



Commissioned Corps of the US Public Health Service
Scientist Professional Advisory Committee

Career Development Subcommittee



Scientist Category Career Development Profile: Promotion Years 2019 and 2020

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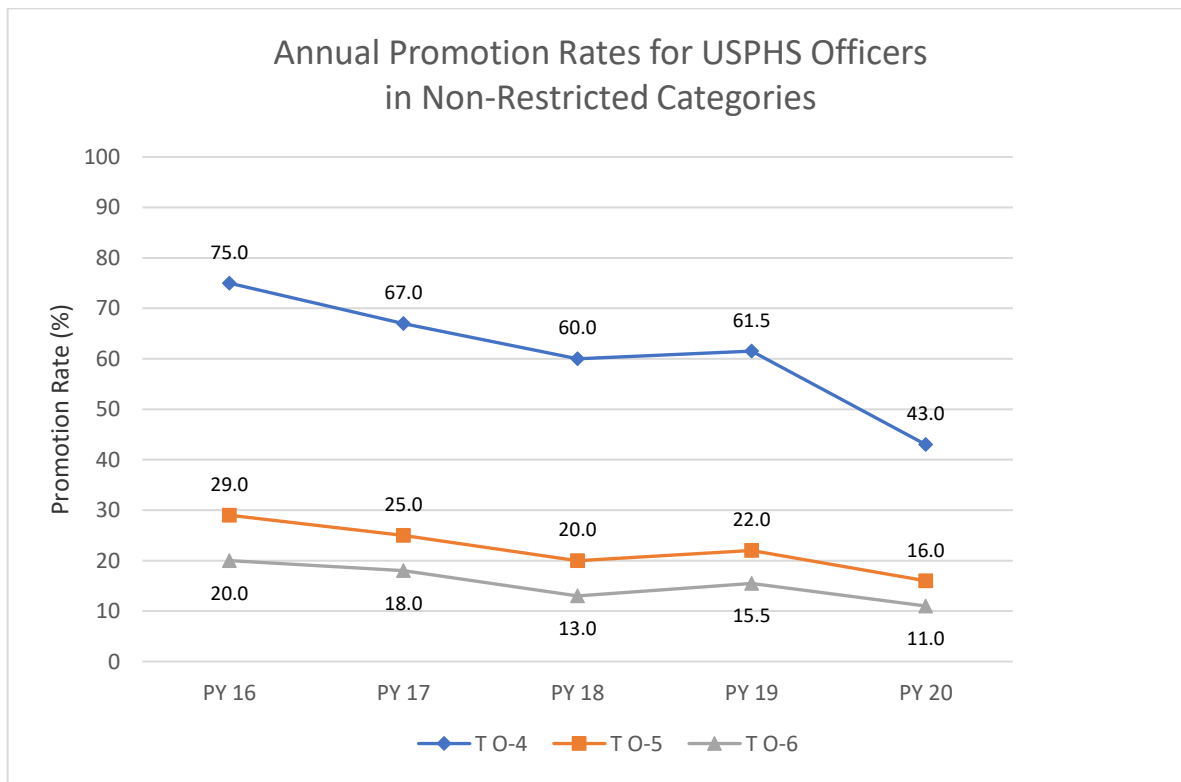
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Purpose

Promotion rates for U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) Commissioned Corps Officers eligible for temporary O-4 (T O-4), temporary O-5 (T O-5), and temporary O-6 (T O-6) promotion have substantially declined in recent years. This was especially evident in Promotion Year (PY) 20, when promotion rates for temporary ranks for non-restricted categories, which includes the Scientist category, dropped by approximately half compared to rates in PY 16 (see Figure below). For example, the promotion rate for T O-4 decreased from 75% in PY 16 to 43% in PY 20. Officers continue to have many questions surrounding the process of developing a promotion package and how packages are evaluated by promotion boards. To augment promotion resources available to officers, SciPAC launched the Promotion Panels Initiative (PPI) under the Career Development Subcommittee to generate data-driven insight into factors that may relate to success of promotion-eligible Scientist officers. This purpose of this report is to support continued efforts to identify and document critical aspects of professional progression.



Source: https://dcp.psc.gov/ccmis/promotions/PROMOTIONS_index_m.aspx

Methods

The data collected for this report were from USPHS Commissioned Corps Officers in the Scientist Category selected for temporary promotion in PY 19 and 20. All Scientist officers selected for promotion to T O-4 (n=21), T O-5 (n=14), and T O-6 (n=11) were contacted via email by a member of the PPI team in August 2020 asking the officer to complete an anonymous online survey (SurveyMonkey). The survey closed on October 10, 2020. The survey contained 37 questions and was primarily designed to be consistent with the 2020 Scientist Category Promotion Benchmarks. Topics included demographics, career progression and potential, performance rating and Reviewing Official Statements, awards, mentoring, deployments, professional contributions, and service to the USPHS Commissioned Corps. All officers were asked to provide answers consistent with information submitted in their promotion packages. The data collected from the surveys were analyzed in Microsoft Excel and Stata. All questions were optional, and denominators were adjusted to account for unanswered questions.

Results

Participation

The survey was completed by 17 of 21 (81%) officers promoted to T O-4, 12 of 14 (86%) officers promoted to T O-5, and 11 of 11 (100%) officers promoted to T O-6 in PY 2019 and PY 2020.

Number of Years in the Corps

Officers promoted to T O-4 reported an average of 3.6 years (range: 2–5 years) in the USPHS Commissioned Corps at the time of promotion. Officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 8.6 years (range: 8–10 years) in the USPHS Commissioned Corps at the time of promotion. Officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 13.5 (range: 10–15) in the USPHS Commissioned Corps at the time of promotion.

Number of Attempts Prior to Achieving Promotion

Overall, 53% of officers reported being promoted on their first attempt, but this varied by promoted rank (T O-4: 53%; T O-5: 42%; T O-6: 64%). Officers promoted to T O-4 reported an average of 1.5 attempts before achieving promotion (range: 1–3 attempts); officers promoted to T O-5 reported an average of 2.6 attempts before achieving promotion (range: 1–5 attempts); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 1.5 attempts before achieving promotion (range: 1–3 attempts).

Exceptional Proficiency Promotion (EPP)

No officers promoted to T O-4 reported receiving an EPP. One officer promoted to T O-5 and four officers promoted to T O-6 reported receiving an EPP.

Agency Affiliation

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers by Agency, stratified by promoted rank. Across ranks, the most commonly reported Agency among promoted officers was CDC.

Agency	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
BOP	1	(5.9)	0	-	0	-
CDC	13	(76.5)	11	(91.7)	6	(54.5)
DOD/DHE	1	(5.9)	0	-	2	(18.2)
FDA	0	-	0	-	2	(18.2)
NIH	0	-	1	(8.3)	0	-
OS	1	(5.9)	0	-	0	-
SAMHSA	1	(5.9)	0	-	1	(9.1)

Prior Military Service

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers with prior military service, stratified by promoted rank. Across ranks, most officers reported no prior military service.

Prior Military Service	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Yes	2	(11.8)	0	-	3	(27.3)
No	15	(88.2)	12	(100.0)	8	(72.7)

Discipline within Scientist Category

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers by discipline within the Scientist category at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank. Across ranks, most officers reported Epidemiology as their discipline.

Discipline ¹	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Epidemiology	13	(76.5)	10	(83.3)	6	(54.5)
Laboratory	0	-	1	(8.3)	0	-
Programmatic	2	(11.8)	1	(8.3)	1	(9.1)
Psychology	2	(11.8)	0	-	3	(27.3)
Other (Please Specify)	0	-	0	-	1	(9.1)

¹ Officers were given the option to choose from the following disciplines: Emergency Response or Preparedness, Epidemiology, Evaluation, Laboratory, Policy Development, Programmatic, Psychology, Regulatory, Research, or Other.

Billet Grade at Time of Promotion

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers by billet grade at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank. The majority of officers promoted to T O-4 reported serving in a T O-5 billet grade, while the majority of officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 reported serving in a T O-6 billet grade.

Billet Grade at Time of Promotion	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
T O-3	5	(29.4)	0	-	0	-
T O-4	1	(5.9)	0	-	0	-
T O-5	10	(58.8)	1	(8.3)	2	(18.2)
T O-6	1	(5.9)	11	(91.7)	9	(81.8)

Position Level of Leadership

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers by their position's level of leadership at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank. The majority of officers promoted to T O-4 reported that they served as staff members (94.1%), while the majority of those promoted to T O-5 reported that they served as either staff members (41.7%) or Team Leaders (33.3%), and the majority of those promoted to T O-6 reported that they served as either Team Leaders (36.4%) or Division Leaders (27.3%).

Position Leadership ¹	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Staff Member	16	(94.1)	5	(41.7)	1	(9.1)
Team Leader	1	(5.9)	4	(33.3)	4	(36.4)
Branch Leader	0	-	1	(8.3)	1	(9.1)
Division Leader	0	-	0	-	3	(27.3)
Center/Bureau Leader	0	-	0	-	1	(9.1)
Other Leadership ²	0	-	2	(16.7)	1	(9.1)

¹This factor was assessed by the following question: Prior to achieving promotion, how would you best describe your position's level of leadership?

²Officers who selected "Other Leadership" reported serving as Associate Director for Science (Division Senior Leadership), Director, and Scientific Coordinator of a national program.

Position Entails Publishing Research/Scientific-Based Articles

The table below shows the number and percentage of promoted officers reporting that their position at the time of promotion entailed publishing research or scientific-based articles, stratified by promoted rank.

Publishing	Promoted Rank					
	T O-4		T O-5		T O-6	
	n	(%)	n	(%)	n	(%)
Yes ¹	12	(70.6)	12	(100.0)	6	(54.5)
No	5	(29.4)	0	-	5	(45.5)

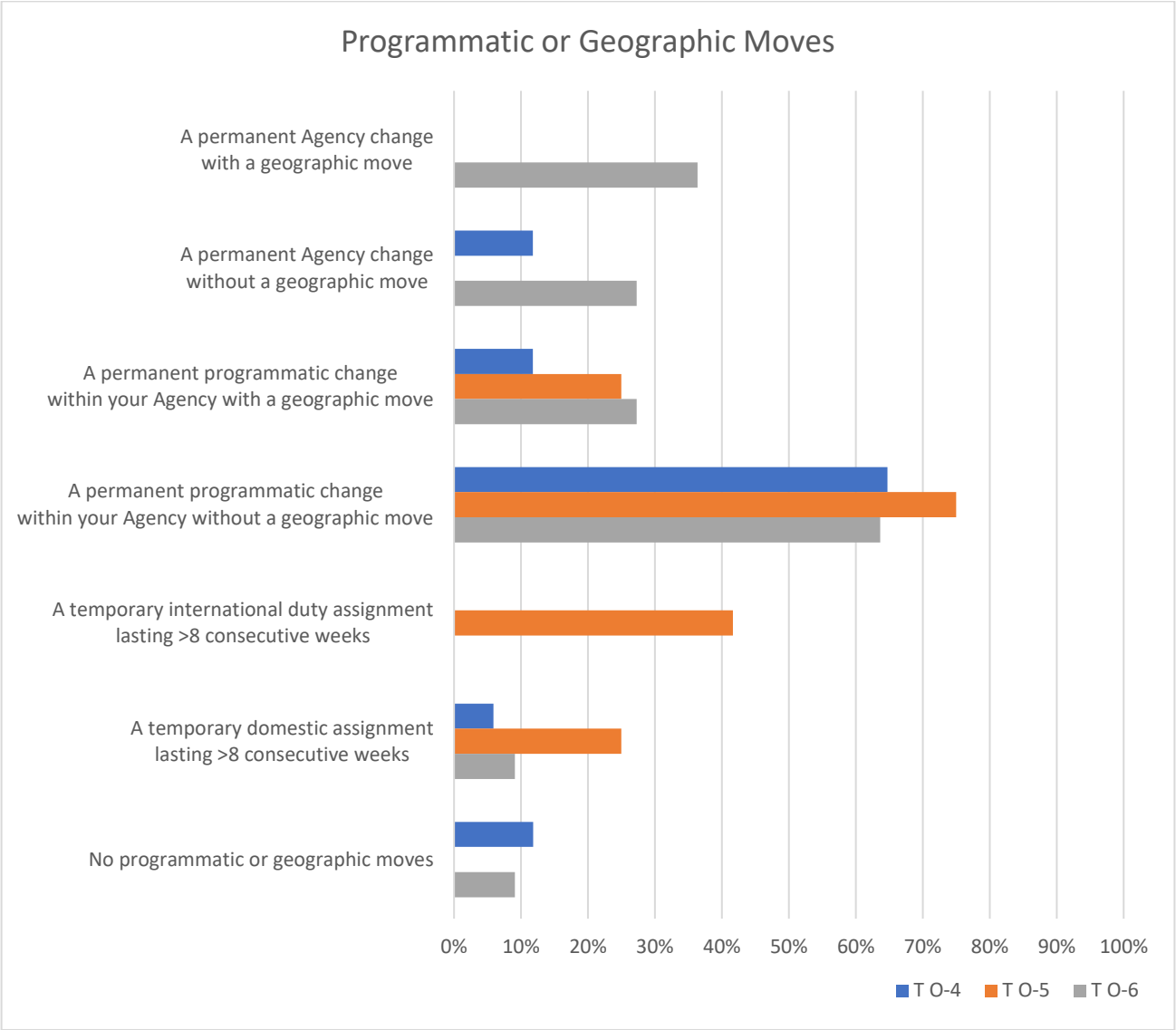
¹ Twenty-nine of 30 officers who indicated a role of publishing research/scientific based articles as part of their position reported CDC as their affiliated agency.

COER Scores

All officers promoted reported receiving either mostly 7s (42.5%) or all 7s (57.5%) on their COER. A higher percentage of officers promoted to T O-5 and T O-6 reported receiving all 7s on their COER (80% and 82%, respectively) compared to officers promoted to T O-4 (29%).

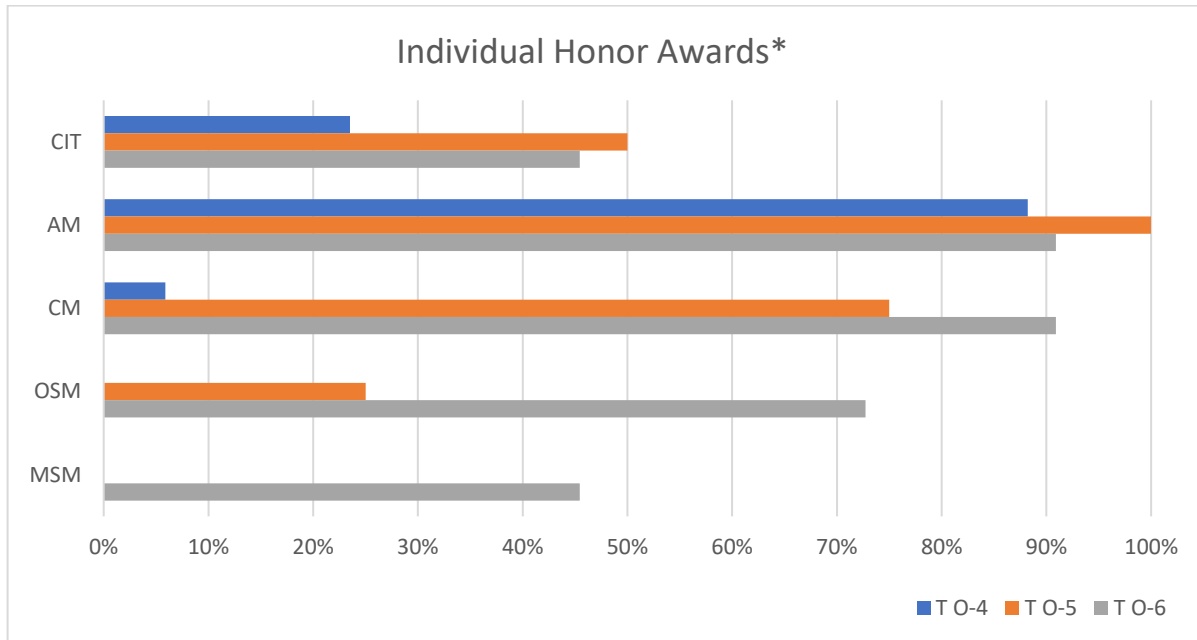
Programmatic or Geographic Moves

Officers were asked to indicate if they had made any of the following programmatic or geographic transfers at the time of promotion. Multiple options could be selected. The following figure shows the percentage of officers reporting each option, stratified by promoted rank.



Individual Honor Awards

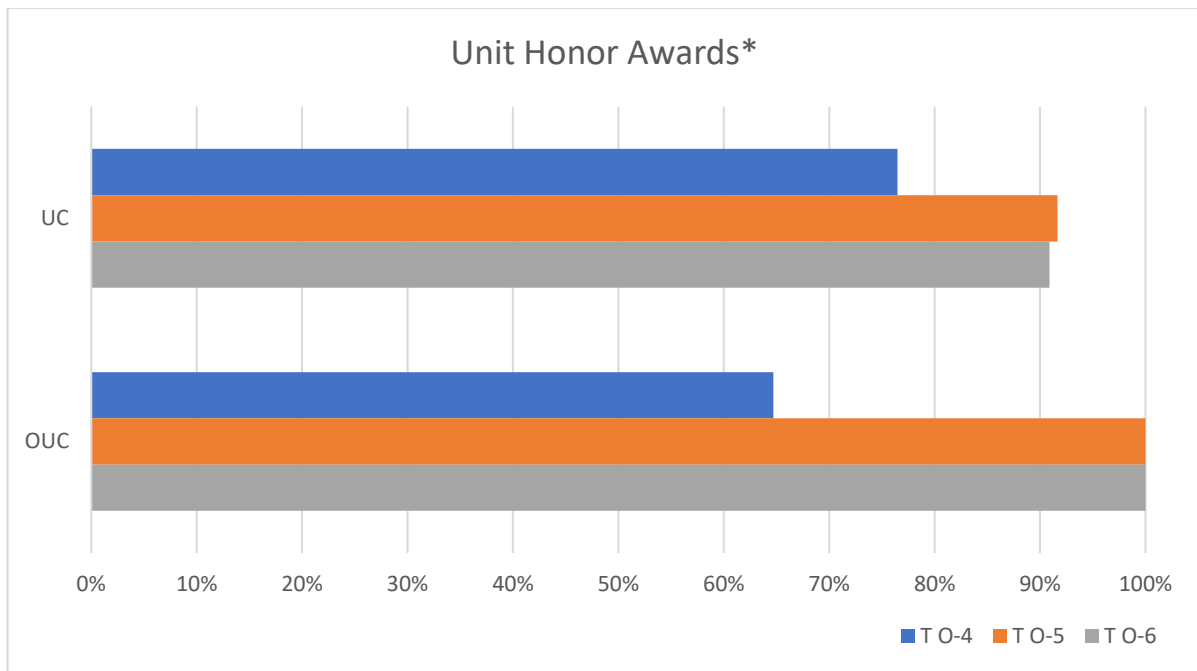
The following figure shows the percentage of officers who reported they had received each type of USPHS individual honor awards at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank.



* PHS Citation (CIT), Achievement Medal (AM), Commendation Medal (CM), Outstanding Service Medal (OSM), Meritorious Service Medal (MSM)

Unit Honor Awards

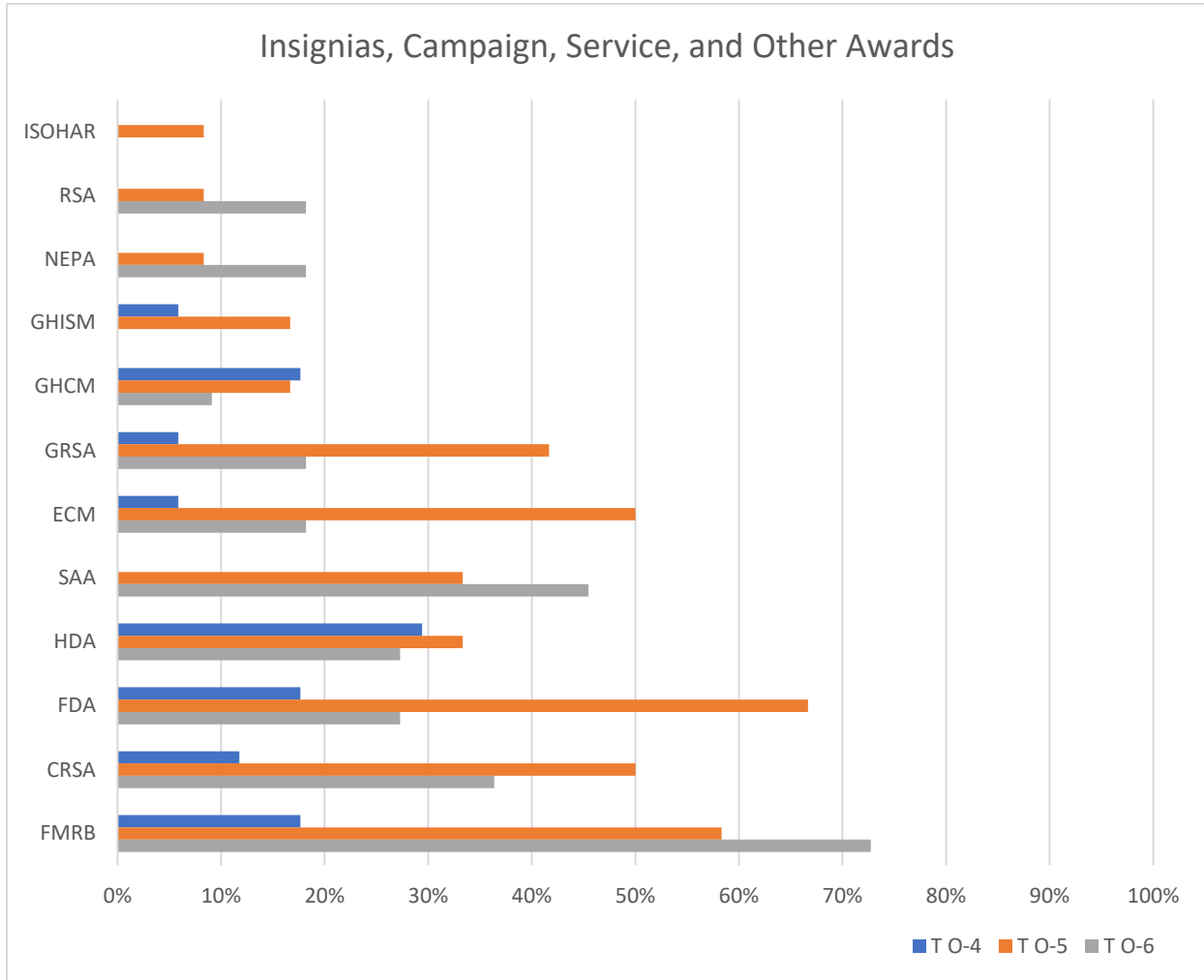
The following figure shows the percentage of officers who reported they had received the following USPHS unit honor awards at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank.



* Unit Commendation (UC), Outstanding Unit Citation (OUC)

Insignias, Campaign, Service, and Other Awards

The following figure shows the percentage of officers who reported they had received the following insignias, badges, campaign awards, service awards, or other specified awards at the time of promotion, stratified by promoted rank.

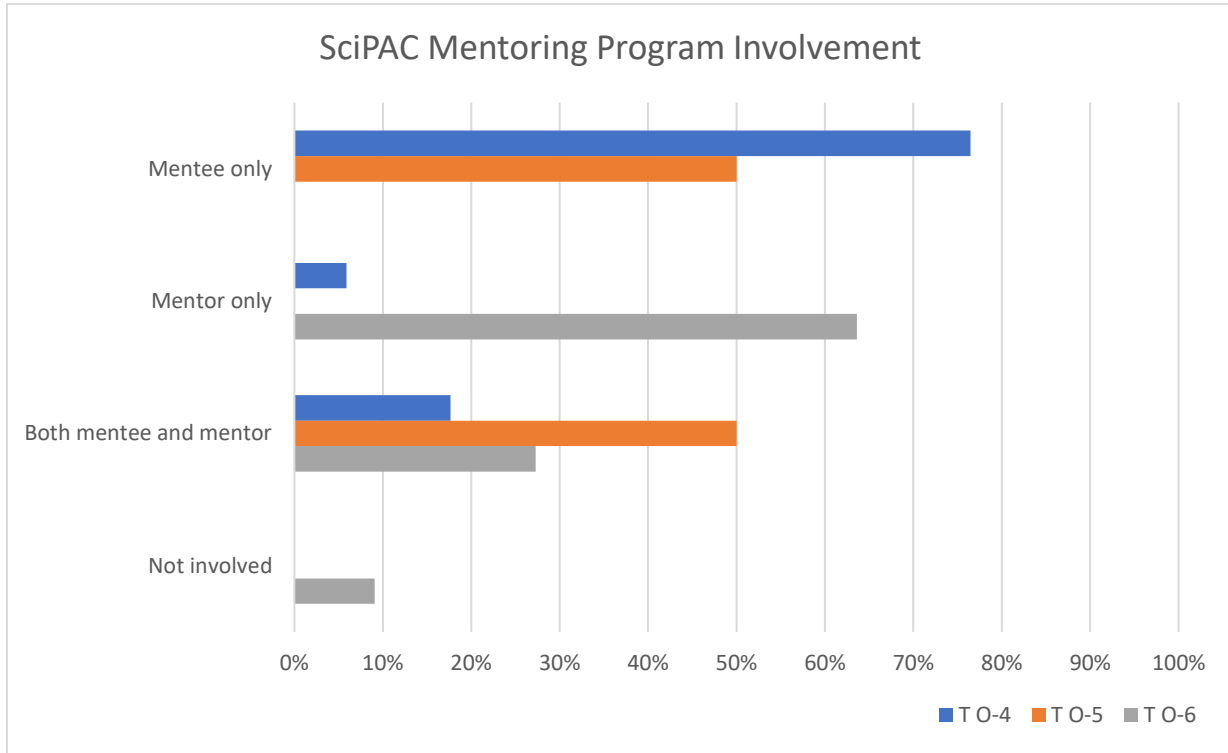


Abbreviations: Isolated Hardship Award (ISOHAR), Response Service Award (RSA), National Emergency Preparedness Award (NEPA), Global Health Initiatives Service Medal (GHISM), Global Health Campaign Medal (GHCM), Global Response Service Award (GRSA), Ebola Campaign Medal (ECM), Special Assignment Award (SAA), Hazardous Duty Award (HDA), Foreign Duty Award (FDA), Crisis Response Service Award (CRSA), Field Medical Readiness Badge (FMRB)

Officers were asked to describe any additional information regarding awards they believed pertinent to their promotion application. Some officers reported that they had received multiple Agency and/or DOD awards. Others mentioned specific awards of significance including: Army Commendation Medal, Navy Marine Corps Commendation Medal, Joint Services Meritorious Unit Award, Navy/Marine Achievement Medal, State Department Award, SciPAC Junior Officer of the Year, JOAG Junior Officer of the Year Award, Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee Junior Officer of the Year Award, BCOAG award, SOAGDAG award, Atlanta COA Officer of the Year, AMSUS awards, NIH Merit Awards, and Fleet Marine Force Qualified Officer.

Level of Involvement in the Official Scientist Category Officer Mentoring Program

Officers were asked to describe their level of involvement with the SciPAC Mentoring Subcommittee’s mentoring program at the time of promotion. The following figure shows the percentage of officers reporting each option, stratified by promoted rank.



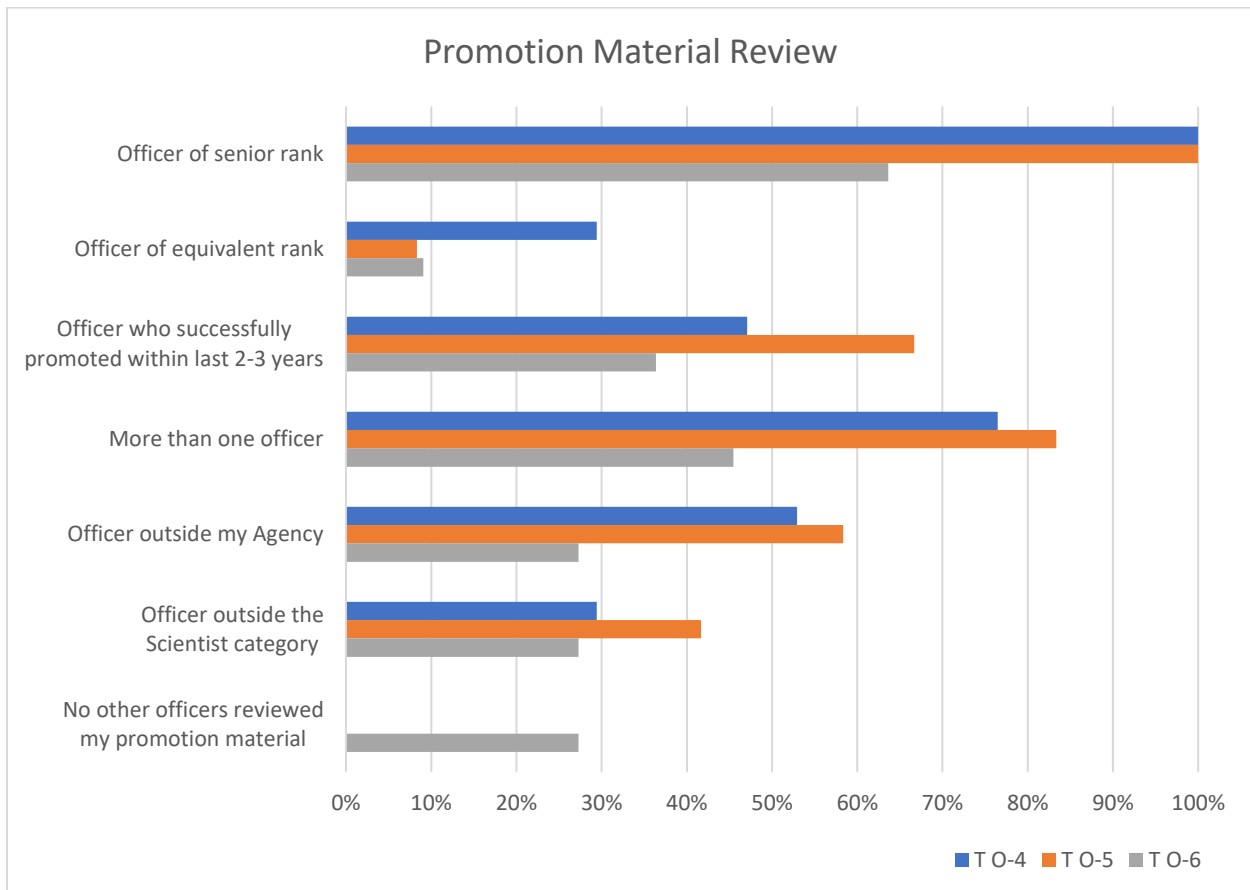
Level of Participation in Writing Reviewing Official Statement (ROS)

The majority of officers promoted to T O-4, T O-5, and T O-6 reported providing a draft ROS to their Reviewing Official (RO) who only made minor adjustments/edits before finalizing (85% overall). Six of the forty officers who participated (15%) reported providing a draft ROS to their RO who made significant changes/edits before finalizing.

Review of Promotion Material Prior to Submission

Overall, 70% of promoted officers reported that their CV was reviewed through the SciPAC Career Development Subcommittee CV review program before submission. A higher percentage of officers promoted to T O-4 (88%) and T O-5 (83%) reporting using this service compared to officers promoted to T O-6 (27%).

Officers were also asked who reviewed their promotion material prior to submission and were prompted to select those mentoring relationships which they believe made a significant impact on their promotion documentation. Multiple options could be selected. The following figure shows the percentage of officers reporting each option, stratified by promoted rank.



USPHS Deployments

Twenty-eight of forty officers (70%) promoted to T O-4, T O-5, and T O-6 reported at least one HHS managed USPHS deployment, with a range of 1-12 deployments. Officers promoted to T O-4 reported a median of 1 USPHS deployment (range: 0-2 deployments); officers promoted to T O-5 reported a median of 1.5 USPHS deployments (range: 0-12 deployments); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 2 USPHS deployments (range: 0-9 deployments).

Other Deployments (Non-USPHS/Agency Deployments)

Thirty-three of forty officers (83%) promoted to T O-4, T O-5, and T O-6 reported at least one other non-USPHS deployment, with a range of 1 to 31 deployments. Officers promoted to T O-4 reported a median of 2 non-USPHS deployments (range: 0-19 deployments); officers promoted to T O-5 reported a median of 4.5 non-USPHS deployments (range: 0-40 deployments); and officers promoted to T O-6 reported an average of 5 non-USPHS deployments (range: 0-31 deployments). Twenty-eight out of thirty officers (93%) who indicated CDC as their affiliated Agency reported a non-USPHS deployment. All three officers who indicated DOD and all two officers who indicated FDA as their affiliated Agency reported a non-USPHS deployment. None of the officers who indicated BOP, NIH, OS, or SAMHSA as their affiliated Agency reported a non-USPHS deployment.

Response Teams

Six of seventeen (35%) officers promoted to T O-4 reported serving on a Tier 1 or Tier 2 response team. Reported teams included Applied Public Health Team (APHT), Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), Regional Incident Support Team (RIST), and Services Access Team (SAT). One of those officers (17%) reported having a leadership role on the Tier 1/Tier 2 response team. Eight officers (47%) promoted to T O-4 reported serving on a Tier 3 response roster, and three officers (18%) reported being mission critical.

Ten of eleven (91%) officers who were promoted to T O-5 reported serving on a Tier 1 or Tier 2 response team. Reported teams included APHT, Mental Health Team (MHT), RDF, RIST, and SAT. Two of those officers (20%) reported having a leadership role on the Tier 1/Tier 2 response team. One officer (9%) promoted to T O-5 reported serving on a Tier 3 response roster.

Eight of eleven (73%) officers promoted to T O-6 reported serving on a Tier 1 or Tier 2 response team. Reported teams included APHT, MHT, RDF, RIST, and SAT. Three of those officers (38%) reported having a leadership role on the Tier 1/Tier 2 response team. Two officers (18%) promoted to T O-6 reported serving on a Tier 3 response roster and one officer (9%) reported being mission critical.

Participation in USPHS Advisory Committees/Groups

Almost all (98%) officers promoted to either T O-4, T O-5, T O-6 reported participation in at least one advisory committee or group in the years leading up to promotion. Most officers reported participation in multiple professional groups. Of the 40 officers who responded to the survey, 38 (95%) reported participating in SciPAC, 17 (43%) in Junior Officer Advisory Group (JOAG), and 14 (35%) in Commissioned Officers Association of the USPHS (COA). These were the most frequently cited groups. Other groups included PsyPAG (20%), Prevention through Active Community Engagement (PACE) (15%), Black Commissioned Officers Advisory Group (BCOAG) (13%), Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) (10%), Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity Advisory Group (SOAGDAG) (10%), PAC Chairs Group (10%), PHS Athletics (10%), Commissioned Corps Women's Issues Advisory Board (CCWIAB) (5%), Hispanic Officers Advisory Committee (HOAC) (5%), Smoking Cessation (3%), PHS

Ensemble (3%), Minority Officers Liaison Council (MOLC) (3%), and CPO Group (3%).

Most officers (83%) described having leadership roles within their affiliated professional groups. Voting membership and leadership roles increased with rank.

PHS Scientific and Training Symposium Attendance

Twenty-four of forty (60%) officers promoted to either T O-4, T O-5, T O-6 reported attending at least one PHS Scientific and Training Symposium. A higher percentage of officers promoted to T O-5 (83%) and T O-6 (73%) reported attending compared to officers promoted to T O-4 (35%). Most officers who attended also noted serving in an active role for the symposium. Examples include presenting material, reviewing abstracts, planning for Category Day, organizing trainings, or organizing events.

Continuing Education Standards

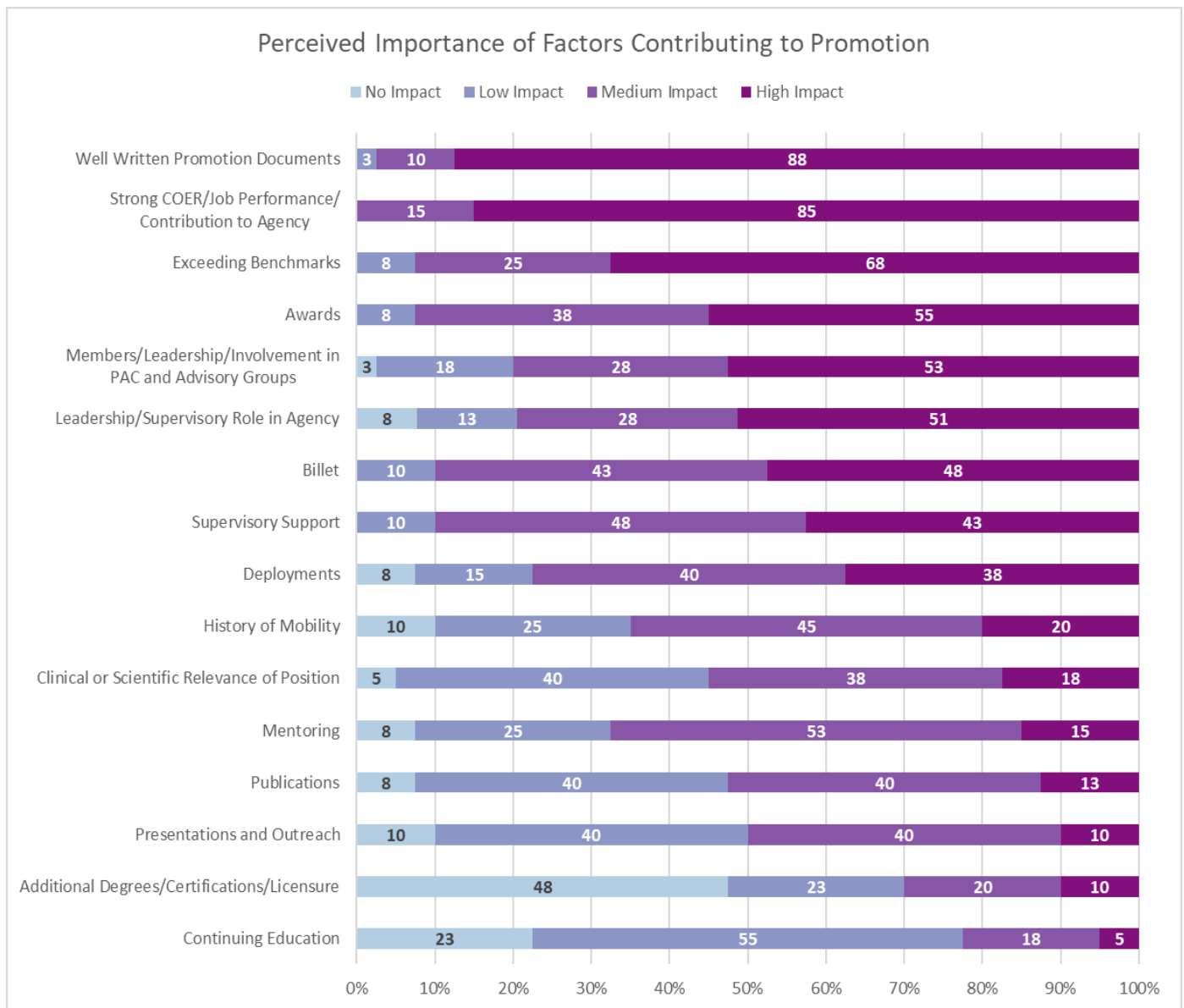
All officers promoted to T O-4, T O-5 and T O-6 reported meeting the continuing education standards as described in the benchmarks.

Additional Certifications or Educational Degrees Beyond the Commissioning Degree

Eleven of forty (28%) officers promoted to T O-4, T O-5, and T-O6 reported additional certifications or educational degrees beyond the commissioning degree. Reported certifications or degrees included Master's degree, Epidemic Intelligence Service Fellowship, COR certification, Project Management certification, Public Health Readiness Certificate, and Hazardous Materials certification.

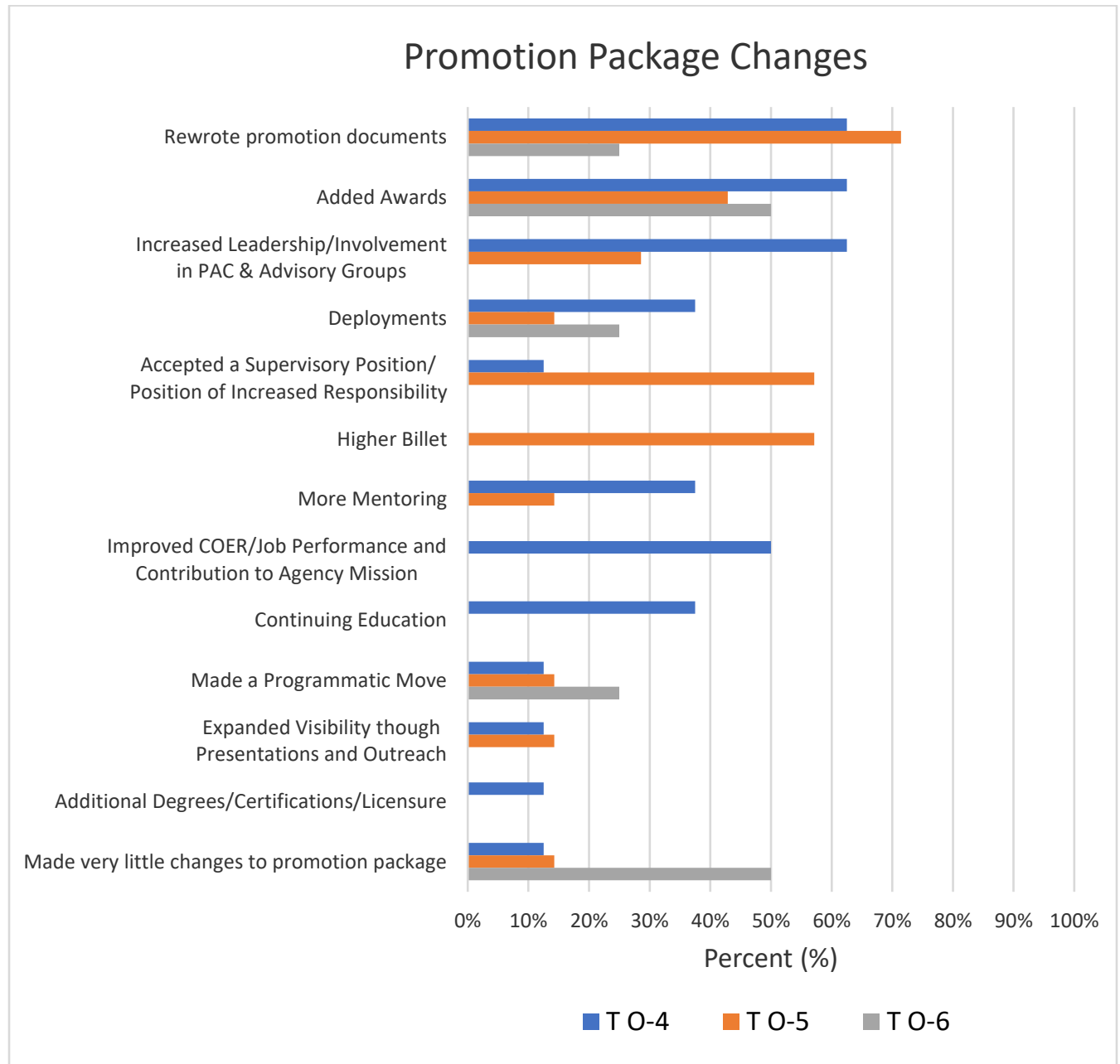
Perceived Importance of Factors Contributing to Promotion

Officers were prompted to score the following factors according to their perceived importance in achieving promotion (response options: No Impact, Low Impact, Medium Impact, High Impact). They were prompted to select “No Impact” for factors that were perceived as not applicable or that they felt did not play an important role in promotion, or “High Impact” if they felt the factor represented one of their strengths and was critical for their promotion. The following figure shows the overall percentage of officers reporting each level of perceived importance for each factor. Factors are sorted by the percentage reporting “High Impact.”



Changes Made to Promotion Package If Not Successful on First Attempt

Officers who were not promoted on their first attempt (n=19) were asked to indicate where they made significant changes that they believe impacted their ability to get promoted. Officers were given the option to choose more than one answer. The following figure shows the percentage of officers who selected each option, stratified by promoted rank.



Note: This question only applied to officers who were promoted on at least one subsequent attempt. Denominators were adjusted when calculating percentages.

Additional Comments

Finally, officers were provided an opportunity to expand on their answers or describe other factors which they believed may have impacted their promotion. Officers emphasized early preparation of documents, having materials reviewed early by mentors across categories and agencies, demonstrating progressively increasing levels of responsibility/leadership in agency and PAC roles, meeting or exceeding benchmarks, and well-written and organized promotion documents as key factors contributing to promotion success.

Summary of Results

Officers who were successfully promoted in PY 19 and PY 20 exhibited strong job performance, exceptional leadership skills, and dedication to the Commissioned Corps. Many officers promoted in PY 19 and PY 20 exceeded the Scientist Category Promotion Benchmarks associated with the rank they were trying to achieve. For example, most officers promoted to T O-4 reported serving in positions with an O-5 billet and, similarly, most officers promoted to T O-5 reported being in an O-6 billet.

Well-written promotion documents were ranked most often by officers as having “high impact” on achieving promotion success. This was followed by a strong COER/job performance/contribution to the agency’s mission, exceeding benchmarks, awards, membership/leadership/involvement in PAC and advisory groups, and leadership/supervisory role in Agency. Continuing education, additional degrees/certifications/licensure, presentations and outreach, and publications were the categories perceived as least likely to have a “high impact” on achieving promotion success.

Among officers who had at least one unsuccessful promotion attempt, rewriting promotion documents was selected most often as the change made to their promotion package that had a critical impact on their ability to get promoted on subsequent attempts. This was followed by adding awards, increasing leadership/involvement in PAC and advisory groups, deployments, and accepting a supervisory position or a position of increased responsibility.

Limitations

This report only includes information from Scientist officers selected for temporary promotion in PY 2019 and PY 2020 who responded to the survey. Scientist officers not selected for promotion were ineligible for the survey. As a result, no correlational conclusions should be made from the data presented. Promoted officers who did not participate in the survey may possess different career development characteristics from officers who responded to the survey, which may have influenced the findings in this report. Finally, the findings presented in this report were self-reported by the promoted officers and cannot be validated.

Concluding Remarks

The Career Development Subcommittee continues to support the professional development and career progression of Scientist Category officers. The PPI team is tasked with identifying factors that may relate to success of promotion-eligible officers and is proud to provide this resource to our fellow officers. We remind its readers that the limitations of this report should be carefully considered before drawing conclusions about the findings. Future iterations of this report should consider ways to streamline data collection and reporting, and improve the information's accuracy, as well as ways to publicize the findings.

Acknowledgements

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