



Highlights of [GAO-03-491](#), a report to the Ranking Democratic Member, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

By the year 2006, the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) projects it will lose a significant portion of its mission-critical workforce to retirement. VBA has hired over 2,000 new employees to begin to fill this expected gap. GAO was asked to review: (1) the attrition rate at VBA, particularly for new employees who examine veterans' claims, and the agency's methods for calculating attrition; and (2) the adequacy of VBA's analysis of attrition data, including the reasons for attrition. To answer these questions, GAO analyzed attrition data from VBA's Office of Human Resources, calculated attrition rates for VBA and other federal agencies using a governmentwide database on federal employment, and interviewed VBA officials about their efforts to measure attrition and determine why new employees leave.

What GAO Recommends

To ensure that VBA collects and analyzes information on the reasons for attrition, particularly for new hires, GAO recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs (VA) direct the Under Secretary for Benefits to develop a strategy for the systematic collection and analysis of attrition data, including attrition rates, reasons for leaving, and cost data; and that VBA integrate the results of its attrition analysis into its workforce plan. VA concurred with GAO's recommendation.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-491.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Cynthia A. Bascetta at (202) 512-7101 or bascettac@gao.gov.

VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION

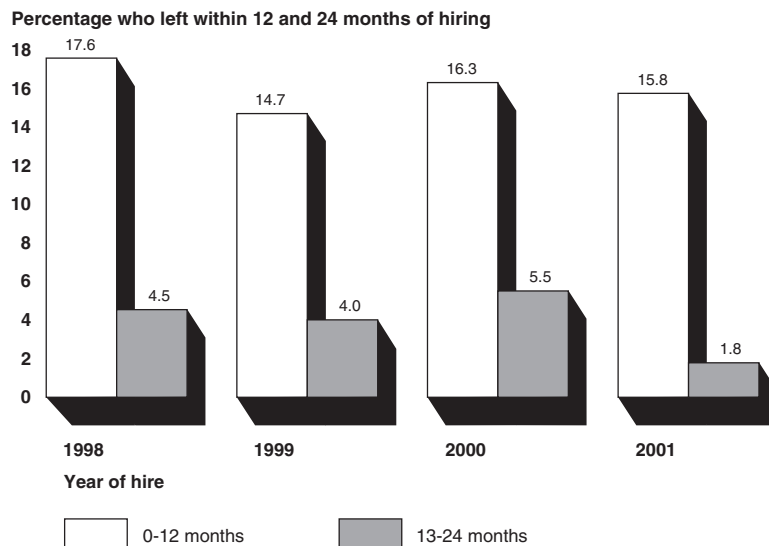
Better Collection and Analysis of Attrition Data Needed to Enhance Workforce Planning

What GAO Found

About 16 percent of new examiners hired in fiscal year 2001 left VBA within 12 months of their hiring date, more than double the 6 percent rate for all VBA employees who left that year. In general, new hire attrition tends to exceed the rate for all other employees, and VBA's 16 percent rate is similar to the attrition rate for all new federal employees hired in recent years, when as many as 17 percent left within 12 months of being hired.

VBA does not have adequate data on the reasons why employees, particularly new employees, choose to leave the agency. VBA has descriptive data on whether employees leave the agency through resignation, termination, retirement, or transfer, but does not yet have comprehensive data on the reasons employees resign. While VBA collects some data on the reasons for attrition in exit interviews, these data are limited because exit interviews have not been conducted consistently, and the data from these interviews are not compiled and analyzed. Without such data, VBA cannot determine ways to address why employees are leaving. Furthermore, VBA has not performed analysis to determine whether it can reduce its staff attrition. Despite recent steps to improve the collection and analysis of data on the reasons for attrition, an overall strategy for the collection and analysis of attrition data could help guide workforce planning and determine the extent to which attrition and its costs could be reduced.

Percentage of Examiners Who Left Within 2 Years of Their Hiring Date, FY 1998-2001



Source: OPM's Central Personnel Data File.

Note: Data for fiscal year 2001 do not reflect a full 24-month time period.