

# New National Case Study Analyzes Social Security Disability Wait Times Across the U.S. in 2025

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EINPresswire.com/ -- A new national case study released today by Hiller Comerford Injury & Disability Law, [Social Security Disability \(SSD\) Wait Times: A 2025 Study](#), provides a comprehensive analysis of how long Americans wait for disability decisions at every significant stage of the Social Security process. Drawing exclusively from official government sources, the report examines initial claims, reconsiderations, and Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearings, highlighting both recent improvements and ongoing challenges for disability applicants nationwide.



The study analyzes the most recent data available through fiscal year 2024, supplemented with 2025 updates from the Social Security Administration (SSA), the SSA Office of Inspector General (OIG), and the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO). Together, these findings paint a clear picture of a system in recovery, but still under strain.

## Key Findings

□ Initial disability backlogs are shrinking.

As of 2025, SSA has reduced initial SSD backlogs by 25% (from over 1.2 million to about 950,000 cases), lowered hearing backlogs to roughly 276,000, and shortened average wait times by about 60 days.

□ Hearing backlogs hit historic lows.

Pending disability hearings have fallen to approximately 276,000 cases, the lowest level in nearly three decades.

□ Wait times are improving, but remain lengthy.

Average hearing wait times are about 60 days shorter than mid-2024 levels, yet still hover around one year for many claimants.

□ Initial and reconsideration stages remain slow.

Nationwide averages show about 231 days for an initial determination and another 231 days for reconsideration, adding more than a year before a hearing is even requested.

□ State-level disparities persist.

Applicants in slower states may wait nearly twice as long as those in faster-performing states, mainly due to staffing shortages and examiner attrition at state Disability Determination Services (DDS) offices. For initial claims, the slowest states (2019–2023 average) were Alaska, Delaware, South Carolina, and Tennessee (all ~200+ days), while the fastest were Rhode Island, Vermont, Iowa, and Missouri (~125–135 days).

□ Staffing is the single most significant driver of delays.

OIG audits link examiner attrition rates of 13–25% per year to sharp increases in processing times.

### Why SSD Wait, Times Matter

Social Security Disability benefits, through SSDI and SSI, are often the primary financial lifeline for people who can no longer work due to severe medical conditions. Long delays can mean months or years without income, healthcare stability, or certainty.

The case study emphasizes that while SSA's recent progress is real, the system remains vulnerable. Pandemic-era staffing losses, rising caseloads, and uneven state resources continue to affect how quickly claims move through the system.

### Trends Over Time: From Crisis to Recovery

The report examines Social Security Disability (SSD) wait times over the past 15 years, highlighting how economic events, policy changes, and staffing levels have shaped the claims process.

□ 2010–2015: A historic backlog crisis following the Great Recession, with hearing waits approaching two years.

□ 2016–2019: Major reforms reduced hearing delays and stabilized processing times.

□ 2020–2021: COVID-19 disruptions worsened initial claim delays but temporarily reduced hearing backlogs.

□ 2022–2024: Gradual recovery, with steady improvements in hearing wait times and renewed hiring efforts.

□ 2025: Early signs of sustained progress, paired with ongoing risk from staffing turnover.

Despite recent improvements, SSD wait times remain sensitive to staffing levels and funding decisions. Continued investment and operational stability will be critical to ensuring that progress made since the pandemic is not reversed.

### Looking Ahead to the Rest of 2025

According to SSA's FY 2025 plans, continued investments in staffing, expanded remote hearings, and nearly \$1.7 billion in IT modernization are intended to reduce wait times further. As of 2025, SSA has already reduced initial SSD backlogs by 25% (from over 1.2 million to about 950,000 cases), lowered hearing backlogs to roughly 276,000, and shortened average wait times by about 60 days. However, watchdog agencies caution that progress will stall without sustained funding and workforce retention.

"Backlog reduction is encouraging," the report notes, "but meaningful, lasting improvement depends on rebuilding and retaining the experienced workforce that drives disability decisions."

### A Data-Driven Resource for Claimants and Advocates

Social Security Disability Wait Times: A 2025 Study is designed to help claimants, attorneys, advocates, and policymakers understand what delays to expect, and why they happen, using only verified government data.

### About Hiller Comerford

Hiller Comerford Injury & Disability Law is dedicated to helping disabled individuals pursue SSDI and SSI claims. Founded in 1999, the firm has grown into a respected practice with 24 attorneys and 48 non-attorney staff members, serving clients throughout New York, Illinois, and Michigan.

With decades of experience in disability and personal injury law, the firm is committed to providing knowledgeable representation, personalized attention, and strong advocacy at every stage of the claims process.

For more information and to read the full case study, visit: <https://www.hillercomerford.com/>

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