

Methodology & Definitions for Operational Analysis of SSA Pending Caseload

This analysis utilizes SSA State Agency Monthly Workload (SA MOWL) data on claims for Social Security Disability Insurance and Supplemental Security Income sent to state Disability Determination Services. The derived metrics are constructed from three core administrative variables, where (All Initial) refers to claims for Social Security Disability Insurance, Supplemental Security Income, or both:

- **[Receipts (All Initial)]:** The total count of new initial claims received by the state Disability Determination Service in the reporting month.
- **[Determinations (All Initial)]:** The total count of initial claims cleared by the state Disability Determination Service in the reporting month.
- **[Closing Pending (All Initial)]:** The total count of initial claims *not* cleared by the state Disability Determination Service at the end of the reporting month.

1. Pending Caseload Intensity

Formula: [Closing Pending (All Initial)] / [Receipts (All Initial)]

This metric measures “Months of Inventory.” It normalizes the size of the pending caseload relative to the office’s current intake volume. For example, a value of 4.0 indicates that the state holds four months’ worth of work in its queue at current intake rates. Higher values indicate higher intensity, regardless of the state’s size.

2. Clearance Ratio

Formula: [Determinations (All Initial)] / [Receipts (All Initial)]

This measures the agency’s ability to keep pace with incoming work. A ratio greater than 1.0 indicates the agency is clearing cases faster than they arrive (reducing the caseload), while a ratio less than 1.0 indicates the caseload is growing.

3. Net Pending Caseload Growth

Formula: [Receipts (All Initial)] - [Determinations (All Initial)]

This represents the raw volume added to the caseload in a given month. A positive value means intake exceeded clearance, while a negative value means the agency successfully reduced its total inventory.

4. Operational Status

States are segmented based on the interaction between their Pending Caseload Intensity and Clearance Ratio:

- **Overloaded:** (Intensity > Average; Clearance Ratio < 1.0) – Higher inventory levels relative to intake; determinations are lagging behind receipts (net growth).

- **Accumulating:** (Intensity < Average; Clearance Ratio < 1.0) – Lower inventory levels relative to intake; determinations are lagging behind receipts (net growth).
- **High Volume:** (Intensity > Average; Clearance Ratio \geq 1.0) – Higher inventory levels relative to intake; determinations are keeping pace with or exceeding receipts (equilibrium or net reduction).
- **Stable:** (Intensity < Average; Clearance Ratio \geq 1.0) – Lower inventory levels relative to intake; determinations are keeping pace with or exceeding receipts (equilibrium or net reduction).