

# **What It Looks Like vs. What It Is:** Building Competent Diversity in National Security



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# Executive Summary

“What It Looks Like vs. What It Is: Building Competent Diversity in National Security” is the result of a collaborative effort between Guidehouse and #NatSecGirlSquad, with input and assistance from Dr. Natalie Todak. We are grateful to the members of #NatSecGirlSquad, who took the time to participate in this important project and trusted us to share detailed accounts of their professional lives.

Despite the potential for competent diversity to greatly contribute to the goals of the national security apparatus, there is very little research into why the representation of women and other underrepresented groups has lagged so significantly. This study sought to gather preliminary information from a large sample of employees and prospective employees in the national security field, to better understand the key barriers facing these groups in entering, working, promoting, and leading in the field. It is our hope that this initial survey will not only provide further context for one of the most significant national security challenges of our time, but also enable and support ongoing work to address it and encourage greater collaboration going forward.

The results shared in this report are the voices of 841 members of the #NatSecGirlSquad community. As the respondent profile shows, this community is highly educated. The most common applicant for a position in the field has at least a master’s degree and several years of experience. They are young, and from underrepresented and intersectional groups, though still less racially and ethnically diverse than the general population.

Respondents reported significant barriers to entry, namely the computerized HR screening process, getting a sponsor for and information on the security clearance process, and identifying opportunities with sufficient salary and benefits. While there are countless more insights to share, we will leave the members of #NatSecGirlSquad to speak for themselves in the pages that follow.

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# Survey Approach

**Sampling Frame.** Broadly focused on securing and defending the country from foreign and internal threats, the U.S. National Security field encompasses jobs in the federal government, military, research, media, technology, general contracting, and beyond. We aimed to recruit approximately 1,000 current, prospective, and former employees (18 years of age or older) from across these subfields. Prospective employees were sampled to examine how they are considering and preparing for jobs in national security, while current and former employees were sampled to understand their direct experiences working in the field.

**Recruitment.** Recruitment and data collection were carried out in fall 2019. Prospective participants were contacted via email and on social media. We targeted recruitment efforts to the #NatSecGirlSquad (#NSGS) network, a professional development community and strategic advisory services firm with over 20,000 followers. #NSGS Founder and Managing Director Maggie Feldman-Piltch sent several emails to the membership, providing an overview of the study and a link to complete the survey. Individuals were also asked to share the link among their networks. The research team posted similar information to their professional Twitter pages.

**Ethics.** The study was reviewed and approved by the University of Alabama at Birmingham Office of the Institutional Review Board (UAB IRB), where Dr. Natalie Todak, the survey creator, works as an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice. All recruitment, data collection, and reporting procedures used in this study adhered strictly to the plan approved by the UAB IRB.

**Questionnaire Overview.** The survey was developed and deployed online using Qualtrics XM. Given the lack of research on diversity in the U.S. National Security field, the primary purpose of this study was to generate preliminary descriptive data that could be used to guide future research. Accordingly, a majority of the survey questions were designed to gather descriptive statistics to illustrate the extent to which individuals agreed with various statements. Open-ended questions were also included, allowing individuals to explain their responses. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

**Participant Screening.** On opening the survey, potential participants were presented with an IRB-approved information sheet to ensure they were fully informed about the study. They were then asked whether they consented to participate and those who responded “no” were not able to enter the survey. Those who reported they were less than 18 years old and those who did not have any experience or interest in the field were also unable to complete the survey.

**Survey Questions and Organization.** The first question gauged whether the respondent was a prospective, current, or former national security employee. Their response to this question determined the set of questions they were asked.

- *Prospective employees* were either interested in or currently applying for jobs in national security. They were asked about steps taken to prepare for the job, interest in other career options, and concerns about a career in the field.
- *Former employees* had either retired or left their careers in national security. They were asked about their decisions to leave the field.
- *Current and former employees* were asked about their careers in national security, including length, assignments, transfers, promotions, and leadership experience.

After responding to category-specific questions, most\* respondents were asked about experiences with the application process, general attitudes about diversity and equality in the national security field, personal experiences on the job, mentorship, and demographics.

\*Prospective employees were only asked relevant questions.

*[See Appendix B for the complete survey questionnaire.]*

## **Organization of the Report**

The report groups findings into three broad categories:

- Applying for Jobs in National Security
- Working in National Security
- Leadership and Promotion in National Security Careers

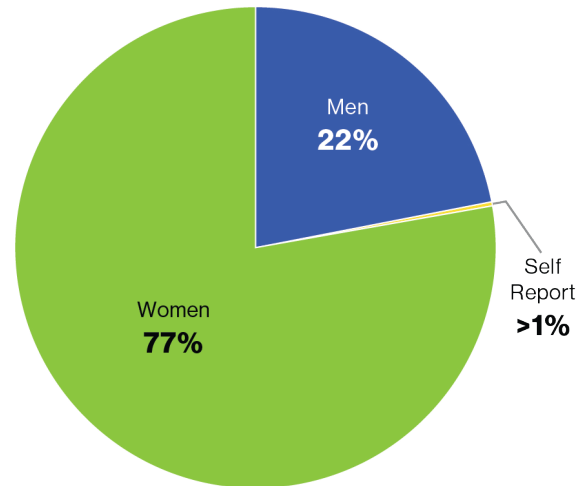
The results of key questions grouped into these survey categories are provided within this report. An analysis is included based on the results at the aggregate level, as well as across demographic categories including age and gender. The data provided was collected from responses to questions designed to gather descriptive statistics to illustrate the extent to which individuals agreed with various statements across these categories. In some instances, illustrative text or quotes gathered from open-ended questions are also included to provide depth or context to the data.

# Demographics

While personally identifiable information was not requested from survey respondents, some demographic information about their gender identity, race/ethnicity, education, job status, and length of tenure were captured. The demographic categories were selected with an expectation that the survey results might vary in a material way across these sub-categories and thereby provide additional insight into the analysis. It is important to note that there are some limitations for reporting across these demographics, as the majority of respondents identified as white. Any future research will attempt to recruit a more diverse sample, particularly in terms of race/ethnicity. Of the 841 people who began the survey, 611 people reached the end of the survey. Specific demographic information captured is included to the right.

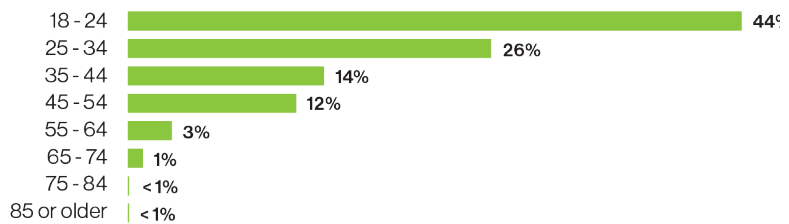
## Gender

The majority of survey respondents, or 77% (417), identified as women. 22% (118) identified as men, and less than 1% (5) self-reported their gender. Of the aggregate sample, 301 people did not respond to the question about gender.



## Age of respondents

Most survey respondents, or 70% (380), were between the ages of 25 and 44. The highest sub-grouping by age was the 25 to 34 category, which represents 44% (237) of the sample.



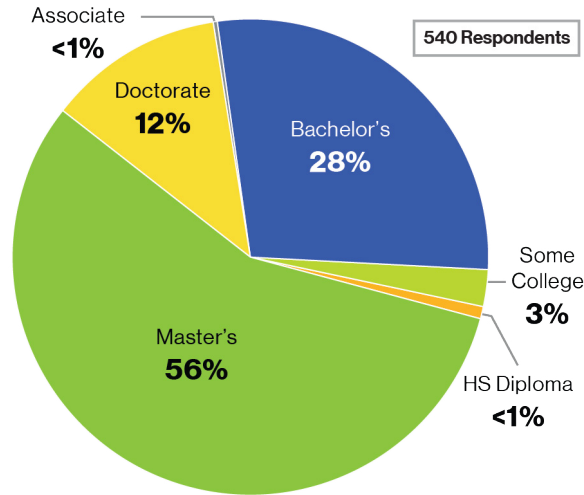
## Race

The majority of survey participants, or 83% (445), identified as White. Of the participants identified as Non-White, 4% (22) identified as Asian, 3% (15) identified as Black/African American. Less than one percent identified as Middle Eastern/Arab (4), American Indian (3), Alaska Native (1), or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (1). Approximately 8% (44) of those who responded selected multiple categories.



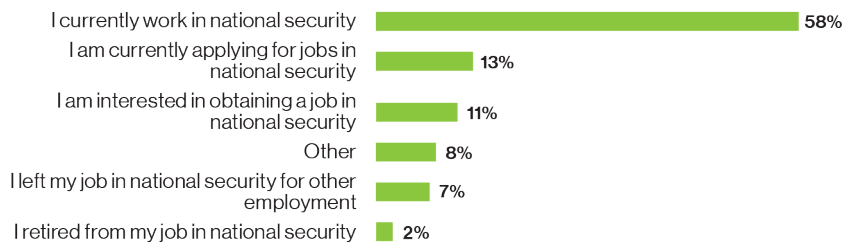
### Highest level of education completed

Survey respondents tended to be highly educated, with 56% (305) having reported a master's degree as the highest level of education obtained. Additionally, 28% (152) reported having earned a bachelor's degree and 12% (64) reported having earned a doctorate degree. 15% (77) of respondents stated they are currently working toward a degree, of those 60% (46) reported working towards a master's, 21% (16) towards a bachelor's, and 12% (9) towards a doctorate.



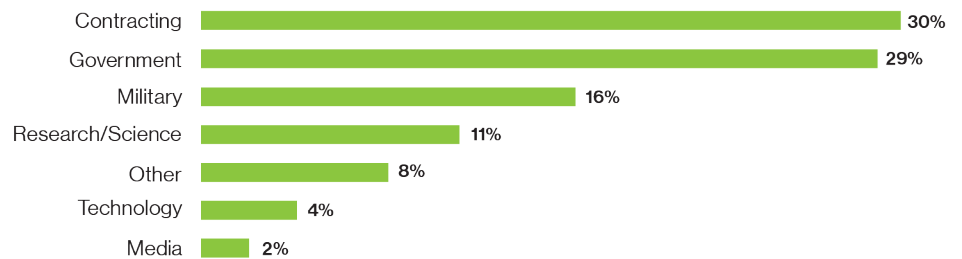
### Employment Status

The majority of survey respondents actively work in national security, with 58% (461) of respondents represented by that category.



### Component of national security

Survey participants were asked "In which component of national security do you serve?". The most popular response was contracting at 30% (136), followed by government at 29% (131).



### Length of time in current position

Most survey respondents, or 49% (179), reported having been in their current position for less than three years.



# Survey Results

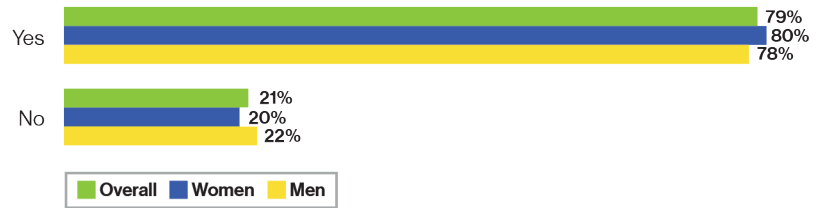
Of the respondents that answered this question, 79% (193) reported having been encouraged or supported in their application for a job in national security. When filtered by gender, 78% (29) of men and 80% (163) of women agreed with this statement. *Most popular responses to a follow-on open text question that asked, "Please explain who encouraged or supported you?" were family members working in the national security field and professors from college and/or graduate school.*

Of the respondents that answered this question, 53% (256) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that applying for a job in national security was challenging. When filtered by gender, 55% (204) of women either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 45% (50) of men strongly agreed or agreed.

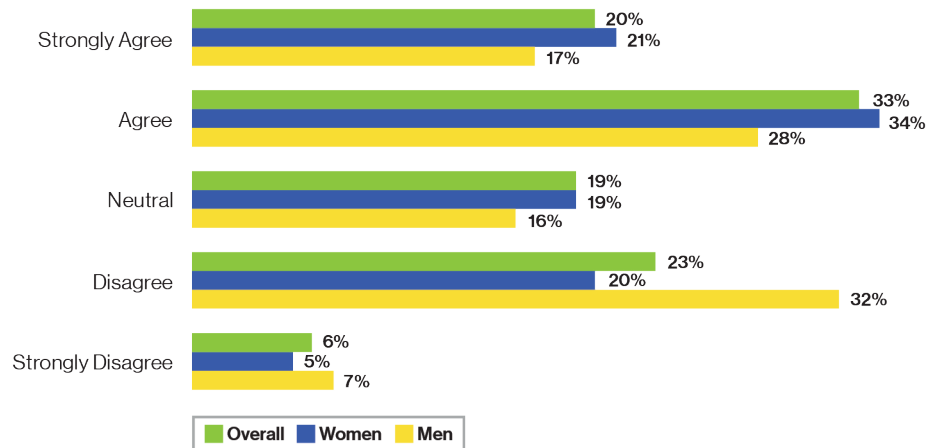
## Applying for Jobs in National Security

This section of the report is designed to represent the respondents' views on all aspects of the application process. Survey respondents were asked a variety of questions intended to capture their overall perceptions of the application process, challenges that exist with specific phases of the application process, and perceptions about the application process specifically as it relates to women and underrepresented groups. Highlights of the survey results are included below.

**Q:** Has anyone encouraged you or supported you to apply for a job in national security?



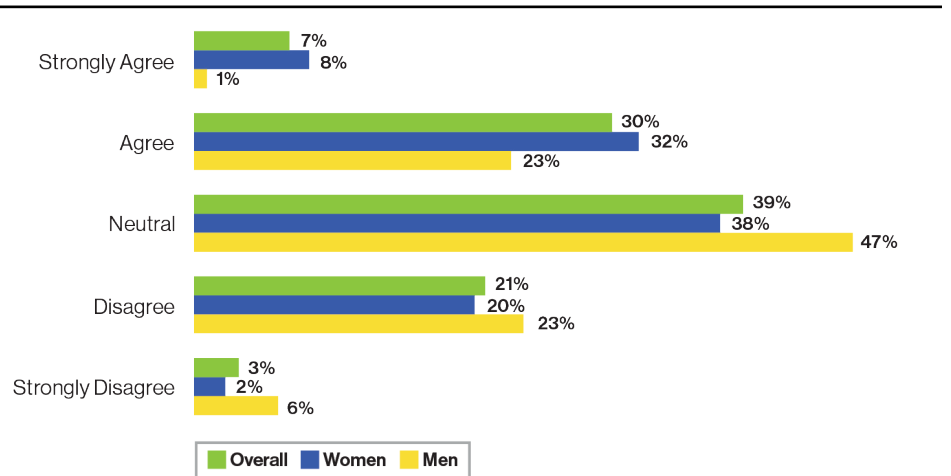
**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: Applying for a job in national security is/was challenging for me.





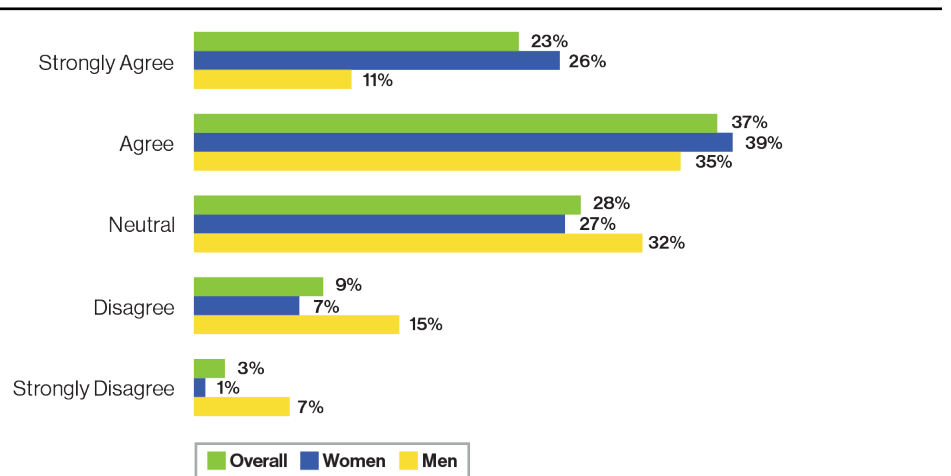
Of the respondents that answered this question, 39% (208) were neutral on the statement that it is especially difficult for women to get through the application process. When filtered by gender, women strongly agreed or agreed (40% or 165) with the statement at a much higher rate than men (24% or 27).

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: It is especially difficult for women to get through the application process.



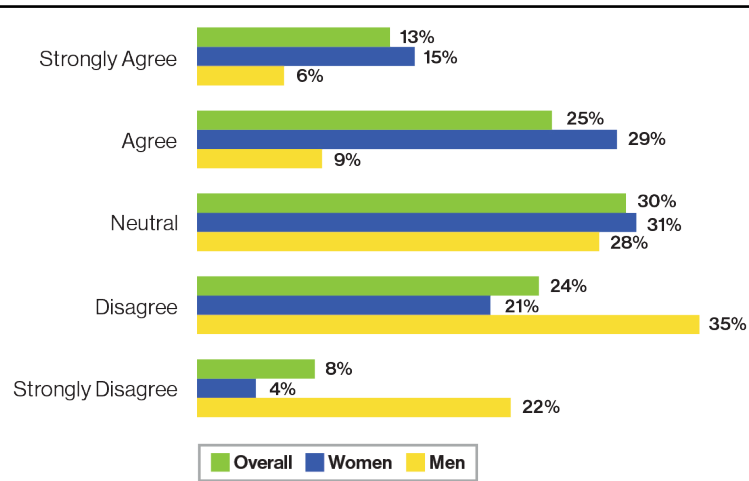
When asked whether it is especially difficult for people from underrepresented groups to get through the application process, 60% (318) of the respondents to this question strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When filtered by gender, women strongly agreed or agreed (65% or 262) with this statement at a higher rate than men (46% or 53). *Open text responses that further illustrate this point most often focused on the background investigation/clearance process being especially difficult for immigrants, and a need for better education on the part of human resources to understand the broader life and work experiences of women and underrepresented groups versus viewing desirable experience from a very narrow scope.*

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: It is especially difficult for people from underrepresented groups to get through the application process.



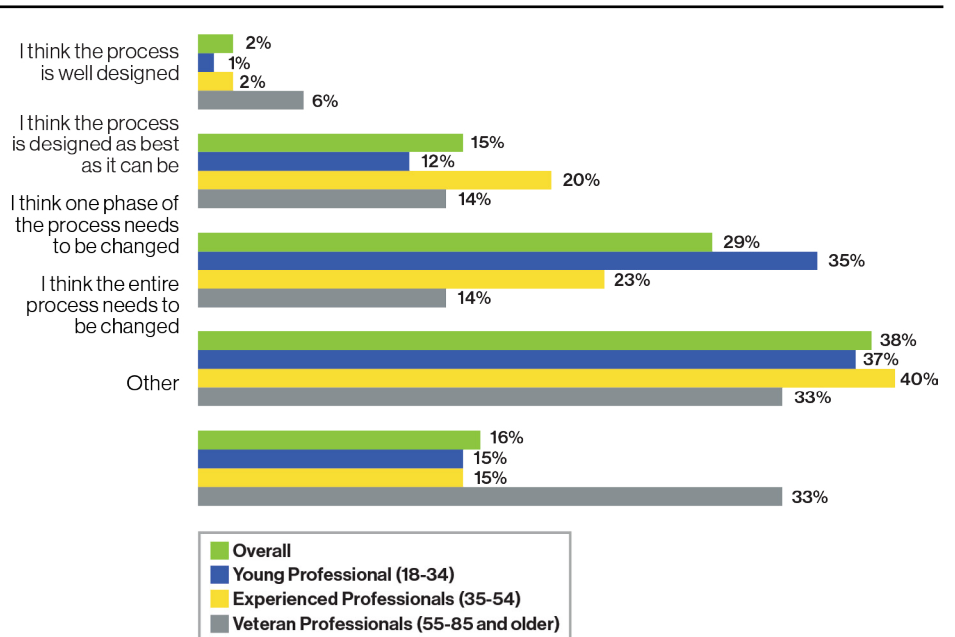
Of the respondents that answered this question, responses were mixed in agreement with the statement that it is difficult for “people like me” to get through the application process. When filtered by gender, 44% (181) of women strongly agreed or agreed, while 15% (17) of men strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: It is especially difficult for people like me to get through the application process.



Of the respondents that answered this question, 38% (210) reported the entire application process for jobs in national security needs to be changed. In comparison 29% (155) reported that one phase of the process needs to be changed, and 15% (80) reported that they think the process is designed as best as it can be. Only 2% (13) reported the process as well designed. When filtered by age, the percentage of respondents that think the entire process needs to be changed is more heavily weighted in the early- to mid-career range.

**Q:** What best reflects your view about the application process for jobs in national security?



**Q:** Which phase of the application process was most challenging for you?

The most popular response to the question about the most challenging phase of the application process was the Written Application, with 18% (51) of the respondents having selected that option, and the Computer-Based HR Screening, with 17% (49) selecting that option. *Open text responses that further illustrate this point most often focused on a desire on the part of applicants to have access to training or information on how to communicate qualifications on resumes and applications best.*

An overwhelming 87% of the respondents to this question stated that they wish there were more opportunities made available to assist women and people from other underrepresented groups applying for jobs in this field.

**Q:** Do you wish there were more opportunities made available to assist women and people from other underrepresented groups applying for jobs in this field?



Most popular responses to a follow-on open text question that asked, “Please explain,” were centered around access to information about **identifying jobs, how to prepare for the process, and lack of a professional “network.”** A sampling of open text responses is included below.

**Example responses to open text question regarding opportunities needed to assist women and underrepresented groups in applying to national security jobs:**

- I would like to see mentorship for women and underrepresented groups to help connect them, and teach them the norms and standards for the industry. Information and expectations about salary, required skills and experience, and opportunities to showcase these would be very helpful.
- In my experience, much of the application process is unknown. It would be helpful to talk to people who have been through the process or have access to resources that better prepare me for the process so that I know generally what to expect and how to best prepare myself.
- The national security field relies heavily on personal connections for job opportunities, and especially on unpaid internships for entry-level positions. This systematically harms people who can’t afford to take those positions or who attended schools that are not directly plugged into those personal networks. I think this is one of the biggest reasons for the lack of diversity in our field.

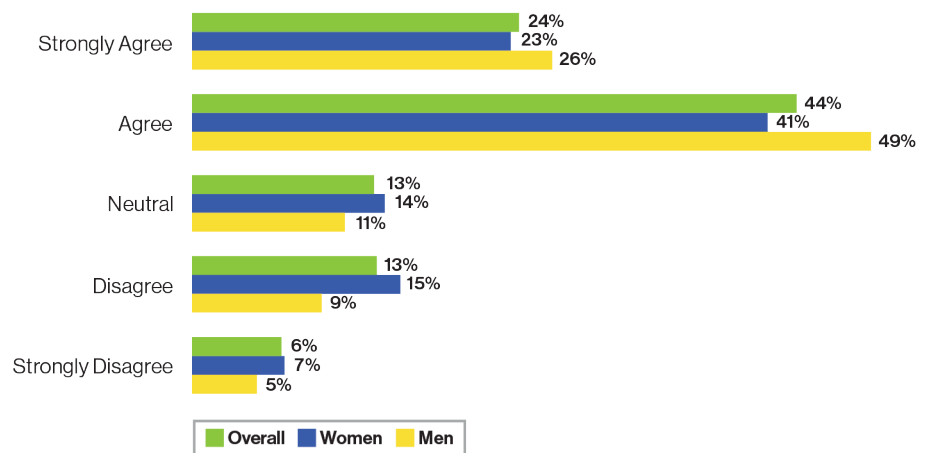
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## Working in National Security

Within this section of the report, the respondents' perceptions and insight into their, and others, experience within the national security field is represented. Questions were designed to elicit responses on a Likert scale related to overall satisfaction within the national security field and specific aspects of their jobs, as well the perception of the national security field as one that is welcoming to women and underrepresented groups. Highlights of the survey results are included below.

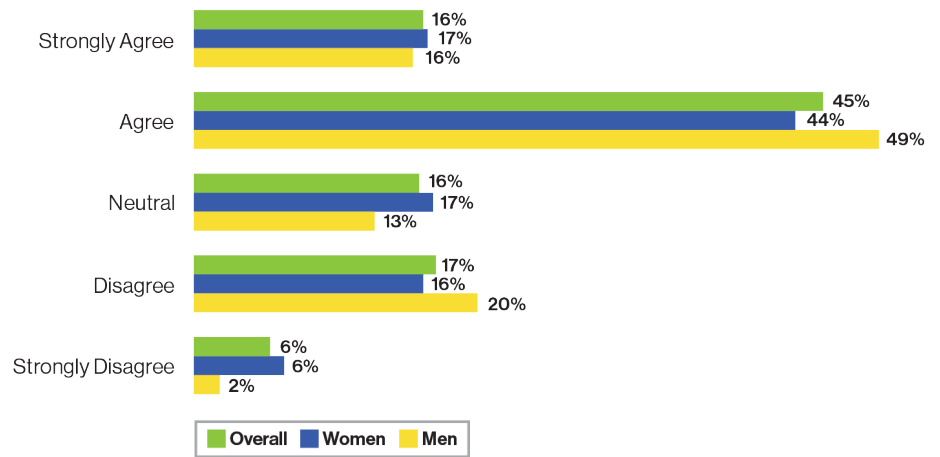
Of the respondents that answered this question, two-thirds or 68% (277), strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that the organization they work for puts their skills to good use. When filtered by gender, men strongly agreed or agreed (75% or 81) with this statement at a slightly higher rate than women (64% or 194).

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement:  
The organization I work for puts my skills and abilities to use.



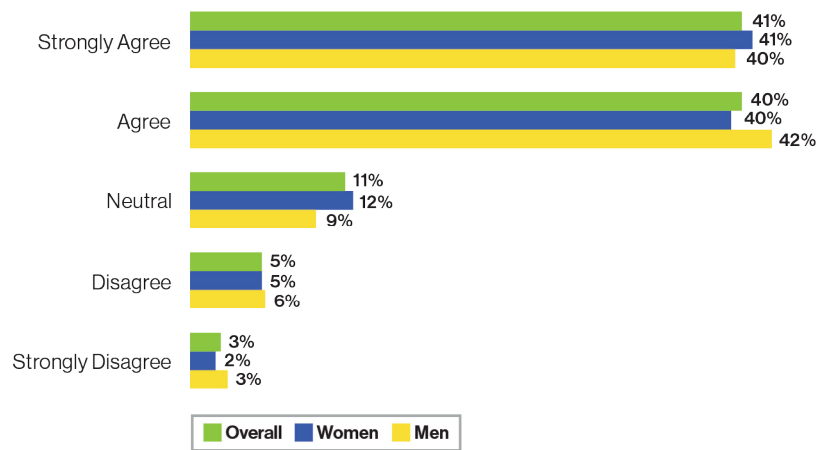
Of the respondents that answered this question, 61% (252) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they are doing what they thought they would be doing in their job. This is relatively consistent across gender groups.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I am doing what I thought I would be doing in my job.



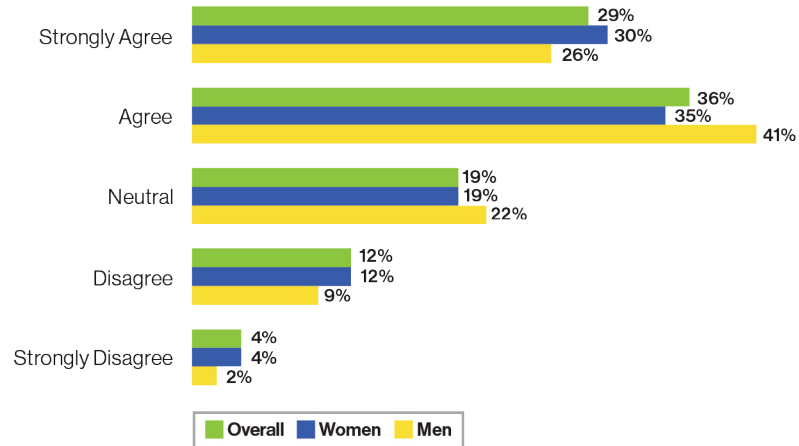
Over three-quarters of respondents to this question, or 81% (333), either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that in their position, they often learn new things of interest. Men and women responded consistently, as 82% (89) of men strongly agreed or agreed and 81% (234) of women strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: In my position, I often learn new things of interest to me.



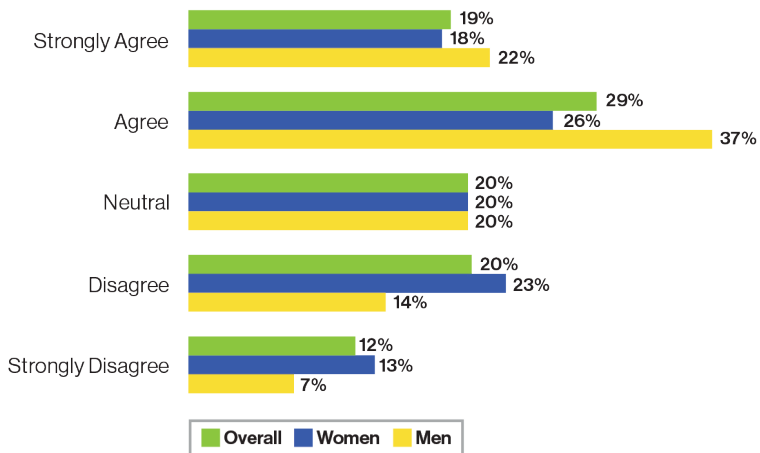
Over half of respondents to this question, or 65% (268), also reported enjoying their job. Men and women reported enjoying their job at similar rates.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I am doing a job that I truly enjoy.



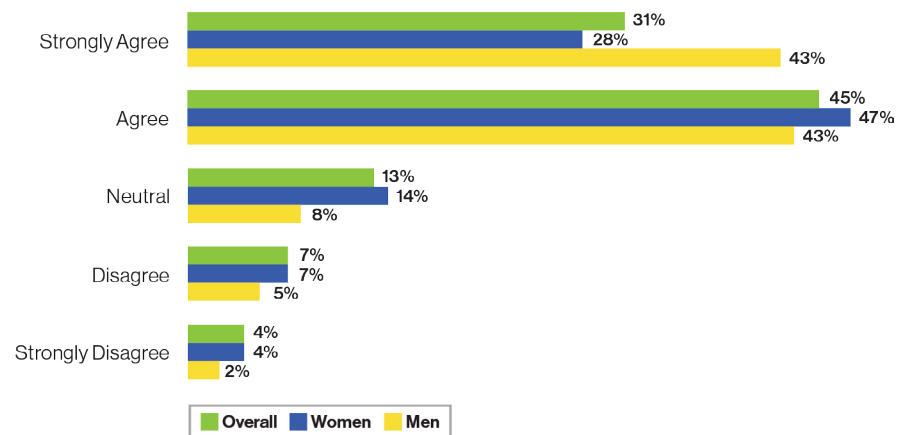
Respondents to this question were mixed on whether they believe there are growth opportunities within their work. Of the respondents, 19% (86) strongly agreed that there are many opportunities for growth in their current position, while 29% (130) agreed, 20% (92) responded neutral, 20% (91) disagreed, 12% (54) strongly disagreed. When filtered by gender, more men (59% or 63) than women (44% or 132) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: There are many opportunities for growth in my current position.



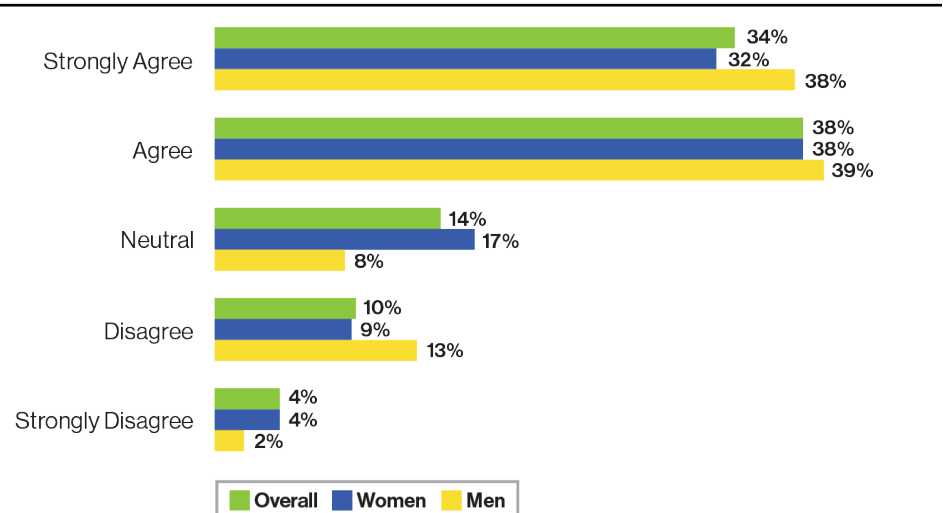
Those surveyed were overall positive about their work colleagues. Over three-quarters of the respondents that answered this question, or 76% (314), reported they strongly agreed or agreed that they have supportive colleagues at work. More men (86% or 91) than women (75% or 221) reported having supportive colleagues.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I have supportive colleagues at work.



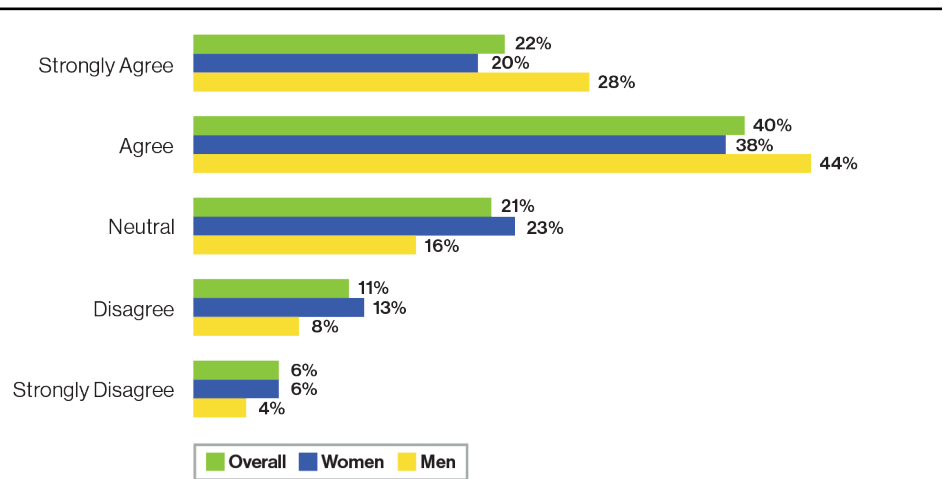
Additionally, almost three-quarters or 72% (292) of the respondents that answered this question indicated they strongly agreed or agreed that they feel like part of a team at work. When filtered by gender, women were less likely than men to report feeling like they were part of a team. Approximately 77% (82) of men strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while only 70% (208) of women strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I feel like I am part of a team at work.



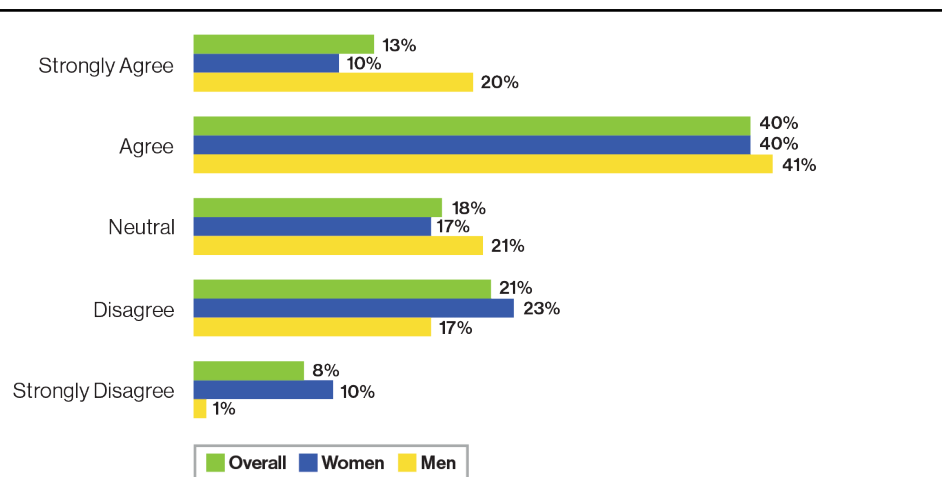
Over half of the respondents to this question, or 62% (253), indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they are on the way to achieving their career goals. When filtered by gender, 72% (77) of men strongly agreed or agreed that with the statement, while only 58% (175) of women strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I am on my way to achieving my personal career goals.



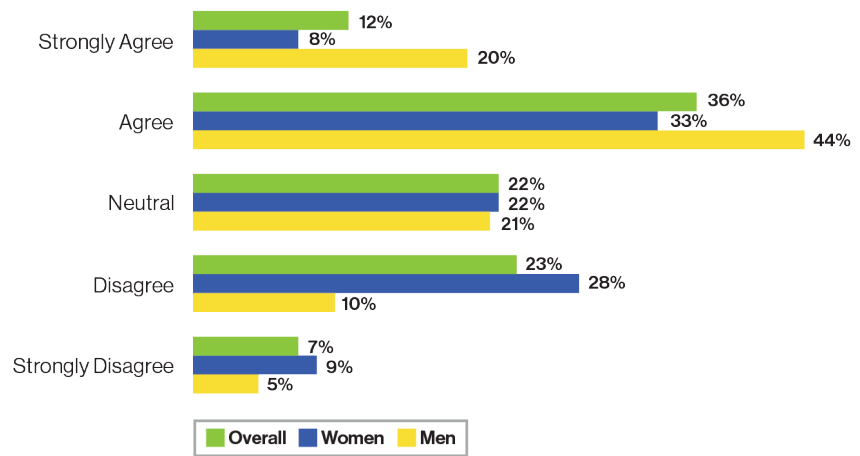
Approximately half or 53% (232) of the respondents to this question strongly agreed or agreed they are able to balance between work and home life. When filtered by gender, 61% (65) of men strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while 50% (149) of women strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I am able to find a balance between my work and home life.



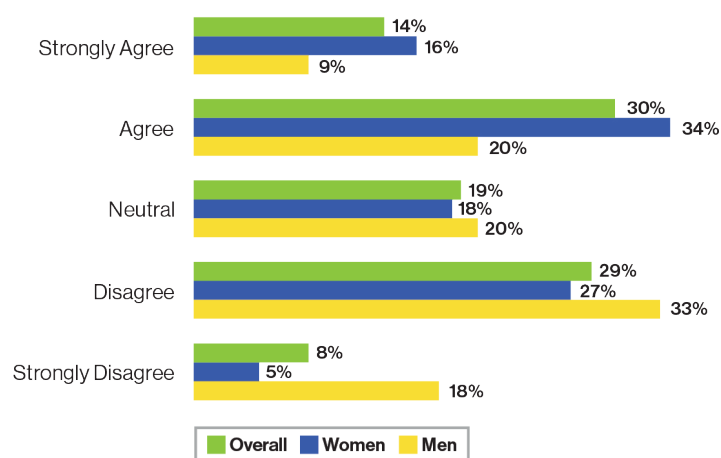
Of the respondents that answered this question, a little less than half, or 48% (193) of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they are satisfied with their salary. When filtered by gender, 64% (68) of men stated that they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while only 41% (123) of women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I am satisfied with my salary.



Of the respondents that answered this question, 44% (180) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. When filtered by gender, 50% (148) of women reported they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, but only 29% (31) of men reported they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement. Agreement by employment field is consistent, with approximately 40% of respondents within each field having indicated they agreed with the statement.

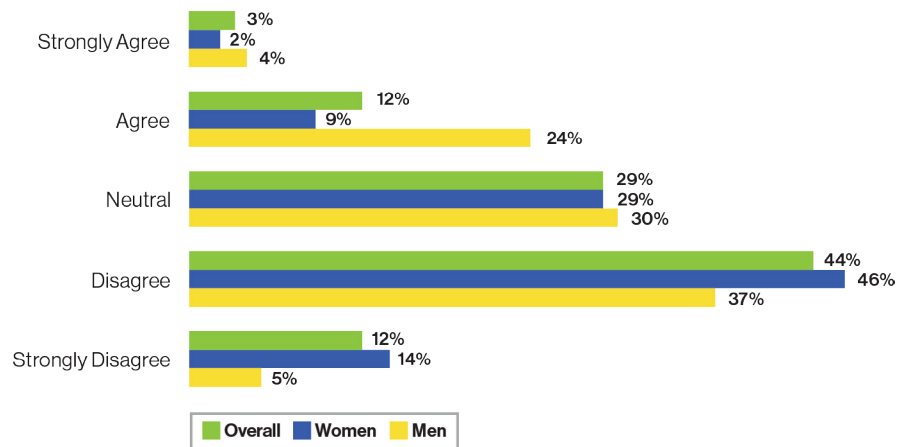
**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I feel that my salary is too low.





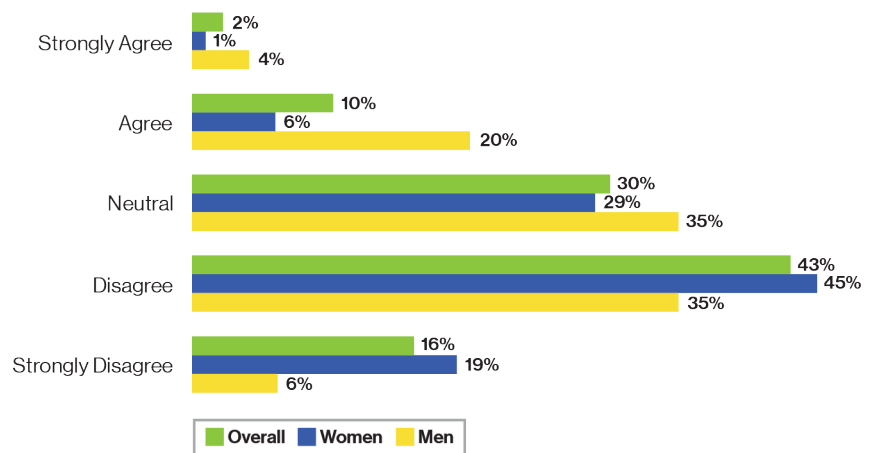
Approximately half of the respondents to this question, or 56% (300), indicated they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that national security careers offer a welcoming environment for women. When filtered by gender, more women (60% or 247) than men (42% or 48) strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: National security careers offer a welcoming environment for women.



Respondents replied similarly to the statement that national security careers offer a welcoming environment for people from underrepresented groups. Of the respondents that answered this question, 59% (309) indicated they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement. When filtered by gender, 41% (47) of men indicated they strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement, while 64% (260) of women strongly disagreed or disagreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: National security careers offer a welcoming environment for people from underrepresented groups.



**Q:** Do you have a professional mentor that you can go to for help or support?

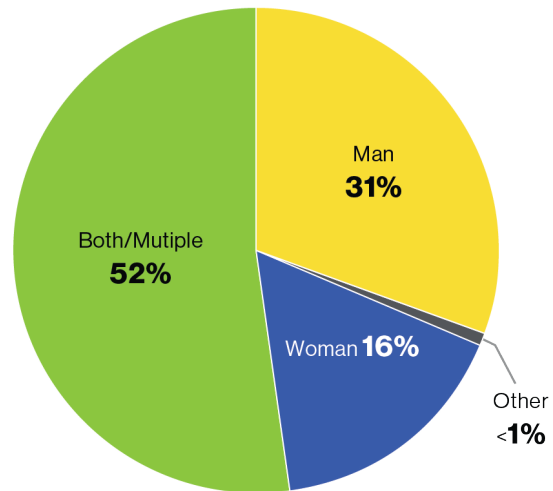
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Of the respondents that answered this question, 62% (280) reported having a mentor. Rates were similar for women and men.

Of the respondents that answered this question, 52% (145) reported having multiple mentors who are both men and women, whereas 31% (86) respondents reported that their mentor is a man, and 16% (46) reported that their mentor is a woman.

**Q:** Is your mentor a man or a woman, or both?

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Of the respondents that answered this question, 90% (476) responded that they wished there were more opportunities made available to assist women and people from other underrepresented groups who are working in this field.

**Q:** Do you wish there were more opportunities made available to assist women and people from other underrepresented groups who are working in this field?



Most popular responses to a follow-on open text question that asked “Please explain” were centered around **mentorship, and specifically mid-career assistance, as well as family/work-life balance**. A sampling of open text responses is included below.

**Example responses to open text question regarding opportunities needed to assist women and underrepresented working in the national security field:**

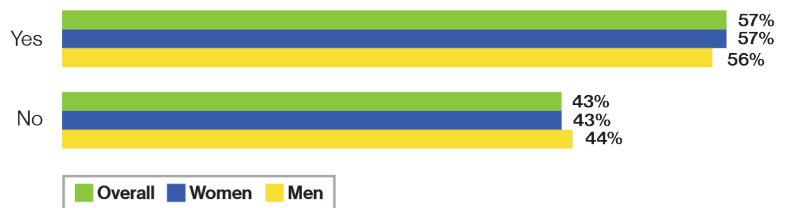
- I think people are typically more comfortable seeking out and mentoring people who look like them. I have met very few leaders who are willing to spend time with those that are different that they are in order to find the commonalities they would be willing to invest in. The path of least resistance may be the easy route, but rarely it is the path of greatest impact. If leaders would buy into the notion that they have the power to break down many barriers in our career field, then we could drastically change the narrative. By intentionally seeking out at least one person outside one’s comfort zone to whom one can impart wisdom will allow that individual to have a lasting impact that defies cultural norms.
- **I wish there were more mid-career assistance and leadership programs.** There seems to be an issue elevating from the mid-career tier level to the upper management area for women and underrepresented groups. I think it partly stems from upper management white males seeing their younger selves in their fellow employees who tend to share those same characteristics. It’s the idea of the old boy’s network (albeit less in control today than twenty years ago). They promote and tend to mentor those who reflect themselves and their own backgrounds.
- We need a more open conversation about this in all areas of national security. **It is far less a pipeline issue than it is a sustainment issue. More research is needed to understand why so many fewer women reach the top levels in national security, both within and outside of government. Is it issues with parental leave, culture, opportunities, or something else?**

## Leadership and Promotion in National Security Careers

This section of the report is designed to represent the respondents' views on leadership and promotion within the national security field. Questions were designed to elicit responses on whether respondents have been promoted, have been encouraged or discouraged to apply for a promotion, and their perceptions on their experience as leaders, if applicable. Highlights of the survey results are included below.

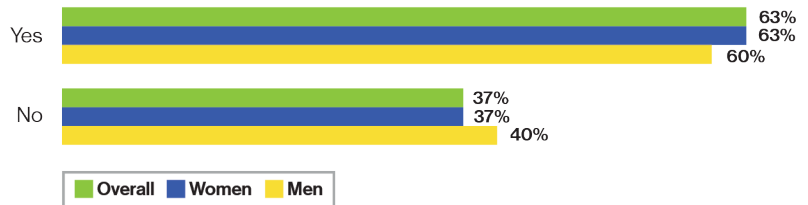
A little over half of the respondents to this question, or 57% (234), indicated they sought a promotion in their current job. When filtered by gender, men and women responded consistently, with 56% (61) of men and 57% (171) of women reported that they have sought a promotion.

**Q: Have you ever sought out a promotion in your job?**



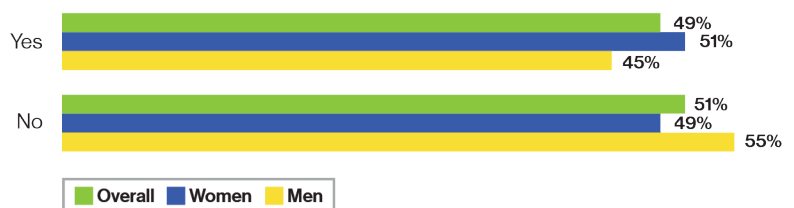
Of the respondents that answered this question, 63% (109) reported being interested in seeking a promotion. When filtered by gender, rates were similar for men (60% or 28) and women (63% or 80).

**Q: Do you have any interest in seeking out a promotion?**



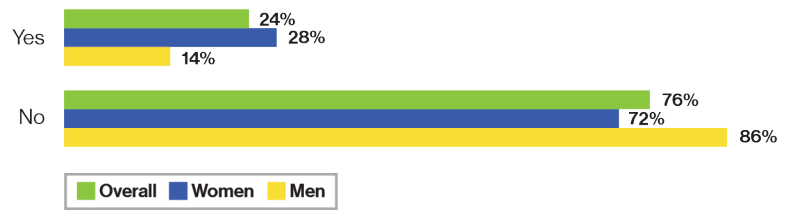
Of the respondents that answered this question, approximately half, or 49% (201), stated that they had been encouraged to apply for a promotion. When filtered by gender, 45% (49) men reported being encouraged to put in for a promotion, while 51% (151) women reported being encouraged to put in for a promotion.

**Q: Have you been encouraged by someone in your agency to put in for a promotion?**



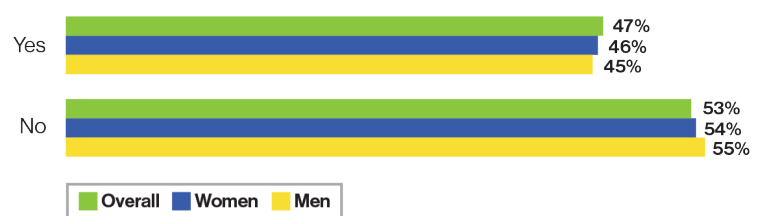
When asked the reverse, approximately one-quarter of respondents that answered this question, or 24% (97), indicated they were discouraged from putting in for a promotion. When filtered by gender, 28% (82) women reported being discouraged from putting in for a promotion, as compared to 14% (15) men.

**Q:** Have you been discouraged by someone in your agency to put in for a promotion?



Almost half of the respondents that answered this question, or 47% (208), indicated that they have promoted at their current job. This is consistent across gender groups, with 45% (49) men having reported promoting and 46% (137) having reported promoting.

**Q:** Have you been promoted in your current job?

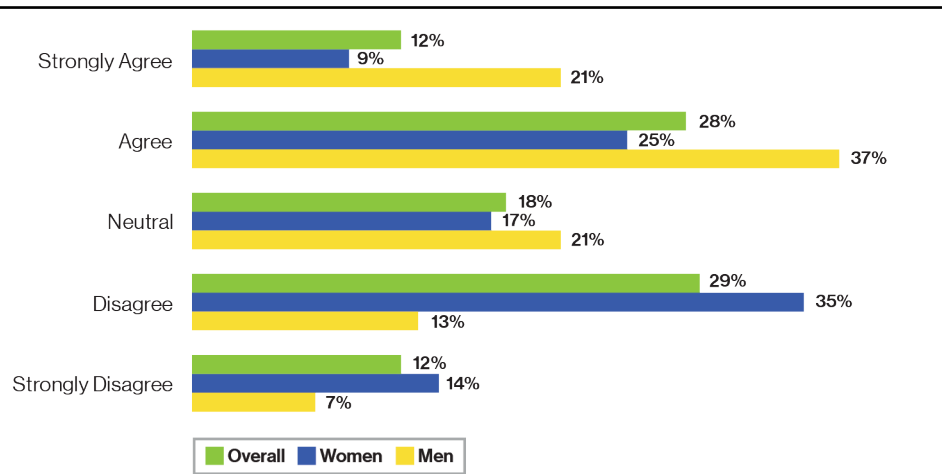


**Q:** How many times did you try for the promotion before you received it?

Of the respondents that answered this question, approximately two-thirds, or 67% (135), reported having promoted on their first attempt, 18% (37) on their second attempt, and 9% (18) on their third. When filtered by gender, 72% (33) of the men who responded promoted on their first try, while 63% (84) of women promoted on their first try.

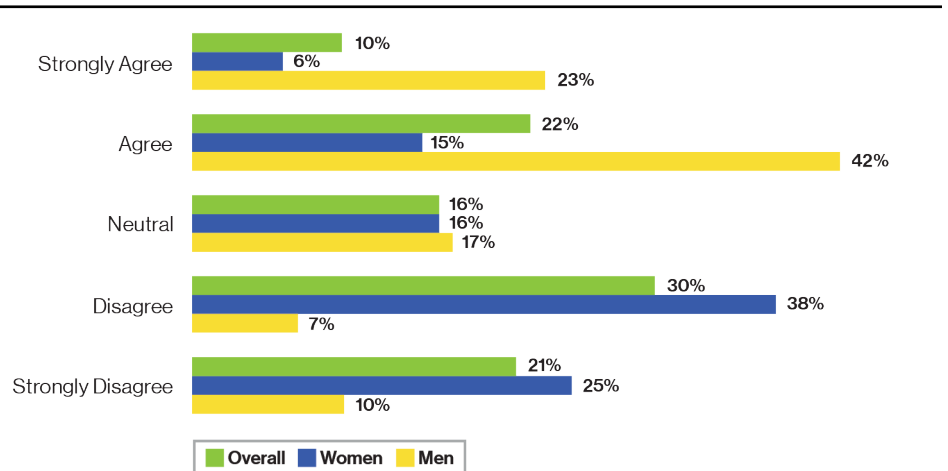
Of the respondents that answered this question, responses were split on whether they agreed with the statement that they see many other people “like them” working in their position. However, when filtered by gender, fewer women (34% or 101) than men (58% or 63) strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I see many other people like me working in my position.



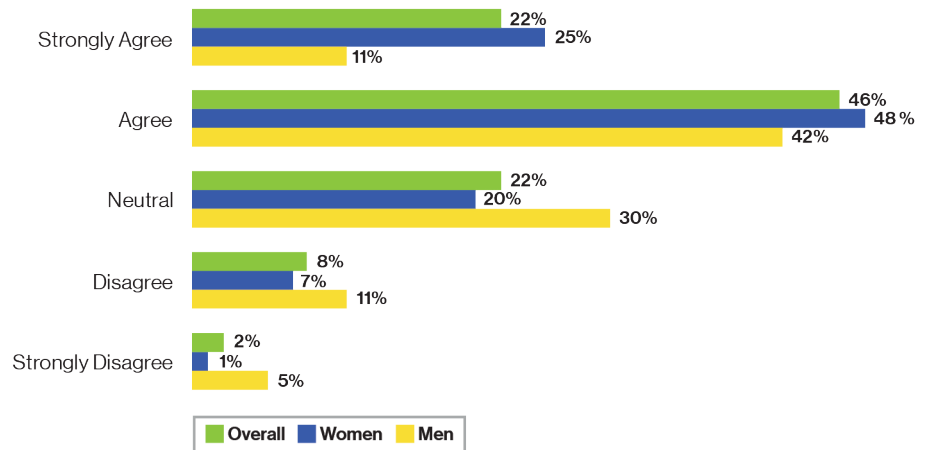
Similarly, respondents were split in whether they agreed with the statement that they see many other people like themselves serving as leaders in their field. When filtered by gender, fewer women also strongly agreed or agreed with this statement than men, with percentages at 21% (62) and 65% (70), respectively.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I see many other people like me serving as leaders in my field.



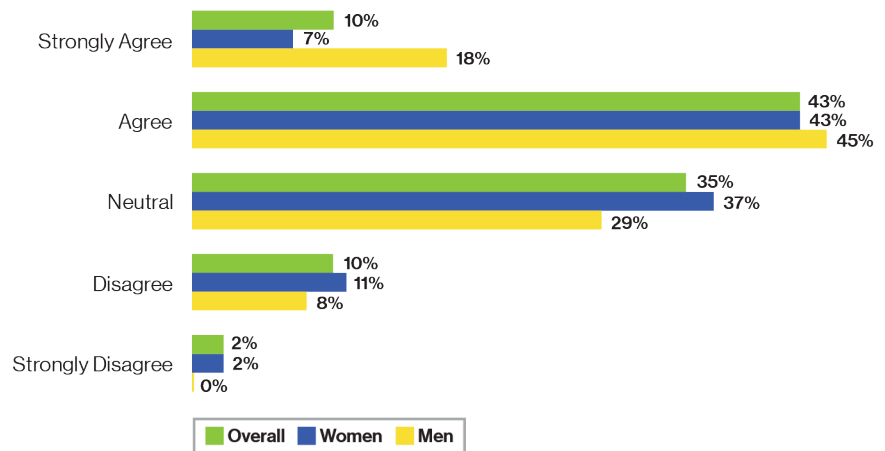
More than two-thirds of the respondents to this question, or 68% (360) indicated they strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that it is more challenging for women to earn promotions in this field. When filtered by gender, 73% (296) of women strongly agreed or agreed, while only 53% (61) of men strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: I think it is more challenging for women to earn promotions in this field.



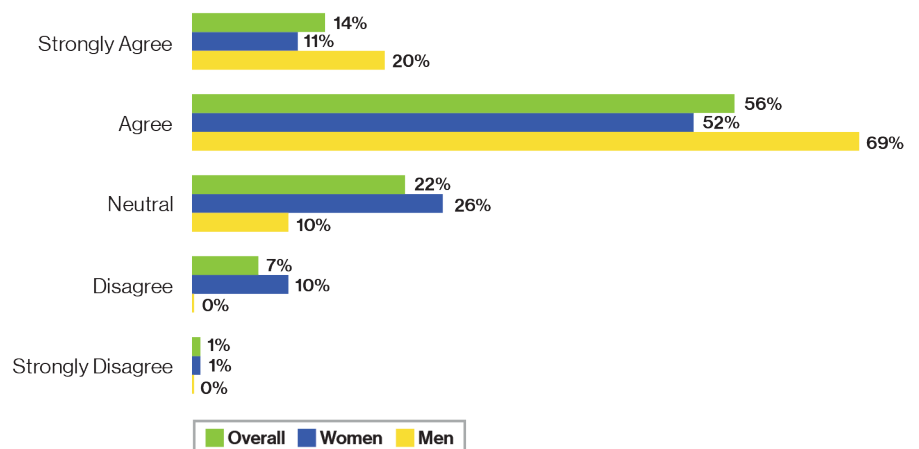
Over half of all respondents to this question, or 53% (99), strongly agreed or agreed that their experiences as a leader have been positive. When filtered by gender, 50% (66) of women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, whereas 63% (31) of men strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: My experiences as a leader have been overwhelmingly positive.



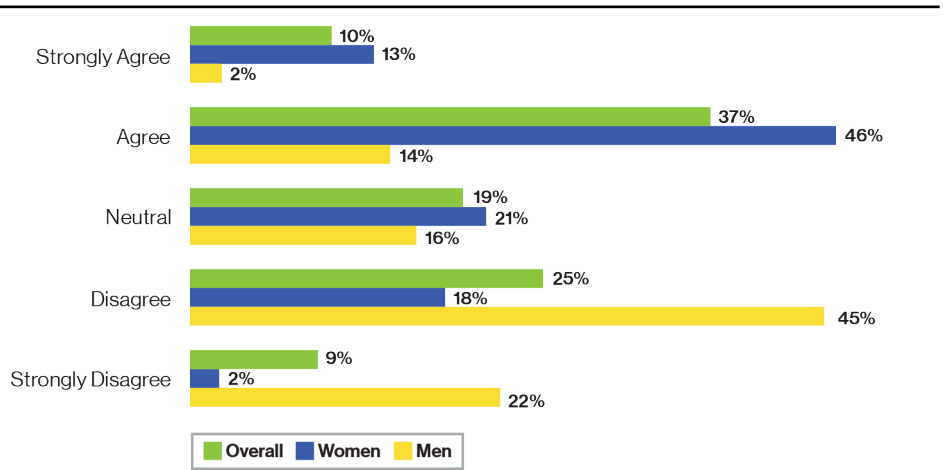
Similarly, almost three-quarters of the respondents that answered this question, or 70% (130), strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that as a leader, they feel respected by others in their agency. When filtered by gender, men strongly agreed or agreed (89% or 44) with the statement at a higher rate than women (63% or 84).

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement: As a leader, I am respected by others in my agency.



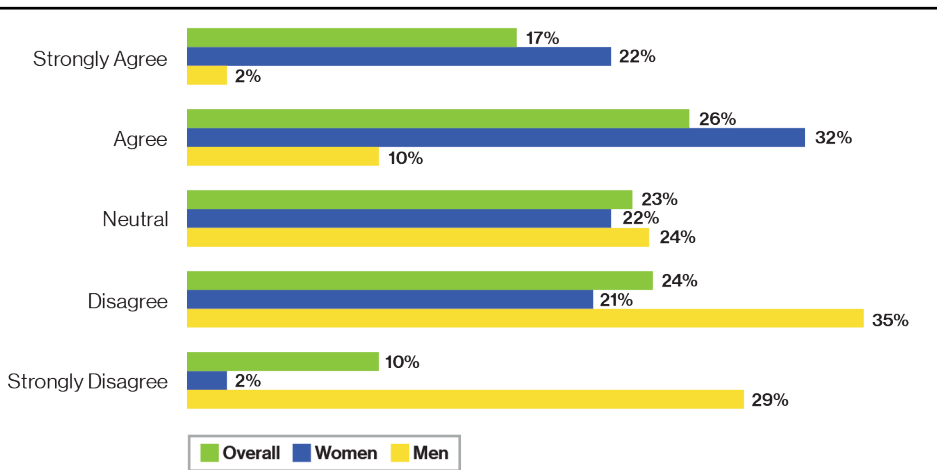
Almost half or 47% (87) of the respondents to this question strongly agreed or agreed that they had experienced discrimination in their role as a leader. When filtered by gender, 59% (78) of women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, while only 16% (8) men strongly agreed or agreed.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement:  
I have experienced discrimination in my role as a leader.



Of the respondents that answered this question, responses were mixed to the statement that they had to work twice as hard to earn their position compared to others. However, when filtered by gender, 54% (73) women strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, whereas 12% (6) men strongly agreed or agreed with the statement.

**Q:** Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with this statement:  
I had to work twice as hard to earn my position compared to others.





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## Conclusion

Recognizing that there is a need to increase competent diversity in the national security field is an important first step, but is only part of the solution. This study was designed as an exploratory effort to gather preliminary data and insights into challenges from the applicant and employee perspective. The intent is for this research to serve as a further catalyst for the conversation about what we, collectively, can do to overcome these challenges, both on the part of those working or interested in working in national security and the organizations that employ them. Moving the needle on diversity will require continued conversation and collaboration, as well as additional research and programming within the government, and across the rest of the national security apparatus.



# Appendix A

## Brief Literature Review

While large bodies of research document the experiences of women working in male-dominated professional industries like policing, construction, and the automotive industry, very little attention has been paid to women's entrance and integration in U.S. national security. The limited research in this area has focused on the experiences of women in the military (Mattocks et al., 2012; Sadler et al., 2000; Shields, 1988; see, e.g., Williams, 2017) and federal law enforcement and intelligence (see, e.g., Barratt et al., 2014; Bonesteel, 2017; Martin, 2015; Schulz, 2009; Yu, online first, 2015, 2019).

Women have historically been underrepresented in U.S. national security careers. Though trends show their numbers have increased considerably over the last forty years, most notably in the armed forces, their presence in leadership is still extremely limited (Kidder et al., 2017). A recent study carried out by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS; Kidder et al., 2017) examined the representation of women in the field, from area-specific college programs (e.g., Security Studies and Public Policy) and internships, up to cabinet level positions, from 2001 to 2014. Women's representation in undergraduate programs and military service academies continuously increased during this time period, and some of the nation's top ranked security, public policy, and national security graduate programs report majority female enrollments.

However, the representation of women dropped considerably when looking at employment in national security careers, and especially in leadership (Kidder et al., 2017). One explanation for the disconnect between those training in and those ultimately working in the field of national security is that the processes for hiring individuals into careers may disproportionately weed out women recruits (Yu, 2018). For example, veteran's preference policies, which afford bonus points to applicants with military experience, tend to prioritize men over women candidates. Indeed, in 2013, women made up less than one-fifth of veteran hires in U.S. national security jobs (Kidder et al., 2017).

Echoing the stories heard in other male-dominated career fields, evidence suggests women working in national security face a number of gender specific challenges, including discrimination, sexual harassment, a lack of respect from male colleagues, a lack of role models (Hutcherson, 2018; Keverline, 2003; Martin, 2015; Yu, 2011, 2015), barriers to career advancement (Central Intelligence Agency, 2006; Hutcherson, 2018; Kidder et al., 2017; Martin, 2015; Williams, 2017; Yu, online first), and disproportionate criticism when serving in leadership roles (Holman et al., 2017; Swers, 2007). As noted by Kidder and colleagues (2017), many national security positions are focused on responding to and preventing high priority emergency situations. As such, these assignments come with the expectation that the individual be always on call and available for travel. As women still bare the majority of household and childcare responsibilities in American society (Rabe-Hemp, 2018), these factors can negatively impact morale and retention of women employees with families (see also Keverline, 2003; Shields, 1988; Yu, 2011).

Supporting this argument, several studies have found women working in federal law enforcement are less likely to be married and have fewer children compared to male agents (Keverline, 2003; Schulz, 2009; Yu, 2015, 2018). On the other hand, those working in Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs; Schulz, 2009; Yu, online first) tend to be more satisfied with their jobs compared to women working in other federal agencies. OIGs may allow for better work-life balance and generally employ more women, resulting in an overall more positive work environment for female agents.

Calls for gender diversity in the workplace are most often grounded in arguments of equity, inclusion, and basic progress (Yu, 2018). It has been argued that employees working in the national security field are not receptive to such arguments because they perceive no clear benefits in hiring women beyond, perhaps, a boost in public relations (Kidder et al., 2017; Partlow, 1984). However, anecdotal evidence suggests that acceptance of women in the field is improving.

There is ample evidence of the benefits of gender diversity for innovation and performance across a variety of professional industries worldwide (e.g., Hong & Page, 2004; McLeod et al., 1996; Nemeth, 1985; Ruiz-Jiménez et al., 2016). In policing, for example, women are linked to less controlling behaviors during encounters with citizens (Rabe-Hemp, 2008), reductions in racial and ethnic disparities in pedestrian stops (Chanin & Rojo-Mendoza, 2019), and improved responses to domestic assault and other crimes against women (Gover et al., 2011; Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006; Miller & Segal, 2019). Investigations into the benefits of diversity in national security are extremely rare. For one, women's involvement in the military and post-conflict restructuring is related to reductions in human trafficking and sexual violence, improved cooperation from local populations, and less intrastate conflict (Bleckner, 2013; Caprioli, 2005; De la Vega & Haley Nelson, 2005; Mazurana, 2003).

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# Appendix B

## Complete Survey Questionnaire

### Agreement to Participate and Eligibility *[For All Respondents]*

1. With this information in mind, would you like to participate in this survey?

- Yes
- No

2. Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes
- No

*["No" responses to either of these questions will end the survey]*

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### Career Status *[For All Respondents]*

Your response to this question will let us know what survey questions to ask you from here on out.

**3. What best describes your employment status?**

- I am interested in obtaining a job in national security
- I am currently applying for jobs in national security
- I currently work in national security
- I left my job in national security for other employment
- I retired from my job in national security
- Other *[End survey]*

### Questions About Your Career *[For Everyone Except "Interested" and "Applying"]*

These questions gather information about your career field and work experience. If you no longer work in national security, please answer these questions about the position you held the longest.

*[For Current only]*

**4. In which component of national security do you serve?**

- Government
- Military
- Contracting
- Research
- Media
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**5. What is your current position?**

- Law enforcement officer
- Intel Analyst
- Military member
- Researcher
- Reporter
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**6.** How long have you worked in your current position?

- Years \_\_\_\_\_
- Months \_\_\_\_\_

*[For Left only]*

**7.** Why did you leave your job in national security? Select all that apply.

- Dissatisfaction with the work
- Dissatisfaction with my agency
- Dissatisfaction with my coworkers/leadership
- Lack of opportunities for advancement
- Another career opportunity was more appealing to me
- Leaving was best for my personal and/or family life
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**8.** Here are the reasons you selected for leaving your job in national security. By dragging and dropping the options, please rank them from most to least important. [auto fills with selected options]

*[For Retired only]*

**9.** How long has it been since you worked in national security?

- Years \_\_\_\_\_
- Months \_\_\_\_\_

*[For Retired, Left, and Current]*

**10.** Have you worked in other areas of national security? Select all previous positions held.

- I have not held a job in any other field of national security
- Government
- Military
- Contracting
- Research
- Media
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**11.** *[Everyone except "I have not worked in other fields"]* Here are the fields of national security you have previously worked in. Please indicate how long you served in these previous positions.

- Years \_\_\_\_\_
- Months \_\_\_\_\_

**Interest in National Security Careers** *[For “Interested” and “Applying”]*

These questions gather information about your interest in a national security career.

**12.** What are your primary motivations for seeking a job in national security? *[open]*

**13.** Do you have any concerns about entering a career in national security? *[open]*

**14.** Are you interested in any other careers besides national security?

- Yes
- No

**15.** *[If yes]* What other careers are you considering?

**16.** Have you taken any specific steps to train or prepare yourself for a job in national security?

- Yes
- No

**17.** *[If yes, specific steps to prepare]* Please describe what steps you have taken to train or prepare yourself for a job in national security?

*[Interested Only]*

**18.** Is there anything in particular that has kept you from applying for a job in national security already?

**Experiences with the Application Process** *[For All Respondents Except “Interested”]*

These questions ask about the experiences you have had applying for jobs in national security. If you no longer work in national security, please answer these questions about the position you held the longest.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement *[Response options provided: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree]*

**19.** Applying for a job in national security was challenging for me.

*[The rest for agree or strongly agree only]*

**20.** Which phases of the application process did you find challenging for you? Select all that apply.

- Written application
- HR Screening Process
- In-Person Interview
- Drug test
- Polygraph Exam
- Medical screening/Fitness test
- Background Investigation

**21.** Here are the phases you indicated were challenging for you. By dragging and dropping the options, please rank them from most to least challenging.



**22.** Here is the phase of the application process that you indicated was the most challenging. Please indicate why. Select all that apply.

- I have a moral objection to this phase
- I have concerns with how this phase is carried out
- This phase of the process takes too long
- It is difficult to pass this phase of the process for me personally
- I struggled to pass this phase of the process for some other/unknown reason
- I have anxiety about this part of the process
- Other

**Experiences in National Security Positions** [*For All Respondents Except “Interested” & “Applying”*]

These questions ask about the experiences you have had in the course of your career in national security. If you no longer work in national security, please answer these questions about the position you held the longest.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement [*Response options provided: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree*]

**23.** The organization I work for puts my skills and abilities to use.

**24.** I am doing what I thought I would be doing in my job.

**25.** In my position, I often learn new things of interest to me.

**26.** I am doing a job that I truly enjoy.

**27.** There are many opportunities for growth in my current position.

**28.** I have supportive colleagues at work.

**29.** I feel like I am part of a team at work.

**30.** I am on my way to achieving my personal career goals.

**31.** I see many other people like me working in my position.

**32.** I see many other people like me serving as leaders in my field.

**33.** I am able to find a balance between my work and home life.

**34.** I am satisfied with my current salary.

**35.** I feel that my current salary is too low.

**36.** Do you have a professional mentor that you can go to for help or support?

- Yes
- No

**37.** [*If yes*] Is your mentor a man or a woman?

- Man
- Woman
- Other

**Promotion and Leadership** [For All Respondents Except “Interested” and “Applying”]

These questions ask about your experiences with the promotion process and any leadership positions you have held. If you no longer work in national security, please answer these questions about the position you held the longest.

**38.** Have you ever sought out a promotion in your current job?

- Yes
- No

**39.** [For “no” have not applied only] Do you have any interest in seeking a promotion in your current job?

- Yes
- No

**40.** [For “no” have not applied only] What is the main reason you have not yet sought a promotion?

- I am not eligible to seek a promotion yet
- I would like to accumulate more experience before I promote
- The process is too cumbersome
- I would like to keep my current position
- Promotion is not a good option for me because of family obligations
- I am not interested in the roles required of a leader in my field
- I am afraid coworkers will retaliate against me if I promote
- I have been discouraged by someone at work against promotion
- I have been discouraged by a loved one against promotion
- My agency does not have a good record of promoting women
- My agency does not have a good record of promoting people of color
- I do not think I would be selected
- I do not think I would make a good leader
- I think there are others who are better qualified for the position
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**41.** Have you ever been advised by someone in your agency to put in for a promotion?

- Yes
- No

**42.** Have you ever been discouraged by someone in your agency against putting in for a promotion?

- Yes
- No

**43.** Have you promoted at your current job?

- Yes
- No

*[For yes, promoted only]*

**44.** How many times did you try for the promotion before you got it?

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement *[Response options provided: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree]*

**45.** My experiences as a leader have been overwhelmingly positive.

**46.** I have experienced discrimination in my role as a leader.

**47.** I had to work twice as hard to earn my position compared to others.

**48.** As a leader I am respected by others in my agency.

**Perceptions of the National Security Field** *[For All Survey Respondents]*

These questions ask for your personal opinions about the national security field. If you no longer work in national security, please answer these questions about the position you held the longest.

**49.** Which best reflects your view about the application process for jobs in national security?

- I think the process is well designed.
- I think the process is designed as best as it can be.
- I think one phase of the process needs to be changed.
- I think the entire process needs to be changed.
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**50.** *[If one or more changed]* Which phase do you think needs to be changed? Select all that apply.

- Written application
- HR Screening Process
- In-Person Interview
- Drug test
- Polygraph Exam
- Medical screening/Fitness test
- Background Investigation

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement *[Response options provided: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree]*

**51.** It is especially difficult for women to get through the application process

**52.** It is especially difficult for people from underrepresented groups to get through the application process

**53.** It is especially difficult for people like me to get through the application process

**54.** National security careers offer a welcoming environment for women

**55.** National security careers offer a welcoming environment for people from underrepresented groups

**56.** National security careers offer a welcoming environment for people like me

**57.** It is difficult for women to find supportive colleagues in this field

**58.** It is difficult for people from underrepresented groups to find supportive colleagues in this field

- 59.** It is difficult for people like me to find supportive colleagues in this field
- 60.** The agency I work for has a history of promoting women
- 61.** The agency I work for has a history of promoting people from underrepresented groups
- 62.** The agency I work for has a history of promoting people like me
- 63.** I think it is more challenging for women to earn promotions in this field
- 64.** I think it is more challenging for people from underrepresented groups to earn promotions in this field
- 65.** I think it is more challenging for people like me to earn promotions in this field
- 66.** Do you wish there were more opportunities made available to assist women and minorities applying for jobs in this field?
- Yes
  - No
- 67.** Please explain. \_\_\_\_\_
- 68.** Do you wish there were more opportunities made available to assist women and minorities who are already working in this field?
- Yes
  - No
- 69.** Please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

**Demographic Information** *[For All Survey Respondents]*

This final set of questions asks for your demographic information. Please remember that this survey is completely anonymous and no information will be used to identify you or your agency. The purpose of this section is to gather general information about the group of people who completed the survey.

- 70.** What is your gender?
- Female
  - Male
  - Self report
- 71.** How old are you?

**72.** What is your race? Select all that apply.

- White
- Black/African American
- Asian
- American Indian
- Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- Indian/Middle Eastern
- Self report\_\_\_\_\_

**73.** What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic
- Non-Hispanic
- Self report

**74.** What country do you work in?

**75.** What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

- High school diploma
- No college
- Some college
- Associate's degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree

**76.** *[If some college or above]* What subject did you major in in college?

**77.** Are you currently working towards a degree?

**78.** What degree?

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# Acknowledgments and Contact Information

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#NatSecGirlsSquad

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## About Us

### Guidehouse

Guidehouse is a leading global provider of consulting services to the public and commercial markets with broad capabilities in management, technology, and risk consulting. We help clients address their toughest challenges with a focus on markets and clients facing transformational change, technology-driven innovation and significant regulatory pressure. Across a range of advisory, consulting, outsourcing, and technology/analytics services, we help clients create scalable, innovative solutions that prepare them for future growth and success. Headquartered in Washington DC, the company has more than 7,000 professionals in more than 50 locations. Guidehouse is a Veritas Capital portfolio company, led by seasoned professionals with proven and diverse expertise in traditional and emerging technologies, markets and agenda-setting issues driving national and global economies. For more information, please visit: [www.guidehouse.com](http://www.guidehouse.com).

### #NatSecGirlsSquad

#NatSecGirlsSquad builds and supports competent diversity in national security and defense through its professional development community and strategic advisory services.

Our work focuses on building expertise, confidence in that expertise, and institutionalizing opportunities for success within existing systems. We want to ensure each individual has the information, ability, and support required to define professional and personal success for themselves, alter it as their priorities evolve, and achieve it over and over again

For more information, please visit: [www.natsecgirlsquad.com](http://www.natsecgirlsquad.com).

