

Section V: Non-citizen recruits

Non-citizens with green cards are permitted to join the enlisted force, but all regular officers must be citizens. In this section, we focus on the non-citizen enlisted population of the active components of the Air Force, the Army, the Navy, and the Marine Corps. As a large portion of the growth in the U.S. population is from immigration, non-citizens represent a growing source of potential military recruits. Non-citizens are also a potential source of language and cultural skills that are of strategic importance to military operations outside of the U.S.

In the next subsection, we begin our analysis with statistics on the number of non-citizens enlisted in each service. We follow this with a short discussion on the non-citizen population living in the U.S. and the number of non-citizens recruited into the military over the past decade.²⁶

Non-citizens in the enlisted force

In June of 2010, approximately 16,500 non-citizens were serving in the military, making up 1.4 percent of the enlisted force.²⁷ In figures 29 and 30, we see that both the number and the share of non-citizens in the enlisted force declined between FY02 and FY10. The decline in the number of non-citizens is the result of fewer non-citizen accessions (see next subsection) and the effect of the FY02 executive order, which reduced the time non-citizen servicemembers had to wait to apply for citizenship to 1 day of honorable service, on servicemembers' citizenship status.²⁸ McIntosh and Sayala (2011) show that (1) the time it took to become a citizen fell for those non-citizens that accessed around the time of the executive order and (2) that the number of non-citizens obtaining citizenship increased.²⁹ These factors, when combined with fewer non-citizen accessions, result in fewer non-citizen servicemembers in each fiscal year.

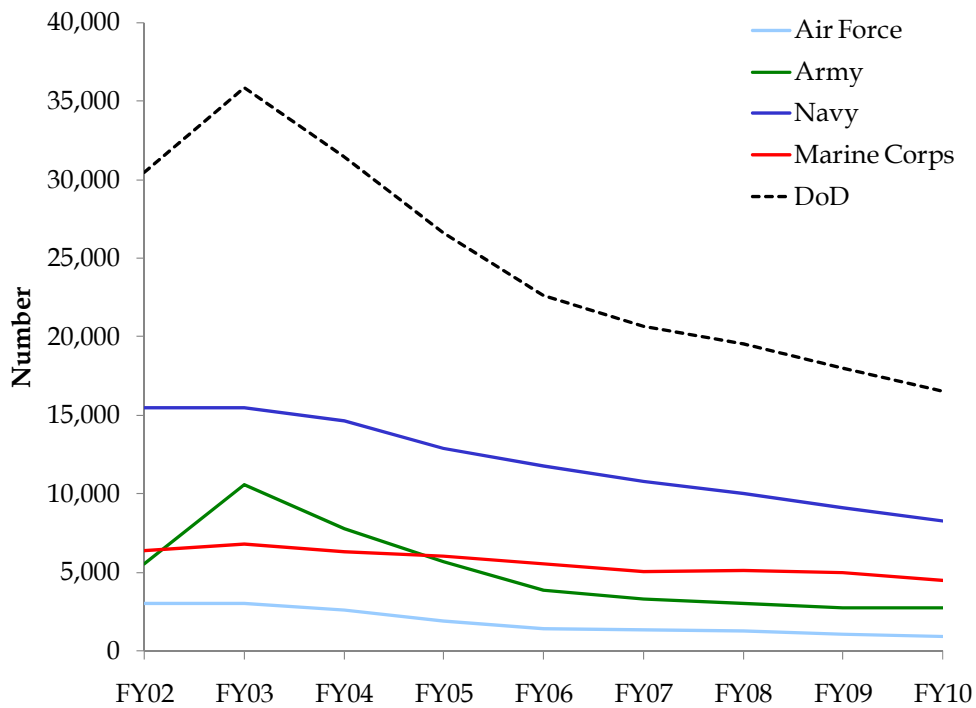
²⁶ CNA published a report on non-citizens for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Accession Policy: Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011. This report includes an analysis of non-citizen accessions' first-term attrition rates, their likelihood of becoming a U.S. citizen, and the time it takes a non-citizen to naturalize.

²⁷ These are calculations using DMDC non-citizen counts from June 2010.

²⁸ Executive Order no. 13,269, *Expedited Naturalization of Aliens and Noncitizen Nationals Serving in an Active-Duty Status During the War on Terrorism* (June 2002).

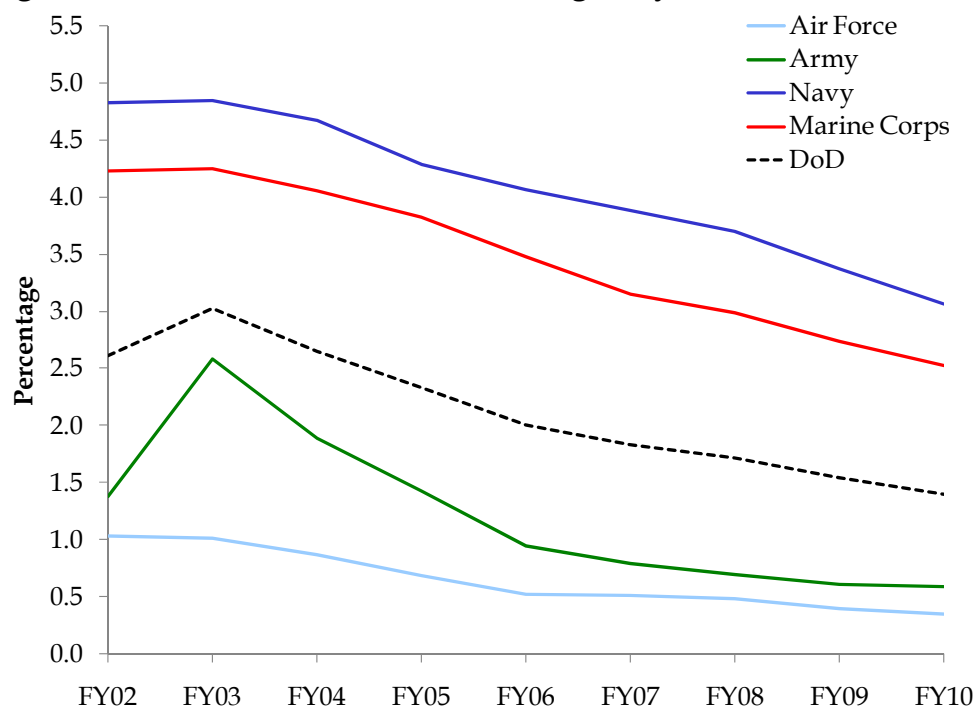
²⁹ Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011.

Figure 29. Number of enlisted non-citizens, by service, FY02–FY10



Note: Data are DMDC counts from June of each year. Prior to FY02, non-citizen counts for the Army are not available.

Figure 30. Non-citizen share of endstrength, by service, FY02–FY10



Note: Data are DMDC counts from June of each year. Prior to FY02, non-citizen counts for the Army are not available.

Of all the services, the Navy had the highest number and percent of non-citizens – in FY10, its share of non-citizens was twice that of the total DoD force. The Air Force has the fewest non-citizens and the smallest share of all the services. In FY10, only 0.4 percent of those in the enlisted Air Force were non-citizens. Relative to the other services, the Marine Corps has the second largest share of non-citizens.

Non-citizen accessions

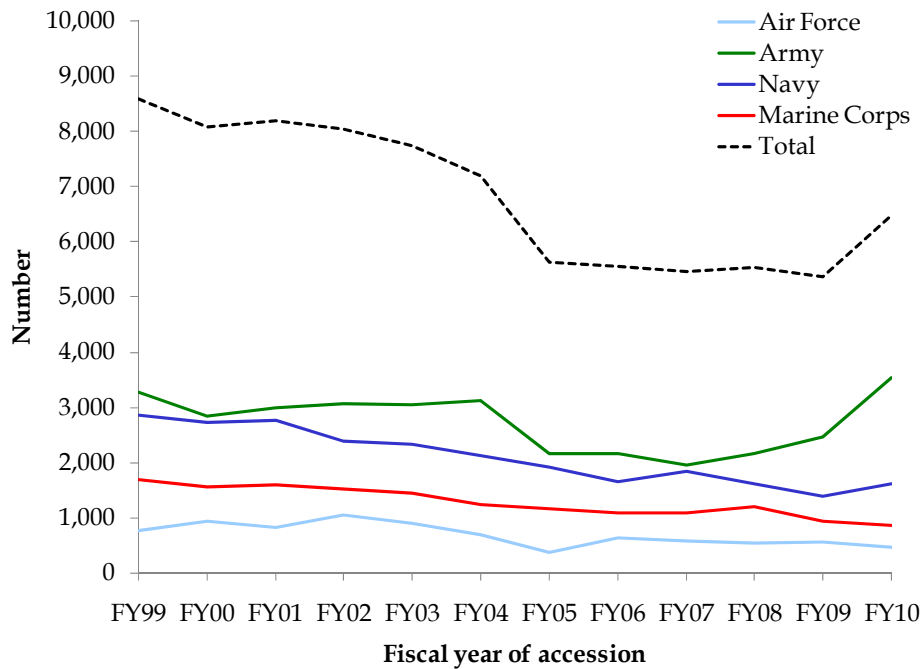
To be eligible to serve in the U.S. military, non-citizens must be legal permanent residents, have at least a high school diploma, and speak English well enough to meet the individual service requirements. There are an estimated 1.2 million non-citizens – half of which are male – between the ages of 18 and 29 (target recruiting ages) in the population who may be eligible to enlist.³⁰

Recruitable non-citizens living in the U.S. possess an array of language and cultural skills. Half of non-citizens eligible for service are from the Americas. Other notable regions of origin include Asia (17 percent), Europe (12 percent), India or Pakistan (9 percent), and the Middle East (3 percent). An estimated 85 percent of the eligible non-citizen population speaks a foreign language at home. Spanish speakers make up 39 percent of non-citizens, and Spanish is the most common foreign language spoken. Chinese is spoken by 5 percent of non-citizens, and another 10 percent speak another Asian or Pacific Island language. Other notable languages include those spoken in India (spoken by 15 percent of non-citizens) and the Middle East (spoken by 4 percent of non-citizens).

Figures 31 and 32 show the non-citizen accession levels and percentages, respectively, for each service from FY99 to FY10. During this period, some 80,000 non-citizens enlisted across all four services, accounting for 4 percent of all accessions. The Army accessed the most non-citizens, and the Air Force accessed the fewest. Across all services, the number of non-citizen accessions per fiscal year declined by over 2,100 recruits (approximately 34 percent) between FY99 and FY10.

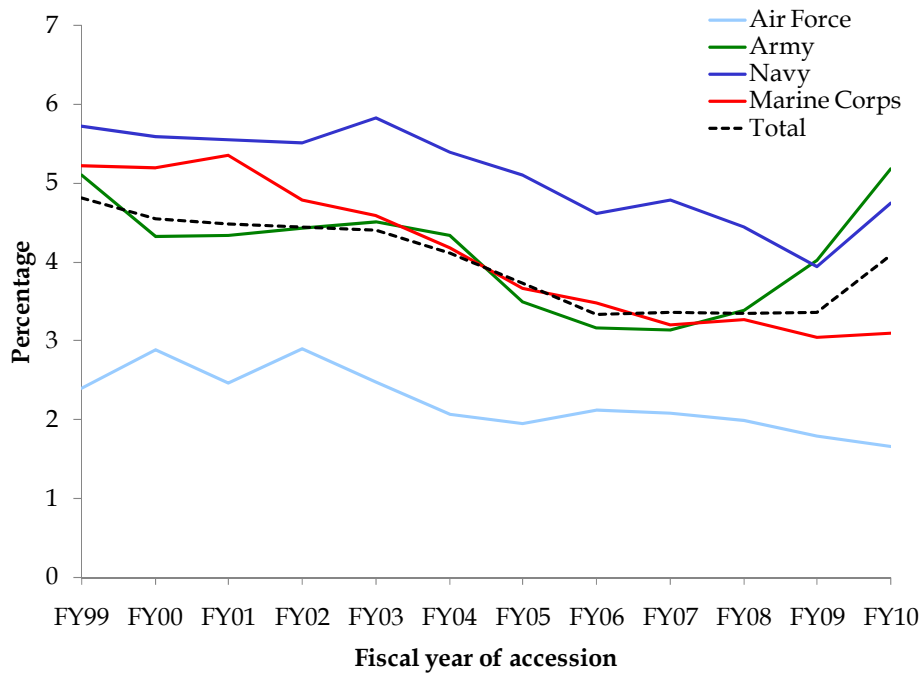
³⁰ These and all estimates and statistics presented in the remainder of this section are from Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011.

Figure 31. Number of non-citizen accessions, by service and fiscal year of accession, FY99-FY10



Note: The figure is from Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011.

Figure 32. Non-citizen share of accessions, by service and fiscal year of accession, FY99-FY10



Note: The figure is from Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011.

The Navy has the largest share of non-citizen accessions at roughly 5.2 percent over the entire period. The Army and the Marine Corps follow, each with approximately a 4 percent share. The Air Force share is 2.3 percent. Across all services, the percentage of non-citizen accessions declined about 15 percent between FY99 and FY10. The Marine Corps and the Air Force showed the steepest declines, at 41 and 31 percent, respectively. The Navy's percentage of non-citizen accessions declined roughly 17 percent, but the Army's *grew* by almost 2 percent.

Citizenship status at accession

Non-citizenship status varies over time, as servicemembers can apply for and become U.S. citizens while serving. Today, non-citizens can apply for citizenship after 1 day of honorable service.³¹ Since we are interested in comparing those who enlist as non-citizens with those who enlist as U.S. citizens, we define non-citizens based on a recruit's *citizenship status at accession* rather than citizenship status at a particular point in time. Therefore, a non-citizen refers to someone who was not a U.S. citizen when he or she enlisted.

For the group of non-citizens who entered the military between FY99 and FY08, we show the percentages of non-citizen and citizen recruits with selected demographic and service-related characteristics in table 3. Non-citizen recruits are more likely to be female, minority, older, married or with dependents than citizen recruits, but they are less likely to be "high quality" or have an enlistment waiver at accession. Table 3 also shows the percentage of non-citizen and citizen recruits who join each of the four services. A larger percentage of non-citizens join the Navy (30.9 percent) than citizen recruits (22.9 percent), while a smaller percentage of non-citizen recruits join the Air Force (10.8 percent compared to 18.7 percent). The differences between the percentage of non-citizens who join the Army or the Marine Corps is not statistically different from the percentage of citizen recruits.

³¹ Executive Order no. 13,269, *Expedited Naturalization of Aliens and Noncitizen Nationals Serving in an Active-Duty Status During the War on Terrorism* (June 2002).

Table 3. Characteristics of FY99–FY08 accessions, by citizenship status

	Citizenship status at accession	
	Non-Citizen	Citizen
Service-related characteristics (%)		
Army*	39.7	39.0
Air Force	10.8	18.7
Navy	30.9	22.9
Marine Corps*	18.6	19.0
High quality	46.2	59.6
Waiver recipient	0.2	0.3
Demographic characteristics (%)		
Female	19.4	16.8
Non-white	56.0	20.7
Married or with dependents	17.9	11.4
18 years old or younger	25.8	37.0
19 years old	18.5	22.4
20 to 24 years old	37.1	33.5
25 years old or older	18.6	7.1
High school dropout*	3.3	3.1
GED recipient	4.0	8.4
High school diploma graduate	81.4	82.0
Adult education graduate	4.0	3.1
Two-year college	7.2	3.4

Note: Except where noted with an asterisk (*), the difference between non-citizens and citizens is statistically significant at the 5-percent level. Data are from Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011.

This concludes the special focus section on non-citizens in the U.S. military services, and the Population Representation in the Military Services 2010 summary report. For more analysis on non-citizens in the enlisted U.S. military see the CNA report.³²

³² See Molly F. McIntosh and Seema Sayala, with David Gregory. *Non-Citizens in the Enlisted U.S. Military*. CNA Research Memorandum D0025768.A2/Final, November 2011. This report includes an analysis of non-citizen accessions' first-term attrition rates, their likelihood of becoming a U.S. citizen, and the time it takes a non-citizen to naturalize.