

GAO@100 Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-21-556](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

From fiscal year 2016 through 2018, USPS saved an estimated \$6.6 billion by increasing its use of non-career employees; this increase is an important accomplishment given USPS's financial challenges. Compared to career employees, non-career employees are compensated less and USPS has more flexibility in setting their schedules.

GAO was asked to review the effects of USPS's increased use of non-career employees. This report examines the rates of non-career employees: (1) turnover and (2) injuries, as well as factors and costs associated with each and USPS's efforts to manage these issues. GAO analyzed USPS data from fiscal years 2016 through 2020 to determine turnover and injury rates, conducted analyses to determine associated factors, and calculated costs, including workers compensation costs using Department of Labor data. GAO also interviewed officials representing USPS, postal unions, postal management associations, and the USPS Office of Inspector General.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that USPS analyze employee injuries by career status to identify opportunities for reducing injuries, particularly among non-career employees. USPS accepted this recommendation and noted that future analysis of injuries by career status can enhance accident analysis and the development of training initiatives.

View [GAO-21-556](#). For more information, contact Jill Naamane at (202) 512-2834 or NaamaneJ@gao.gov

August 2021

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

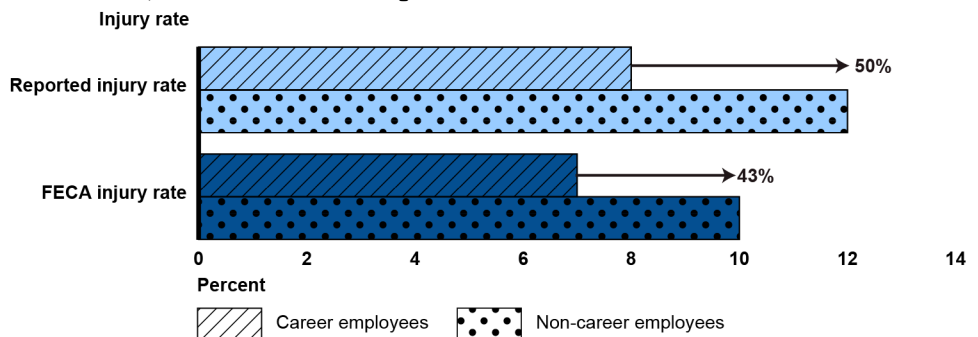
Further Analysis Could Help Identify Opportunities to Reduce Injuries among Non-Career Employees

What GAO Found

The United States Postal Service (USPS) uses both career employees and non-career employees to accomplish its mission. Career employees are considered permanent and are entitled to a range of benefits and privileges; non-career employees receive lower pay and fewer benefits and are often hired on renewable contracts that offer a pathway to a career position. GAO found that non-career employees' turnover rates were significantly higher than career turnover rates, both before and after GAO controlled for numerous factors such as employee tenure. GAO found that non-career status was the most significant factor associated with turnover. Postal employee groups identified features, including unpredictable hours, of non-career positions that may contribute to turnover, though USPS officials noted some of these features are governed by negotiated agreements. USPS has taken steps, and described other initiatives in its March 2021 strategic plan, to reduce non-career turnover rates.

With regard to injuries, non-career employees had higher injury rates in the study period, for both definitions of injury used in GAO's analyses (see figure), but USPS does not analyze injury data by career status. USPS officials attributed higher rates of injuries among non-career employees to differences other than career status such as less tenure among non-career employees. However, GAO analysis controlled for tenure and other factors and found that non-career employees had higher injury rates than career employees by about 16 percent and 22 percent, depending on the definition of injury used. Moreover, average workers' compensation costs were higher for non-career employees than for career employees with limited tenure, driven primarily by differences in injury rates. USPS regularly collects and analyzes workplace accident and injury data across its workforce and has taken steps in recent years to improve safety through training and other actions. However, USPS does not identify key differences between career and non-career employees in its analyses. Without conducting analyses by career status, USPS may be unable to identify some causes of non-career employee injuries and miss opportunities to reduce them.

Rates of Reported Injuries and of Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) Injuries by Career Status, Fiscal Years 2016 through 2020



Source: GAO analysis of U.S. Postal Service and Department of Labor data. | GAO-21-556

Note: FECA injuries refer to USPS employee incidents associated with workers' compensation claims, regardless of whether the claims have been determined to be eligible.