



Highlights of [GAO-07-838T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

The Senior Executive Service (SES) generally represents the most experienced and senior segment of the federal workforce. Having a diverse SES corps can be an organizational strength that contributes to the achievement of results by bringing a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to bear on policy development and implementation, strategic planning, problem solving, and decision making.

In a January 2003 report (GAO-03-34), GAO provided data on career SES members by race, ethnicity, and gender as of October 2000. In March 2000, we reported similar data for the Postal Career Executive Service as of September 1999 (GAO/GGD-00-76). In response to a request for updated information on diversity in the top levels of government, GAO is providing information obtained from the Office of Personnel Management's Civilian Personnel Data File and the Postal Service on the representation of women and minorities in (1) the federal government's career SES, (2) the developmental pools from which the vast majority of potential successors for career senior level positions will come (i.e., GS-14 and GS-15), (3) the Postal Service's career officer and senior executive positions in the Postal Career Executive Service, and (4) the developmental pool of potential successors for senior level Postal Service positions as of the end of fiscal year 2006.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-07-838T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact George Stalcup on (202) 512-9490 or at stalcupg@gao.gov.

HUMAN CAPITAL

Diversity in the Federal SES and the Senior Levels of the U.S. Postal Service

What GAO Found

Data in the Civilian Personnel Data File and provided by the U.S. Postal Service show that as of the end of fiscal year 2006, the overall percentages of women and minorities have increased since 2000 in both the federal career SES and the developmental pool for potential successors and the Postal Career Executive Service (PCES) and the developmental pool of potential successors (EAS levels 22 and above) since 1999.

Governmentwide	October 2000			September 2006		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
		Women	Minorities		Women	Minorities
SES	6,110	23.6	13.8	6,349	28.4	15.9
SES potential developmental pool (GS-14s and GS-15s)	135,012	28.2	17.0	160,573	32.8	21.0

Source: GAO analysis of the Office of Personnel Management's Central Personnel Data File.

U.S. Postal Service	September 1999			September 2006		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
		Women	Minorities		Women	Minorities
PCES	854	20.1	20.8	768	28.6	25.5
PCES potential developmental pool	8,955	22.7	25.3	8,606	30.9	29.1

Source: GAO analysis of Postal Service data.

As we have testified, the federal government is facing new and more complex challenges in the 21st century because of long-term fiscal constraints, changing demographics, and other factors. SES members are critical to providing the strategic leadership needed to effectively meet these challenges. Racial, ethnic, and gender diversity in the federal government's senior ranks can be a key organizational component for executing agency missions, ensuring accountability to the American people in the administration and operation of federal programs, and achieving results.

SES retirement eligibility is much higher than the workforce in general, and a significant number of SES retirements could result in a loss of leadership continuity, institutional knowledge, and expertise among the SES corps. In fact, OPM estimates that 90 percent of federal executives will be eligible for retirement over the next 10 years, and the Postal Service expects nearly half of its executives to retire within 5 years. This underscores the need for effective succession planning. Succession planning also is tied to the federal government's opportunity to affect SES diversity through new appointments. Gaining insight into diversity in the federal government's senior leadership and developmental pools and factors affecting them is important to developing and maintaining a high-quality and inclusive workforce.