

2015 TAX FILING SEASON

Deteriorating taxpayer service underscores the need for a comprehensive strategy and continued efficiencies

AN OVERVIEW FROM GAO-16-151



In fiscal year **2015**

IRS resources for taxpayer services was about **\$111 million less** than it was in fiscal year 2014



As a result of:

- The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act
- Increased identity theft refund fraud cases



A comprehensive **customer service strategy** would help the IRS overcome challenges in delivering service to individual taxpayers

IRS provided poor telephone service during fiscal year 2015

38%
response rate for callers seeking live assistance

Over **56 million** calls abandoned, disconnected or met with a busy signal

Average wait times of more than **30 minutes**

The IRS is late to resolve nearly **50%** of correspondence



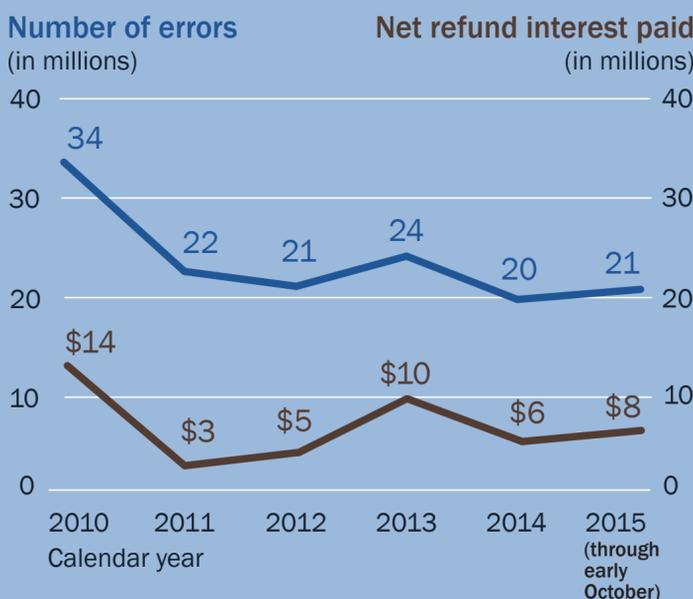
A control that requires assistors to send correspondence as needed would help reduce this problem

Common errors made by IRS assistors include providing inaccurate information when sending correspondence to taxpayers, or not sending correspondence at all



Conducting **performance evaluations** would help the IRS find ways to reduce refund delays and interest paid to taxpayers

Errors by the taxpayer or the IRS can delay refunds and result in significant refund interest paid by the IRS to taxpayers



The IRS made changes to services that include:

In fiscal year 2014

- Eliminating free tax return preparation at walk-in sites

In fiscal year 2015

- Directing more taxpayers to use the IRS's online services such as its payment agreement tool, and
- Providing fewer printed products at walk-in sites



Eliminating free tax return preparation and other services in fiscal year 2014 allowed IRS to redirect about **\$50M** to other services

GAO's prior filing season related matters for Congress and recommendations remain open



5 matters for Congressional consideration

21 recommendations for improving operations

