



February 2024

# TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS

## DHS Has Enrollment Processes, but CBP Should Provide Additional Information on Reconsiderations

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-24-106314](#), a report to congressional committees

## Why GAO Did This Study

The summer of 2023 marked one of the busiest travel seasons on record. According to Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) data, each day approximately 2.5 million passengers boarded a commercial flight, and approximately 1.1 million travelers entered the U.S. through a port of entry during that period.

Congress included a provision in statute for GAO to review the DHS trusted traveler programs and reconsideration process. This report addresses (1) DHS's trusted traveler programs and enrollments and (2) the extent to which DHS provides reconsideration for travelers it denied or revoked from its programs.

GAO analyzed relevant regulations, policies, and program data from fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of 2023; interviewed headquarters and field officials involved in the trusted traveler programs; and conducted in-person and virtual site visits to CBP enrollment centers that processed the highest volume of program applications in fiscal year 2022. While not generalizable, these visits provided program insights.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the CBP Commissioner include written instructions in trusted traveler program denial and revocation decision letters on how travelers can seek additional information regarding the specific reason(s) for the decision. DHS concurred and identified steps to implement the recommendation.

View [GAO-24-106314](#). For more information, contact Tina Won Sherman at (202) 512-8461 or [shermant@gao.gov](mailto:shermant@gao.gov).

February 2024

## TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS

### DHS Has Enrollment Processes, but CBP Should Provide Additional Information on Reconsiderations

## What GAO Found

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) operate five distinct trusted traveler programs—(1) TSA PreCheck® and CBP's (2) Global Entry, (3) NEXUS, (4) Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), and (5) Free and Secure Trade (FAST). These programs allow for expedited screening or inspection of preapproved, low-risk travelers at certain domestic and international airports and at select land and sea ports of entry. TSA and CBP have enrolled millions of travelers to these programs through a multi-step process that generally includes an online application, traveler vetting, and an enrollment eligibility decision. In fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, TSA enrolled or renewed TSA PreCheck® memberships for over 99 percent of applications, and CBP enrolled or renewed membership for over 97 percent of applications across its four programs.

### NEXUS Lane at the U.S. Port of Entry in Blaine, Washington



Source: GAO. | GAO-24-106314

TSA and CBP have reconsideration processes for travelers denied or revoked from a trusted traveler program. TSA informs travelers of its decision in a letter that includes steps for pursuing reconsideration—known as a “correction of record”—if travelers believe TSA based its decision on incorrect or incomplete information. CBP also informs travelers of its decision via a letter that includes steps for pursuing reconsideration. The CBP Ombudsman has sole discretion to sustain or overturn denial or revocation decisions, based on the totality of circumstances and any new information that the traveler has provided.

While CBP notifies travelers of denial and revocation decisions through letters posted to its online portal, it does not include instructions—required by regulation—for seeking additional information on the reason for its denial decision. According to CBP officials, the agency changed the format of its letters in 2018 when it updated its online portal and inadvertently removed these instructions. By providing these instructions, CBP could improve travelers' understanding of the specific reason for the decision, as appropriate, and could better ensure that travelers are able to directly address the reason for their denial or revocation when pursuing reconsideration.

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## Abbreviations

CBP	U.S. Customs and Border Protection
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
FAST	Free and Secure Trade
SENTRI	Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection
TSA	Transportation Security Administration

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February 28, 2024

The Honorable Gary C. Peters  
Chairman  
The Honorable Rand Paul, M.D.  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate

The Honorable Mark E. Green, M.D.  
Chairman  
The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security  
House of Representatives

The summer of 2023 marked one of the busiest travel seasons on record. According to data from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), each day approximately 2.5 million passengers boarded a commercial flight, and approximately 1.1 million travelers entered the U.S. through a port of entry during that period. Given the demand among the traveling public, the U.S. transportation system—which includes airports and sea and land ports of entry— remains critical to facilitating lawful travel and trade.<sup>1</sup>

Within DHS, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) oversee domestic and international travel and trade and work to balance efficiency and security at airport security checkpoints and ports of entry. TSA is the federal agency with primary responsibility for securing the nation’s civil aviation system, which includes the screening of all commercial air passengers and property. In fiscal year 2022, TSA screened nearly 715 million passengers at security checkpoints at nearly 440 airports across the U.S. CBP is the lead federal agency charged with a dual mission of keeping terrorists and their weapons, criminals and their contraband, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ports of entry are facilities that provide for the controlled entry into or departure from the U.S. Specifically, a port of entry is any officially designated location (seaport, airport, or land border location) where U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers clear passengers, merchandise, and other items; collect duties; enforce customs and other U.S. laws; and inspect persons seeking to enter or applying for admission into, or departing from, the U.S. pursuant to U.S. immigration and travel controls.

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inadmissible noncitizens out of the country while also facilitating the flow of legitimate travel and trade at the nation's borders. In fiscal year 2022, CBP processed approximately 295 million arrivals to the U.S. across 328 ports of entry.<sup>2</sup>

To help facilitate the flow of legitimate travel and trade, TSA and CBP operate five distinct trusted traveler programs. TSA operates a single program, the TSA PreCheck® Application Program, and CBP operates four trusted traveler programs—Global Entry, NEXUS, Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), and Free and Secure Trade (FAST).<sup>3</sup> These programs are designed to expedite screening or facilitate the inspection of preapproved, low-risk travelers through dedicated lanes and kiosks at select airports and ports of entry.<sup>4</sup>

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022 includes a provision for us to review DHS trusted traveler programs and how DHS provides reconsideration for travelers it denied membership or whose membership it revoked from its trusted traveler programs.<sup>5</sup> This report addresses (1) how DHS enrolls travelers within its trusted traveler programs and the results of these efforts and (2) the extent to which DHS provides reconsideration for travelers it denied or revoked membership from its trusted traveler programs.

To address our first objective, we reviewed TSA PreCheck® documents, including TSA's *Security Threat Assessment Division Adjudication Manual*, which establishes policies and procedures related to enrollment, initial applicant vetting, recurrent member vetting, denials, and revocations.<sup>6</sup> We also obtained and analyzed TSA PreCheck® program data on enrollments, denials, and revocations in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023.<sup>7</sup> To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed relevant documentation and interviewed program

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<sup>2</sup>The number of arrivals does not include travelers processed at seaports of entry.

<sup>3</sup>We refer to the TSA PreCheck® Application Program as TSA PreCheck® for reporting purposes. NEXUS is the program name and not an acronym.

<sup>4</sup>49 U.S.C. §§ 114 note, 44919 (PreCheck Program); 8 C.F.R. §§ 235.1(b)(4) (trusted traveler programs), 235.12 (Global Entry program); see also 6 U.S.C. § 218(g) (trusted traveler program defined). FAST also expedites the inspection of cargo being transported by members of the FAST program.

<sup>5</sup>Pub. L. No. 117-81, div. F, title LXIV, subtitle B, § 6416, 135 Stat. 1541, 2415 (2021).

<sup>6</sup>Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Security Administration, *Security Threat Assessment Division Adjudication Manual*, (Washington, D.C., Sept. 2022).

<sup>7</sup>We included quarter two of fiscal year 2023 to report on the most recent data available.



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officials and determined the data were sufficiently reliable to report on the results of TSA PreCheck® enrollments over these years. To better understand the TSA PreCheck® enrollment process, we met with TSA headquarters officials to discuss the online TSA PreCheck® pre-enrollment application and renewal, and in-person enrollment processes. We also met with five TSA adjudicators responsible for initial and recurrent vetting, denials, and revocations. During these meetings, we discussed how TSA vets travelers against program eligibility criteria during initial and recurrent vetting. We also discussed TSA's policies and procedures related to denials and revocations, including the level of detail TSA provides and the underlying reason for denial and revocation decisions. Lastly, we observed how TSA adjudicators use vetting sources to determine and document travelers' eligibility to participate in TSA PreCheck®.

Similarly, for CBP's programs we reviewed program documents, including the *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook*.<sup>8</sup> CBP's handbook establishes program policies, procedures, and guidelines governing enrollment, initial applicant vetting, recurrent member vetting, denials, and revocations for Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST. We also obtained and analyzed CBP trusted traveler program data on enrollments, denials, and revocations in fiscal years 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023. To assess the reliability of these data, we reviewed relevant documentation, conducted electronic testing of the data, and interviewed program officials. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable to report the results of CBP trusted traveler program enrollments over these years.

We also interviewed CBP program officials at headquarters and field officials at selected enrollment centers.<sup>9</sup> During our interviews with CBP headquarters officials and officers at the National Targeting Center, we discussed program enrollment as well as initial and recurrent vetting.<sup>10</sup> We also observed how CBP officers use vetting sources to determine and

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<sup>8</sup>Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook* (Washington, D.C., Sept. 2022).

<sup>9</sup>We did not visit a TSA PreCheck® enrollment center since these locations are managed by contractors that do not vet applicants or make enrollment decisions.

<sup>10</sup>The National Targeting Center provides advance information and research about high-risk travelers and cargo. According to CBP, the Passenger Division of the National Targeting Center is responsible for vetting travelers who are applying to or are members of CBP's trusted traveler programs.

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document travelers' eligibility to participate in a CBP trusted traveler program. To select enrollment centers for interviews, we identified the centers that processed the most applications in fiscal year 2022, by program. Based on these criteria, we selected enrollment centers at the ports of entry in Blaine, Washington; Detroit, Michigan; and Otay Mesa, California. Lastly, we selected Dulles International Airport, Virginia, due to its proximity to CBP's National Targeting Center. At these enrollment centers, we interviewed CBP officers responsible for conducting CBP trusted traveler program enrollment interviews. We also met with CBP supervisors responsible for overseeing denial and revocation decisions at the enrollment centers and for discussing the reason for denial or revocation with travelers, as needed. While information from our interviews with these officials cannot be generalized to all ports of entry, the visits and meetings provided us with insights into the operation of the trusted traveler programs.

To address our second objective, we reviewed program documents and interviewed TSA PreCheck® officials about the extent to which TSA provides reconsideration for travelers it initially denied or whose membership it revoked from the program. Specifically, we reviewed TSA PreCheck® documents outlining its reconsideration process—known as a “correction of record.” These documents included TSA's *Security Threat Assessment Division Adjudication Manual*, which establishes policies and procedures related to reconsideration requests.

We also reviewed TSA PreCheck® standard operating procedures and preliminary determination of ineligibility letters, which provide travelers with instructions on obtaining additional information on the reason for denial or revocation and on pursuing reconsideration. During our document review, we assessed the extent to which the process for reconsideration was consistent with TSA PreCheck® guidance and *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*.<sup>11</sup> We also assessed the reliability of TSA PreCheck® reconsideration data by reviewing relevant documentation and interviewing program officials. After determining that the data were sufficiently reliable, we analyzed reconsideration data for fiscal years 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023. Lastly, to discuss TSA PreCheck® roles and responsibilities related to reconsideration, we interviewed TSA headquarters officials and adjudicators. During these meetings, we discussed TSA PreCheck® policies and procedures related to reconsideration and interviewed adjudicators about their roles and

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<sup>11</sup>GAO, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, [GAO-14-704G](#), (Washington, D.C.: Sept. 10, 2014).

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responsibilities related to approving and denying reconsideration requests.

Similarly, we reviewed relevant CBP documents. These documents included CBP's *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook*, which establishes policies, procedures, and guidelines governing the reconsideration process. We also reviewed denial and revocation letters, which provide steps for requesting reconsideration. During our document review, we assessed the extent to which the process for reconsideration was consistent with the *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook, Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government*, and federal regulations. In addition, we assessed the reliability of CBP reconsideration data by reviewing relevant documentation and interviewing program officials. After determining that CBP data on reconsideration were sufficiently reliable for reporting reconsideration results, we analyzed data on reconsideration request outcomes in fiscal years 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023. Lastly, we met with officials from the CBP Ombudsman office who oversee and review reconsideration requests. During these interviews, we discussed CBP's reconsideration process as well as roles and responsibilities.

We conducted this performance audit from October 2022 to February 2024 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

### DHS's Trusted Traveler Programs

TSA and CBP operate five distinct trusted traveler programs that allow for expedited screening of preapproved, low security risk U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or U.S. lawful permanent residents; certain other noncitizens; and cargo at specific domestic and international airports and at other

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select ports of entry.<sup>12</sup> DHS's trusted traveler programs enable TSA and CBP to expend fewer resources on screening and inspecting low-risk travelers. The security benefits of trusted traveler programs are designed to increase with scale since moving more travelers into expedited lanes leaves fewer travelers of unknown risk levels. This in turn helps DHS allocate its resources to focus on travelers of unknown or potentially higher risk to better detect threats to national security.<sup>13</sup>

## TSA PreCheck®

In fiscal year 2022, TSA screened nearly 180 million travelers through its trusted traveler program—known as TSA PreCheck®—at approximately 200 airports nationwide.<sup>14</sup> TSA PreCheck® provides dedicated airport security screening lanes for its members. In general, TSA PreCheck® members are not required to remove certain articles of clothing, including shoes, belts, and light jackets. Further, TSA PreCheck® members are not required to remove laptops and liquids from their carry-on baggage, saving time and the need to remove items at the airport security checkpoint.<sup>15</sup> According to TSA, travelers using a TSA PreCheck® lane typically wait less than 10 minutes to complete airport security checkpoint screening. Figure 1 depicts travelers queuing at a TSA airport security checkpoint in December 2023.

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<sup>12</sup>DHS trusted traveler program benefits may not be available to travelers at all U.S. airports or ports of entry. For example, TSA PreCheck® is available at approximately 200 of the nearly 440 federalized airports in the U.S. as of January 2024. Similarly, CBP does not offer trusted traveler program benefits at all 328 U.S. ports of entry. Dedicated trusted traveler lanes or kiosks exist at 26 land ports of entry and 61 airports in the U.S. A U.S. citizen is an individual who (1) is a citizen of the U.S. at birth; (2) automatically acquired, or obtained a certificate of, citizenship as a child; or (3) became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. as an adult. All U.S. citizens are, by definition, U.S. nationals. A U.S. noncitizen national is a person who, though not a citizen of the U.S., owes permanent allegiance to the U.S. by virtue of their U.S. nationality (for example, persons born to noncitizen parents in American Samoa or Swains Island). A U.S. lawful permanent resident is a foreign national who has obtained a Green Card permitting them to lawfully reside and work within the U.S. on a permanent basis.

<sup>13</sup>Congressional Research Service, *Trusted Traveler Programs*, R46783 (Washington, D.C.: May 5, 2021).

<sup>14</sup>The number of TSA airport security checkpoint screenings may include multiple trips by the same traveler. As of December 2023, TSA PreCheck® is available at over 200 airports and over 90 airlines.

<sup>15</sup>TSA allows passengers to bring a quart-sized bag of liquids, aerosols, gels, creams, and pastes through the airport security checkpoint. These containers are limited to 3.4 ounces or less per item.

**Figure 1: Travelers Queue at a Transportation Security Administration Airport Security Checkpoint at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport in December 2023**



Source: GAO. | GAO-24-106314

CBP Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST

In fiscal year 2022, CBP processed over 44 million entries into the U.S. via its four trusted traveler programs: Global Entry, NEXUS, SENTRI, and FAST. CBP’s trusted traveler programs are intended to expedite customs and immigration processing for preapproved, low-risk travelers—including U.S. citizens and foreign nationals—and cargo through dedicated lanes and kiosks at air, land, and sea ports of entry.

Global Entry offers aviation travelers expedited processing, primarily when returning from international travel at certain U.S. airports. In addition to reduced wait times at customs and immigration, Global Entry members are also eligible to receive TSA PreCheck® benefits when traveling through TSA checkpoints. SENTRI offers expedited processing to travelers at the southern U.S. land border with Mexico, while NEXUS primarily offers expedited processing to travelers at the northern U.S. land border with Canada.<sup>16</sup> For both programs, travelers use dedicated lanes and may experience reduced wait times for entry into the U.S. Enrollment

<sup>16</sup>Certain members of NEXUS and SENTRI are eligible to received TSA PreCheck® benefits when traveling via U.S. airports based on their citizenship. This includes U.S. citizens enrolled in both NEXUS and SENTRI and Canadian citizens enrolled in NEXUS.

in one of these programs may confer benefits of another program, in certain instances.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to the three programs above, CBP also operates a trusted traveler program for commercial truck drivers and their conveyances, known as FAST. FAST allows commercial truckers expedited processing at certain commercial ports of entry at both the northern (FAST North) and southern (FAST South) borders. For a list of ports of entry with dedicated trusted traveler lanes or kiosks, see appendix I. Table 1 provides basic information on each of CBP's trusted traveler programs.

**Table 1: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Trusted Traveler Programs**

Trusted traveler program	Primary environment	Available locations <sup>a</sup>	Year begun	Eligible countries and citizenship
Global Entry	Air ports of entry <sup>b</sup>	61 international airports located in the U.S. and 14 airports located in foreign countries <sup>c</sup>	2012 <sup>d</sup>	Citizens, nationals, or lawful permanent residents of the U.S., citizens of Argentina, Brazil, Bahrain, Germany, India, Colombia, the Netherlands, Singapore, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, Panama, or the United Kingdom, and Mexican nationals <sup>e</sup>
Free and Secure Trade (FAST)	Land ports of entry (commercial border crossings)	11 southern ports of entry and 7 northern ports of entry	2002	Citizens or lawful permanent residents of the U.S., Canada, or Mexico
NEXUS	Land, air, and sea ports of entry	12 northern ports of entry and 8 Canadian airports <sup>f</sup>	2002	Citizens or lawful permanent residents of the U.S. or Canada
Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI)	Land ports of entry	12 southern ports of entry <sup>g</sup>	1995	Any

Source: GAO analysis of CBP data. | GAO-24-106314

<sup>a</sup>A single land port of entry may consist of one or more crossings. For example, at the Port of Laredo, Texas, CBP oversees operations at four separate land border crossings. CBP operates a total of 110

<sup>17</sup>Global Entry members can use NEXUS lanes when entering the U.S. by land or sea. In addition, Global Entry members can use SENTRI lanes when they are in a SENTRI registered vehicle and comply with all SENTRI requirements and can use SENTRI pedestrian lanes. SENTRI members can use NEXUS lanes when entering the U.S. from Canada by land or sea and Global Entry kiosks when entering the U.S. by air, except for Mexican nationals, who can only use Global Entry kiosks if they are members of Global Entry. NEXUS members can utilize Global Entry kiosks in U.S. airports (when entering the U.S.) and NEXUS kiosks at eight Canadian airports (when entering Canada) when traveling by air. If arriving by sea, NEXUS members can report their arrival to either the U.S. or Canada by calling a marine telephone reporting center. NEXUS members can also use SENTRI lanes when they are in a SENTRI registered vehicle and comply with all SENTRI requirements. In addition, NEXUS members can use SENTRI pedestrian lanes.

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land ports of entry along the northern and southern borders consisting of a total of 167 individual land border crossings. Some ports of entry process vehicles arriving by ferry.

<sup>b</sup>Global Entry members can use NEXUS lanes when entering the U.S. by land or sea. In addition, Global Entry members can use SENTRI lanes when they are in a SENTRI registered vehicle and comply with all SENTRI requirements and can use SENTRI pedestrian lanes.

<sup>c</sup>CBP processes inbound travelers through Global Entry lanes at 61 airports in the U.S. and pre-clears travelers at 14 airports located in foreign countries prior to departure to the U.S. These foreign airports are in the United Arab Emirates, Aruba, Bermuda, the Bahamas, Canada, and Ireland. When pre-cleared, travelers bypass CBP and TSA inspections upon U.S. arrival and proceed directly to their connecting flight or destination.

<sup>d</sup>Global Entry began as a pilot program in 2008 and became a permanent program in March 2012.

<sup>e</sup>Canadian citizens are eligible for Global Entry benefits through membership in the NEXUS program. A U.S. citizen is an individual who (1) is a citizen of the U.S. at birth; (2) automatically acquired, or obtained a certificate of, citizenship as a child; or (3) became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. as an adult. All U.S. citizens are, by definition, U.S. nationals. A U.S. noncitizen national is a person who, though not a citizen of the U.S., owes permanent allegiance to the U.S. by virtue of their U.S. nationality (for example, persons born to noncitizen parents in American Samoa or Swains Island). A U.S. lawful permanent resident is a foreign national who has obtained a Green Card permitting them to lawfully reside and work within the U.S. on a permanent basis.

<sup>f</sup>NEXUS members can utilize Global Entry kiosks in U.S. airports (when entering the U.S.) and NEXUS kiosks at 8 Canadian airports (when entering Canada) when traveling by air. If arriving by sea, NEXUS members can report their arrival to either the U.S. or Canada by calling a marine telephone reporting center. NEXUS members can also use a SENTRI lane when they are in a SENTRI registered vehicle and comply with all SENTRI requirements. In addition, NEXUS members can use SENTRI pedestrian lanes.

<sup>g</sup>SENTRI members can use NEXUS lanes when entering the U.S. from Canada by land or sea and Global Entry kiosks when entering the U.S. by air, except for Mexican nationals, who can only use Global Entry kiosks if they are members of Global Entry.

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## DHS Has Enrolled Millions of Travelers to Its Trusted Traveler Programs Through a Multi-Step Process

### TSA Has Enrolled Millions of Travelers to TSA PreCheck® through a Multi-Step Process

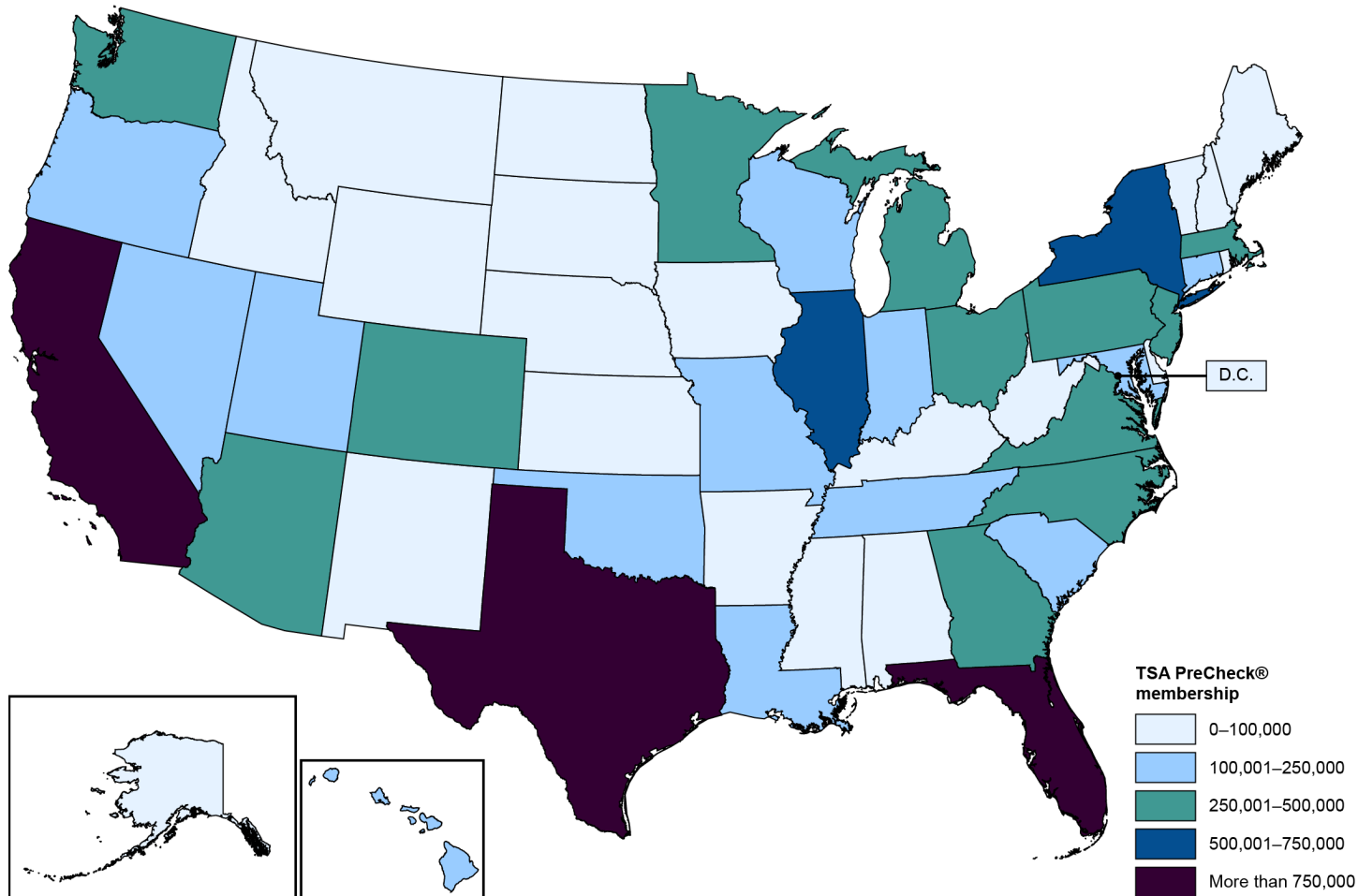
In March 2023, TSA PreCheck® membership surpassed 15 million, and approximately 29 percent of all travelers on U.S. domestic and outbound international flights received expedited airport security checkpoint screening in designated TSA PreCheck® lanes. Appendix II identifies category X airports by TSA PreCheck® screening volume in fiscal year 2022.<sup>18</sup> Figure 2 identifies the distribution of TSA PreCheck® members

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<sup>18</sup>TSA classifies the nation's commercial airports into one of five categories ('X', I, II, III, and IV) based on various factors, such as the number of take-offs and landings annually, the extent of passenger screening at the airport, and other security considerations. In general, category 'X' airports have the highest number of passenger enplanements.

across U.S. states in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 2: Distribution of Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Members across U.S. States in Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of TSA data; Map Resources (map). | GAO-24-106314



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To apply for TSA PreCheck®, travelers may complete an online application, in which they provide basic biographic information and schedule an in-person enrollment appointment with a TSA PreCheck® contractor.<sup>19</sup> During the in-person enrollment appointment, contractors verify travelers' identity and U.S. citizenship or lawful permanent resident status and collect a photograph, fingerprints, key documents (such as driver license and birth certificate or passport), and a fee. Using these data and documents, adjudicators within TSA's Security Threat Assessment Division determine travelers' eligibility for TSA PreCheck® membership by vetting them against set criteria, which involves criminal history, immigration status checks, as well as intelligence and regulatory violation records.<sup>20</sup>

These eligibility criteria establish that membership is available to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and U.S. lawful permanent residents. TSA's eligibility criteria further establish that travelers may be ineligible due to incomplete or false information in their TSA PreCheck® application, prior disqualifying criminal offenses, or violations of certain federal security regulations. Appendix III describes TSA PreCheck® eligibility criteria.

If adjudicators determine that travelers meet program eligibility criteria, TSA enrolls these travelers in TSA PreCheck® for a period of 5 years,

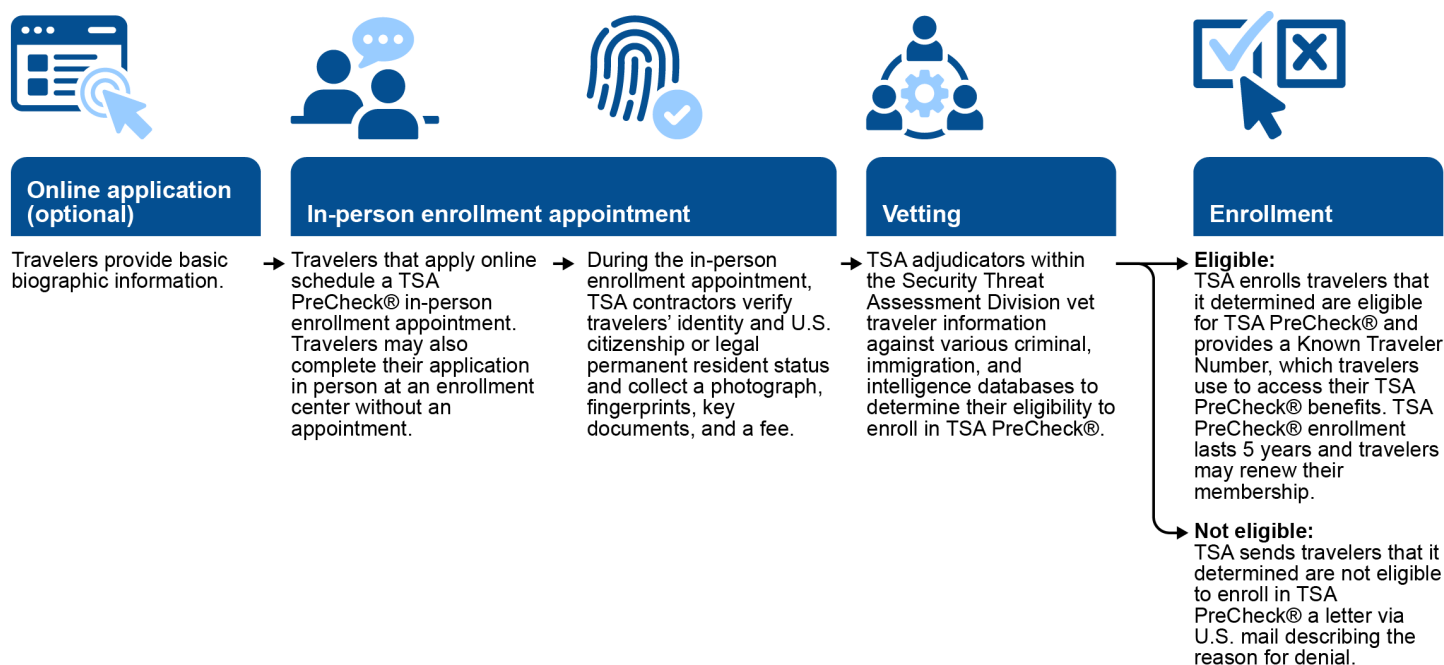
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<sup>19</sup>Travelers can access the online TSA PreCheck® application at <https://www.tsa.gov/precheck>. Travelers may also enroll in-person at an enrollment center without an appointment. According to TSA officials, the online application takes approximately 5 minutes to complete whereas the walk-in option at an enrollment center may take 10 minutes to complete. TSA PreCheck® contracts with two companies, IDEMIA and Telos, for enrollment services. IDEMIA charges a \$78 fee and offers in-person enrollment appointments at over 600 locations. Telos charges \$85 and offers in-person enrollment appointments at 26 locations as of January 2024.

<sup>20</sup>To determine whether travelers meet TSA PreCheck® eligibility criteria, TSA's Security Threat Assessment Division adjudicators use an automated system to vet traveler information against data contained in four federal criminal, immigration, and intelligence databases, as well as the terrorism watchlist and regulatory enforcement records. These databases include the Federal Bureau of Investigation's National Crime Information Center, which contains information on open warrants and other criminal records; the Transportation Vetting System, which contains intelligence-related information; and the Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlement system, which maintains data on citizenship and immigration. TSA also uses two fingerprint-based vetting systems, including Next-Generation Identification, which contains information on criminal records, and IDENT, which maintains data on criminal histories, immigration, and intelligence information. Lastly, adjudicators use the Federal Bureau of Investigation's RAP Back Service, which contains information on misdemeanor and felony arrests and prosecutions, for recurrent vetting. TSA's Intelligence & Analysis Office investigates matches to the terrorism watchlist and other intelligence databases. These investigations may result in a determination of ineligibility by STAD adjudicators.

during which members undergo recurrent vetting.<sup>21</sup> TSA may deny TSA PreCheck® membership for applicants that do not meet program eligibility criteria during initial vetting or revoke TSA PreCheck® membership if enrolled travelers fail to continue meeting eligibility requirements. Figure 3 describes TSA's process for enrolling travelers in TSA PreCheck®.

**Figure 3: Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Enrollment Process**



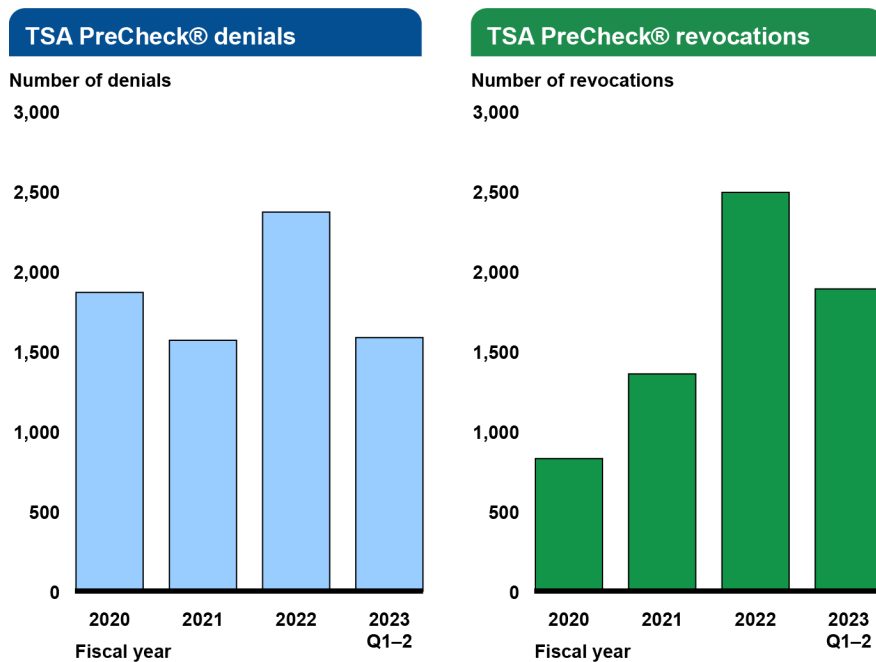
Source: GAO analysis of TSA data; Icons-Studio/stock.adobe.com (illustrations). | GAO-24-106314

In fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, approximately 12 million travelers applied for TSA PreCheck® membership, including applications for renewal. During this period, TSA enrolled or renewed TSA PreCheck® memberships for most travelers who applied (approximately 99.94 percent of decisions) and denied approximately 7,400 travelers (approximately 0.06 percent of decisions) for failure to meet program eligibility criteria. TSA also revoked memberships for approximately 6,600 enrolled travelers for failing to continue meeting eligibility requirements.

<sup>21</sup>TSA provides enrolled TSA PreCheck® members with a Known Traveler Number, which members use to access program benefits. TSA PreCheck® enrollment lasts 5 years and travelers may renew their membership.

According to TSA data, over 99 percent of TSA PreCheck® denials and revocations in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023 were the result of disqualifying criminal offenses. Figure 4 identifies numbers of TSA PreCheck® denials and revocations in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023. Figure 5 identifies the top five criminality-related reasons for TSA PreCheck® denials and revocations during that same period.

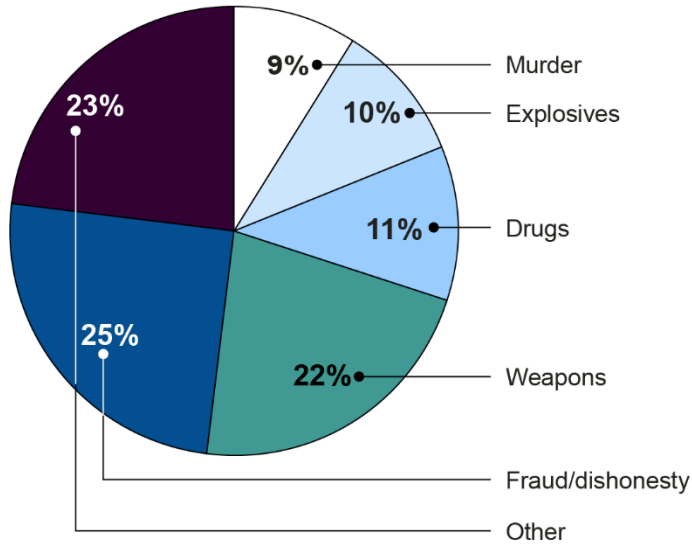
**Figure 4: Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Denials and Revocations from Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of TSA data. | GAO-24-106314

Note: Q1 and Q2 refer to quarter 1 and quarter 2 of fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 5: Top Five Criminally-related Reasons for Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Denials and Revocations in Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of TSA data. | GAO-24-106314

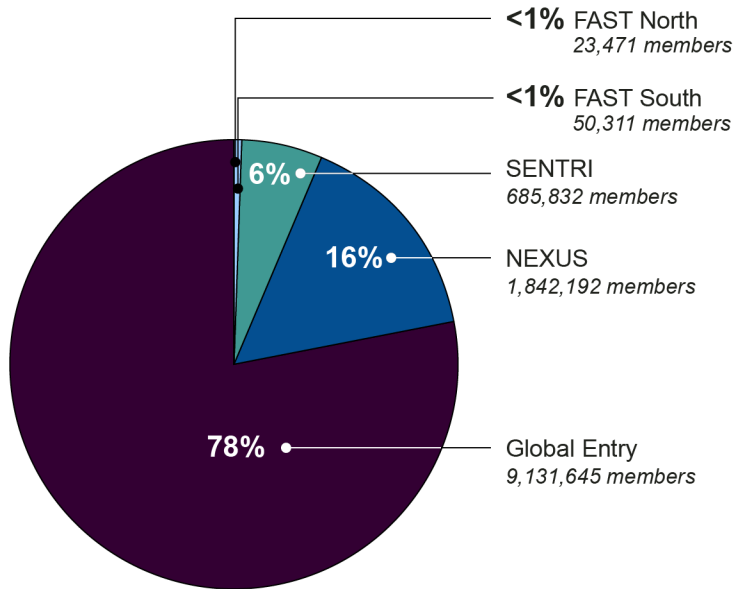
Note: According to TSA officials, the agency categorizes many state-level terrorism related offenses as “explosives.” “Other” includes criminality that was not among the top five reasons for TSA PreCheck® denial and revocation in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of 2023. “Other” crimes may include sedition or conspiracy to commit sedition, smuggling, extortion, arson, and robbery.

Travelers whom adjudicators determined do not meet TSA PreCheck® eligibility criteria receive a preliminary determination of ineligibility letter via the U.S. mail describing TSA’s decision and the specific reason for denial or revocation. For example, TSA’s preliminary determination of ineligibility letters for criminality may cite the specific disqualifying criminal offenses, the approximate date of each offense, and information on court proceedings, rulings, or verdicts. TSA’s letters also provide instructions to travelers on how to obtain additional information on the denial or revocation decision, as needed. Appendix IV includes an example TSA PreCheck® preliminary determination of ineligibility letter.

## CBP Has Enrolled Millions of Travelers to Its Trusted Traveler Programs through a Multi-Step Process

As of March 2023, membership across CBP’s trusted traveler programs reached nearly 12 million travelers. Figure 6 shows the distribution of members across CBP’s four trusted traveler programs.

**Figure 6: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Trusted Traveler Membership by Program, as of March 2023**



**Legend**

FAST Free and Secure Trade  
 SENTRI Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection

Source: GAO analysis of CBP data. | GAO-24-106314

Note: Global Entry offers low-risk aviation travelers expedited processing, primarily when returning from international travel at certain U.S. airports. SENTRI offers expedited processing to approved, low-risk travelers at the southern U.S. land border with Mexico, while NEXUS primarily offers expedited processing to approved, low-risk travelers at the northern U.S. land border with Canada. FAST allows low-risk commercial truckers expedited processing at certain commercial ports of entry at both the northern (FAST North) and southern (FAST South) borders.

To apply for membership in a CBP trusted traveler program, travelers create an account using CBP’s online portal, complete an online application, and provide basic biographic information, including name, address, date of birth, country of citizenship, travel history, place of birth, and employer. Travelers also pay an application fee.<sup>22</sup> Using this information, CBP officers at the National Targeting Center determine travelers’ eligibility for program membership by vetting them against eligibility criteria, which involves criminal records and immigration status

<sup>22</sup>The fee for NEXUS and FAST is \$50, the fee for Global Entry is \$100, and the fee for SENTRI is \$122.25, as of January 2024.

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checks, among other things.<sup>23</sup> Appendix V describes CBP's trusted traveler programs eligibility criteria.

CBP conditionally approves travelers whom officers at the National Targeting Center determine may meet program eligibility criteria.<sup>24</sup> CBP notifies conditionally approved travelers via an email that includes instructions for scheduling an in-person interview at one of CBP's 110 trusted traveler enrollment centers.<sup>25</sup> If CBP officers at the National Targeting Center determine that travelers do not meet eligibility criteria, CBP notifies these travelers of the decision in a letter posted to the travelers' online portal. These letters include the reason for denial and provide steps for submitting a reconsideration request.

If conditionally approved, travelers schedule and participate in an in-person interview with a CBP officer at an enrollment center.<sup>26</sup> During the interview, officers confirm travelers' identity, collect fingerprints, and take a photograph of the traveler.<sup>27</sup> Officers also review vetting results from the National Targeting Center and may ask questions about travelers' background, such as prior criminal offenses or customs violations, if any. In addition to meeting with a CBP officer, NEXUS applicants also meet with Canada Border Services Agency officials to answer any questions they may have based on their own vetting results.

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<sup>23</sup>To determine whether travelers may meet CBP eligibility criteria, CBP officers use an automated system to vet traveler information against data contained in several criminal, immigration, and intelligence database, including TECS, which contains information on violations of federal laws. Once CBP collects fingerprints from a traveler, they are run through IDENT, which maintains data on criminal histories, immigration, and intelligence information, and Next-Generation Identification, which contains information on criminal records. CBP officials told us that while misidentification does occur during vetting, such instances are extremely rare. The CBP Ombudsman, which we discuss later in the report, is usually involved in resolving those situations.

<sup>24</sup>CBP's approval at this stage is conditional and allows the traveler to schedule an interview at a CBP enrollment center. During the interview CBP officers verify travelers' identity and collect fingerprints, among other things. CBP makes a final enrollment decision once it has fingerprint results.

<sup>25</sup>Enrollment centers are generally located at ports of entry.

<sup>26</sup>Global Entry applicants can also utilize Enrollment on Arrival. Enrollment on Arrival allows Global Entry applicants who CBP has conditionally approved to complete their interviews at Pre-Clearance locations or upon arrival into the U.S. via select airports, eliminating the need for an applicant to schedule an interview at an enrollment center. According to CBP, it currently operates 69 Enrollment on Arrival locations.

<sup>27</sup>In addition, SENTRI applicants must register a vehicle under their membership during the interview process.

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If, following the interview and fingerprint screening, CBP determines that travelers meet eligibility criteria, CBP enrolls these travelers and sends a trusted traveler card via the mail that travelers may begin using immediately. If CBP determines travelers do not meet eligibility criteria, it posts a denial letter detailing the reason for denial and providing more information on requesting reconsideration to the travelers' online portal. There are multiple reasons why CBP may deny travelers, including prior arrests and convictions; false, inaccurate, or incomplete information on the program application; violations of laws or regulations enforced by CBP; or immigration status, among other reasons. Appendix VI includes an example CBP denial letter.

If travelers wish to pursue membership in multiple CBP trusted traveler programs, they must apply to each program separately. According to CBP's *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook*, the application and vetting process is similar for all four CBP programs, with some notable differences.<sup>28</sup> For example, both CBP and the Canada Border Services Agency vet U.S. and Canadian NEXUS applicants, while only CBP vets SENTRI applicants from the U.S. and Mexico.<sup>29</sup> In another example, according to CBP, FAST applicants must provide a commercial driver's license and proof of employment with a trucking company.

Once enrolled, travelers are subject to recurrent vetting to ensure they continue meeting program eligibility criteria and remain low risk. If CBP identifies potentially disqualifying information about travelers during recurrent vetting, officers at the National Targeting Center review the case and determine travelers' eligibility to remain in the program. If officers determine travelers are no longer eligible, CBP revokes their membership.<sup>30</sup> CBP notifies travelers of the revocation decision via a letter posted to their online portal. In general, these letters describe the reason for revocation and provide information on requesting

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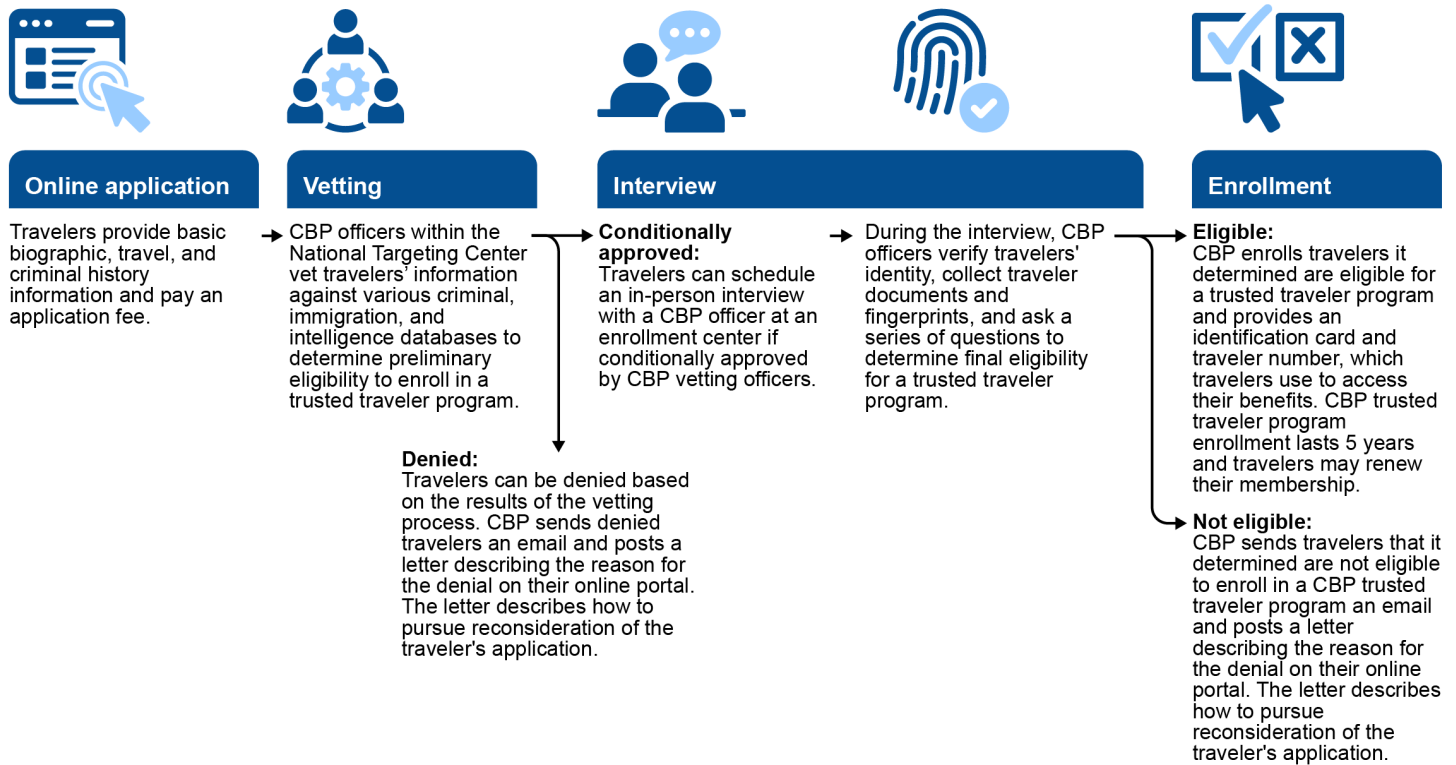
<sup>28</sup>CBP's *Trusted Traveler Program Handbook* establishes program policies and procedures related to enrollment, vetting, denials, revocations, and reconsideration for the trusted traveler programs. It is used by CBP officers and supervisors at enrollment centers and ports of entry.

<sup>29</sup>According to CBP, the Canada Border Services Agency marks an application as a "pass" or "fail" following the adjudication of an application. If the agency "passes" an application, the U.S. can continue the vetting process and rely on its own determination of eligibility. If the Canada Border Services Agency "fails" an application, the traveler is denied from participating in the program.

<sup>30</sup>Travelers whom CBP revokes also lose access to any TSA PreCheck® benefits they obtained through membership in a CBP trusted traveler program.

reconsideration. Figure 7 describes CBP's process for vetting and enrolling travelers to its trusted traveler programs.

**Figure 7: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Trusted Traveler Programs Enrollment Process**



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data; Icons-Studio/stock.adobe.com (illustrations). | GAO-24-106314

Note: Conditionally approved Global Entry applicants can complete the interview portion of the enrollment process at any of the participating airports in the U.S. and Pre-Clearance locations when returning from international travel without an appointment. Pre-Clearance locations are foreign airports where CBP personnel are stationed to inspect travelers prior to boarding U.S.-bound flights. With Pre-Clearance, travelers then bypass CBP and TSA inspections upon U.S. arrival and proceed directly to their connecting flight or destination.

From fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, over 9.4 million travelers applied for enrollment or renewal in a trusted traveler program. Across all four programs, Global Entry applications accounted for a majority, with about 7.2 million applications. NEXUS applications exceeded 1.4 million, SENTRI applications numbered almost 700,000, and FAST applications reached over 63,000. During this period, CBP enrolled or renewed membership for over 7.4 million travelers across its four programs (97.6 percent) and denied approximately



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183,000 applicants (2.4 percent).<sup>31</sup> Global Entry accounted for the majority of enrollments, with almost 6 million newly enrolled or renewed travelers.<sup>32</sup> In fiscal year 2022, CBP revoked membership for just over 21,000 travelers across the four programs. Figure 8 identifies the numbers of CBP trusted traveler programs denials and revocations in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of 2023.

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<sup>31</sup>The number of enrolled or renewed travelers is not a perfect subset of the applications across the same time period due to processing times for each program. According to CBP, all trusted traveler enrollment centers closed for a period of approximately 6 months in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Global Entry Enrollment on Arrival locations continued to process applications during this time. In addition, the NEXUS and FAST North programs were unable to conduct interviews until April 2022 due to the absence of Canada Border Services Agency officers as a result of pandemic related border restrictions. According to CBP officials, enrollment center closures resulted in extended application review times.

<sup>32</sup>NEXUS accounted for over 960,000, SENTRI accounted for almost 520,000, and FAST North and South combined accounted for close to 50,000 enrollments or renewals.

**Figure 8: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Trusted Traveler Program Denials and Revocations from Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data. | GAO-24-106314

Note: Scale varies across programs. Q1 and Q2 refer to quarter 1 and quarter 2 of fiscal year 2023.

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DHS Programs  
Provide  
Reconsideration, but  
CBP Does Not  
Provide Instructions  
for Seeking Additional  
Information on  
Denials or  
Revocations

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TSA Adjudicators Have  
Provided Reconsideration  
for Thousands of Travelers  
Denied or Revoked from  
TSA PreCheck®

In fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, TSA reviewed 3,184 reconsideration requests for travelers whom it preliminarily determined were ineligible for TSA PreCheck® during initial or recurrent vetting. TSA's preliminary determination of ineligibility letters include instructions to travelers on how to seek additional information on a denial or revocation decision, as needed, as well as steps for pursuing reconsideration, known as a correction of record request. Specifically, TSA's letters explain that travelers must submit a correction of record request within 60 days of a denial or revocation decision if they believe TSA's decision was based on incomplete or inaccurate information.<sup>33</sup> TSA's correction of record process does not make enrollment exceptions for travelers who do not meet TSA PreCheck® eligibility criteria, but instead allows travelers to update their record as needed to demonstrate program enrollment eligibility.

Adjudicators are responsible for reviewing correction of record requests and stated that the process is necessary since the vetting sources they use may not always include complete details on travelers' full criminal record—particularly for state and local offenses. For example, adjudicators we interviewed explained that vetting sources may identify that a traveler was arrested on state charges for a criminal offense that disqualifies them from TSA PreCheck® membership. However, these vetting sources may not include information on whether the traveler was

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<sup>33</sup>If travelers do not respond to TSA PreCheck®'s preliminary determination of ineligibility within 60 days of receiving a preliminary determination of ineligibility letter, TSA's decision to deny or revoke travelers' eligibility for membership becomes final. Travelers whom TSA denied or revoked may reapply to the program.

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convicted, found not guilty, or whether a judge dismissed their case, all of which could impact the traveler's eligibility to enroll in TSA PreCheck®.<sup>34</sup>

Adjudicators we interviewed stated that they use research tools, including LexisNexis, Court Link, or Public Access to Courts Electronic Records to locate records that may be missing from travelers' criminal history. However, according to TSA officials, these vetting sources and research tools may not always provide complete information. In rare instances, it may be necessary for travelers to submit a correction of record request and provide missing court documents or other records to demonstrate their eligibility to enroll in TSA PreCheck®. According to adjudicators and TSA PreCheck® officials, travelers own their criminal records and are solely responsible for providing these documents to TSA when applying for TSA PreCheck®. These officials stated that TSA generally does not coordinate with other federal, state, or local entities on vetting matters and does not attempt to obtain missing records from these entities on travelers' behalf.<sup>35</sup>

In fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, 2,238 travelers whom TSA determined were preliminarily ineligible for TSA PreCheck® membership during initial vetting submitted a correction of record request. Among these travelers, 1,685 (75 percent) updated their record and demonstrated eligibility to enroll in TSA PreCheck®.

During this period, an additional 946 enrolled travelers whom TSA determined were ineligible to maintain their membership in TSA PreCheck® during recurrent vetting submitted a correction of record request. Among these travelers, 690 (73 percent) updated their record

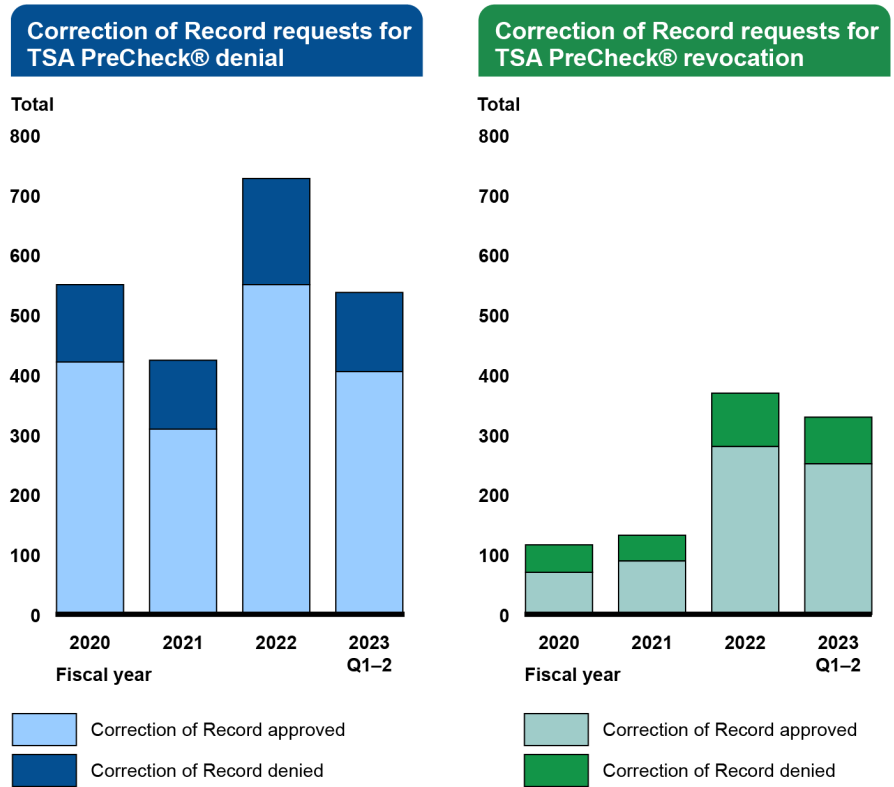
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<sup>34</sup>We previously reported on the incompleteness of criminal history records in [GAO-23-105859](#).

<sup>35</sup>TSA officials told us that while misidentification does occur during TSA PreCheck® vetting, such instances are extremely rare. When a potential misidentification does occur, DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program officials may conduct research to validate travelers' identity and resolve any issues related to misidentification. DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program is a single point of contact for individuals who have had difficulties during travel screenings at transportation hubs such as airports or U.S. borders. These difficulties include issues pertaining to the Terrorist Watch List, screening problems at ports of entry, and situations where travelers believe they have been unfairly or incorrectly delayed, denied boarding or identified for additional screening at domestic transportation hubs.

and demonstrated eligibility to remain enrolled in TSA PreCheck®.<sup>36</sup> Figure 9 describes TSA PreCheck® correction of record requests in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023.

**Figure 9: Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Correction of Record Requests in Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of TSA data. | GAO-24-106314

Note: Q1 and Q2 refer to quarter 1 and quarter 2 of fiscal year 2023.

<sup>36</sup>According to TSA data, adjudicators approved or denied travelers' correction of record requests within an average of 10 days in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023.

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## CBP Ombudsman Has Provided Reconsideration for Thousands of Travelers Denied or Revoked from Its Trusted Traveler Programs

The CBP Ombudsman provides the primary method for travelers whom CBP denied or revoked to pursue reconsideration and reviewed over 76,000 requests from fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of 2023.<sup>37</sup> As previously described, when CBP denies or revokes a traveler, it posts a letter to the traveler’s portal detailing the reason for denial or revocation and includes instructions on requesting reconsideration with the Ombudsman.

Upon receiving the letter, travelers can submit a reconsideration request and upload any relevant documents or information through their online portal.<sup>38</sup> According to CBP officials, travelers are solely responsible for obtaining accurate documentation and providing it to the Ombudsman for review.<sup>39</sup>

Once travelers submit a reconsideration request, the Ombudsman reviews travelers’ information and makes a determination. According to CBP, there are four possible outcomes associated with a reconsideration request. Specifically, the Ombudsman may (1) sustain the traveler’s denial or revocation, (2) approve the traveler to enroll in a program following a denial, (3) reinstate the traveler’s membership following a revocation, or (4) “unset” the denial and allow the traveler to visit an enrollment center for an interview with a CBP officer.

According to CBP officials, once the Ombudsman decides, it notifies the traveler of the outcome through the online portal. The Ombudsman has sole discretion to sustain or overturn denial or revocation decisions, based on the totality of circumstances and any new information that the traveler provided as part of the reconsideration request. Once the Ombudsman renders a decision, that decision is final and neither the National Targeting Center or CBP officers at enrollment centers can

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<sup>37</sup>While the Ombudsman is the primary reconsideration method, travelers have two other options for updating their information or getting assistance with technical issues. Travelers can contact the enrollment center where their application interview occurred to discuss their denial or revocation with a supervisor or update information if they believe their denial or revocation was based on invalid or incomplete information. Travelers may also contact the DHS Traveler Redress Inquiry Program, which can assist travelers with trusted traveler card or kiosk issues or other technical issues.

<sup>38</sup>For instance, a traveler may have not been convicted of the crime or may have pled it down from a felony to a misdemeanor, which may affect their eligibility to enroll.

<sup>39</sup>The CBP Ombudsman does not coordinate with other federal, state, or local entities on missing, incomplete, or potentially inaccurate records from these entities on travelers’ behalf.

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overturn it unless new or previously undisclosed disqualifying information becomes available.<sup>40</sup>

The Ombudsman may exercise discretion in considering whether travelers who may not technically meet program eligibility criteria are sufficiently low-risk and whether enrollment in a CBP trusted traveler program is appropriate based on the entirety of travelers' records and circumstances. CBP Ombudsman guidance describes factors that officials should consider when reviewing reconsideration cases. These considerations generally include, for example, the length of time between travelers' application and any prior disqualifying offenses, the severity of any prior offenses, and whether travelers have maintained a clean record in recent years, among other things.

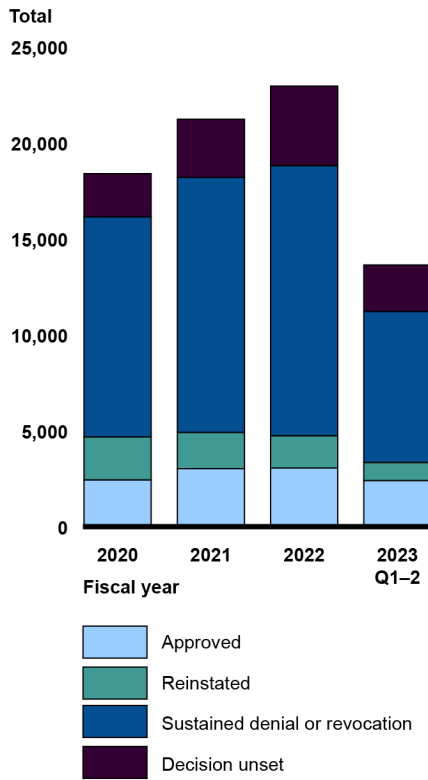
For example, CBP trusted traveler program eligibility criteria states that travelers may not be eligible to enroll in a CBP trusted traveler program if they have been arrested for or convicted of a crime. However, the Ombudsman may make an exception to these criteria if the traveler committed a disqualifying criminal offense decades ago, has since led a seemingly law-abiding life, and is deemed sufficiently low risk.

From fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023, the Ombudsman reviewed 76,183 reconsideration requests. The Ombudsman sustained denial or revocation decisions for about 61 percent (46,679) of the requests. The Ombudsman approved reconsideration requests for 39 percent, allowing these travelers to enroll in a CBP trusted traveler program (14 percent), have their program membership reinstated (about 9 percent), or to schedule an interview with CBP officers at an enrollment center after having their decision unset (nearly 16 percent). Figure 10 describes reconsideration decisions made by the CBP Ombudsman in fiscal year 2020 through the second quarter of fiscal year 2023.

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<sup>40</sup>A CBP denial or revocation decision does not prevent travelers from applying again in the future.

**Figure 10: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Ombudsman’s Reconsideration Decisions from Fiscal Year 2020 through Quarter 2 of Fiscal Year 2023**



Source: GAO analysis of CBP data. | GAO-24-106314

Note: “Decision unset” means the denial decision has been cleared to allow the traveler to visit an enrollment center for an interview with a CBP officer. Q1 and Q2 refer to quarter 1 and quarter 2 of fiscal year 2023.

**CBP Notifies Travelers of a Denial or Revocation Decision, but Does Not Provide Instructions to Seek Additional Information**

While CBP notifies travelers of denial and revocation decisions through letters posted to their online portal, it may not provide specific information about the reason for denial or revocation, and beginning in 2018, CBP stopped including instructions for seeking additional information on the reason for denial or revocation. For example, CBP’s denial and revocation letters may simply cite “criminality” or “incomplete or inaccurate information” in travelers’ program application, without any



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additional information on the specific disqualifying criminal offense or inaccurate application information.<sup>41</sup>

Though the letters may not always provide a detailed reason for denial or revocation, CBP does provide travelers with opportunities to seek additional information on the specific reason for its decision to deny or revoke membership. However, CBP does not explicitly state these options are available to travelers and does not provide instructions within its denial and revocation letters on how utilize them.

According to CBP officials, these opportunities include contacting an enrollment center or contacting the CBP Information Center.<sup>42</sup> CBP's *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook* states that if contacted by a traveler seeking more information on their denial or revocation, enrollment center officers should provide as much information as appropriate, based on CBP security policies, third party considerations, and any other policy and legal constraints.<sup>43</sup> Officers from all four centers we spoke to told us that supervisors do meet with travelers to discuss their denial or revocation.

While CBP's denial and revocation letters do not currently provide instructions as of November 2023, they included this information prior to 2018. Specifically, the letters stated, "If you believe the decision was based upon inaccurate information, you may contact the local trusted traveler Enrollment Center to schedule an appointment to speak with a supervisor." The letters also included a website address with a list of enrollment center locations and contact information. According to program officials, CBP changed the format of its letters in 2018 when it updated the online portal and inadvertently removed these instructions.

The federal regulation governing Global Entry states that in communicating a denial, CBP is to provide instructions regarding how to proceed if the applicant wishes to seek additional information as to the

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<sup>41</sup>The letters may also cite "other" or "you do not meet program eligibility requirements" as a reason for denial or revocation, which may indicate CBP is not permitted or has chosen not to disclose the specific reason for denial or revocation within the letter. For example, travelers may be denied membership to a trusted traveler program if they have a connection to a known drug smuggler. However, CBP cannot disclose that the association is known to them.

<sup>42</sup>Travelers can access CBP's Information Center online at [https://help.cbp.gov/s/?language=en\\_US](https://help.cbp.gov/s/?language=en_US).

<sup>43</sup>These policy, legal, or security constraints may prohibit an officer from sharing additional information with a traveler on their denial or revocation.

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reason for the denial.<sup>44</sup> Further, *Standards for Internal Control in the Federal Government* state agency management should externally communicate necessary quality information to the public and should select appropriate methods of communication, which would apply to both denial and revocation letters.<sup>45</sup>

Without written instructions to travelers on how to seek additional information on CBP's decision to deny or revoke trusted traveler program membership in its letters, travelers may be unaware they have the option to contact CBP for more information. By providing instructions to travelers on how to seek more information within the letters, CBP could improve travelers' understanding of the specific reason for their denial or revocation, as appropriate, and better ensure that travelers are able to directly address the reason for their denial or revocation when pursuing reconsideration.

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## Conclusions

Millions of travelers board U.S. domestic and outbound international flights or enter the U.S. through a port of entry on a daily basis. DHS's trusted traveler programs are key components of both TSA's and CBP's risk-based approach to facilitating legitimate travel and trade while preventing terrorists, criminals, weapons, and contraband from entering or traveling within the U.S. However, while CBP has clear enrollment and reconsideration processes for its trusted traveler programs, it does not provide instructions to travelers on seeking additional information on the underlying reason for CBP's denial or revocation decision. Prior to 2018, CBP included these instructions in denial and revocation letters but inadvertently removed them when it changed the format of its letters. By including written instructions for seeking additional information, CBP could ensure travelers understand the means to seek the specific reason for their denial and revocation, as appropriate.

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## Recommendations for Executive Action

The CBP Commissioner should include written instructions in CBP's trusted traveler program denial and revocation decision letters on how travelers can seek additional information regarding the specific reason(s) for the decision. (Recommendation 1)

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## Agency Comments

We provided a draft of this report to DHS for review and comment. DHS provided written comments, which are reproduced in full in appendix VII.

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<sup>44</sup> 48 C.F.R. § 235.12(j)(1). The regulation establishes the Global Entry program, its eligibility criteria, application and enrollment considerations, and methods of reconsideration, among other things. CBP's implementation of the other three trusted traveler programs are also modeled on this regulation.

<sup>45</sup> [GAO-14-704G](#).

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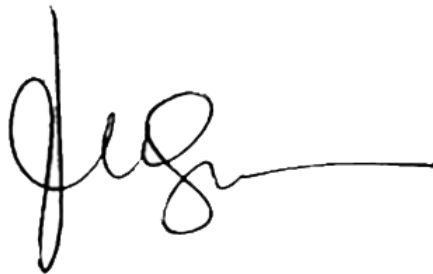
DHS also provided technical comments, which we incorporated as appropriate.

In its written comments, DHS stated that it concurred with our recommendation and identified actions and a timeline for implementing it. Specifically, it stated that CBP will update denial and revocation decision notification letters to include instructions on how travelers can seek additional information regarding the specific reason(s) for the decision. Within these letters, CBP will also include a website address with a list of enrollment center locations and contact information. CBP expects to complete these actions by June 2024.

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We are sending copies of this report to the appropriate congressional committees and the Secretary of Homeland Security. In addition, the report is available at no charge on the GAO website at <https://www.gao.gov>.

If you or your staff have any questions about this report, please contact Tina Won Sherman at (202) 512-8461 or [shermant@gao.gov](mailto:shermant@gao.gov). Contact points for our Offices of Congressional Relations and Public Affairs may be found on the last page of this report. Key contributors to this report are listed in appendix VIII.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tina Won Sherman', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Tina Won Sherman  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice

# Appendix I: U.S. Ports of Entry with Dedicated Trusted Traveler Lanes or Kiosks

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has dedicated trusted traveler lanes for passenger and commercial traffic at ports of entry along the northern and southern land borders. In addition, CBP has kiosks for trusted travelers at select international airports in the U.S. and foreign countries. Ports of entry may have dedicated lanes or kiosks for one or more trusted traveler program.<sup>1</sup> Table 2 shows the ports of entry that have dedicated lanes for trusted travelers in NEXUS, Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI), and Free and Secure Trade (FAST). Table 3 shows the domestic airports that have dedicated kiosks for Global Entry. Table 4 shows the foreign airports that have Global Entry Pre-Clearance and/or NEXUS kiosks. Information on airports and ports of entry offering trusted traveler lanes or kiosks is current as of October 2023.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2: U.S. Land Ports of Entry That Have U.S. Customs and Border Protection Trusted Traveler Program Lanes<sup>a</sup>**

Port of Entry	Program
Alexandria Bay, New York	NEXUS, FAST North
Blaine, Washington	NEXUS, FAST North
Buffalo, New York	NEXUS, FAST North
Calais, Maine	NEXUS
Champlain, New York	NEXUS, FAST North
Detroit, Michigan	NEXUS, FAST North
Highgate Springs, Vermont	NEXUS
Houlton, Maine	NEXUS
Pembina, North Dakota	NEXUS
Port Huron, Michigan	NEXUS, FAST North
Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan	NEXUS
Sumas, Washington	NEXUS

<sup>1</sup>A single land port of entry may consist of one or more crossings. For example, at the Port of Laredo, Texas, CBP oversees operations at four separate land border crossings. CBP operates a total of 110 land ports of entry along the northern and southern borders consisting of a total of 167 individual land border crossings.

<sup>2</sup>CBP maintains a list of land ports of entry offering NEXUS lanes at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/nexus/land-border-crossings>. CBP also maintains a list of airports offering Global Entry kiosks at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/global-entry/airports-with-global-entry>. Finally, CBP maintains a list of Canadian airports offering NEXUS kiosks at <https://www.cbp.gov/travel/trusted-traveler-programs/nexus/canadian-airports-kiosks>.

**Appendix I: U.S. Ports of Entry with Dedicated  
Trusted Traveler Lanes or Kiosks**

Madawaska, Maine	FAST North
Brownsville, Texas	SENTRI, FAST South
Calexico, California	SENTRI, FAST South
Del Rio, Texas	SENTRI
Douglas, Arizona	SENTRI
Eagle Pass, Texas	SENTRI, FAST South
El Paso, Texas	SENTRI, FAST South
Hidalgo, Texas	SENTRI, FAST South
Laredo, Texas	SENTRI, FAST South
Nogales, Arizona	SENTRI, FAST South
Otay Mesa, California	SENTRI, FAST South
San Luis, Arizona	SENTRI, FAST South
San Ysidro, California	SENTRI, FAST South
Santa Teresa, New Mexico	FAST South

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. | GAO-24-106314

<sup>a</sup>Information on land ports of entry offering trusted traveler lanes is current as of October 2023.

Appendix I: U.S. Ports of Entry with Dedicated  
Trusted Traveler Lanes or Kiosks

**Table 3: U.S. Domestic Airports with Global Entry Kiosks<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Airport</b>
Anchorage-Ted Stevens International
Austin-Bergstrom International
Baltimore-Washington International
Boston-Logan International
Charleston International
Charlotte Douglas International
Chicago Midway International
Chicago-O'Hare International
Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International
Cleveland Hopkins International
Dallas/Fort Worth International
Daniel K. Inouye International
Denver International
Detroit Metropolitan
Fairbanks International
Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood International
George Bush Intercontinental
Guam International
Hartford-Bradley International
Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International
Houston-Hobby International
Indianapolis International
John F. Kennedy International
John Wayne
Kansas City International
Los Angeles International
Luis Muñoz Marin International
McCarran International
Miami International
Milwaukee-General Mitchel International
Minneapolis-St. Paul International

**Appendix I: U.S. Ports of Entry with Dedicated  
Trusted Traveler Lanes or Kiosks**

Nashville International
New Orleans International
New York-Stewart International
Newark Liberty International
Oakland International
Ontario International
Orlando International
Orlando-Melbourne International
Orlando-Sanford International
Philadelphia International
Phoenix Sky Harbor International
Pittsburgh International
Portland International
Providence-T.F. Green International
Raleigh-Durham International
Sacramento International
Saipan International
Salt Lake City International
San Antonio International
San Diego International
San Francisco International
San Jose International
Seattle-Tacoma International
South Bend International
Southwest Florida International
St. Louis Lambert International
St. Pete-Clearwater International
Tampa International
Toledo Express
Washington-Dulles International

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. | GAO-24-106314

<sup>a</sup>Information on airports offering trusted traveler kiosks is current as of October 2023.

**Appendix I: U.S. Ports of Entry with Dedicated  
Trusted Traveler Lanes or Kiosks**

**Table 4: Foreign Airports with U.S. Customs and Border Protection Trusted Traveler Program Kiosks<sup>a</sup>**

<b>Airport</b>	<b>Program</b>
Abu Dhabi International Airport, United Arab Emirates	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Calgary International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Dublin Airport, Ireland	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Edmonton International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Halifax Stanfield International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
L.F. Wade International Airport, Bermuda	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Lynden Pindling International Airport, The Bahamas	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Montreal Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Queen Beatrix International Airport, Aruba	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Shannon Airport, Ireland	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance)
Toronto Pearson International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Vancouver International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS
Winnipeg James Armstrong Richardson International Airport, Canada	Global Entry (Pre-Clearance), NEXUS

Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Customs and Border Protection data. | GAO-24-106314

<sup>a</sup>Information on airports offering trusted traveler kiosks is current as of October 2023.



# Appendix II: Category X Airports by Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Screening Volume in Fiscal Year 2022

TSA classifies the nation’s commercial airports into one of five categories (X, I, II, III, and IV) based on various factors, such as the number of take-offs and landings annually, the extent of passenger screening at the airport, and other security considerations. In general, category X airports have the highest number of passenger enplanements. Table 1 identifies category X airports by total passenger screening volume and TSA PreCheck® screening volume in fiscal year 2022.

**Table 5: Category X Airport Passenger and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Volume in Fiscal Year 2022**

Airport name	Passenger screening volume	TSA PreCheck® screening volume	Percent TSA PreCheck® screening volume
Baltimore-Washington International	8,341,721	1,993,601	24%
Boston-Logan International	17,161,189	4,879,887	28%
Charlotte Douglas International	9,018,753	2,467,226	27%
Chicago-O’Hare International	24,367,679	6,771,731	28%
Dallas-Fort Worth International	20,082,764	4,134,288	21%
Daniel K. Inouye International	7,467,096	1,843,268	25%
Denver International	20,243,414	5,452,148	27%
Detroit Metropolitan Airport	10,549,569	2,502,708	24%
Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood International	15,743,703	3,971,775	25%
George Bush Intercontinental	15,412,665	3,173,967	21%
Harry Reid International	21,987,125	3,902,503	18%
Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International	23,318,930	5,442,572	23%
John F. Kennedy International	25,395,324	4,282,911	17%
LaGuardia Airport	13,917,883	3,672,020	26%
Los Angeles International	29,752,932	6,708,835	23%
Luis Muñoz Marin International	5,791,096	679,689	12%
Miami International	22,362,270	2,532,147	11%
Minneapolis-St. Paul International	10,536,226	3,537,461	34%
Newark International	20,355,119	4,253,214	21%
Orlando International	23,252,952	4,342,627	19%
Philadelphia International	10,384,701	2,527,436	24%
Phoenix Sky Harbor International	17,677,436	5,816,533	33%
San Francisco International	17,618,420	5,820,555	33%

**Appendix II: Category X Airports by  
Transportation Security Administration (TSA)  
PreCheck® Screening Volume in Fiscal Year  
2022**

Seattle-Tacoma International	15,948,368	4,428,492	28%
St. Louis Lambert International	5,535,424	1,620,056	29%
Washington Reagan National	9,272,022	3,618,980	39%
Washington-Dulles International	8,147,579	2,217,989	27%

Source: GAO analysis of TSA data. | GAO-24-106314

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# Appendix III: Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Eligibility Criteria

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The TSA Precheck® eligibility criteria in this appendix can be found at <https://www.tsa.gov/travel/frequently-asked-questions/who-can-apply-tsa-precheckr>.

The TSA PreCheck® Application Program is only open to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals and lawful permanent residents. Applicants may be ineligible due to incomplete or false application information, certain violations of federal security regulations, or [disqualifying criminal offenses and factors](#).

Parts A, B and C below include information on disqualifying criminal offenses. In addition to the disqualifying criminal offenses listed below, TSA may determine that an applicant is not eligible for the application program based on analyses of the following:

- a) Interpol and other international information, as appropriate.
- b) Terrorist watchlists, other government databases, and related information.
- c) Any other information relevant to determining applicant eligibility or an applicant's identity.

TSA may also determine that an applicant is not eligible if the security threat assessment process reveals extensive foreign or domestic criminal convictions, a conviction for a serious crime not listed in Part A or B below (including some lesser included offenses of serious crimes, e.g., murder/voluntary manslaughter), or a period of foreign or domestic imprisonment that exceeds 365 consecutive days.

TSA may also determine that an applicant is not eligible based on analyses of records related to violations of transportation security regulatory requirements. These violations include security-related offenses at an airport, on board an aircraft (including assault, threat, intimidation, or interference with flight crew, physical or sexual assault or threat of physical or sexual assault of any individual on an aircraft), at a maritime port, in connection with air cargo, and other regulatory violations.

An applicant will also be disqualified if he or she has had a court, board, commission, or other government authority determine that he/she, as a result of mental illness, poses a danger to himself/herself or to others, or that he/she lacks the capacity to conduct or manage his/her own affairs, or if he/she has been found not competent to stand trial in a criminal case or found not guilty by reason of insanity by a court; or if he/she has been

involuntarily committed to an inpatient facility for mental health or psychiatric reasons.

TSA PreCheck® participants must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or U.S. lawful permanent residents.<sup>1</sup>

### **Part A: Permanent Disqualifying Criminal Offenses**

An applicant will be disqualified if he or she was convicted, pled guilty (including 'no contest'), or found not guilty by reason of insanity for any of the following felonies regardless of when they occurred:

- Espionage or conspiracy to commit espionage.
- Sedition or conspiracy to commit sedition.
- Treason or conspiracy to commit treason.
- A federal crime of terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 2332b(g), or comparable State law, or conspiracy to commit such crime.
- A crime involving a transportation security incident. Note: A transportation security incident is a security incident resulting in a significant loss of life, environmental damage, transportation system disruption, or economic disruption in a particular area, as defined in 46 U.S.C. § 70101. The term "economic disruption" does not include a work stoppage or other employee-related action not related to terrorism and resulting from an employer-employee dispute.
- Improper transportation of a hazardous material under 49 U.S.C. § 5124 or a comparable state law.
- Unlawful possession, use, sale, distribution, manufacture, purchase, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, import, export, storage of, or dealing in an explosive or explosive device. An explosive or explosive device includes an explosive or explosive material as defined in 18 U.S.C. §§ 232(5), 841(c) through 841(f), and 844(j); and a destructive device, as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(4) and 26 U.S.C. § 5845(f).

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<sup>1</sup>A U.S. citizen is an individual who (1) is a citizen of the U.S. at birth; (2) automatically acquired, or obtained a certificate of, citizenship as a child; or (3) became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. as an adult. All U.S. citizens are, by definition, U.S. nationals. A U.S. noncitizen national is a person who, though not a citizen of the U.S., owes permanent allegiance to the U.S. by virtue of their U.S. nationality (for example, persons born to noncitizen parents in American Samoa or Swains Island). A U.S. lawful permanent resident is a foreign national who has obtained a Green Card permitting them to lawfully reside and work within the U.S on a permanent basis.

- Murder.
- Threat or maliciously conveying false information knowing the same to be false, concerning the deliverance, placement, or detonation of an explosive or other lethal device in or against a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, or an infrastructure facility.
- Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961, et seq., or a comparable State law, where one of the predicate acts found by a jury or admitted by the defendant, consists of one of the permanently disqualifying crimes.
- Attempt to commit the crimes in items (1)-(4) of this section.
- Conspiracy or attempt to commit the crimes in items (5)-(10) of this section.

**Part B: Interim Disqualifying Criminal Offenses**

- Conviction for one of the following felonies is disqualifying if the applicant was convicted, pled guilty (including “no contest”), found not competent to stand trial, or found not guilty by reason of insanity within 7 years of the date of the application; or if the applicant was released from incarceration after conviction within 5 years of the date of the application.
- Unlawful possession, use, sale, manufacture, purchase, distribution, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, delivery, import, export of, or dealing in a firearm or other weapon. A firearm or other weapon includes, but is not limited to, firearms as defined in 18 U.S.C. § 921(a)(3) or 26 U.S.C. § 5845(a), or items contained on the U.S. Munitions Import List at 27 C.F.R. § 447.21.
- Extortion.
- Dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation, including identity fraud and money laundering, where the money laundering is related to a crime listed in Parts A or B (except welfare fraud and passing bad checks).
- Bribery.
- Smuggling.
- Immigration violations.
- Distribution, possession w/ intent to distribute, or importation of a controlled substance.
- Arson.

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**Appendix III: Transportation Security  
Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Eligibility  
Criteria**

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- Kidnapping or hostage taking.
- Rape or aggravated sexual abuse.
- Assault with intent to kill.
- Robbery.
- Fraudulent entry into a seaport as described in 18 U.S.C. § 1036, or a comparable State law.
- Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act under 18 U.S.C. §§ 1961, et seq., or a comparable state law, other than any permanently disqualifying offenses.
- Voluntary manslaughter.
- Conspiracy or attempt to commit crimes in this section.

**Part C: Under Want, Warrant, or Indictment**

A person will be disqualified if he or she is wanted or under indictment in any civilian or military jurisdiction for a felony listed under Part A or Part B until the want or warrant is released or the indictment is dismissed.

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# Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter

While the information and formatting in the letter below is representative of an official TSA PreCheck® preliminary determination of ineligibility letter, the addressee and personal information are fictional for the purpose of this example.

**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Intelligence and Analysis  
Springfield, VA 20598-6010



**Transportation Security Administration**

06/19/2023

JANE DOESNTEXIST,  
123 Minor Street  
Nowhere, FL 12345-6789  
United States

Re: Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility, TSA Pre✓® Application Program,  
0-0000000000

Dear JANE DOESNTEXIST:

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has received your application to participate in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program. After review of the information received as a result of your application, TSA has made a preliminary determination that you **may not** be eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program because of your criminal history, described below in greater detail:

**Open Criminal Dispositions:**

**Carrying a Concealed Firearm in an Airport, in Tampa Bay, Florida, on or about March 03, 2021.**

**If you were not convicted of a disqualifying criminal offense within the prescribed time periods, within 60 days of the receipt of this letter, you may submit a corrected copy of your criminal history record to TSA for review. See the enclosed General Instructions for**

Criminal Disqualifications, Section 1, regarding *correction of criminal records*.

**If the information above is correct, you will not be eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program.**

Please note that TSA is unable to correct any other state or federal criminal history records information system. Applicants seeking to challenge the accuracy or completeness of any information on a criminal record should contact the applicable state or federal agency originating the record. For FBI criminal history records, pursuant to Title 28, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), section 16.34, please direct your inquiry to:

FBI



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**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation  
Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck®  
Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

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Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Division  
ATTN: SCU, Mod D-2  
1000 Custer Hollow Road  
Clarksburg, WV 26306

**If you do not reply within 60 days, TSA's preliminary determination of ineligibility will become final and you will not be eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program.**

**A copy of the enclosed TSA Pre✓® Application Program Response Cover Sheet must be included with all documents you send to TSA.** Please review the enclosure, which provides detailed instructions on how to submit information to TSA. If you have questions, please write to us at the address provided.

For more information, you can also visit the TSA Pre✓® web page at [www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck](http://www.tsa.gov/tsa-precheck).

Sincerely,

Elmo McFerguson, Jr  
Adjudication Branch Manager Security  
Threat Assessment Division  
Intelligence and Analysis  
Transportation Security Administration

Enclosures

**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

**DISQUALIFYING CRIMINAL OFFENSES**

**If you have pleaded guilty or *nolo contendere* to a Disqualifying Criminal Offense**, TSA treats the case in the same way as if you had been convicted of the offense, even if the court withheld or deferred adjudication of guilt.

TSA does not consider you to have been convicted if the finding of guilt was overturned on appeal, pardoned (with full restoration of all rights), or expunged so that it has been removed from your criminal record and carries no disabilities or restrictions (except for future sentencing purposes).

**If you are under want, warrant, complaint or indictment for a Disqualifying Criminal Offense**, you will be disqualified until the want or warrant is released or the complaint or indictment is dismissed.

**If you were found not guilty by reason of insanity or incompetent to stand trial**, you will be disqualified until you provide proof that you no longer lack mental capacity.

<p>If you have been convicted of one of these felonies, you may be eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program if you submit documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record to show that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You were convicted more than 7 years before you applied for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program; <b>and</b></li> </ul> <p>You were released from confinement more than 5 years before you applied for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program (if applicable).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlawful possession, use, sale, manufacture, purchase, distribution, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, delivery, import, export of, or dealing in a firearm or other weapon. A firearm or other weapon includes, but is not limited to, firearms as defined in Title 18, United States Code (U.S.C.), section 921(a)(3) or 26 U.S.C. section 5845(a), or items contained on the U.S. Munitions Import List in Title 27, Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.), section 447.21</li> <li>Extortion</li> <li>Dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation, including identity fraud and money laundering where the money laundering is related to a crime described in paragraphs (a) or (b) of this section. Welfare fraud and passing bad checks do not constitute dishonesty, fraud, or misrepresentation for purposes of this paragraph</li> <li>Bribery</li> <li>Smuggling</li> <li>Immigration violations</li> <li>Distribution of, possession with intent to distribute, or importation of a controlled substance</li> <li>Arson</li> <li>Kidnapping or hostage taking</li> <li>Rape or aggravated sexual abuse</li> <li>Assault with intent to kill</li> <li>Robbery</li> <li>Fraudulent entry into a seaport as described in 18 U.S.C. section 1036, or a comparable State law</li> <li>Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. section 1961, <i>et seq.</i>, or a comparable State law, other than the violations listed in paragraph (a)(10) of this section</li> <li>Conspiracy or attempt to commit any of the above crimes.</li> </ul>
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**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

If you have been convicted of one of these felonies, you are not eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program.

- A crime involving a transportation security incident. A transportation security incident is a security incident resulting in a significant loss of life, environmental damage, transportation system disruption, or economic disruption in a particular area, as defined in 46 U.S.C. section 70101. The term “economic disruption” does not include a work stoppage or other employee-related action not related to terrorism and resulting from an employer-employee dispute
- Improper transportation of a hazardous material under 49 U.S.C. section 5124, or a State law that is comparable
- Unlawful possession, use, sale, distribution, manufacture, purchase, receipt, transfer, shipping, transporting, import, export, storage of, or dealing in an explosive or explosive device. An explosive or explosive device includes, but is not limited to, an explosive or explosive material as defined in 18 U.S.C. sections 232(5), 841(c) through 841(f), and 844(j); and a destructive device, as defined in 18 U.S.C. section 921(a)(4) and 26 U.S.C. section 5845(f)
- Murder
- Making any threat, or maliciously conveying false information knowing the same to be false, concerning the deliverance, placement, or detonation of an explosive or other lethal device in or against a place of public use, a state or government facility, a public transportation system, or an infrastructure facility
- Violations of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, 18 U.S.C. section 1961, *et seq.*, or a comparable State law, where one of the predicate acts found by a jury or admitted by the defendant, consists of one of the crimes listed in subsection 1961(a);
- Conspiracy or attempt to commit the above crimes.
- Espionage, or conspiracy to commit espionage.
- Sedition, or conspiracy to commit sedition.
- Treason, or conspiracy to commit treason.
- A federal crime of terrorism as defined in 18 U.S.C. section 2332b(g), or comparable State law, or conspiracy to commit such crime.
- Attempt to commit the above crimes.
- Extensive foreign or domestic criminal convictions, a conviction for a serious crime not listed above, or a period of foreign or domestic imprisonment that exceeds 365 consecutive days.

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**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation  
Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck®  
Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

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**GENERAL INSTRUCTION FOR CRIMINAL DISQUALIFICATIONS**

**• THE FACTS IN THE PRELIMINARY DETERMINATION OF  
INELIGIBILITY ARE INCORRECT.**

**(I have corrected my criminal history record and/or have  
documentation to support that I was not convicted of a  
disqualifying criminal offense).**

If you believe you were not convicted of a disqualifying criminal offense, you may submit documentation to support that you were not convicted of a disqualifying criminal offense and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record information to TSA for review.

If you have been convicted of a disqualifying criminal offense, you **may be** eligible for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program if you submit documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record to show that you were convicted more than 7 years before you applied for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program; **and** you were released from confinement more than 5 years before you applied for participation in TSA Pre✓® through the TSA Pre✓® application program (if applicable).

**You must use the enclosed TSA Pre✓® Application Program Response Cover Sheet when submitting documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record to TSA. You must submit your documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record to TSA within 60 days from the date you receive this letter. Along with the cover sheet, you should send official documents to show:**

- The open warrant issued for a disqualifying criminal offense was issued in error, has been resolved, or did not result in a disqualifying felony criminal conviction;
- You are no longer under indictment for a disqualifying felony criminal offense;
- You were convicted of a misdemeanor or lesser offense, were found not guilty, or the charges were dismissed with no remaining legal restrictions;
- The conviction was overturned on appeal, or expunged so that it has been removed from your criminal record and carries no disabilities or legal restrictions (except for future sentencing purposes);
- You were allowed to withdraw a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere* and enter a plea of not guilty, and the case was later dismissed;
- For some, *but not all felony convictions* (see list of disqualifying offenses), you were released from incarceration more than 5 years before you filed your application and the conviction was incurred more than 7 years before you filed your application; or
- You received a *full* pardon (restoring all rights) for the disqualifying criminal conviction.

TSA should notify you whether your application has been granted within 60 days after receiving your documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record, or a longer period of time for good cause.

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**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation  
Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck®  
Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

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- **HOW TO SEND DOCUMENTS TO TSA**

**Before submitting your TSA Pre✓® Application Program Response Cover Sheet, please make sure that your printed name and address are correct.** If they are not, please make any necessary corrections and be sure to include a telephone number where you can be reached during the day.

**DOCUMENTS MAY BE MAILED VIA U.S. POSTAL SERVICE TO THE ADDRESS PROVIDED ON THE TSA Pre✓® APPLICATION PROGRAM RESPONSE COVER SHEET.**

If you use an overnight mail service, **make sure that the mail carrier delivers to a Post Office Box.** Currently, only the U.S. Postal Service delivers to Post Office Boxes. In addition to Express Mail, you may also write to TSA using registered, certified, priority, or regular mail.

**Using the enclosed TSA Pre✓® Application Program Response Cover Sheet and mailing the documents to the address on the cover sheet is the fastest way to communicate with TSA.**

**Appendix IV: Example of a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) PreCheck® Preliminary Determination of Ineligibility Letter**

TSA Pre✓® APPLICATION PROGRAM RESPONSE COVER SHEET

FROM: JANE DOESNTEXIST  
123 Minor Street  
Nowhere, FL 12345-6789  
United States

TSA Pre✓® Application Program  
0-0000000000

Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Area Code)

**DIRECTIONS FOR THE APPLICANT**

(1) Review and correct the above information as needed; (2) Select from the options listed below by marking the appropriate box(es); and (3) Attach this cover sheet to the front of any documentation submitted to TSA.

**CRIMINAL RECORD CORRECTION:** I dispute the preliminary determination of ineligibility because (check all appropriate boxes and provide supporting documentation and/or a corrected copy of your criminal history record):

**CRIMINAL RECORD ISSUES:**

- My arrest/indictment did not result in a felony conviction
- I was convicted of a misdemeanor offense, not a felony
- I received a pardon
- My conviction was overturned on appeal
- My conviction was expunged
- My conviction is more than 7 years old *and* I was never incarcerated
- My conviction is more than 7 years old *and* I was released from incarceration more than 5 years ago
- Other (an explanation must be provided) \_\_\_\_\_

**Correspondence may be submitted to TSA as follows:**

**\*Via U.S. Postal Service:**  
**Transportation Security Administration**  
**TSA Pre✓® Application Program Processing Center**  
**P.O. Box 7356**  
**Fredericksburg, VA 22404-7356**  
**Fax: 540-373-0620**

Please ensure that all documentation provided for TSA's reconsideration of the preliminary determination of ineligibility is attached. Closely following these directions will help ensure expedited processing of your request.

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# Appendix V: U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Trusted Traveler Programs Eligibility Criteria

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The CBP trusted traveler programs eligibility criteria in this appendix is from CBP's *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook*.<sup>1</sup>

Part A and B below include information on general eligibility and citizen status requirements for the four CBP trusted traveler programs.

An individual is ineligible to participate in a trusted traveler program if CBP, at its sole discretion, determines that the individual presents a potential risk for terrorism, criminality, or is otherwise not a low-risk traveler. CBP bases its risk determination in part upon an applicant's ability to demonstrate past compliance with laws, regulations, and policies.

## **Part A: General Eligibility**

Reasons why an applicant may not qualify for participation include:

- The applicant knowingly provides false and/or misleading information on the application or during the interview.
- The applicant has been arrested for, or convicted of, any criminal offense or has pending criminal charges or outstanding warrants in any country.
- The applicant has been found in violation of any customs regulations, procedures, or laws in any country.
- The applicant has been found in violation of any immigration regulations, procedures, or laws in any country.
- The applicant has been found in violation of any agriculture regulations, procedures, or laws in any country.
- The applicant is the subject of an investigation by any federal, state, or local law enforcement agency in any country.
- The applicant is inadmissible to the U.S. under applicable immigration laws or has, at any time, been granted a waiver of inadmissibility or parole.
- The applicant is known or suspected of being or having been engaged in conduct constituting, in preparation for, in aid of, or related to terrorism.

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<sup>1</sup>Department of Homeland Security, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, *Trusted Traveler Programs Handbook* (Washington, D.C., Sept. 2022).

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**Appendix V: U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection (CBP) Trusted  
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- The applicant cannot satisfy CBP of their low-risk status or meet other program requirements.

### **Part B: Citizenship Status Requirements**

Each trusted traveler program has its own citizenship status requirements.

#### Global Entry

- U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, and U.S. lawful permanent residents.<sup>2</sup>
- Citizens of countries approved for participation through reciprocal bi-national arrangements. These individuals must be admissible to the U.S. and be in possession of all required entry documents.
- Must be admissible to the U.S. without a waiver.

#### Secure Electronic Network for Travelers Rapid Inspection (SENTRI)

- U.S. citizens and U.S. lawful permanent residents.
- Citizens of other countries who are admissible to the U.S. and are in possession of all required entry documents.
- Must be admissible to the U.S. without a waiver.

#### NEXUS

- U.S. citizens and U.S. lawful permanent residents who are admissible to Canada and are in possession of all required entry documents.
- Canadian citizens or landed immigrants of Canada who are admissible to the U.S. and are in possession of all required entry documents.

#### Free and Secure Trade (FAST)

- U.S. citizens and U.S. lawful permanent residents who meet all legal and regulatory requirements to operate a commercial conveyance into Canada (including valid admission documents).

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<sup>2</sup>A U.S. citizen is an individual who (1) is a citizen of the U.S. at birth; (2) automatically acquired, or obtained a certificate of, citizenship as a child; or (3) became a naturalized citizen of the U.S. as an adult. All U.S. citizens are, by definition, U.S. nationals. A U.S. noncitizen national is a person who, though not a citizen of the U.S., owes permanent allegiance to the U.S. by virtue of their U.S. nationality (for example, persons born to noncitizen parents in American Samoa or Swains Island). A U.S. lawful permanent resident is foreign national who has obtained a Green Card permitting them to lawfully reside and work within the U.S. on a permanent basis.



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**Appendix V: U.S. Customs and  
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- Canadian citizens or landed immigrants of Canada who meet all legal and regulatory requirements to operate a commercial conveyance into the U.S. (including valid admission documents).
- Mexican citizens or residents who meet all legal and regulatory requirements to operate a commercial conveyance into the U.S. (including valid admission documents).
- Must be 18 years of age or older and possess a valid driver's license.

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# Appendix VI: Example of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Denial Letter

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While the information and formatting in the below letter is representative of an official U.S. Customs and Border Protection denial letter, the addressee and personal information are fictional for the purpose of this example.

**Appendix VI: Example of a U.S. Customs and Border Protection Denial Letter**



U.S. Customs and Border Protection  
Official Trusted Traveler Program Website | Department of Homeland



NTC-P TTV  
--  
Sterling, VA 20164  
US

John Doe  
123 Main Street  
Somewhere, VA 12345  
US

RE: Your Global Entry Program Membership #012345678

Dear John Doe:

Thank you for your application to the Global Entry program of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Global Entry is a voluntary program available to travelers that pass a comprehensive background investigation. Applicants found to be ineligible for Global Entry participation may still be permitted to enter into the United States although they will not be permitted to use the Global Entry dedicated lanes. We regret to inform you that your membership in Global Entry has been disapproved for the following reason(s):

Other

You do not meet program eligibility requirements due to one or more arrests, pending criminal charges, and/or convictions, in any country.

If you believe the decision was based upon **inaccurate or incomplete information**, you may be eligible to request reconsideration through the Trusted Traveler Program application website:

<https://ttp.dhs.gov/>. Reconsideration Requests and attachments to the Ombudsman should be in English and must include the following details:

1. Date of denial and denial reason(s) from this letter
2. Summary of information to further clarify a record or explain an incident or arrest;
3. Court disposition documentation in PDF format for all arrests or convictions, even if expunged; and/or

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**Appendix VI: Example of a U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection Denial Letter**

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4. Other supporting documentation you feel may influence the Ombudsman's decision. Supported formats: PDF, DOCX, DOC, PNG, JPEG, and GIF.

The review by the Ombudsman will be based on the information provided by you and should include any information to further clarify a record, explain an incident or arrest, or show the disposition of criminal charges. Please remember that the following circumstances may make you ineligible for participation:

1. Providing false or incomplete information on the application;
2. Convictions for any criminal offense or pending criminal charges to include outstanding warrants;
3. Violations of any customs, immigration, or agriculture regulations or laws in any country;
4. Inadmissibility to the United States under immigration laws;
5. Receipt of a criminal pardon from any country; or
6. Other circumstances that indicate to CBP that you have not qualified as "low risk."

CBP is committed to the fair, impartial and respectful treatment of all members of the trade and traveling public, and has memorialized its commitment to nondiscrimination in existing policies, including the February 2014 CBP Policy on Nondiscrimination in Law Enforcement Activities and all other Administered Programs.

Sincerely,

Supervisor, Global Entry Enrollment Center  
U.S. Customs and Border Protection

# Appendix VII: Comments from the Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland  
Security**

February 8, 2024

Tina Won Sherman  
Director, Homeland Security and Justice  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548-0001

Re: Management Response to Draft Report GAO-24-106314, "TRUSTED TRAVELER PROGRAMS: DHS Has Enrollment Processes, but CBP Should Provide Additional Information on Reconsiderations"

Dear Ms. Sherman:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this draft report. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department) appreciates the U.S. Government Accountability Office's (GAO) work in planning and conducting its review and issuing this report.

DHS leadership is pleased to note GAO's recognition that DHS's trusted traveler programs (TTP) are key components of both the Transportation Security Administration's and U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) risk-based approach to facilitating legitimate travel and trade while preventing terrorists, criminals, weapons, and contraband from entering or traveling within the U.S. DHS remains committed to ensuring TTP expedites customs and immigration processing for pre-approved, low-risk travelers—including U.S. citizens and foreign nationals—and cargo through dedicated lanes and kiosks at air, land, and sea ports of entry using modified screening that improves security by being more efficient during screenings.

The draft report contained one recommendation with which the Department concurs. Enclosed find our detailed response to the recommendation. DHS previously submitted technical comments addressing several accuracy, contextual, sensitivity, and other issues under a separate cover for GAO's consideration.

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**Appendix VII: Comments from the Department  
of Homeland Security**

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Again, thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this draft report. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. We look forward to working with you again in the future.

Sincerely,

JIM H CRUMPACKER Digitally signed by JIM H CRUMPACKER  
Date: 2024.02.08 08:46:27 -05'00'

JIM H. CRUMPACKER, CIA, CFE  
Director  
Departmental GAO-OIG Liaison Office

Enclosure

**Enclosure: Management Response to Recommendation  
Contained in GAO-24-106314**

GAO recommended that the CBP Commissioner:

**Recommendation 1:** Include written instructions in CBP's trusted traveler program denial and revocation decision letters on how travelers can seek additional information regarding the specific reason(s) for the decision.

**Response:** Concur. CBP's Office of Field Operations (OFO) TTP will review existing materials and make updates, as appropriate, to the denial and revocation decision notification letters, including instructions on how travelers can seek additional information regarding the specific reason(s) for the decision. CBP OFO TTP will also include a website address with a list of enrollment center locations and contact information. Estimated Completion Date: June 28, 2024.

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# Appendix VIII: GAO Contacts and Staff Acknowledgements

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## GAO Contact

Tina Won Sherman, 202-512-8461 or [shermant@gao.gov](mailto:shermant@gao.gov)

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## Staff

## Acknowledgements

In addition to the contact above, Kirk Kiester (Assistant Director), Bruce Crise (Analyst-In-Charge), Tracy Abdo, Michele Fejfar, Eric Hauswirth, Sierra Hicks, Susan Hsu, Sasan J. "Jon" Najmi, and Kevin Reeves all made key contributions to this report.



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