

# State of Black Promotions at the National Geospatial- Intelligence Agency

NGA Diversity and Inclusion Study



**NGA**  
**NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

Please note that in this report, the term “Black” is utilized to refer to NGA’s Black and/or African-American employees. This was done to be as inclusive as possible, to include employees who may not identify with the term “African-American,” and to align with terminology already in use at or affiliated with NGA, such as the Black Advisory Council and Blacks in Government.



Office of Diversity Management  
and Equal Employment Opportunity  
571-557-7374

Published 2018

# A Letter from the Director

Diversity and equal opportunity are vital to mission success at NGA and throughout the Intelligence Community.

This State of Black Promotions report reveals differences in promotion rates between Black and White colleagues. This report identifies barriers to advancement that our Black teammates experience and offers ten recommendations to help NGA mitigate these barriers to promotion.

Accountability for implementing these recommendations is vital. And I am pleased (b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424 of NGA's (b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424 will be spearheading the implementation of these recommendations. This plan will include changes to the processes and culture at NGA that will enhance inclusion of our entire workforce.

(b) (3) cannot do this alone – implementation will require agency-wide collaboration. I encourage all employees to take an active role to identify ways to help strengthen team NGA and make our agency a more equitable place to work.

I am committed to dedicating the necessary resources to implement the recommendations and holding leaders accountable for making these impactful changes.

Diversity and inclusion are mission imperatives that require all of our efforts. We can -- and must -- do better.



Robert Cardillo  
Director



**NGA**  
**NATIONAL GEOSPATIAL-INTELLIGENCE AGENCY**

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

# Table of Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	3
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	5
<b>Introduction</b> .....	8
What is the Promotion Process at NGA? .....	9
<b>Methodology</b> .....	11
Data Definitions and Study Participants.....	12
<b>What are the Promotion Rates for Blacks and Whites at NGA?</b> .....	14
Overall Promotion Rates.....	14
Promotion Rates by Band and GEOINT Mission vs. GEOINT Mission Support.....	15
Promotion Rates by Gender.....	19
Rank-in-Person (RIP) Promotions.....	20
<b>Why Are These Differences Happening?</b> .....	23
Unconscious Bias.....	24
Supervision.....	25
Feedback.....	26
Networking/Mentoring.....	27
Developmental Opportunities and Assignments.....	28
Leadership Roles.....	29
Performance (DCIPS) Appraisals.....	31
Promotion Readiness Rating.....	33
<b>What Can We Do About These Differences?</b> .....	35
Recommendation Theme Area #1: Focus on Micro-Decisions.....	36
Recommendation Theme Area #2: Encourage Better Feedback.....	37
Recommendation Theme Area #3: Enhance Networks and Mentors.....	38
Recommendation Theme Area #4: Evaluate the Promotion Process.....	39
<b>Summary and Conclusion</b> .....	41
<b>References and Additional Reading</b> .....	44



# Foreword

## (b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424 Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity (ODE)

(b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424, it is my privilege to be your advocate for diversity and inclusion throughout our agency. I am committed to supporting efforts to achieve greater equality while remaining transparent and open to new ideas.

This study is a result of NGA's first-ever Rank-in-Person promotion cycle, when no Black Band 5s were promoted to Senior Executive. When then-Director Letitia A. Long became aware of this, she commissioned ODE to conduct a study on Black promotions at NGA to identify any inequities or barriers to advancement within NGA specifically for the Black workforce. Once this call to action came, (b) (3) (b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424 stood up NGA's Diversity and Inclusion Study Program, composed of research psychologists and workforce analysts.

This "State of Black Promotions at NGA" report reflects the culmination of the study team's extensive research and analysis (including multiple promotion cycles) that required agency-wide coordination and collaboration. The report identified differences in promotion rates for Black employees compared to White employees, and the differences have been growing since 2014. The study team combined personnel data, academic literature, reports from other federal agencies, and input from current employees across the agency to determine what barriers may prevent Black employees from reaching their full potential in the agency. From this, the team developed a set of 10 recommendations as a way forward. Agency leadership has approved all of the recommendations in the study for implementation.

As (b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424, I have the honor and responsibility to lead this important initiative and champion the implementation efforts. Moving toward greater equality in our promotions requires collaboration and active participation agency-wide. I am committed to bringing together the right teams to make lasting change at NGA, communicating our progress to the workforce, and measuring the impact of these efforts.

I extend my sincere thanks to our study team and the workforce for their participation, including the Black Advisory Council for their role providing input and stakeholder support to shape the final recommendations. I also extend my appreciation to (b) (3) for his leadership in standing up the team and seeing the study program through this project. I especially thank NGA's principal leadership — particularly Director Robert Cardillo, Deputy Director Justin Poole, and Executive Director Harry E. Mornston — for their active and visible support of NGA's Diversity and Inclusion Study Program and for recognizing the importance of such studies.

(b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424



# Executive Summary

## State of Black Promotions at NGA: Barriers and Recommendations

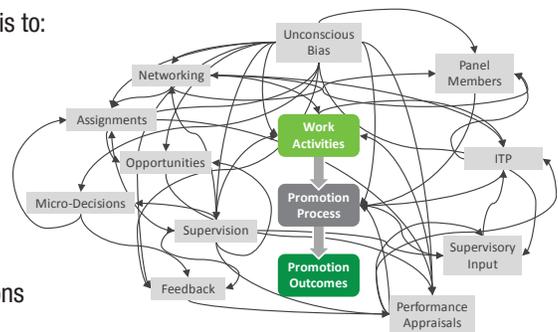
As NGA strives to embody the ideals of diversity and inclusion (D&I), NGA undertook this study to examine whether there were differences in promotion rates between Blacks and Whites at NGA, whether barriers to career advancement exist for Black employees, and ways to mitigate these barriers. As a result of this study, 10 recommendations are made to address differences and barriers related to Black promotions.

Improving D&I throughout the agency results in enhanced decisions and greater cultural competency, which acts as a force multiplier. These cumulative effects of D&I yield improved success against increasingly complex global threats and is, therefore, a mission imperative.

### Purpose

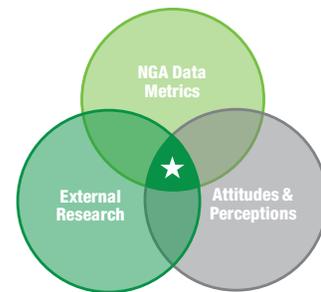
Recognizing that promotions are not the simple result of performing well at your job, but instead reflect a complex system of interrelated parts, this study's purpose is to:

- Identify whether there are consistent differences between Black and White promotion rates at NGA,
- Conduct root cause analysis research to identify possible barriers to promotions faced by Blacks,
- Investigate employee perceptions about the state of promotions, and
- Develop a core set of recommendations for improvement and interventions to improve the D&I at NGA; specifically, regarding Black promotions.



### Methodology

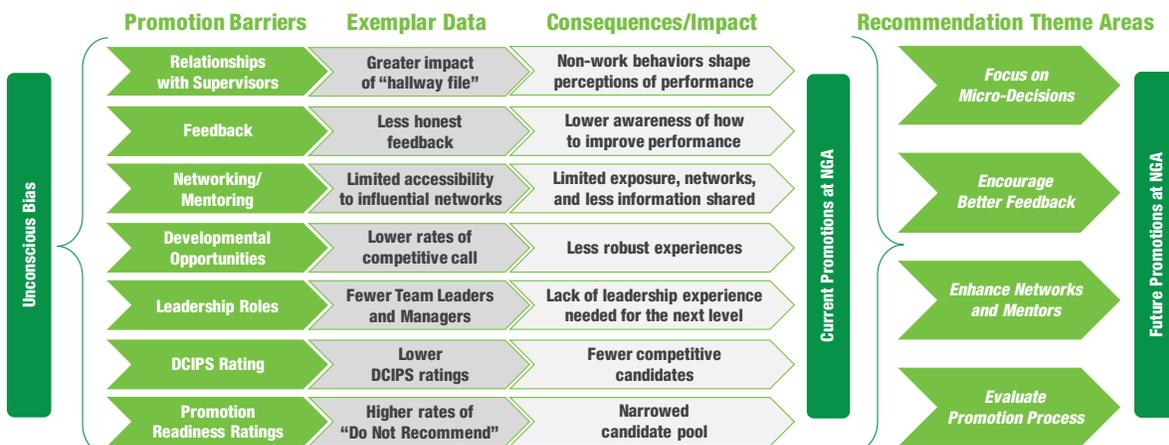
ODE's team of research psychologists and workforce analysts designed and conducted an agency-wide research study utilizing multiple methodologies, with recommendations aimed at addressing findings common across these research methods: secondary data analyses of NGA's data metrics, employee attitudes and perceptions, and literature reviews of external research.



### Summary of Results

Since 2014, Black promotion rates have been lower than White promotion rates.

Focusing on the criteria important under the current promotion system, the study identified and described possible barriers to advancement faced by Blacks and developed a set of recommendations to mitigate these barriers.



## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address the identified differences and barriers:

Theme Area	Recommendation
Focus on Micro-Decisions	1. Ensure NGA supervisors and managers understand the cumulative effects of their small, everyday decisions on employees' careers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach supervisors and managers the types of decisions that they need to pay attention to when distributing work and opportunities.</li> <li>Hold supervisors and managers accountable for the mission-appropriate and equitable distribution of opportunities in their work group.</li> </ol>
	2. Make Unconscious Bias Awareness Training mandatory for all supervisors and Career Service board and panel members.
Encourage Better Feedback	3. Educate supervisors, managers, and promotion panel members on providing quality, timely, and more actionable, useful, and constructive feedback to all employees, and hold them accountable for delivering said feedback. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure this supervisory education includes components highlighting challenges and strategies related to providing quality, actionable, and more constructive feedback to all employees (see DIV2181 "Building meaningful business relationships across difference" in the NGA College (NGC) course catalog for ideas).</li> </ol>
	4. Educate all employees on how to receive, accept, and apply constructive feedback.
Enhance Networks and Mentors	5. Educate all employees in the value and importance of diverse and inclusive networks.
	6. Ensure all employees recognize that professional networking is a legitimate work activity (e.g., consider building professional networking into performance objectives).
	7. Encourage all employees to build and maintain diversified and inclusive networks and mentoring partnerships.
Evaluate Promotion Process	8. Ensure the promotion process is implemented consistently across Career Services.
	9. Validate the job-relatedness of current promotion profile factors and related selection criteria.
	10. Conduct regular program evaluations, particularly when there are changes to the process, to ensure that changes do not have unintended consequences for particular demographic groups.

## Next Steps

Agency leadership has appointed **(b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424**, to oversee implementation activities for all 10 study recommendations. In this role, she will work across the agency to ensure implementation of the recommendations, keep the workforce informed, assess implementation efforts to ensure results and return on investment, and hold leadership and the workforce accountable for change.

**POC:** NGABlackPromotionStudy@coe.ic.gov



# Introduction

At the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) and across the intelligence community (IC) as a whole, diversity is recognized as a mission imperative. Diversity is one of the seven Principles of Professional Ethics for the IC, a set of standards which codifies the importance of embracing the diversity of the nation, promoting diversity and inclusion (D&I) for the IC workforce and encouraging diversity in thinking.<sup>1</sup> In one of his final memos of his tenure as the director of national intelligence (DNI), James R. Clapper wrote:

“The IC’s mission remains unchanged. We exist to provide timely, insightful, objective, and relevant intelligence to inform decisions on national security issues and events. We must continue to advance our mission, leveraging the most diverse and inclusive workforce possible. Not because it’s altruistically right, but because the security of our nation depends on it.”<sup>2</sup>

Traditional definitions of diversity tend to emphasize demographic diversity; differences along characteristics of race/ethnicity, gender, age, disability status, etc. More modern definitions of diversity also consider individual differences on dimensions of culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, education level, socioeconomic status, abilities and limitations, and life experiences. Leveraging all types of diversity is important; but ensuring that traditionally underrepresented demographic groups, such as Blacks, are fully integrated into an organization must remain an equal priority.

NGA leadership’s commitment to diversity ensures the composition of the workforce is such that NGA is best-positioned to address our country’s most challenging issues. Importantly, though, it is when we move beyond mere diversity and toward full inclusion that diversity truly acts as a force multiplier. As expressed by NGA Director Robert Cardillo in his Statement on Diversity and Inclusion:

“The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) is committed to an inclusive work environment that respects, values, and draws on the strengths of our diverse workforce. We appreciate the varied backgrounds, attributes, experiences, and perspectives of each individual and the unique contributions they make.”<sup>3</sup>

It is the act of leveraging diversity that moves an organization from simply being a diverse organization to actually harnessing the benefits that a diverse workforce brings to make a more successful organization. Conceptualized as inclusion, this can be more fully defined as “the achievement of a work environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success.”<sup>4</sup> As regularly heard at NGA: “diversity is about counting people; inclusion is about making people count.”

This study’s investigation focuses on some of these aspects of inclusion. Specifically, it examines whether there are barriers faced especially by Black employees regarding equality of access to opportunities and resources related to promotion. Given NGA leadership’s insight as a result of the 2014 promotion cycle from Band 5-to-Senior — that the lack of any Black promotions to Senior suggested that Blacks were not as competitive compared to Whites — this study focused on the state of Black promotions at NGA.

Considering all of the decision points in an employee’s tenure at the agency, receiving — or not receiving — a promotion is one that has far-reaching implications, both for the individual employee and for the organization. As described in the IC-wide report “Diversity and Inclusion: Examining workforce concerns within the United States Intelligence Community,” clear career paths to leadership and promotion opportunities are both incentivizing and motivating, and career progression is seen as a “tangible sign of their hard work.”<sup>5</sup> Not all employees can be promoted, and not all employees should be promoted. However, employees who want to be promoted should be afforded the same access to those promotion opportunities regardless of their gender, race or national origin, disability status, and so on. This study focused on one of these dimensions of diversity: race; and more specifically, promotions for NGA’s Black employees.

First, the study analyzed promotion data to see if there were triggers related to Black promotion rates at NGA.<sup>6</sup> Second, where triggers were found, this study explored possible barriers using a combination of personnel data, literature from academia, research from other federal agencies, and perspectives from

<sup>1</sup> ODNI (2014)

<sup>2</sup> ODNI (2017)

<sup>3</sup> NGA (2014)

<sup>4</sup> SHRM (2008)

<sup>5</sup> ODNI IC EEO (2017), p. 61

<sup>6</sup> The EEOC defines triggers as “red flags” which are conditions, disparities, or anomalies, including statistical anomalies or trends, which warrant further inquiry to determine if barriers exist (US EEOC 2015).

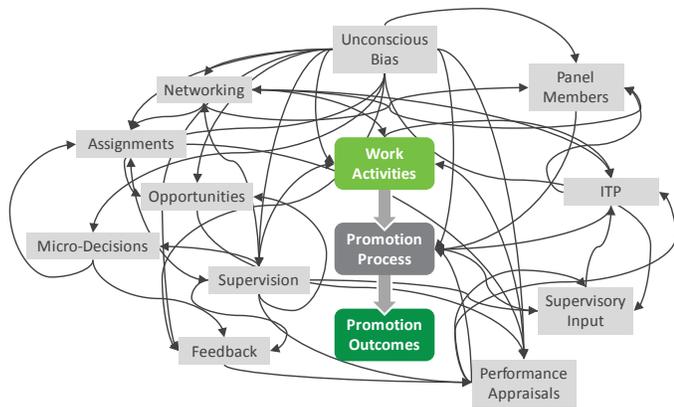
NGA employees. Finally, a core set of recommendations was developed to mitigate proposed barriers, with the ultimate goal of improving D&I at NGA, specifically focused on our Black employees. This study is published for the workforce with the intent of highlighting quantitative and qualitative data and analyses from recent years, culminating in recommendations that should help ensure equal opportunities for advancement, not only for Black employees, but for all NGA employees.

NGA's Office of General Counsel reminds readers that this report from ODE provides a summary of the research conducted for the study; it is not a legal document. This study neither makes legal conclusions of disparate impact nor does it recommend that Rank-in-Person should not be NGA's promotion process.

## What is the Promotion Process at NGA?

On the surface, it seems reasonable to expect that promotions are the result of performing at an excellent or outstanding level in a position; that there is a simple linear relationship between doing a job well and being rewarded with a promotion.

However, the reality is that promotions are the result of a complex system of interrelated parts. Certainly, superior performance at work is a precursor to receiving a promotion, but it is not the only factor that matters during promotion decisions. Opportunities, including education, exposure, and experiences, along with mentors, networks, and job performance, are but a few of the different aspects that may play a role in helping some individuals be more or less competitive for promotion compared to others.



In 2014, NGA began rolling out a new promotion process called Rank-in-Person, or RIP. The RIP promotion process is one that

decouples the promotion decisions from assignment decisions. Previous to RIP, promotions were determined based on the employees' position or job assignment. For example, a Pay Band 4 who wanted to be promoted to a Pay Band 5 needed to find a job posting for a Pay Band 5 position, apply, compete, and be selected for that position. Then, by virtue of being selected for a position at a higher band, that employee would be promoted. That type of system is known as a Rank-in-Position process.

Unlike Rank-in-Position, where an employee receives a promotion based on the position he or she occupies, RIP selects for promotion based on Promotion Profile Factors, which reflect the combination of education, experience, exposure, and technical expertise/skills that demonstrate the person is ready to work at the next level. RIP decisions are processed by each Career Service (CS) on an annual basis. After determinations are made about who is selected for promotion, the assignment process is worked separately to find a position at the next higher level for those selectees to encumber. NGA began transitioning to RIP in FY 2014, when the Band 5-to-Senior promotions were the first to be converted to RIP. This was followed in FY 2015 by the Band 4-to-Band 5 promotions converting to RIP and in FY 2016 with the Band 3-to-Band 4 promotions converting to RIP. By FY 2017, all promotions to Bands 4, 5, and Senior were conducted utilizing the RIP process. In FY 2017, promotions from Band 2-to-Band 3 were converted to a career development program, so they were not included in the RIP transition.

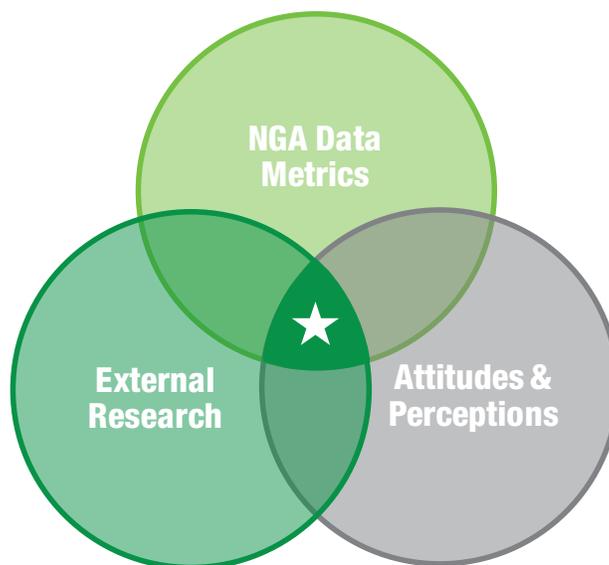
As mentioned in the foreword **(b) (3) 10 USC Sec 424**, the impetus for this study on Black promotions at NGA came in 2014 with the first RIP cycle, when zero Black Band 5s were selected for promotion to Senior. From that point, ODE built a Diversity and Inclusion Study Program, and the research team comprised of Ph.D.- and Masters-level research psychologists and workforce analysts determined that to truly measure the current state of promotions at NGA, the "new" RIP process had to fully become the "current" process. In other words, there needed to be more than just one cycle of one level of RIP promotions to examine. Now that all promotions to Bands 4, 5, and Senior are conducted under RIP, this report is the culmination of a data-driven research study of Black promotions at NGA. This paper is a summary report of the research — it identifies whether there are consistent differences between Black and White promotion rates between 2009 and 2017, identifies potential barriers contributing to these differences, and makes a set of recommendations to begin mitigating these barriers to promotion.



# Methodology

To first understand whether triggers were present for Black promotions, the study examined whether there were trends or consistent differences in promotion rates between Blacks and Whites overall, at different bands, and/or between GEOINT Mission (GM) and GEOINT Mission Support (GMS) work areas. GM includes employees with CS designations in the Analysis, Collections, Content and Visualization, and Foundation CSs. GMS includes employees in all other CSs (Contracts, Corporate, Financial Management, Human Capital, Information Technology, Program and Office Administration, Security and Facilities, and Research and Development).

After examining the Black and White promotion rates at NGA, the next step was to investigate why trends or consistent differences were occurring instead of similarities or expected year-to-year fluctuations between Black and White promotion rates. To do this, the study analyzed other workforce metrics, data gathered on attitudes and perceptions from NGA employees on promotions, and external research from academia and other federal agencies. The convergence of these research streams shaped the subsequent recommendations that stemmed from this data-driven approach. The recommendations focus on mitigating barriers that the study found to affect Blacks, with the end result being that all employees will benefit from these changes. The figures below describe the types of data used for each research stream in more detail.



<b>NGA Data Metrics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative analyses of race and promotion overall and by band, GEOINT Mission (GM) vs. GEOINT Mission Support (GMS), and Rank-in-Person (RIP); Additional analyses by supervisory status, DCIPS ratings, supervisory recommendations, etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Attitudes &amp; Perceptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey results from NGA's Employee Engagement Survey (EES)</li> <li>Qualitative analyses of interviews with Seniors and focus groups with a stratified random sample of Black and White employees</li> <li>Partnership with the Black Advisory Council on recommendations</li> </ul>
<b>External Research</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academic literature review</li> <li>Environmental scan of other government agencies, private companies, and other publications</li> </ul>

## Data Definitions and Study Participants

### Definition of Race Categories

In this study, Blacks were those who self-identified in NGA's personnel system as Black, Non-Hispanic, whereas Whites were those who self-identified as White, Non-Hispanic. Those who self-identified as Black and/or White as part of a multiple-race identity were not included in the Black or White categories for the purposes of this study.

### Promotion Rate Calculations

Promotion rates can be calculated as the number of employees in a particular demographic group who were promoted (e.g., Blacks who were selected for promotion in FY 2012) divided by the total number of employees in that same group (e.g., all Black employees who were at NGA during FY 2012). This latter number, the denominator, can be defined in multiple ways, and accordingly, each resulting rate should be interpreted keeping in mind the relative comparison population (i.e., the denominator). For this study, the denominator was defined in one of three ways, depending on the specific analyses being conducted:

1. Promotion rate relative to the population: the number of employees in a demographic group that were promoted divided by the total number of employees in the same demographic group at NGA. This calculation is used to examine promotion rates holistically at NGA (i.e., all promotions in a given year, regardless of Band).
2. Promotion rate relative to the population that could have been promoted: the number of all employees in a demographic group that were promoted divided by the total number of employees in the "feeder" population<sup>7</sup> that belong to the same demographic group at NGA. This calculation is used to examine promotion rates for each band separately.
3. Promotion rate relative to the population that applied: the number of all employees in a demographic group that were selected for promotion divided by the total number of employees in the same demographic group that self-nominated. This calculation is used to examine promotion selections for RIP-specific analyses.

### Focus Groups and Senior Interviews

NGA employees' attitudes and perceptions about promotion were collected via focus groups with the banded workforce and one-on-one interviews with Senior executives.

To understand the perspectives and experiences of the workforce at large regarding the promotion process and perceived barriers to promotion, focus groups were conducted with the banded NGA workforce. For the focus groups, a moderator's guide was used that asked participants about their experiences with the promotion process, including reasons for self-nominating or not, if they felt they experienced barriers in their career at NGA (and if so, what those barriers were), feedback they did or did not receive during the RIP process, and their thoughts on how race might play a role in the path to promotion. Focus group participants consisted of a sample of Black and White employees, selected at random based on RIP promotion status (did not self-nominate, self-nominated, promoted, not promoted). A total of 33 focus groups were held, including in-person focus groups (at NGA's East (NCE) and West (NCW) headquarters), as well as virtual focus groups (by phone for external employees). To ensure that all employees were given the opportunity to participate even if they were not part of the randomly selected group and if their race/ethnicity was other than Black or White, "open" focus groups were also held for NCE, NCW, and external employees. In addition, employees were invited to email the study team to share their perspectives.

For the Senior interviews, a semi-structured interview protocol was used that asked Seniors to describe such things as their path to Senior leadership, roadblocks or obstacles they faced along the way, and advice they would share with others. The goal of these interviews was to: understand the experience of Blacks who successfully reached Senior levels; identify whether they faced barriers specific to advancement at NGA; determine whether these barriers were similar to or different than barriers experienced by the workforce and non-Black Seniors; and learn how they overcame these barriers to become a Senior. Ninety percent of all Black Seniors who were not otherwise involved as advisors in the initial launch of the study participated in one-on-one interviews for the study. In addition, a random selection of non-Black Seniors at NGA were also invited to participate. Overall, eight percent of all Seniors at NGA participated in individual interviews.

<sup>7</sup> "Feeder" population means the group from which employees are being promoted (e.g., the feeder population for Black Band 4 promotions is the population of Black Band 3 employees).



## What are the Promotion Rates for Blacks and Whites at NGA?

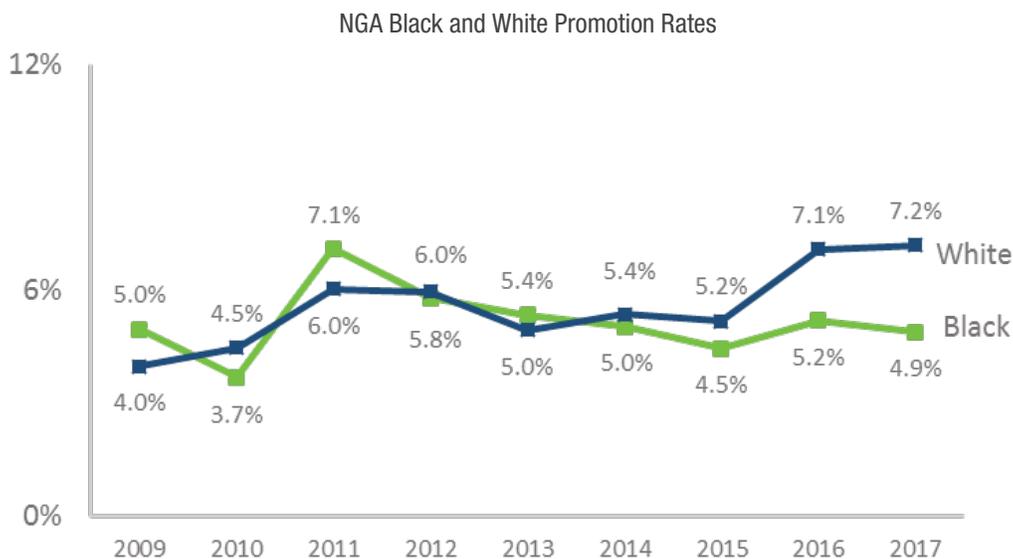
The quantitative data described in this section moves from a macro-level look at promotions at NGA to a micro-level look. To begin, annual promotion rates for Blacks and Whites are examined for all band levels together. Then, promotion rates are reviewed separately for each band level and to Senior. Within the examination of each band separately, we further explore promotion rates for GM and GMS work areas. Finally, we separately analyze promotions conducted under the RIP process for each band and include an examination of available self-nomination data as well.

### Overall Promotion Rates

To begin, the annual promotion rate for all bands combined allowed for an overall view to see whether triggers exist for

Blacks' promotion rates. This assessment utilized the first promotion rate calculation described earlier, determining promotion rates relative to the population. This allowed for an initial look at the promotion rates of all Black and White NGA employees since 2009, which marked the implementation of the DCIPS performance appraisal system.

From 2009 to 2014, Black and White promotion rates at NGA fluctuate year to year, with neither demographic having a consistently higher or lower rate than the other. Since then, promotion rates for Blacks have been trending lower, while promotion rates for Whites have been trending higher, and this emergent pattern was explored to see whether it held across promotion rates at all Band levels and work areas.



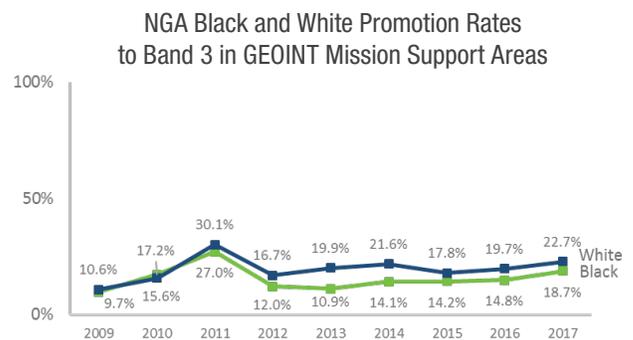
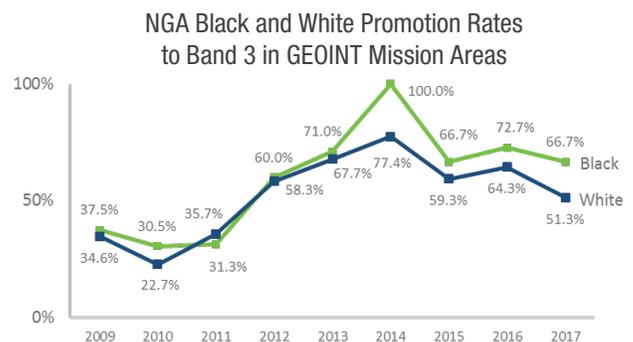
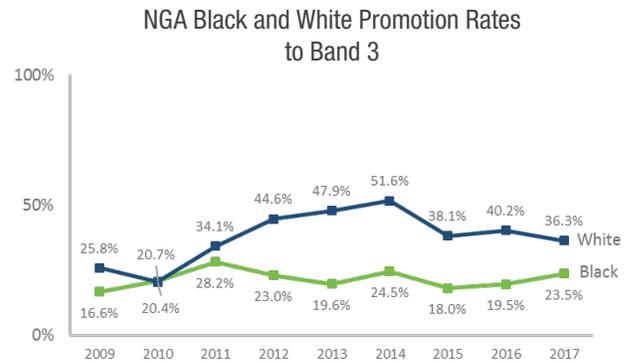
## Promotion Rates by Band and GEOINT Mission vs. GEOINT Mission Support

Next, to examine whether the overall trend previously identified is similar across all band levels or if a single band is influencing the overall promotion rates, this section describes analyses conducted on each band separately. Furthermore, to identify if distinct trends existed by work area (i.e., GM/GMS), promotion rates were analyzed separately for Blacks and Whites by GM and GMS for each band. Therefore, promotion rates in this section were calculated using the second method: the number of selectees in a given year divided by the number of employees in the feeder pool for that same demographic.

### Band 2-to-3 Promotions, Overall and by GM/GMS

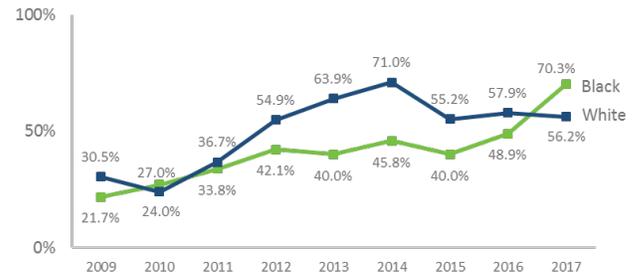
Since 2011, Black promotion rates to Band 3 have been consistently lower than promotion rates for Whites.

However, when these rates are separated out by GM/GMS, this difference appears to be driven by promotion rates in GMS, since Black promotion rates for GM are either on par with or higher than Whites since 2009 (except for 2011). Given that the vast majority of Black Band 2 employees are in GMS (since 2009, between 71 percent and 93 percent), the difference in promotion rates between Blacks and Whites in GMS is potentially indicative of an early-career bottleneck for Black employees. This early bottleneck in the pathway to advancement may eventually limit the pool of Black candidates that can compete for higher Bands and Senior roles.



One potential explanation for these findings at Band 3 is that differences in promotion rates could be work role-driven. If Whites are more equally spread out across work roles than Blacks, a bottleneck of sorts may occur for Blacks, since only a small fraction of people in a given work role can be promoted each year. From 2009–2017, anywhere from one-third to over half of Black Band 2s were found in the police officer work role each year (the percentage of Blacks in Band 2 who were police officers has ranged from 32–65 percent, whereas only about 16–38 percent of White Band 2s were police officers during these same years). To determine if the promotion rate gap between Blacks and Whites to Band 3 is work role-driven, the study re-analyzed promotion rates to Band 3 without the police officer work role. Differences between Black and White promotion rates should disappear if the promotion rate differences are due to Blacks being more concentrated in this one work role. Excluding police officers from the promotion rates slightly reduces the Black and White promotion rate gaps to Band 3, compared to the Black and White promotion rate gap when police are included. However, a large gap remains (except for 2017 when the Black Band 3 promotion rate exceeded the White promotion rate), indicating that this clustering of employees in a single work role does not fully explain overall promotion rate differences.

NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 3, Police Excluded



Future promotions to Band 3 will be done via the Career Development Program, which involves completing a set of prescribed milestones and obtaining supervisory approval. This program will include all Band 2s in a “Professional Work Category” but does not include police officers. The study anticipates that with standardized milestones, promotion rate differences will likely be mitigated and minimized under this new system, which is similar to how most of the GM promotions to Band 3 were already being conducted. However, these rates should continue to be tracked as the new system is put into place.

### Band 3-to-4 Promotions, Overall and by GM/GMS

From 2009 to 2014, Black and White promotion rates at NGA fluctuate year to year, with neither demographic having a consistently higher or lower rate than the other. However, starting in 2014, Black promotion rates to Band 4 have been trending lower than White promotion rates.<sup>8</sup>

When examining promotion rates separately by GM/GMS, consistent trends starting in 2014 become apparent. For promotions to Band 4 in GM, prior to 2016, Black promotion rates have been similar to or slightly lower than White promotion rates but by no more than 3 percentage points in any given year. In 2016, the gap increased to a 4-percentage-point difference, then increased to 5 percentage points in 2017.

Looking at promotions to Band 4 in GMS, the study finds lower rates for Blacks in most years compared to Whites, but it was not until 2014 that this gap became consistent and large: starting in 2014, Blacks' promotion rates have been differing from Whites' promotion rates on average by 7 percentage points.

NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 4



NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 4 in GEOINT Mission Areas



NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 4 in GEOINT Mission Support Areas

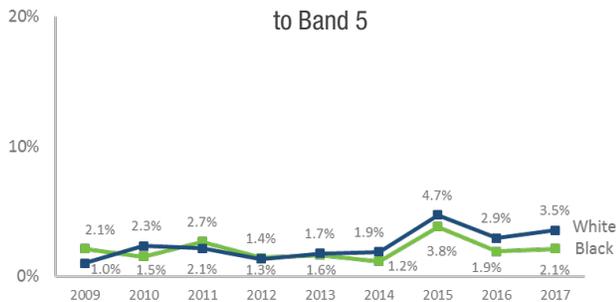


<sup>8</sup> RIP started in 2016 for Band 3-to-4 promotions, and nearly three-fourths of promotions to Band 4 were awarded through RIP; in 2017, all promotions to Band 4 were through RIP.

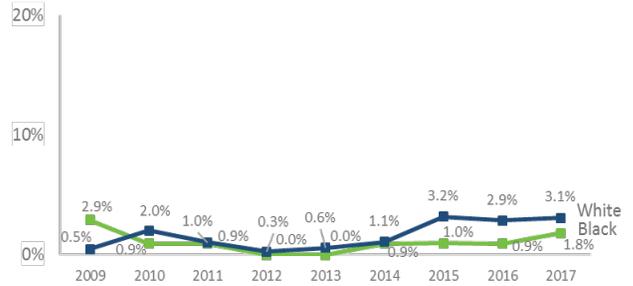
### Band 4-to-5 Promotion Rates, Overall and by GM/GMS

From 2009 to 2014, Black and White promotion rates to Band 5 were on par with each other. Since then, Band 5 promotion rates overall for Blacks start to be consistently, but only slightly, lower than Whites. When separated out by GM/GMS, promotion rates for GM do not diverge until 2015, and in GMS, rates stay mostly similar to each other.<sup>9</sup>

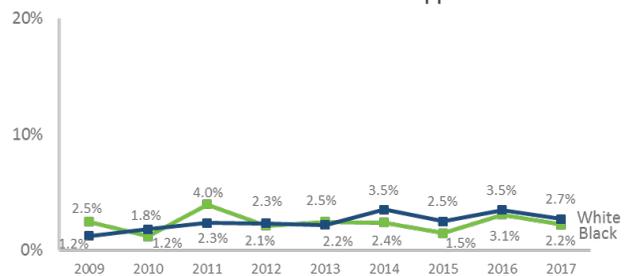
NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 5



NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 5 in GEOINT Mission Areas



NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Band 5 in GEOINT Mission Support Areas

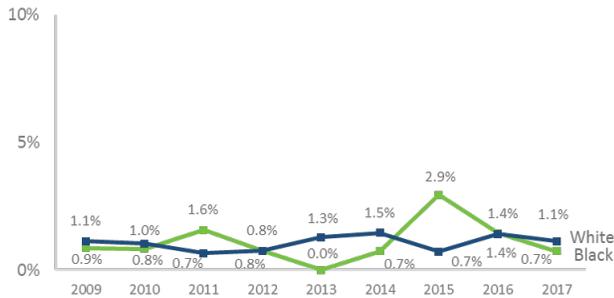


<sup>9</sup> In 2015, nearly three-fourths of promotions to Band 5 were awarded through RIP; in 2016 and 2017, nearly all Band 5 promotions were done through RIP.

## Band 5-to-Senior Promotion Rates

From 2009 to 2017, promotion rates to Senior show no consistent pattern between Blacks and Whites, either before or after the implementation of RIP. Since such a small group of Band 5s are promoted to Senior each year, the promotion rates are less consistent over time, as differences of even one or two people easily create fluctuations in the promotion rates in any given year.

NGA Black and White Promotion Rates to Senior

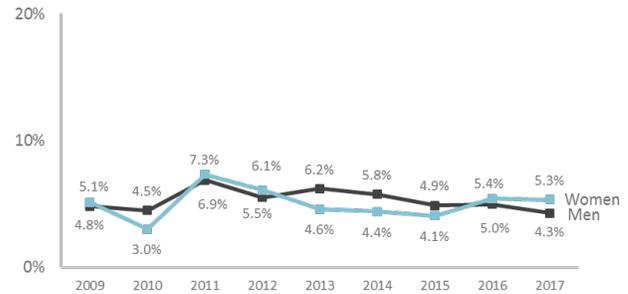


As noted earlier, this study was prompted when no Blacks were promoted during the first RIP cycle for promotions to Senior in 2014, but since 2009, there have been no consistent differences between Black and White promotion rates to Senior.<sup>10</sup> Although there have been no consistent differences in promotion rates to Senior, that does not mean there are no barriers for Blacks at this point. In fact, the vast majority of Black Seniors interviewed reported facing barriers that they had to overcome along the way to reach Senior Executive. Senior promotion rates should continue to be tracked, since they act as a lagging indicator of issues percolating at lower levels. If a healthy pool of competitive candidates who can apply for promotion to Senior does not exist (as not all Band 5s will necessarily apply for promotion), then Black promotion rates to Senior may start to drop consistently below Whites, as a consequence of not having a robust pipeline of Black candidates at lower Bands.

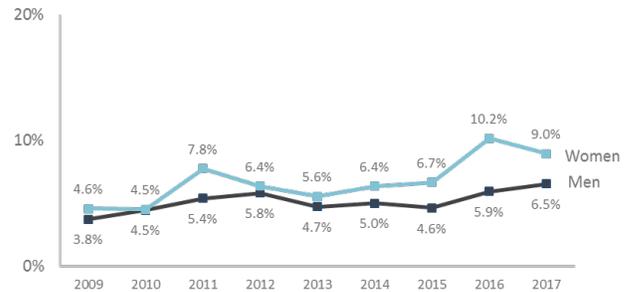
## Promotion Rates By Gender

Averaging across all Bands, promotion rates for Blacks have been lower than promotion rates for Whites for the past four years. A previous study from this office examined how women were faring at NGA, finding that on average, women had higher promotion rates than men.<sup>11</sup> In order to test whether this same advantage is present specifically for Black women, the study analyzed promotion rates separately for Blacks by gender.

NGA Promotion Rates for Black Men and Women



NGA Promotion Rates for White Men and Women



In four of the last nine years, Black women had slightly lower promotion rates than Black men, demonstrating Black women do not appear to experience the same consistent benefit that White women have regarding promotion rates compared to men. In fact, for Blacks, being a man conferred some benefits: rates for Black men were generally on par with or slightly higher than rates for White men.

<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that 2013 was actually a year where there were no Black promotions to Senior, but it was less visible to the workforce since promotions were not centralized and occurred throughout the year. 2014 did include some non-RIP promotions even though it was the first year of RIP, which explains why the promotion rate for Blacks in 2014 is not 0 percent.

<sup>11</sup> NGA (2016)

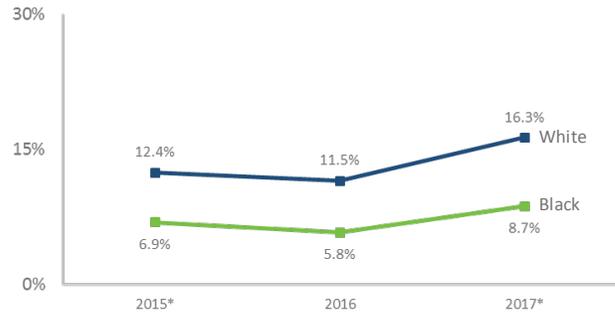
## Rank-in-Person (RIP) Promotions

To understand if there were differences in Black and White promotion rates occurring under RIP, promotion rates were calculated using the third method described earlier: promotion rates relative to those employees who applied for promotion; that is, using the employees that self-nominated for RIP as the denominator in the rate calculation. Knowing the demographics of the pool that applied for promotion allows for calculations of whether promotion rates are statistically different, rather than simply examining trends.

### RIP Promotion Rates by Band (Overall and by GM/GMS)

When isolating promotions to those selected via RIP and computing promotion rates relative to those who self-nominated, the study finds that in almost every instance of RIP to Band 4 and to Band 5, Blacks have lower promotion rates compared to Whites, and these differences are statistically significant (as noted by asterisks in the graphs).<sup>12</sup> The only instance where the difference in promotion rates was not statistically significant was the 2016 cycle of RIP to Band 5.

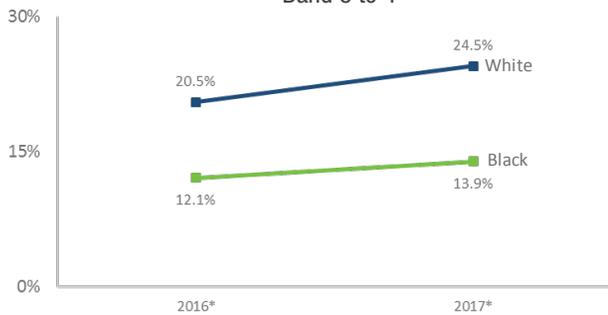
NGA Black and White RIP Promotion Rates Band 4 to 5



For promotions to Band 4, these lower rates remain consistent, even when separating out rates by GM/GMS. However, for promotions to Band 5, the difference in promotion rates for Blacks compared to Whites is greater in GM than in GMS.<sup>13</sup>

Band 3-to-4 RIP	GM		GMS	
	Black	White	Black	White
2016	12.0%	20.0%	12.1%	21.9%
2017	13.1%	24.8%	14.3%	23.6%

NGA Black and White RIP Promotion Rates Band 3 to 4



Band 4-to-5 RIP	GM		GMS	
	Black	White	Black	White
2015	3.7%	12.0%	7.5%	12.7%
2016	4.5%	15.1%	6.1%	8.8%
2017	9.1%	19.6%	8.5%	14.2%

<sup>12</sup> Assessments of differences in rates were determined via both Impact Ratios, as set forth in the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures and statistical tests (Chi-square tests,  $Z_{R1}$ ,  $Z_{D1}$ , and Fisher's Exact Test).

<sup>13</sup> Promotion rates in these tables differ from the promotion rate graphs displayed earlier for promotions to Bands 4 and 5 for all years, since different denominators were used for each: RIP rates are calculated using just those who self-nominated; earlier graphs use the entire relevant population as the denominator.

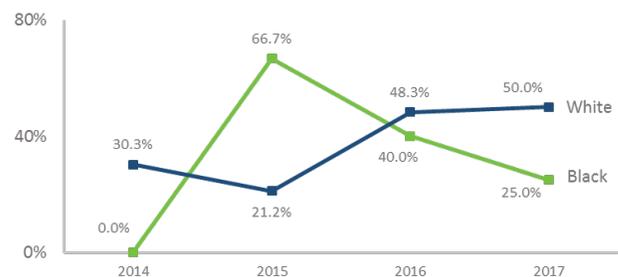
One possible explanation for lower promotion rates for Blacks is that Blacks might not self-nominate in rates similar to Whites. However, self-nomination rates for Blacks are on par with, or higher than, self-nomination rates for Whites, indicating that lower promotion rates for Blacks are not due to fewer Black employees self-nominating.

RIP Self-Nomination Rates		Black	White
2016	Band 3-to-4	41%	42%
2017	Band 3-to-4	37%	38%
2015	Band 4-to-5	42%	31%
2016	Band 4-to-5	31%	27%
2017	Band 4-to-5	25%	21%

Knowing that Blacks self-nominated for promotions in rates similar to or higher than Whites, the next analysis tried to answer the question: Were the most competitive candidates applying? To test this hypothesis, DCIPS ratings were used as a proxy for applicant competitiveness, since there is no comprehensive measure of applicant readiness and DCIPS is an agency-wide standard measurement of employee performance. The study found that among the pool of eligible employees who received high DCIPS ratings,<sup>14</sup> Blacks in this pool self-nominated at similar or higher rates than Whites in this pool. Therefore, using DCIPS as a proxy, the study did not find support for this hypothesis (that less competitive applicants were applying for promotion) and found that similar rates of “competitive” employees — both Black and White — applied for promotion.

For RIP promotions to Senior, there is one additional stage in the promotion process compared to the banded promotions. First, each CS panel reviews its respective nominees. Then, each panel selects which candidates to put forth to the next stage, the agency-wide panel. This NGA panel then decides who is promoted. Therefore, the promotion rates to Senior, under RIP, were calculated using the percentage of employees nominated to the agency-wide panel as the denominator, since final selectees were chosen from that agency-wide candidate pool. Across all years of RIP to Senior, no consistent trend emerged; in two out of four years, Blacks were promoted at rates either higher than or on par with Whites’.

NGA Black and White RIP Promotion Rates to Senior



This pattern is consistent with the overall promotion rates to Senior and indicates that even when rates are isolated to only those conducted under RIP, no stable trends are present. However, these rates should still be tracked to ensure that disparities do not emerge.

Utilizing a root cause analysis approach, the next section combines quantitative and qualitative analyses to identify possible promotion barriers faced by Blacks at NGA, regardless of the point in a career at which the barrier may arise.

<sup>14</sup> A high rating was defined as promotion-eligible employees who received a DCIPS rating in the year prior to the RIP year that was in the 75th percentile or higher of all promotion-eligible employees.

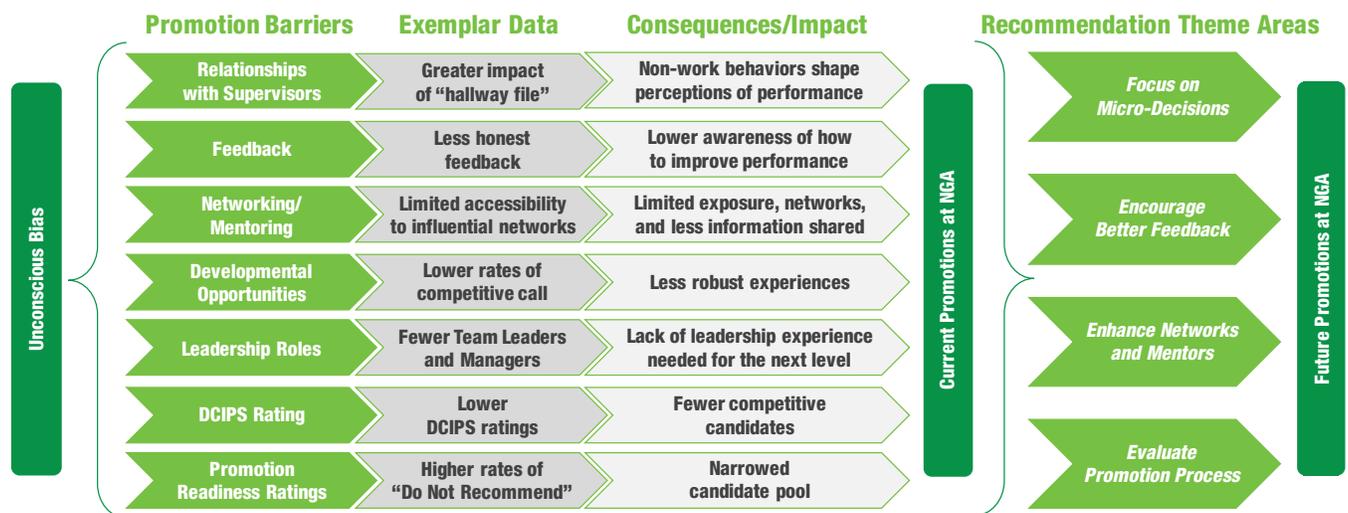


# Why Are These Differences Happening?

Promotion decisions reflect a culmination of numerous factors prior to the selection process and at the point of selection itself. Barriers to promotion can arise at several places along the way. This section describes the results of the root cause analysis and some of the barriers that may explain the differences between Black and White promotion rates. Sources include Human Resource (HR) metrics, perspectives gathered from the NGA workforce, peer-reviewed empirical research, and industry best practices.

As already discussed, RIP emphasizes a variety of criteria to determine promotion readiness; promotions are no longer based mainly on the best fit for a particular position at the next level. As a result, many of the challenges existing prior to RIP still exist, but now, they may be barriers to promotion.

Utilizing a mix of quantitative (e.g., HR metrics) and qualitative (e.g., focus group findings) analyses, this section describes barriers to promotion faced by Blacks at NGA. It is important to note that although unconscious bias is described as a separate potential barrier, it may influence many of the other barriers.



## Unconscious Bias

The field of social psychology refers to implicit bias as the collection of attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes that can influence people's decisions, understanding, or behavior in ways that they are unaware. In non-academic settings, implicit bias is more commonly known as unconscious bias. These unconscious biases are often learned via socialization — and reinforced by society. Constant exposure to these attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes about different social groups results in this information being stored in memory — which in turn, can subconsciously influence behaviors, often in a negative way.<sup>15</sup>

Unconscious biases typically reflect cultural stereotypes and may or may not align with someone's stated values. The consequence of having these implicit attitudes is that even when they do not align with someone's stated, or explicit, belief system, they can still influence people's decisions and behaviors in ways that people do not intend or are not aware. This is particularly the case when quick judgments are made which tend to rely more on inferences and assumptions than careful processing of information or when not enough information is present such that implicit bias serves to “fill in the blanks.”<sup>16</sup>

In the workplace, Black employees face barriers due to these often invisible biases.<sup>17</sup> For example, someone growing up in a society that has pervasive negative stereotypes about Blacks may subconsciously associate Blacks with having a poor work ethic. These unconscious biases become a problem when they influence explicit attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors. For example, if someone who is Black did not complete a task, perhaps an automatic assumption — influenced by unconscious bias — is that that person did not work hard enough; but if the task was not completed by someone who is White, perhaps the initial assumption is that that person did not have not enough

time. The presence of these hidden biases can affect employees at multiple points in their careers. If unconscious bias influences decision-making within the context of the promotion system, this may disadvantage particular groups, including Blacks, at NGA.

NGA's employees appear to be aware of the negative impact of both conscious and unconscious biases on decisions that ultimately affect promotions, as evidenced by focus group data collected for this study. In addition to many Black focus group participants who mentioned unconscious bias, several White employees also recognize the extra barriers faced by Blacks as a result of unconscious bias. As one White focus group participant said, “I see unconscious bias entering the equation well before [panels]. The things you can and can't put on your Integrated Talent Profile (ITP) — opportunities, challenging projects handed to non-minorities. I think a lot of that is unconscious bias.” Regardless of race or RIP status, a common theme across many focus groups was that bias — whether conscious or unconscious — influences even the smallest decisions that eventually impact career development opportunities and promotions. To overcome negative stereotypes about Black people, many Black focus group participants reported feeling they have to work twice as hard as their White counterparts and that they are not rewarded for their efforts even after proving themselves. For example, one Black focus group participant mentioned that “I looked at my coworkers, and I'm doing things at an excellent level, almost outstanding; and I see people that just did their jobs, and they got promoted. But I'm not getting promoted.” Others explicitly talked about carrying out work at higher Bands, as one Band 3 reported, “I've been working at a Band 4 level and outworking them [but not receiving a promotion].”

As the rest of this section will demonstrate, unconscious biases may underlie many decisions eventually influencing promotions.

<sup>15</sup> Banaji & Greenwald (2013)

<sup>16</sup> Dovidio & Gaertner (2000); U. S. EEOC (2013)

<sup>17</sup> Lowe (2013)

## Supervision

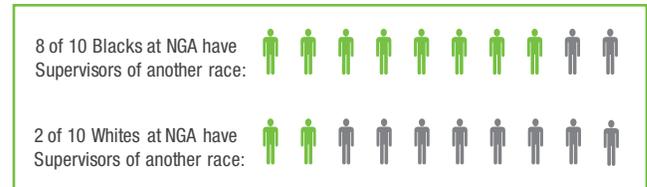
Supervisors are an integral component in employees' careers. Supervisors have the most immediate say in what work individual employees are tasked with completing. They are also the primary driver behind giving special assignments (experience), high-visibility opportunities (exposure), support for competitive call opportunities (education), and approving "extra-curricular" activities such as participating in an Employee Council, the Combined Federal Campaign, or a Special Emphasis Program Council, all of which have implications for employees' competitiveness for promotion.

Supervisors are also critical purveyors of institutional information, information which empowers employees to take charge of their careers and effectively maneuver through changing systems. This has been of particular importance in recent years, as the transition to RIP has resulted in slight changes to the promotion process each year. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring organizational information is passed down to individual contributors, whether it is information closer to home (e.g., division-level expectations) or closer to the flagpole (e.g., agency-wide policy changes). Some supervisors may rely on informal channels of communication rather than on formal channels. For instance, supervisors may share news with employees who happen to be at their desks instead of at a staff meeting where all employees are present. These informal channels of communication certainly have a set of benefits — they are more timely, encourage open, two-way dialogue, and increase the frequency of supervisor-direct report interactions. However, informal communication becomes an issue if information is communicated to some employees but not others. If supervisors are unintentionally biased toward which employees they informally chat and share information with, then other employees may miss valuable, career-enhancing information.<sup>18</sup>

Research shows that people tend to favor, be more helpful to, reward, and have more robust relationships with those who are perceived to be similar to themselves.<sup>19</sup> This is often referred to as the "like me" bias. Supervisors may develop more robust relationships with their "like me" employees and, as a result, unknowingly help to better develop the careers of their "like me" employees and disadvantage the dissimilar ones.<sup>20</sup>

In FY 2017, the vast majority of Blacks had supervisors of a different race (8 in 10); the vast majority of Whites had supervisors who were similar to them (i.e., also White) — only 2 in 10 Whites had supervisors of a different race. It is possible that Blacks at NGA experience the negative aspects of the "like me" bias.

### In FY 2017, Most Blacks at NGA had Racially Dissimilar Supervisors



In each of the last four years of NGA's EES, proportionately fewer Black than White employees at NGA report that supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds.<sup>21</sup> For example, in 2017, 80 percent of White employees but only 68 percent of Black employees agreed that supervisors work well with employees of different backgrounds, a statistically significant difference. Thus, the majority group (Whites) has a more positive perception compared to the minority group (Blacks) regarding how well supervisors work with their dissimilar employees.

The "like me" bias can influence supervisors' perceptions of both performance and behavior. Focus group participants noted that this plays out in the workplace. For instance, one Black participant stated, "You prefer people who look like you. If the person making the decision is White, that person is more likely to hire a White person — he [the White person] is going to get the job and get the bonus." Differing perceptions of performance may make it appear that decisions are meritocratic, but in reality, supervisors' assessments of employees and their performance may be subconsciously influenced by the "like me" bias. In a similar vein, many Black participants, particularly in the West, noted that they were judged based on their casual conversations or who they "hung out with" away from their desks. More Black than White participants expressed concern with their "hallway file," which is essentially an unofficial, informal assessment about an employee's performance and conduct that is discussed off

<sup>18</sup> Pallais (2017)

<sup>19</sup> Gelfand, Nishii, Raven, & Schneider (2005); Griffin, Phillips, & Gully (2017)

<sup>20</sup> Wanguri (1996)

<sup>21</sup> NGA's EESs (2014–2017) show statistically significant differences on this question.

the record (e.g., in hallways) and often includes perceptions unrelated to the work itself, such as making judgments based on with whom people socialize, their personality, cultural fit, and so forth. Some Black participants even expressed that they did not think White employees even had hallway files. This demonstrates the pervasive effect of the “like me” bias at work: even behaviors that are not work-related can shape supervisors’ perceptions of employees, which may then influence the lens through which performance is judged and reflected in performance appraisals. Since performance appraisals are used in multiple personnel decisions for several years, it is important to ensure they are not influenced by bias, whether intentional, unintentional, or unconscious.

## Feedback

In addition to challenges faced in simply receiving organizational information from supervisors, many focus group participants, both Black and White, reported that supervisors have difficulties with performance feedback, particularly when it comes to providing negative feedback or constructive criticism.

Having difficult conversations about performance is critical in helping employees progress in their careers. The NGA College (NGC) acknowledges this and is currently offering at least two different courses to help supervisors better have these discussions in general.<sup>22</sup> However, the challenges associated with having difficult conversations may be exacerbated by race. Supervisors of employees who are dissimilar to them (e.g., White supervisors of Black employees) may fear appearing prejudiced or discriminatory if they provide negative or hard feedback<sup>23</sup> and may therefore be even less likely to have difficult conversations with Black employees. One Black focus group participant made the link directly, saying that “Supervisors will hinder an employee. Black people will sometimes have bad supervisors that are not used to dealing with certain [Black] people and don’t want to offend anyone.”

Similar to findings from the Central Intelligence Agency’s (CIA’s) Diversity in Leadership Study,<sup>24</sup> in NGA’s focus groups, Black, but not White, participants reported feeling that they receive disingenuous feedback from their supervisors. For example, many Black focus group participants — both those who were promoted under RIP and those who were not — reported that instead of receiving meaningful feedback about promotion decisions both before and after RIP, they received placating comments saying how close they were to promotion. Being told you were “really close” or “almost there; right below the line” does not provide the type of critical performance feedback that will assist employees in advancing their skill set and competencies in ways that will actually help them be more competitive for promotion.

Additionally, Black focus group participants expressed that their supervisors appeared reluctant to tell them about any areas needing improvement and that they feel that they receive less honest and informative feedback than their White teammates. For example, one said, “Just give me honest feedback ... don’t just say something. Be honest, and give it to me straight. Don’t dance around it.” The lack of critical feedback from supervisors and the perception that supervisors may not be comfortable with employees who differ from them may partly explain why proportionately fewer Blacks (66 percent) than Whites (73 percent) report having trust and confidence in their supervisor.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, the nature of unconscious bias may make it so that supervisors are not even aware of why they hold negative perceptions of employees’ performance. The lack of effective feedback may be due to both discomfort in providing feedback and in the inability to accurately describe or define the performance needing improvement if supervisors’ assessments of performance are influenced by unconscious bias. Without effective feedback, it is difficult for employees to reach their full potential in the agency if they are not receiving sufficient supervisory feedback on how to improve performance.

<sup>22</sup> The NGC offers “Constructive Conversations” (an in-person half-day course) and “Preparing for Difficult Conversation” (a self-paced online course).

<sup>23</sup> Gelfand et al. (2005)

<sup>24</sup> CIA (2015)

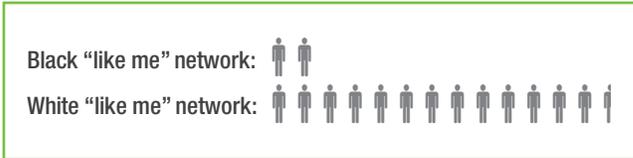
<sup>25</sup> NGA (2017) EES; differences of at least 4 percentage points are statistically significant.

## Networking/Mentoring

Supervisors are not the only people who play a role in employee career development and advancement. Mentors provide support, information, guidance, and access beyond what a single supervisor can reasonably offer to all of his or her employees. Networks also play an important role in sharing information, providing visibility to opportunities that employees might not otherwise have known about, and lending behind-the-scenes support for an employee in a variety of situations, among other things.<sup>26</sup> Although research has shown the importance of having a diverse set of mentors across such varying characteristics as race and gender, there is also evidence that employees tend to seek out people who are similar to them in those characteristics for their networks and as mentors.<sup>27</sup> Having similar mentors and networks enables employees to feel understood, knowing that the mentors and networks truly comprehend what employees may be going through, whereas a diverse set of mentors and networks may be better positioned to help employees to grow by allowing them to learn to see things from a different perspective.

Virtually all Seniors interviewed for this study described the importance of having strong mentors and networks. However, in focus groups, both Black and White employees identified difficulties Black employees have when it comes to being a part of networks, particularly informal networks. For example, a White employee noted that “you see it in social activities. They [Black colleagues] are not invited to go out to lunch. They forget to let them [Black colleagues] know about it; don’t include them on emails.” On the surface, it may not seem like that much of a disadvantage to be excluded from some of the more social events at work, but as pointed out by another focus group participant, “If a leader is going out to lunch and chatting, they’re giving pointers. For the Black community, we don’t have that ... we don’t really have the same mentoring for what to put on paper and what to write and how to write it ... it’s a hindrance for the Black community.”

At NGA, Blacks comprise a small proportion of the workforce (13 percent in FY 2017), so it is particularly important that they have a diverse set of networks and mentors. If mentors and networks remained homogenous, this would limit the potential network that Black employees could form, whereas the network Whites could reach out to would be extensive. For example, estimating the potential “like me” (homogenous) network of leaders (Band 5s and Seniors) shows a network that is seven times larger for White employees than for Black employees:



Black “like me” network: 2 icons  
White “like me” network: 14 icons

A consequence of mainly having similar others for their mentees, mentors, and networks for NGA’s Black employees is that it limits informational access. This is particularly a problem for information that is not explicitly stated in guidelines and policy or easily accessible otherwise. Access to unwritten information is critical, given that both Black and White focus group participants reported inconsistencies across CSs in how each CS implemented RIP. If Blacks have to rely mainly on the official and formal documented policies and information rather than information received informally from robust informative networks, their ability to be as competitive for promotion as their White counterparts may be unduly constricted.

In fact, this barrier was similarly identified at CIA<sup>28</sup> and further across the IC, where it was recognized that minorities in the IC have challenges participating in and therefore benefitting from “traditional, predominantly white male mentoring networks.”<sup>29</sup> Since inclusive relationships are two-way streets, it is incumbent upon both the majority and minority group members to be aware of and willing to participate in inclusive mentoring and networking.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> U.S. EEOC (2013); U.S. MLDC (2011)

<sup>27</sup> Sosik & Goshalk (2000); Gelfand et al. (2005); Thomas (2001)

<sup>28</sup> CIA (2015)

<sup>29</sup> ODNI IC EEO (2017), p. 62

<sup>30</sup> Thomas (2001)

## Developmental Opportunities and Assignments

There are many ways that employees become aware of developmental and high-profile opportunities and assignments — usually through their supervisors, mentors, or networks. But awareness is only one piece of the puzzle: employees must also be selected for these opportunities and assignments. Black employees at NGA perceive that they are not often offered opportunities and assignments that enrich their experience, education, and exposure, which are all critical components leading to positive promotion decisions, mirroring concerns across the federal government.<sup>31</sup>

At NGA, there are a wide variety of opportunities and assignments for employees outside of the formal assignments process for full-time positions. Through NGA's competitive call program, employees can self-nominate for selection into such programs as Military Service Schools (e.g., Army War College, Air Command and Staff College), Masters of Science in Strategic Intelligence, and Harvard National Security Fellows Program. Other types of opportunities, many of which are not formally competed, include working on agency-wide tiger teams or IC-wide working groups, both of which involve completing specific tasks while also having the added benefit of broadening employees' networks. In addition to these longer-term options, there are many domain-specific opportunities available to the workforce, such as delivering a briefing during the director's daily Operations Intelligence (Ops Intel) morning meeting, being an invited guest speaker to an IC Chief Human Capital Officer's Council meeting, or participating in a Culture of Respect facilitation training.

Despite having a variety of opportunities for education, experience, and exposure, Black employees perceive that they are often not selected for these opportunities. For instance, among competitive call decisions since 2013, Blacks have had numerically lower selection rates than Whites each year, though the differences have only been statistically significant in two of those years (2015 and 2016).

Similarly, an examination of the briefers at Ops Intel across 2016 and 2017 demonstrates that Blacks were underrepresented as briefers (only 2 to 3 percent were Black) as compared to both Analysis, or A (the directorate where most briefers came from), and NGA as a whole.

Minority Status	Briefers FY17	Briefers FY16	A FY17	NGA FY17
Black	2%	3%	7%	13%

In NGA's 2017 EES, proportionately fewer Blacks than Whites felt that competitive call was competed fairly, that their supervisor provided them with opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills, and that supervisors support employee development.<sup>32</sup>

Employee Engagement Survey Item	Percentage-Point (pp) Difference in Black-White Agreement
I believe competitive training and development opportunities are competed fairly here.	-7 pp
My supervisor provides me with opportunities to demonstrate my leadership skills.	-5 pp
Supervisors in my work unit support employee development.	-4 pp

Focus group participants also routinely mentioned that Black employees are not typically selected for opportunities. One Black participant said, "You look at the people who get picked for special projects or tiger teams, and they are not African Americans . . . I didn't know about these extra projects; I wasn't invited!" This quote highlights two barriers faced by Black employees regarding assignments and opportunities — one is the selection decision itself, and the second, even more difficult to address, is the knowledge aspect. If Black employees are not hearing about opportunities through their supervisors, mentors, or networks, then they do not even know that there is something for which they should volunteer.<sup>33</sup> Blacks, therefore, face an uphill battle at NGA to obtain high-visibility, high-impact opportunities which may affect competitiveness for promotion, since their talent profiles will not reflect these types of experiences.

<sup>31</sup> U.S. MSPB (2009)

<sup>32</sup> NGA (2017) EES; differences of at least 4 percentage points are statistically significant.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. EEOC (2013)

## Leadership Roles

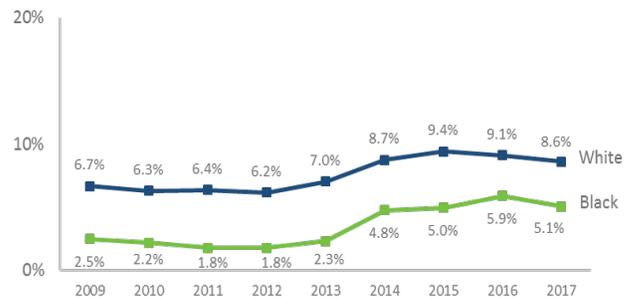
The opportunities discussed thus far reflected mainly short-term education, experience, and exposure opportunities such as competitive call training, high-visibility briefings, and time-limited tiger teams. It is also important to examine the longer-term opportunities or job assignments that may have an impact on promotion readiness and competitiveness. One such experience that may make employees more competitive for promotion, particularly for promotion to higher bands and to Senior, is leadership experience held while at NGA. Leadership experience in this context is defined as being in a team lead, supervisory, or managerial position. Team leads are those individuals who oversee employees on their work teams, distributing work, setting priorities, and ensuring tasks are completed. Team leads are different from supervisors in that team leads do not have formal authority or responsibility for rating employees or for employee development. Supervisors are those individuals who have all the responsibilities of team leads, plus requirements for performance evaluations and employee development. Managers are those supervisors who have among their direct reports at least one supervisor. In other words, a manager is a supervisor of at least one supervisor.

Participants across multiple focus groups reported believing that having experience in leadership roles while at NGA is particularly critical for obtaining a promotion under RIP. Looking across all cycles of RIP, for promotion to Bands 4 and to Band 5, the percentage of selected employees who had recent leadership experience (within the last three years at NGA) was higher than the percentage of self-nominees who had recent leadership experience. Similarly, for promotion to Senior, the percentage of selected employees who had recent leadership experience was slightly higher than the percentage of those nominated to the agency-wide board with leadership experience. The impact of recent leadership experience on selection was particularly notable for promotion to Band 5.

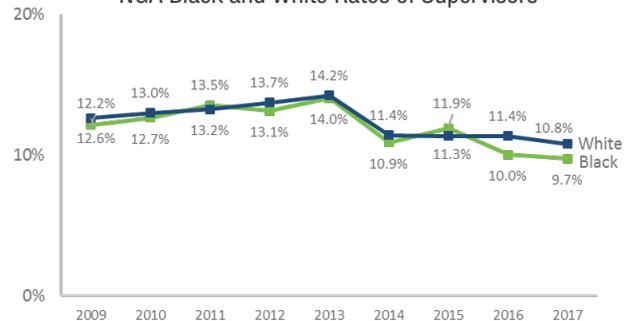
	Percent in Each Group with Leadership Experience	
	Self-Nominated	Selected
Band 3-4	8%	11%
Band 4-5	45%	60%
Band 5-Senior	92%	96%

In general, Blacks and Whites have similar rates of being in supervisory positions, but in both 2016 and 2017, Blacks start to have lower rates of being in supervisory positions. In team lead and manager roles, there are proportionately fewer Blacks than Whites. Considering that the leadership experience may be viewed as either highly desirable or even unofficially required for promotion, the lower proportion of Blacks in team lead and manager roles and the emergent gap between Blacks and Whites at supervisor may culminate in Blacks being less competitive for promotion.

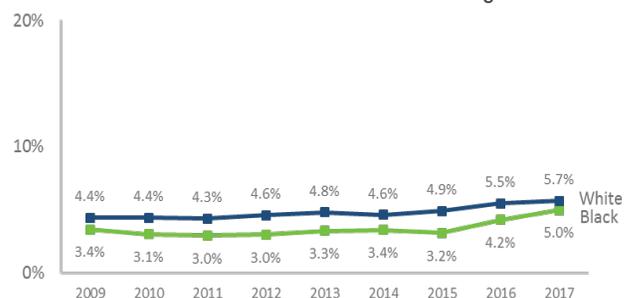
NGA Black and White Rates of Team Leads



NGA Black and White Rates of Supervisors



NGA Black and White Rates of Managers



Even when Blacks are supervisors and managers, seemingly leveling the playing field and helping to make both Blacks and Whites similarly competitive for promotion, a deeper analysis demonstrates that Blacks have, on average, fewer employees reporting to them than do Whites. In other words, Blacks' span of control as supervisors and managers is smaller than Whites', and this — when written up in an ITP — may make Blacks appear less qualified and competitive for promotion than their White counterparts. The difference in span of control was very minor at Band 4 but grew considerably at Band 5. And even though Seniors do not compete for promotions under RIP, they do compete for assignments, and the span of control difference between Black and White Seniors was particularly dramatic.<sup>34</sup> With Black Band 5s and Seniors having smaller spans of control than their White counterparts, Black employees in lower bands may have difficulties seeing “like me” others in positions of greater responsibility and perceived authority, as reported by many focus group participants and measured by Blacks at Band 5 and Senior having, on average, smaller spans of control than Whites at Band 5 and Senior.

	2017 Average Span of Control			Overall Average
	Band 4	Band 5	Senior	
Black	8	16	83	21
White	9	22	135	34

Placement of Seniors into roles of varying spans of control are accomplished by both competition and directed assignments. In interviews, both Black and White Seniors expressed the importance of being willing to take on new leadership assignments when asked. In fact, a common thread across interviews was the importance of being “tapped on the shoulder” to take on an assignment. However, Black Seniors also expressed that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to be seen as desirable for stretch or high-profile/high-visibility positions. One Black Senior even remarked that “I’ve been pegged and pigeonholed. Now I’m stymied in my career. I have changed things, created programs, but across the agency it seems to not be respected. I’ve been labeled a one-trick pony. It’s frustrating; I have more to offer . . . Non-minorities [Whites] get more assignments or get put in positions to be recognized more. I have seen this.” If even Senior Blacks — those who have purportedly “made it” to the highest levels of the agency — feel that they are passed over for the most meaningful, highly visible, critical positions, an even more daunting uphill battle can be imagined for Blacks at the lower levels.

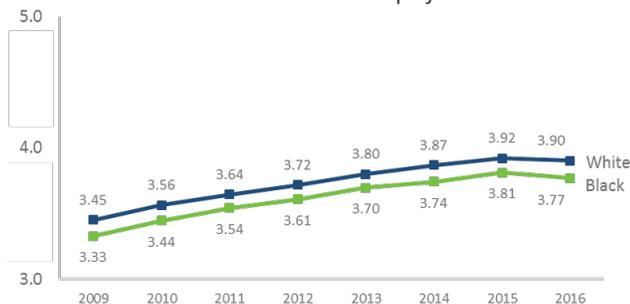
As described throughout this report, it is the compounding effect of a series of decisions that subtly disadvantages Blacks over time that may eventually manifest as lower promotion rates for Blacks compared to Whites. Employees can only write in their ITP what they have done — if Black employees are not selected for the plum assignments, opportunities, or leadership roles, their ITPs may indeed be less competitive than Whites. Thus, less competitive ITPs may not reflect differences in potential; but may rather be a result of not being able to demonstrate potential in the ITP due to the lack of access to opportunities.

<sup>34</sup> This was even true after removing the outliers with extremely large spans of control, such as the director of Analysis and the EXCOM leadership. Numbers in the table reflect average span of control with these outliers removed.

## Performance (DCIPS) Appraisals

Performance appraisals, inclusive of both ratings and narratives, are part of employees' ITPs. The ratings themselves are one of the few quantitative metrics that panelists have when reviewing promotion packages. Including ratings in the ITP reflects a shift from a recent (2013) NGA decision that actually removed ratings from personnel processes, including the corporate resume. In initial RIP cycles, three years of performance appraisals were part of the ITP package, and beginning in 2017, only two years of appraisals were included in packages. On average, Blacks have lower DCIPS ratings than Whites. Although small, these differences have been statistically significant every year since the implementation of DCIPS. If Blacks who are competing for promotion tend to have lower ratings relative to their White counterparts, this, along with other factors, may contribute to panelists' possible perceptions that Blacks are less prepared to perform at the next level, affecting their chances of being promoted.

Average DCIPS Ratings of NGA's Black and White Employees



In RIP, DCIPS ratings appear to play more of an important role in promotion decisions to Band 5 but not necessarily for promotions to Band 4. This difference can be explained when considering the nature of duties at each of these bands. To advance from Band 3 to Band 4, technical accomplishments are likely more important, and Blacks may be able to overcome a less competitive DCIPS rating by effectively highlighting their technical experience in their ITP narrative. But at Band 5, specific technical expertise becomes less critical, and a broader array of experience, to include leadership experience, becomes more important. Candidates for Band 5 promotions may therefore have a more difficult time overcoming lower DCIPS ratings and the accompanying narratives when the softer leadership and supervisory skills become potentially more important than technical expertise.

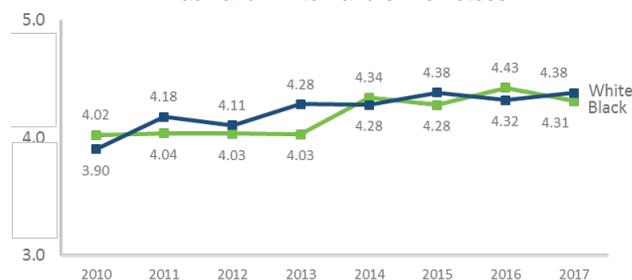
Among those who were promoted to Band 4 in RIP (2016–2017), the average DCIPS rating for Blacks was lower than the average DCIPS ratings for Whites and in a magnitude that is similar both before and after the implementation of RIP.<sup>35</sup> In other words, some Black Band 3s were effectively able to overcome their slightly lower DCIPS ratings to be promoted to Band 4, but Blacks in RIP, overall, were still promoted to Band 4 at a lower rate than Whites.

Average DCIPS Ratings of NGA's Black and White Band 4 Promotees



When looking at Band 5 promotees, there is a smaller difference between the average Black and White DCIPS ratings for promotions made during RIP (2015–2017) than the difference between ratings prior to RIP. That is, in years prior to RIP, Blacks selected for promotion to Band 5 tended to have lower DCIPS ratings compared to selected Whites, indicating DCIPS ratings under the previous promotion system were not as important, since Blacks with lower DCIPS ratings were still promoted. However, since the implementation of RIP, Blacks and Whites that were selected for promotion had similar DCIPS ratings on average.

Average DCIPS Rating of NGA's Black and White Band 5 Promotees



Lower DCIPS ratings may be a manifestation of the barriers faced by Blacks that have already been discussed. For example, Blacks' lack of selection for high-profile opportunities and assignments may contribute to lower DCIPS ratings. If Blacks are not selected for more complex opportunities, they are

<sup>35</sup> Graphs show the average DCIPS rating from the year prior to the promotion decision (e.g., Black promotees in 2017 had an average 2016 DCIPS rating of 4.06).

unable to be rated on performance that reflects taking on more challenging duties. Additionally, lower DCIPS ratings for Blacks may be perpetuated by a lack of informative feedback that could otherwise help them improve their performance.<sup>36</sup>

It should be emphasized that while DCIPS ratings are not the only indicator of quality used to make selection decisions, having a high DCIPS rating can certainly enhance employees' competitiveness. If a Black employee lacks a high enough DCIPS rating, this means he or she will need to compensate for it in other ways.

---

<sup>36</sup> Glover, Pallais, & Pariente (2017)

## Promotion Readiness Rating

As discussed already, Black employees have faced potential barriers to promotion in both the new and old promotion system at NGA. The promotion readiness rating is a new component in promotion applications under RIP that was not in existence before. Now that it is an integral component of the promotion packet, it should be examined. Each self-nominated employee obtains a promotion readiness assessment from his or her second-line supervisor. When RIP was first instituted, the promotion readiness indicator was three levels (“Do Not Recommend,” “Recommend,” and “Highly Recommend”), and it was determined by the supervisor. In 2017, this was revised; ratings were made by the second-line supervisor and were reduced to two levels (“Do Not Recommend” and “Recommend”). Narratives accompany this readiness rating as part of the ITP. The promotion readiness rating is clearly a critical input into selection decisions; across all 2016 and 2017 RIP cycles, only three employees with “Do Not Recommend” ratings were selected for promotion — representing less than one-half of one percent of those selected for promotion — and none of those three employees were Black. An analysis of the available readiness indicators (2016 and 2017) revealed that a higher proportion of Blacks than Whites are not recommended for promotion. Because being selected with a “Do Not Recommend” rating is so rare and Blacks receive proportionately more of these ratings than Whites, this may be a barrier to promotion for Blacks.

	Rates of “Do Not Recommend”			
	2016		2017	
	Black	White	Black	White
<b>Band 3-4</b>	25.9%	18.7%	33.3%	17.5%
<b>Band 4-5</b>	20.8%	17.1%	22.1%	17.1%
<b>Band 5-Senior</b>	24.0%	22.5%	22.2%	16.3%

Not only do proportionately more Blacks receive “Do Not Recommend” ratings than Whites, but in focus groups, more Blacks than Whites reported being surprised by their recommendation. This seems partly due to the general lack of honest feedback Blacks reported receiving from their supervisors, along with challenges expressed in knowing their second-line supervisor. For example, when asked about

receiving a “Do Not Recommend,” one Black focus group participant said, “Hell yeah, I am upset! You [the supervisor] didn’t tell me all year long that I was lacking something.” Other focus group participants, particularly Black participants, reported being surprised by the “Do Not Recommend,” because they felt it was inconsistent with their DCIPS ratings. Black participants more than White participants also shared their perceptions that decisions about who would receive the “Highly Recommend” and “Recommend” versus “Do Not Recommend” ratings were decided by office- or directorate-level leadership, and Black participants reported being less likely to have connections with that level of leadership, which put them at a disadvantage. Even when Blacks did receive the “Recommend” or “Highly Recommend” ratings, they reported that their accompanying narrative was sub-par. Both Black and White focus group participants commented that discrepancies between the rating and the narrative reduce the likelihood of being selected for promotion. In other words, some Black employees felt that their supervisors were “gaming the system”— avoiding difficult conversations that would ultimately benefit the employee while simultaneously writing a less-than-glowing report so that the Black employee would not stand out among the applicants for promotion.

Similar to the performance appraisals, decisions made earlier in the year — or during employees’ careers — about what opportunities they receive, what training they get, and so forth, all culminate with this readiness recommendation that can stagnate an otherwise-capable employee in his or her career. Considering that promotion recommendations are the confluence of all of these experiences, many of which may be influenced by unconscious biases, the greater rate of Blacks that receive a “Do Not Recommend” highlights the many interconnected challenges faced by Blacks at NGA as they seek promotions.

Each of these individual barriers on their own may be but a small bump in the road — a molehill, if you will. However, when taken together, they combine into mountains that only a very select few manage to climb. The next section details how the identified barriers can be addressed holistically via very specific recommendations for interventions.



# What Can We Do About These Differences?

The 10 recommendations presented in this section offer ways to address differences and barriers to promotion that may disproportionately affect Black employees at NGA. When implemented, these recommendations will help NGA realize long-lasting and meaningful change, working to advance the agency towards a more equitable and fully inclusive organization for all employees.

This set of recommendations is the culmination of a comprehensive data collection effort (quantitative and qualitative data), thorough and rigorous data analyses, and an extensive academic literature review and environmental scan of other government agencies, private industry, and popular press. Collectively, these research streams enable a better understanding of the complexities behind the promotion rate differentials the study found between Blacks and Whites.

Once the quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed, the results were distilled and synthesized to identify themes and trends, and the team established key recommendations, which aligned to four theme areas: 1) Focus on Micro-Decisions, 2) Encourage Better Feedback, 3) Enhance Networks and

Mentors, and 4) Evaluate the Promotion Process. These four theme areas encompass many of the activities and associated barriers that may arise long before an employee applies for promotion, as well as barriers that might occur during the promotion process itself. Each of these areas presents an opportunity for a stumbling block, and while these obstacles may not entirely prevent Black employees from obtaining promotions, they may pose significant obstacles to Black employees, as a group, at NGA.

Many of the challenge areas identified by the study are not necessarily new; however, they may not have posed as much of a barrier to promotions for Blacks in the old system as they do now. Therefore, the recommendations are designed to address the possible root causes for each of these challenge areas, consistent with the new promotion system and within the context of the organization's current programs and processes (CSs, Mission-Talent Alignment, etc.).

While meaningful and enduring change does not occur instantly, the 10 recommendations detailed in this report increase the likelihood of producing lasting change, thereby ensuring the highest possible return on investment.

## Recommendation Theme Area #1: Focus on Micro-Decisions

As discussed earlier in the report, supervisors play a critical role in employees' careers — whether through informal mentoring, selections for professional development opportunities, or exposure to leadership and other high-visibility projects or roles. Inherent in most of these opportunities and situations are decisions made by supervisors. Supervisors' decisions can sometimes be made with a lot of thoughtful consideration and objective reflection as to why the decision was made and who was selected, but other times, these decisions, especially minor and seemingly unimportant ones, can be made somewhat subjectively with little awareness or contemplation by the decision-maker.

At first glance, these small and seemingly inconsequential decisions that are made on a daily basis — otherwise known as micro-decisions — may not look like major obstacles to promotion. However, when grouped together and taken collectively over time, the effects of these small decisions can compound and have positive or negative impacts on employees' careers. These decisions and their associated experiences may seem minor, but collectively across employees' careers, they signify important chances for development, exposure, learning, networking, visibility, and growth.

Some examples of these types of decisions include selecting an “acting” supervisor while out of the office, choosing an employee to attend a meeting on a leader's behalf, encouraging (or discouraging) an employee to take a stretch assignment, nominating an employee for a training or leadership development class, or picking an employee to brief at a meeting or event.

Academic, peer-reviewed D&I research shows that when micro-decisions consistently favor certain groups, often via

unconscious bias, subtle discrimination can manifest in the workplace, often disadvantaging minorities.<sup>37</sup> When these daily decisions afford fewer opportunities for a particular group of people, it can be career-limiting and result in lower promotion rates, among other outcomes.

These findings, coupled with the conclusion that micro-decisions may play a greater role in the new promotion system than the old, elevates the importance of these experiences and leads to two recommendations pertaining to micro-decisions.

The study recommends: first, ensuring NGA supervisors and managers understand the cumulative effects of their small, everyday decisions on employees' careers; and second, making Unconscious Bias Awareness training mandatory for all supervisors and CS board and panel members in addition to Seniors, for whom it is already mandatory. These two recommendations underscore the importance of teaching supervisors and managers to recognize the small, seemingly inconsequential decisions made on a daily basis and understand the possible downstream effects these decisions have on employees' careers. Supervisors and managers should be held accountable for the equitable distribution of opportunities in their work group to avoid inadvertently favoring one group over another, while also ensuring that the mission demands are met. Given that many of these daily, small decisions are influenced by biases, often unconscious in nature, it is critical for employees — especially supervisors and those serving on CS boards and promotion panels — to learn about these biases via the Unconscious Bias Awareness training held at NGA. Together, these two recommendations will help foster awareness and promote equal access to opportunity through unbiased and impartial decision-making.

Theme Area	Recommendation
Focus on Micro-Decisions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure NGA supervisors and managers understand the cumulative effects of their small, everyday decisions on employees' careers.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Teach supervisors and managers the types of decisions that they need to pay attention to when distributing work and opportunities.</li> <li>b. Hold supervisors and managers accountable for the mission-appropriate and equitable distribution of opportunities in their work group.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Make Unconscious Bias Awareness Training mandatory for all supervisors and Career Service board and panel members.</li> </ol>

<sup>37</sup> McCormick (2016); Deitch et al. (2003)

## Recommendation Theme Area #2: Encourage Better Feedback

As stated earlier in the report, race may play a role in the nature of relationships between supervisors and employees via the “like me” bias. As expressed in focus groups, some Blacks at NGA perceive that the lack of robust supervisory relationships manifests in the form of less honest and constructive feedback from supervisors.

Actionable feedback is a critical component to the unbiased implementation of performance management and promotion systems.<sup>38</sup> Constructive feedback is an important component for professional growth and development, career progression and advancement, and self-awareness and self-improvement; it is critical that employees understand their gaps and professional development needs throughout their career before the promotion cycle.<sup>39</sup> In the absence of a clear attribution for decisions such as promotions, people often try to determine the motive for those decisions, assuming it may be linked to a salient physical characteristic (e.g., race) rather than performance.<sup>40</sup> Literature suggests that Blacks can be disadvantaged by managers who are afraid of providing critical feedback due to concerns with appearing or being accused of being prejudiced/racist.<sup>41</sup> However, the onus is not solely on supervisors and managers. In instances where an employee receives actionable and constructive feedback, the employee must know how to process and apply the feedback.

The study recommends educating supervisors, managers, and promotion panel members on providing quality, timely, and more actionable, useful, and constructive feedback to employees and holding supervisors accountable for delivering such feedback. Supervisors should provide employees with recommendations on steps employees can take to strengthen their overall performance and promotion potential. This will both provide useful feedback to employees and reinforce to supervisors the impact of their micro-decisions in a timelier fashion, since feedback would be more regular and robust.

The focal point of the supervisory education should be to aid supervisors in overcoming hesitation in giving feedback to dissimilar employees. That said, providing honest feedback is only half of the solution. Feedback is most beneficial to employees if they understand how to utilize it. Thus, an equally critical recommendation is to educate employees on how to receive, accept, and apply constructive feedback.

The intended goal of this recommendation theme area is to create a culture that emphasizes honest, quality, and actionable feedback that will provide employees with useful information with which they can make informed career development decisions. Furthermore, quality feedback will mitigate perceptions of bias in selection decisions, thereby reducing the possibility for recipients to question whether an action or decision was based on a personal attribute.

Theme Area	Recommendation
Encourage Better Feedback	3. Educate supervisors, managers, and promotion panel members on providing quality, timely, and more actionable, useful, and constructive feedback to all employees, and hold them accountable for delivering said feedback. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Ensure this supervisory education includes components highlighting challenges and strategies related to providing quality, actionable, and more constructive feedback to all employees (see DIV2181 “Building meaningful business relationships across difference” in the NGA College (NGC) course catalog for ideas).</li> </ol>
	4. Educate all employees on how to receive, accept, and apply constructive feedback.

<sup>38</sup> Gelfand et al. (2005)

<sup>39</sup> Heilman & Haynes (2005)

<sup>40</sup> Deitch et al. (2003)

<sup>41</sup> Gelfand et al. (2005)

## Recommendation Theme Area #3: Enhance Networks and Mentors

Blacks' access to influential networks and mentors is limited if the main, and often-unspoken, criteria for group participation are demographic and cultural similarities. Racial minorities often lack access to these social networks due to these criteria, which influence both the majority and minority's willingness to participate in such networks.<sup>42</sup> These challenges have been similarly highlighted by CIA and ODNI.<sup>43</sup>

Investing in professional networks is an important part of professional development and advancement. Professional networks provide many added benefits to group members, such as insights into unwritten requirements, new and emerging processes, experience/exposure opportunities that make candidates more competitive for promotion, and resources for editing and reviewing ITPs. Literature supports focus group findings that Blacks may lag behind their White peers in the variety, size, and type of professional networks to which they have access.<sup>44</sup> In focus groups, Blacks reported perceiving that they have fewer mentorship opportunities, because there are not many people "like me" in leadership and Blacks in leadership do not reach back to help other Blacks. Lastly, Blacks reported feeling "left out" of important conversations regarding RIP requirements and preparation. Without diverse networks and mentoring relationships, Blacks may receive fewer opportunities and less informal and formal institutional information, essentially disadvantaging them on their path to promotion.

The study recommends educating the workforce, both supervisors and employees, on the value and importance of building and maintaining networks, including the benefits

of having a diversified and inclusive network. Supervisors and managers should equally share knowledge with and offer help to all employees; however, employees need to understand the value of seeking out dissimilar mentors. Given that networking is vital to expanding employees' institutional knowledge, the study also recommends that all employees recognize that professional networking is a legitimate work activity (e.g., consider building professional networking into DCIPS objectives). To mitigate isolation and disproportionate opportunity-sharing caused by the "like me" bias, the study encourages all employees to build and maintain diverse and inclusive networks and mentoring partnerships. Supporting, encouraging, and mainstreaming diversity in networks and mentoring relationships should help mitigate the disadvantages faced by minority group members who tend to receive less support from the majority group within organizations.

The intended goal of this recommendation theme area is to educate and emphasize the legitimacy of building and maintaining diverse networks comprised of knowledgeable and influential people and to inspire the workforce to build inclusive networks. Encouraging employees to look beyond establishing professional relationships with only similar employees will help to reduce the chances of any one group from being excluded from information or career development opportunities. This recommendation theme area will aid and encourage Blacks to gain the same robust, strategic, and influential professional networks to which the majority group has historically been accustomed.

Theme Area	Recommendation
Enhance Networks and Mentors	5. Educate all employees in the value and importance of diverse and inclusive networks.
	6. Ensure all employees recognize that professional networking is a legitimate work activity (e.g., consider building professional networking into performance objectives).
	7. Encourage all employees to build and maintain diversified and inclusive networks and mentoring partnerships.

<sup>42</sup> Gelfand et al. (2005)

<sup>43</sup> CIA (2015); ODNI IC EEO (2017)

<sup>44</sup> Giscombe & Mattis (2002)

## Recommendation Theme Area #4: Evaluate the Promotion Process

NGA implemented the new RIP promotion process in 2014 starting with Senior Executive promotions and then began a cascading rollout to include additional banded promotions each year, to Band 5 in 2015 and to Band 4 in 2016. In the first round of RIP (2014), no Black Band 5s were promoted to Senior Executive. Since then, there have been no consistent patterns between Black and White promotion rates to Senior. However, this study did find that under the new promotion process, Black promotion rates to both Band 4 and Band 5 have been numerically lower than Whites', and these differences are statistically significant in all but one of the cycles of RIP (Band 4-to-5 in 2016).

For a promotion process to be successful and fair, it should be assessed via routine program evaluations and be consistently implemented throughout the organization. At NGA, the promotion process has been evolving each year, with adjustments made annually based on after action reviews and process evaluations.

In 2017, NGA's Human Development directorate (HD) conducted a program evaluation of the RIP process and made a set of recommendations to CS heads.<sup>45</sup> This HD program evaluation included goals to "strengthen consistency across the promotion program" and to "increase consistency of measurement when procedures are repeated." This study supports the importance of consistency in executing the promotion process. As noted earlier, many focus group participants highlighted challenges associated with the adjustments made year to year and identified perceived inconsistencies in how the promotion process was executed across the CSs (e.g., differences in feedback or differences in how panels interpret promotion criteria). Additionally, focus group participants stated that annual changes in the promotion process and perceptions of

poor communication of those changes made it difficult for them to prepare for and understand what would be reviewed from cycle to cycle (e.g., supervisor recommendation to manager recommendation, three years of DCIPS to two years of DCIPS back to three years of DCIPS). In line with the HD program evaluation goals related to consistency, the study recommends that the promotion process and evaluation criteria are implemented consistently across all the CSs.

According to the "Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures" as set forth by the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology<sup>46</sup> — the professional association for industrial and organizational psychology academics, researchers, and practitioners — validation of selection procedures and associated criteria (e.g., for hiring and promotion) is an industry best practice and one the study recommends NGA adopt. In accordance with these principles, HD's program evaluation recommended a validation study of the job-relatedness of updated promotion profile factors, and this study supports that recommendation and reiterates it here. Such validation will ensure the selection criteria that are being utilized to measure employees' readiness for promotion are predictive of performance at the next level and that the process for evaluating the criteria are accurately and consistently identifying the most qualified candidates for promotion.

Only fully implemented for two years, RIP will continue to be refined as the process matures. This study recommends continuing to conduct program evaluations, particularly when there are changes to the process. Regular program evaluations will assist leadership with staying ahead of any unintended consequences that could have a negative impact on a particular demographic group before a long-term systemic issue develops.

Theme Area	Recommendation
Evaluate Promotion Process	8. Ensure the promotion process is implemented consistently across Career Services.
	9. Validate the job-relatedness of current promotion profile factors and related selection criteria.
	10. Conduct regular program evaluations, particularly when there are changes to the process, to ensure that changes do not have unintended consequences for particular demographic groups.

<sup>45</sup> NGA HD (2017)

<sup>46</sup> SIOP (2003)



# Summary and Conclusion

Since 2014, the promotion rates for Blacks and Whites at NGA has been consistently different, and the difference has been growing. This study described a number of potential barriers related to promotions at NGA, some of which were in existence before RIP (e.g., unconscious bias) and some of which are new in the RIP process (e.g., promotion readiness ratings).

That said, with education of and active involvement from leadership and the workforce and by addressing these trends and implementing the 10 recommendations from the study, NGA will continue to work towards creating a more equitable and inclusive environment for all employees.

Theme Area	Recommendation
Focus on Micro-Decisions	1. Ensure NGA supervisors and managers understand the cumulative effects of their small, everyday decisions on employees' careers. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teach supervisors and managers the types of decisions that they need to pay attention to when distributing work and opportunities.</li> <li>Hold supervisors and managers accountable for the mission-appropriate and equitable distribution of opportunities in their work group.</li> </ol>
	2. Make Unconscious Bias Awareness Training mandatory for all supervisors and Career Service board and panel members.
Encourage Better Feedback	3. Educate supervisors, managers, and promotion panel members on providing quality, timely, and more actionable, useful, and constructive feedback to all employees, and hold them accountable for delivering said feedback. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure this supervisory education includes components highlighting challenges and strategies related to providing quality, actionable, and more constructive feedback to all employees (see DIV2181 "Building meaningful business relationships across difference" in the NGA College (NGC) course catalog for ideas).</li> </ol>
	4. Educate all employees on how to receive, accept, and apply constructive feedback.
Enhance Networks and Mentors	5. Educate all employees in the value and importance of diverse and inclusive networks.
	6. Ensure all employees recognize that professional networking is a legitimate work activity (e.g., consider building professional networking into performance objectives).
	7. Encourage all employees to build and maintain diversified and inclusive networks and mentoring partnerships.
Evaluate Promotion Process	8. Ensure the promotion process is implemented consistently across Career Services.
	9. Validate the job-relatedness of current promotion profile factors and related selection criteria.
	10. Conduct regular program evaluations, particularly when there are changes to the process, to ensure that changes do not have unintended consequences for particular demographic groups.

Substantial change, especially organizational and cultural change, does not occur overnight, and the recommendations proposed in this study will take time to fully impact the workforce. This requires both persistence and patience, allowing time for the recommendations to take effect and for behaviors, attitudes, and culture to shift. This also requires leadership commitment and accountability to ensure implementation efforts are comprehensive in nature and widespread across the agency. To successfully implement the 10 recommendations in the spirit in which they were originally created, the study suggests standing up a Senior-led team that will: oversee implementation activities, communicate progress and keep the workforce informed, assess implementation efforts to ensure results and return on investment, and hold leadership and the workforce accountable for implementation.

NGA is faced with complex, global, and evolving threats in an ever-changing environment, and in order to confront these multi-faceted threats and achieve its mission, NGA must tap into the full extent of its workforce and capabilities. NGA's mission set is diverse in nature and so too must be the workforce. Furthermore, the organization must provide an environment that is inclusive, promoting a culture that is respectful, and fostering a climate that is supportive, allowing all of its employees to thrive.

Change is never easy, but it is necessary to address the areas identified in this report, enabling NGA to fully face the threats of tomorrow and accomplish NGA's dynamic mission.



## References and Additional Reading

- Banaji, M. R., & Greenwald, A. G. (2013). *Blindspot: Hidden biases of good people*. New York: Bantam Books.
- Central Intelligence Agency (2105). *Director's Diversity in Leadership Study: Overcoming Barriers to Advancement*.
- Brief, A. P., Butz, R. M., & Deitch, E. A. (2005). Organizations as reflections of their environments: The case of race composition. In R. L. Dipboye & A. Colella (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational bases* (pp. 119–148). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Deitch, E. A., Barsky, A., Butz, R. M., Chan, S., Brief, A. P., & Bradley, J. C. (2003). Subtle yet significant: The existence and impact of everyday racial discrimination in the workplace. *Human Relations, 56*, 1299–1324.
- Diversity Best Practices (2008). *Proven strategies for addressing unconscious bias in the workplace*. Last retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <http://www.cookcross.com/docs/unconconsciousBias.pdf>.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Gaertner, S. L. (2000). Aversive racism and selection decisions: 1989 and 1999. *Psychological Science, 11*, 315–319.
- Dovidio, J. R., Kawakami, K., & Gaertner, S. L. (2000). Reducing contemporary prejudice: Combating explicit and implicit bias at the individual and intergroup level. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 37–163). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dovidio, J. F., & Hebl, M. R. (2005). Discrimination at the level of the individual: Cognitive and affective factors. In R. L. Dipboye & A. Colella (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational bases* (pp. 11–35). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Fleras, A. (2016). Theorizing micro-aggressions as racism 3.0: Shifting the discourse. *Canadian Ethnic Studies, 48*, 1–19.
- Gelfand, M. J., Nishii, L. H., Raver, J. L., & Schneider, B. (2005). Discrimination in organizations: An organizational-level systems perspective. In R. L. Dipboye & A. Colella (Eds.), *Discrimination at work: The psychological and organizational bases* (pp. 89–114). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Giscombe, K., & Mattis, M. C. (2002). Leveling the playing field for women of color in corporate management: Is the business case enough? *Journal of Business Ethics, 37*, 103–119.
- Glover, D., Pallais, A., & Pariente, W. (2017). Discrimination as a self-fulfilling prophecy evidence from French grocery stores. *Quarterly Journal of Economics, 132*, 1219–1260.
- Griffin, R. W., Phillips, J. M., & Gully, S. M. (2017). *Organizational behavior: Managing people and organizations*. Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Harris, C., & Valentine, G. (2016). Encountering difference in the workplace: Superficial contact, underlying tensions, and group rights. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie (Journal of Economic and Social Geography), 107*, 582–595.
- Hebl, M., Ruggs, E., Martinez, L., Trump-Steele, R., & Nittrouer, C. (2016). Understanding and reducing interpersonal discrimination in the workplace. In T. D. Nelson (Ed.), *Handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination* (pp. 387–407). New York: Psychology Press.
- Heilman, M. E., & Haynes, M. C. (2005). No credit where credit is due: Attributional rationalization of women's success in male-female teams. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*, 905–916.
- James, E. H. (2000). Race-related differences in promotions and support: Underlying effects of human and social capital. *Organization Science, 11*, 493–508.
- Jones, K. P., Arena, F. D., Nittrouer, N. M., & Lindsey, P. A. (2017). Subtle discrimination in the workplace: A vicious cycle. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology, 10*, 51–76.

- Kalev, A., Dobbin, F., & Kelly, E. (2006). Best practices or best guesses? Assessing the efficacy of corporate affirmative action and diversity policies. *American Sociological Review*, *71*, 589–617.
- Levine, J. M., & Moreland, R. L. (1990). Progress in small group research. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *41*, 585–634.
- Lowe, F. (2013). Keeping leadership white: Invisible blocks to black leadership and its denial in white organizations. *Journal of Social Work Practice*, *27*, 149–162.
- Martell, R. F., Lane, D. M., & Emrich, C. (1996). Male-female differences: A computer simulation. *American Psychologist*, *51*, 157–158.
- McCormick, H. (2016). The real effects of unconscious bias in the workplace. Executive Development, 2-10. Last retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <https://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/~media/Files/documents/executive-development/unc-white-paper-the-real-effects-of-unconscious-bias-in-the-workplace-Final>.
- Military Leadership Diversity Commission (2011). From representation to inclusion: Diversity leadership for the 21st-century military. Arlington, VA: Author.
- Morris, S. B. & Dunleavy, E. M. (Eds). (2017). Adverse impact analysis. New York, NY: Routledge.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (2014). Policy U-2014-2634, Policy Statement on Diversity, October 21, 2014.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (2016). Women's Representation Within and Across the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (2017). Employee eNGagement dashboard.
- National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency, Human Development Directorate (2017). NGA Promotions: FY17 Program Evaluation Recommendations.
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2014). ODNI's IC Principles of Professional Ethics. Last retrieved January 5, 2018, from <https://www.dni.gov/files/documents.CLPO/Principles of Professional Ethics for the IC.pdf>.
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence (2017). DNI letter to IC leadership on promoting diversity and inclusion within the U.S. Intelligence Community. Last retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/newsroom/reports-publications/item/1740-dni-letter-to-ic-leadership-on-promoting-diversity-and-inclusion-within-the-u-s-intelligence-community>.
- Office of the Director of National Intelligence, Office of Intelligence Community Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity (2017). Diversity and inclusion: Examining workforce concerns within the United States Intelligence Community.
- Pallais, A. (2017). Evidence that minorities perform worse under biased managers. *Harvard Business Review*, *January*, 1–5.
- Pettigrew, T. F. & Tropp, L. R. (2000). Does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Recent meta-analytic findings. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 93–114). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Ramasubramanian, S. (2015). Using celebrity news stories to effectively reduce racial/ethnic prejudice. *Journal of Social Issues*, *71*, 123–138.
- Rand Corporation (2014). Improving demographic diversity in the U.S. Air Force officer corps. Santa Monica, CA: Author.
- Society for Human Resource Management (2008). SHRM's Diversity and Inclusion Initiative. Last retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <https://community.shrm.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx>.
- Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Inc. (2003). Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures. Bowling Green, Ohio: Author.
- Sosik, J. J. & Godshalk, V. M. (2000). The role of gender in mentoring: Implications of diversified and homogeneous mentoring relationships. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *57*, 102–122.

- Thackwell, N., Swartz, L., Dlamini, S., Phahladira, L., Muloiwa, R., & Chiliza, B. (2016). Race trouble: Experiences of Black medical specialist trainees in South Africa. *BMC International Health and Human Rights*, *16*, 31.
- Thomas, D. A. (1993). Racial dynamics in cross-race developmental relationships. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *38*, 169–194.
- Thomas, D. A. (2001). The truth about mentoring minorities: Race matters. *Harvard Business Review*, *April*, 98–107.
- Tsui, A. S., O'Reilly III, C. A. (1989). Beyond simple demographic effects: The importance of relational demography in superior-subordinate dyads. *Academy of Management Journal*, *32*, 402–423.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (1978). Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection Procedures. *Federal Register*, *44*, 38290–38315.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2013). EEOC African American Workgroup Report. Last retrieved on January 5, 2018, from <http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/reports/aawg.cfm>.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2015). Basic Management Directive 715 Training Manual. Washington, DC: Author.
- U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (2009). Fair and equitable treatment: Progress made and challenges remaining. Washington, DC: Author.
- Wanguri, D. M. (1996). Diversity, perceptions of equity, and communicative openness in the workplace. *The Journal of Business Communication*, *33*, 443–457.





NGA.mil

