



Highlights of [GAO-08-609T](#), a testimony before congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

A diverse Senior Executive Service (SES), which generally represents the most experienced segment of the federal workforce, can be an organizational strength by bringing a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to policy development and decision making. In January 2003, GAO provided data on the diversity of career SES members as of October 2000 ([GAO-03-34](#)). In March 2000, GAO reported similar data for the Postal Career Executive Service (PCES) as of September 1999 ([GAO/GGD-00-76](#)). In its 2003 report, GAO also projected what the profile of the SES would be in October 2007 if appointment and separation trends did not change.

In response to a request for updated information on diversity in the SES and the senior ranks of the U.S. Postal Service, GAO is providing data on race, ethnicity, and gender obtained from the Office of Personnel Management's (OPM) Central Personnel Data File and the Postal Service for (1) career SES positions as of the end of fiscal year 2007 and the SES developmental pool (i.e., GS-15 and GS-14 positions) as well as a comparison of actual fiscal year 2007 data to projections for fiscal year 2007 that GAO made in its 2003 report, and (2) the PCES, the Executive Administrative Schedule (EAS), and EAS participants in the Corporate Succession Planning (CSP) program. GAO also describes the process that executive agencies and the Postal Service use to select members into their senior ranks.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-609T](#). For more information, contact Katherine Siggerud at (202) 512-2834 or siggerudk@gao.gov or George Stalcup at (202) 512-6806 or stalcupg@gao.gov

HUMAN CAPITAL

Diversity in the Federal SES and Senior Levels of the U.S. Postal Service and Processes for Selecting New Executives

What GAO Found

Data in the Central Personnel Data File and provided by the U.S. Postal Service show that as of the end of fiscal year 2007, the overall percentages of women and minorities have increased in the federal career SES and its developmental pool for potential successors since 2000 as well as in the PCES and EAS levels 22 and above, from which PCES potential successors could come, since 1999.

Governmentwide	October 2000			September 2007		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
		Women	Minorities		Women	Minorities
SES	6,110	23.6	13.8	6,555	29.1	15.8
SES potential developmental pool (GS-15s and GS-14s)	135,012	28.2	17.0	149,149	34.3	22.5

Source: GAO analysis of OPM's Central Personnel Data File.

U.S. Postal Service	September 1999			September 2007		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent	
		Women	Minorities		Women	Minorities
PCES	854	20.1	20.8	748	29.0	25.5
EAS levels 22 and above	8,955	22.7	25.3	8,826	31.5	29.5

Source: U.S. Postal Service.

Actual fiscal year 2007 SES data show that representation increased from October 2000 among minorities and women and that those increases generally exceed the increases we projected in our 2003 report. The only decrease among minorities occurred in African American men, whose fiscal year 2007 actual representation (5.0 percent) was less than the October 2000 baseline (5.5 percent). For the developmental pool (GS-15s and GS-14s), fiscal year 2007 data show that increases also occurred generally among minorities and women since October 2000.

Both executive branch agencies and the Postal Service have processes for selecting members into their senior ranks. Executive agencies use Executive Resources Boards to review the executive and technical qualifications of eligible candidates for initial SES career appointments and make recommendations on the best qualified. An OPM-administered board reviews candidates' qualifications before appointment to the SES. The Postal Service does not fall under the jurisdiction of OPM's board for promoting employees to the PCES. Instead, it promotes EAS and other employees to the PCES when they are selected to fill PCES vacancies. Most employees promoted to the PCES have been CSP program participants, consistent with Postal Service policy encouraging this practice. The CSP program is intended to identify and develop employees so that they can promptly and successfully assume PCES positions as these positions become available.