

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD spends over \$300 billion annually on contracts for products and services such as major weapons systems and military support services. By awarding and overseeing these contracts, DOD's acquisition workforce plays a critical role in maximizing DOD's buying power. DOD has increased the size of its acquisition workforce in recent years, but has also faced a number of challenges hiring and retaining personnel. DOD has a number of human capital flexibilities that help DOD in hiring, recruiting, and retaining its civilian acquisition workforce.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 included a provision for GAO to review DOD's implementation of human capital flexibilities for its acquisition workforce. This report: (1) provides information on DOD's use of human capital flexibilities and (2) determines the extent to which DOD has monitored and assessed its use of these flexibilities. GAO reviewed relevant statutes, and DOD policies, guidance, and acquisition workforce plans; analyzed DOD's fiscal year 2014-2018 civilian acquisition workforce personnel data; and interviewed DOD officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that HCI regularly monitors DOD's use of human capital flexibilities for its civilian acquisition workforce to help identify challenges, inconsistencies, or needed improvements in using these tools. DOD concurred with the recommendation.

View [GAO-19-509](#). For more information, contact Timothy J. DiNapoli at (202) 512-4841 or dinapoli@gao.gov.

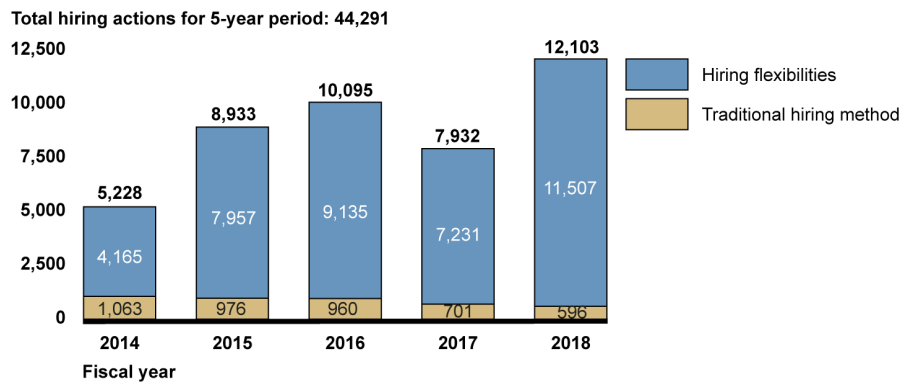
DEFENSE ACQUISITION WORKFORCE

DOD Increased Use of Human Capital Flexibilities but Could Improve Monitoring

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) has used human capital flexibilities extensively to hire, recruit, and retain its civilian acquisition workforce. Since 2014, usage rates for hiring flexibilities—alternatives to the traditional, competitive hiring process—have generally increased. DOD leadership has encouraged its hiring personnel to use these flexibilities, such as direct hire authorities, to reduce the length of the hiring process. From fiscal year 2014 to 2018, DOD used hiring flexibilities for 90 percent of its approximately 44,000 civilian acquisition workforce hiring actions (see figure).

The Department of Defense (DOD) Used Hiring Flexibilities for Most of Its Civilian Acquisition Workforce Hires from Fiscal Year 2014 to 2018



Source: GAO analysis of DOD information. | GAO-19-509

DOD also increased its use of recruitment and retention flexibilities for its civilian acquisition workforce, increasing the dollar amount authorized from \$13.9 million in fiscal year 2014 to \$33.7 million in fiscal year 2018. This increase came as DOD leadership emphasized the benefits of these flexibilities, and oversaw concerted efforts to increase their usage through the dissemination of information to human resource specialists.

While usage of human capital flexibilities has increased, DOD's Office of Human Capital Initiatives (HCI), which is responsible for DOD-wide acquisition workforce strategic planning, does not regularly monitor or assess how the department uses these flexibilities. HCI regularly monitors the overall health of the acquisition workforce, including by reviewing workforce metrics on a quarterly basis, but does not regularly monitor the military departments' use of human capital flexibilities. For example, GAO found the Air Force and Navy used direct hire authorities twice as often as the Army in fiscal year 2018. Without efforts to gain such insights through monitoring, HCI may be missing opportunities to identify challenges, inconsistencies, or needed improvements in using these tools. With regard to assessing the use of human capital flexibilities, HCI intends to study how long it takes to hire personnel when using the flexibilities. According to DOD officials, this analysis can begin following development of a plan to ensure that defense components consistently collect data on hiring timeframes. DOD officials said they expect to issue this plan in 2019.