

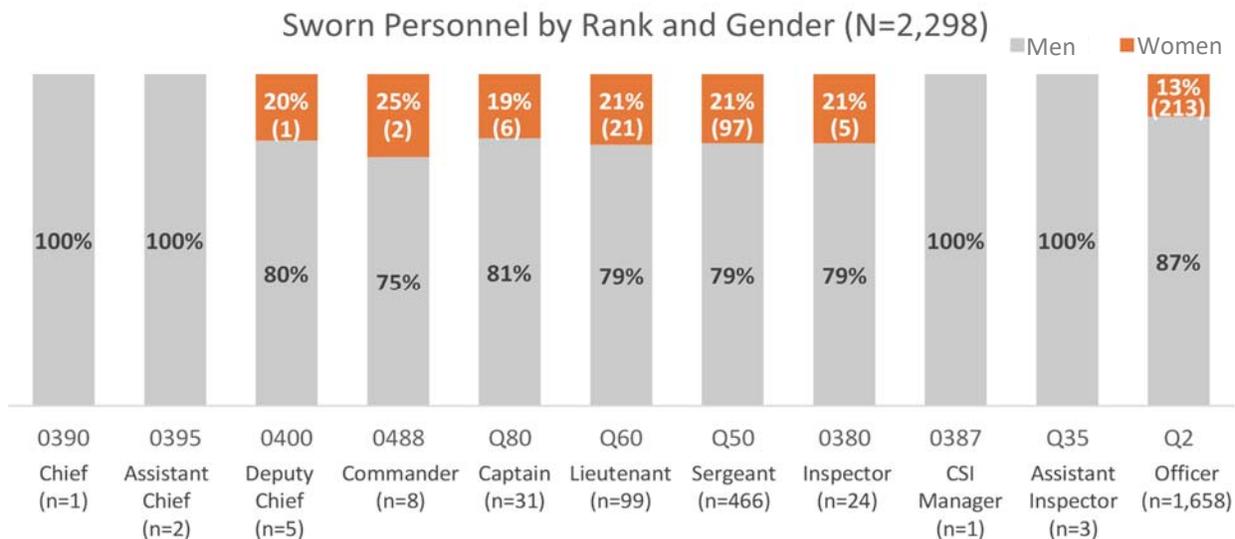


Pathways to Promotion: A Gender Analysis of the San Francisco Police Department *Executive Summary*

The San Francisco Department on the Status of Women conducted a gender analysis of the opportunities and barriers for women’s advancement in the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) through extensive analysis of internal data, focus groups and interviews with sworn women, and a review of additional research and literature. The objective of this gender analysis was to help ensure sworn women have equal opportunity and access to promotion and advancement opportunities as their male peers. The data and findings reflect a point in time and serve to surface ongoing issues and identify areas where gender equity has improved. Research finds that women are well suited to police work, better able to neutralize escalating situations, and less likely to use excessive force than men.¹ Increasing women’s representation in hiring, patrol, and leadership is not only the right thing to do for gender equity but also can improve the work of the SFPD.

Main Findings

Women made up 15% (345) of the SFPD’s nearly 2,300 sworn personnel in May 2018, comparable with other police departments across the state. White women comprised about half of all sworn women, while about 20% were Latinx women, 13% were black women, and 10% were Asian women. Notably, Asian women are above parity with their participation in the law enforcement labor force, making up 2% of sworn members, but not well represented considering they are 19% of the overall San Francisco population.



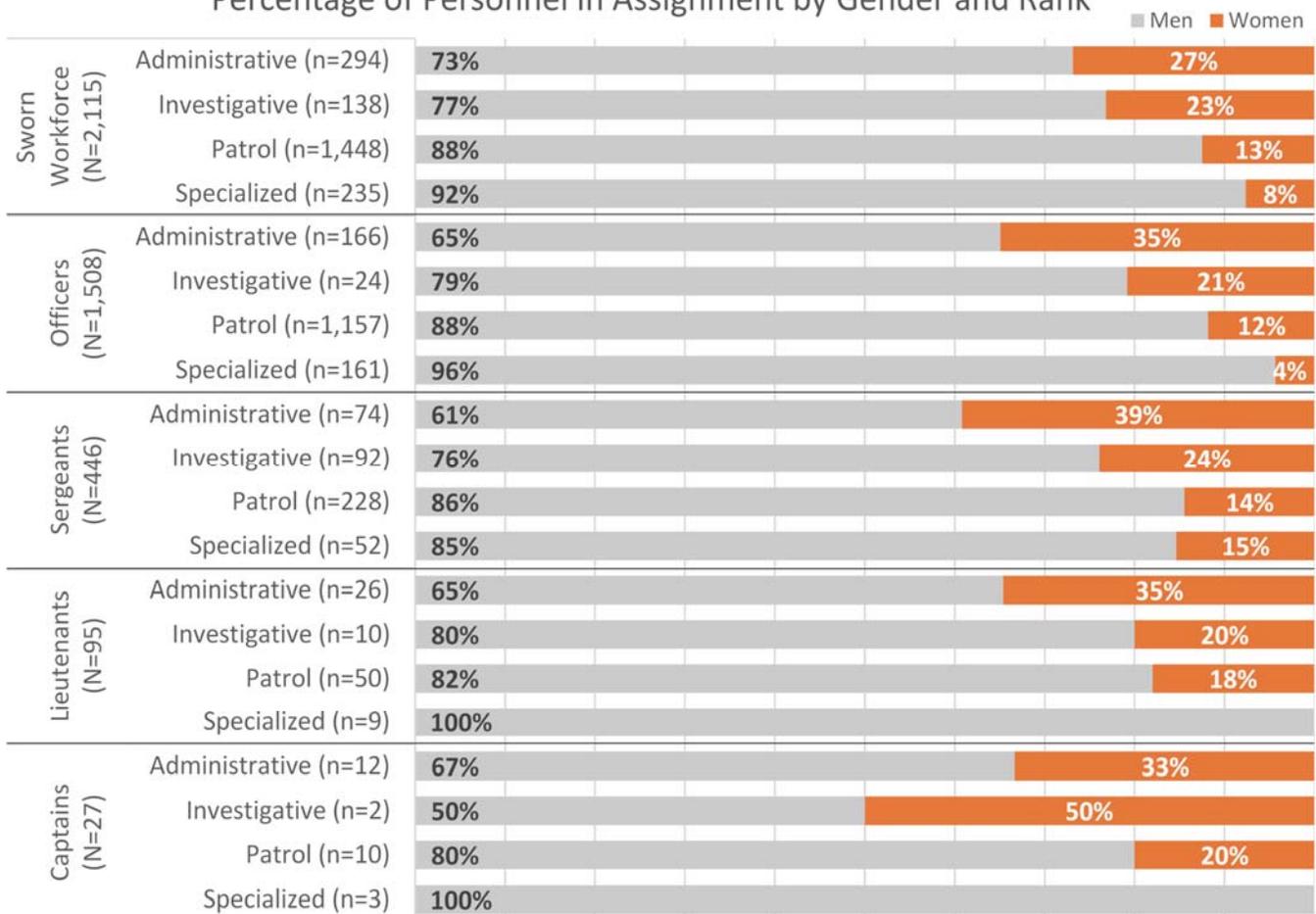
Source: San Francisco Police Department, May 2018.

¹ Joseph Balkin, “Why Policemen Don’t Like Policewomen,” *Journal of Police Science & Administration*, (1988), and Dr. Kim Lonsway, Margaret Moore, Chief Penny Harrington, Eleanor Smeal and Katherine Spillar, “Men, Women, And Police Excessive Force: A Tale of Two Genders,” *National Center for Women & Policing* (2002).

Sworn women have been advancing through the ranks of the SFPD. Women comprised 13% of Officers and around 20% of the next highest ranks of Sergeant, Lieutenant, and Captain. Two out of the eight Commanders were women and one out of the eight executive positions of Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief, and Chief was held by a woman. However, the higher ranks had fewer women of color. White women filled seven out of the nine positions held by women from the rank of Captain and above, while black women held the other two.

While women were represented across the ranks at or above their overall proportion in the SFPD workforce, sworn women identified unit assignments as a major barrier in developing skills and gaining experience that created a pathway to leadership positions. They reported that where women work in the SFPD often aligned with gender stereotypes and attitudes that women belong behind a desk rather than on the street. Grouping units by primary function and skills, assignments fell into four categories: administrative, investigative, patrol, and specialized. Women more often worked in administrative or investigative assignments. Meanwhile, men were assigned to patrol or specialized units in far greater numbers than women. These disparities held true for nearly every category at every rank. Even within the 13% of women in patrol units, many sworn women felt that they were more likely to be asked to serve in administrative roles at the station. Meanwhile, some sworn women believe that getting into specialized units is nearly impossible.

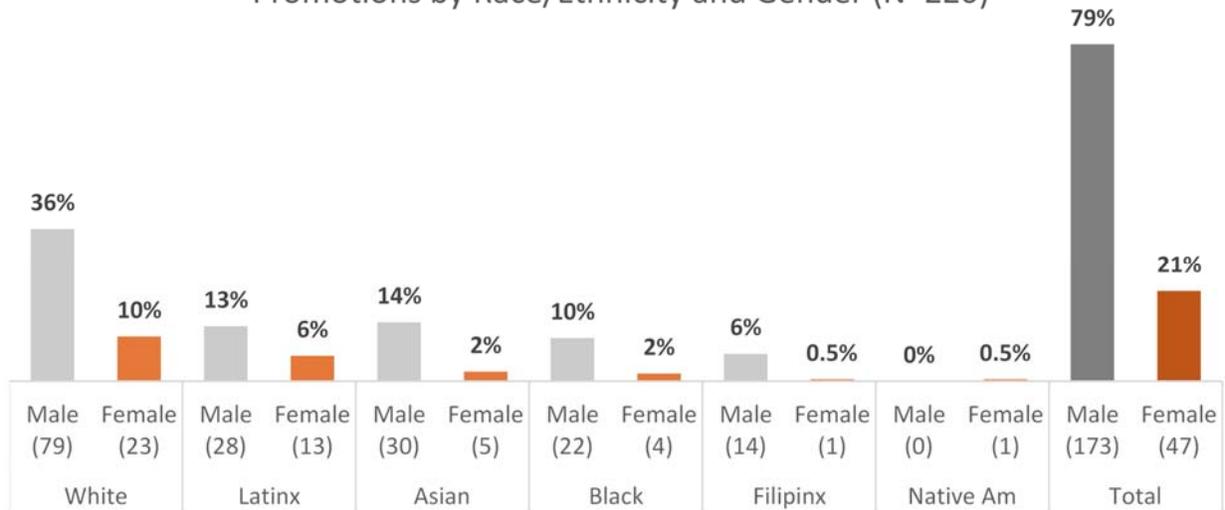
Percentage of Personnel in Assignment by Gender and Rank



Source: San Francisco Police Department, May 2018.

Overall, sworn women were promoted at rates proportionate to their availability in the workforce in recent years. Out of all sworn women, 14% were promoted compared to 9% of sworn men over the past three years. Across nearly every rank, women had high success rates for promotion. This was especially visible in 2017, when more than half of those promoted were people of color and more than one-quarter were women. These promotions were evidence of the SFPD’s commitment to recruitment and retention strategies that include diverse groups, as well as the quality of the diverse candidates within the sworn workforce.

Promotions by Race/Ethnicity and Gender (N=220)

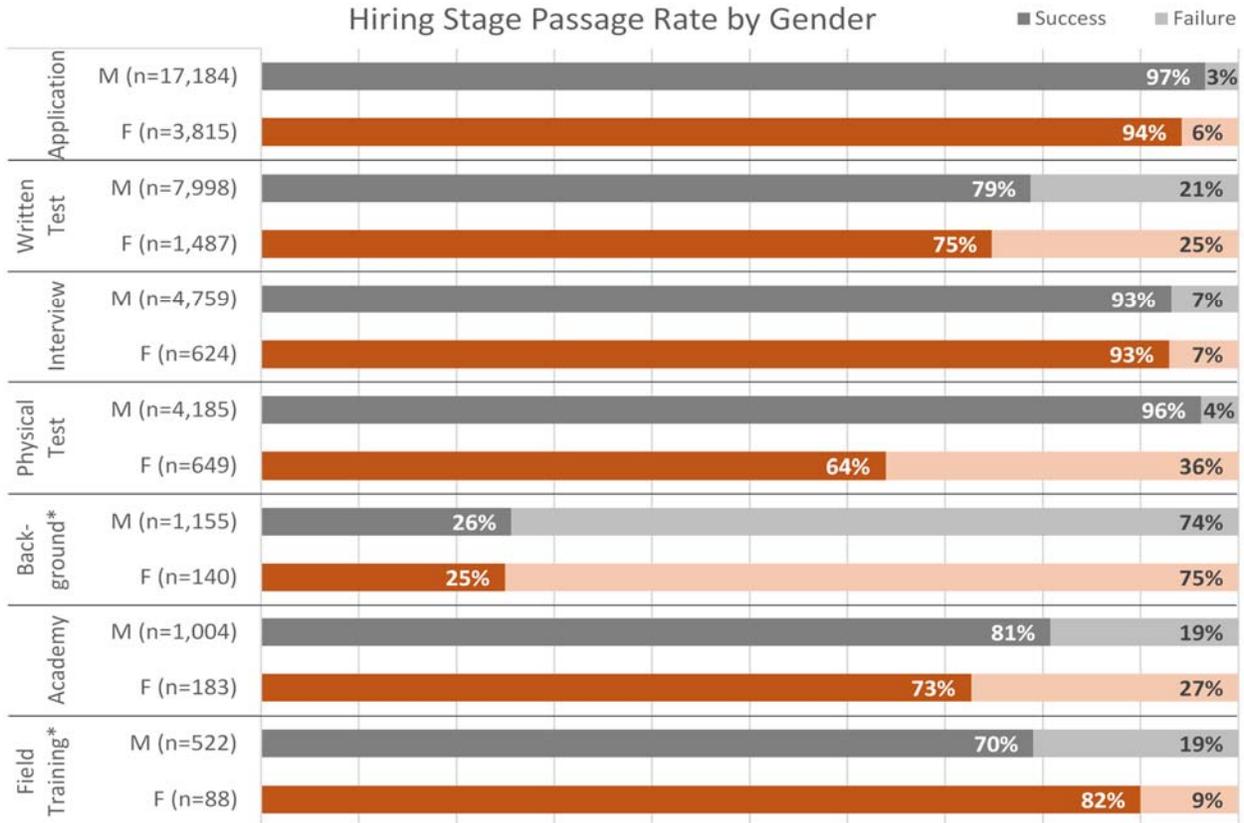


Source: San Francisco Police Department, 2015-2017.

However, the disparities in assignment and the larger proportion of women in administrative units continued through promotions. Not only were a greater proportion of women than men assigned to administrative units upon promotion, their percentages increased in subsequent assignments while the percentages remained substantially the same for sworn men. For specialized assignments, the reverse was true.

The challenge of increasing the number of women throughout the ranks at SFPD begins at the hiring stage, where only 17% of applicants were women. This falls slightly below the availability of women in the relevant labor pool (21%), however it is much less than their representation in the San Francisco population (49%). Slightly fewer women passed the application and written test than men. The physical test had the largest gender gap, with nearly all men successfully passing the test compared to less than two-thirds of women. Women also struggled more than men in the Academy where 73% of women successfully completed training compared to 81% of men. A major challenge for women was the Emergency Vehicle Operations Course, which was the reason nearly one-third of female recruits did not complete the Academy. However, one bright spot was that for women who made it through the Academy, they completed Field Training at greater rates than men.

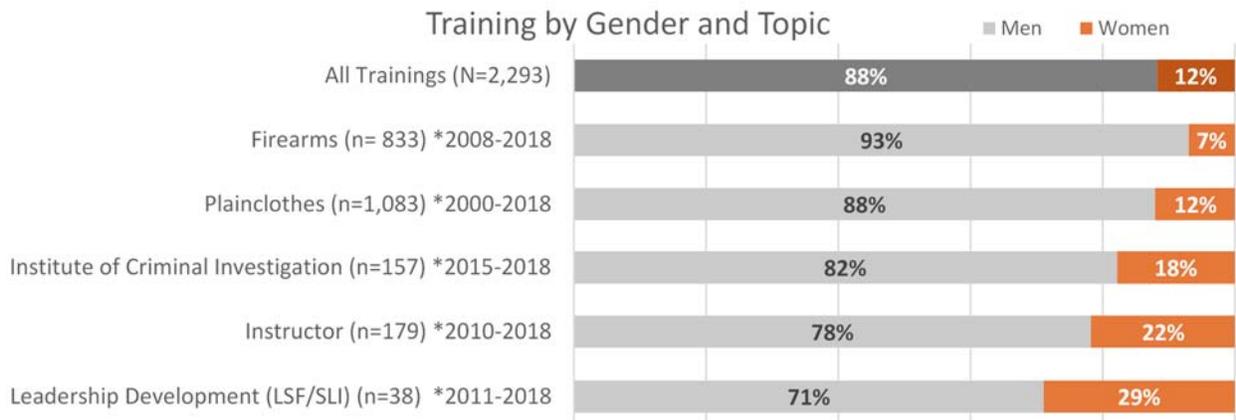
SFPD has taken some steps to discover and address implicit gender bias in its selection process. Actions such as changing the physical ability test by replacing the trigger pull with a grip strength test shift the focus to testing ability rather than task specific experience. Following changes to the selection process, the Department of Human Resources found that applicant pass rates for women have increased since 2013.



Source: San Francisco Police Department, San Francisco Department of Human Resources, 2012-2018.

*Note: Background data from May 2016-December 2017, Field Training data from 2015-2018.

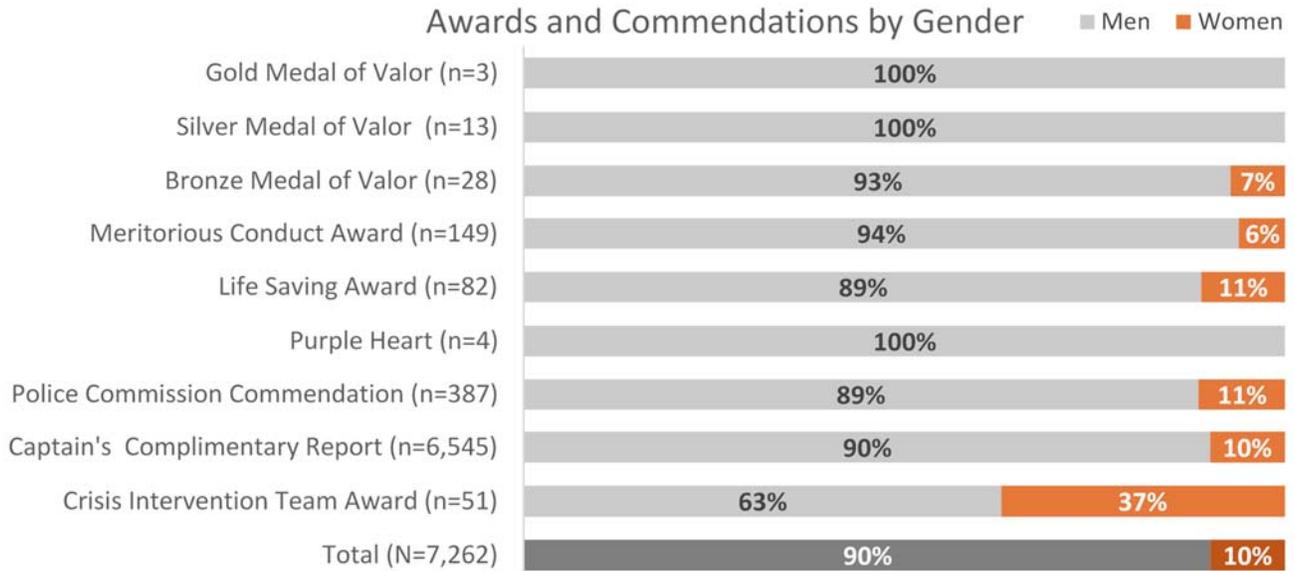
Nevertheless, sworn women reported disparities in the treatment of women after hire. The interplay between assignment and opportunity for sworn women was further expressed through training and commendation inequities. While the SFPD made leadership development training particularly accessible to sworn women, sworn women made up just 12% of participants in plainclothes trainings and 7% of those in firearms, which are most relevant for patrol and specialized unit assignments. Only 58 sworn women completed firearms trainings in the past decade, compared to 775 sworn men. Sworn women reported a culture at certain stations that discouraged participation in training and a lack of transparency and communication about available training opportunities.



Source: San Francisco Police Department, 2000-2018.

Those who were on administrative assignments were sometimes denied requested training because it was perceived they did not need it, and those on patrol were denied training due to staffing constraints.

Patrol and specialized unit assignments are also where acts of bravery are more commonly called for, resulting in recognition in the form of awards and commendations. Only one out of ten commendations and awards in the past few years went to women and no women received the highest levels of awards (Gold and Silver Medals of Valor). White women received more than half of the recognitions awarded to sworn women, and two-thirds of the 44 Police Commission Commendations sworn women received. Similarly, white men also received more than half of all recognitions awarded to sworn men and even more so among the higher-level awards. While the SFPD includes many people in the review process for awards and commendations, sworn women reported a lack of consistency in what acts are deemed worthy of recognition and a tendency toward valuing physical abilities and conduct traditionally associated with masculine behavior. The newly created Crisis Intervention Team awards were welcomed by sworn women, yet many felt they were not regarded as highly as other types of recognition.



Source: San Francisco Police Department, 2015-2017.

Data on discrimination complaints revealed more race discrimination complaints than gender-based complaints. This was the case for both sworn men and sworn women. On the whole, a greater number of sworn women (8) than men (5) reported sexual harassment, hostile work environment, and gender discrimination. Veteran sworn women from all backgrounds had stories of being ignored, personal property vandalism, and having their qualifications questioned for reasons they attributed to being female police officers. On the other hand, several sworn women with less tenure had not experienced this type of behavior, and nearly all sworn women agreed that the culture towards women was improving.

Equal Employment Opportunity Complaints by Gender (N=54)



Source: San Francisco Police Department, 2015-2017.

Overall, sworn women who participated in the focus groups and interviews were highly motivated to serve their community, do their job to the best of their abilities, and advance to leadership positions. They also expressed frustration at perceived double standards when it came to expectations of sworn women compared to men. Sworn women felt they had to prove themselves again and again to be taken seriously and afforded the same opportunities as sworn men. Some reported that doors to opportunities were closed to them no matter how hard they worked. While they acknowledged that the SFPD had improved for women in many ways, they believe opportunities exist for greater equity in hiring, assignments, training, recognition, and senior leadership. Eliminating gender bias and stereotypes in the SFPD can also have broader impacts from increasing the recruitment of diverse candidates to an improved response to violence against women and reducing incidents of excessive force. Efforts to advance gender equity are proven to create a more just and equitable society for all.

Recommendations

I. Establish formal and informal means of support and guidance for female officers.

Many sworn women, especially new officers, highlighted mentorship as an important way to address feelings of isolation associated with being the only woman, or one of a few women, on a shift. They also desire more opportunities for information sharing and guidance to help navigate the professional and social experience of being women police officers.

II. Increase diversity in assignments and diversify units.

Without diverse experiences, sworn women cannot be as competitive for advancement opportunities as their male counterparts. Further, expanding the knowledge of all sworn personnel will strengthen the workforce. To do so, it is necessary to be intentional and consistent with efforts to monitor assignments for gender bias, including administrative positions at stations, and to develop strategies for increasing the number of women in specialized units.

III. Implement recruitment strategies to attract diverse candidates, promote transparency, and expand communication in the hiring process.

Increasing the number of women in the SFPD must begin before the hiring, application, and training process. As early as pre-school, the department can promote policing as a viable career choice for women. Creating a home workout video series, evaluating the background checking process, physical test, and driving course for bias, and increasing communication with applicants will better support women and other diverse candidates going through the selection process.

IV. Increase transparency and communication in promotions.

Many sworn women desired greater feedback and guidance on how to reach their career goals, especially for those units that are traditionally dominated by men.

V. Encourage professional development and ensure equity in training opportunities.

Improved communications and encouraging professional development and training opportunities will equalize access career development opportunities. Monitoring the denial of training as well as the completion of training will to help identify and address the barriers and challenges facing sworn women.

VI. Enforce completion of performance reviews and review potential bias in commendations.

Sworn women's contributions to the SFPD are likely to be overlooked without consistent performance reviews and equity in commendations and awards. Further, updating the system for conducting performance reviews will benefit the entire department.

VII. Increase flexibility and transparency in scheduling.

Equalizing access to overtime opportunities, increased notice before transfers and schedule changes, and encouraging men to utilize policies for scheduling flexibility will reduce the stigma and bias against sworn women associated with being caregivers.

VIII. Address specific needs of women and implementation of accommodation policies.

Issues of pregnancy, lactation, and menopause often require women to modify many aspects of their lives including in the workplace. While federal, state and local laws guarantee accommodations and protections for pregnant and lactating women, sworn women expressed concern about damaging their reputations or career development to accommodate these life changes. Involving more women in developing policies and procedures around pregnancy and lactation accommodation, leaves, and uniform and equipment standards will ensure that the SFPD serves the specific needs of sworn women.

IX. Foster a culture of equality and inclusion.

Women in traditionally male-dominated fields face incredible hurdles just to do their job—from higher rates of harassment to stereotyping and work-identity conflict. Fostering an inclusive workplace culture and addressing disparities requires leadership to remain intentional and prioritize inclusion throughout the organization.

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by Elizabeth Newman, Policy and Projects Director at the Department on the Status of Women, who led the gender analysis of the San Francisco Police Department. Department Public Policy Fellows Mollie Read and Diana McCaffrey and Policy Intern Sarah Small contributed to the research, analysis, and coordination of this project. It also benefitted from significant guidance and support from Department Director Emily Murase, Associate Director Carol Sacco, and Policy and Grants Manager Elise Hansell.

This gender analysis could not have been completed without the cooperation and good faith of the San Francisco Police Department, especially Chief William Scott, Assistant Chief Robert Moser, and Lieutenant Nicole Jones. We thank all the SFPD staff who helped compile data in response to the many questions asked of them. Special appreciation also extends to the sworn women who shared their experience and suggestions through focus groups and interviews. This project was informed by the participation of the Police Officers Association Women's Action Committee, who provided input throughout the process to assist in the formulation of the questions, review of the findings, and development of the recommendations. We are sincerely grateful for their time, expertise, and support of this work. Lastly, we thank the Department of Human Resources, and Janie White in particular, for their comments, suggestions, and feedback.

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