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African American Women in the Federal Sector



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
Research, Evaluation, & Applied Data Division | Office of Federal Operations

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing Federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against job applicants or employees because of a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, retaliation, or genetic information.

Previous Federal reports have detailed the status of African American workers in the Federal workforce. However, the EEOC is unaware of reports that focus specifically on African American women. This profile will show that employment outcomes among African American women in civilian Federal service are not equal to those of other groups, including women as a whole and African American men.

Main Results

This report compares fiscal year (FY) 2020¹ data on African American women to the general civilian Federal workforce, all women in the civilian Federal workforce, African American men in the civilian Federal workforce, and the national civilian labor force (CLF). The analysis focuses on data gathered from the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) complaint process and workforce distribution statistics, such as representation, voluntary and involuntary separations, and pay. Results show that:

- In FY 2020, African American women made up 11.7% of the civilian Federal workforce, almost twice their participation in the CLF.
- African American women resigned at a rate of 3%, slightly higher than the civilian governmentwide average.
- African American women involuntarily separated at a rate of .7%, slightly higher than the civilian governmentwide average.
- The participation rates of African American women in leadership positions were lower than their participation in the Federal workforce. African American women accounted for 10.4% of supervisors, 9.6% of managers, and 7.3% of executives.
- Pay gaps between African American women and other groups persisted in FY 2020. African American women in the civilian Federal sector earned, on average, \$12,597 less than other civilian Federal employees and \$9,206 less than all women.

The information highlighted in this report can help Federal agencies understand the challenges faced by African American women in the civilian workplace and identify ways to advance equal opportunity for African American women and all workers.

¹ This report uses FY 2020 data due to the inclusion of the latest available data from the EEOC's Management Directive 715 (MD-715).

Background

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits unlawful discrimination in the workplace and established the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) as the agency responsible for monitoring, investigating, and enforcing the anti-discrimination laws. The EEOC is responsible for enforcing Federal laws that make it illegal to discriminate against job applicants or employees because of a person's race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity), national origin, age, disability, retaliation, or genetic information. The EEOC also strives to prevent discrimination before it occurs through outreach, education, and technical assistance programs.

The EEOC helps Federal agencies strive to become model EEO employers that ensure fair and equitable workplaces for all employees and applicants.²

This profile of African American women in the Federal sector provides an overview of their representation, retention, advancement, and pay in FY2020.

Data Sources and Methodology

This report relies on data drawn from the following sources:

- Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Management Directive 715 (MD-715) Workforce Tables – the EEOC's annual data collection on Federal sector civilian workforce distributions by the various protected categories.³
- FY 2020 Enterprise Human Resources Integration (EHRI) Data– The U.S. Office of Personnel Management's quarterly data collection of Federal sector civilian workforce distributions by key personnel data items.
- The American Community Survey (ACS) EEO Tabulation 2014-2018, Table EEO-CIT02R – The Census Bureau's tabulation table derived from the ACS 5-year data and used by the EEOC to track workforce distributions in the larger American workforce.

Workforce statistics for African American women were compared to the civilian labor force (CLF), the civilian Federal workforce in general, all women in the civilian Federal workforce, and African American men in the civilian Federal workforce. The analyses examined a variety of EEO-related measures, including:

² U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (2010). Annual EEO Program Status Report for Fiscal Year 2010, EEO Management Directive 715.

³ This report only includes data from agencies that submitted and certified MD-715 reports. A complete list of agencies that were required to but did not submit and certify FY 2020 MD-715 reports is provided with the Annual Report Workforce Tables found on EEOC's Federal Sector Reports webpage at <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/reports>. These missing data may cause annual fluctuations in the governmentwide numbers and percentages, particularly when cabinet agencies fail to submit.

- Representation
- Age distributions
- Voluntary and involuntary separations
- Participation in management positions
- Pay

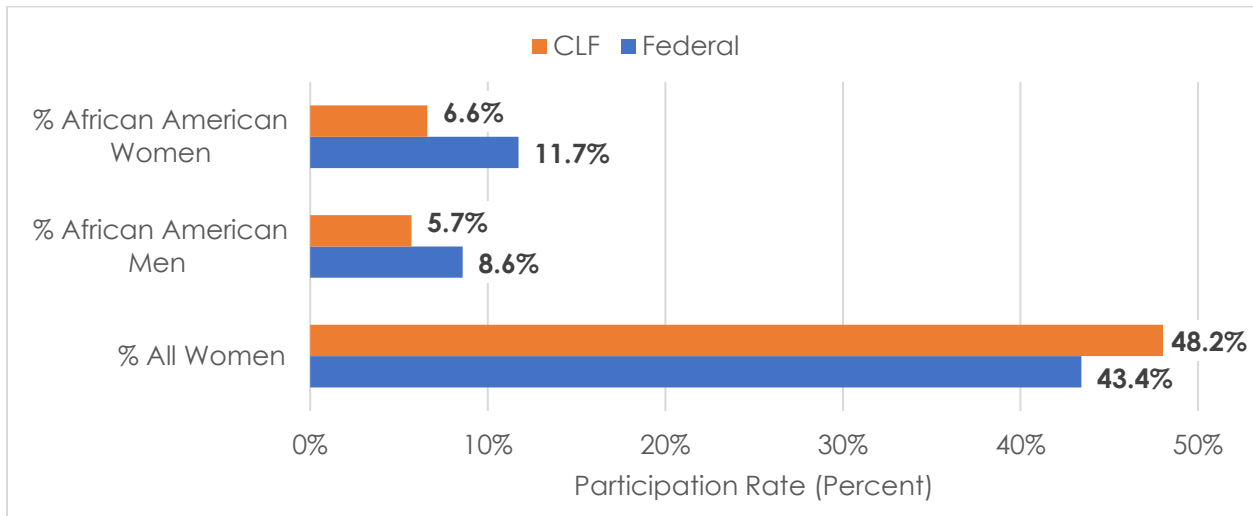
Statistical tests of significance and/or associated methodologies were not within scope for this profile report.

Results

Participation of African American Women in the Federal Workforce

In FY 2020, African American women participated in the civilian Federal workforce at a greater rate than in the CLF. African American women accounted for 11.7% of the civilian Federal workforce, compared to 6.6% of the CLF (Figure 1 and [Table 2 in Appendix](#)). African American women also exceeded the participation rates of African American men, who accounted for 8.6% of the civilian Federal workforce and 5.7% of the CLF. In addition, African American women were overrepresented compared to their share of the CLF by a larger margin (+5.1%) than both African American men (+2.8%) and all women (-4.8%). Overall, women accounted for 48.2% of the CLF, compared to 43.4% of the civilian Federal workforce.

Figure 1. Federal Workforce and Civilian Labor Force Participation Rates, African Americans by Gender, FY 2020

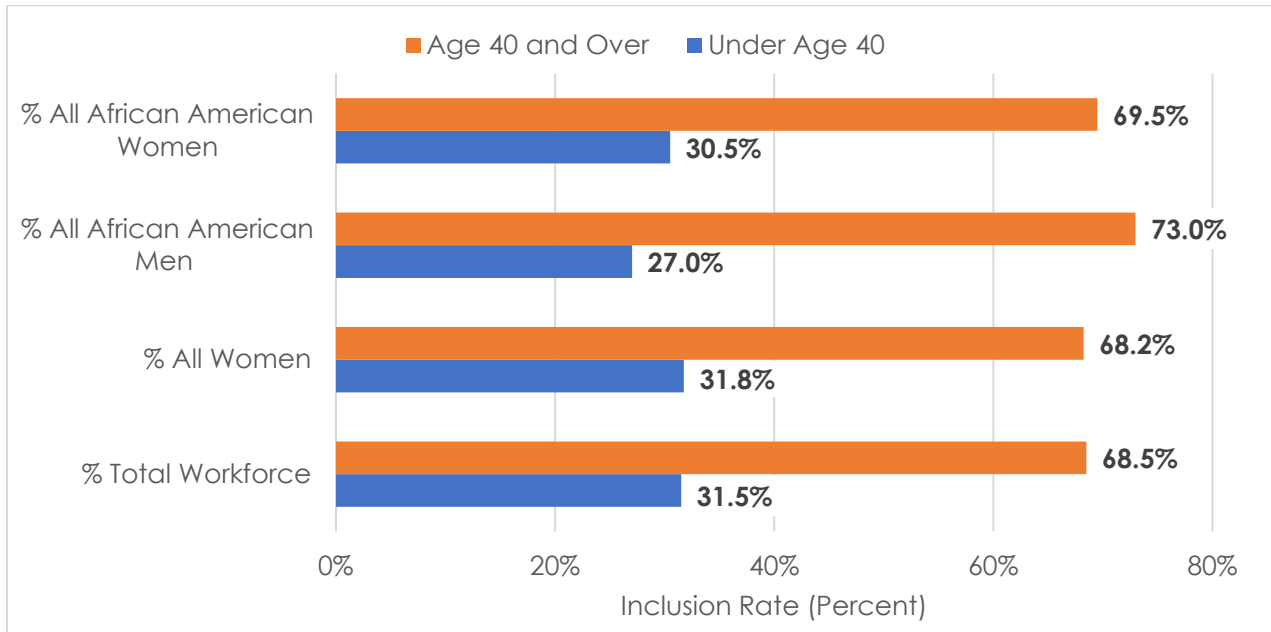


Notes: The participation rate is the number of people from a demographic group in the workforce divided by the total workforce. Data include permanent and temporary employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission using data from its FY 2020 Management Directive 715, Workforce Table A1 and 5-year American Community Survey data from EEO Tabulation 2014-2018, Table EEO-CIT02R—Occupation by Sex and Race/Ethnicity for Residence Geography, Citizen.

Statistics vary when factoring for age (Figure 2 and [Table 3 in Appendix](#)). African American women aged 40 and over comprised a larger proportion of the civilian Federal workforce (69.5%) than African American women under age 40 (30.5%). Overall, the inclusion rate of African American women aged 40 and over in the civilian Federal workforce was more than double under the age of 40, consistent with the governmentwide rates for all employees 40 and over and all women 40 and over.

Figure 2. Inclusion Rates of African Americans by Age and Gender Among Civilian Federal Employees, FY 2020, FY 2020



Notes: The inclusion rate is calculated by dividing the number of employees in an age group by the number of employees within an Ethnic/Gender Group.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission calculations using data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's September 2020 Enterprise Human Resources Integration-Statistical Data Mart.

Voluntary Separations of African American Women

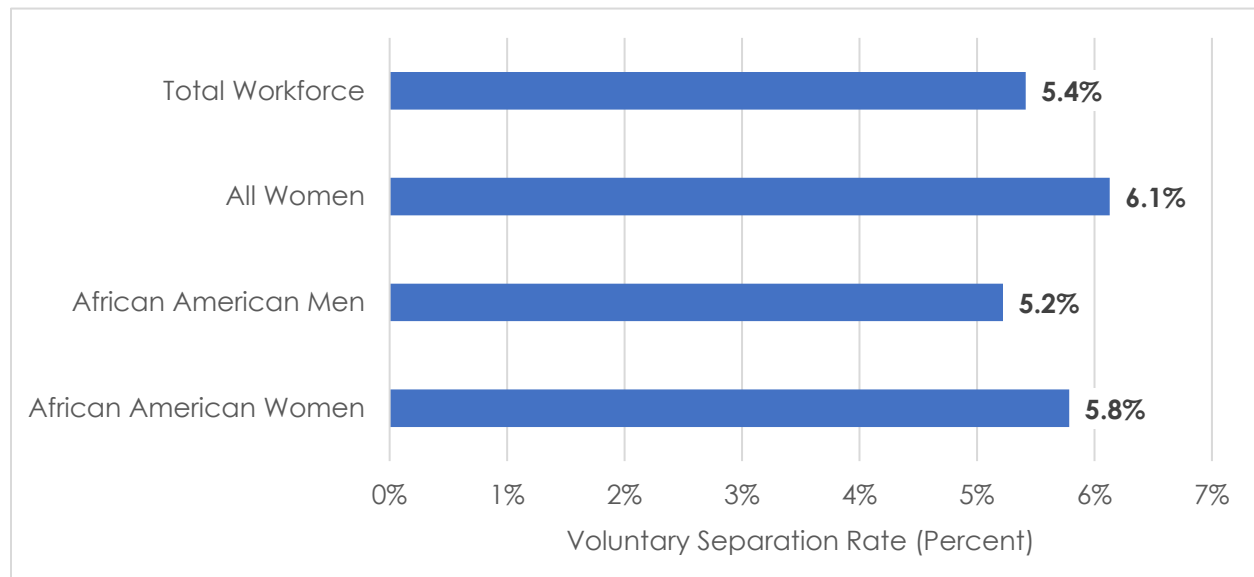
Retention is one factor that influences overall participation rates. In the Federal Government, voluntary separations (specifically, resignations and retirements) are more common than involuntary separations (caused by removal and reductions in force). Voluntary separations occur when federal employees voluntarily resign or retire from federal agencies, specifically to include removal from their civilian Federal positions due to reduction in force, misconduct, delinquency, suitability, unsatisfactory performance, or failure to qualify for a conversion to a career appointment. The separation rate is the number of people who separated within a demographic group, divided by the number of people in the permanent workforce in that demographic group with the latter as the

denominator. For example, for the voluntary separations rate for African American women, the following equation was used:

$$\text{Voluntary Separations Rate} = \frac{\# \text{ African American Women Voluntarily Separating}}{\text{Total \# of African American Women in the Permanent Workforce}}$$

Overall, the voluntary separation rate from the total permanent workforce across the civilian Federal Government in FY 2020 was 5.4%. The rate of voluntary separations among African American women was 5.8%, slightly below the civilian governmentwide average. African American women exceeded the rate of voluntary separations of African American men, who separated at a slightly lower rate of 5.2% of all voluntary separations (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Voluntary Separations Among African Americans in the Civilian Federal Workforce, FY 2020

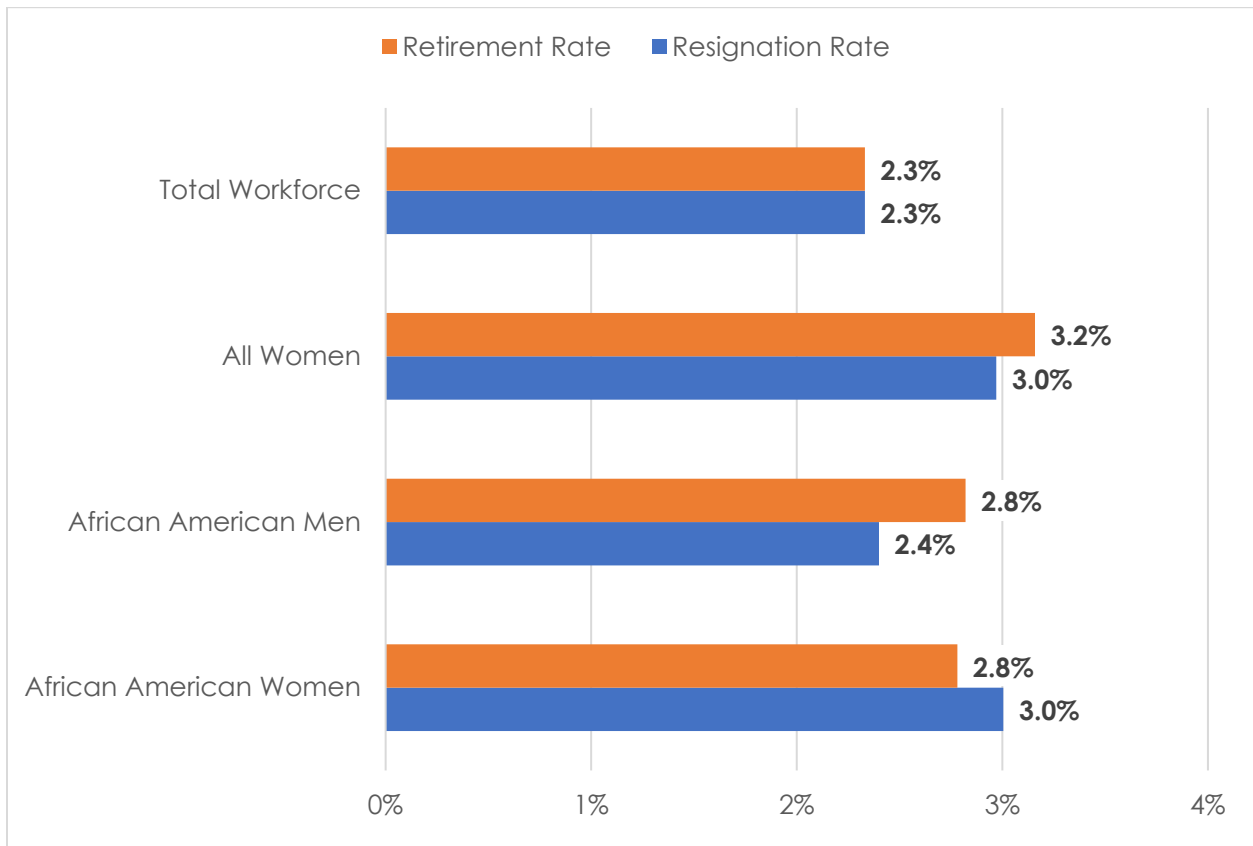


Notes: Voluntary separations include resignations and retirements. Voluntary separation rates are calculated within demographic groups by dividing the number of voluntary separations from the permanent workforce by the number of employees within the permanent workforce. Data only include permanent employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, FY 2020 Management Directive 715, Workforce Table A1.

Figure 4 separates these data into resignation rates and retirement rates (also see [Table 4 in Appendix](#)). The figure illustrates that African American women resigned from the civilian Federal workforce at a rate of 3.0%, higher than the civilian governmentwide rate of 2.3%. African American women however, retired at same rate as African American men (2.8%).

Figure 4. Resignation and Retirement Rates Among African Americans and Women in the Federal Workforce, FY 2020



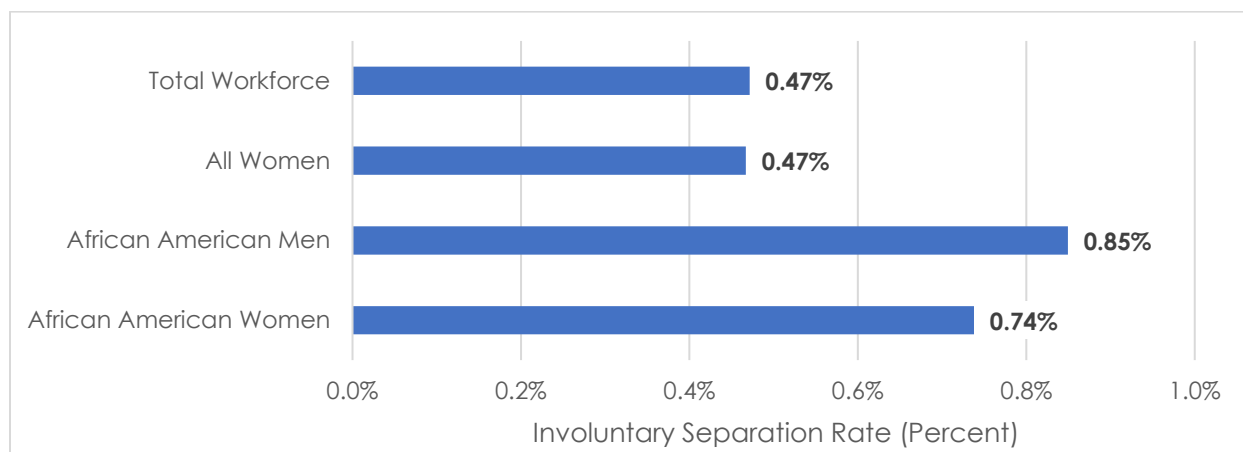
Notes: Resignation rates are calculated within demographic groups by dividing the number of resignations or retirements from the permanent workforce by the number of employees within the permanent workforce. Data only include permanent employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, FY 2020 Management Directive 715, Workforce Table A1.

Involuntary Separations of African American Women

In addition to voluntarily separating at a higher rate than other Federal employees, African American women involuntarily separate at a relatively high rate (Figure 5 and [Table 5 in Appendix](#)). Involuntary separations refer to employees who are removed from service due to either a reduction in the workforce or dismissal, specifically to include removal from their civilian Federal positions due to reduction in force, misconduct, delinquency, suitability, unsatisfactory performance, or failure to qualify for a conversion to a career appointment. Overall, about 0.5% of the civilian Federal workforce was involuntarily separated in FY 2020. African American women were involuntarily separated at a rate of 0.7%, slightly higher than the governmentwide rate but slightly lower than the rate of involuntary separations among African American men (0.9).

Figure 5. Involuntary Separations Among African Americans in the Federal Workforce, FY 2020



Notes: Involuntary separations include reductions in force and removals. Involuntary separation rates are calculated within demographic groups by dividing the number of involuntary separations from the permanent workforce by the number of employees within the permanent workforce. Data include only permanent employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, FY 2020 Management Directive 715, Workforce Table A1.

African American Women in Federal Leadership Positions

Line employees, supervisors, managers, and executives have different levels of influence and responsibility in the workplace. First-level supervisors are responsible for directing and executing the day-to-day operational objectives of agencies.⁴ Managers implement policies, programs, and directives of Executive level management through subordinate supervisors.⁵ Executives plan, direct, and formulate policies, set strategy, and provide the overall direction of agencies for the development and implementation of services to accomplish the mission.⁶ Participation in supervisory, managerial, and executive positions is one way to measure workforce advancement.

Compared to their Federal sector permanent workforce participation rate (11.3%), African American women participated in first-line supervisory levels at a lower rate, representing 10.4% of civilian Federal supervisors in FY 2020 (Figure 6.A and [Table 6 in](#)

⁴ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Instructions to Federal agencies for EEO MD-715 Section IV: Interpretation and completion of workforce data tables*. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/instructions-federal-agencies-eeo-md-715-0>.

⁵ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Instructions to Federal agencies for EEO MD-715 Section IV: Interpretation and completion of workforce data tables*. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/instructions-federal-agencies-eeo-md-715-0>.

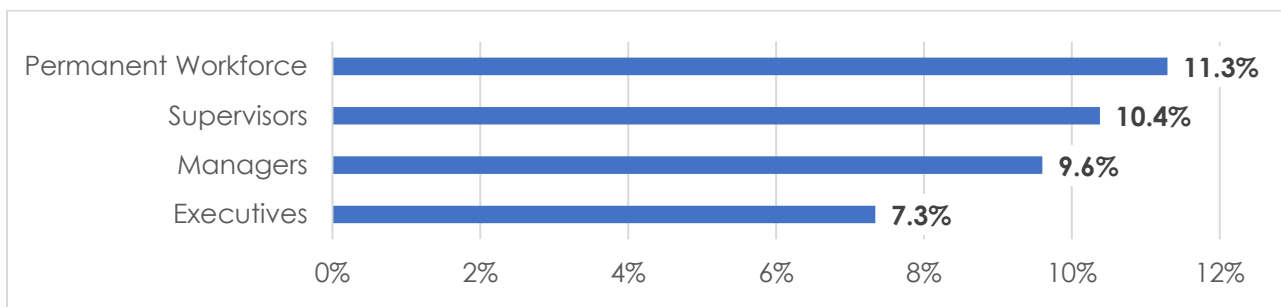
⁶ U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. *Instructions to Federal agencies for EEO MD-715 Section IV: Interpretation and completion of workforce data tables*. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from <https://www.eeoc.gov/federal-sector/management-directive/instructions-federal-agencies-eeo-md-715-0>.

[Appendix](#)). Moreover, African American women were also underrepresented at the Federal manager (9.6%) and Federal executive (7.3%) levels.

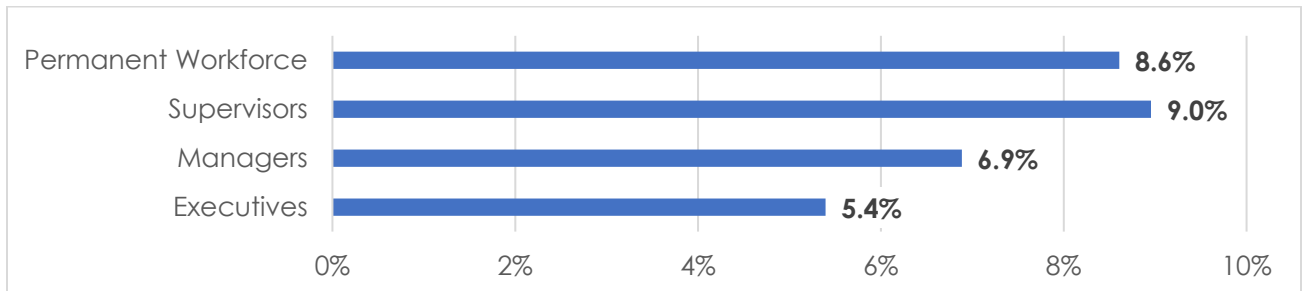
African American women's pattern of having a low participation rate as supervisors, managers, and executives, was similar to what African American men experienced in the Federal sector in FY 2020, with the exception of supervisory positions in which African American men had a slightly (.4%) higher participation rate than the federal sector overall (Figure 6.B). On the other hand, women overall had their highest participation rates in the civilian permanent workforce (42.3%) and manager positions (40.5%) (Figure 6.C).

Figure 6. African Americans in Civilian Federal Leadership Positions, FY 2020

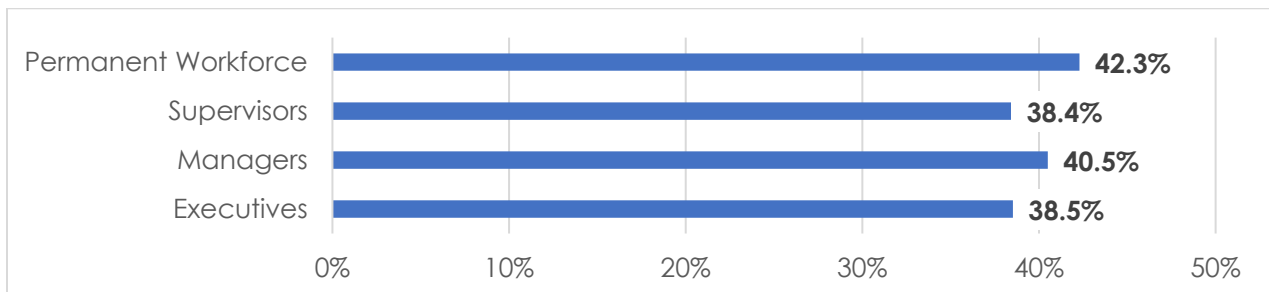
A. African American Women



B. African American Men



C. Women Overall



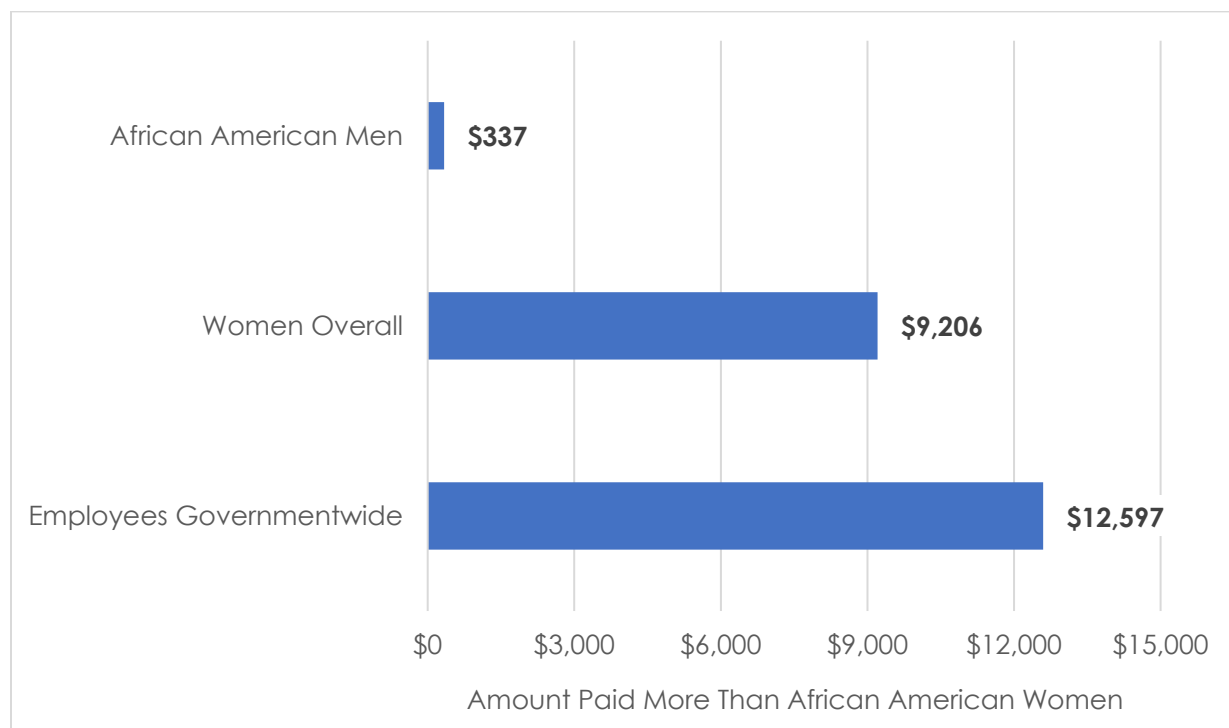
Notes: The participation rate is the number of people from a demographic group in the workforce or a managerial level divided by the total permanent workforce. Data include only permanent employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, FY 2020 Management Directive 715, Workforce Tables A1 and A3.

Pay Gaps of African American Women in the Federal Workforce

On average,⁷ African American women in the civilian Federal workforce were paid \$70,072 annually in FY 2020 (Figure 7 and Table 1). They were paid less than African American men (\$70,409), women overall (\$79,278), and employees governmentwide (\$82,669). The civilian Federal sector pay gap between African American women and employees governmentwide was smaller than the gap in the general U.S. population. Federal sector African American women were paid 85 cents on the dollar paid to the average civilian Federal employee. In comparison, among full-time workers nationwide, African American women were paid only 88 cents on the dollar paid to the average woman.

Figure 7. Difference in Median Annual Pay of Federal Sector African American Women Compared to African American Men, All Women, and Civilian Employees Governmentwide, FY 2020



Notes: Values are based on median adjusted base pay. The median is the middle number in a list of numbers sorted in ascending or descending order. Adjusted base pay is the sum of an employee's rate of basic pay and any supplement, after applying any applicable pay cap. See <https://dw.opm.gov/datastandards/list>.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission calculations using data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's September 2020 Enterprise Human Resources Integration-Statistical Data Mart.

⁷ All Federal sector pay values are based on median governmentwide pay for the relevant group.

Table 1. Pay Inequalities for Civilian Federal Sector African American Women, FY 2020

Ethnic/Gender Group	Median Annual Pay	Amount Paid More than African American Women	Percent Paid More than African American Women	Amount Paid to African American Women Compared to Group
African American Women	\$70,072	N/A	N/A	N/A
African American Men	\$70,409	\$337	.5%	\$0.99
Women Overall	\$79,278	\$9,206	13.1%	\$0.88
Employees Governmentwide	\$82,669	\$12,597	18.0%	\$0.85

Notes: Values are based on median adjusted base pay. The median is the middle number in a list of numbers sorted in ascending or descending order. Adjusted base pay is the sum of an employee's rate of basic pay and any supplement, after applying any applicable pay cap. See <https://dw.opm.gov/datastandards/list>.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission calculations using data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's September 2020 Enterprise Human Resources Integration-Statistical Data Mart.

Conclusion

This profile of African American women in civilian Federal service can serve as a baseline for Federal agencies striving to improve the employment opportunities available to African American women in Federal service. African American women are vital to our nation's economy. The Federal Government should continue to address the potential barriers to advancement, pay, and retention that African American women face.

The report measured overall participation, participation by protected age status, retention, advancement opportunities, and pay of African American women in the civilian Federal workforce in FY 2020. The primary findings include:

- The participation rate of African American women in the civilian Federal sector (11.7%) was nearly double their representation in the civilian labor force (CLF).
- African American women resigned and involuntarily separated at higher rates than the civilian governmentwide average.
- The participation rates of African American women in leadership positions were lower than their participation rate in the civilian Federal workforce. African American women accounted for 10.4% of supervisors, 9.6% of managers, and 7.3% of executives in the Federal sector.

- African American women faced significant pay gaps—earning about \$12,600 less than the median civilian Federal employee and \$9,200 less than all women.

As a model employer, the Federal Government should strive to provide equal employment opportunity to all its employees. The information highlighted in this report can inform Federal agencies on the challenges faced by African American women in the workplace. By further investigating the root causes of these challenges, employers can promote the diversity of its workforce and leadership, better retain African American women as employees, and offer them more equitable pay.

Appendix: Data Tables

Table 2. Federal Workforce and Civilian Labor Force Participation Rates, African Americans by Gender, FY 2020

Ethnic/Gender Group	Federal Workforce Participation	Federal Workforce Participation Rate	2014-2018 CLF Participation Rate
African American Women	255,693	11.7%	6.6%
African American Men	187,207	8.6%	5.7%
All Women	946,406	43.4%	48.2%
Total Workforce	2,179,386		

Notes: The participation rate is the number of people from a demographic group in the workforce divided by the total workforce. FY 2020 MD-715 data filed with EEOC and certified by Federal agencies was aggregated to calculate Federal Workforce Participation values. When aggregating data from cabinet-level agencies, department-wide aggregate reports were used where available, and subcomponent data were used where department-wide reports were unavailable. MD-715 data in this table includes permanent and temporary employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) using data from its FY 2020 Management Directive 715 (MD-715), Workforce Table A1 and 5-year American Community Survey data, EEO Tabulation 2014-2018, Table EEO-CIT02R—Occupation by Sex and Race/Ethnicity for Residence Geography, Citizen.

Table 3. Inclusion Rates of African Americans by Age and Gender Among Civilian Federal Employees, FY 2020, FY 2020

Ethnic/Gender Group	Under Age 40 (%)	Age 40 and Over (%)
African American Women	3.0%	6.8%
African American Men	1.9%	5.1%
All Women	31.8%	68.2%
Governmentwide	31.5%	68.5%

Notes: The inclusion rate is a percentage calculated by dividing the number of employees in an age group by the total number of employees, all within an ethnic/gender group (African American Women, African American Men, All Women, or Governmentwide).

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission calculations using data from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management's September 2020 Enterprise Human Resources Integration-Statistical Data Mart.

Table 4. Resignation and Voluntary Separations Among African Americans in the Civilian Federal Workforce, FY 2020

	African American Women	African American Men	All Women	Total Workforce
Resignation Rate	3.0%	2.4%	3.0%	2.3%
Retirement Rate	2.8%	2.8%	3.2%	3.1%
Voluntary Separation Rate	5.8%	5.2%	6.1%	5.4%
Permanent Workforce	215,319	164,117	806,306	1,906,642

Notes: Voluntary separation rates and resignation rates are calculated within demographic groups by dividing the number of voluntary separations, resignations, or retirements from the permanent workforce by the number of employees within the permanent workforce. Voluntary separations include resignations and retirements. FY 2020 MD-715 data filed with EEOC and certified by Federal agencies was aggregated to calculate the values. Data only include permanent employees. When aggregating data from cabinet-level agencies, department-wide aggregate reports were used where available, and subcomponent data were used where department-wide reports were unavailable.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), FY 2020 Management Directive 715 (MD-715), Workforce Table A1.

Table 5. Involuntary Separations Among African Americans in the Federal Workforce, FY 2020

	African American Women	African American Men	All Women	Total Workforce
Involuntary Separation Rate	0.7%	0.9%	0.47%	0.5%
Permanent Workforce	215,319	164,117	806,306	1,906,642

Notes: Involuntary separations include reductions in force and removals. Involuntary separation rates are calculated within demographic groups by dividing the number of involuntary separations from the permanent workforce by the number of employees within the permanent workforce. FY 2020 MD-715 data filed with EEOC and certified by Federal agencies was aggregated to calculate separation and permanent workforce values. Data only include permanent employees. When aggregating data from cabinet-level agencies, department-wide aggregate reports were used where available, and subcomponent data were used where department-wide reports were unavailable.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), FY 2020 Management Directive 715 (MD-715), Workforce Table A1.

Table 6. Federal Sector Participation Rates Among African Americans by Managerial Level, and Gender, FY 2020

	African American Women	African American Men	Women Overall
Permanent Workforce	11.3%	8.6%	42.3%
Supervisors	10.4%	9.0%	38.4%
Managers	9.6%	6.9%	40.5%
Executives	7.3%	5.4%	38.5%

Notes: The participation rate is the number of people from a demographic group in the permanent workforce or a managerial level divided by the total permanent workforce. FY 2020 MD-715 data filed with EEOC and certified by Federal agencies was aggregated to calculate these rates. When aggregating data from cabinet-level agencies, department-wide aggregate reports were used where available, and subcomponent data were used where department-wide reports were unavailable. Data include only permanent employees.

Source: U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), FY 2020 Management Directive 715 (MD-715), Workforce Tables A1 and A3.