



FAIR AND EQUITABLE TREATMENT:

PROGRESS MADE AND CHALLENGES REMAINING



A REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT AND THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
BY THE U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

The Chairman



U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD
1615 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20419-0001

December 1, 2009

The President
President of the Senate
Speaker of the House of Representatives

Dear Sirs and Madam:

In accordance with the requirements of 5 U.S.C. 1204(a)(3), it is my honor to submit this Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) report, *Fair and Equitable Treatment: Progress Made and Challenges Remaining*. The purpose of this report is to examine changes in the composition of the Federal workforce and Federal employee perceptions of their treatment in the workplace.

MSPB has a long history of examining the success of the Federal Government and its component agencies in adhering to the merit system principles, achieving a representative workforce, and avoiding prohibited personnel practices. Over the past thirty years, progress has been made as the Federal workforce has become more diverse. However, the percentage of minorities at higher levels of pay and responsibility remains below their rate of employment at lower levels. In addition, many employees believe that personnel decisions are often based on factors other than merit, such as favoritism.

Fairness is essential to recruit highly-qualified employees and create an engaged, high performing workforce. Accordingly, agencies must ensure that their human resources management policies and practices do not create barriers to merit-based selection, advancement, recognition, and retention.

The insights in this report should help Federal agencies enhance their ability to achieve and maintain an effective workforce that represents all segments of society, in accordance with the merit system principles. I believe that you will find this report useful as you consider these and other issues regarding the future of the Federal civil service.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Susan", followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Susan Tsui Grundmann

Enclosure

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OFFICE OF POLICY AND EVALUATION

Director

John Crum, Ph.D.

Project Manager

Cynthia H. Ferentinos, Ph.D.

Assistant Project Manager

James J. Tsugawa

Project Analysts

Dee Ann Batten, Ph.D.

Annette Butler

J. Peter Leeds, Ph.D.

Paul van Rijn, Ph.D.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) has a clear mission—to protect Federal merit systems and the rights of individuals within those systems in accordance with the merit system principles. In part, these principles require Federal agencies to recruit “qualified individuals...to achieve a workforce from all segments of society” and to select and advance employees “on the basis of merit after fair and open competition.”¹ Further, Federal agencies must afford applicants and employees “fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management, without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age or handicapping condition.”² To meet its obligations to report to the President and the Congress regarding whether the Federal Government is meeting these goals, MSPB has conducted research over the years to evaluate progress in these areas. In this report, we summarize results over time from surveys of Federal employees, as well as trends gleaned from Federal workforce data. This report combines these subjective and objective components to provide a more complete understanding regarding how much progress has been made and what challenges remain.

Overview

In the past 30 years, there have been significant changes to the Federal workforce and the broader labor market from which it draws—the civilian labor force. As articulated in the merit system principles, the Federal Government is committed to the goals of a representative Federal workforce and to Federal agencies which manage their employees fairly and develop and deploy their talents effectively. Therefore, it is important to assess the Government’s progress towards achieving the stated ideals.

The MSPB, which is responsible for evaluating and reporting on the health of the Federal civil service, conducted this study to assess the Federal Government’s progress in meeting these goals, with particular attention to representation, career advancement, and the perceived fairness and integrity of personnel practices and decisions. With regard to representation, we examined the availability of various groups of workers in the civilian labor force and compared the presence of these groups in the Federal workforce over a period of significant demographic change in our Nation. We also reviewed Federal employee opinions over time, including those reported in our 1996 Fair and Equitable Treatment Report, and other survey data. Our findings and recommendations are based on demographics and trend data on the civilian labor force and the Federal workforce, measures of Federal employee opinion, and previous research.

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1).

² 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(2).

Findings

Progress has been made. First, the Federal workforce has become more diverse, consistent with the Federal Government's commitment to recruit and retain a workforce that reflects the Nation's diversity. Second, an increasing percentage of Federal employees believe that they are treated fairly, and a decreasing percentage believe that they have experienced discrimination on factors such as ethnicity/race, gender, and age, indicating progress toward managing all Federal employees on the basis of merit and in a manner free from prohibited personnel practices.

Nevertheless, the ideals of a fully representative workforce and fair treatment of all employees have not been wholly realized. Although a statistical analysis of the Federal workforce confirms that diversity has increased, that analysis also shows that progress has been uneven. For example, the Federal Government continues to employ Hispanics at a rate below their availability in the civilian labor force (CLF). Also, the percentage of minorities at higher levels of pay (*e.g.*, General Schedule grades GS-14 and GS-15) and responsibility (*e.g.*, supervisory and executive positions) remains below their rate of employment at lower levels. These differences are the result of a variety of factors, including occupational and educational patterns, as well as other possible influences, such as the legacy of past discrimination or other socioeconomic disadvantages.

Similarly, although a decreasing percentage of employees believe that they have experienced prohibited discrimination, many employees believe that personnel decisions are often based on factors other than merit, such as favoritism. Moreover, survey data indicate that a substantial group of employees lack confidence in both existing redress procedures (such as the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint process) and the willingness or ability of Federal agency leaders to take appropriate action against managers who discriminate or misuse their personnel authority.

Below, we briefly summarize our findings on specific aspects of fair treatment and career advancement.

Promotion rates. Promotion rates are generally comparable across lines of ethnicity/race and gender, but some differences persist. Statistical analysis indicates that those differences are driven primarily, although not exclusively, by factors such as occupation, education, and experience. The analysis also suggests that the value of factors such as education and experience depends more on relevance and quality than on sheer quantity. For example, we found that supervisory experience from an earlier position makes little difference in initial advancement but gains importance at higher levels.

Fostering advancement. As in 1996, minority employees remain more likely to report a lack of career-enhancing opportunities, such as serving as an "acting supervisor." Employees in ethnic/minority groups also continue to express less confidence than White

employees in agency promotion processes. That lack of confidence may be reducing the diversity in candidate pools and, as a consequence, diversity at higher levels. In our surveys, employees sometimes indicated that they had chosen not to apply for a position because they believed the manager (or agency) would not select someone of their ethnicity or race for the position. Although fewer employees reported such a decision in our 2007 survey, the proportion of employees who “opted out” of a competition under the belief that applying would be pointless is not negligible—as high as one in five for some demographic groups.

Employee strategies for career advancement. Although employees continue to express serious reservations about promotion processes and decisions, employees also reported that Federal agencies and managers can and often do promote employees based on accomplishment and ability, and that individual initiative matters. When asked about factors that had aided their advancement, employees gave high marks to: (1) finding a supervisor or mentor who could provide career advice and developmental opportunities; and (2) seeking and successfully completing challenging assignments to “get noticed” and develop a good track record. Employees also recognized that education and training are the foundation for advancement in many occupations.

Views on the impact of ethnicity and race. Survey results show a dramatic decrease in the percentages of employees who believe that they have recently experienced discrimination on the basis of their ethnicity or race. Nevertheless, a considerable percentage of employees still feel that their ethnicity or race has hindered their advancement or otherwise disadvantaged them. Also, employees appear to be less aware of—or less inclined to believe in—discrimination against employees of a different ethnicity or race. Such differences in opinion have significant implications for personnel policy and practice. In particular, they create the potential for disagreement and discord over matters such as the prevalence and severity of discrimination in Federal agencies, the appropriateness of giving agencies and managers greater discretion in hiring and pay, and the need for measures to prevent and address prohibited discrimination.

Concerns about favoritism. Decreases in the proportion of employees who believe that they have experienced prohibited discrimination have not been matched by increases in the proportion of employees who believe that personnel decisions are fair and merit based. Substantial percentages of employees believe that managers engage in favoritism when selecting employees, allocating work and developmental opportunities, and granting awards. It is not realistic to expect every employee to accept every less-than-optimal personnel decision, such as not being selected for a promotion or the denial of a request for training, as fair, just, and merit-based. Nevertheless, continued employee perceptions of favoritism are a serious concern, given their pervasiveness and their corrosive effects on the credibility of agency leadership, the perceived integrity of personnel decisions, and the efficiency and effectiveness of agency human resources (HR) systems (including, but not limited to, hiring, performance management, and pay).

Recommendations

Recommendations for Federal agencies—

Improve measurement. Efforts to improve representation and fair treatment may be unfocused or unproductive unless agencies have a clear understanding of the goals to be achieved, their performance in relation to those goals, and how their personnel policies and practices are promoting or hindering attainment of those goals. Agencies should conduct a thorough workforce analysis, such as the analysis required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s Management Directive 715. That analysis should clearly identify: (1) workforce requirements; (2) areas (such as organization, occupations, or grade levels) where representation lags behind the civilian labor force; and (3) possible barriers to a fully representative workforce. The analysis should also be used to develop strategies for eliminating those barriers. Agencies should also evaluate critical HR processes and policies, and that assessment should examine effects on employees at different levels and in different demographic categories, in addition to other measures such as cost, timeliness, and contribution to organizational and employee performance.

Ensure that HR policies and practices, at both the organizational and individual level, do not create barriers to merit-based selection, recognition, advancement, and retention. Seemingly neutral policies and practices can unintentionally overlook or disadvantage members of certain demographic groups, including those who are highly qualified or high-performing. Below, we outline some measures agencies should consider in specific areas of human resource management.

- *Recruitment.* Use a balanced set of recruitment strategies, complementing “passive” recruitment methods such as posting jobs on USAJOBS and agency websites with active methods such as job fairs, targeted advertisements, and tapping into professional networks. Seek balance when selecting and using appointment authorities, recognizing that recruitment methods or eligibility criteria for a particular authority may limit the diversity or depth of the resulting candidate pool.
- *Assessment and selection.* Ensure that selection criteria are job-related and do not impose unnecessary requirements or inappropriately favor internal or “connected” applicants. Assess critical skills, such as analytical ability and writing, through direct measurement, rather than relying upon indirect indicators, such as education or credentials. Develop and use structured rather than unstructured assessments to improve the consistency and quality of hiring decisions and to minimize the possibility that decisions will be influenced by unconscious or unwarranted assumptions about candidates. Evaluate the diversity of both applicants and new hires to evaluate the success of recruitment efforts and the effects of assessment criteria and methods.

- *Supervisory selection and training.* Emphasize the human resources management aspects of supervision when advertising supervisory positions and base selection decisions on supervisory competence or potential. In addition to improving selection, train supervisors on their responsibilities, to increase their ability to make unbiased, merit-based personnel decisions.
- *Training, development, and career advancement.* Remind supervisors that how they allocate work assignments, training, and developmental opportunities can expand and accelerate—or constrain and slow—their employees’ growth and advancement. Because critical, high-visibility projects, acting supervisor assignments, and selection for developmental programs can provide employees with valuable skills and enhance their confidence and visibility, agencies should allocate these opportunities with due attention to fairness and the long-term goal of developing a diverse pool of capable employees, not merely based on expediency or management’s “comfort level.”
- *Retention.* Devote appropriate resources to orientation and training of new employees, to enhance their initial performance and job satisfaction and reduce the likelihood of unwanted turnover. Use mechanisms, such as employee surveys and exit interviews, to identify problems that may contribute to unwanted turnover.

Emphasize to supervisors their influence over—and responsibility for—the career development of the employees they supervise. Supervisors’ power extends well beyond formal personnel actions. Supervisors are appropriately accountable for timely, high-quality products and services and responsible use of resources. However, supervisors should not permit day-to-day demands, expediency, or limited budgets to overshadow their responsibility to support the professional development and growth of all their employees. Supervisors should take particular care to ensure that coaching, constructive feedback, and training and development are available to all employees, not only a favored few.

Strengthen processes for identifying and rectifying unfair treatment, including accountability for supervisors who misuse their authority. Delegated authorities must be accompanied by safeguards. The first safeguard is transparency—establishing and communicating bases for personnel decisions, both before and after decisions are made, to supervisors and employees. The second safeguard is having procedures for identifying and resolving unfairness and inequity in the workplace. In addition to informing employees of their rights, agencies should seek to increase confidence in the effectiveness of existing redress mechanisms (*e.g.*, grievance and EEO complaint processes). Those mechanisms should be complemented by organization-wide processes, such as employee surveys and program evaluations, to identify concerns that might go unraised or unresolved, at the individual level. The final, indispensable safeguard is accountability. Even in the presence of clear personnel policies and viable complaint procedures, employee trust in agency leaders will be guarded, at best, if employees believe that those leaders will tolerate misuse of authority or mistreatment of employees.

Ensure that managers understand that personnel decisions must be based on merit factors—that is, the ability to perform the job. However, agencies need to be alert to the potential impact of nonmerit factors such as ethnicity/race and gender when monitoring workforce patterns. The recommendations outlined above require a delicate balancing act from Federal agencies and Federal managers. On the one hand, agencies must be conscious of nonmerit factors, such as ethnicity/race and gender, when conducting high-level analyses of the workforce and of personnel programs and practices. On the other hand, managers must be scrupulous in ensuring that those same factors do not influence personnel decisions. Instead, managers must focus on organizational needs and individual abilities and performance—not group identity—when filling jobs, establishing and communicating expectations, assigning work, evaluating performance, recognizing excellence, and holding employees accountable.

Recommendations for Employees—

Employees should understand the long-term implications of their decisions in matters such as education, occupation, geographic mobility, and willingness to take on challenging projects and to assume supervisory and leadership roles. Not all jobs are equal in terms of upward mobility. Some occupations have much more limited career paths, and employees may find it difficult to obtain supervisory positions from certain occupations.

Employees should recognize that what suffices for initial advancement and routine salary progression—conscientious completion of assigned tasks, satisfactory performance, and acceptable conduct—is insufficient to earn advancement to higher levels. Accordingly, we recommend that employees who desire advancement, or who seek professional growth and high regard in their current roles:

- Take the initiative to seek or create developmental opportunities;
- Strive to develop a productive relationship with their supervisors or other mentors;
- Request and accept opportunities to demonstrate exceptional performance and initiative; and
- Understand that continuous learning and formal education and training have gained in importance, reflecting the increasing complexity of Federal work and the professionalization of the Federal workforce.

Summary

Many of the patterns we observed, in both Federal employment and Federal employee attitudes, reflect two conditions in the United States. The first is rapid demographic change. As the U.S. population has become more diverse, so has the Federal workforce. However, because of its stability and distinctive occupational mix, change in the Federal workforce has lagged behind change in the broader civilian labor force. The second is historical inequities in the allocation of opportunities for both education and employment, which can impact qualifications for Federal jobs.

Yet, the merit system principles do not permit Federal agencies to simply accept those inequities. Instead, the merit system principles require Federal agencies to strive for a workforce that is representative of all segments of American society and to select, develop, and advance employees on the basis of merit, without regard to factors such as gender, ethnicity or race. Thus, Federal hiring policies must be both race- and gender-neutral. Achieving a representative, competent, and motivated workforce—and equal opportunity and protection for all—requires more than avoiding prohibited discrimination. This report outlines steps that Federal agencies, as well as current and prospective Federal employees, can take to achieve those goals.



INTRODUCTION

The MSPB was created by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. MSPB’s primary roles are: (1) to adjudicate appeals filed by Federal employees; and (2) to conduct studies relating to Federal merit systems. These functions help ensure that the Federal workforce is managed fairly and equitably in accordance with the Federal merit system principles³ and in a manner free from prohibited personnel practices,⁴ actions that violate the integrity of the merit systems.

Consequently, MSPB’s Office of Policy and Evaluation has researched topics in support of the merit system principles for 30 years. During this time, we have conducted numerous employee surveys and researched many topics relating to the fair and equitable treatment of Federal employees. As a result, we have compiled historical data that enable us to examine trends over time, with particular attention to those that reveal changes in the status and opinions of the demographic groups that compose the Federal workforce.

Purpose of the Study

As part of its mission, MSPB issued several reports in the 1990s assessing barriers that minorities and women encountered in the Federal Government.⁵ Given the time that has passed, concurrent with opportunities for change, this report seeks to assess the degree to which the Federal Government is fully utilizing the available workforce and to identify challenges that require attention to ensure the Federal Government is operating as a model employer in the 21st century. To provide a more comprehensive perspective than relying on one approach alone, we use and consolidate both subjective data (opinions gathered through interviews, discussion groups, and surveys) and objective quantitative data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM’s) Central Personnel Data File (CPDF).⁶

³ Refer to 5, U.S.C. § 2301. The merit system principles are discussed in the next section, “Building a Diverse and Representative Workforce.” Refer to Appendix A for a list of the principles.

⁴ Refer to 5, U.S.C. § 2302. The prohibited personnel practices are briefly discussed in the next section and are listed in Appendix B.

⁵ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling*, October 1992; *Fair and Equitable Treatment: A Progress Report on Minority Employment in the Federal Government*, August 1996; and *Achieving a Representative Federal Workforce: Addressing the Barriers to Hispanic Participation*, September 1997.

⁶ The Central Personnel Data File includes data elements that capture the status of Federal employees, as well as changes to their status via personnel actions. The CPDF covers approximately 1.8 million civilian non-postal Federal employees.

As a starting point, we examine the most basic issue of whether the Federal Government has achieved the goal of representing “all segments of society.”⁷ Next, we review the issue in further detail to explore whether representation occurs consistently throughout the multiple levels and occupational groups of the workforce and explore the factors that may be driving the differences that we found. Beyond the factual data, we also consider the subjective opinions that Federal employees have regarding fair and equitable treatment within the Federal Government. By comparing snapshots of the Federal workforce and changes in employee opinions over time, we can develop a better understanding of the progress made. Finally, we summarize the challenges that remain and suggest potential strategies for improvement. As a result, this report provides an updated perspective on where we stand and ideas for moving forward to close existing gaps.

Methodology

As preparation for this research effort, we collected input from a variety of sources to ensure broad coverage of past and present issues. We started with a literature review, which included the prior MSPB reports most closely related to the topic of fair and equitable treatment within the Federal Government. Then we branched out to similar research conducted by other organizations that examined the fair treatment of a variety of demographic groups, within the private and public sectors, as well as books and articles from academic journals and the popular press.

Next, we conducted interviews with a diverse group of Federal managers and employees, including representatives from Human Resources Management (HRM) offices and employee affinity groups.⁸ The purpose of these meetings was to delve into perceptions of how fairly Federal employees believed they were being treated and to discuss areas where improvement was desired. We also met with colleagues from the U.S. Government Accountability Office and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to exchange ideas about the research topic obtained through our different perspectives.

In addition, we convened groups of Federal employees to discuss the degree to which agencies operate within the merit system principles and to obtain suggestions for improvement.⁹ To get a wide representation of employees, we selected most of the participants based on their geographic location, agency, ethnicity/race, gender,

⁷ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1).

⁸ We received input from Blacks in Government, the Federal Asian Pacific American Council, Federally Employed Women, National IMAGE, and the Society of American Indian Government Employees.

⁹ Refer to Appendix C for the discussion group questions.

occupation and grade.¹⁰ Occasionally, employees volunteered or were nominated by their agencies to participate in these sessions. In addition to conducting discussion groups in eight different geographic locations, we collected employee input in conjunction with presentations given at numerous conferences.

As a culmination of this information gathering, we identified broad themes and specific topics to be covered in the Career Advancement Survey used for this study.¹¹ Approximately half of the survey consisted of items that had appeared on earlier surveys¹² thereby enabling us to compare how opinions changed over time. For the remainder of the survey, we developed new questions to expand upon earlier questions or to tap emerging issues. We pilot tested our draft survey with diverse groups of Federal employees and made revisions prior to implementing the survey. We drew the survey sample from the pool of full-time permanent Federal employees whose agencies are included in the CPDF. A stratified random sampling plan was utilized with strata based on ethnicity/race, gender and pay level. The survey was administered in 2007¹³ in a web-based format with a paper survey for the approximately 5 percent of sampled employees who did not have internet access.

To take advantage of a wealth of archival employee survey data at our disposal, we also analyzed results from eight prior administrations of the Merit Principles Survey (MPS)¹⁴ spanning the period 1983 through 2007. Many of our findings from these analyses were presented in MSPB's 2008 report entitled *The Federal Government: A Model Employer or a Work In Progress?*

The CPDF provided another rich source of information regarding the Federal workforce.¹⁵ The CPDF contains two components: a status and a dynamics file. The status file enables us to take “snapshots” at various points in time. The dynamics file captures all personnel actions that create an individual’s employment record. Combined with demographic codes, our analyses can identify trends over time for specific groups, as well as the overall representation at any moment in time. Please note that all CPDF data in this report reflects fiscal years. Data on the civilian labor force and the relevant

¹⁰ Discussion groups were conducted in a variety of geographic locations, such as Oklahoma City, OK; Chicago, IL; Long Beach, CA; and Albuquerque, NM.

¹¹ A copy of the paper-based Career Advancement Survey can be found in Appendix D.

¹² U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *A Question of Equity: Women and the Glass Ceiling*, October 1992; *Fair and Equitable Treatment: A Progress Report on Minority Employment in the Federal Government*, August 1996.

¹³ Given that this data was collected prior to the 2008 Presidential election, this report does not reflect any changes in Federal employee opinions that may have occurred more recently.

¹⁴ As part of its statutory function to conduct studies of the Federal merit systems and ensure that employees are managed in accordance with the merit system principles, and free from prohibited personnel practices, MSPB periodically administers the MPS. Surveys are distributed to a stratified random sample of Federal employees to ensure representativeness Governmentwide.

¹⁵ For our analyses, we narrowed our sample to full-time permanent employees.

civilian labor force are based on the Current Population Survey as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau as comparison data for the historical dates or the most recent data available.

Consequently, we have the capability to combine objective evidence of groups' progress (or lack thereof) with employees' perceptions over time. The end result is a fuller picture of how things have changed within the Federal Government and the degree to which employees' opinions concur with the objective evidence.



BUILDING A DIVERSE AND REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE

The U.S. population, and subsequently, the available workforce, has changed substantially during the past 30 years. Changes in immigration patterns, birth rates, and societal norms have dramatically altered the Nation’s workforce—including the Federal Government’s—from one dominated by White males to one with much greater diversity in terms of ethnicity/race and gender. Consequently, most employees now acknowledge that having a diverse and representative workforce has become a necessity—not simply something that is “nice to do.”¹⁶

In response to our Career Advancement Survey, approximately two-thirds of Federal employees agreed that the workforce should be “representative of the public they serve” and that a “diverse workforce produces better services and products than a workforce that is not diverse.” Although the majority of Federal employees recognize the value of a diverse and representative workforce, the lack of consensus indicates that some still harbor reservations about creating and maintaining a Federal workforce that “is reflective of the Nation’s diversity.”¹⁷

The Case for a Diverse and Representative Workforce

The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 stated that “In order to provide the people of the United States with a competent, honest, and productive Federal workforce reflective of the Nation’s diversity, and to improve the quality of the public service, Federal personnel management should be implemented consistent with the merit system principles and free from prohibited personnel practices.”¹⁸ Among other mandates, the merit system principles require agencies to recruit qualified individuals “from all segments of society,” select and advance employees on the basis of merit after “fair and open competition,” and treat employees and applicants fairly and equitably, without regard to “political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age,

¹⁶ Diversity implies a workforce that includes employees who differ on a variety of personal characteristics, including (but not limited to) ethnicity/race and gender. Representativeness goes further, implying a workforce that is not only diverse, but also reflective of the general population.

¹⁷ 5 U.S.C. § 1101 note.

¹⁸ *Id.*

or handicapping condition.”¹⁹ The prohibited personnel practices specify that actions such as discrimination, reprisal, and other violations of the integrity of the merit system will not be tolerated. A variety of laws provide additional protection for employees in the public and/or private sector from discrimination, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has the authority to levy fines against organizations that discriminate.²⁰ Treating employees fairly serves as one of the most basic steps an agency can take to achieve and maintain a diverse and representative workforce.

However, beyond the legal requirements not to treat employees (or prospective employees) unfairly on the basis of characteristics that are not job related, many agencies have discovered other incentives that have driven them to pursue a representative workforce. For example, some agency missions require working closely with members of the public. In some cases, proficiency in a language spoken by customers or a familiarity with cultural traditions serves an essential role in ensuring that the agency can effectively deliver its services.²¹

Inclusivity also tends to make people feel valued and consequently more likely to contribute to the mission and less likely to engage in counter-productive behaviors. Research has demonstrated quantifiable benefits of diversity in terms of sales, profits, and wider customer base in the private sector.²² In contrast, perceptions of discrimination can have negative impacts on employees and the organization through decreased satisfaction, commitment, organizational citizenship, and performance, as well as increased absenteeism and turnover.²³ For example, one study focused on “knowledge workers”²⁴ and their commitment levels and subsequent performance based on perceptions of fairness.²⁵ The researchers concluded that the quality of the manager-employee relationship determines commitment, with transparent performance management systems leading to perceptions of fairness. Another study found that people’s perceptions of fairness drove them towards either engagement or “burnout”

¹⁹ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1) and (2).

²⁰ Examples include: the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Lily Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

²¹ For example, fluency in a foreign language may be essential to effectively perform as a Customs and Border Patrol officer who is responsible for interviewing travelers to the United States. Similarly, a nurse with the Indian Health Service who is sensitive to beliefs within the American Indian community may be more effective in gaining the trust required to treat and advise patients.

²² C. Herring, “Does Diversity Pay? Racial Composition of Firms and the Business Case for Diversity,” *American Sociological Review*, 74(2), 2009.

²³ B.M. Goldman, B.A. Gutek, J.H. Stein, and K. Lewis, “Employment Discrimination in Organizations: Antecedents and Consequences,” *Journal of Management*, 32, 2006, pp. 786-830.

²⁴ Knowledge workers perform work that involves managing information, using problem solving capability, and creating knowledge, which relates closely to professional and administrative occupations within the Federal Government.

²⁵ M. Thompson and P. Heron, “The Difference a Manager Can Make: Organizational Justice and Knowledge Worker Commitment,” *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2005, pp. 383-404.

(defined as exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficiency).²⁶ Hence, employees' perceptions can create real impacts on organizational outcomes, so they warrant being examined and acted upon by the agency.

To explore the impact of perceptions of fair treatment and outcomes in the Federal Government, we developed a fairness index comprised of selected items from the MPS.²⁷ Next, we conducted analyses that demonstrated a strong link between perceptions of being treated fairly and employee engagement. Given the previously demonstrated correlation between employee engagement and organizational outcomes,^{28, 29} it logically follows that perceptions of fair treatment would have a similar impact.

In terms of undesirable employee behaviors, we found that perceptions of being treated fairly are negatively correlated with metrics such as EEO complaints and complainant rates, number of appeals as a percent of the workforce, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) total case rate, OSHA lost-time case rate, and average sick leave usage. This means that employees who felt they were treated unfairly were more likely to file EEO complaints and appeals, report work-related illnesses or injuries, and use more sick leave.

Not surprisingly, the fairness index was also strongly correlated with intent to leave the organization ($r=.20$, $p<.01$) so people who felt they were treated unfairly were much more likely to report plans to leave within the next year. The 2007 fairness index was correlated ($r=.44$, $p<.05$) with rate of quits, indicating that people do not just say they are going to leave when they feel treated unfairly, rather there is evidence that they actually do leave. These types of outcomes create negativity and turmoil in organizations, so avoiding them by fostering perceptions of fair treatment logically supports organizational missions.

When examining issues and measures of fairness, the tendency is to focus on differences among demographic groups. However, we found that the "fair treatment index" we used as a measure of perceived fairness varied more across agencies than across demographic lines (*e.g.*, ethnicity/race, gender, and supervisory status). To some extent, this outcome reflects cultural and demographic differences across agencies (such as mission, agency image and funding, occupational mix, pay levels, and workforce composition). But this outcome also confirms the centrality of agency HRM practices to fairness in the

²⁶ C. Maslach and M.P. Leiter, "Early Predictors of Job Burnout and Engagement," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(3), 2008, pp. 498-512.

²⁷ Our index of fairness items from the 2005 MPS proved highly correlated with MSPB's employee engagement index ($r=.69$, $p<.01$). We created a fairness index by combining responses to 2005 MPS items 22 a-g, which measure perceptions of being treated fairly within the past 2 years in terms of career advancement, awards, training, performance appraisal, job assignments, discipline and pay.

²⁸ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *The Power of Federal Employee Engagement*, September 2008.

²⁹ M. Ricketta, "The Causal Relation Between Job Attitudes and Performance: A Meta-Analysis of Panel Studies," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 2008, pp. 472-481.

workplace, both actual and perceived. Overall, it appears that perceived fairness depends more on the employer than the employee. Restated, when it comes to fairness, where you work matters more than who you are.

Finally, competition for qualified employees has forced many employers, including the Federal Government, to realize that they can no longer afford to neglect previously untapped sources of workers. Agencies need to extend their outreach to develop a broader network of individuals who would consider applying for a Federal job rather than simply waiting for them to apply. Many prospective employees simply lack information about obtaining employment with the Government, which has limited the applicant pool.³⁰

In summary, agencies should be concerned about maintaining a diverse and representative workforce for three primary reasons:

- (1) Required by law to treat Federal employees fairly and equitably, and the merit system principles mandate recruitment from all segments of society and selection and advancement based on merit through a process of fair and open competition.
- (2) A business necessity to be able to serve the public effectively.
- (3) Needed to fully utilize all available segments of the workforce.

Achieving Representation

Achieving representation requires knowing what the desired end state is and understanding legal requirements regarding the management of the Federal workforce on the basis of merit. First of all, agencies need to decide what the workforce should look like in order to be representative. Next, agencies must work to achieve representation without intentionally or unintentionally discriminating based on personal characteristics unrelated to job performance. The challenge is how to manage the ethnic/racial composition of the workforce to achieve this goal while affording protection to everyone—African American, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, and White.

Agencies should look at their workforce overall and by major occupations to identify where they are lacking diversity. Agencies can use the Census 2000 EEO Data Tool³¹ to compare the representation within their agencies to availability in the “relevant

³⁰ Partnership for Public Service, *Back to School: Rethinking Federal Recruiting on College Campuses*, PPS-06-01, May 2006, p. 20.

³¹ For the Census 2000 EEO Data tool, visit the Census website at <http://www.census.gov/eo2000/index.html>. Guidance on determining which data serve as the most appropriate reference point can be obtained from the EEOC’s website regarding Management Directive 715.

civilian labor force” (RCLF) by occupation and/or geographical location.³² However, one concern with using 2000 Census data is that some groups, notably Hispanics, have experienced rapid growth within the U.S. population that has rendered the 2000 Census numbers significantly out of date.

The OPM provides an annual overview of representation for the entire Federal workforce compared to the total civilian labor force by ethnic/racial group and gender. The report also reviews representation against the RCLF for each executive department and independent agency.³³ These calculations take into account the occupational mix within each organization to calculate the RCLF. The RCLF typically provides a more accurate reference point than the total civilian labor force because of differences between the occupations within the Federal workforce and those in the private sector. Within the private sector, a large segment of jobs entail sales and personal services, which have no counterpart in the public sector.³⁴ However, in some instances, the total civilian labor force may be more appropriate, such as when the jobs are entry level because in these cases prior job training would not necessarily limit the pool of qualified applicants.

After assessing the current workforce and identifying gaps that need to be closed, agencies should prepare a comprehensive strategy to address these deficits, such as identifying specific demographic groups that are not fully represented, occupations or pay levels that lack diversity, and the point at which inequities occur. For example, an agency may be recruiting and hiring in proportion to the available workforce, but if members of one group fail to progress, then the organization should examine if there are any barriers preventing a diverse pool of employees from reaching the top levels. Similarly, if certain employees believe they are blocked from promotional opportunities and leave the organization out of frustration at their lack of career progress, the agency may find it is unable to maintain the diversity obtained on the front end due to differential turnover rates. Therefore, it is essential for agencies to monitor diversity at various steps of workforce management, and not just at the point of entry.

³² As defined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the civilian labor force covers everyone 16 years of age and older, who is not institutionalized or serving on active military duty, whether employed or unemployed, and regardless of U.S. citizenship. In contrast, the relevant civilian labor force considers only those who are in comparable occupations. Therefore, the RCLF will vary by agency.

³³ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Annual Report to the Congress Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP)*, FY 2008.

³⁴ The civilian labor force also differs from the Federal workforce in that the CLF includes noncitizens, while Federal employment typically requires citizenship. Likewise, the CLF includes those age 16 and older, while the Federal Government employs very few from the younger age groupings. More details are included in the 2006 GAO report, *Additional Insights Could Enhance Agency Efforts Related to Hispanic Representation* and MSPB’s 1997 report *Achieving a Representative Federal Workforce: Addressing the Barriers to Hispanic Participation*.

Recruitment. Agencies have access to a variety of tools to facilitate the recruitment of a diverse and representative workforce. As we recommended in an earlier report,³⁵ agencies need to view recruitment as a “critical management function” that serves a vital role in helping them achieve their strategic goals. Agencies should maintain a focus on being diverse and representative of the available workforce by building these concepts into their strategic goals. Having a representative workforce and a well-qualified workforce need not be in conflict. Achieving both goals simultaneously may require some additional effort by agencies to ensure that they are identifying a diverse pool of qualified candidates and not simply those who are most easily available when the resulting pool lacks diversity. Yet, this investment is likely to benefit agencies in the long term as it leads to hiring the most qualified applicants who also represent diverse perspectives.

To create the best possible workforce, agencies need to develop a recruitment plan based on the current status of their workforce and future needs. To implement this plan, they should use a “balanced set of recruitment strategies.”³⁶ These strategies will depend heavily upon the responsibilities of the position to be filled, but should go beyond passive approaches such as posting announcements on USAJobs and/or the agency website. Other strategies to consider may include participating in university and community jobs fairs, targeting job advertisements, and tapping into professional networks, which may be based on occupation and/or demographic affiliation (*e.g.*, the National Association of Black Accountants and the Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers).

Also, rather than waiting for prospective applicants to learn of opportunities, agencies should develop recruitment strategies that are proactive and reach out to prospective applicants who are qualified but may not have previously considered a Federal career. For example, many agencies work with colleges and universities identified as Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions and build relationships that generate an ongoing stream of interested applicants. Agencies may also use intern programs, such as the Student Educational Employment Program, to groom employees from the earliest stages of their career.³⁷

Finally, agencies need to evaluate how well each of their recruitment strategies has achieved its goals—not only in terms of quantity of applicants from a variety of groups but also in terms of quality, and long-term success with the agency. Although it may be tempting for agencies to focus on the sheer numbers of applicants from the desired demographic groups, it is even more essential to ensure that the agency attracts applicants who are well-qualified for the positions. Otherwise, agencies risk discouraging applicants

³⁵ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Managing Federal Recruitment: Issues, Insights, and Illustrations*, September 2004.

³⁶ *Id.* and U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Attracting the Next Generation: A Look at Federal Entry-Level New Hires*, January 2008.

³⁷ The Student Educational Employment Program (5 CFR 213.3202) consists of the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

(and their counterparts) once they are not selected and give the appearance of adverse impact against certain groups in the selection process.

Applying for a Federal job. There appears to be agreement from a variety of sources, including applicants, selecting officials and agency leaders, Congress, and OPM, that the current recruitment and hiring process for Federal jobs has tremendous room for improvement. In 2008, OPM issued an End-to-End Hiring Roadmap,³⁸ and more recently, a bill was introduced to further streamline the hiring process and make it more user-friendly.³⁹ The legislation also proposes requiring agencies to devote more attention to workforce planning, including identifying “recruitment strategies to attract highly qualified candidates from diverse backgrounds.”

All too often, Federal hiring processes remain dauntingly complex and long, especially for first-time applicants.⁴⁰ Research and data from MSPB surveys suggest that the Government’s heavy reliance on training and experience (T & E) assessments to screen applicants and identify the best-qualified applicants may be counterproductive. T & E methods require detailed information about an applicant’s competencies and accomplishments, which must be obtained through narratives (such as the often laborious “knowledge, skills and ability (KSA) essays”) or questionnaires.⁴¹ The ability of this approach to attract and reliably identify the best applicants is questionable.⁴² Moreover, data from our surveys suggest that agency job posting and screening practices may be harming the diversity and, consequently, the quality of applicant pools.⁴³ For example, minority employees were slightly more likely to report that they experienced difficulty qualifying for a Federal position. This pattern may reflect factors that may correlate with ethnicity/race, such as language fluency or education levels. Yet this pattern also highlights the potential for seemingly neutral practices (such as narrowly defined experience requirements and positive educational requirements⁴⁴) to limit the applicant pool in unexpected and unintended ways.⁴⁵ Therefore, agencies should take care to ensure that their recruitment, application, and assessment processes do not create barriers for otherwise qualified applicants.

³⁸ For more details, refer to <http://www.opm.gov/publications/EndToEnd-HiringInitiative.pdf>.

³⁹ Federal Hiring Process Improvement Act of 2009, S. 736, 111th Cong., 155 Cong. Rec. S3991-92 (daily ed. Mar. 30, 2009).

⁴⁰ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Managing Federal Recruitment: Issues, Insights, and Illustrations*, September 2004; U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Attracting the Next Generation: A Look at Federal Entry-Level New Hires*, January 2008, pp. 17-18.

⁴¹ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Identifying Talent through Technology*, August 2004, p. 8.

⁴² F.L. Schmidt and J.E. Hunter, “The Validity and Utility of Selection Methods in Personnel Psychology: Practical and Theoretical Implications of 85 Years of Research Findings,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), September 1998.

⁴³ Results from the 2007 Career Advancement Survey.

⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment: 2000*, August 2003, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Both statute, at 5 U.S.C. § 3308, and OPM policy establish a high threshold for positive educational requirements. Indeed, section 3308 states that OPM “or other examining agency may not prescribe a minimum educational requirement for an examination for the competitive service except when the Office decides that the duties of a scientific, technical, or professional position cannot be performed by an individual who does not have a prescribed minimum education.”

Accordingly, agencies need to examine their recruitment and hiring practices to ensure that qualified applicants are not deterred or inappropriately disadvantaged by application procedures or assessment methods. In terms of substance, agencies should ensure that required (minimum) qualifications are truly essential, and that desired qualifications are not so narrowly defined as to effectively exclude external applicants. In terms of form, agencies should recognize that assessment methods can affect hiring outcomes in subtle and unintended ways. For example, the use of KSA essays places a premium on writing skill—whether or not that is essential to the job. Lengthy job announcements and complex application procedures may reward applicants who have excellent writing abilities and the luxury of time to devote to the application process.

Hiring. To guide their recruitment and hiring activities, agencies should closely monitor the diversity of employees brought onboard through various hiring authorities and avoid relying exclusively on hiring methods that disadvantage certain groups. As we discussed in a prior report, which authority is used may influence the diversity of new hires as certain authorities tend to favor certain groups over others.⁴⁶

In a 2008 report, MSPB recommended that agencies improve their hiring practices by using “more predictive applicant assessment tools” and evaluating the agency’s hiring processes to identify any “unnecessary obstacles.”⁴⁷ Ideal assessment techniques effectively identify the most qualified applicants based only on job-related characteristics. Although Federal agencies often rely heavily on methods to assess training and experience due to the relative ease with which questionnaires about these factors can be developed (*e.g.*, “have you done x, y and z?”), such methods often lack the important element of distinguishing how well applicants can perform on job-relevant competencies. Rather than relying excessively on the applicant’s past career opportunities, investing in more rigorous assessment methods, such as work sample tests and structured interviews,⁴⁸ may result in a greater ability to differentiate between applicants in terms of current capabilities and future potential.

Even when agencies believe that they are using valid selection instruments, they must carefully monitor for any evidence of adverse impact. If any group appears to be disproportionately screened out, agencies should carefully review the selection process to ensure that all aspects of the examination process are truly job-related, and if so, consider what other equally valid screening tools might have less adverse impact. This comparison of the population of new hires to the applicant pool can help agencies maintain the diversity that they sought through targeted recruitment efforts.

⁴⁶ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *In Search of Highly Skilled Workers: A Study on the Hiring of Upper Level Employees from Outside the Federal Government*, February 2008, pp. 24-25.

⁴⁷ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Attracting the Next Generation: A Look at Federal Entry-Level New Hires*, January 2008, p. iii.

⁴⁸ F.L. Schmidt and J.E. Hunter, “The Validity and Utility of Selection Methods in Personnel Psychology: Practical and Theoretical Implications of 85 Years of Research Findings,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 124(2), September 1998, p. 265.

Given the competition for high-quality new hires, agencies need to be more careful not to overlook diverse pools of candidates who have already expressed an interest in working for the Government and have already demonstrated their capabilities and future potential—interns.⁴⁹ Since agencies typically have substantial flexibility regarding how they fill intern positions,⁵⁰ they can use targeted recruitment to reach underrepresented groups.⁵¹ Plus, if the interns perform well on the job, they can often be converted to permanent status, if the right hiring authorities are used (*e.g.*, Student Career Experience Program). For example, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has worked with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities to place interns in USDA jobs.⁵²

Equitable promotion rates to ensure diversity at all levels. Promotion rates can differ across groups for many reasons, including differences in occupation, geographic location, and career interests. However, to achieve both fairness and diversity, agencies must ensure that differences in outcomes (such as differences in promotion rates and representation) are not the result of discrimination or practices that inappropriately favor or disfavor any particular group. Steps that agencies can take include:

- Monitoring recruitment practices, diversity, and retention in mission-critical occupations and occupations with high promotion potential. Different occupations offer different opportunities for promotion and advancement to managerial positions. Agencies should take particular care to avoid directing women or minorities (or men and nonminorities, for that matter) into occupations that offer limited potential for advancement.
- Ensuring that promotion criteria are appropriately job related and using valid assessments to make promotion decisions. Agencies should be particularly careful about using classroom training or formal education as an indicator of proficiency in areas such as writing, analytical ability, leadership, and subject matter knowledge. If such competencies are indeed important, that should be clearly communicated to applicants—and the competencies should be evaluated using appropriate assessment tools.
- Monitoring promotion processes. In addition to selection decisions, agencies should look at applicant pools and how promotion processes are perceived. Data from our Career Advancement Survey indicate that minorities are more likely to believe that promotion processes are unfair or biased, and since such beliefs can affect the decision to apply, there exist obvious consequences for the applicant pool and representation.
- Understanding and communicating factors that are important to advancement. Employees are more likely to attain necessary skills and experience—and compete

⁴⁹ Partnership for Public Service, *Leaving Talent on the Table: The Need to Capitalize on High Performing Student Interns*, April 2009.

⁵⁰ Agencies often use excepted service hiring authorities to fill intern positions due to their temporary nature.

⁵¹ Given the need for up-to-date agency-specific guidance, this report should not be taken as legal advice. Each agency should seek the input of their Office of General Counsel regarding the use of intern programs to fill positions in the excepted service. In particular, decisions in *Weed v. SSA* (2009 MSPB 159) and *Gingery v. DOD* (2009 MSPB 151) may impact future staffing procedures within Federal agencies.

⁵² A. Rosenberg, “USDA Touts Success with Intern Program,” *Government Executive*, Apr. 10, 2009, www.govexec.com.

successfully for advancement—when they have an accurate understanding of what is needed to advance. Yet, an employee’s initial experiences can be misleading in that regard. Our analysis of promotion rates indicates that the skills, performance, and attributes needed for advancement in a career ladder position may not suffice for competitive advancement to higher level positions.⁵³ For example, our analysis of promotion rates indicates that higher level education may improve an employee’s chances of promotion, even when such education is not required for entry into the occupation. Similarly, factors such as supervisory experience and willingness to relocate may be immaterial at entry level but critical at higher levels.

- Supporting employee growth. Support should not be limited to developmental assignments and formal training, although both are important. As discussed later in the report, employees believe that supportive relationships with supervisors and other mentors play a critical role in facilitating career advancement. Research supports that belief.⁵⁴
- Emphasizing the importance of effective HRM practices in supervisory selection, development, and accountability. Supervisors’ practices in hiring, work assignment, and performance management have long-term effects on employees’ careers and the quality and diversity of an agency’s future workforce, in addition to the short-term productivity and morale of the immediate work unit.

Retention. Various motives drive employees to separate from agencies. Employees may be pulled away by positive incentives elsewhere (*e.g.*, a promotion) or driven away by negative incentives, such as a supervisor who plays favorites. Agencies need to examine whether patterns exist to suggest that one group is being treated differently, which serves to increase the chances that they will leave.

A review of turnover from the Governmentwide CPDF suggests that the Federal workforce remains very stable. In FY 2008, only 2.2 percent of full-time permanent employees quit and 3.4 percent retired. American Indian, Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander employees were slightly more likely than White or African American employees to quit. White employees retired at the highest rate, reflecting the greater average age and tenure of White employees. These trends suggest that retirements associated with the exodus of the Baby Boomers⁵⁵ from the Federal workforce will create opportunities for increasing minority representation. However, gains appear unlikely unless minority employees can be retained at comparable rates to White employees.

⁵³ The results of this analysis are presented in the section “Fostering a Representative Workforce at All Levels,” pp. 24-34.

⁵⁴ B. Frankel, “5 Mentoring Best Practices,” DiversityInc., printed from the website www.diversityinc.com, on April 15, 2009.

⁵⁵ The term “baby boomer” typically refers to individuals born between 1946 and 1964.

Although it may be difficult to identify the real reasons that employees leave, as they are often motivated not to burn any bridges by revealing negative experiences, agencies should develop mechanisms, such as anonymous exit surveys or confidential interviews, whereby employees feel they can honestly share their opinions without fear of retribution. However, agencies should realize that exit surveys, although they can provide useful information to stem future losses, come far too late to preserve the relationship with not only the departing employee, but perhaps also with some of the employee's colleagues. Each person who actually leaves the organization can represent many others who share the same concerns and frustrations, so these issues should be considered and addressed without delay.

Given the costs that are associated with turnover, agencies cannot afford to allow their employees to leave because of perceived unfair treatment. One survey of employees in the private sector found that 6.3 percent selected "unfairness" as the only reason for separating from their employer.⁵⁶ However, minorities were three times as likely to select this reason compared to White men. When asked about what could have convinced them to stay, the most popular response among minorities was "better managers who recognized their abilities."⁵⁷ Further, most agencies are aware of the costs of recruiting, hiring, and training an employee's replacement, yet most overlook other costs associated with employees who leave because they feel unappreciated because of their ethnicity/ race. Because word of mouth can be a powerful recruitment and retention tool, these employees may steer others away from the organization, which makes it even more challenging for the agency to build and maintain a diverse workforce.⁵⁸

Summary

To recap, each agency has a number of levers at its disposal to build a diverse and representative workforce. However, prerequisites for this include: (1) commitment to the multiple rationales for achieving a diverse and representative workforce; and (2) understanding what is required to achieve this goal. Next, the agency must attend to aspects of the recruitment, application, hiring, advancement and retention processes to facilitate diversity at all levels of the organization.

⁵⁶ Level Playing Field Institute, *The Corporate Leavers Survey: The Cost of Employee Turnover Due Solely to Unfairness in the Workplace*, San Francisco, CA, 2007.

⁵⁷ *Id.*, p. 10.

⁵⁸ *Id.*, p. 7.

A STATUS REPORT ON THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE

How successful has the Federal Government been in achieving a workforce “reflective of the Nation’s diversity” as envisioned by the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978? To assess whether we have fully achieved this goal, we need to look beyond overall numbers to see if members of all ethnic/racial groups have achieved parity across pay levels as well.

Representation in the Federal Workforce

Overall, minority representation in the Federal Government has increased. As shown in **Table 1**, the representation of every ethnic and racial group other than White employees has increased since 1976. The increase has been greatest for Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders.

Table 1. Composition of the Federal Workforce by Ethnicity/Race, Fiscal Years 1976-2008⁵⁹

Ethnicity/Race	1976	1986	1996	2006	2008	Change
African American	14.9%	16.1%	17.0%	17.7%	18.0%	3.1%
American Indian	0.5%	1.3%	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%	1.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.1%	2.9%	4.1%	5.2%	5.3%	4.2%
Hispanic	3.6%	5.0%	6.1%	7.6%	7.9%	4.3%
White	76.6%	74.4%	71.1%	67.5%	66.5%	-10.1%

Data from OPM reports provide a comparison between the Federal civilian workforce and the total civilian labor force in 1996 and 2008.⁶⁰ While members of minority ethnic/racial groups overall have increased their representation in the Federal workforce, Hispanic employees remain underrepresented. As **Table 2** shows, Federal employment

⁵⁹ Percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

⁶⁰ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *The Fact Book, 1997 Edition, Federal Civilian Workforce Statistics and The Annual Federal Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program (FEORP) Report to Congress, FY 2008*. These numbers differ slightly from data presented elsewhere in this report because OPM analyses are based on the total (full-time and part-time) permanent workforce, while MSPB analyses only cover the full-time permanent workforce.

of Hispanics has not kept pace with their growth in the civilian labor force.⁶¹ That CLF growth is expected to continue, with Hispanics projected to account for 30 percent of the U.S. population by 2050.⁶² Consequently, the gap between the representation of Hispanics in the Federal workforce and the civilian labor force may actually widen in the near future.

Table 2. Comparison of the Federal Workforce and the Civilian Labor Force, by Ethnicity/Race, Fiscal Years 1996 and 2008⁶³

Ethnicity/Race	1996			2008		
	Federal Workforce	CLF	Difference	Federal Workforce	CLF	Difference
African American	17.0%	10.8%	6.2%	17.9%	10.0%	7.9%
American Indian	1.7%	0.8%	0.9%	1.9%	0.7%	1.2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.0%	3.4%	0.6%	5.4%	4.3%	1.1%
Hispanic	6.0%	10.5%	-4.5%	7.9%	13.2%	-5.3%
White	71.3%	73.7%	-2.4%	66.6%	70.7%	-4.1%

Even if the percentage of Hispanics in the general population and the civilian labor force was stable, that gap would be difficult to close quickly or completely. **Figure 1** shows how Hispanic representation in the Federal workforce would change under different scenarios for employee turnover and Hispanic hiring:⁶⁴

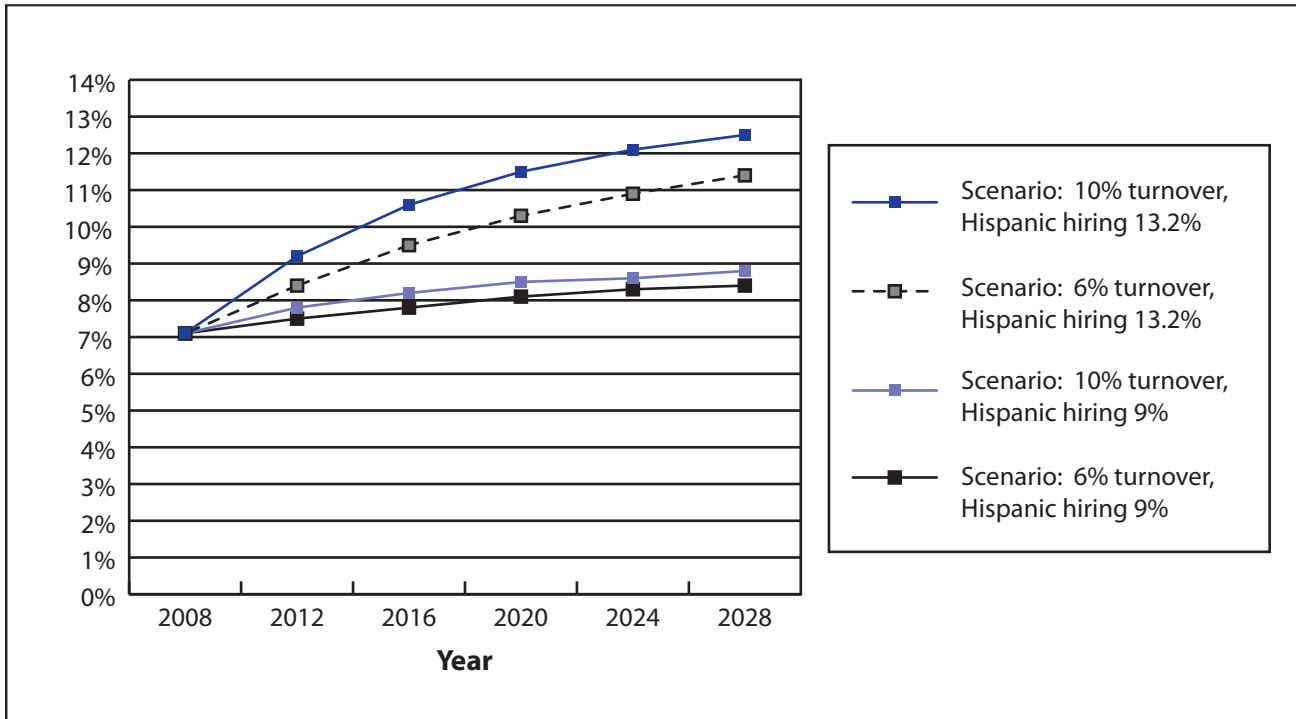
⁶¹ Reasons for this underrepresentation, such as group differences in citizenship and educational attainment, have been discussed in the following reports: U.S. Government Accountability Office’s August 2006 report, *The Federal Workforce: Additional Insights Could Enhance Agency Efforts Related to Hispanic Representation*, GAO-06-832, and MSPB’s September 1997 report *Achieving a Representative Federal Workforce: Addressing the Barriers to Hispanic Representation*.

⁶² U.S. Government Accountability Office, *The Federal Workforce: Additional Insights Could Enhance Agency Efforts Related to Hispanic Representation*, GAO-06-832, August, 2006, p. 25.

⁶³ Percentages do not total to 100% due to rounding.

⁶⁴ For these scenarios, we assumed that: (1) the total number of Federal employees is stable—that the Federal Government neither creates nor eliminates jobs but simply fills vacancies as they occur; (2) Hispanic representation in the civilian labor force remains unchanged; and (3) turnover rates are the same for current and for newly hired employees.

Figure 1. Changes in Hispanic Representation in the Federal Workforce Under Different Scenarios, Fiscal Years 2008-2028



We emphasize that these scenarios and their projections are not predictions. Yet, the scenarios provide some useful insights:

- The demographics of the Federal workforce change only gradually, without significant expansion or contraction of the workforce. Therefore, Hispanic representation in the Federal Government is a long-term issue;
- Given current—or even increased—levels of turnover, the gap between the representation of Hispanics in the Federal workforce and in the civilian labor force is unlikely to be eliminated in the immediate future;
- Increased turnover alone will make little difference in both the short- and the long-term. The gap will close only slowly if Federal agencies are able to significantly increase Hispanic representation among new hires. Restated, action will be more helpful than attrition; and
- If improvements in Hispanic hiring are only marginal, the gap will close slowly, if at all, especially in light of projected changes in the population (and, by extension, the civilian labor force).

As shown in **Table 3**, Hispanic employees were selected for Federal jobs at a rate lower than their presence in the civilian labor force in 2008. As discussed later in this section, this most likely reflects the current occupational distribution of Hispanic employees

in the civilian labor force.⁶⁵ Further, the percentage of Hispanics among new hires in 2008 was actually slightly lower than their presence in the Federal workforce in that year. Hiring at a rate above or below overall representation may indicate fluctuations in the occupations hired for in a given year compared to the current levels onboard, but if a pattern of hiring below the status quo continues, no progress will be made. Moreover, as the scenarios in Figure 1 illustrate, progress will be gradual even if agencies succeed in increasing Hispanic representation among new hires by a few percentage points. As suggested above, in order to achieve more ambitious goals, a greater shift in hiring would be required.

Table 3. Federal New Hires and Comparison of Representation in the Federal Workforce and the Civilian Labor Force, FY 2008

Ethnicity/Race	Federal Workforce	New Hires	Civilian Labor Force
African American	17.9%	18.0%	10.0%
American Indian	1.9%	1.8%	0.7%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.4%	5.4%	4.3%
Hispanic	7.9%	7.1%	13.2%
White	66.6%	66.5%	70.7%

To better mirror the available workforce, agencies would have to follow a more comprehensive approach that would encompass measurement, workforce planning, and recruitment. Under such an approach, agencies should first evaluate the diversity of their new hires against the most recent data on the CLF (or the relevant civilian labor force when the area of consideration is limited geographically or if the level or nature of the job requires specialized experience or education). Second, agencies should consider whether they are defining staffing requirements, career paths, or job requirements in ways that may unnecessarily limit the applicant pool and reduce diversity among qualified applicants. Finally, agencies should ensure that their recruitment efforts produce an applicant pool that is both qualified and diverse, and that job opportunities are both attractive and accessible to that pool. Although representation within the relevant civilian labor force may make it more challenging to locate employees from certain groups, agencies should not rely upon this as an excuse for a lack of diversity in their workforce.

⁶⁵ In the civilian labor force, Hispanics are disproportionately represented in blue collar occupations (e.g., construction and agriculture) and service occupations (e.g., food preparation and maintenance), which are not prevalent in the Federal workforce. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2009, pp. 384-387.

Pay and Status

Overall, minorities have made considerable progress in the Federal Government but have yet to attain fully comparable pay or status. For example, as shown in **Table 4**, in 1991 and in 2008, American Indian, African American, and Hispanic employees received significantly less pay than Asian/Pacific Islander and White employees.

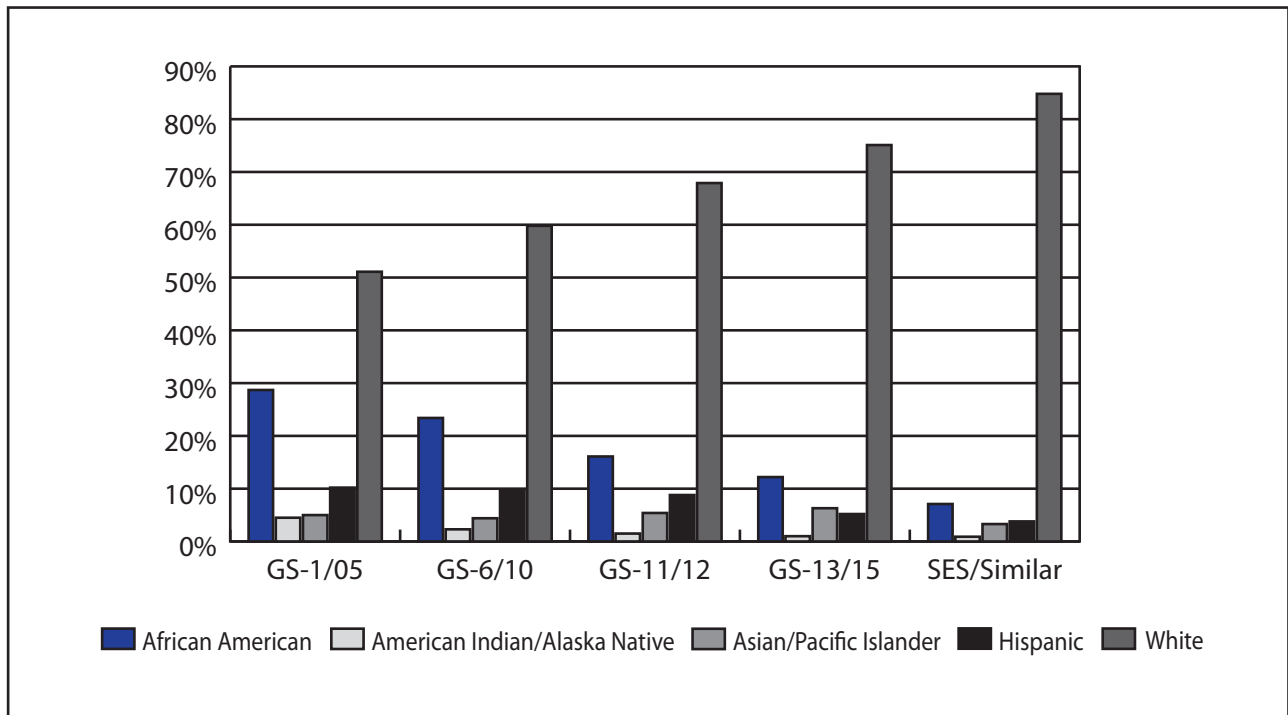
Table 4. Median Salary of Federal Employees by Ethnicity/Race, Fiscal Years 1976-2008

Ethnicity/Race	1976		1991		2008	
	Median	Percent of Government-wide	Median	Percent of Government-wide	Median	Percent of Government-wide
African American	\$11,309	83%	\$24,814	80%	\$55,172	85%
American Indian	\$13,931	103%	\$25,930	83%	\$51,300	79%
Asian/Pacific Islander	\$14,810	109%	\$33,430	108%	\$70,362	109%
Hispanic	\$12,730	94%	\$27,164	87%	\$57,706	89%
White	\$14,358	106%	\$32,745	105%	\$68,875	106%
Governmentwide	\$13,562	100%	\$31,075	100%	\$64,704	100%

Shown another way, **Figure 2** displays the representation by General Schedule (GS) grade level. Although a significant percentage of Federal employees are now covered by other pay systems, over half remain covered by the General Schedule (or a comparable pay system that can be equated with the GS). This bar graph makes it clear that White employees represent a larger percentage of the employees among the higher grades. In comparison, other groups decrease as they move up the pay scale.⁶⁶ As we discuss in the following pages, these differences largely reflect occupational influences, as members of several minority groups tend to be concentrated in jobs whose career ladders top out at the middle of the pay scale (GS-10 to 12 or their equivalents). However, the reasons underlying the differences in occupational distribution are beyond the scope of this report as they are likely to reflect larger societal and cultural influences.

⁶⁶ We note, however, that Asian/Pacific Islander employees are well represented until the SES level.

Figure 2. Ethnic/Racial Representation in the Federal Workforce by Grade Levels, FY 2008⁶⁷



Occupational Distribution

As mentioned above, salary differences appear due, in large part, to differences in the representation of minorities across occupations within the Federal Government.⁶⁸ It should be noted that similar differences in occupational distribution are found in the overall civilian labor force. In fact, in many cases, the Federal Government has achieved a greater degree of diversity than is available in the relevant civilian labor force for many occupations that are prevalent in the Federal workforce. For example, we examined the ethnicity/race of those employed by the Government in the most populous occupations compared to their counterparts in the civilian, noninstitutional population.⁶⁹ Although not all occupations have a direct match, many do.⁷⁰ Of those with a match, two findings stand out: (1) African Americans are frequently employed in the Federal Government’s most populous occupations at a rate above their presence in the overall civilian labor force and the relevant civilian labor force; and (2) Hispanics are less likely to be employed

⁶⁷ These figures represent GS and GS-equivalents.

⁶⁸ Refer to Appendix E for descriptions of the Federal occupational categories.

⁶⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2009* (128th Edition), <http://www.census.gov/statab/>, 2009.

⁷⁰ The most populous occupations with a reasonable match to Census data included: Information Technology, Nurse, Contract Specialist, Attorney, Human Resources Management, Electronics Engineer, Medical Officer, Accounting, Auditor, and Civil Engineer.

in these occupations compared to their proportion in both the overall civilian labor force. Further, Hispanics are less likely to be employed in these occupations compared to their proportion in the relevant civilian labor force. Results for Asian/Pacific Islanders appear mixed. They tend to be more prevalent in the Government's most populous occupations than their proportion in the overall civilian labor force, but comparison against the relevant civilian labor force varies from Federal representation being above or below the relevant civilian labor force, depending on occupation.

These findings suggest that the Federal Government tends to offer employment in occupations that African Americans are concentrated in, and that the Government has been very effective in recruiting this segment of the population. In contrast, Hispanics overall tend not to be employed in occupations common in the Federal Government, but even their representation in the relevant civilian labor force is slightly higher than their representation in the Federal workforce. However, some of this may be due to factors such as educational differences and citizenship,⁷¹ which is typically a requirement for employment in the competitive service.⁷²

As shown in **Table 5**, overall, Federal employees are more likely to be found in professional and administrative occupations. However, there are differences by ethnic/racial group as African American, Hispanic, and American Indian employees are less commonly found in the professional occupations. We discuss this pattern in the following section, and how it may be attributed to differential patterns of education as these groups are less likely to have earned a bachelor's degree.⁷³ Some groups of minority employees⁷⁴ are also less likely to be found among the administrative occupations. Given that professional and administrative occupations represent the most financially lucrative Federal positions, the reduced likelihood of holding these types of positions translates into generally lower incomes for those not in these occupations. Minority employees (with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders) are somewhat more likely to be employed in the lower paying clerical and blue-collar series. Nevertheless, minorities have made gains in the higher paying white collar occupations compared to the past, particularly among administrative jobs.⁷⁵

⁷¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Additional Insights Could Enhance Agency Efforts Related to Hispanic Representation*, GAO-06-832, August 2006.

⁷² For more details, please see http://www.opm.gov/hr_practitioners/lawsregulations/citizenship/#policy.

⁷³ According to OPM's *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, "Professional work requires knowledge in a field of science or learning characteristically acquired through education or training equivalent to a bachelor's or higher degree with major study in or pertinent to the specialized field, as distinguished from general education." 1995, p. 9.

⁷⁴ For Asian/Pacific Islander employees, this can be attributed to their prevalence among the professional occupations because they are close to parity for the other occupational groups.

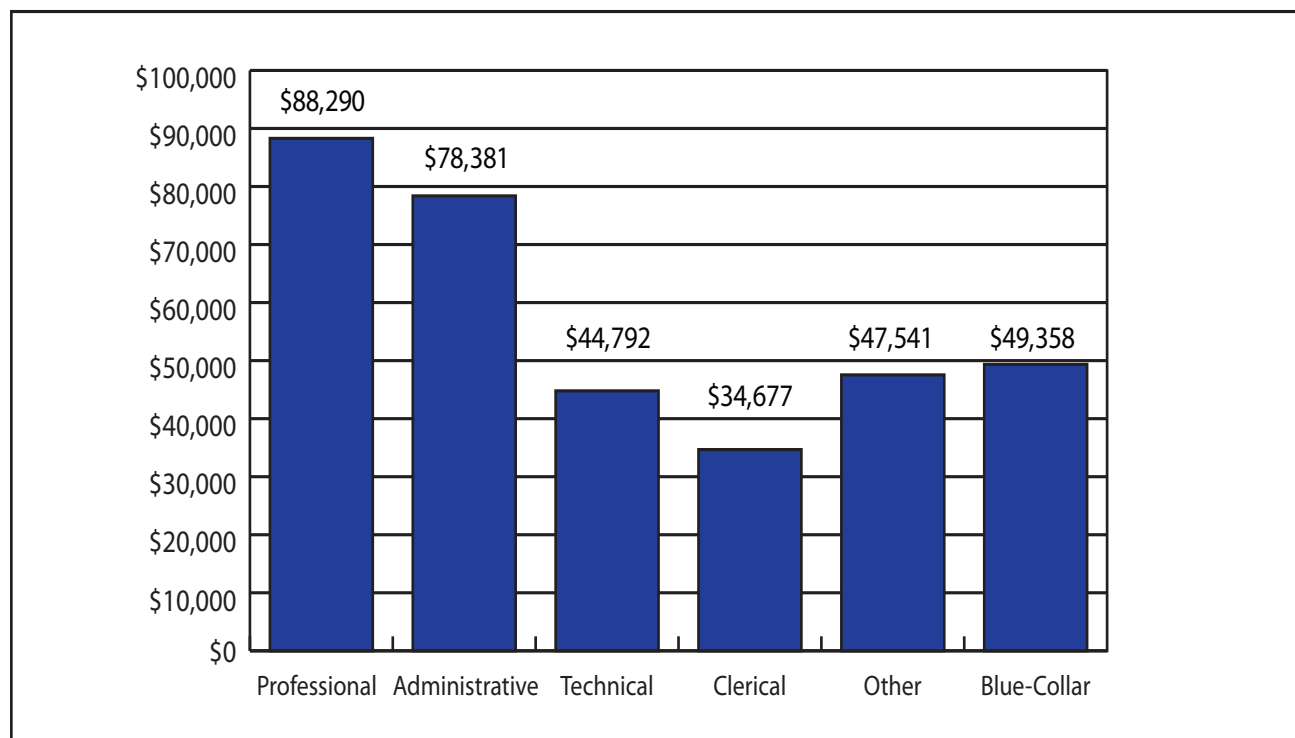
⁷⁵ We compared 2008 representation in the PATCOB occupations with 1991 and 1996 in the CPDF. A copy of the PATCOB definitions can be found in Appendix E.

Table 5. Federal Workforce Representation Across Occupational Groups by Ethnic/Racial Group, FY 2008

Ethnicity/Race	Professional	Administrative	Technical	Clerical	Other	Blue-Collar
African American	14%	37%	25%	10%	3%	11%
American Indian	17%	28%	28%	11%	4%	13%
Asian/Pacific Islander	39%	29%	14%	5%	2%	11%
Hispanic	15%	37%	19%	8%	11%	11%
White	27%	39%	16%	5%	3%	10%
Governmentwide	24%	38%	18%	6%	4%	11%

Differences by occupational group have a very strong impact on median salary. As shown in **Figure 3**, median salary by occupational group varied dramatically in 2008 from a high of \$88,290 for those in professional occupations to a low of \$34,677 for those in clerical occupations.

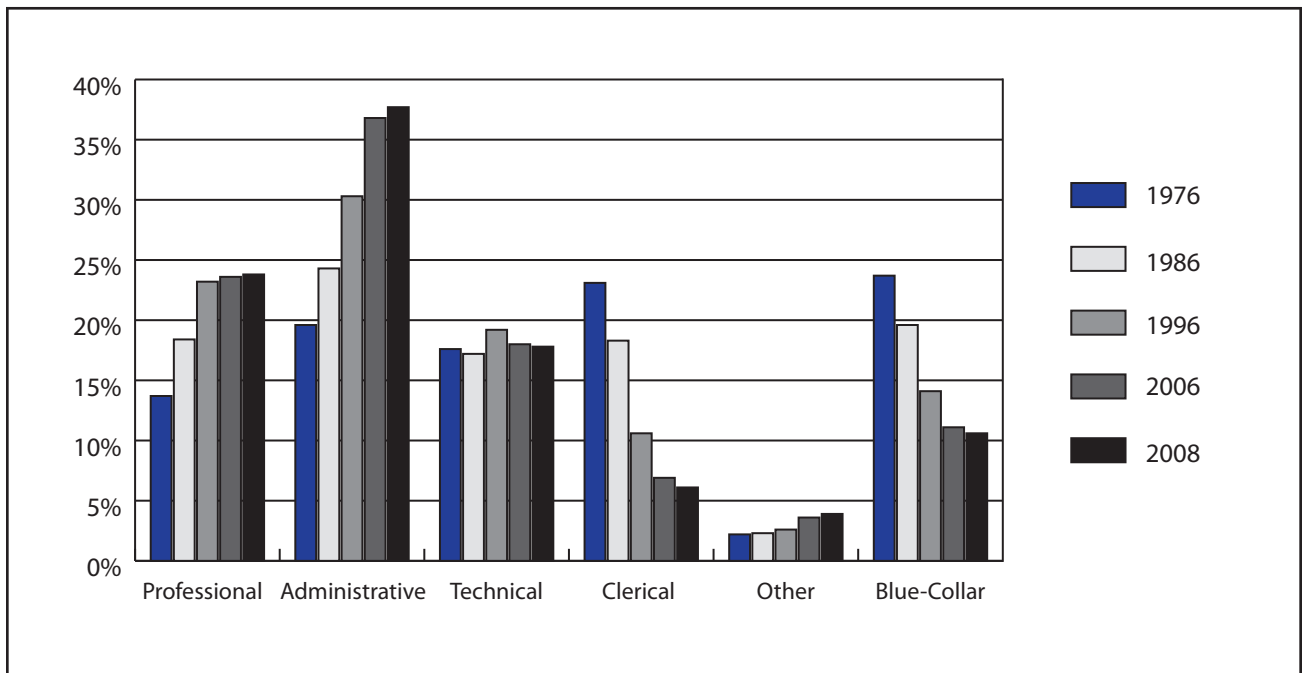
Figure 3. Median Salary by Occupational Group, FY 2008



As a consequence, choice of occupation can severely restrict one’s starting pay. Although employees may change occupations to obtain better career opportunities, many of our discussion group participants described challenges in trying to move between occupations and occupational tracks, even when they felt they met the qualifications, because they had been stereotyped by their lower-paying jobs. In some cases, they reported that those from outside the Government were more likely to be selected because

they were not as stigmatized by their past job titles. It should be noted, however, that in the case of professional jobs—the category showing the greatest differences among ethnic/racial groups—the difficulty of entry into these types of jobs is resolved only when applicants meet the degree requirements. By comparison, the distribution of employees in administrative jobs is similar for all ethnic/racial groups, perhaps because entry into these groups is not as dependent on having obtained a higher level degree in a given field. Further, as shown in **Figure 4**, the occupational mix of the Federal workforce has changed over time in accordance with a shift in the nature of work from heavily clerical and manual labor to an emphasis on white-collar work. This “professionalization” of the Federal workforce has resulted in a growing percentage being employed in professional and administrative occupations, which as noted above, also have higher salaries. Yet, the lower likelihood of employment of minorities in the professional occupations translates into minorities not being able to make as much progress as might have been expected in terms of overall average salary. This pay gap is due to the higher salaries associated with the growth of the professional and administrative workforce. Although minorities were generally well represented among the administrative positions, they were also more likely than White employees to be found in the lower paying technical, clerical and blue-collar occupations.

Figure 4. Composition of the Federal Workforce by Occupational Group, Fiscal Years 1976-2008

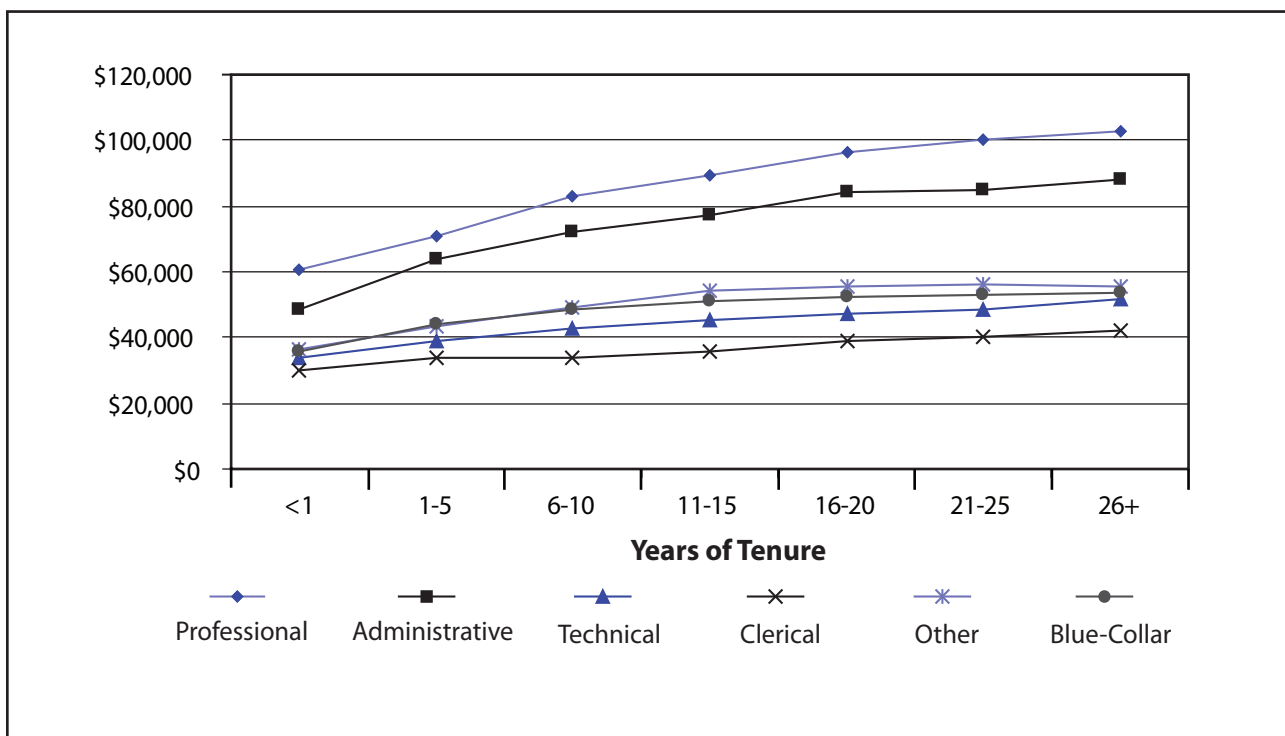


Employees who have their sights set on the highest ranks of the Federal civil service would be well-advised to prepare themselves for careers in the professional

and administrative tracks.⁷⁶ And the Federal Government could assist employees through outreach programs that communicate the nature of Federal professional and administrative work to students at the college and high school levels. Sharing this information can serve to empower preemployment decision making that affects qualifications for subsequent employment.

Beyond being aware of the greater availability of certain occupations and higher median salaries for some occupational groups, it is important for employees to realize that there also exists a difference in long-term earnings potential associated with these jobs. **Figure 5** presents the average earnings for employees by length of service. These data show that experience pays off for all occupational groups, but for some, it pays off better than others.

Figure 5. Impact of Occupational Group on Federal Salary Progression over Years of Tenure



Level of Responsibility

Beyond issues of occupational distribution and tenure, differences in salary may also reflect trends in reduced diversity among the supervisory and senior executive ranks. As

⁷⁶ Prospective Federal employees can also learn about career growth areas by reviewing reports such as the Partnership for Public Service’s *Where the Jobs Are 2009: Mission-Critical Opportunities for America* which can be found at <http://www.wherethejobsare.org>. Funding legislation for Federal agencies, such as the annual funding bills as well as supplemental legislation such as the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act can also provide insight into occupations that are likely to expand due to increased funding.

shown in **Table 6**, diversity wanes as level of responsibility increases. In other words, minority employees are less often found in higher level supervisory positions. This may reflect a variety of influences, such as occupational or educational background or differences in opportunities. It may also reflect the length of time required to move up the career pipeline since the Federal Government promotes primarily from within and therefore, the snapshot of the higher levels today reflects the reduced diversity present in the Federal Government 20 years ago.

Table 6. Ethnic/Racial Diversity of the Federal Workforce by Level of Supervisory Level, FY 2008

Ethnicity/Race	Total Share of Workforce	Supervisory	Senior Executive Service (SES)/ Similar
African American	18.0%	13.0%	8.1%
American Indian	1.9%	1.8%	1.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.4%	3.7%	2.5%
Hispanic	7.9%	6.8%	3.6%
White	66.5%	74.5%	84.5%
Governmentwide	100.0%	13.4%	0.6%

Nevertheless, there has been improvement over time as minorities have increased their representation in supervisory positions (**Table 7**). Also, as reported in a recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, progress has been made in the executive ranks, with the exception of a decrease of African American men in the SES between October 2000 and September 2007.⁷⁷

Table 7. Ethnic/Racial Representation of Federal Supervisors, Fiscal Years 1991-2008

Ethnicity/Race	1991	1996	2001	2006	2008	Change
African American	10.3%	11.0%	11.8%	12.6%	13.0%	2.7%
American Indian	1.4%	1.7%	1.8%	1.8%	1.8%	0.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2.5%	2.9%	3.1%	3.5%	3.7%	1.2%
Hispanic	3.9%	4.8%	5.5%	6.3%	6.8%	2.9%
White	82.0%	79.7%	77.7%	75.7%	74.5%	-7.5%

⁷⁷ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Diversity in the Federal SES and Processes for Selecting New Executives*, November 2008.

Summary

To review, minorities, with the exception of Hispanic employees, are well represented in the total Federal workforce. However, American Indian, African American and Hispanic employees earn significantly lower salaries than Asian/Pacific Islander and White employees. This can be directly attributed to the uneven distribution of minorities across different occupational groups, with higher prevalence of some minority groups among lower-paying technical, clerical, and blue-collar jobs. It also reflects the lower percentage of minorities in the supervisory, managerial, and executive positions in the Federal workforce.

Nonetheless, these statistics reflect continued progress for minorities. For example, the percentage of minorities employed in professional and administrative positions has risen, consistent with a shift in the Federal workforce toward “knowledge work.” Also, an increasing percentage of minority employees occupy supervisory/managerial positions, despite an overall reduction in the number of such positions.

Unfortunately, the data also show that significant gaps remain. With the exception of Asian/Pacific Islander employees, minorities are still employed less often in professional positions. Also, minority employees remain less likely to hold supervisory positions than nonminority employees. Consequently, median salaries for minority group members (other than Asian/Pacific Islander employees) remain lower than salaries for nonminority employees, and lower than the Governmentwide median.

These results indicate that members of most minority groups do not, at present, occupy higher-graded or supervisory positions at a rate proportional to their overall representation in the Federal professional/administrative workforce. However, if minorities are hired, promoted, and retained at rates comparable to nonminorities, then the representation of minorities at higher grades should increase over time. Therefore, in the next section we examine promotion rates to determine how employees from different ethnic/racial groups compare in terms of career advancement.



FOSTERING A REPRESENTATIVE WORKFORCE AT ALL LEVELS

Data in the previous section suggest that although progress has been made in achieving diversity throughout the various levels of Federal organizations, minorities remain underrepresented in achieving certain levels and/or roles. For example, American Indian, African American, and Hispanic employees remain less likely to be employed in the professional occupations than in other types of jobs and, correspondingly, have salary levels below the Governmentwide median. Additionally, these groups, as well as Asian/Pacific Islander employees, remain less likely than would be expected based on their proportion in the workforce to hold supervisory positions. In the following section, we examine differences in promotion rates that may help account for when and how different groups encounter difficulties in their career advancement.

Analysis of Promotion Rates

We analyzed promotion rates for several reasons. First, promotions are important for reasons other than pay. A promotion increases an employee's level of responsibility and can lead to more challenging and "visible" assignments, projects, and roles for the employee. That, in turn, can help the employee qualify for higher level positions and increase the odds that the employee can compete successfully when additional opportunities for promotion arise. Second, promotion rates can provide insight into how promotion opportunities are allocated and whether employees are treated equitably in promotions and career advancement. Large differences among groups can help agencies identify patterns or practices—ranging from recruitment to promotion criteria to differential treatment or outright discrimination—that may limit employees' advancement for reasons other than their performance and abilities. Third, promotion rates can provide insight into the future composition of the Federal workforce, helping policymakers and agency officials make informed judgments about the success and adequacy of efforts to achieve a diverse, representative workforce. Finally, promotion rates can influence behavior. For that reason, large differences in promotion rates, even if they can be explained by factors other than discrimination, can be problematic. If employees believe, rightly or wrongly, that they are not treated fairly in promotions, they may lose motivation (which is likely to reduce performance), be discouraged from pursuing valuable training or developmental opportunities, or choose not to compete for promotion, as discussed in a later section.

However, it is important to keep in mind that Governmentwide analyses may not be as sensitive as agency analyses of promotion rates and may not reveal trends in promotion rates when they differ dramatically between agencies. For example, it would be possible for one group to be disadvantaged in some agencies and advantaged in others, resulting in apparently equitable promotion rates, when in reality, this is not true for all agencies. Despite this limitation, analyzing promotion rates Governmentwide and to more detailed levels within agencies can reveal patterns worth further investigation.

Trends and Patterns in Overall Promotion Rates

We calculated promotion rates for 1993 through 2008 by tracking employees who held professional or administrative positions⁷⁸ in General Schedule grades GS-5 through GS-14.⁷⁹ We found three broad patterns in promotion rates. First, promotion rates for both professional and administrative positions at these grades have risen. This increase may reflect any of several factors, including increased hiring and promotion activity;⁸⁰ changes in grade structure or occupational mix; new opportunities for promotion resulting from turnover, evolving missions, or increasing complexity of work; changes in agency promotion policies and practices; or increases in the ability and performance of Federal employees. Whatever the reasons, it appears that talented Federal employees will have considerable opportunity for advancement in coming years, especially if increasing numbers of experienced, long-tenured employees retire as part of the anticipated retirement trends.

Second, as shown in **Table 8**, promotion rates decline dramatically as grade level rises, reflecting the increasing scarcity of promotional opportunities at higher grade levels. Promotion rates are generally higher for professional occupations than for administrative occupations, consistent with the fact that professional occupations have, overall, higher grade structures than administrative occupations. However, promotion rates for professional and administrative employees are nearly equal at grades GS-12, GS-13, and GS-14.

⁷⁸ We focused on professional and administrative occupations for two reasons. First, professional and administrative occupations now account for over 60 percent of the permanent Federal civil service. Second, those occupations offer the greatest opportunities for pay, advancement, and influence in the civil service. To illustrate, approximately 99.7 percent of positions in the Senior Executive Service are in a professional or administrative occupation. Source: U.S. Office of Personnel Management, FedScope (www.fedscope.opm.gov). Distribution by occupational category of employees in the Senior Executive Service as of March 2009.

⁷⁹ We tracked employees over a succession of 1-year periods, from the end of one fiscal year to the end of the next fiscal year. The tracking involved: (1) checking personnel actions to determine whether the employee received a permanent or temporary promotion which included career ladder and other promotions and (2) comparing the employee's grade level at the beginning and at the end of the one-year period. Our calculations were limited to employees for whom data were available at both the beginning and the end of the one-year period. Thus, our figures exclude employees who left Federal service during a given one-year period.

⁸⁰ The full-time permanent Federal workforce has varied in size over the 15-year period 1993-2008. After reaching a peak in 1992, downsizing and outsourcing resulted in a shrinking workforce until hiring surges associated with national security reversed the downward trend in 2002.

Table 8. Federal Workforce Promotion Rates for Demographic Groups by Occupational Category and Grade Level at Start of the FY, FY 2007- FY 2008

Category	Group	GS-5	GS-7	GS-9	GS-11	GS-12	GS-13	GS-14
Professional	American Indian	88%	79%	23%	13.3%	9.5%	7.5%	6.2%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	84%	86%	55%	27.6%	13.1%	9.6%	7.0%
	African American	88%	86%	49%	24.8%	13.5%	9.0%	7.6%
	Hispanic	94%	91%	45%	21.8%	13.4%	8.2%	7.3%
	White	94%	91%	45%	21.4%	12.8%	8.8%	7.9%
	Women	92%	90%	42%	21.6%	13.9%	9.8%	8.2%
	Men	92%	89%	48%	22.5%	12.2%	8.3%	7.6%
	TOTAL	92%	89%	45%	22.0%	12.8%	8.8%	7.8%
Administrative	American Indian	79%	58%	26%	15.7%	11.1%	9.6%	7.6%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	86%	72%	40%	20.8%	14.1%	9.0%	7.4%
	African American	81%	73%	31%	20.6%	13.5%	9.7%	8.2%
	Hispanic	92%	80%	39%	15.3%	13.9%	9.4%	8.7%
	White	90%	77%	34%	19.3%	13.6%	8.6%	8.5%
	Women	86%	74%	32%	19.5%	13.2%	9.6%	8.5%
	Men	90%	78%	36%	18.6%	13.9%	8.4%	8.3%
	TOTAL	88%	76%	34%	19.1%	13.5%	8.9%	8.4%

Light shading indicates below-average promotion rates. (Other differences are not statistically significant.) For grades GS-5, GS-7, and GS-9, a rate is shown as below average if it is 5 percentage points or more below the Governmentwide average. For grades GS-11 through GS-14, the threshold was 2 percentage points.

Third, current promotion rates for minorities and women are generally comparable to Governmentwide averages, with the notable exception of American Indians, who have lower rates most likely because American Indians often work on or near reservations in lower paying occupations with fewer promotion opportunities. Although the absence of additional large disparities is reassuring, it is not conclusive evidence that promotion decisions are always made without regard to ethnicity and race and gender.

Therefore, we conducted a second analysis to better understand how agencies make promotion decisions by assessing the degree to which possible factors, which are captured in CPDF, affected promotion rates. The factors include occupation,⁸¹ grade level, sex, ethnicity and race, age, length of service, education, and supervisory status. Our analyses produced several insights, which we discuss in greater detail below. To briefly summarize, we found that occupation, grade level, education, and supervisory status play a significant role in promotion decisions. Length of experience exerts some influence, but quality of experience is likely to be more important than simply quantity of experience. Finally, race/ethnicity and gender appear to play a much smaller role, which may be linked to their correlation with other variables in the model, such as occupation, grade level, education, and supervisory status.

Different occupations offer different opportunities for advancement. Professional occupations and administrative occupations vary greatly from one another in several respects. These include qualification requirements, relationship to agency mission, labor market conditions, and level of difficulty and responsibility. These differences are reflected, in part, in an occupation's grade distribution and salary levels. To illustrate differences in grade distribution, promotional opportunities, and pay level, we calculated 2008 median salary and full-performance grade levels⁸² for professional and administrative occupations. **Table 9** shows the median full-performance grade level and salary for selected populous professional and administrative occupations.

⁸¹ For practical reasons, we did not make direct use of OPM occupational series in our analysis. Instead, we used occupational category (professional or administrative) and variables indicating that an employee's current grade level was above or below the modal grade for his or her occupational series. Those variables served as indicators of the promotion opportunities available in a given occupation and of whether the employee would have to compete for promotion.

⁸² A median is a midpoint: in a given population, half the population will be at or below the median, and half the population will be at or above the median. We used the median grade level of nonsupervisory positions from GS-9 through GS-15 (or equivalent) grade levels as our estimate of the median full performance level. We used the median instead of the more frequently used average (mean) because the median enabled us to group occupations and because the median is less sensitive to extreme (outlying) values. We excluded GS-5 and GS-7 positions from our median grade and salary calculations because the GS-5 and GS-7 levels are entry-level (developmental or trainee) grades in professional and administrative occupations. In many occupations, positions at higher grade levels may also be developmental; however, such positions cannot be easily identified in the Central Personnel Data File. Nevertheless, the median remains a useful indicator of an occupation's inherent promotion potential.

Table 9. Median Grade and Salary Levels in Selected Professional and Administrative Occupations, FY 2008

Median Grade	Occupation (Series)	Median Salary
GS-14	Attorney (0905)	\$119,547
	Aerospace Engineering (0861)	\$107,854
GS-13	Criminal Investigation (1811)	\$93,207
	Mechanical Engineering (0855)	\$99,557
GS-12	Civil Engineering (0810)	\$84,913
	Information Technology (2210)	\$83,720
GS-11	Paralegal Specialist (0950)	\$70,980
	Social Work (0185)	\$65,393
GS-9	Medical Technologist (0644)	\$60,394
	General Legal and Kindred (0901)	\$56,258

Source: CPDF, September 2008. Salary for nonsupervisory positions at and above GS-9 only; GS-5 and GS-7 positions (trainee positions) are excluded.

Thus, promotion rates are determined not only by ability and performance, but also by initial choices in education and career field. An employee in an occupation with a limited career path may have to be truly outstanding or enterprising to attain a mid-level grade, while an employee in an occupation with a higher full-performance level is likely to find promotions to higher grades much easier to achieve. The differential nature of the challenge is even greater for employees who aspire to leadership positions. Employees in fields such as law and criminal investigation may gain their supervisory experience and appointment to the Senior Executive Service without ever changing their line of work. In contrast, employees who enter Federal service as paralegal specialists may find that advancement beyond the GS-12 or GS-13 level will require a major career change.

Upper level promotions differ from entry-level promotions. Promotion rates from entry-level grades are much higher than promotion rates from upper level grades.⁸³ The difference in rates reflects important differences between the two types of promotion, which are briefly summarized in **Table 10**.

⁸³ The grades that can be considered “entry level” and “upper level” vary by occupation and position. For professional and administrative occupations, grades GS-5 and GS-7 are typically entry-level (trainee) positions. Grades GS-13 through GS-15 are often, but not always, “upper level”—grade levels above the norm for the occupation, and which require competition and involve supervisory duties.

Table 10. Differences Between Entry Level and Upper Level Promotions in the Federal Workforce

Area of Difference	Entry Level	Upper Level
Selection process	Noncompetitive within the career ladder. No application is required and the employee can be promoted “in place” because the competition for advancement occurred when the vacancy was announced with a designated full performance level above the initial grade.	Usually competitive. The employee must apply and be selected from a pool of candidates.
Selection decision	Promotion is contingent on the ability to perform higher level work. The decision is usually based on recommendation of the employee’s supervisor, who has direct knowledge of the employee and his or her performance.	Promotion is contingent on identification as the best qualified candidate. The identification is usually based on formal assessments of the applicant’s competencies and the hiring manager’s judgment. The hiring manager may have no prior knowledge of the employee.
Change in role	Incremental. Duties and responsibilities are generally similar, although assignments may be more difficult and require more independence and initiative.	Potentially substantial. Duties and responsibilities may change greatly, including new supervisory and managerial responsibilities.
Change in working conditions	Usually minimal. Generally, any significant changes will have been communicated to and accepted by the employee at the time of placement in the entry-level position.	Potentially substantial. Changes may include a new supervisor, transfer to another organization, geographic relocation, extended or less flexible working hours, and increased travel.

The differences between these two levels of promotions mean that education and experience, as well as demographic factors such as sex, and ethnicity and race, could have different effects on an employee’s prospects for promotion as he or she advances. Our statistical analysis suggested that this is, in fact, true.

Our findings have implications for both agencies and employees. For agencies, these differences in promotion levels mean that close attention should be paid to upper level promotion processes and outcomes. Because upper level promotions are competitive, the process is much more complex—and there are more risks for undesirable outcomes. For example, because competitive processes typically require interested individuals to apply to be considered, excellent candidates may be “lost” if opportunities are not appropriately publicized or if employees view the competitive process as unfair. Similarly, because competitive processes necessarily provide for considerable managerial discretion, and because managers must often exercise that discretion based on limited information about

(and brief encounters with) candidates, there is more potential for unconscious biases, unwarranted assumptions, and initial impressions to affect promotion decisions—not to mention conscious favoritism or discrimination.

For employees, it is essential to realize that choices and strategies that support (or are at least compatible with) initial advancement may not aid subsequent advancement. In particular, as we discuss below, employees may need to broaden (and not merely deepen) their skills, pursue development and education, and seek leadership opportunities and positions to successfully compete for advancement. And, as we discuss later in this report, employees must take the initiative to identify and apply for opportunities and become adept at presenting and marketing their abilities and accomplishments.

Quality of experience matters more than quantity of experience. In the Federal civil service, some experience is of course required for advancement. However, our analysis suggests that, beyond some point, *more* experience may not be *better* for purposes of advancement. Neither life experience (as measured by age) nor work experience (as measured by an employee’s length of service)⁸⁴ enhanced an employee’s prospects for promotion. The absence of a positive relationship may reflect, in part, the limitations of our measure of work experience—but we believe that that absence is also a valid indication of the limitations of length of work experience. Employees should recognize that, although lengthy experience can lead to salary advancement,⁸⁵ it will not automatically lead to promotion. For experience to improve prospects for promotion, it must convey positive information to the hiring manager. Experience can do that in two ways: it can indicate that the employee has acquired useful competencies, or it can indicate that the employee has desirable attributes such as initiative, an excellent “track record,” or good organizational citizenship.⁸⁶ Employees should also understand that it is possible for the content and/or length of their experience to be irrelevant—or to be relevant in a way that harms rather than helps an applicant’s prospects. In summary, average performance may suffice for entry-level promotions and within-grade increases—but not for upper level promotions, which requires the employee to distinguish himself or herself from a large pool of equally qualified competitors.

Formal education can be beneficial, even when it is not mandatory. For professional occupations, formal education or credentials are a necessity.⁸⁷ And employees in

⁸⁴ Length of service is the amount of an employee’s Federal service that is creditable (i.e., can be counted) for purposes of leave accrual. That amount may reflect service in the military and service in the legislative and judicial branches of the Federal Government, as well as civilian service in an Executive agency. It does not reflect non-Federal work experience, nor does it differentiate between job-related and non-job-related experience.

⁸⁵ One example is the within-grade increase (WGI). Under the General Schedule pay system, an employee below the tenth and highest step of the grade will receive a WGI (step increase) if he or she has accumulated a specific amount of service and has a satisfactory or higher performance rating. Refer to 5 CFR 531.

⁸⁶ “Organizational citizenship behaviors” are voluntary behaviors that facilitate organizational functioning, but aren’t explicitly demanded of employees.

⁸⁷ According to OPM’s *Introduction to the Position Classification Standards*, “Professional work requires knowledge in a field of science or learning characteristically acquired through education or training equivalent to a bachelor’s or higher degree with major study in or pertinent to the specialized field, as distinguished from general education.” p. 9.

professional occupations are, by definition, applying their knowledge and credentials in a specific field to projects and assignments that demand such preparation. In contrast, administrative occupations do not require a college degree, occupational certification, or similar credential for entry. Yet we found a positive relationship between formal education and promotion rates not only for professional occupations, but also for administrative ones. There are several possible explanations for this relationship.

First, education could provide competencies or perspectives that are useful on the job. Those competencies may be highly specific and directly applicable to particular tasks, or general and applicable to a wide variety of assignments and roles. In addition to improving task performance, education could also affect how an employee understands and defines his or her job, which could be helpful in competing for promotion and in carrying out roles and projects that require vision or innovation. Second, even if the knowledge acquired through education has little applicability to the job being filled, education could provide (or a prospective employer might believe that education indicates the presence of) desirable attributes such as conscientiousness, analytical ability, and an interest in learning. Third, an agency or hiring manager might prefer that candidates possess a particular degree or credential.⁸⁸ That preference could be plausible or completely unfounded. For example, a manager filling a high-level supervisory engineering position could believe that possession of an advanced degree would give a selectee immediate or enhanced credibility when dealing with subordinates and stakeholders and in providing expert testimony. On the other hand, a manager might prefer or insist that candidates hold a particular degree or credential merely because he or she personally holds that degree or credential.

We also found that the effect of a given level of education varies with job level. The general pattern we observed is that possession of a bachelor's degree was associated with higher promotion rates from entry-level and mid-level grades, while possession of a higher level (master's or professional) degree tended to aid advancement at higher levels. That pattern almost certainly reflects differences in career progression between occupations such as attorney and medical officer. Yet, it may also reflect how different levels and types of education apply to different job levels (*i.e.*, different stages of one's career). For example, a master's degree in electrical engineering might help an entry-level engineer advance rapidly—but that degree might be of less use in competing for a position that involved supervisory or project management responsibilities.

Conversely, a master's degree in business administration would give an entry-level staffing specialist no knowledge of the complex rules governing Federal hiring—but it might be very useful to the future mid-level staffing specialist who applies for a high-level position focused on policy or program management. The value of a degree may also change as changes occur in the promotion process—and changes in the pool of

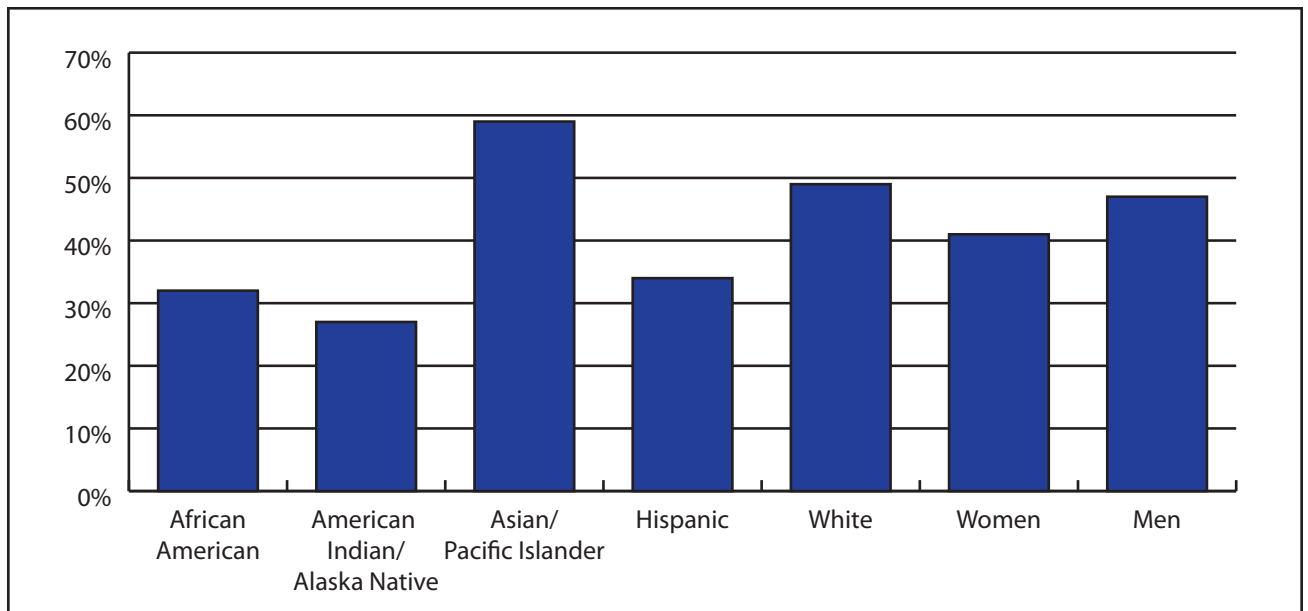
⁸⁸ We distinguish agencies and managers to make the point that this preference may be institutional or personal, and explicit or unstated.

competitors—as job level increases. For example, a manager’s decision regarding a career ladder promotion, which is noncompetitive, is unlikely to be influenced by an employee’s college degree or lack thereof. But a manager filling a position through merit promotion or examination might.

And a degree that is beneficial at one level might make little difference at another. For example, an employee with a bachelor’s degree might have an edge when competing for a mid-level HR position: in 2008, only 37 percent of HR specialists at grade GS-11 had such a degree. But that same employee would not stand out when competing for a GS-15 position: 64 percent of GS-14 HR specialists held a bachelor’s or higher degree.

Whatever factors underlie the relationship between education level and advancement, this linkage has possible implications for the future shape of the Federal workforce. As shown in **Figure 6**, American Indian, Hispanic, and African American Federal employees are less likely than Asian/Pacific Islander or White employees to have a Bachelor’s degree or higher level of education, which most likely helps explain the prevalence of these latter groups of employees in the professional ranks. In addition, women currently employed by the Federal Government are very slightly less likely than men to have a Bachelor’s degree. And although Federal employees are more likely than employees in the civilian labor force to have 4-year college degrees, these patterns also reflect the distribution of education among the general population.⁸⁹

Figure 6. Prevalence of a Bachelor’s Degree or More Among Federal Employees, by Group, FY 2008



Therefore, although education may customarily convey useful skills and knowledge—and entry and advancement in the professional occupations may require competencies that

⁸⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Educational Attainment: 2000*, August 2003.

are more effectively developed through formal education than through coaching and on-the-job training, it should be used judiciously as a screen. Because of differences in educational patterns across groups, reliance on education as an indirect measure of ability can be harmful to both agencies and applicants. In particular, because educational attainment alone may not be a good predictor of job performance, using it as a screening or selection device may exclude excellent candidates. Instead, agencies should explicitly identify required and desired competencies, then use appropriate assessment tools to directly measure those competencies.

Yet, differences in educational patterns across groups may help explain reduced Governmentwide promotion rates for employees in some groups, reductions that have slowed progress toward their full representation at the highest levels of the Federal service. To ensure that employees have an equal opportunity to excel, agencies may want to consider the return on investment of assisting employees with obtaining their educational goals when furthering the employees' education is also in the agency's interest.⁹⁰ By paying for or sharing expenses in terms of tuition and/or the employee's time, agencies can enable employees to achieve levels of education they might not have been otherwise able to reach. Further, this development of inhouse talent provides a better developed employee who already possesses substantial expertise regarding his or her job. As a result, this can be a "win-win" situation for both sides.

Nonetheless, education level does not either make or break a career. Our analysis showed that education has its limits. Notably, promotion rates for Asian/Pacific Islander employees at higher grades were not markedly different from rates for other employees even though as a group they have higher average education levels.

Supervisory experience becomes important at higher levels. At higher grade levels, we found that employees who held supervisory positions (and thus, were known to have supervisory experience) were more likely to be promoted.⁹¹ There are two obvious reasons for this relationship. First, many high-level positions are supervisory. Thus, employees with supervisory experience will usually have an advantage over competitors lacking such experience if that experience demonstrates their acceptable (or better) competence at supervisory roles and tasks.

Second, supervisory employees may differ from nonsupervisory employees in career interests, not just experience. It is possible that many high-level nonsupervisory employees have chosen not to pursue such positions because they prefer staff and

⁹⁰ Agencies may also want to ask employees to sign a "continued service agreement" so employees are committed to stay onboard long enough for the agency to reap the benefit gained from the additional training.

⁹¹ In our analysis, supervisory experience was negatively correlated with likelihood of promotion at lower grade levels. The most likely explanation for this counterintuitive result is that lower-graded supervisory employees held positions that lacked promotion potential. We do not believe that it means that supervisory experience makes an employee in a developmental position "less promotable."

technical work or because they do not want the responsibilities and stresses of supervision. Such a decision can be good for both the employee and the employer—but it does have consequences. At some point, employees who lack supervisory experience will almost certainly find that they have fewer advancement opportunities than peers who are willing to assume supervisory duties.

Gender and ethnicity/race are sometimes correlated with chances of promotion.

Although we found promotion rates to be generally comparable across gender and ethnicity/race (with the exception of American Indians whose rates are lower than the other groups), our statistical analysis suggested these factors may play some role in promotions, although the analyses cannot determine whether this is due to discrimination or due to a correlation with other factors. For example, one of the factors contributing significantly to the relationship between gender or ethnicity/race and promotion rates is the uneven distribution of Federal employees by gender and ethnicity/race across agencies and occupations. To determine whether occupational differences could be contributing to the statistical relationship between gender and ethnicity/race and an employee’s prospects for promotion, we clustered occupations by their grade structure. In particular, women and minorities in the Federal Government are generally more likely than men and nonminorities to be employed in occupations with relatively low grade structures, as illustrated in **Table 11**. That pattern may explain why an employee’s chances for promotion are correlated with sex and ethnicity/race.

Table 11. Demographic Group Representation in Professional and Administrative Occupations, by Median Grade and Salary, FY 2008

Median Grade *	Median Salary	Representation **					
		Women	American Indian	Asian/ Pacific Islander	African American	Hispanic	White
GS-09/10	\$60,044	59%	2.4%	5.6%	25.6%	6.3%	59.4%
GS-11	\$68,352	50%	2.2%	4.2%	15.3%	9.9%	68.1%
GS-12	\$81,394	49%	1.5%	5.5%	19.5%	6.0%	67.2%
GS-13	\$94,331	31%	0.9%	7.4%	9.5%	6.6%	75.3%
GS-14/15	\$117,032	38%	1.1%	6.0%	8.4%	4.7%	79.6%
All	\$80,259	46%	1.6%	5.5%	16.5%	7.0%	69.0%

* Median grade and salary for positions at or above GS-9. Because few employees are in occupations with a median grade of GS-10 or GS-15, we combined those levels with more populous levels.

** Figures for employees with unspecified or multiple ethnicity and race identification are not shown.

However, the result of our statistical analysis suggests that occupational differences are not the only reason for likelihood of promotion to be correlated with sex or ethnicity/race. Agency, geographic location, and personal characteristics such as language fluency, geographic mobility, initiative and optimism, and family responsibilities may also play a role.⁹² Another possible factor is employee perceptions of agency promotion processes. As discussed later in this report, data from our Career Advancement Survey indicate that employee perceptions of agency promotion processes and hiring decisions differ across lines of ethnicity/race, and that such perceptions can affect whether an employee applies for promotion.

In summary, we found promotion rates to be equitable, with the exception of those for American Indians. Nevertheless, the lower representation of women and minorities in the highest graded (and highest paying) occupations⁹³ means that progress toward full representation of women and minorities at the highest levels of the civil service will be gradual at best.

Current representation appears to reflect societal influences that may have constrained the educational and occupational options available to certain groups in the past. Although recent data indicate growth for women and minorities in terms of educational and employment opportunities, change is often slow, particularly in the absence of active efforts to advance those who are underrepresented.

⁹² For example, approximately one-third of American Indian employees in professional and administrative occupations are employed in either the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs or the Department of Health and Human Services' Indian Health Service. (Source: Central Personnel Data File, September 2008.) The occupational mix and organizational structure of those agencies may explain why our analysis indicated that American Indian employees often had a lower likelihood of promotion than other employees.

⁹³ The exception is Asian/Pacific Islander employees. However, although a high percentage of Asian/Pacific Islander employees are in high-graded occupations, comparatively few hold supervisory or managerial positions.



ADVANCEMENT TO LEADERSHIP ROLES

Current Status

Due to limited opportunities for advancement into roles involving supervising and managing employees, especially at the highest executive ranks, those who aspire to these levels are often frustrated by their lack of progress. In response to a mismatch between the diversity of the Federal workforce and the executive ranks, Congress introduced the “Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act of 2009.”⁹⁴ The objective of this legislation is to improve the Senior Executive Service by improving the human resources management of the SES and enhancing diversity within the SES corps. However, this legislation has not yet been passed.

Meanwhile, OPM continues to explore methods to improve the SES selection process, such as through a pilot project testing accomplishment-based and resume-based selection procedures.⁹⁵ The pilot project—with the expressed goal of streamlining the application process (without negatively impacting the quality of the selections)—resulted in a 50 percent increase in applicants.⁹⁶ OPM also offers the SES Federal Candidate Development Program (CDP) for current Federal employees at the GS-15 level (or equivalent). The outcomes of these selection procedures, including movement into the CDP, should be evaluated on an on-going basis to identify if adverse impact is occurring against any groups.

Given that the number of those who aspire to rise to the SES level exceeds the number of openings, the Government must ensure that effective selection techniques are used to identify those best qualified for these important positions—and for the Candidate Development Program—and that discriminatory barriers do not impede the selection of members of any ethnic/racial groups.

As we mentioned in an earlier section, employees from some ethnic/racial groups tend to be employed in lower numbers in the professional occupations. However, employment

⁹⁴ H.R. 2721 and S. 1180, 111th Congress.

⁹⁵ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *Memorandum for Chief Human Capital Officers from Michael W. Hager*, Acting Director, Subject: Results of SES Selection Pilot, January 12, 2009.

⁹⁶ B.R. Ballenstedt, “OPM to Modify Senior Executive Selection Process,” *Government Executive*, printed from www.govexec.com on January 15, 2009.

in these occupational groups effectively serves as a prerequisite for further advancement. Very few career Federal executives attain their rank without a “track record” of success in a professional or administrative field and previous supervisory experience.

Table 12 illustrates that ethnic/racial diversity in the Senior Executive Service has generally increased in the past 12 years but has not yet achieved parity. In part, this reflects occupational distribution of African Americans, American Indians and Hispanics as shown in Table 12 by the decreased representation among professional and administrative occupations. As discussed in prior sections, factors such as differential educational and employment patterns among population groups may drive some of these differences.

Table 12. Ethnic/Racial Diversity in the Career Senior Executive Service Compared to the Federal Workforce, Fiscal Years 1996 and 2008

Ethnicity/Race	1996			2008		
	Federal Civilian Workforce	Professional & Administrative	SES	Federal Civilian Workforce	Professional & Administrative	SES
African American	17.0%	11.6%	7.0%	18.0%	15.0%	8.6%
American Indian	1.7%	1.3%	0.8%	1.9%	1.4%	1.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4.1%	4.4%	1.3%	5.4%	5.9%	2.4%
Hispanic	6.1%	4.8%	1.9%	7.9%	6.7%	3.6%
White	71.1%	78.0%	88.9%	66.5%	70.7%	83.9%

It is also noteworthy that in the relevant civilian labor force for managerial, professional, and related occupations, African American and Hispanic workers are significantly underrepresented—and Asian/Pacific Islander employees are to a lesser extent—compared to their availability in the overall CLF as of 2007.⁹⁷ This discrepancy makes it more difficult to raise representation by recruiting from outside the Government for professional and administrative positions that can lead to advancement to the top executive levels. This discrepancy also suggests that barriers encountered by members of certain minority groups are firmly entrenched in our society and, therefore, that the SES situation is not primarily an artifact of employment practices in the Federal Government. Even when societal-based causes account for disparities in the SES, agencies should attempt to provide developmental opportunities for employees in the lower ranks that ultimately become “feeder pools” for managerial and executive positions.

A report by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) offers some cause for optimism with data showing that from October 1, 2000, through September 2006, the

⁹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United State: 2009*, p. 388.

number and percentage of all minority groups in the Senior Executive Service increased, with the exception of African American men.⁹⁸ Further, at the GS-14 and GS-15 levels, representation increased or remained level for all minority groups. This suggests the feeder pools for the SES contain growing levels of diversity, development that will ultimately improve opportunities for increasing representation at these top levels as attrition occurs.

As shown in **Table 13**, there is greater diversity in the grades immediately below the Senior Executive Service for Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic employees, with a slightly lower percentage at the GS-15 level for African Americans and American Indians. Therefore, if selections are proportionate, the SES should gradually become more diverse, at least with regard to Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics, especially with expected increased retirements from the current SES pool. However, the comparison of the professional and administrative workforce to the overall workforce reveals that these occupations, which often serve as feeder pools for higher graded positions, are disproportionately filled by White and Asian/Pacific Islander employees, which likely facilitates their representation at the higher grade levels.

Table 13. Ethnic/Racial Diversity at the Federal Workforce Compared to Professional and Administrative Employees, and GS-14, GS-15 and SES Levels, FY 2008

Ethnic/Racial Group	Federal Civilian Workforce	Professional & Administrative	GS-14	GS-15	SES
African American	18.0%	15.0%	13.0%	8.2%	8.6%
American Indian	1.9%	1.4%	1.1%	1.0%	1.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.4%	5.9%	6.2%	8.3%	2.4%
Hispanic	7.9%	6.7%	4.8%	4.2%	3.6%
White	66.5%	70.7%	74.9%	78.2%	83.9%

By running retirement eligibility criteria against CPDF data, OPM determined that over half of the full-time permanent Federal workforce that was onboard as of October 1, 2006, will be eligible to retire by the end of 2014.⁹⁹ The proportion of retirement-eligible employees among the SES ranks is even higher, given their higher average age and tenure. As a result, an enormous opportunity exists for agencies to implement employee development and succession planning strategies to ensure that the future executive ranks will better reflect the diversity of the Federal workforce.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Diversity in the Federal SES and the Senior Levels of the U.S. Postal Service*, GAO-07-838T, May 10, 2007.

⁹⁹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *An Analysis of Federal Employee Retirement Data*, March 2008.

¹⁰⁰ Given that the majority of employees do not retire the first year they are eligible, but over half retire within 5 years of eligibility, factors other than eligibility drive retirement decisions under voluntary retirement policies so the window of opportunity extends beyond the initial date of retirement eligibility for the anticipated “retirement bubble.”

In the report noted above and in a related report,¹⁰¹ the GAO provided detailed analyses of representation in the SES and feeder pools by demographic group, grade level, and agency to educate agencies regarding the current status of diversity at these levels. Once this understanding has been achieved, agencies can consider actions they can take to ensure that they will be better able to maintain an effective Federal workforce, in part by ensuring diversity at the highest levels where it is currently lacking.

Career-Enhancing Opportunities

As will be seen in the next section, approximately three-fourths of Federal employees viewed their willingness to take difficult assignments and the quality of their past performance to be positively impacting their career advancement. However, it also appeared that such opportunities to demonstrate one's motivation and ability were not viewed as available to all.

Being designated as acting supervisor for a significant period of time may provide a critical opportunity for employees who aspire to demonstrate that they can handle the responsibilities associated with the role.¹⁰² In fact, MSPB's 1996 report revealed that serving as acting supervisor was a critical opportunity, and one that was not viewed as equally available to all. Analysis of promotion rates suggests that this was more than a perception, as those who had served as acting supervisory actually were more likely to have been promoted. Secondly, an employee serving as an acting supervisor also demonstrates that the supervisor has confidence in the employee and therefore signals to the employee who is acting, as well as to other employees and managers, that this employee would be under serious consideration for future promotions. Unfortunately, our survey results indicate that members of minority groups report that they have less opportunity to serve in an acting capacity than White employees (**Table 14**). Further, these discrepancies do not appear to be diminishing. While some employees may not be eligible to serve as acting supervisor due to their current grade, agencies should ensure that those who are eligible are considered for this career-enhancing opportunity.

¹⁰¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Diversity in the Federal SES and the Senior Levels of the U.S. Postal Service*, GAO-07-838T, May 10, 2007; *Diversity in the Federal SES and Processes for Selecting New Executives*, GAO-09-110, November 2008.

¹⁰² As discussed in MSPB's 1996 report, *Fair and Equitable Treatment: A Progress Report on Minority Employment in the Federal Government*, employees who had served in an acting supervisor capacity were "more likely to have received a greater number of promotions during the course of their Government careers.", p. 34.

Table 14. Percentage of Employees Reporting That They Have Served as Acting Supervisor Almost Always or Regularly, by Ethnicity/Race, Fiscal Years 1993 and 2007

Ethnicity/Race	1993	2007
African American	10.1%	13.9%
American Indian	20.8%	15.3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	15.0%	13.8%
Hispanic	15.1%	15.2%
White	19.5%	22.3%
Total	17.8%	19.7%

To see if salary level could be impacting patterns of having opportunities to serve as an acting supervisor, we also reviewed the results by salary level. As would be expected, those at higher pay levels proved more likely to have the opportunity to serve in this temporary leadership role. However, we still saw differences within salary groupings, with Asian/Pacific Islander, African American, and Hispanic employees being less likely to have opportunities to act as supervisor.

As with serving in an acting capacity, when asked about the likelihood of being assigned to a critical project members of minority groups reported being much less likely to have this opportunity compared to White employees. In this case, women also reported being less likely to have such a developmental opportunity. Since being selected for critical projects can provide a forum for employees to demonstrate their capabilities, not being selected for even relatively minor opportunities may keep them from being considered for future career-enhancing opportunities, such as serving in an acting supervisor role, or ultimately for higher level positions.

Supervisors should examine their past selections to see if they have been limiting developmental assignments to a restricted pool without competition. When such patterns emerge, supervisors should challenge themselves to consider if unrecognized biases might be contributing to selecting individuals for acting supervisor or other critical assignments. For example, given that three-fourths of supervisors are White and over two-thirds are men, there might be an unconscious inclination to select others who are similar to the supervisor in terms of ethnicity/race or gender. Alternatively, the supervisor may harbor unconscious beliefs that certain types of people are more willing or able to perform well on the job. These stereotypes can be detrimental to the development of employees who do not fit the current mold of supervisors. Supervisors generally understand that non-merit factors such as ethnicity/race and gender should not be considered in selection for positions; however, these tendencies may not be as closely monitored in relation to giving out career-enhancing opportunities. Although the stakes

are lower on the basis of selection for individual assignments, together they accumulate to provide some individuals with an unfair advantage over others who might be equally capable and deserving of the opportunity.

To remedy limiting developmental opportunities to the favored few, we suggest that supervisors consider reviewing their entire staff for potential “actors” and rotate this responsibility as an alternative to designating the same person as acting supervisor in their absence. Supervisors should be careful to not assume that someone would not want this role based upon unverified perceptions of ambition level, family responsibilities, and so on. Although the supervisor should gain insight into employees’ career aspirations as part of performance management discussions, especially in the context of additional training and development that is needed, the supervisor should also keep in mind developmental assignments that may be available, within either the current office or other offices. In addition, while supervisors are often reluctant to let their best employees venture out, they should realize that it may be in the best interest of the agency and employees to let them broaden their experiences. And if the assignment is temporary, the employee will bring back valuable knowledge and contacts that may benefit the team.

Employees also have a responsibility to demonstrate their capabilities and motivation by showing their supervisors their interest in opportunities. Not only should they volunteer and enthusiastically complete current assignments, but they need to be sure to voice their desire for future, as yet unknown, opportunities given that supervisors have the most awareness of available projects. Because supervisors directly assign work, they exercise an enormous amount of control over employees’ developmental opportunities. Supervisors need to consider the range of abilities within their staff when delegating projects, but also give employees “stretch” assignments to help them develop their skills. Although supervisors may find it easiest to go back to the same people they know to be good at certain tasks, it is better in the long run for employers and employees to provide everyone with developmental opportunities. Another advantage of this approach is that it develops a team with more depth and avoids the likelihood that only one or two people possess a critical talent since it is always possible that employees will move on, which could leave the office without essential areas of knowledge or skills.

Both supervisors and employees share responsibility for developing the agency’s human capital. Supervisors, by virtue of their position, need to be cognizant of the gate-keeping role that they play in terms of allocating developmental assignments. Concurrently, employees need to be sure to communicate their willingness to work for these opportunities to demonstrate their motivation and abilities. Through this collaboration, both sides are better able to develop the agency’s future leaders.



SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT

As discussed earlier in this report, occupation, education, and experience represent three of the most powerful determinants of career advancement. However, survey respondents, interviewees, and discussion group participants cited many additional factors as essential to their movement upward through the ranks, as well as a number of possible impediments. Across ethnic/racial groups, employees believed the factors that they could improve through effort greatly outweighed the potentially negative influence of inherent personal characteristics that cannot be changed.

Employee Strategies for Career Advancement

After collecting input from interviews and discussion groups, we compiled a list of likely career accelerators—actions, behaviors, and other factors that could help employees advance their careers. We then asked survey respondents to indicate first, if the factor applied to them, and secondly, whether the presence or absence of these factors had a positive, neutral, or negative impact.

A summary of our findings provides practical advice from a diverse group of Federal employees as to what behaviors or characteristics they viewed as able to facilitate career advancement or to seriously undermine efforts to progress. In terms of career accelerators, employees felt that the factors shown in **Table 15** had the most positive impact.

Table 15. Top 10 Federal Career Accelerators, According to Respondents to the FY 2007 Career Advancement Survey

Career Accelerator	Percent Reporting Positive Impact
A supportive supervisor to encourage my development and advancement	85%
Senior person/mentor (other than my supervisor) looking out for my interests	85%
Ability/willingness to take on challenging work assignments	80%
High-quality past work experience	80%
Contacts who knew the selecting official and recommended me	78%
Extensive past work experience	78%
Specialized or technical training	78%
Formal educational qualifications	76%
Acting in a position prior to appointment	76%
Developmental assignments to improve the depth of my experience	75%

Clearly, one should not underestimate the power of personal connections in the workplace. Given their nearly absolute control over the developmental opportunities employees receive, supervisors play crucial roles in determining the fate of their employees. Therefore, it is essential that agencies ensure that they select supervisors who will treat employees fairly, educate supervisors on their responsibilities to all employees, and hold them accountable if they should ever misuse or abuse their authority. Similarly, it is incumbent on employees to be aware that they need to exercise initiative in working with their supervisors to develop their knowledge, skills, and abilities and explore opportunities for further advancement. Still, employees may encounter supervisors who lack the time to help employees or who are not interested in doing this. In these cases, employees need to consider whether they should look for another job or supervisor who would be better able to meet these needs. Given the equal importance attributed to having a mentor, it is possible that some employees find this support elsewhere in the organization, but it is also likely that employees simply benefit from having more than one person serving as their advisor and advocate. A large percentage of employees also mentioned the criticality of having contacts who knew the selecting official. Our comparative results from 1992 and 2007 indicate that having contacts who knew the selecting official has become significantly more important. Only 38 percent of the earlier group cited them as very or somewhat important, compared to 78 percent in 2007. And although it did not make the top 10 list, professional networking also increased substantially in terms of perceived importance.

As shown in the next section of this report, a growing concern of employees relates to the perception that interpersonal relationships trump competence or hard work, but,

as these survey responses demonstrate, many employees have found a way to manage work relationships to their advantage. This is not surprising given that social aspects play an increasingly important role in the work environment as it continues to evolve from production-based to knowledge-based. Hence, career progression more frequently hinges upon developing interpersonal connections that: (1) help employees develop their competence; and (2) provide a network to advertise their talents.

Not surprisingly, good old-fashioned quality and quantity of work experience also appeared high on the list of career accelerators, but appropriately, these were accompanied by a factor relating to the willingness of employees to demonstrate initiative by taking responsibility for challenging assignments. The optimistic message inherent in the high placement of these factors is that employees who demonstrate competence, perseverance, and initiative believe that these actions are rewarded. It is important to note that merely serving time is insufficient. Although employees generally receive within-grade increases and career ladder promotions for doing what is expected of them, as one progresses to more competitive levels, it becomes essential for employees to seek out ways to distinguish themselves.

Specialized training and formal education also often serve as prerequisites to success in the Federal Government. Specialized training enables employees to move upward within their career tracks, while formal education may not only help employees shine above the competition for promotions, it may also be a necessary prerequisite for entry into the Federal workforce, particularly among professional occupations.

As we discussed in the prior section, the opportunity to act in a position can provide invaluable experience, but other developmental opportunities may also assist employees with developing their skills and gaining recognition of their capabilities. Interestingly, the opportunity to serve as acting supervisor has apparently gained importance over time as we have seen an increase in the percentage of employees who report that this confers a benefit on career advancement.

Other actions, such as working long hours, traveling, taking leadership development courses, networking, relocating, and taking lateral transfers within or between agencies, were noted as having a positive impact for over half of those who had done them. And, as would be expected in accordance with the merit principles, employees rarely attributed a positive influence to any factors relating to personal characteristics. One possible exception related to family responsibilities, which 28 percent of employees reported as a positive, compared to 24 percent who viewed this as a negative. Additionally, members of minority groups tended to see a positive impact of family, while White employees expressed the contrasting view. In our conversations with employees, they suggested that employees may be driven to work harder to support a large family, but that, at times, family responsibilities can also be viewed as a limitation, so family can be a double-edged sword. A similar pattern was seen regarding ethnicity/race, which members of ethnic/

racial minority groups, particularly American Indians,¹⁰³ sometimes viewed as a positive (13 percent) and sometimes as a negative (23 percent). Although ethnicity/race was relatively low on the list of potential negative impacts, it reveals that nearly one in four employees viewed their ethnicity/race as a possible threat to their career advancement, despite protections offered through a variety of civil rights laws and Federal regulations. However, comparison of responses in 1992 and 2007 regarding whether members of some minority groups receive preferential treatment shows consensus as all groups reported a decrease in perceptions that some ethnic/racial minority groups are granted special advantages because of ethnicity/race.

Interestingly, the number one item on the list of career impediments (shown in **Table 16**) was the same as the number one item for top career accelerators but in reverse. In other words, employees most often viewed *not* having a supportive supervisor or other senior person to be a fatal flaw. A lack of formal education, developmental assignments, and leadership development programs appeared as the next most negative factors inhibiting career advancement.

Table 16. Top 10 Federal Career Impediments, According to Respondents to the FY 2007 Career Advancement Survey

Career Impediment (Read "lack of" in front of each factor except disability and foreign accent)	Percent Reporting Negative Impact
A supportive supervisor to encourage my development and advancement	54%
Senior person/mentor (other than my supervisor) looking out for my interests	47%
Formal educational qualifications	40%
Developmental assignments to improve the depth of my experience	39%
Leadership development program or managerial training	36%
A disability	34%
A foreign accent	34%
Specialized or technical training	29%
Ability/willingness to relocate as needed	28%
Ability/willingness to travel	27%

Other factors also emerged, including ones that are related to personal characteristics and, therefore, much more difficult or impossible to change. For example, although only 9 percent of employees reported having a disability, 34 percent viewed this as having a negative impact. For other factors, employees seemed more divided regarding the degree

¹⁰³ This can be attributed to the policy of providing Indian preference in certain organizations (e.g., the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Indian Health Service).

of the impact. For example, 34 percent of employees viewed speaking with a foreign accent to have harmed their career advancement, though 24 percent inferred a positive impact. Looking specifically at ethnicity/race, survey results suggested that this factor plays less of a role than it has in the past, both in positive and negative terms.

Optimism

Applying for jobs also requires confidence that you will be evaluated on your qualifications and not eliminated from consideration based on superficial characteristics, such as your ethnicity/race. Results from the 2007 Career Advancement Survey revealed that, overall, only 11 percent of employees reported that they chose not to apply for a promotion or developmental opportunity because they felt someone of their race/ethnicity had no chance of being selected. However, members of ethnic/racial minority groups were much more likely to express this opinion (ranging from 16 percent to 21 percent) compared to White (7 percent) employees. Nevertheless, these findings represent notable improvement from 1993,¹⁰⁴ when 20 percent of employees cited their ethnicity/race as a reason not to apply, with 25 percent to 30 percent of minorities agreeing. While it is encouraging that improvement has occurred, agencies need to realize that simply placing an EEO statement on a vacancy announcement may not be sufficient to assure employees that they will be judged solely on their capabilities, especially when they believe there is evidence to the contrary. When employees lack confidence that everyone will be treated fairly and therefore do not apply, the applicant pool may actually decrease in diversity, with the end result being that agencies become less able to achieve diversity in their workforce, which runs counter to the goals of achieving representation.

Another survey item asked whether the employee's organization is "reluctant to promote minorities into management."¹⁰⁵ Seventy-one percent disagreed, a modest (7 percent) improvement from the response in 1993. However, disagreement ranged from a low of 41 percent for African American employees to 83 percent for White employees so there was a sizable difference between these perspectives. Clearly, African American employees have a much more pessimistic view and expect more limitations on their opportunities to be promoted compared to White employees.

Ambition

In a related question, we asked employees about their ambitions for higher level positions, including specifically their aspirations to the SES. Interestingly, minority employees were

¹⁰⁴ Survey data collected in 1993 and reported in *MSPB's Fair and Equitable Treatment: A Progress Report on Minority Employment in the Federal Government*.

¹⁰⁵ Question 19o from the 2007 Career Advancement Survey, p. 5.

significantly more likely than White employees to report an intention to apply for higher level and SES positions. This may reflect thwarted ambitions on the part of capable minorities who have not had opportunities available to other employees or underlying occupational differences which may have impeded opportunities for some groups, given the correlation between ethnicity/race and some occupational groupings. In other words, members of minority groups may not have had equal opportunities to progress so they are still yearning for advancement compared to others who have achieved these goals and are now satisfied. The survey also asked those who did not intend to apply for a higher level position to explain why they did not plan to apply for these advancement opportunities. White, Hispanic, and American Indian employees most frequently responded that they enjoyed their current job. African American employees frequently said that they planned to retire soon and Asian/Pacific Islander employees most often stated they were comfortable with their current level of responsibility. Responses regarding applying for the SES position were similar, but African American and Hispanic employees were more likely to express doubt that they would be selected. Therefore, it becomes clear that optimism and ambition may be closely linked and impact one's career expectations and related actions regarding whether or not to apply for a promotion. By actively supporting equal opportunity for all, agencies can facilitate a broader pool of qualified applicants and not discourage anyone based on characteristics not linked to their ability to perform on the job.

Summary

Results from our Career Advancement Survey indicate that Federal employees believe that there are strategies that they can actively pursue to improve their opportunities to be promoted. First of all, employees recognize the criticality of developing effective relationships in the workplace with supervisors, mentors, and other contacts. They also realize the importance of performing high-quality work and demonstrating initiative while also having the appropriate education and training as a foundation. In terms of negative impacts, some 23 percent viewed their ethnicity/race as a liability. Since such a concern can discourage employees from applying, the perceptions of possible unfair treatment can be just as damaging as the reality of discrimination. Therefore, agencies need to inspire employee confidence that all employees will receive fair consideration so everyone will feel free to pursue their career ambitions.



UNIFYING CONCERNS AND DISTINCT CHALLENGES

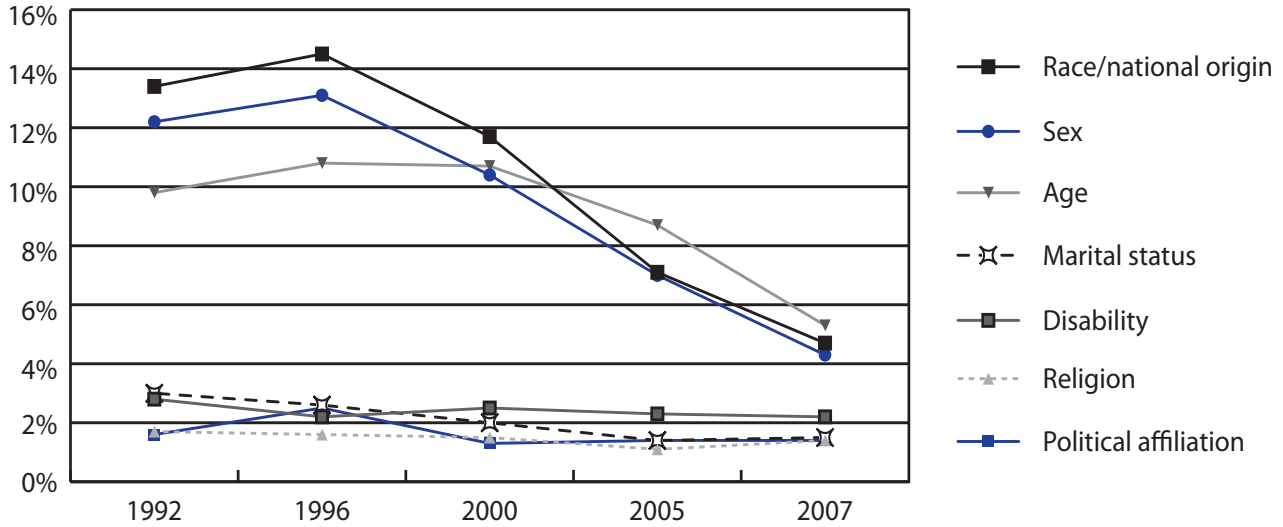
Several of the prior sections presented an overview of how the Federal workforce has changed by offering snapshots capturing representation at different points in time as well as by examining differences in the events that shape careers, such as promotions. Yet, these data only tell part of the story. Although objective data reflected by CPDF addresses the accomplishments of individuals and groups, these data lack the critical explanations of why these events occurred and how people viewed them. To obtain insight into the more subjective perspectives of the workforce, analyses of factual data are complemented with perceptual data gained through survey research. This approach provides a more complete and more complex view of where the Federal workforce stands. In particular, the survey results further our understanding regarding how comfortable Federal employees are with the progress that has been made and how they view the challenges that remain to ensure the fulfillment of the merit system principles.

Changing Perceptions of Discrimination

In the past 10 to 15 years, there has been a dramatic shift in the opinions of the Federal workforce regarding discrimination. As shown in **Figure 7**, perceptions of unfair treatment on the legally protected basis of race/national origin, sex, and age have plummeted.¹⁰⁶ Perceptions of discrimination based on disability, religion, marital status, and political affiliation have remained very low.

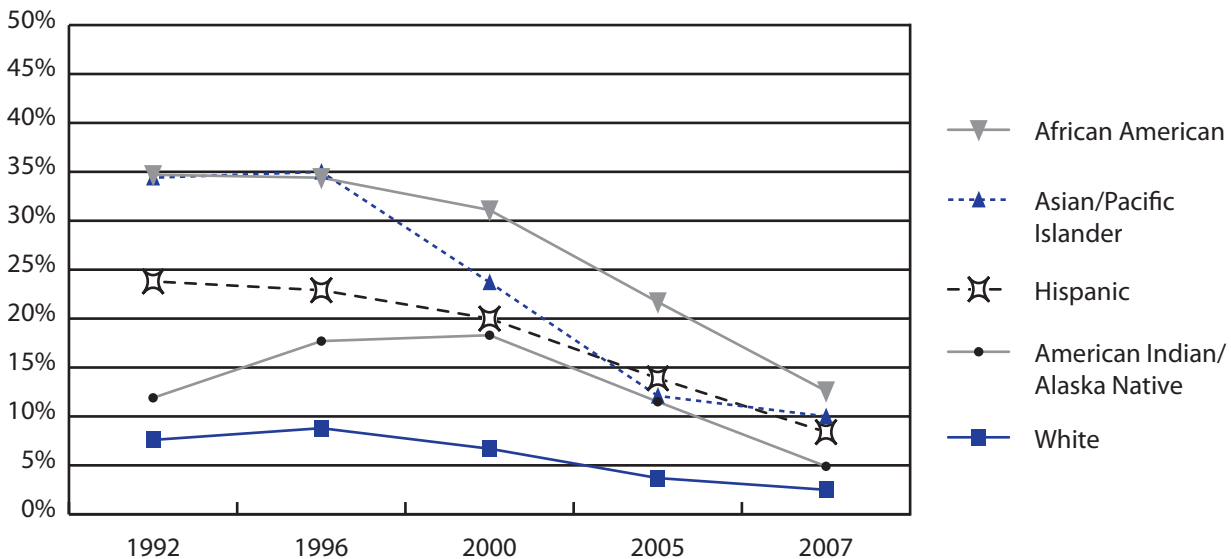
¹⁰⁶ These results are further discussed in MSPB's 2008 report, *The Federal Government: A Model Employer or a Work In Progress?*

Figure 7. Perceived Bases of Discrimination in the Federal Workplace, Merit Principles Survey, Fiscal Years 1992-2007



As shown in **Figure 8**, members of all groups have reported a decreased perception that they have been discriminated against based on their ethnicity/race. In the past decade, African American and Asian/Pacific Islander employees have reported a dramatic drop, while Hispanic employees have also reported a significant decrease. American Indian employees have reported substantial improvement since 2000. Yet, even as we applaud the improvements, we must acknowledge that minority employees still feel more susceptible to ethnic/racial discrimination compared to White employees.

Figure 8. Percentage of Federal employees perceiving they had been denied a job, promotion, or other job benefit on the basis of race and national origin, by ethnicity and racial group, Merit Principles Survey, Fiscal Years 1992-2007



Different Perspectives on Discrimination

Although employees share a perception that discrimination based on ethnicity/race has decreased, some differences remain among groups. Despite the dramatic decrease in perceived discrimination based on ethnicity/race, perceptions of discrimination persist with African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic employees remaining the most likely to believe they have experienced discrimination based on their race/national origin.

Further, employees generally appear to be more sensitive to discrimination against their own ethnic/racial group than others. Although the data showed improvements in terms of how groups perceived they were treated, a disconnect still exists between how groups perceive their treatment and that of others. For example, in response to an item on the Career Advancement Survey, 56 percent of African American employees reported “great” or “moderate” discrimination against African Americans on the job.¹⁰⁷ While this represents an improvement compared to the percentage who perceived such discrimination in 1993, it is noteworthy that substantially fewer members of other groups agreed with this assessment. Overall, only 15 percent of employees stated African Americans face discrimination, a proportion fueled in large part by the tendency of White employees to not perceive discrimination. The same pattern holds true for Asian/Pacific Islander employees. Interestingly, Hispanic and American Indian employees also are more likely to perceive discrimination than others do regarding those two groups, with the exception of African American employees, who are equally likely to agree that Hispanic and American Indian employees experience discrimination.

When the Career Advancement Survey asked employees in 2007 about how much progress had been made by various groups, all groups reported continued improvement (or at least maintaining the same level of improvement), but groups proved less likely to report progress by their own group compared to others. For example, African American employees reported the greatest progress in achieving top-level positions (a gain of 15 percent). Yet only 54 percent of this group agreed that their group has made “considerable” or “some” progress in the past 10 years, which was well below 80 percent agreement by all employees, led by White employees who were the most likely to perceive progress for all minority groups. Likewise, Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic employees noted progress for all minority groups but remained more skeptical than other groups regarding their own progress. Again, for Hispanic and American Indian employees, African American employees were more likely to concur that these groups had not made as much progress as other groups perceived them to have made. Based on

¹⁰⁷ Although similar in content, this item from the Career Advancement Survey differs substantially from the item from the MPS which is discussed earlier and featured in Figure 8. Employees are much more likely to report that members of their group have experienced discrimination than to report personally experiencing discrimination. This may be due to the fact that the sample they are observing is much larger, thereby providing more opportunities for discrimination compared to their own personal experience.

these results, it appears that African Americans differ from other groups in being more attuned—not only to their own treatment but also to the experiences of other groups who have a history of being disadvantaged.

These findings illustrate that awareness of discrimination differs dramatically among ethnic/racial groups. This may make it difficult for these groups to understand each other's perspective—despite their shared concerns (among African American, Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic employees) regarding unfair treatment based on their ethnicity/race. For example, as we discussed earlier, Hispanic employees appear to be employed in lower numbers across a wide range of agencies, occupations, and pay levels, a pattern that warrants a broad spectrum approach to bring in more Hispanics at all levels and facilitate their development within the Federal workforce.¹⁰⁸ American Indians perceive less discrimination than other groups although they tend to be in lower paying occupations with fewer promotion opportunities, a finding that most likely reflects the opportunities in these employees' often remote locations. African Americans appear well represented in the Federal Government but are underrepresented in higher paying, professional occupations. In contrast, Asian/Pacific Islander employees are not only well represented in the Federal Government but are particularly well represented among the lucrative professional occupations. Therefore, the underrepresentation of Asian/Pacific Islander employees among the executive ranks calls attention to the need for specific remedies to remove the barriers preventing these employees from reaching the highest levels of management.¹⁰⁹

In summary, all groups perceived a decline in discrimination and increased progress over 1993 to 2007 in reaching the upper levels, but groups often maximized their own struggles and minimized those of others. This can lend itself to discord between groups when they differ on these perceptions and fail to empathize with others who share the same concerns.

Concerns About Favoritism

Unfortunately, decreases in perceptions regarding ethnic/racial discrimination do not necessarily equate to fair and equitable treatment for all. Based on responses to several questions on our 2007 Career Advancement Survey, all members of the Federal workforce have not achieved full confidence that they are treated fairly and equitably. Suspicions regarding traditional/blatant forms of discrimination have been supplanted by a growing skepticism about managers making their decisions in accord with the merit principles.

¹⁰⁸ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Report on the Hispanic Employment Challenge in the Federal Government*, January 2009.

¹⁰⁹ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Asian American and Pacific Islander Work Group Report to the Chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, January 2009.

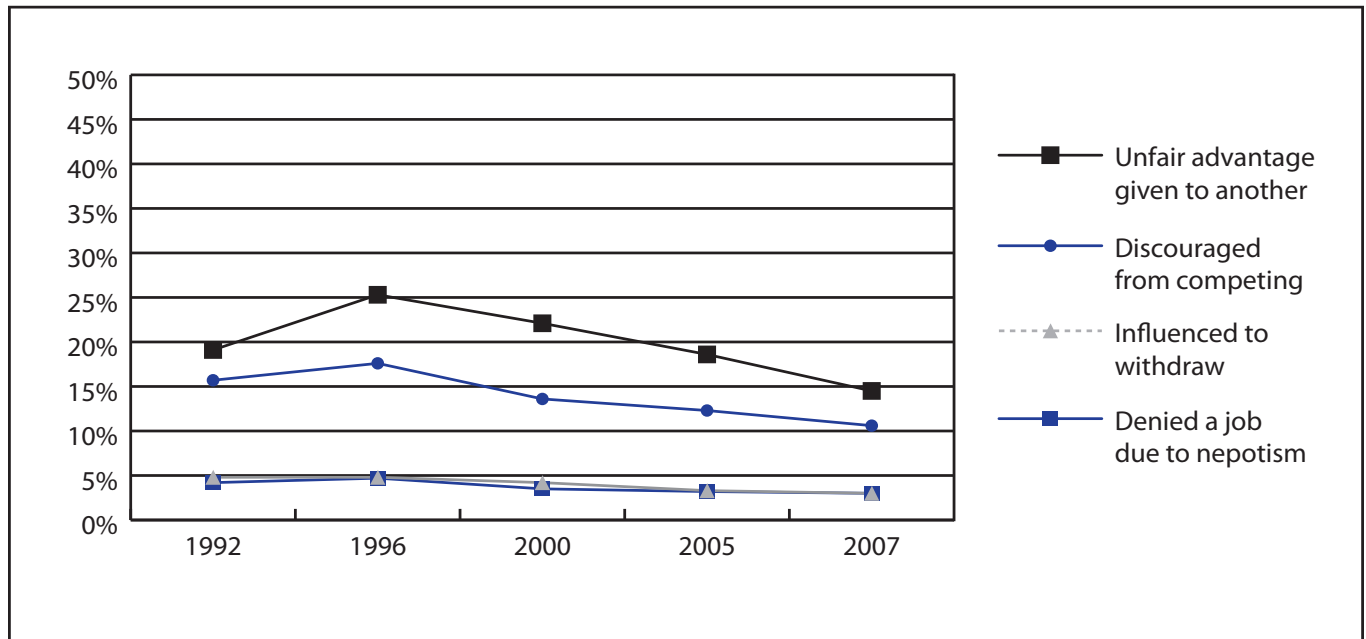
For example, when employees were asked about reasons for promotions, the most popular response by far was neither competence (40 percent) nor hard work (36 percent), but rather “who they know” at 72 percent. These perceptions represent prevalent concerns about whether employees are advanced on “the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which ensures that all receive equal opportunity” (5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1)) and protected against “personal favoritism” (5 U.S.C. § 2301 (b) (8)). Since personal relationships such as having a supportive supervisor or a mentor were noted in an earlier section as critical to career advancement, it is clear that some concern exists regarding the proper balance for supervisors between developing effective work relationships and the dangers of demonstrating favoritism.

When asked about specific unfair practices on the 2007 Career Advancement Survey, over 70 percent of employees believed that some supervisors practiced favoritism. Although African American and American Indian employees were the most likely to hold this opinion, over two-thirds of Hispanic, White, and Asian/Pacific Islander employees concurred. In comparison, 31 percent of employees reported nepotism with American Indian, African American, and Hispanic employees the most likely to agree. Given prohibitions on the employment of relatives,¹¹⁰ the percentage of employees who have perceived nepotism seems quite high; perhaps there has been lax enforcement of this regulation or perhaps employees believe nepotism is at work through indirect advantages that may be granted to relatives employed within agencies though not in a direct reporting relationship.

In contrast, when survey questions are worded to ask about their perceived treatment within the past 2 years—as is done for the MPS—employees are much less likely to perceive unfair treatment. For example, in **Figure 9**, we present a longitudinal perspective on employees’ responses and see a marked decrease in perceptions of unfairness since 1996.

¹¹⁰ 5 U.S.C. § 3110 note.

Figure 9. Employee Perceptions of Having Experienced Unfair Competition, Merit Principles Survey, Fiscal Years 1992-2007



The difference between these findings may reflect: (1) the lower likelihood of unfair treatment occurring within the past 2 years as opposed to anytime in the employee’s memory and (2) the lower likelihood of the respondent having personally experienced a prohibited personnel practice (PPP) as opposed to perceiving that one of their many colleagues experienced it. In other words, the more narrowly a question is limited in terms of time frame or who committed or experienced the PPP, the lower the probability of agreement. However, given that surveys are samples and not a census (given to 100 percent of employees), it is important that we use both types of questions and examine the apparent differences between the two versions of these questions regarding fairness.



LOOKING BACK AT PROGRESS MADE AND CHALLENGES THAT REMAIN

We begin this section with a recap of key findings and recommendations from our previous Fair and Equitable Treatment report, published in 1996 and then provide a brief update on the situation today. This information provides a segue into our concluding sections that address what can be done to foster continued progress towards achieving the ideals of a workforce that is “reflective of the Nation’s diversity” and “treated in accord with the merit principles.”¹¹¹

Findings From the 1996 Fair and Equitable Treatment Report With Brief Updates¹¹²

1. Minorities have made substantial progress in gaining access to Federal jobs.

The progress noted in 1996 is ongoing as minorities have continued to increase their representation in the Federal Government. Despite progress in getting a foot in the door (diversity among new hires) and moving up (generally equivalent promotion rates), this has not yet translated into full representation at all levels or roles, or in all agencies or occupations. A multitude of challenges are likely to prevent this full saturation from occurring in the near future. Nevertheless, the Federal Government, agencies, and prospective and current employees can all take action to accelerate the timeframe required for the Federal workforce to fully represent the public that it serves.

2. Minorities are not evenly distributed across the white-collar workforce.

Minorities (with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islanders) continue to lag White employees in representation, particularly in professional occupations. This reflects many factors, such as availability in the relevant civilian labor force, educational requirements, and possibly discrimination.

¹¹¹ “The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978,” (PL 95-454), Sec. 3.

¹¹² U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Fair and Equitable Treatment: A Progress Report on Minority Employment in the Federal Government*, 1996.

3. Minorities have lower [pay] grades even after controlling for education, experience, and other advancement-related factors that are statistically controlled.

Again, minorities (excluding Asian/Pacific Islander employees) still have lower pay levels than White employees. Regression analyses suggest that ethnicity/race are somewhat correlated with promotion rates, but it is relatively minor compared to job-related factors such as occupational group, education, and experience. Occupation was not included in the earlier analyses, but we found that it warrants inclusion in our study model because of its significant impact on advancement.

4. Promotion rates for professional and administrative positions are generally comparable across ethnicity/race, although some differences remain.

Current promotion rates for ethnic/racial minorities and women in professional and administrative occupations, with the notable exception of American Indians, are generally comparable to Governmentwide averages. However, generally equivalent promotion rates do not preclude the possibility that discrimination exists. Our statistical analyses suggest that ethnicity/race may play a minor role in promotion rates, but occupation, education, and experience exert a much stronger pull on career progress. Further, ability, job performance, career interests, and the initiative of individual employees proved even more influential than ethnicity/race.

5. Minorities receive, on average, lower performance ratings and fewer cash awards than nonminorities.

In our current analyses, we statistically controlled for agency and occupation and found differences in performance ratings across ethnic/racial categories to be small. Yet our analysis suggests that some differences persist. For example, in nearly every agency and agency component organization, White employees in nonsupervisory professional and administrative positions received ratings slightly above the average for the agency or component. In contrast, ethnic/racial minority employees tended to receive ratings slightly below the average for the agency or component, although averages for individual minority groups sometimes exceeded the mean. These patterns suggest that performance ratings are influenced by characteristics or factors correlated with ethnicity or race. These characteristics or factors may be job related (*e.g.*, lower ratings may be associated with certain types of work) or performance related (because of differences in factors such as education or years of experience) or they may reflect discrimination.

In terms of cash awards (individual performance awards and quality step increases), our analyses revealed that a lower percentage of minorities received these awards compared to White employees. Additionally, the cash awards that minorities receive, on average, are smaller in amount. Given that award amounts tend to be linked to salary, this result might partially reflect the lower median salaries of African American, Hispanic, and

American Indian employees. It may also be linked to different values placed on certain occupations since members of some minority groups tend to be underrepresented in professional occupations.

6. Minorities are not provided with the same opportunities to demonstrate their abilities as nonminorities (e.g., serve as acting supervisor).

Members of ethnic/racial minorities remain at a substantial disadvantage when it comes to career-enhancing opportunities such as serving as acting supervisor. (In fact, because the perceived importance of serving in an acting capacity has increased, minorities who do not have the opportunity to act in a supervisory position may find themselves even more disadvantaged than in prior years.) Similarly, American Indian, Hispanic, and African American employees are less likely than White or Asian/Pacific Islander employees to report that they are assigned to “critical projects.”

7. Minorities and nonminorities have significantly different perceptions about the degree to which discrimination may be present in the workplace.

Although the opinions of minorities and nonminorities regarding the prevalence of discrimination have converged in recent years, a large discrepancy still exists among perceptions of each group. In particular, each ethnic/racial group is more aware of discrimination directed at its own group than at other groups, except that African Americans agreed with Hispanic and American Indian employees’ perceptions of discrimination against Hispanic and American Indian employees. This may exacerbate feelings of resentment as groups feel that other groups are dismissing their concerns.

Additionally, in order to remedy a problem, recognition of the existence of a problem is a prerequisite. When some employees do not recognize that some groups believe they are treated disparately, such employees lack the motivation to address the concerns of the disadvantaged group, a consequence that can lead to heightened conflict and potentially the filing of lawsuits and other undesirable actions.¹¹³

8. Minorities and nonminorities have different perspectives on what measures, if any, are needed to achieve a more diverse workforce.

Our current findings indicate that minority employees remain more likely than White employees to support the consideration of ethnicity/race when making selections in a work unit where minorities are underrepresented. However, African Americans are the only group where a greater percentage support rather than oppose considering ethnicity/race.

¹¹³ D.R. Avery, P.F. McKay, and D.C. Wilson, “What Are the Odds? How Demographic Similarity Affects the Prevalence of Perceived Employment Discrimination,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 93(2), 2008, pp. 235-249.

9. Substantial numbers of Federal employees lack confidence in their organization's ability to ensure equal employment opportunity.

We have seen great progress in the confidence that employees have in their organization's commitment to and ability to ensure equal employment opportunity. Nevertheless, gaps remain that need to be closed through continued efforts to improve the HRM processes within agencies.

Recommendations From the 1996 Fair and Equitable Treatment Report With Brief Updates

1. Agencies should conduct their own analysis of differences in promotion rates, performance rates, and other aspects of the personnel process.

Beginning in 2003, as part of the Management Directive 715 process, each Federal agency has been required by the EEOC to conduct extensive analyses of the composition of their workforce and the personnel actions that shape it. Unfortunately, not all agencies are completing their reports in a timely manner.¹¹⁴

2. Assessments of progress toward ensuring equal employment opportunity should include gathering and addressing employee perceptions.

Starting in 2007, agencies have been required under Federal law to conduct an annual survey of their employees.¹¹⁵ Covered topics include whether employees believe promotions are based on merit and employee satisfaction with opportunities to get a better Federal job. As part of the survey, employees also complete a brief demographics section. Data from these surveys should be used by agencies to improve the effectiveness of their workforce management practices. Additionally, OPM and MSPB periodically conduct Governmentwide surveys to assess employee satisfaction with various aspects of the work environment and use the results for recommendations on needed actions and, also in the case of OPM, to initiate actions within its areas of responsibility.

¹¹⁴ The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's *Annual Report on the Federal Work Force Fiscal Year 2008*.

¹¹⁵ 5 C.F.R. Part 250, and the Federal Register, Vol. 71, No. 164, Aug. 24, 2006, pp. 49979-49983.

3. The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Federal agencies should continue to work toward development of better and more “user-friendly” tools for assessing candidates, that allow supervisors to more accurately and objectively rate candidates on job-related characteristics.

The MSPB has conducted research studies and published several reports to foster a hiring process that is more user-friendly, less labor-intensive, and produces hiring decisions that are timelier, merit-based, and rely upon improved assessments. In particular, MSPB has urged Federal agencies to reduce their reliance on training and experience (T & E) ratings. Although T & E ratings have a role in hiring, applicant-provided narratives (and the technology-based alternative of self-assessment questionnaires) do not provide a reliable basis for selecting officials to reliably make fine distinctions among applicants.

We continue to encourage Federal agencies to explore and develop alternatives to T & E ratings, especially for distinguishing among applicants who meet basic (minimum) qualification requirements. Recommended alternatives include structured interviews, accomplishment records,¹¹⁶ job simulations, job knowledge tests, and ability tests.¹¹⁷

4. When choosing from among equally qualified candidates for new hires or promotions, agencies and selecting officials should actively pursue the concurrent goals of the merit system principles, which call for: (a) selection and advancement based solely on relative ability, knowledge, and skills combined with (b) efforts to achieve a “workforce from all segments of society.”

These goals continue to be the foundation for Federal agencies’ management of their employees. Our survey data show that in terms of selection decisions, employees agree with the goals. Our 2007 Career Advancement Survey results suggest that most employees want to be assessed on their “relative ability, knowledge, and skills” rather than their ethnicity/race. When asked on the survey whether the underrepresentation of minorities in a work unit should be considered when making a selection, 22 percent agreed, while 54 percent disagreed. Further, even though minorities were more likely than White employees to agree, African Americans were the only demographic group with more people agreeing than disagreeing.

¹¹⁶ “An accomplishment record is a competency assessment based on applicant descriptions of their past accomplishments that are similar to key duties of the new position.” U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *Issues of Merit*, July 2008, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ Refer to MSPB reports on this subject, including *The Federal Selection Interview: Unrealized Potential*, 2003, and *Job Simulations: Trying Out for a Federal Job*, 2009.

5. Supervisors should understand and be able to clearly articulate to employees the criteria for evaluating employees for appraisals and awards and candidates for vacancies and promotion opportunities.

The current situation is mixed. According to results from the MPS,¹¹⁸ most employees (85 percent) know what is expected of them on the job and nearly 60 percent reported that their supervisor kept them informed about their performance. Sixty-six percent felt that their performance standards are fair. This suggests that most employees understand what they are supposed to be doing on the job and how they will be evaluated.

Unfortunately, a disconnect appears to exist between performance and rewards, such as cash awards and pay increases. Only about half of the MPS respondents (in 2007) felt confident that rewards are based on performance, while only 40 percent expected better performance to result in more pay. As might be expected from this mismatch between performance and desirable outcomes for the employee, fewer than 40 percent reported satisfaction with recognition. Similarly, fewer than 40 percent felt they had been treated fairly in terms of awards within the past 2 years and about half felt the performance appraisal process was fair. Further, results from our 2007 Career Advancement Survey showed that over one in five employees felt their most recent performance appraisal rating was too low, which suggests employees lacked an understanding of either their true performance levels or what they were expected to do.

Regarding promotion opportunities, 37 percent of MPS respondents felt they had been treated unfairly in terms of career advancement opportunities within the past 2 years. Likewise, employees expressed serious reservations about supervisors' ability to rate the qualifications of applicants for jobs and to select people for promotions (slightly fewer than 40 percent thought the supervisor would be fair to a "great" or "moderate" extent on both of these items, with minorities being slightly less optimistic than White employees regarding the fairness of their supervisors).

These findings suggest that employees do not feel confident that they will be rewarded and promoted as a result of their performance or qualifications. Further, it appears that they are confident that they are performing in accordance with expectations, but the agency, supervisor or both do not hold up their end of the bargain.

In terms of selections, our results from the Career Advancement Survey suggest that employees have serious reservations regarding how fairly they are evaluated for promotion opportunities. Although perceptions of discrimination based on ethnicity/race have substantially declined, employees still feel they are treated unfairly, believing that "who you know" greatly outweighs "what you know" in the selection process.

¹¹⁸ These analyses were conducted in preparation for the September 2008 MSPB report, *The Federal Government: A Model Employer or a Work In Progress?* Results reported are from the 2005 MPS unless otherwise noted.



ADDRESSING THE REMAINING CHALLENGES

Although the Federal Government has made substantial progress in becoming a “model employer” and being viewed as treating employees fairly and equitably—regardless of characteristics such as ethnicity/race and gender, it remains clear that it has not achieved total equality. Some of the discrepancies will require concerted, long-term efforts to give people from all backgrounds an equal opportunity to excel in the work place. Other issues require continued attention and perseverance to ensure that applicants and employees trust agencies to treat them in accord with the merit system principles and, in fact, are treated in this manner.

Fostering Fairness and Transparency

With increasing reliance upon flexible hiring and promotion practices and more discretion to supervisors in terms of managing pay and awards, agencies need to ensure that supervisors are carefully selected and trained, and held accountable, so they will operate in accordance with the merit system principles. Although critical, it is not sufficient for supervisors to treat people fairly; they also need to act with sufficient transparency to provide employees with confidence that they are indeed being given a fair and equitable opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities and be treated accordingly.

In terms of selection decisions, transparency not only gives employees more confidence that outcomes are fair because they can see the entire process and the results, but it also puts subtle pressure on the deciding official to select the best qualified applicant according to publicly vetted standards. Having a rigorous and fair selection process in place makes it much more difficult, if not impossible, for a selecting official to pass over more qualified applicants to select a “friend.” Given the benefits of selecting the best qualified applicants, attempting to disregard the results of a valid screening process would be likely to call into question not only the credibility but also the competence of such a manager.

If there is any doubt as to the potential return on investment from developing valid and reliable selection tools or the effort invested in employee evaluations for determining performance ratings, awards, and pay increases, agencies need to consider the potential negative impact on the workforce whose members do not believe they are treated fairly.

In recent years, we have witnessed resistance to pay for performance systems as employees have feared being treated unfairly when supervisors gain increased authority to divide up funding for pay increases. Ideally, performance would be the sole driver to determine how the cash is allocated. Unfortunately, analyses of some recent efforts to implement performance-based pay systems in the Federal workforce have revealed inequities by ethnicity/race.^{119, 120, 121, 122} Unexplained differences between groups in ratings or pay increases cannot be relied upon in isolation as evidence of discrimination, but such patterns warrant another look by the agency to determine what may be underlying this variance.¹²³

Additionally, as discussed earlier, MSPB's prior research into the impact of employee engagement found that highly engaged employees are more satisfied and their agencies are more productive.¹²⁴ We found that the converse is also true—employees who feel they are treated unfairly are more likely to be dissatisfied and express their discontent through actions, such as filing EEO complaints, appeals, and OSHA claims, and increasing their sick leave usage.

Because of the potentially significant impact on employee morale and organizational outcomes, agencies need to strive to create open work environments where employees feel valued and believe that they have the ability to make the most of their potential.

Agencies also need to understand that perceptions can be more powerful than reality. Although the majority of employees of all ethnicities believe that they personally have been treated fairly,¹²⁵ the perception of one person that he or she has been treated unfairly may heavily influence others' perceptions regarding the practice of merit in the workplace. Therefore, if an employee believes that another employee is treated unfairly, that suspicion can taint the first persons' trust of the organization and, subsequently, that person may feel vulnerable to being subjected to unfair treatment. Similarly, when there is doubt regarding whether someone has been treated fairly, it is human nature to look for logical explanations to resolve the ambiguity. Given our society's history of racial discrimination, it is not surprising that one of the first attributions raised is discrimination based on ethnicity/race.

¹¹⁹ S. Losey, "Is DoD's New Pay System Fair?" from www.federaltimes.com, Aug. 10, 2008, "Race Still a Factor in DoD Pay Raises," from www.federaltimes.com, June 8, 2009.

¹²⁰ S. Barr, "Hitting Merit Pay with a Fair-Play Standard," from www.washingtonpost.com, Feb. 14, 2008.

¹²¹ B. Ballenstedt, *SEC Scales Back Pay-for-Performance Ambitions*, from www.govexec.com, Feb. 15, 2008.

¹²² The Ivy Planning Group, *Government Accountability Office African American Performance Assessment Study, Final Report*, Apr. 25, 2008.

¹²³ U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Questions for the Record Related to the Implementation of the Department of Defense's National Security Personnel System*, May 18, 2009.

¹²⁴ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *The Power of Federal Employee Engagement*, September 2008.

¹²⁵ U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, *The Federal Government: A Model Employer or a Work In Progress?*, September 2008.

Safeguarding Equal Opportunities in Employment

The EEOC serves an invaluable role as a protector of employee rights from discrimination, but only if employees are not afraid to speak up when they believe their rights have been violated. The EEOC enforces a variety of laws that flesh out and supplement the requirements of the merit principle regarding fair treatment of employees regardless of non-merit factors, such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability. The Notification and Federal Employee Antidiscrimination and Retaliation Act of 2002 (No FEAR Act) heightens Federal agency responsibilities for eliminating discrimination and retaliation. EEOC Management Directive 715 (MD 715) mandates agency analysis and reporting of workforce data to facilitate equal employment opportunity in employment.¹²⁶ However, not all agencies filed these reports in a timely manner in FY 2008.¹²⁷ Although improvements were made in meeting reporting requirements in FY 2007, it appears that agencies still need to devote more time and attention to the timely collection and use of MD 715 data.

Although reporting requirements create a sometimes unwelcome burden on agencies already overwhelmed by demands on them,¹²⁸ agencies also need to realize that requiring specific information is not an exercise to appease an external entity, but one that produces valuable data that can be used to not only facilitate equal employment opportunity in the Federal workforce but also to achieve a fully engaged and highly qualified workforce. In particular, the data can help agencies to more fully utilize all components of the available applicant pools and to remove barriers to the development and advancement of the current workforce.

Sometimes it is useful to look at trend lines to examine whether an event of interest is increasing or decreasing, rather than only focusing on the volume of events in a particular year. For example, the EEOC reported that workplace discrimination charges among employees (other than Federal employees) reached an all-time high during 2008, with a 15 percent increase compared to 2007.¹²⁹ This contradicts the current trend in the Federal workforce towards decreased complainants (as shown in **Figure 10**), but only time will tell if the Federal Government can maintain its reputation as holding itself to a higher standard than other sectors in treating employees fairly. One would hope that this trend reflects a reduced incidence of discrimination in the workplace, rather than increased employee cynicism regarding the effectiveness of the EEO process.

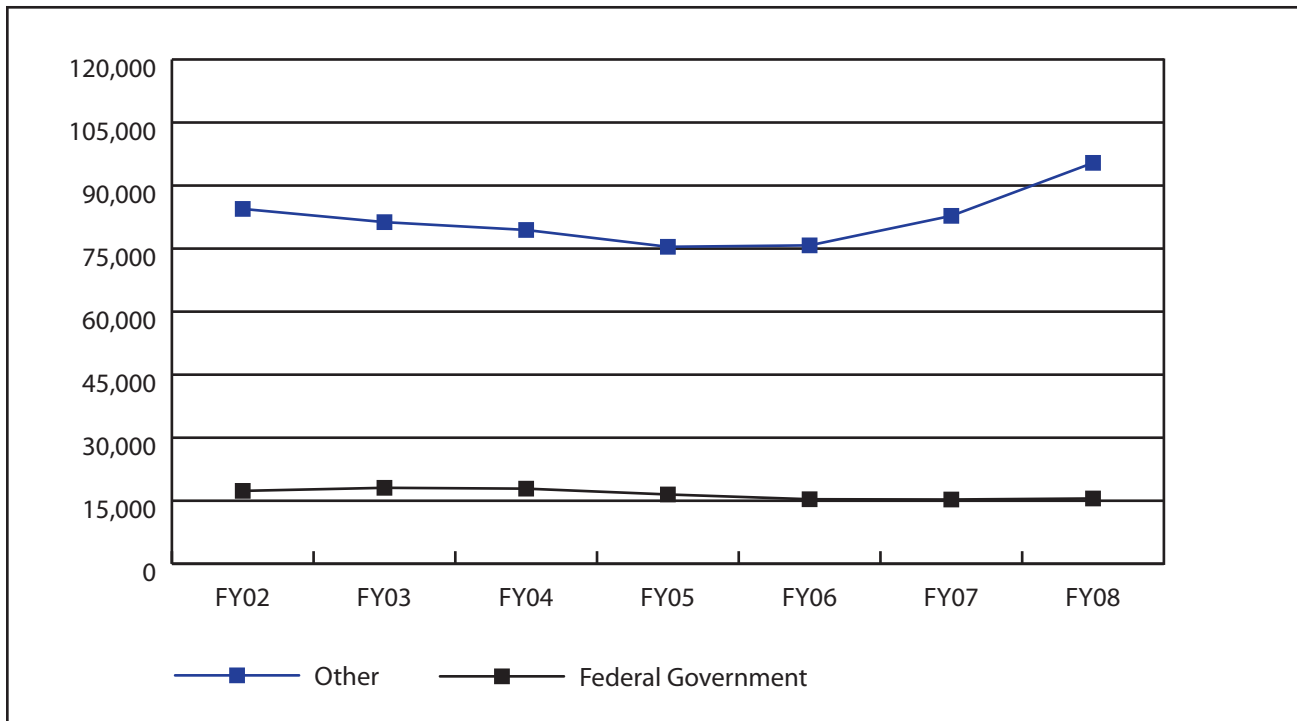
¹²⁶ 29 C.F.R. 1614.602(c).

¹²⁷ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *Annual Report on the Federal Workforce Fiscal Year 2008*.

¹²⁸ As discussed in a 2006 GAO report, this burden results in part from duplicative reporting requirements that could be reduced if EEOC and OPM worked jointly to streamline the reports. Refer to U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Equal Employment Opportunity: Improved Coordination Needed between EEOC and OPM in Leading Federal Workplace EEO*, GAO-06-214, June 2006.

¹²⁹ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, *EEOC Reports Job Bias Charges Hit Record High of Over 95,000 in Fiscal Year 2008*, Mar. 11, 2009 press release. These results cover the private sector and state and local governments. Federal Government employees are covered under a separate report, *Annual Report on the Federal Work Force*.

Figure 10. EEO Discrimination Complainants in the Federal Workforce Compared to Other Sectors, Fiscal Years 2002-2008



Source: EEOC data from the *Annual Report on the Federal Workforce*.

Although the number of Federal equal employment opportunity complainants has trended slightly downward over the past several years, complaints based on race and color remain the most common, with African American employees filing the majority of these complaints. Complaints filed under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act have increased, a trend that corresponds with the growing prevalence of older employees in the workforce.

Among Federal employees, retaliation remains a common basis for complaints, suggesting that many employees who file a complaint perceive that they risk serious repercussions for doing so. In response to our Career Advancement Survey, over half of employees responded that filing a grievance or an EEO complaint would harm their career. Such concerns might prevent employees from filing a complaint but also lead them to assume that there is no satisfactory remedy for unfair treatment. Moreover, opinions on this topic were consistent for all groups. Thus, a lack of trust in supervisors and the agency may create an environment in which unfair treatment is uncontested, and wrongs are never righted.

While the EEO complaint system provides a means for employees to seek a remedy for discrimination on prohibited bases, such as sex, race, and national origin, our Career Advancement Survey results reveal that Federal employees lack confidence in the EEO

complaint process.¹³⁰ For example, only 57 percent trust that management would take appropriate action against a supervisor who discriminated. African American, American Indian, and Hispanic employees were the most likely to lack this trust, although the percentage of employees in these groups who agreed is substantially higher compared to 15 years ago. Similarly, only 44 percent of employees believed that a charge of discrimination would be resolved justly, with African American and American Indian employees being least likely to agree. These data reveal that the EEO process lacks credibility in the eyes of Federal employees to resolve problems. In view of this situation, agencies should review their EEO complaint processes against best practices and strive to improve the credibility of the process.¹³¹ By strengthening the EEO complaint process, agencies will foster not only the integrity of the merit systems, but also the confidence of Federal employees that they will be treated fairly and equitably, consistent with the vision established in the merit system principles.

¹³⁰ Concerns about the process are not limited to Federal employees. For example, the preface to a recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) study of equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint processes in Federal agencies states that “Delays in processing federal EEO complaints, apparent or perceived lack of fairness and impartiality in complaint processing, and fear of retaliation in the workplace, have been long-standing concerns of the EEOC, other federal agencies, and Congress.” Refer to U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Equal Employment Opportunity: Pilot Projects Could Help Test Solutions to Long-standing Concerns with the EEO Complaint Process*, GAO-09-712, Washington, DC, August 2009.

¹³¹ The aforementioned GAO report on EEO complaint processes offers many ideas for agencies to consider. Although GAO’s formal recommendations are directed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the report also discusses recommendations offered by EEO practitioners to improve the timeliness and effectiveness of the EEO complaint process. Many of those recommendations, such as strengthening accountability, improving the knowledge and skills of the EEO staff, and reinforcing leadership commitment to EEO, are directed primarily to Federal agencies.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Overall, progress has been made. However, substantial differences across lines of ethnicity and race persist—both in quantitative measures such as representation and pay, and in qualitative measures such as the perceived prevalence of discrimination and unfair treatment. And progress in a few areas—most notably, achieving full representation of minorities at the top levels of the Federal Government and in the employment of Hispanics in the Federal workforce, as well as eliminating favoritism from personnel decisions—has been limited. Although we have identified some of the factors contributing to these differences, this does not necessarily assuage the intent stated in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 to achieve a workforce that is “reflective of the Nation’s diversity.”¹³²

Many of the issues faced by the Government are the result of inequities fueled by socioeconomic discrepancies across society as a whole. These differences can play out in many ways, such as differential access to education or encouragement to follow certain career paths which impact preparation for Federal careers. The Government’s hiring process operates within the legal mandate that employees be treated fairly and equitably without regard to race and color.¹³³ Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000e *et seq.*) also prohibits employment discrimination based on race or color. This precludes not only discrimination against minorities but also taking actions that would benefit minorities but not others. As a result, the Government cannot make hiring decisions in a way that would advantage some groups at the expense of others. However, this does not suggest that the Government cannot make concerted efforts to improve the diversity of the Federal workforce at all levels. In fact, the Government has, and should continue to make progress to achieve a workforce that fulfills the ideals of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978.

To summarize the findings of this report, the Federal Government has—

- Increased the diversity of its workforce. However, progress has been uneven as all groups are not yet represented at the level found in the civilian labor force. These differences also appear at the higher pay levels and among supervisory and executive

¹³² 5 U.S.C. § 1101 note.

¹³³ 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b)(1).

positions. However, we cannot determine through our analyses whether these differences are due to discrimination based on ethnicity/race or to other factors that correlate with ethnicity/race, such as agency, occupation, geographic location, or education. Regardless, it is clear that minorities are underrepresented in both supervisory and executive ranks. The cause is not a lack of ambition—minority employees expressed interest in applying for higher level positions, including the Senior Executive Service, at rates higher than nonminority employees.

- Our research did identify some possible contributors to this continued underrepresentation. The first is inequity in how agencies allocate acting supervisor responsibilities and critical, high-visibility projects or roles. As in our 1996 study, minority employees are less likely than nonminority employees to report receiving such career-enhancing opportunities. The second is a lack of employee confidence in agency hiring processes and selecting officials' ability or willingness to judge applicants on their merits. Minority employees were more likely than nonminority employees to report that they had chosen not to apply for a position, believing that they would not be selected because of their ethnicity or race.
- Reduced, but not eliminated, differences in pay across lines of sex and ethnicity and race. The reality of higher potential salaries associated with professional and administrative positions and the dearth of minorities in these jobs translate into lower earning for minorities, not only at the time of hire, but with pay levels between groups diverging over time so that the differences become greater. A variety of factors, such as market pressures, determine the salaries associated with specific jobs, and consequently, the Federal Government has set wages in accordance with the values society has assigned to types of work. Therefore, given that African American, Hispanic, and American Indian employees are disproportionately represented in the lower paid technical, clerical, and blue-collar occupational categories, their salaries also tend to lag those of other groups. These patterns can be partly, but not fully, explained by differences in occupation, education, and experience.
- Reduced the perceived prevalence and severity of discrimination based on ethnicity and race, but struggled to gain employee trust in agency leadership, the integrity of personnel processes, and the efficacy of grievance and complaint procedures. Opinions expressed on the vast majority of survey items have become more positive, suggesting that more employees believe that nonmerit factors such as sex and ethnicity/race play no (or at least a greatly diminished) role in personnel decisions. Yet employees expressed increasing concern about the role of favoritism in promotion decisions within the Federal Government. Many employees also expressed a lack of confidence in the EEO complaint process as an avenue to pursue redress when facing discrimination.

As outlined below, future progress depends on efforts from both Federal agencies and Federal employees.

Recommendations

Agencies should—

- Recognize the importance of treating all employees fairly. Agency responsibilities extend beyond statements of support for diversity and fairness, compliance with antidiscrimination laws, and avoidance of prohibited practices. As outlined below, those responsibilities include an affirmative duty to: (1) measure and strive for progress toward a representative workforce; and (2) develop and implement personnel practices that treat employees fairly and support merit principles.
- Collect and analyze workforce data to drive improvements in representation. As detailed in this report, the Federal Government has yet to attain a workforce that represents “all segments of society.” Yet one in five agencies neglected to submit a timely MD 715 report in FY 2008,¹³⁴ suggesting that agencies are assigning insufficient importance (or resources) to a process intended to identify groups that may be under-represented and barriers that may be hindering full representation.
- Incorporate fair practices into every aspect of human resource management. Specific areas to review, and actions to consider, are outlined below.

Specifically to avoid creating employment barriers to recruitment and advancement, agencies should—

- Use a variety of recruitment strategies to ensure that recruitment is both active and open with the objective of achieving an applicant pool that is both high-quality and representative.
- Understand the impact of using different hiring authorities since these may impact the diversity or depth of the candidate pool.
- Facilitate transparency of the selection process by telling applicants in the vacancy announcement what will be expected of them on the job and providing them with accurate and timely feedback throughout the process, including after the selection has been made.
- Encourage greater use of structured assessments and a systematic approach to selection decisions. Although managerial discretion is inherent in hiring decisions, unstructured assessments and informal judgments tend to be more susceptible to unconscious biases that can operate to the detriment of women and minorities.

¹³⁴ The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission’s *Annual Report on the Federal Work Force Fiscal Year 2008*.

Agencies can promote better and fairer decision-making by helping managers understand and articulate job requirements, and by providing managers with tools and guidance to help them systematically assess how well candidates meet those requirements.

- Avoid overly relying on educational requirements as a proxy for desired skills, such as analytical ability or writing ability, which can be measured directly.
- Evaluate the diversity of the pools of applicants and new hires to determine the success of recruitment efforts and to identify any differential impact of assessment criteria and methods.
- Appreciate the importance of work assignments, feedback, informal coaching, and mentoring to employees' long-term development, and remind supervisors of their responsibility to (1) support the growth and development of their employees and (2) ensure that employees are treated equitably in both formal and informal training and development. Supervisors cannot and should not force every employee to seek advancement or take advantage of available opportunities—but they should also not reserve challenging assignments and growth opportunities for only a favored few.
- Collect and monitor data, such as employee opinions and turnover, to identify actions that the agency should take to enhance retention of valued employees.

Finally, in terms of ensuring accountability, agencies should—

- Strengthen selection, training, and accountability for supervisors. As the “front line of management” and the individuals who translate personnel policies into personnel actions, supervisors are critical to the goals of a diverse workforce and fair treatment. Agencies should emphasize the HR aspects of supervision when advertising and filling supervisory positions, and train supervisors to improve their ability to make unbiased, merit-based personnel decisions. Supervisors should understand that the requirement to treat employees fairly and equitably goes beyond formal personnel actions (such as appointments, promotions, awards, and pay increases) to include training, development, and opportunities for growth, such as the allocation of acting supervisor duties and critical work assignments.
- Take steps to improve employee confidence in existing complaint and redress processes. Survey results indicate that employees have little confidence in the established mechanisms, such as the EEO complaint process, for raising and resolving concerns about discrimination or unfair treatment. Good HR policies and fair, competent supervisors must be complemented by complaint and dispute resolution processes that are trusted, timely, and effective.

Employees should—

- Understand the long-term implications of their decisions in matters such as education, occupation, and geographic location and mobility. Initial career choices can greatly expand—or limit—an employee’s long-term options and opportunities.
- Actively seek opportunities to further their career advancement. Although education, training, and quality and quantity of work experience are important, initiative is indispensable. Employees who volunteer for difficult assignments, and who identify and pursue training, and the development and acknowledgement of their efforts, can distinguish themselves from their peers and increase their chances of success when competing for promotion.
- Request feedback on performance and nonselection in a way that demonstrates their understanding regarding the value of constructive feedback. When employees convey to supervisors that they intend to improve themselves and need assistance identifying the areas that can be addressed, they are more likely to receive honest feedback than when the supervisor feels defensive.
- Appreciate the power and value of supervisor and mentors in career development. Employees who establish good working relationships with supervisors and mentors can enhance their access to developmental opportunities, communicate their interest in further advancement, and obtain valuable insight into their career options, strengths and developmental needs, and strategies for career growth.

Summary

Over the past 30 years, the Federal Government has made significant strides toward providing fair and equitable treatment to all its employees. Unfortunately, this progress has been uneven, which has served to frustrate many who hoped that the Federal workforce would already have achieved a greater diversity at all levels. Therefore, it is important for Federal employees, from agency heads to first-line employees, to continue to strive to achieve a fully representative workforce that provides fair and equitable treatment for all.



APPENDIX A. MERIT SYSTEM PRINCIPLES

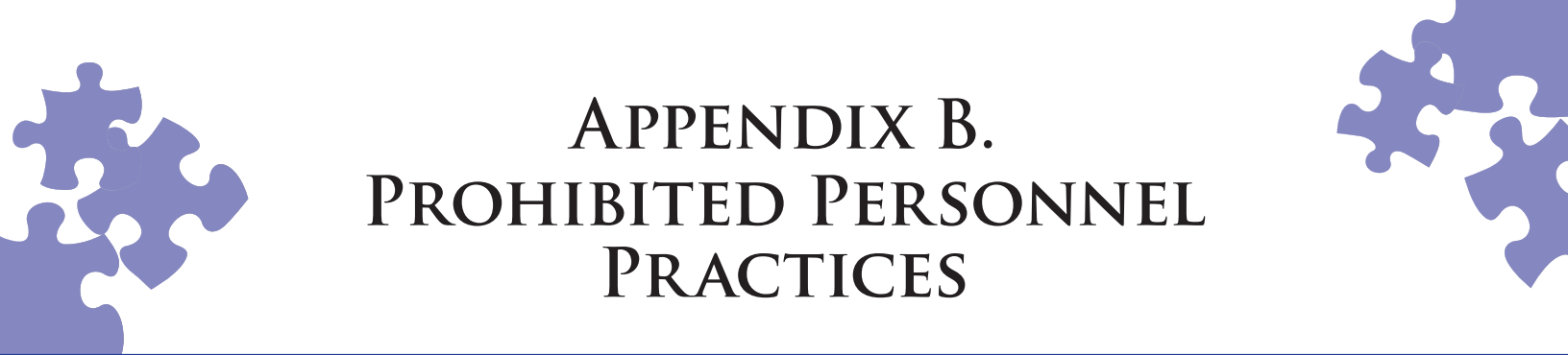
This appendix lists the Federal merit system principles enumerated in 5 U.S.C. § 2301(b).

- Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which ensures that all receive equal opportunity.
- All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or disability, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
- Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.
- All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest.
- The Federal workforce should be used efficiently and effectively.
- Employees should be retained on the basis of adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.
- Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.¹³⁵

¹³⁵ This may include paying for employees' training and education, such as through tuition reimbursement. For information on tuition reimbursement, refer to 5 U.S.C. § 4109(a)(2).

- Employees should be—
 - protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and
 - prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.

- Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences—a violation of any law, rule, or regulation, or mismanagement, a gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety.

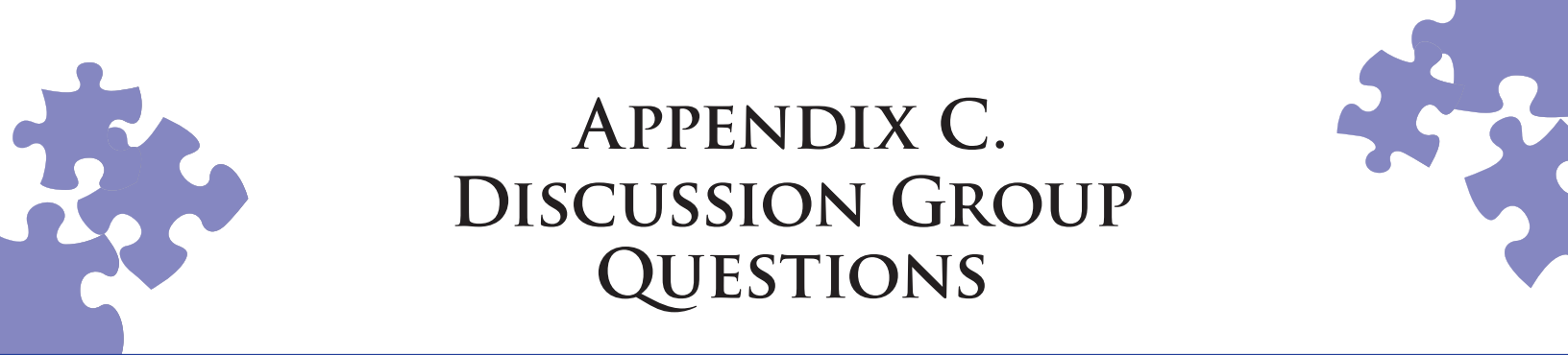


APPENDIX B. PROHIBITED PERSONNEL PRACTICES

This appendix summarizes the prohibited personnel practices enumerated in 5 U.S.C. § 2302(b).

A Federal employee with authority over personnel actions may not:

- Discriminate against an employee or applicant based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, marital status, or political affiliation;
- Solicit or consider any recommendation that is not job-related and based on personal knowledge of the employee or applicant;
- Coerce the political activity of any person;
- Deceive or obstruct any person from competing for employment;
- Influence anyone to withdraw from competition;
- Give an unauthorized preference or advantage to an employee or applicant;
- Give employment advantages to relatives (*i.e.*, nepotism);
- Retaliate against employees or applicants for whistleblowing;
- Retaliate against employees or applicants for filing an appeal, complaint, or grievance;
- Discriminate based on personal conduct which is not job-related;
- Violate veterans' preference requirements; or
- Violate merit principles as stated in Section 2301(b) of Title 5, United States Code.

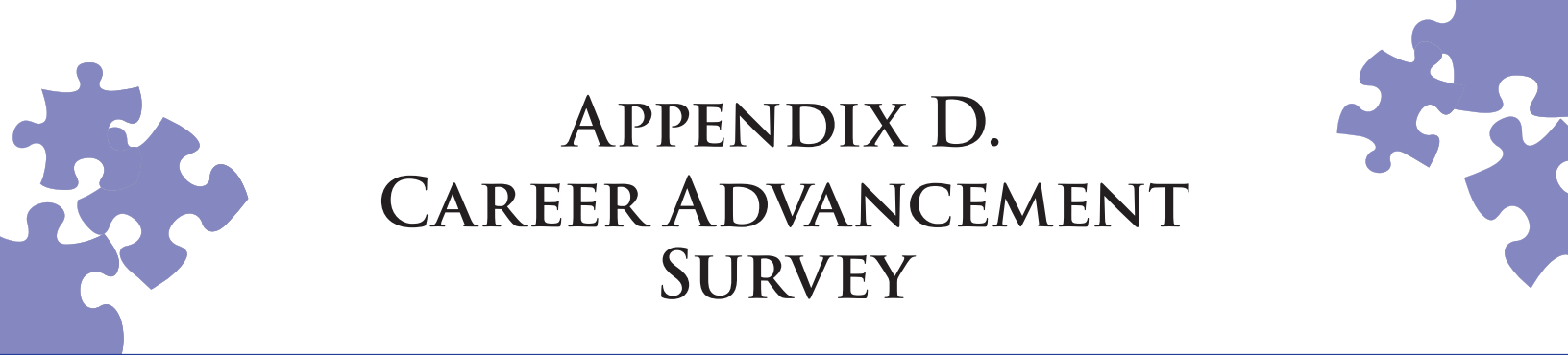


APPENDIX C. DISCUSSION GROUP QUESTIONS

1. As noted in the merit principles, one of the ideals of the Federal service is a workforce that represents “all segments of society.” How close is your agency to that vision? How well has it recruited and managed a diverse workforce? Where is it lacking?
2. “Fair and equitable treatment” is also mandated by the merit system principles.
 - Despite this ideal, in your agency, do personal characteristics that are not job-related, (*e.g.*, sex, race, national origin religion, age, marital status) create challenges for employees in the workplace? (In other words, does discrimination still occur?)
 - Which personal characteristics have created challenges? Do certain groups have unique challenges in specific areas?
 - What kinds of challenges (*e.g.*, recruitment, hiring, advancement, training, pay, awards, performance appraisal, discipline, retention) do you see?
 - Based on your own observations, do you think the amount of discrimination has remained the same, increased, or decreased over the past 10 years? Are things better, worse, or the same compared to 10 years ago?
3. How can agencies better manage a diverse workforce? Will these strategies differ by particular group (*e.g.*, race/national origin, sex)?
 - Recruit
 - Hire
 - Train/prepare
 - Advance/promote
 - Manage performance (pay, performance management, awards, discipline)
 - Retain
4. Do you feel that changes in the Federal civil service systems (*e.g.* pay for performance, changes in appeals and labor relations, changes in job descriptions and classifications) will affect fairness in the workplace? How? If so, what do you recommend to preserve the merit principles and ensure that employees are managed efficiently and effectively?

5. In the spring, we plan to administer a Fair and Equitable Treatment survey of Federal Government employees to cover a number of the topics we've discussed today. What topics would you recommend that we cover in this survey?

6. What can we (MSPB) do to ensure fair and equitable treatment of a diverse workforce?



APPENDIX D. CAREER ADVANCEMENT SURVEY

2007 CAREER ADVANCEMENT SURVEY U.S. MERIT SYSTEMS PROTECTION BOARD

OMB Control No. 3124-0013

RCS# MSPB-2007-002. Expires December 31, 2007

Dear Federal Colleague:

You are part of a small group of Federal employees who have been randomly selected to participate in a survey conducted by the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB). This survey is part of a study examining Federal employees' career advancement strategies and work experiences. This study will also review whether career advancement opportunities vary for different groups of employees. For the survey to reflect the true thoughts and experiences of all groups of Federal employees, it is extremely important that you complete and return this survey. We value your opinions!

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, an independent Federal agency, is responsible for monitoring the health of Federal merit systems by conducting studies of the Federal civil service and other merit systems in the Executive Branch to ensure they are free of prohibited personnel practices. For example, the study supported by this survey examines how Federal employees move through their Government careers, and what factors may help or hinder their career advancement. This research has combined a variety of information sources, such as this survey and data from the Office of Personnel Management's Central Personnel Data File, interviews of key management officials and representatives of employee groups, discussions with groups of Federal employees in a variety of locations, and data from other MSPB surveys. We will summarize our findings and recommendations in a report to the President and the Congress.

Your responses to this survey are voluntary and will be kept **strictly confidential**. The survey should take about 30 minutes and may be completed at your worksite or from another computer with Internet access. If you have any questions about this survey, please send your question in an email to CareerSurvey@mspb.gov or call our survey hotline at 1-888-260-4798. Additional information on this survey is available by clicking on the "MSPB Studies" tab on MSPB's website (www.mspb.gov).

Thank you in advance for answering this survey. Your input will help us make recommendations to improve the ability of the Federal Government to recruit, retain, and effectively manage a top quality workforce.

Sincerely,



John Crum, Ph.D.
Acting Director, Policy and Evaluation

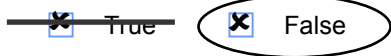
GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

The Career Advancement Survey is divided into different sections containing a variety of questions. We would appreciate your response to each question. Some of the questions ask for your opinion regarding sensitive topics. We assure you that your responses will be kept **confidential**. Please answer these questions as truthfully as possible.

Thank you for participating in this very important survey.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS:

- Place an **X** in the box next to your response.
- Use a blue or black pen. Do not use a pencil or a felt-tipped pen.
- Please print where applicable.
- To change your answer, cross out the incorrect answer and put an **X** in the correct box. Also draw a circle around the correct answer.



- Sometimes you will be asked to *Mark all that apply*. When this instruction appears, you may mark more than one answer.
- Please follow any arrows or instructions that direct you to the next question.

MAILING INSTRUCTIONS:

Please return your completed survey in the business reply envelope. If you misplaced the envelope, mail the survey to:

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board
 c/o Westat
 1650 Research Boulevard
 Rockville, Maryland 20850

PRIVACY NOTICE:

Collection of this information is authorized by Title 5, U.S. Code, Section 1204. This survey has been approved by the Office of Management and Budget in accordance with 5 CFR 1320.

Only MSPB staff and our survey support contractor staff will have access to the individually completed surveys. In accordance with the Privacy Act (PL-93-579, Title 5 U.S. Code, Section 552a), no data will be disclosed that could be used to identify individual participants.

A. WORK SATISFACTION

1. Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	
	Disagree	↓
	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	↓
	Agree	↓
	Strongly Agree	↓
a.	In general, I am satisfied with my job.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
b.	I am satisfied with my career advancement so far.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
c.	Overall, I am satisfied with my supervisor.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
d.	I would recommend my agency as a place to work	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
e.	I would recommend the Federal Government as a place to work.....	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

2. How many years have you been employed on a full-time permanent basis as a civilian (not military) with the Federal Government?

Less than 1 year.
 NUMBER OF YEARS

3. Thinking back to when you applied for your first job with the Federal Government,

a. In the first column, what obstacles did you face when searching for a Federal job?
MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

b. If you encountered obstacles, which ONE was the worst? Mark the ONE worst obstacle in the second column.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Finding out about job opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The complexity of the hiring process.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	The length of the hiring process.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Qualifying for a Federal position	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Finding a job offer with good pay and benefits	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I don't remember the application process for my first job.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I didn't face any obstacles.....	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other - <i>Please specify:</i> _____	<input type="checkbox"/>

B. CAREER EXPERIENCES

4. For the items listed below, please indicate the following:

Step 1. In the first column, mark whether or not you have this or have done this, and

Step 2. The impact you think the presence or absence of each has had on your career advancement in the Federal Government.

HAVE (✓)		Not Applicable/Don't Know				
		Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
<input type="checkbox"/>	a. Formal educational qualifications (e.g., a college degree or higher).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	b. Specialized or technical training.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Leadership development program or managerial training.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	d. Developmental assignments to improve the depth of my experience.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	e. Taken a lateral transfer (at the same grade) within my agency.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	f. Taken a lateral transfer (at the same grade) to another agency.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	g. Extensive past work experience.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	h. High quality past work performance.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	i. Acting in a position prior to appointment.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	j. Contacts who knew the selecting official and recommended me.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	k. A supportive supervisor to encourage my development and advancement.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	l. Senior person/mentor (other than my supervisor) looking out for my interests.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	m. Networking through a professional association or other formal network.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	n. Ability/willingness to take on challenging assignments.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	o. Ability/willingness to work long hours.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	p. Ability/willingness to travel whenever needed.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	q. Ability/willingness to relocate as needed.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	r. Other – <i>Please specify:</i> _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Listed below are some personal characteristics.

Step 1. In the first column, mark whether or not you have this, and

Step 2. For the remainder, rate only the impact on your career advancement. We're not asking for the specific nature of these personal characteristics.

HAVE (✓)		Not Applicable/Don't Know				
		Very Negative	Somewhat Negative	Neutral	Somewhat Positive	Very Positive
<input type="checkbox"/>	a. A foreign accent.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	b. A disability.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	c. Family responsibilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	d. My gender.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	e. My race/national origin/ethnicity.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	f. My marital status.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	g. My sexual orientation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	h. My political affiliation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	i. My religion.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	j. My age.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	k. Other – <i>Please specify:</i> _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. From the list of factors shown in Question 4 and 5, please indicate the one factor (by writing in the question number and letter) that has had the greatest positive impact and the one factor that has had the greatest negative impact on your advancement.

Please write the question number in the first box and the letter in the second box.

GREATEST **POSITIVE** IMPACT

GREATEST **NEGATIVE** IMPACT

7. How many jobs within the Federal Government have you applied for within the past 3 years?

NUMBER OF JOBS APPLIED FOR

Not applicable – I've been with the Federal Government less than 3 years.

➔ **SKIP TO QUESTION 10 ON THE NEXT PAGE**

7a. How many of these jobs for which you applied in the past 3 years did you not receive a job offer?

JOB OFFER(S) NOT RECEIVED

Not applicable. I haven't applied for any jobs or I've been offered every job that I've applied for within the past 3 years.

→ **SKIP TO QUESTION 10**

8. How important do you believe the following factors were in explaining why you did not get the most recent job you applied for but did not receive?

	Very Important	Somewhat Important	Of Little Importance	Of No Importance	Not Applicable/Don't know/Can't judge
a. Another candidate was equally or better qualified in terms of work experience	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I did not have enough education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I don't interview well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Someone else had already been "preselected".....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I did not have great references.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. I was not a friend or relative of the selecting official	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. The selecting official did not like me.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. My past performance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. My past conduct	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. My gender.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. My ethnicity/race/national origin	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. My marital status.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. My family responsibilities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. My sexual orientation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. My political affiliation.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. My religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. My age (too old).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. My age (too young).....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. My disability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. Other – <i>Please specify:</i> _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. From the list of reasons shown in Question 8, which do you believe is the most important reason you did not get the job?

Please write in the letter corresponding to the most important reason.

MOST IMPORTANT REASON

10. In the last 3 years, did you choose not to apply for any promotion or developmental opportunity (for example, assignment to a high visibility task force or group project) because you thought that someone of your ethnicity or race or national origin had no chance of being selected for the job or assignment?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – There were not any promotions or developmental opportunities available during this time frame.
- Not applicable – I've been with the Federal Government less than 3 years.

11. In the last 3 years, did you choose not to apply for any promotion or developmental opportunity (for example, assignment to a high visibility task force or group project) because you thought that someone of your gender had no chance of being selected for the job or assignment?

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable – There were not any promotions or developmental opportunities available during this time frame.
- Not applicable – I've been with the Federal Government less than 3 years.

12. How many times in your Federal civil service career have you been temporarily promoted or detailed to a higher graded job for at least 30 days?

TIMES TEMPORARILY PROMOTED OR DETAILED

13. How often in your Federal civil service career have you voluntarily made a lateral transfer to advance your career; that is, moved from one permanent job to another permanent job without getting a raise in pay?

TIMES VOLUNTARILY MADE LATERAL TRANSFER

14. How often in your Federal civil service career have you voluntarily taken a downgrade to advance your career; that is, moved from one permanent job to another permanent job at a lower grade or pay level?

TIMES VOLUNTARILY TAKEN DOWNGRADE

15. When your supervisor is away for a short period of time, is the responsibility to serve as the “acting supervisor” always assigned to employees at a higher grade than yourself?

- Yes → [GO TO QUESTION 16](#)
- No → [GO TO QUESTION 15a](#)
- Not applicable – no one acts for my supervisor when he or she is away. → [GO TO QUESTION 16](#)

15a. How often are you asked to serve as the “acting supervisor” when your supervisor is away for a short period of time?

- Almost always
- Regularly
- Occasionally
- Very rarely
- Never

16. If your supervisor had a critical project, how likely is it that it would be assigned to you?

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely

17. Is it likely that you will apply for a higher level position within the next 5 years?

- Very likely → [GO TO QUESTION 18](#)
- Somewhat likely → [GO TO QUESTION 18](#)
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Not applicable – I am already a member of the Senior Executive Service. → [GO TO QUESTION 19](#)

17a. If somewhat unlikely or very unlikely, why?

MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

- I enjoy my current job.
 - I am comfortable with my current level of responsibility.
 - I like working with my current supervisor.
 - I don't want the stress of working at that level.
 - I don't want supervisory responsibilities (if applicable).
 - I don't want to work more hours.
 - I don't want to relocate.
 - I have family responsibilities that would conflict with job requirements (such as travel or longer work hours).
 - I don't have the qualifications/ability.
 - I don't think I would be selected.
 - The application process is too burdensome.
 - I plan to retire soon.
 - Other – *Please specify:*
-

18. Is it likely that you will strive to be a member of the Senior Executive Service during your career?

- Very likely → [GO TO QUESTION 19](#)
- Somewhat likely → [GO TO QUESTION 19](#)
- Somewhat unlikely
- Very unlikely
- Not applicable – I am already a member of the Senior Executive Service. → [GO TO QUESTION 19](#)

18a. If somewhat unlikely or very unlikely, why?

MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

- I enjoy my current job.
 - I am comfortable with my current level of responsibility.
 - I like working with my current supervisor.
 - I don't want the stress of working at that level.
 - I don't want supervisory responsibilities.
 - I don't want to work more hours.
 - I don't want to relocate.
 - I have family responsibilities that would conflict with job requirements (such as travel, or longer work hours).
 - I don't have the qualifications/ability.
 - I don't think I would be selected.
 - The application process is too burdensome.
 - I plan to retire soon.
 - Other – *Please specify:*
-

C. PERCEPTION OF THE WORK ENVIRONMENT

The following questions ask about your perceptions of the work environment in the Federal Government.

19. Based on your experience in your current organization, please mark whether you agree or disagree with each of the following statements.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
a. People are promoted because of their competence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. People are promoted because of how hard they work.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. People are promoted because of the number of hours they work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. People are promoted because of whom they know	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Women and men are respected equally	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. The viewpoint of a woman is often not heard at a meeting until it is repeated by a man.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. In selecting among well-qualified men and women job candidates, the selecting official should consider whether women are under-represented in the work unit as one of the important factors in his or her decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Standards are higher for women than men.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. My organization is reluctant to promote women to supervisory or managerial positions.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Minorities and nonminorities are respected equally.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. The opinions and insights of minority employees are often ignored or devalued	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. In selecting among well-qualified minority and nonminority job candidates, the selecting official should consider whether minorities are under-represented in the work unit as one of the important factors in his or her decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. Standards are higher for minorities than nonminorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. My organization is reluctant to promote minorities to supervisory or managerial positions.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. In my organization, members of some minority groups receive preferential treatment compared to other minority groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. In my organization, nonminorities receive preferential treatment compared to minorities.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. Minority women face extra obstacles in their careers because they are both minority and female	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r. My agency has been successful in recruiting a diverse workforce	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s. My organization only pays lip service to actively supporting the goal of equal employment opportunity for all employees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
t. If a supervisor or manager in my organization was found to have discriminated based on prohibited factors (e.g., race/national origin or gender), management would take appropriate action against that person.....	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
u. If I filed an action charging discrimination, I am confident that it would be resolved in a fair and just manner by my organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. In your organization, to what extent do you believe that employees from the following groups are subjected to flagrant or obviously discriminatory practices that hinder their career advancement?

	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Minimal Extent	To No Extent	Don't Know/ Can't Judge
a. African Americans/Blacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Asians/Pacific Islanders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Hispanics/Latinos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. American Indians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Whites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. People with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. People over age 40	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. I have experienced flagrant discrimination (based on non-job related characteristics) that has hindered my career advancement ..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. I have experienced subtle barriers based on non-job related characteristics that have hindered my career advancement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

21. If you've been a Federal Government employee for at least 10 years, what is your general impression of the amount of progress each of the following groups has made in moving into top-level positions in the Federal Government in the last 10 years?

	Considerable Progress	Some Progress	Minimal Progress	No Progress	Negative Progress (Things are worse now.)	Not Applicable/Don't Know/Can't Judge
a. African Americans/Blacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Asians/Pacific Islanders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Hispanics/Latinos	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. American Indians	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Minority Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Minority Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Nonminority Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Nonminority Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. People with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. In your opinion, does discrimination against minorities in the Federal Government occur more or less often than it did 10 years ago?

- I wasn't in the Federal Government 10 years ago.
- Discrimination occurs more often now.
- Discrimination occurs with about the same frequency.
- Discrimination occurs less often now.
- Not applicable – discrimination against minorities has not been a problem in the last 10 years.
- Don't know/can't judge.

23. In your opinion, does discrimination against women in the Federal Government occur more or less often than it did 10 years ago?

- I wasn't in the Federal Government 10 years ago.
- Discrimination occurs more often now.
- Discrimination occurs with about the same frequency.
- Discrimination occurs less often now.
- Not applicable – discrimination against women has not been a problem in the last 10 years.
- Don't know/can't judge.

24. Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Can't Judge
a. Some supervisors in my agency practice favoritism (giving an unfair advantage to friends or favorite employees)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Some supervisors in my agency practice nepotism (giving an unfair advantage to relatives)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Filing a grievance would harm my future career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Filing an equal employment opportunity (EEO) complaint would harm my future career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. I have been disadvantaged by the emphasis on diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. In my organization, it is a disadvantage to have family responsibilities when being considered for a job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. A diverse workforce produces better services and products than a workforce that is not diverse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Agencies should ensure that their workforce is representative of the public they serve	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. (Continued) Do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Can't Judge
i. I try to get along with my supervisors and managers even if I don't agree with their decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. I speak up whenever I suspect that I've been treated unfairly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. I "tell it like it is" even if my supervisor doesn't like what I have to say ..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
l. If I work hard, I will succeed in my organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
m. I volunteer for difficult assignments ...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
n. To be successful in my organization, it's important to maintain a physical appearance (e.g., dress, hairstyle) that is similar to others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
o. If I want to advance my career, I will have to play down my own ethnic and cultural customs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
p. I have experienced frustration (such as due to communication problems) in the workplace while trying to deal with a coworker of another race or ethnicity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
q. I have experienced frustration (such as due to communication problems) in the workplace when trying to deal with a coworker of the opposite sex ..	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. If you think people are treated less favorably based on their race/ethnicity, gender, or age of 40+, please mark off the ways in which they are treated less favorably.

	Race/ethnicity	Gender	Age (40+)
a. Recruitment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. Initial hiring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. Selection for assignments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d. Advancement/promotion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
e. Telework/flexible schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
f. Training/developmental opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
g. Compensation/pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
h. Performance management/appraisals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
i. Awards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
j. Discipline	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
k. Retention efforts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

D. PAY AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

26. To what extent does your supervisor provide constructive feedback on your job performance?
- To a great extent
 - To a moderate extent
 - To a minimal extent
 - To no extent
27. Compared to what I deserved, the performance appraisal rating that I received during my last appraisal was:
- Too high
 - About right
 - Too low
 - I have not received a performance appraisal
28. Do you feel you are usually expected to do work that is above, at, or below your current pay level?
- Work that is above my pay level
 - Work that is at my pay level
 - Work that is below my pay level
29. Do you feel that you are paid more, about the same, or less compared to other employees in your agency who do similar work?
- More
 - About the same
 - Less
 - Don't know

E. WORK/LIFE ISSUES

30. Did you relocate geographically to take your first job with the Federal civilian service?
- Yes
 - No
31. How many times have you voluntarily relocated (moved geographically) for the sake of your career since you have been employed as a civilian with the Federal Government?
- 0
 - 1
 - 2
 - 3
 - 4
 - 5 or more times
32. Have you ever relocated to follow the career of your spouse or significant other?
- Yes
 - No

33. For each of the following statements, indicate the extent to which each applies to you.

	To a Great Extent	To a Moderate Extent	To a Minimal Extent	To No Extent	Don't Know/ Can't Judge
a. I am willing to relocate to advance my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b. I am willing to devote whatever time is necessary to my job to advance my career	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
c. I am willing to develop myself professionally (e.g., attend classes/training) on my own time and/or money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

34. How many days per month, on average, have you spent on Government travel during the past year?

- None
- 1-2 days
- 3-5 days
- 6-10 days
- 11-15 days
- 16-20 days
- 21 or more days

35. How many hours, on average, have you worked each week during the past year?

- 40 hours or less
- 41-45 hours
- 46-50 hours
- 51-55 hours
- 56-60 hours
- 60+ hours

36. Which option most closely reflects how frequently you telework from an office within your home or from a telework center?

- Five days a week
- Twice a week
- Once a week
- Once every two weeks
- Once a month
- Twice a year
- Never

37. Have you ever done any of the following to help balance work and life/family responsibilities? Second, what impact did this have on your subsequent career?

MARK ALL THAT APPLY.

	Very Positive	Somewhat Positive	Neutral	Somewhat Negative	Very Negative	Not Applicable/Don't Know
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> a. Used flexible work schedules (alternate work schedules)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Used flexi-place (telework or telecommute) options	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Took significant blocks of leave intermittently (as needed to handle family responsibilities)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> d. Took leave for more than 4 consecutive weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> e. Switched to a less than full-time schedule (less than 40 hours a week)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> f. Quit Federal job, but returned after a break in service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> g. Changed jobs within my agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> h. Changed jobs by going to another agency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> i. My spouse adjusted his/her schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> j. Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

38. Which of these would you like to do (or do more frequently) to help balance work and life/family responsibilities? **MARK ALL THAT APPLY.**

- a. Flexible work schedules
- b. Telework (also known as telecommute or flexi-place)
- c. Take leave intermittently (as needed)
- d. Take leave for more than 4 consecutive weeks
- e. Switch to a less than full-time schedule (less than 40 hours a week)
- f. Quit Federal job, but return after a break in service
- g. Change jobs within my agency
- h. Change jobs by going to another agency
- i. Have my spouse adjust his/her schedule
- j. Other: _____

39. If you were to be promoted, how many additional hours per week would you be willing to work in your new job?

- 0 hours
- 1-5 hours
- 6-10 hours
- 11-15 hours
- 16-20 hours
- 20+ hours

40. Has caring for children significantly impacted your availability for work?

- Yes
- No → **GO TO QUESTION 41**

40a. If so, for how many years (combining time if it was intermittent)?

- One year or less
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-7 years
- 8-9 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years.

41. Have you had children (under the age of 18) living with you at any time during your Federal career?

- Yes
- No → **GO TO QUESTION 42**

41a. What was the greatest number of children (under the age of 18) you had living with you (at one time) during your Federal career?

CHILDREN

42. Has caring for elderly family members or other adult dependent family members significantly impacted your availability for work?

- Yes
- No → **GO TO QUESTION 43**

42a. If so, for how many years (combining time if it was intermittent)?

- One year or less
- 2-3 years
- 4-5 years
- 6-7 years
- 8-9 years
- 10-15 years
- More than 15 years.

43. If you have/had any dependents (e.g., children, elderly or disabled family members) requiring care, would you say that you have/had primary responsibility for their day-to-day care?

- I have not been responsible for caring for any dependents.
- My spouse or another adult in the household had primary responsibility for caring for dependents.
- Responsibility was/is split 50/50 with another adult.
- I have/had primary responsibility.

F. ABOUT YOU

44. Are you Hispanic/Latino?

- Yes
- No

45. Are you: **MARK ALL THAT APPLY**

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

46. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

47. Is your immediate supervisor the same gender as you?

- Yes
- No

48. Is your immediate supervisor the same race/national origin/ethnicity as you?

- Yes
- No

49. What is the highest level of education (a) that you had completed at the time you got your first, full-time, permanent, civilian job with the Government, and (b) that you have now?

a. At the time hired for first, full-time permanent civilian Government job

b. That you have now

- Less than high school
- High school diploma or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- Some college, no degree
- Completed associate's degree (e.g., AA).....
- Completed bachelor's degree (e.g., BA).....
- Some graduate school, no graduate degree.....
- Completed master's degree (e.g., MA, MS).....
- Completed professional degree (e.g., JD, MD, DDS) ...
- Completed doctorate (e.g., PhD)

OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

50. What advice would you offer to someone from a similar background as yours who is interested in a career with the Federal Government?

51. What does the Federal Government need to do to better recruit and hire a diverse workforce?

52. What does the Federal Government need to do to better retain a diverse workforce?

53. Excluding the legally protected areas of race/national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, marital status, political affiliation, and sexual orientation, are there other characteristics that are not related to job performance that impact the way employees are treated-either positively or negatively?

54. Please provide any additional comments that you have regarding the fairness of employment practices within the Federal Government.

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN OUR SURVEY!
PLEASE MAIL YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.**

**If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the MSPB Survey Support Center
Toll-free: 1-888-260-4798 (Monday through Friday 8:00am – 5:00pm ET)
Email: CareerSurvey@mspb.gov**



APPENDIX E.

OCCUPATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Professional work requires knowledge in a field of science or learning characteristically acquired through education or training equivalent to a bachelor's or higher degree with major study in or pertinent to the specialized field, as distinguished from general education. Work is professional when it requires the exercise of discretion, judgment, and personal responsibility for the application of an organized body of knowledge that is constantly studied to make new discoveries and interpretations, and to improve data, materials, and methods, *e.g.*, mathematics or engineering.¹³⁶

Administrative work involves the exercise of analytical ability, judgment, discretion, and personal responsibility, and the application of a substantial body of knowledge of principles, concepts, and practices applicable to one or more fields of administration or management. While these positions do not *require* specialized education, they do involve the type of skills (analytical, research, writing, judgment) typically gained through a college level education, or through progressively responsible experience.

Technical work is typically associated with and supportive of a professional or administrative field. It involves extensive practical knowledge, gained through experience and/or specific training less than that represented by college graduation. Work in these occupations may involve substantial elements of the work of the professional or administrative field, but requires less than full knowledge of the field involved.

Clerical occupations involve structured work in support of office, business, or fiscal operations. Clerical work is performed in accordance with established policies, procedures, or techniques; and requires training, experience, or working knowledge related to the tasks to be performed. Clerical occupational series follow a one-grade interval pattern.

Other white-collar occupations. There are some occupations in the General Schedule that do not clearly fit into one of the above groupings. Included among these are series such as the Fire Protection and Prevention Series, GS-081, and Police Series, GS-083.

Blue-collar are occupations whose paramount requirements are trades, crafts, and labor experience and knowledge.¹³⁷

¹³⁶ This definition and that of the other white-collar occupations came from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Introduction to the Position Classification Standards," TS-134, July 1995. This document can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/gsinintro.pdf>.

¹³⁷ This definition came from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, "Introduction to the Federal Wage System Job Grading System," TS-44, September 1981. The document can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/fwsintro.pdf>.

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