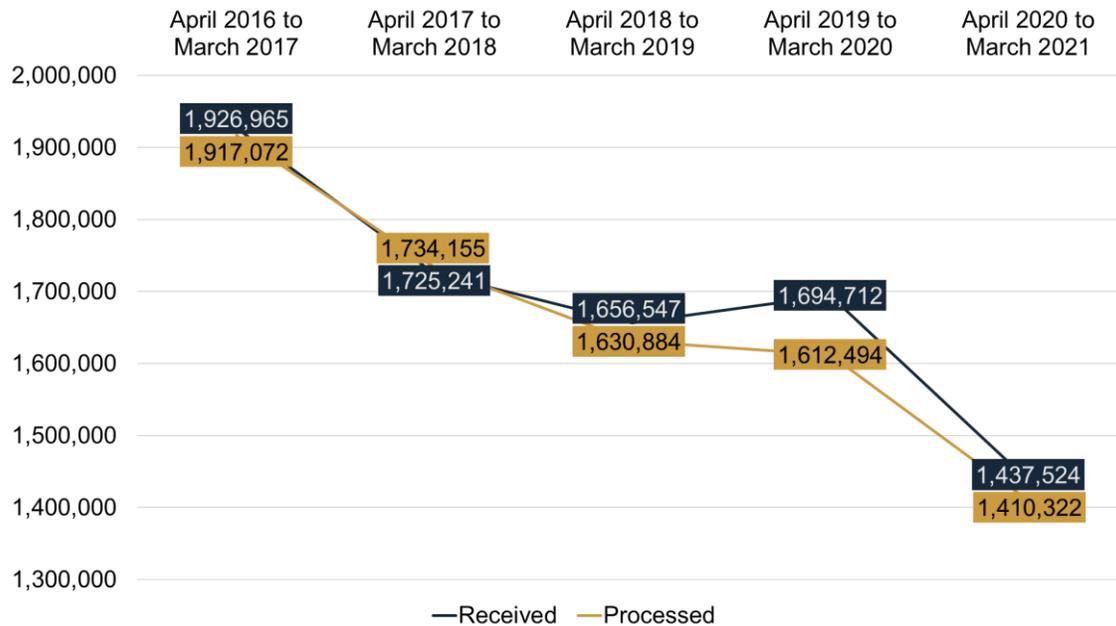
Table 3: SSI Disability Claims Summary

Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Percent Change from Prior Year to COVID-19 Year
Receipts	1,437,524	1,694,712	-15.2%
Processed	1,410,322	1,612,494	-12.5%
Pending	525,322	510,822	2.8%

¹⁵ The People Facing Barriers Workgroup was formerly known as the Vulnerable Populations Workgroup.

Figure 3 shows that SSI disability claims received and processed generally decreased from April 2016 through March 2021; and the largest decreased occurred between the COVID-19 period and the year before the start of the pandemic.

Figure 3: SSI Disability Claims Received and Processed



Supplemental Security Income Aged Claims

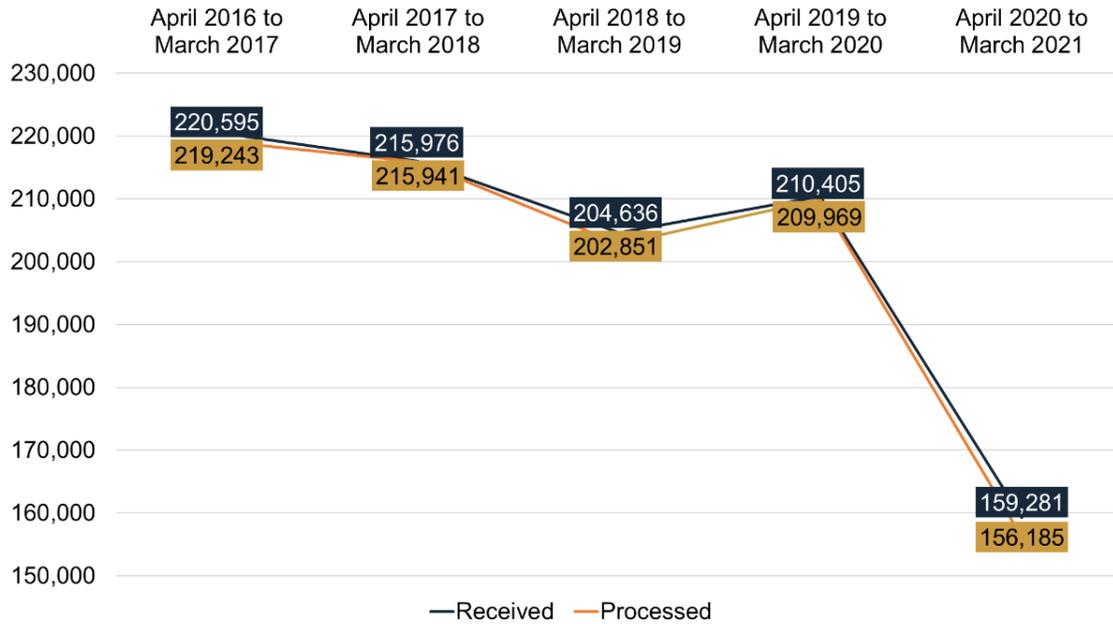
As seen in Table 4, SSA received and processed fewer SSI aged claims during the COVID-19 period compared to the prior-year period. The Agency’s outreach efforts included focusing on the aged population and informing certain individuals about their potential eligibility for SSI and methods to apply. The number of pending SSI aged claims increased 27.8 percent in the COVID-19 period, from approximately 7,600 in March 2020 to 9,700 in March 2021.

Table 4: SSI Aged Claims Summary

Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Percent Change from Prior Year to COVID-19 Year
Receipts	159,281	210,405	-24.3%
Processed	156,185	209,969	-25.6%
Pending	9,743	7,623	27.8%

Figure 4 shows that SSI aged claims received and processed generally decreased from April 2016 through March 2021; and the largest decrease occurred between the COVID-19 period and the year before the start of the pandemic.

Figure 4: SSI Aged Claims Received and Processed



Supplemental Security Income Redeterminations and Limited Issue Cases

From mid-March through August 2020, SSA temporarily deferred processing actions that would have suspended or reduced benefits following an SSI redetermination or limited issue. As seen in Table 5, SSA processed 9.8 percent fewer SSI redeterminations and limited issue cases during the COVID-19 period compared to the prior-year period. However, pending SSI redeterminations and limited issue cases decreased by 5.9 percent.

Table 5: SSI Redeterminations and Limited Issue Cases Summary¹⁶

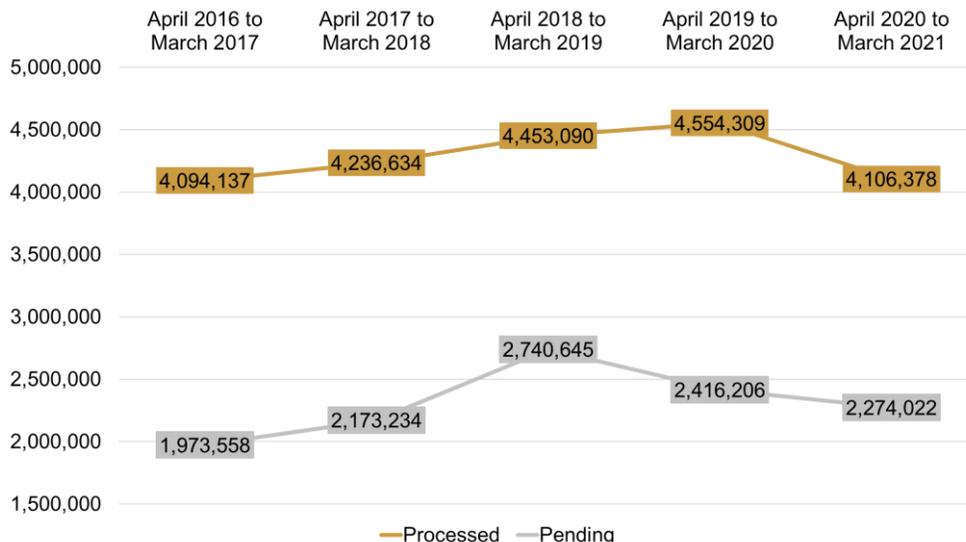
Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Change from Prior Year
Processed ¹⁷	4,106,378	4,554,309	-9.8%
Pending	2,274,022	2,416,206	-5.9%

¹⁶ SSA, POMS, SI 02305.001, B.1 (September 5, 2019). SSA performs periodic system runs to identify some recipients who meet the criteria for a redetermination. The timing of these system runs determines when an office “receives” a redetermination. As such, we did not analyze receipts or monthly workloads for redeterminations and limited issue cases.

¹⁷ Processed redeterminations and limited issue cases include completed and clearance cases. Completed cases represent cases with all necessary activity finished while clearance cases involve items that SSA will not process to completion. For example, SSA will not complete a redetermination if the SSI recipient becomes ineligible for unrelated reasons after the redetermination is initiated.

Figure 5 shows that SSI redeterminations and limited issue cases processed increased each year from April 2016 through March 2020 but decreased during the COVID-19 period. Pending levels had decreased since March 2019.

Figure 5: SSI Redeterminations and Limited Issue Cases Processed and Pending



Continuing Disability Reviews

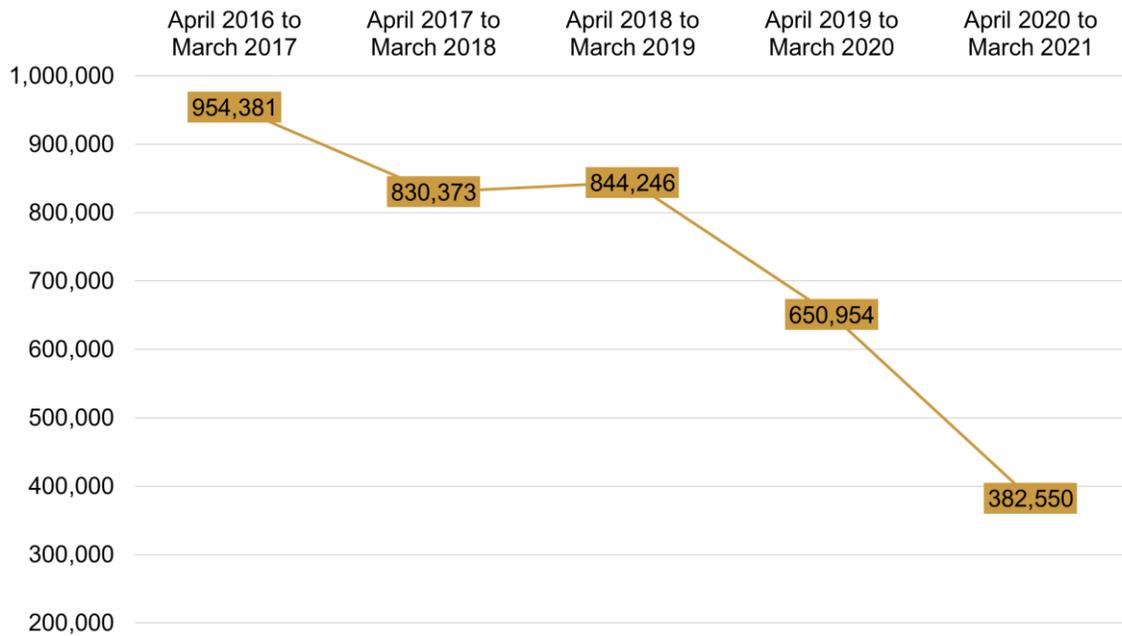
During the COVID-19 pandemic, SSA temporarily suspended certain workloads, including medical CDRs. In addition, according to SSA, CDR completions were affected by issues beyond its control, including reduced hours and a pivot to telehealth appointments by DDS medical providers and reduced availability of consultative examinations used for medical CDRs. Delays in mail and document processing also affected CDR completions. As seen in Table 6, SSA processed 41.2 percent fewer full medical CDRs during the COVID-19 period compared to the prior-year period.

Table 6: CDR Summary

Workload	April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID Year)	April 2019 to March 2020 (Prior Year)	Percent Change from Prior Year
Full Medical CDRs	382,550	650,954	-41.2%
Mailer CDRs	1,034,923	1,238,672	-16.4%
Total Processed	1,417,473	1,889,626	-25.0%

SSA had completed record levels of full medical CDRs in previous years as it worked to eliminate a backlog of CDRs. After eliminating the backlog at the end of FY 2018, SSA conducted fewer full medical CDRs annually—enough to remain current and prevent another backlog. However, the reduction in medical CDRs completed during the pandemic, as seen in Figure 6, resulted in a backlog of 130,636 full medical CDRs at the end of FY 2020. On August 31, 2020, SSA resumed workloads suspended due to the pandemic, which included medical CDRs. On April 7, 2022, SSA restored in-person services and expects to eliminate the medical CDR backlog in FY 2023.

Figure 6: Full Medical CDRs Processed



CONCLUSIONS

We plan to conduct an additional review to determine why pending levels increased while receipts decreased for some SSA workloads in the COVID-19 period compared to prior years. We will also identify best practices from SSA’s outreach efforts to inform certain individuals about their potential eligibility for SSI and methods to apply.

AGENCY COMMENTS

SSA stated it had taken steps to improve accessibility and equity in the SSI program. See Appendix D for the full text of SSA's comments.



Michelle L. Anderson
Assistant Inspector General for Audit

APPENDICES

Appendix A –SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable sections of the *Social Security Act* and Social Security Administration’s (SSA) regulations, rules, policies, and procedures.
- Obtained SSA workload information from SSA’s Management Information Central and Agency Level Management Information¹ for the following workloads:²
 - Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance,
 - Supplemental Security Income,
 - Redeterminations and limited issue cases, and
 - Continuing disability reviews.
- Calculated the time frames we wanted to compare (April to March) from the workload information we obtained from the Management Information. The time frames we calculated to summarize were as follows:
 - April 2020 to March 2021 (COVID-19 period), this period was Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 week 27 (April 3, 2020) to FY 2021 week 26 (March 26, 2021).
 - April 2019 to March 2020, this period was FY 2019 week 27 (April 5, 2019) to FY 2020 week 26 (March 27, 2020).
 - April 2018 to March 2019, this period was FY 2018 week 27 (April 6, 2018) to FY 2019 week 26 (March 29, 2019).
 - April 2017 to March 2018, this period was FY 2017 week 27 (April 7, 2017) to FY 2018 week 26 (March 30, 2018).
 - April 2016 to March 2017, this period was FY 2016 week 27 (April 1, 2016) to FY 2017 week 26 (March 31, 2017).
- Compared the number of SSA workload receipts, processed, and pending as of the end of March for 2017 through 2021.
- Contacted SSA and received responses from the Agency on questions we had concerning the SSA workload and staffing information.

¹ We did not test the reliability of the data since we did not conduct this review under generally accepted government auditing standards.

² We did not include all of SSA’s workloads in our review. For example, we did not include Appeals Council, Office of Hearings Operations, or enumeration workloads, which are being addressed in ongoing audits. SSA, OIG, *The Social Security Administration’s Appeals Council Workload*, A-12-20-50986 (June 30, 2022); SSA, OIG, *The Office of Hearing Operations’ Use of Video and Telephone Hearings*, A-05-18-50615 (in progress); SSA, OIG, *The Social Security Administration’s Enumeration Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, A-15-21-51015 (in progress). In addition, SSA has numerous smaller workloads, such as those related to Special Veterans Benefits, that we did not review.

Appendix B – AGENCY WORKLOADS FOR APRIL 2016 THROUGH MARCH 2020

The following tables represent the Social Security Administration’s workloads for field offices, processing centers, teleservice centers, and other components¹ for the COVID-19 period of April 2020 to March 2021 to the prior 4-year periods. Workload Support Units (WSU) handle online claims for benefits. SSA counts workloads processed by WSUs in the component that provides administrative oversight for the WSU.² For the tables that show the *Percent Changes from Year to Year*, we did not calculate the percent change and intentionally left blank the column for the April 2016 to March 2017 period because we did not obtain workload information to compare it with the prior-year period of April 2015 to March 2016.

Table B–1: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Receipts

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	1,925,949	2,233,807	2,250,607	2,388,052	2,542,409
Processing Centers	146,321	131,943	120,439	92,633	87,974
Teleservice Centers	51,926	36,162	33,392	19,886	10,288
Other Components	13,035	8,436	7,152	7,769	3,667
Agency Total	2,137,231	2,410,348	2,411,590	2,508,340	2,644,338

¹ Other components include disability determination services (DDS), hearings offices, Appeals Council, and other components that process aspects of SSA’s workloads. We did not break redeterminations and limited issue cases down by component because this workload is mostly processed in field offices. We also did not break continuing disability reviews down by component because DDSs conduct full medical reviews. We issued a separate report on DDS workloads during COVID. SSA, OIG, *Comparing the Social Security Administration’s Disability Determination Services’ Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years*, A-01-21-51038 (December 2021).

² According to SSA, workloads presented in the following tables as being processed by field offices also include work performed by WSUs under the administrative oversight of field operations. Additionally, workloads presented as handled by processing centers or teleservice centers include WSUs under the administrative oversight of processing centers or teleservice centers.

**Table B–2: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Receipts
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-13.8%	-0.7%	-5.8%	-6.1%	
Processing Centers	10.9%	9.6%	30.0%	5.3%	
Teleservice Centers	43.6%	8.3%	67.9%	93.3%	
Other Components	54.5%	18.0%	-7.9%	111.9%	
Agency Total	-11.3%	-0.1%	-3.9%	-5.1%	

Table B–3: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Processed

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	1,804,151	2,114,803	2,153,235	2,297,770	2,467,298
Processing Centers	194,534	195,544	186,378	178,729	177,943
Teleservice Centers	40,282	29,358	26,962	15,325	8,867
Other Components	11,633	7,827	6,166	7,735	2,295
Agency Total	2,050,600	2,347,532	2,372,741	2,499,559	2,656,403

**Table B–4: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Processed
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-14.7%	-1.8%	-6.3%	-6.9%	
Processing Centers	-0.5%	4.9%	4.3%	0.4%	
Teleservice Centers	37.2%	8.9%	75.9%	72.8%	
Other Components	48.6%	26.9%	-20.3%	237.0%	
Agency Total	-12.6%	-1.1%	-5.1%	-5.9%	

Table B-5: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Pending

Component	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	767,887	701,817	645,340	650,819	642,051
Processing Centers	81,801	58,883	50,919	33,330	27,690
Teleservice Centers	16,685	9,775	8,197	5,661	2,229
Other Components	404,048	382,952	329,817	337,619	348,186
Agency Total³	833,006	746,942	684,392	650,819	642,051

Table B-6: Old-Age, Survivors and Disability Insurance Disability Claims Pending (Percent Change from Year to Year)

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	9.4%	8.8%	-0.8%	1.4%	
Processing Centers	38.9%	15.6%	52.8%	20.4%	
Teleservice Centers	70.7%	19.3%	44.8%	154.0%	
Other Components	5.5%	16.1%	-2.3%	-3.0%	
Agency Total	11.5%	9.1%	5.2%	1.4%	

³ Agency totals do not equal the sum of the component counts because, according to SSA, cases can be pending in more than one component as they move from one component to another during processing.

Table B-7: Retirement and Survivor Claims Receipts

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	4,324,265	4,681,125	4,392,986	4,274,078	4,282,893
Processing Centers	1,519,157	1,370,586	1,391,194	1,318,369	1,195,260
Teleservice Centers	456,998	403,788	408,925	423,316	441,066
Other Components	273,849	239,722	240,214	238,564	234,956
Agency Total	6,574,269	6,695,221	6,433,319	6,254,327	6,154,175

**Table B-8: Retirement and Survivor Claims Receipts
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-7.6%	6.6%	2.8%	-0.2%	
Processing Centers	10.8%	-1.5%	5.5%	10.3%	
Teleservice Centers	13.2%	-1.3%	-3.4%	-4.0%	
Other Components	14.2%	-0.2%	0.7%	1.5%	
Agency Total	-1.8%	4.1%	2.9%	1.6%	

Table B–9: Retirement and Survivor Claims Processed

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	3,954,247	4,216,634	3,959,508	3,810,435	3,822,701
Processing Centers	1,748,256	1,775,590	1,728,646	1,695,943	1,608,256
Teleservice Centers	428,400	355,314	361,496	392,188	411,957
Other Components	251,770	212,514	210,710	218,784	218,263
Agency Total	6,382,673	6,560,052	6,260,360	6,117,350	6,061,177

**Table B–10: Retirement and Survivor Claims Processed
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-6.2%	6.5%	3.9%	-0.3%	
Processing Centers	-1.5%	2.7%	1.9%	5.5%	
Teleservice Centers	20.6%	-1.7%	-7.8%	-4.8%	
Other Components	18.5%	0.9%	-3.7%	0.2%	
Agency Total	-2.7%	4.8%	2.3%	0.9%	

Table B–11: Retirement and Survivor Claims Pending

Component	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	1,382,782	1,256,056	1,149,713	1,041,423	953,247
Processing Centers	421,455	382,012	366,970	312,900	274,861
Teleservice Centers	132,056	119,532	110,240	103,388	97,187
Other Components	51,543	38,815	34,376	30,598	26,075
Agency Total⁴	1,987,387	1,795,821	1,660,689	1,487,785	1,350,832

**Table B–12: Retirement and Survivor Claims Pending
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	10.1%	9.2%	10.4%	9.3%	
Processing Centers	10.3%	4.1%	17.3%	13.8%	
Teleservice Centers	10.5%	8.4%	6.6%	6.4%	
Other Components	32.8%	12.9%	12.3%	17.3%	
Agency Total	10.7%	8.1%	11.6%	10.1%	

⁴ Agency totals do not equal the sum of the component counts in some years because, according to SSA, cases can be pending in more than one component as they move from one component to another during processing.

Table B–13: SSI Disability Claims Receipts

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	1,387,268	1,649,663	1,611,228	1,681,768	1,888,596
Processing Centers	34,756	33,713	33,348	33,035	31,657
Teleservice Centers	11,975	10,119	10,516	7,963	5,293
Other Components	3,525	1,217	1,455	2,475	1,419
Agency Total	1,437,524	1,694,712	1,656,547	1,725,241	1,926,965

**Table B–14: SSI Disability Claims Receipts
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-15.9%	2.4%	-4.2%	-11.0%	
Processing Centers	3.1%	1.1%	0.9%	4.4%	
Teleservice Centers	18.3%	-3.8%	32.1%	50.4%	
Other Components	189.6%	-16.4%	-41.2%	74.4%	
Agency Total	-15.2%	2.3%	-4.0%	-10.5%	

Table B–15: SSI Disability Claims Processed

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	1,365,320	1,568,697	1,583,675	1,687,966	1,880,534
Processing Centers	30,435	30,904	31,418	30,605	30,131
Teleservice Centers	9,921	8,758	10,694	6,994	4,674
Other Components	4,646	4,135	5,097	8,590	1,733
Agency Total	1,410,322	1,612,494	1,630,884	1,734,155	1,917,072

**Table B–16: SSI Disability Claims Processed
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-13.0%	-0.9%	-6.2%	-10.2%	
Processing Centers	-1.5%	-1.6%	2.7%	1.6%	
Teleservice Centers	13.3%	-18.1%	52.9%	49.6%	
Other Components	12.4%	-18.9%	-40.7%	395.7%	
Agency Total	-12.5%	-1.1%	-6.0%	-9.5%	

Table B–17: SSI Disability Claims Pending

Component	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	506,795	496,607	432,512	423,373	45,273
Processing Centers	26,779	19,461	17,231	11,857	8,277
Teleservice Centers	4,662	3,432	2,838	2,909	1,482
Other Components	402,815	398,248	335,231	332,785	364,642
Agency Total⁵	525,322	510,822	444,459	434,978	463,059

**Table B–18: SSI Disability Claims Pending
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	2.1%	14.8%	2.2%	835.2%	
Processing Centers	37.6%	12.9%	45.3%	43.3%	
Teleservice Centers	35.8%	20.9%	-2.4%	96.3%	
Other Components	1.1%	18.8%	0.7%	-8.7%	
Agency Total	2.8%	14.9%	2.2%	-6.1%	

⁵ Agency totals do not equal the sum of the component counts because, according to SSA, cases can be pending in more than one component as they move from one component to another during processing.

Table B-19: SSI Aged Claims Receipts⁶

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	157,966	209,565	203,914	215,567	220,131
Processing Centers	588	597	469	286	333
Teleservice Centers	623	184	191	94	100
Other Components	104	59	62	29	31
Agency Total	159,281	210,405	204,636	215,976	220,595

**Table B-20: SSI Aged Claims Receipts
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-24.6%	2.8%	-5.4%	-2.1%	
Processing Centers	-1.5%	27.3%	64.0%	-14.1%	
Teleservice Centers	238.6%	-3.7%	103.2%	-6.0%	
Other Components	76.3%	-4.8%	113.8%	-6.5%	
Agency Total	-24.3%	2.8%	-5.3%	-2.1%	

⁶ A small number of SSI aged claims come into PCs, TSCs, and other components. For example, if a claimant indicates he or she intends to file for SSI when they complete an online disability application, SSA systems produce an alert for a field office or Workload Support Unit employee to obtain an SSI application or close out the intent to file for benefits.

Table B–21: SSI Aged Claims Processed

Component	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	154,067	208,130	201,257	214,354	218,822
Processing Centers	536	542	450	265	325
Teleservice Centers	557	161	141	71	69
Other Components	1,025	1,136	1,003	1,251	27
Agency Total	156,185	209,969	202,851	215,941	219,243

**Table B–22: SSI Aged Claims Processed
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	April 2020 to March 2021	April 2019 to March 2020	April 2018 to March 2019	April 2017 to March 2018	April 2016 to March 2017
Field Offices	-26.0%	3.4%	-6.1%	-2.0%	
Processing Centers	-1.1%	20.4%	69.8%	-18.5%	
Teleservice Centers	246.0%	14.2%	98.6%	2.9%	
Other Components	-9.8%	13.3%	-19.8%	4,533.3%	
Agency Total	-25.6%	3.5%	-6.1%	-1.5%	

Table B-23: SSI Aged Claims Pending

Component	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	9,504	7,446	8,232	7,355	8,056
Processing Centers	61	46	21	18	6
Teleservice Centers	158	123	114	83	68
Other Components	126	116	131	8	6
Agency Total⁷	9,743	7,623	8,394	7,464	8,136

**Table B-24: SSI Aged Claims Pending
(Percent Change from Year to Year)**

Component	Percent Change from Prior-Year Period to:				
	March 2021	March 2020	March 2019	March 2018	March 2017
Field Offices	27.6%	-9.5%	11.9%	-8.7%	
Processing Centers	32.6%	119.0%	16.7%	200.0%	
Teleservice Centers	28.5%	7.9%	37.3%	22.1%	
Other Components	8.6%	-11.5%	1,537.5%	33.3%	
Agency Total	27.8%	-9.2%	12.5%	-8.3%	

⁷ Agency totals do not equal the sum of the component counts for all years because, according to SSA, cases can be pending in more than one component as they move from one component to another during processing.

Appendix C –STAFFING INFORMATION FOR MARCH 2017 THROUGH MARCH 2021

Table C–1 shows staffing levels at field offices, processing centers,¹ and teleservice centers, which includes employees (both full- and part-time), as of the end of March for 2017 to 2021.

Table C–1: Staffing Totals for Field Offices, Processing Centers, and Teleservice Centers

Component	As of March 2021	As of March 2020	As of March 2019	As of March 2018	As of March 2017
Field Offices	27,376	27,204	27,477	27,153	27,314
Processing Centers	5,725	5,568	5,698	5,501	5,486
Teleservice Centers	4,861	4,613	4,289	4,142	4,227
Total	37,962	37,385	37,464	36,796	37,027

Note: Totals exclude reader assistants, personal assistants, interpreters, and delegated employees (such as external employees delegated to do Social Security Administration work) as well as staff in Processing Centers 7 and 8.

¹ There are six processing centers that process similar workloads. The remaining two processing centers—the Offices of Disability and International Operations, also known as Processing Centers 7 and 8—handle specialized workloads. As such, their work is not comparable to Processing Centers 1 through 6. Thus, we excluded their staff from our analysis.

Appendix D – AGENCY COMMENTS



SOCIAL SECURITY

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 15, 2022

Refer To: TQA-1

To: Gail S. Ennis
Inspector General

From: Scott Frey
Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report "Comparing the Social Security Administration's Workload Statistics During the COVID-19 Pandemic to Prior Years" (A-05-21-51062) — INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. In addition to the People Facing Barriers Workgroup noted in the report, we continue to take a number of steps to ensure access to our services and programs. On April 7, 2022, we reopened our local Social Security offices to walk-in service.

In March 2022, we implemented a new electronic option that enables individuals and third parties to express their intent to file for Supplemental Security income (SSI) and other benefits. This tool protects the earliest date we may use to pay benefits if an applicant is eligible for SSI or Social Security benefits. Additionally, we are streamlining and improving our SSI application to make it accessible online.

We use targeted outreach and media campaigns to raise awareness about our benefit programs to eligible groups, including homeless individuals, seniors, children, and adults with disabilities. To address the decline in SSI claim receipts during the pandemic, we established a new agency priority goal to improve equity in our SSI program through increased outreach and improved benefit delivery.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. You may direct staff inquiries to Trae Sommer at (410) 965-9102.



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