

GAO

Fact Sheet for the Chairman, Committee
on Post Office and Civil Service
House of Representatives

December 1994

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

Drug Investigation
Data



General Government Division

B-259292

December 6, 1994

The Honorable William L. Clay
Chairman, Committee on Post Office
and Civil Service
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This fact sheet responds to your June 30, 1994, request for information regarding the Postal Inspection Service's investigations of possible employee drug-related crimes. We agreed to provide certain information on the race, gender, age, occupation, and location of Postal Service employees investigated. We also agreed to provide information on whether confidential informants were involved and what administrative and court actions were taken as a result of the investigations.

To collect the information requested, we obtained a copy of the Postal Inspection Service database covering investigations from September 1988 through April 1994. The database included information on the type of data source (e.g., confidential informants) used in the investigations and the actions taken as a result of the investigations. We also obtained copies of the Postal Service's human resource databases on its workforce for fiscal years 1989 through 1994. We defined the Postal Service workforce for the purposes of this report as including only those postal employees assigned to the ZIP Code areas where investigations were instituted for drug-related crimes. We categorized the information you requested into the four largest employee groups according to size within the defined ZIP Code workforce—white males, black males, black females, and white females. We did not attempt to ascertain the reasons for any differences among the employee groups or locations. We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of the inspection or human resource databases.

Results

The Postal Service data show that 1,760 Postal Service employees were investigated for suspected drug-related crimes from September 1988 through April 1994. When the investigative data are compared with certain attributes of the Postal Service workforce, the results show the following:

- The percentage of black males among employees who were investigated was more than double the percentage of black males in the postal workforce within the defined ZIP Code areas. The percentages of black females and white females among investigated employees were only

one-half as large as the percentages of black females and white females. The percentage of white males among employees investigated was about three-fourths as large as the percentage of white males.

- About one-half of investigations that resulted in an arrest¹ involved employees who were between the ages of 30 and 39. This age category made up about one-third of the workforce. Employees over age 40 made up about one-fifth of those investigated and one-half of the workforce.
- Clerks made up 42 percent of the workforce and 30 percent of the investigations, while city carriers made up about one-fourth of both the workforce and the investigations. Mail handlers made up 11 percent of the workforce and 29 percent of the investigations.
- Two-thirds of the investigations involved employees assigned to first-class (large main) post offices.

Confidential informants were involved in the development of evidence in about three-fourths of all investigations. About 10 percent of all employees investigated resigned or retired after the investigation began. Initial action by the Postal Service resulted in about 60 percent of those investigated being placed on emergency suspension and 12 percent being placed on administrative leave. Final action by the Postal Service resulted in terminations of almost three-fourths of those employees who were investigated and who did not retire or resign. Postal investigators completed about 90 percent of all investigations with an arrest, while the remaining 10 percent did not result in an arrest. The U.S. Attorneys prosecuted 91 percent of the cases brought to them by postal investigators, and the courts convicted 93 percent of those prosecuted.

Additional details on the investigations can be found in appendix I.

Agency Comments

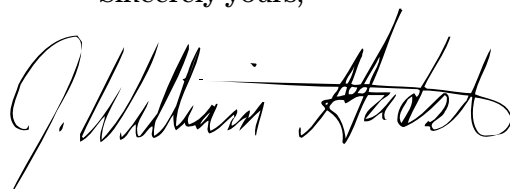
The Chief Postal Inspector and other Postal Service officials reviewed a draft of this fact sheet and agreed that it was factual. They suggested some clarifications and technical corrections, which we made where appropriate.

We are sending copies of this fact sheet to interested congressional committees and the Postmaster General. Copies will also be made available to others upon request.

¹Inspection Service data did not show age at the date the investigation began. Therefore, we used the age at the time of arrest, which necessarily excluded those employees who were investigated but were not arrested.

If you have any questions concerning this fact sheet or would like further information, please contact me at (202) 512-8387. Major contributors to this fact sheet were Michael E. Motley, Associate Director; James T. Campbell, Assistant Director; and Bonnie J. Steller, Evaluator-in-Charge.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "J. William Gadsby". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and a prominent flourish at the end.

J. William Gadsby
Director, Government Business
Operations Issues

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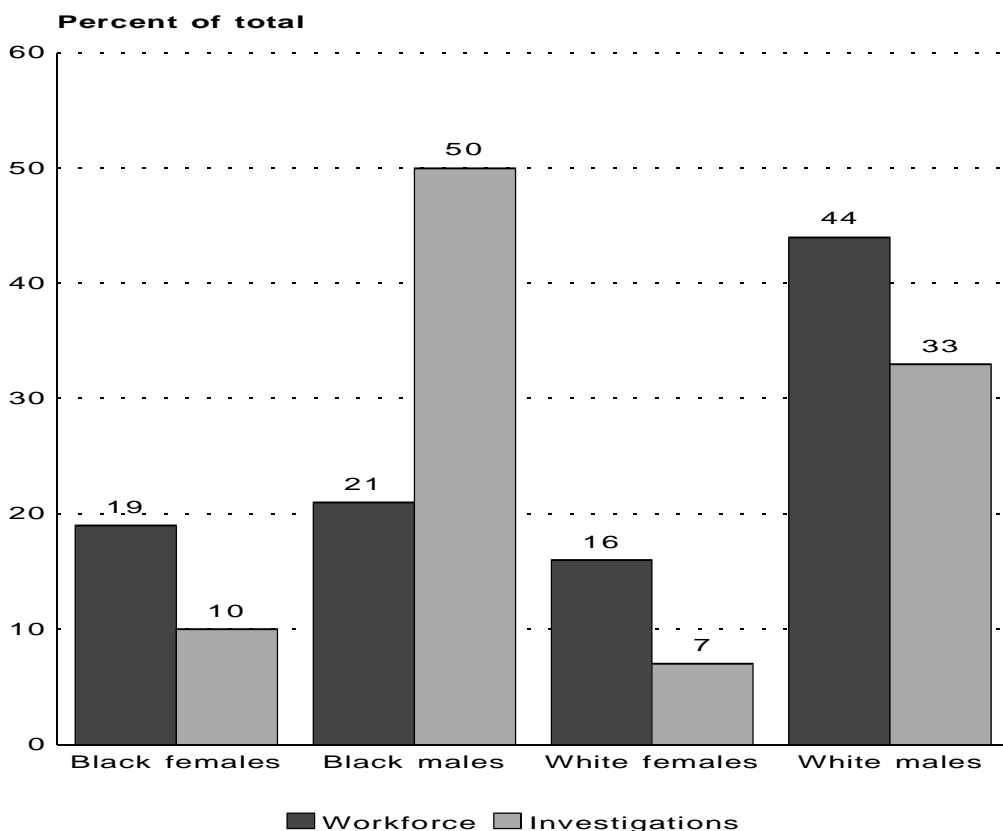
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Information on Postal Inspection Service Investigations of Possible Drug Crimes in Postal Workforce During the Period September 1988 Through April 1994

Relative Proportions of Employees Investigated by Race, Gender, and Age

The proportion of black males among employees investigated was more than double the proportion of black males in the workforce within the defined ZIP Code area; i.e., black males made up 50 percent of the investigations and 21 percent of the workforce. The proportion of black females and white females among employees who were investigated was about one-half the proportion of black females and white females in the workforce. The proportion of white males among employees investigated was about three-fourths the proportion of white males in the workforce. (See fig. I.1.)

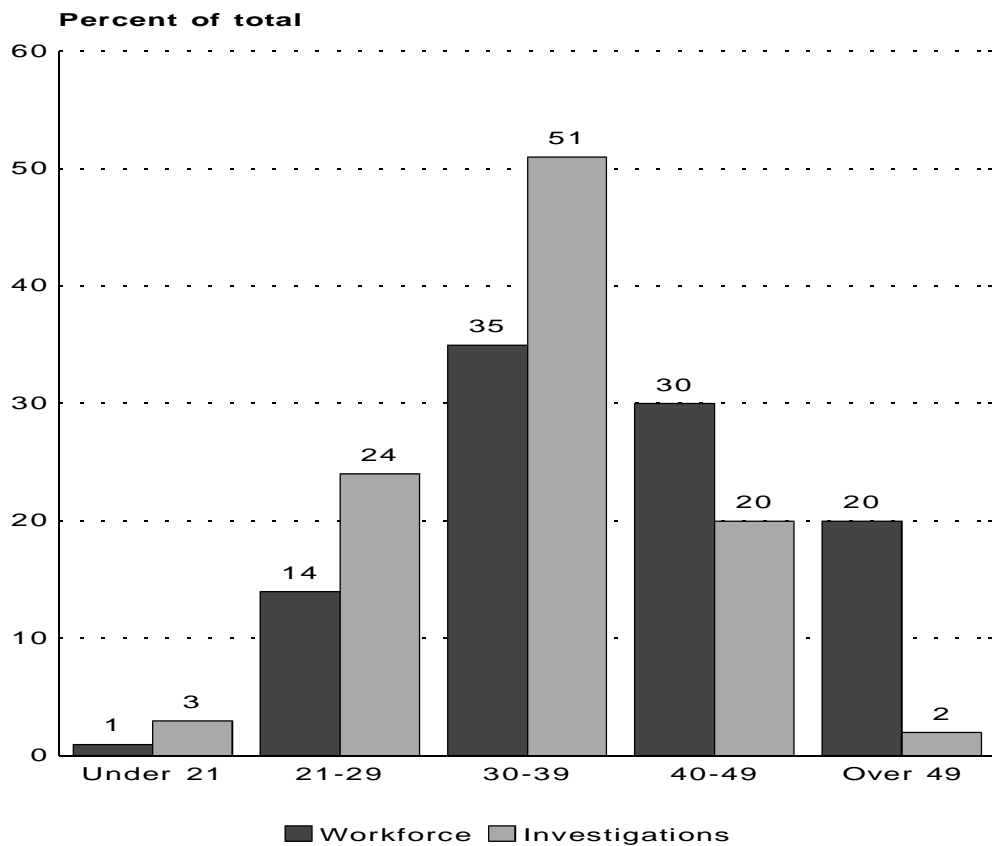
Figure I.1: Comparison of Percentages Within Postal Workforce and Employees Investigated According to Four Employee Groups



Source: U.S. Postal Service data.

About 51 percent of the investigations that resulted in an arrest involved employees between the ages of 30 and 39. This age category made up 35 percent of the workforce. Employees over age 40 made up 22 percent of the investigations and 50 percent of the workforce. (See fig. I.2.)

Figure I.2: Comparison of Percentages in Postal Workforce and Employees Arrested by Age Categories



Note: Only investigations that resulted in an arrest are included in the figure because Inspection Service data did not show employees' ages at the time investigations were initiated.

Source: Postal Inspection Service data.

Occupations of Employees Investigated

About 82 percent of the investigations involved clerks (30 percent), city carriers (23 percent), or mail handlers (29 percent). These occupations made up 80 percent of the workforce, with clerks accounting for 42 percent, city carriers for 27 percent, and mail handlers for 11 percent. The ratio of mail handlers who were investigated was almost three times their representation in the workforce. (See table I.1.)

Table I.1: Postal Investigations Showing Percentages by Occupation, Race, and Gender

| Occupation | Percent of black females | Percent of black males | Percent of white females | Percent of white males | Percent of investigations | Percent of workforce |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Postmaster | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Clerk | 52 | 26 | 50 | 27 | 30 | 42 |
| City carrier | 15 | 22 | 22 | 26 | 23 | 27 |
| Rural carrier | 0 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Mail handler | 22 | 33 | 16 | 28 | 29 | 11 |
| Maintenance | 4 | 10 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 6 |
| Motor vehicle | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Other ^a | 8 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 11 |
| Total Number | 165 | 857 | 122 | 574 | 1718 | |

Note: Percentages in this table and subsequent tables that were less than 1/2 of 1 percent were rounded to zero.

^aOther includes such occupations as supervisors, administrative support, postal police officers, and drivers.

Source: U.S. Postal Service data.

Location of Employees Investigated

Table I.2 presents data on the postal workforce, in ZIP Code areas where investigations occurred, and investigations for each of the four employee groups categorized by Postal Inspection Service division. If the proportion of employees in the workforce and the proportion who were investigated were about the same, the ratio would be at or near 1.0. The further the ratio deviates from 1.0, the greater the difference between the proportions.

Table I.2: Percentage and Total Number of Postal Workforce and Employees Investigated Within 13 Inspection Service Divisions Plus "All Others" by Race and Gender

| Inspection Division | | Percent of black females | Percent of black males | Percent of white females | Percent of white males | Total number |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Boston | Workforce | 4.9 | 6.1 | 20.5 | 68.6 | 24,132 |
| | Investigated | 0.0 | 13.2 | 22.4 | 64.5 | 76 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.0 | 2.2 | 1.1 | 0.9 | |
| New York | Workforce | 24.7 | 26.2 | 8.4 | 40.8 | 35,533 |
| | Investigated | 8.5 | 49.1 | 5.4 | 37.1 | 224 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.3 | 1.9 | 0.6 | 0.9 | |
| Newark | Workforce | 19.7 | 23.7 | 10.3 | 46.2 | 14,699 |
| | Investigated | 17.7 | 48.9 | 4.3 | 29.1 | 141 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.9 | 2.1 | 0.4 | 0.6 | |
| Philadelphia | Workforce | 15.5 | 21.6 | 13.4 | 47.4 | 19,067 |
| | Investigated | 13.0 | 52.2 | 8.7 | 26.1 | 92 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.9 | 2.4 | 0.6 | 0.6 | |
| Washington | Workforce | 27.8 | 34.2 | 10.0 | 29.6 | 24,247 |
| | Investigated | 11.7 | 75.6 | 1.7 | 10.9 | 119 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.4 | 2.2 | 0.2 | 0.4 | |
| Cleveland ^b | Workforce | 19.3 | 21.7 | 15.5 | 43.5 | 10,095 |
| | Investigated | 8.2 | 69.4 | 8.2 | 14.3 | 49 |

(continued)

| Inspection Division | | Percent of black females | Percent of black males | Percent of white females | Percent of white males | Total number |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Chicago | Ratio ^a | 0.4 | 3.2 | 0.5 | 0.3 | |
| | Workforce | 35.8 | 33.7 | 8.1 | 22.6 | 25,394 |
| | Investigated | 14.2 | 77.4 | 2.5 | 5.9 | 239 |
| Detroit | Ratio ^a | 0.4 | 2.3 | 0.3 | 0.3 | |
| | Workforce | 23.7 | 18.5 | 20.7 | 37.0 | 16,168 |
| | Investigated | 9.5 | 47.6 | 7.9 | 34.9 | 63 |
| Denver | Ratio ^a | 0.4 | 2.6 | 0.4 | 0.9 | |
| | Workforce | 4.0 | 10.1 | 21.8 | 64.1 | 8,266 |
| | Investigated | 2.2 | 8.9 | 13.3 | 75.6 | 45 |
| Fort Worth | Ratio ^a | 0.6 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 1.2 | |
| | Workforce | 17.8 | 23.5 | 15.8 | 42.8 | 14,348 |
| | Investigated | 6.0 | 46.0 | 14.0 | 34.0 | 50 |
| Miami | Ratio ^a | 0.3 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 0.8 | |
| | Workforce | 20.0 | 16.2 | 23.3 | 40.4 | 10,868 |
| | Investigated | 4.4 | 37.0 | 15.2 | 43.5 | 46 |
| San Francisco | Ratio ^a | 0.2 | 2.3 | 0.7 | 1.1 | |
| | Workforce | 17.4 | 21.9 | 17.8 | 43.0 | 15,262 |
| | Investigated | 4.0 | 19.0 | 11.0 | 66.0 | 100 |
| Los Angeles | Ratio ^a | 0.2 | 0.9 | 0.6 | 1.5 | |
| | Workforce | 29.0 | 28.5 | 14.0 | 28.5 | 18,325 |
| | Investigated | 3.7 | 51.9 | 3.7 | 40.7 | 81 |
| All others | Ratio ^a | 0.1 | 1.8 | 0.3 | 1.4 | |
| | Workforce | 13.3 | 18.5 | 18.3 | 49.5 | 126,703 |
| | Investigated | 9.7 | 44.8 | 7.1 | 38.4 | 393 |
| | Ratio ^a | 0.7 | 2.4 | 0.4 | 0.8 | |

Note: Because of the concentration of investigations in 13 divisions, we combined 16 other divisions plus Postal Headquarters into a single unit, which we identify as "all others."

^aThis is the ratio between percentage of employees investigated and percentage in workforce, by race and gender, for the locations indicated.

^bInspection Service data did not include 68 investigations that were conducted in Cleveland, OH. (See app. II for additional information.)

Source: U.S. Postal Service data.

About 67 percent of all investigations involved employees assigned to first-class (large main) post offices. Black males accounted for 47 percent of the investigations in first-class post offices, and white males accounted for 37 percent. About 20 percent of all investigations took place in branch and annex post offices. About 57 percent of the investigations in branch and annex post offices involved black males, and 26 percent involved white males.

Use of Confidential Informants in Investigations

About three-fourths of the investigations involved confidential informants. About 80 percent of the investigations involving blacks, both males and females, utilized information supplied by confidential informants. Almost two-thirds of the investigations of whites, both males and females, utilized

information supplied by confidential informants. The percentages of white males and females investigated on the basis of tips or information provided by other agencies were roughly equal (i.e., 15 and 16 percent respectively). (See table I.3.)

Table I.3: Basis for Postal Investigation Showing Percentages and Total Number by Race and Gender

| Basis for investigation | Percent of black females | Percent of black males | Percent of white females | Percent of white male | Percent of total |
|--|--------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| Tip (202 cases) | 9 | 10 | 16 | 15 | 12 |
| Confidential informant (1,267 cases) | 84 | 80 | 62 | 65 | 74 |
| Other law enforcement agency (176 cases) | 6 | 7 | 15 | 16 | 10 |
| Other ^a (73 cases) | 1 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 4 |
| Total number | 165 | 857 | 122 | 574 | 1718 |

^aIncludes sources such as drug testing and customer complaints.

Source: Postal Inspection Service data.

Actions Taken as a Result of Investigations

Administrative Actions Taken by Postal Service

Inspection Service data show that the administrative action the Postal Service took most often (60 percent of the investigations) was to place the employee on emergency suspension.

In the Detroit, Fort Worth, and Los Angeles Divisions, the Postal Service used emergency suspensions in less than 40 percent of the cases. In the New York; Philadelphia; Washington, D.C.; Cleveland; Denver; and Miami Divisions, the Postal Service used emergency suspensions in over 70 percent of the cases. Table I.4 provides detailed information by Postal Inspection Service Division on the initial actions taken by the Postal Service.

Table I.4: Postal Service Initial Action by Percentages According to the Inspection Service Divisions

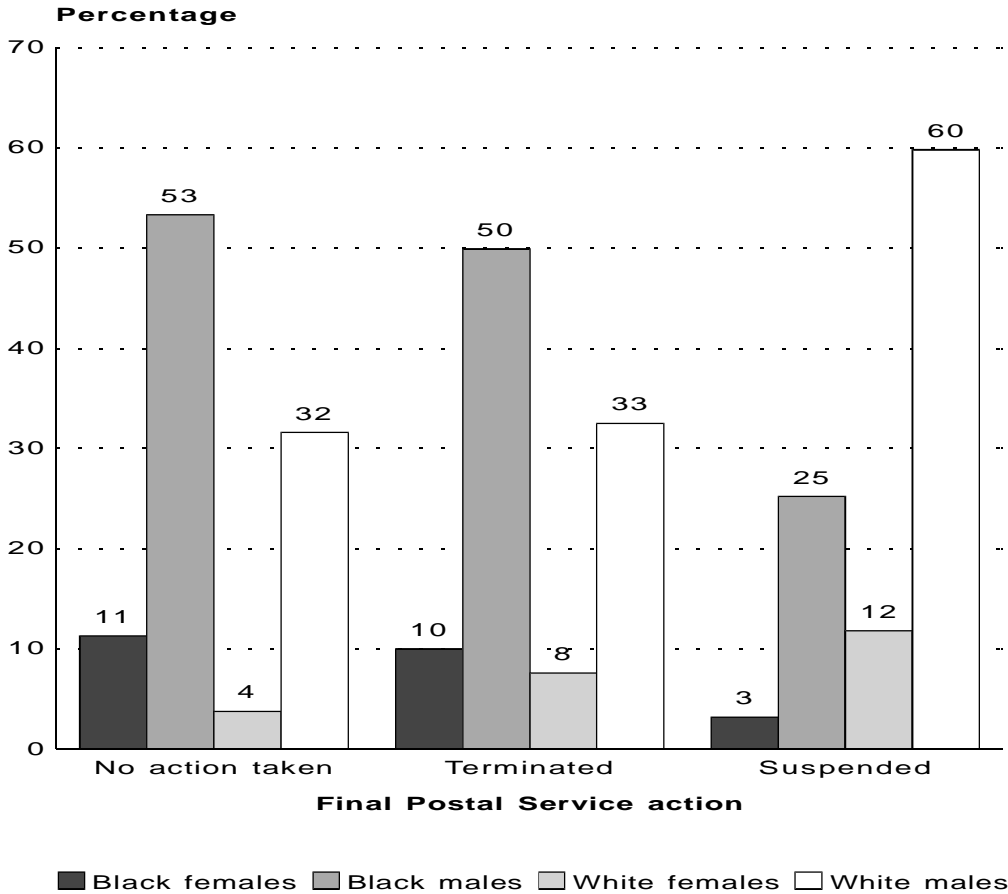
| Numbers in percent | | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|----------------------|--------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| Division | No action taken | Emergency suspension | Admin. leave | Resigned Retired | Percent of total actions |
| Boston | 25 | 67 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| New York | 17 | 75 | 4 | 4 | 13 |
| Newark | 21 | 57 | 0 | 21 | 8 |
| Philadelphia | 11 | 78 | 4 | 7 | 5 |
| Washington | 17 | 72 | 0 | 11 | 7 |
| Cleveland | 8 | 74 | 18 | 0 | 3 |
| Chicago | 12 | 64 | 2 | 21 | 14 |
| Detroit | 16 | 22 | 54 | 8 | 4 |
| Denver | 11 | 84 | 2 | 2 | 3 |
| Fort Worth | 26 | 36 | 20 | 18 | 3 |
| Miami | 11 | 74 | 2 | 13 | 3 |
| San Francisco | 12 | 47 | 29 | 12 | 6 |
| Los Angeles | 33 | 36 | 27 | 4 | 5 |
| All others | 20 | 51 | 22 | 7 | 23 |
| All divisions | 17 | 60 | 12 | 10 | 100 ^a |

^aMay not total due to rounding

Source: Postal Inspection Service data

The Postal Service’s goal is to hire and keep employees who are suitable in character, reputation, trustworthiness, and fitness for the jobs involved. When employees are suspected of having committed a crime, the Service’s policy and its agreement with labor unions representing postal employees provide for remedial action to be taken, including the suspension or termination of the suspected employees. Figure I.3 shows the percentage according to race and gender for each type of final action taken by the Postal Service. The Postal Service terminated about 75 percent of all employees who were investigated but who did not resign or retire. Black males accounted for 50 percent of the employees who were terminated by the Postal Service, and white males accounted for 33 percent. White males accounted for 60 percent of the employees who were suspended, while black males accounted for 25 percent.

Figure I.3: Percentage, by Race and Gender for Each Type of Final Action Taken by the Postal Service



Note: Data on investigations exclude those employees who resigned or retired after the investigations began and 25 employees for whom insufficient data were available on final actions.

Source: Postal Inspection Service database.

Actions Taken by U.S. Attorneys and Courts

Postal investigators completed about 90 percent of all investigations with an arrest, while the remaining 10 percent did not result in an arrest. The U.S. Attorneys prosecuted 91 percent of the cases brought to them by postal investigators and declined to prosecute about 9 percent. The courts convicted employees in 93 percent of the cases prosecuted by the U.S. Attorneys, acquitted about 2 percent, and dismissed the remaining 5 percent. As of April 1994, about 13 percent of the postal investigations in which a charge had been brought against the employee were pending final actions within the criminal justice system.

In cases where the basis for the investigation was a tip, about 59 percent of the employees were convicted. When the basis for the investigation was information provided by a confidential informant, about 68 percent of the employees were convicted.

Objectives, Scope, and Methodology

The Committee on Post Office and Civil Service requested that we compare the Postal Service workforce to postal investigations in terms of race, gender, age, occupation, and the location of the facility to which the employee was assigned. The Committee expressed an interest in information on the basis for and the outcome of these investigations.

To provide the information requested, we obtained a copy of the Postal Inspection Service data covering investigations entered into the database from September 1988 through April 1994. We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of the data included within the database. Postal Service officials told us that they deleted 68 records from the Cleveland Division from the database in response to a court case that charged the Postal Service with disparate treatment in that location. The Postal Inspection Service determined that the confidential informants involved in these investigations had acted improperly. Therefore, to protect the employees all records relating to the investigations were purged. Inspection officials said that except for some occasional minor changes, no other modifications to the database had been made.

We also obtained copies of the Postal Service's human resource databases, which included full-time, part-time, temporary, casual, flexible, and other employees in all postal occupations, for fiscal years 1989 through 1994. These databases represented the status of the workforce as of the end of the final accounting period in September of each year.¹ We did not verify the accuracy or completeness of these databases.

The Inspection Service uses a field structure different from the rest of the Postal Service. In the Inspection Service database, employees were identified according to the 5-digit ZIP Code of the postal facility to which they were assigned. For our comparisons, we matched the ZIP Codes from the Inspection Service database to those on the human resource databases.

We interviewed Postal Service officials from the Inspection Service, Employee Relations, and Diversity Development to ensure that our interpretations of the data contained in the databases were accurate and to obtain information regarding postal employment policies. We defined the workforce for this report as those postal employees assigned to the ZIP Code areas where investigations were undertaken for drug-related crimes. Postal Service officials said that this would result in more accurate comparisons, because most investigations took place in large metropolitan

¹The 1994 database reflects the workforce status as of April 1994 rather than September 1994.

ZIP Code areas, where minorities constituted a major part of the workforce. We used the workforce data in the defined ZIP Codes as of September 1990, since preliminary analyses revealed that the gender and race composition of the workforce remained stable over time.

As agreed with the Committee, we included information only on black males, black females, white males, and white females. We also deleted the San Juan division because the Inspection Service data did not accurately indicate those employees who were of Hispanic origin.²

The Inspection Service includes 29 divisions (excluding San Juan) plus Postal Headquarters. Only 13 of these divisions accounted for 1,325 investigations, or 77 percent of all investigations. On average, each of these 13 divisions handled 102 investigations. The remaining 16 divisions plus Postal Headquarters handled a total of 393 investigations for an average of 23. Because of the concentration of investigations in the 13 divisions, we combined the 16 divisions plus Postal Headquarters into a single unit, which we identify throughout this fact sheet as “all others.”

We furnished a draft of this fact sheet to the Chief Postal Inspector and other Postal Inspection officials for review. We met with them on November 14, 1994, and their comments are discussed on page 2.

We performed our work from June 1994 through July 1994 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. This fact sheet provides summary information from the databases but does not analyze reasons for any differences that are reported.

²Our analysis reflected the categorization used by the Postal Service and may not differentiate other Hispanic employees from whites or blacks.

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