

New Occupancy Data Help Agencies Shed Unneeded Office Space But Gaps Limit the Full Picture

GAO-27-108503

October 2026

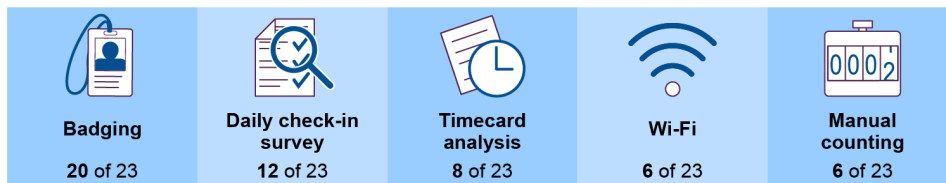
A report to congressional committees

Contact: David Marroni at MarroniD@gao.gov

What GAO Found

Under the Utilizing Space Efficiently and Improving Technologies (USE IT) Act, enacted in January 2025, federal agencies are now required to collect and report occupancy data. This data is used to calculate utilization rates for agencies' office space in federally owned buildings and leased locations. While 20 of the 23 agencies that responded to GAO's survey reported using existing badging systems for this purpose, 16 of these 20 agencies reported supplementing that information with data from other sources such as daily check-in surveys. Nearly all agencies surveyed noted the importance of having easy to implement, cost-effective data collection approaches that they could put in place by the act's July 2025 implementation deadline. Most agencies reported minimal costs associated with collecting and reporting USE IT Act data—collectively \$16 million across 23 agencies in 2025.

Agencies' Use of Approaches to Collect Occupancy Data, as of September 2025



Source: GAO analysis of survey data. | GAO-27-108503

Many agencies told GAO they are either using or plan to use their USE IT Act data to identify and dispose of unneeded real property. Some agency officials told GAO that they have already made decisions to consolidate or dispose of underutilized spaces, informed in part by USE IT Act data, and that they expect to save millions of dollars annually as a result.

However, the USE IT Act data submitted to Congress and the public in March 2026 does not have important context—including on GSA-controlled vacant space—needed to fully reflect office space utilization. Without this information, Congress and the public may have an inaccurate impression of the extent to which owned and leased office spaces are being utilized, including some locations that are likely being utilized at lower or higher rates than reported.

While surveyed agencies generally agreed that USE IT Act data are helpful, about one-third expressed concerns about how GSA data collection and reporting guidelines affect their utilization rate calculations. Further, some agencies described approaches to collecting and reporting their occupancy data that are inconsistent with GSA guidelines, resulting in data that are incomplete. For example, one agency reported the number of employees that are assigned to each location rather than measuring the extent to which employees were present in those spaces. By coordinating with agencies to improve the consistency and completeness of their occupancy data, GSA could better position agencies to make informed decisions about which underused spaces to prioritize for disposal, potentially leading to tens of millions of dollars in financial savings.

Why GAO Did This Study

Chronic underutilization of federal buildings is one of the main reasons that the management of federal real property has been on GAO's High Risk list for more than 20 years. The USE IT Act requires the 24 Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Act agencies to collect and report occupancy data on the number of employees working in certain owned and leased spaces. It also contains a provision for GAO to review the costs to these agencies of this requirement to measure the occupancy and utilization rates of their spaces.

This report examines 1) the approaches CFO Act agencies reported using to collect the occupancy data required by the USE IT Act and their associated costs; 2) how agencies are using USE IT Act data to inform real property decisions and what additional information, if any, may help Congress and the public better understand federal office space utilization; and 3) agencies' concerns about USE IT Act data collection and reporting and GSA's actions to address these concerns.

GAO surveyed the CFO Act agencies about their data collection approaches, associated costs, and any limitations to their data or selected approaches. GAO also reviewed GSA guidelines for USE IT Act data collection, analyzed GSA data on vacant spaces, and conducted in-depth interviews with five agencies selected based on the variety of approaches to collecting occupancy data and the size of their real property portfolios.

What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to GSA to improve future office space utilization reporting, including that it provide data on vacant space to help fully reflect utilization. GSA did not agree or disagree but stated it would consider these recommendations.