

**Population
Representation
in the Military Services**

Fiscal Year 1996

December 1997

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the 23rd annual Department of Defense report on social representation in the US Military Services. The eight chapters and accompanying technical appendices provide data and comments on demographic, education, aptitude, and socioeconomic characteristics of applicants, new recruits, and enlisted and officer members of the Active and Reserve Components. This report covers fiscal year (FY) 1996, from October 1, 1995, to September 30, 1996.

The FY 1996 end-strength of the Active Component was almost 1.5 million and the Selected Reserve (comprising the Army National Guard, Army Reserve, Naval Reserve, Marine Corps Reserve, Air National Guard, and Air Force Reserve) totaled more than 920,000. Today's force is much smaller than in the early volunteer force years, and even reduced in comparison to the size in the late 1980s because of planned downsizing of the military. To sustain this reduced strength, in FY 1996 in excess of 179,000 new non-prior service (NPS) recruits were enlisted and almost 15,000 newly commissioned officers reported for active duty. Furthermore, more than 54,000 without and 98,000 with prior service experience were enlisted in the Selected Reserve. Over 15,000 officers entered the National Guard or Reserves this past fiscal year as well. The salient characteristics of these personnel are described in this summary.

FY 1996 Highlights

Age. The active duty military comprises a younger workforce than the civilian sector. Service policies and legal restrictions account for the relative youthfulness of the military. Eighty-nine percent of FY 1996 new active duty recruits were 18 through 24 years of age, compared to 35 percent of civilians within the military-age range of 17-35. Not quite half (44 percent) of the active duty enlisted force was 17-24 years old, in contrast to about 15 percent of the civilian labor force. Officers were older than those in the enlisted ranks (mean ages 34 and 27, respectively), but they too were younger than their civilian equivalents.

The data for enlisted personnel in the Selected Reserve similarly showed a more youthful composition than that of the civilian labor force. Among enlisted Reserve Component members, 62 percent of NPS accessions were between the ages of 17 and 19, but only 15 percent of civilians fell within this age subgroup. Of course, prior service Reserve Component enlisted accessions were older than those without prior service, but still younger than the civilian workforce (e.g., 66 percent versus 44 percent were under 30 years of age).

Race/Ethnicity. In FY 1996, Blacks were amply represented in the military overall. In the enlisted force, Blacks were overrepresented among NPS active duty accessions (19 percent) relative to the 18-24 year-old civilian population (14 percent). Hispanics, on the other hand, continued to be underrepresented, with 10 percent among NPS accessions compared with more than 14 percent for comparable civilians. FY 1996 representation of "Other" minority enlisted accessions (includes American Indians, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans) stood at 5 percent, the same as in the civilian population. Not only does active duty attract an overrepresentation of Blacks, but higher retention rates boosted their representation among Active Component enlisted members to 22 percent in contrast to the 12 percent of Blacks among 18-44 year-old civilians. With nearly 7 percent of active duty enlisted members counted as

Hispanic, this ethnic minority maintained its low proportion relative to the comparable civilian population (11 percent).

Over the years, Blacks have been overrepresented, whereas Hispanics and "Other" minorities have been underrepresented. The proportion of active duty accessions with Hispanic and "Other" backgrounds has increased during the past 10 years. The Navy and Marine Corps have generally recruited greater proportions of Hispanics than the Army and Air Force. The Marine Corps has retained more Hispanics, as evidenced by larger percentages of Hispanic Marines in the enlisted force during the past 10 years.

Minorities were not as populous among Active Component officers. Slightly more than 8 percent of newly commissioned officers were Black, 4 percent were Hispanic, and 6 percent were "Other" minorities. Among new and "seasoned" active duty officers combined, the percentages were about 7, 3, and 4, for the Black, Hispanic, and "Other" subgroups, respectively. Although Blacks comprised a much smaller proportion of officers than of enlistees, when viewed from the vantage point of college graduates in the civilian work force 21-49 years old (which is 7 percent Black, 4 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent "Other"), minorities appear to be proportionately represented and not on the decline among the officer corps.

Racial/ethnic findings for the Reserve Component were similar. Blacks were overrepresented, Hispanics were underrepresented, and "Others" were fairly represented among NPS and prior service Selected Reserve accessions. As with the Active Component, the proportions of minorities among Selected Reserve officers were smaller than for enlisted personnel, but the percentages were not out of line with appropriate civilian college graduate minority percentages.

This is the third year that the *Population Representation* report has examined warrant officers. When combined with commissioned officers, warrants account for 8 percent of active duty officer accessions (6 percent in the Selected Reserve) and 7 percent of the officer corps (9 percent in the Selected Reserve). Warrant officers do not serve in the Air Force. Warrant officers on active duty have greater minority representation than commissioned officers. Blacks, in particular, have higher representation among active warrant officers (13 percent warrants versus 7 percent commissioned officers). However, the same does not hold for Selected Reserve warrant officer accessions or officers; there are fewer minorities in the Reserve warrant ranks as compared to commissioned officers. Minority warrants are underrepresented with respect to civilian college graduates.

Gender. Women comprised 17 percent of NPS active duty accessions and 22 percent of NPS accessions to the Selected Reserve (15 percent of the numerically larger prior service segment of Reserve Component accessions were women) compared to 50 percent of 18- to 24-year-old civilians. Among enlisted members on active duty, 13 percent were women. Among comparable Selected Reservists, 14 percent were women. The representation of women among active duty officer accessions and within the officer corps was 18 and 14 percent, respectively. Similar percentages were seen among Selected Reserve officers (19 and 18 percent, accessions and officer corps, respectively).

Although women constitute a smaller proportion of the Total Force than men, their representation has grown greatly since the inception of the all-volunteer force. During recent

years, the Services have opened more jobs to women. With the introduction of current gender-integration policies in FY 1994, the percentage of Active Component women has increased by more than 1 percentage point.

Marital Status. In addition to the growing presence of women in the military, marriage among Servicemembers has also been on the rise. During the last 20 years, the enlisted force has moved from a predominantly single male establishment, to one with a greater emphasis on family. In FY 1974, approximately 43 percent of enlisted members were married. Today, a majority of soldiers, sailors, and airmen are married. Newcomers to the military are less likely than their civilian age counterparts to be married, but as time goes on military members come close to resembling the civilian sector in terms of marital status. Among enlisted members, 57 percent of those on active duty and 52 percent of the Reserve Component were married at the end of FY 1996. In the military, men were more likely to be married than women.

As one might expect, officers were more likely to be married (73 percent of the Active and the Reserve Component officer corps were married) than enlisted personnel, owing to their being older and financially more secure on average. Again, women officers were less likely than men to be married.

Education Level. The Military Services value and support the education of their members. The emphasis on education was evident in the data for FY 1996. Practically all active duty and Selected Reserve enlisted accessions had a high school diploma or equivalent, well above civilian youth proportions (79 percent of 18-24 year-olds). More important, 96 percent of active duty and 92 percent of Selected Reserve enlisted accessions held a regular high school diploma.

Given that most officers are required to possess at least a baccalaureate college degree upon or soon after commissioning and that a college education is part of the main commissioning sources (i.e., Service academies and ROTC), the academic standing of officers is not surprising. The fact that 93 and 98 percent (excluding those with unknown education credentials) among active duty officer accessions and officer corps, respectively, were degree holders (approximately 12 and 43 percent advanced degrees) is in keeping with policy and the professional status and expectations of officers. Likewise, 86 percent of Reserve Component officer accessions and over 89 percent of the total Reserve Component officer corps held at least a B.S. or B.A. degree, with 24 and 32 percent possessing advanced degrees, respectively.

Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) Scores. Levels of cognitive aptitude as measured by scores on the military's enlistment screening test (AFQT) were higher among enlisted military members than among the civilian youth population. Persons who score in Categories I and II (65 to 99th percentile) tend to be above average in trainability; those in Category III (31 to 64th percentile), average; those in Category IV (10 to 30th percentile), below average; and those in Category V (1 to 9th percentile), markedly below average. The percentage of recruits in Categories I and II was higher than for their civilian counterparts. Category III accessions greatly exceeded civilian group proportions, while the percentage of recruits in Category IV was much lower than in the civilian population. No enlistees were in Category V.

Test score data were not reported for officers because of test variation by Service and commissioning source. Tough entry requirements (e.g., SAT scores) for the commissioning sources as well as the college degree hurdle ensure quality among officers.

High-Quality Recruits. Level of education together with AFQT score is used to predict quality, encompassing persistence, training outcome, and job performance, in the enlisted ranks. Because high school diploma graduates are more likely to complete their contracted enlistment terms and higher AFQT-scoring recruits perform better in training and on the job, the Services strive to enlist AFQT Category I-III A (50th percentile and above on the AFQT) high school diploma graduates. The need to recruit and train greater proportions of individuals with above average aptitude is expected to increase with the redesign of jobs because of the defense drawdown and the addition of peacekeeping missions. The drawdown caused the Services to redesign jobs so that incumbents assume more diverse workloads and greater responsibilities. Incumbents must perform more tasks and tasks of greater complexity. The Services need more personnel of high-quality levels to meet these job demands. In FY 1996, active duty recruits dropped slightly in quality for all Services (63.8 percent in FY 1996 compared to the FY 1995 level of 65.6 percent of high-quality NPS active duty recruits).

Reading Ability. Like aptitude levels, reading levels were higher in the enlisted military than in the non-military sector. FY 1996 NPS active duty enlisted accessions had a mean reading level typical of an 11th grade student whereas the mean for civilian youth was within the 10th grade range.

Geographic Representation. During the last 10 years, the percentage of recruits from the North Central Region has decreased and the percentage from the South has increased. The geographic distribution of enlisted active accessions for FY 1996 shows that the South, and in particular the West South Central and South Atlantic Divisions of this region, continued to have the greatest representation. More than one-third of NPS accessions hailed from this region. In fact, the South was the only region to be slightly overrepresented among enlisted accessions compared to its proportion of 18-24 year-olds. The representation ratio (percentage of accessions divided by percentage of 18-24 year-olds from the region) for NPS active accessions from the South was 1.2, compared to 0.9 for the other regions (Northeast, North Central, and West).

Representation in Occupations. The Services need a steady supply of military-specific combat and combat support personnel. They rely heavily on infantrymen and guncrew specialists. In addition, the Services require technicians, mechanics, health care specialists, and other support personnel. Assignment to and training in one of the military's many occupational specialties, which carry varying cognitive and noncognitive demands, is part of the enlistment or commissioning package. Less than one-third (31 percent) of FY 1996 active duty enlisted personnel were in occupations such as infantry, craftsmen, and service and supply handling that require relatively lower AFQT levels. A plurality of enlisted members (42 percent) served in mid-level skill jobs in medical and dental, functional support and administration, and electrical/mechanical equipment repair. The remainder were in high-skill areas (21 percent), including electronic equipment repair, communications and intelligence, and other allied specialists, and in non-occupational categories (6 percent).

During the last two decades, assignment patterns for women have shifted to increase their presence in "non-traditional" jobs. Previously, most enlisted women were in either functional support and administration or medical/dental jobs. By FY 1996, 33 and 16 percent, respectively, served in these jobs. The proportion of women in combat-related occupations has been increasing since FY 1994, when current gender-integration policies became law. In FY 1993, before more combat-related positions were opened to women, 4.5 percent of women served in these occupations. In FY 1996, 6.8 percent of women served in combat-related positions. However, gender differences still exist. In FY 1996, the percentage of women in functional support and administration and in medical/dental occupations was two and a half times that of men.

In FY 1996, the proportions of Blacks and Whites were similar in five of the nine occupational areas (infantry, communications and intelligence, medical and dental, other allied specialists, and craftsmen). In two areas (electronic equipment repair and electrical/mechanical equipment repair) the proportions of Whites were higher. Blacks were still more heavily represented in the functional support and administration and the service and supply areas.

Most active duty officers serve in tactical operations (39 percent) with health care a distant second (19 percent). Assignment patterns differed between men and women. Greater percentages of men were in tactical operations (e.g., fighter pilots, combat commanders; 44 percent), whereas greater percentages of women were in health care (47 percent) and administration (14 percent). In FY 1996, racial and ethnic groups of officers generally had similar assignment patterns across occupational areas although there was a lower percentage of Blacks in tactical operations and a greater percentage of Blacks in administration and supply areas.

The occupational distributions among Active and Reserve Components vary somewhat. In FY 1996, 18 percent of the enlisted Active Component were in infantry and related occupations in contrast to 23 percent of enlisted Selected Reserves. The Reserve Component is somewhat "lighter" in technical occupational areas such as electronic and electrical/mechanical equipment repair, and communications and intelligence, and somewhat "heavier" in functional support and administration, and craftsmen. There were also some occupational differences between Active and Reserve officers; the Reserve Component had a smaller proportion in tactical operations but a larger proportion in health care. However, differences were greater between Services than between Active and Reserve members.

Socioeconomic Status. Socioeconomic representation in the volunteer force is a key interest because of concerns that our nation's defense might fall heavily on the poor and the underclass. DoD conducts the Survey of Recruit Socioeconomic Backgrounds annually among active duty and reserve enlisted accessions to assess this issue. Based on a summary of parents' education, employment status, occupation, and home ownership, FY 1996 data showed that both active and reserve recruits are primarily from middle and lower middle socioeconomic strata families. The high end of the distribution was not as well represented among the backgrounds of new recruits as in census data on parents of civilian youth ages 14 through 21.

Conclusions

The FY 1996 *Population Representation* report shows both the diversity and the quality of the total force. Men and women of various racial and ethnic groups of divergent social

backgrounds, from all over the United States serve our country as Active and Selected Reserve enlisted members and officers of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force. The mean cognitive ability and educational levels of these soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen are above the average of comparatively aged U.S. citizens.

Although the force is diverse, it is not an exact replica of society as a whole. The military way of life is more attractive to some members of society than to others. Among the enlisted ranks, the proportion of Blacks continues to exceed comparatively aged population counts. Other minority groups are underrepresented in the military, but the percentages of Hispanics and other non-Black minorities have risen over the years. Minorities comprise proportionally less of the officer corps; however, their representation levels are in keeping with minority statistics among the pool of college graduates from which second lieutenants and ensigns are drawn. Women continue to be underrepresented in the military, compared to their proportion in civilian society. However, accession statistics show that women are gaining numerical strength in spite of the recent drawdown of forces.

The all-volunteer force has overcome recruiting obstacles such as declines in numbers and ability within the youth population. It is now facing declining enlistment propensity, youth reactions to the drawdown and the pace of deployments, and budget constraints. Population representation is often affected by such external and internal events. Thus, there is a continuing need to track demographic changes and potential upheaval in the balance of military benefits and burdens that befall population segments of society. Attention to human resource issues beyond numerical representation is also necessary to manage recruiting and to promote readiness.

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