Assessing What Factors Are Driving the Army Civilian Acquisition Multigenerational Workforce Age/Experience Mix

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Abstract

Generation members are born, start school, enter the workforce, have children, and retire at about the same time and age. Further, generation members are the same age when wars are waged, technological advances are made, and other social changes occur. It is vital that Army leadership understands the potential effects of generational habits and dispositions to enable and maintain an effective workforce to support Force 2025.

This research has examined the multigeneration literature to determine and form a contextual underpinning of the generations' behaviors and their workforce trends. Subsequently, a survey was distributed to the engineering and contracting members of the Army acquisition workforce to examine and predict their employment behavior and intentions. The results may potentially serve as the basis for future workforce initiatives.

Literature and studies of importance to this research are summarized in chapter 2 of this paper. The pool of literature spanned many years of credible researchers, who examined generational habits within the context of workplace and socioeconomic environment, including differences in values, personality traits, and work attitudes. Therefore, the researcher places value in the generational characteristics that were postulated and have adopted some for the purpose of this work effort.

This study has concluded that the younger generation's characteristics, such as the need to change jobs within 1–5 years could potentially affect the Army's acquisition workforce. One-fourth of them may leave the Army within 1–5 years. If the potential exodus of the Army's younger workforce occurs and it coincides with the actual retirement of Baby Boomers, the Army's acquisition workforce could experience a severe gap in the next 5 years. Leaders who are

planning for Force 2025 acquisition and other activities should make sure they are devising initiatives to balance the workforce experience mix.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

In their “Force 2025 and Beyond—Setting the Course” memorandum, dated July 22, 2014, Army Chief of Staff, General Odierno and Secretary of the Army John McHugh explained that “Force 2025 and Beyond will develop land-power concepts and capabilities for the Joint Force as integrated and innovative solutions into Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities (DOTMLPF).” It is necessary that Army leaders at all echelons consider all implications of the DOTMLPF mantra to find and recommend solutions to decisively affect our Nation’s strategic interest, the Army’s sphere of influence, and tactical operations.

Within the lanes of DOTMLPF, the Army has developed and continues to educate a cadre of civilian acquisition experts to assess, conduct analysis, and support development of capabilities. Therefore, to optimize hiring, retaining, and educating the civilian acquisition workforce to meet the Force 2025 requirements, it is imperative that Army leaders are provided with human capital objectives and understand current workforce employment insights and behavioral patterns of the generational pool. The Army’s chief of staff and secretary further stated:

> The effort will examine the multi-domain challenges the Nation faces and the ways and means for Army forces to operate decisively across the full spectrum of operations in every domain. *Force 2025 and Beyond* will rely on innovation, concept development, simulations, experimentation, evaluations and scientific research to ensure proposals push towards the future to create executable, inventive options for the Army. (Odierno & McHugh, 2014)

One of the multidomain challenges the Army could theoretically face over the next few years is the potential for retirement-eligible employees' mass exodus from the acquisition workforce. Therefore, it is critical to maintain the right level of acquisition workforce experience, alignment of skill mix, multigenerational balance, and sufficient number of personnel to support an executable Force 2025 and Beyond strategy.

This limited research examines the employment trends and potential future behaviors of the Army's acquisition personnel and, as necessary, recommends balancing initiatives, incentives, and methods to ensure an effective future workforce to support Force 2025 capabilities development.

Background

Throughout U.S. history, the Department of Defense (DoD) and Army have been acquiring and developing systems and capabilities to support and enable our national defense strategy. These capabilities are deployed and employed to protect our warfighters and support their missions. To acquire, develop, and manage our warfighters' systems, DoD uses a group of military and civilian professionals, who constitute the acquisition workforce. This research focuses on the Army civilian workforce.

To develop and sustain Army Force 2025, it is important that the Army hire, train, and retain a highly skill workforce to provide capabilities in a timely and cost effective manner. A phenomenon that could pose a challenge to DoD and the Army is emerging. Over many years the DoD and Army acquisition workforce has evolved into a multigenerational workforce of young (Millennials, born 1980–2000), middle age (Generation X, 1965–1980), and retirement-eligible employees (Baby Boomers, 1946–1964). The Millennials are recognized in literature as employees who leave the Federal workforce in 2 to 4 years of initial hire, which could leave a gap in the Army's acquisition workforce in the near future if the Baby Boomers retire en mass.

According to researchers (Barford & Hester, 2011; Cennamo & Gardner, 2008), each age group in the multigenerational workforce is motivated by different work environmental factors, and they conduct work and social efforts via different sets of principles and desires. One main trend that could pose a problem to the Army's acquisition workforce is the desire of the younger workforce to move around from job to job: "According to a new report from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the median amount of time Millennials stay in their jobs is just 3.8 years" (Lunney, 2014, p. 1).

Adding to this problem is the fact that a large percentage of Federal employees are eligible to retire in the next couple of years. This points toward a potential future gap in the acquisition workforce. Could these human capital circumstances pose an issue for balancing the future Army civilian acquisition workforce, which is required to develop and maintain the Army capabilities? This potential future imbalance of age mix in the Army's multigenerational acquisition workforce is the target of this paper.

Problem Statement

Due to the potential employment preferences of the younger Federal workforce and/or a hiring freeze, there could be a future imbalance in the age mix of the Army's multigenerational acquisition workforce. It is possible that the acquisition workforce could suffer a gap in both experience and numbers of critical employees. DoD budget drills, fiscal issues (e.g., funding shortfalls, sequestration), hiring freezes, and the Army's personnel drawdown announcements could be sending the wrong message to the civilian workforce of Millennials, Generation X, and Baby Boomers. According to the literature, younger hires remain with the Federal Government for only 1–5 years of initial employment (Lunney, 2014; Rein, 2014). Adding to the potential problem is the fact that large numbers of Baby Boomers are eligible for retirement in a few years.

While investigating the potential experience gap, this research also attempted to determine whether acquisition knowledge, skills, and lessons learned are being transferred from experienced to new and less experienced employees. If knowledge transfer is not occurring and many eligible employees retire in the next few years, the combined effect of workforce retirement and the early exodus of younger employees could create an experience gap in the Army's workforce. If a potential workforce gap occurs, it will limit the execution of systems acquisition strategies and specific functions to support Force 2025 equipment and capability requirements.

Purpose of This Study

This research was undertaken to explore the multigenerational Army acquisition workforce employment behaviors and attempt to predict the future generational mix in the Army's civilian acquisition workforce and its impact on Force 2025. It was hypothesized that each generation of employees has a different set of life values and work-related motivational factors, which guides their employment desires and behaviors. Leaving Government jobs in 2 to 4 years after initial hire is one particular Millennial behavior that has been observed in the Federal workforce (Ferraro, 2014; Office of Personnel Management, 2014). This study hypothesized that the Millennial employees in acquisition are exhibiting the same 2-to-4-year employment term with the Army. Therefore, a potential shortfall in the number of personnel to fill acquisition skills—such as program management, engineering, contracting, logistics, cost analysis, production, quality control, etc.—may occur in the near and mid-term future.

Significance of This Research

The existing literature exposes the motivations and employment trends of the Federal Government multigenerational workforce. This research will specifically contribute to the understanding of how the employment trends of the multiple generations could potentially affect the Army's future CP-16 (engineers and scientists) and CP-14 (contracting) acquisition workforce experience mix. Specifically, this research attempted to uncover any indicators of an experience gap in the Army's Force 2025 acquisition workforce and identify any potential "stop gap" and long-term initiatives to maintain capability.

Overview of the Research Methodology

This research paper uses an analytical exploratory approach and applies a combination of secondary and primary study methodology/techniques to examine the multigenerational mix in the workforce. Specifically, descriptive statistical techniques such as analysis of secondary data sets from existing reports and review of current, expert opinion research, and assessment were conducted to acquire a picture of the Federal Government multigenerational employment trends and work habits. Additionally, workforce strength and demographical analysis, multigenerational age-mix data, and descriptive statistics such as histograms and tables were obtained from the Department of the Army's human resources system.

The primary techniques used consisted of an Army acquisition workforce survey. The survey was developed to gather feedback from human capital experts and current employees to refine the resolution of the Army employees' employment trends, intentions, and motivations. Strategies for developing and qualifying an effective workforce age mix were an outcome of the survey analysis. The survey has enabled the researcher to gather and analyze multigenerational workforce trends and discover possibly original trends specific to the Army acquisition workforce. The surveys focused on the Army's CP-16 and CP-14 acquisition workforce, which accounts for approximately 17,000, or about 43%, of the Army's total acquisition workforce of 40,000. The functions of the CP-16 and CP-14 population include acquisition technology development and integration, product development and manufacturing, market research review and reporting, Analysis of Alternatives, proposal evaluation, contract negotiations and obligations, contractor debriefing and contract cost, schedule and performance monitoring and evaluation, contract close-outs, and performance assessments.

Research Questions

RQ1. What potential impacts will the employment behaviors and trends of the multigenerational Federal workforce have on the Army Force 2025 capabilities acquisition?

RQ2. How should the Army organizations recruit, motivate, grow, and retain new, experienced, and capable CP-16 and CP-14 employees?

These two questions will form a basis for studying the Army acquisition workforce traits and the implications for strategies to secure for Force 2025 a multigenerational acquisition workforce that is ample, capable, and balanced in experience. Additionally, in this study the researcher will concentrate on the CP-16 population survey results. The CP-14 surveyed population results will be further explored in a larger DoD Human Capital Study expected to be published in the near future.

Research Hypothesis

There is a significant difference in the employment trends of the younger (Millennial and Generation X) Army civilian acquisition workforce members compared to those of the older generation (Baby Boomers).

Objectives and Outcomes

The objective of this research is to assess the employment behaviors and decisions of the Army's multigenerational workforce using workforce data and surveys. Expected outcomes will include a descriptive model of the Army's CP-16 workforce trends and strategies for recruiting, developing, and retaining the acquisition workforce.

Limitations of the Study

The study results' validity will be limited by and sensitive to biases that could be caused by the interpretation and the number of questions. To increase the validity of the results, the principal investigator has written clear and concise questions. Additionally, to increase survey sample size reliability, a survey request was sent to all the Army's CP-16 and some of the CP-14 workforce to increase the pool of responses. The researcher delimited the survey pool by choosing to survey only the 9,000 CP-16 and more than 1,000 CP-14 personnel of the approximately 40,000 Army acquisition workforce. This delimitation obviously reduced the number of respondents (979 CP-16 responses), but the researcher thinks an ample survey response rate was obtained, and the survey pool delimiting enabled an expeditious analysis of the results.

Validity of the Research

The independent variable is Army multigenerational employees; the dependent variable is the Army Force 2025 acquisition workforce. This research validity was based on surveying actual present employees who are representative of the age categories. Their responses were cross-checked with the appropriate literature and survey results. Possible biases could be inherent in the interpretation of the survey questions, and CP-16 and CP-14 trends may not represent the entire 40,000 population of the Army acquisition workforce. The number of questions was limited to 34, which should increase the potential for a higher response rate. Concise and clear questions were developed and a beta test was conducted by peers before launching to the masses. Additionally, the 9,000 CP-16 Army acquisition engineering professionals work in different functional positions (e.g., design, quality assurance, testing, production, team leadership), which should randomize the sample for a better representation of the acquisition workforce population.

Reliability of the Study

The literature reviewed and assessed for this project comes from reputable publishers that follow standardized scholarly processes. This literature is accessible through various databases (e.g., Business Source Complete, DTIC Technical Reports, EBSCOhost, Defense Daily, OPM, GAO [Government Accountability Office]), so acquisition of the reference material can be easily replicated. Additionally, the survey used to acquire real-time generational workforce trends and behaviors was reviewed for verbal and interpretive clarity and precision, and it was beta tested on cohorts and peer groups at the Army Senior Service College Fellowship. The survey was standardized through the SurveyMonkey online user-interface software and replicated exactly for verbal consistency during the process of surveying the intended Department of the Army acquisition personnel audience. This audience has direct, personal knowledge about their own employment plans and trends. Therefore, it is highly likely that the information they provide is reproducible and reliable. Based on my process and survey audience, there is good assurance that the information received and results are replicable with minimal error and/or bias.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

This chapter summarizes the relevant information garnered from the literature review, regarding generational differences and their specific workforce behaviors. This research revealed that the body of literature is consistent regarding what range of years differentiates each of the workforce generations. Therefore, the researcher will adopt the following year ranges as the generational categories for the purposes of this research: Millennials, 1981–2000; Generation X, 1965–1980; Baby Boomers, 1946–1954. The quest to find information on the generations' work behavior led to a pool of journal published research, news articles, Army workforce data reports, and a Federal Government workforce survey with follow-on analysis by pundits. The literature examined is categorized into three perspectives: Federal employee viewpoint survey results and pundits' analysis, Army workforce data reports, and cross-industry multigenerational workforce behavioral studies.

Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Analysis

Much of the literature on multigenerational employment behaviors and trends deals with a general population of Federal workers. Example papers of popular Federal workforce studies include an OPM survey (2014) and Martin (2011). Emily Kopp (Kopp, 2014) stated in her internet article that John Salamone, vice president of Federal Management Partners, cited the OPM survey to underscore the relatively high turnover of Millennial employees in the Federal Government. She wrote that Salamone saidthe OPM data shows that over the past 5 years, the Government hired approximately 601,000 Millennials, but lost nearly 400,000 during the same period. According to Kopp Salamone also stated that:

> They are coming into government during their prime years, when they could make a contribution, learn how the government works, and—if they are not happy where they

> are—transition to another position. Instead, Millennials tend to leave. But it's not evident whether they eventually return to government work. (p.1)

Another important source is the report by Partnership for Public Service (2014). This report used the OPM survey (2014) to analyze Government-wide job satisfaction trends using 10 workplace attribute categories (effective leadership, effective leadership empowerment, effective senior leadership, leadership fairness, strategic management, employee skills-mission match, teamwork, pay, innovation, and support for diversity). The data analysis indicated that while there was an uptick in private-sector job satisfaction to 72 out of 100 points for the past 4 years, there has been a consistent drop in the Federal employee job and workplace satisfaction to 56.9 out of 100 points. The report also indicated a drop in satisfaction within 6 of the 10 workplace attribute categories. Additionally, the report indicated that the under-40 age group (Millennials) experienced a 5.1-point decline in Federal job satisfaction in 2014, and those over 40 (Generation X and Baby Boomers) saw their score drop by 3.8 points. This decline in all three age groups coincides with a decrease in the overall Government-wide job satisfaction score.

Army Workforce Data Reports

According to the DoD (2007), the Defense Acquisition Workforce will experience a growth in the multigenerational mix over the next decade and more. For many years before the entrance of the Millennials, the workforce was predominantly made up of Generation X and Baby Boomers. The multigenerational workforce predicted by DoD is already being realized by the Army acquisition organizations. This is evident in the Army CP-16 human resources data received from the Army Acquisition Support Center (Table 1). As seen in Table 1, in the period from 2003 to 2012, there is a steady increase of the Millennials in the workforce, and in 2013 a 2% reduction. During this same period we can observe a percentage increase of Baby Boomers.

The growth in the generational mix potentially brings a diverse set of workforce characteristics that must be effectively managed to achieve efficiency and to motivate the employees to meet our warfighters' and national security needs. Parry and Unwin (2011) validate the idea of generational cohorts with their own characteristics. They posited that although empirical data is inconclusive about the make-up of generational values and traits, a host of managerial and sociological professionals hold a theoretical premise that individuals share a “social location” due to their year of birth and also a bond through common experiences (pp.79–96). They further explained through the lens of “Mannheim” that

> the existence of generations is made possible by five characteristics of our society: (1) new participants in the cultural process are emerging; (2) former participants are continually disappearing; (3) members of a generation can participate in only a temporally limited section of the historical process; so (4) cultural heritage needs to be transmitted; and finally (5) the transition from generation to generation is continuous.” (p. 81)

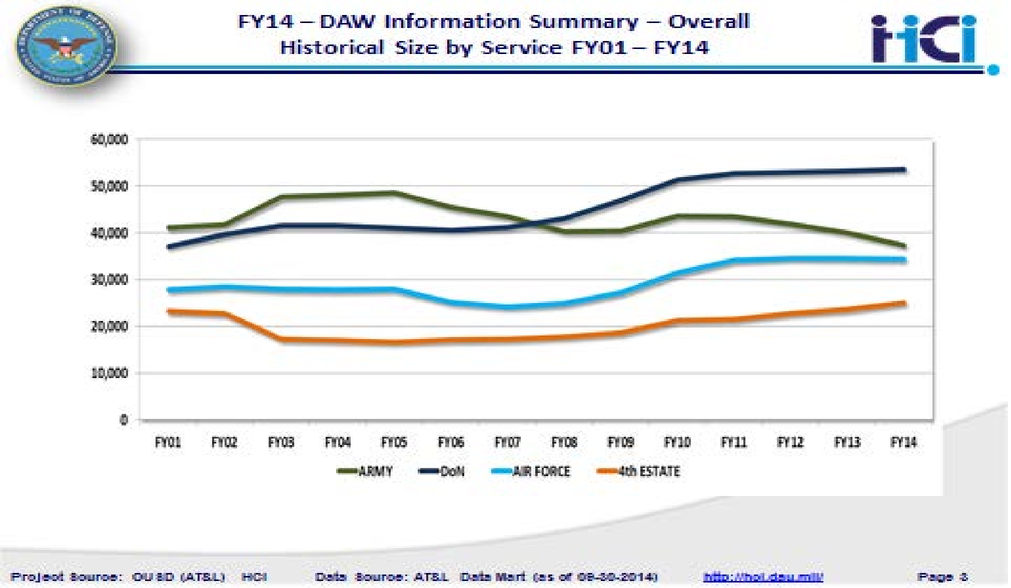
Parry and Unwin (2011) tentatively validated the existence of generations and the reasons for their behavioral differences.

Table 1 – Army CP-16 Generational Workforce Strength

FY	CAR_PGM	STRENGTH	MILLCT	GENXCT	BOOMERCT	TRADCT	MILLPT	GENXPT	BOOMERPT	TRADPT
FY03	16	15391	2312	7784	5088	207	15.0%	50.6%	33.1%	1.3%
FY04	16	15850	2735	7778	5123	214	17.3%	49.1%	32.3%	1.4%
FY05	16	16364	3123	7730	5271	240	19.1%	47.2%	32.2%	1.5%
FY06	16	16210	3320	7368	5284	238	20.5%	45.5%	32.6%	1.5%
FY07	16	16216	3504	7113	5345	254	21.6%	43.9%	33.0%	1.6%
FY08	16	16804	3974	6985	5601	244	23.6%	41.6%	33.3%	1.5%
FY09	16	17913	4553	6996	6120	244	25.4%	39.1%	34.2%	1.4%
FY10	16	18605	4939	6822	6579	265	26.5%	36.7%	35.4%	1.4%
FY11	16	20819	5398	7145	8018	258	25.9%	34.3%	38.5%	1.2%
FY12	16	20148	4948	6846	8095	258	24.6%	34.0%	40.2%	1.3%
FY13	16	19103	4173	6447	8036	256	22.1%	34.1%	42.5%	1.4%

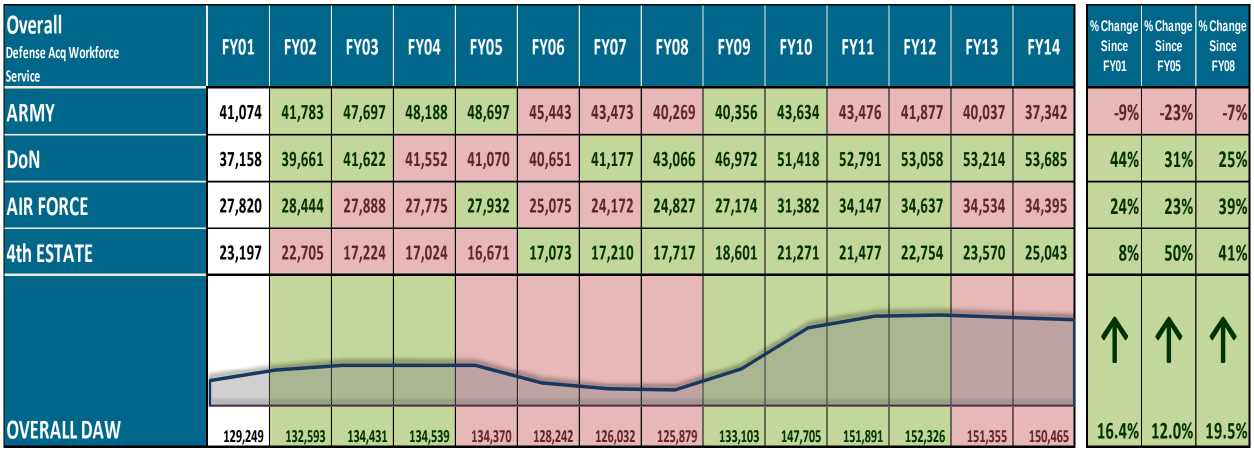
Source: Adapted from Burch, 2014

The Army's acquisition workforce has become a multigenerational body, but Burch (2014) revealed a downward trend in the number of younger civilian employees remaining in the Army after the increased hiring in the last decade. The Burch literature indicates a need for Army leaders and human resources to strategize on a recruitment and retention plan for human capital. Review of the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command (RDECOM) workforce data reveals a 4-year trend in the reduction of Millennial employees (U.S. Army RDECOM, 2014). Additionally, a DoD Defense Acquisition Workforce graph and data (Figure 1), depict an Army acquisition workforce decline since FY 2011 and a steep drop in personnel from FY 2013 to FY 2014. However, further analysis needs to be done to determine and predict potential cause and impact, if any that the downward employment trend of younger employees will have on the Force 2025 acquisition workforce. The reduction in the Army's workforce could be due to a hiring freeze (lack of new and younger hires, sequestration fears, and age-group attrition). Whatever the reason, if new hiring does not keep pace with retirement, Army leaders will have to contend with an imbalance in the workforce experience mix in the out-years to support Force 2025. If retention of acquisition employees becomes a systematic problem for the Army, the pool of journeyman will not be available to gain experience and assume expertise and leadership roles for Force 2025 systems development.



FY14 – DAW Information Summary – Overall
Historical Size by Service FY01 – FY14

Project Source: OUSD (AT&L) HCI Data Source: AT&L Data Mart (as of 09-30-2014) http://hci.dau.mil/ Page 3



Overall Defense Acq Workforce Service	FY01	FY02	FY03	FY04	FY05	FY06	FY07	FY08	FY09	FY10	FY11	FY12	FY13	FY14	% Change Since FY01	% Change Since FY05	% Change Since FY08
ARMY	41,074	41,783	47,697	48,188	48,697	45,443	43,473	40,269	40,356	43,634	43,476	41,877	40,037	37,342	-9%	-23%	-7%
DoN	37,158	39,661	41,622	41,552	41,070	40,651	41,177	43,066	46,972	51,418	52,791	53,058	53,214	53,685	44%	31%	25%
AIR FORCE	27,820	28,444	27,888	27,775	27,932	25,075	24,172	24,827	27,174	31,382	34,147	34,637	34,534	34,395	24%	23%	39%
4th ESTATE	23,197	22,705	17,224	17,024	16,671	17,073	17,210	17,717	18,601	21,271	21,477	22,754	23,570	25,043	8%	50%	41%
OVERALL DAW	129,249	132,593	134,431	134,539	134,370	128,242	126,032	125,879	133,103	147,705	151,891	152,326	151,355	150,465	↑ 16.4%	↑ 12.0%	↑ 19.5%

Source: Adapted from Department of Defense, 2014, slide 6

Figure 1 – Defense Acquisition Workforce Strength by Services

Multigenerational Workforce Behavioral Studies

According to Barford & Hester (2011):

> In business, Generation Y exhibits the propensity for working in teams while being collaborative, results-oriented individuals, and having an ardor for pressure (Shih & Allen, 2007). Unfortunately, Generation Y followed their two previous generations and have partitioned themselves away from organizations (Dries et al., 2008), knowing that lifetime employment at an organization is very unlikely. Generation Y expects to change jobs often during their lifetime (Morton, 2002; Kim, Knight, & Crutsinger, 2009), especially if their talents are underutilized (Kim et al., 2009; Weingarten, 2009). Millennials want lifelong learning (Alch, 2000), expect on-the-job training (Morton, 2002) to stay marketable (Sayers, 2007; Holden and Harte, 2004; King 2003), and proactively plan their own careers and professional development (Westerman and Yamamura, 2007; Kim et al., 2009; Zemke et al., 2000). (p. 67)

Becton, Walker, and Jones-Farmer (2014) said their study of workforce behavior data highlights that Generation X and Millennials show more propensity to job shop than Baby Boomers and that Generation X shows less willingness to work overtime than Millennials and Boomers. They also said their research found that Boomers exhibit more inclination to compliance and experience fewer moments of termination than Generation Xs and Millennials. The authors did caution that these differences are significant in some generational groups and not significant for several work-related habits.

According to Lyons and Kuron (2013), there is a growing body of cross-temporal evidence from the United States, particularly that of Jean Twenge and associates, that provides compelling evidence of generational differences in a number of personality factors. They stated that

> Taken together, there is convincing evidence that personalities have shifted both in general and in relation to work: successive generations appear to be more neurotic, extroverted, and conscientious and regard themselves in an increasingly positive manner. Accordingly, younger generations express greater interest in careers that are expressive of extroversion and social influence. Such shifts have several implications at work given that personality influences turnover, satisfaction, leadership, and stress management, among other outcomes. (p. S144)

In addition to looking at generational personality differences, Lyons and Kuron (2013) investigated several work-related questions that are of interest to this research: What's important to the various generations at work? Do generations differ in their work attitudes? Do work-life balance preferences and experiences differ across generations? Has the importance of teamwork changed? Have career patterns changed across generations? Do the generations differ in their leadership preferences and behaviors? Lyons and Kuron believe that they have uncovered evidence that there are a number similarities in today's workplace generations, but that differences can be noted in their habits, work ethic and attitudes, leadership and teamwork preferences, leader behaviors, and career experiences. Specifically, there are trends in the newer generations that indicate greater extroversion, conscientiousness, and self-esteem, but also greater neuroticism and narcissism. The importance of material rewards and leisure appear to be increasing, whereas work ethic and the centrality of work in people's lives are decreasing. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment appear lower among younger generations, but intent to quit and career mobility are higher.

Millennials’ Characteristics Uncovered

Millennials’ workforce presence and impact are becoming more apparent in the Army’s systems acquisition process. Therefore, this section was developed to describe specific characteristics of this younger workforce.

Editors of TDn2K, a restaurant workforce data and analytics provider firm (Restaurant Hospitality, 2014), quoting Sarah Atkinson said, “It’s clear that this burgeoning generation [Millennials] has preferences and behaviors different from their predecessors. Especially when it comes to jobs” (p. 1). The TDn2K surveyed 400 workers born between 1980 and 2000 and found that only 25% of Millennials are completely satisfied in their current position, and the same 25% stated that a good job has the following characteristics:

- A flexible schedule (26%)
- Competitive pay and benefits (25%)
- A favorable location (21%)
- Growth opportunities (18%)

A second component of TDn2K’s study looked at turnover. Its research found that 60% of Millennials expect to switch jobs within the next 5 years. The following factors cause these workers to seek employment elsewhere:

- 39% leave in search of getting a better schedule.
- 36% leave due to a perceived lack of growth opportunities.
- 15% leave because of “issues with management.”
- 9% are fired.

Pew Research Center (2010), a respected data-gathering organization, said that Millennial behavior continues to perplex just about everyone who studies it. But it's a generation that holds vast potential.

According to the *3rd Annual Study on the State of Gen Y, Gen X, and Baby Boomer Workers* (Millennial Branding, 2014):

> Millennials are often facing higher rates of underemployment, not to mention higher student loan debts; they're struggling financially when they first enter the job market, so their first job might not be the one they were hoping for. Languishing in a job that doesn't utilize your education or isn't paying you what you're worth isn't a savvy career decision either. The job market looks different than it did when Gen X and Boomers were first entering it.

Synthesis of Literature Review

The body of literature reviewed has imparted important knowledge regarding the multigenerational employment habits and behaviors. It is evident in all the literature that defining generational cohorts and studying their personalities, work-related behaviors, and habits is an emerging field. This emergence requires more conclusive research and study to settle a dichotomy that seems to exist regardless of the field of employment and managerial strategies. The dichotomy that is prevalent through the professional studies of generational characteristics is two-fold. On one side, empirical and qualitative evidence of generational differences is glaring, and on the other side the differences do not provide a sufficiently significant basis for any specific workforce strategy. However, the majority of the sources reviewed agreed that the generational differences exist in some form of age cohorts and was most likely caused by social or economic environment, world events, or some combination. The sources also agreed that more work is needed to determine the effects of the generational differences, if any, during their interfaces in the dynamic social and work-related environment. The essence of the literature search is captured in the following quote (Colombo & Fortunati, 2011):

> When talking about “generations” we speak primarily of people as social actors with a life cycle that links them together with humanity and with the individuality of each person, However, we are also talking about the temporal dynamics that are the background to any social change, and that are substantiated in historical cycles, with their watershed, their characteristics, their overlaps, and where community is somewhat the principal player. Finally, we speak of those intermediate bodies or agencies which sociological analysis has emphasized, such as family, school, work place and the media. These are the places where the different generations meet, talk and sometimes clash among themselves; where a sense of continuity (the family), tradition (the school), socio-economic environment (workplace), and sharing (media) is handed on and down and where, however, fractures that make generational differences evident occur. In sum, that sociology looks at generation as a peculiar form of social identity. (p. 20)

The sources reviewed have conducted multiple qualitative and quantitative studies and have characterized the generations into four main categories, namely, Millennials (or Generation Y), Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalist. These studies focused on generational trends, cohort similarities, behaviors and socioeconomic drivers. All of the sources reviewed have characterized each generation as exhibiting different general and workforce behaviors. Additionally, each cohort generation displays similar trends at a macro-level and micro-level. Each person of a cohort generation could display different tendencies or only some of the related generational tendencies; therefore, each person should be treated and approached as an individual. The Millennials’ generational behaviors and trends, such as the tendency to change jobs every 1–5 years (Ferraro, 2014; OPM, 2014), their desire to feel a part of a team, their need for immediate growth opportunities, their desire for competitive salaries and flexible work schedule are reasons for concern because of the potential impact to the acquisition workforce.

Is the younger generation in the Army acquisition workforce exhibiting behaviors similar to the general population workforce? If so, what can be done to retain and secure a balanced mix of workforce experience to support Force 2025? Although abundant literature exists concerning different industries and covering the general characteristics and behaviors of each generation, specific literature and data on the Army’s multigeneration employment behaviors are limited. Therefore, this study may contribute knowledge and insights about the Army’s workforce behaviors and trends.

Chapter 3 – Research Methodology

This research study was implemented to explore the multigenerational Army acquisition workforce employment behaviors and attempt to predict the future civilian acquisition generational mix the army will experience and what it will need to enable Force 2025. It was hypothesized that each generation of employees has a different set of life values and work-related motivational factors, which guide their employment desires and behaviors. This chapter outlines the study approach and procedures, which includes literature review for generational characteristics, survey questions development, participant selection, survey implementation, and data analysis.

Research Hypothesis

This research study's guiding hypothesis is that there is a significant difference in the employment trends of the younger (Millennial and Generation X) Army civilian acquisition workforce when compared to those of the older generation (Baby Boomers). It was further hypothesized that the Millennials in the Army's civilian acquisition workforce will exhibit employment tendencies and behaviors similar to those in the national workforce.

Research Process

This research study used several interrelated and methodical steps. First, to select a topic of relevance to the Army, the researcher reviewed higher Army headquarters' reports, which depicted leadership concerns and issues, and attended several sessions with Army leadership to ask clarifying questions and listen to further elaborations on concerns facing the Army. Subsequently, the Army acquisition generational workforce topic was selected. Second, a review of past literature was undertaken to gain information and ideas on generational workforce trends and behaviors. Terms of reference were also developed and construction of a research design was accomplished. The literature review assisted in the development of the survey questions and highlighted what generational trends the Army workforce may exhibit over the next few years. Third, a quantitative and qualitative survey was developed and administered using the online SurveyMonkey platform. Table 2 shows the correlation between the survey questions and the research questions.

Table 2 – Correlation Between Survey Questions and Research Questions

Survey Questions	**Research Question 1**	**Research Question 2**
• Survey Q12, Q13, Q21, Q24	x	x
• Survey Q18, Q23, Q28, Q34	x	
• Survey Q16, Q22, Q27, Q31		x

The survey was delivered to 8,933 CP-16 personnel and about 1,000 CP-14 personnel, for a total of 9,933, representing approximately 25% of the Army's acquisition workforce. Finally, the survey data was analyzed for answers to the research questions and indications of any workforce trends that will need to be addressed by Army leadership and the acquisition workforce.

Potential Research Design Biases and Errors

The CP-16 and CP-14 personnel were chosen to be the survey population because they represent a large part of the acquisition workforce and perform a high percentage of the core acquisition activities and leadership. However, the researcher is cognizant of potential biases inherent in the survey population sample size and of other possible research errors. Errors like non-randomization of the sample respondents could cause underrepresentation of the acquisition workforce demographic groups; the voluntary nature of the survey and time limit for responses may have inadvertently reduced the response size or eliminated pertinent subgroups. Other potential biases are (1) inconsistent interpretation of the survey questions, (2) questionnaires distorted by researcher preferences due to experience and viewpoints, (3) population selection, and (4) results interpretation. Questionnaire errors could also mask the intended questionnaire interpretation and response.

A high probability of validity in this study's survey was accomplished by carefully crafting the questionnaire to address the two research questions and hypothesis. Subsequently, a beta test was conducted by eight Senior Service College fellows and three senior-level Army officials. After the beta test, the questionnaire was updated and sent to the sample population. As mentioned above, lack of randomization could cause biases in the results. Therefore, to include randomization in the population, the survey was sent to Army employees representing over 10 different functional areas of responsibility and more than 16 different Army organizations.

Data Collection

The data collection design was also a methodical process, which consisted of querying the Army Acquisition Support Center for past years' workforce strength trends and the current year (2014) baseline strength. Second, a survey was developed and sent to a large sample of the Army's acquisition workforce to assess potential generational groups' employment outlook and trends. The data was collected and analyzed in the online SurveyMonkey software platform. This collection method provided quantitative data with which to describe the Army's acquisition workforce behaviors, trends, and distribution of age groups and skills. Additionally, qualitative responses were assessed for employees' thoughts on the Army's acquisition health and for suggestions on how to improve the Army's working environment and meet the needs of each generational group.

Chapter 4 – Findings

The objective of this research is to assess the potential impact of the multigenerational Federal workforce employment behaviors and trends on the experience mix and stability of the Army's civilian acquisition workforce and how that will affect Force 2025 capabilities. Typical generational employment behaviors and decisions were first appraised by examining information on generational traits and employment behaviors harvested from industry and Government-wide studies. Subsequently, Army workforce trends data pulled from the Defense Civilian Personnel Data System and survey data results were evaluated to address the research questions and objectives. The results of this research are presented in two parts. The first part contains empirical data and figures depicting respondents' plans for their Army employment over the next 1–5 years. The second contains a qualitative summary of respondents' thoughts on how to improve the Army's attractiveness as an employer.

Survey Population & Sample Size

The Army acquisition workforce consists of approximately 40,000 employees. A population sample size made up of approximately 8,933 engineering and 1,000 contracting acquisition personnel were surveyed (see Appendix A questionnaire). A total of 896 engineers (136 Millennial, 393 Generation X, 307 Boomer, 60 Traditionalist) and 523 contracting personnel responded. The engineers' responses were analyzed for this research and the contracting responses analysis will be used soon in a Department of Defense human capital study. The percentage of Army organizations represented by the engineering respondents appears in Figure 2.

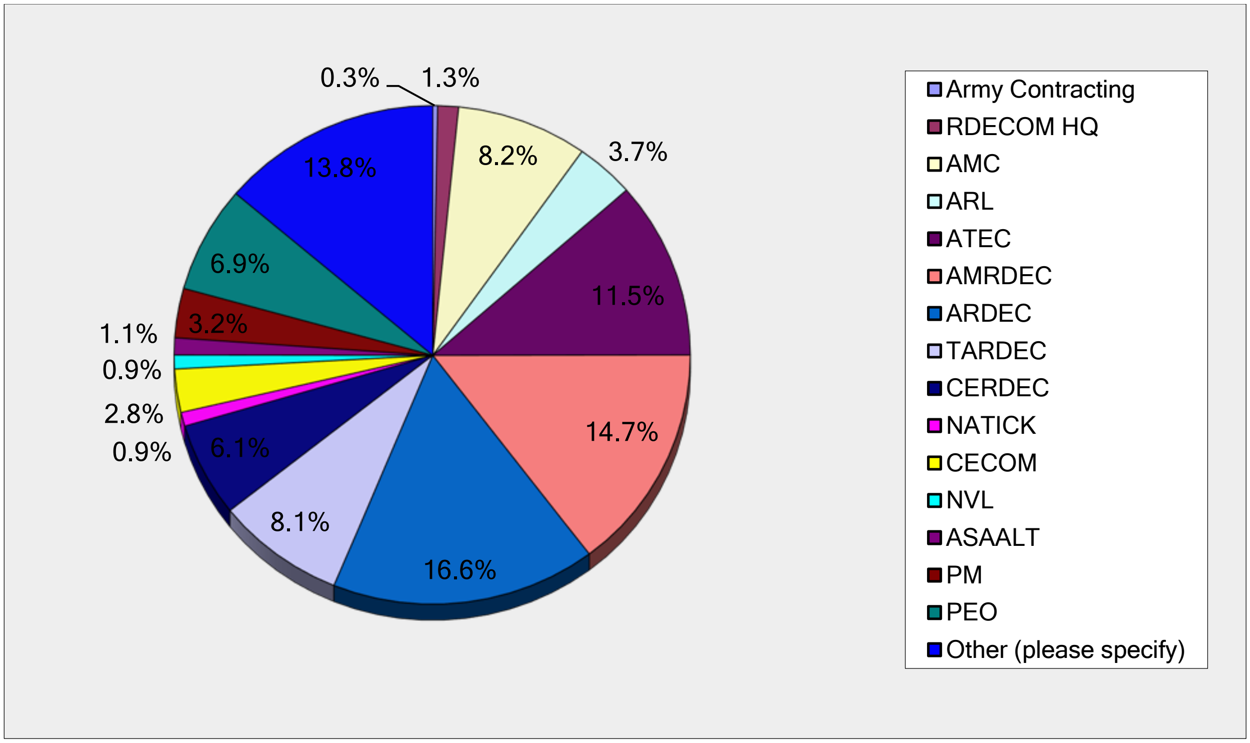


Figure 2 – Percentage of Respondents in Army Organizations

The survey population size for this research was 8,933, and the respondents' effective sample size was 896. Therefore, the engineers' response rate was 9.8%. Respondents' demographic data for age groups (generations), length of Federal service completed, and educational levels are presented in Figures 3, 4, and 5 respectively. Figure 3 shows the number of representatives in each generational group: 15% are Millennials, 43% are Generation Xers, 35% are Boomers and 7% are Traditionalists. Figure 4 provides the respondents' years in Federal service, and Figure 5 summarizes the respondents' educational levels. It is evident from Figure 5 that the respondents are highly educated, with 39% holding a bachelor's degree and more than 55% possessing a master's or higher educational degree. These highly educated respondents inspire more confidence in the credibility of the survey results.

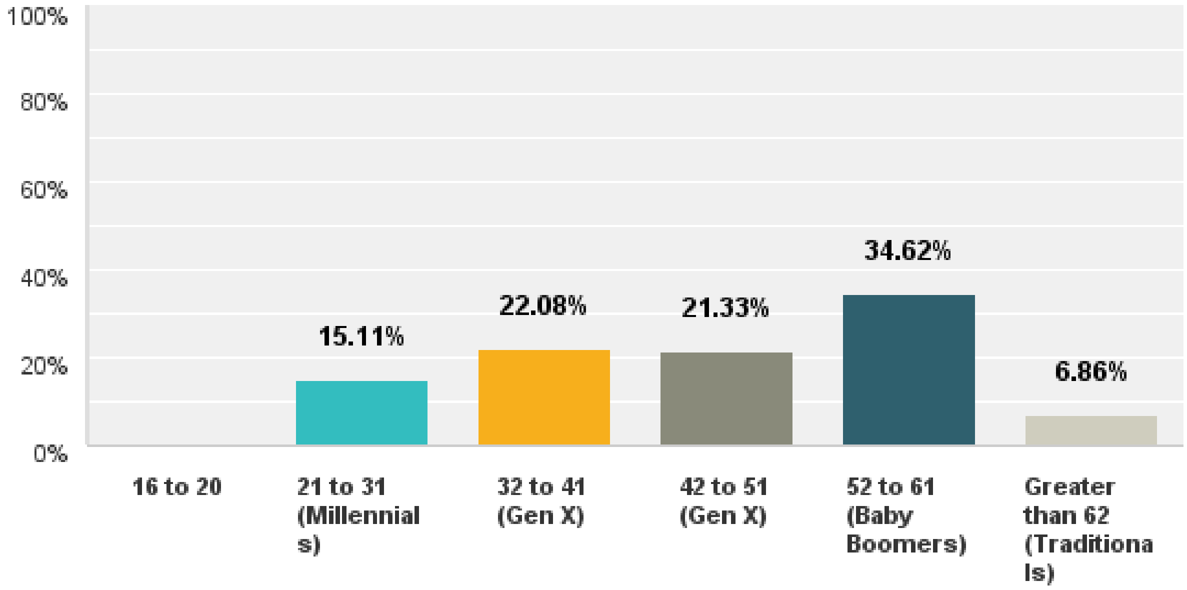


Figure 3 – Respondents' Age Groups (Generations)

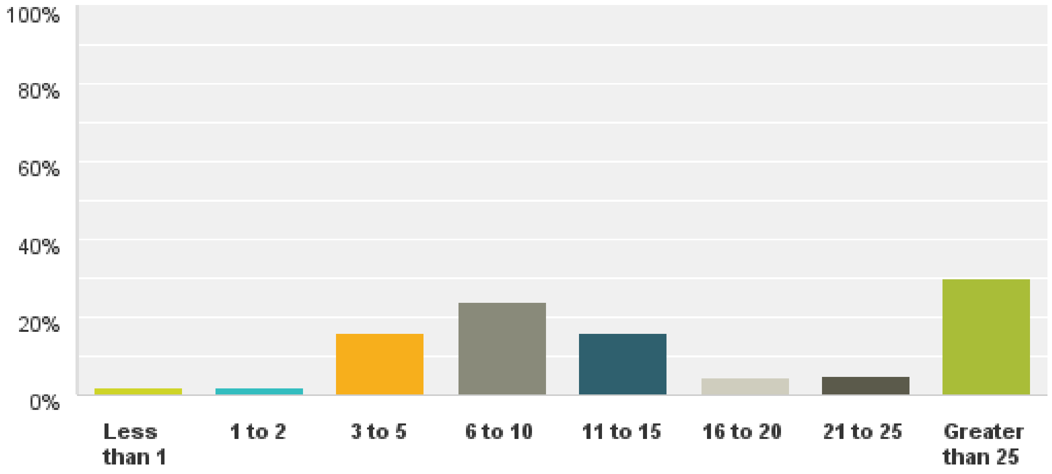


Figure 4 – Length of Federal Service Completed

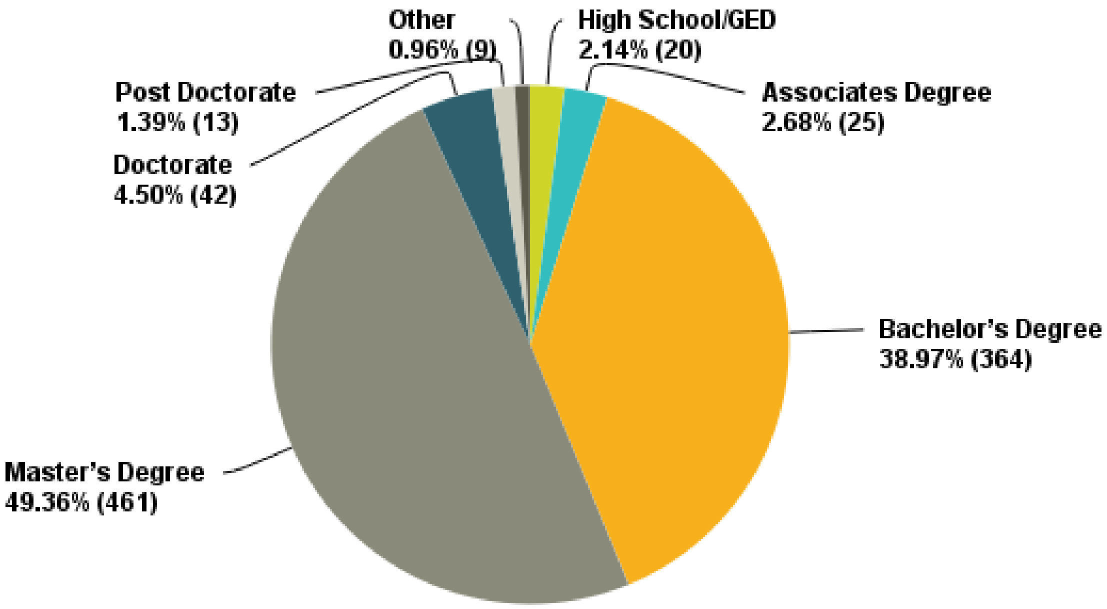


Figure 5 – Education Level Completed

Collected Data

The aim of this data analysis is to evaluate the correlation of this study's two research questions to the results of the survey questions (see Appendix A questionnaire). As specified in Table 2, research question 1 is associated with generational employees' responses to survey questions 12, 13, 18, 23, 24, 28, and 34. Additionally, research question 2 is related to generational replies to survey questions 12, 13, 16, 21, 22, 24, 27, and 31. Although several survey questions potentially correlate to the research questions (RQ), the investigator focused on the data from responses to 12, 18, 23 and 34 for RQ1 and questions 12, 16, 22, 24, 27 for RQ2.

Survey Results: Army's Generational Workforce Behaviors and Trends

The graphical representation of data presented in this segment contains a direct image of the Army's multigenerational engineering workforce employment behaviors and habits. The responses to the survey questions presented will help to decipher any specific Army workforce generational habits and trends.

Survey Question (SQ) 12 (My job makes a difference in the Army Acquisition mission…). Looking at the generational data as an integrated set presented for question 12 (Figure 6), the good news is that 76% of 819 respondents believe that their job is important to acquiring and providing value to the warfighter. However, it is a concern that over 23% are unsure of their contribution to the Army acquisition mission. This data prompted the researcher to filter and include responses from each generation. This will determine what generation is most liable to not understand how their jobs support the acquisition process. Of the 111 Millennial respondents, 33% are unsure of how their jobs relate to Army acquisition and 69% are sure (Figure 7). Of the 350 Generation X respondents, 19% are unsure of their acquisition job's impact and 71% are well aware (Figure 8). Of the 248 Boomer respondents, 23% are unsure of their acquisition job's input and 77% are well aware (Figure 9). The combined Millennial and Generation X responses for question 12 predicts that 25% of the survey respondents' younger generations are unsure about what they do for Army acquisition (Figures 7 and 8).

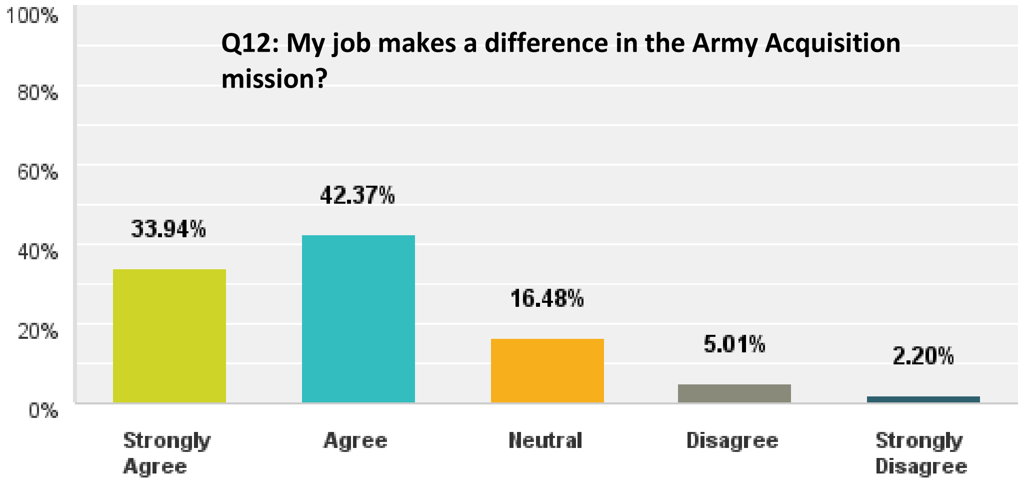


Figure 6 – Multigenerational Summary Response

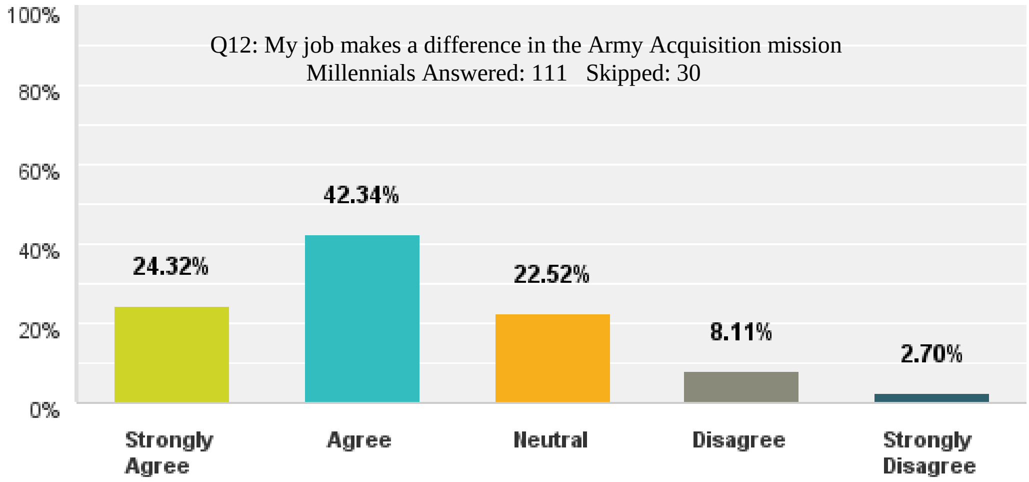


Figure 7 – Millennial Respondents

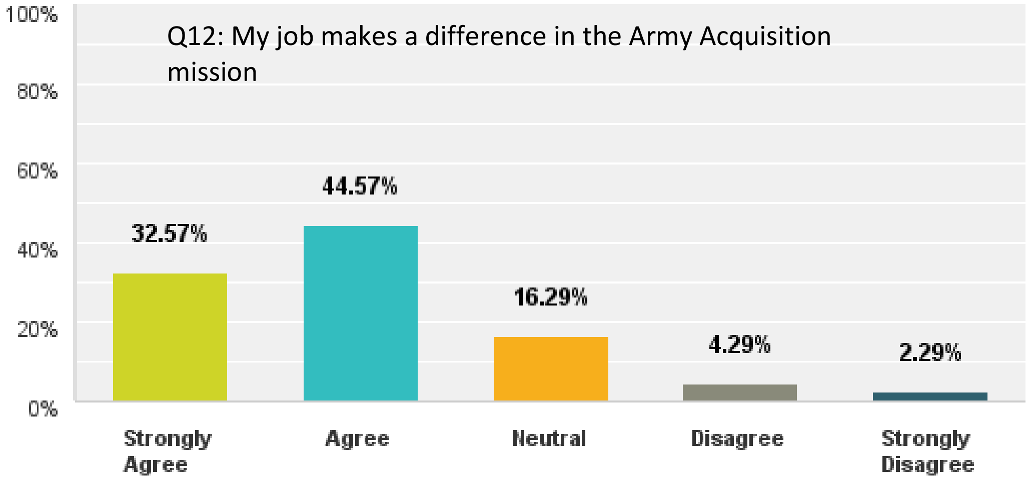


Figure 8 – Generation X Respondents

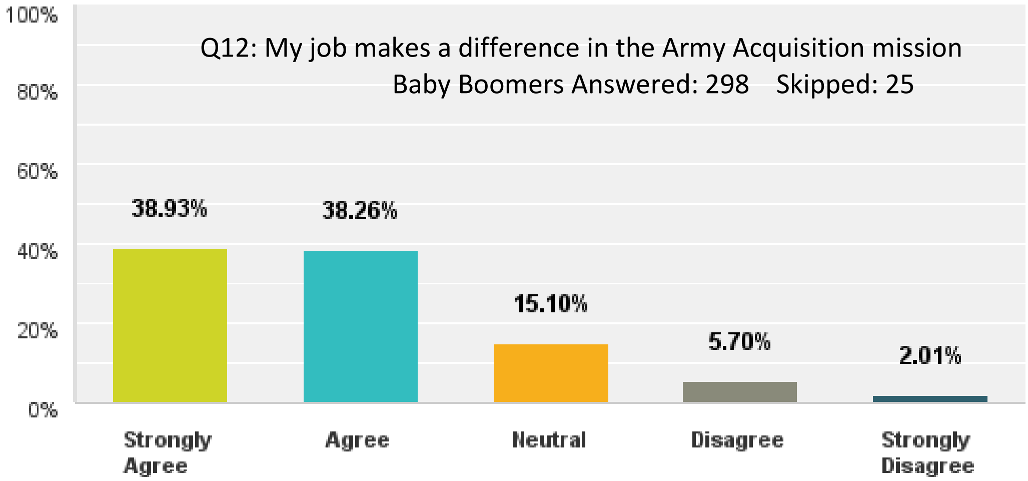


Figure 9 – Baby Boomer Respondents

Survey Question 16 (I like the work I am currently performing…). Motivational factors and the desire to stay with Army acquisition are examined in question 16. Looking at the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 10), we can see that 75% of the 758 respondents like the work they are performing; however, 25% are not happy with the work they are performing. Examining the combined younger workforce (Millennials and Generation X), approximately 26% of the 459 respondents (Figures 11 and 12, respectively) are concerned about or do not like the work they perform.

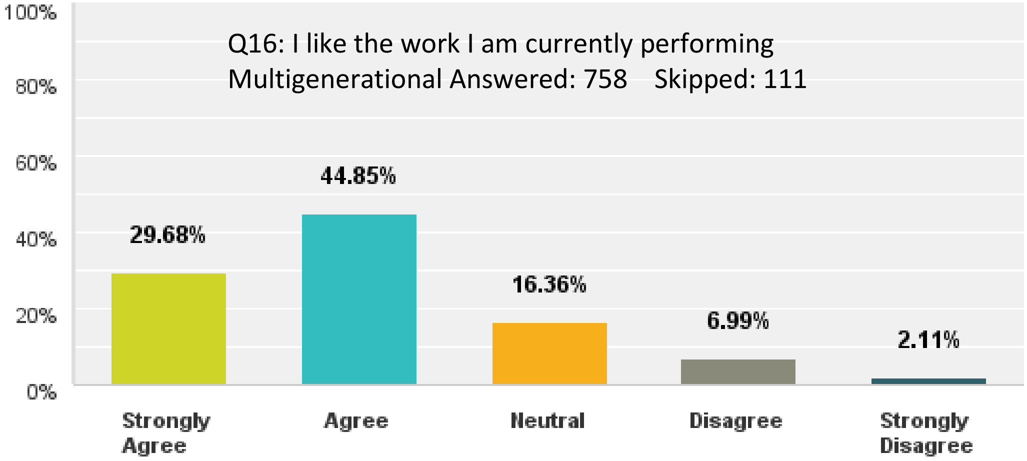


Figure 10 – Question 16, Multigenerational Respondents

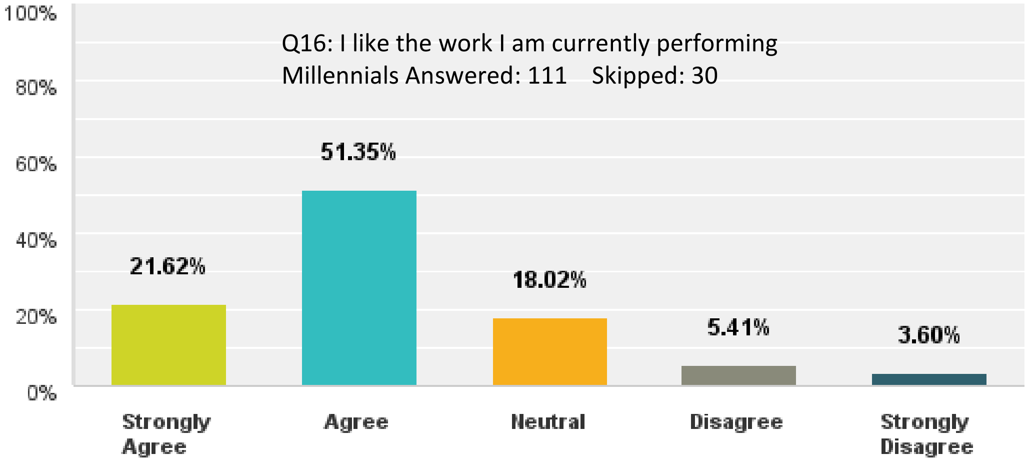


Figure 11 – Question 16, Millennial Respondents

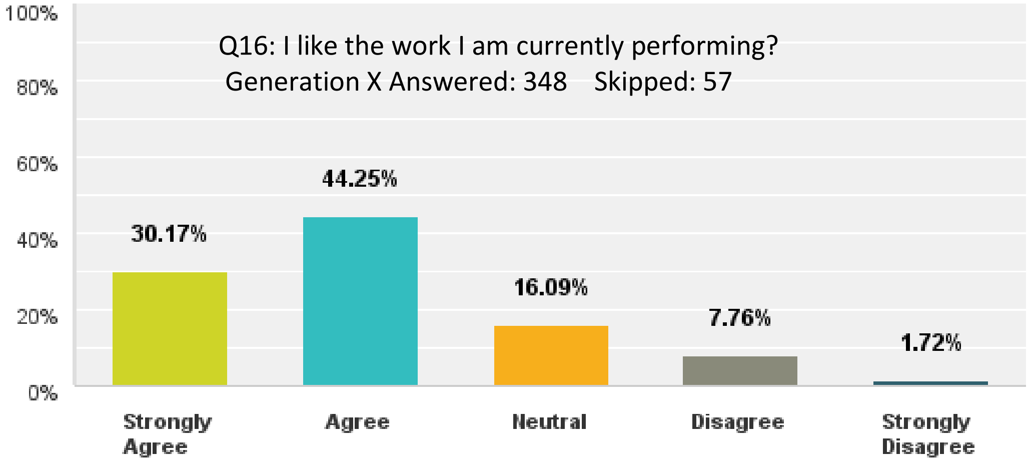


Figure 22 – SQ16, Generation X Respondents

Survey Question 18 (I plan to remain employed in the Army acquisition engineering [CP16] for…). Employment behavioral decision factors and the desire to remain with Army acquisition are examined in question 18. Looking at the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 13), we see that 41% of the 725 respondents are planning to stay with Army acquisition for only 1–5 years and 59% are in for the long haul, 6–25 years. Examining the combined younger workforce (Millennials and Generation X) approximately 35% of the 435 respondents (Figures 14 and 15, respectively) are only planning on a 1–5-year stay in the Army CP16 career field.

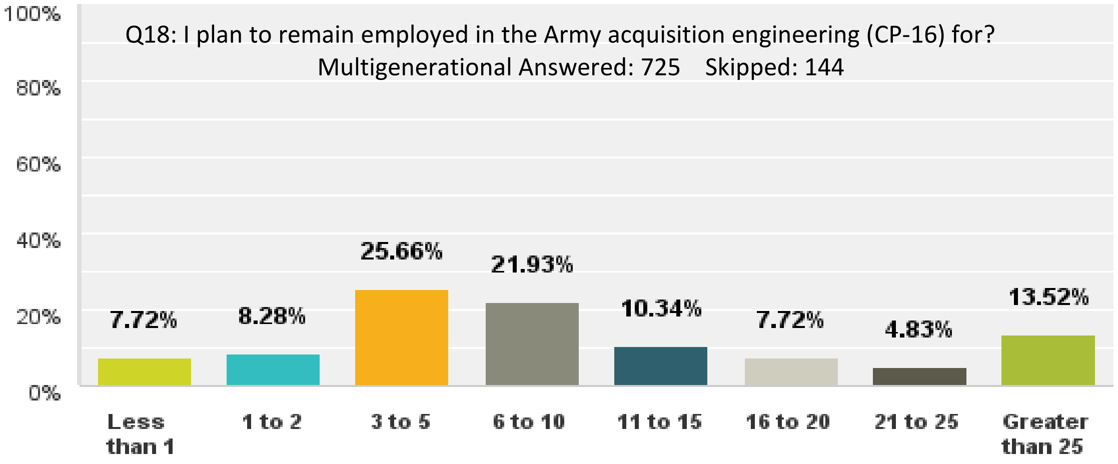


Figure 33 – SQ18, Multigenerational Respondents

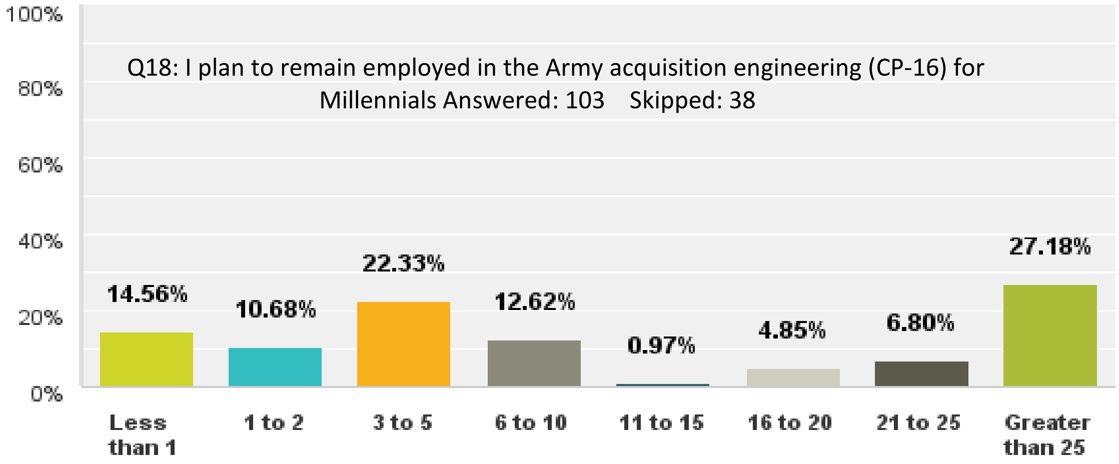


Figure 44 – SQ18, Millennial Respondents

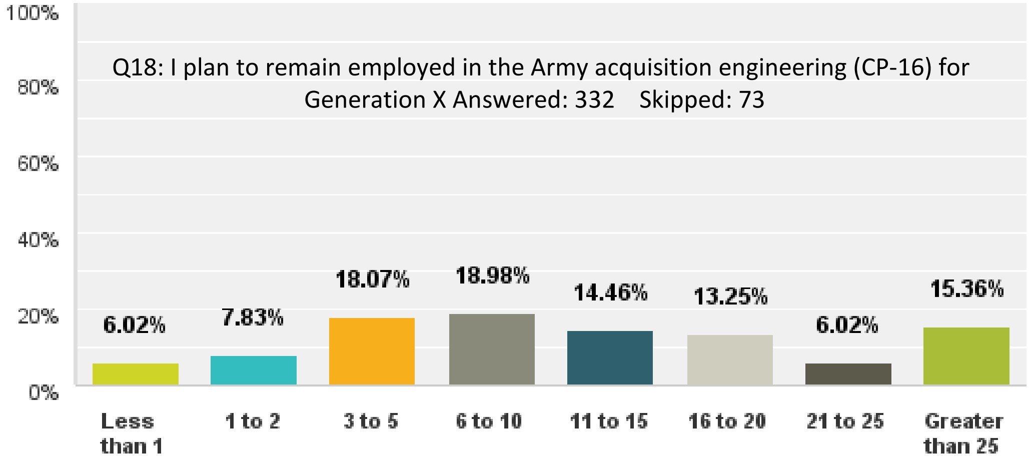


Figure 55 – SQ18, Generation X Respondents

Question 23 (How long are you planning to work for the Army?). Employment behavioral decision, motivation, and retention factors for remaining with the Army as an institution are examined in question 23. Looking at the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 16), we see that 29% of the 738 respondents are planning to stay with Army acquisition only 1–5 years, and 42% are considering staying 6–15 years. Examining the combined younger workforce (Millennials and Generation X), approximately 22% of the 446 respondents (Figure 17 and 18, respectively) are only planning for a 1–5-year stay with the Army.

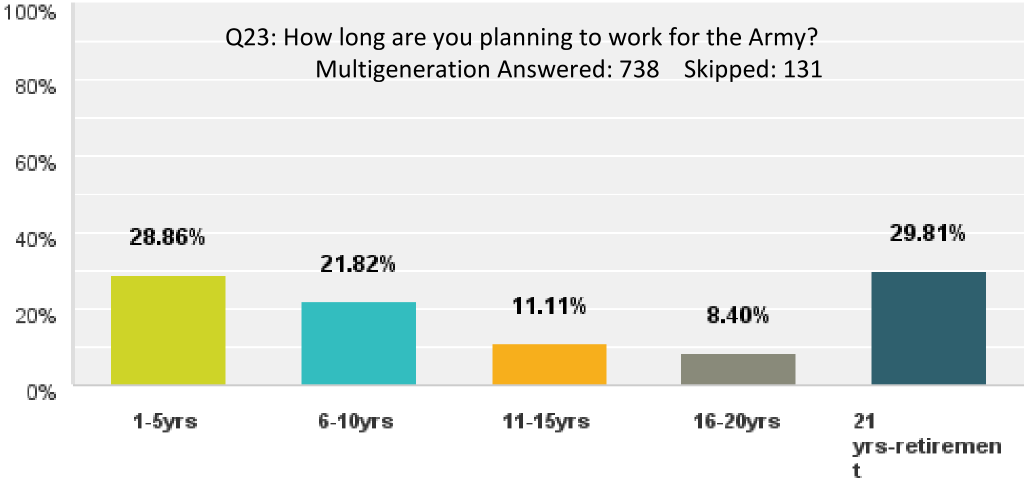


Figure 66 – SQ23, Multigeneration Respondents

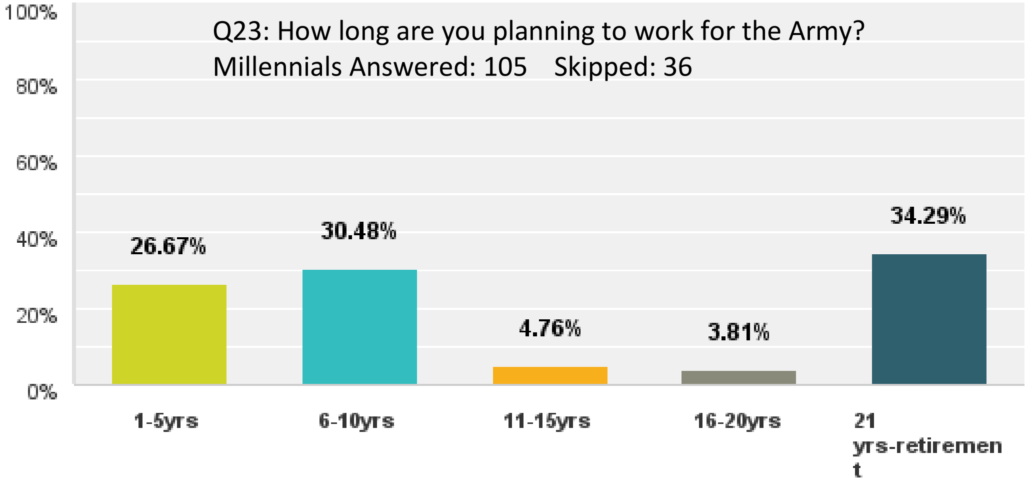


Figure 77 – SQ23, Millennial Repondents

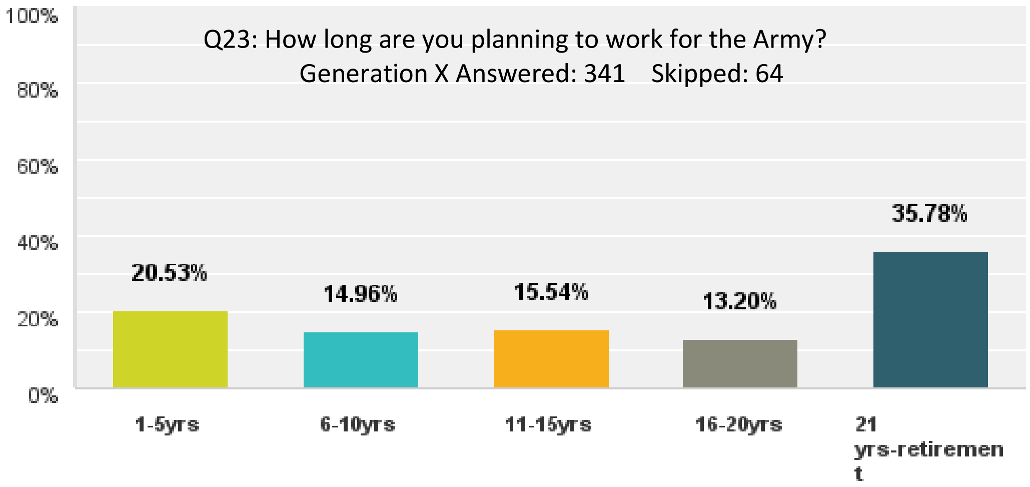


Figure 88 – SQ23, Generation X Respondents

Question 24 (I am motivated to stay with the Army…). General motivation and opportunity to grow with the Army are examined in question 24. Looking at the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 19), we see that 61% of the 754 respondents are motivated to stay with the Army; however, 24% are neutral, and 15% are not motivated at all. Examining the younger workforce (Millennials and Gen X) responses (Figure 20 and 21, respectively), approximately 49% of the 111 Millennials and 39% of the 346 Generation X respondents are not motivated to stay with the Army.

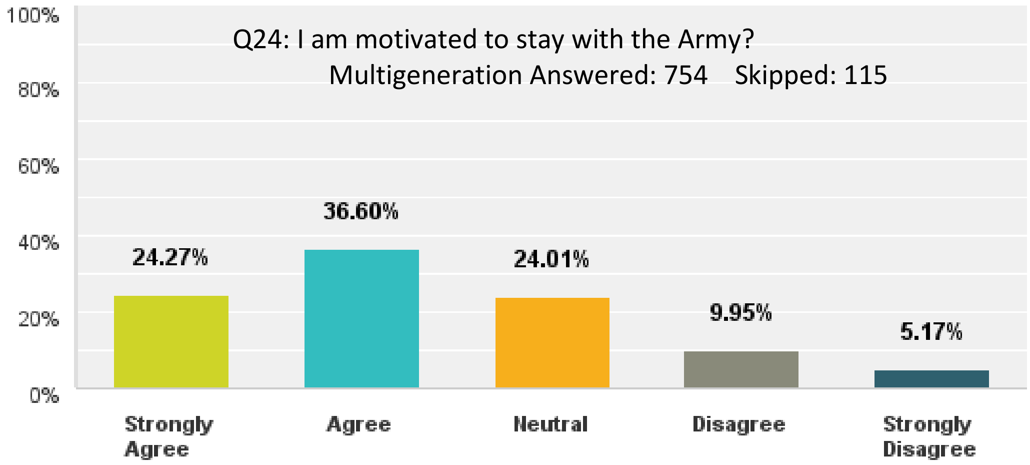


Figure 99 – SQ24, Multigeneration Respondents

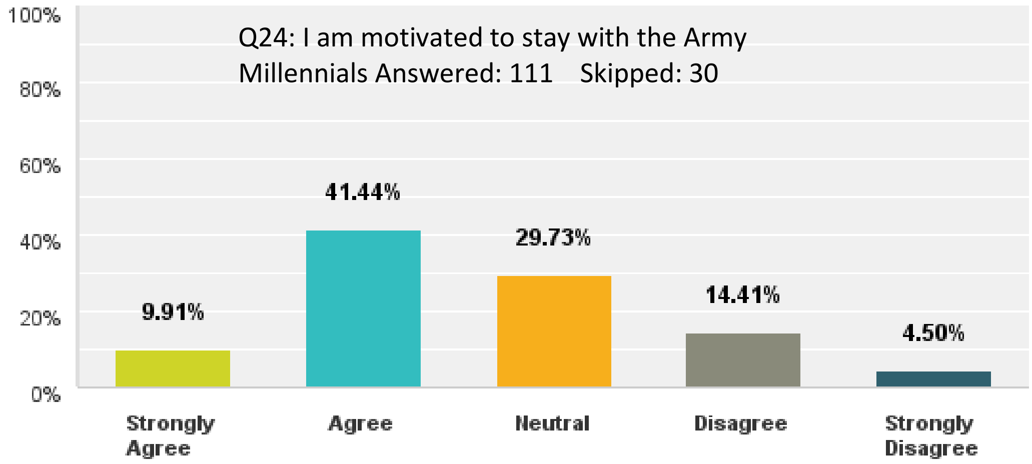


Figure 20 – SQ24, Millennial Respondents

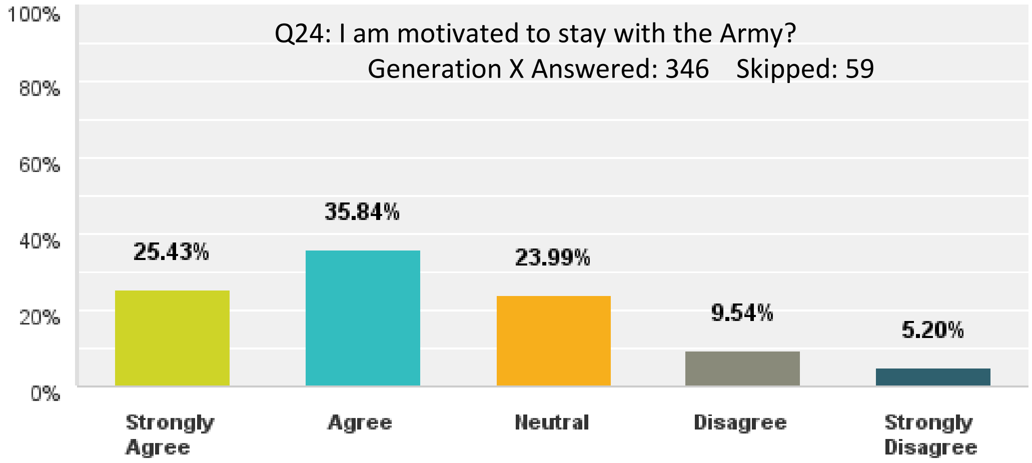


Figure 101 – SQ24, Generation X Respondents

Question 27 (I was attracted to government work because…). General opportunity to recruit and retention factors are examined in question 27. Factors such as pay, benefits, and work environment (e.g., location) were tested for their attractive nature. Viewing the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 22), we can observe that benefits and work environment are almost even in their attractive nature, accounting for 89% of the favorable response from the 619 respondents. Examining the younger workforce (Millennials and Generation X) responses

(Figure 23 and 24, respectively), approximately 61% of the 93 Millennials and 47% of the 278 Generation X respondents rate benefits as the most attracting factor.

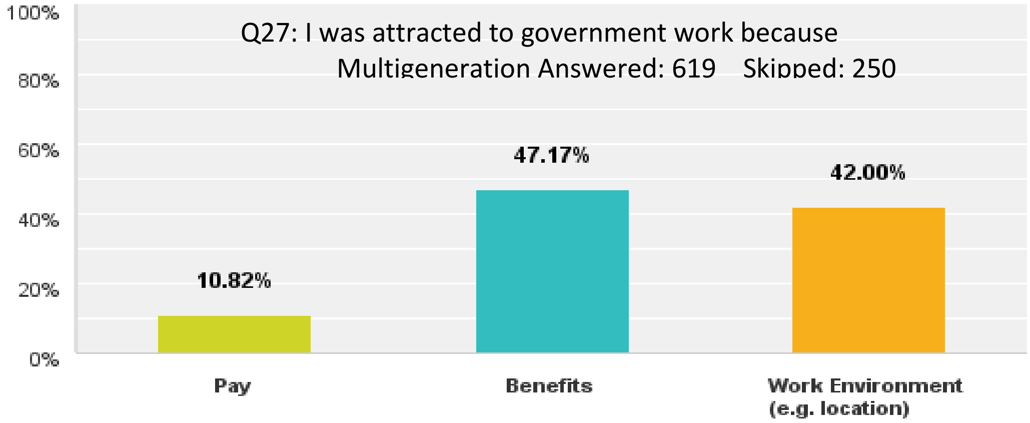


Figure 112 – SQ27, Multigeneration Respondents

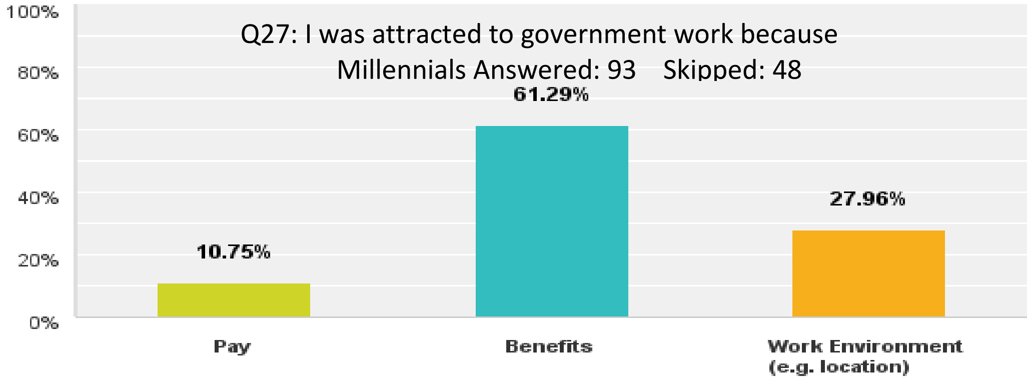


Figure 123 – SQ27, Millennial Respondents

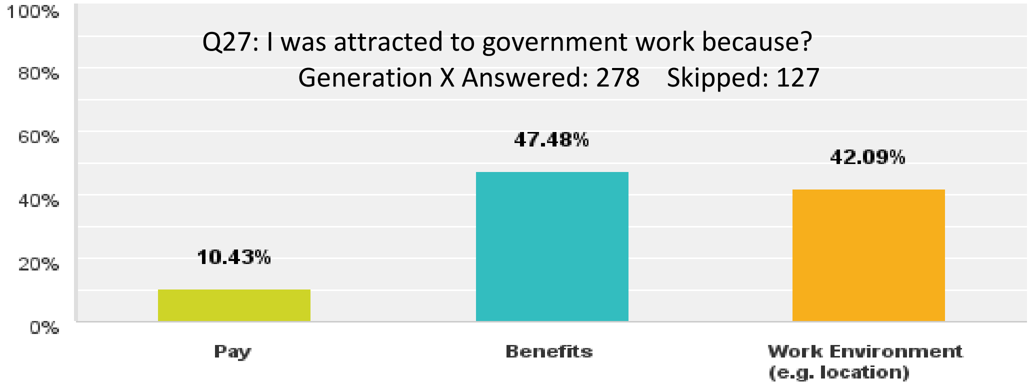


Figure 134 – SQ27, Generation X Respondents

Question 34 (My career plan in the next five years is…). Near-term employment behavioral decision factors are examined in question 34. Looking at the integrated multigenerational data chart (Figure 25), we can observe that 61% of the 747 respondents plan to remain with the Army and/or DoD; however, 22% are considering employment outside of DoD, and 16% have their eyes on retirement. Examining the younger workforce (Millennials and Generation X), 40% of the 109 Millennials and 26% of the 345 Generation X respondents (Figure 26 and 27, respectively) are considering employment outside of DoD in the next 5 years.

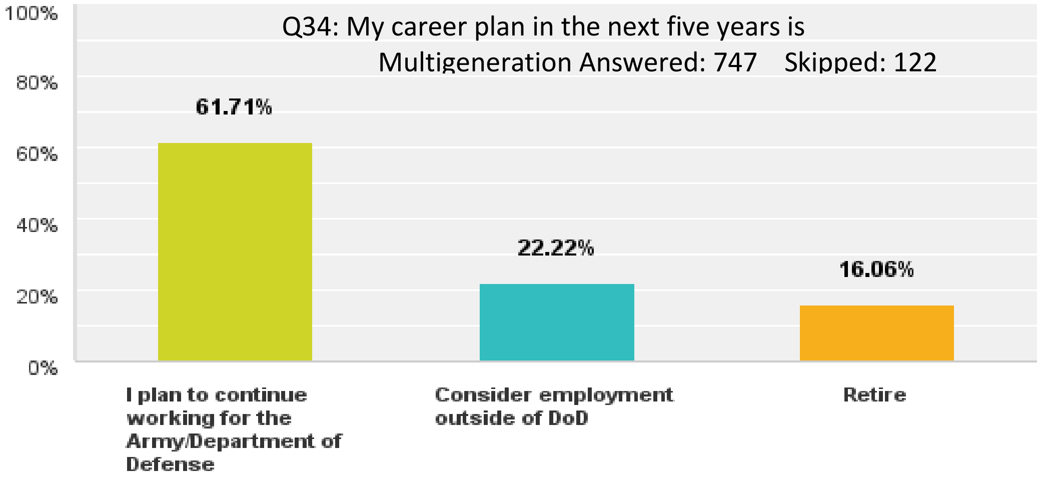


Figure 145 – SQ34, Multigeneration Respondents

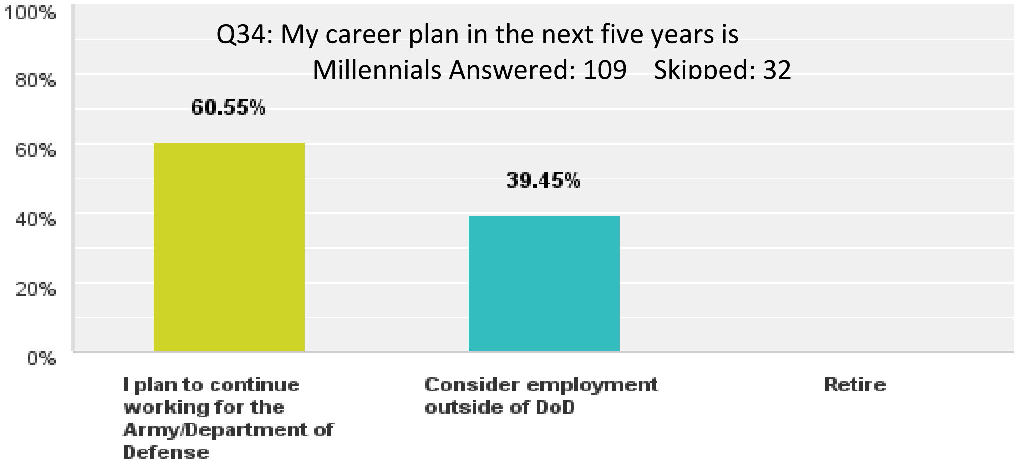


Figure 156 – SQ34, Millennial Respondents

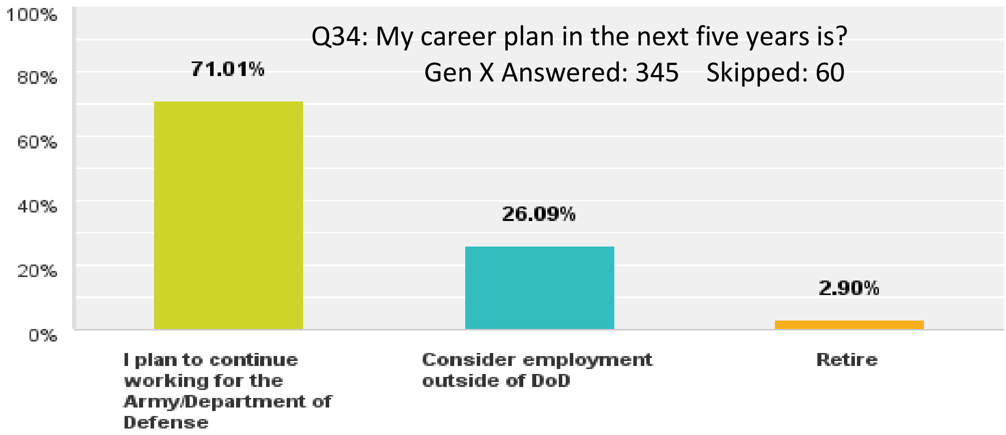


Figure 167 – SQ34, Generation X Respondents

Q22 (What can the Army do to be a more attractive employer? List some improvement ideas [any ideas are welcome]). Question 22 was employed to allow respondents' free-spirited thoughts on what would make the army more attractive as an employer and to get at qualitative responses to support the research questions and hypothesis. There were 622 open- ended responses to question 22, of which workforce pay/salary increase and advancement opportunities lead the responses with approximately 206 hits. Employees' programs to promote empowerment, educational growth, and incentives to perform followed with 77 responses. Another response worth mentioning was to improve management proficiency, styles, and types.

Results Summary

The survey respondents were a generational and organizationally diverse pool of 933 CP-16 engineers (141 Millennials, 405 Generation X, 323 Baby Boomers, and 64 Traditionalists). Additionally, the pool of respondents consisted of multiple workforce functional disciplines. Analysis of the research results included the examination of how the respondents feel about their current Army employment and what their potential motivational factors are. The research questions that guided the study were: (RQ1) What potential impacts will the multigenerational federal workforce employment behaviors and trends have on the Army Force 2025 capabilities acquisition? (RQ2) How should the army organizations recruit, motivate, grow and retain new, experienced, and capable CP-16 employees? The following are the important findings that are associated with the research questions:

- 25% (117) of the 461 younger respondents are unsure of how their jobs fit into the Army systems acquisition process (Figures 7 and 8).
- 25% (115) of the 459 younger respondents are unsure or don’t like the work they are performing (Figure 11 and 12).
- 36% (153) of the 435 younger respondents say they are only planning to stay with Army CP16 (Engineering) for 1–5 years.
- 22% (100) of the 446 younger respondents are planning to remain with the Army only 1–5 years.
- 40% (184) of the 457 younger respondents are either neutral or not motivated to stay employed with the Army.
- 26% (118) younger respondents are planning to change career plans within the next 1–5 years. Their plan includes searching for employment outside of the Army.

In conclusion, aggregated analyses of the younger workforce (Millennials, Generation X) responses regarding Army employment intentions revealed that approximately 22–40% of the Army’s younger employees surveyed are not motivated to stay with the Army and are seeking to leave within the next 1–5 years.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and Recommendations

In the previous chapters the researcher has systematically focused on the trends and behaviors of the multigenerational workforce by examining previous studies and literature. The expert sources have agreed that each generation displays behaviors that are macroscopically different. In other words, cohorts' employment tendencies, trends, and motivational factors can be determined and described by their generational group (e.g., Millennials, Generation X, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalists). Additionally, the researcher conducted a survey to determine whether the Army's multigenerational acquisition workforce employment trends and motivational factors will pose potential impacts to the Force 2025. For the purposes of limiting the scope of this study, the researcher focused on findings that potentially portray the Army's younger workforce employment trends. This chapter will explore possible interpretations, conclusions, and suggestions for follow-on research. However, the researcher would like to point out that limitations are inherent in this study and should be taken into consideration if implementing any of the recommendations. The study is not able to conclude how accurately the survey sample size represents the employment trends of the total population, and accuracy in the responses cannot be determined. Also, the study did not include a cost-benefit analysis for implementing recommendations.

Study Finding Analysis #1

Table 3 presents an aggregated set of generational differences, which were compiled from sources such as Department of Defense (2007, p. 11)**,** Twenge (2010, p. 208), and Cassidy and Berube (2009). The differences are listed in three categories (preferred work environment, motivation, and other personalities). Examining the accepted conventional work preferences, motivational tendencies, and other personalities of each generation leads the researcher to postulate that the generations possess different employment needs and inclinations. Guided by RQ1,I have taken interest in the Millennials' work behaviors and preferences (e.g., flexible schedules, higher job mobility, fun environment, peers are like family, technology savvy, and expects bosses to be involved), because they could be negatively affecting the Army acquisition workforce experience mix, now and potentially in the near future. Considering that 33% of Millennials surveyed are unsure about their job's relationship to the acquisition process and 28% do not like the work they are performing, the Army needs to consider how to make the work environment more fun and technology oriented, and to instill more family values into the acquisition workforce atmosphere.

Recommendation: Army leadership should study what is considered to be a fun organization (such as Google, perhaps) and implement objectives in that regard. Army leaders should consider implementing more organizational group activities and continue incorporating more use of technology like iPhones, iPads, and instant computer network collaboration tools such as Skype. Army leaders should study the generational characteristics in Table 3 to determine how to hire, develop, retain and establish a more collaborative workplace environment.

Table 3 – Generational Differences in the U.S Workforce

	Preferred Work Environment	Motivated by…	Other Personalities & Tendencies
Traditionalist	• Promotions come with seniority • Younger workers should pay dues • Value sacrifice, conformity, patience	• Satisfaction is a job well done • Being respected	• Prefer job security over entrepreneurship—cautious • Unadventurous • Unoriginal • Facilitators and helpmates • Arbiters but not leaders • Without outward turmoil • Inward focused
Baby Boomer	• Love to have meetings • Job security • Learn technology • Position = respect • Younger workers should pay dues • Value "face time"	• Advancement • Title recognition • Being valued and needed • Money	• Much heralded • Self-absorbed • Intellectually arrogant • Socially mature • Culturally wise • Critical thinkers • Spiritual, religious • Having an inner fervor • Radical • Controversial • Nonconformist • Self-confident • Self-indulgent
Generation X	• Fun environment • Use technology • Internal mobility • Flexible schedules • Peers not = family • Changing challenges and responsibilities • More competitive • Self-reliant • Prefer to work alone	• Freedom • Removal of rules • Continuous learning • Time off • Money	• Distrusting • Bearing the weight of the world • Fearful • Hard to change • In-your-face • Mature for their age—pragmatic • Apathetic • Disengaged • Politically independent • Feeling underachieving
Millennial	• Fun, relaxed, and less formal environment • Assume technology • Internal mobility • Peers = family • Expect bosses to assist and mentor • Higher voluntary rate than Generation Xers and Boomers, but lower turnover intentions	• Meaningful work • Working with bright people • Increased responsibility • Time off • Money	• Optimistic • Cooperative • Team players • Trusting • Accepting of authority • Rule-followers • Smart, civic-minded • Special, sheltered • Confident, achieving • Pressured • Conventional • High-maintenance

Study Finding Analysis #2

Survey question (SQ #12): “My job makes a difference in the Army acquisition mission?” examines the respondents’ awareness of their job responsibility in relation to the Army acquisition process. Twenty-four percent of all the acquisition employees (Figure 6) and 25% of the younger ones (Figures 7 and 8) that responded to SQ #12 are unsure or don’t believe their jobs support the Army acquisition process. Analysis #2 examined qualitative responses to SQ #12 for correlation to RQ1 and RQ2. Responses are directly related to RQ2, especially within the realm of employees’ motivation and growth needs. Also the responses are indirectly associated with RQ1, because the respondents’ employment trends could be caused by their perspective (negative or positive) of how their jobs fit into the acquisition mission. Since 25% of the younger and 24% of all the respondents (819) are either neutral or don’t understand exactly how their work effort fits into the Army acquisition process, the possibility exist that these employees are demotivated regarding employment with the Army. Not knowing how one’s job fits into the puzzle could be discouraging. Additionally, if individuals is not trained for that job they are performing, the dynamics could cause them to be consumed with learning or distrusting the job and the organization. Therefore, inadvertently they will miss the bigger picture of their contribution (e.g., system acquisition for the warfighter) and decide to find alternative employment. Some respondents feel that they are “preparing documents that they were not trained for, so the job is not interesting.”

Recommendation: Army leadership should implement a job-contribution-awareness campaign and query each engineering staff for specific training and development needs.

Study Finding Analysis #3

Survey question (SQ) #16: “I like the work I am currently performing?” examines the respondents’ satisfaction with work duties and responsibilities. Twenty-five percent of all the acquisition employees (Figure 10) and 26% of the younger ones (Figures 11 and 12) that responded to SQ #16 are either neutral or do not like the work they are performing. Analysis #3 examined qualitative responses to SQ #16 for correlation to RQ1 and RQ2. Responses are directly related to RQ1, especially within the auspices of workforce employment trends. Will unsatisfied employees leave or try to do something else in the Army? The literature review has revealed that the younger generation, if they are unhappy with the current job, will actively seek to find a more satisfying work environment. This question and its responses are inherently associated with RQ1, because job satisfaction is a motivator for retention and employees’ self-desire to grow. If 25% of the workforce doesn’t like their job because it is not challenging and decides to leave, a hole in the acquisition workforce will be left. This could, in turn, affect recruitment, because cohorts are very connected through technology and social Web sites and their discontentment with Army employment will spread like wildfire. Therefore, the Army’s attractiveness as a viable employer will potentially be reduced and competing for new talent will be arduous.

Recommendation: Since 75% like what they are doing for the Army, leadership should implement a job-enthusiasm-capture campaign and publish why the 75% of its employees enjoy their job. This effort would most likely incentivize employees who are on the fence about job satisfaction to actively seek other opportunities in the Army. Leadership should also try to match employees’ skills and desires with the right job as much as possible.

Study Finding Analysis #4

Survey questions (SQ) #18, 23, 24, and 34 and responses specifically expose the employment plans of the workforce for the next 1–5 years. This timeframe provides a window of opportunity for the Army to plan for and react to the acquisition workforce requirements to support Force 2025 system development initiatives. SQ #18, 23, 24, 34 and respondents' responses appear to be intrinsically tied to RQ1 and RQ2, because employment trends for the next 5 years were explicitly asked in the questions. Responses were presented in Figures 13–21 and 25–27 and are summarized below.

Thirty-six percent (153) of the 435 younger respondents said they are only planning to stay with Army CP16 (Engineering) only 1–5 years. Twenty-two percent (100) of the 446 younger respondents are planning to remain with the Army only 1–5 years. Forty percent (184) of the 457 younger respondents are either neutral or not motivated to stay employed with the Army. Twenty-six percent (118) younger respondents are planning to change career plans within the next 1–5 years, and their plan includes searching for employment outside of the Army. It is apparent that 22–40% of the younger workforce respondents are planning to leave the Army in the next 1–5 years. Promotion and better pay are indicated in the qualitative responses as the major reasons for the planned exodus.

Recommendation: Army leadership should consider different ways of increasing salaries and awards for related performance. Additionally, leadership is to develop and implement a recruitment contingency plan, which would include highlights on competitive salary, increased emphasis on benefits and workplace locations, mentoring, and a clearly defined growth plan (career advancement) for each employee and potential recruit.

Follow-on Research Recommendation

Army managers should conduct a study on the following research question: Are our Army leaders and managers doing enough to motivate the current workforce and potential employees who possibly don't view the government as the top career choice (e.g., examining competitive environment, salary, growth opportunities, enabling social dynamics, room for innovation, and creativity)? This question will assist in determining ideas for the Army to possibly improve its employment image.

It is further recommended that Army officials conduct a detailed review of every qualitative response provided in this research survey. This study has produced hundreds of qualitative responses that should be explored for other workforce trends and behavioral implications.

Research Summary

This research found that at least one-fourth of the younger-generation survey respondents are planning to leave the Army acquisition workforce in the next 1–5 years. This potential exodus of a quarter of the Army's current younger employees correlates to the body of literature that was reviewed; the literature postulates that Millennials have a propensity to change jobs within a 3–5-year window. If the exodus of retirement-eligible employees coincides with the younger generations' plans to leave, the Army will experience a severe gap in acquisition leadership and execution personnel.

Although a significant number of younger employees are considering other employment, and some do not understand their contribution to systems acquisition, there is an opportunity (silver-lining) for leadership to motivate current and new employees. Exposed in the survey responses are key qualitative feedbacks. Three key motivational factors (warfighter support, employment benefits, and workplace environment (e.g., location) are major features that attract employees to work for the Army in the first place. The data indicates that a majority of the Millennials and Generation Xers are pleased with what they do for the warfighter and believe that their efforts are well worth it. However, promotions, career path, pay, and awards are becoming an issue for the younger workforce. They want a clear path to promotions and career advancements, increased pay, and, for some, more challenging assignments.

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Glossary of Acronyms and Terms

AT&L	Acquisition, Technology and Logistics
CP	Career Program
DoD	Department of Defense
GAO	Government Accountability Office
RQ	research question
SQ	survey question

Appendix A – Survey Tool

In the following survey tool, the choices for questions 4–34 have been omitted for space reasons:

The purpose of this research survey is to assess and project the experience and generational mix of our future Army acquisition workforce. Your input is very important.

1. INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT:
As an adult 18 years of age or older, I agree to participate in this research about what factors are driving the army civilian acquisition workforce age/experience mix. This survey is being conducted to support research efforts being performed by Oral Walker, a student of the Army Senior Service College Fellowship Program of the Defense Acquisition University.

I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary; I can withdraw my consent at any time. By agreeing to participate in this study, I indicate that I understand the following:

1. The purpose of the research is to assess and project the experience and generational mix of our future Army acquisition workforce. Should I choose to participate in the survey, I am aware that my feedback will be consolidated with other participants and the outcome will be briefed to Army leadership allowing them to potentially take action on my recommendations.

2. If I choose to participate in this research, I will be asked to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire will include items relating to the multigenerational workforce. The questionnaire will take approximately 15–20 minutes to complete.

3. There is no incentive for participation.

4. All items in the questionnaire are important for analysis, and my data input will be more meaningful if all questions are answered. However, I do not have to answer any that I prefer not to answer. I can discontinue my participation at any time without penalty by exiting out of the survey.

5. This research will not expose me (you) to any discomfort or stress beyond that which might normally occur during a typical day. There are no right or wrong answers; thus, I (you) need not be stressed about finding a correct answer.

6. There are no known risks associated with my participating in this study.

7. Data collected will be handled in a confidential manner. The data collected will remain anonymous.

8. The purpose of this research has been explained and my participation is entirely voluntary.

9. I understand that the research entails no known risks and by completing this survey, I am agreeing to participate in this research.

END OF INFORMED CONSENT

I have read the informed consent and agree to participate?

Yes
☐
No
☐

2. What is your pay grade or equivalent level?

GS 14
☐
GS 59
☐
GS 1013
☐
GS 1415
☐
NB 12
☐
NB 35
☐
NH 12
☐
NH 34
☐
WG 15
☐
WG 610
☐
Other (please specify)
☐

3. Which organization do you work for?

Army Contracting
☐
RDECOM HQ
☐
AMC
☐
ARL

☐
ATEC
☐
AMRDEC
☐
ARDEC
☐
TARDEC
☐
CERDEC
☐
NATICK
☐
CECOM
☐
NVL
☐
ASAALT
☐
PM
☐
PEO
☐
Other (please specify)
☐

4. How many years of government service have you completed?

5. What occupation best describes what you do?

6. Which best describes your work role for the Army?

7. What is your age group?

8. Are you male or female?

9. What is your highest level of education?

10. My job directly supports critical missions for the warfighter…

11. My job supports critical objectives internal to my organization…

12. My job makes a difference in the Army acquisition mission…

13. I see myself working at my current organization until I retire…

14. How many years have you been in your current position?

15. I currently perform work in Army acquisition…

16. I like the work I am currently performing…

17. I feel that the Army acquisition engineering career field (CP16) is an excellent opportunity…

18. I plan to remain employed in the Army acquisition engineering (CP16) for…

19. What do you plan to do if you choose to leave the Army engineering (CP16) career field?

20. I expect to benefit in the transition from the Army with…

21. Which one of the following employment environments is more attractive?

22. What can the Army do to be a more attractive employer? List some improvement ideas (any ideas are welcome).

23. How long are you planning to work for the Army?

24. I am motivated to stay with the Army…

25. I held a job outside before coming to the government. If yes, how long?

26. If you held a job outside the Army, why did you leave the previous employer?

27. I was attracted to government work because…

28. I would leave the Army to work for…

29. I enjoy working in the current Army management structure…

30. I prefer a __________management structure.

31. I prefer to learn my work by…

32. I chose to work for the Army/Department of Defense primarily based on…

33. I feel good about what I do for the Army…

34. My career plan in the next five years is…