

Actions Needed to Ensure Complete and Timely Reports to Congress Regarding Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment

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A report to congressional requesters.

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What GAO Found

The problems of sexual assault and sexual harassment at the U.S. Coast Guard are not new. In its most recent report to Congress on this issue, covering fiscal year 2022, the Coast Guard reported 226 incidents of sexual assault and 88 incidents of sexual harassment. This report is required by law but fully included only 5 of the 11 required elements, partially included 4 of them, and did not include 2. Further, the Coast Guard submitted this report about 1 year late. The report covering fiscal year 2023 was due on January 15, 2024 and the report covering fiscal year 2024 was due on January 15, 2025. Both remained unissued, as of December 2025.

Comparison of U.S. Coast Guard's Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Report on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment to Statutory Reporting Requirements

Number of elements	Examples
5  Fully included	<i>The report identified 40 substantiated cases of sexual harassment in fiscal year 2022.</i>
4  Partially included	<i>The report provided synopses of substantiated cases of sexual assault that resulted in courts martial but did not provide synopses for other types of cases.</i>
2  Not included	<i>The report does not include the percentage of sexual assault investigations involving accusations or adverse actions against the victims.</i>

Source: GAO analysis of 14 U.S.C. § 5112 and U.S. Coast Guard documents and interviews. | GAO-26-108571

The Coast Guard's process for compiling the annual report did not fully follow its own procedures. According to these procedures, cognizant program and legal offices are to conduct reviews. The service used outdated statutory language and templates with deficiencies over multiple years, raising questions about whether the legal review was sufficient. By ensuring that it addresses all required sexual assault and sexual harassment reporting requirements and meets the statutory deadline, the Coast Guard could better communicate complete and quality information for decision-making and oversight, and increase transparency to Congress on incidents of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

Why GAO Did This Study

Since 2010, the Coast Guard has been required by law to submit an annual report to Congress on reported incidents of sexual assault and, since 2018, sexual harassment involving members of the Coast Guard.

GAO was asked to review the Coast Guard's process for annually reporting on sexual assault and sexual harassment to Congress. This report examines (1) the Coast Guard's processes to identify and compile sexual assault and sexual harassment data, and (2) the extent to which the Coast Guard ensures that it reports on instances of sexual assault and sexual harassment to Congress as required.

GAO reviewed Coast Guard documentation on its processes for identifying and compiling sexual assault and sexual harassment data. GAO analyzed the extent to which the sexual assault and sexual harassment report for fiscal year 2022—the most recent year available—incorporated required elements by comparing them to the law (14 U.S.C. § 5112). GAO also interviewed Coast Guard officials from headquarters and from 5 of 9 Coast Guard districts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is recommending that the Coast Guard ensure that (1) annual sexual assault and sexual harassment reports to Congress address all required elements and (2) the reports are issued on time. DHS concurred with the recommendations and stated that the Coast Guard will ensure that the annual reports address all required elements and are timely.