

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-223](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

The Coast Guard is a multi-mission maritime military service responsible for maritime safety, security, and environmental protection, among other things. Since 2006 the Coast Guard has implemented organizational changes to improve its effectiveness and efficiency. During this time, the Coast Guard also created a workforce assessments process to determine the number of personnel and skills required to meet mission needs. In April 2018, the Coast Guard reported to Congress that it was operating below the workforce necessary to meet its mission needs.

GAO was asked to review the status of the Coast Guard's modernization and workforce assessment efforts. Among other things, this report examines the extent to which the Coast Guard (1) applied key practices for agency reorganization and (2) has assessed its workforce needs. GAO analyzed Coast Guard documents used to plan and implement its modernization effort against GAO key practices for agency reorganization. GAO also analyzed Coast Guard workforce assessments and data from 2003 through 2019. GAO also reviewed policy and planning documents and interviewed Coast Guard officials.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making six recommendations, including that the Coast Guard measure progress in achieving the goal of modernization, update a plan with time frames and milestones for completing its workforce assessment goal, and obtain information on the resources needed to meet its goal. DHS concurred with our recommendations.

View [GAO-20-223](#). For more information, contact Nathan Anderson at (202) 512-3841 or [andersonn@gao.gov](mailto:andersonn@gao.gov).

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# COAST GUARD

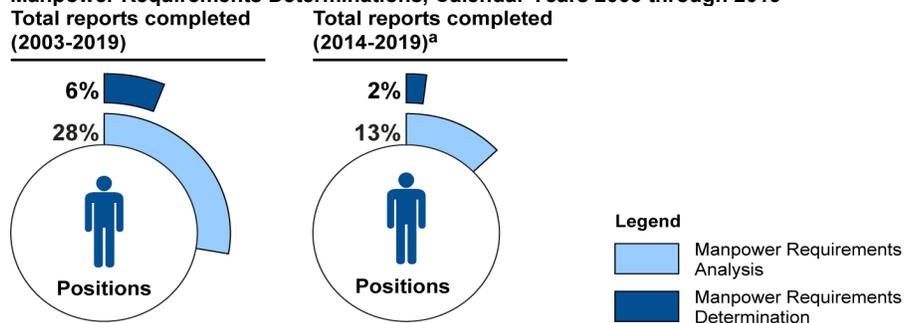
## Actions Needed to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Organizational Changes and Determine Workforce Needs

### What GAO Found

The U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard) realigned its mission planning and mission support functions through an effort known as "modernization," but did not consistently apply key practices for agency reorganization in implementing the effort. Of seven key practices, the Coast Guard did not apply two and partially applied three. For example, the Coast Guard did not measure its progress in achieving the goal of modernization, as key practices recommend. Coast Guard documents for organizational change and associated guidance do not require such practices to be followed. By ensuring such practices are implemented, the Coast Guard will be better positioned to determine the extent to which its investments meet modernization's goal of improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Although the Coast Guard has informed Congress that it needs to increase its workforce, it has assessed a small portion of its workforce needs. Its preferred tool for assessing workforce needs is its manpower requirements determination process, which includes manpower requirements analyses (MRA) and is completed with a manpower requirements determination (MRD). Coast Guard guidance states that MRAs are to be updated every 5 years, and according to its April 2018 Manpower Requirements Plan, the Coast Guard's goal is to complete MRDs for all of its 58,000 personnel and 158 unit types. However, the Coast Guard had completed MRAs for 13 percent of its workforce and MRDs for 2 percent over the past 5 calendar years (see figure).

**Share of U.S. Coast Guard Workforce Supported by Manpower Requirements Analyses and Manpower Requirements Determinations, Calendar Years 2003 through 2019**



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Coast Guard reports. | GAO-20-223

Note: The U.S. Coast Guard (Coast Guard) began implementing the manpower requirements determination process in 2003.

<sup>a</sup>Coast Guard guidance states that manpower requirements analyses should be updated every 5 years. This shows the share of analyses and associated determinations the Coast Guard completed within the past 5 years, in accordance with its guidance.

The Coast Guard's plan does not include time frames and milestones for how it will achieve its workforce assessment goal, and information on the resources it needs to complete MRDs for all positions and units has not been updated in 10 years. By updating its plan to complete manpower requirements determinations and obtaining information on the resources needed to achieve its workforce assessment goal, the Coast Guard will be better positioned to ensure that it has the right number of people with requisite skills in the right units to meet its mission demands and to inform Congress of its manpower needs.