



Government Processing of the T Visa, the Temporary Legal Status That Protects Trafficking Survivors, Has Effectively Stopped

As of June 2026, USCIS's processing times tool shows 80% of T visa cases are completed within 30.5 months.¹ Two years ago, the median processing time was 14.9 months.²

By Cast's Training and Technical Assistance Department

[New federal data](#) shows that 59,187 applications for T-1 nonimmigrant status were pending at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) as of December 31, 2025. In the first quarter of fiscal year 2026 (October through December 2025), USCIS adjudicated 4.6% of applications received, approving only 157 while denying 178.³ Measured against the full pending backlog of 59,187 cases at the end of that quarter, USCIS adjudicated 0.57% of pending applications in that period.

Historical Processing Times

The table below shows USCIS median processing times for Form I-914 by fiscal year, drawn from the [USCIS Historical Processing Times webpage](#).

Fiscal Year	Median Processing Time (Months)
FY2014	5.9
FY2015	6.9
FY2016	8.5
FY2017	9.6
FY2018	12.1
FY2019	16.2
FY2020	N/A ⁴
FY2021	18.0
FY2022	12.9
FY2023	12.3
FY2024	14.9
FY2025	20.8
FY2026 (Oct 2025–Apr 2026)	28.2

Source: USCIS Historical National Median Processing Times for All USCIS Offices, queried May 2026. Figures are median (50th percentile) processing times per fiscal year. FY2026 reflects October 2025 through April 2026 only. The current USCIS processing times tool, queried June 17, 2026, shows the 80th percentile for recent completions at 30.5 months.^{5,6}

Both figures reflect only cases USCIS has processed. Neither account for the 59,187 applications currently pending without action. The published figure should be understood as a baseline waiting time for current filers, not a projected wait time.

The Processing Slowdown

The table below shows T-1 principal applicant data from FY2021 through Q1 FY2026. The processing rate reflects total cases adjudicated (approved and denied) divided by applications received in that period. This methodology is consistent with how USCIS reports processing data



and allows for year-over-year comparison but does not reflect how quickly USCIS is working through all pending cases. That figure is addressed in the text below.

Fiscal Year	Applications Received	Total Adjudicated	Processing Rate
FY2021	1,702	1,353	79.5%
FY2022	3,070	2,104	68.5%
FY2023	8,598	2,819	32.8%
FY2024	15,332	4,389	28.6%
FY2025	37,177	3,760	10.1%
FY2026 Q1 (Oct-Dec 2025)	7,248	335	4.6%

While applications received grew sharply from FY2021 to FY2025, the processing rate fell from 79.5% to 4.6% over the same period. The result is a program operating well below its own authorized capacity: while Congress set a statutory cap of 5,000 annual T-1 approvals, USCIS approved just 1,398 in FY2025 and 157 in Q1 FY2026, leaving thousands of authorized visas unused as applications go unprocessed. At the Q1 FY2026 adjudication pace of 335 cases per quarter, it would take over 44 years to clear the 59,187 cases currently pending, before accounting for new applications.

USCIS Priorities

In May 2026, USCIS announced a policy intended to free up agency resources to focus on, among other things, “visas for victims of violent crime and human trafficking.”⁷ The processing data through Q1 FY2026 does not reflect any such reallocation. USCIS approved only 157 T visa applications in the prior quarter with 59,187 pending without action.

What this Means for Survivors

For survivors with a pending T visa application, the processing slowdown has direct consequences for their ability to work, access services, and maintain stability.

A pending T visa application does not confer lawful status or protection from removal. Survivors whose applications remain unresolved are not shielded from immigration enforcement while they wait. That exposure is compounded when bona fide determinations are not issued, as a bona fide determination (BFD) does provide interim protection from removal and may include deferred action and work authorization. Survivors may also wait five to ten months simply to receive receipt notices confirming that USCIS has received their application, leaving them without any documentation of their pending case during that period.⁸

Under federal regulation, survivors who receive a BFD on their application are eligible to apply for interim employment authorization and receive an automatic stay of removal while their case is pending. That authorization is intended to function as a bridge, allowing survivors to work legally while their case moves through the queue. But BFD employment authorization applications are not being processed at the rate they are being received. In Q1 FY2026, 9,150 applications for BFD-based employment authorization were received and only 124 were approved, leaving 51,562 pending at the end of the quarter, a 52% increase from the prior quarter.⁹

The result is that survivors are waiting not only for a visa decision, but for the interim protections that were designed to sustain them during that wait.



Case management services available to trafficking survivors are typically structured to support individuals through a defined period of need, with the expectation that legal status will provide the stability to transition out of those services. The T visa processing timeline is now measured in years, not months. That gap is longer than most case management frameworks are designed to bridge, leaving survivors and the organizations supporting them without a clear path forward.

This discussion addresses only the legal and administrative consequences of the processing slowdown. It does not account for the psychological toll. For survivors of trafficking, prolonged uncertainty compounds existing trauma.

CAST will continue to track and publish T visa processing data as new quarterly statistics become available.

Data cited in this article is drawn from:

- [USCIS Form I-914 T Nonimmigrant Status Statistics, FY2026 Q1](#)
- [USCIS Form I-765 Employment Authorization Data, FY2026 Q1](#)
- [USCIS Historical National Median Processing Times for All USCIS Offices \(queried May 2026\)](#)
- [USCIS Case Processing Times tool for Form I-914 at Service Center Operations \(queried June 17, 2026\)](#)

¹ USCIS calculates this figure based on the time it took to complete 80% of adjudicated cases over the prior six months. Processing times are generally updated monthly. As of June 17, 2026, the posted processing time for Form I-914 at Service Center Operations was 30.5 months. See <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times> and [https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times-faqs](https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/processing-times-faqs).

² USCIS Historical National Median Processing Times for All USCIS Offices for Select Forms by Fiscal Year. Available at <https://egov.uscis.gov/processing-times/historic-pt>. This figure reflects the median (50th percentile) processing time for cases adjudicated in FY2024 and is not directly comparable to the 80th percentile figure reported by the live processing times tool. Both metrics reflect the same upward trend.

³ USCIS Form I-914, Application for T Nonimmigrant Status, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, and Case Status: Fiscal Year 2026, Quarter 1. Available at <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>.

⁴ Not available. FY2020 data does not appear in the USCIS Historical National Median Processing Times table.

⁵ The live processing times tool reports the 80th percentile (the time within which 80% of adjudicated cases were completed over the prior six months). The Historical Processing Times table reports the median (50th percentile) for each full fiscal year. The two figures are not directly comparable but reflect the same upward trend. See American Immigration Lawyers Association, Recommendations to USCIS on Publicly Posted Processing Times for Benefits Requests (August 4, 2023), AILA Doc. No. 23080803.

⁶ The processing times published on the USCIS website are based on cases completed in the prior six months and do not account for the volume of cases currently pending. AILA has documented that this methodology is structurally unreliable as a predictor of how long it will take USCIS to process a newly filed case. See American Immigration Lawyers Association, Recommendations to USCIS on Publicly Posted Processing Times for Benefits Requests (August 4, 2023), AILA Doc. No. 23080803; AILA USCIS Operations Committee, Practice Pointer: Understanding USCIS Updates to Processing Times Information (May 1, 2026), AILA Doc. No. 26050100 (available to AILA members only).

⁷ USCIS, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Will Grant "Adjustment of Status" Only in Extraordinary Circumstances (May 22, 2026). Available at <https://www.uscis.gov/newsroom/news-releases/us-citizenship-and-immigration-services-will-grant-adjustment-of-status-only-in-extraordinary>. This policy, which significantly restricted access to adjustment of status for people seeking permanent residence from within the United States, has drawn widespread concern from immigration advocates and practitioners. On May 29, 2026, [press reports](#) indicated an apparent walk back of the policy, with a USCIS spokesperson stating the policy would not prevent any alien from obtaining a green card who legitimately and properly qualifies. As of publication, USCIS has not issued official guidance clarifying how the policy is being implemented.

⁸ American Immigration Lawyers Association, Practice Alert: Continued Receipt Notice Delays in VAWA, U, and T-related Filings (updated April 9, 2026), AILA Doc. No. 25050703. Available to AILA members only.

⁹ USCIS Form I-765, Application for Employment Authorization, by Fiscal Year, Quarter, Eligibility Category, and Case Status: Fiscal Year 2026, Quarter 1, Category C40 (Bona Fide T Application Pending). Available at <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-and-studies/immigration-and-citizenship-data>.