



# SENIOR EXECUTIVE SERVICE

## Enhanced Agency Efforts Needed to Improve Diversity as the Senior Corps Turns Over

Highlights of [GAO-04-123T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Civil Service and Agency Organization, Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

The federal government faces large losses in its Senior Executive Service (SES), primarily through retirement but also because of other normal attrition. This presents the government with substantial challenges to ensuring an able management cadre and also provides opportunities to affect the composition of the SES.

In a January 2003 report, [GAO-03-34](#), GAO estimated the number of SES members who would actually leave service through fiscal year 2007 and reviewed the implications for diversity, as defined by gender, race, and ethnicity of the estimated losses. Specifically, GAO estimated by gender, race, and ethnicity the number of members of the career SES who will leave government service from October 1, 2000, through September 30, 2007, and what the profile of the SES will be if appointment trends do not change. GAO made the same estimates for the pool of GS-15s and GS-14s, from whose ranks the vast majority of replacements for departing SES members come, to ascertain the likely composition of that pool.

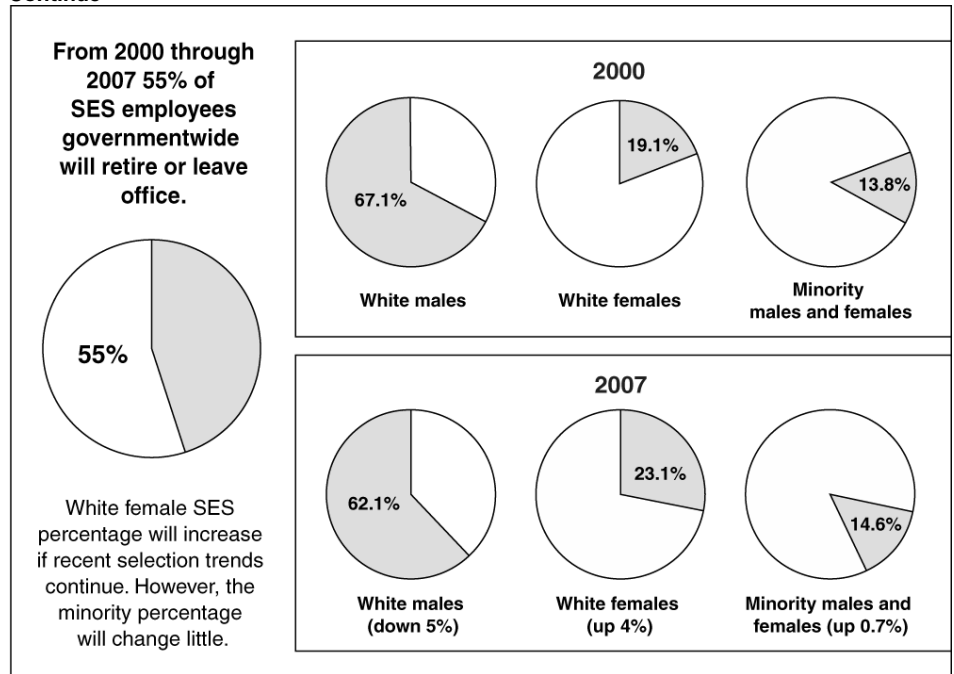
### What GAO Found

More than half of the 6,100 career SES members employed on October 1, 2000, will have left service by October 1, 2007. Using recent SES appointment trends, the only significant changes in diversity would be an increase in the number of white women and an essentially equal decrease in white men. The percentage of GS-15s and GS-14s projected to leave would be lower (47 percent and 34 percent, respectively), and we project that the number of minorities still in the GS-15 and GS-14 workforce would provide agencies sufficient opportunity to select minority members for the SES.

Estimates showed substantial variation in the proportion of SES minorities leaving between 24 large agencies and in the effect on those agencies' gender, racial, and ethnic profiles. Minority representation at 10 agencies would decrease and at 12 would increase.

Agencies have an opportunity to affect SES replacement trends by developing succession strategies that help achieve a diverse workforce. Along with constructive agency leadership, these strategies could generate a pool of well-prepared women and minorities to boost the diversity of the SES ranks.

**Projected Changes in the SES from 2000 through 2007 If Recent Appointment Trends Continue**



Source: GAO.

[www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-123T](http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-04-123T).

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

