

INTELLIGENCE PROJECT

The Past, Present, and Future of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the American Intelligence Community

Michael Miner, Lindsay Temes



HARVARD Kennedy School

BELFER CENTER

for Science and International Affairs

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About the Intelligence Project

The Intelligence Project seeks to build a new generation of intelligence practitioners prepared to serve in a rapidly changing world and to help future policymakers and intelligence consumers understand how best to interact with intelligence to gain a decision advantage. Building on multi-disciplinary research being conducted at the Belfer Center, from history to human rights and cyber technologies, the Intelligence Project links intelligence agencies with Belfer researchers, Faculty, and Kennedy School students, to enrich their education and impact public policy.

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The seal of the Central Intelligence Agency at CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. | AP Photo/Carolyn Kaster, File

Executive Summary

In over seven decades of study after study, the U.S. Intelligence Community (IC) has identified a lack of diversity in the workforce as a problem. Beginning with a 1953 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) report on women in the agency, tellingly titled “The Petticoat Panel,” organizations have documented a lack of presence and opportunity for women, minorities, and other groups including people with disabilities. Recommendations and actions were repeated over the years with marginal results. This paper reviews efforts of what has been done, what has succeeded, and what has failed as an important starting point for building a robust intelligence workforce for the latter half of the twenty-first century. It then offers recommendations for overcoming systemic challenges and fostering culture change to improve diversity across the community.

A key milestone for diversifying the IC workforce was Executive Order 13583, issued by the Obama Administration in 2011, which defines diversity across the federal government.¹ Personnel efforts have since used this definition, and the community of today is more representative of America than it was seven decades ago. Nevertheless, U.S. intelligence agencies have not progressed at the same rate as other government entities.

This paper examines the history of IC diversity efforts through an open-source literature review of publicly known IC initiatives, studies, and policies alongside observations from current and former intelligence officials, academics, and senior military officers. It unpacks why progress has been slow and identifies lessons from the past that can inform future efforts to reinforce America’s intelligence posture and capabilities to meet requirements of the changing world. This report is not the first attempt to grapple with this issue; it builds upon decades of dialogue between policymakers, intelligence practitioners, academics, and dedicated citizens.

We write with a high confidence that a diverse IC workforce provides the U.S. with a mission advantage. Operations and assessments which draw upon different views, backgrounds, languages, and cultures improve

¹ President Barack H. Obama, “[Executive Order 13583](#).” The White House. August 18, 2011.

outcomes across the board and are more reflective of modern-day intelligence requirements. To President Biden's credit, his senior leadership team has recognized prioritizing diversity for the community is a mission imperative.² Sustainable progress requires consistent effort in a whole-of-IC approach and beyond. To operate in the world as it is, the workforce must reflect the realities of today and tomorrow.

Key Takeaways:

1. Substantive reasons for insufficient progress on diversity include frequent leadership changes, lack of middle management buy-in, poor metrics, absence of accountability, and a cultural failure to embrace diversity as integral to IC mission success.
2. Personnel numbers are classified and most, if not all, historical diversity reports were or are still classified, making it difficult to accurately evaluate past accomplishments. Lack of transparency fosters poor accountability.
3. Diversity statistics are likely far worse than they appear because a significant portion of the IC workforce—contractors—are not included or counted in the metrics.

Key Recommendations:

1. Utilize the intelligence cycle as a framework while continuously measuring, assessing, and acting upon the requirement of building a diverse workforce.
2. Transparently facilitate a whole-of-IC accounting including public sector organizations and contractors to accurately measure and strengthen accountability.
3. Leading culture change requires cascading, sequential actions to build cohesive momentum including clearance reform, outreach, education, and retention.
4. Oversight and engagement by Congress, the President's Intelligence Advisory Board, veterans, and scholars adds constructive external pressure for internal reform.

2 President Joseph R. Biden Jr, "[Remarks by President Biden at the Office of the Director of National Intelligence](#)." The Office of the Director of National Intelligence. July 27, 2021.

Introduction: A Cyclical and Persistent Challenge

Understanding where the community has been offers insight into where it must go. For decades the leadership of the CIA and later the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) have identified diversity as a priority. For just as long, it largely failed to deliver on this grand aspiration. Change occurred, but slowly, incompletely, and with many setbacks. The cyclical nature of start-and-stop efforts led to fleeting moments of progress and subsequent reversals. For a recent example, President Biden's 2021 statement and order emphasizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility as a national security imperative appeared specifically designed to reverse the previous administration.³ Former President Donald Trump's prior Executive Order had prohibited diversity training characterized as "divisive, anti-American propaganda."⁴ This was not the first occurrence of shifting approaches to the diversity challenge.

This paper will examine three principal areas related to the diversity challenge. First, why diversity is a mission imperative for the community and how that narrative has evolved since the formation of organized intelligence in the United States. Between a changing security environment and contrasting views of policymakers in Congress, these evolving dynamics have resulted in differing views on the role of diversity within the intelligence mission in past years. Fortunately, over the last decade there has been moderate progress on recognizing diversity as a critical mission imperative. Putting this into action has remained an elusive goal, yet one that is now front and center in the conversation.

Second, three historical eras share common challenges: the Cold War, the 1990s, and post 9/11. All three reflected a shifting security environment with changing requirements and priorities. Policymakers or intelligence leaders of each era pursued new initiatives seeking to remedy diversity shortcomings. They often began by relearning painful lessons of history borne out in preceding eras before recognizing that diversity must play an increasing role

3 Ibid.

4 President Donald J. Trump, "Executive Order 13950." The White House. September 22, 2020.

in the purpose and function of organized American intelligence. This paper considers the shared lessons from each era. Workforce diversity landscapes mirrored trendlines and stark challenges facing American society more generally. Avoiding these historical pitfalls offers a useful perspective on how to move forward versus reliving past shortcomings.

Finally, we conclude with observations and recommendations for current and future policymakers grappling with the diversity challenge today and tomorrow. By no means do these recommendations reflect revolutionary thinking or surefire remedies. Like medical providers providing a second opinion, we seek to offer a differential diagnosis so that policymakers might consider new avenues or approaches to breaking this cycle of consistent inconsistency.

This work is necessarily reliant on unclassified sources, limiting the extent of its insights. Nevertheless, a significant volume of material is available in open sources and our belief is that while classified data would provide rich context and detail, it would not significantly alter these findings. We strongly believe that a more public airing of still classified internal studies would not pose a national security risk, but would instead foster greater transparency, accountability, and public confidence in the community.

Attracting, retaining, and promoting diverse, highly skilled employees is not just an issue of fairness and law, but is necessary to meet core mission requirements. Insufficient diversity in the national security workforce, specifically within the IC, inhibits the effectiveness of intelligence collections, operations, and the IC's ability to advise senior leaders and policymakers on emerging national security threats. President Biden's call for prioritizing diversity and inclusion in the IC is an opportunity for a generational effort that builds on historical initiatives to develop a workforce reflective of the people they serve and more capable of meeting twenty-first century global challenges.

Defining Diversity

How the U.S. government defines diversity as it applies to the intelligence community is the first step toward understanding the objective and measuring progress. In 2011, the Obama Administration defined diversity across the federal workforce through Executive Order 13583. This definition continues to underpin policy for subsequent administrations and has been amplified through recent policy initiatives, additional executive orders, and efforts to build on diversity and inclusion efforts across government.⁵ Although not necessarily specific to the intelligence community, it offers a critical foundation for diversity in government that is applicable to a workforce that has been historically imbalanced in composition.

We define workforce diversity as a collection of individual attributes that together help agencies pursue organizational objectives efficiently and effectively. These include, but are not limited to, characteristics such as national origin, language, race, color, disability, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, veteran status, and family structures. The concept also encompasses differences among people concerning where they are from and where they have lived and their differences of thought and life experiences.⁶

Government efforts since 2011 have utilized this definition as the baseline policy view for addressing diversity in the modern era across the federal workforce. During the entirety of its existence, the IC has been on the same diversity journey as much of American society. Recruiting has improved, but retention and promotion problems identified in the Glass Ceiling of the 1990s persists. Women, minorities, and people with disabilities are still underrepresented in senior leadership and middle management roles, particularly in the core operational, scientific, and analytic positions. According to Director of National Intelligence Avril Haines:

5 President Joseph R. Biden Jr, “[Executive Order 14035](#).” The White House. June 25, 2021.

6 President Barack H. Obama, “[Executive Order 13583](#).” The White House. August 18, 2011.

Ensuring that we have an IC workforce made up of people who think differently, see problems differently, and overcome challenges differently, is a prerequisite to our success. Their creativity makes us smarter more innovative, and more successful. And that makes our nation safer and more secure against the array of adversaries and the foreign threats we face. Currently, however, the Intelligence Community is not where it needs to be.⁷

Diversity in the Intelligence Community: A Mission Imperative

“We need demographic diversity and diversity of thought . . . to penetrate our toughest targets around the world.” George Tenet, Director of Central Intelligence, 1997–2004⁸

Months before the deadly terror attacks on September 11, 2001, the *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* published an article on cultural diversity in the IC: “*Either the IC will embrace diversity on its own, or it will find change thrust upon it in the wake of failure.*”⁹ The necessity of change in the intelligence community was as prescient in early 2001 as was Allen Dulles’ at the dawn of the Cold War.¹⁰ Both the Cold War and Post 9/11 periods reflected generational transformation with new threat vectors and operational requirements that necessitated a reimaging of the American IC posture.

In wake of 9/11 and the Iraq War, Congress enacted the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA).¹¹ This legislation was

7 Avril Haines, “[Diversity, Equity Inclusion, and Accessibility in the Intelligence Community](#).” House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. October 27, 2021.

8 George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007).

9 Robert Callum, “[The Case for Cultural Diversity in the Intelligence Community](#).” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 14, vol. 1: 2001. pp. 25–48.

10 Allen Dulles, William Jackson, Mathias Correa. “The Central Intelligence Organization and National Organization for Intelligence.” Washington. 1 January 1949. pp. 163–164.

11 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 [Public Law No: 108-458; signed 17 December 2004].

intended to address perceived intelligence failures and to improve the collection and dissemination of intelligence. Concurrently, IRTPA mandated efforts to diversify the IC to ensure its personnel “are sufficiently diverse for purposes of the collection and analysis of intelligence through the recruitment and training of women, minorities, and individuals with diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.” This first-of-its-kind legislation language served as the impetus for initiatives and policies based on the operational necessity of diversity among intelligence practitioners.

Prior to IRTPA, diversity initiatives traditionally focused on the legal and ethical requirements of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) legislation. The emphasis was on compliance rather than mission necessity, organization culture, or value-added capabilities. It is unsurprising that studies and initiatives in the twentieth century failed to yield significant or lasting results. While most reports conducted from the 1950s until the 1990s are still classified, the historical track record suggests their findings did not result in substantive progress towards a diverse workforce.

Comparatively, the assessments following 9/11, including the House and Senate’s *Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities before and after the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001*, were a watershed moment.¹² No longer could diversity be sought for “diversity’s sake alone.”¹³ The external pressure to drive and initiate transformational change—at this moment, congressional and presidential action after the worst terror attack in U.S. history—had come to pass. Policies now had the force of legislation to address diversity goals more concretely in the IC whereas decades of precious reports, studies, and reviews had largely failed to move ahead.

In 2006, then Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (D/CIA) Michael Hayden acknowledged that a lack of diversity contributed to past intelligence failures. To protect national interests, the IC had to respond appropriately for “mission success.”¹⁴ The U.S. needed to leverage

12 Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “[Report of the Joint Inquiry into Intelligence Community Activities before and after the Terrorist Attacks of September 11, 2001](#).” United States House of Representatives. December 2001.

13 Ibid.

14 Vernon E. Jordan, “[Director’s Diversity in Leadership Study: Overcoming Barriers to Advancement](#).” Washington, DC. April 17, 2015.

its greatest asset: people. Building diversity into the structure of the IC workforce, representing the culture, backgrounds, and perspectives of the U.S. population would allow the U.S. to build culturally and socially diverse teams. The backgrounds and experiences of these team members would lead to improved quality of intelligence collection and analysis, a better understanding of targets, an increase in language capabilities, and lessen existing biases that undermine objective analysis.¹⁵ That same year, the Director of National Intelligence (DNI) appointed the first Chief of Equal Employment Opportunity for the IC and merged this office with the IC Diversity Strategies Division to better integrate EEO and diversity resources and functions. Since 2007, diversity has been declared a *strategic mission imperative* by the ODNI.¹⁶

In 2009, Intelligence Community Directive (ICD) 110, *Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity* promoted diversity in the IC as a *mission critical imperative* and charged the IC to advance diversity objectives “through the recruitment, development, and retention of minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and individuals of various backgrounds, cultures, generations, perspectives, and ideas, among other aspects.”¹⁷ ICD 110 also captured the **necessity of diversity commitment and accountability**, through the development and implementation of **performance measures** for the IC to thrive as a model employer. Congress, policymakers, and senior IC leaders repeatedly reinforced this policy stating improving diversity and inclusion in the national security workforce is not a matter of political correctness, but a national security concern critical to “to meet the challenges we face around the world.”

The 2019 National Intelligence Strategy emphasized building a diverse workforce and instructed the IC to “forge and retain a diverse, inclusive, and expert workforce to address enduring and emerging requirements and enable mission success.” In 2020, the House Permanent Select

15 William Y. Chin, “Diversity in the Age of Terror: How Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the U.S. Intelligence Community Enhances National Security.” *Florida A&M Law Review* 6, (Fall 2010).

16 Donald Kerr, “500 Day Plan Hearing,” Intelligence Community Management Subcommittee of the Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 6 December 2007; John Michael McConnell, “United States Intelligence Community 100 Day Plan for Integration and Collaboration,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 27 July 2007; John Michael McConnell, “United States Intelligence Community 500 Day Plan for Integration and Collaboration,” Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 10 October 2007.

17 ICD-110, “Intelligence Community Equal Employment and Opportunity and Diversity,” July 1, 2009.

Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) reiterated that diversity and inclusion in the IC is a mission-critical priority.¹⁸ Codifying diversity and inclusion as a priority central to the intelligence mission is a significant milestone for reinforcing a positive culture.

Brief History of IC DEI Initiatives

There have been a wide range of efforts to address diversity and inclusion over the history of the modern American IC. Three eras stand out which help to identify common issues that resonate to the present day. First, the 1950s to the late Cold War era of the 1980s saw a range of initiatives from the early days of the modern American IC through the end of the Cold War. Unsurprisingly, these debates reflected the changes taking place in broader society and focused more on gender diversity than racial. The second period, the early 1990s to 9/11 reflected an era in which the IC faced significant budgetary cuts at the end of the Cold War followed by a belated effort to rebuild at the turn of the century. Finally, the post 9/11 era led to the most diverse workforce in American history but one which has yet to reach its potential. Furthermore, **a huge influx of contractors into the IC workforce post 9/11 has created a pocket of uncounted, and unaccountable, employees and managers.**

The Cold War: 1950s–1980s

From its inception in 1947 until the mid 1980s, the CIA was a largely homogenous organization, consisting of mostly white, male, and protestant members. Early intelligence leaders and their inner circle of advisors recruited heavily from the Ivy League, Wall Street, and prominent social circles reinforcing a narrow status-quo. A common joke was that the CIA was pale, male, and Yale. Recruitment narrowly focused on elite institutions that excluded students of color, women, and other minorities that

¹⁸ House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “[Intelligence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2021–Intelligence Authorization.](#)” United States House of Representatives, October 30, 2020.

would be majorities elsewhere in the world.¹⁹ Few were hired and even fewer made it into the ranks of senior management or leadership.

In 1953, then Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) **Allen W. Dulles commissioned the first study on women and equality at CIA, the *Petticoat Panel***, at the behest of senior women at the agency.²⁰ The report remains classified today; however, the CIA published details in 2013 that provide insight into the original study.²¹ Early on, the study met resistance. The group that the study was presented to, the Career Services Board (CSB), was made up of all men. Board comments detailed significant discrimination not uncommon of the era with references to losing women because of family commitments, therefore it was not worth time to invest in them.

Additional CSB findings reflected similar trends seen throughout government. It found 19% of women were in grades higher than GS-7 compared to 69% of men. In the Directorate for Plans (DDP)—(today's DO)—only 7% of field-based officers were women, and 25% of headquarters-based officers were women.²² The CSB identified examples of discrimination in the opinions and attitudes of male supervisors that “come from a traditional attitude toward women which will be affected only through a slow evolution of sociological change.” The board noted examples of disparaging remarks such as statements that women are more emotional, less objective, and cannot work under the pressures of urgency.

The report called for education of supervisors, and the all-male leadership board recognized the “serious need” for training to improve personnel management.²³ Additional recommendations with support from the board included the need for supervisory training “towards the improvement of management and morale at the Agency.” The CSB acknowledged a “serious need” for supervisory training within the agency, adding that it would

19 Robert Callum, “[The Case for Cultural Diversity in the Intelligence Community](#),” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 14, vol. 1: 2001. pp. 25-48.

20 The actual report is unavailable for review. However, on October 13, 2013 the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence declassified a March 2003 review of the report titled: “[The Petticoat Panel: A 1953 Study of the Role of Women in the CIA's Career Service](#).” Washington DC, 1953.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid, p.12.

23 Ibid.

encourage various components to develop programs for the improvement of personnel management.

The structure and approach to assessing and measuring progress remained an obstacle. The personnel office originally refused to provide statistics to the CSB on the grounds such data was classified, thus the results of the study were ultimately classified and few people in the agency were made aware of its findings. Many senior leaders and managers did not embrace that any change was needed. The DCI issued a policy statement to “encourage the maximum utilization of women in the Agency.” Despite acknowledgement, there was no concrete measurement, consistent follow-through, or mechanism for oversight to ensure change was implemented. Some new procedures were put in place to review all recruitment requests. For example, justification was required for any job posting list preference for male applicants. However, these bureaucratic requirements appear to have been largely demonstrative.

In sum, little was done to implement the panel’s suggestions and it was largely forgotten once the panel disbanded.^{24, 25} The classified nature of personnel details and demographics and the struggle to gain buy-in for change from both mid-and senior-level managers would continue to challenge the IC for years to come. Diversity policies and equal opportunity efforts with consequential impact largely did not exist until mandated by EEO legislation of the 1960s and 1970s. Like other government and private sector entities, the IC was required to adapt to comply with this new legislation and federal standards. From the early days of the IC to the end of the Cold War there was a slow but increasing level of awareness of the importance of diversity as both an appropriate forward-thinking policy and as important for operational requirements. As then Deputy Director of the CIA Robert Gates forecast in a 1986 speech at Harvard University’s John F. Kennedy School of Government, new intelligence requirements were “staggering in their diversity” and demanded more attention from capable officers looking beyond a Cold War about to end.²⁶

24 Central Intelligence Agency, “[The Petticoat Panel: CIA’s First Study -- in 1953 -- on the Role of Women in Intelligence.](#)” Washington DC. March 8, 2021.

25 Central Intelligence Agency, “[The Petticoat Panel: A 1953 Study of the Role of Women in the CIA’s Career Service.](#)” Washington DC, 1953. p.20.

26 Robert Gates. Remarks. Harvard Kennedy School of Government. Cambridge. 13 February 1986.

External Pressure on Internal Reform: 1990s to the 9/11 Era

External pressure to increase diversity within the IC workforce built in the late 1980s when Representative Louis Stokes became the first African American chair of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) and led congressional oversight efforts of minority representation and recruitment by the intelligence agencies. Under his leadership, the HPSCI called on IC leaders to report and testify about minority hiring and promotion and provide plans to remedy minority underrepresentation. By the 1990s, minority and female representation in the IC improved overall, but according to a 1996 GAO study, diversity representation at the CIA, NSA, and DIA continued to lag the civilian labor force from 1992–1994.²⁷

In 1991, the CIA conducted a ‘Glass Ceiling Study’ to determine if there were barriers to career advancement at the agency, specifically for women and minorities. The report, though not classified, was published under the designation “For Official Use Only” and not authorized for public release until the implementation of IRTPA in 2006.²⁸ **The report concluded that glass ceilings do exist for the gender, racial, and ethnic groups studied, that women and minorities were concentrated in lower grades, and that promotion rates were higher for white men than for women or minorities.**²⁹ These problems were recognized by then CIA Director James Woolsey and briefed to the House Intelligence Committee in 1993.

By the mid 1990s inadequate policies and approaches came into the spotlight as discrimination in promotions, overseas assignments, and supervisory positions came to the fore. In a class action lawsuit against the CIA, originally filed in 1986, women accused the agency of “widespread sexual bias and harassment.” The agency settled the lawsuit in 1995, effectively admitting to broad discrimination against women. Acting

27 GAO found that among CIA, DIA, and the NSA, for female and minority representation, the agencies were below the civilian labor force standard during the years 1992 through 1994.

28 This report was retrieved from CIA’s Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room: It was not available to the public until a Freedom of Information Act query reviewed and released it in April 2006.

29 Ibid, p.24.

CIA Director William Studeman vowed to resolve to treat women and minorities fairly at all levels. The settlement required the agency to provide backpay, salary increases, retroactive promotions, and transfers back to operational roles for some women.³⁰ Additionally, changes in personnel practices were to be monitored by a federal judge.

At the time of the initial filing, a CIA spokesman stated women represented more than 37% of the agency's work force and women at senior levels increased from six percent in 1989 to nearly 12% in 1994. However, these numbers did not shed light on the roles women played at the agency. The *New York Times* reported fewer than ten women held positions of real power in the CIA's operations directorate and one complainant alleged women were expected to be secretaries.³¹ A lawyer for the women officers alleged that despite internal agency studies, top CIA officials "paid only lip service to correcting the problem."³²

In wake of the lawsuit and settlement, there was progress in creating space and opportunity for women to advance. A message was sent throughout the workforce that lasted a generation. For the first time in a half century there were substantive efforts to push the diversity mission forward with a signal from leadership that the status-quo was unacceptable. Retired CIA officers describe the lawsuit and settlement as having real impact in improving agency culture and practice vis a vis women. Unfortunately, as the intelligence community entered a draw down following the end of the Cold War, progress stalled.

After the "peace dividend" following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the wider national security enterprise faced an uphill battle in budgetary and policy priorities. The IC found itself on the defensive at home. Despite a rapidly changing world that few understood or could anticipate, reducing budgets was an attractive proposition for the United States Congress. Indeed, New York Senator Patrick Moynihan equated the end of the Cold War with the end of the CIA and introduced legislation to effectively

30 John Broder, "CIA Will Settle Women Agents' Bias Lawsuit." *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1995.

31 Tim Weiner, "Women, Citing Bias, May Sue the CIA." *New York Times*, March 28, 1994.

32 John Broder, "CIA Will Settle Women Agents' Bias Lawsuit." *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 1995.

eliminate the agency as an organization.³³ With a wider drawdown underway, the effort to diversify the workforce became a lesser policy priority for a community focused on survival. Hiring dropped to a trickle.

From 1993 to 1996, annual congressional hearings addressed minority representation and the number and roles of women and minorities in the IC. In the 1994 hearing, Representative Stokes reported underrepresentation of minorities and women in the senior professional ranks in the IC was likely largely due to “ancient customs and outmoded thinking.”³⁴ Despite increasing pressure from Congress, no significant legislation was passed during this period. After 1996 the next hearing was not held until 2003.³⁵

Generational Transformation: 9/11 to Present

9/11 highlighted the critical requirement of diverse experiences and backgrounds in the IC. The IC needed more case officers, analysts and technical specialists that had the language and cultural skills to combat new global terror threats. Diversity became an operational imperative for understanding ethnic and cultural differences around the world. Heightened risk drove rapid hiring and served as the impetus for transformational change and defined a new approach to intelligence work reinforced as mission critical. Implementing this transformational moment in a workforce culturally steeped in Cold War legacy was not easy.

Wartime requirements imposed new demands on an IC workforce that had previously been drawn down over the course of the 1990s. Although there had been a clear message sent to the workforce of the IC in the run up to 2000, the new millennium revealed old hurdles that threatened progress. Despite renewed growth, investment, and recruitment in the IC wartime

33 Washington Post, “[Moynihan Bill Would Abolish CIA, Shift Functions to State.](#)” *Washington Post*, January 23, 1991.

34 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “Hiring, Promotion, Retention and Overall Representation of Minorities, Women and Disabled Persons within the Intelligence Community.” United States Congress, September 20, 1994.

35 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, “[Building Capabilities: The Intelligence Community's National Security Requirements for Diversity of Language, Skills, and Ethnic and Cultural Understanding.](#)” November 5, 2003.

conditions and expectations put additional strains on the workforce where the past became the present once again.

A Global War on Terror, in addition to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, militarized IC culture that included deployments to warzones, long separation from families, and growth of a paramilitary mindset. This war time and war zone environment resulted in higher personal and professional costs for women. Although not the same conditions of the Cold War era, there were common and familiar DEI challenges at play as the total number serving in the military, civilian space, and contractors soared. Shortcomings became stark to even the casual observer by the mid 2000s. Within the larger debate on intelligence reform, Congress turned their eye to understanding the numbers as they sought to build upon early progress of the 1990s.

In 2003, Congress again found that the IC had a lower percentage of women and minorities than the civilian labor force or government work force, with women and minorities under-represented at senior grades and in core mission areas.³⁶ At this time, Congress required the IC to publish a diversity report examining the hiring and retention of women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities. The reports have reportedly been provided to oversight bodies since 2005, but they were not published publicly until 2016, making it difficult to ascertain trends, successes, and failures. In 2011, Congress required the IC Inspector General to report on “the degree to which racial and ethnic minorities in the United States are employed in professional positions in the intelligence community and barriers to the recruitment and retention of additional racial and ethnic minorities in such positions.” However, this report too remains classified.³⁷

By 2015, then-Director of the CIA John Brennan commissioned a study on diversity at the agency which found that in many aspects the agency was less diverse than twenty years prior.³⁸ Little progress had been made in diversifying the leadership cadre. Policies for sustaining hiring of diverse

36 Ibid.

37 Anne Daugherty Miles, “[The U.S. Intelligence Community: Selected Cross-Cutting Issues.](#)” *Congressional Research Service*. April 12, 2016; House Intelligence Authorization Act of 2011, P.L. 112-18, Section 403.

38 Vernon E. Jordan, “[Director’s Diversity in Leadership Study: Overcoming Barriers to Advancement.](#)” Washington, DC. April 17, 2015.

officers remained less of a priority. The agency did not hold its officers accountable for creating and maintaining an inclusive workplace at the highest level. Brennan commented that this report would not be one more study whose recommendations were not implemented and continued every year thereafter.

In 2017, DNI Clapper acknowledged the IC’s lack of success in efforts to increase the representation of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities and led initiatives to provide public, unclassified reports on IC demographics to “acknowledge where we are and to measure future progress.”³⁹ He also initiated the IC’s first Barriers Analysis report, shared it publicly, and stated the IC must implement the report’s recommendations. **The 2017 report identified many of the same historical issues, such as that women and minorities were still concentrated at lower levels.**

Additionally, despite strong leadership messaging supporting diversity and inclusion efforts, middle managers and supervisors often lacked empathy for non-majority employees and avoided workplace inequalities. The report notably recommended that DEI initiatives “must be strongly supported by **research, implemented carefully, and then evaluated to ascertain their effectiveness**” and further highlighted initiatives fail when organizations base policies on common sense rather than empirical research.⁴⁰

In December 2020 the **Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report detailing additional actions needed to strengthen diversity planning and oversight in the IC.**⁴¹ The report concluded that though the ODNI is taking steps to address and lead practices to coordinate workforce diversity initiatives it **may not yet be doing enough to hold IC elements accountable.** Although most IC elements have been taking steps to address leading practices for diversity management, there have been no publicly established objectives and timeframes to hold the community accountable. Additionally, most IC elements did not have a current or complete diversity strategic plan or utilize performance measurements

39 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “[Diversity and Inclusion: Examining Workforce Concerns Within the Intelligence Community](#).” January 2017.

40 Ibid, p.9.

41 United States Government Accountability Office, “[Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight](#).” December 2020.

to assess progress towards diversity goals.⁴² Quantitative and qualitative performance measures help to “translate diversity goals into practice.”⁴³ If the IC does not establish objective goals, they will continue to have difficulty gauging success and may continue to pursue diversity efforts and initiatives that simply do not work, are not effective, or are not aligned with organizational goals.

The ODNI did reply to the GAO report acknowledging shortcomings but also clarified that part of the challenge facing the office is their lack of statutory authority to direct aspects of a federated community.⁴⁴ This has been a challenge for ODNI since 2005 and will likely remain a hurdle necessitating creativity and teamwork across members of the IC to further the diversity mission.

Another fundamental reason for slow change is the false dichotomy that diversity somehow stands at odds with meritocracy. In HPSCI hearings on diversity, this view was expressed by former Representative Devin Nunes:

The IC, military, and other national security bodies have traditionally been color blind meritocracies where the most capable people move up rapidly through the ranks. The effectiveness of these organizations will unavoidably suffer, when merit is devalued in favor of any other consideration. I urge all the directors to stay out of politics and focus on deterring enemies and winning wars.⁴⁵

Congressman Jim Himes offered a different take:

Now, maybe you believe that an IC comprised of white males is the result of a perfectly meritocratic system. Maybe you believe that white males have some racial or ethnic or genetic advantage over others. If you do, there is a word for that. I don't believe that we believe that. I believe that if we have an insufficiently diverse IC, we

42 Ibid, p.43.

43 Ibid.

44 United States Government Accountability Office, “[Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight: Status Report.](#)” Updated February 2022.

45 Devin Nunes, “[Opening Statement.](#)” House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. October 27, 2021.

are failing to tap the talent of women and African Americans and Latinos and Asian Americans. If we fail to tap that talent, we are falling down on our duty to field the most competent, capable team we can.⁴⁶

The CIA and other agencies neither look like America as a whole nor, more importantly, like the world they need to understand in pursuit of their mission as America's first line of defense. Furthermore, the DEI mission narrative many in Congress continue to espouse as "anyone but a white male" remains flawed and inaccurate. DEI efforts are inclusive, not exclusive, and this fundamental distinction reinforces contemporary approaches to the mission.

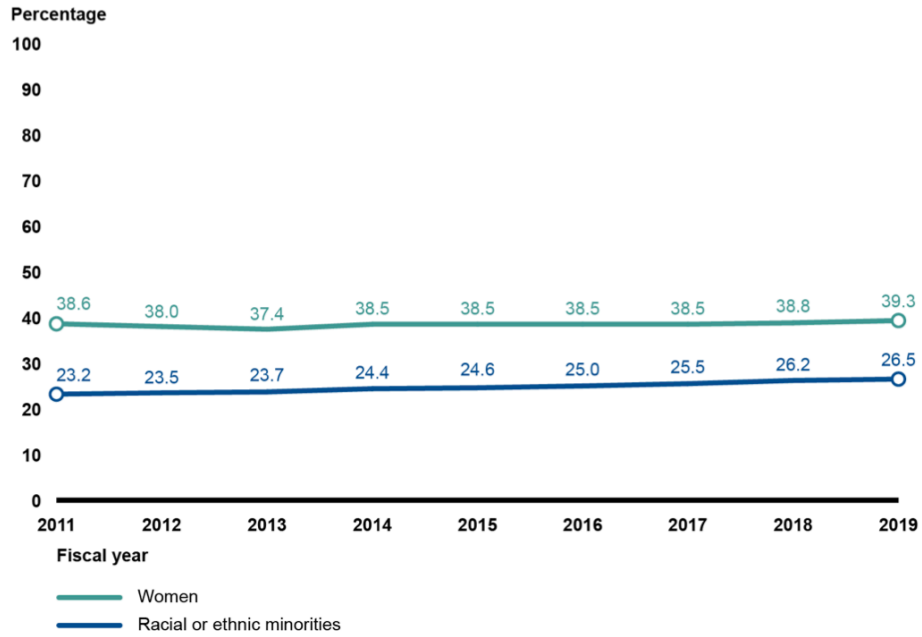
To Congressman Himes' point, the numbers suggest there is an opportunity to improve and return to historical progress that in some ways has been reversed over the past twenty years. The 2020 GAO report highlights these findings.⁴⁷ In fiscal year 2019 women composed 39.3% of the IC, which was lower than the broader federal workforce in 2017 (43.3%). Minorities in 2019 were 26.5%, also lower than the broader workforce at 37.1 and the civilian labor force of 37.4.

To underscore where this effort began and where we are today, as reported in the Petticoat Panel, at the time the CIA had a much higher percentage of its workforce that were women—and this trend has almost entirely reversed. "Statistical findings based on 1952 data showed that women represented 39% of the staff employee [redacted] group in the CIA as compared with 25% of the rest of the Federal government and 30% of the total US employed population." Even these percentages were comparatively low-level positions with little prospect for advancement.

46 Jim Himes, "Comments." House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. October 27, 2021.

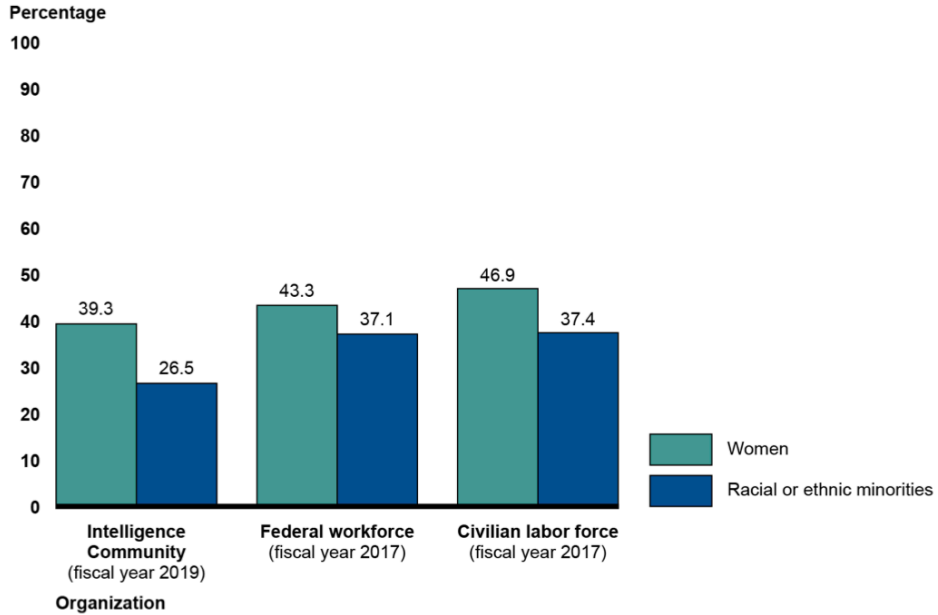
47 United States Government Accountability Office, "Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight." December 2020.

Figure 3: Proportion of Women and Racial or Ethnic Minorities within the Intelligence Community Workforce, Fiscal Years 2011–2019, as Reported by ODNI



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

Figure 5: Proportion of Women and Racial or Ethnic Minorities within the Intelligence Community Workforce in Fiscal Year 2019 Compared to the Federal Workforce and Civilian Labor Force, as Reported by ODNI



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

A Massive Data Hole: Contractors Not Counted and Not Accountable

After 9/11, the number of contractors in the IC workforce increased dramatically as agencies sought to quickly expand programs and bring in particular skills. By 2007 “contractor personnel made up 27% of the IC’s total workforce.”⁴⁸ For the ODNI itself, the numbers were even higher. According to a declassified ODNI budget, contractors held 44 percent of the positions as of 2013. Press reports indicate that at one point there were more contractors working for the CIA than there were regular staff employees. Current public data is limited, but it appears that number of contractors in the IC is trending downward, though these “employees” likely make up at least 20 percent of the overall IC workforce.

Why are contractor numbers important? Because **it does not appear that any member of the IC, nor the ODNI itself, is paying attention to what a high percentage cadre of contractors means for diversity.** Contractors are not just numbers on a page. They are people, civil servants or contractor roles, who play a significant role in shaping the culture of the workforce. **None of the publicly available reports on diversity in the IC workforce mention contractors, or explicitly or implicitly include contractors in their totals.** Anecdotally, former senior members of the IC report that contractor diversity statistics are simply not gathered. This means that conservatively, 20 percent of the IC workforce is not even counted in diversity statistics. A more aggressive estimate would approach 50 percent. This also means that IC self-reporting on diversity trends is inherently skewed. Contractor work forces are heavily weighted towards IT and technical support, fields which are not particularly diverse. Contractor hiring skews heavily toward individuals already possessing a current security clearance. In the wake of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, trends reinforced preferential hiring of veterans emphasizing military experience in the IC. In sum, **by not counting contractors in diversity statistics, the IC is throwing out its lowest test scores to boost the final grade.**

48 For at least a brief period, the percentage of contractor personnel in the IC’s total workforce decreased. Contractor personnel made up 24% of the IC’s total workforce in FY2009 and 23% in FY2010; Dianne Feinstein, “Opening Statement of Chairman Dianne Feinstein, Joint SSCI/HPSCI Hearing: 10th Anniversary of 9/11.” Joint House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence of the United States Congress, September 13, 2011.

It is impossible to reach definitive conclusions on diversity trends without an accurate accounting of everyone working in the community. Perhaps most significantly, **where there is no accounting, there is no accountability.** Contractors can be hired or fired at will. They do not enjoy federal employee protections, and the benefit of workforce flexibility comes with the potential for capricious, biased, and discriminatory hiring and firing. Further, **the CIA's contractor training cadre is reportedly heavily represented by white males, perpetuated by non-transparent and non-accountable contractor hiring practices. A new generation of diverse recruits is seeing only vestiges of the past as they train for a world of the future.**

What History Tells Us

The lived history of the American intelligence community points to common and recurrent obstacles in creating a truly diverse workforce. First, culture and identity vex those inside and outside government service. Defining and shaping culture in the intelligence space is a team sport and requires wholesale buy in from leadership and the community. **However, since the Petticoat Panel the community has struggled to recognize itself with insufficient transparency and metrics on matters of diversity.** From mid-century WASP recruitment to the end of the Cold War and post-9/11 era, there have been challenges with comprehensive accountability in both the public and among contractors.⁴⁹

Second, **transforming diversity policy into action has remained consistently inconsistent.** Policy implementation has been at best stunted and at times disregarded in favor of metrics that reinforce the status quo. Time and again the self-perpetuating approach to building the IC workforce has not been sufficiently challenged by leadership or external oversight bodies to pursue new avenues of recruitment, adjust antiquated standards, or build a modern hiring process on par with industry leaders. The implementation of new policy priorities or turnover of administrations slowed

49 David A. Thomas, "Diversity as Strategy," *Harvard Business Review*, September 2004.

positive momentum to a crawl or outright halted new initiatives to the point of irrelevance.

Finally, **contradictory policymaker direction and oversight led to lack of accountability and support across government.** Periodic antagonistic relations between different branches of government led to broken relationships from the White House to Congress and the community writ large. Fractured input and inconsistent effort from partners across government led to minimal attention to diversity as a policy priority versus continuation of the status-quo.

These trends, examined below, require targeted approaches to better support a forward leaning culture, transform policy into action, and develop consistent policymaker direction with constructive oversight. This evidence is by no means comprehensive, and admittedly there are likely many additional classified internal reports that could aid in this effort. However, our analysis offers a look at challenges the IC workforce has faced over the past seventy years and how new approaches might push the status-quo ahead.

Culture and Identity

In the 1980s, Representative Stokes recognized that the underrepresentation of minorities and women, particularly in the senior ranks of the IC, could be “attributed to ancient customs and outmoded thinking” which he believed would require years to change.⁵⁰ De-biasing a system steeped in tradition and ritual, where there is a high barrier to entry, generational attitudes, and a culture of secrecy, has historically been one of the most significant impediments to change in the IC.

Former senior intelligence professionals have expressed frustration with cultural rigidity within the IC, particularly in operations, where culture,

50 Congressional Research Service, “[Intelligence Community Diversity and Equal Opportunity](#),” December 7, 2020; Louis Stokes, “Hiring, Promotion, Retention and Overall Representation of Minorities, Women and Disabled Persons within the Intelligence Community.” House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, September 20, 1994; “[while serving as the HPSCI Chairman from 1987 to 1989] ... I knew that the problems faced by the intelligence community, ... that is charges of racial and sex discrimination, underrepresentation of minorities and women, in the senior professional ranks-can be attributed to ancient customs and outmoded thinking, mind-sets which in all probability require years to change.”

norms, and generational attitudes have proven resistant to change. Though CIA Director Gina Haspel, the first female CIA Director, brought an unprecedented number of women into senior positions, domestic and foreign roles continue to heavily feature white men in leadership.

The IC's targeted recruitment efforts in the 21st century have led to a more diverse workforce over the past decade, but promotion to senior ranks has not followed suit. As such, **the ODNI has called the lack of demographic diversity in its senior ranks its most “persistent challenge.”** Though there have been significant improvements to clarify the requirements for career advancement within the IC, there are cultural elements and barriers of formal and informal processes—many seeded in historical norms—that have not fostered mentorship and sponsorship of diverse candidates.

Good Intentions, Bad Implementation

From its inception, the IC limited its search for talent. Recruitment, hiring, and advancement practices lacked transparency and were arguably exclusionary, driven by a history of—and requirement for—classified hiring and promotion processes.

Since the 1990s, the IC has acknowledged the challenges with hiring and has initiated programs to identify and attract diverse, qualified candidates. However, evidence suggests the problems still exist and the IC loses many candidates through its lengthy and inefficient hiring processes. It is a qualitative problem as much as it is a quantitative one. Many of the hiring and screening requirements that exist within the IC are unique, such as entrance testing, the polygraph, or the requirement to obtain a security clearance.⁵¹ Published opinions have argued that these processes are culturally biased and based on the “historic candidate profile.” The community has not publicly shared how it has or will address potential barriers or biases in security screening practices nor determined if they assess for outdated, innate bias in such processes.

⁵¹ For more insight on similar challenges in the private sector, see: Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev, “[Why Diversity Programs Fail](#).” *Harvard Business Review*, July-August 2016.

Fortunately, CIA Director William Burns has prioritized reforming the hiring process at CIA by aiming to shorten the timeframe from two years to as little as six months. It remains to be seen if this will be successful, but if so, represents an opportunity to build diversity goals into the new personnel process as human resource policies seek to move beyond the antiquated systems of a bygone era. If the CIA is successful in this endeavor, it would behoove the wider IC to consider a new structure and aim to replicate it across the community to build a coherent and streamlined workforce.

Burns is also enacting other changes to the CIA's structure and hiring process, designed in part to make the agency more competitive as an employer. Today, it can take up to two years for applicants to wind their way through interviews and the lengthy process of being approved for a security clearance. The senior official said the agency will endeavor to shorten that timeline to six months.⁵²

If the IC does not continue to routinely assess barriers to its personnel policies, practices, and programs, it will limit itself to its old ways of recruitment, hiring, retention, and promotion and will miss out on the best talent, perspectives, and capabilities. This will inevitably harm the intelligence posture of the United States and their principal functions.

Inconsistent Policymaker Direction and Weak Oversight

The lack of diversity in the IC has been acknowledged and highlighted repeatedly since the 1950s into the 1990s, but implementation and follow through of reform efforts have been slow to take hold and difficult to assess due to lack of transparency and classified publications. In 1993, then DCI James Woolsey testified before the HPSCI that "...this is not our vision of where the Agency should be" in reference to the concentration of women and minorities in lower grade levels at the CIA.⁵³ By 2019, then

52 Shane Harris, "[CIA creates new mission center to counter China.](#)" *Washington Post*, October 7, 2021.

53 House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, "[Central Intelligence Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency and National Security Agency: Minority Hire, Retentions and Promotions.](#)" United States Congress, October 28, 1993.

DNI Dan Coats and every IC senior element leader signed *A Pledge to our People*, expressing their intent to implement stronger measures in the IC to address inclusion and discrimination. These steps included shared accountability, responsibility at all levels, transparency, leadership training, and employee awareness.⁵⁴ Senior leaders must stand behind their words to remove obstacles, and to embrace and prioritize change if they truly want to break the cycle of discrimination and cronyism.

Most recently, in March 2021, DNI Avril Haines released her Statement on Equal Employment Opportunity where she emphasized, “...we must also work together to identify policies and practices that disadvantage underserved communities, and we must ensure equity considerations are applied.” DNI Haines stressed the importance of **accountability** for results and reiterated that diversity, inclusion, equity, and equal opportunity are **mission imperatives within the IC** and one of the top national security issues of our time. In the closing statement, she addressed “**data-driven approaches**” to improve accountability, equality of opportunity, and inclusion across the IC.⁵⁵

Recommendations for Today and Tomorrow

Who We Are: Measurement, Transparency, and Accountability

The first step toward reinforcing diversity as a priority for the intelligence community requires an accurate accounting of the entire workforce from the public sector to contractors working for the American people. Where it does not already exist, adding a requirement for contractors to report demographics to the ODNI can provide greater insight into the diversity of the workforce. This can support a more accurate number to

⁵⁴ Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “[A Pledge to Our People](#).” February 2019.

⁵⁵ Avril Haines, “[Director’s Statement on Equal Employment Opportunity](#).” March 28, 2021.

better understand the reality of who is doing the intelligence work of the United States. Transparency is an issue; it has been and continues to be. Classification has been a crutch. Though there is some need for classification, it's been abused and a cloak to hide behind. An accurate measurement of the workforce can increase and foster an enduring transparency that will lend more credibility to current and future efforts to current and future approaches.

Diversity and inclusion efforts have been borne out of studies, policies, and legislation, but it is unclear from publicly available documents what measurements are being used to determine if efforts are successful or not. For example, in 2005, the DNI implemented the IC Centers for Academic Excellence Program, which has awarded approximately \$69M in grants to colleges and universities to prepare students of diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in the IC.⁵⁶ However, a 2019 GAO report revealed that the IC does not know if this program is achieving its goal of increasing diversity by expanding the IC applicant pool and is unable to determine the program's return on investment.⁵⁷ The report made several recommendations, one of which suggested the program establish and document strategies to achieve results-oriented goals.

Additionally, in 2020, GAO identified that while all IC elements had a process to identify barriers to diversity, nine IC elements did not complete required barrier assessments. Senior IC leaders must be asking the question: If half of the IC elements are not implementing required practices, how will the IC ensure effective development of diversity policies and programs?⁵⁸ The IC should establish requirements to evaluate programs and initiatives through objective measures and analysis, publishing these figures on an annual basis or at least sharing them with the ODNI and Congress. This is a necessary step to evaluate progress and success.

56 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, "[Centers for Academic Excellence](#)."

57 United States Government Accountability Office, "[Actions Needed to Improve Planning and Oversight of the Centers for Academic Excellence Program](#)." August 2019.

58 United States Government Accountability Office, "[Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight](#)." December 2020.

What We Measure

If diversity and inclusion is a mission imperative, we must “reflect diversity in its broadest context” to include cultural backgrounds, language proficiency, perspectives, age, and gender identification—among others—then the IC should consider setting goals and objective metrics to measure progress and diversity beyond the congressionally mandated targets.⁵⁹ Measurements of success and progress have largely focused on diversity demographics—specifically covered groups mandated by law including women, minorities, and individuals with disabilities. In the 2020 IAA, diversity was defined as “gender, race, ethnicity, disability status, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, and other demographic categories.”

The ODNI further expanded the attributes of such categories to include national origin, sex, language, color, age, religion, socioeconomic status, and family structure. Despite this extensive list of diversity attributes, studies and analysis of IC DEI efforts have only focused on the three dimensions of the workforce required by law. In a 2020 GAO report, ODNI officials reportedly stated they plan to expand the categories the office collects and reports demographic data on to include gender identity and sexual orientation, among others. No timeframe has been specified but future information will likely be included in annual demographic reports.⁶⁰

Perhaps most revealing would be increased transparency for contractors. Contractors compose much of the workforce. If their own metrics are not currently included in a comprehensive assessment of the entire workforce, then what is being measured within current processes? If there is no genuine, transparent accounting of the entire IC workforce from public sector to contractor support, there should be no reasonable expectation of accuracy or consequential, measurable progress. Clearly, this would run counter to the ongoing diversity mission and therefore requires substantive reform.

Any contracting entity that does business with the IC should be expected to meet reasonable workforce parameters to support the mission

59 Office of the Director of National Intelligence, “Diversity Reports.”

60 United States Government Accountability Office, “Intelligence Community: Additional Actions Needed to Strengthen Workforce Diversity Planning and Oversight.” December 2020.

imperative of diversity for the community. This should not be a punitive effort but one that provides incentives tied to contracts and agreements. It may not be a smooth process in the short-term but fundamentally in the long-term this will not only strengthen the workforce composition of contracting entities but better support the mission of the wider IC.

Transforming Workforce Culture: Diverse Agility

Culture remains one of the hardest organizational elements to change. In past cases of IC reform, change often required at least a generation of turnover. Fortunately, the greatest assets of the intelligence community remain an increasingly agile workforce. Unlike bygone eras of the mid-century or the Cold War, the next generation on the ascent are largely committed to diversity. There remains an important qualifier that individuals in positions of great responsibility must be capable and well suited for the position, but there are fewer direct or indirect conditional factors that historically shaped this decision-making space in a negative way. On the contrary, the challenge now requires building on these generational dynamics by strengthening and amplifying positive trends underway within recruitment, mentorship, and leadership across the community at every stage—especially at the senior level.

We see culture as an essential pillar that supports everything the IC does. To reinforce this pillar there are mechanisms and approaches that should be strongly considered in a cascading policy approach. Each sequential action reinforces the next and the mission overall. Where similar ideas are currently in motion, they should receive priority attention and support from leadership.

1. **Security Clearance Reform.** There is little sense in undertaking any other recommendations without reimagining one of the greatest barriers to entry for most of the American people. Current structures in place often stretch the clearance process to unsustainable amounts of time for young college graduates, many burdened by unreasonable amounts of debt and unable to wait years to begin their career. A shorter timeline

would dramatically improve the number of potential recruits that seriously consider a career in public service. Entry cannot be only desirable from a personal and professional perspective but must be a realistic option, sustainable, and achievable. Furthermore, this would prove helpful for more than just recent graduates. There have been impressive gains in the private sector when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Building a more conducive process for mid-career professionals to cycle into the IC would not only result in a more robust workforce and system more responsive to the needs of the community, but leverage cutting edge, experienced talent that may not require years of development within the IC to make an immediate impact. Experienced mid-career professionals possess transferable skills, a current knowledge base, and networks that often do not exist in early career stages.

2. **Educational Opportunity.** The IC must actively go to diverse students and professionals versus passive approaches. Attracting and retaining the best and the brightest must be a concerted effort from secondary education to career fairs and highlighting opportunities for those considering new directions. Intelligence specific university courses tied to political science, government and public policy programs offer structured introductions to history and background fostering understanding while sharpening skillsets. Outreach efforts must visit a wider array of institutions from state institutions to the Ivy League, historically black colleges and universities, and equal weight to schools in rural America and urban centers across the country. Furthermore, outreach should not be undertaken solely by graduates of those respective schools, demographics, or backgrounds. Diverse and inclusive teams should visit institutions of higher learning. Raising the number of virtual career fairs to reach the next generation in a tech centric world also ties interest to skillset. Scholarships, internships, and high school visits for seniors can help widen the talent pool in new ways. Building deeper partnerships with the New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles Police Departments offer additional windows into successful diversity recruitment programs tied to public service.
3. **Flexible Work Models.** The last two years have demonstrated to the public and private sector the feasibility of remote work. From disparate geographic locations to work-from-home models of varying hours, there are incentives to continue remote work when reasonable and reimagine

how the day-to-day work of the IC is conducted. Not everyone in the IC wants to move to Washington DC or initial assignments left to chance. Elevating flexible work models with regional centers of excellence including SCIF facilities could not only attract a deeper talent pool but incentivize the IC as a career option for Americans on a more equitable basis. From general cost-of-living concerns on federal salaries to family or life commitments, flexible models could attract and retain a diverse workforce confident in their ability to build successful careers around fulfilling lives. Clearly, there will continue to be certain geographic locations that are immovable for specific functions and activities. However, more flexible models for careers in the IC would be highly attractive for the next generation workforce. Dynamic options for individuals in various career stages can also ensure higher levels of retainment. For others, later career entry for those possessing highly sought, transferable skills.

4. **Leadership, Mentorship & Teamwork.** Wholesale buy-in for the diversity mission sets organizational tone. From the senior service to mid-level and the newest class of analysts, at every level mentorship plays a critical role to shape the culture of the IC through an individual, one-to-one basis. When everyone is engaged in this process in an equitable way, there is potential for grander organizational impact. Whether experienced professionals shepherding departmental leaders or newer employees reverse mentoring executives with fresh perspectives, routine can build connectivity and reinforce esprit de corps. Teamwork strengthens workforce cohesion. Clear communication from leadership and the continuing availability of a robust employee resource group promotes confidence and support for organizational members. Finally, amplifying voices in meetings where everyone has a seat at the table improves outcomes.
5. **Purpose: Enduring Mission Narrative.** One clear trendline across all generations of the workforce is belief in the mission. We see this from senior ranks to those going into new training programs as summer interns. At every opportunity the IC should champion that notion and belief in the functional intelligence mission. Many of the next generation are seeking purpose, meaning, and substance in the work that they do on a day-to-day basis. Leaders must highlight accomplishments, celebrate small milestones, and invest time and energy into recognition of individual contributions to the team.

Implementation: Consistent Policymaker Direction with Constructive Oversight

Over the past decade senior leaders have repeatedly pledged their commitment to furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion in the IC. They should be commended for their efforts thus far but cannot rest on limited progress and should continue to build for the future. DEI must remain a consistent priority with regular direction from senior community leadership, organizational leaders, along with constructive oversight from Congressional intelligence committees and the President's Intelligence Advisory Board (PIAB). Finally, retired intelligence professionals and academics can serve to amplify this effort through their engagement with the community and educational institutions outside of Washington. As the history of intelligence reform reminds us, it often requires more than whole-of-government action and must include continuous, synergistic lines of effort.

Senior leaders should embrace and prioritize change to address the institutionalized culture that has contributed to a lack of transparency and exclusionary practices. We feel our recommendations on accountability of community metrics is a good starting point, alongside cascading policy ideas or variations of them currently underway. This is not an overnight solution, but long-term and generational. Increasing transparency regarding public studies and reports can build trust. For classified and sensitive information pertaining to the workforce, IC leaders should consider publishing more detailed unclassified addendums.

It is important to honor the history and culture of the IC while maintaining secrecy of sensitive information. However, leaders must recognize the limitations these practices and traditions bring and lead these organizations into a new era that is welcoming, accommodating, and supportive of all. Former Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michele Flournoy said it best when talking about changing culture *“It requires a clearly communicated vision from the top, sustained leadership engagement, buy-in from managers at multiple levels, revised incentives to realign behavior*

*toward desired outcomes, and a greater emphasis on holding people accountable for results.*⁶¹

From the very top, the President, the DNI, and the heads of all IC elements have made their goals and commitment to ensure critical perspectives and talents are represented in the national security workforce. Buy-in from managers at various levels will continue to be one of the most pressing challenges. Incentivizing behaviors to change culture will be key while continuing to address barriers to both diversity and inclusion that will translate across the community and the next generation. Lastly, assessing and measuring progress by holding the community accountable will be the most important driver to lasting change.

The legal oversight role of Congress often has a negative connotation within conventional narratives seen in both the legislative branch and the community. In reality, and especially in successful cases of intelligence reform in the past, they are a strong partner and enabler of bold reform measures that favor progress. When leaders on committees in Congress have a clear view and understanding of how to improve the community, therein lies an opportunity to move forward in a constructive way. Congressional committee members must put aside partisanship to work with leaders of the community in defense of the American people.

In their legal role, Senior IC leaders must be held accountable for revising, analyzing, and assessing organizational DEI efforts. Leaders must continue to measure organizational efforts and Congress should continue oversight. If the IC fails to adequately assess and implement diversity initiatives, Congress should not continue to fund such efforts. But Congress should also ensure that the DNI has the requisite authorities to accurately measure and account for the composition of the workforce across the board—from public sector entities to contractors. In particular, ICD 110 might benefit from additional study and potential revision to ensure the DNI has ability to execute this responsibility as leader of the IC.⁶² There should be a concerted effort between the ODNI, Congress, and partners inside and outside government.

61 Michele A. Flournoy, “America’s Military Risks Losing Its Edge.” *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 2021.

62 ICD-110, “Intelligence Community Equal Employment and Opportunity and Diversity.” July 1, 2009.

An underappreciated partner in the intelligence community is the President's Intelligence Advisory Board (PIAB). The PIAB has a long history of providing the president with counsel and ideas for how to effectively move the community ahead without upending the central mission of the IC. Indeed, this was in their portfolio as recently as in the 1990s as the community sought to rebuild after downsizing. If they are not already doing so, the PIAB should prioritize diversifying the IC workforce in their recommendations to the president and his senior leadership team. Appointing new individuals to the board to serve as constructive advisors for the group, along with direct support for the president, IC leaders, and Congress would establish another point of impact to shape the space in a positive way.

Finally, retired intelligence community veterans and academics should amplify arguments in favor of DEI efforts to reinforce the direction of leadership and encourage a lasting shift in culture for the current workforce and next generation. Much as members of Congress represent the interests of the American people, retired veterans, and scholars of intelligence each offer an informed perspective that can add much to the effort in direct and indirect ways. Through frequent writing and commentary in addition to teaching courses on intelligence, therein lie additional lines of effort to support the grander mission of better understanding workforce needs, requirements, and national security in the twenty-first century.

Lastly, leaders must learn from the past and implement a research-based approach when implementing DEI initiatives. Through this broad-based effort, the intelligence community can practice a large degree of self-governance with contributions from partners in government and outside of it to improve outcomes. Oversight from Congress and other partners of the intelligence community need not be antagonistic or competitive but supportive and reinforcing. This is fundamentally a *constructive* endeavor versus one perceived as *destructive*. Synergistic efforts can contribute to building the next generation of American intelligence.

Conclusion

Upon examination of the history of DEI in the IC, **when there is no external pressure or motivator, and a veil of secrecy protecting organizational data, effective oversight and accountability becomes difficult if not impossible.** Transforming an institutionalized culture is very difficult and will not happen overnight. It requires continuous external pressure, clear incentives, and accountability of senior leaders. The IC should assess—from all angles—why the IC has not made *enough* progress in past decades. The IC should conduct their own intelligence cycle as its framework: to identify requirements, task accordingly, collect, assess, process, and analyze the results for internal and external leaders. The GAO recommended the IC establish specific implementation objectives and timeframes that support workforce diversity goals to help ensure IC elements are held accountable for making progress.

The IC has been routinely challenged in its efforts to recruit, retain, and promote a talented and diverse workforce. **The secret nature of the IC's activities and culture has created an environment where accountability and implementation of DEI initiatives are more difficult than in other agencies, fields, and industries.** Over the past decade, the IC has demonstrated its commitment to become a more diverse and inclusive community. Although some progress has been made, senior leaders cannot rest on their laurels. Today, the need and desire for top talent is cut-throat and demands our best and brightest continue to build and champion what must be the best workforce in the world. To recruit and retain top talent, the IC must do its part to ensure greater transparency and implement diversity policies supported by research, implemented intentionally, and evaluated to assess effectiveness. Pledging commitment is not enough. To succeed, the IC must evolve, modernize, and open its doors to feedback and oversight.

Left unsaid in most of this report is developing more than just diversity of the workforce in composition of individuals but also diversity in thought. **Recruiting more creative thinkers, analysts, and intelligence professionals remains as important as the operational reality of a serving**

in a diverse world. If the CIA and others in the community are to work possibilities and not prediction, this requires professionals able to think in a structured way beyond the status-quo to question key assumptions and consider alternative views that could generate breakthrough insights on America's greatest challenges. This value-added contribution to the intelligence community is by itself invaluable and *begins* with building an equitable culture that encourages diversity as a cardinal strength versus reinforcement of the status-quo.

The ODNI should prioritize objectives and timeframes in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure accountability and transparency. Section 309 of the 2022 Intelligence Authorization Act provides the DNI additional flexibility and funding in support of IC-wide workforce activities related to recruitment, retention, diversity, equity, inclusion, or accessibility, if they are of benefit to the whole IC.⁶³ Section 310 establishes a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion officer to lead efforts on behalf of the IC.⁶⁴ This is a good start. The GAO report further recommended the IC establish specific implementation objectives and timeframes that support IC wide workforce diversity goals to help ensure IC elements are held accountable for making progress. Experts agree that diversity and inclusion efforts will enhance national security, but policy alone is not enough. Diversity and inclusion in the IC must be widely accepted and understood as mission critical to internal and external stakeholders along with the next generation of intelligence professionals.⁶⁵

63 United States Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "[Intelligence Authorization Act of 2022](#)." United States Congress, August 10, 2021.

64 Ibid.

65 Tiffany Dao, Jenine Patterson, and Phil Roberts. "[Intelligence After Next, Diversity and Inclusion: A Mission Imperative For the Intelligence Community](#)." MITRE: Center for Technology & National Security, 2021.



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