

**Population
Representation
in the Military Services**

Fiscal Year 1998

November 1999

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the 25th annual Department of Defense (DoD) report on social representation in the U.S. Military Services. The nine chapters and accompanying technical appendices provide data and comments on demographic, educational, 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) 1998, from October 1, 1997, to September 30, 1998.

The FY 1998 end-strength of the Active Component was slightly less than 1.4 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 881,000. Today's force is much smaller than in the early volunteer force years. To sustain this reduced strength, in FY 1998 approximately 180,000 non-prior service (NPS) recruits were enlisted and nearly 6,000 prior service recruits were returned to the ranks. Nearly 16,000 newly commissioned officers reported for active duty. Furthermore, almost 52,000 recruits without and more than 82,000 with prior military experience were enlisted in the Selected Reserve. In excess of 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 1998 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-seven percent of FY 1998 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. Almost half (45 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 counterparts, college graduates in the work force 21-49 years old.

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, 61 percent of NPS accessions were between the ages of 17 and 19, but only 16 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., 63 percent versus 45 percent were under 30 years of age).

Race/Ethnicity. In FY 1998, African Americans were equitably represented in the military overall. In the enlisted force, African Americans were overrepresented among NPS active duty accessions (20 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 15 percent for comparable civilians. FY 1998 representation of "Other" minority enlisted accessions (Native Americans, Asians, and Pacific Islanders) stood at more than 6 percent, slightly more than in the civilian population (5 percent). Not only did African Americans enlist in high proportions, but higher retention rates boosted their representation among Active Component enlisted members to 22 percent in contrast to the 12 percent of African Americans among 18-44 year-old

civilians in the workforce. With 8 percent of active duty enlisted members counted as Hispanic, this ethnic minority maintained its low proportion relative to the comparable civilian population (12 percent).

Over the years African Americans have been overrepresented, whereas Hispanics and “Other” minorities have been underrepresented. However, 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.

Almost 9 percent of newly commissioned officers were African American, 4 percent were Hispanic, and 8 percent were “Other” minorities. Within the active duty officer corps, the percentages were about 8, 3, and 5, for the African American, Hispanic, and “Other” subgroups, respectively. Although African Americans comprised a much smaller proportion of officers than of enlistees, when compared to college graduates in the civilian work force 21-49 years old (which is 8 percent African American, 4 percent Hispanic, and 7 percent “Other”), minorities appear to be proportionately represented and not on the decline within the commissioned officer corps.

Warrant officers account for 9 percent of active duty officer accessions and 7 percent of the officer corps. Warrant officers do not serve in the Air Force. Warrant officers on active duty have greater representation of African Americans and Hispanics than among commissioned officers (15 and 5 percent warrant officers versus 8 and 3 percent commissioned officers, respectively). Minority warrant officers are underrepresented in comparison with civilian college graduates.

Racial/ethnic findings for the Reserve Component were similar. African Americans were overrepresented, Hispanics were underrepresented, and “Others” were represented at population benchmark levels 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.

Warrant officers account for 7 percent of Selected Reserve duty officer accessions and 9 percent of the officer corps. Warrant officers do not serve in the Air National Guard or the Air Force Reserve. There are fewer minorities in the National Guard and Reserve warrant ranks as compared to commissioned officers. As with the Active Component, minority warrant officers in the Selected Reserve are underrepresented compared with civilian college graduates.

Gender. Women comprised 18 percent of NPS active duty accessions and 24 percent of NPS accessions to the Selected Reserve (16 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, 14 percent were women. Among comparable Selected Reservists, 15 percent were women. The representation of women among active duty officer accessions and within the officer corps was 19 and 14 percent, respectively. Similar percentages were seen among Selected Reserve officers (19 and 18 percent, accessions and officer corps, respectively).

Military women, across the enlisted force and officer corps in both the Active and Reserve Components, are more likely to be members of a racial/ethnic minority group than are military men. In fact, almost half of the women in the Active Component enlisted force are members of minority groups (48 percent).

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. Since the introduction of the current policies on women in the military 4 years ago (FY 1994), the percentage of Active Component women has increased by 2 percentage points.

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 25 years, the enlisted force has moved from a predominantly single male establishment to one with a greater emphasis on family. In FY 1973, approximately 40 percent of enlisted members were married. Today, a majority of soldiers, sailors, marines, 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 are more likely to be married than those in the civilian sector. Among enlisted members, 55 percent of those on active duty and 54 percent of the Reserve Component were married as of the end of FY 1998. In the military, men were more likely to be married than women.

As one might expect, owing to their being older and financially more secure on average, officers were more likely to be married (71 percent of the Active Component and 72 percent of the Reserve Component officer corps were married) than enlisted personnel. Again, women officers were less likely than their male colleagues 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 1998. 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, 94 percent of NPS active duty and 86 percent of NPS 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 colleges and universities are among the Services' main commissioning sources (i.e., Service academies and ROTC), the academic standing of officers is not surprising. The fact that 95 percent of active duty officer accessions and 98 percent of the officer corps (both excluding those with unknown education credentials) were degree holders (approximately 14 and 44 percent advanced degrees) is in keeping with policy and the professional status and expectations of officers. Likewise, 85 percent of Reserve Component officer accessions and 90 percent of the total Reserve Component officer corps held at least a bachelor's degree, with 24 and 32 percent possessing advanced degrees, respectively.

Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) Scores. Enlisted members tend to have higher cognitive aptitude than the civilian youth population, as measured by scores on the military's enlistment test. Persons who score in Categories I and II (65th to 99th percentiles) tend to be above average in trainability; those in Category III (31st to 64th percentiles), average; those in Category IV (10th to 30th

percentiles), below average; and those in Category V (1st to 9th percentiles), markedly below average. The percentage of recruits in Categories I to II (39 percent) was higher than for their civilian counterparts (35 percent). Category III accessions (60 percent) greatly exceeded civilian group proportions (34 percent), while the percentage of recruits in Category IV (1 percent) was much lower than in the civilian population (21 percent). No enlistees were in Category V, whereas 10 percent of the civilian population scores in this category.

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. To predict recruit quality in areas such as persistence, training outcome, and job performance in the enlisted ranks, the Services use level of education and AFQT scores. 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 recent drawdown led 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 1998, the proportion of NPS high-quality recruits ranged from 57 percent in the Army to 74 percent in the Air Force.

Reading Ability. Like aptitude levels, reading levels were higher in the enlisted military than in the non-military sector. FY 1998 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 2 years, the percentage of recruits from the Northeast and North Central Regions has decreased slightly with a corresponding increase in the percentage of recruits from the South and West Regions. The geographic distribution of enlisted active accessions for FY 1998 shows that the South, and in particular the South Atlantic and West South Central Divisions of this region, continued to have the greatest representation. More than one-third of NPS accessions hailed from the South. In fact, this 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 0.8 for the Northeast and North Central and 1.0 for the West.

Representation in Occupations. The Services need a steady supply of 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 (29 percent) of FY 1998 active duty enlisted personnel were in occupations such as infantry, craftsmen, and service and supply handling. A plurality of enlisted members (43 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 specialties, or in non-occupational categories (7 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 and dental jobs. By FY 1998, smaller proportions (33 and 17 percent, respectively) served in these jobs. Women were two and a half times more likely than men to serve in the “traditional” female occupations, functional support and administration and medical/dental specialties. Women are excluded from infantry and other assignments in which the primary mission is to physically engage the enemy. However, the direct ground combat rule allows women to serve on aircraft and ships engaged in combat. The proportion of women serving in such operational positions (i.e., gun crews and seamanship specialties) in FY 1998 was 4 percent. In contrast, the percentage of men in these occupations was nearly 19 percent. Service Reserve units have greater representation of women (20 percent) than their National Guard (11 percent) counterparts. This is due to the National Guard’s heavier combat arms mix which precludes women from many of the positions in those units.

In FY 1998, the proportions of African Americans and Whites were similar in four of the nine occupational areas (communications and intelligence, medical and dental, other allied specialists, and craftsmen). In three areas (infantry, electronic equipment repair, and electrical/mechanical equipment repair) the proportions of Whites were higher. African Americans were still more heavily represented in the functional support and administration and the service and supply areas.

The most common occupational area for active duty officers was tactical operations (e.g., fighter pilots, combat commanders; 38 percent) with health care a distant second (19 percent). Assignment patterns differed between men and women. Greater percentages of men were in tactical operations (43 percent), whereas greater percentages of women were in health care (46 percent) and administration (12 percent). In FY 1998, racial and ethnic groups of officers generally had similar assignment patterns across occupational areas although there was a lower percentage of African Americans in tactical operations and a greater percentage of African Americans in administration and supply areas.

The occupational distributions among Active and Reserve Components varied somewhat. In FY 1998, 17 percent of the enlisted Active Component were in infantry and related occupations in contrast to 19 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 slightly smaller proportions in tactical operations and engineering and maintenance but slightly larger proportions in health care, administration, and supply. 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 1998 data showed that both active and reserve recruits are primarily from families in the middle and lower middle socioeconomic strata. 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 14–21.

U.S. Coast Guard. New to the report this year is a chapter on representation in the U.S. Coast Guard. The Coast Guard is the smallest of the Armed Services. It is a part of the Department of Transportation during peacetime, but during times of war it becomes a part of the Department of Defense. Compared to the other Services, the Coast Guard is very similar on demographic variables, with slightly greater proportions of males and Whites.

Conclusions

The FY 1998 *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 every state in our country, serve as Active and Selected Reserve enlisted members and officers of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The mean cognitive ability and educational levels of these soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen are above the average of comparably 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 African Americans continues to exceed comparably aged population counts. Hispanics are underrepresented in the military, but their percentages 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 is now facing increased recruiting goals with low enlistment propensity (compared to the early 1990s), ambiguous youth reactions to humanitarian and peacekeeping missions 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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