

Government Business Council

GENERAL DYNAMICS **Tactical Communications (TacCom) & the Future of Mobile**

A Candid Survey of Federal
Managers

November 2013

Purpose

In response to the Department of Homeland (DHS) Security's Efficiency Review Initiative, the Tactical Communications (TacCom) procurement vehicle was created to streamline the purchasing of all tools and services affiliated with TacCom. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and the United States Secret Service (USSS) are the largest potential buyers of TacCom. As a result, Government Business Council (GBC), the research division of *Government Executive*, launched a study around the use, affinity, and knowledge of TacCom at DHS and other affiliated agencies.

Methodology

To assess the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of federal buyers regarding TacCom and mobile procurement more broadly, GBC deployed a survey to those who downloaded information about TacCom on the govexec.com website as well as a sample of *Government Executive* readers from DHS, DoJ, and other affiliate agencies. The pool of 209 respondents includes those of GS-11 through 15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service.

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Rise of TacCom

TacCom created to leverage immense buying power

On August 1, 2010, the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security established an Efficiency Review Initiative for tactical communications. The Initiative established a DHS-wide sourcing vehicle for TacCom equipment and services. In doing so, DHS leverages its immense buying power to receive high-volume discounts and the lowest price possible when acquiring TacCom.

This procurement vehicle is a multiple-award Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) vehicle, making a set of prime contract holders the sole providers of TacCom goods and services.

“Upon establishment of a DHS-wide strategically sourced vehicle for tactical communications equipment and services, all Components are to utilize the DHS-wide contract vehicle whenever most cost efficient and meets mission requirements/needs.”

DHS-Wide Tactical Communications Ordering Guide, May 2012,
http://www.corp.att.com/gov/images/TACCOM_Ordering_Guide_Version1-12.pdf.

TacCom planned trajectory follows two phases

TacCom-1

During this phase, the Office of the Chief Information officer (OCIO) conducts a program health review of the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Tactical Communications Modernization Program. It was determined that coverage of the existing TacCom network is cost prohibitive. As a result, TacCom-1 is limited to only modernizing current network infrastructure. This phase is almost entirely completed.

Status: Complete

TacCom-2

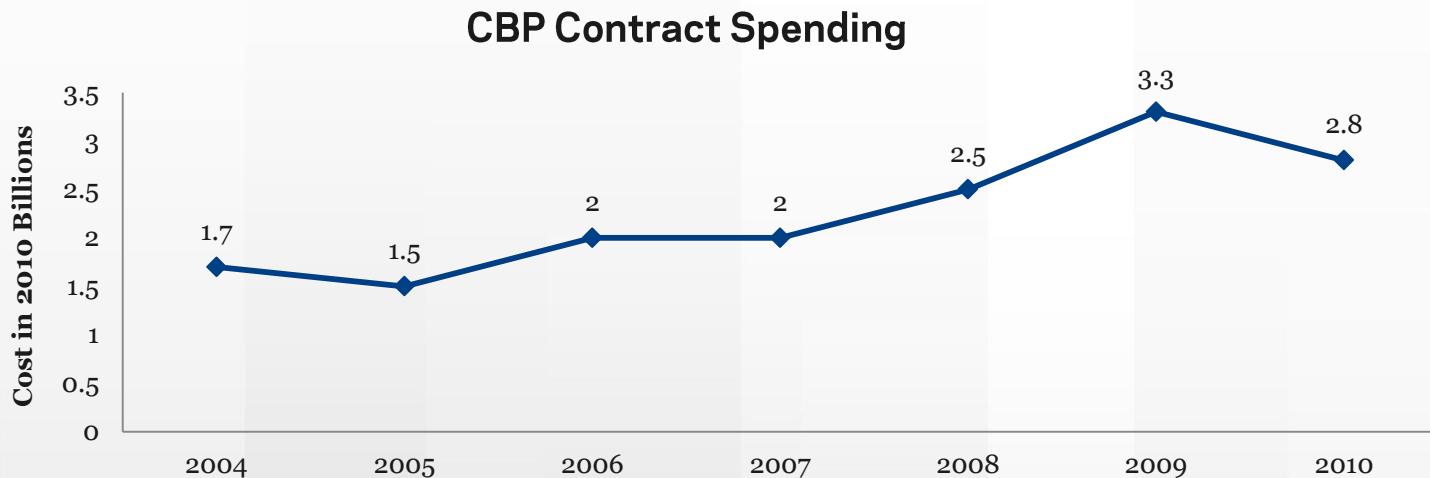
TacCom-2 expands on the modernization done in TacCom-1. TacCom-2 plans to employ a new 700MHZ broadband public safety frequency allocation. It will capitalize on existing and evolving commercial technologies such as Long Term Evolution (LTE) in order to augment a hybrid network architecture.

Status: Pending

IT Program Assessment, CBP - Tactical Communications Modernization (TACCOM-1, TACCOM-2),
<http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/mgmt/itpa-cbp-taccomm2012.pdf>.

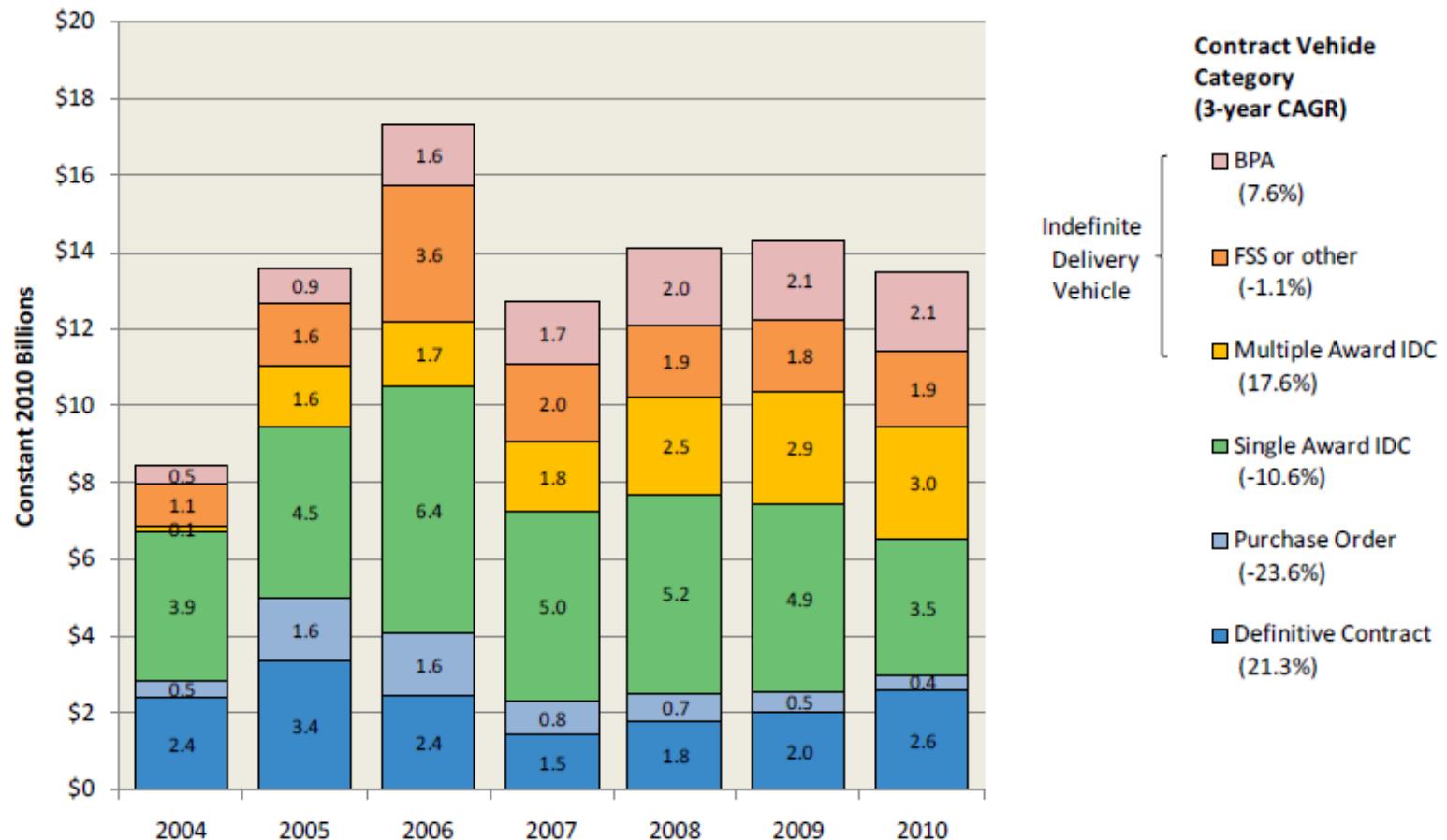
Biggest potential buyer on TacCom increases spending

Between 2004 to 2010, CBP experienced a total growth in contract spending of 71 percent. The biggest increases occurred between 2006 and 2008, likely due to heightened border security efforts along the southwest border. Since then, CBP has experienced 5 percent increase in spending likely due to the construction of new CBP-owned Land Ports of Entry (LPOE), nonintrusive inspection technology, border security enhancements and tactical communications. As a result, DHS (not just CBP) has been starting to use an increasing number of multiple award contracts since 2004.



David Berteau and Guy Ben-Ari. DHS Contract Spending and the Supporting Industrial Base, CSIS, July 2011.

DHS contract spending by vehicle

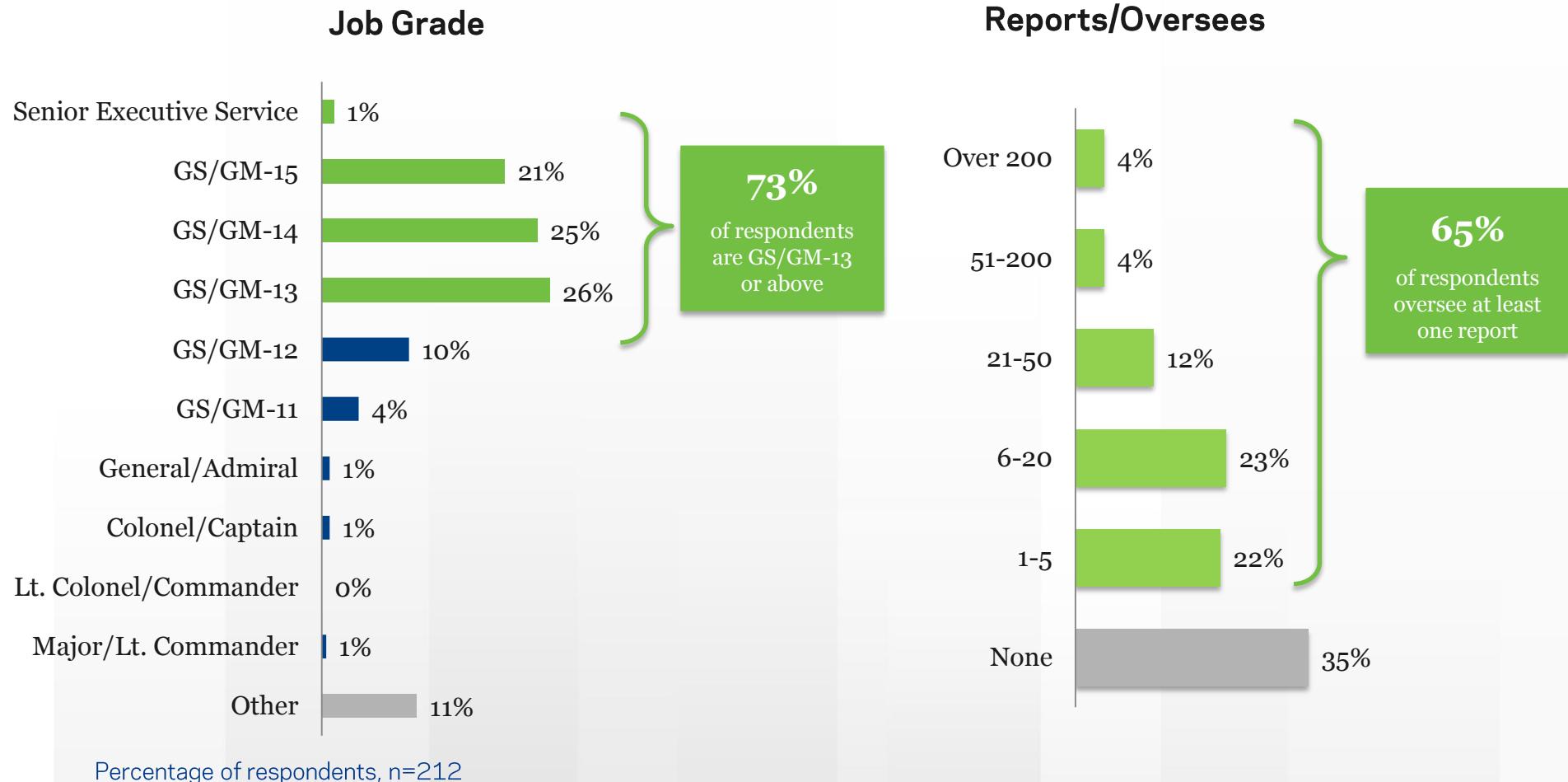


David Berteau and Guy Ben-Ari. DHS Contract Spending and the Supporting Industrial Base, CSIS, July 2011.

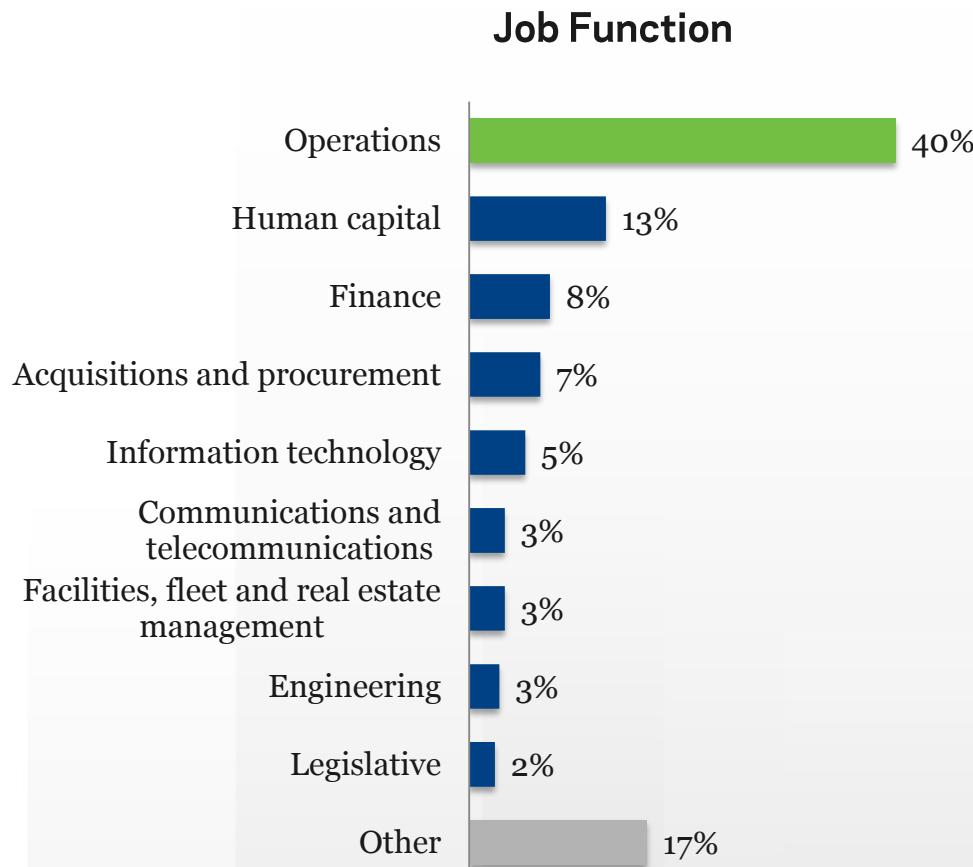
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Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are senior federal executives



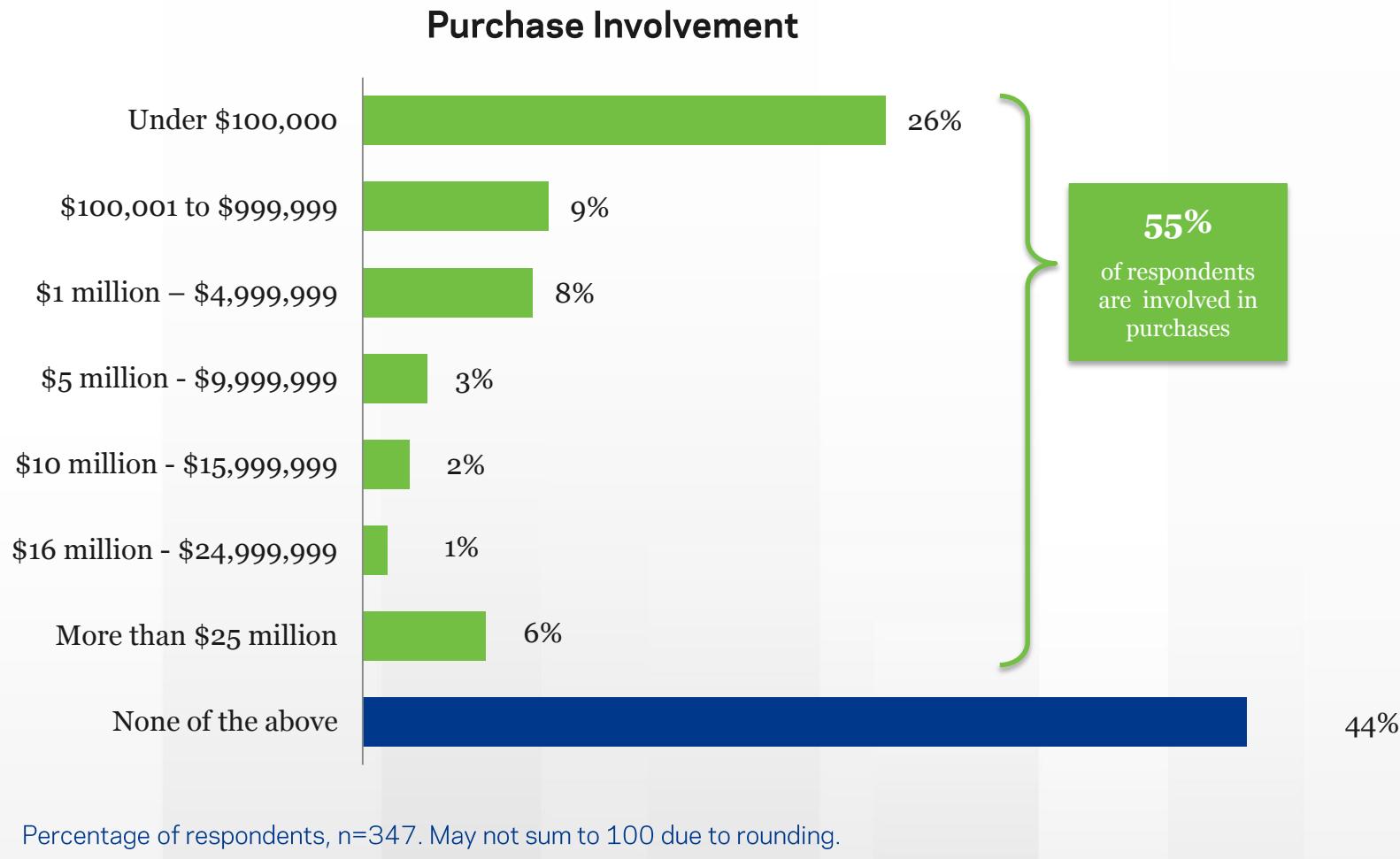
Operations is the most common job function



Percentage of respondents, n=212

- ▶ Forty percent of respondents work in operations, a category that includes program/project managers and logistics specialists.
- ▶ Seventeen percent of respondents identify their job function as “other,” a category that includes research, legal, strategy, auditing, and planning functions.

Most respondents involved with purchases



Represented agencies

Government Business Council surveyed federal agencies with a particular need for tactical communications, and individuals in other agencies who expressed interest in the subject.

Department of Homeland Security

Department of Justice

Department of the Interior

Small Business Administration

Department of Agriculture

Department of Health and Human Services



Agencies listed in order of frequency

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Research findings

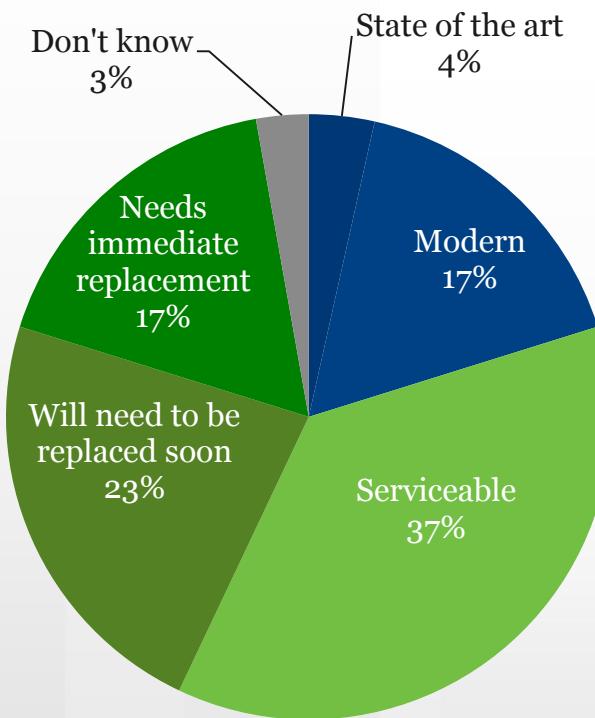
i.

Current state of
mobile
procurement

Agencies' mobile equipment in need of service

Forty percent of respondents indicate that their mobile equipment is needs replacement either soon or immediately.

State of' Mobile Equipment

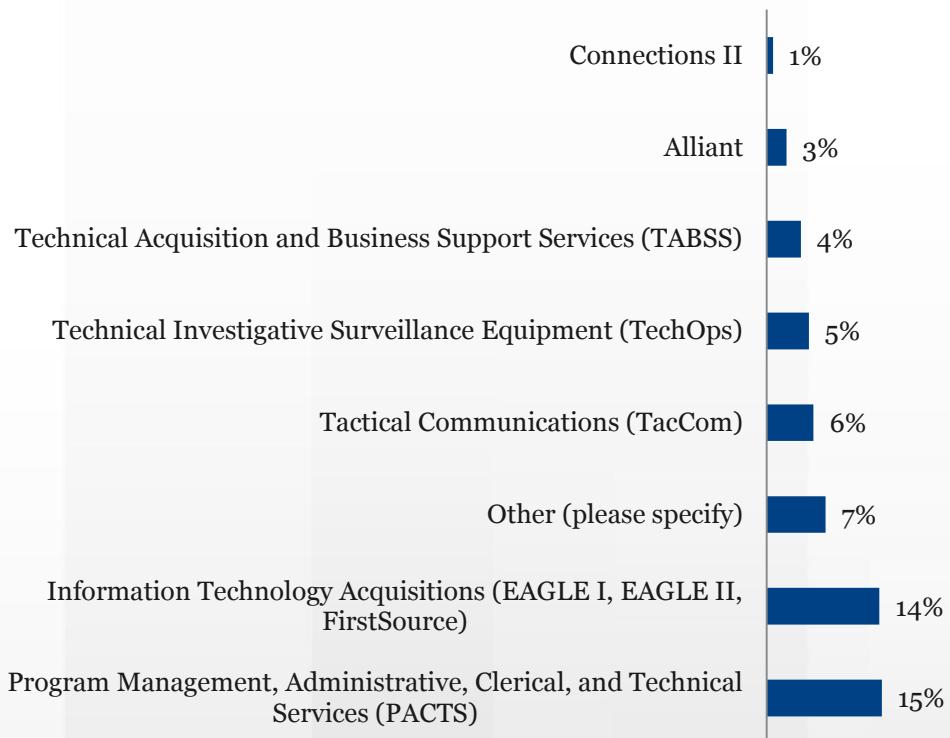


Percentage of respondents, n=426

Use of contract vehicles not widely known

Respondents were asked which of the following contract vehicles they have used to procure mobile goods and/or services.

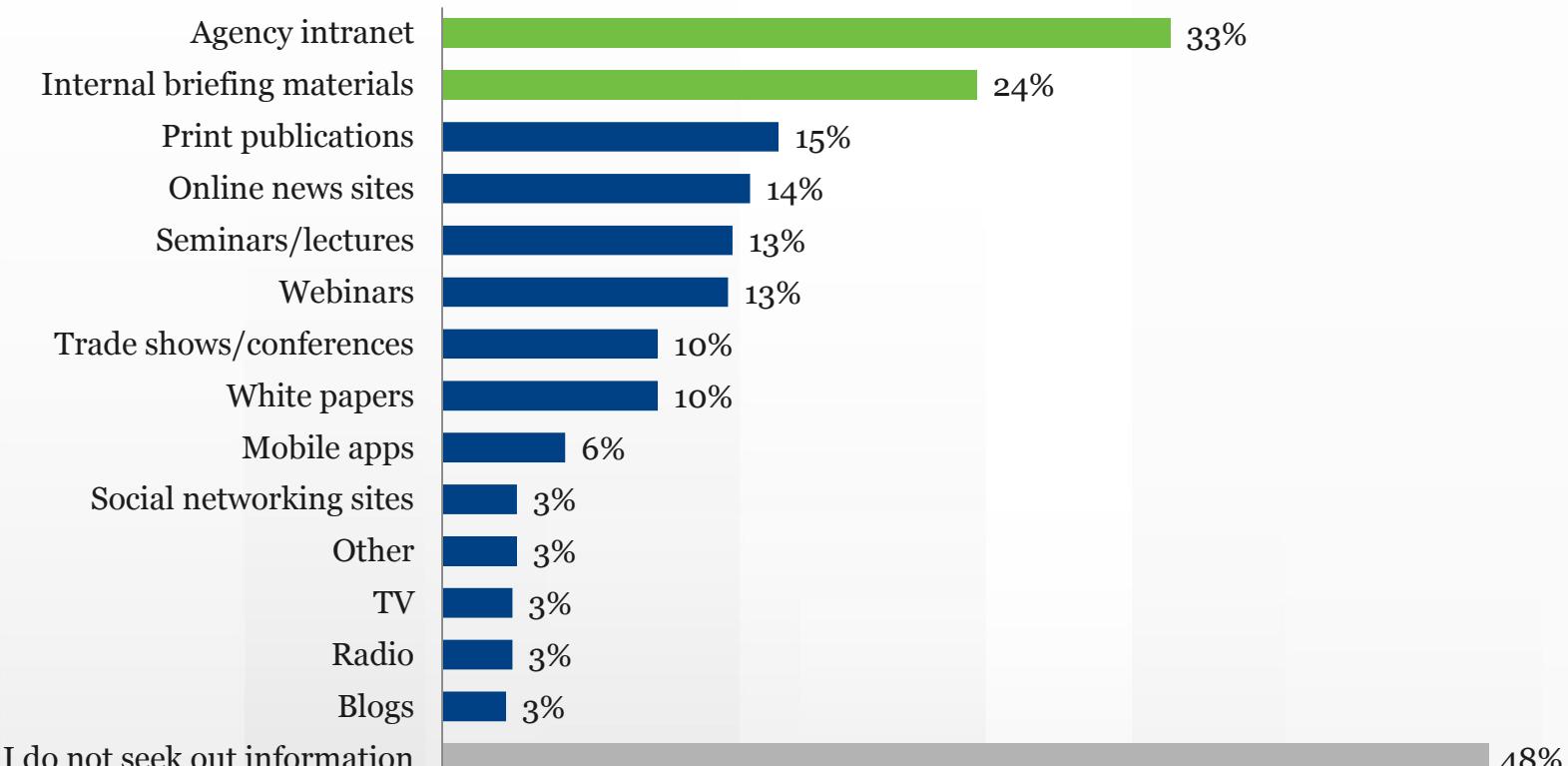
Contract Vehicles Used



Percentage of respondents , n=393. "Don't knows" removed.

Internal sources most common educational materials

Education Materials Used to Learn about Procurement

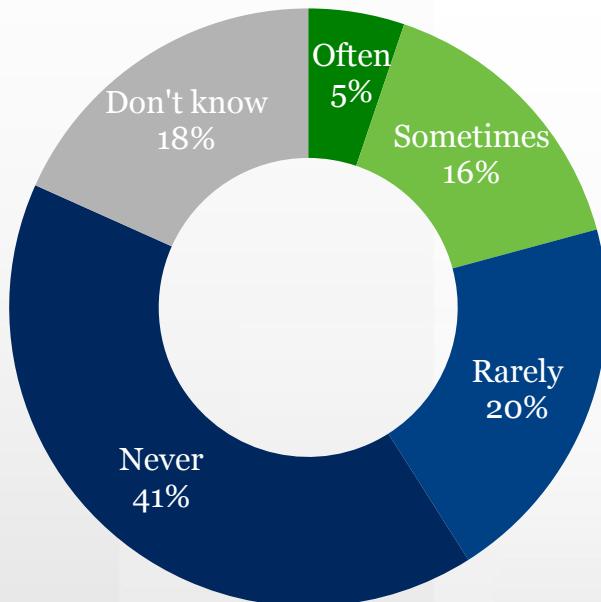


Percentage of respondents, n=378

Vendor-specific materials rarely used

Few respondents reference vendor-specific educational materials to learn about contract vehicles. This may be attributed to lack of availability of vendor-specific materials.

Frequency of Referencing Vendor-Specific Materials



Percentage of respondents, n=366

ii.

Use of Tactical Communications (TacCom)

Few familiar with TacCom contract vehicle

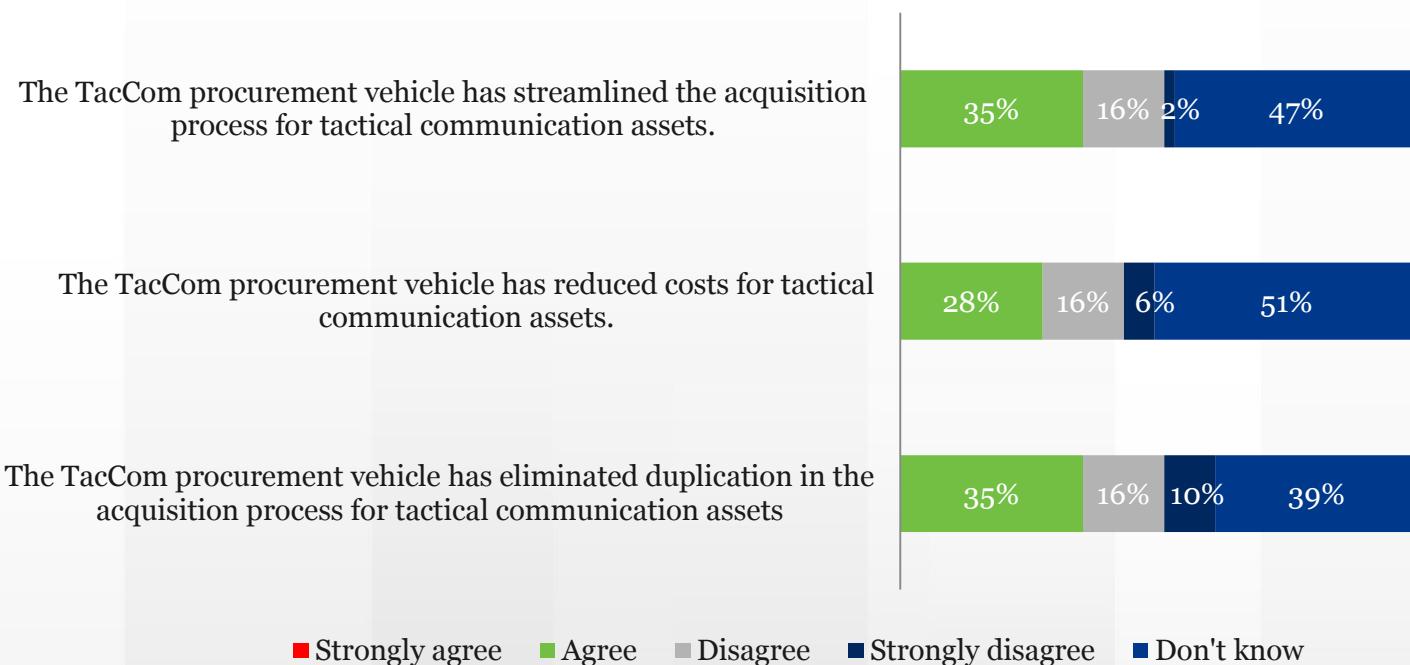
Twenty-one percent of respondents report at least some familiarity with TacCom. However, those who report familiarity tend to be 'extremely familiar' with the contract vehicle.



Respondents unsure about value of TacCom

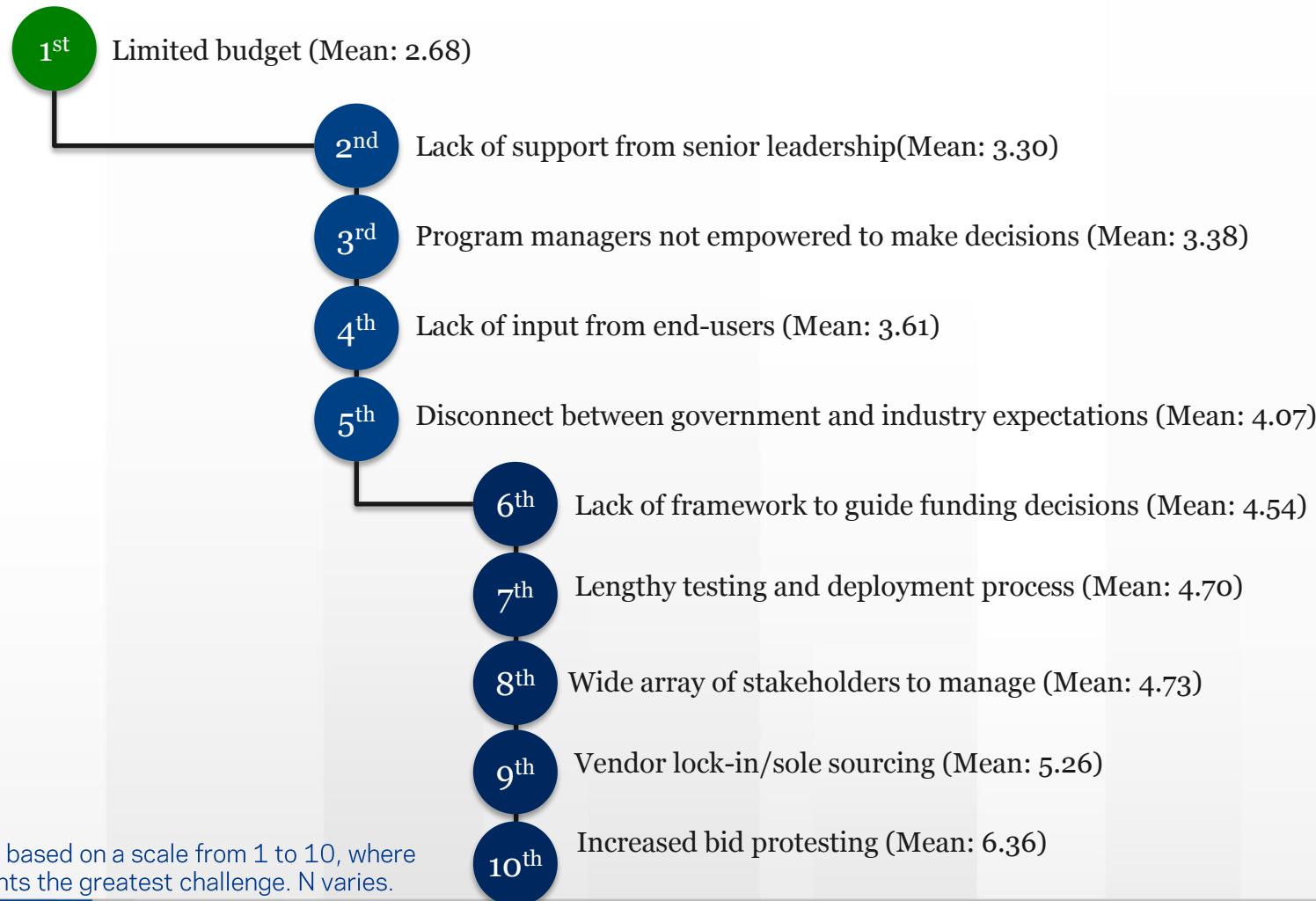
No respondents 'strongly agree' that the TacCom procurement vehicle has provided the benefits listed. This may be attributed to lack of knowledge of the TacCom vehicle.

Attributes of TacCom



Percentage of respondents, n=51

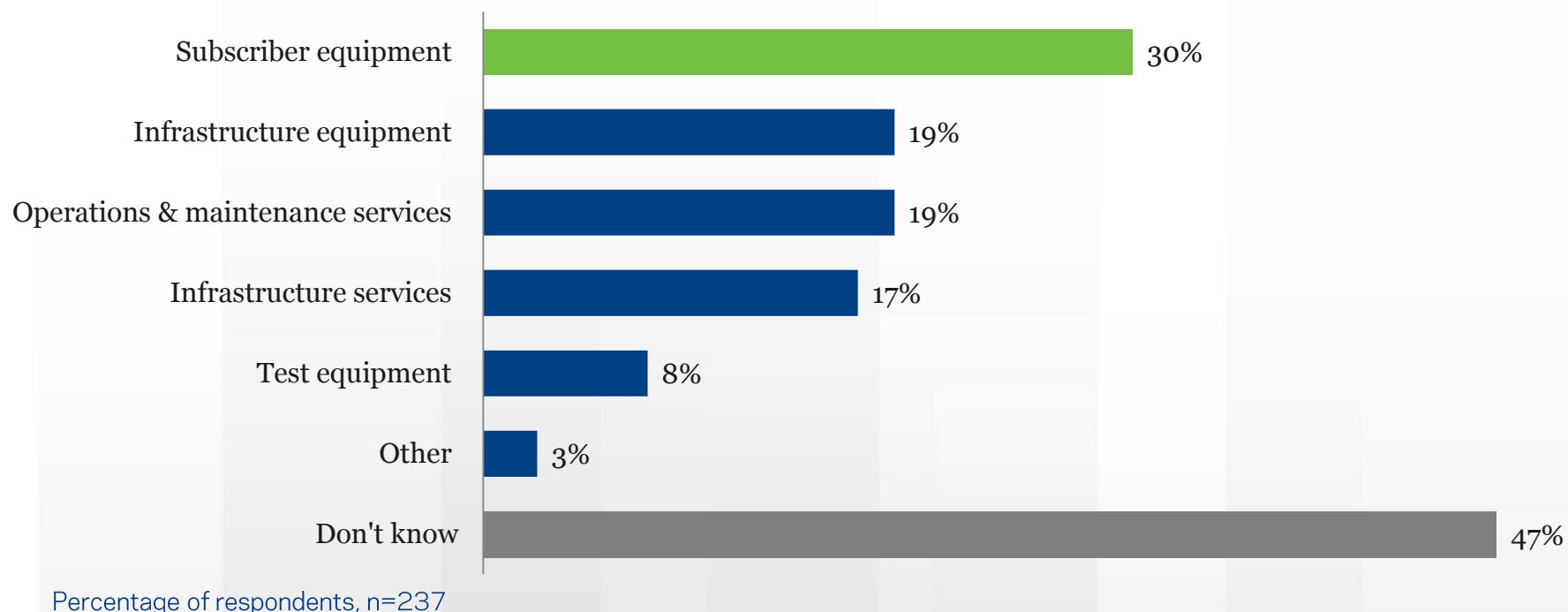
Budget greatest challenge to acquiring tactical communications



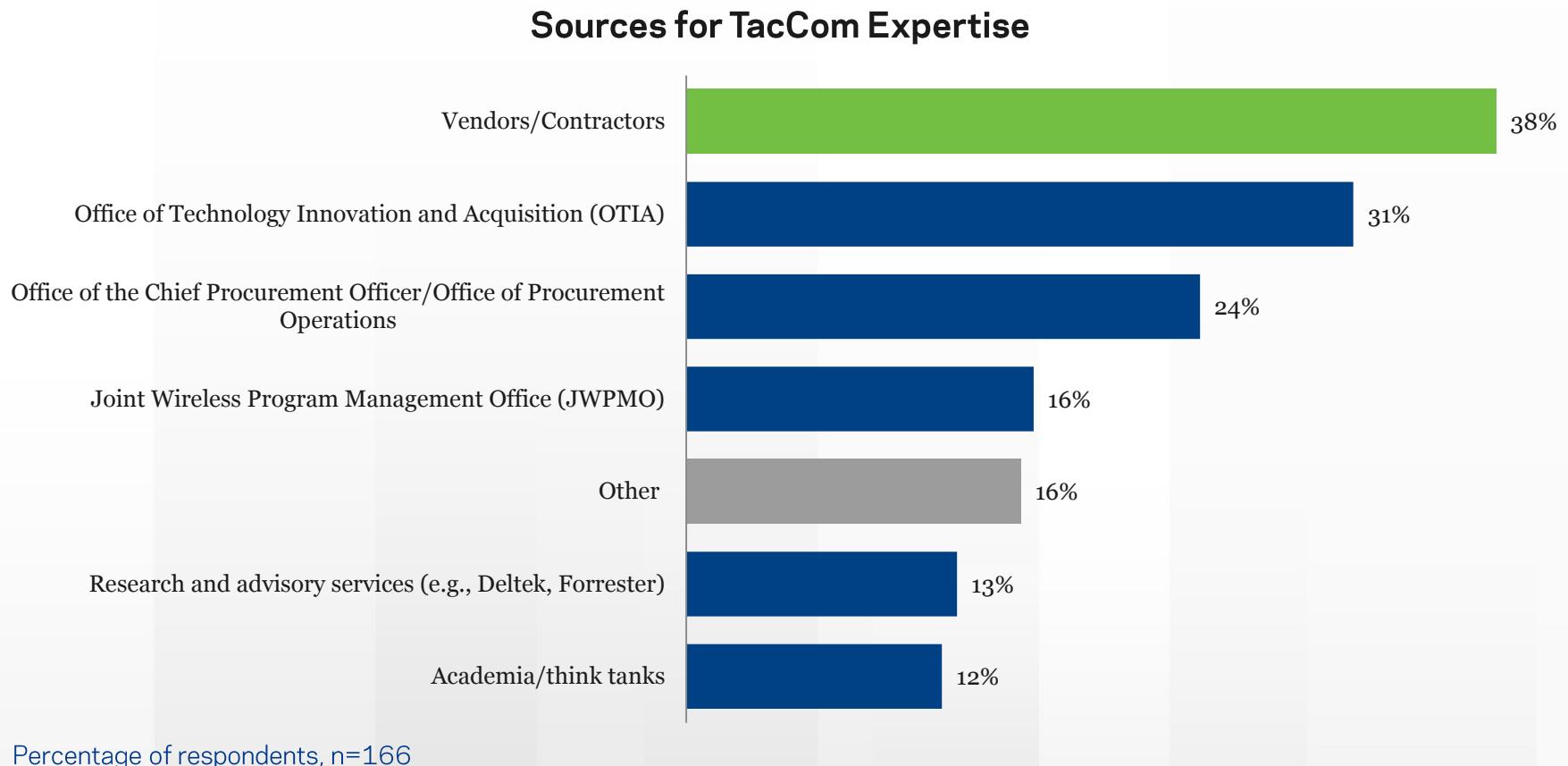
Greatest need for subscriber equipment

Almost half of participants are unaware of the tactical communications equipment their department needs. However, those who do know tend to choose subscriber equipment.

Need for Tactical Communications



Survey respondents prefer vendors as sources for expertise on TacCom



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Final Considerations

As spending rises, more opportunity exists to educate TacCom community

- ▶ **Spending on TacCom has risen in recent years, potentially in the future too.** From 2004 to 2010, CBP's spending on goods and/or services rose. Given TacCom-1 has completed and TacCom-2 is starting in the foreseeable future. Continued spending may be imminent.
- ▶ **There tends to be a dearth of information regarding TacCom.** Respondents note several instances of 'don't knows' with regard to questions around tactical communications. Only 21 percent of respondents are familiar with TacCom. Forty-seven percent of respondents don't know which TacCom equipment their agency needs.
- ▶ **Mobile equipment is in need of updating.** Forty percent of respondents report that their mobile equipment is in need of replacement. In thinking about procuring new mobile equipment, no specific contract vehicle is pervasive. This may provide an opportunity for educating buyers.

Underwritten by General Dynamics

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About General Dynamics

General Dynamics, headquartered in Falls Church, Virginia, employs approximately 90,000 people worldwide. The company is a market leader in business aviation; land and expeditionary combat systems, armaments and munitions; shipbuilding and marine systems; and information systems and technologies. More information about the company is available at www.generaldynamics.com.

About GBC

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