Why GAO Did This Study

Gender-related price differences occur when consumers are charged different prices for the same or similar goods and services because of factors related to gender. While variation in costs and consumer demand may give rise to such price differences, some policymakers have raised concerns that gender bias may also be a factor. While the Equal Credit Opportunity Act and Fair Housing Act prohibit discrimination based on sex in credit and housing transactions, no federal law prohibits businesses from charging consumers different prices for the same or similar goods targeted to different genders.

GAO was asked to review gender-related price differences for consumer goods and services sold in the United States. This report examines, among other things, (1) how prices compared for selected goods and services marketed to men and women, and potential reasons for any price differences; (2) what is known about price differences for men and women for products not differentiated by gender, such as mortgages; and (3) the extent to which federal agencies have identified and addressed any concerns about gender-related price differences.

To examine these issues, GAO analyzed retail price data, reviewed relevant academic studies, analyzed federal consumer complaint data, and interviewed federal agency officials, industry experts, and academics.