

Why GAO Did This Study

DOD employs term and temporary personnel as a part of its overall civilian workforce. Recently, DOD extended the maximum duration of term appointments to 8 years with further extensions considered on a case-by-case basis, and temporary appointments to 3 years.

House Report 116-120 included a provision for GAO to review DOD's use of term and temporary hiring authorities. GAO's report (1) identifies changes in the number of DOD term and temporary personnel from fiscal years 2016 through 2019, and (2) assesses the extent to which DOD modified term and temporary appointments and completed and submitted a statutorily required report assessing those modifications.

GAO analyzed DOD personnel data from fiscal years 2016 through 2019 to identify any changes, DOD memoranda modifying term and temporary appointments, and relevant statutes; and interviewed DOD and Office of Personnel Management officials.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD report the results of the assessment of employee perceptions of modifications to term and temporary appointments to Congress and GAO. DOD concurred with the recommendation.

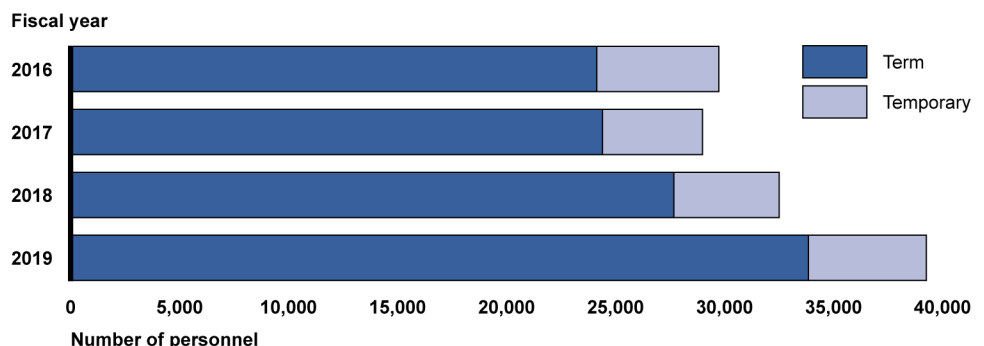
DEFENSE WORKFORCE

DOD Needs to Assess Its Use of Term and Temporary Appointments

What GAO Found

The Department of Defense (DOD) uses term and temporary appointments to hire personnel to non-permanent positions that have uncertain funding or workload. During fiscal years 2016 through 2019, DOD increased term personnel by 40 percent and decreased temporary personnel by 3 percent, according to GAO analysis.

Number of DOD Term and Temporary Personnel, Fiscal Years 2016—2019



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense (DOD) data. | GAO-20-532

According to GAO analysis of DOD data, during fiscal years 2016 through 2019:

- Approximately 35 percent of DOD term and temporary personnel were converted to permanent civilian positions within the federal government.
- The Army employed 72 percent of DOD's term and temporary personnel.
- Two Army organizations—Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Command and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers—employed 32 percent of DOD's term and temporary personnel. This large use was due to increases in ground combat equipment returning from overseas operations needing to be repaired at the Army depots, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers work to support disaster relief, according to DOD officials.

DOD modified the procedures for making term appointments in June 2017 and August 2018, and temporary appointments in June 2017. These modifications extended the duration limit for term appointments from 4 years to 8 years, with further extensions considered on a case-by-case basis; allowed an option for certain term personnel to be non-competitively converted to permanent positions; and extended the duration limit for temporary appointments from 2 years to 3 years. However, DOD did not assess employee perceptions of the 2017 modifications and report the results of the assessment to Congress and GAO, as required by statute. In October 2019, DOD officials told GAO that they mistakenly believed Congress had waived this requirement, and that they plan to complete the assessment and report to Congress and GAO. In commenting on a draft of this report, DOD established a timeframe of May 2021 for completing a survey to assess employee perceptions. This is a positive step, but it will be important for DOD to provide the results of the assessment to Congress and GAO.