

FEDERAL UNIFORMED POLICE

Selected Data on Pay, Recruitment, and Retention at 13 Police Forces in the Washington, D.C., Metropolitan Area

Why GAO Did This Study

Officials at several federal uniformed police forces in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area have raised concerns that disparities in pay and retirement benefits have caused their police forces to experience difficulties in recruiting and retaining officers. These concerns have increased during the past year with the significant expansion of the Federal Air Marshal Program, which has created numerous relatively high-paying job opportunities for existing federal uniformed police officers and reportedly has lured many experienced officers from their uniformed police forces. GAO's objectives were to (1) determine the differences that exist among selected federal uniformed police forces regarding entry-level pay, retirement benefits, and types of duties; (2) provide information on the differences in turnover rates among these federal uniformed police forces, including where officers who separated from the police forces went and the extent to which human capital flexibilities were available and used to address turnover; and (3) provide information on possible difficulties police forces may have faced recruiting officers and the extent to which human capital flexibilities were available to help these forces recruit officers.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-658.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Richard M. Stana, (202) 512-8777, or stanar@gao.gov.

What GAO Found

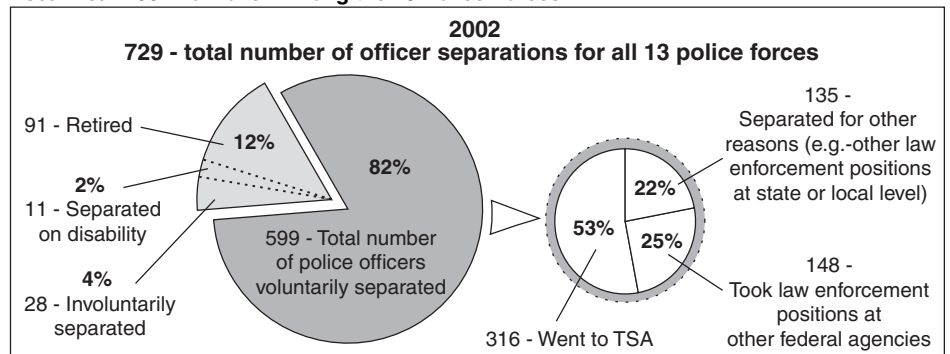
During fiscal year 2002, entry-level police officer salaries varied by more than \$10,000 across the 13 police forces, from a high of \$39,427 per year to a low of \$28,801 per year. Four of the 13 police forces received federal law enforcement retirement benefits. Between October 1, 2002, and April 1, 2003, 12 of the 13 police forces received pay increases, which narrowed the pay gap for entry-level officers at some of the 13 forces. Officials at the 13 police forces reported that while officers performed many of the same types of duties, the extent to which they performed specialized functions varied.

Total turnover at the 13 police forces nearly doubled (from 375 to 729) between fiscal years 2001 and 2002. Additionally, during fiscal year 2002, 8 of the 13 police forces experienced their highest annual turnover rates over the 6-year period, from fiscal years 1997 through 2002. Sizable differences existed in the turnover rates among the 13 federal uniformed police forces during fiscal year 2002. The availability and use of human capital flexibilities to retain employees, such as retention allowances, varied.

GAO found that the increase in the number of separations (354) across the 13 police forces between fiscal years 2001 and 2002 almost equaled the number of officers (316) who left their forces to join the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Given that the buildup in staffing for TSA's Federal Air Marshal Program has been substantially completed, the increase in turnover experienced in fiscal year 2002 at 12 of the 13 police forces may have been a one-time occurrence.

Officials at 9 of 13 police forces reported at least some difficulty recruiting officers. However, none of the police forces used important human capital flexibilities, such as recruitment bonuses and student loan repayments, during fiscal year 2002.

Fiscal Year 2002 Turnover Among the 13 Police Forces



Source: GAO analysis of separations data provided by the 13 police forces.