

Social Security stops reporting call wait times and other metrics

The changes are the latest sign of the agency's struggle with website crashes, overloaded servers and long lines at field offices amid Trump cutbacks.

June 20, 2025



Lynn McKerral holds a sign in support of Social Security Administration workers on Security Boulevard in front of the agency's headquarters in Woodlawn, Maryland, on May 20. (Wesley Lapointe/For The Washington Post)

By [Meryl Kornfield](#) and [Hannah Natanson](#)

Social Security has stopped publicly reporting its processing times for benefits, the 1-800 number's current call wait time and numerous other performance metrics, which customers and advocates have used to track the agency's struggling customer service programs.

The agency removed [a menu of live phone and claims data](#) from its website earlier this month, according to Internet Archive records. It put up [a new page this week](#) that offers a far more limited view of the agency's customer service performance.

The website also now urges customers to use an online portal for services rather than calling the main phone line or visiting a field office — two options that many disabled and elderly people with limited mobility or computer skills rely on for help. The agency had previously [considered cutting phone services and then scrapped those plans](#) amid an uproar.

The changes are the latest sign of the agency's [struggle with website crashes, overloaded servers and long lines at field offices](#) after [cost-cutting efforts led by Elon Musk's U.S. DOGE Service](#) targeted the agency's customer service system.

The decision to remove public-facing data drew sharp criticism from advocates who said that it will make it more difficult to assess how the agency is performing for its 74 million beneficiaries.

Former Maryland governor Martin O'Malley, who served as Social Security commissioner under President Joe Biden, said that public disclosure of data provided staff with an incentive for higher performance and held the agency accountable.

"It's a shame that now they are trashing the trust that the public should have in numbers that are timely and accurate and real," O'Malley said.

In response to questions about why the data was removed, a Social Security spokesperson who declined to be named said that as Social Security Commissioner Frank Bisignano "continues to evaluate the agency, we are updating our performance metrics to better reflect the real experiences of the people we serve and highlight the fastest ways our customers can get service. The agency will determine if additional information will be provided at a later date."

The spokesperson also provided a statement from Bisignano that said his "top priority is to turn the Social Security Administration into a model of excellence — one that operates at peak efficiency."

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The spokesperson said Bisignano aims to make Social Security a "digital-first" agency, and the agency wants to encourage customers to use the online portal so staff can focus on more complex cases.

Alex Lawson, executive director of the Social Security Works advocacy group, said the data removals “hide how much they’ve destroyed the system’s customer service.”

“If they think this lack of transparency will fool the American people, they’re in for a surprise,” Lawson said. “People notice when they can’t get an appointment because their local field office has lost half its staff. When checks and decisions are delayed. When they get the runaround from an AI chatbot on the phone, instead of getting to talk to a real person.”

In response to the criticism, White House spokeswoman Elizabeth Huston said in a statement that President Donald Trump “is leading the most transparent administration in history” and Bisignano “is streamlining the Social Security Administration to deliver more efficient and better service for American taxpayers.”

Among the performance metrics now withheld was a “live data” section with current call wait time, callback wait time, number of callers waiting on hold and the number of callers waiting on callback.

The new website now shows only the percentage of calls and number of calls handled through automation, the average speed to answer and the total number of customers served. That data is only available for the fiscal year through the last month that data is available. And while the previous dashboard allowed users to click on data points and see trends over time, the new page does not show historical data.

The dashboard says that nearly 42 percent of calls — or 27.2 million — were handled through automation in the current fiscal year through the last completed month. In contrast, the Social Security spokesperson said 5 percent — or 2.9 million calls — were handled through automation in the same period in the prior year. The data does not identify what month was used.

It took an average of 19.2 minutes to answer calls and 72 percent of customers were served over the phone in this fiscal year through the last available month, the dashboard shows.

The current tracker now provides one new statistic about in-person visits: that the average time to wait for an appointment at a field office is 34 days. The page says “very few services require you to visit a field office” and customers are encouraged again to use the online portal.

However, that statistic is a national average and does not help retirees and those with disabilities assess what wait times might be like in their area.

Pages with information about the processing times for retirement, survivor, disability and Medicare benefits are now gone, as well as pages about the time it takes to reconsider

disability decisions and process appeals. There is no reference to disability benefits on the new page.

Another agency [webpage](#) does have some historical data about claims available to download.

Rich Couture, a spokesman for the largest federal workers union, American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE), said the loss of 10 percent of the agency's workforce has taken a "toll on already overworked employees."

"Removal of real-time performance data from SSA's website will only obscure the impact of the cuts and chaos on public service," he said in a statement.

One Social Security employee, who works in a claims processing center and who spoke on the condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation, said she suspects the erased webpages indicate an attempt to hide exploding call times and service backlogs piling up under the second Trump administration.

She noted that, in her experience under Trump so far, it is taking at least double the time to process a claim than it did under Biden. She sits near colleagues who handle international calls, she said, and often overhears co-workers tell callers that actions will take 15 to 30 business days to process. She attributed the slowdown to mismanagement driven in part by DOGE, which slashed the agency's staff, hampered its ability to spend and drove down efficiency by enacting massive staff reorganizations.

"Them removing that type of data off the website about processing times doesn't surprise me, because we're so behind on things being processed," the employee said. "It's really a mess right now, everything is so far backed up."

The agency took down the data performance page on June 6 and replaced it with a message that the website was under maintenance until Monday, according to Internet Archive records compiled by the Strategic Organizing Center, a coalition of unions, and independently verified by The Washington Post. The altered page was then published with fewer statistics and with the added language about using the online portal.

"The fastest way for customers to get service is through [my Social Security](#), which gives you immediate access to important information and tools, putting you in control of your time," the new website reads.

The page also says that the wait time to access online services is "0 minutes" and lists the number of transactions completed online, the count of customers who got replacement cards through the website and the percentage of customers who filed for retirement benefits online.

The website also says "if you are thinking of calling us" there's a list of actions you can complete online without having to make the call.

Kathryn Locatell, a 68-year-old in Placerville, California, whose 73-year-old husband receives Social Security payments, scoffed at the webpage's updated suggestion that applicants forgo phone calls in favor of an online portal. She noted that her town is filled with elderly people who do not use smartphones, some of whom cannot even access the internet.

When Locatell has visited her local Social Security office, she said she found it filled with older men and women who often wait hours to be seen.

"It's sad," she said. "Using an online portal just isn't going to happen in this community. ... I know it from my personal experience. My husband doesn't use the internet at all."

Across the country in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 76-year-old Joan Garnett, for whom Social Security payments are the primary form of income, was also struggling to understand why the agency would revise its website. She, too, thinks it is unrealistic that elderly people will be able to use the portal.

And she finds it disturbing that Social Security would take down data on its own performance serving customers.

"The government should be transparent in how they function," she said. "If you can't check on things, how do you know it's functioning right?"