

Programmatic Information

This section discusses how effectively and efficiently SSA performs its day-to-day business processes and service delivery functions. Included are performance measures to assess the effectiveness in achieving intended results relating to service delivery goals and objectives outlined in the Agency's strategic plan published in FY 1997 and workload and unit cost data to measure the efficiency of operations. NA indicates that actual data are unavailable for that particular fiscal period. When current dollars are presented to restate prior period costs at the 1998 cost levels, the conversion from "actual dollars" to current dollars is calculated based on the change in the cost of an average SSA workyear. The "deflator" factors used to adjust prior period costs are 1.086166 for 1997, 1.090633 for 1996, 1.167862 for 1995 and 1.226278 for 1994.

Enumeration Process

Service Delivery

The public's lifetime earnings records are used to determine eligibility and benefit amounts. As such, they must be maintained and safeguarded. Social Security numbers (SSN) are crucial to the accuracy and protection of these earnings records. The issuance of new and replacement numbers must be prompt and efficient. SSA's percentage of applicants notified of their SSNs within the timeframes outlined in the service delivery objectives has remained very high over the last several years. Requests for SSNs are processed timely, without sacrificing the integrity of the numbers issued.

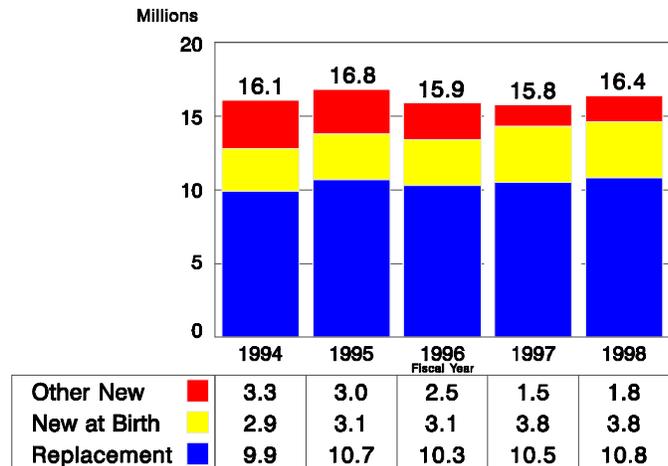
	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of applicants that can be notified orally of their SSN within 24 hours of completing an application	86.6%	91.2%	92.2%	94.4%	98.9%
◦ % of SSN cards issued within 5 days of completing an application	94.6%	97.0%	96.9%	98.2%	99.7%
◦ Average processing time (days)	1.0	0.6	0.6	0.4	0.1
◦ % of SSNs issued accurately *	99.9%	99.8%	99.6%	99.9%	NA

* Represents performance for January to December.

Operational Efficiency

SSA has issued approximately 369.9 million SSNs since the program began in 1936. Resources required by SSA for the enumeration function were substantially impacted by IRS' initiative to strengthen Federal income tax enforcement. Workloads increased when parents contacted SSA to obtain SSNs for their children to support deductions on Federal income tax returns filed in January 1988 (5 years or older), January 1990 (2 years or older), January 1992 (1 year or older) and January 1995 (all ages). To soften the resource impact of the IRS initiative, SSA implemented a process in 1989 to enumerate children at birth. SSA's planned system improvements in integrated telecommunications linkages, including those with States and the Immigration and Naturalization Service, coupled with online searching of master files will permit an SSN to be assigned immediately and improve future efficiency.

SSN Cards Issued



	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Workyears	2,534	2,560	2,577	2,811	2,902
◦ Production Per Workyear	6,370	6,575	6,187	5,539	5,584
◦ Unit Costs (Current Dollars)	\$12.68	\$12.53	\$13.65	\$14.75	\$14.01

Earnings Process

Service Delivery

Data shown as FY 1998 performance relates to the processing of tax year 1997 data. SSA annually estimates the number of annual wage reports (AWRs) and the amount of self-employment income that will be posted for a particular tax year. These estimates are used to monitor current year processing. Once all wage and self-employment income information is processed, these measures are recalculated using actual data. The percent of reported earnings posted accurately continues to remain high with 99.0 percent posted accurately. The percent of self-employment income posted within 9 months of the close of the tax year has increased from 61.4 percent in 1996 to an estimated 94.6 percent in 1998.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of reported earnings posted accurately to individuals' earnings record	98.8%	98.7%	99.0%	99.0%	99.0%
◦ % of AWRs posted within:					
— 6 mos. following close of tax year	62.1%	83.9%	86.2%	86.9%	82.3%*
— 9 mos. following close of tax year	97.4%	97.4%	97.3%	97.8%	97.7%*
◦ Number of months to post 98.5 percent of AWRs for tax year	10.5	10.1	10.3	9.8	10.4*
◦ % of self-employment income posted within					
— 9 mos. following close of tax year	83.2%	84.9%	61.4%	80.4%	94.6%*
— 12 mos. following close of tax year	99.5%	98.1%	99.7%	99.5%	NA

* Estimates

Operational Efficiency

SSA's efficiency in maintaining the public's lifetime earnings records has increased steadily over the past 4 years. Over this time, the unit cost to process earnings items has decreased. This trend is expected to continue as more employers report wage information electronically as opposed to paper reporting. Production per workyear has increased from 142,641 in FY 1994 to 217,440 in FY 1998, a 52 percent increase.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Earnings Processed	221,949,522	235,314,733	239,958,058	249,123,545	266,011,984
— Workyears	1,556	1,595	1,540	1,303	1,223
— Production Per Workyear	142,641	147,515	155,842	191,210	217,440
— Unit Costs (Current Dollars)	\$0.62	\$0.57	\$0.49	\$0.42	\$0.35

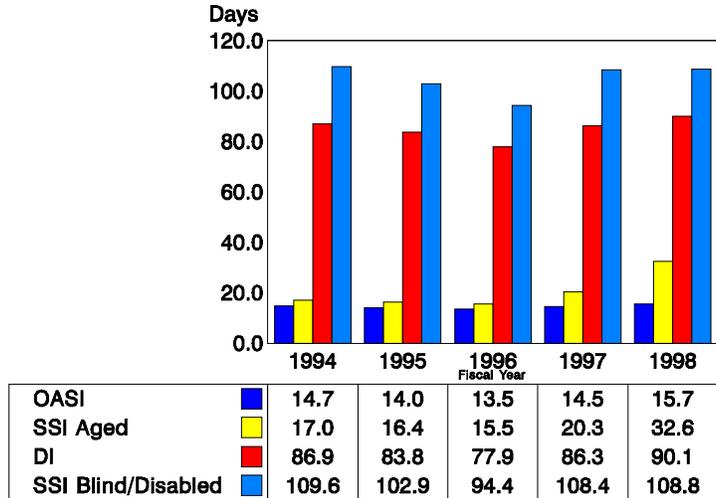
Claims Process

Service Delivery

One of the major elements in providing "World-Class Service" to our customers is to ensure their claims for benefits are processed as accurately and efficiently as possible. OASI claims processing times had shown steady improvement until FY 1997. Processing time increased from 13.5 days in FY 1996 to 14.5 days in FY 1997. In FY 1998, processing time increased to 15.7 days. The increase in claims processing time can be attributed to a nationwide focus on a number of postentitlement workloads, which diverted our resources from the initial claims process.

SSI Aged claims processing time increased significantly in FY 1998 over FY 1997. Welfare Reform legislation negatively impacted the processing time beginning in FY 1997 and revisions to this piece of legislation continued to affect the processing times in FY 1998. SSI Aged processing time was skewed for the majority of FY 1998 by inclusion of disability time for the non-citizen SSI aged alien cases, that required a disability determination.

Initial Claims Processing Times



There have been increases in the processing times for both SSI Blind/Disabled and DI initial claims during FYs 1997 and 1998. While no single factor can be identified as the reason for the increases, a combination of factors appears to be the basis for the increased times. The effects of Welfare Reform legislation were felt in both disability initial claims processing times in FY 1997 and continued into FY 1998. Priority processing was placed on continuing disability reviews and SSI non-disability redeterminations. Additionally, SSA devoted resources to updating and improving the modernized claims system as well as the introduction of new postentitlement event screens.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of OASI applications completed before the first regular payment is due or within 14 days from the effective date of filing, if later	81.1%	83.0%	84.3%	82.9%	82.6%
◦ % of initial SSI Aged claims either paid or denied within 14 days of the filing date	63.2%	65.4%	66.4%	59.5%	54.2%
◦ % of continuing monthly payments made on the scheduled delivery date:					
OASDI	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%
SSI	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%	99.9%

The "Initial Payment Accuracy Rate" is the measure of accuracy of the first payment made to newly awarded OASI and SSI claimants. It is calculated by dividing the amount of payments made correctly by the total amount that should have been paid. In FY 1996, most OASI errors were attributable to earnings records, benefit rate computations, date of birth, application-related issues and relationship/dependency issues. The increase in accuracy for FY 1997 was due primarily to a reduction in dollar errors involving earnings records, computations and application issues. In SSI, initial payment accuracy declined 1.1 percent - this difference is .8 percent greater than any decline in the current 5-year period. Although this difference is not statistically significant, the potential for a significant downward trend exists.

Initial payment accuracy rate:	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	95.2%	94.7%	93.7%	95.6%	NA
— SSI	93.7%	93.7%	93.4%	92.5%	NA

The Index of Dollar Accuracy is based on a statistically reliable sample of the workloads reviewed. It measures the dollar accuracy of adjudicative decisions over the retrospective, current and prospective lifetime of the payment. For OASI, the Index of Dollar Accuracy rate represents total dollars paid divided by dollars that should have been paid over the life cycle of the award. For SSI, it expresses the relationship of field office processed initial claims and redetermination dollars paid to dollars that should have been paid over the expected life of the award or redetermination. The lifetime of the SSI award continues until termination or redetermination. The percent of lifetime dollars paid correctly for OASI initial awards has remained consistently high for the past several years. The changes in the SSI index of dollar accuracy rate from one year to the next are not statistically significant; however, the decline in accuracy over the past 5 years is statistically significant.

% of lifetime dollars from a claims award or redetermination that are paid correctly:	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	99.8%	99.8%	99.7%	99.8%	NA
— SSI	95.9%	94.8%	93.4%	93.0%	NA
— Awards	95.3%	94.6%	93.6%	90.4%	NA
— Redeterminations	96.2%	95.0%	93.2%	94.3%	NA

Operational Efficiency

Workload Receipts	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	3,183,573	3,140,331	3,044,834	3,112,022	2,992,786
— DI	1,858,231	1,783,757	1,670,897	1,529,513	1,487,545
— SSI Aged	204,424	181,629	165,169	128,492	138,570
— SSI Blind/Disabled	<u>2,037,639</u>	<u>1,918,162</u>	<u>1,757,791</u>	<u>1,496,408</u>	<u>1,444,351</u>
— Total	7,283,867	7,023,879	6,638,691	6,266,435	6,063,252
— Year-to-Year Change	-1.7%	-3.6%	-5.5%	-5.6%	-3.2%
Workload Processed	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	3,205,793	3,162,881	3,058,745	3,129,238	3,020,268
— DI	1,888,807	1,881,802	1,711,281	1,662,353	1,536,900
— SSI Aged	204,402	181,329	161,649	125,680	135,442
— SSI Blind/Disabled	<u>2,052,347</u>	<u>2,016,790</u>	<u>1,759,870</u>	<u>1,498,520</u>	<u>1,429,247</u>
— Total	7,351,349	7,242,802	6,691,545	6,415,791	6,121,857
— Year-to-Year Change	-1.5%	-1.5%	-7.6%	-4.1%	-4.6%

◦ End-of-Year Pendings	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	64,060	57,751	59,410	56,844	55,505
— DI	334,166	269,938	260,769	167,081	259,018
— SSI Aged	3,613	3,471	6,349	8,138	8,469
— SSI Blind/Disabled	<u>475,765</u>	<u>377,965</u>	<u>372,022</u>	<u>367,625</u>	<u>328,260</u>
— Total	877,604	709,125	698,550	599,688	651,252
◦ End-of-Year Pendings as a % of Current Year's Dispositions					
— OASI	2.0%	1.8%	1.9%	1.8%	1.8%
— DI	17.7%	14.3%	15.2%	10.1%	16.9%
— SSI Aged	1.8%	1.9%	3.9%	6.5%	6.3%
— SSI Disabled	23.2%	18.7%	21.1%	24.5%	23.0%
◦ Workyears	23,338	20,717	19,436	19,560	17,263
◦ Production Per Workyear	315	350	344	328	355
◦ Unit Cost (Current Dollars)					
— OASI	\$236.12	\$219.97	\$214.60	\$218.56	\$193.75
— DI	620.18	574.58	584.91	591.13	576.45
— SSI Aged	292.23	271.12	292.09	337.85	290.70
— SSI Disabled	527.05	491.05	496.37	563.69	516.09
— Overall Average	417.58	388.87	385.28	398.04	367.23

Disability Determination Services (DDS)

Service Delivery

The decisional accuracy of disability claims reflects the percentage of accurate determinations issued by the State DDSs. The decisional accuracy of disability determinations for DI and SSI initial claims has remained relatively constant for the last 5 years, despite increased workloads. Decisions to allow disability continue to be more accurate than denials.

◦ % of accurate disability determinations by State agencies (DI and SSI combined):	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Overall Decisional Average	96.8%	96.6%	96.9%	96.5%	96.2%
— Allowances	97.7%	97.9%	98.0%	97.7%	97.8%
— Denials	96.3%	95.9%	96.4%	95.9%	95.3%

The following tables illustrate the DDS performance accuracy for disability determinations. Performance accuracy rates reflect the estimated percentages of initial disability determinations and reconsideration disability determinations that do not have to be returned to the DDS for development of additional documentation or correction of the disability determination. Accuracy of initial disability determinations have remained relatively constant over the last 5 years.

◦ Performance accuracy initial disability determinations:	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Overall Average	94.4%	94.2%	94.5%	94.0%	93.7%
— Allowances	95.8%	96.0%	96.5%	95.9%	96.1%
— Denials	93.7%	93.4%	93.6%	93.1%	92.3%

Performance accuracy reconsideration disability determinations:	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Overall Average	92.7%	91.7%	92.7%	92.3%	91.6%
— Allowances	95.8%	96.2%	95.6%	94.0%	95.6%
— Denials	92.3%	91.0%	92.3%	92.0%	90.9%

The following table reflects net accuracy of initial disability determinations. Net accuracy is the percentage of correct DDS disability determinations. The net accuracy rate is based on the net error rate (defined as the number of corrected deficient cases with changed disability decisions plus the number of deficient cases that are not corrected within 90 days from the end of the period covered by the report) divided by the number of cases reviewed. "Net accuracy of initial disability determinations" differs from the "percent of accurate disability determinations by State agencies" in that the latter measure is not adjusted to include the results of the cases that are returned to the DDSs for correction of the decision or for development of additional documentation. Net accuracy of initial disability determinations has remained fairly stable over the past 4 years.

Net Accuracy of Initial Disability Determinations	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Overall Average	96.8%	96.6%	96.7%	96.5%	NA
— Allowances	97.6%	97.8%	97.9%	97.6%	NA
— Denials	96.4%	96.1%	96.1%	95.9%	NA

SSA is mandated by statute to review at least 50 percent of the favorable disability insurance determinations made by State DDSs. These reviews of initial and reconsideration allowances are conducted prior to effectuation of the DDS determination. We also perform preeffectuation reviews of DDS determinations of continuing eligibility. SSA uses a profiling system to select cases for review. This helps to ensure the cost-effectiveness of preeffectuation reviews, and satisfies the legislative requirement that the cases reviewed are those that are most likely to be incorrect.

Preeffectuation Reviews	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— % of accurate decisions to allow or continue benefits by State DDSs	97.4%	98.0%	97.7%	96.4%	96.4%
— Number of cases reviewed	270,363	271,363	238,751	249,321	241,611
— Number of cases returned to DDS due to error or inadequate documentation	6,991	5,498	5,536	9,013	8,729

SSA also performs quality assurance reviews to measure the level of decisional accuracy for the State DDSs against standards mandated by regulations. These reviews are conducted prior to effectuation of the DDS determinations and cover initial claims, reconsiderations and determinations of continuing eligibility. The chart below shows that the State DDSs have consistently made the correct decision to allow benefits.

Quality Assurance Review	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— % of accurate decisions to allow or continue benefits by State DDSs	96.0%	96.0%	96.2%	95.8%	96.1%
— Number of cases reviewed	26,957	26,536	27,150	42,402	42,303
— Number of cases returned to DDS due to error or inadequate documentation	1,079	1,078	1,030	1,801	1,638

Operational Efficiency

The volume of initial claims remains a challenge for SSA as this business process consumes over 34 percent of SSA's administrative resources. Although the DDSs received 40,000 fewer initial disability cases in FY 1998, cases still pending at the end of the year increased by almost 17,000 cases. In part, this is caused by the record number of continuing disability reviews conducted in FY 1998.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Workload Receipts					
— Initial Disability Cases	2,609,498	2,488,878	2,439,658	2,076,201	2,037,160
— Total Cases	3,611,377	3,647,337	3,714,060	3,805,920	3,848,878
◦ Workload Processed					
— Initial Disability Cases	2,615,809	2,611,622	2,360,034	2,187,263	2,024,524
— Total Cases	3,607,482	3,786,535	3,601,856	3,804,111	3,792,151
◦ End-of-Year Pending					
— Initial Disability Cases	549,167	430,805	510,454	399,392	416,378
— Total Cases	721,307	590,045	702,316	703,696	760,026
◦ Production Per Workyear	272	281	278	269	265

Due Process Operations

Service Delivery

The following measure focuses on the reconsiderations of initial claims (which constitute the majority of all reconsideration actions). The Agency's vision for redesigning the disability process encompasses the timely processing of reconsiderations. Once fully implemented, the accurate and more efficient processing of initial claims should result in a decrease in the number of initial claims reversed as a result of filing a reconsideration. However, should a reconsideration be filed, it is expected that the beneficiary receive a prompt reply. The Agency's percentage of reconsiderations processed within 60 days after filing has fluctuated over the last four years; with FY 1998 representing the lowest percentage to date. The decrease in the timely processing of reconsiderations for FYs 1997 and 1998 is consistent with the overall decline in the Agency's performance for processing initial claims timely.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of requests for reconsideration of denied disability claims completed within 60 days of filing	57.4%	53.8%	57.9%	53.2%	50.9%

Significant improvements in hearings processing times were achieved during FY 1998. A favorable trend started in March and continued through September. The September average processing time in FY 1998 was 341 days, a 14 percent improvement over the September FY 1997 processing time, and just 3 days short of the goal of 338 days. Average processing time for SSA cases only (i.e., excluding Medicare cases) was 326 days, exceeding the goal by 12 days. (Beginning in FY 1999, data for SSA cases only will be reported.) With the projected continued decline in total pending and pending per ALJ, we expect processing times to continue to fall throughout FY 1999.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Hearings processing time (days)*	337	357	392	397	341

* Represents average processing time for September of the fiscal year.

In FY 1998, the processing time for the appeals workload increased dramatically to an average of 430 days. The average processing time was 90 days higher than in FY 1997. Additional resources have been directed to the appeals workload. The Appeals Council hired additional adjudicators to process claims and has implemented streamlining procedures on an ongoing basis. Investigation of other approaches to manage the workload continues. These initiatives have had a positive impact and have slowed the rate of growth of the pending level. However, record productivity was still not enough to counterbalance increased receipts and the corresponding greater percentage of aged cases within the total pending. As a result, the processing time increased.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Appeals processing time (days)	126	149	276	340	430

This is the fifth year that the percentage of Appeals Council reviews that have decisions made and notices sent within 90 days after filing the appeal was tracked. At the beginning of the year, one percent of reviews were processed within 90 days. This figure remained constant throughout the year. Heavy receipts continued and, as a result, both the overall pending and the number of aged cases increased. The Council implemented numerous case streamlining initiatives throughout the year. Although such actions resulted in increased productivity, the effort was not enough to reduce the pending level. As a result, the number of reviews processed within 90 days remained at one percent.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of reviews with decisions made and notices sent within 90 days after filing	40.4%	24.5%	3.5%	1.0%	1.0%

Operational Efficiency

OHA continued its record high productivity in FY 1998, disposing of 618,578 cases, which included 6,595 SSI Childhood redetermination cases. With receipts of 519,179, OHA ended the fiscal year with a pending hearings workload of 384,313, a reduction of 99,399 cases during FY 1998, marking the third straight year that dispositions have outpaced receipts. Since the end of FY 1995, the hearings pending workload has been reduced by 163,377 cases, from 547,690 to 384,313. Of the current 384,313 pending cases, 11,711 are pending in AO sites.

◦ Workload Receipts	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Hearings	539,871	588,596	544,036	547,612	519,179
— Appeals	83,843	84,472	111,776	128,970	129,033
◦ Workload Processed					
— Reconsiderations	1,152,322	1,176,754	1,065,348	1,052,732	1,054,512
— Hearings	417,333	526,743	580,832	574,795	618,578
— Appeals	82,308	66,129	69,377	104,876	119,271
◦ End-of-Year Pendings					
— Hearings	480,102	547,690	510,895	483,712	384,313
— Appeals	27,093	45,063	93,511	117,605	127,367
◦ End-of-year Pendings as % of Current Year's Dispositions					
— Hearings	115.0%	104.0%	88.0%	84.2%	62.1%
— Appeals	32.9%	68.1%	134.8%	112.1%	106.8%
◦ Workyears (total)	10,500	11,739	12,375	12,773	13,218
◦ Production per Workyear (total)	157	151	139	136	136

◦ Unit Costs (Current Dollars)	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Reconsiderations	\$353.30	\$359.64	\$372.25	\$399.40	\$384.20
— Hearings	1,377.98	1,305.91	1,306.78	1,349.06	1,384.77
— Appeals	657.89	723.21	631.50	475.38	454.33
— Overall Average	684.36	707.61	754.97	772.77	784.54

Postentitlement Process

Service Delivery

At prescribed intervals, SSA conducts reviews of disability beneficiaries to determine their continuing eligibility for benefits. In addition to these periodic CDRs, for FY 1996 through FY 1998 the Social Security Independence and Program Improvements Act of 1994 requires that SSA annually process a minimum of 100,000 SSI CDRs.

◦ CDR performance accuracy	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Overall Average	96.2%	95.6%	95.9%	94.7%	94.8%
— Continuances	96.7%	96.1%	96.2%	95.1%	95.7%
— Cessations	94.1%	94.1%	94.7%	94.0%	91.5%

The measure of the dollar accuracy of the monthly OASI payments made in a year is referred to as the “dollar accuracy of payment outlays.” The accuracy rate is obtained by comparing the total amount of error in the monthly payments (both excess payment and insufficient payment) to the total payments for the year measured. The accuracy in OASI benefit payments has remained at a consistently high level over the last five years and exceeds the SSA PM goal.

◦ % of benefit payment outlays paid during a FY that are free of error	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
OASI Dollar Accuracy					
— Overpayments	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%	99.9%	NA
— Underpayments	99.9%	99.9%	99.8%	99.9%	NA

The dollar accuracy rate of continuing SSI payments is based on a statistically reliable sample of workloads reviewed. It is the percent of all SSI benefit payment outlays paid during the fiscal year that is free of error. The rate represents the percent of dollars issued free from overpayment, ineligibility or underpayment. The table below shows that dollar accuracy in the SSI program has remained relatively stable over the past 4 years.

◦ % of benefit payment outlays paid during a FY that are free of error	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
SSI Dollar Accuracy					
— Overpayments	95.7%	95.7%	94.5%	94.7%	NA
— Underpayments	98.7%	98.6%	98.8%	98.8%	NA

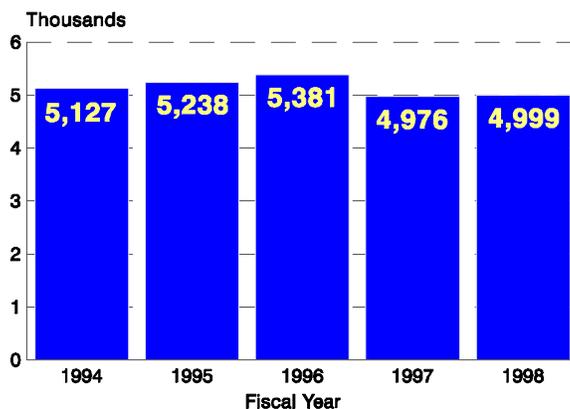
Operational Efficiency

SSA's efficiency in maintaining the rolls for an increasing beneficiary population has remained fairly consistent over the past 5 years. Over this time, DI and SSI workloads have increased by 31 percent and 20 percent, respectively.

SSA regularly reviews SSI cases to ensure that non-disability factors of eligibility continue to be met and that payments are correct. During FY 1998, SSA conducted 1,852,842 SSI redeterminations, more than 80,000 cases than were processed in FY 1997.

Workloads Processed	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	61,183,205	62,792,654	64,324,391	65,677,579	64,970,602
— DI	10,741,681	11,348,819	12,353,466	13,095,777	14,101,384
— SSI	<u>18,101,383</u>	<u>21,408,956</u>	<u>22,590,307</u>	<u>22,175,293</u>	<u>21,783,670</u>
— Total	90,026,269	95,550,429	99,268,164	100,948,649	100,855,656
◦ Workyears	17,560	18,240	18,449	20,289	20,175
◦ Redeterminations Conducted	1,900,147	1,597,453	1,762,967	1,772,818	1,852,842

Postentitlement Process Production Per Workyear



Unit Costs (Current Dollars)	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— OASI	\$10.20	\$9.81	\$9.62	\$9.87	\$9.44
— DI	26.39	27.83	29.85	34.40	36.77
— SSI	31.02	30.06	31.53	37.68	39.94
— Overall Average					
– Per Work Unit	16.31	16.49	17.12	19.16	19.85
– Per Beneficiary	30.28	31.88	33.76	38.46	39.59

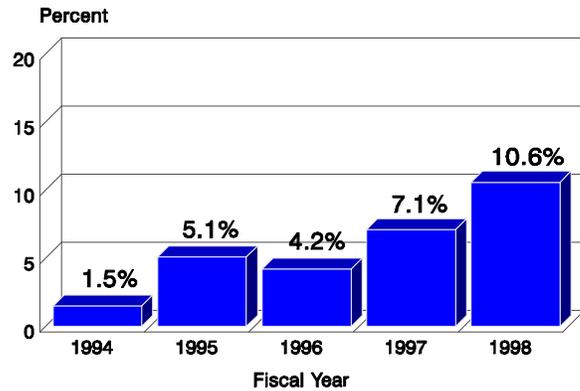
Informing the Public

Service Delivery

Informing the public about Social Security programs, and educating them about the value and operation of these programs, is a basic Agency responsibility. The public needs an accurate understanding of the basic principles of the social insurance programs, of the value of these programs to themselves and society as a whole, and an appreciation of the role Social Security programs play in the nation's income security system.

SSA publishes leaflets, newsletters, booklets and other informational materials about its programs, policies and procedures so that the public can be fully informed about the Social Security programs. SSA also produces informational materials in audio, video and computer media. SSA publishes over 100 consumer leaflets, booklets and fact sheets to inform the public about Social Security programs and policies. SSA also produces about 20 administrative publications, many of which are included as stuffers with notices sent to Social Security beneficiaries.

Percent of Covered Workers Receiving PEBES Statements



Operational Efficiency

Legislation requires SSA to annually issue "SSA-initiated" Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statements (SIPEBES) to all eligible individuals who attain age 60 during FYs 1996 through 1999 and to eligible individuals age 25 or over beginning in FY 2000. The SIPEBES are printed and mailed for SSA by a contractor. As earnings corrections and other workloads are generated from the annual SIPEBES issuance, the earnings process will demand a greater portion of SSA's resources. However, this increased resource demand should be tempered somewhat by further productivity improvements that will be realized from systems enhancements currently being implemented.

° Earnings Statements	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
— Total Number Issued	3,452,323	10,773,169	9,047,589	15,702,739	24,109,695
— Workyears	234	235	251	357	267
— Unit Costs (Current Dollars)*	\$4.97	\$1.80	\$2.14	\$1.83	\$0.89

* SSA began issuing SIPEBES in FY 1995, those costs are reflected in the FY 1995-1998 unit costs.

Face-to-Face Service

Service Delivery

There are many aspects involved in becoming an Agency that truly provides "World-Class Service". Providing prompt, courteous service is crucial. An indicator of this type of service is the length of time visitors spend in field offices waiting for service. The following information indicates SSA had consistently reduced its national field office waiting times (wait time to first contact) in each FY from 1994-1997. However, in FY 1998, there was a slight increase in wait time of 1.1 minutes over FY 1997. In the segment of "visitors with appointments", two of the three areas steadily improved from FY 1994 through FY 1996. In FY 1997, the percent seen within 15 minutes slipped by 1.3 minutes, but recovered in FY 1998 by 2.2 minutes. Prior to FY 1997, the "average wait time" in this segment had also consistently improved. FY 1997's wait time slipped by only .2 minutes but improved in FY 1998. In the category of "visitors without appointments", SSA has not exhibited a clear pattern of improvement in two of the three areas. The percent seen within 60 minutes had shown continuous improvement until FY 1998 when the percent dropped by 1.7 minutes.

◦ National field office waiting times	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
Wait time to first contact (<i>in minutes</i>)	13.3	12.7	12.5	11.4	12.5
◦ Visitors with appointments					
Average wait time (<i>in minutes</i>)	6.9	6.8	5.8	5.6	5.8
% seen within 10 minutes	83.1%	83.8%	84.8%	84.9%	87.4%
% seen within 15 minutes	88.0%	88.6%	91.6%	90.3%	92.5%
◦ Visitors without appointments					
Average wait time (<i>in minutes</i>)	27.5	25.2	25.4	23.9	25.8
% seen within 30 minutes	69.8%	72.7%	70.0%	72.7%	71.9%
% seen within 60 minutes	88.1%	90.3%	91.0%	91.6%	89.9%

Results of SSA's FY 1998 Annual Customer Satisfaction Survey show that customers continue to give high ratings for the service provided by SSA staff, in spite of a decline in the rating for overall satisfaction. The great majority of respondents were also satisfied with the office location and hours of business. However, office waiting time, waiting area comfort and the amount of privacy afforded in the office all received much lower ratings than other aspects of field office service, but were not significantly different from the previous year's findings. The table below displays levels of satisfaction with various aspects of field office service rated in the survey and compares them with results from FY 1997 and FY 1996.

Satisfaction with Aspects of Field Office Service

ASPECT OF SERVICE	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
Office Location	87%	86%	89%
Office Hours	88%	89%	89%
Office Privacy	69%	73%	72%
Waiting Time	71%	70%	71%
Waiting Area Comfort	73%	73%	76%
Staff Helpfulness	84%	83%	83%
Staff Courtesy	85%	84%	87%
Staff Knowledge	83%	83%	83%
Clarity of Information	80%	82%	82%

800 Number Telephone Service

Service Delivery

In addition to providing personal face-to-face service, SSA offers a single nationwide toll-free number (1-800-SSA-1213) weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. in each time zone. Service is available for the hearing-impaired community during the same hours using a telecommunication device for the deaf. Automated services are also available at all times including after normal business hours, on weekends and holidays. Using the automated services, callers can request applications for Social Security numbers, Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statements, verification of monthly benefit amounts and recorded information on local field offices and Medicare carriers and intermediaries.

A measure of the effectiveness of the 800 number, called the access rate, measures the percent of individual callers who successfully reach the 800 number. Following are two methods of measuring the access rate.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of individuals who successfully access the National 800 number within 5 minutes of their initial call	82.2%	73.5%	83.0%	96.2%	95.3%
◦ % of individuals who successfully reach the National 800 number the first time they call	NA	NA	NA	92.7%	91.1%

The slight declines in performance for FY 1998 as compared to FY 1997 are attributable to agents having to be off of the phone for training on new legislative initiatives, installation of and training on new computer equipment, an increase in call demand and processing of critical non-telephone workloads.

SSA conducts an ongoing evaluation of the national 800 number service. National 800 number accuracy rates are derived from the remote monitoring of calls handled by teleservice representatives and program service center SPIKE employees (individuals who answer 800 number calls during high volume periods).

The payment accuracy rates represent the percentage of all calls free of teleservice failures which have a reasonable potential to improperly affect payment of or eligibility to benefits. There are two measures of payment accuracy: 1) payment accuracy based on the universe of all calls, and 2) payment accuracy based only on calls with the potential to affect payment of or eligibility to benefits. The service accuracy rate represents the percentage of calls free of teleservice failures in service delivery which do not have a reasonable potential to improperly affect payment or eligibility to benefits. Service errors involve situations which can: 1) result in inconvenience to the public; 2) cause additional SSA workloads; or 3) result in situations where information is released from SSA records or reports which affect SSA records are accepted before obtaining all identifying information required by SSA.

The following information shows that after remaining relatively stable, payment accuracy declined significantly for the 6 months ending March 1998. The lower payment accuracy rates were attributed to declines in both teleservice representatives' and SPIKE employees' performance. Except for the surge in service accuracy during the 6 month period ending March 1997, national 800 number service accuracy rates have generally fallen in the lower 80 percent range.

To improve quality, SSA has developed systems software that is intended to help call answerers correctly respond to most frequently asked questions. SSA continues to make enhancements to the software to promote its usage as quality improvement enablers in order to meet SSA's 800 number PM goals. Data obtained from SSA's service observation activities are also used to determine ongoing training initiatives.

	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998*
◦ Portion of National 800 number calls handled accurately				
— % of responses leading to correct payments (payment accuracy - all calls)	96.8%	96.7%	97.1%	95.9%
— % of responses leading to correct payments (payment accuracy- payment affecting calls)	94.2%	94.4%	95.2%	93.1%
— % of responses which did not result in inconvenience to the caller or cause additional SSA workloads (service accuracy)	82.0%	80.8%	84.3%	81.8%

* Current year data represents the 6-month period ending March 31, 1998

When asked about their experiences with SSA's 800 number service, 97 percent of the callers rated the Agency's representatives as courteous or very courteous. Satisfaction with the service provided via the 800 number was expressed by 83 percent of the callers. Staff courtesy and service satisfaction data is based on caller recontact survey results for the months of February.

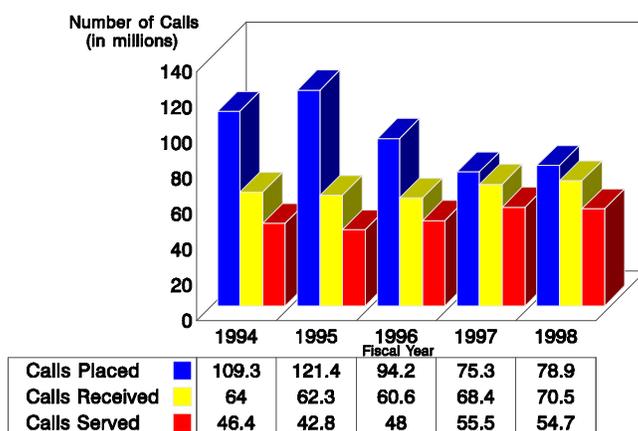
	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ Staff Courtesy	99%	97%	97%	98%	97%
◦ Service Satisfaction	94%	90%	91%	89%	83%*

* The February 1998 survey questionnaire applied the Agency's new "world-class" 6-point scale, replacing the previous 5-point scale. Eighty-three percent of the February 1998 survey respondents rated the 800 number service they received that day as "Excellent", "Very Good" or "Good."

Operational Efficiency

Calls placed in the chart below represent the actual number of calls placed to the 800 number including busy signals. Calls received consists of all callers that get through and either conduct business or hang up while on hold. Calls served represent all callers that conduct business with SSA. There was an increase in the number of calls placed and calls received in FY 1998 compared to FY 1997, but a slight decline in the number of calls served. This is attributable to agents having to be off of the phone for training and processing of critical non-telephone workloads.

SSA's 800 Number Workloads



Mail

The public can initiate requests for all information and services by writing to SSA. Though members of the public do not often make their first contact with SSA through the mail, SSA's need to make contact on a large scale means that SSA frequently interacts with customers by mail. General program information is mailed to requesters and notices are sent to explain eligibility and payment decisions and to inform clients of their rights and responsibilities. Overall, 81 percent of respondents to SSA's Customer Satisfaction Survey were satisfied with the clarity of written material they received from SSA.

	FY 1994	FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998
◦ % of public who were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the clarity of information mailed to them by SSA	70%*	73%*	78%*	82%	81%

* For FYs 1994-1996, customers were asked whether the information mailed to them by SSA was "easy" or "very easy" to understand.