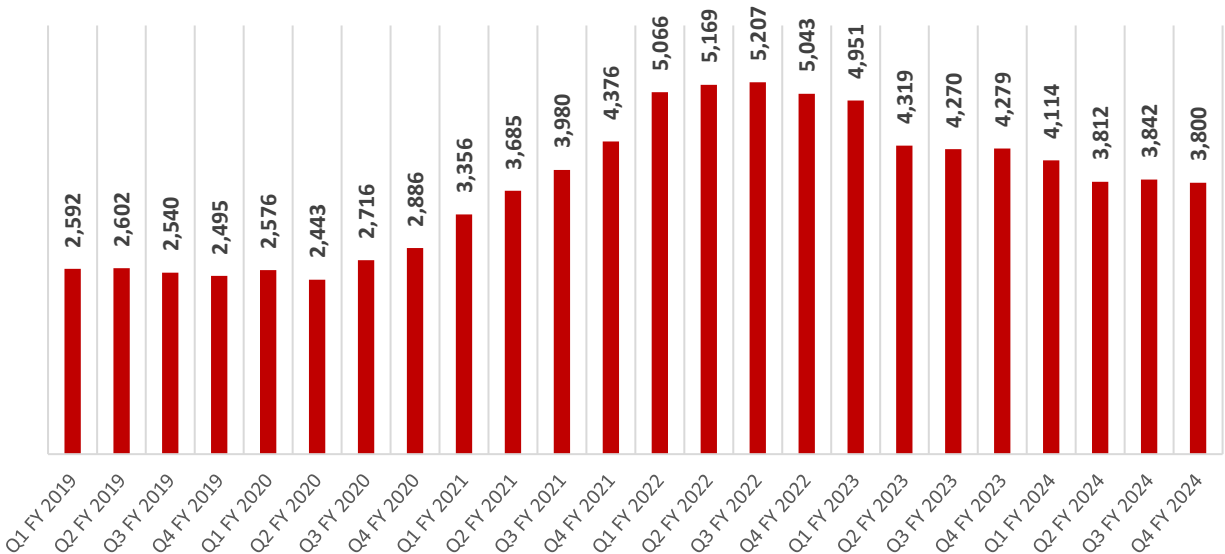


USCIS Backlog Snapshot

Backlog is defined as the volume of pending applications, petitions, or requests that exceed the target level of pending cases.¹ Cases that we cannot adjudicate due to factors outside of government control (for example, cases without an available visa based on statutory limitations or with a pending Request for Evidence awaiting response from a petitioner or applicant) are not included.

We publish data on the backlog by form type each quarter on our [immigration data page](#). Backlog calculations are different than the total pending caseload reported quarterly in the [All Forms Report](#), which reports *all* pending cases regardless of whether they are counted in the backlog.

Graphic 1: Backlog by Quarter, Fiscal Year 2019 - 2024 (in Thousands)



¹ Target level of pending cases is pegged to the volume of applications, petitions, or requests received during the target cycle time period (e.g., 5 months). The target cycle time refers to the goal for a given benefit request type. For example, if the goal for Form N-400, Application for Naturalization, is 5 months, then the acceptable pending volume will be equal to the last 5 months' worth of receipts. For more information on target cycle times, see [this report](#).

Efforts to Reduce the Backlog

Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 was the first year USCIS successfully reduced the backlog in more than a decade. Over the course of FY 2023, USCIS reduced the backlog by 15%, after a [spike in the backlog](#) following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In FY 2022, the backlog grew by 16%, which was slower growth than the two previous years – 43% in FY 2021 and 26% in FY 2020.

The backlog decreased again in FY 2024, by 11.2% over the course of the year.

The slower backlog growth rate in FY 2022 and declines in FY 2023 and FY 2024 were driven by ongoing agency-wide efforts to increase hiring and implement new efficiencies and innovation in case processing. Congress also supported this effort with a crucial \$275 million in appropriated funding in FY 2022. Learn more about USCIS' successful [efforts to reduce the backlog](#).

Backlogs vs. Visa Caps

The backlogs described above are based on how many cases are effectively “behind schedule” for USCIS to adjudicate.

In 1990, Congress established annual caps on certain immigrant visas under [8 USC 1153](#). These statutory caps have not changed even as demand for immigrant visas and adjustment of status have steadily increased over the decades. As a result, certain noncitizens may have to wait a long time before they can apply for lawful permanent resident status because the immigrant visa number is unavailable. (Note that some nonimmigrant visa categories also have annual statutory caps, including the [H-1B](#), [H-2B](#), and [U visa](#)). The Department of State Visa Bulletin shows when an immigrant visa is available or will soon become available and a beneficiary of an approved immigrant visa petition can generally only adjust status (Form I-485) or consular process when the visa is available.

Therefore, USCIS does also not include visa-unavailable cases in our backlog calculations for Form I-485 (visa-regressed), Form I-130, Form I-360, or Form I-918. These pending cases are reported quarterly in the [All Forms Report](#).

For more information, please see our [Employment-based Adjustment of Status FAQs](#), as well as the [State Department Visa Bulletin](#).