

A report to congressional addressees.

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What GAO Found

TSA has taken some steps to communicate Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC®) program information with stakeholders. However, TSA relies on an ad hoc communication approach rather than a documented communication plan to determine how to share information with stakeholders. This has contributed to some stakeholders reporting that they experienced declining engagement with and delays receiving key program updates from TSA. Developing and implementing a communication plan could help TSA ensure that all stakeholders receive the information necessary to effectively operate the TWIC® program and reduce security risks.

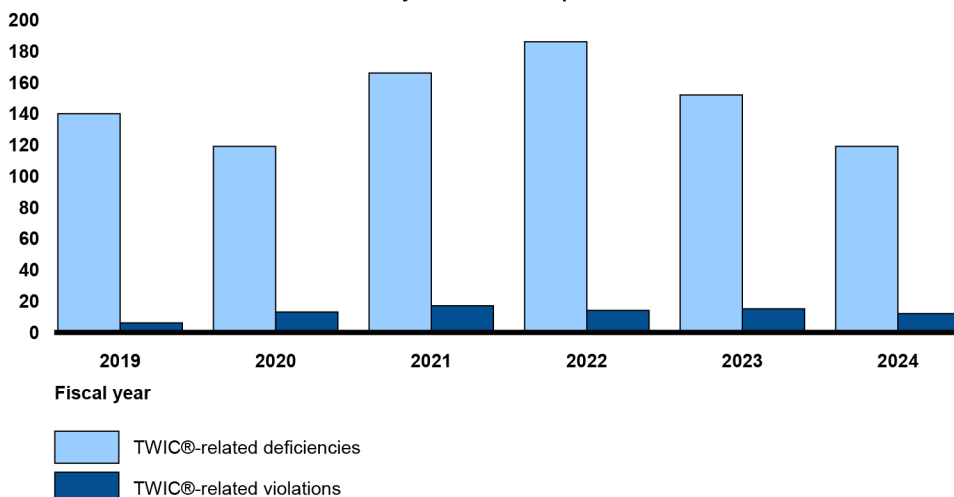
The Coast Guard does not share or analyze all of the data it collects during inspections to oversee how facility operators implement the TWIC® program. For example, the Coast Guard collects data on deficiencies, a less severe form of noncompliance, and violations, a more severe form of noncompliance that can result in notices of violation or civil penalties. GAO's assessment of inspection findings for fiscal years 2019 through 2024 showed:

- 888 TWIC®-related deficiencies, such as operators not ensuring that facility personnel with security duties were qualified to perform their roles, and
- 83 TWIC® violations, such as unescorted individuals entering a secure area, highlighting areas that may warrant improvement.

However, the Coast Guard does not provide the data to TWIC® inspectors. According to officials, this is because the data did not relate to areas that would require a change to the program. However, by communicating the data with inspectors, regardless of their effect on the program, the Coast Guard could improve inspectors' awareness of TWIC®-related risks.

Total Number of Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC®)-related Deficiencies and Violations, Fiscal Years 2019–2024

Number of deficiencies or violations found by Coast Guard inspectors



Source: GAO analysis of TWIC® deficiency and violation data. | GAO-26-107521

Why GAO Did This Study

The TWIC® program aims to provide a tamper-resistant biometric card to maritime workers who require unescorted access to designated secure areas of facilities and vessels under Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 regulations. As of August 2025, more than 2 million individuals held a TWIC® credential.

TSA oversees TWIC® applicants' enrollment and background checks. The Coast Guard enforces certain TWIC® regulatory requirements, including by inspecting facilities for compliance.

The Transportation Security Screening Modernization Act of 2024 includes a provision for us to review TSA's security threat assessment programs and we were asked to review other aspects of TWIC® operations. This report examines (1) the extent to which TSA communicates TWIC® program information to stakeholders, and (2) the extent to which the Coast Guard has overseen the implementation of the TWIC® program by facility operators, among other objectives.

GAO also examined TSA and Coast Guard policy and data for fiscal years 2019 through 2024. In addition, GAO interviewed agency officials and port stakeholders. To obtain a range of TWIC® perspectives, these stakeholders included TWIC® operators at facilities selected in part for diversity in size and geographic regions.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making seven recommendations, including that the TSA Administrator implement a plan to communicate TWIC® information to stakeholders and that the Coast Guard communicate TWIC®-related violation and deficiency data with inspectors. The Department of Homeland Security concurred with these recommendations.