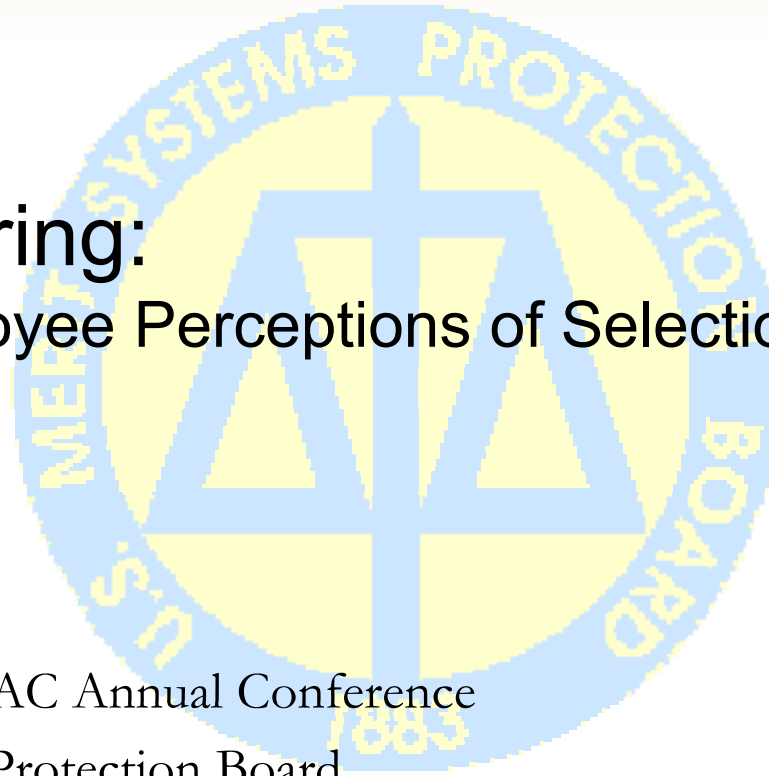


Merit In Hiring: Federal Employee Perceptions of Selection Processes

2009 IPMA-HR/IPAC Annual Conference

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board

Office of Policy and Evaluation



Overview

Who we are	An agency responsible for merit systems in the Federal civil service
What we do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adjudicate Federal employee appeals• Evaluate Federal agency HR policy and practice
What we did	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Advancement Survey• Research on Federal hiring
What we'll do	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Present selected survey results• Explore nonselection and advancement• Consider implications

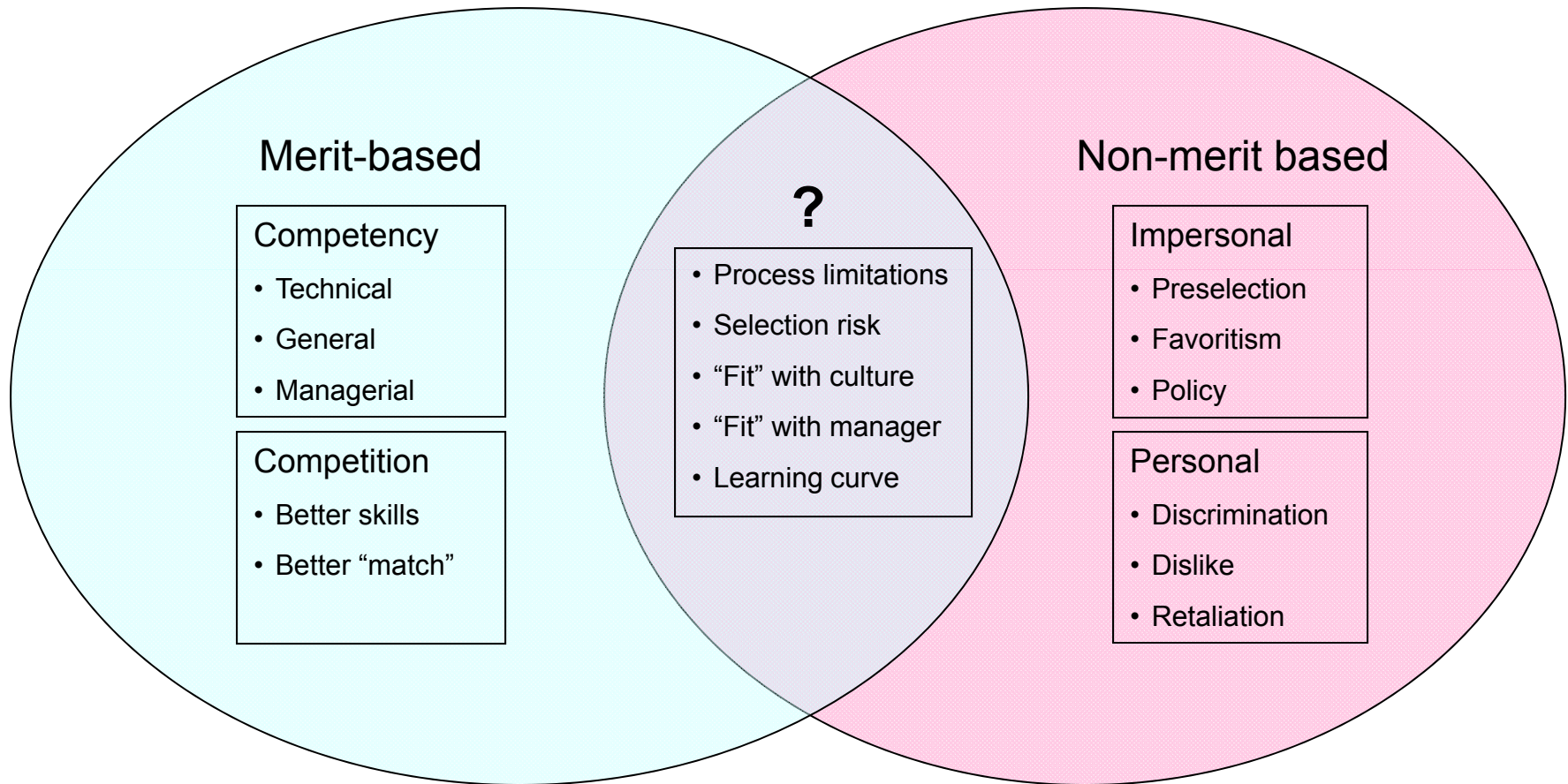


About the Career Advancement Survey

- Topics
 - Applying for jobs: actions, success, perceptions
 - Satisfaction with advancement
 - Perceptions of equity
- Sampling and response
 - 22,000 Federal employees
 - 53% response rate
 - Stratified by sex, ERI, pay level



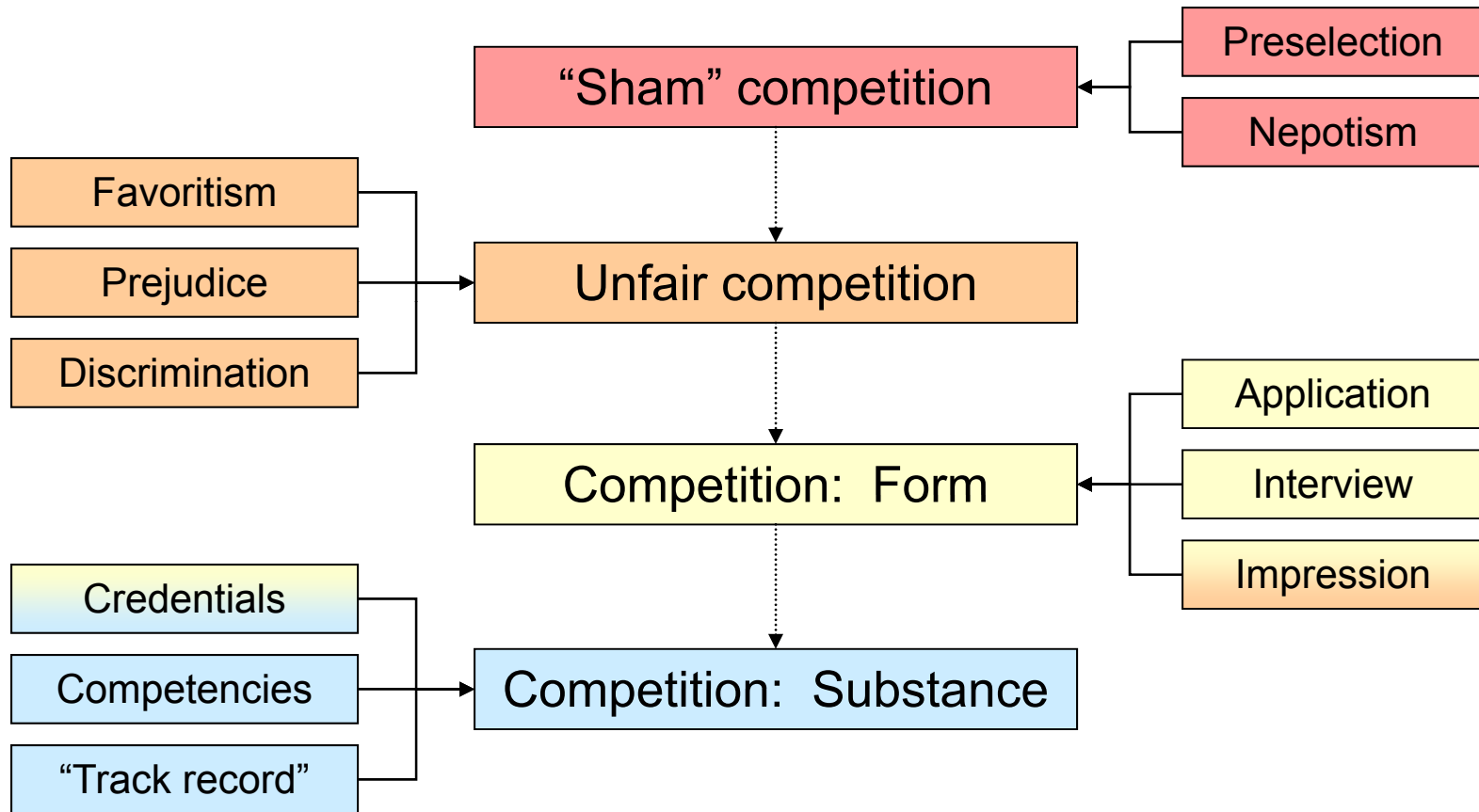
Possible Reasons for Nonselection



Survey Results and Insights

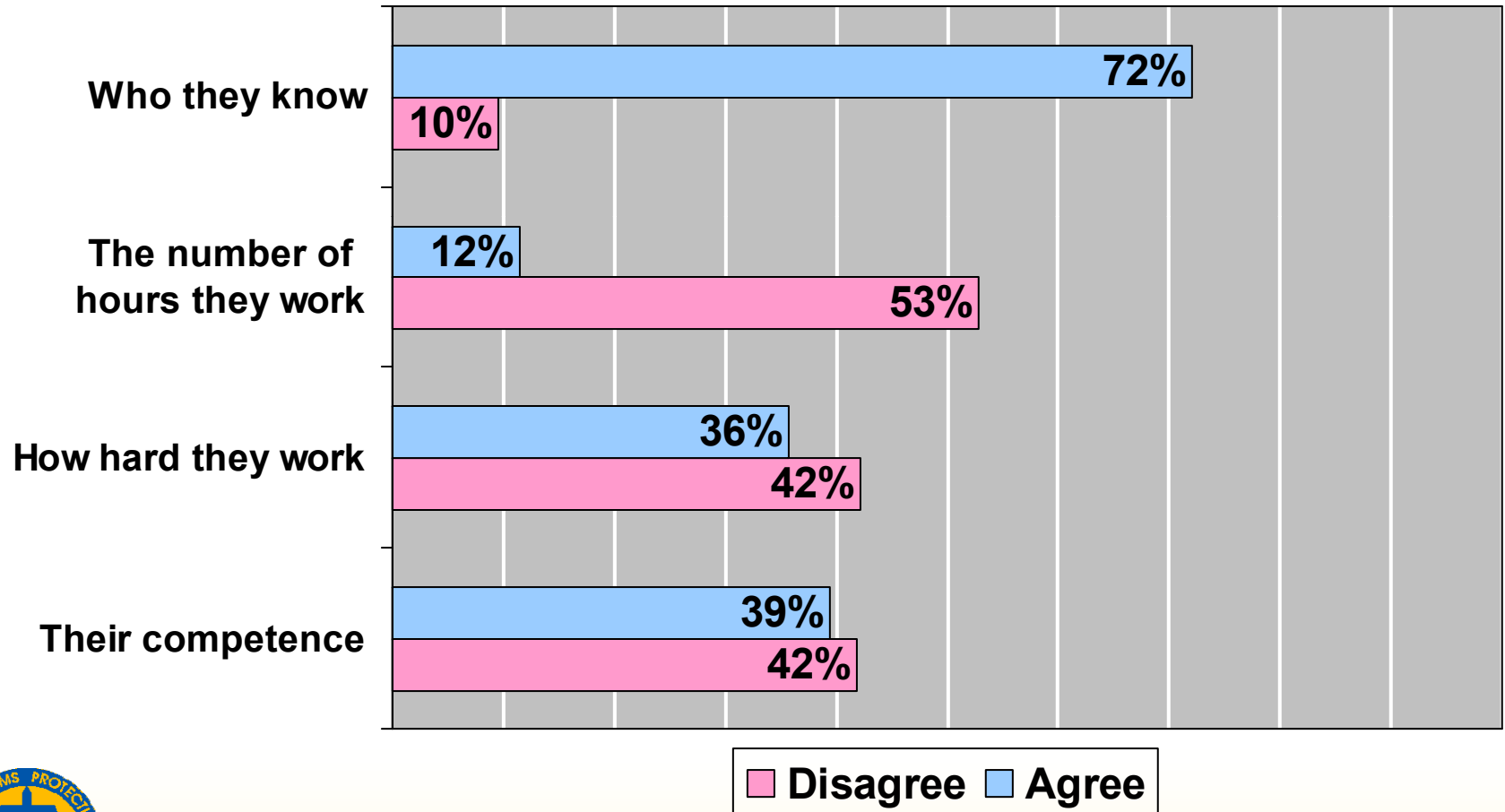


Nonselection: The Applicant Perspective



How to Get Ahead: Employee Perceptions

People are promoted because of –



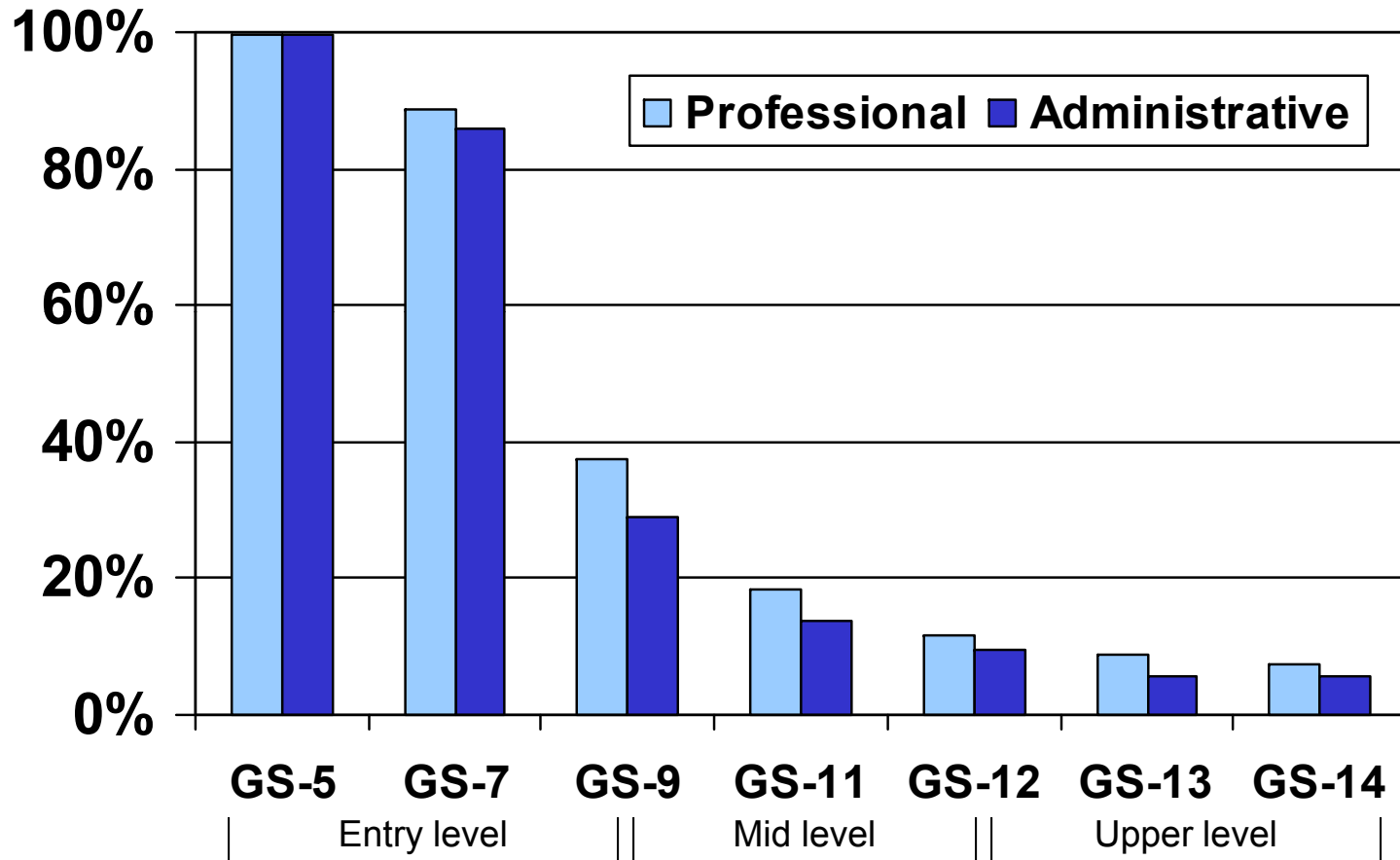
Source: U.S. MSPB, Career Advancement Survey

Potential Misunderstandings

- Past experience may mislead
 - Availability of opportunities
 - Likelihood of success
 - Criteria for promotion



Federal Government Promotion Rates



One-year promotion rates from specified grade for employees paid under the General Schedule.
Source: Central Personnel Data File, fiscal year 2006.

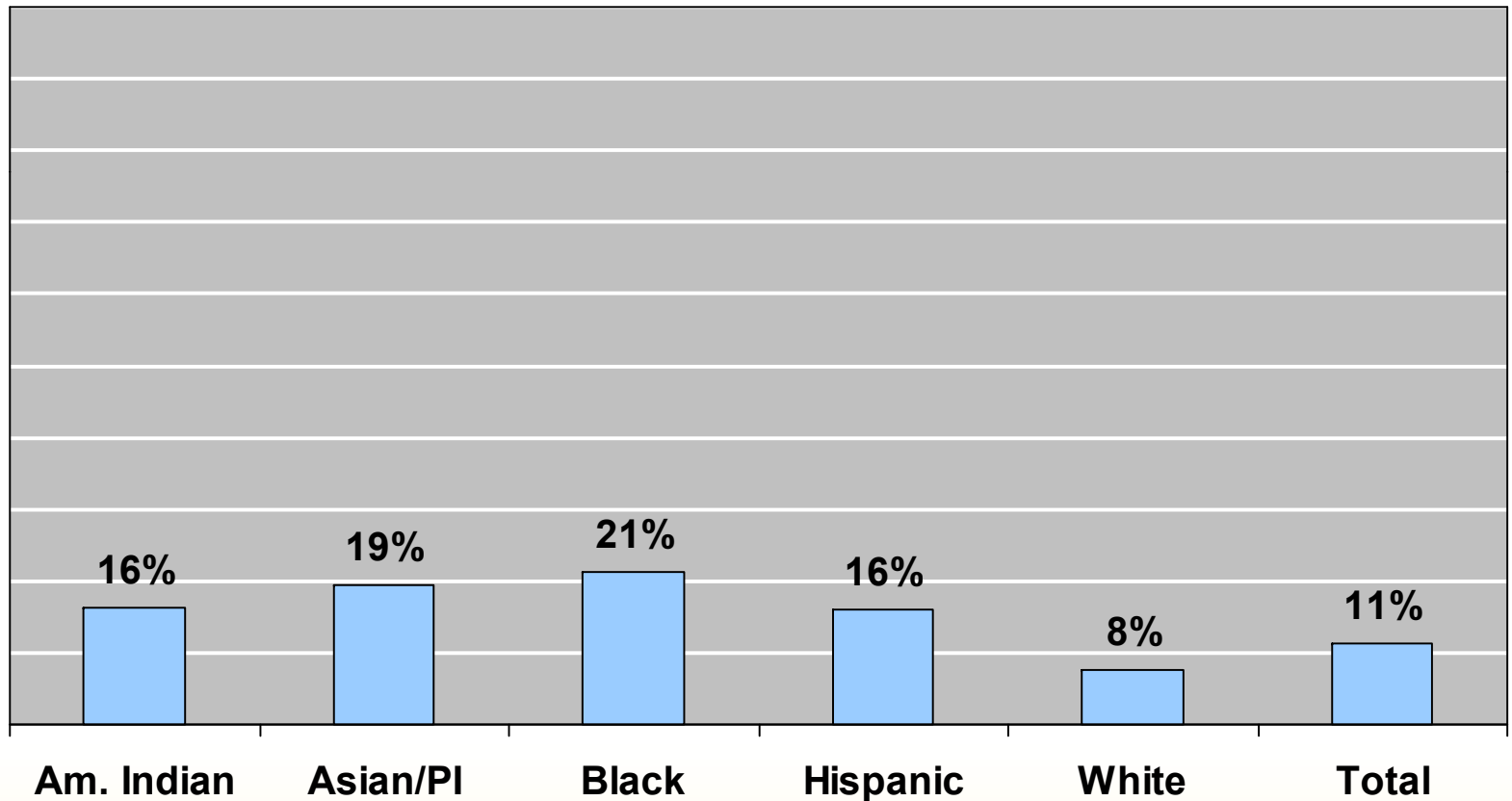
Potential Misunderstandings

- Nature of “merit”
 - Competencies
 - Performance
 - Organizational citizenship
 - Fit: work unit, workload, organization
- Mechanics of process
 - Screening vs. sorting vs. selection
 - Role of HR vs. role selecting officials
 - Meaning of scores and labels



Effects of Perceptions

Respondents who chose not to apply for an opportunity because “someone of my ethnicity or race or national origin had no chance”



Source: U.S. MSPB, Career Advancement Survey

Implications for Practice



Insights

- Compliance and nondiscrimination are essential, but not sufficient
- Vulnerabilities: both process and perception
 - Use of “competition” to validate decisions
 - Vagueness regarding “merit”
 - Measurement
 - Applicant (mis)understanding of process
 - Communication of reasons for nonselection



Implications for HR

- Understand reasons for decisions
 - Look below the surface
 - Align paper process and “real” process
 - Seek improvement in measurement
 - Recognize limits of measurement



Implications for Managers

- Confront factors beyond usual KSAs
 - Unknowns and risks
 - Past performance and behavior
 - Working relationships
 - Organizational citizenship
- Improve measurement
- “Own” hiring processes and decisions



The Way Forward

- “More process” is probably not the answer
- Direction: Less process, more rigor?
- Possible improvements
 - More clarity
 - Align paper process and real process
 - Better-prepared applicants
 - Better-informed selection decisions
 - Better-communicated selection decisions



So you want to do a survey...



Measure and Interpret with Care

- Challenge: respondent knowledge
 - Reasons for actions of *others*
 - Self-perception is not reality
- Challenge: complexity
 - (Non)selection may occur for many reasons
 - Effects may vary
- Challenge: attribution
 - Locus of control
 - Success vs. non-success



Expect Surprises

- Interpretation of terms
- Understanding of HR processes and rules
- Insights

What responses would you expect to these questions—

Rate the impact of...on your career advancement:	Positive	Negative
• Family responsibilities	?	?
• My race/national origin/ethnicity	?	?
• My sexual orientation	?	?



For More Information

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