

Representation of racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. military

Defining race and ethnicity in this report

On 30 October 1997, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published “Standards for Maintaining, Collecting, and Presenting Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity.” These new standards motivated a change in the way DOD reported demographic information on members of the armed services.

Since 2003, when information on race has been collected, individuals have been asked to choose *one or more* of the following race categories:

- American Indian or Alaskan Native (AIAN)
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (NHPI)
- White

In a separate question on ethnicity, they are also asked to indicate whether they identify themselves as Hispanic.

Since FY 2003, the *Population Representation in the Military Services* report has provided *separate* tables for the answers to these two questions and has used mutually exclusive categories when reporting information on racial identity. As a result, Hispanic individuals who identify themselves as “White” are grouped with the non-Hispanic Whites in tables that provide information on racial identity. This is true with other racial identities as well. For instance Hispanic Blacks are grouped with non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanic Asians are grouped with non-Hispanic Asians, and so on. Unless otherwise indicated, those individuals who identify more than one racial group are counted in a separate category called “2 or more.” In this section of the report, the charts and tables all refer to data reported in the mutually exclusive race categories as described above.

Race and ethnicity of current active duty personnel

Table 5 presents the race and ethnicity of current active duty enlisted personnel and commissioned officers. These data are based on data presented in tables B-17 and B-25 in appendix B. They differ, however, from the numbers in those tables in one important aspect. In the appendix tables, there is a category that identifies individuals whose race is unknown. The numbers of such individuals can be quite significant. Seven percent of all active duty officers and 5 percent of enlisted personnel fall into this category. This can make it difficult to compare these numbers with those in our civilian comparison groups, since there are no civilians with missing data. To deal with this issue, we, in effect, dropped individuals with missing data when computing the percentages presented in table 5. Consequently, these percentages are slightly higher than the ones reported in tables B-17 and B-25.

Table 5: Race and ethnicity of active duty enlisted members and officers, FY 2008

	Army¹	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	DOD	Civilian²
Enlisted members						
<i>Race</i>						
White	72.7%	62.8%	83.2%	75.6%	72.5%	79.5%
Black	22.7%	21.3%	11.6%	17.8%	19.6%	12.7%
AIAN	1.0%	5.2%	1.2%	0.7%	2.0%	0.9%
Asian	3.5%	6.3%	2.3%	2.5%	3.8%	5.0%
NHPI	0.0%	1.0%	0.9%	1.2%	0.7%	0.4%
Two or more	0.0%	3.4%	0.8%	2.2%	1.4%	1.5%
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Hispanic	11.9%	16.0%	13.1%	5.5%	11.6%	17.9%
Officers						
<i>Race</i>						
White	81.3%	85.4%	89.4%	88.4%	85.2%	80.3%
Black	13.6%	8.2%	5.7%	6.5%	9.3%	8.6%
AIAN	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0.4%
Asian	4.6%	3.9%	2.6%	3.2%	3.8%	9.4%
NHPI	0.0%	0.3%	0.4%	0.3%	0.2%	0.3%
Two or more	0.0%	1.6%	1.2%	1.2%	0.9%	0.9%
<i>Ethnicity</i>						
Hispanic	5.5%	5.8%	6.5%	3.7%	5.1%	7.2%
<p>1. The Army does not report NHPI and “2 or more” as separate categories. For the Army there are only four mutually exclusive categories for race: White, Black, Asian, and AIAN.</p> <p>2. The civilian comparison groups are different for enlisted members and officers. The comparison group for enlisted members is made up of individuals between the ages of 18 and 44 in the civilian workforce. The comparison group for the officers is made up of college graduates between the ages of 21 and 49 in the civilian workforce.</p>						

Considering table 5, it becomes apparent that, when it comes to race and ethnicity, the active duty military components are quite diverse. Still, their populations do not amount to a “random draw” from the relevant civilian comparison group populations. Whites tend to be slightly “under-represented” in the enlisted ranks in all but one of the components (the Marine Corps being the exception).¹ At the same time, Whites tend to be “over-represented” among officers in all of the components. Blacks appear to be over-represented in the enlisted ranks in all of the components except the Marine Corps. They make up roughly 20 percent of all active duty enlisted personnel, but only 13 percent of the civilian comparison group. Among officers, the representation of Blacks is more

¹ We use the terms “under-represented” and “over-represented” to simply indicate whether a group makes up a lesser or greater proportion of the DOD population than of the relevant civilian population. This in no way implies that we have come up with the optimal proportions of various racial and ethnic groups that should be present in the military services.

mixed. They are over-represented in the Army, but under-represented in the Marine Corps and the Air Force.

Among the other racial groups, Asians tend to be under-represented among both enlisted personnel and officers; this is especially pronounced among officers. The only exception to this is among Navy enlisted personnel, where Asians make up more than 6 percent of the population as compared to 5 percent of the relevant civilian population. Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (when they are reported) are over-represented in the enlisted ranks but are neither over- nor under-represented among officers. Representation of American Indians and Alaskan Natives is as one would expect when compared with the civilian comparison groups, which is roughly 1 percent of the population. However, members of this group tend to be greatly over-represented among the enlisted ranks in the Navy (by a 5-to-1 margin). Individuals identifying themselves as multi-racial are over-represented in both the Navy and Air Force enlisted ranks and among Navy officers.

Finally, Hispanics are generally under-represented in the active duty components. They make up 11.6 percent of the enlisted ranks across the military, while accounting for nearly 18 percent of the population in the relevant civilian comparison group. They also make up 5 percent of the officers, while accounting for a little over 7 percent of the population of individuals in the relevant comparison group.

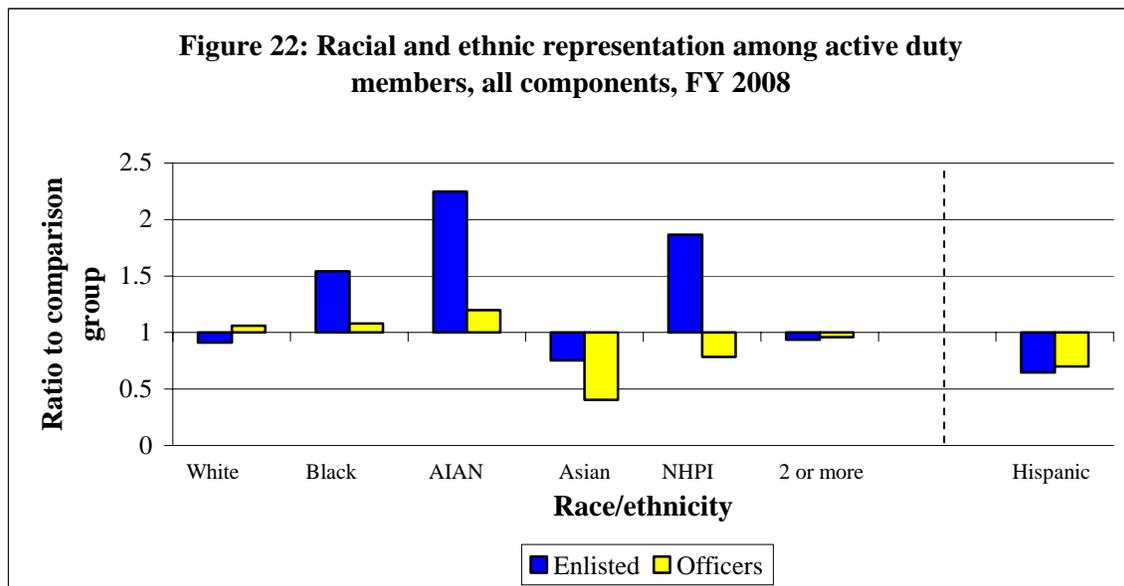


Figure 22 illustrates these results for the active duty military as a whole. Values greater than one indicate over-representation in the active duty components. Values between zero and one indicate under-representation.

Race and ethnicity of enlisted and officer accessions

Enlisted accessions. Figure 23 illustrates the racial composition of enlisted accessions for the various active duty components. Compared with the civilians, we see that

generally Whites are slightly under-represented among accessions across DOD, except for in the Navy, where they are greatly under-represented, and the Marine Corps, where they are significantly over-represented. As we discussed above, there are many more American Indians and Alaskan Natives and multi-racial individuals among the Navy accessions than one would expect given the numbers from the civilian comparison group. The Navy also has more Blacks than one would expect among their accessions, while the Marine Corps has fewer Blacks. Blacks are slightly over-represented among Army and Air Force accessions.

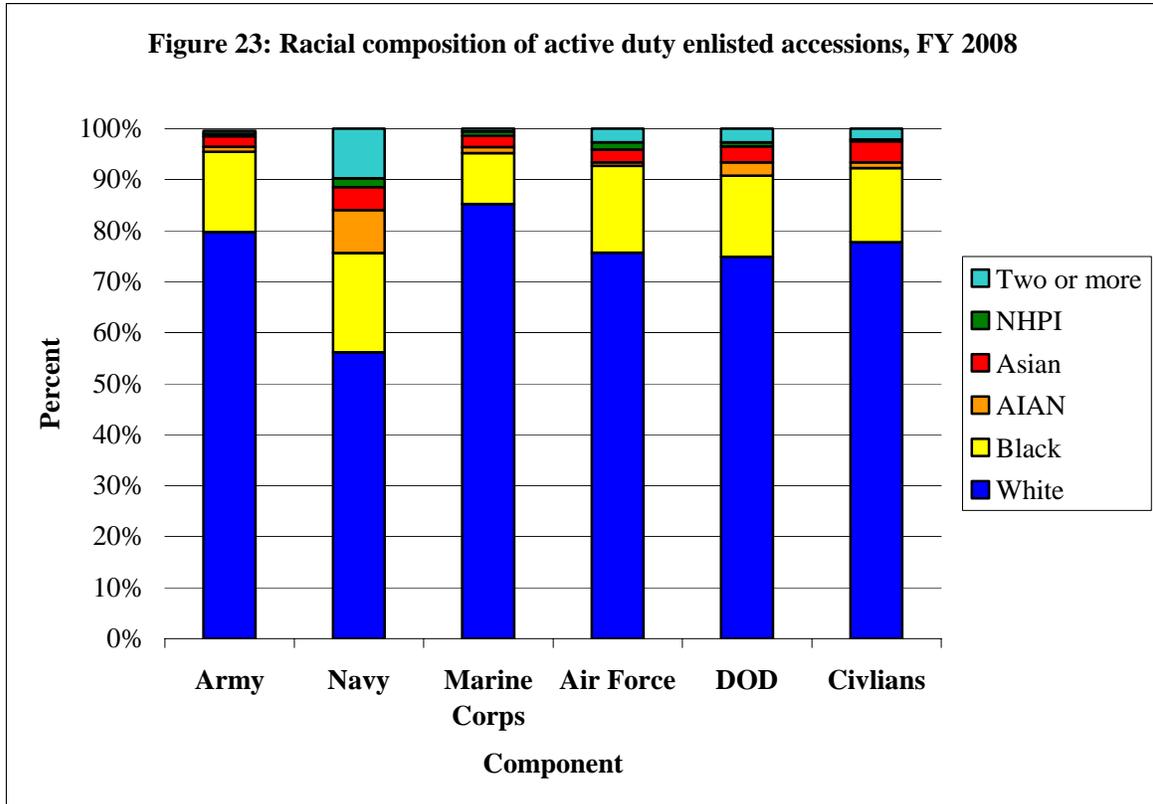
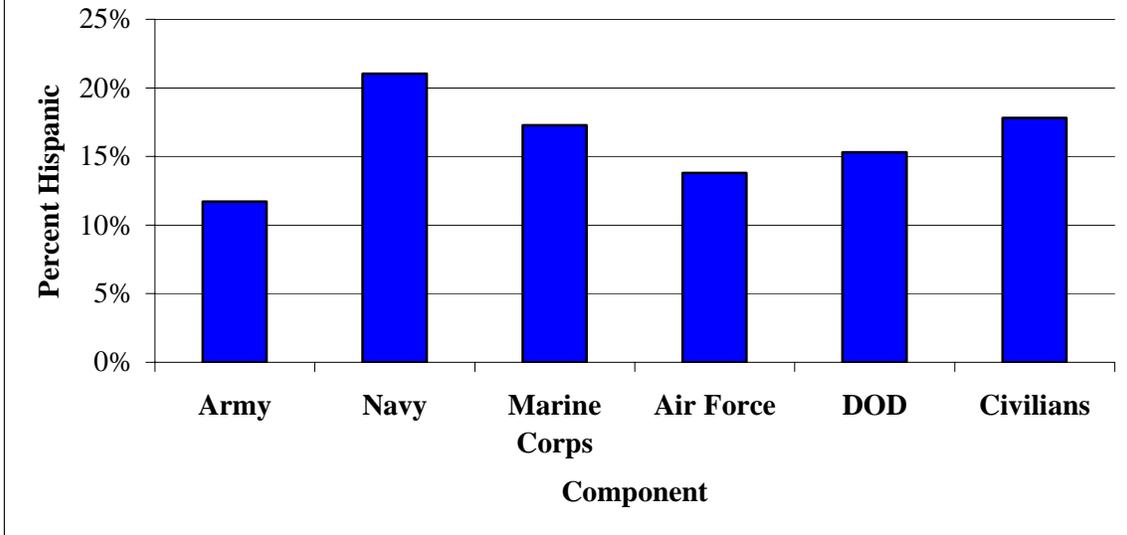


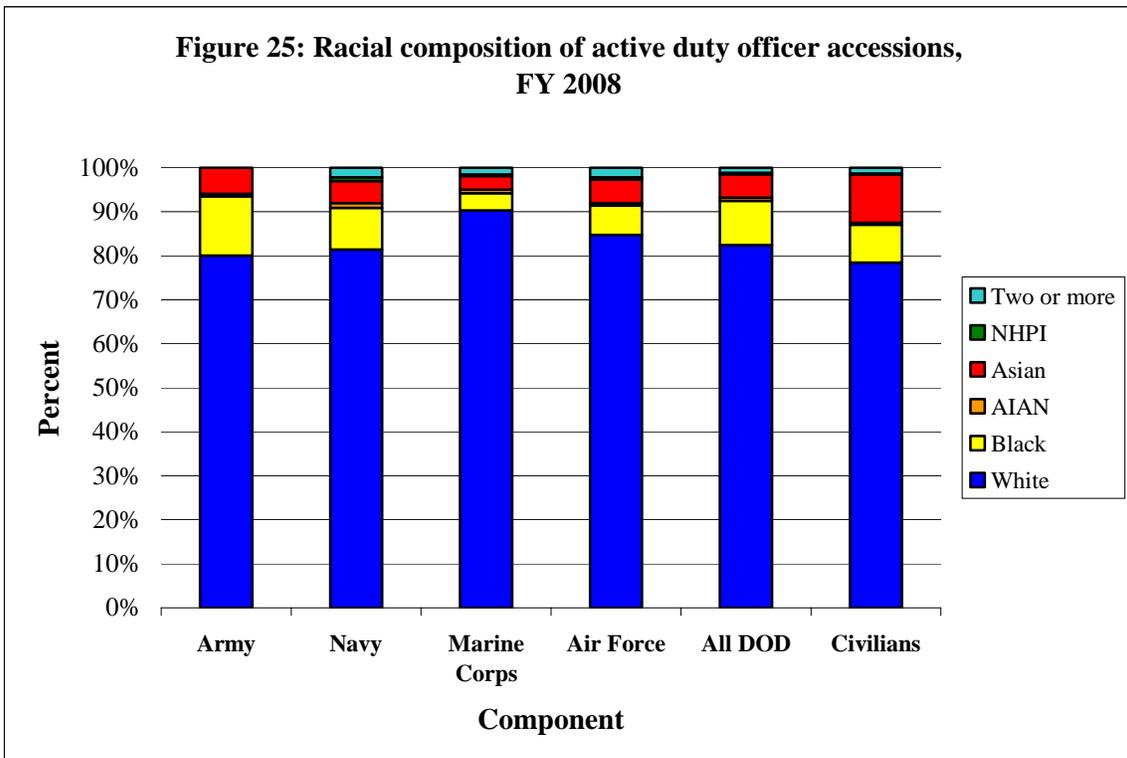
Figure 24 illustrates the representation of Hispanics among the enlisted accessions for the various active duty components. We find that Hispanics are somewhat under-represented among enlisted accessions, making up 15 percent of these accessions as compared to 18 percent of individuals in the relevant civilian population. The one major exception is the Navy, where Hispanics made up 21 percent of the new accessions in FY 2008. Also, in the Marine Corps, the representation of Hispanics is very close to their representation in the relevant civilian population.

Figure 24: The representation of Hispanics among active duty enlisted accessions, FY 2008



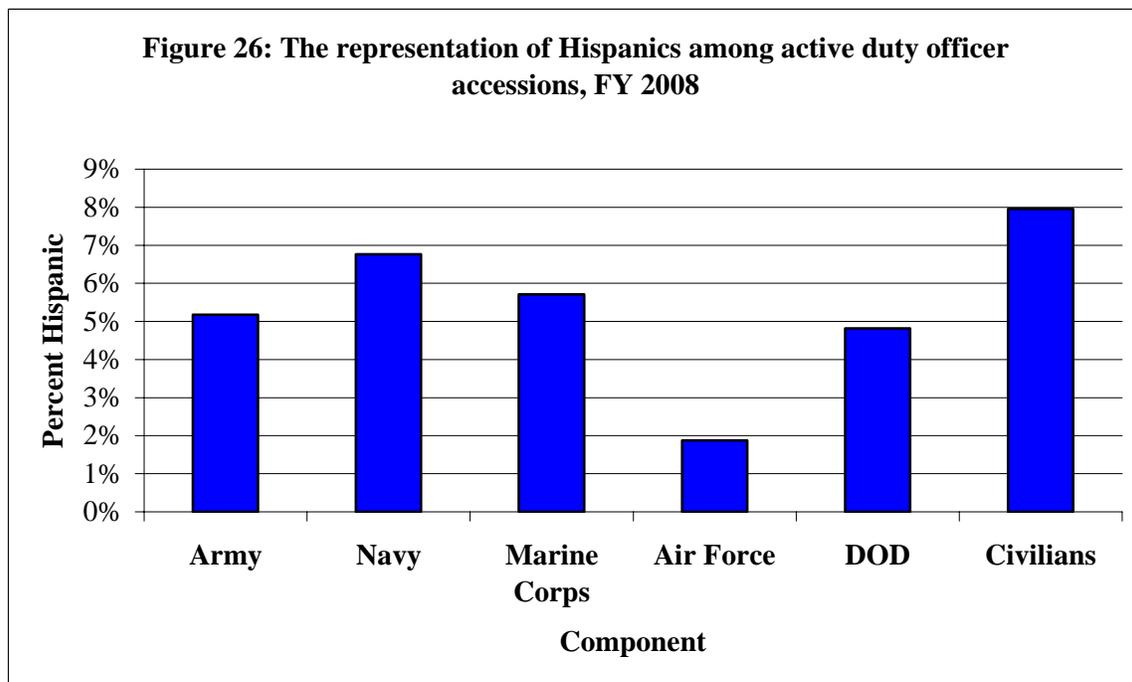
Officer accessions. Figure 25 illustrates the racial composition of officer accessions for the various active duty components.

Figure 25: Racial composition of active duty officer accessions, FY 2008



Whites are slightly over-represented among Army and Navy officer accessions and even more so among Marine Corps and Air Force officer accessions. Blacks are over-represented in the Army (13 percent versus 9 percent among the civilians) and under-represented in the Marine Corps (4 percent). Again, we find that Asians are quite under-represented across the components. They account for 11 percent of the relevant civilian population, but never more than 6 percent of any of the components' officer accessions.

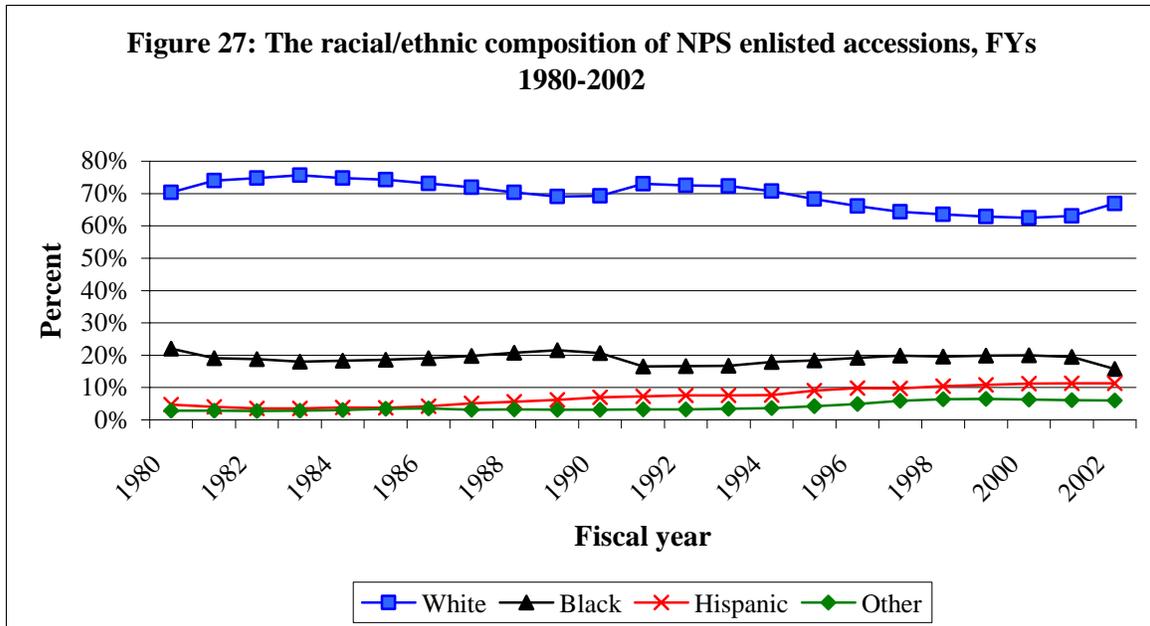
Figure 26 illustrates the representation of Hispanics among officer accessions for the various active duty components. According to the data, the Navy accessed more Hispanics, as a percentage of its total officer accessions, than the other components. But even in the Navy, Hispanics were under-represented in the population of officer accessions. Hispanics make up roughly 8 percent of all young college graduates, but only 6.75 percent of the Navy's officer accessions and a little less than 5 percent of all officer accessions across the four components.



Putting the racial/ethnic profile of enlisted accessions in historical context. Figure 27 presents how the racial/ethnic composition of active duty enlisted accessions evolved between FYs 1980 and 2002. There is a break in the time series between FYs 2002 and 2003 because DOD adopted a new way of reporting race and ethnicity in FY 2003. Prior to FY 2003, data on race and ethnic characteristics were used jointly to define demographic groups for reporting purposes. The most common set of mutually exclusive categories was the following:

- Non-Hispanic White
- Non-Hispanic Black
- Hispanic
- Other

The percentage of accessions identifying themselves as Non-Hispanic White fluctuated between 70 and 77 percent from FY 1980 through the mid-1990s and then fluctuated between 60 and 70 percent between the mid-1990s and FY 2002. The percentage of accessions describing themselves as Non-Hispanic Black generally fluctuated between 15 and 20 percent. The percentage of accessions describing themselves as Hispanic grew steadily throughout this time period from less than 4 percent in the early 1980s to a little more than 11 percent by FY 2002. The percentage of accessions describing themselves as another race also grew steadily over time from 3 percent in the early 1980s to over 6 percent by FY 2000.



Since FY 2002, the racial composition of enlisted accessions has remained relatively stable, although the percentage of recruits who identified themselves as Black fell from roughly 15 percent in FY 2003 to 13 percent in FYs 2005 and 2006. Since FY 2006 the percentage of recruits identifying themselves as Black has rebounded to nearly 16 percent. During these same years, the percentage of accessions identifying themselves as Hispanic has continued to grow to the point that it reached 15 percent in FY 2008 (see figure 28).

Race and ethnicity in the reserve components

Figure 29 presents the racial composition of current enlisted members and officers from the reserve components along with information on the racial compositions of their civilian comparison groups. Overall, the results are very similar to those found among the active duty members. Whites are slightly over-represented among the officers, while Blacks are over-represented among both the enlisted personnel and officers. Asians are under-represented among both groups, especially among the officers.

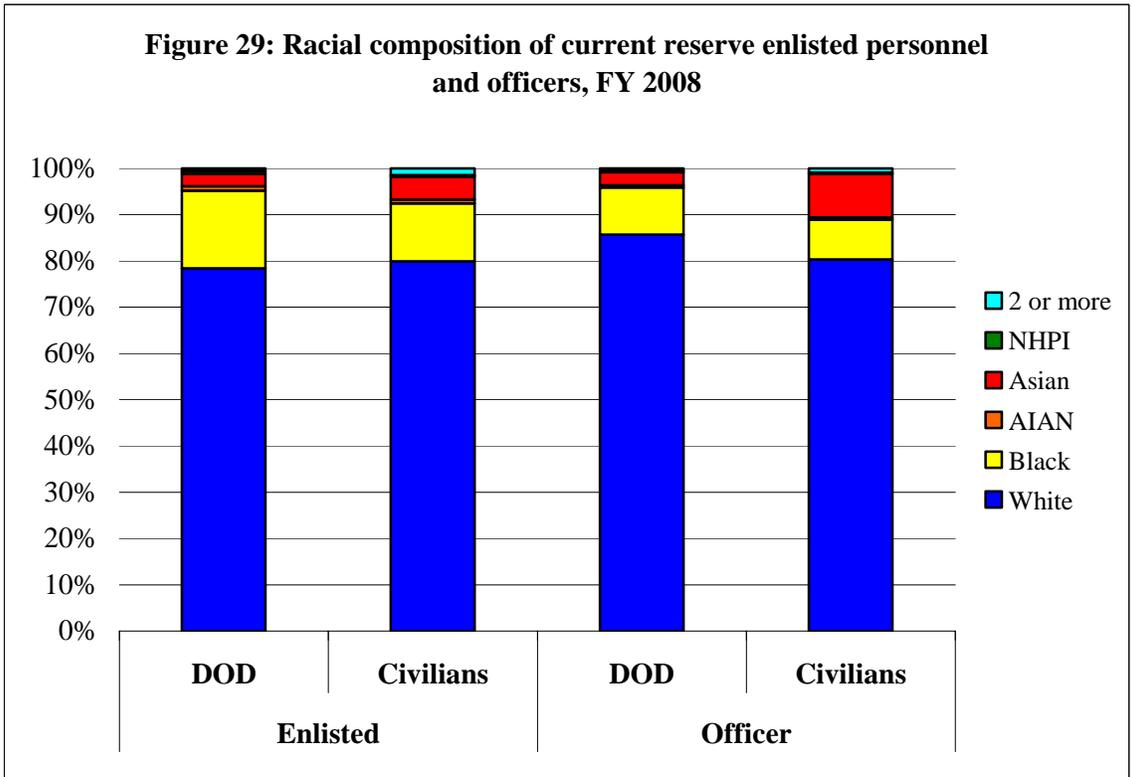
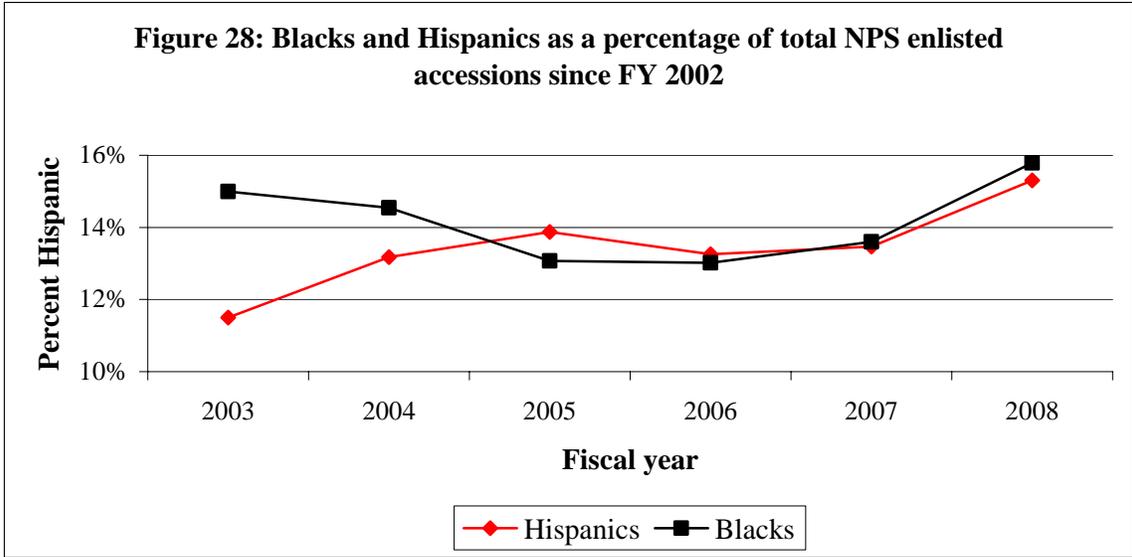


Figure 30 presents data on representation of Hispanics among reserve enlisted members and officers along with information on their representation in the relevant civilian comparison groups. Roughly 10 percent of enlisted members are Hispanic as compared to 17 percent in the relevant civilian comparison group. Among the officers, 5 percent are Hispanic as compared to 7 percent in the relevant civilian comparison group. These results are very similar to those found for active duty personnel.

Figure 30: The representation of Hispanics among current reserve enlisted personnel and officers, FY 2008

