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INTELLIGENCE AFTER NEXT

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: A MISSION IMPERATIVE FOR THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

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Diversity is a Mission Imperative

The United States (U.S.) faces a future in which domestic and global demographics will rapidly shift and starkly contrast with the current demographics. To remain effective in producing high-quality intelligence, the Intelligence Community (IC) must comprehensively understand and correctly assess the dynamic environment in which the U.S. operates. This requires building and leveraging teams comprised of experts from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds to maximize analytic value. And yet, despite a variety of diversity and inclusion initiatives, IC workforce diversity changes have been modest. Women, minorities, and people with disabilities remain underrepresented throughout the workforce, with the most extreme disparities in leadership positions. By sustaining a workforce that is disproportionately white and male, the IC misses important mission benefits derived from diversity, as data consistently show that organizations with diverse staff and leadership outperform their more homogeneous counterparts. The IC's ongoing diversity and inclusion efforts will be most successful when they are widely accepted and understood as mission essential and the IC workforce itself is both driving the demand and shaping strategies for more diversity and inclusion.

Investments in greater diversity and inclusion will result in better-quality intelligence collection and analysis to support U.S. policy decision making and warfighting. Diversity, when empowered through an inclusive culture, helps the IC:

- Understand the targets of its efforts, which are more diverse than ever. Representation from diverse American communities helps the IC to understand the cultures, intentions, and characteristics of its diverse targets.

- Regain the trust of the American people. Diverse American communities have the greatest trust in the IC when they see reflections of themselves in it, along with responsiveness to their interests and concerns.

- Counter biases that undermine the IC's ability to produce thorough, objective intelligence. Diversity both introduces additional subject matter expertise and changes the way teams prepare, communicate, and analyze information, making them more innovative and fact-based.

Given changing domestic demographics, it will become increasingly difficult to build and maintain a healthy long-term IC workforce without building a lasting culture of diversity and inclusion. The IC can accelerate its efforts by:

- Building recognition among IC staff that diversity and inclusion are essential to producing high-quality intelligence. If cultural blind spots and implicit biases are treated as natural, albeit dangerous, occurrences and are openly addressed, diversity and inclusion efforts can be seen as helpful enhancements to team effectiveness. Diversity and inclusion efforts must be recognized by the entire IC workforce as authentic and necessary, rather than as abstract hiring mandates.

- Sustaining and expanding programs that 1) increase voluntary engagement aimed at achieving mission success through diversity and inclusion, 2) promote intergroup contacts, and 3) promote leadership engagement and accountability.

- Expanding the collection of diversity and inclusion metrics to include more detailed data, such as diversity by mission area, disaggregation of gender data by race, and cultural competencies.

- Developing new strategies that are based on this data, detailed barrier and implementation analyses, and recently released research on effective methods for achieving a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Introduction

The 2019 National Intelligence Strategy[1] (NIS) notes that the United States faces both traditional and new adversaries and opportunities in an increasingly

complex, globalized, strategic environment, and that succeeding in this environment now and into the future means that the IC must evolve. One element of this evolution, as noted in the NIS, is the effort to forge and retain a diverse, inclusive, and expert workforce. To achieve its analytic mission, the IC must accurately understand and correctly assess the constantly shifting strategic environment in which the United States operates to identify threats and opportunities in a timely manner. Success requires recruiting relevant expertise from socially and culturally diverse backgrounds and leveraging these teams to take full advantage of the analytic value that only a richly diverse team can achieve.

The IC recognizes this, asserting in the FY19 Annual Demographic Report[2] that "diversity and inclusion are essential to maintaining the IC's competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic global threat environment." The IC report defines diversity as "a collection of individual attributes," including characteristics such as "race, national origin, language, color, mental or physical disability, ethnicity, sex, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structure." In addition, the report states that inclusion is "a culture that connects each employee to the organization, encourages collaboration, flexibility and fairness, and leverages diversity throughout the organization—from entry level to the most senior ranks— so that all individuals are able to participate and contribute to their full potential."
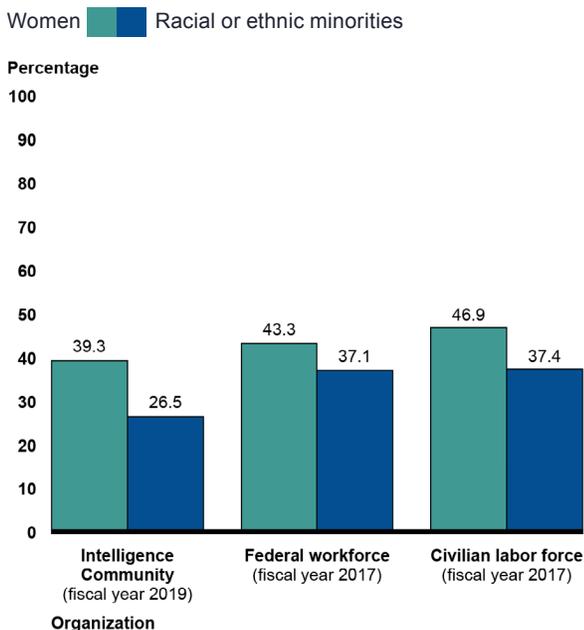
The IC has committed itself in recent years to diversity and inclusion initiatives, adopting programs specifically designed to make progress in attracting and retaining racial and ethnic minorities, women, and people with disabilities. Nevertheless, there have been only modest improvements in hiring and retention of diverse staff[3] (Figure 1), and the IC workforce is lagging behind both the federal and civilian workforce with regard to diversity (Figure 2). Women and minorities remain underrepresented among managers and supervisors (Figure 3) and are especially rare among agency leadership, with three women and one person of color having served among the 118 current and former directors of the "Big Six" intelligence agencies or the Office of the Director of National Intelligence.[4]

The current shifts in demographics and dynamics abroad and at home, and the need for intelligence that is free from bias, *require* a much more diverse and inclusive IC workforce to scrupulously collect
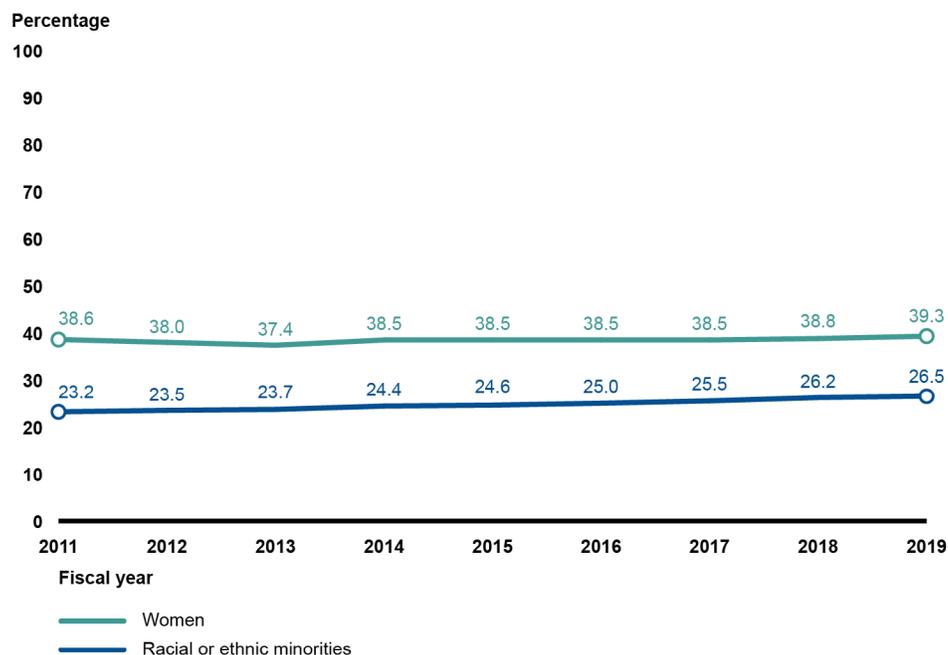
Source: GAO summary of Office of Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) data. | GAO-21-83

Figure 1 Proportion of Women and Racial or Ethnic Minorities within the IC Workforce, Fiscal Years 2011-2019, as Reported by ODNI

Women ▮ Racial or ethnic minorities

Percentage

Figure 2 Proportion of Women and Racial or Ethnic Minorities within the IC Workforce in Fiscal Year 2019 Compared to the Federal Workforce and Civilian Labor Force, as Reported by ODNI

Source: GAO summary of Office of Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) data. | GAO-21-83

and analyze intelligence. The IC's efforts to replace substantial numbers of retirees in the coming years—while maintaining the quality, volume, and breadth of intelligence production—adds urgency to the imperative to diversify and advance a culture of inclusion.

The IC workforce transition to one of broad cultural and social inclusion is challenging, with many constraints remaining outside the control of the IC. Still, there is more the IC must do to build on recent momentum and capitalize on recent research for creating and sustaining a culture of inclusion. Ultimately, the inclusion and diversity efforts in the IC ensure not only richer intelligence product, but that all variety of people—both as IC employees and the diverse American public they serve—are valued when crafting domestic and international policy and creating a more stable and secure future.
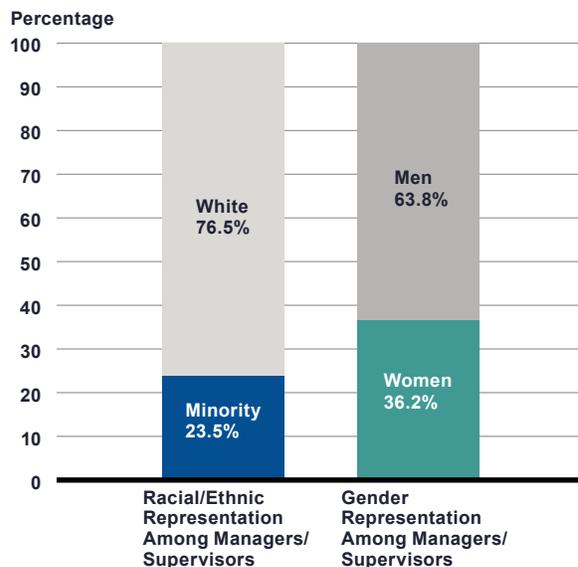
Figure 3 Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity Among IC Managers and Supervisors in FY2019

Shifting Demographics and Dynamics Abroad

Several studies and reports project dramatic global population shifts in coming years. The United Nation's (UN) 2020 International Migration Report states, "the largest corridors tend to be from developing countries to larger economies such as those of the United States, France, the Russian Federation, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia. This pattern is likely to remain the same for many years into the future, especially as populations in some developing subregions and countries are projected to increase in coming decades, placing migration pressure on future generations."[5]

Not only will migration patterns affect the composition of the globe, changes in demographics due to shifts in religion, culture, and other factors will greatly influence the future makeup of the globe. The global growth in population in the next 30 years, for instance, will predominantly stem from nine countries: India, Nigeria,

Pakistan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Indonesia, Egypt, and lastly, the United States of America.[6] Notably, this growth stems from regions of the world where the majority population is not of White European origin, as data projections also expect the United States to have a non-white majority by 2050. While current population growth shows the majority of the current population resides on the Asian continent, more than half of the global population growth is projected to originate in Africa from now until 2050.[7]

Furthermore, a data set from the UN projects that the potential support ratio, defined as the ratio of people between the ages of 18 and 65 to people over the age of 65, is the highest in the African continent, with an average ratio of 20-30:1 in comparison to 1.5-3.5:1 in Northern America and Europe in 2050.[8] The number of youth on the African continent ensures that this region will play a leading role in not only continental share of humans, but the future distribution of this population across the globe, should migration trends continue.[9] In contrast, Europe will experience a rapid decline in population growth as fertility rates are projected to continue their decrease. Domestic Europeans will be a larger part of the older age group of the population, while migrants will be the larger percentage of the younger age group population.[10] Additionally, studies project that there will be just as many 30- to 44-year-old Muslims as Christians across the globe.[11]

Taken together, these current statistics and projected global demography support the notion that global power, shocks, and threats extend well beyond a traditional Russian, Chinese, and Western European-centric view and will stem from a more complex and diverse environment. For successful intelligence collection and analysis into the future, the IC must continue to expand its depth in teams with the right technical expertise and cultural understanding to assess information and context from the broadening list of international state and non-state sources. Intelligence analysts have

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shared that analytic breakthrough often arises from a group comprising analysts with both lived cultural experiences and professional training.[12] Understanding nuances and reading between cultural lines are crucial to deciphering intelligence. To maintain effectiveness in complex and changing global dynamics, the IC must recruit and retain a workforce that is not only technically expert, but also culturally and ethnically (in addition to racially) diverse—including professionals from countries previously of limited intelligence interest. Through recruitment, partnerships, immersive training, rotations, and the way teams are formed and recognized, the IC can demonstrate a valuing of global cultural diversity and expertise.

Changing Domestic Dynamics

The IC must understand the varied concerns and priorities of its own constituents to support the nation most effectively. This helps put intelligence into context and identifies when and how the analytic subject indicates a threat, vulnerability, or opportunity for U.S. interests. For example, this understanding can inform analysis as to which foreign influence campaigns might be effective in different U.S. communities and which insider threat behaviors are really anomalous. Conversely, the constituents—the American public—must have confidence that the IC and the larger federal policymaking and law enforcement apparatus can be impartial

and objective when analyzing diverse policy interests and the dynamics of underrepresented or marginalized people. This builds public trust necessary to secure the homeland and maintain order. A diverse workforce reflective of the American populace is one critical element of achieving these outcomes.

The United States, like the rest of the world, is undergoing a dramatic population change. Several studies indicate that between the 2030s and 2040s, immigrants will make up a record-breaking share of the U.S. domestic population; people of retirement age will outnumber the workforce; and the majority of the U.S. population under 30 years of age will be racially non-white.[13] In addition, a study projects that Islam will surpass Judaism as the second most popular religion in the United States, with Christianity falling in popularity by 2040.[14] A report from the International Organization on Migration further notes that in 2020 "the top destination country remained the United States (50.7 million international migrants)," supporting the trending statistics that immigrants will become a crucial percentage of the United States future domestic workforce.[15] An IC workforce that is not reflective of these changes will be viewed by the American public as a community that is out of touch and will create the impression that the IC does not give credence to diverse world views, experiences, languages, and interests, thereby breeding mistrust, disinterest, and disaffection.

Comprehensively and accurately understanding the dynamics of the domestic population is particularly important for elements of the IC involved in domestic security, such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Many people of color in the United States look with suspicion at elements of the IC because of both historical legacies and more recent incidents. For immigrants of color, this can include domestic incidents and those involving the IC abroad. In many situations involving the IC and their close partners in law enforcement, people of color feel misunderstood or misrepresented. They believe tensions escalate

unnecessarily or more quickly due to misperceived threats, or that threats against people of color are too easily disregarded. This, in turn, creates a lack of confidence in public leaders and sows division that foreign actors can exploit for national security gains. In the 2020 Homeland Threat Assessment report, DHS reports that Russian adversaries have been successful in aggravating social and racial tensions, undermining trust in U.S. authorities, and stoking political resentment in different communities within the American public.[16] As the U.S. population becomes increasingly heterogeneous, it is likely that foreign actors will continue their efforts to undermine national unity and sow seeds of discord by exploiting grievances within minority communities.

Recent efforts by the FBI and DHS to recognize the long-standing threat from white supremacist extremists do reflect inclusion of the interests of people of color. Still, the domestic law enforcement elements of the IC can do more to rebuild trust with Indigenous, Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Muslim populations domestically. A first step is including people of color in much larger numbers among the public-facing workforce (agents, officers, and senior leaders), but this must also extend to those producing intelligence regarding domestic and foreign populations. Ultimately, however, the IC must ensure the culture, policies, practices, and rhetoric reflect an authentic and broad appreciation for the growing multiculturalism in the United States. Without these institutional changes to create equity in the security interests and perspectives of all segments of the domestic population, misrepresentations will harm American communities of color and domestic resilience will remain at risk due to racial and social discord.

Diversity and Inclusion Improve Analytic Quality and Support Innovation

IC analysts' efforts at objective analysis are challenged by any number of cognitive biases. However, in our diverse and intertwined domestic and global environments, intergroup[17] biases are of particular

concern because they lead to intelligence pitfalls like mirror imaging,[18] fundamental attribution bias,[19] and in-group bias.[20] Psychological research explains that normal mental processes create intergroup biases[21] and that, without other cultural influences, Americans tend to rely on a White Western cultural worldview[22] when analyzing and drawing conclusions about other groups. Psychologists have shown that stereotype-based judgments are common cognitive shortcuts humans employ when presented with incomplete information,[23] such as during the intelligence analysis and collection cycle. Given the central mission of the IC to assess the motivations and actions of people around the world, including those who are not straight, White, male, and Christian, such implicit biases and cognitive shortcuts can be consequential when unmitigated. For intelligence analysts, and the decision makers who rely on their analyses, a failure to confront implicit intergroup biases results in missed opportunities and misunderstandings that create national and homeland security risks.

These implicit intergroup biases, however unintentional, must be directly acknowledged and managed. Our well-meaning nature is an insufficient defense against them. For example, studies show that people committed to being egalitarian still harbor racial bias implicitly.[24] Defenses must include intentional efforts to discover implicit intergroup biases and learn the tools to defeat them. The IC must ensure that discussions about mitigating intergroup biases, in particular, are a normal part of the dialogue for producing quality intelligence, and regularly re-evaluate internal policies and practices to discover opportunities to disrupt the application of biases.

One important counterbalance to implicit biases is building socially diverse and inclusive teams. Aside from the obvious substantive benefits of introducing different subject matter expertise and cultural orientations, diverse teams are shown to deliver functional benefits critical to developing objective and effective analytic products. The late researcher and professor Katherine Phillips

IT IS IMPORTANT TO EMPHASIZE THAT TEAM DIVERSITY WITHOUT INCLUSION WILL NOT REALIZE THESE BENEFITS.

writes, "Diversity jolts us into cognitive action in ways that homogeneity simply does not."[25] A large and growing body of research shows that socially diverse teams prepare and interact in ways that produce more innovative and fact-based outcomes.[26] Members of diverse groups spend more time before meetings thinking about others' perspectives, anticipating a more challenging effort to reach consensus, and preparing to avoid potential miscommunication,[27] leading to more comprehensive analyses. During interaction among diverse teams, participants share information more thoroughly and are more likely to focus on facts, constantly re-evaluating them and remaining objective. Diverse teams disrupt group think, force groups to consider alternative perspectives, and demonstrate better group performance on decision-making tasks.[28] And when dissent comes from a socially diverse team member, it provokes more thought than when it comes from a homogeneous team member.[29]

Research also shows that diverse teams produce more innovative and impactful scientific research and analysis. Richard Freeman and Wei Huang of Harvard University examined the ethnic identities of more than 1.5 million authors on scientific papers published in the United States between 1985 and 2008. Considering both citations and journal impact factors, the analysis concluded that "diversity in inputs into papers leads to greater contributions to science" than ethnically homogeneous teams.[30] Individuals who have been exposed to other cultures are more likely to develop and explore creative ideas themselves.[31][32] It is important to emphasize that team diversity without inclusion will

not realize these benefits. Diversity begins the process of changing the makeup of the team, but it may not ultimately change the environment to ensure diverse voices are heard. If very few members of marginalized groups are involved on a team, if organizational leadership is not also diverse, and if the organization does not demonstrate receptiveness and egalitarianism in small and large interactions, research shows the organization will not reap the benefits of diversity. Data suggests that while the IC has made some progress in diversity at lower ranks, work remains to achieve comprehensive and persistent inclusion.

MINORITY SUBGROUPS DISTRIBUTION
Pay Grades GS/GG-11 to Senior Pay Levels
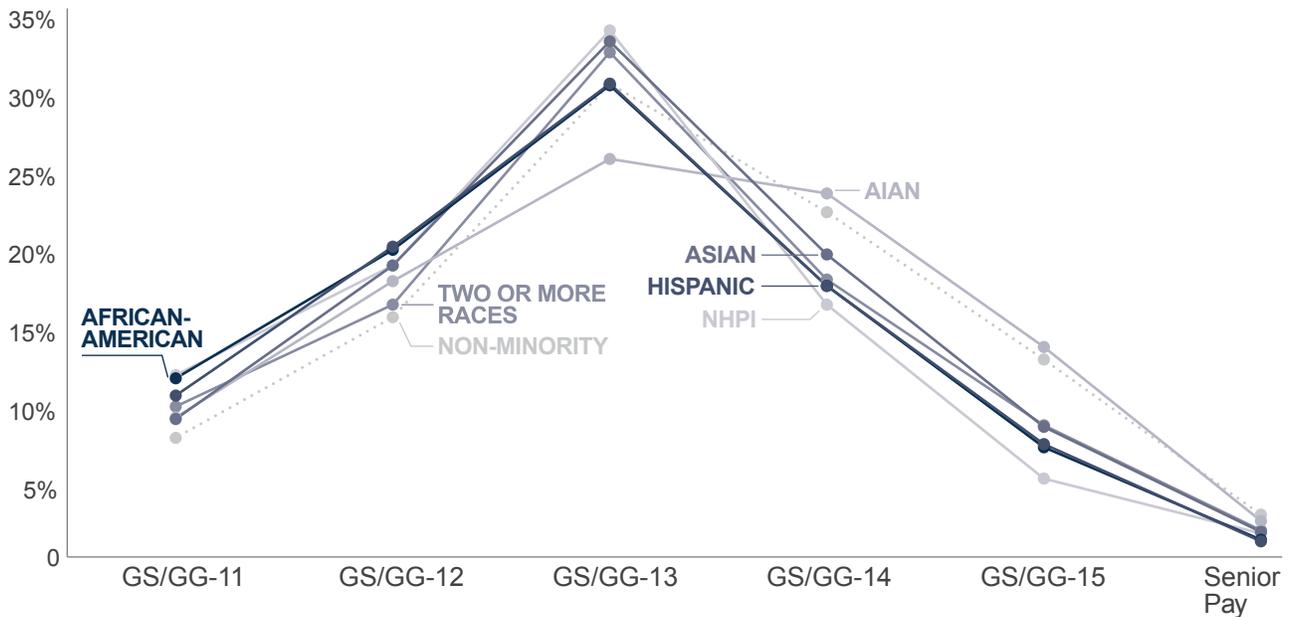
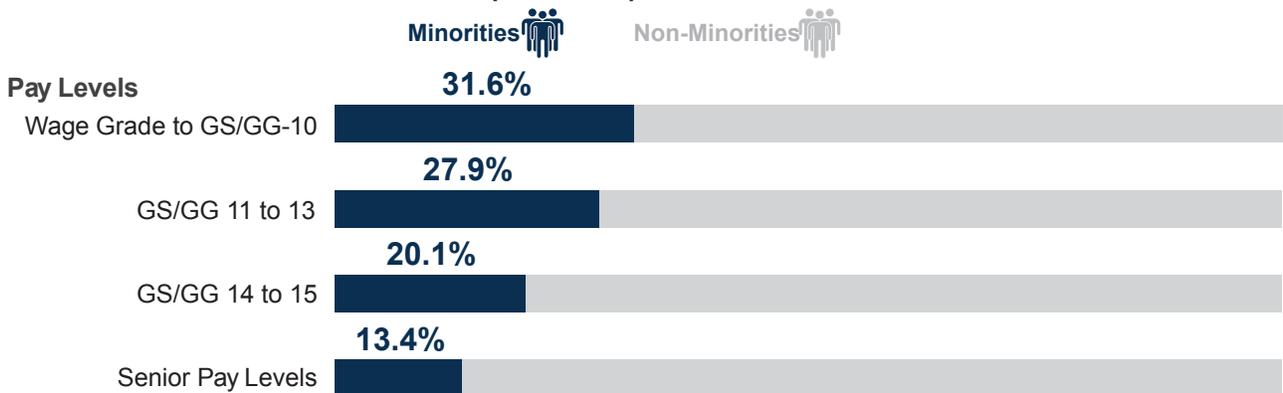## MINORITIES BY PAY GRADE (FY 2017)

Figure 4 Statistic of Minorities Holding Leadership Positions in the IC

Research shows that diverse leadership is a key marker for inclusive organizations. Without diverse leadership, women are 20 percent less likely than straight White men to win endorsement for their ideas, people of color are 24 percent less likely, and members of the LGBTQ community are 21 percent less likely.[33] And yet, within the IC women and minorities continued to be *less represented* at pay grades above GS/GG-13 and their representation as managers and supervisors *decreased* in FY2019.[34] Inclusive organizations also ensure that all team members feel they have been invited to contribute, that there are no token diversity hires, and that no single woman or minority is put in the position to represent all others. Inclusion ensures that there is no risk of retaliation or humiliation for speaking up, that the minority voice is not at risk of elimination. Yet, according to recent Congressional testimony,[35] there are very few minorities in the core mission areas of collection and analysis. Instead, minorities make up a greater share of support positions.

These trends are illuminated by a closer look at two of the larger IC agencies, the CIA and FBI. A 2015 study of CIA leadership commissioned by then-director John Brennan concluded, "Over the past 20 years—in several critical areas—the senior leadership of the CIA has become less diverse." The study also noted that the number of senior Black officers actually declined between 2004 and 2014. In a request by the Wall Street Journal, the CIA could not provide an update to the 2015 report, which alone is telling.[36] Similar issues persist at the FBI: "'The seventh floor in the FBI is where decisions and policies are made,' [retired Special Agent Eric Jackson] told CBS News. 'Right now, there are no African Americans on the seventh floor.' Of the top 10 leadership positions in the FBI, all are currently held by White men…Currently, only 4% of the 13,000 FBI agents around the world are Black, a number that has stayed virtually the same for decades."[37]

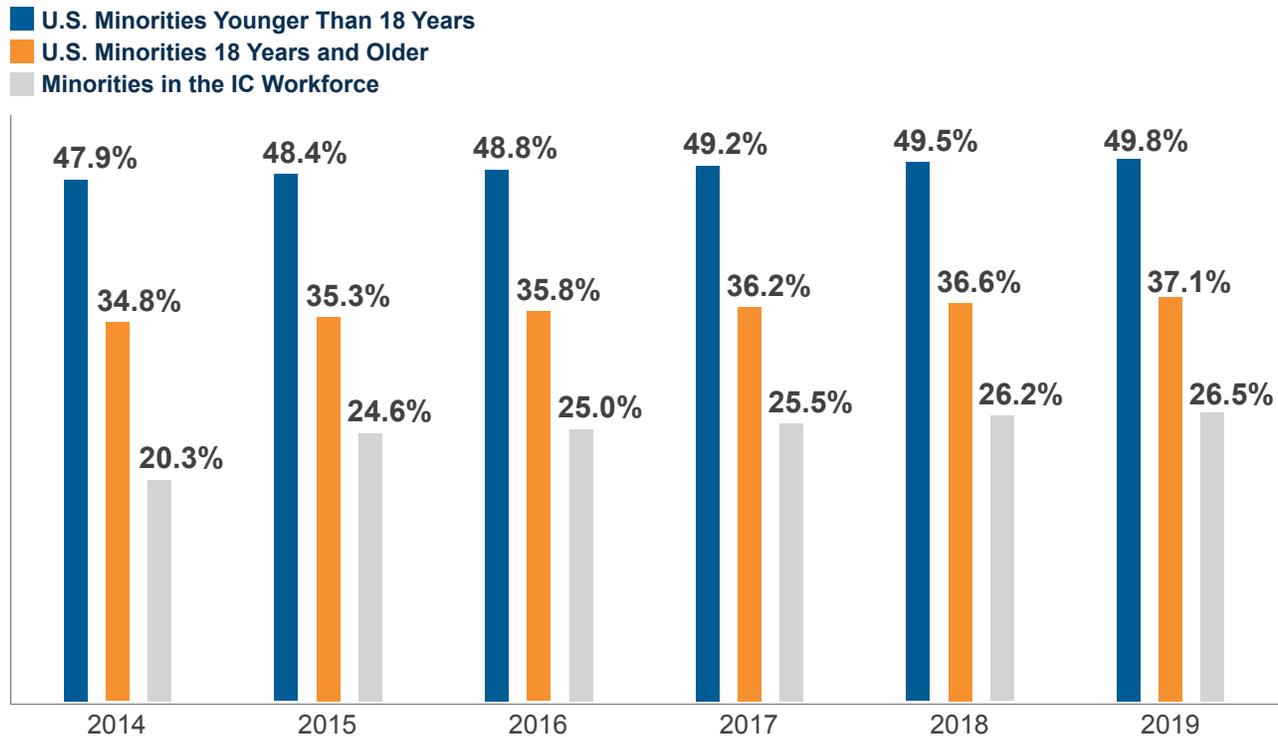Organizations with diverse leaders outperform other organizations in part because that more entrenched diversity helps create an environment where all employees find receptive senior leaders willing to hear their ideas and concerns, thereby unlocking innovation. Team members are psychologically safe, another key indicator of successful teams.[38] Inclusion, within a team and within leadership, helps ensure that all questions and ideas are taken seriously and can have a positive impact. Lastly, inclusion is a key marker of workplace belonging, which indicates that workers are more likely to stay engaged at work, remain loyal, and have longer tenure with an organization.[39]

Diverse and inclusive organizations are critical to disrupting implicit intergroup biases that have the potential to cloud IC collection and analysis efforts. But the IC writ large will not create this organizational environment without larger numbers of socially diverse teams in core mission areas, diverse leadership, and ultimately a value system that creates psychological safety and conveys authority to heterogeneous sources of expertise and skill.

The Way Ahead

As IC agencies work toward greater diversity and inclusion, they will navigate a domestic talent pool split between a current larger and older generation that is less diverse and a future younger generation in which racial Whites will become the minority.[40][41][42] As depicted in the figure below, the future U.S. workforce's percentage of minorities is both growing and already larger than the current percentage of minorities in the workforce. Furthermore, not only will the future workforce look starkly different by demographics, the ideals of the future working generations and their expectations in the workspace will differ from the current working generation. For example, millennials desire a workplace that encourages innovation over rigid procedural step processes. More specifically, 83 percent of Gen Z candidates state that companies' commitment to diversity and inclusion is a vital factor in their decision-making process.[43]

A COMPARISON OF RECENT WORKFORCE MINORITIES WITH THE FUTURE WORKFORCE, BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS

- █ U.S. Minorities Younger Than 18 Years
- █ U.S. Minorities 18 Years and Older
- █ Minorities in the IC Workforce

Year	U.S. Minorities Younger Than 18 Years	U.S. Minorities 18 Years and Older	Minorities in the IC Workforce
2014	47.9%	34.8%	20.3%
2015	48.4%	35.3%	24.6%
2016	48.8%	35.8%	25.0%
2017	49.2%	36.2%	25.5%
2018	49.5%	36.6%	26.2%
2019	49.8%	37.1%	26.5%

Figure 5 The future U.S. workforce's percentage of minorities is growing

Millennials, Generation Z, and Generation X also expect their work environment to reflect their lived experiences of diversity and to have a sense of community and sense of worth through social collaboration.[44][45][46]

The Government Accountability Office in 2017 estimated that 31.6 percent of the federal workforce would be eligible for retirement by 2022 (numbers vary significantly by agency).[47] Additional reports noted that only 7.3 percent of the federal workforce is younger than 30 years of age compared with 27 percent of the private sector's workforce[48] and that only 39 percent of federal workers under the age of 35 see themselves staying in the federal sector for a long-term career.[49] To both replace retiring workforce and meet the mission need for diversity outlined in the prior sections, the IC will have to be very effective in the coming years at attracting and retaining talent from an increasingly diverse pool. And, to keep pace with demand for intelligence and achieve diversity and inclusion throughout the ranks, they will not only need to recruit college hires, but also win over and retain recruits from a younger, more diverse, and more inclusive private sector. This requires an authentic, pervasive culture of inclusion within IC agencies, fueling a reinforcing cycle where the workforce is genuinely aware of the benefits of diversity, develops and provides opportunities to diverse leaders, is receptive to diverse voices, and achieves higher hiring and retention rates for diverse talent.

A critical step in achieving this culture of inclusion is gaining recognition among all IC staff that diversity and inclusion are essential to mission success. If cultural blind spots and implicit biases naturally exist and must be upended to produce high-quality intelligence, then diversity and inclusion efforts can be seen as not only being about meeting hiring targets, but more so about

improving the effectiveness of the team in achieving the mission. The work to rectify disparities in hiring and leadership is not solely the responsibility of diversity and inclusion advocates. It must be central to leadership in all mission areas, and all staff must be involved in generating solutions. Widespread commitment in the IC to the quality of intelligence production creates an opening for teams to reflect on the processes and team dynamics that help them be more successful. Leaders should normalize discussion of cultural blind spots and implicit biases and challenge their teams to come up with mechanisms for diversifying their teams to address them, therefore creating a demand for diversity and inclusion that is driven by the core mission areas. The IC should recognize, reward, and promote leaders who are successful in leveraging diversity for innovation and intelligence production.

Diversity and inclusion advocates in the IC have made meaningful progress by establishing and promoting a variety of recruiting, leadership development, and retention programs to support a diverse workforce in the IC. When implemented in ways that increase the active, voluntary engagement of management across the organization and promote intergroup contact, such programs have been shown to drive meaningful changes in diversity over a short time. They not only provide opportunities to support capable, diverse talent, but they also turn employees who were passive supporters of inclusion and diversity into active advocates by giving these employees opportunities to make a difference (e.g., recruiting or mentorship) and to help them build collaborative, intergroup relationships, which in turn reduces biases.[50] These programs should be expanded across the IC and complemented with other effective programs, such as diversity task forces, which promote leadership engagement and accountability in diversity efforts. Diversity task forces—comprised of members from core mission areas and not only human resources —periodically bring together leadership from across the organization to review diversity and inclusion progress and challenges and to generate solutions,

which they then take back to their home departments to drive and monitor adoption.[51] Similarly, the IC could promote transparency through peer reviews of hiring and promotion decisions by internal diversity and inclusion panels or managers, particularly for senior leader positions where there is a more urgent need to make near-term progress. All of these initiatives advance a culture of inclusion, which in turn provides career development and leadership opportunities for diverse candidates.

Additionally, the IC should continue to collect metrics on its progress. Agencies can enhance this work by capturing more detailed data, such as:

- Assessing and publishing diversity by job function or mission area

- Capturing data on cultural competencies, both through education and through personal experience

- Disaggregating the share of women in the workforce by race

- Disaggregating each minority group by gender

- Workforce attitudes about diversity and inclusion, by race and gender

The addition of these more detailed analyses will shed light on where the IC may require targeted programs or cultural nuance in planning the way forward. For example, some diversity strategies the IC might consider may be beneficial for the advancement for White women, but are counter productive for women or men of color due in part to persistent stereotypes[52] of race and ethnicity. In addition, perceptions of discrimination and inclusion vary widely by race, ethnicity, and gender yet are critical to understanding and crafting strategies that reflect organizational culture. For instance, a recent Pew Research Center study[53] finds that while 82 percent of Black people say Black people are treated less fairly than Whites in hiring, pay, and promotions, 44 percent of all White interviewees agree with that statement.

The IC's efforts to analyze barriers to diversity and inclusion, as in the 2017 report commissioned by the IC Equal Employment Opportunity Office,[54] are commendable and must be expanded to examine the unique cultural attributes and programs of different IC agencies, the attitudes of the workforce about diversity and inclusion, and potential negative consequences of implementation approaches. Research and increasing corporate transparency are providing more insight into which diversity and inclusion strategies are most effective for transforming the workforce. The combination of detailed barrier and implementation analyses of the IC agencies with new data on effective methods for achieving a diverse workforce, can inform a new generation of agency-specific and IC-wide strategies to accelerate diversity and inclusion progress.

Conclusion

Leaders across the federal government have expressed a commitment to diversity for many years, recognizing that, as the largest employer in the United States, the federal government has a duty to set an example by providing equal opportunity to all segments of society. But in many cases, diversity and inclusion initiatives are seen by the general workforce as a virtuous side project or a burden, rather than as a source of mission advantage. More recently, both the public and private sectors are recognizing that diverse and inclusive workplaces are more creative, effective, and profitable; better able to understand and meet the needs of their customers and constituents; and enjoy higher employee satisfaction and retention.

For IC agencies, these benefits are particularly important given their unique mission and challenges: identifying threats, vulnerabilities, and opportunities by assessing foreign actors, many of whom do not share the straight, White, male, Christian, and American world view. By sustaining a workforce that is disproportionately White and male, with few women and diverse voices

in leadership and core mission areas, the IC misses important mission benefits. Inclusion of diverse voices enriches analysis with critical nuance that helps analysts identify threats and vulnerabilities more quickly and accurately and mitigates the implicit intergroup biases that have the potential to hamper effective intelligence analysis.

Furthermore, a diverse IC workforce builds trust with a diverse American public, which is essential to achieving equity for all constituent groups, sustaining order, and heightening constituents' interest in joining the IC workforce itself. When diversity and inclusion are embraced as a mission imperative, it makes the IC a more attractive place to work, broadens the potential candidate pool, and increases hiring and retention rates to blunt the impact of impending retirements.

Should the IC continue to pursue the same path it is taking to address diversity and inclusion, it will be increasingly difficult to achieve its mission objective with integrity. The IC will find itself lagging behind global dynamics, given projected shifts in global populations as well as changing roles of women and people of color in leadership around the world, leading to biased intelligence products, costly time delays, and missed opportunities. And if the elements of the IC workforce responsible for domestic security do not reflect and thoroughly understand all elements of the American public they serve, the United States is more vulnerable and less cohesive.

The ongoing national discourse on race and diversity presents an opportunity for the IC to build on internal investment in diversity and inclusion and make changes that will achieve lasting mission benefits. IC leaders must do more to involve the broader workforce in driving demand for diverse talent and shaping strategies to deliver diversity and inclusion as a mission advantage. It must change course to deliver pervasive and authentic diversity and inclusion more rapidly and intentionally to avoid risk to mission.

Notes

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https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=848252

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