

## Frequently Asked Questions on USCIS Processing Times for Orphan and Hague Adoption Cases

On Nov. 2, 2022, USCIS [announced](#) a change in our method for calculating orphan and Hague adoption [case processing times](#). In response to this announcement, we received several questions from stakeholders that we address in this FAQ.

### **Q1. Why were the processing times faster in previous years when there were many more intercountry adoptions? (With fewer numbers, we would anticipate faster processing times.)**

A1. We appreciate the question. The answer stems from two factors:

- Changes in how we calculate processing times; and
- Changes in countries prospective adoptive parents (PAPs) are adopting from.

On Nov. 30, 2022, we began publishing processing times for orphan and Hague adoption cases calculated with the 80% completion method. Before that, published processing times for orphan cases typically ranged from 2.5 to 4.5 months. However, the 80% completion method now accounts for many factors that are generally outside USCIS' control that previous processing times did not. As our [Nov. 2, 2022 announcement](#) explains, these factors include the time it takes petitioners to provide biometrics and respond to USCIS notices and, for many orphan cases, the time it takes for the Department of State (DOS) to conduct a required Form I-604 determination before a USCIS decision.

As you may know, many countries have seen changes to their intercountry adoption processing due to COVID-19 (China), war (Ukraine), violence and unrest (Haiti), etc. These are factors outside USCIS' control that may cause delays and pauses. Pauses or delays because of country conditions or the actions of a country of origin are unfortunately not new. What is new is that the 80% completion method of calculating case processing times includes these pauses and delays.

As shown in previous [Department of State annual reports to Congress](#), countries such as Ethiopia, South Korea, Ukraine, and Taiwan were some of the largest countries of origin for orphan adoptions. However, adoptions from these countries have significantly decreased in recent years for a variety of reasons.

In fiscal year (FY) 2022, 36.6% of USCIS National Benefits Center (NBC) Form I-600 filings were cases from Nigeria, currently making the Nigerian caseload the largest percentage of the NBC's total orphan cases in FY 2022.

The required Form I-604, Determination on Child for Adoption, process can be lengthy and challenging. DOS regularly communicates with adoption service providers about intercountry adoption processing in various countries. In West Africa, DOS has noted several Form I-604-related challenges that can delay processing, including, but not limited to:

- Security concerns;
- High fraud levels; and
- Lack of record-keeping practices.

**Q2. Does the 80% completion method mean that you are measuring the middle 80%, excluding the 10% slowest and 10% fastest cases?**

A2. Processing times calculated with the 80% completion method reflect the amount of time in which 80% of cases were approved or denied in the last six months. For orphan cases, this number is currently 18 months. So, of all the orphan cases decided in the last six months, 80% of them were decided in 18 months or less. Measuring 80% captures the fastest cases. The slowest 20% of cases will not be captured by the 80% completion method, because they took longer than 18 months to decide.

**Q3. Can USCIS provide more transparency around case processing times? Why not also provide data such as the mean, median, standard deviation, interquartile range, etc.? (Providing an average of times can mask longer, drawn-out cases, while cases that are approved relatively quickly can also bring down the average.)**

A3. We value as much transparency as possible and appreciate the importance of transparency to stakeholders.

USCIS has explored many different methods and ways of presenting our case processing data over the years for the many different workloads that we process. We have transitioned the orphan and Hague workloads to the 80% completion method because we have determined that calculating processing times based on this method provides more useful information than using the mean, median, or other methods. Stakeholders may also use the Case Inquiry Date to further measure processing times (as pictured below from our processing times page after you select the form type).

**i When can I ask about my case?**

Many routine factors impact how quickly a case is processed. We only allow inquiries for cases that are well outside the processing time listed above.

[Learn more about the Case Inquiry Date.](#)

Enter your receipt date below to find out if you can contact us with questions.

When is your receipt date?

Get Inquiry Date

The case inquiry date measures the 93% completion time, which includes more cases that are taking longer to process. The case inquiry date can help stakeholders know whether their case is taking longer than usual to process and when a case inquiry is appropriate.

Our [May 5, 2022 announcement](#) and our [Frequently Asked Questions About Processing Times](#) provide more information on USCIS' efforts to simplify and improve communication on case processing data at a broader agency level. Our [Nov. 2, 2022 announcement](#) provides more information on how differences between our previous and current processing time methods specifically apply to intercountry adoption cases.

USCIS' Check Case Processing Times webpage previously reported the median (or 50% completion time) on the low end and the 93% completion time on the high end. However, USCIS decided that reporting 80% completion times, with the 93% completion time as the case inquiry date, is a better approach. We still report median data, including orphan and Hague adoption data, on our [historical processing times](#) webpage. The chart below provides median processing time data for orphan and Hague adoption cases for FY 2022.

Form	Months
I-600A	4.2
I-600	6.3
I-800A	2.3
I-800	0.9

We will continue to explore ways to adjust our calculation method, and we appreciate your interest in it.

**Q4. Does USCIS have internal time frame goals you are aiming to achieve? If so, can you share those?**

A4. As always, we process orphan and Hague adoption cases as quickly and efficiently as possible while also maintaining safeguards in the intercountry adoption process to protect children, birth parents, and adoptive families.

In March 2022, USCIS announced various efforts to [reduce processing backlogs](#), including new internal cycle time goals. We generally continue to process orphan and Hague adoption cases faster than our six-month internal goal. However, if we need additional information, if we are waiting for an applicant or petitioner to respond to a USCIS notice, or if we are waiting for DOS to complete a required Form I-604, Determination on Child for Adoption, we cannot decide that case until we have all necessary information.

**More Information**

To provide feedback on how we share processing time data, email [processingtimesfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:processingtimesfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov).

To provide feedback and recommendations on USCIS policy, email [policyfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov](mailto:policyfeedback@uscis.dhs.gov).

For information about a pending intercountry adoption case, contact the [NBC Adoption Unit](#).

For additional information on intercountry adoption, visit our [Adoption](#) page.

For more information on USCIS and our programs, please visit [uscis.gov](https://uscis.gov) or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).