



Agency Priority Goal | Action Plan | FYs 2022–2023 | FY 2023 – Q4

Improve the National 800 Number Service

Goal Leader: Eric Skidmore, Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Office of Operations

Deputy Goal Leader: Yateesh Katyal, Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Systems Operations and Hardware Engineering

Goal Overview

Goal Statement

Improve the customer experience by reducing the average speed of answer¹ on the National 800 Number.

- By September 30, 2023, achieve an average speed of answer of under 12 minutes, including implementation of estimated wait time and call back options.²

Problem to Be Solved

- Customers who contact our National 800 Number experience lengthy delays waiting to speak with an agent, particularly during our peak calling periods.³
- Our current National 800 Number systems experience regular disruptions and the temporary loss of self-service and management information tools while we estimate transitioning to a new phone system by the end of FY 2023.

What Success Looks Like⁴

- Improved capacity for answering calls by maintaining staffing levels and improved training for agents and supervisors.

¹ Average speed of answer (ASA) is measured from the time the call enters the queue until the call is answered by an agent. It does not include time spent in self-service.

² This target is also a budgeted workload measure.

³ Peak calling periods are typically October through March and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Eastern time.

⁴ Demonstrates progress towards achieving our Agency Strategic Plan's Build a Customer-Focused Organization and Improving the Accuracy and Administration of Our Programs strategic objectives.

- Improved customer experience by providing timely and accurate service when calling our 800 number and increasing our ability to resolve caller questions during their initial interaction with us.
- Fully implementing our new phone system resulting in consistent systems performance, enhanced self-help options, and improved access to real-time management information capabilities.

Goal Target(s)

Achievement statement Repeat the achievement statement from the goal statement on the previous slide		Key indicator(s) A "key performance indicator" measures progress toward a goal target	Quantify progress These values enable us (and you!) to calculate % complete for <u>any</u> type of target			Frequency When is there new data?
By...	We will...	Name of indicator	Target value	Starting value*	Current value ⁵	Update cycle
09/30/23	Achieve an average speed of answer less than 12 minutes	National 800 Number Average Speed of Answer ⁶	12 minutes	13.5 minutes	35.8 minutes	Monthly
09/30/23		National 800 Number Agent Busy Rate ⁷	15%	0.2%	8.3%	Monthly
09/30/23		National 800 Number Agent Calls Handled ⁷	26,000,000	0	25,133,420	Monthly

*Fiscal year ending 09/30/2021

⁵ Value represents fiscal year to date performance as of the end of the most recent quarter.

⁶ Our FY 2023 Congressional Operating Plan includes planned performance based on our FY 2023 appropriation. Please visit www.ssa.gov/budget for more information. Average Speed of Answer (ASA) resets at the beginning of each fiscal year. Our FY 2022 annual ASA was 32.7 minutes.

⁷ Target revised based on our FY 2023 Congressional Operating Plan. The initial estimated FY 2023 targets in the FY 2022 Action Plans were 1 percent for the National 800 Number Busy Rate and 36,000,000 Agent Calls Handled by 09/30/23. Agent Calls Handled is a subset of Total Calls Handled, a budgeted workload measure.

Goal Team



Leadership Team

Eric Skidmore, *Assistant Deputy Commissioner, Office of Operations*
Goal Leader

Yateesh Katyal, *Deputy Associate Commissioner, Office of Systems Operations and Hardware Engineering* – Deputy Goal Leader

Associate Commissioner (Office of Operations)
Office of Customer Service

Associate Commissioner (Office of Systems)
Office of Systems Operations and Hardware Engineering

Division Director (Office of Operations)
Office of Customer Service, Division for Contact Center Services

Regional Commissioners (Office of Operations)
Regional Offices (excluding Boston and Denver)



Implementation Team

Goal Strategies

Implementation Strategies

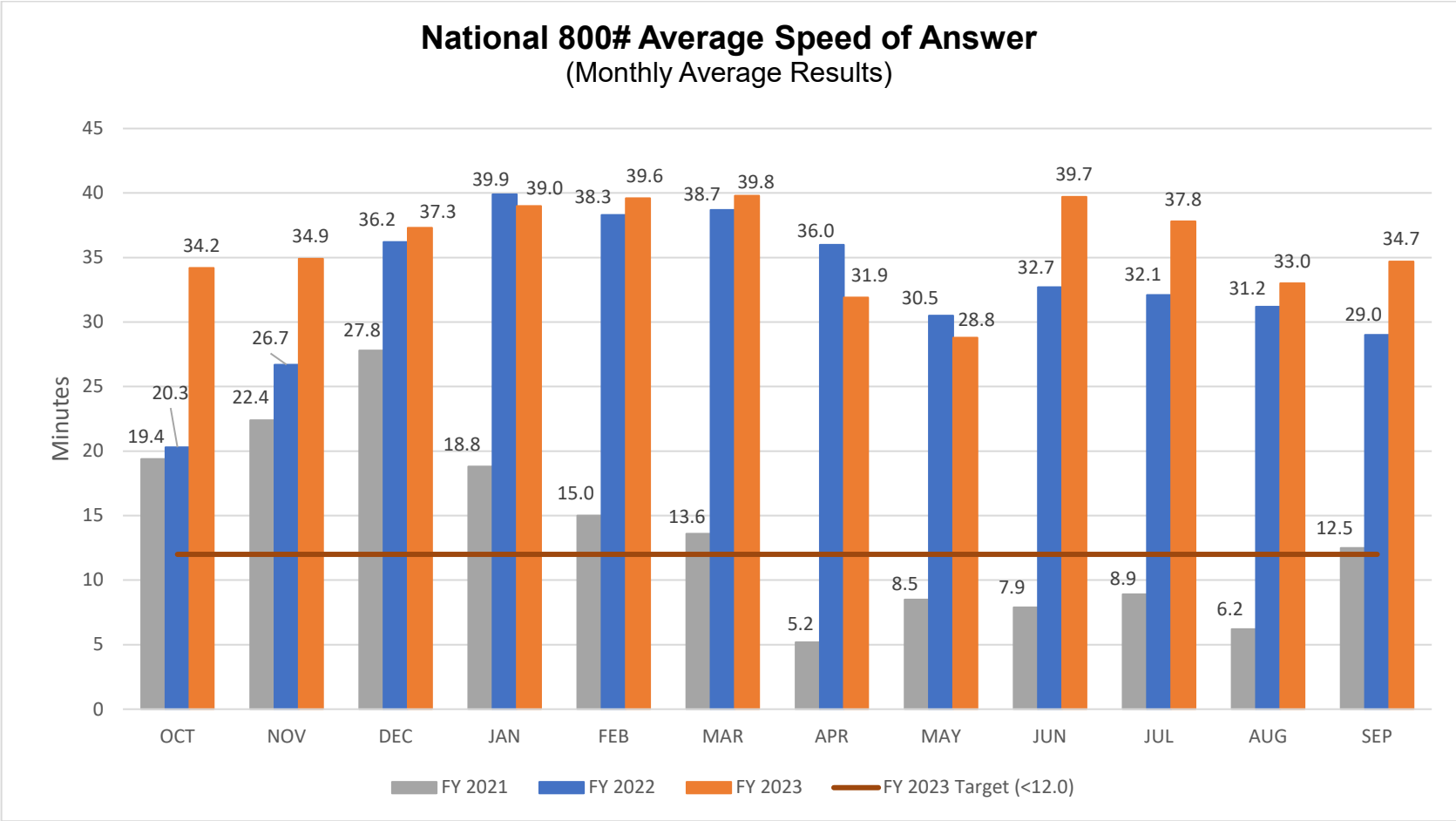
- Implement our new phone system, known as the Next Generation Telephony Project (NGTP) through continuous monitoring of vendor activities and milestones.
- Improve call handling by using an improved hiring process that recruits and retains quality candidates in a competitive labor market.
- Maximize agent performance with an improved and updated new agent training curriculum and improve supervisor support through a new training call center supervisor curriculum.
- Reduce scam-related call volumes through our public education campaign.

External Considerations

- The vendor's ability to implement NGTP timely and maintain quality systems performance is key to our ability to meet our goal, and we are closely monitoring implementation.
- Following NGTP implementation, the vendor must provide us with fully functioning caller management features such as call-back assistance, estimated wait time, express routing of calls and more comprehensive automated self-service options.
- Labor market factors outside our control could result in staffing shortages in our call centers and challenges in answering calls.
- An unanticipated increase in the number of calls may affect our average speed of answer.

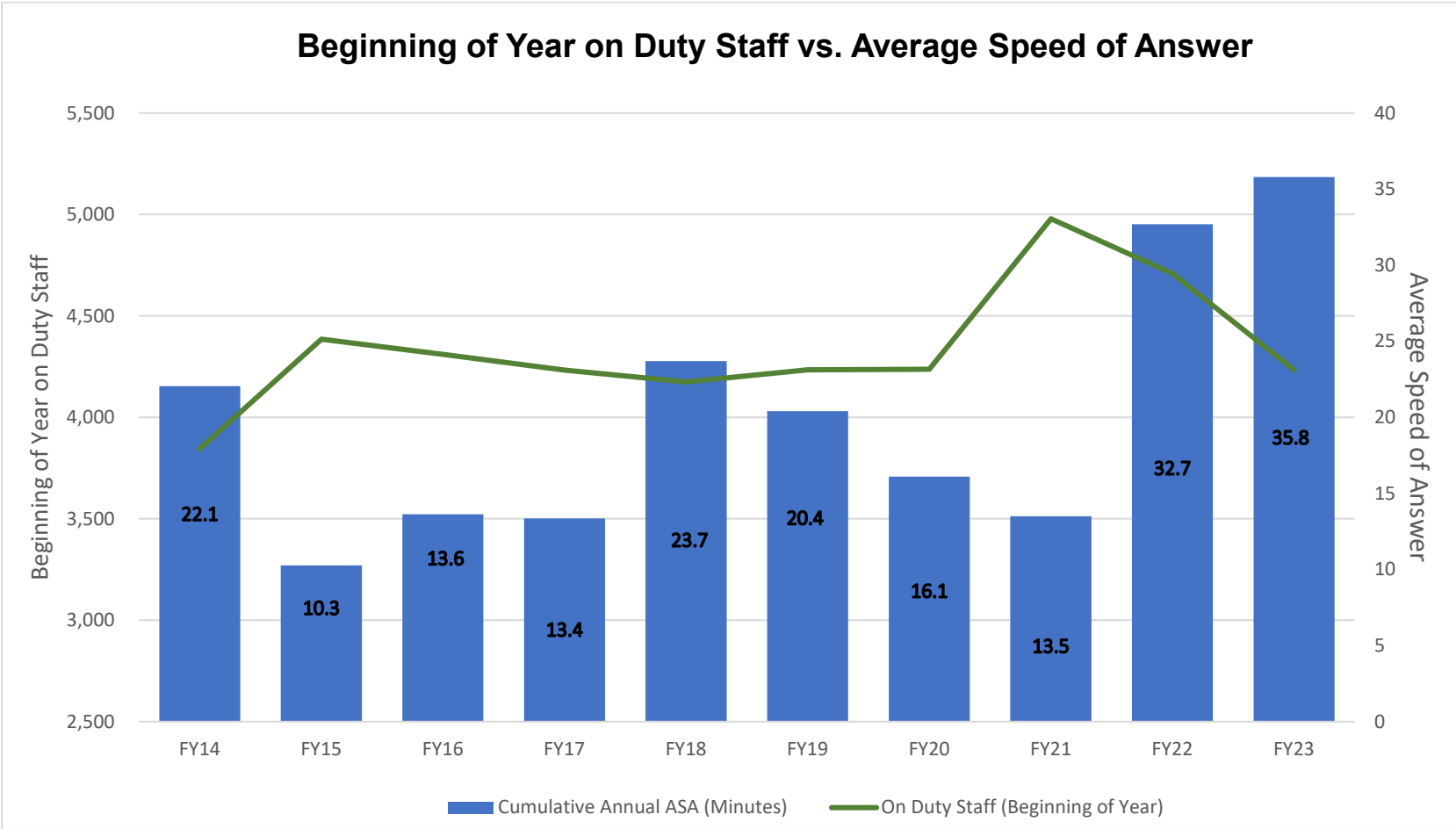
Key Indicators

Primary Indicator: Average Speed of Answer



Key Indicators

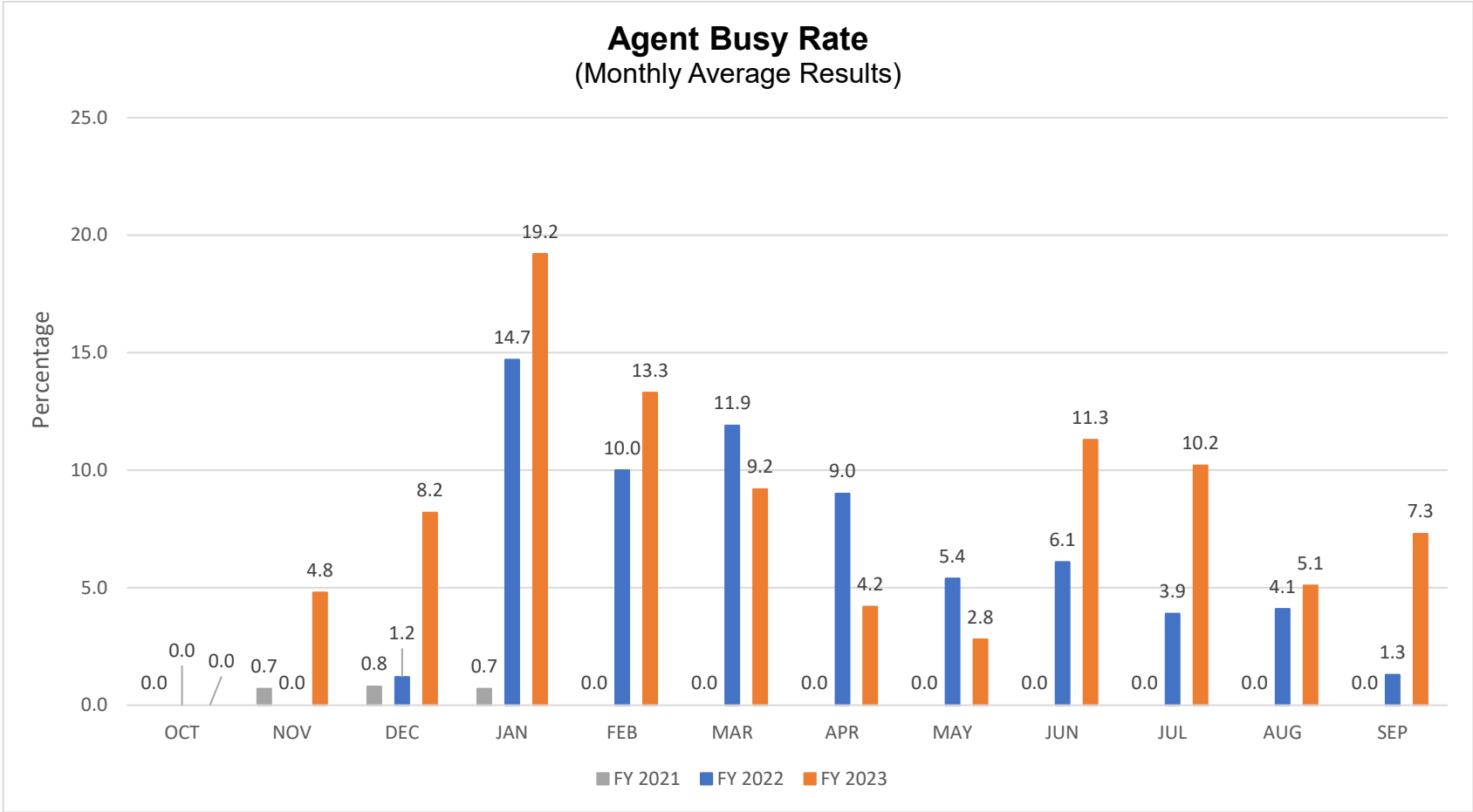
Historical Data⁸



⁸ FY 2021 shows increased 800 Number agents and continued improvement in the average speed of answer.

Key Indicators

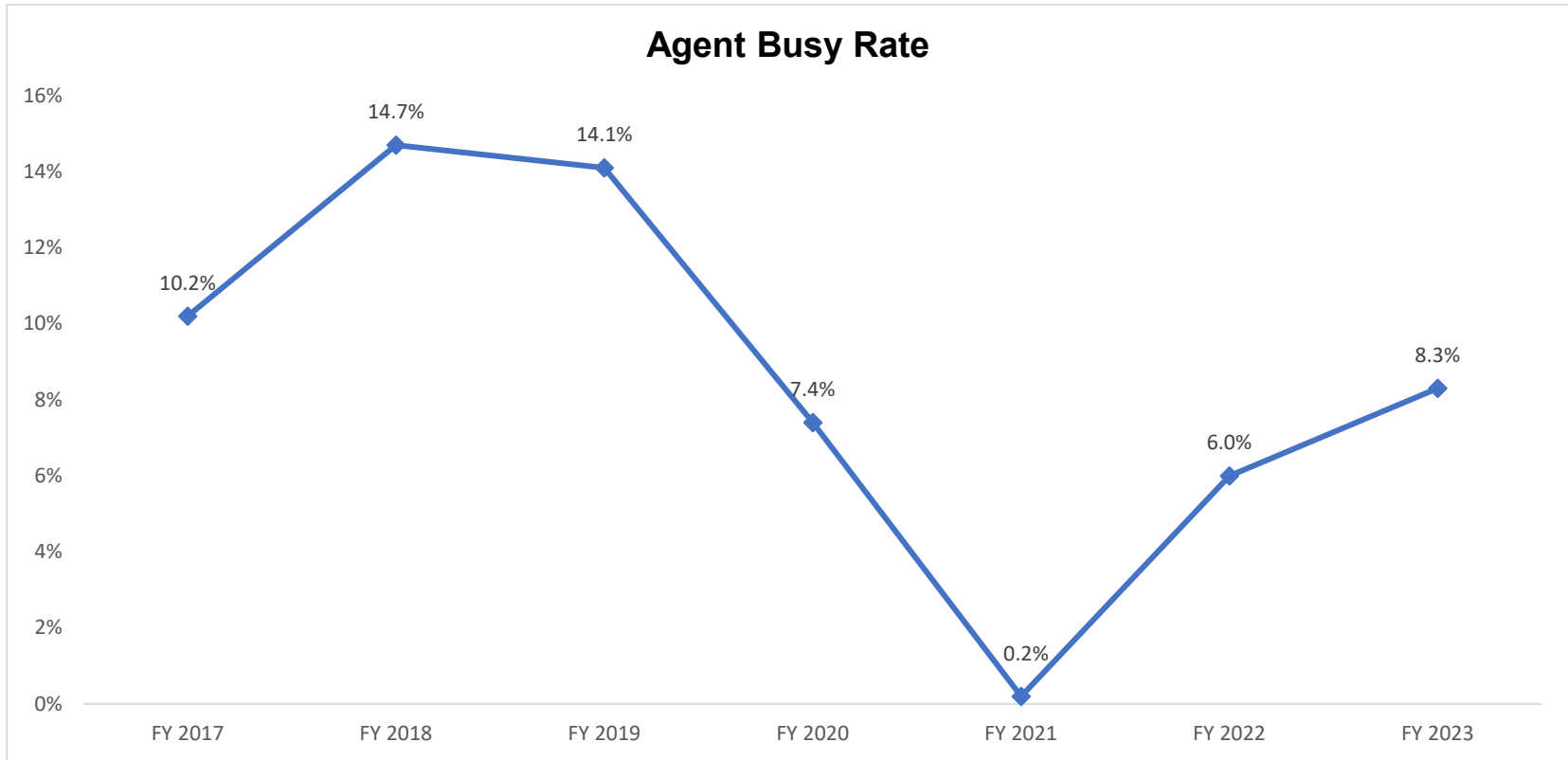
Secondary Indicator: Agent Busy Rate⁹



⁹ This is a budgeted workload measure. Agent attrition and hiring challenges also impacted agent productivity in FY 2022 and FYTD 2023.

Key Indicators

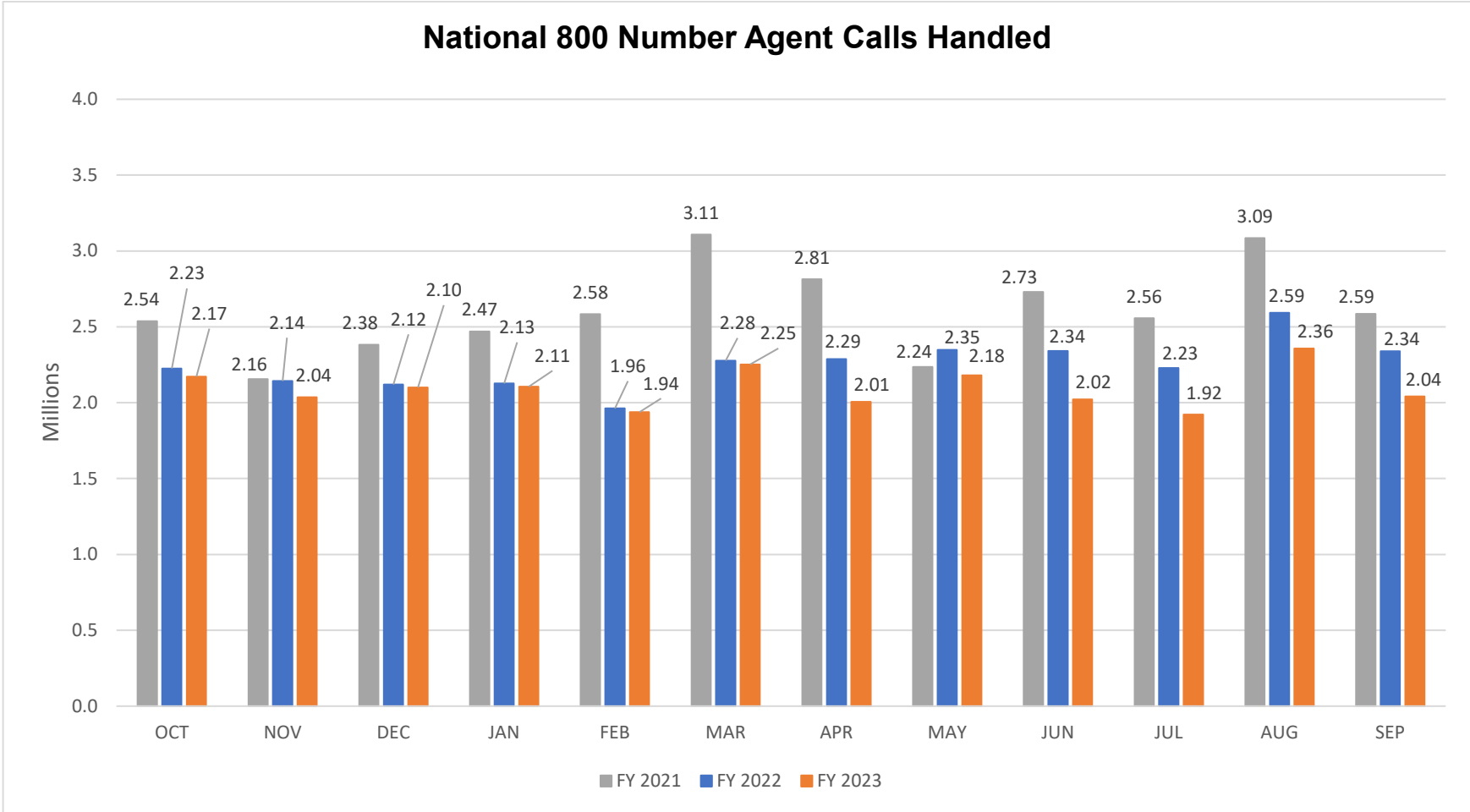
Historical Data¹⁰



¹⁰ In FY 2021 while operating on the CARE 800 Number Platform, we were able to largely eliminate the use of a busy signal and allow all calls onto the platform. In FY 2022 the National 800 Number transitioned to an interim phone infrastructure (Unification Platform) that proved to be unstable, causing repeated outages and prevented us from answering as many calls as we did in FY 2021. Agent attrition and hiring challenges also impacted agent productivity in FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Key Indicators

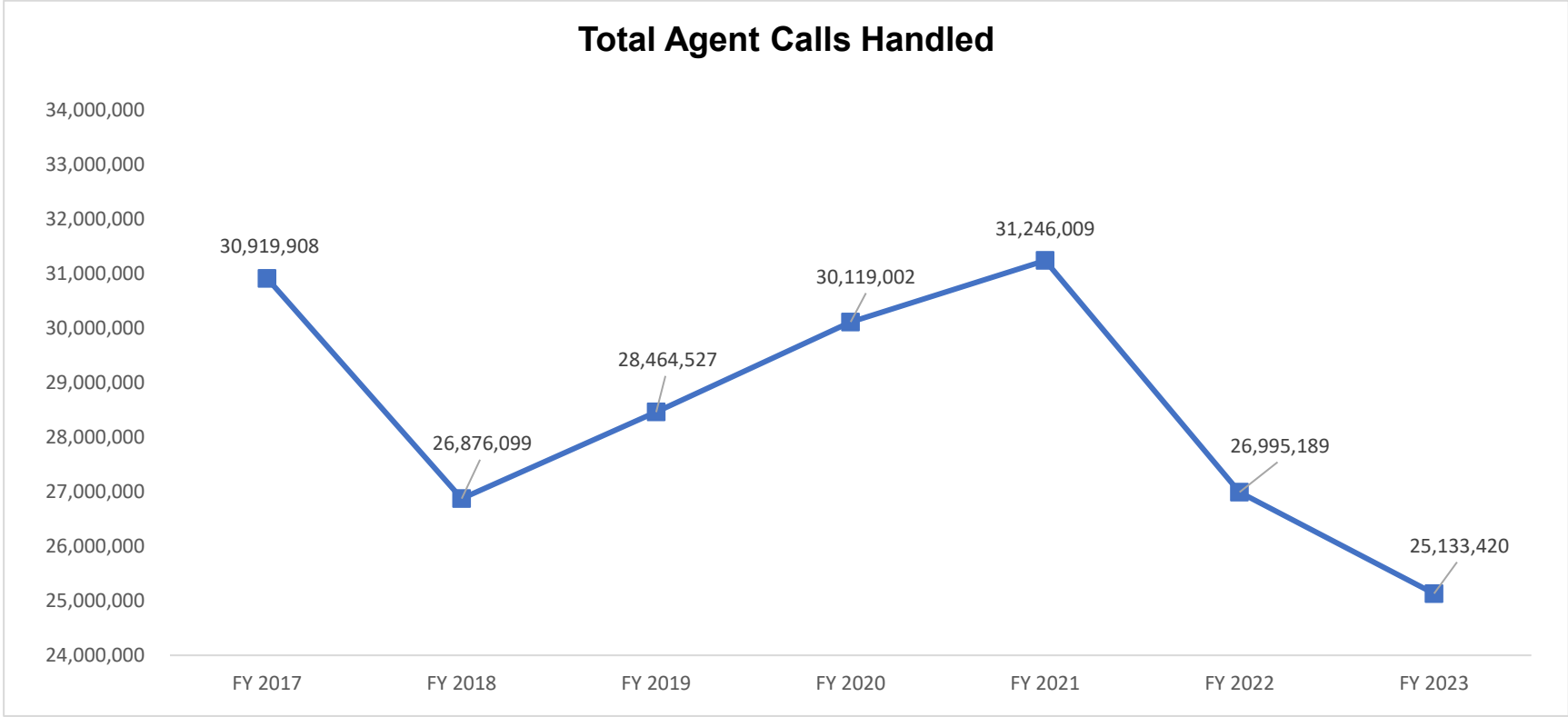
Secondary Indicator: Agent Calls Handled¹¹



¹¹ Agent attrition and difficulty in hiring also impacted agent productivity in FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Key Indicators

Historical Data¹²



¹² In FY 2022 the National 800 Number transitioned to an interim phone infrastructure (Unification Platform) that proved to be unstable, causing repeated outages and prevented us from answering as many calls as we did in FY 2021. Agent attrition and difficulty in hiring also impacted agent productivity in FY 2022 and FY 2023.

Key milestones

Milestone Summary

Key Milestone	Milestone Due Date	Milestone Status	Comments
Complete transition to Unification Platform	Q1, FY 2022	Not Met	We completed the transition to the Unification Platform in Q1 FY 2023. For limited periods, we returned agents to the prior platform for stability purposes.
On-board latest round of agent hires (~ 280)	Q2, FY 2022	Met	273 new agents on-boarded.
Complete New Agent Training Rollout	Q3, FY 2022	Not Met	Currently adjusting training in response to feedback from field offices. Revised rollout now planned by Q4 FY 2023.
Complete New Supervisor Training Rollout	Q4, FY 2022	Not Met	Supervisor training is being refined to incorporate feedback from our regional offices. We rolled out the training in Q2 and Q3, FY 2023.
NGTP Implementation	Q1, FY 2023	Not Met	NGTP implementation has been delayed to Q1, FY 2024.
Reimplement Customer Satisfaction Survey	Q2, FY 2023	Not Met	Scheduled to be deployed in FY 2024, following NGTP implementation.
Integrate Customer Engagement Tools	Q3, FY 2023	Not Met	Scheduled to be deployed in FY 2024, following NGTP implementation.
Implement Interactive Voice Response Enhancements	Q4, FY 2023	Not Met	Scheduled to be deployed in FY 2024, following NGTP implementation.
Reimplement Agent Scorecards	Q4, FY 2023	Met	

Narrative – FY 2023 Q4

We experienced significant challenges in our National 800 Number performance over the last two fiscal years, so were unable to meet our goal. The Average Speed of Answer (ASA) for FY 2023 was 35.8 minutes, well above our goal of 12 minutes. Even though our ASA ended greater than what we projected, we are diligently working to establish the technology to improve service. We did, however, meet the goal for one of our key indicators and almost met another. In particular, we met our Agent Busy Rate (ABR) goal, finishing FY 2023 at 8.3 percent, significantly below the goal of 15 percent. We also narrowly missed our FY 2023 Agent Calls Handled goal of 26 million calls, finishing at just over 25 million calls.

Several factors contributed to missing the ASA goal and not implementing estimated wait time and call back options. We continued to experience delays in implementing the Next Generation Telephony Project (NGTP), which began a phased rollout in the first quarter of FY 2024. Another factor was the loss of Call Back Assistance (CBA) since April 2020, when we moved platforms. When CBA was an option for callers, many took advantage of it and did not have to wait on hold to speak to an agent. Our prior experience suggests that CBA is expected to reduce wait times. The CBA feature could not be supported by the temporary telephone platform, but it will be reinstated in the first quarter of FY 2024 following the implementation of NGTP.

To improve the stability of the Unification Platform during our high call-volume months, we maintained a reduced caller queue. While this change increased stability, more callers encountered a busy signal and the agency's polite disconnect message. Both ASA and ABR improved in the second half of FY 2023. While we were able to handle 25.1 million calls through the end of the fiscal year, it was about 552,000

lower than the previous fiscal year through the same period of time. The lower calls handled is a combination of the reduced queue and our staffing challenges.

Ongoing hiring difficulties, which began in FY 2021, continued to affect performance. High attrition among our telephone agents continued to be a concern, along with challenges in recruiting, hiring, and retaining new agents. Though we did see positive results from the use of Direct Hire Authority this year, we ended FY 2023 approximately 550 agents short of our staffing goal of 5,220.

Going forward, we are on track to fully transition to our new modern telephone system in early November, which we expect to improve some of our current service challenges. Our ability to maintain sufficient staff to handle calls and complete full implementation of all features of our new telephone platform will improve the customer experience on our National 800 Number.

Data Accuracy & Reliability

Our National 800 Number data combines data management tools from two vendors. There are data and system limitations while operating in a dual environment, including data reliability issues. Our data reliability will greatly improve once we fully transition to the NGTP in FY 2023.

Within the Office of Operations, the Office of Customer Service monitors daily data and performance. Due to short data retention periods, we are working to collect and preserve historical data on a regular basis.

We are working to restore our National 800 Number scorecards to highlight efficiency and effectiveness for the agents and at the site. Some of the metrics include:

- Customer Satisfaction
- First call resolution
- Avg Logon hours (agent)
- Avg Calls Handled per hour (agent)
- After Call work Time
- Hold Time Percentage
- Aux time (off phone time)

Additional Information

Stakeholder / Congressional Consultations

Internal Stakeholders:

Employees: Our National 800 Number Network Agents are dedicated public servants committed to providing accurate and timely service to the public.

Office of Human Resources (OHR): We work with OHR to hire new employees and develop and deliver training.

Office of Acquisitions and Grants (OAG): We collaborate with OAG to address acquisition planning and procurement needs, including purchasing major information technology services and products to support our communication platforms.

Office of the Inspector General (OIG): We collaborate with OIG to address spoofing and fraudulent Social Security schemes targeting our callers.

Office of Systems (OS): We work closely with OS to execute the NGTP contract and task order to manage vendor activities for development and deployment of the NGTP solution, including N8NN.

Additional Information

External Stakeholders

The Public: The public should have a positive customer experience when calling the National 800 Number. Existing customer feedback surveys continue to show that wait time is one of the biggest drivers of customer satisfaction.

Congress: Congress maintains an interest in service delivery options for the public—the National 800 Number, face-to-face, and online services.

Labor Union Organization: The American Federation of Government Employees represents our National 800 Number agents and provides input to leadership.

Advocacy Groups: These organizations advocate for the rights of people seeking our services and encourage secure and convenient service delivery options such as National 800 Number services.

