



Highlights of [GAO-12-58](#), a report to congressional requesters

Why GAO Did This Study

The Washington, D.C. metropolitan (DC metro) area is home to many federal police forces, including the United States Capitol Police (USCP), which maintain the safety of federal property, employees, and the public. Officials are concerned that disparities in pay and retirement benefits have caused federal police forces to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining officers. In 2010, the USCP Labor Committee proposed six changes to enhance the USCP benefit structure. GAO was asked to review USCP's pay and retirement benefits and compare them to other federal police forces in the DC metro area. GAO (1) compared USCP to other forces with respect to retirement benefits, minimum entry-level salary, duties, and employment requirements; (2) compared attrition at USCP to other forces, and determined how, if at all, USCP and other forces used human capital flexibilities (e.g., retention bonus); and (3) determined what level of retirement income USCP benefits provide and the costs associated with the proposed benefit enhancements. GAO chose nine other federal police forces to review based on prior work, inclusion in the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) police occupational series, and officer presence in the DC metro area. GAO analyzed laws, regulations, OPM data from fiscal years 2005 through 2010, and human capital data from the 10 police forces. GAO also surveyed the 10 forces.

USCP and the Office of Personnel Management generally agreed with our findings and provided technical comments, which GAO incorporated as appropriate.

View [GAO-12-58](#). For more information, contact Eileen R. Larence at (202) 512-8777 or larencee@gao.gov or Charles A. Jeszeck at 202-512-7215 or jeszeck@gao.gov.

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CAPITOL POLICE

Retirement Benefits, Pay, Duties, and Attrition Compared to Other Federal Police Forces

What GAO Found

USCP generally has enhanced retirement benefits, a higher minimum starting salary, and a wider variety of protective duties than other federal police forces in the DC metro area that GAO reviewed, but has similar employment requirements. Even though USCP, Park Police, Supreme Court Police, and Secret Service Uniformed Division are federal police forces, they provide enhanced retirement benefits similar to those offered by federal law enforcement agencies that have additional investigative duties. These enhanced benefits allow their officers to retire early and accrue retirement pensions faster than other federal police forces. USCP and these three forces also offered among the highest minimum entry-level salaries—ranging from \$52,020 to \$55,653—than the other six forces GAO reviewed, which had minimum entry-level salaries ranging from \$38,609 to \$52,018. USCP reported routinely having a wider variety of duties than most other forces. These duties ranged from routinely protecting members of Congress to protecting buildings. USCP and most of the forces generally have similar employment requirements, such as being in good physical condition.

USCP's attrition rate is generally lower than the majority of the federal police forces in our review; and USCP and seven of the other nine police forces considered human capital flexibilities to be at least of some importance to recruiting and retaining qualified officers, but use of these flexibilities generally depends on recruiting needs, among other factors. From fiscal years 2005 through 2010, USCP had the fourth lowest attrition rate (6.5 percent) among the 10 police forces GAO reviewed; the attrition rates for the nine other forces ranged from 3.5 percent to just under 14 percent. Officials from USCP and four other forces GAO reviewed stated that, currently, attrition is not a problem because of the challenging economy. For example, officials from USCP and Bureau of Engraving and Printing Police stated that their officers want to retain their jobs in the challenging economy. In addition, USCP and other forces said that when their officers do leave the force, they generally do so either because of personal reasons or for better career advancement opportunities, and officers generally stay for reasons such as good working environment or appreciation for the agency's mission. The extent to which retirement benefits, pay, and use of human capital flexibilities affect attrition can vary among forces given other factors—such as family issues—that could influence an employee's decision to leave or remain with his or her employer.

If fully utilized, benefits for USCP officers who retire at the age of 57 under existing provisions generally would be within the range of retirement income targets suggested by some retirement experts. However, the level of benefits depends significantly on the level of employee retirement contributions. In 2010, the USCP Labor Committee presented six proposals that would enhance the current USCP benefit structure. GAO's analysis shows that five of the six would increase existing costs, GAO's review found the other proposal, which urges the USCP Board to exercise its current authority to allow officers to voluntarily remain employed until age 60 rather than retire at age 57, as mandated, would have only a minimal impact on USCP costs and could increase officers' retirement income.