

EEOC FORM
715-01 PART E

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

FEDERAL AGENCY ANNUAL EEO PROGRAM STATUS REPORT

U.S. Department of Agriculture – Agricultural Research Service

For Period Covering October 1, 2011 to September 30, 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USDA – AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE

Northern Plains Area

EEOC Management Directive 715 (MD 715) Employment Opportunity Program Plan

FY 2012

NFC Reporting Center MD715 reports utilized for all but SY data
SY Workforce Data from Visual Power Files EEO software FY 12

MISSION AREA: The Northern Plains Area (NPA) is one of eight Areas of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) which in turn is one of four agencies in USDA's Research, Education, and Economics (REE) mission area. The NPA Area Office is located in Fort Collins, CO. The NPA encompasses eight states and 13 research locations: **Colorado** (Fort Collins and Akron); **Kansas** (Manhattan); **Montana** (Miles City and Sidney); **Nebraska** (Lincoln and Clay Center); **North Dakota** (Fargo, Grand Forks, and Mandan); **South Dakota** (Brookings); **Utah** (Logan); and **Wyoming** (Cheyenne).

SUMMARY OF NPA SELF-ASSESSMENT (Parts G and H)

Essential Element A: Demonstrated Commitment from Agency Leadership

The Area Director issues an annual EEO/CR (Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights) Policy Memo that all NPA workplaces will be free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation for all employees, customers and job applicants. This annual policy memo is distributed to all (new and continuing) Area employees and is posted on the NPA web site, along with annual policy memos issued by the ARS Administrator.

Essential Element B: Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission

The Area ODEO (Office of Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity) Program Manager (Area ODEO PM) reports to the Director of the Office of ODEO and is responsible for all ODEO-related functions in the Northern Plains Area. The NPA ODEO PM is physically situated in the NPA Area Director's office suite and works closely with the NPA Area Director and all NPA locations. In FY 2012 the NPA ODEO PM was assigned to co-service the Pacific West Area (PWA) with the Southern Plains Area ODEO PM on all ODEO-related functions.

Essential Element C: Management and Program Accountability

Employees and managers/supervisors are encouraged to attempt to resolve EEO/Civil Rights issues, if feasible, by working through their supervisory chain of command. Alternatively, employees are encouraged to contact the Area ODEO Program Manager and/or the ARS ODEO office for assistance in resolving issues. There were no formal or informal civil rights complaints filed in FY 12, and there are no outstanding formal or informal complaints.

Essential Element D: Proactive Prevention

The Area Director proactively seeks to prevent discriminatory actions and promptly addresses areas of concern. All employees have a CR/EEO element in their performance standards and all supervisors have a stand-alone CR/EEO element. All new employees receive a comprehensive orientation that includes EEO/CR issues. Additionally, the Area produces *VOICES*, a bi-annual on-line diversity newsletter that is sent to all employees and includes the standard anti-discrimination language as well as contact information for the ARS ODEO office.

Essential Element E: Efficiency

The NPA ODEO PM has completed MD-715 Advanced Analysis course and prepares the annual NPA MD-715 report in accordance with ARS ODEO requirements. The ARS ODEO office is responsible for the complaint process, with the NPA ODEO PM involved when needed.

Essential Element F: Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

The ARS ODEO office oversees the complaint process. The NPA fully complies with all Agency processes and directives associated with the complaint process.

Part A: Agency Self-Assessment – Discussion of FY 2012 NPA Workforce

Introduction

Once a year federal agencies analyze their workforce demographics and present that analysis in a report entitled Management Directive 715 (MD 715), a report required by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The MD 715 is the tool by which agencies demonstrate that they have effective affirmative employment programs in place to ensure that all employees and applicants are afforded equal opportunity in employment decisions. Accordingly, a number of data sets are utilized that look at an agency's workforce by race, ethnicity (Hispanic), gender, and disabilities compared to the US Civilian Labor Force (CLF), further broken down by occupations, grades, promotions, awards, hires, and separations. The MD 715 also requires agencies to identify any barriers that may exist to equal employment opportunity and specify how the agency will correct any barriers. The MD 715, then, is both an assessment of what is, as well as a planning document for what an agency's workforce can become.

Although NPA has a very good record of recruiting talented individuals, and retaining them, creating a more diverse workforce by race, ethnicity and disabilities, continues to be a challenge. One strategy to ensure fair and open searches with proactive recruitment for diversity is a rigorous recruitment policy required for Research Leader and Center Director vacancies, and strongly recommended for all permanent searches.

Wise strategic planning recognizes that a diverse workforce is essential to an organization's sustainability, especially since the US is undergoing tremendous demographic shifts, with predictions that whites will no longer be the majority by the early 2040s. Organizations that do not achieve a diverse workforce will find it increasingly difficult to do so, and risk not having the competitive edge that a diversity of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives adds. The NPA MD 715 analysis rests on those two premises: 1) we are obligated to have a workforce that reflects the US CLF and; 2) diversity in and of itself is beneficial.

Overview

While this document primarily looks back at FY 12, there are many parts of this analysis that can be used by leadership in their strategies for building a workforce that meets the first obligation stated above. At the same time, the Area has been forceful in promoting diversity and especially the value of diversity, which meets the second premise.

Areas of concern are: **1)** racial/ethnic demographics continue to be predominantly white; **2)** very few employees with disabilities, and even fewer with targeted disabilities are employed; **3)** over half of employees are eligible to retire in the next 10 years; **4)** especially for women, moving beyond the GS 11 is difficult (83% of white women and 74% of minority women hold positions in grades 1-11 compared to 48% of white men and 18% of minority men); **5)** largely due to a hiring freeze, the hiring rate was miniscule (just five new hires, and four were white males); and **6)** 19% of those eligible for career ladder promotions were promoted, with 29% of all eligible males promoted compared to 11% of all eligible females, and 20% of whites and 9% of minorities were promoted.

At the same time, NPA is doing quite well in the following areas: **1)** female participation is increasing, and 63% of employees younger than 30 are female; **2)** minority participation in the younger age groups also increased; **3)** minorities tend to hold positions in the higher-paying occupations; **4)** there are 10 occupational series where women hold 20% or more of the positions, and five series where minorities hold 20% or more of the positions; **5)** our retention rates are quite high, in that just 8% of the workforce separated in FY 12, with 71% due to retirements, 22% to resignations, and 7% to removals; **6)** comparing awards received to participation rates, women received awards at a slightly higher rate than their workforce participation rate; **7)** the SY workforce is more diverse than other occupational groups; **8)** 9% of RL positions are held by women and another 9% by minority males; and **9)** the overall RPES promotion rate (from GS 12-15) was 64%, including two promotions **from** GS 15, and a 73% promotion rate for reviews for promotion for all grades from GS 12 **to** GS 15 (excluding reviews of scientists who already hold a GS 15).

Looking forward, recruitments are moving ahead, retention rates are high, and leadership at all levels is dedicated to recruiting diversity.

FY 2012 Workforce—All Employees

Overview: Briefly, the NPA permanent workforce is: smaller in FY 12 than in the previous last seven years; predominantly white (91%); predominantly male (60%); and older, in that 55% are over 50 years of age.

Size of Workforce (Charts 1-1b): The NPA at the end of FY 12 had 673 permanent employees, 50 fewer than in FY 11. This reduction in the workforce is largely due to retirements and a hiring freeze that resulted in just five new permanent hires. As discussed later in retirement eligibility, it is expected that retirements will continue to occur, and unless retirees are replaced, the workforce will continue to decrease. It is important to note, though, that in FY 94 there were 704 permanent

employees, and 796 in FY 04, indicating that the number of permanent employees has been quite variable over time.

Racial/ Gender Diversity of Workforce (Charts 2-2b): In FY 12 the NPA permanent workforce was 91% white, the same as in FY 11, with Asians the largest minority group. In the period FY 04 to FY 12, the percentage of permanent employees from under-represented groups ranged from a low of 6.9% in FY 06 to a high of 9.1% in FY 12. In comparison, ARS is 78% white, with blacks the largest minority group at 9%.

The NPA temporary workforce ranged from a high of 10.8% in FY 06, to a low of 4.5% in FY 09, to 7.4% in FY 12. The temporary workforce has served as a feeder in previous years for recruitment into the permanent workforce, particularly with the SCEP and STEP appointments. The Pathways Program has replaced those two programs, and using USAJOBS for all student recruitment may very well assist in throwing a wider net for recruiting and hiring a more diverse workforce.

Gender: The NPA permanent workforce is 60% males, and the temporary workforce is 54% males. However, women account for 63% of all employees under the age of 30, so that gender discrepancy may well narrow in the coming years.

Comparison to the US Civilian Labor Force (CLF) (Charts 3-3b): The participation rates of white males and females, Asian males and females, and American Indian females are all above the CLF in the NPA permanent workforce.

Disabilities: The EEOC has established a goal of having 2% of all employees having a targeted disability. A little over 90% of NPA employees have indicated they do **not** have a disability, a little over 6% reported a non-targeted disability, and just 0.69% reported a targeted disability. Of the permanent workforce, the targeted disability rate rises slightly to 0.74% (5). Only one of those employees indicating a targeted disability is a SY.

Age of Workforce (Charts 4-4d): Although not required by the MD 715, it is interesting and valuable nonetheless to briefly consider the age of the permanent workforce, especially for strategic planning purposes:

Average age of permanent employees is 49, and 55% of the workforce is 50 or older.

Age and Race/Ethnicity: Whites have an average age of 50, while Hispanics, blacks, and Asians all have a higher average age (52, 55, and 55 respectively), while those indicating 2 or more races and American Indians/Alaskan Natives have average ages lower than whites (29 and 48 years of age respectively). The most diverse age grouping is 50-59 which is 11% minority, followed by those aged 29 and younger, which is 10% minority.

Age by Gender: Although only 4% of the permanent workforce is 29 or younger, women account for 63% of that group, compared to 31% of those aged 60 and older, who comprise 15% of the workforce.

Retirement Eligibility: About 54% of whites and 52% of minorities are eligible to retire in the next ten years. Hispanics have the largest ratio eligible to retire (78%), followed by 56% of Asians. The minority population may very well become an even smaller percentage of the workforce as they retire and recruitments either do not result in minority hires or recruitments are

once again frozen. The extent to which the budget might impact recruitments and how the US economy might influence retirement decisions are both unknown.

Occupational Categories and Major Occupations: [Charts 5-5d](#). Generally, one gender or the other dominates in all of the major occupations. The largest occupational group is Professionals (43% of all employees), followed by technicians at 35%, Officials and Managers at 9%, Administrative Support at 8%, and others at 5% (Chart 5). The Officials and Managers category accounted for 33% in FY 11, but dropped to 9% of the workforce in FY 12. Two events in FY 12 contributed to that drop: 1) the agency reorganization resulted in reassigning 17 employees (5 white males and 12 white females), all of whom were from the Area Director's Office to the Western Business Service Center; and 2) a number of retirements occurred in concert with the Early-Out offer. The "Other" category is mostly wage grades.

Occupational Categories by Gender: (Charts 5a and 5b). Nearly half (48%) of all women hold a technician position, and 55% of all technicians are female. On the other hand, 55% of all men hold a professional position, and 76% of all professionals are men.

Occupational Categories by Race/Ethnicity and Gender: (Chart c). Generally, minorities tend to hold positions in just two or three occupational categories – Professionals, Officials and Managers, and Technicians – while whites hold positions in all five categories. Additionally, 50% or more of Hispanic males, black males, black females, Asian males and females, American Indian males, and 2+ races male hold professional positions, compared to 53% for white males and 34% for white females.

Selected Major Occupations: (Chart 5d). There are five series where minorities (males and females) hold 20% or more of the positions, and 10 series where women (whites and minorities) hold 20% or more of the positions.

Grades: ([Charts 6-6c](#)). There are just a few occupations in NPA that have a FPL (Full Promotion Level) beyond GS 11, and those are found primarily with scientists and a few AFM occupations. For instance, within NPA, technicians account for 35% of permanent positions with a FPL of GS 9, scientists generally start at a GS 11 or 12 and can rise to GS 15 and higher, and location administrative officers may start at GS 7 and may have a FPL of 12.

Gender: (Charts 6 and 6a). More than half (57%) of all employees in grades 1-11 are women, and 82% of all women hold positions in grades 1-11, with 75% of all women holding a position in grades 1-9. In contrast, 81% of all employees holding a position in grades 12-15 are men, and 55% of all men hold positions in grades 12-15.

The picture is considerably different in ARS Headquarters: 83% of all employees in grades 1-11 are women, but only 26% of all women hold positions in grades 1-11. In grades 12-15, men hold 72% of those positions, yet 97% of all men hold a GS12-15.

Race/Ethnicity: (Chart 6c). White men are almost equally represented in both grade groupings, with 48% in grades 1-11, while 82% of minority males are in grades 12-15. White women and minority women are very similar in their grades, with 83% of white women holding positions in grades 1-11 and 74% of minority women holding positions in grades 1-11.

Again, in ARS Headquarters, white men hold 10% and minority men hold 7% of all positions in grades 1-11, yet just 2% of all white men and 6% of all minority men hold a GS 1-11. White women hold 40% and minority women hold 43% of all positions in

grades 1-11, and 19% of all white women and 5% of all minority women hold a GS 1-11 position.

In grades 12-15, white men hold 57% and minority men hold 15% of those positions, with 98% of white men and 95% of minority men holding a position in grades 12-15. White women hold 20% and minority women hold 6% of GS 12-15 positions, and 81% of all white women and 77% of all minority women hold a GS 12-15 position.

Hires: ([Charts 7 and 7a](#)). ARS was under a hiring freeze for much of FY 12, which resulted in just five new permanent hires and 220 temporary hires. New hires are those who are new to ARS.

Permanent Hires: Four of the five permanent hires were white males and one was a white female. In addition to the new hires, NPA hired one employee from another Area (Hispanic female) through a competitive recruitment and welcomed several employees who accepted relocation to NPA locations as a result of closures of ARS research units, including one Hispanic male. New hires are compared to participation rates, and the hiring rate of white males was well above their participation rate (Chart 7).

Temporary Hires: (Chart 7a). Whites accounted for 93% of the 220 temporary hires, which is the same rate of participation in the temporary workforce. Compared to participation rates, white men and minority women were hired at lower rates than their participation rates, while white women and minority men were hired at higher rates than their participation rates.

Separations: ([Charts 8-8b](#)). Fifty-four employees separated in FY 12, which is about 8% of the workforce. Retirements (48) far outnumbered resignations (12) and removals (4). It is expected that the rate of separations will likely increase in the coming years due to the number of employees eligible to retire, and unless those positions are filled, the NPA permanent workforce will continue to decline in number. No minority women separated in FY 12. Compared to their participation rates, men separated at a higher rate than their participation rate while white women separated at a rate about 1% lower than their participation rate.

Voluntary Separations – Retirements: Thirty-eight employees retired in FY 12, accounting for 71% of all separations. White men accounted for 55% of all retirements, white women for 37% and minority men for nearly 8%.

Voluntary Separations – Resignations: Twelve separations were resignations, accounting for 22% of all separations, with 8 tendered by men and 4 by women.

Involuntary Separations: Four (7%) employees were removed, 3 were white males and 1 was a white female.

Awards and Promotions: ([Chart 9-9b](#)). A total of 581 awards were given in FY 12 to 508 employees, or about 75% of all permanent employees.

Types of Awards: There are three types of awards: Time Off; Cash; and Quality Step Increases (QSI). Cash awards accounted for 90% of all awards given, with 78% for amounts greater than \$500. Time off awards accounted for 7% of all awards, and 3% of the awards were QSI.

Awards by Race and Gender: Women received 44% of all awards, with 40% going to white women. Men received 56% of the awards, with 52% going to white men. Whites received 15

(94%) of the QSI awards (37.5% to men and 56.25% to women), and one minority female received one of the QSIs.

Promotions: There were 106 employees eligible for career ladder promotions and 19% were promoted. Of the 106 employees eligible for a career-ladder promotion, 95 were white and 11 were minority; 57 were females, and 49 were males.

Of the 20 employees promoted, 19 were white and 1 was minority; 6 were female (all white), and 14 were male (1 minority, 13 white). Overall, 29% of all males eligible for promotion were promoted, compared to just 11% of all eligible women. By race, 20% of whites and 9% of minorities eligible for promotion were promoted.

FY 2012 Workforce—SY Employees

SY and Non-SY Workforce ([Chart 10](#)): SYs account for 34% of all NPA permanent employees. With the exception of black males, 50% or more of minority employees hold a SY position. In contrast, 13% of white females, 33% of black males, and 42% of white males hold a SY position.

Number of SYs ([Chart 10a](#)): There were 231 SYs in FY 12, seven fewer than in FY 11. White men continue to hold the majority of SY positions (82%), followed by white women (15%), Asian men (8%), Hispanic men (2%), and black males, American Indian males, and 2+ races males each at almost 1% (all figures are rounded).

Major Occupations: ([Charts 11-11a](#))

By Gender: There is only one occupation – food technology – that is 100% all women. Four other occupations have women holding 20% or more of the positions: plant physiology (35%), microbiology (35%), animal science (22%), soil science (21%). The occupation with the highest percentage of men is agricultural engineer (93%) and the smallest is agronomy, with 50%.

By Race/Ethnicity: Two of the major occupations are 100% white (animal science and agronomy) and agricultural engineer is 99% white. Four occupations are 20% or more minority: plant pathology (33%), soil science (31%), food technology (29%), animal science (22%), and genetics (21%).

Grades (SY) ([Charts 12-12a](#)): All racial/gender groups are represented in all grades except for those beyond GS 15.

Grades: More female SYs hold a GS 13 than any other single grade (45%) while more male SYs hold a GS 14 than any other single grade (38%). For minority men and women, more hold a GS 14 than any other single grade (42% and 43% respectively), compared to 38% of white men and 20% of white females. By gender, women hold 40% of all GS 12s, with smaller percentages for each succeeding grade, dropping to 8% of all GS 15s.

Research Leaders (RLs) ([Chart 13](#)): RL recruitments are relatively infrequent, as RLs generally do not relinquish that position until they retire or near retirement. In FY 12, one RL resigned (white male) and an Acting RL has been appointed (white female).

RL Pipeline: RLs generally hold at least a GS 14, and preferably a GS 15, as well as a strong desire to take on RL duties in addition to their research program. Nonetheless, as RLs retire, and

women and minorities continue to move into the GS 15 grades, opportunities in the next few years for adding more women and minorities to location leadership should occur.

Current RLs: Of the 32 permanent RLs, 26 are white men, 3 are minority men, and 3 are white females. On the surface, it appears that white men are over-represented in the RL cadre, although it is important to keep in mind that many RLs have held those positions for many years and perhaps gained their RL position when there were few women and minorities who were in the RL pipeline. With that caveat, here is the breakdown of RLs: 81% of RLs are white males, 9% are minority males, and 9% are white women.

Hires and Retention of SYs: ([Chart14-14a](#))

Hires: (Chart 14). Three SYs were hired in FY 12, two males and one female, all white. Despite the FY 12 hiring profile, the SY workforce nonetheless is becoming more diverse. For instance, there have been 89 SYs hired since 2004: 54% were white men, 17% were minority men, 26% were white women, and 3% were minority women. The hiring rates between 2004 and 2012 for minority men and white women were notably higher than their overall participation rates ((13% and 15% respectively), while the hiring rate for white males was quite a bit lower than their participation rate (70%). Hiring and participation rates for minority women though remain even at 3%. Of concern is that no minorities have been hired into SY positions since 2010.

Retention: Overall, 82% of all SYs hired since 2004 remain with NPA, and 100% of minority females have remained with NPA. Only one scientist resigned in FY 12, and that was a RL who was hired in FY 10 and left ARS to return to academia, and eight SYs retired in FY 12.

Promotion of SYs: ([Charts 15-15a](#))

There were 45 RPES reviews (pre-panel grades of GS 12-15) in FY 12, and 64% of those reviews resulted in promotions, including two GS 15s who were promoted. Not counting reviews of 8 SYs who already held a GS 15, those 37 reviews resulted in a promotion rate of 73%. Of all 45 reviews, white females had the highest promotion rate at 80% (8 out of 10), followed by minority males at 75% (6 out of 8) and white males at 56% (15 out of 27). No minority females were reviewed in FY 12. The largest number of reviews was at grade 14, with 14 reviews, and 57% resulted in a promotion. The next largest group was grade 13, with 13 reviews, and 91% of those reviews resulted in a promotion.

FY12Barriers

Two barriers have been identified: 1) Glass Ceiling and 2) Career Ladder Promotions.

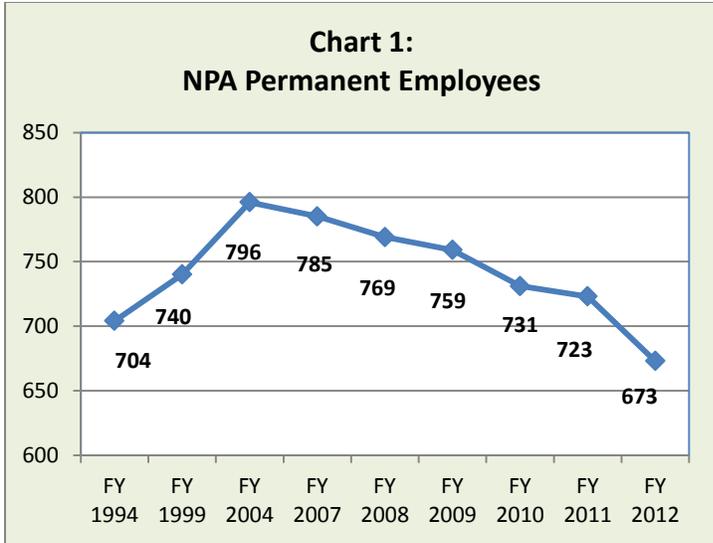
Glass Ceiling: The majority of women (76%) hold positions in grades 1-9. The technician series is the second largest occupational group, and 48% of all women hold a technician position, and 55% of all technicians are women. Also, nearly all non-SY positions now in Area Offices are capped at grades GS 9 and below, including technicians.

Given the high percentage of women who are technicians as well as a dearth of Area/Location positions beyond GS 9, it is likely that the majority of women will continue to hold positions in grades 9 and below. Two administrative decisions fuel the glass ceiling: 1) The technician category is capped at GS 9 by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); 2) location and Area positions are capped at lower grades compared to Headquarters, and the reorganization into

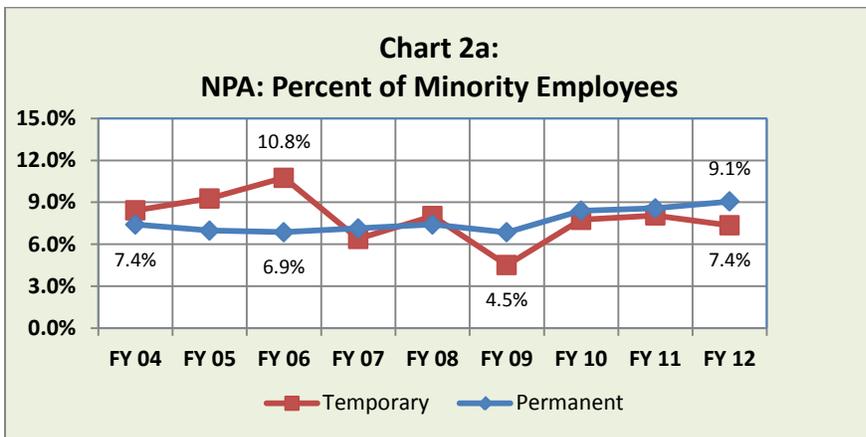
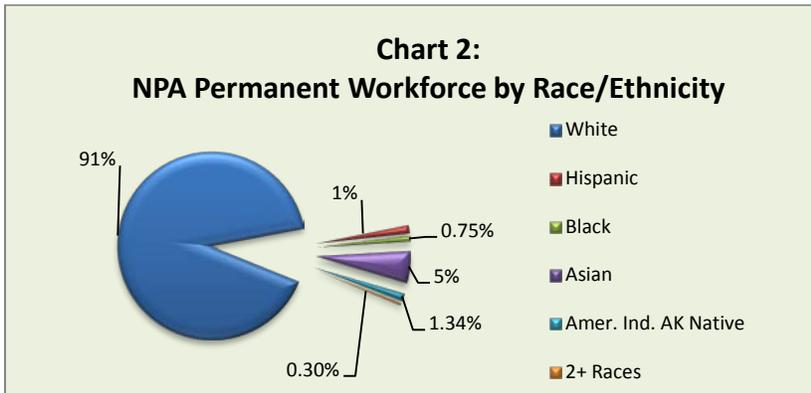
Business Service Centers (BSC) moved most if not all of the higher-graded non-SY positions which were primarily held by women, out of the Area and into one or more of the BSCs.

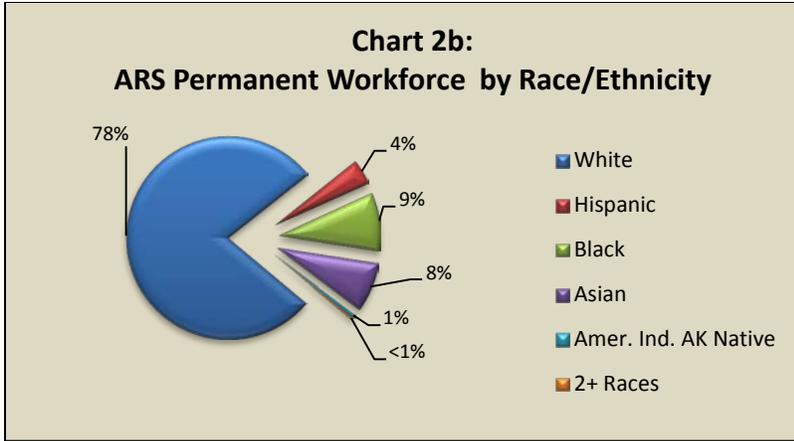
Career Ladder Promotions: Of those employees eligible for career ladder promotions, whites had higher promotion rates than minorities, and men had higher promotion rates than women. White men and women accounted for 90% of all employees eligible for promotion (46% were white women) and received 95% of all promotions. One out of 3 minority men eligible for promotion were promoted, while no minority women eligible for promotion were promoted.

Men (white and minority) accounted for 46% of all employees eligible for promotion and received 70% of all promotions, compared to women who accounted for 54% of all employees eligible for promotion but received just 30% of all promotions. Looked at another way, 29% of all men eligible for promotion were promoted, while just 11% of all women who were eligible were promoted.

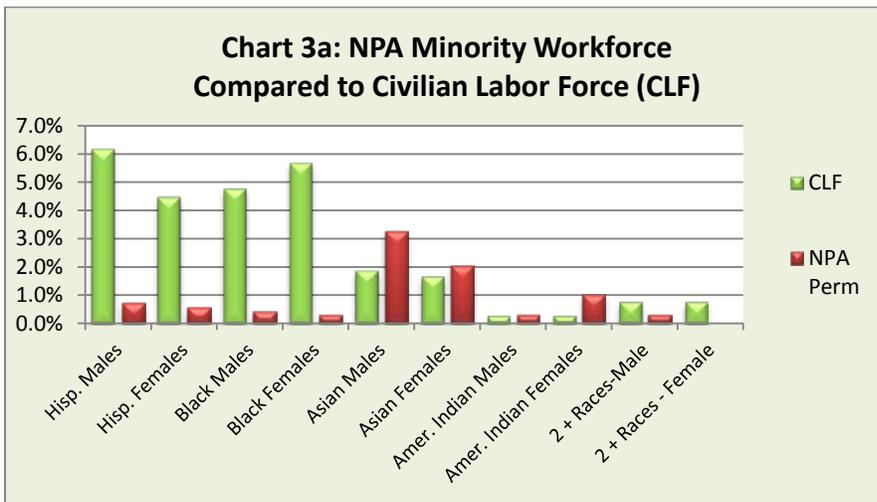
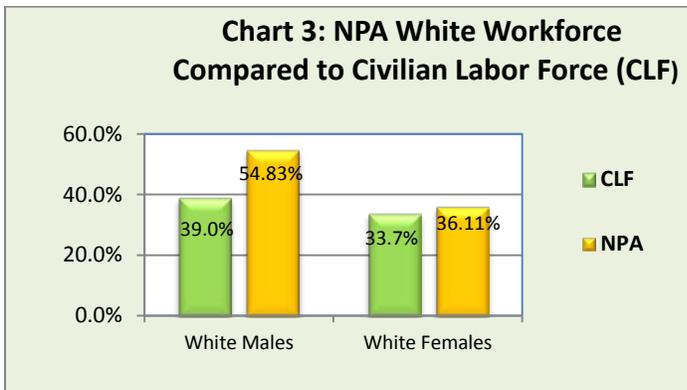


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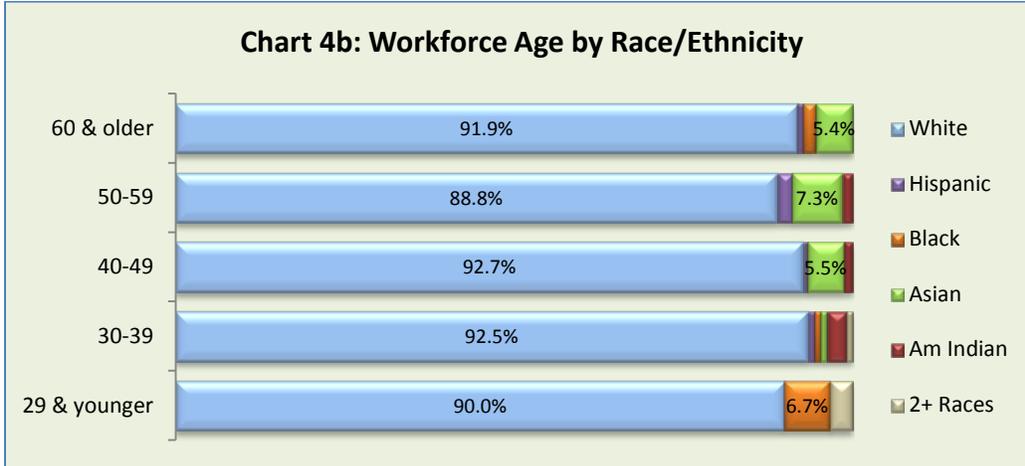
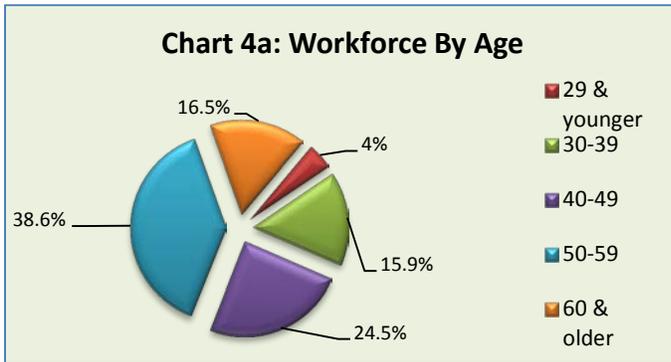
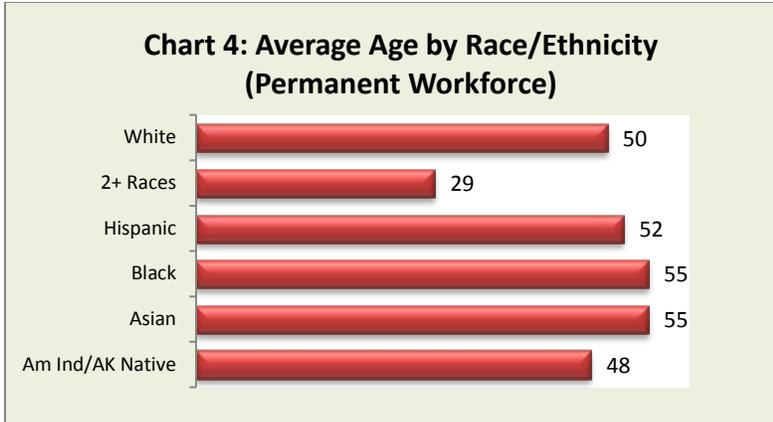


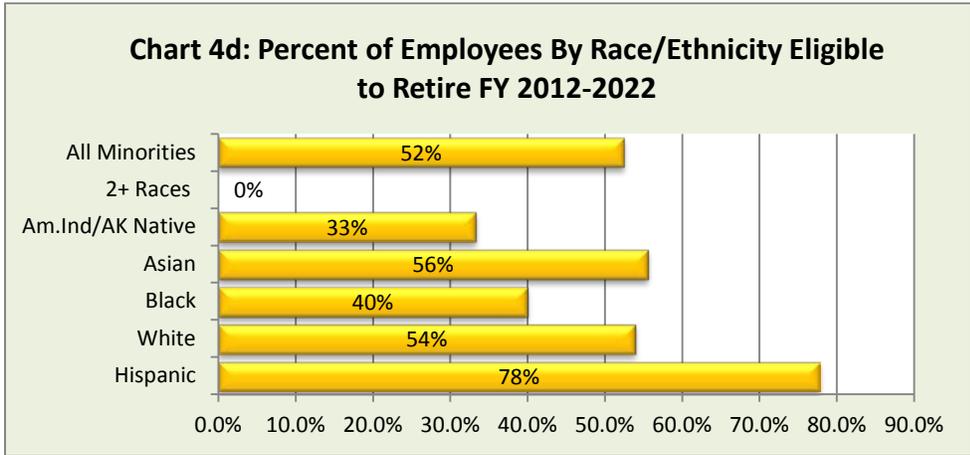
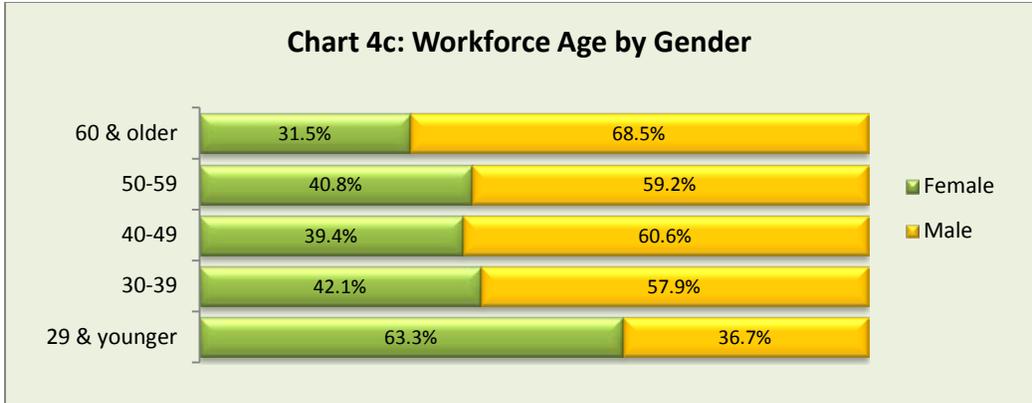


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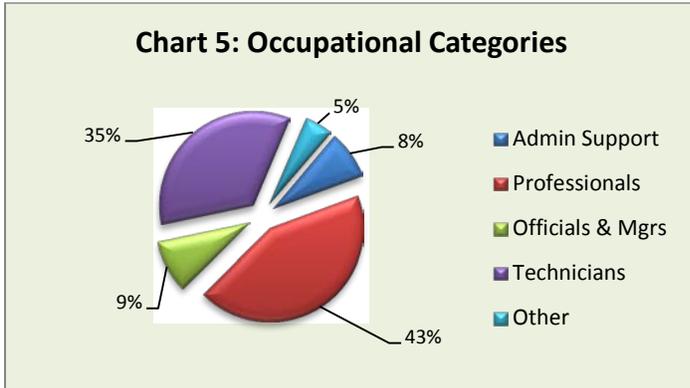


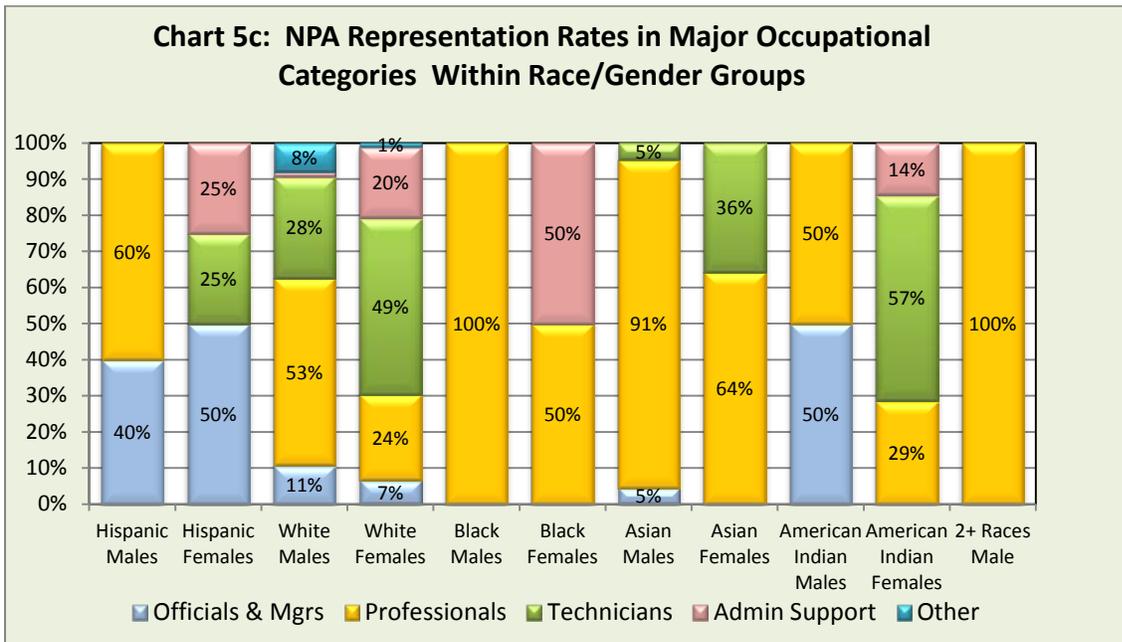
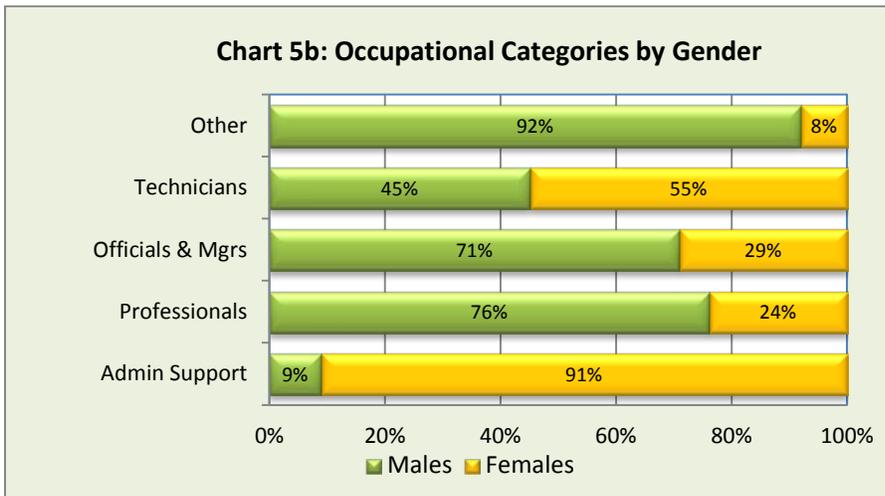
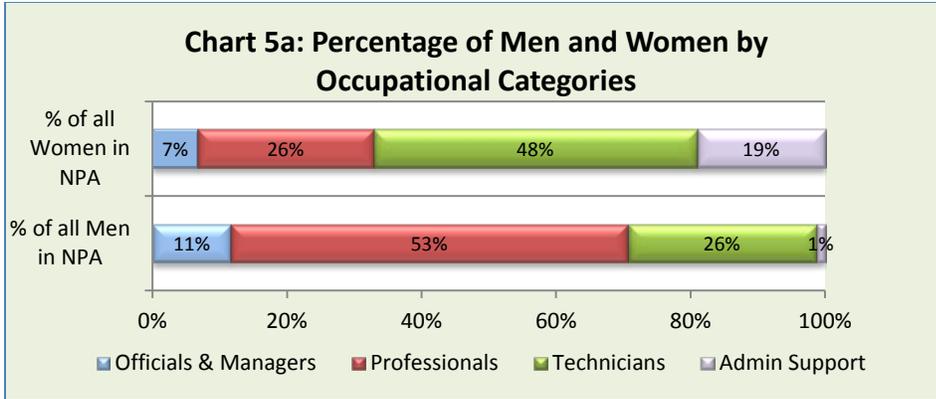
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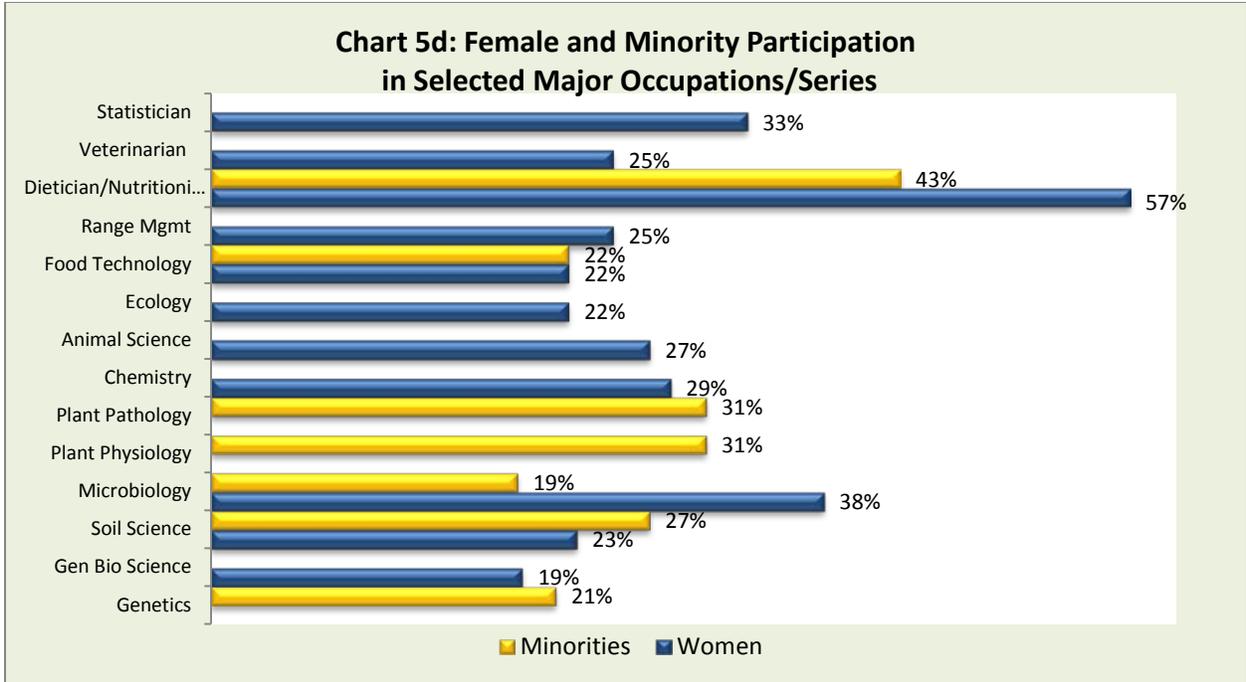




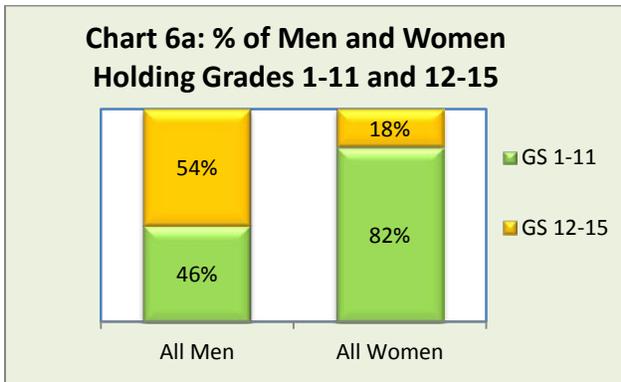
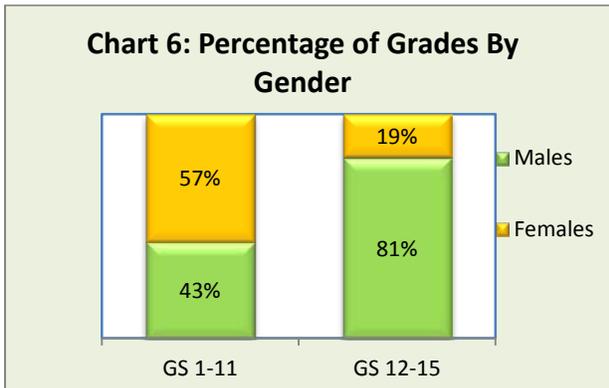
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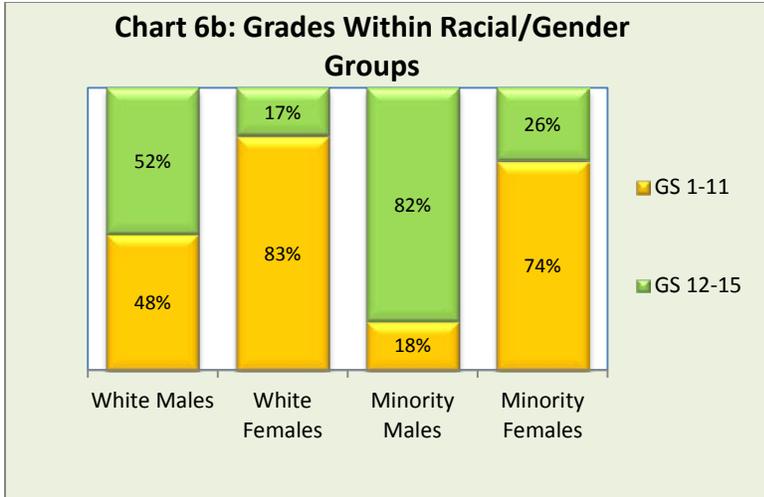




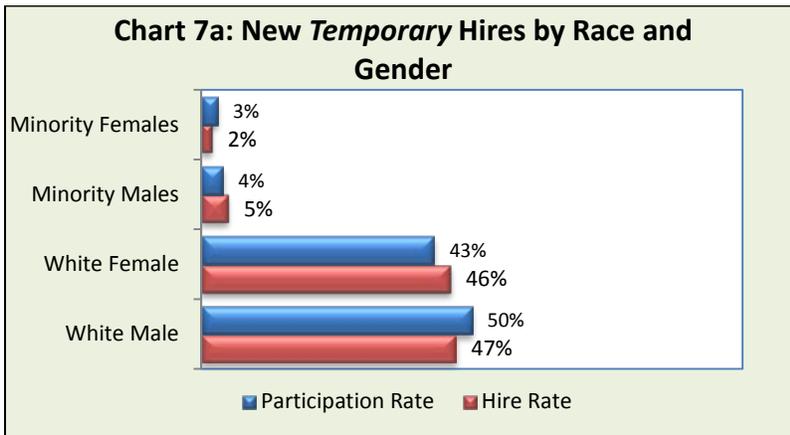
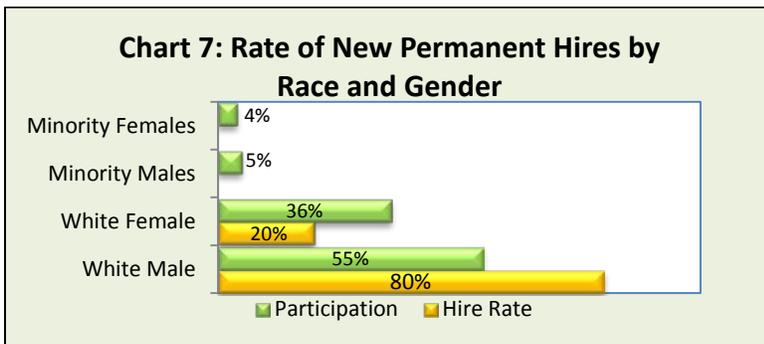


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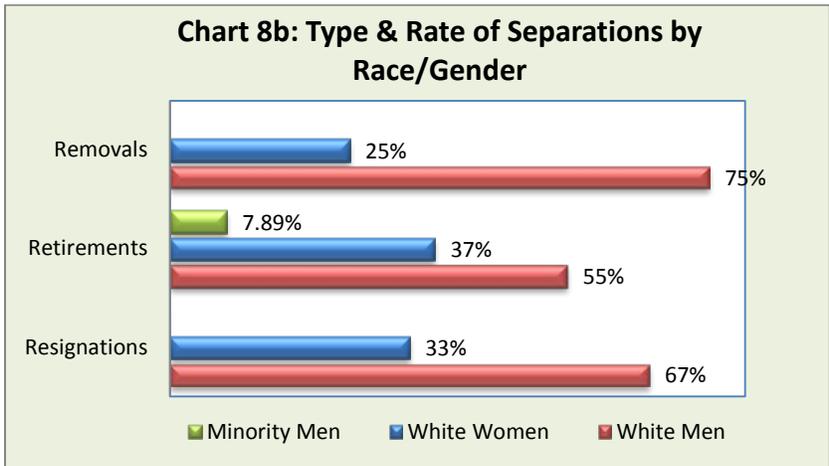
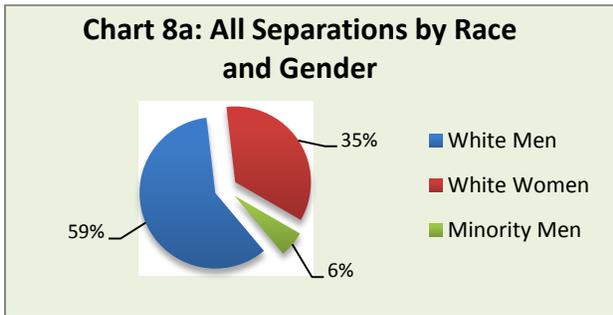
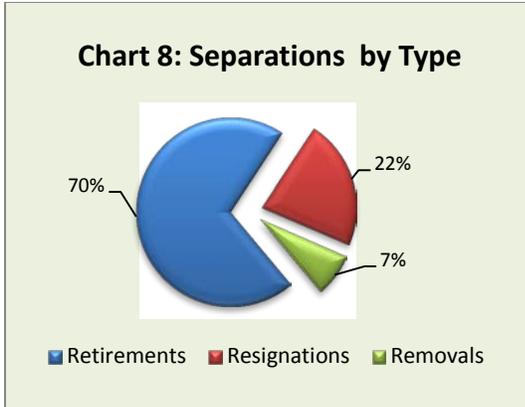




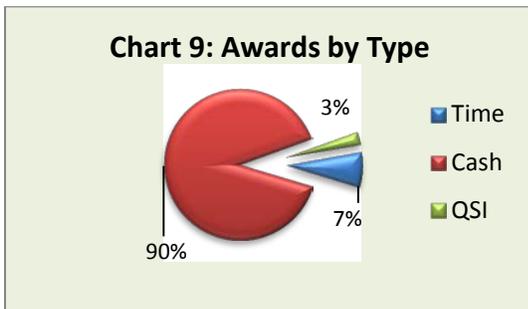
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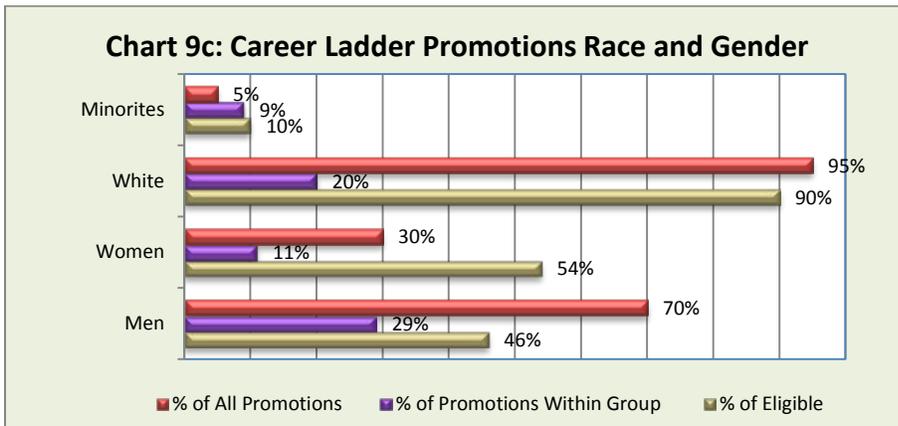
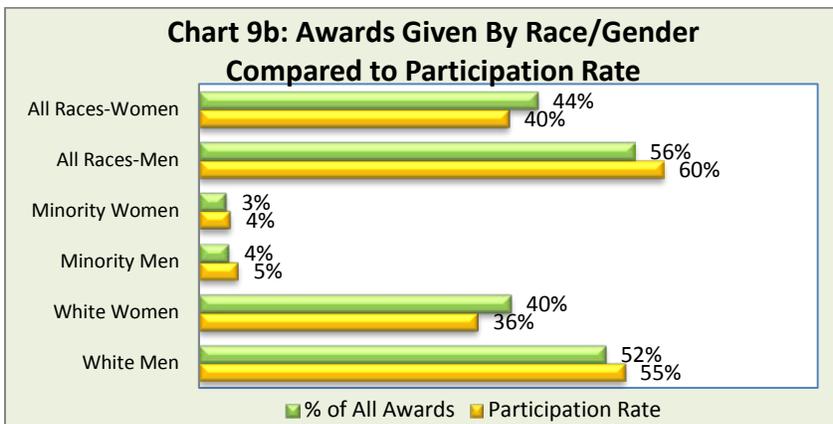
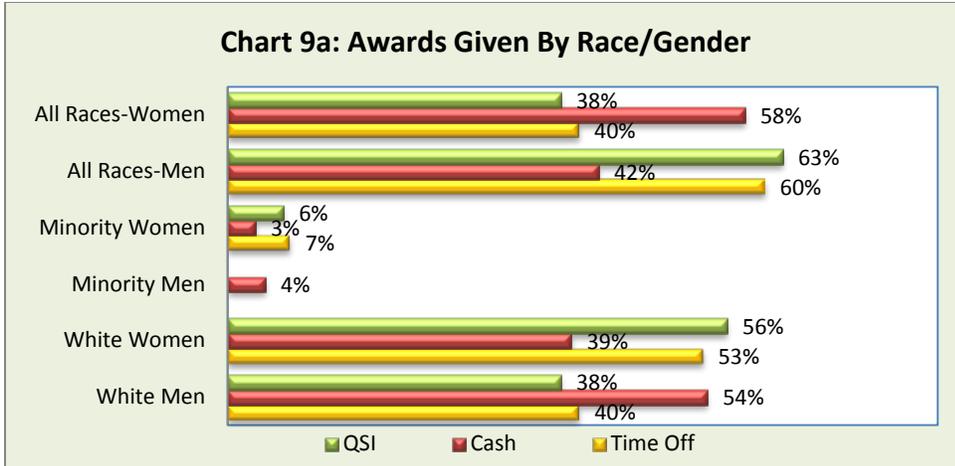


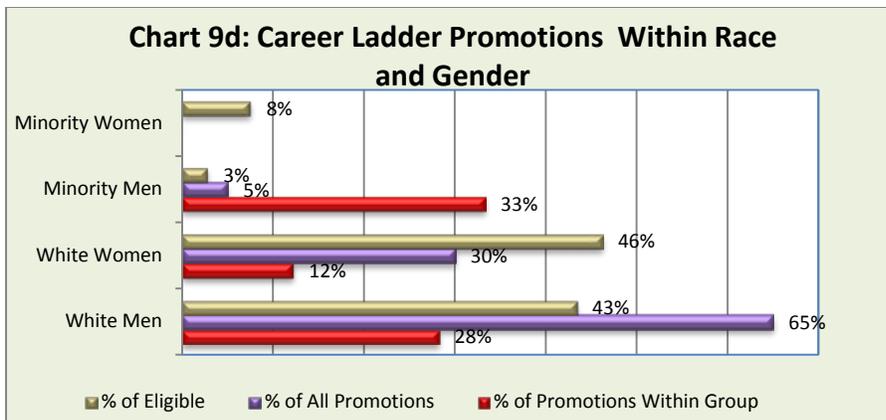
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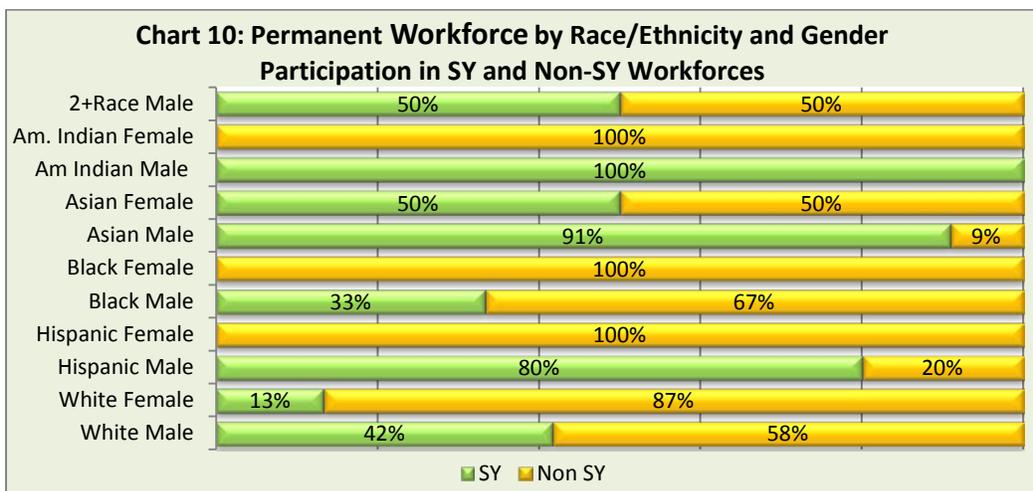
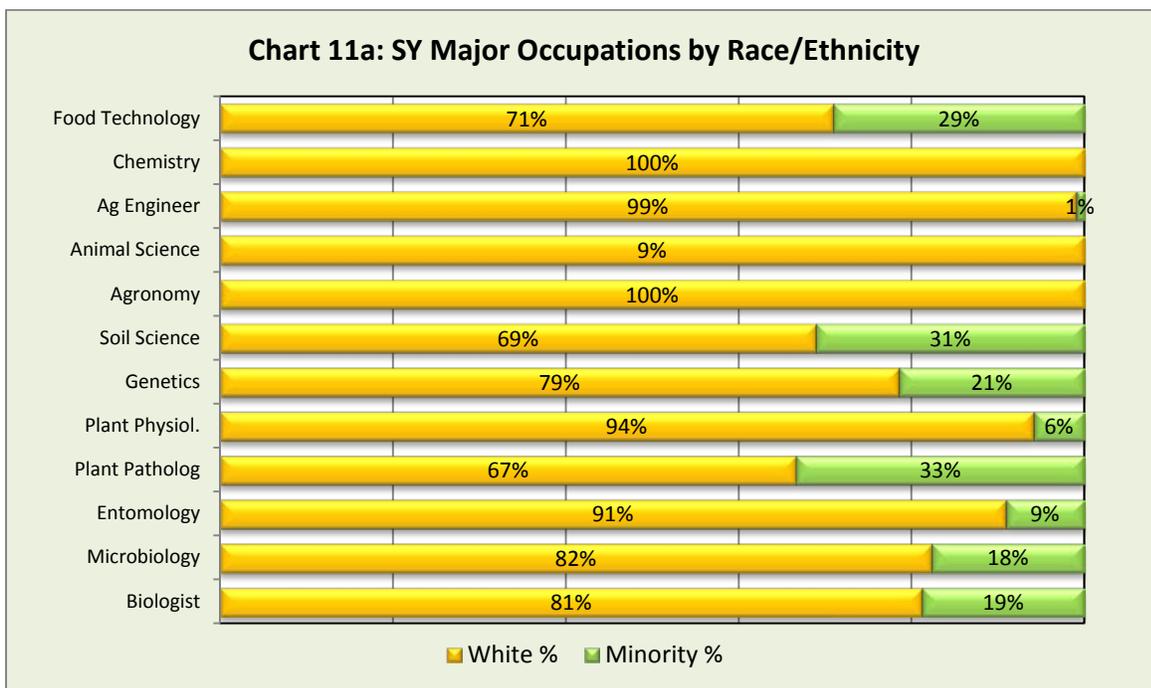
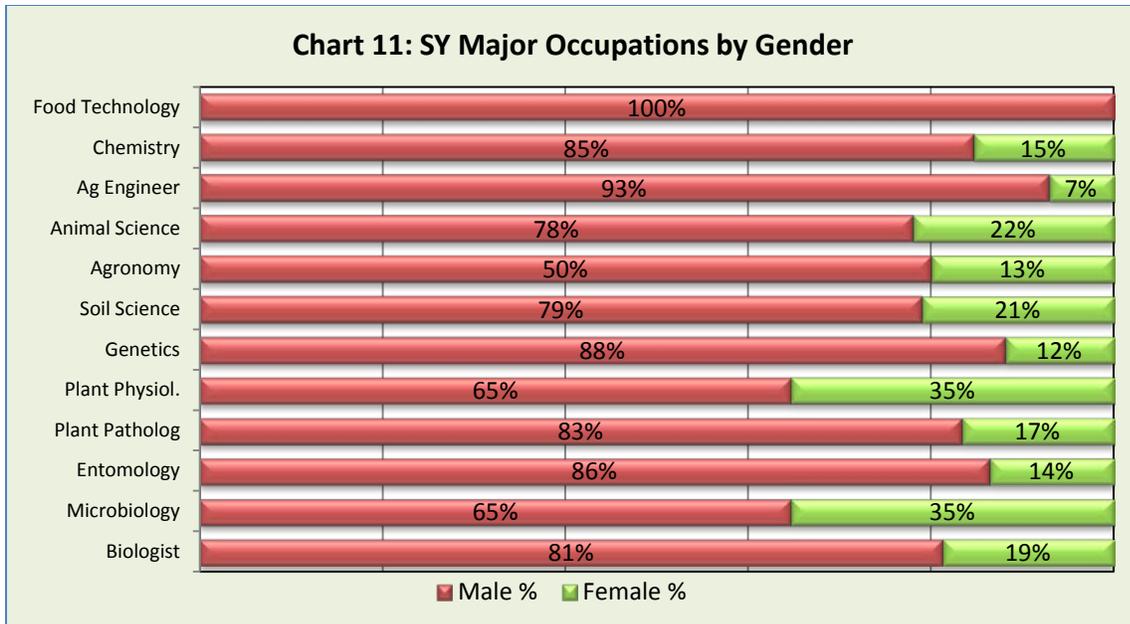


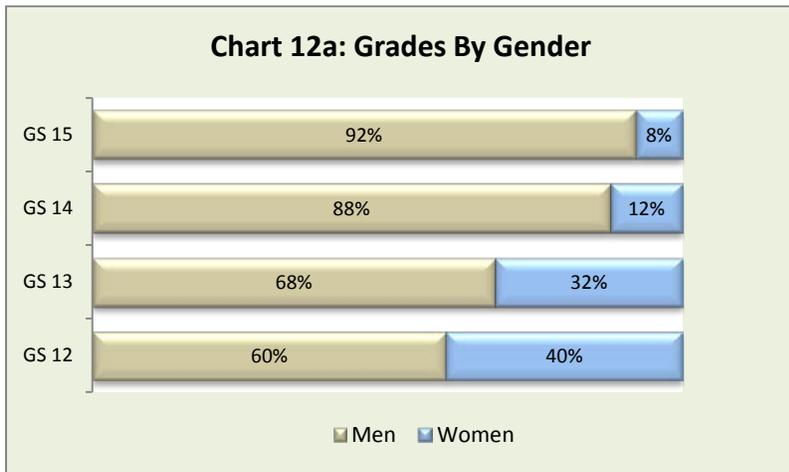
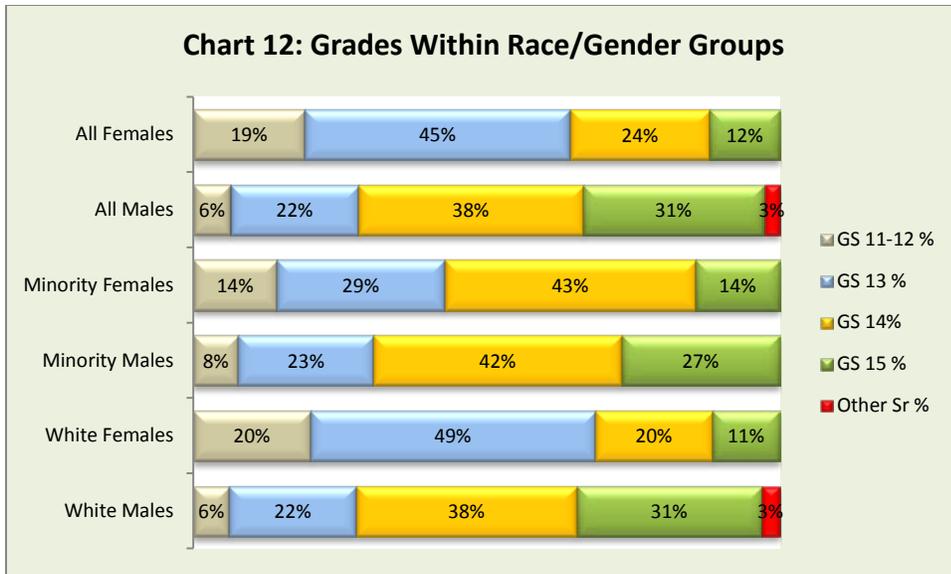
Chart 10a: SY Workforce by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Race	Male #	Male %	Female #	Female %	Total #	Total %
Asian	19	8%	7	3%	26	11%
Black	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
Hispanic	4	2%	0	0%	4	2%
Am. Indian	2	1%	0	0%	2	1%
2+ Races	1	1%	0	0%	1	1%
White	162	70%	35	15%	197	85%
Totals:	189	82%	42	18%	231	100%

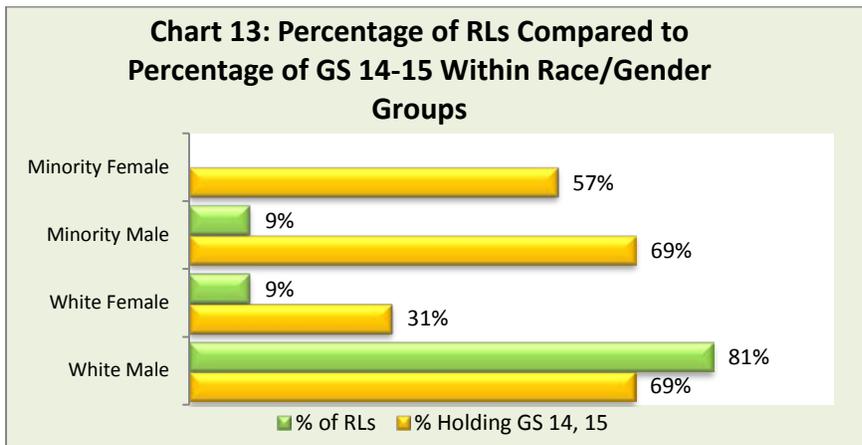
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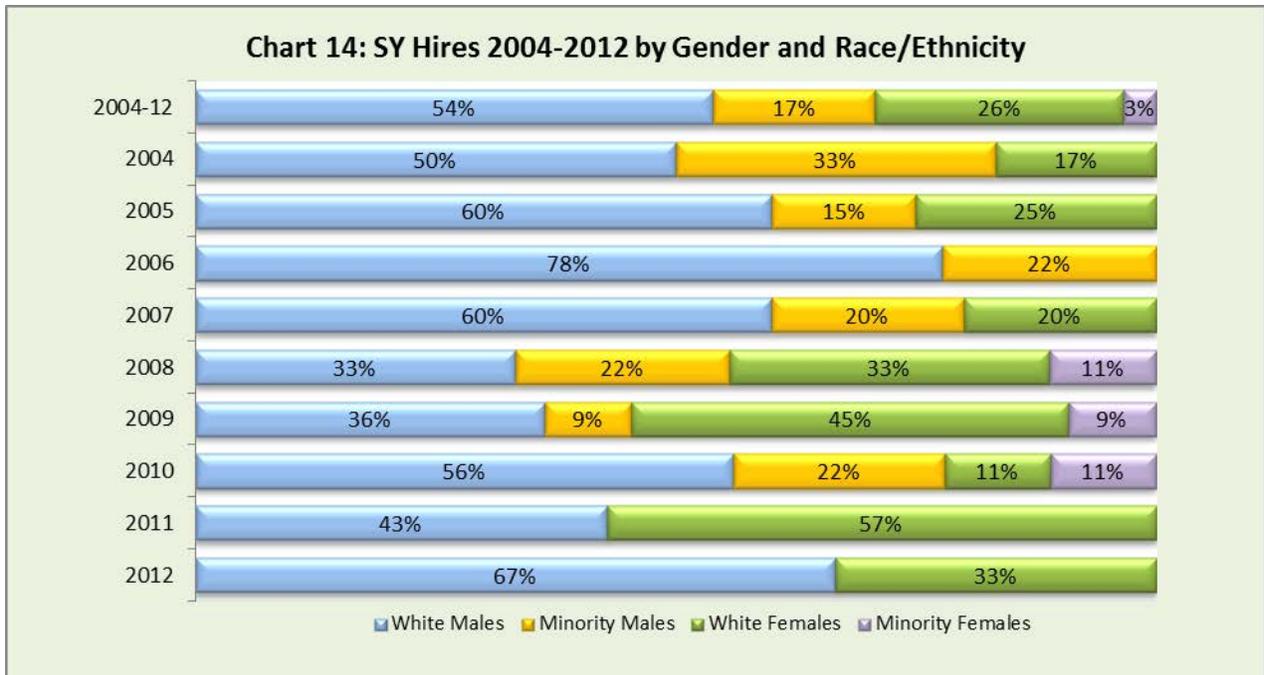
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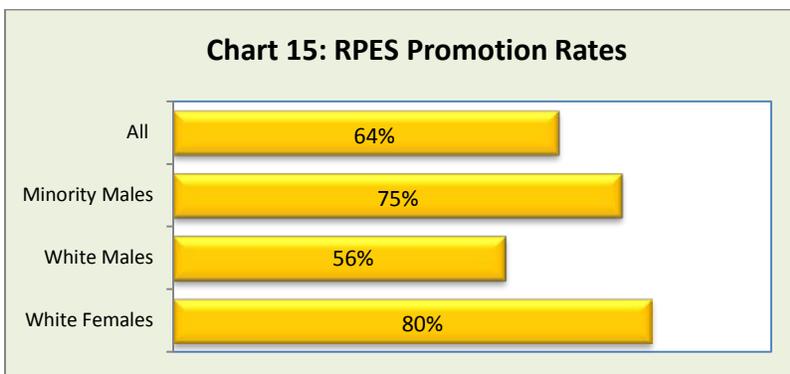
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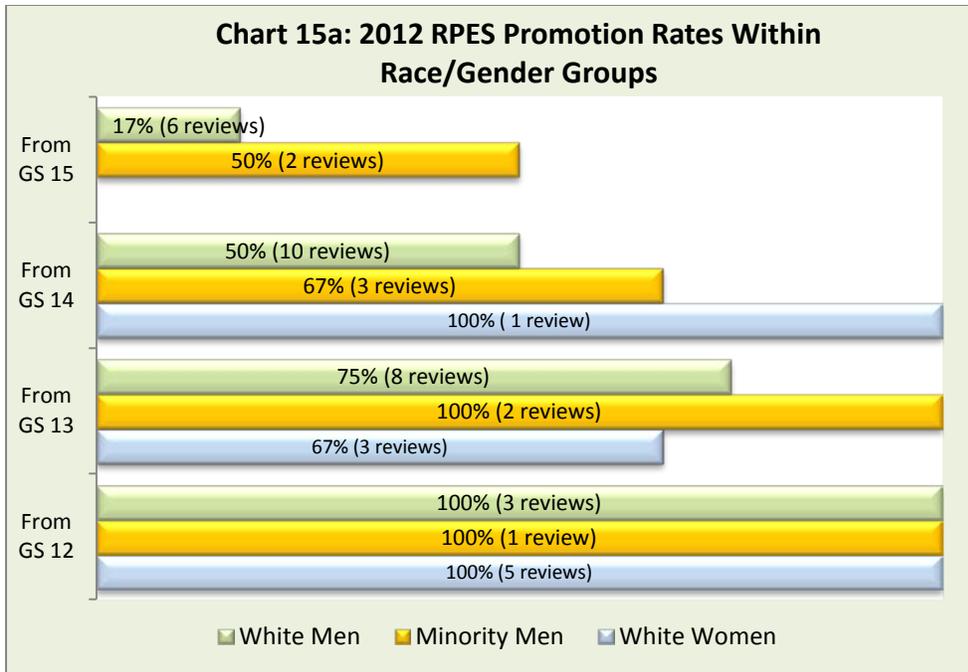


[Return to narrative](#)



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