LeadHERship in the Federal Government
Race, gender and public service leadership: Major findings from 360 assessment data

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About the Partnership

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that works to revitalize the federal government by inspiring a new generation to serve and by transforming the way government works. The Partnership teams up with federal agencies and other stakeholders to make our government more effective and efficient.
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Background

Women are underrepresented in federal leadership positions, making up just 27.3% of the U.S. Congress in 2021 and 39% of the Senior Executive Service—the highest level of our government’s career workforce—in 2022. While various sociological and psychological theories offer insight into why these persistent gender gaps exist, a potential strategy to solve this issue is for researchers and federal agencies to better understand how federal leaders view themselves, as well as how they are viewed by their colleagues, direct reports and supervisors.

Historically, the common conception of what it means to be a leader has been built on characteristics typically associated with white men. Understanding women’s experiences in federal leadership roles, and the barriers and challenges they face, is critical to creating a federal workforce that reflects the diversity of the United States and is better equipped to serve people with different backgrounds and needs.

Collecting and analyzing this information will enable organizations that support the federal government and its institutions—and our government itself—to address the societal barriers that contribute to gender disparities in federal leadership roles and to build a more effective federal workplace.

This is the third brief in the Partnership for Public Service’s LeadHERship series, which explores these issues in greater depth. For more information about this series, please review our introductory brief.

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Executive Summary

Our previous research highlighted differences between how men and women leaders in the federal government scored on the Public Service Leadership Model. Specifically, scores on the two core values — stewardship of public trust and commitment to public good. Also, scores on the four key competencies—becoming self-aware, engaging others, leading change and achieving results—and 20 subcompetencies. These scores are based on data collected through the Public Service Leadership 360 assessment tool.

In this brief, we examine how racial and ethnic identity intersect with gender to affect federal leaders’ workplace experience. Like other research, our analysis supports the need to not just focus on gender when seeking to understand this experience, but to also explore how other social identities—especially race—influence the social perception of women leaders in government.²

Overall, we found that people in the federal workplace perceive leaders differently based on race and gender. When we closely examined the data, we uncovered several important trends about these differences.

First, we found that, despite their underrepresentation in certain government leadership roles, federal employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds—for example Black, African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Latino, Latinx and additional individuals—scored higher than white employees on all the key competencies and subcompetencies. This finding persists for both leaders’ self-assessments and for their ratings by others, such as direct reports, colleagues and supervisors. In addition, employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds self-rate more similarly to their other raters than their white colleagues, suggesting that these leaders may possess greater self-awareness. As stated in our previous brief, the alignment between how employees perceive their own performance and how others perceive it is a strong indicator of career success and advancement.

As in our analysis of men and women leaders, we did not find a statistically significant difference between how diverse groups of employees and white employees scored on our two core values: stewardship of public trust and commitment to public good. This finding reinforces the idea that federal leaders—regardless of both gender and race—demonstrate the main ideals needed to make an impact in government. However, while not statistically significant, employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds did self-rate lower on stewardship of public trust—even though diverse employees are scored higher on this value by others.

We also found that, while there is not a consistent statistically significant difference in how individuals are rated based on their race, ethnicity and gender, women with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds scored higher than white women on all core values and competencies.

Furthermore, using qualitative data, we also found that gender bias persists in the federal workplace against both diverse groups of women and white women. When examining questions that asked raters to offer constructive feedback about employees in our sample, we discovered that white women received more negatively framed comments than white men and that women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds received more negatively framed comments than men of diverse backgrounds. We also found that white women received the least positively framed feedback of these groups. This finding suggests that gender continues to affect the type of feedback leaders receive, which may hinder leadership development opportunities for women and help explain why they remain underrepresented in certain senior government roles—even while the number of white women in these roles has grown in recent years.3

Similarly, we found significant differences in the top adjectives used to describe the federal leaders in our sample based on race and gender. For example, the adjective “intelligent” is used statistically significantly less for men of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds than for any other group, and white men are identified as “intelligent” the most in our sample. In addition, the adjective “trustworthy” is used statistically significantly less for white women than for any other group in our sample. However, these same women are identified as “hardworking” the most, while men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds are identified as “hardworking” significantly less than any other group.

In all, these findings suggest that federal leaders’ gender, or racial/ethnic background affects how they are perceived by their colleagues and coworkers. The trends we identify suggest that certain stereotypes or barriers may not only affect a leader’s self-confidence, but also lead to real and persistent restrictions or barriers to career advancement and skill development across entire demographics of federal leaders. These barriers reinforce ongoing racial, ethnic and gender disparities in the federal workforce.

Introduction

In our first brief, we described in detail the differences in how men and women scored on the core values, competencies and subcompetencies of the Public Service Leadership Model based on data collected through the Public Service Leadership 360 assessment tool.

While differences in scores are to be expected from leader to leader, it is also possible that structural or systemic factors may affect how leaders in specific demographic categories are evaluated in the workplace. For example, gender stereotypes may reinforce and exacerbate women’s access to certain federal leadership positions. Women are often perceived as warm and communal, whereas “leaders” are often viewed as more assertive and competent.4

In addition to these implicit biases, how we define and imagine “leadership” has historically been grounded in specific notions of gender and race—specifically ones that elevate white men and other societal norms.2,4,5,6,7 This implicit bias leads to systemic bias against women and other leaders with diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds. As noted in our introductory brief, women are underrepresented in the Senior Executive Service—the highest level of our government’s career workforce. The same is also true for diverse racial or ethnic groups, who make up about 40% of the U.S. population, but roughly 23% of the Senior Executive Service, about 47% of entry-level jobs and more than 50% of the clerical roles in our federal government.8

While this research series highlights the importance of having federal leadership that represents the whole of the U.S. population, achieving a more balanced federal leadership is only one component of advancing diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility at an

organization. Employing inclusive leadership practices, which directly impacts an employee’s experience and perception of organizational fairness, is a more crucial factor.9

Additionally, even within the field of study of women in leadership it is only recently that the focus has shifted from one of white women to also including Black women’s experiences to understand how the intersection of racism and sexism compound systems of oppression.10

This idea, termed "intersectionality" by Kimberlé Crenshaw, highlights the ways in which different social identities overlap to reinforce discrimination and is an important lens to understand women’s experiences in the federal government, especially when it comes to race and gender.11 Using intersectionality to explore leadership is an evolving field of study12,13 and necessitates caution in interpreting or generalizing results across diverse groupings of people.14,15,16,17 Our brief uses findings from our 360 assessment to build new knowledge in this area and add much-needed data analysis to studies of systemic racism, gender identity and whiteness.18

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Overview of demographic data for the individual leaders being rated

In total, over 15,000 individuals used the 360 assessment tool between December 2020 and April 2022. Of those, 1,123 were self-ratings, and 14,007 were ratings completed by others—for example, managers, direct reports, friends or family, or colleagues.

The racial and ethnic breakdown of these employees is in the figure below:

![Figure 1. Overview of race and ethnicity data.](chart)

Additional demographic details can be found in our research brief, “Analysis of Federal Government Leadership Assessment Scores by Gender”. These race and ethnicity categories predate the author’s work on this project. As a part of our efforts to evaluate the 360 assessment tool and better align with current best practices in collecting demographic data, we will be updating and refining these categories. For all subsequent analyses conducted for this research brief, we created a “diverse race/ethnicity” category where we combined all race and ethnicity categories other than white. We combined the categories to draw meaningful conclusions due to small sample sizes on individual categories, however we acknowledge that these categories do not represent a monolith, similar to “white” having a broad array of individuals under one category.
Findings
Examining scores on core leadership competencies, core values and subcompetencies
The Public Service Leadership Model identifies four competencies that federal leaders need to exhibit to best serve our country—becoming self-aware, engaging others, leading change and achieving results. Additionally, the model outlines two core values—stewardship of public trust and commitment to public good—that federal leaders should demonstrate to live up to the highest ideals of public service.

To explore how leaders with different racial or ethnic identities scored on these competencies and values, we used a statistical test called an independent samples t-test, to compare their average scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall, we found that:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Individuals with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds scored higher than their white colleagues on all four core competencies and all 20 subcompetencies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• These differences were statistically significant for all subcompetencies except embracing risk and uncertainty—part of the leading change competency—and for three of the four achieving results subcompetencies—evidence-based decision-making, systems thinking and tech savviness, where the scores were still higher, but not statistically significant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and white employees scored similarly on the two core values: stewardship of public trust and commitment to public good.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In all, the federal leaders in our sample with diverse racial and ethnic identities were consistently rated as performing higher than their white colleagues on our core leadership competencies identified as critical for effective public service leadership.\textsuperscript{21} This trend suggests that larger systemic inequities may explain the racial disparities in certain federal leadership positions and the overrepresentation of diverse groups in entry-level roles.

**Average scores on core values, key and subcompetencies**

Average scores for all raters based on race and ethnicity.

- White
- Diverse race/ethnicity

![Chart showing average scores on core values, key and subcompetencies for all raters based on race and ethnicity.](chart)

**Figure 2.** Average scores on core values, key and subcompetencies for all raters based on race and ethnicity.

Self-ratings versus others’ ratings

In our previous brief, we found that individuals, regardless of gender, rated themselves statistically significantly lower than others rated them on all key competencies and core values.

In this brief, we used the same statistical test, an independent samples t-test, to compare average scores on self-ratings and others’ ratings for employees with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and white employees.

Overall, we found that:

• All employees, regardless of race/ethnicity, rated themselves lower than they were rated by others on all competencies and core values.
• Employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds self-rated higher than their white colleagues on all core values, key and subcompetencies, except for one: stewardship of public trust.
  o These values were statistically significantly higher than their white colleagues on all four key competencies and 17 of 20 subcompetencies.
  o While not statistically significant, employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds self-rated higher than their white colleagues on the remaining three subcompetencies—embracing risk and uncertainty, evidence-based decision-making, and systems thinking—as well as the core value of commitment to public good.
  o White employees self-rated statistically significantly higher on the stewardship of public trust value than their colleagues with more diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds.
• Employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were rated higher by others than their white colleagues on all core values, key and subcompetencies.
  o These results were statistically significantly higher on all four core competencies and 15 of 20 subcompetencies.
  o While not statistically significant, employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were also rated higher on the values of commitment to public good and stewardship of public trust, as well as the remaining five subcompetencies of integrity, embracing risk and uncertainty, evidence-based decision making, systems thinking and tech savviness.
Figure 3. Average scores on core values and key competencies for self and others’ ratings based on race and ethnicity.

Average scores on core values and key competencies

Average scores for self- versus others’ ratings based on race and ethnicity.

- White-other
- Diverse race/ethnicity-other
- White-self
- Diverse race/ethnicity-self

Stewardship of public trust
Commitment to public good
Becoming Self Aware
Engaging Others
Leading Change
Achieving Results

Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Created with Datawrapper

Average scores on subcompetencies

Average scores for self- versus others’ ratings based on race and ethnicity.

- White-other
- Diverse race/ethnicity-other
- White-self
- Diverse race/ethnicity-self

Self-reflection
Authenticity
Emotional intelligence
Integrity
Continuous learning
Relationship building
Empowering others
Conflict management
Collaboration
Diversity, equity and inclusion
Vision setting
Influence
Innovation and creativity
Embracing risk and uncertainty
Adaptability
Accountability
Evidence-based decision making
Systems thinking
Tech savviness
Customer experience

Chart: Partnership for Public Service • Created with Datawrapper
These results demonstrate that Black or African American, Hispanic, Latino or Latinx, Asian American, and additional employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds self-rated more similarly to how they were rated by others compared to their white counterparts on all the model’s values, competencies and subcompetencies except stewardship of public trust.

This is an important finding, as we have discussed previously that more alignment of self-versus others’ ratings may indicate greater self-awareness and can be a predictor of strong performance and career advancement. This trend also contradicts the underrepresentation of certain racial and ethnic groups in federal leadership roles by highlighting greater self-awareness and higher scores, overall, for these employees, which would suggest greater representation than present reality, based on skills and experience.

The question of why leaders of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds rated themselves lower on the value of stewardship of public trust than their white colleagues highlights a need for further research, especially as there are high levels of public mistrust in the federal government. It is important to determine any potential barriers or factors that are causing these employees to doubt their abilities on only this specific core value.

**Relationship between race and gender in others’ ratings**

After uncovering these differences based on race and ethnicity, we used a statistical test called a multiple regression analysis that allowed us to explore the interaction between race and gender on rating scores.

Because our previous analyses identified significant differences in how men and women were rated by others, such as supervisors, direct reports, colleagues, or friends and family, we also ran an additional statistical test, a two-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), to explore any trends in how others rated women based on their race and ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall, we found that:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• There was no statistically significant pattern of people rating individuals differently based on the intersection of their gender and race or ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• However, when examining just women, we did find important differences in ratings:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Across the four core competencies and two core values, women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were consistently rated higher by others compared with white women. However, differences were only statistically significant for the four core competencies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This trend suggests that the underrepresentation of diverse groups of women in senior federal leadership positions is not due to a lack of leadership ability, but rather due to more systemic or structural factors.

**Average scores on core values and key competencies**

Average scores for intersection of gender and race/ethnicity

![Average scores graph](chart.png)

*Figure 5. Average scores on core values and key competencies for the intersection of gender and race/ethnicity.*

**Type of feedback provided to leaders**

To complement our quantitative data and better understand these trends, we used sentiment analysis to analyze one open-ended question on our 360 assessment: “What is one behavior or practice this person could adopt to be a more effective leader?”

We used sentiment analysis to measure the degree to which the answer to this question was framed positively or negatively. For example, the response, “Continue to bring in diverse ideas” was coded as positive, while the response, “...sometimes [name removed] can come off as
easily frustrated when others do not follow her lead. Tho’ tenacious in seeking buy-in her sometimes aggressive approach with peers could be more assertive and less aggressive,” was coded as negative.

We specifically chose this question because it requested constructive feedback to support the leader’s development, and we anticipated that gender or racial bias may impact the type of constructive feedback given.

<table>
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<th>Overall, we found that:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• There are statistically significant differences in how many positively framed statements were given to leaders based on their gender, and there were close to statistically significant differences based on a leader’s race and ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• White men were provided with more positively framed feedback to improve their leadership than white women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds received more positively framed feedback than diverse groups of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Overall, white women received the least positively framed feedback on opportunities to improve.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Frequency of negative, neutral, or positive sentiments

Negative numbers refer to how less frequently the positive, negative, or neutral sentiment was given to that demographic category than expected. Positive numbers refer to how more frequent the sentiment was given than expected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Race/Ethnicity Men</td>
<td>-10</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Men</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Race/Ethnicity Women</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-99</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Partnership for Public Service • Created with Datawrapper

Table 1. The difference between the observed and expected values is statistically significant. $X^2 (6, N = 12,792)$ $=24.76, p = .05$.  

22 There are limitations to this analysis, and researchers should interpret these results with caution. Excel uses a generic dictionary with negative and positive words and then assigns each phrase in the dataset a score based on how strongly that phrase aligns with those positive or negative words. We recommend future research to explore if this trend persists in the data.
Adjectives used to describe leaders

Across our 13 interviews and one focus group, women repeatedly mentioned that they felt others in the workplace were holding them to different standards due to their gender. These women also indicated that others may use certain adjectives or leadership characteristics to describe men in a positive way—but not women—in the workplace.

Based on these data points and previous research demonstrating that white men are often regarded as typical “leaders” in society,\[^2\,5\,6\,7\] we examined the open-ended question, “Describe this person in up to three adjectives,” and reviewed the most common adjectives used in the response. Some of these terms were used to positively assess leaders who are men, but negatively to assess leaders who are women. Still others—like the adjective “warm”—reinforced certain stereotypes about how women leaders are expected to behave.\[^4\]

The chart below highlights the percentage of respondents that used a given term to describe the federal leader.

### Figure 6. Percentage of individuals in each demographic category who were described using a specific adjective in a list of three.
Overall, we found that:

- The top three most used adjectives to describe leaders in our sample were intelligent, trustworthy and hardworking.
- How frequently these words were used varied in a statistically significant way depending on the race/ethnicity and gender of the federal leader.
- The adjective “intelligent” was used statistically significantly less for men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds than for any other group.
- White men were identified as “intelligent” the most in our sample.
- The adjective “trustworthy” was used statistically significantly less for white women than for any other group.
- Women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were identified as “trustworthy” the most in our sample.
- The adjective “hardworking” was used significantly less for men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds than for any other group.
- White women were identified as “hardworking” the most in our sample.
- While not quite statistically significant, women of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds were identified as “warm” the most in our sample. Men from this same demographic were identified as “warm” the least.

Frequency of adjectives used to describe federal leaders

Negative numbers refer to how much less frequently than expected a given adjective was used for a specific demographic. Positive numbers refer to how much more frequently a given adjective was used than expected for a specific demographic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Intelligent</th>
<th>Trustworthy</th>
<th>Hardworking</th>
<th>Warm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Race/Ethnicity Men</td>
<td>-45</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-25</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Men</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Race/Ethnicity Women</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Women</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-37</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table: Partnership for Public Service • Created with Datawrapper

Table 2. Negative numbers indicate how many less times a given adjective was used for a specific demographic than expected if it was equally represented across all demographic categories. Positive numbers indicate how
many more times a given adjective was used than expected. While not in the list of top three adjectives, we include “warm” here for comparison since it has been used in the literature to describe a characteristic that women leaders are more often expected to display than leaders who are men.

These findings highlight the persistence of common stereotypes about leaders and leadership in the federal government. The fact that men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in our sample were less likely to be described as “intelligent” or “hardworking” than white men—and that women of the same group were more likely to be described as “warm” than men—reveals the need to ensure that leaders identify implicit biases in their performance evaluations of others. This finding also highlights the need to build performance management systems that promote equity in career advancement and leadership opportunities. Our findings warrant future research to better understand how implicit bias affects the workplace experience of specific groups of federal employees.
Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first comprehensive exploration of trends in federal government 360 assessment data across race and ethnicity, and gender. Indeed, a 2017 literature review that examined public leadership research demonstrated that only a handful of studies since the mid-2000s have focused on intersectional data. Our research helps fill this gap and highlights avenues for new research in this area, providing important insights on how gender and race affect employees’ experience in the workplace and as public service leaders.16

Our findings indicate that the racial and gender disparities within federal leadership reflect broader stereotypes and biases that have historically resulted in barriers for women and diverse racial and ethnic groups in the workplace. We found that employees of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds—and women in this group, in particular—scored higher than their white counterparts on the skills, values and competencies critical to public service leadership. We also found that these diverse groups assess their own abilities more similarly to how others assess them compared to their white colleagues, which is typically a strong predictor of career advancement.

Nonetheless, a broader acceptance of white men as leaders and an implicit bias against women and employees with diverse backgrounds has enabled the persistent belief that both groups are less competent in the workplace and closed off opportunities for underrepresented groups to advance into senior federal leadership roles.23,24

For example, we found that white men and men of diverse backgrounds received more positively framed feedback on questions related to improving their leadership style than women from both demographic groups. Even more convincing, we found that raters used the word “intelligent” and “hardworking” less frequently to describe men of diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds than for any other demographic group. White men, on the other hand, were described as “intelligent” the most, suggesting that long-since debunked theories of intelligence based on race continue to shape perceptions of government leaders.25

Uncovering how these stereotypes—and other racial and ethnic stereotypes—persist in the federal government is crucial, as they not only affect performance appraisals by others, but can also have detrimental effects on performance if the leader believes them.26,27

Researchers have documented the phenomenon of individuals rating leaders from similar racial and ethnic backgrounds more favorably than individuals from different backgrounds.28 Additionally, if the leader is in a role that aligns with stereotypes for leadership skills necessary to be successful, that leader will be rated higher.29

All these trends highlight specific interventions and strategies that leadership development programs should prioritize to build a more equitable and inclusive federal leadership corps.

For example, previous research outlines three main barriers to reducing racial and gender disparities in federal leadership: stereotypes about who makes a good leader and what good leadership looks like; a “double-paned” glass ceiling that holds back women and diverse groups from career advancement; and a lack of mentorship or professional development for these groups.15 We cannot know for certain which of these causes, if any, is the most important factor driving our findings, but our data suggests that some combination of all three play a critical role.

Leadership programs—as well as agency efforts to implement President Joe Biden’s executive order on supporting diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the federal workforce—should focus on helping federal organizations address these issues. The data from the 360 assessment is thus important not only at the individual level, but also at a systems level. Our findings—and others from this assessment tool—can help shape and inform organizational performance and public policy. These results can also be used to improve the government’s ability to build a diverse workforce that represents all of the United States, designs services for those who need them most and provides a good overall customer experience to the public.

Our detailed analysis and identification of key trends in how federal leaders are rated by themselves and others provides support for the persistence of stereotypical perceptions of what it means to be a “leader”.24,56

Specifically, we identified key differences across gender and race/ethnicity for how individuals are rated by themselves and others. There are many potential structural or individual reasons for why these differences exist, and we hope to continue to explore this further in future research. Our finding is significant, as it is one of few studies providing qualitative and quantitative data to understand how the experience of our federal leaders varies based on their race/ethnicity and gender.

Areas for future research:
The trends we uncovered present multiple areas of future exploration, including:

- Examining how, or if, additional social identities—such as disability status, LGBTQ+, age and more—relate to leadership assessment scores.

- Connecting individual 360 assessment scores with agency data, such as the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey or the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government® rankings, to examine how rating differences based on race and gender affect employee engagement and satisfaction at specific agencies.

- Exploring other ways that implicit bias may affect perceptions of federal leaders.

- Examining difference in perception of the value of stewardship of public trust based on race or ethnicity, as well as additional social identities.
Select recommendations on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA):

It is well understood that top-performing organizations have more diverse leadership. While the Biden administration has prioritized DEIA-focused strategies for the federal workforce, they alone are not enough to create an equitable, inclusive and accessible government workplace.

Agencies can successfully achieve strategic goals related to DEIA by taking several actions, including:

1. Using data to highlight the connection between diverse organizations and improved performance and to align leadership on why DEIA is important for their agency and for our government.
2. Adequately funding and providing time to build capacity in DEIA.
3. Ensuring sufficient internal expertise to sustain and grow efforts over time.
4. Developing a clear method for tracking progress and accountability over time.

In addition to this list, mentorship is often considered a tool for underrepresented groups to advance in their career. Participants in our interviews and focus groups mentioned this consistently as one additional helpful tool, however, barriers can exist in those mentoring relationships and it may not address all the structural inequities that exist. There are also differences between mentorship and sponsorship in the federal workforce, which we will highlight in a future research brief.

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32 Jeffcoat, Sandra Y. Mentoring women of color for leadership: Do barriers exist?. Antioch University, 2008.
Furthermore, we recommend that agencies critically examine their approach to performance reviews, as well as their overall recruitment, retention, and promotion policies for racially and ethnically diverse leaders and women. Additionally, we recommend critically examining practices and policies for areas of implicit bias and seeking expertise to minimize the impact implicit bias may have on employee experience and engagement.

In our final research brief in the LeadHERship series we will compile and outline a list of lessons learned and recommendations gleaned from our quantitative analysis of the 360 data, as well as the qualitative interviews and focus groups we have conducted.
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