



Highlights of [GAO-05-190](#), a report to the Chair, Subcommittee on Energy, Committee on Science, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

In April 2002, GAO identified the need to strengthen equal employment opportunity (EEO) oversight at three Department of Energy (DOE) national weapons laboratories and recommended that DOE and the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) collaborate to ensure the laboratories complied with EEO requirements.

GAO was subsequently asked to examine six other DOE laboratories and determine (1) whether differences exist for managerial and professional women and minorities compared with men and Whites in salaries, merit pay increases, separation patterns, and promotion rates; (2) what EEO concerns laboratory women and minorities have raised; and (3) what DOE and OFCCP have done to implement GAO's earlier recommendation.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OFCCP review the statistical differences identified at the laboratories for practical significance and that the Secretaries of Labor and of Energy work together to define the scope of DOE's oversight responsibility for diversity. DOE and DOL agreed to continue working together to resolve EEO oversight issues.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-05-190.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Robin Nazzaro, (202) 512-3841, nazzaror@gao.gov.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Information on Personnel Actions, Employee Concerns, and Oversight at Six DOE Laboratories

What GAO Found

For fiscal years 2001 through mid-2004, GAO found some statistically significant differences in salaries, merit pay increases, and separation patterns for managerial and professional women and minorities when compared with men and Whites, and differences in promotion rates when compared with White men. These differences remained despite holding constant factors such as age, education, and occupational category.

- Women were paid 2 to 4 percent less than men at five of the six laboratories, while minorities were paid about 2 percent less than Whites at one laboratory.
- Merit pay increases were comparable for all groups at three of the six laboratories. At the other three laboratories, merit pay increases were higher for women and minorities at one, higher for women at another, and lower for minorities at the third.
- Separation patterns for women and minorities were generally comparable to men and Whites. However, at one laboratory, women were more likely to leave than men, and at another laboratory, minorities were more likely to leave than Whites.
- At one laboratory, selected minority groups were promoted at a rate less than 80 percent of the rate for White men (a "rule of thumb" used by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and OFCCP).

Statistically significant differences do not prove or disprove discrimination; rather, they provide information at an aggregate level and may indicate a need for further investigation into their practical significance.

Concerns of women and minority staff at the laboratories focused primarily on underrepresentation, the lack of career development opportunities, and the need for an improved laboratory work environment. Complaints investigated or resolved within the laboratories varied among the laboratories and included issues such as sexual harassment and a hostile work environment. Complaints filed with outside agencies such as EEOC most often cited concerns with pay and terminations. The highest number of external complaints filed dealt with sex or race matters.

As a result of GAO's April 2002 recommendation, OFCCP and DOE staff met to discuss the possible creation of a more formal relationship through a memorandum of understanding. While reviewing OFCCP's draft memorandum, the Department of Labor raised questions about DOE's authority and responsibility for EEO matters at the laboratories, and as a result, OFCCP has not sent the draft memorandum to DOE for coordination. OFCCP maintains that Executive Order 11246, as amended, made DOL solely responsible for enforcing federal contractors' compliance with EEO requirements, and this authority has been delegated to OFCCP by DOL. DOE officials agree, but maintain that DOE's requirement for its contractors to promote diversity through diversity plans is independent from OFCCP's jurisdiction. Accordingly, GAO believes that the departments of Labor and of Energy need to clarify and reach agreement about DOE's role concerning its contractors' diversity activities.