

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-20-477](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

USAID has a stated commitment to fostering an inclusive workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States and has undertaken efforts to increase diversity in its Civil and Foreign Services. However, concerns about the demographic composition of USAID's workforce are longstanding.

GAO was asked to review issues related to the diversity of USAID's workforce. This report examines, among other things, the demographic composition of USAID's workforce in fiscal years 2002 through 2018, differences between promotion outcomes for racial or ethnic minorities, and the extent to which USAID has identified workforce diversity issues and worked to address those issues. GAO analyzed USAID's personnel data for its full-time, permanent, career workforce for fiscal years 2002 through 2018—the most recent available data. GAO's analyses do not completely explain the reasons for differences in promotion outcomes, which may result from various unobservable factors. Thus, GAO's analyses do not establish a causal relationship between demographic characteristics and promotion outcomes. GAO also reviewed USAID documents and interviewed USAID officials and members of 13 employee groups.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO is making four recommendations to USAID, including three to perform required EEO activities and one to demonstrate senior leadership attention to diversity efforts. USAID concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-20-477](#). For more information, contact Jason Bair at (202) 512-6881 or [bairj@gao.gov](mailto:bairj@gao.gov).

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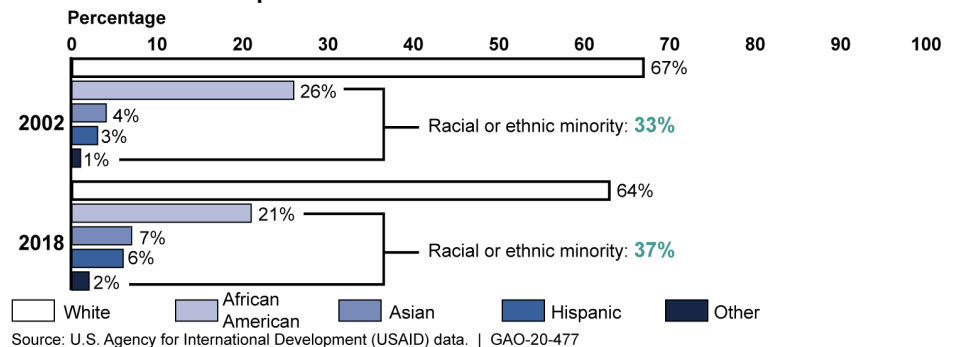
## USAID

# Mixed Progress in Increasing Diversity, and Actions Needed to Consistently Meet EEO Requirements

## What GAO Found

The overall proportion of racial or ethnic minorities in the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) full-time, permanent, career workforce increased from 33 to 37 percent from fiscal year 2002 to fiscal year 2018. The direction of change for specific groups varied. For instance, the proportion of Hispanics rose from 3 to 6 percent, while the proportion of African Americans fell from 26 to 21 percent. The proportions of racial or ethnic minorities were generally smaller in higher ranks. During this period, the overall proportion of women increased from 51 to 54 percent, reflecting their growing proportion in USAID's Foreign Service.

### Racial or Ethnic Groups in USAID's Workforce in Fiscal Years 2002 and 2018



Promotion outcomes at USAID were generally lower for racial and ethnic minorities than for whites in early to mid career. When controlling for factors such as occupation, GAO found statistically significant odds of promotion in the Civil Service were 31 to 41 percent lower for racial or ethnic minorities than for whites in early and mid career. In the Foreign Service, average promotion rates were lower for racial or ethnic minorities in early to mid career, but differences were generally not statistically significant when GAO controlled for various factors.

USAID has previously identified underrepresentation of specific groups in its workforce, but staffing gaps, partly due to a lack of senior leadership attention, prevent the agency from consistently performing required Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) activities. The Office of Civil Rights and Diversity (OCR), responsible for USAID's EEO program, has been significantly understaffed. Vacancy rates in most OCR divisions were 50 percent or higher in November 2019 and, despite attempts to hire more staff, remained at 30 to 50 percent as of April 2020. These staffing gaps have limited OCR's capacity to process EEO complaints and investigations within mandated timeframes and analyze USAID's demographic data. Staffing gaps also prevented OCR from submitting required reporting on the status of its EEO program in fiscal year 2018. A lack of consistent leadership in OCR as well as a lack of senior USAID leadership attention to diversity has contributed to OCR's staffing gaps. As a result, USAID lacks the capacity to respond to allegations of discrimination, identify potential barriers to equal employment opportunity, and submit required annual reports on the progress of its diversity and inclusion efforts in a timely manner—all of which are required EEO functions.