

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-104599](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

To help address challenges veterans may face when seeking employment, VEVRAA requires that certain federal contractors take affirmative action to employ and promote veterans protected under the law. OFCCP is charged with ensuring that the approximately 123,000 federal contractor establishments comply with VEVRAA. GAO was asked to review the implementation and enforcement of VEVRAA. This report examines OFCCP's (1) assistance to help federal contractors comply with VEVRAA requirements, and (2) its enforcement efforts to help ensure federal contractors take steps to recruit and employ protected veterans.

To address these objectives, GAO interviewed agency officials and representatives from 10 stakeholder groups, reviewed guidance documents and enforcement procedures, and analyzed enforcement data and a non-generalizable sample of 46 contractors' affirmative action programs, selected for variation in employer size, industry, and geography.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that OFCCP incorporate key practices on employing veterans into its VEVRAA information, clarify hiring benchmarks, and use available data to better approximate the protected veteran population and assess discrimination. The agency had no comments on these recommendations.

View [GAO-22-104599](#). For more information, contact Thomas Costa at (202) 512-4769 or costat@gao.gov.

May 2022

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

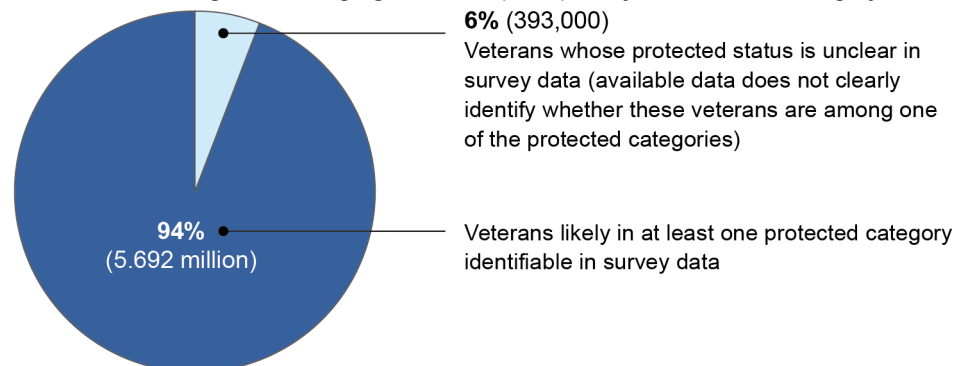
Better Assistance and Data Use Could Improve Oversight of Veterans' Federal Contractor Employment

What GAO Found

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) helps contractors comply with affirmative action provisions for veterans protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 (VEVRAA). OFCCP provides web-based resources and coordinates with contractors and stakeholders, among other activities. For example, OFCCP provides some information on veteran recruitment, but does not include key practices, such as how to write veteran-friendly job descriptions. VEVRAA regulations require contractors to establish an annual veteran hiring benchmark—generally based on the percentage of veterans in the civilian workforce—to help contractors assess the success of their veteran recruitment efforts. However, information OFCCP provides does not clearly specify how contractors should use this benchmark. Among the sample of 46 contractors GAO reviewed, one-half did not compare their benchmark to new hires. Without key information on best recruiting practices and how to use these hiring benchmarks, contractors may be missing opportunities to expand and improve their veteran outreach efforts.

OFCCP lacks data on the protected veteran population, which may limit its ability to protect veterans' rights under VEVRAA. Officials said they cannot approximate the overall size or characteristics of the protected veteran population. However, survey data used to develop the national VEVRAA hiring benchmark provides some information about veterans likely in protected categories (see figure). Without estimating the size of the protected veteran population, OFCCP cannot effectively assess progress because it cannot determine the availability of protected veterans in the labor force. OFCCP enforces VEVRAA regulations, which prohibit discrimination against protected veterans, through compliance evaluations and complaint investigations. While OFCCP can access contractor data on protected veterans by job category, compliance officers are not required to analyze these data during evaluations. If OFCCP analyzed existing data, it may be better able to identify potential discrimination against these veterans.

Estimated Percentage of Working Age Veterans (25-54) Likely in a Protected Category, 2020



Source: GAO analysis of CPS Veterans Supplement data in Bureau of Labor Statistics' *Employment Situation of Veterans—2020* report. | [GAO-22-104599](#)