

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-107409](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

NPIC responds to public inquiries and provides information on passport services and related matters. NPIC is contractor-operated and has four locations—two in Michigan (Grand Rapids and Lansing) and two in Phoenix, Arizona. It is an important touchpoint of the passport process, according to State officials.

In FY 2023, NPIC experienced periods of extremely high call volumes, and customers experienced longer-than-usual wait times to speak to an NPIC call agent. This surge in call volumes coincided with a backlog in passport applications and significant delays in passport issuance that attracted attention from Congress and the public.

The Department of State Authorization Act of 2023 includes a provision for GAO to review NPIC's operations and personalized customer service. This report examines (1) the services NPIC has in place to respond to customer inquiries, (2) customer satisfaction with NPIC services and factors that affected call volume, and (3) changes that NPIC made to meet call volume needs.

To address these objectives, GAO analyzed telecommunication, staffing, and survey data; conducted site visits to two NPIC locations in Michigan (Grand Rapids and Lansing); and interviewed State and contractor officials.

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## PASSPORT SERVICES

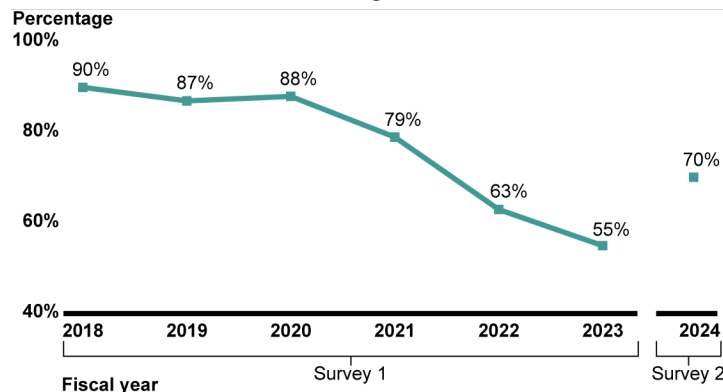
### The National Passport Information Center Has Taken Steps to Meet Customer Needs

## What GAO Found

The Department of State's centralized customer service call center, the National Passport Information Center (NPIC), assists customers by answering general questions about passports, providing passport application assistance, and scheduling urgent passport appointments in circumstances such as life-and-death emergencies. NPIC maintains a toll-free telephone number and an email address for customers with passport-related questions. In addition, NPIC has a dedicated telephone line and email address to assist congressional staffers with similar requests on behalf of their constituents.

Customers who were randomly selected by NPIC and responded to post-call surveys reported decreasing levels of satisfaction between fiscal year (FY) 2018 and FY 2023.

**National Passport Information Center (NPIC) Post-Call Survey Respondents' Overall Customer Satisfaction, Fiscal Year 2018 through Fiscal Year 2024**



Source: GAO analysis of American Customer Satisfaction Index survey data from fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2023 and National Passport Information Center survey data from fiscal year 2024. | GAO-25-107409

Note: The figure includes a break in the data because it combines results from two separate NPIC post-call surveys.

NPIC officials identified several factors that affected NPIC's ability to meet customer needs leading up to and during the FY 2023 call surge. These included low staffing capacity, inadequate infrastructure, and misuse of technology systems.

Since the FY 2023 call surge, NPIC has taken steps to address the factors that affected call volume needs. Specifically, NPIC increased its customer service representative (call agent) staffing levels from approximately 500 in FY 2020 to about 1,600 in FY 2024, according to GAO's analysis of NPIC data. In addition, NPIC has increased its physical space by adding two new locations in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Phoenix, Arizona. Further, NPIC has enhanced its technology by adding approximately 7,000 phone lines. Moreover, NPIC call agents are undergoing training to improve their skills in actively listening, displaying empathy, and clearly explaining relevant details and next steps. The data GAO reviewed reflect an improvement in customer response time. In June 2023, the average wait time for callers was approximately 45 minutes; by June 2024, the average wait time for callers had declined to less than a minute.