



National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Section 2024 Operational Report

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Executive Summary

The FBI's Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division serves as the focal point and central repository for criminal justice information services in the FBI. For over 30 years, the CJIS Division has been equipping our partners with the criminal justice information needed to protect the American people while preserving civil liberties. The NICS Section is one of several CJIS Division sections. Since NICS's inception on November 30, 1998, the staff of the NICS Section have been dedicated to making accurate and timely firearm decisions for the dual mission of keeping firearms out of the hands of prohibited individuals and not inhibiting the Second Amendment rights of lawful firearm transferees.

Highlights of the NICS Section's operations in calendar year 2024 include the following:

- NICS was available 99.87 percent of the time.
- A total of 28,097,205 firearm-related background checks were conducted through NICS. Of those, 9,757,644 were processed by the NICS Section and 18,339,561 were processed by state users. Monthly and annual NICS statistical reports, including the type of background check conducted and the state of the attempted firearm transfer, are available on the FBI's website at fbi.gov/nics.
- Of the NICS firearm checks processed by the NICS Section:
 - 9,238,735 (94.7 percent) were proceeded.
 - 110,505 (1.1 percent) were denied.
 - 408,404 (4.2 percent) remained unresolved (delayed or open) or canceled.
- 9,005,796 (92.3 percent) were conducted through the NICS E-Check.
- NICS attained an average Immediate Determination Rate (IDR) of 91.87 percent.

Of the transactions the NICS Section "denied":

- The leading reason for those NICS Section denials was due to subjects being a descriptive match to prohibiting information per Title 18, United States Code (U.S.C.), section (§) 922(g)(1)—being convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term of more than one year. Monthly reports with denial data including the category of prohibitions are available on the FBI's website at fbi.gov/nics.
- 2,758 firearm retrieval referrals forwarded to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), equating to 2.5 percent of the NICS Section's denied transactions.
- The NICS Section received 19,116 NICS-related challenges in 2024. Of those challenges:
 - 10,652 (55.7 percent) were sustained.
 - 5,463 (28.6 percent) were overturned.
 - 3,001 (15.7 percent) remained unresolved.

As of December 31, 2024:

- There were 33,025,815 active NICS Indices entries identifying prohibited individuals.
- There were 60,745 active Unique Personal Identification Numbers (UPINs) issued to successful applicants of the Voluntary Appeal File (VAF).

500 Millionth NICS Check

The Gun Control Act of 1968 (Public Law 90-618) mandated, among other requirements related to firearms, individual and corporate entities engaged in the business of firearms dealers, manufacturers, and importers to become federal firearms licensees (FFLs). That Act created a system for keeping prohibited persons from receiving firearms from FFLs by requiring a potential firearm transferee to answer questions pertaining to their eligibility. See 18 U.S.C. § 921 *et seq.* However, there was no computerized process to check national records to determine if the potential firearm transferee was answering those questions accurately. To strengthen federal firearms regulations, the Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993 (Brady Act) was passed leading to the creation of an electronic means for information to be supplied immediately as to whether the transfer of a firearm would violate 18 U.S.C. § 922, or state law. When signed into law in November of that year, the Brady Act amended the Gun Control Act and created NICS. Five years later, through a cooperative effort of Department of Justice (DOJ) entities like FBI and ATF, as well as state and local criminal justice agencies, NICS became operational on November 30, 1998. Based on their state's NICS participation, FFLs either contact the FBI's NICS Section directly to initiate NICS checks or, alternatively, a designated law enforcement agency acting as the NICS point-of-contact (POC).

On December 18, 2024, NICS hit the monumental milestone of processing its 500,000,000th background check. Crossing over the half-billion mark in volume gave the NICS Section a chance to reflect on the scope of the work taken on every day by the FBI and its state partners. Each and every day, the dedicated employees of the NICS Section work to ensure decisions made, at all levels of the NICS Section, focus on the mission of keeping the country safe and supporting those who are exercising their Second Amendment rights with a culture of good judgment, high energy, demonstrated competence and customer service.



NICS Section staff outside the CJIS Division

Welcome to the NICS Section

The NICS Section has processed firearm background checks since November 30, 1998. Over time, the FBI has identified, developed, and implemented improvements supporting the NICS mission statement of, “Seeking to enhance national security and public safety by conducting background checks to determine a person’s eligibility to possess firearms or explosives in accordance with federal and state laws.”

The most common use of NICS is for potential firearm transfers initiated by FFLs. For an FFL to initiate a NICS background check, the prospective firearm transferee must complete and sign an ATF Form 4473,¹ Firearms Transaction Record. The ATF Form 4473 collects the prospective transferee’s name and descriptive data (e.g., date of birth, sex, race, state of residence, country of citizenship) and also elicits information that may immediately identify the prospective transferee as a prohibited person. An FFL is prohibited from initiating a NICS background check if answers to specific questions on the ATF Form 4473 reveal a firearm prohibition. There are a few exceptions which allow a firearm transaction to occur without a NICS check being initiated.

When NICS receives the information from the FFL, it conducts a background check where a name and descriptor search is conducted. Every NICS check consists of either the FBI or a POC state agency comparing the descriptive information provided by the individual against three national databases: Interstate Identification Index (III), National Crime Information Center (NCIC), and the NICS Indices. Information contributed to these national databases is modified,

¹ Additional information regarding the ATF Form 4473 is available at [atf.gov](https://www.atf.gov)

cancelled, and added daily. To ensure a timely and accurate eligibility status can be determined and provided to the FFL, it is vitally important that information needed to determine firearm eligibility is available to NICS in one or more of these three databases. Unless the transaction is first denied, federal law allows an FFL to transfer a firearm without receiving a proceed response from NICS after a certain timeframe² referred to as the Brady Transfer Date (BTD). Depending on several factors (e.g., the citizenship or age of the potential firearm transferee, whether a potentially prohibitive criminal history exists, etc.), additional research may be required. For example, when the prospective transferee is not a U.S. citizen, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement is contacted to establish whether the individual is legally in the United States.

The III provides access to criminal history records supported by fingerprint submissions. NCIC's person files are also checked for possible descriptive matches to records of wanted persons, subjects of disqualifying protection orders, and other persons who pose a threat to public and officer safety. The NICS Indices contains information on persons prohibited as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 922(g) or (n) or state law. The NICS Indices was specifically created to identify disqualified individuals when the information cannot be shared with the other two databases. For example, information on an individual who renounced their U.S. citizenship would not be available in III or NCIC, so the U.S. Department of State shares with the NICS Indices information on persons that have renounced their U.S. citizenship. The mental health prohibition is also an excellent example of information that may only be available in the NICS Indices, as a disqualifying mental health adjudication or commitment is not always associated to a criminal event available through III. Although the majority of NICS Indices entries contain information not available in III or NCIC, authorized agencies may enter information into the NICS Indices regardless of whether the information is otherwise available in those systems.

The NICS Section encourages and promotes agencies to make federal and state prohibiting records/information available at the national level. Information made available via the NICS Indices provides NICS users with an immediate indication, when matched to a prospective firearm transferee, of a federal and/or state prohibition for possessing or receiving firearm(s). A valid match of a NICS Indices hit allows NICS to render an immediate denial determination. This can provide greater efficiency for NICS users nationwide by eliminating the need to conduct additional research to determine if the information is prohibiting.

Contributing agencies are responsible for the accuracy and validity of the NICS Indices information and are obligated to remove invalid or expired entries. Source documentation, containing the descriptive data used in the NICS Indices entry, must be retained and available for validation purposes such as routine audits and NICS challenges. The NICS Section publishes a

² For a potential firearm transferee 21 years of age or older, federal law allows an FFL to transfer a firearm after 3 business days if they have not first received a "Denied" response from NICS. A business day is a 24-hour day (beginning at 12:01 a.m.) on which state offices are open and does not include the day the check was initiated, Saturday, Sunday, or state and federal holidays. When the potential firearm transferee is under 21, the transaction may be delayed up through 10 business days, from when the transaction was initiated, if cause exists to further research a potentially prohibiting juvenile record. If cause is established in such circumstances, federal law would not prohibit the FFL from transferring a firearm after the tenth business day if they have not first received a "Denied" response from NICS.

calendar year report of the submissions into the NICS Indices on the FBI’s website at fbi.gov/nics. This report shows data on NICS Indices submissions made by federal, state, local, and tribal agencies.

NICS Participation

Through 2024, FFLs within 31 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories, contacted the FBI’s NICS Section to initiate NICS background checks for firearm transfers. These are referred to as non-POC states, as there is no state or local law enforcement agency serving as a contact between the FFL and NICS. In non-POC states, the NICS Section is responsible for making the firearm eligibility determinations for prospective firearm transfers occurring at FFLs.

Non-POCs states in 2024 were:

Alabama	Alaska	Arizona	Arkansas
Delaware	Georgia	Idaho	Indiana
Iowa	Kansas	Kentucky	Louisiana
Maine	Massachusetts	Michigan	Minnesota
Mississippi	Missouri	Montana	New Mexico
North Carolina	North Dakota	Ohio	Oklahoma
Rhode Island	South Carolina	South Dakota	Texas
Vermont	West Virginia	Wyoming	District of Columbia
American Samoa	Guam	Puerto Rico	Northern Mariana Islands
Virgin Islands			

States may elect to serve as a NICS POC—meaning they will designate a state or local law enforcement agency(ies) to serve as the contact between the FFL and NICS, or in permit instances, a designated state agency(ies) will serve as the contact between the permit applicant and NICS. NICS full-POC states are responsible for making firearm eligibility determinations for all firearm checks initiated by FFLs within their state.

In 2024, the following 15 states served as full-POC states:

California	Colorado	Connecticut	Florida
Hawaii	Illinois	Nevada	New Jersey
New York	Oregon	Pennsylvania	Tennessee
Utah	Virginia	Washington ³	

States may also elect to serve as a partial POC—meaning the NICS Section and a state-designated agency share the responsibility of processing NICS checks initiated by FFLs for firearm transfers. In 2024, three partial-POC states processed checks related to handgun transfers and the NICS Section was responsible for checks related to long gun transfers (occurring at FFLs).

³ Washington became a full-POC state in February 2024

The three partial-POC states processing checks related to handgun transfers are:

Maryland

New Hampshire

Wisconsin

One partial-POC state, Nebraska, processes state-issued handgun permits for individuals interested in receiving a handgun in their state, and the FFLs contact the NICS Section to process the NICS check for any potential long gun transfers.

Regardless of a state's POC status, individuals challenging a denied transaction 'may elect to direct' their challenge directly to the FBI. See Title 28 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) Section 25.10(d). More information about challenges (appeals) is in the [Firearm-related Challenges \(Appeals\)](#) section of this document.

NICS Availability

NICS is customarily available by phone 17 hours a day, every day of the year excluding Christmas day. NICS E-Check is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, every day of the year (including all holidays). To operate completely and accurately, NICS depends on the availability of the NICS Indices, III, and NCIC. If either III or NCIC is not available, it impacts NICS even though NICS and the NICS Indices are fully operational. Decreases in availability of NICS are typically due to scheduled maintenance (for system upgrades) or unscheduled maintenance (to resolve any reported system issues). Due to the impact outages have on stakeholders, including those wishing to purchase a firearm, the NICS Section staff make every effort to ensure these outages are rare and are addressed quickly when they do occur. In 2024, the average availability of NICS during hours of operation was 99.87 percent, which is consistent with the previous 5 year average of 99.84 percent.

FFLs contacting the NICS Section have the option of initiating a NICS background check by either calling the NICS Contracted Call Center (NCCC) via telephone or electronically submitting necessary information through a secure internet connection known as the NICS E-Check.

When calling the NCCC, a customer service representative (CSR) enters the prospective firearm transferee's name and descriptive information, provided by the FFL from the ATF Form 4473, into NICS to initiate the search. Over 70 percent of traditional⁴ NICS checks instantly provide a "proceed" or "denied" status. For example, if the subject's identifying information matches no records in any of the systems searched, NICS instantly provides the CSR a proceed status, which is then given to the FFL. Similarly, if NICS instantly determines a valid match to a prohibiting record (e.g., a valid descriptive match to a NICS Indices entry), the system provides the CSR with a denied status and the CSR advises the FFL of that status. When a NICS transaction requires further review, the CSR advises the FFL the transaction has been "delayed" and provides the FFL with the NICS-generated BTD (see footnote 2 above). When the CSR provides the FFL with the appropriate status, the FFL is also provided with the NICS Transaction Number (NTN). A delayed transaction is routed electronically to a NICS Section staff member to process. After a review and a final determination, the NICS Section staff will submit the NTN and status

⁴ "Traditional NICS checks" refers to transactions for individuals 21 years of age or older.

back to the NCCC for a return call to the FFL. This process eliminates lengthy telephone hold times for the FFLs while increasing timely determinations of firearm eligibility.

NICS E-Check removes the CSR from the process and provides FFLs the ability to submit information for background checks electronically via a secured internet connection. NICS processes E-Checks similarly to the telephonic process described above: if no records are matched, the FFL receives the instant proceed status through NICS E-Check, if disqualifying information is instantly identified during the initial NICS search, the denied status is instantly provided for the FFL to retrieve through NICS E-Check, and if an immediate eligibility determination is not possible, NICS E-Check provides the FFL with the delayed status, the NTN, and the BTM, and routes the transaction to the NICS Section staff for processing.

There are many benefits for an FFL to use the NICS E-Check, including:

- Increased data accuracy which, in turn, increases the accuracy of the NICS check, as the FFL enters the data directly into the system rather than relaying it via phone call.
- 24 hours a day, 7 days a week availability.
- Instant FFL availability of a final status without awaiting a callback from the NCCC.
- Simplified record keeping for FFLs—ability to print or export completed NICS background check requests and results.
- Increased FFL access to communications from NICS regarding issues such as the current NICS operational status.
- Reduction in NCCC traffic for faster processing and less hold times for FFLs opting to use the NCCC to initiate NICS background checks.

In 2024, over 92 percent of NICS background checks were processed via the NICS E-Check.

Immediate Determination Rate (IDR)

The IDR consists of all traditional transactions in which the NICS Section makes a final status determination within seconds to minutes of the FFL initiating the check. In 2001, the U.S. Attorney General requested the NICS Section attempt to maintain a 90 percent IDR. The NICS Section strives to meet or exceed this goal. In fact, in 2024, the NICS Section maintained at least 90 percent IDR for all 12 months, achieving a yearly average of 91.95 percent and exceeding the previous 5 years average IDR of 89.13 percent.

Less than 9 percent of NICS background checks processed by the NICS Section in 2024 needed further research, often because the subject was a descriptive match to a potential firearm prohibition and more information was needed to either establish or eliminate the potential prohibition. When this occurs the NICS Section searches for additional information, for instance, by making contacts to agencies that could have the information. Challenges in obtaining this information often include: the information is not available, the agency may not respond, or the agency's response may not be received in a timely manner. Regardless, 18 U.S.C. 922(t) generally affords the NICS Section three business days to research a potential prohibition and try to provide a final status to the FFL, otherwise the FFL may generally transfer the firearm under federal law. As noted above, for individuals under 21 years of age attempting to receive a firearm from an FFL, the BTM can be extended up through 10 business-days if cause of a potential juvenile prohibition as described under 18 U.S.C. § 922(d) is established. When such cause has

been established, an FFL is not federally prohibited from transferring a firearm after the tenth business day, as applicable, even if the NICS Section has been unable to provide a final determination. If such cause has not been conveyed to the FFL by the end of the third business day, federal law would not prohibit them from transferring the firearm the next day. Again, upon hitting the applicable BTD, an FFL can only transfer the firearm if they have also not first received a “Denied” response from NICS.

Unresolved Transactions

The NICS Section continues working a transaction until a final determination can be made or until the transaction is purged from NICS. Pursuant to NICS Regulation, 28 C.F.R. § 25.9, all information relating to a NICS check, except for the NTN and date of inquiry, is destroyed after not more than 90 days from the inquiry date if an eligibility determination cannot be made within that time. In 2024, there were 290,027 traditional NICS transactions handled by the NICS Section that could not be resolved within 3 business days. Ultimately, 196,804 (2 percent) transactions processed by the NICS Section remained unresolved and were purged from the NICS audit log within 90 days of the date of inquiry.

Prohibitions

With every NICS firearm background check, the NICS Section considers all federal firearm prohibitions to determine firearm eligibility.

Federal law prohibits any person from possessing or receiving a firearm who:

Has been convicted in any court of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year (includes misdemeanors punishable by more than two years)—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1)**

Is a fugitive from justice—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(2)**

Is an unlawful user of or addicted to any controlled substance—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(3)**

Has been adjudicated as a mental defective or committed to a mental institution—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(4)**

Is illegally or unlawfully in the United States—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(5)**

Has been discharged from the armed forces under dishonorable conditions—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(6)**

Having been a citizen of the United States, has renounced U.S. citizenship—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(7)**

Is subject to a court order that restrains the person from harassing, stalking, or threatening an intimate partner or child of such intimate partner—**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8)**

Has been convicted in any court of a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence (MCDV) —**18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9)**

Is under indictment/information for a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term exceeding one year—**18 U.S.C. § 922(n)**

The NICS Section also considers hundreds of state prohibitions, as applicable (based on the state of residence and the state of attempted firearm transfer), to determine firearms eligibility.

NICS Denials

A valid match of the subject to a NICS Indices hit allows NICS users to render an immediate denial determination. Criminal history information available through III may also include firearm disqualification indicators allowing for an immediate denial determination during a NICS check. Similarly, NCIC responses may include firearm disqualification indicators allowing for an expedited denial decision during a NICS background check. However, in many instances, when a NICS background check matches a record in III or NCIC to the prospective firearm transferee, the NICS Section staff conducts research to determine if a firearm prohibition exists and to validate records. The NICS Section publishes monthly reports of the NICS Section's denials and they are sorted by prohibition on the FBI's website at [fbi.gov/nics](https://www.fbi.gov/nics). In 2024, the NICS Section denied a total of 110,505 firearms transactions. Historically, and again in 2024, the leading reason for a NICS Section denial was 18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1)—being convicted of a crime punishable by imprisonment for a term of more than one year.

NICS Section Denials by Category

NICS Section Denials by Category, 2024	
Category	
Convicted of a crime punishable by more than one year (includes misdemeanors punishable by more than two years)—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(1)	49,665
Under indictment/information—18 U.S.C. § 922(n)	11,379
Unlawful user/addicted to a controlled substance—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(3)	10,179
Fugitive from justice—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(2)	9,154
State prohibition	8,554
MCDV—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(9)	7,245
Adjudicated/Committed mental health—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(4)	6,599
Illegal/unlawful alien—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(5)	4,511
Protection/restraining order for domestic violence—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(8)	3,171
Dishonorable discharge—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(6)	34
Federally denied persons file	14
Renounced U.S. citizenship—18 U.S.C. § 922(g)(7)	0
Total denied transactions	110,505

NICS Section Denials by State/Territory

NICS Section Denials by State/Territory, 2024			
State	Denials	State	Denials
Alabama	4,849	New Hampshire	201
Alaska	696	New Jersey ³	2
Arizona	6,170	New Mexico	1,808
Arkansas	2,967	New York ³	16
California ¹	0	North Carolina	10,023
Colorado ¹	0	North Dakota	656
Connecticut ¹	0	Ohio	5,203
Delaware	599	Oklahoma	2,707
Florida ²	11	Oregon ³	2
Georgia	8,496	Pennsylvania ³	3
Hawaii ¹	0	Rhode Island	153
Idaho	1,292	South Carolina	6,777
Illinois ¹	0	South Dakota	534
Indiana	5,313	Tennessee ³	2
Iowa	1,207	Texas	18,590
Kansas	1,940	Utah ³	4
Kentucky	3,167	Vermont	240
Louisiana	6,458	Virginia ³	2
Maine	559	Washington ³	6
Maryland	1,063	West Virginia	3,624
Massachusetts	503	Wisconsin	854
Michigan	3,092	Wyoming	536
Minnesota	1,403	District of Columbia	157
Mississippi	3,134	American Samoa	0
Missouri	3,893	Guam	9
Montana	921	Northern Mariana Islands	1
Nebraska	249	Puerto Rico	402
Nevada ¹	0	Virgin Islands	11

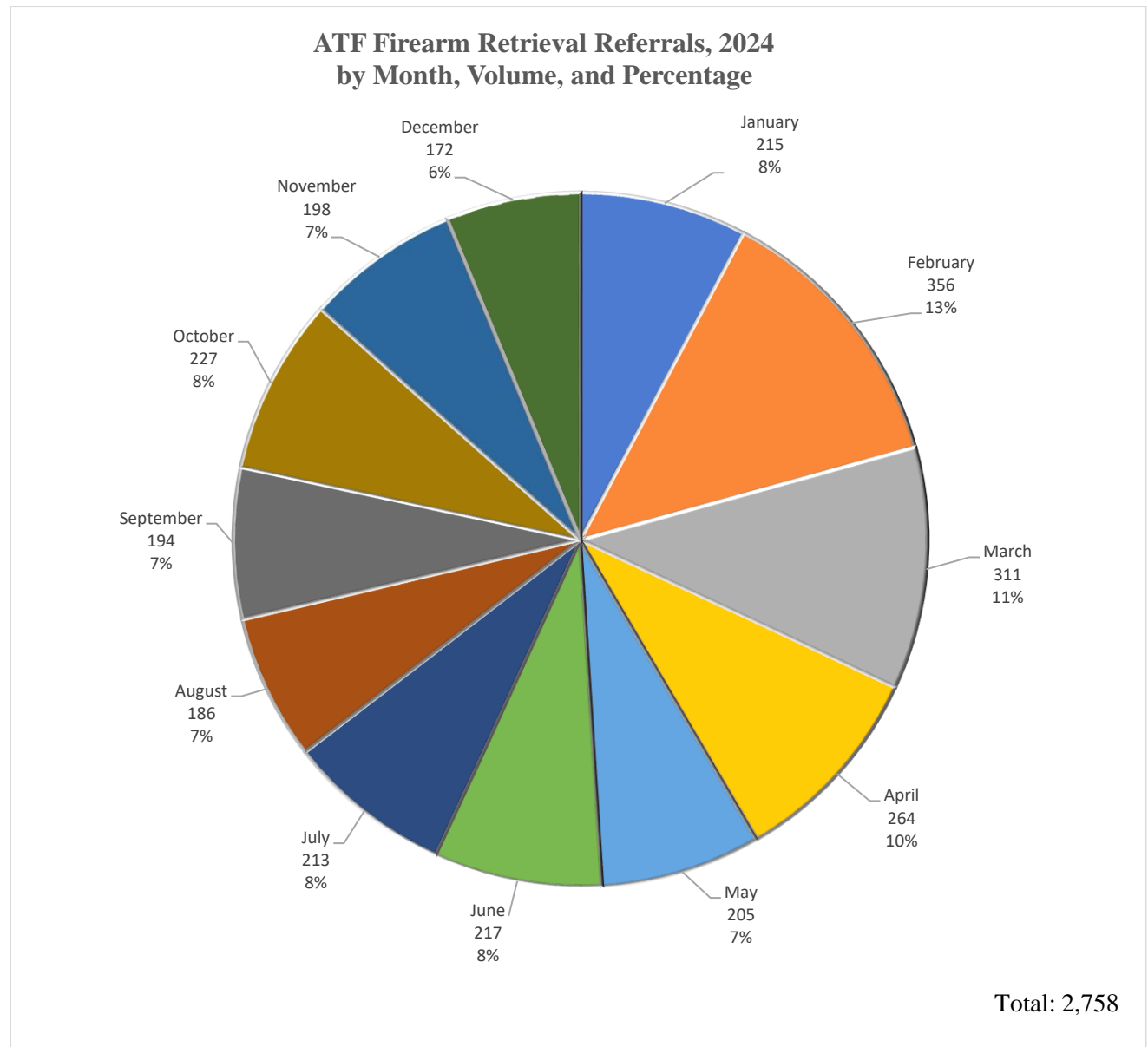
¹Full-POC state—the NICS Section did not process their NICS checks.

²Pre-pawn checks processed by the NICS Section for Florida (full-POC state).

³DOF checks processed by the NICS Section for FBI field offices in a full-POC state.

ATF Firearm Retrieval Referrals

If information is received after the transfer of a firearm indicating the transferee is a prohibited person, a firearm retrieval referral is sent to ATF. In 2024, there were 2,758 firearm retrieval referrals provided to ATF equating to 2.5 percent of the NICS Section's denials and down from the 3.1 percent average from the 5 previous years.



ATF Firearm Retrieval Referrals by State/Territory of Residence

ATF Firearm Retrieval Referrals by State/Territory of Residence, 2024 ¹			
Alabama	191	New Hampshire	10
Alaska	7	New Jersey	0
Arizona	219	New Mexico	34
Arkansas	60	New York	0
California	0	North Carolina	146
Colorado	0	North Dakota	13
Connecticut	0	Ohio	151
Delaware	0	Oklahoma	96
Florida	0	Oregon	2
Georgia	248	Pennsylvania	0
Hawaii	0	Rhode Island	1
Idaho	27	South Carolina	81
Illinois	0	South Dakota	18
Indiana	100	Tennessee	0
Iowa	17	Texas	435
Kansas	81	Utah	0
Kentucky	134	Vermont	11
Louisiana	105	Virginia	0
Maine	26	Washington	0
Maryland	33	West Virginia	26
Massachusetts	30	Wisconsin	15
Michigan	70	Wyoming	20
Minnesota	43	District of Columbia	5
Mississippi	139	American Samoa	0
Missouri	115	Guam	1
Montana	31	Northern Mariana Islands	0
Nebraska	3	Puerto Rico	14
Nevada	0	Virgin Islands	0

¹These statistics represent the number of transactions referred to ATF for retrieval consideration due to the firearm being transferred to an individual matched to prohibiting information. The statistics do not represent the number of firearms potentially transferred.

NICS-Related Challenges (Appeals)

NICS checks are based on comparing the descriptive information of a potential firearm transferee and the information available to NICS, and not by fingerprint comparison. However, the FBI offers a challenge process available for any individual believing they were wrongly denied the transfer of a firearm. This challenge process provides for fingerprint comparison to assist with identity resolution. The challenge process also allows for the consideration of

additional documentation, such as a restoration of rights or pardon, which may not have been available to NICS during the initial check.

The NICS Section is required to process firearm-related challenges from all states and territories, if requested, including those submitted by persons denied by full- or partial-POC states.

Individuals may request the reason for the denial and/or challenge the reason for the denial from the agency that conducted the NICS check or the FBI. Individuals denied directly by a full- or partial-POC states are encouraged to contact the POC that denied the transaction prior to contacting the FBI. The firearm-related challenge process offers individuals the opportunity to submit a request and receive results electronically or via U.S. Postal Service-First Class Mail®.

Individuals wishing to inquire about the reason for, or to challenge, their NICS denial electronically are directed to edo.cjis.gov or fbi.gov/nics-appeals. Electronic requests are preferred; however, faxed and emailed requests are accepted if received. In addition, individuals who wish to submit a challenge request via mail may send the request to: NICS Challenges, Criminal Justice Information Services Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1000 Custer Hollow Road, Clarksburg, WV 26306.

In 2024, the FBI received 19,116 NICS-related challenges and, of those, 10,652 (55.7 percent) were sustained. Of the remaining challenges, 5,463 (28.6 percent) were overturned and 3,001 (15.7 percent) remained unresolved. The primary reason for overturning denied transactions in 2024 was due to fingerprint comparison establishing the denied individual was not the person with the prohibiting information (e.g., misidentification because of common names or stolen identity). The aforementioned average of 28.6 percent denial overturns occurring in 2024 is consistent with the previous 5 years average of 28.4 percent.

Voluntary Appeal File (VAF)

NICS is required to purge all identifying information of the background's subject within 24 hours of notifying the FFL that the transaction can proceed. In many cases, specifically with overturned denials involving a denial based on a descriptive match to a non-matching fingerprint or when a criminal history cannot be updated/corrected, an individual can be denied or experience an extended delay (again) due to remaining a biographical match to prohibiting or potentially prohibiting record/information. To combat this and unnecessary delays from occurring in future transactions, the NICS Section implemented the VAF in July 2004. It is not a prerequisite to have completed a NICS check to apply for entry into the VAF. For example, individuals having been subject to identity theft may wish to apply before even attempting a firearm transfer.

Applicants approved for entry into the VAF receive a UPIN. The individual must then provide the UPIN to an FFL through entry on the ATF Form 4473 during subsequent NICS background checks to give NICS access to the individual's VAF information. On December 31, 2024, there were 60,745 active UPINs allowing individuals to exercise their Second Amendment right and receive a firearm in a timely manner.

If an individual is determined to no longer be eligible to possess or receive a firearm, the NICS Section deactivates the UPIN. Individuals wishing to request entry into the VAF may access edo.cjis.gov or fbi.gov/nics-appeals for additional information.

NICS Denial Notification Act (NDNA)

The NDNA, codified in 2022 at 18 U.S.C. § 925B, requires the U.S. Attorney General to report NICS denials under 18 U.S.C. 922(t) to appropriate local law enforcement authorities (e.g., state, local, or tribal law enforcement authorities). Reports must be sent based on the potential firearm transferee's residence and, if different, the local law enforcement authorities of the state or tribe where the attempted firearm transfer occurred.

An NDNA denial report is sent in near real time and includes the date and time of the denial, the reason for the denial, the location of the FFL, and the identity of the person. If at any time the original denial is overturned and proceeded, an updated report is sent to all authorities receiving the original report.

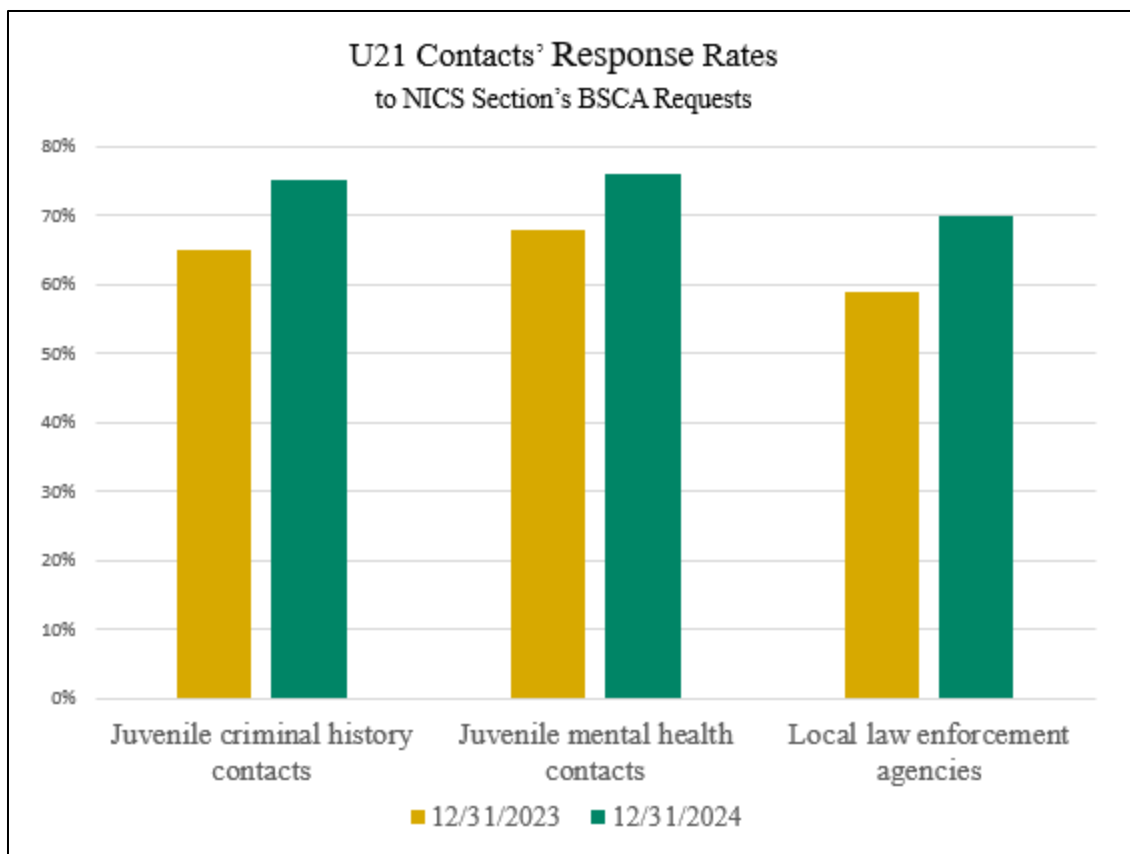
In 2024, NICS considered approximately 18,000 agencies when identifying agencies to receive NDNA denial reports. Multiple law enforcement agencies may have jurisdiction and qualify to receive NDNA reports. In 2024, the NICS Section sent 518,828 NDNA denial reports to agencies of jurisdiction—an average of approximately 5 NDNA denial reports per denial.

Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA)

As noted, BSCA impacted NICS by requiring an enhanced background check process for persons under the age of 21 (U21) seeking to receive firearms from FFLs. This enhanced check seeks potentially disqualifying juvenile criminal and mental health records, as described under 18 U.S.C. § 922(d), that state or local agencies may have but that might not already be available to NICS. On December 12, 2025, DOJ published a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in the *Federal Register* (RIN 1110-AA36) related to U21 transactions (as well as the NDNA). See 89 *Federal Register* 100404.

In 2024, the NICS Section processed 161,634 U21 transactions. Of those, a total of 153,328 transactions (95 percent) were proceeded, and 1,497 (less than 1 percent) were denied. On December 31, 2024, 6,809 (4 percent) remained in a delayed/unresolved status. Out of the 1,497 denied U21 transactions, 453 would likely not have been denied without the enhanced outreach because the disqualifying information had not been made available to NICS.

In 2024, the NICS Section and entities within the CJIS Division's Law Enforcement Engagement Unit continued their U21 outreach, often customizing the education for the specific needs of the contact agency. Because of these efforts, response rates to U21 requests continued to improve. As shown in the bar graph below, response rates increased by as much as 17 percent, with most agencies responding over 70 percent of the time. These responses, in turn, assist NICS to make timely and accurate firearms eligibility determinations.



In 2024, the CJIS Division was actively working with DOJ regarding other BSCA provisions, such as working to promulgate separate rulemakings. The NICS Section engaged with the CJIS Division's NCIC Operations and Policy Unit regarding FFLs using a familiar tool, the NICS E-Check, to access to the NCIC Gun File to see if a firearm the FFL sought to purchase had been reported stolen.

Disposition of Firearms (DOF)

NICS is accessible to law enforcement/criminal justice agencies prior to disposing of firearms currently under the agency's control to a prospective transferee. A search of NICS assists the agencies in determining an individual's eligibility to ship, transport, possess, and/or receive firearms in accordance with federal and state law. As of December 31, 2024, state law enforcement/criminal justice agencies within 47 states, the District of Columbia, and Northern Mariana Islands had access to NICS for DOF purposes. NICS access for DOF was also available to all ATF and FBI field offices, 6 FBI resident agency offices, 5 major military branches, 10 other federal agencies, and 29 tribal agencies. Of the total NICS firearms checks previously reported for 2024, 156,128 were for DOF purposes. Although agencies are not required to report DOF denials to the NICS Section, 7,142 DOF denials were reported during 2024, equating to at least a 4.5 percent denial rate. DOF volume has increased by 85 percent over the past 5 years.

Bioterrorism Risk Assessment Group (BRAG)

The NICS Section is also home to BRAG. BRAG became operational in April 2003 as a direct result of the 2001 anthrax attacks that killed 5 people and infected 17 others. BRAG conducts security risk assessments (SRAs) on individuals or entities who possess, use, or transfer biological select agents and toxins, and analyzes data to determine if an applicant (scientists, academics, medical researchers) meet the categories established by Congress of persons restricted from accessing select biological agents and toxins. While certain agents and toxins are beneficial in the research of communicable diseases, health standards and commercial restrictions, access must be safeguarded to prevent weaponizing the materials. Example of restricted agents and toxins: anthrax, ricin, Ebola, SARS, botulinum neurotoxin, etc. BRAG receives assessment requests from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and considers nine federal prohibitors and three discretionary prohibitors when determining an individual's eligibility to access select agents and toxins. Upon completion of each SRA, BRAG provides the CDC or USDA with a recommendation to restrict or not restrict the individual's access to select agents and toxins. BRAG continues to monitor active, unrestricted SRA subjects for three years to identify if any restricted activities occur.

BRAG serves as a resource for weapons of mass destruction coordinators in FBI field offices since it houses information on approximately 11,000 individuals who possess, use, or transfer biological select agents and toxins. In November 2024, the NICS Section collaborated with FBI Weapons of Mass Destruction Directorate in a working group regarding the capabilities of the two groups and identified ways to share respective resources and collaborate on future projects.

In 2024, BRAG completed 4,415 SRAs—4,404 (99.8 percent) of the assessments identified the individual was not restricted from access to select agents and toxins, while 19 (0.4 percent) resulted in a recommendation to restrict the individual's access. Note: some SRAs may receive multiple, differing recommendations due to a change in the individual's status during continued monitoring periods.

NICS Supports ATF with National Firearm Act (NFA) Checks

Certain types of firearms are subjected to a NICS check under NFA. ATF initiates the NICS NFA check and the NICS Section processes the check by applying federal and state firearm prohibitors. The NICS Section then provides ATF with a recommended eligibility determination.

NFA checks received by the NICS Section have increased by 140 percent over the last 5 years. In 2024, the NICS Section received a record-breaking 1,084,183 NFA checks from ATF.

In 2024, 77 percent of NFA NICS checks were not a descriptive match to potentially prohibiting information and ATF automatically received a “proceed” recommendation from NICS within seconds of the NICS check being initiated. The remaining 23 percent of NFA checks required review by NICS Section staff. While the NICS Section strives to process all work in a timely manner, it must prioritize work based on considerations such as whether the delay poses a risk to public safety. NICS checks initiated by FFLs have the potential for firearms to be released

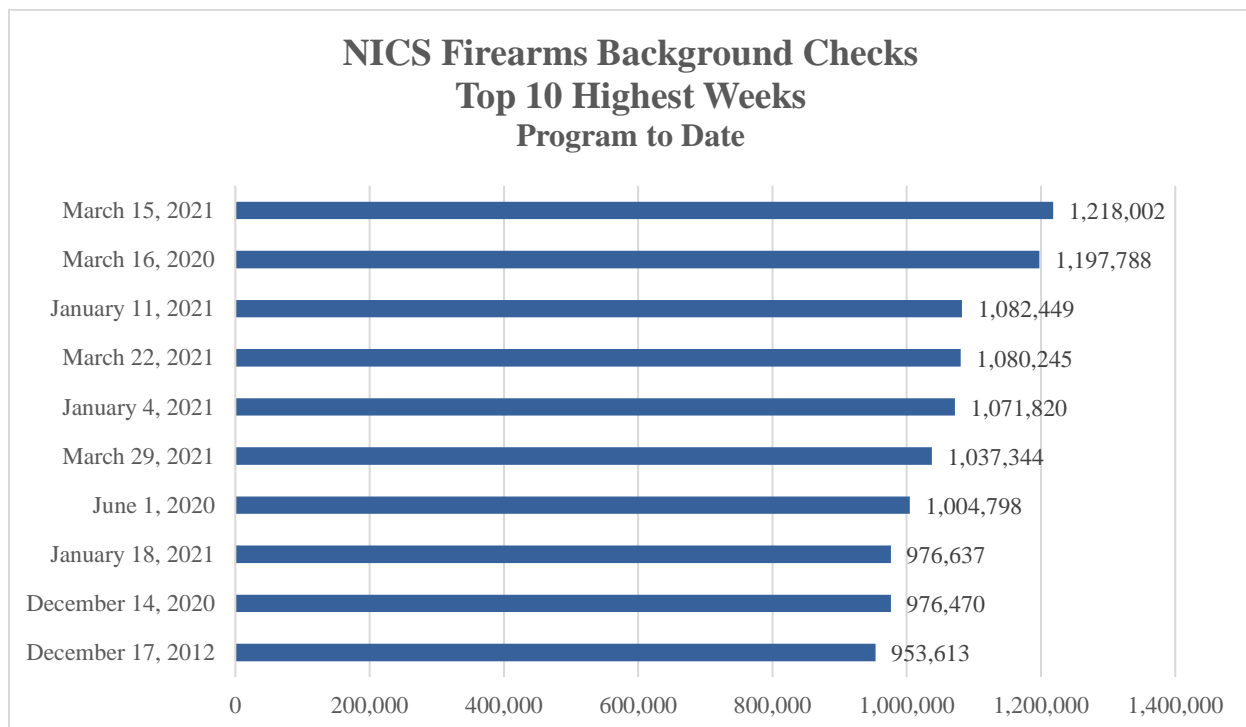
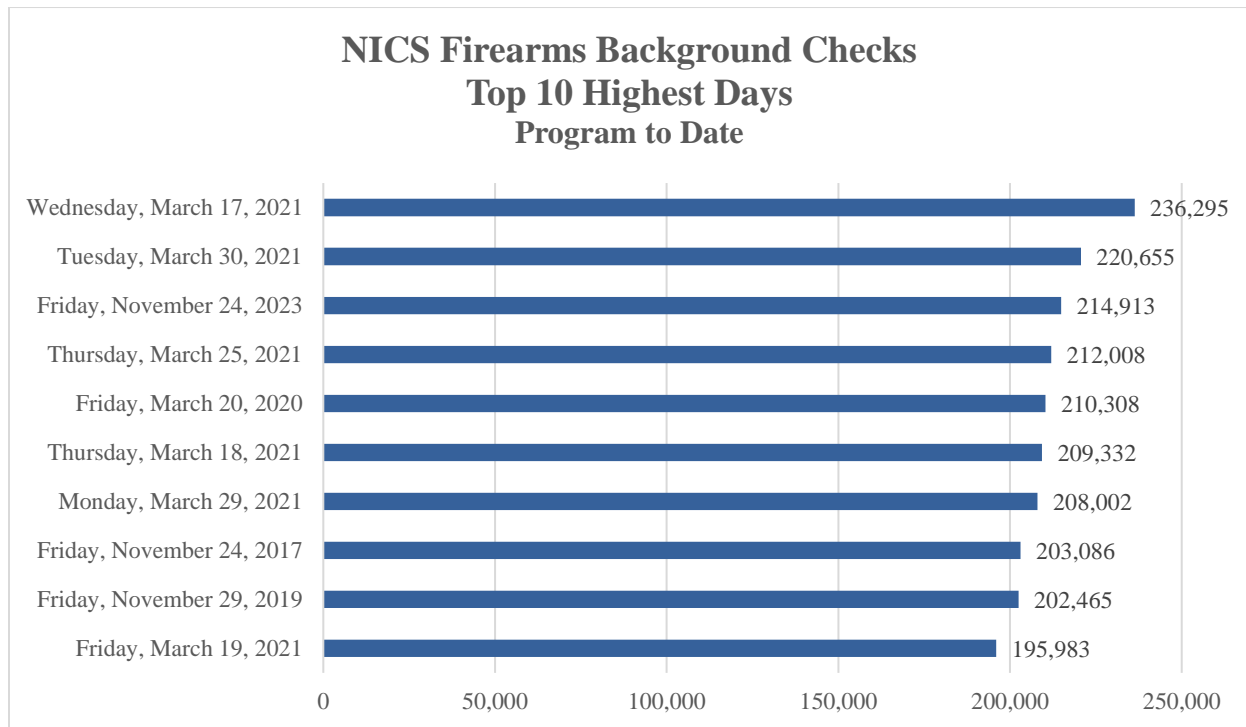
without the NICS Section's approval when the NICS Section's eligibility determinations are not completed within applicable waiting periods; therefore, FFL checks are given priority over NFA checks. Due to this processing method, combined with a large increase in NFA checks being initiated, the NICS Section has at times experienced backlogs with NFA checks. In June 2024, the NICS Section introduced system changes and dedicated additional staff to process NFA checks resulting in a significant decrease in the time taken to provide ATF with a recommended status for NFA checks requiring additional review/research. During the 5 months prior to the NICS Section's campaign to reduce their NFA backlog, it took an average of 110 days for the NICS Section to complete their review/research and provide ATF with a recommended status—by the end of December, the average time was reduced to 48 days.

In January 2024, the NICS Section's challenge process became available to NFA applicants receiving denial recommendations made by the NICS Section. In calendar year 2024, the NICS Section processed 126 NFA-related challenges. The NICS Section's VAF process is also available to NFA applicants.

NICS Peak Time

The NICS Section observes an increase in transaction activity associated with major hunting seasons, year-end holidays, and tax-refund season. Historically, the day after Thanksgiving (Black Friday) repeatedly ranked among NICS highest volume days; however, there was a deviation from this trend during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown on the following chart, NICS experienced most of its highest volume days in March 2021. March 17, 2021, was the single highest volume day to date when NICS processed 236,295 NICS background checks. During 2024, NICS experienced a return to a relatively pre-pandemic cycle of seasonal transaction activity. The highest-volume day for NICS in 2024 was Black Friday, November 29, 2024, when 169,906 transactions were initiated.

NICS Firearm Background Checks Top Ten Days and Weeks



NICS Partner Interaction and Education

NICS outreach and education with the NICS Section’s partners—including FFLs and federal, state, local, tribal agencies—is key to the success of NICS and a top priority of the NICS Section. Subject matter experts are available to support and educate NICS users and NICS contributors through training events, meetings, telephone conversations, written correspondences, information articles in law enforcement publications, and customized resource documents. NICS training included a combination of in-person and virtual sessions to accommodate the needs and schedules of NICS partners, while considering budget parameters. The following are some examples of the outreach and education conducted in 2024.

NICS Section staff participated in over two dozen court and law enforcement conferences such as the Alabama Circuit Clerk Association Conference and the South Dakota Sheriffs’ Association and Police Chiefs’ Joint Conference. To support and educate the public and the FFL community, NICS Section staff hosted or participated in conferences at 34 venues such as the Shooting, Hunting, and Outdoor Trade Show, the National Rifle Association Annual Meeting, and the National Shooting Sports Foundation Range Retailer Days. Support and education were also provided to federal and military agencies such as visiting the Department of Homeland Security’s Law Enforcement Support Center where NICS staff presented to 121 attendees regarding NICS processes for non-U.S. citizens. The CJIS Division training instructors also assisted NICS staff by providing 40 training sessions to approximately 2,600 attendees in over 700 agencies across the nation.

The NICS Section provided a wide array of outreach efforts to support the state POC agencies in 2024, including presenting at the *Oregon State Police CJIS Conference*. The NICS Section also hosted the 2024 NICS User Conference in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, from May 21-23, 2024, with an attendance of 167. The NICS User Conference is the focal point of the NICS Section’s partner interaction and provides the only in-person forum for POC states, alternate permit states, federal agencies, tribal entities, and special interest groups to share information and operational expertise, discuss lessons learned for the mutual benefit of all, and to bring problematic issues to the forefront for resolution.

Along with participation at the numerous training events, the NICS Section provided customized written education in 2024. For example, staff authored two NICS-specific articles published in the *Police Chiefs* and *Sheriff & Deputy* magazines. Another example is a resource document specific to educating law enforcement on NICS topics that was created and shared with representatives from national law enforcement associations, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the National Sheriffs’ Association, and the FBI’s Office of Partner Engagement, to share with their stakeholders, including federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement. A document titled “Understanding NICS Processes” was also created at the request of a representative from the Office of Congressional Affairs to educate congressional staffers on NICS items.

System Enhancements

Information technology enhancements to NICS are continuously occurring to further advance system functionality. The following is an example of how the staff at the NICS Section continually strive to provide timely and accurate determinations of an individual's firearms and/or explosives eligibility in accordance with federal and state law.

When the information available to NICS during a background check is incomplete and additional information is needed to establish or eliminate a potential firearm prohibition, outreach to external agencies is often required. Historically, NICS conducted that outreach via fax, e-mail, and mail. Over the last couple of years, the NICS Section has taken further steps toward encrypting communications between the FBI and outside entities to secure personal information and, at the same time, make it easier for agencies to respond to NICS requests. In January 2023, the NICS Section created a new option for sending (and responding to) these requests—the digital R-84 form. This new feature sends participating agencies an e-mail with a direct link to a request from the NICS Section, and a Personal Identification Number (PIN) is provided. Both the link and PIN are unique to the specific information being requested. The agency utilizes this method to access a secure area of NICS containing the requested information. They are then able to provide the necessary information directly within the system. This method allows for several efficiencies, both to the NICS Section, and federal, state, local, and tribal agencies contacted for information. A national rollout of the Digital R-84 occurred in 2023, with participation increasing in 2024 making the digital R-84 a standard method of contact for requesting and receiving missing information. To better assist agencies with managing, tracking, and responding to Digital R-84 and “link and PIN” requests, the NICS Section developed an inclusive response portal—the NICS Information Exchange Portal (IEP). The NICS IEP allows the participating agencies to review active requests, provide the applicable responses, and revisit any completed requests, all within a secure area of the NICS application.

Use of the Digital R-84 and the NICS IEP improves efficiencies for the NICS Section and participating agencies, allowing for the needed information to be received and applied faster, and ultimately improving the service NICS provides to individuals exercising their Second Amendment rights.

Appendix A: Acronyms

ATF	Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives
Brady Act	Brady Handgun Violence Prevention Act of 1993
BSCA	Bipartisan Safer Communities Act of 2022
BTD	Brady Transfer Date
C.F.R.	Code of Federal Regulations
CJIS	Criminal Justice Information Services
CSR	Customer Service Representative
DOF	Disposition of Firearms
DOJ	Department of Justice
FFL	Federal Firearms Licensee
IDR	Immediate Determination Rate
IEP	Information Exchange Portal
III	Interstate Identification Index
MCDV	Misdemeanor Crime of Domestic Violence
NCCC	NICS Contracted Call Center
NCIC	National Crime Information Center
NDNA	NICS Denial Notification Act
NICS	National Instant Criminal Background Check System
NTN	NICS Transaction Number
PIN	Personal Identification Number
POC	Point of Contact
U21	Under the Age of 21
UPIN	Unique Personal Identification Number
U.S.C.	United States Code
VAF	Voluntary Appeal File