

Government Business Council

Underwritten by:



Duty of Care in Federal Agencies

A Candid Survey of Federal Employees

October 2015

Purpose

Government employees who travel or work remotely are exposed to a myriad of potential risks and challenges. While other countries have established extensive legal obligations for employers to protect traveling employees, federal agencies in the United States have yet to implement comprehensive duty of care policies to ensure employee safety and mitigate risk. With much of the federal workforce engaging in some sort of business travel or remote work, organizations may benefit from implementing robust logistical and safety protocols to better support their employees. In an effort to learn more about federal employees' experiences with travel safety and agency travel management, Government Business Council (GBC) and Concur undertook an in-depth research study.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of federal employees regarding duty of care and travel safety, GBC deployed a survey to a sample of *Government Executive*, *Nextgov*, and *Defense One* online and print subscribers in September 2015. The pool of respondents includes those from more than 30 federal civilian agencies, including GS-11 through -15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service. All 431 respondents represented have experience traveling for work and/or working remotely in their current job. All questions relating to travel refer to employee travel on official business.

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Nearly all travelers face disruptions but not all agencies provide adequate support

Although a plurality of respondents are satisfied with their agency's travel logistics, the vast majority of travelers have been impacted by issues and disruptions while traveling or working remotely, including itinerary complications and potential safety threats. Nearly half of respondents are regularly concerned about personal safety while traveling and/or working remotely. In the face of these issues, 4 in 10 respondents still cite a need for greater support from their agencies.

Improved travel resources may enhance employee safety and support

Agencies have yet to diversify the resources they provide to employees when they travel. Many travelers currently receive itinerary and compliance reminders; however, only 11% of respondents say their agency provides electronic device security, and even fewer receive real-time alerts, emergency information, or medical resources.

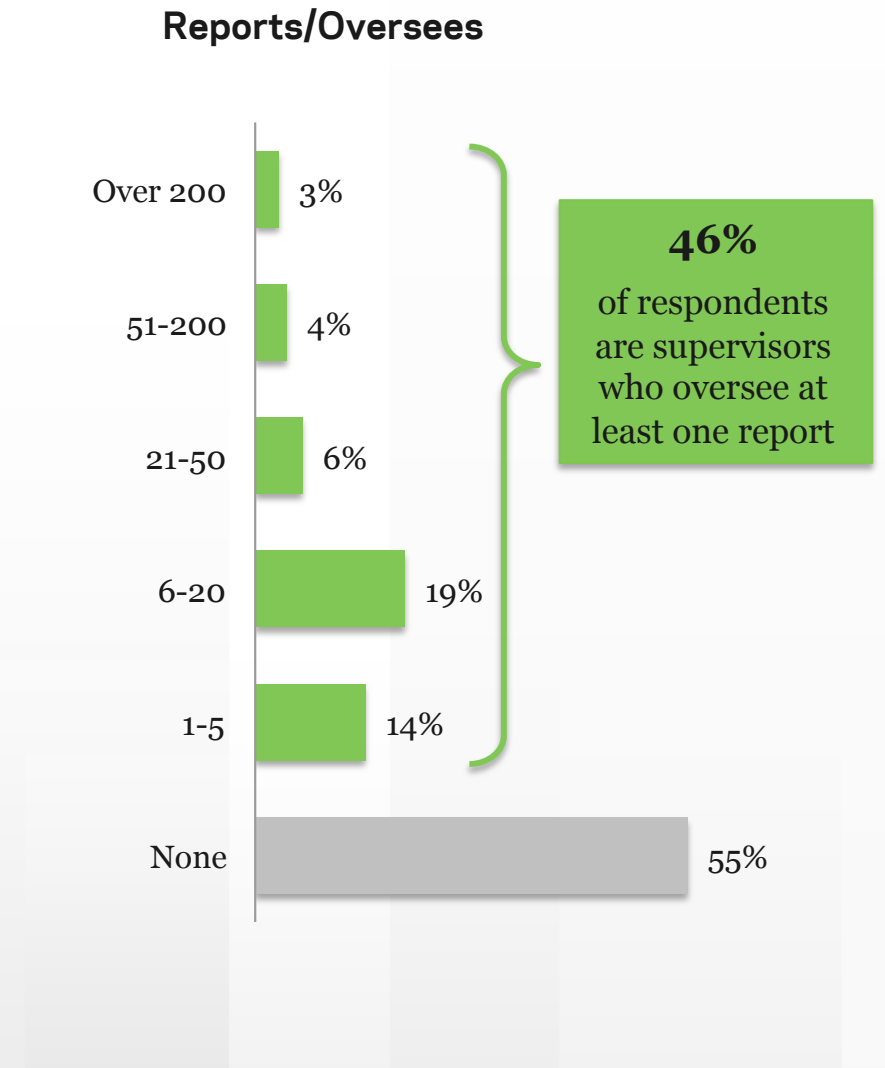
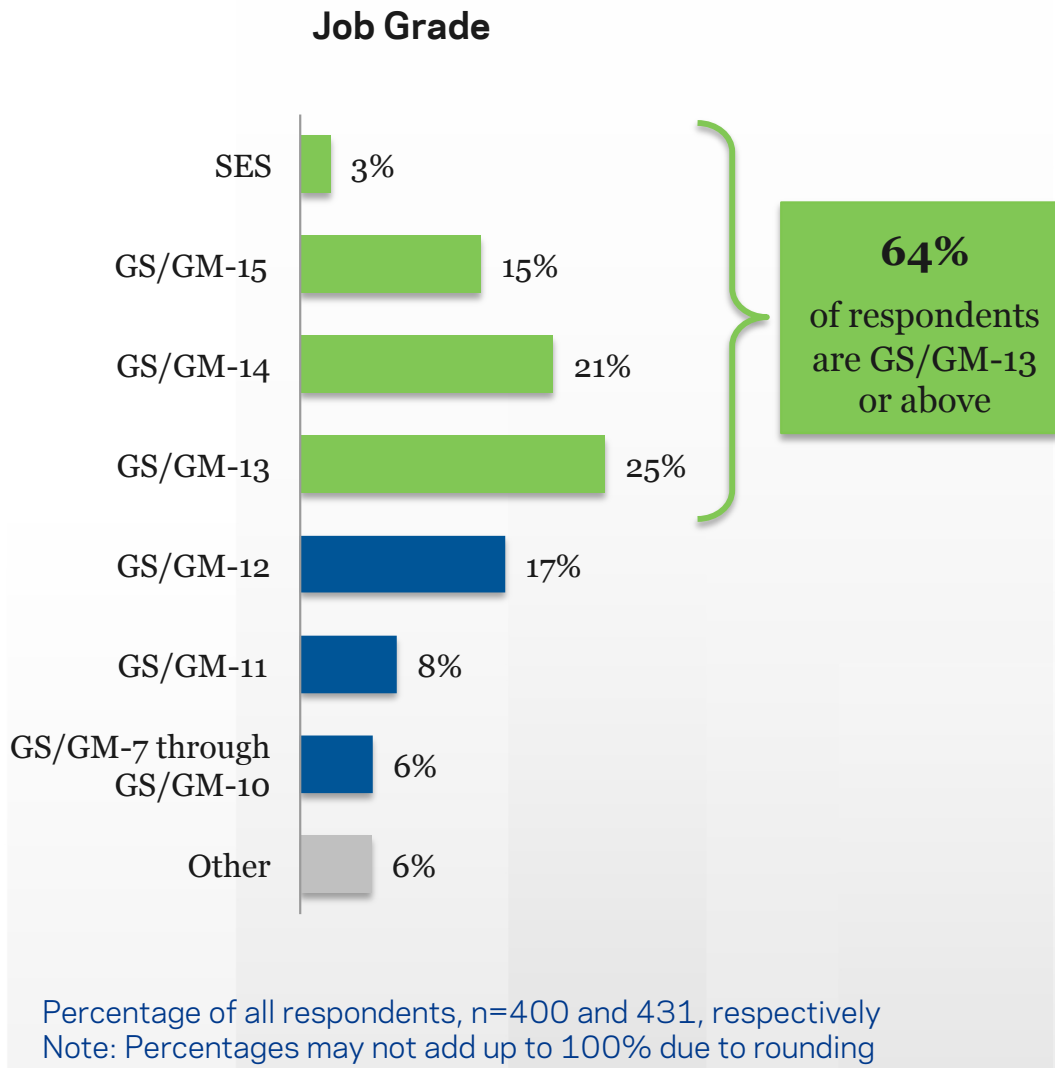
Agency emergency procedures could be expanded to include a broader range of services

During emergencies, agencies still rely mainly on one-to-one communication between supervisors and employees, organization-wide emails, and official agency emergency notification systems rather than faster, more efficient technologies such as GPS location services and mobile apps. Currently, only 40% of managers estimate being able to receive confirmation of their employees' safety within one hour.

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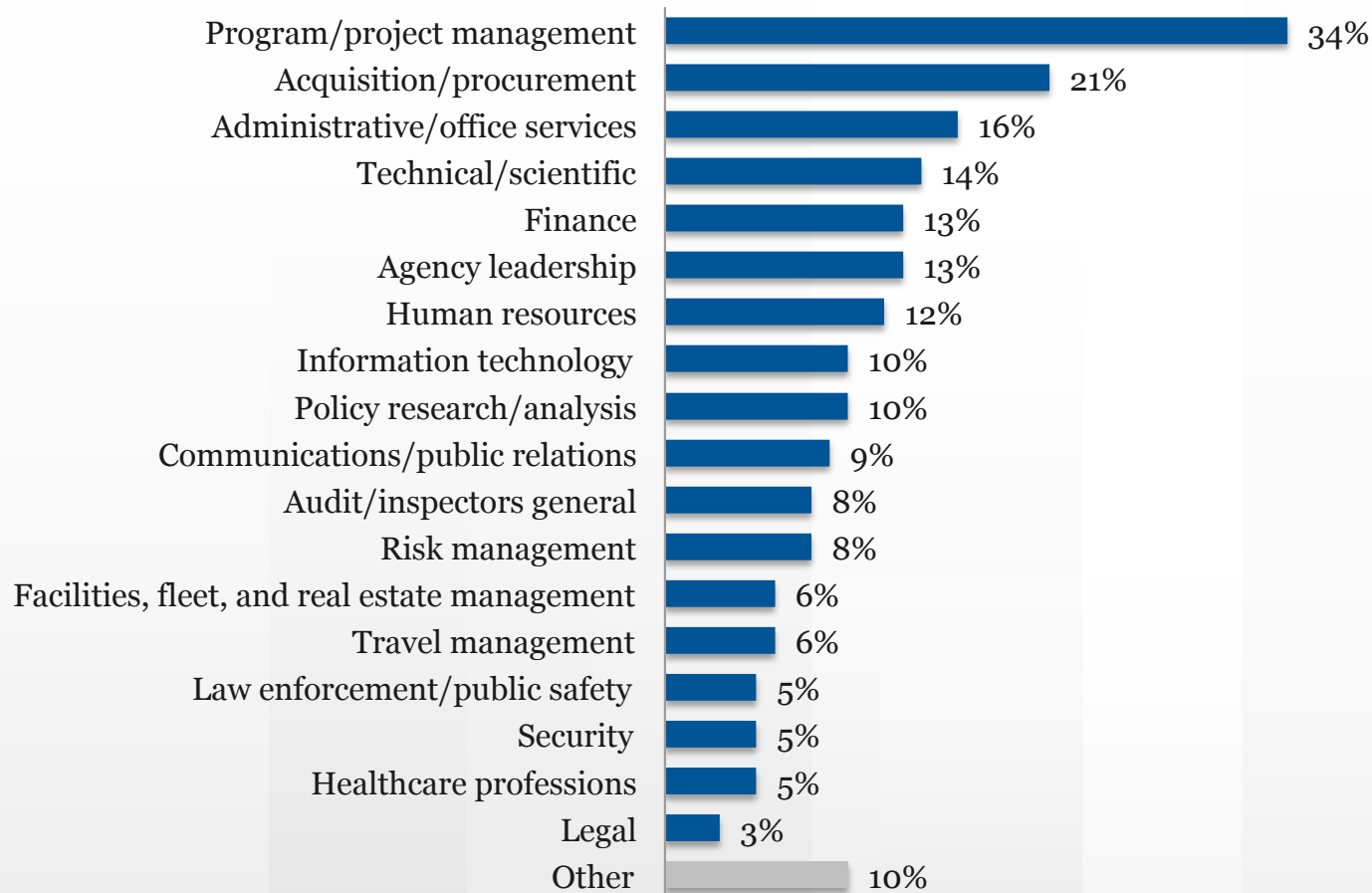
Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are largely senior federal leaders



Respondents have a wide range of responsibilities within their organization

Which of the following roles or responsibilities do you have in your organization?



Percentage of all respondents, n=400
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Most Represented Agencies

Department of the Treasury

Department of Agriculture

Department of Veterans Affairs

Department of Homeland Security

Department of the Interior

General Services Administration

Department of the Air Force

Office of the Secretary of Defense

Department of the Army

Department of the Navy

Department of Health and Human Services

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Environmental Protection Agency

Department of Energy

Department of Housing and Urban Development

Department of Justice

Department of Commerce

Department of Labor

Department of Transportation

Small Business Administration

Department of State

Agency for International Development

Government Accountability Office

Social Security Administration

National Science Foundation

Department of Education

Nuclear Regulatory Commission

Congress/Legislative Branch

Department of Defense Joint Chiefs of Staff

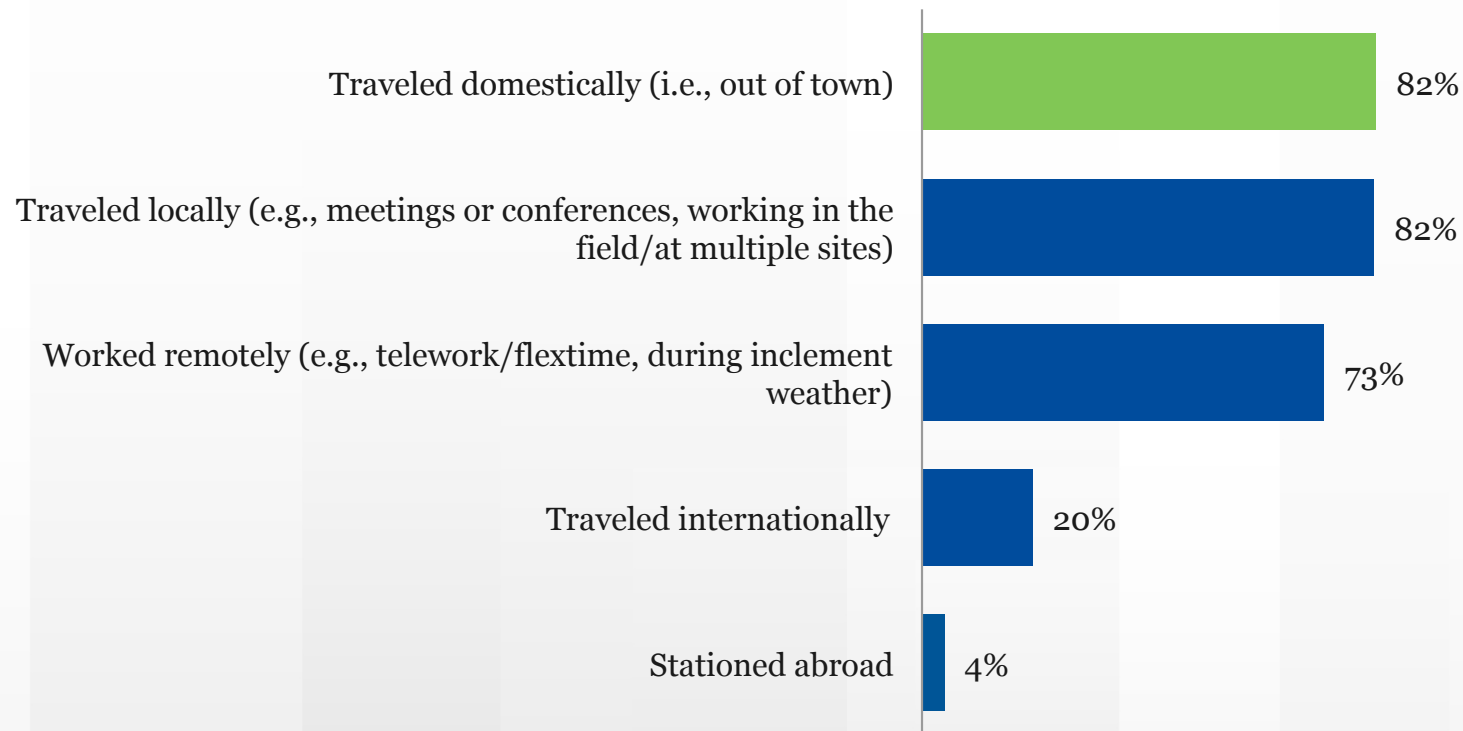
Executive Office of the President

Other Independent Agencies

Agencies listed in order of frequency

All respondents have traveled for work or worked remotely in their current job

In your current job, have you ever had any of the following experiences with traveling on official business or working remotely?



Percentage of all respondents, n=431
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Travel and remote work frequency varies among respondents

How frequently do you travel on official business or work remotely?

	Daily	Multiple times a week	A few times per month	A few times per year	Rarely
Travel locally n=320	14%	12%	29%	31%	13%
Travel domestically n=315	1%	1%	18%	56%	24%
Travel internationally n=83	1%	0%	5%	28%	66%
Work remotely n=292	10%	31%	33%	18%	8%

Percentage of respondents, n varies.

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

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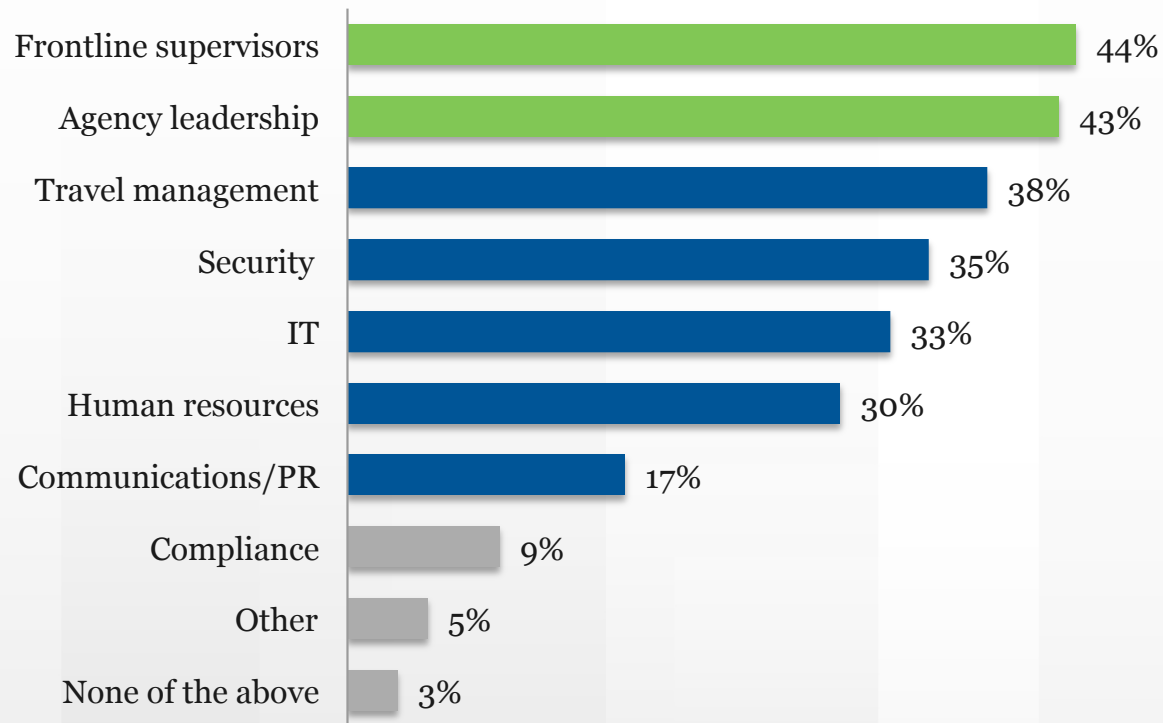
Research Findings

i.

Agency Travel and Emergency Safety

A wide range of agency departments are stakeholders in employee travel safety

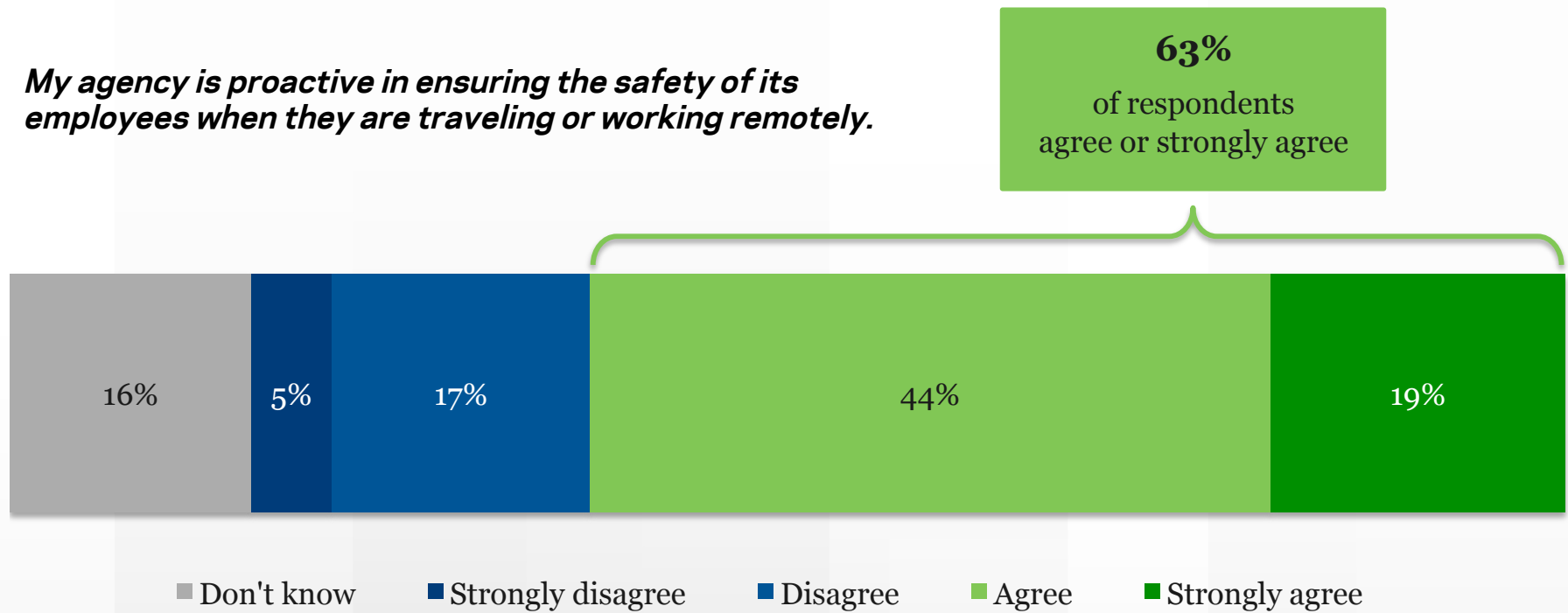
Which of the following organizations/departments are stakeholders in emergency and travel safety within your agency?



Percentage of all respondents, n=400
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Most respondents believe their agency is proactive about travel safety

My agency is proactive in ensuring the safety of its employees when they are traveling or working remotely.



Percentage of all respondents, n=427

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Communication gaps may exist between decision makers and rank-and-file employees

When asked whether their agency is proactive about travel safety...

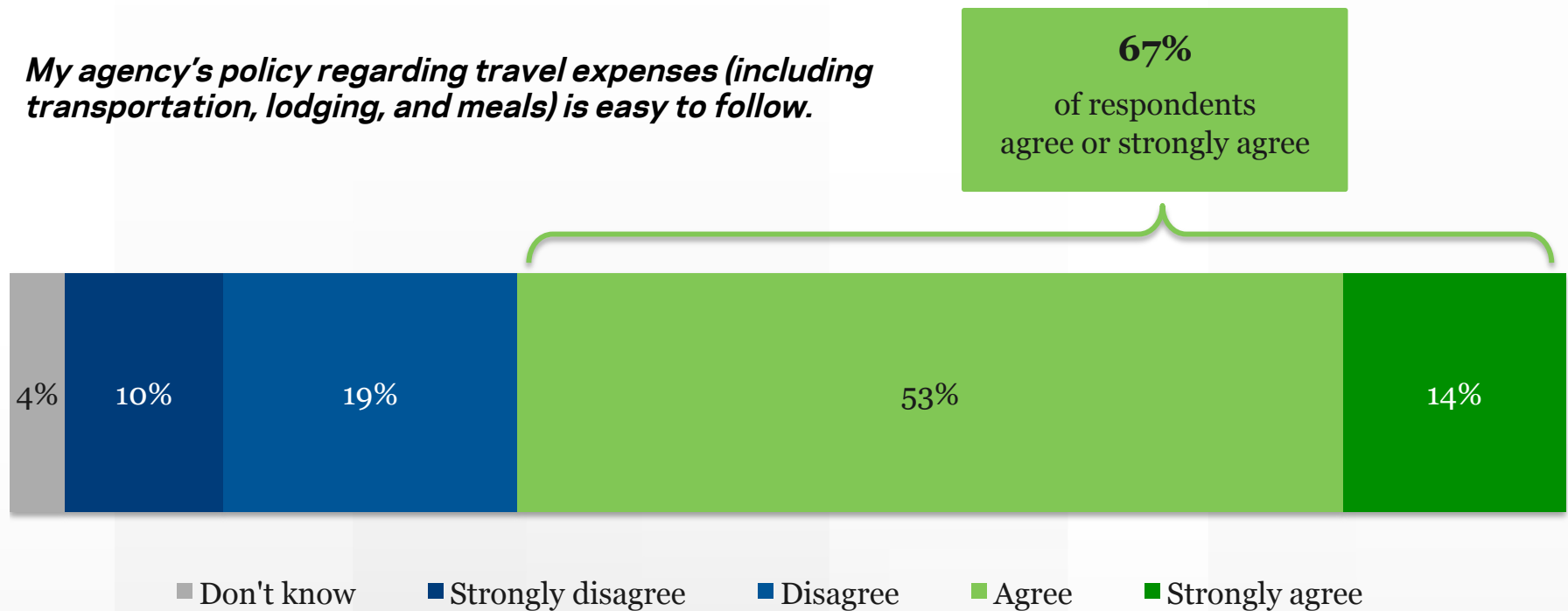
78% of GS-15 and Senior Executive Service respondents agree and **11%** disagree

57% of respondents ranking GS-13 and below agree and **27%** disagree

Percentage of all respondents, n=71 and 223, respectively

2 in 3 respondents believe their agency's travel expense policy is easy to follow

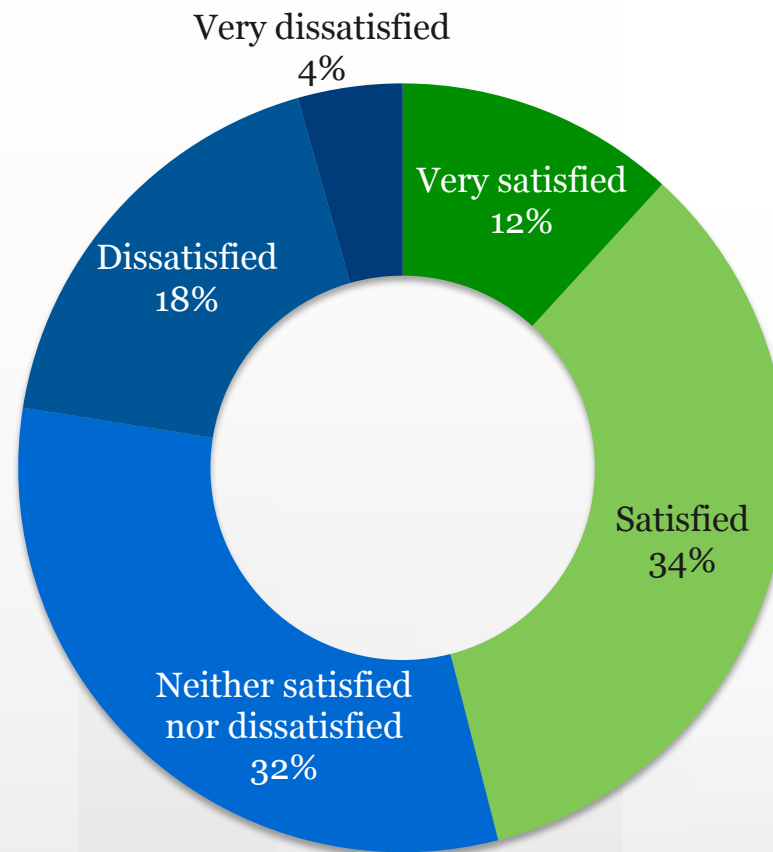
My agency's policy regarding travel expenses (including transportation, lodging, and meals) is easy to follow.



Percentage of respondents who travel, n=371
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

However, less than half of respondents are satisfied with their agency's travel logistics

Overall, how satisfied are you with the way your agency handles travel logistics?



46%

of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied

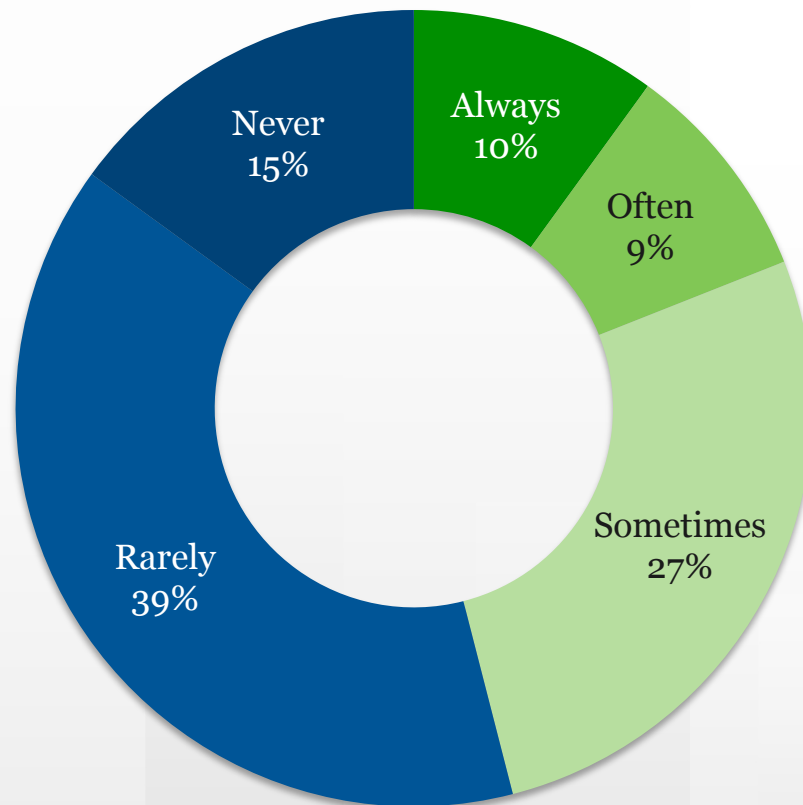
Percentage of respondents who travel, n=365
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

ii.

Travel Issues and Disruptions

Almost half of respondents are regularly concerned about personal safety

How often are you personally concerned for your safety while traveling or working remotely?



46%

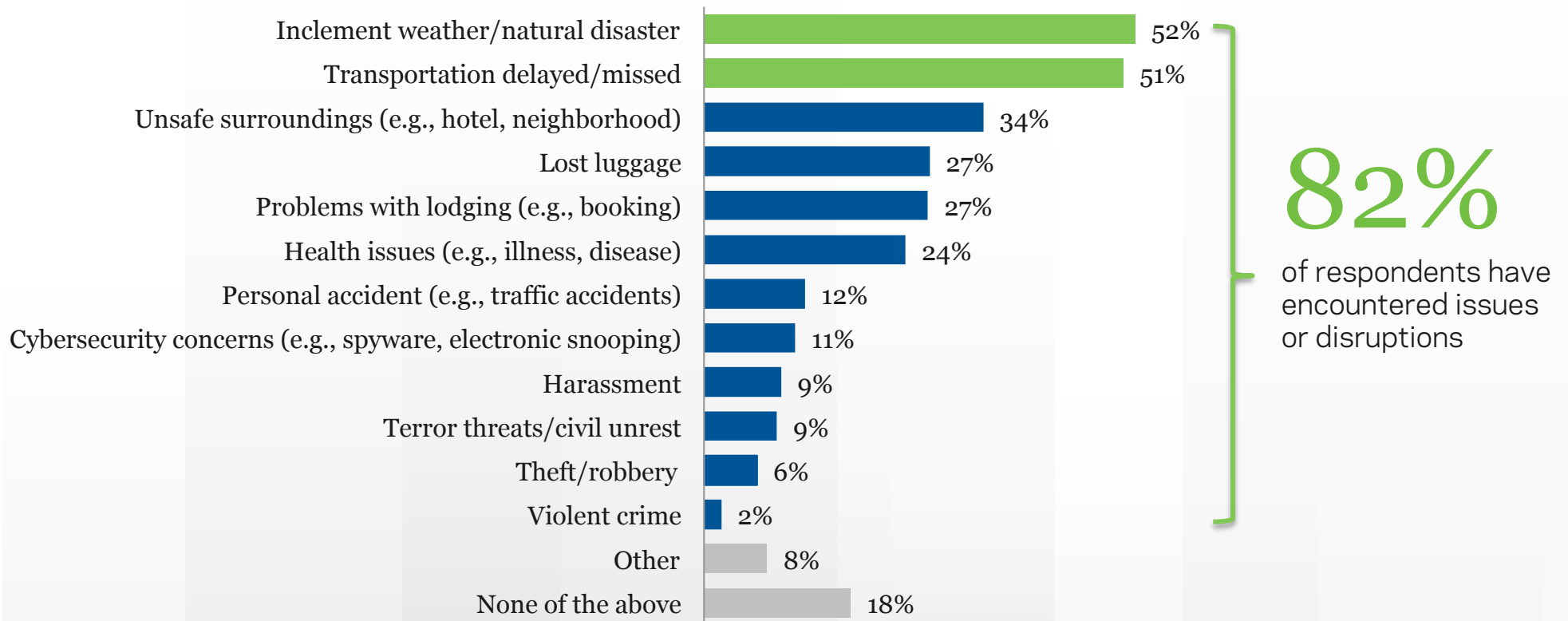
of respondents are regularly concerned about their safety

Percentage of all respondents, n=426

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Weather and transportation issues are the most commonly reported travel disruptions

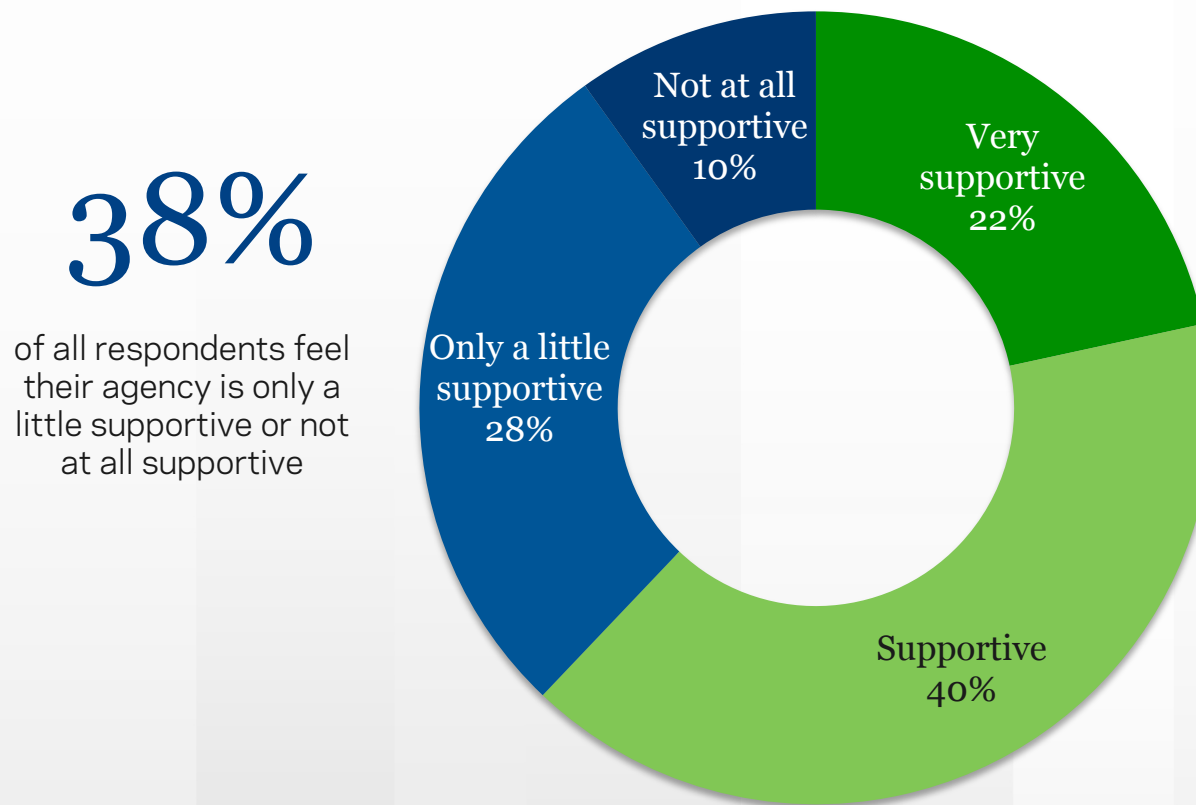
Disruptions Encountered Traveling or Working Remotely



Percentage of all respondents, n=419
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Nearly 4 in 10 respondents feel inadequately supported during travel disruptions

When you face issues/disruptions, how supportive is your agency?



Percentage of respondents who indicate they have faced issues/disruptions, n=343

Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Travelers have concerns about agency response to employee safety threats

55% of respondents have faced disruptions while traveling or working remotely that potentially threatened their personal safety.

Yet respondents told us:

“ When traveling, my main support is my travel companion. My agency is so far removed from me during my travels that it feels like I have very few resources available to me. ”

“ Our agency lacks an end-to-end process for foreign travel and has little concern about travel risks in general. Too many entities are involved with no overarching responsibility or policy. ”

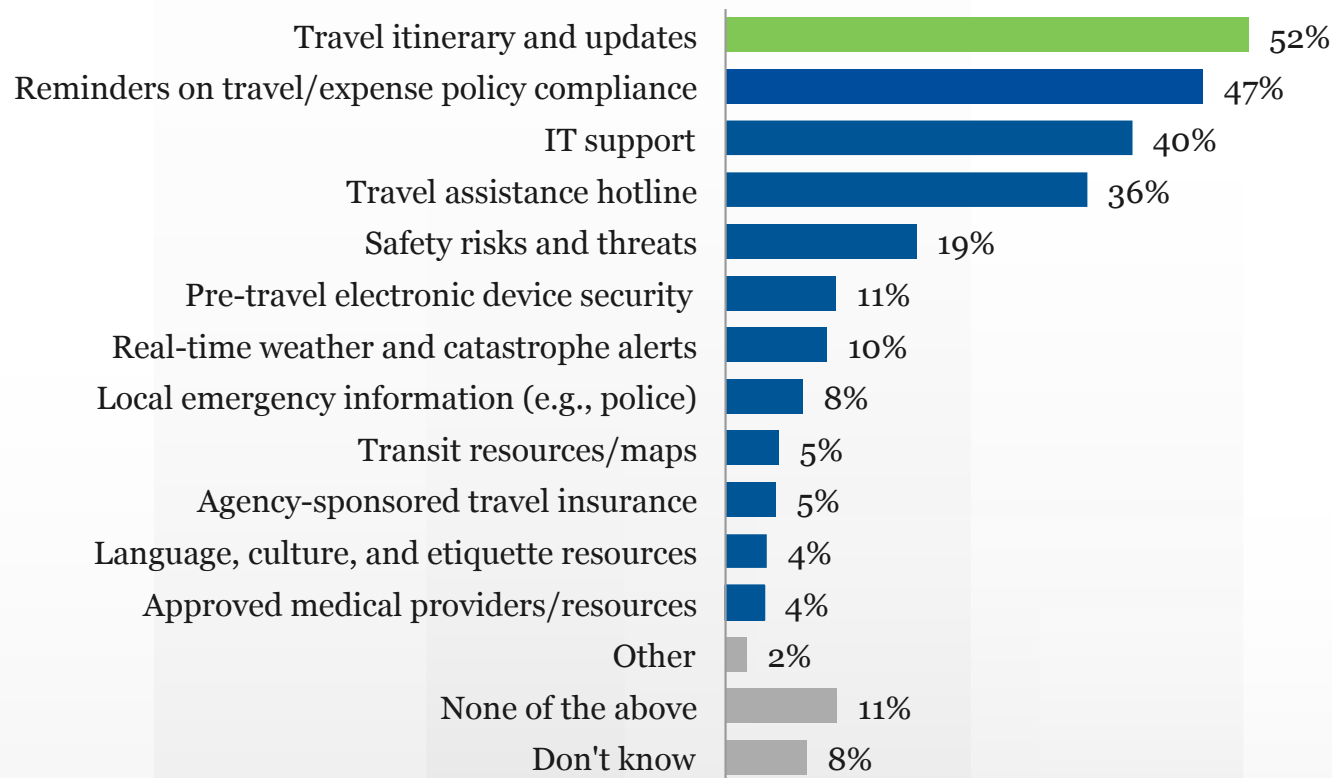
Percentage of all respondents, n=419; threats to personal safety include unsafe surroundings, health issues, personal accident, harassment, terror threats/civil unrest, theft/robbery, and violent crime. Quotes are a sample of open-ended qualitative responses.

iii.

Existing Travel and Emergency Protocols

Agencies mainly provide employees with logistical and compliance-related resources

Agency-Provided Travel Resources



Few agencies currently equip their travelers with a full range of resources intended to enhance employee safety.

38% of DoD civilian travelers report receiving agency resources on safety risks and threats, compared to 14% of other Federal civilian travelers.

Percentage of respondents who travel, n=340; DoD civilian travelers, n=65; Federal civilian travelers, n=272
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

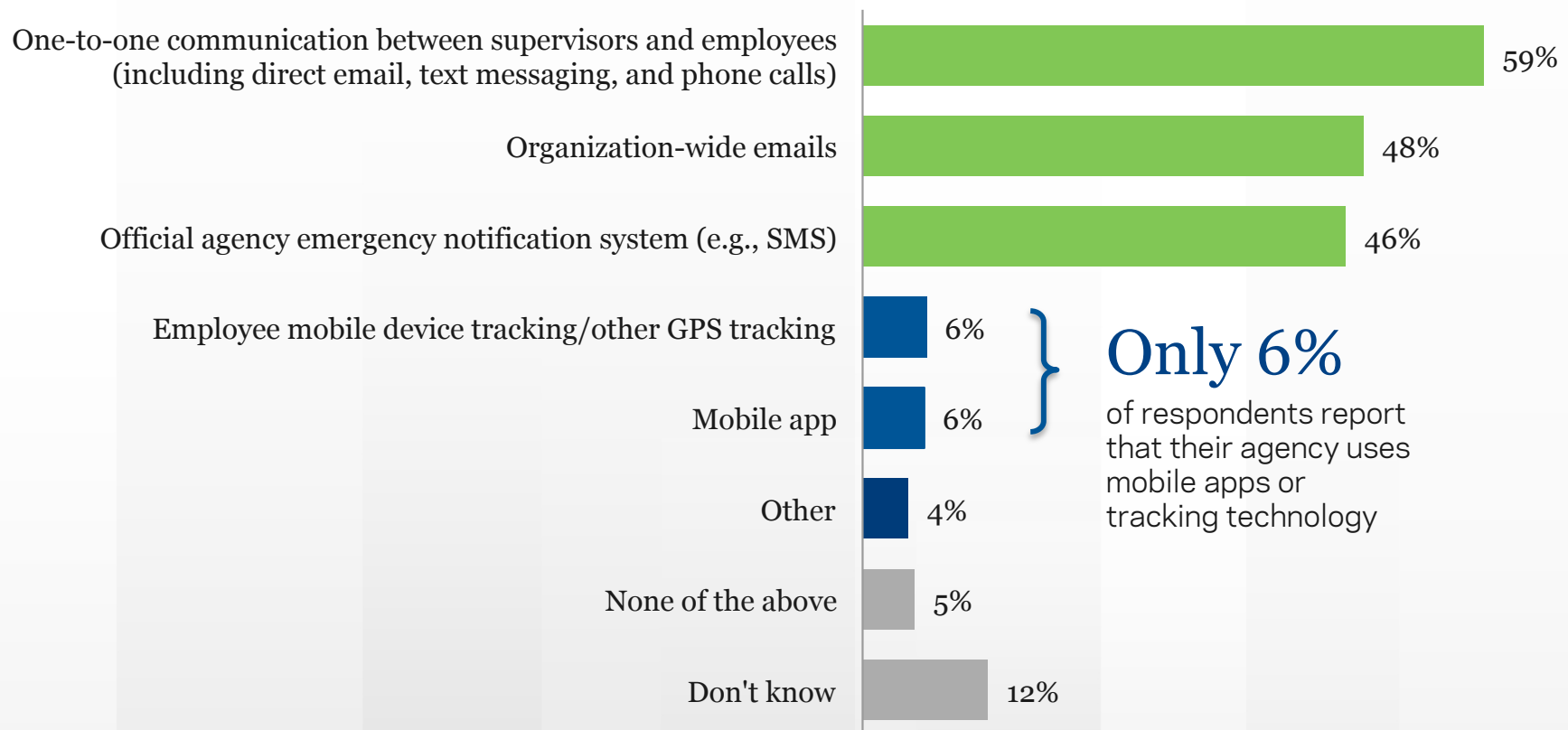
Respondents suggest additional resources that might be beneficial to travelers:

- “ Provide formal consistent training, have a public announcement system in office for emergencies, be proactive in contacting employees and verifying safety instead of waiting for employees to check in. ”
- “ Provide us with a detailed recovery plan for when we travel, especially for high risk areas. ”
- “ Provide a resource website on the internal intranet. ”

Sample of open-ended responses

Agencies have yet to adopt automated methods for verifying employee safety

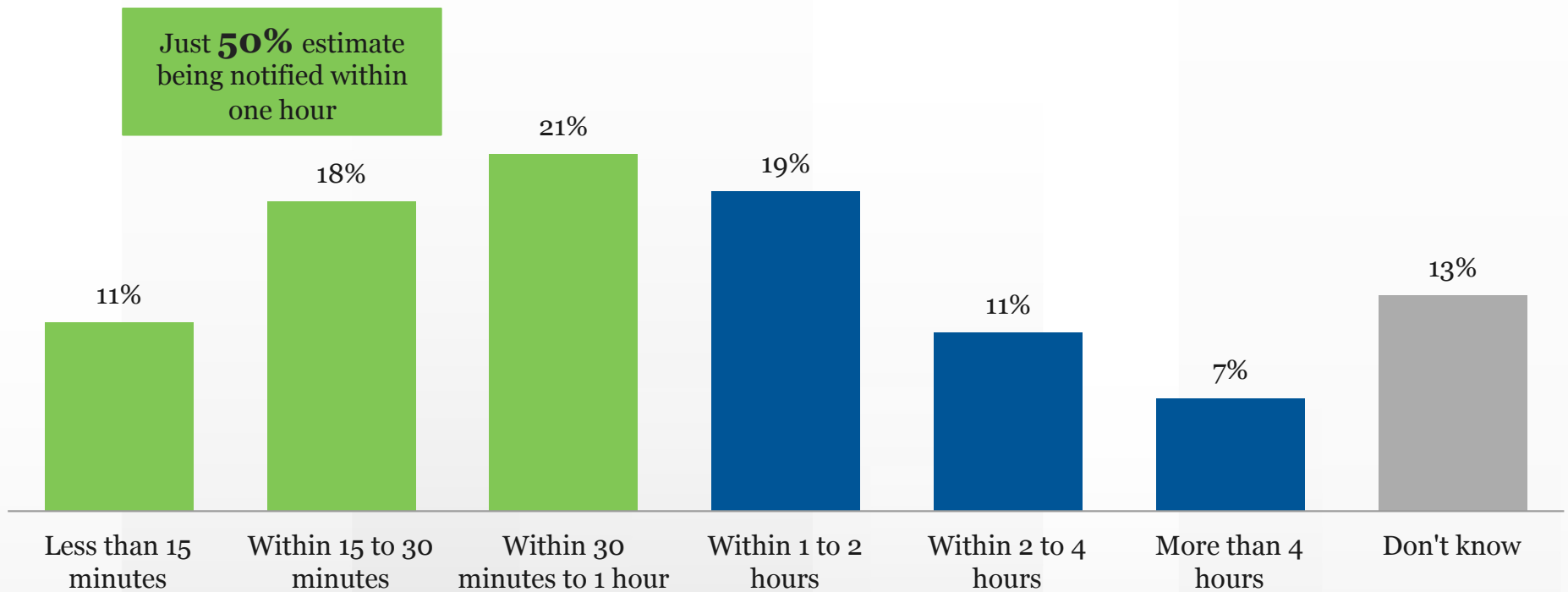
How does your agency verify the safety of employees during emergency situations (e.g., severe weather, terrorism attack, other safety risks)?



Percentage of all respondents, n=409
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Managers may not be receiving timely information about emergency incidents

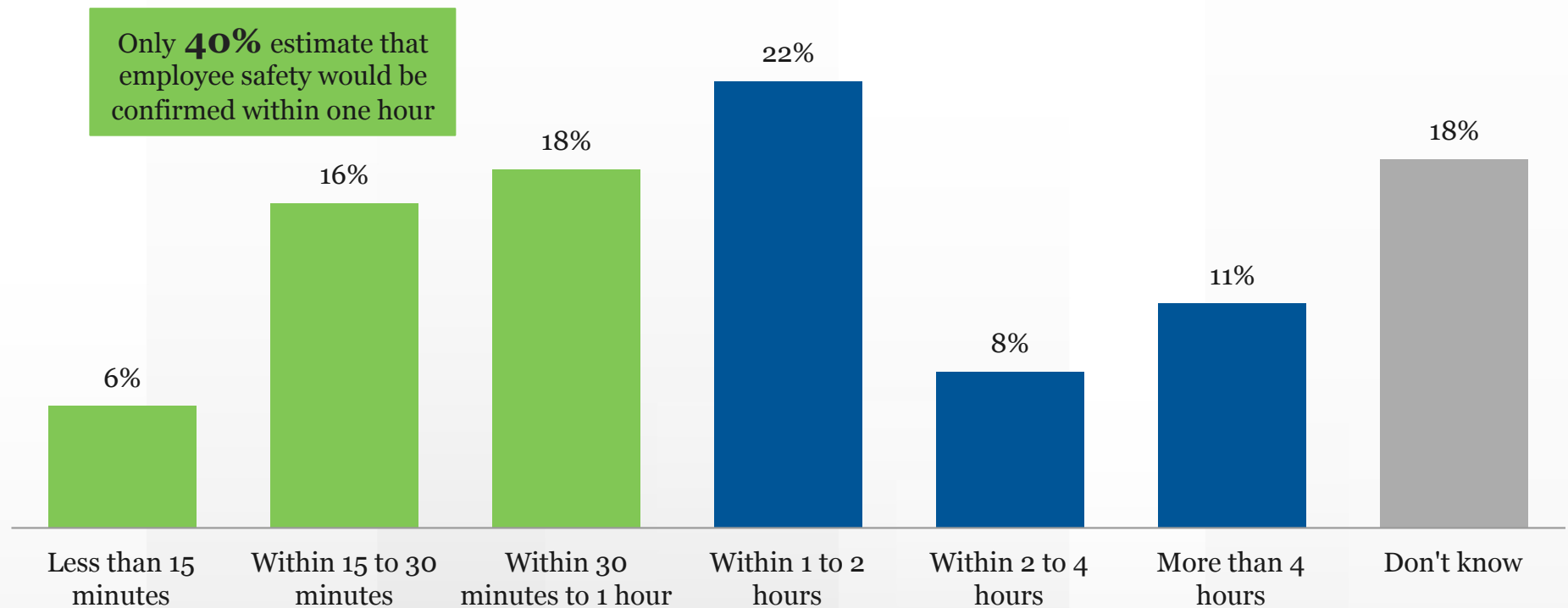
As a manager, how long do you estimate it would take to be notified about an emergency incident impacting your employees, including those traveling or working remotely?



Percentage of managers who oversee at least one direct report, n=179
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Most managers estimate that confirming employee safety would take an hour or more

As a manager, how long do you estimate it would take to receive confirmation of your employees' safety in the event of an emergency?



Percentage of managers who oversee at least one direct report, n=179
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Defense managers anticipate longer safety verification times during emergencies

When asked to estimate how long it would take to be notified about an emergency incident impacting their employees...

38% of DoD civilian managers estimate being notified within one hour, compared to **53%** of other federal civilian managers

When asked to estimate how long it would take to confirm employee safety in the event of an emergency...

34% of DoD civilian managers estimate being notified within one hour, compared to **42%** of other federal civilian managers

Percentage of managers: DoD civilian, n=39; Federal civilian, n=138

iv.

Duty of Care

Duty of Care

Employees traveling on business and/or working remotely face a host of potential challenges and risks. As a result, both government and private sector organizations are increasingly implementing [duty of care](#) policies. These policies include legal rules and regulations designed to enforce organizational responsibility for employee well-being (including during travel and emergencies) and to protect organizations from risk. Given the wide range of stakeholders responsible for different aspects of employee safety, duty of care can help incorporate and simplify these diverse considerations into a holistic, organization-wide concept.

In contrast to the United States, other countries have established duty of care policies, including:

- United Kingdom: Companies and organizations can be held liable if an injury results from a breach of duty of care.
- Canada: Companies that fail to fulfill duty of care obligations can be found criminally and financially liable under the *Criminal Code*.

While some federal agencies do have existing processes for safety compliance and emergency management, many are disconnected or lack consistency. As agencies look to improve and ensure the well-being of their employees, integrating these travel, emergency, and safety policies into organization-wide standards for duty of care may help mitigate risk and better protect employees.

Sources: Health and Safety Executive, HM Government of the United Kingdom; The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service, Government of Canada.

Respondents suggested ways that agencies can adopt duty of care principles:

- “ Develop a team that is responsible for all aspects of travel risk management rather than the hodge-podge of concerns and knitted-together policies that no one has any control or management over. The government doesn't do travel risk management well like some industries do. ”
- “ Overly bureaucratic processes, almost no personal concern for welfare, emphasis on compliance with rules and regulations make it impersonal. Improve the human assistance factors for travel, provide security training for frequent travelers. ”

Sample of open-ended responses

Respondents also added...

- “ Offer more flexibility for common sense rather than the apparent focus on compliance with limited options. ”
- “ It's said that knowledge is power. Making and keeping employees aware of safety measures and concerns while on official travel would be a major improvement. ”
- “ We need a major shift in corporate attitude before we can even look at specific policies or tools. ”

Sample of open-ended responses

4 Final Considerations

When considering how to implement and enhance federal duty of care...

Adopt a clear, consistent duty of care policy across the agency

In light of safety and emergency concerns, the federal government can better safeguard employees by adopting comprehensive duty of care policies. With less than half of respondents expressing satisfaction with travel logistics as it applies to safety and security, agencies might consider unifying and standardizing safety and emergency protocols across organizational subgroups. These broader policies may help resolve employee concerns about inefficient and unintuitive travel processes, lack of flexibility, and insufficient support in the event of issues and emergencies.

Ensure agencies have the technology needed to effectively manage and support employees

When addressing inefficiencies in travel safety, agencies might consider expanding their range of resources. Traveler experience could be improved with on-the-ground resources such as local emergency, transit, and etiquette information. In addition, technologies such as mobile apps and GPS location services can provide travelers greater control over their own safety by allowing them to more quickly initiate safety and emergency protocols.

Develop rules and compliance to emphasize employee care

When supporting federal travelers, organizations should recognize the importance of practical rules and regulations that are aligned with employee safety. However, duty of care should extend beyond meeting compliance standards: agencies can also provide better training and resources to travelers. For instance, while many employees are currently provided with travel itinerary updates, compliance reminders, and IT support, far fewer are supplied with pre-travel electronic security, local emergency information, agency-sponsored travel insurance, cultural preparation resources, and medical resources. By equipping employees with greater guidance, many of the risks attached to travel and remote work could be substantially mitigated.

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About Concur

Concur imagines the way the world should work, offering cloud-based business services that make it simple to manage travel & expenses. By connecting data, applications and people, Concur services do the hard work, delivering an effortless experience for government agencies & their employees.

About GBC

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