



# Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## *Informational Report*

### Administrative Law Judges with the Highest and Lowest Allowance Rates



# Office of the Inspector General

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

## MEMORANDUM

**Date:** September 30, 2025

**Refer To:** 032404

**To:** Frank Bisignano  
Acting Commissioner

**From:** Michelle L. Anderson *Michelle L. Anderson*  
Acting Inspector General

**Subject:** Administrative Law Judges with the Highest and Lowest Allowance Rates

The attached final report presents the results of the Office of Audit's review. The objective was to identify factors that may have accounted for variances in administrative law judges' allowance rates.

If you wish to discuss the final report, please call me or have your staff contact Jeffrey Brown, Deputy Assistant Inspector General for Audit.

Attachment

# Administrative Law Judges with the Highest and Lowest Allowance Rates

## 032404



September 2025

Office of Audit Report Summary

### Objective

To identify factors that may have accounted for variances in administrative law judges' (ALJ) allowance rates.

### Background

We conducted this review in response to the explanatory statement for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations bill, which included language that encouraged us to update our June 2017 report on ALJ allowance rates.

A claimant who disagrees with an initial determination or decision may request further review under the Social Security Administration's (SSA) administrative review process, which consists of a reconsideration, a hearing before an ALJ, and an Appeals Council review. At the hearing level, an ALJ independently reviews evidence related to each claimant's case and issues a written decision based on that evidence and the applicable laws, regulations, rulings, and Agency policy.

We conducted this review using FY 2023 data. In FY 2023, 1,251 ALJs issued 376,953 dispositions. We interviewed hearing office employees and analyzed workload trends for 24 ALJs—12 with the highest and 12 with the lowest allowance rates. None of the ALJs discussed in our June 2017 report were among the 24 ALJs with the highest and lowest allowance rates in FY 2023.

### Results

Consistent with observations from prior reviews, and based on our interviews with employees, we attribute the variances in allowance rates to many factors, most notably the ALJs' interpretation of evidence, claimants' accessibility to healthcare, the volume of medical evidence, and the service area's demographics.

Throughout the hearings process, SSA reviews ALJ decisions and uses a variety of reports and data to monitor ALJ and hearing office workloads. The Agency also takes actions against ALJs for misconduct and complaints, when appropriate. The FY 2023 allowance rates for the 24 ALJs in our review were outliers because they were significantly higher or lower than the FY 2023 average. Despite being outliers, SSA's Appeals Council concluded the ALJs' decisions were generally accurate. As such, high or low allowance rates—in and of themselves—do not indicate erroneous decisions, as many factors can contribute to wide variances in allowance rates.

### Conclusion

Allowance rate variances among ALJs are shaped by a range of operational and contextual factors, rather than as a direct measure of decision quality. While some ALJs have higher or lower allowance rates, these differences often reflect the unique circumstances of their caseloads, office environments, and personal interpretation of evidence. Oversight mechanisms, such as Appeals Council reviews and ongoing monitoring, can help ensure decisions remain accurate and policy-compliant, regardless of individual allowance rates.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

ALJ	Administrative Law Judge
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
FY	Fiscal Year
HALLEX	<i>Hearings, Appeals, and Litigation Law Manual</i>
OHO	Office of Hearings Operations
OIG	Office of the Inspector General
POMS	Program Operations Manual System
SSA	Social Security Administration

## OBJECTIVE

Our objective was to identify factors that may have accounted for variances in administrative law judges' (ALJ) allowance rates.

## INTRODUCTION

We conducted this review in response to the explanatory statement for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 appropriations bill, which included language that encouraged us to update our June 2017 report on ALJ allowance rates.<sup>1</sup> Our June 2017 report was a follow-up to a February 2012 report, in which we identified the 24 ALJs who had the highest and lowest allowance rates in FY 2010.<sup>2</sup> Office of Hearings Operations (OHO) employees, including ALJs, managers, and staff, we interviewed attributed the variances in allowance rates to many factors. The most notable of these factors were ALJ decisional independence and the demographics of claimants the specific hearing office served. Additionally, we identified case-rotation exceptions related to dismissals, on-the-record decisions, and frequency of claimant representation.

In our June 2017 review, we determined most of the 24 ALJs from our 2012 review were no longer among the ALJs with the highest and lowest allowance rates during FY 2016 because their allowance rates had changed or they were no longer ALJs.<sup>3</sup> The hearing office managers and ALJs we interviewed attributed allowance rate variances to such factors as the ALJs' backgrounds and previous work history.

## BACKGROUND

The Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance program provides monthly benefits to retired and disabled workers and their dependents as well as the survivors of deceased workers.<sup>4</sup> The Supplemental Security Income program provides a minimum level of income to financially needy individuals who are aged, blind, or disabled.<sup>5</sup> Social Security Administration (SSA) employees must fully develop and review claims for these programs to make determinations and decisions on entitlement.

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<sup>1</sup> Congressional Record, *Proceedings and Debates of the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, Vol. 170, No. 51, Book II, *Explanation of the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act*, 2024, p. H1897, March 22, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> SSA OIG, Congressional Response Report: *Oversight of Administrative Law Judge Workload Trends*, A-12-11-01138 (February 2012).

<sup>3</sup> SSA OIG, *Administrative Law Judges from our February 2012 Report Who Had the Highest and Lowest Allowance Rates*, A-12-17-50220 (June 2017).

<sup>4</sup> 20 C.F.R. §§ 404.310, 404.315, 404.320, 404.330, 404.331, 404.335, 404.336, 404.339, 404.340, 404.350, and 404.370.

<sup>5</sup> 20 C.F.R. § 416.110.

A claimant or appointed representative who disagrees with an initial determination or decision may request further review under SSA's administrative review process.<sup>6</sup> The process consists of several steps that usually must be requested within certain time periods and in the following order.

1. **Reconsideration.** If an individual is dissatisfied with SSA's initial determination, they may ask SSA to reconsider it. A reconsideration involves a thorough reexamination of all evidence used in the initial determination and any additional evidence or information submitted with the appeal. The reviewer must be someone who was not involved in the initial determination.
2. **Hearing Before an ALJ.** If an individual is dissatisfied with the Agency's reconsideration determination or certain revised or initial determinations, they may request a hearing before an ALJ. A claimant can choose whether to appear at the hearing, examine and submit evidence, introduce and question witnesses, and present arguments as to why the ALJ should make a favorable decision.
3. **Appeals Council Review.** If an individual is dissatisfied with the ALJ's decision or dismissal of a hearing request, they may request that SSA's Appeals Council review the action. The Appeals Council may dismiss or deny the request for review, grant the request and issue a decision, or remand the case back to the ALJ.

When these steps are complete, SSA will have made its final decision. If an individual is dissatisfied with the Agency's final decision, they may request judicial review by filing an action in a Federal district court. Our review focused on Step 2 of the process: *Hearing Before an ALJ*.

## Hearings Before Administrative Law Judges

SSA's OHO directs a nation-wide organization of ALJs. According to SSA policy, requests for hearings are assigned to ALJs on a rotational basis. Oldest requests receive priority, unless there is a special situation that requires a change in the order a case is assigned.<sup>7</sup> An ALJ independently reviews evidence related to each claimant's case and issues a written decision based on that evidence and the applicable laws, regulations, rulings, and Agency policy.

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<sup>6</sup> SSA, POMS, GN 03101.001 (September 19, 2023).

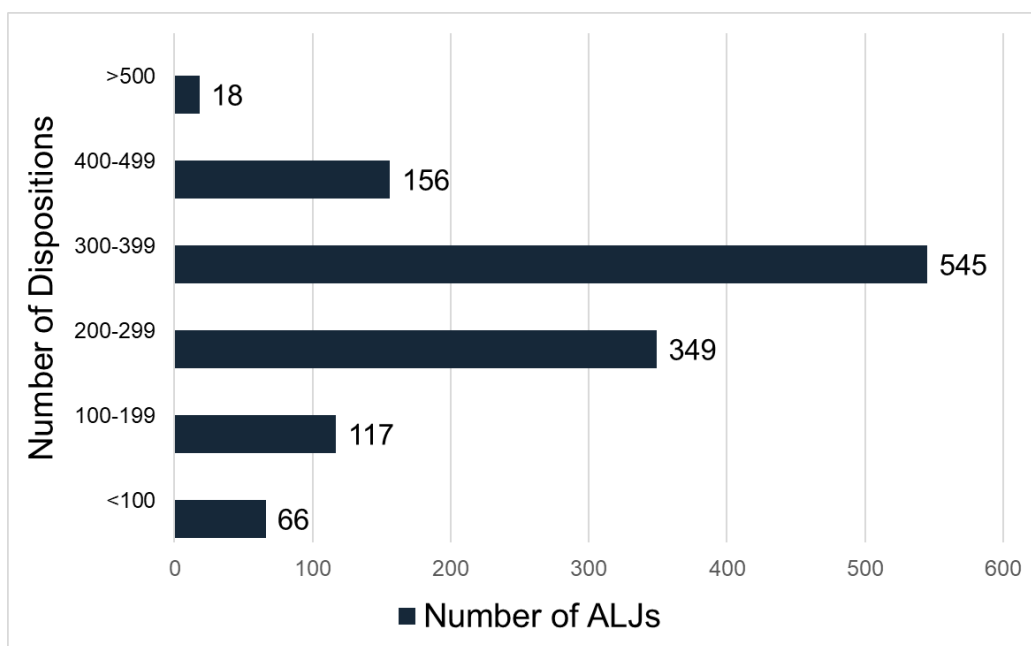
<sup>7</sup> SSA, HALLEX, HA 01210.055 (April 9, 2019).

ALJs have qualified decisional independence, which means they must be impartial in how they conduct hearings. Because of such independence, ALJs are to make decisions free from agency pressure or pressure by a party to decide a case, or a particular percentage of cases, in a particular way.<sup>8</sup> An ALJ may issue a fully favorable decision without holding a hearing based on sufficient evidence in the record (referred to as an on-the-record decision). An ALJ may also dismiss a hearing for such various reasons as claimant withdrawal, failure to appear, death of the claimant, or untimely request for hearing.<sup>9</sup>

## Administrative Law Judge Dispositions

Dispositions include favorable decisions (hereafter referred to as “allowances”), unfavorable decisions, and dismissals. In FY 2023, 1,251 ALJs issued 376,953 dispositions. The dispositions per ALJ ranged between 1 and 609, with an average 301 dispositions per ALJ (see Figure 1).<sup>10</sup>

**Figure 1: FY 2023 Dispositions for 1,251 ALJs**



<sup>8</sup> 75 Federal Register §§ 39154 and 39156 (July 8, 2010).

<sup>9</sup> SSA, *HALLEX*, HA 01240.005 (February 7, 2014).

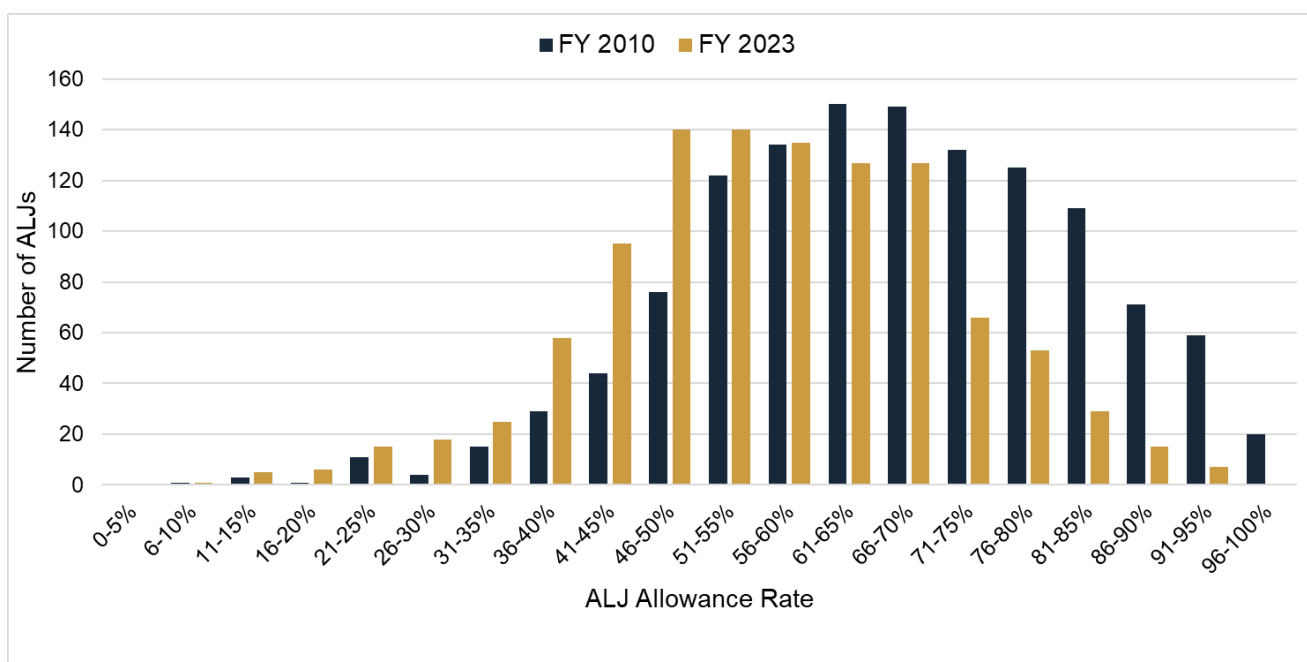
<sup>10</sup> OHO typically has expected ALJs to issue 500 to 700 legally sufficient decisions each year, when there are sufficient number of pending requests for hearing for ALJs to meet this expectation. During such periods, managers limited new case assignments to ensure ALJs were not deciding an excessive number of cases. Although ALJs were still expected to issue a “sufficient” number of dispositions in FY 2023, OHO did not have a minimum disposition expectation or a limitation on case assignments. Instead, OHO used existing benchmarks for quality case processing that focus on moving cases timely and providing availability for scheduling hearings.



There may have been situations where the Agency would expect ALJs to issue fewer dispositions than others, such as ALJs who had administrative duties, were newly hired, or on extended leave.

We identified 1,062 ALJs who individually issued more than 200 dispositions in FY 2023 and collectively rendered 269,885 decisions.<sup>11</sup> On average, these ALJs allowed 57 percent of their cases. The allowance rates for these ALJs ranged from a low of 6 percent to a high of 95 percent. In comparison, ALJs' allowance rates in FY 2010 ranged from a low of 9 percent to a high of 100 percent (see Figure 2). We identified notable differences in the ALJs' allowance rates from FY 2010 to FY 2023. For example, the number of ALJs with an allowance rate above 70 percent decreased by two-thirds.

**Figure 2: FYs 2010 and 2023 Allowance Rates for ALJs who Issued More Than 200 Dispositions**



<sup>11</sup> Consistent with our prior reviews, we excluded ALJs who had 200 or fewer dispositions. ALJs with fewer than 200 dispositions generally had other duties, did not work as an ALJ the entire FY, or were new. Therefore, we concluded it was reasonable to exclude these ALJs from our review.

## SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

We conducted this review using FY 2023 data. Consistent with our prior review, of the 1,062 ALJs who each issued more than 200 dispositions in FY 2023, we identified the 12 ALJs who had the highest allowance rates and the 12 who had the lowest. We analyzed these 24 ALJs' workload trends and performed comparative analysis with other ALJs in the same office.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, we interviewed 27 employees at 9 hearing offices. This included ALJs in our sample, Hearing Office Chief ALJs, and Hearing Office Directors in the ALJs' respective offices we selected to get their perspectives on the factors that affected ALJs' allowance rates. See Appendix A for more information about our scope and methodology and Appendix B for our sampling methodology.

## RESULTS OF REVIEW

Based on our employee interviews, we attribute the variances in allowance rates to many factors, most notably the ALJs' interpretation of evidence, claimants' accessibility to healthcare, the volume of medical evidence, and the service area's demographics. This is consistent with observations in our prior reviews.

Throughout the hearings process, SSA reviews ALJ decisions and uses a variety of reports and data to monitor ALJ and hearing office workloads. The Agency also takes actions against ALJs for misconduct and complaints, when appropriate.

The allowance rates for the 24 ALJs we reviewed were significantly higher or lower than the FY 2023 average. Although they were outliers, SSA's Appeals Council concluded the ALJs' decisions were generally accurate. As such, high or low allowance rates—in and of themselves—do not indicate erroneous decisions as many factors can contribute to wide variances in allowance rates.

## Factors That Influenced Allowance Rates

Based on our interviews with 27 employees, we attribute the variances in allowance rates to the following factors.

- **ALJs' Interpretation of Evidence.** Twelve employees (44 percent) noted different ALJs could review the same case but come to a different conclusion because they interpreted the evidence differently.

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<sup>12</sup> We determined none of the ALJs discussed in our February 2012 or June 2017 reports were among the 24 ALJs with the highest and lowest allowance rates in FY 2023.

- **Accessibility to Healthcare and Volume of Medical Evidence.** Nine employees (33 percent) noted the allowance rates could vary greatly based on the quality of, and accessibility to, healthcare. For example, claimants who lived in areas with better medical care tended to have larger case files that contained thousands of records. Staff believed having a well-developed case with supporting medical evidence increased the likelihood of a more favorable decision.
- **Demographics of the Service Areas.** Seven employees (26 percent) cited regional demographics as factors that could affect allowance rates. For example, some areas had heavy industrial or manufacturing work, which employees noted could lead to different types of disabilities or injuries. Staff noted, in such areas, physical injuries were more common and could be easier to prove.

Employees cited other factors that might affect ALJ allowance rates, including the ALJs' background and training; use of claimant representatives and medical or vocational experts; and complexity of the cases.

## Allowance Rates Among Judges in the Same Office

The 12 ALJs with the highest allowance rates—which ranged from 88 to 95 percent—were in 12 hearing offices in 5 regions.<sup>13</sup> These ALJs issued between 160 and 397 decisions in FY 2023.<sup>14</sup> The 12 ALJs with the lowest allowance rates—which ranged from 6 to 21 percent—were in 10 hearing offices in 7 regions.<sup>15</sup> These ALJs issued between 160 and 317 decisions in FY 2023. Given that most ALJs' allowance rates ranged from 40 to 70 percent over the preceding 5 years,<sup>16</sup> these ALJs were significantly above or below the average allowance rate.

Despite having a high or low allowance rate in FY 2023, most of the ALJs we selected had an agree rate above 70 percent from the Appeals Council.<sup>17</sup> The agree rate represents the extent to which the Appeals Council concluded the ALJ decisions were supported by substantial evidence and contained no error of law or abuse of discretion that justified a remand or reversal.

To determine whether the 24 ALJs were outliers in their respective offices, we compared their allowance rates to those of other ALJs in the same office, and we compared their offices' allowance rates to the 57-percent national average in FY 2023. Our comparison found the following.

- The allowance rates of the 12 ALJs with the highest allowance rates were higher than the rates of other ALJs within the same office (see Table 1). In addition, 10 of these 12 ALJs were in offices where the average allowance rate was higher than the national average.

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<sup>13</sup> Of the 12 ALJs, 4 were in the Atlanta Region.

<sup>14</sup> While we limited our analysis to ALJs who issued more than 200 dispositions, we calculated allowance rates using decisions. Therefore, an ALJ may have more than 200 dispositions, but fewer than 200 decisions. For example, the ALJ who issued 160 decisions also issued 113 dismissals for a total of 273 dispositions.

<sup>15</sup> Of the 12 ALJs, 3 were in the Atlanta Region.

<sup>16</sup> SSA, OIG, *Administrative Law Judge Trends*, 012319, p. 3 (August 2023).

<sup>17</sup> The Appeals Council reviewed 2 to 159 decisions for each selected ALJ.

- The allowance rates of the 12 ALJs with the lowest allowance rates were lower than the rates of other ALJs in the same office. In addition, 7 of these 12 ALJs were in offices where the average allowance rate was lower than the national average.

The allowance rates for 17 (71 percent) of the 24 ALJs generally aligned with their offices' average. Nonetheless, there were large variances within offices. For instance, 1 ALJ who had a 91-percent allowance rate worked in the same hearing office as an ALJ with a 21-percent allowance rate.

**Table 1: ALJ Allowance Rates by Office**  
**FY 2023<sup>18</sup>**

ALJs with the Highest Allowance Rates			ALJs with the Lowest Allowance Rates		
Hearing Office	Selected ALJ's Allowance Rate	Office's Average Allowance Rate	Hearing Office	Selected ALJ's Allowance Rate	Office's Average Allowance Rate
Greensboro	95%	61%	Stockton	21%	62%
Honolulu	93%	65%	San Antonio	18%	51%
Detroit	91%	55%	San Antonio	19%	51%
Orland Park	91%	42%	Phoenix	19%	54%
Jersey City	90%	65%	Fort Lauderdale	14%	59%
Chattanooga	90%	61%	Fort Lauderdale	17%	59%
Sacramento	90%	69%	Middlesboro	16%	48%
Tulsa	90%	64%	Richmond	15%	51%
Charlotte	89%	67%	Cleveland	14%	55%
Covington	89%	57%	Colorado Springs	13%	50%
Ponce	88%	62%	Newark	11%	60%
Dallas North	88%	58%	Las Vegas	6%	57%

Generally, ALJs who had the lowest allowance rates also decided the fewest cases in comparison to other ALJs in the same office. However, we did not identify a similar trend among the ALJs who had the highest allowance rates (see Table 2). We do not know why this occurred.

<sup>18</sup> Since ALJs can have dispositions at multiple hearing offices, our comparative analysis was based on the office where the ALJ issued most of their decisions in FY 2023.

**Table 2: ALJ Decisions Compared to Other ALJs in the Office  
FY 2023**

ALJs with the Highest Allowance Rates			ALJs with the Lowest Allowance Rates		
Hearing Office	Selected ALJ's Decisions	Other ALJs Average Decisions	Hearing Office	Selected ALJ's Decisions	Other ALJs Average Decisions
Greensboro	244	267	Stockton	230	262
Honolulu	214	334	San Antonio	186	248
Detroit	228	259	San Antonio	222	248
Orland Park	189	232	Phoenix	317	250
Jersey City	235	221	Fort Lauderdale	233	257
Chattanooga	171	256	Fort Lauderdale	254	257
Sacramento	170	220	Middlesboro	292	303
Tulsa	279	320	Richmond	241	242
Charlotte	246	251	Cleveland	170	265
Covington	233	213	Colorado Springs	189	248
Ponce	397	340	Newark	161	232
Dallas North	160	290	Las Vegas	160	261

**Note:** ALJ decisions include favorable and unfavorable decisions but exclude dismissals.

## Oversight of Administrative Law Judges

The Agency uses several tools to monitor workload processing and the movement of cases throughout the adjudication process. In addition, SSA reviews ALJ decisions and takes corrective actions for misconduct and complaints.

### Monitoring Tools

OHO uses a variety of reports and data to monitor ALJ and hearing office workloads.<sup>19</sup> See Appendix C for more information about these tools. The Hearing Office Directors we interviewed provided various reports they used to track workload performance. For example, Directors used the *Days in Status* and *No Status Change* reports to monitor how long cases remained in ALJ-controlled statuses to identify those that were over the benchmark and needed to be addressed.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> These included Benchmarks for Quality Case Processing, Disability Adjudication Reporting Tool reports, Case Processing and Management System management information data, electronic Key Workload Indicator reports, Average Wait Time reports, the How MI Doing? tool, and the Management Information Dashboard.

<sup>20</sup> We did not review the tools discussed in this section to determine whether they were effective.

## ***Reviewing Administrative Law Judges' Decisions***

Throughout the hearings process, SSA conducts various reviews of ALJ decisions, including post-effectuation reviews (referred to as focused reviews) as well as special studies or probes and in-line quality reviews of pre-effectuation decisional drafts.<sup>21</sup> These reviews

- assess the decisions' quality and accuracy;
- detect and correct erroneous allowance decisions;
- ensure the decisions are policy-compliant and legally sufficient;
- provide the Agency insight as to why claims are changed at the hearing level; and
- provide SSA feedback to assist in developing training and continuous improvement initiatives.

SSA's Office of Appellate Operations conducted focused reviews on 7 (58 percent) of the 12 ALJs with high allowance rates and 5 (42 percent) of the 12 ALJs with low allowance rates. According to SSA, based on a review of a sample of favorable and unfavorable decisions issued by the ALJs, its Office of Appellate Operations identified such issues as the lack of substantial evidence to support the ALJs' findings, insufficient development of the record, and failure to fully evaluate evidence.<sup>22</sup>

## ***Misconduct and Complaints***

In FY 2023, SSA did not take disciplinary actions against any of the ALJs we selected but took disciplinary actions on nine other ALJs in response to their misconduct. The misconduct related to performance issues,<sup>23</sup> failure to follow management directives or Agency policies and procedures, using profanity, inappropriate behavior during the hearing, and outside misconduct. Of the nine ALJs, SSA reprimanded five, suspended two, and removed two.

In addition, in FY 2023, SSA received 314 complaints about ALJs from a variety of sources, including the public, the Appeals Council, and congressional and presidential inquiry. Of the 314 complaints, 14 related to allegations that involved ALJs who were no longer with the Agency, and 277 related to allegations that OHO's Division of Quality Services determined were not substantiated or not valid.<sup>24</sup> Of the remaining 23 complaints, OHO referred 2 to the Office of the Chief ALJ and the Division of Quality Services determined 21 were substantiated and resulted in a reminder, counseling, a collegial discussion, or no action taken.<sup>25</sup> The 23 ALJ

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<sup>21</sup> OHO conducts in-line quality reviews of draft ALJ decisions, which assess the policy compliance of drafts written by decision writers based on ALJ instruction.

<sup>22</sup> The Office of Appellate Operations reviewed 35 to 61 of the selected ALJs' decisions. We did not determine whether the findings of the focused reviews were accurate.

<sup>23</sup> Generally, the performance issues related to the ALJs' cases in a post-hearing status for 100 days or longer.

<sup>24</sup> Of the ALJs we selected, in FY 2023, bias and misconduct complaints had been filed against 10. However, SSA determined none of the complaints was substantiated or valid.

<sup>25</sup> For the complaint with no action taken, counseling was recommended and planned for the ALJ. However, the ALJ retired before the recommended counseling could be completed.

complaints related to various issues including decisional language that was inconsistent with policy and limiting the claimant's testimony. See Appendix D for additional information.

## **CONCLUSION**

Allowance rate variances among ALJs are shaped by a range of operational and contextual factors, rather than as a direct measure of decision quality. While some ALJs have higher or lower allowance rates, these differences often reflect the unique circumstances of their caseloads, office environments, and personal interpretation of evidence. Oversight mechanisms, such as Appeals Council reviews and ongoing monitoring, can help ensure decisions remain accurate and policy-compliant, regardless of individual allowance rates.

## **AGENCY COMMENTS**

SSA reviewed our draft report but did not provide any comments; see Appendix E.

# ***APPENDICES***



## Appendix A – SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

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To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed applicable laws, regulations, and Social Security Administration (SSA) policies and procedures, including the Hearings, Appeals, and Litigation Law manual; Program Operations Manual System; and Standard Hearings Operations Procedure.<sup>1</sup>
- Reviewed Government Accountability Office and Office of the Inspector General reports related to administrative law judges (ALJ) and hearing office workloads.
- Analyzed Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 hearings data from SSA's Case Processing and Management System. We assessed the reliability of the System data extract by
  - comparing the number of ALJ hearing dispositions in the data extract with the number of hearing dispositions reflected in Case Processing and Management System and reported by the Agency on data.gov,
  - tracing sampled data to source documents, and
  - ensuring all the records had a valid disposition code and hearing type and the final disposition date was within our audit period.

We determined the data used for this audit were sufficiently reliable given the audit objective and intended use of the data.

- Selected a judgmental sample of 24 ALJs—12 ALJs with the highest allowance rates and 12 ALJs with the lowest allowance rates in FY 2023. See Appendix B for more details regarding the sample methodology.
  - Analyzed various workload trends related to the ALJs we selected and their respective offices, including allowances, dismissals, on-the-record decisions, and the frequency of ALJ hearings with a single claimant representative.
  - Determined whether there were alignments between allowance rates and other factors.
  - Determined whether the ALJs discussed in our prior reports were among the current outliers.
  - Obtained information regarding focused reviews the Agency conducted for the ALJs we selected.
  - Interviewed 27 individuals at 9 hearing offices, including 5 ALJs with the highest allowance rates and 5 ALJs with the lowest allowance rates, along with the Hearing Office Chief ALJs, and Hearing Office Directors in the ALJs' respective offices. The interviews focused primarily on case assignment, hearing office workload, ALJ performance, and factors impacting allowance rates.

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<sup>1</sup> The Standard Hearings Operations Procedure is the official guide that all OHO personnel follow in conjunction with HALLEX and other Agency policy.

- Reviewed ALJ misconduct and complaints along with the related corrective or disciplinary actions taken.
- Identified the management information reports, tools, applications, and systems SSA used to monitor ALJ performance.

## Appendix B – SAMPLE METHODOLOGY

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We obtained an electronic data extract from the Social Security Administration's Case Processing and Management System. The extract identified 1,251 administrative law judges (ALJ) who issued 376,953 hearing dispositions in Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. Dispositions included favorable decisions, unfavorable decisions, and dismissals. To identify our judgmental sample, we did the following.

- Removed 189 ALJs who issued 200 or fewer dispositions in FY 2023 to exclude ALJs who may have been in a situation where lower production was expected, such as ALJs with administrative duties as well as ALJs who were new or on extended leave.<sup>1</sup> The remaining 1,062 ALJs issued more than 200 dispositions each, for a total of 354,318 dispositions.
- Calculated the allowance rate for each ALJ by dividing the number of favorable decisions by the number of decisions. We used ALJ decisions rather than dispositions because decisions included favorable and unfavorable decisions but excluded dismissals.
- Identified the 12 ALJs with the highest allowance rates and 12 ALJs with the lowest allowance rates (see Table B-1 and Table B-2).<sup>2</sup>

**Table B-1: ALJs with the Highest Allowance Rates in FY 2023**

Count	Hearing Office	Region <sup>3</sup>	Allowance Rate (Percentage)
1	Greensboro, North Carolina	Atlanta	94.67
2	Honolulu, Hawaii	San Francisco	93.46
3	Queens, New York	New York	91.23
4	Orland Park, Illinois	Chicago	91.01
5	Jersey City, New Jersey	New York	90.21
6	Chattanooga, Tennessee	Atlanta	90.06
7	Sacramento, California	San Francisco	90.00
8	Tulsa, Oklahoma	Dallas	89.61
9	Charlotte, North Carolina	Atlanta	89.43
10	Covington, Georgia	Atlanta	89.27
11	Ponce, Puerto Rico	New York	87.66
12	Dallas (North), Texas	Dallas	87.50

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<sup>1</sup> Excluding ALJs who had 200 or fewer dispositions for further analysis is consistent with prior reviews.

<sup>2</sup> We excluded four ALJs from the highest allowance rate list and one ALJ from the lowest allowance rate list because they were no longer with the Agency.

<sup>3</sup> In FY 2025, the Agency consolidated its regions into the Northeast, Southeast, Mid-West/West, and Southwest.

**Table B–2: ALJs with the Lowest Allowance Rates in FY 2023**

<b>Count</b>	<b>Hearing Office</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Allowance Rate (Percentage)</b>
1	Orland Park, Illinois	Chicago	6.25
2	Newark, New Jersey	New York	11.18
3	Colorado Springs, Colorado	Denver	12.70
4	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	Atlanta	13.73
5	Cleveland, Ohio	Chicago	14.12
6	Richmond, Virginia	Philadelphia	14.52
7	Knoxville, Tennessee	Atlanta	15.75
8	Fort Lauderdale, Florida	Atlanta	17.32
9	San Antonio, Texas	Dallas	17.57
10	Phoenix, Arizona	San Francisco	19.24
11	San Antonio, Texas	Dallas	19.35
12	Stockton, California	San Francisco	20.87

## Appendix C – OVERSIGHT OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE WORKLOADS

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The Office of Hearings Operations' (OHO) local, regional, and Headquarters management and staff use a variety of management information reports and data to monitor administrative law judge (ALJ) and hearing office workloads to ensure timely case processing and assess policy compliance (see Table C–1). The management information report provides OHO immediate access to information essential in measuring ALJs' workload and performance.

**Table C–1: OHO's Monitoring Tools<sup>1</sup>**

Description	Data Being Tracked or Evaluated
Benchmarks for Quality Case Processing	OHO management identified the number of days (benchmark) in which specified tasks should be completed and a case should move out of that status. This includes the following ALJ-controlled statuses: ALJ Pre-Hearing Review, <sup>2</sup> ALJ Post-Hearing Review, <sup>3</sup> ALJ Editing Decision, and Final Review and Signature of Case by an ALJ. <sup>4</sup> OHO staff and management used various Disability Adjudication Reporting Tool reports to monitor these statuses.
Disability Adjudication Reporting Tool Reports	There are over 100 Disability Adjudication Reporting Tool reports available for OHO to track various aspects of the hearings process including ALJ allowance rates, favorable cases, processing time, and aged cases.
Case Processing and Management System Management Information Report Data	The System includes MI reports with data such as caseload analysis, video hearings, national rankings, workload summary, and participation. Each report provides a variety of workload information for the defined period. For example, the caseload analysis report displays various data points including, the number of ALJs on duty and available, total receipts, disposition total, ALJ and attorney adjudicator disposition totals, average processing time, and percent pending.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Disability Adjudication noted many of the reports summarized in this table can be used to track workload processing for all its employees, in addition to ALJs.

<sup>2</sup> Before a hearing, ALJs review their assigned cases and decide on such pre-hearing issues as requests to waive the right to appear at a hearing, untimely requests for hearing, potential on-the-records or dismissals, critical case evaluations, and remands. ALJs are encouraged to expedite any such pre-hearing review to ensure case processing and scheduling of a hearing can proceed in a timely manner.

<sup>3</sup> After a hearing, ALJs review cases assigned to them to determine whether additional development and/or a supplemental hearing is needed.

<sup>4</sup> ALJs review, edit, and sign decisions and dismissals written by staff.

Description	Data Being Tracked or Evaluated
Average Wait Time Report	<p>The following management information reports depict the average time it takes for appeals to move to various levels.</p> <p><u>Hearing Office Report</u> depicts the average time from when a hearing office receives the request until the hearing is held in the individual hearing offices.</p> <p><u>National Hearing Office Report</u> depicts the average time from when a hearing office receives the request until the hearing is held and the average amount of time from when a hearing is held to when the decision is made.</p> <p><u>Appeals Council Information</u> reports the average time it takes the Appeals Council to process a request for review of a hearing decision, from the date of receipt of the request for review to when the decision is issued.</p>
Electronic Key Workload Indicator Report	<p>The electronic Key Workload Indicator Report is a quarterly and annual management information report that contains hearings workload data. The Report tracks the number of ALJs on duty and ALJs available. It also tracks the total number of receipts, pending, dispositions, and processing time. For each claim type, the Report displays the number of dispositions, unfavorable decisions, favorable decisions, partially favorable decisions, and dismissals. Further, the Report provides the average processing time and percentage of each category as it relates to the total dispositions or decisions.</p>
<i>How MI Doing?</i>	<p><i>How MI Doing?</i> is a tool that each hearing office employee can use to track their productivity and compare their work nationally to all OHO offices. This tool allows staff to view and compare their own performance against the office, regional, and national averages. It includes data such as dispositions, pending, scheduling, and average processing time.</p>
OHO MI Dashboard	<p>The OHO MI Dashboard is available to OHO management to view data for all employees in their office, their region, or the nation. The Dashboard includes the same data as <i>How MI Doing?</i> but allows managers to view and compare that data for employees against averages and other employees in their offices, their regions, or the nation, depending on the manager's level of access.</p>

In addition to the data OHO staff used, hearing data are also publicly available on SSA's Open Government website. For example, monthly public data files contain information on workload indicators in OHO's hearing offices. The reports contain such hearing information as average wait time for a hearing to be held, ALJ disposition data, and number of hearing requests received, completed and pending. Also, there are two reports that rank the hearing offices from best to worst in certain workload areas.

## Appendix D – ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE MISCONDUCT AND COMPLAINTS

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In Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, the Social Security Administration (SSA) took disciplinary actions on nine administrative law judges (ALJ) in response to their misconduct. Of the nine ALJs, SSA suspended two, reprimanded five, and removed two (see Table D-1).

**Table D–1: FY 2023 ALJ Misconduct**

Count	Type of Misconduct	Action Taken
1	Performance Issues	Suspension
2	Performance Issues	Suspension
3	Did not appear for scheduled hearings or follow Agency policies and procedures	Reprimand
4	Use of profanity	Reprimand
5	Misconduct during hearing	Reprimand
6	Unprofessional behavior toward colleague and did not follow management directive or Agency policies and procedures	Removal
7	Did not follow management directive	Reprimand
8	Did not follow management directive	Reprimand
9	Outside misconduct	Removal

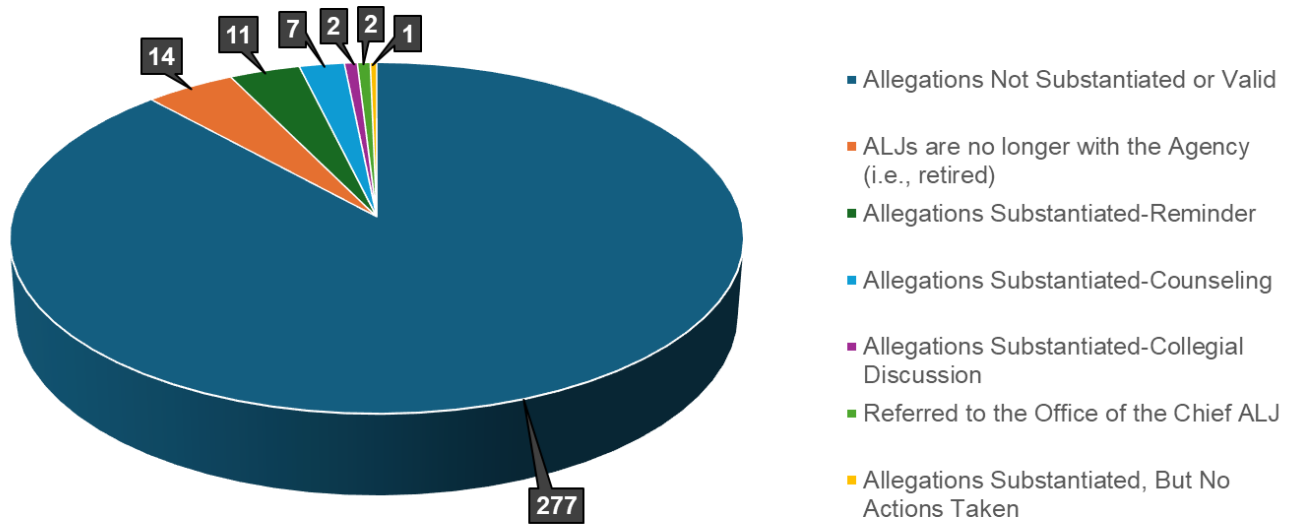
SSA received 314 ALJ complaints in FY 2023 from a variety of sources.<sup>1</sup> Of the 314 ALJ complaints, 14 related to allegations involving ALJs who were no longer with the Agency, and 277 related to allegations that were not substantiated or valid. Of the remaining 23 complaints, 21 were substantiated and resulted in a reminder, counseling, a collegial discussion, or no action taken, and 2 were referred to the Office of the Chief ALJ for review.<sup>2</sup> Figure D-1 illustrates the complaints filed against ALJs in FY 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> SSA received complaints from the public, through referrals from the Appeals Council, through SSA's Center for Compliance Management or Office of the General Counsel; by congressional and presidential inquiry; or from another source.

<sup>2</sup> For the complaint with no action taken, the ALJ was to receive counseling but retired before it was completed.

**Figure D–1: Outcomes of the 314 ALJ Complaints in FY 2023**





## Appendix E – AGENCY COMMENTS

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### SOCIAL SECURITY Office of the Commissioner

#### MEMORANDUM

Date: September 30, 2025

Refer To: TQA-1

To: Michelle L. Anderson  
Acting Inspector General

From: Chad Poist  
Chief of Staff

Subject: Office of the Inspector General Draft Report “Administrative Law Judges with the Highest and Lowest Allowance Rates” (032404) -- INFORMATION

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. We have no comments.

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



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