

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-15-79](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

Federal agencies have the discretion to grant paid administrative leave for a variety of reasons, such as weather closures and blood donations. While paid administrative leave costs taxpayers, it has not been reviewed or reported on extensively.

GAO was asked to examine the use of paid administrative leave. This report (1) describes paid administrative leave policies at selected federal agencies; (2) reviews practices in recording and reporting paid administrative leave and describes the number of federal employees granted such leave, and the amount and associated salary costs of such leave; and (3) describes categories for which large amounts of paid administrative leave have been charged by individual employees at selected federal agencies.

To determine the total amount of paid administrative leave, GAO analyzed fiscal year 2011 through 2013 payroll data from OPM's Enterprise Human Resources Integration system. To review agency policies and reasons for using large amounts of administrative leave, GAO selected five agencies based in part on the percentage of employees with higher-than-average amounts of such leave.

## What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that OPM develop agency and payroll provider guidance regarding the recording and reporting of paid administrative leave. OPM partially concurred agreeing to clarify guidance to agencies and payroll providers, but said it could not direct agencies on how to collect such data. GAO continues to believe the recommendations are valid.

View [GAO-15-79](#). For more information, contact Yvonne D. Jones at (202) 512-2717 or [jonesy@gao.gov](mailto:jonesy@gao.gov).

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## FEDERAL PAID ADMINISTRATIVE LEAVE

### Additional Guidance Needed to Improve OPM Data

## What GAO Found

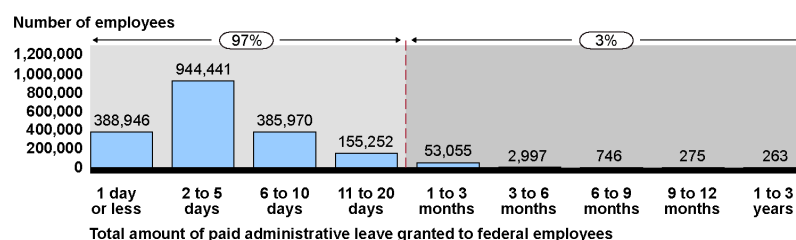
**Policies.** Agencies have the authority to grant paid administrative leave—an excused absence without loss of pay or charge to individual leave—and to set policies governing its use. Among the five agencies GAO reviewed—the Departments of Defense (DOD), the Interior, and Veterans Affairs (VA); the General Services Administration; and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—agency policies and guidance contained several common activities for granting paid administrative leave (such as voting and blood donations). However, variations exist, depending on agency mission and how leave is categorized in agency policy. For example, USAID and DOD officials said that they grant paid administrative leave for rest and recuperation to employees serving 6 months or more in Afghanistan, while the other selected agencies did not.

**Recording and Reporting Practices.** GAO found inaccuracies in Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data due to (1) differences between agencies' leave recording practices and what OPM officials consider paid administrative leave; and (2) differences in what payroll providers report to OPM as paid administrative leave. For example, VA employees record all authorized official time for union activities as paid administrative leave in the agency's time and attendance system. In addition, one payroll provider includes federal holidays as administrative leave when reporting the data to OPM. OPM officials said that, in both instances, they would not expect such absences to be recorded as administrative leave. These variations occur because OPM has not provided guidance on what agencies should record and has provided limited guidance on what payroll providers should report as paid administrative leave. Such guidance could help agencies better manage the federal workforce.

**Amounts and Costs.** After separating federal holidays from the payroll data, OPM-reported data showed that from fiscal year 2011 through 2013, paid administrative leave accounted for less than 1 percent of total paid work days and estimated salary cost. Over these 3 years, about 97 percent of employees charged 20 days or less (see figure). For the same time period, 263 employees charged between 1 and 3 years of paid administrative leave, with an estimated salary cost of \$31 million.

**Large Amounts.** Agency officials stated that the most common reason for which selected employees charged amounts relatively higher than the agency average, was for personnel matters, such as investigations into alleged misconduct.

Employees Charging Paid Administrative Leave Government-wide Fiscal Years 2011-2013



Source: GAO analysis of Office of Personnel Management's Enterprise Human Resources Integration payroll data. | GAO-15-79  
 Note: Reflects workdays (5 days per week, about 21 days per month, and 260 days per year).