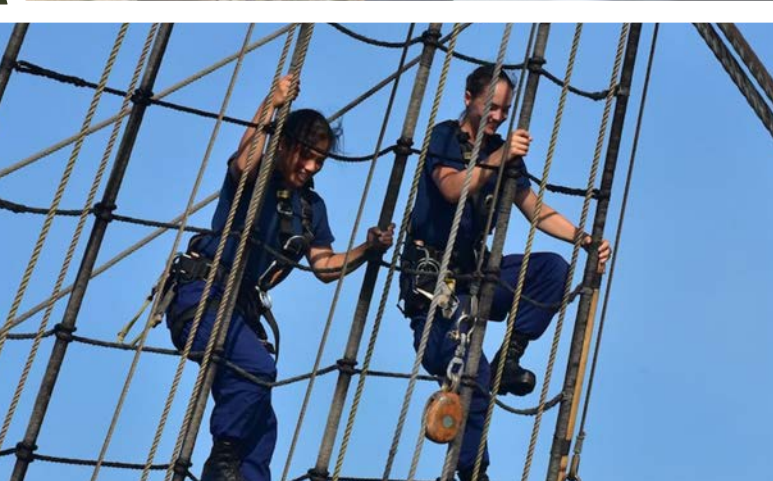


DACOWITS



Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services

2023 Annual Report



Cover photos

First row, left

A Civil Affairs candidate from the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, low crawls under barbed wire on a Leader Reaction Course as part of a Civil Affairs Assessment and Selection course at Camp Mackall, North Carolina February 5, 2023. The course assessed candidates for trainability and suitability to attend the Civil Affairs Team Leader or the Civil Affairs Noncommissioned Officer pathway and allowed the Civil Affairs Proponent to select candidates for attributes and competencies required to be a member of a Civil Affairs Team. (U.S. Army photo by K. Kassens)

First row, right

Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Theresa Scheff stands watch on the forecastle aboard the guided missile destroyer USS Dewey during an underway replenishment with the fleet replenishment oiler USNS Big Horn while operating in the South China Sea, Oct. 23, 2023. (Photo by U.S. Navy Petty Officer 1st Class Gregory Johnson)

Second row, left

Marines fold the U.S. flag during the 81st annual Evening Colors ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Sept. 20, 2023. The ceremony is held to recognize the base's history and legacy. President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicated the installation on Sept. 25, 1942, in honor of World War I Marine Corps Maj. Gen. Joseph H. Pendleton, who had long advocated for the establishment of a West Coast training base. (Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Corporal Mary Jenni)

Second row, right

Schriever Space Force Base, Colo. -- Charles Beames, Forbes Magazine Contributor, interviews service members of the 2nd Space Operations Squadron during his visit to Schriever SFB, CO 7 Sep 23. The purpose of the visit was to learn about 2 SOPS mission and the significance of the of the global positioning satellite system. The squadron performs the command and control mission for the Global Positioning System satellite constellation. (U.S. Space Force Photo by Tiana Williams)

Third row, left

Air Force Tech. Sgt. Jasmine Schaffer and Master Sgt. Kenneth Kirchoff assist pilots with deploying a life raft during survival, evasion, resistance and escape training in St. Clair Shores, Mich., Oct. 15, 2023.

Third row, right

Coast Guard Academy cadets climb the rig aboard the Coast Guard cutter Eagle during training in the Atlantic Ocean, July 27, 2023. (Photo by U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officer John Masson)

The estimated cost of this report or study for the Department of Defense is approximately \$1,128,000 in Fiscal Years 2023–2024. This includes \$485,000 in expenses and \$643,000 in DoD labor.

List of DACOWITS Members

Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman (Chair)
Vice Admiral Robin R. Braun, USN, Retired (Vice Chair)
Colonel Nancy P. Anderson, USMC, Retired
Captain Kenneth J. Barrett, USN, Retired
Dr. (Captain) Catherine W. Cox, USNR, Retired
Dr. Trudi C. Ferguson
Sergeant Major Robin C. Fortner, USMC, Retired (departed December 2022)
Colonel Many-Bears Grinder, AGR, Retired (departed August 2023)
Command Master Chief Octavia D. Harris, USN, Retired
Ms. Robin S. Kelleher
Ms. Marquette J. Leveque, USN Veteran
Lieutenant General Kevin W. Mangum, USA, Retired
Sergeant Major Caprecia A. Miller, USA, Retired (departed March 2023)
Ms. Ann M. Norris (departed March 2023)
Rear Admiral Mary P. O'Donnell, USCGR, Retired (departed March 2023)
Brigadier General Jarisse J. Sanborn, USAF, Retired
Honorable (Colonel) Dawn E.B. Scholz, USAF, Retired
Brigadier General Allyson R. Solomon, ANG, Retired
Dr. (Colonel) Samantha A. Weeks, USAF, Retired

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Signature Pages

Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
2023 Annual Report Signature Page
December 5, 2023

We, the appointed members of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, do hereby submit the results of our findings and offer our recommendations to the Secretary of Defense for consideration.



Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman
Chair



Vice Admiral Robin R. Braun
USN, Retired
Vice Chair



Lieutenant General Kevin W. Mangum
USA, Retired
Recruitment and Retention (R&R)
Subcommittee Chair



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Employment and Integration (E&I)
Subcommittee Chair



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Signature Pages

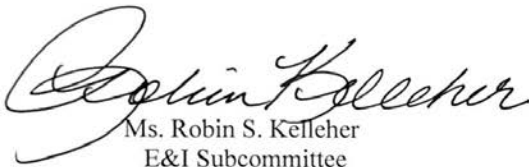
Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
2023 Annual Report Signature Page
December 5, 2023



Dr. (Captain) Catherine W. Cox
USNR, Retired
WB&T Subcommittee



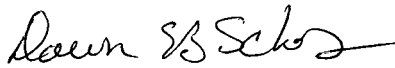
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Dr. (Colonel) Samantha A. Weeks
USAF, Retired
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Prior to their departure, Sergeant Major (Retired) Robin C. Fortner, USMC; Colonel (Retired) Many-Bears Grinder, AGR; Sergeant Major (Retired) Caprecia A. Miller, USA; Ms. Ann M. Norris; and Rear Admiral (Retired) Mary P. O'Donnell, USCGR, contributed to the work and recommendations of the Committee.

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A photograph of a female soldier in camouflage uniform aiming a rifle. She is wearing safety glasses and earplugs. The scene is outdoors in a sandy area. A red circular graphic element is in the top right corner.

A New Jersey Army National Guard soldier participates in a weapons qualification at Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J., Oct. 8, 2023.

Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS) (hereafter referred to as the “Committee” or “DACOWITS”) was established in 1951 with a mandate to provide the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) with independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. Since its inception, the Committee’s charter has expanded to include a focus on recruitment and retention, employment and integration, and the well-being and treatment of U.S. servicewomen. The Committee is authorized up to 20 members who are appointed by the SecDef and serve in a voluntary capacity for a 4-year term, which is renewed annually.

Each year, the SecDef, via the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), provides the Committee study topics to examine during the following year. In 2023, DACOWITS studied seven topics. The Committee gathered information from multiple sources in examining these topics—for example, briefings and written responses from Department of Defense (DoD) and Service-level military representatives, data collected from focus groups and interactions with Service members during installation visits, and peer-reviewed literature.

Based on the data collected and analyzed, DACOWITS offers 26 recommendations. Each recommendation, along with a brief synopsis of the supporting reasoning for each, follows. A detailed description of the reasoning supporting each

recommendation is provided in the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

DACOWITS 2023 Recommendations

Recruitment and Retention

Recruitment Initiatives to Increase Women’s Propensity to Serve

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review and revise their enlisted accessions programs to incorporate best practices from the Army’s Future Soldier Preparatory Course to increase the pool of qualified applicants.

Synopsis

Recruitment for the Military Services is at its lowest since the implementation of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. Three major factors disqualify candidates from joining the military—inability to meet academic, physical fitness, or body fat standards. DACOWITS commends the Army for its implementation of an innovative program to increase the pool of propensed, yet unqualified or underqualified, recruits to join the Army while maintaining current academic and physical fitness accession standards. The Future Soldier Preparatory Course (FSPC) prepares potential recruits academically and physically prior to basic

training through a 3-week course. The Navy began a Future Sailor Preparatory Course in 2023, modeled after the Army's program. DACOWITS believes the other Military Services would benefit from adopting similar programs as a way to increase the recruitable population, especially in today's challenging recruiting environment.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should assign an Assistant Secretary of Defense-level official to coordinate and synchronize Department of Defense and Service efforts to increase and inspire our Nation's youths' propensity to serve.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should implement the military service recommendations published by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service's Final Report, "Inspired to Serve," to more effectively educate and inspire America's youth to serve in the Military Services.

Synopsis

DACOWITS remains concerned about the declining numbers of young adults eligible and interested in military service. The DoD Office of People Analytics (OPA) reports that, in 2020, 23 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds met minimum service qualifications without a waiver. In response to these recent trends in propensity and eligibility to serve, DACOWITS believes recruitment rates could be improved with coordinated

and synchronized efforts to encourage propensity and inspiration for service among America's youth. DACOWITS also endorses implementation of the military service recommendations in the "Inspired to Serve" report from the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service (NCMNPS) as part of this effort.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to develop and implement consistent policies regarding the accession of single custodial parents, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity for potential single custodial parent recruits—especially women—to serve, in order to increase the pool of qualified recruits.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the impacts of declining recruitment rates across the Military Services and encourages the Services to reduce unnecessary barriers for potential recruits. In 2016, DACOWITS recommended the Military Services adopt a policy to increase the accession of single custodial parents. Without these policies or waivers, parents are required to surrender full legal custody of their children to join the military. While some progress has been made since 2016, policies on single custodial parent accessions still vary widely across the Military Services, and the Committee believes they continue to be unnecessarily restrictive. Barriers to single custodial parent accessions disproportionately affect potential female recruits because women

are much more likely to be single custodial parents than men. Implementing consistent policies across the Military Services and allowing more single custodial parents to serve could increase the pool of qualified recruits, ultimately strengthening the military's talent pool and readiness.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 3 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Employment and Integration

Gender Integration

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to integrate recruit training at the platoon level, where recruits are formed into integrated platoons after basic daily routine. Maximizing integration, at the platoon level, develops the foundation of a successfully integrated Force. This would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Synopsis

DACOWITS commends the Marine Corps' recent progress toward gender-integrated recruit training, beginning with the first integrated company at Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) Parris Island in 2019. However, male and female recruits train in gender-segregated platoons, which reduces the opportunity for recruits to develop mutual respect and cohesion for one another during this formative training process. DACOWITS recommends the Marine Corps fully integrate recruit training by

gender at the platoon level—like the other Military Services—to best prepare recruits for operating in an integrated fleet. The Committee believes the Marine Corps' current integrated company model with gender-separate platoons does not meet a true definition of integration nor the intent of Congressional legislation.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to institute mixed-gender drill instructor teams for all integrated companies at recruit training to reinforce the operational environment and present women and men as equally capable and competent Marines and leaders. This would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the Marine Corps has made progress integrating recruit training by gender among recruits with the company-integrated model. However, recruits remain separated by gender in platoons, and drill instructor teams are also segregated by gender (e.g., female drill instructors are assigned only to female platoons). The Committee believes mixed-gender drill instructor teams are essential to providing recruits training and mentorship from opposite-gender role models as they prepare to enter an integrated operational environment. The other Services have trained with mixed-gender drill instructor

teams for decades, with both recruits and drill instructors reporting positive benefits. Restricting drill instructor team assignments by gender hinders female drill instructors' ability to train recruits and promote to higher positions of leadership and creates unnecessary challenges for personnel staffing. DACOWITS recommends the Marine Corps continue its efforts to integrate recruit training by assigning mixed-gender drill instructor teams to integrated companies.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a working group focused on women in special operations forces (SOF), led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. This group should comprise Service SOF communities, Special Operations Command, and the Joint Staff to provide strategic oversight on and direction of current integration plans and challenges, metrics, lessons learned, and best practices. This would enhance recruitment, integration, growth, and retention of women in SOF.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should implement all recommendations from the 2022 Government Accountability Office report on Women in Special Operations, which would increase women serving in previously closed special operations forces positions.

Synopsis

DACOWITS is concerned about the inconsistent and lack of DoD oversight of

SOF integration efforts. Recruitment and qualification of women in SOF communities have remained slow, and in some cases, are nonexistent. Despite the 2016 policy changes mandating the integration of women into all military specialties, gender integration implementation gaps persist within SOF, and cultural and social challenges remain. Responsibility and oversight of gender integration implementation currently resides with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)) and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM); however, no authority, fiscal resources, or leadership exists for these commands to direct the Military Services to improve recruitment, integration, or retention of women in SOF. Greater leadership and collaboration are needed to strengthen our Nation's warfighting capability by fully integrating, growing, and retaining women in SOF.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Women in Aviation

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a joint working group within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to synchronize and expedite the development, distribution, and accessibility of female-specific aviation gear. These efforts will maximize human performance, combat lethality, and readiness and ensure the overall health of servicewomen in aviation.

Synopsis

Women have been serving in aviation for 50 years, yet significant barriers persist in equipping the female-aviation force with functional, well-fitting, gender-specific gear they need to execute the mission. While the Military Services—particularly the Air Force and Navy—have made progress in the development of new gear, stagnation and production delays plague these efforts. Duplicative Service efforts cost DoD more time and money, while still not solving the problem of getting needed gear to female aviators. A lack of properly fitting gear, such as in-flight bladder relief systems, reduces combat lethality and increases the potential for short- and long-term health issues in the female aviation force. Establishing a dedicated joint working group would help coordinate and expedite the design, production, and distribution of necessary female-specific aviation equipment.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Physical Fitness Standards

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should adopt a Department-wide, contemporary, scientifically based body composition standard and measurement technique to reflect gender, racial, and ethnic differences of today's Force because current policies and practices disproportionately affect servicewomen's health and military careers.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should decouple the physical fitness and body composition (B/C) program by reassigning B/C policy development and execution to medical professionals. This will ensure consistent and precise measurement, provide servicewomen with relevant gender-based resources, and promote greater focus on the holistic health pillars of Total Force Fitness.

Synopsis

DACOWITS encourages the DoD to establish a Department-wide and science-based body composition standard and measurement technique that accounts for the diversity of today's force. The military's body composition standards have not adequately accounted for gender, racial, and ethnic differences in body types, which has disproportionately affected servicewomen. Current science demonstrates widely used metrics, such as body mass index (BMI), inaccurately measure body fat for some groups. Implementing scientifically based body composition standards and decoupling body composition from physical fitness assessments will better align with the military's holistic health approach to Total Force Fitness (TFF). Updated body composition standards and measurement techniques will also mitigate unhealthy behaviors some Service members use to meet standards that put their health and operational readiness at risk.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 4 of the full annual report for 2023, which is

available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Well-Being and Treatment

Pregnancy in the Military

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct immediate implementation of the Candidates Afforded Dignity, Equality and Training (CADET) Act retroactive to December 27, 2022, to include grandfathering affected cadets and midshipmen, and publish guidance for the development of new policies related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care and, more immediately, provide leave with healthcare for a cadet's or midshipman's period of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care, as well as healthcare coverage for the child.

Synopsis

The deadline for implementation of the CADET Act was December 27, 2022; however, as of the Committee's vote on this recommendation in September 2023, the law had not yet been implemented, and no DoD directive or guidance had been issued. During the publication of this report, DoD revised DoDI 1322.22 on November 1, 2023, allowing cadets and midshipmen the option to maintain parental rights if they become biological parents while attending an MSA. The CADET Act effectively ends previous policies forcing students at the Military Service Academies (MSAs) to permanently withdraw or give up their children should they become pregnant or father a child. DACOWITS commends the MSA's efforts to comply with the intent of the CADET Act ahead of its implementation while awaiting DoD policy change.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a more robust women's healthcare directory on Military OneSource to include topics such as reproductive health, pregnancy, mental health, and contraceptive care. This directory should provide information and links to all Department of Defense, Service, and Defense Health Agency resources, information, and publications to more effectively aid servicewomen in locating and easily navigating to relevant healthcare information.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the importance of ensuring servicewomen have ready access to information about women's healthcare resources, their TRICARE coverage, and related benefits. The Committee commends recent improvements from DoD in the amount of available information specific to women's healthcare. However, this information is scattered across various DoD and Military Services' websites, potentially making it difficult or confusing for servicewomen to find the information they need when they need it. Centralizing links to women's healthcare information on Military OneSource—a well-known, well-marketed DoD directory recognized as a “one-stop shop”—can improve servicewomen's knowledge about the health information available to them and further enhance use of these existing resources.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should: (1) direct the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to publish guidance for the Services, their medical providers, commanders, and pregnant servicewomen regarding the necessity, authorization, and recommended minimum length of maternity convalescent leave (CONLV) for birth events; (2) prescribe necessary procedures to ensure servicewomen who give birth in civilian facilities receive the necessary maternity CONLV; and (3) require the Services, with DHA guidance, to define the limited circumstances under which commanders may disapprove maternity CONLV or, preferably, prohibit commanders from denying recommended maternity CONLV.

Synopsis

Parental leave and maternity CONLV are important benefits available to new parents in the military. These benefits serve distinct purposes: parental leave provides birth and nonbirth parents time to bond with their new child, while maternity CONLV provides time for the birth parent's physical and mental recovery from childbirth. Recent legislation revised previous maternity CONLV policies by removing the 6-week minimum, requiring recommendation by a medical provider for a diagnosed medical condition, and making maternity CONLV authorization dependent on approval from commanders. DACOWITS believes further action is required to ensure servicewomen are afforded the necessary time they need to recover from birth events, are not unreasonably denied maternity

CONLV, do not face pressures to combine maternity CONLV and parental leave, or have to sacrifice their maternity CONLV due to their entitlement to extended parental leave.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should issue additional guidance to the Military Services on implementation of the Family Care Plans Instruction (DoDI 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being utilized as intended for operational readiness, program elements are tracked adequately, Department guidance is executed consistently across the Services, and policy application is aligned to appropriately support Service members.

Synopsis

DACOWITS continues to be interested in ensuring family care plans (FCPs) are being used appropriately. FCPs are tools intended to support Force readiness, by ensuring a caretaker is available for dependents of Service members during activities that take them away from home, such as deployments or training. However, DACOWITS believes FCPs are being used inappropriately to undermine and stigmatize Service members, in particular servicewomen. Service members have reported inappropriate applications of the FCP, including FCP requests for short-term absences such as caring for a sick child or FCPs being used as a determining factor for training or school selection. Implementation and enforcement of FCPs also vary

considerably across the Military Services, and women are disproportionately affected by voluntary or involuntary separations due to parenthood status. In 2017, the Committee recommended a review be conducted to ensure FCPs were being used appropriately. The Committee maintains its stance on this topic and believes additional DoD guidance will help ensure FCPs are implemented as intended and are being used uniformly across the Military Services.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to update maternity uniforms to present a professional, modern appearance while providing functionality, comfort, and ease of movement for the wearers.

Synopsis

Functional, well-fitting uniforms are essential to ensure Service members are protected, and comfortable, and can take pride in their professional appearance. Military pride is essential to individual and unit morale and directly impacts unit cohesion, retention, and recruiting. Maternity uniforms, while temporary in use, should afford pregnant servicewomen the same level of function and professionalism as regular nonmaternity uniforms. DACOWITS has made several recommendations related to women's uniform items and identified maternity uniforms as a continuing concern in 2016 and 2019. While some progress

has been made toward improving the functionality and professional appearance of maternity uniforms since 2019, more work is needed. Recent updates and revitalization efforts to modernize maternity uniforms are inconsistent across the Military Services, and some uniform items continue to be outdated, lacking proper functionality and fit.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to closely monitor Service implementation of DTM 23-001, Expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program, to ensure timely issuance of final policy directives, consistency of key policy elements and processes across the Services (e.g., disapproval authorities and appeals, distinction between maternity convalescent and parental leave), and proper implementation of legislative intent.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct that only a senior Service leader (first O-6 in the chain of command) be authorized to disapprove Service members' parental leave requests for incremental or single block parental leave to ensure reasonableness of disapproval actions and consistency of policy application across the Military Services.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to routinely survey Service members to assess whether those eligible for parental leave have been treated equitably by their chain of command and were not unreasonably denied or discouraged from taking their full parental leave entitlements.

Synopsis

DACOWITS applauds the recent expansion of paid parental leave for both birth and nonbirth parents to 12 weeks. The Committee seeks to ensure that parental leave benefits are being provided consistently and equitably to all Service members and that Service members feel comfortable taking the full amount of leave allotted to them if desired. Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups reported facing pressure from their units to forgo some or all of their parental leave benefit or take incremental leave as opposed to block leave. Implementation of expanded parental leave should be closely monitored and routinely assessed by DoD to ensure the Military Services uphold the legislative intent that Service members are being authorized to fully maximize use of this benefit. DoD should also direct the Military Services to place disapproval authority with the first O-6 in a Service member's chain of command to emphasize the importance of affording parental leave to Service members and denying only when necessary or in limited, well-substantiated cases.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Defense Health Agency to further study and take proactive action to improve quality of and access to care for servicewomen's unique reproductive healthcare needs (e.g., fertility, assisted reproductive technology, pregnancy, depression) that could adversely impact their well-being, readiness, and retention.

Synopsis

Supporting the reproductive healthcare needs of servicewomen is an essential aspect of maintaining force readiness and retaining women in the military. Limited research exists on the reproductive healthcare needs and challenges of servicewomen. The 2020 "Women's Reproductive Health Survey (WRHS) of Active Duty Service Members" was the first DoD-wide survey of servicewomen in more than 20 years and findings on contraceptive use, pregnancy, and infertility indicate more research is warranted. Servicewomen in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups reported significant barriers to accessing basic reproductive healthcare services, including maternity care, obstetric and gynecological services, and fertility care. Further study and action to improve access and quality of care are essential to improve servicewomen's well-being, readiness, and retention.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to review, and revise as needed, DoD and Military Services' parental leave and operational deferment policies to ensure they do not adversely impact servicewomen's career progression, including training, professional education opportunities, promotions, and performance evaluations.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct a study of the feasibility of and the implementing actions necessary to establish programs enabling servicewomen to (1) transfer from the Active to Reserve Component for a temporary period and (2) elect a later promotion year group to recover lost training, education, or operational opportunities resulting from pregnancy duty reassignments, operational deferments, and maternity convalescent and parental leave absences.

Synopsis

Service members continue to report pregnancy negatively affects a servicewoman's career trajectory. In particular, findings from DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups noted three major areas that present challenges related to pregnancy and career progression: (1) promotion and career advancement; (2) removal from key roles, leadership opportunities, and advanced training; and (3) physical fitness test requirements for schools and training. Lost time and work experience from pregnancy and the postpartum period compound, affecting servicewomen's evaluations and promotion potential, leaving women at a disadvantage relative

to their male peers. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef take more proactive action to identify and remove unnecessary career barriers and employ innovative solutions to ensure servicewomen's careers are not impacted as a result of a temporary medical condition, such as pregnancy.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Gender Discrimination

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to update Department of Defense policies to: (1) distinguish between sexual harassment and gender-based discriminatory harassment; (2) define how gender-based, nonsexual discriminatory harassment can occur; and (3) clarify reporting mechanisms so that Service members can better comprehend, identify, and report discriminatory behavior.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes that DoD and the Military Services have various policies and support resources in place related to harassment. However, the Committee believes updates and clarifications delineating gender-based discriminatory harassment as separate from sexual harassment would benefit Service members and the military as a whole. Gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment are often conflated—harassment against women does not need to be sexual in nature

to harm servicewomen and engender a toxic environment and culture. Many support resources, such as hotlines, are branded or known for sexual harassment even if they serve as support for other forms of harassment and prohibited discrimination. Comprehensive, updated policies and trainings about the types and means of gender-based discriminatory harassment can help Service members identify and confidently report any inappropriate behaviors to ensure perpetrators receive appropriate consequences and make the military a safer and more professional work environment for all Service members.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services' senior leadership to support and foster women's barrier analysis/initiative teams in order to identify and remediate unique challenges faced by servicewomen.

Synopsis

While the DoD and Military Services have made recent strides in updating numerous policies related to servicewomen, more work remains to remove unnecessary barriers and eliminate antiquated policies. The Department of the Air Force (DAF) Women's Initiative Team (WIT) has shown the power of harnessing Service members'

experiences in an organic working group to elevate concerns and policy solutions to senior champions who are prepared to take action. A unique strength of barrier analysis working groups or WITs is their ability to use sustained effort and focus to identify issues from the ground level. Equally as important is connecting these groups with senior leaders and champions who can effectively make policy and programmatic changes. DACOWITS feels it is imperative for the Military Services to have dedicated, sustained groups working to identify and eliminate barriers impeding the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of servicewomen.

A detailed reasoning supporting this recommendation is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to conduct (1) a comprehensive review of promotion rates of Service members from the last 10 years across the Military Services, Reserve Component, and National Guard by gender, race/ethnicity, and occupational specialty/community to identify trends in servicewomen's career progression and promotion rates and (2) additional studies and research (e.g., via mock boards) to assess whether eliminating gender and race/ethnicity indicators in promotion board records reduces bias against women, in all of their diversity, in promotion selection.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to provide education, in appropriate professional development courses, to Service members in supervisory enlisted and officer grades to prevent and reduce gender bias in performance evaluations and selection boards. Curriculum should (1) identify gendered language and descriptors, (2) describe how gender status expectations and biases can impact the way performance evaluations are written and rated, (3) indicate how to recognize and remediate unconscious bias and gender behavioral expectations, and (4) provide Service members the opportunity to participate in mock boards with postexercise analysis to enhance their learning experience.

Synopsis

The Committee recognizes the many initiatives and policy improvements the DoD and Military Services have undertaken in recent years to mitigate gender bias and its impact on the career progression of servicewomen. Research shows women in military and civilian workplaces continue

to face gender bias and discrimination in evaluation descriptions of their attributes, differential perceptions of competency as managers and leaders, and their overall promotion rates as compared with men. Current data shows mixed results as to whether women are promoted at equal rates in the military, but seems to be trending in a positive direction. However, Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups reported gender discrimination continues to affect the climate and culture of military units and negatively affects servicewomen's careers. While DoD and the Military Services have taken actions to remove photos from promotion records, used methods to mask gender information, and implemented bias training or education before promotion board meetings, more can and should be done to improve the career progression for women and eliminate corrosive cultural remnants of gender bias and discrimination in the military.

A detailed reasoning supporting these recommendations is provided in Chapter 5 of the full annual report for 2023, which is available on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).



Navy Petty Officer 2nd Class Zenaida Guerrero participates in an air defense exercise aboard the guided missile cruiser USS Normandy during operations in the Mediterranean Sea, Oct. 11, 2023.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction

The Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS; referred to here as “the Committee” or “DACOWITS”) was established in 1951 with a mandate to provide the SecDef with independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to the recruitment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. Since its inception, the Committee’s charter has expanded to include a focus on the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of U.S. servicewomen (See Appendix A for a copy of the Committee’s charter).

Between 1951 and 2023, DACOWITS made more than 1,000 recommendations to the SecDef, and approximately 95 percent of them were either fully or partially enacted. Notably, DACOWITS provided research and was an instrumental voice that contributed to the 2015 decision to open all military occupational specialties to women. DACOWITS is a Federal Advisory Committee operating in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (Pub. L. 92–463). Committee members serve as individuals, not as official representatives of any affiliated group or organization.

Selection of Committee members is based on experience working with the military or with workforce issues related to women. Members include prominent civilian women and men with backgrounds in academia, industry, public service, and other professions. Members are appointed by the SecDef, for a 4-year term, which is renewed annually, and perform a variety of duties that include visiting military installations annually, reviewing and evaluating current research on military women, and developing an annual report with recommendations on these issues for the SecDef and Service leadership. The Committee is authorized 20 members. See Appendix B for 2023 DACOWITS member biographies.

The Committee is organized into three subcommittees: Recruitment and Retention, Employment and Integration, and Well-Being and Treatment. Each September, the SecDef, via the USD(P&R), provides the Committee study topics to examine during the following year. In 2023, DACOWITS studied 7 topics and the Committee’s research informed the development of 26 recommendations, presented in Chapters 2 through 4 of this report. The Committee chooses, at times, to repeat a recommendation made in a previous year if it has not yet been fully addressed by DoD and/or the Military Services. Table 1.1 lists the study topics examined during 2023 and the number of related recommendations.

Table 1.1. DACOWITS 2023 Study Topics and Corresponding Number of Recommendations

Study Topic	Number of Recommendations
Recruitment and Retention	
Recruitment Initiatives to Increase Women’s Propensity	4
Retention Initiatives for Servicewomen	0
Employment and Integration	
Gender Integration	4
Women in Aviation	1
Physical Fitness Standards	2
Well-Being and Treatment	
Pregnancy in the Military	11
Gender Discrimination	4

Note: Many recommendations made under other study topics are related to retention of servicewomen.

The Committee engages in a range of activities each year to explore its directed topics and, ultimately, inform its recommendations. Each research year, DACOWITS receives briefings from DoD and Service representatives in response to requests for information (RFIs) presented at the Committee’s quarterly business meetings (QBMs), reviews written RFI responses from the Military Services submitted prior to QBMs, conducts formal literature reviews and ad hoc analyses carried out by its research contractor, and incorporates findings from focus groups with Service members. DACOWITS is one of the only DoD Federal Advisory Committees to conduct focus groups with Service members. More detailed information about DACOWITS’ research methodology can be found in Appendix C. Figure 1.1 depicts the data sources that informed the Committee’s 2023 annual recommendations.



Members of DACOWITS pose for a group photo with U.S. Marines from Golf Company, 2nd recruit Training Battalion, at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, July 26, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elliott A. Flood-Johnson)

Figure 1.1. Data Sources That Informed DACOWITS' Annual Recommendations



Chapter 2 commemorates the 75th anniversary of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act (WASIA) of 1948, which granted women permanent status in both the Active and Reserve forces. This chapter includes excerpts and photographs from a Pentagon display celebrating this anniversary and data on the status of women in the military today. Chapters 3–5 present the Committee’s 2023 recommendations, organized by subcommittee. Following each recommendation is a summary of the supporting evidence and a detailed outline of the evidence the Committee examined.



Gunner's Mate 3rd Class Madison Rafferty, from Jacksonville, Illinois, prepares ammo for a .50 caliber machine gun prior to a crew serve weapons live-fire familiarization aboard Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS John Finn (DDG 113). John Finn is assigned to Commander, Task Force 71/ Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15, the Navy's largest forward-deployed DESRON and U.S. 7th Fleet's principal surface force. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Samantha Oblander)

2023 DACOWITS Office Calls

In support of the Committee's work, the DACOWITS Chair conducted office calls with various senior leaders to garner assistance and support from the Defense Department and Military Services.

- Chief of the National Guard Bureau, General Daniel R. Hokanson (October 11, 2022)
- Secretary of the Air Force, Mr. Frank Kendall (October 25, 2022)
- Secretary of the Army, Ms. Christine E. Wormuth (October 25, 2022)
- Commandant of the Marine Corps, General David H. Berger (December 5, 2022)
- Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Michael M. Gilday (December 5, 2022)
- Vice Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Lisa Franchetti (March 20, 2023)
- Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Linda L. Fagan (March 27, 2023)
- Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. Kathleen H. Hicks (September 14, 2023)



Ms. Shelly Stoneman (center), DACOWITS Chair, and COL Seana Jardin (right), DACOWITS Military Director, met with Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth (left) for an office call, October 25, 2022.



Deputy Secretary of Defense Kathleen Hicks and Ms. Shawn Skelly Performing the Duties of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness pose with DACOWITS members at the Pentagon, Washington, DC, September 14, 2023. (DoD photo by U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Cesar J. Navarro)



DACOWITS leadership met with ADM Linda Fagan, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard, during an office call, March 27, 2023. Pictured from left to right are COL Seana Jardin, DACOWITS Military Director; ADM Linda Fagan, Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard; Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman, DACOWITS Chair; Dr. Donna (Mischell) Navarro, Deputy Assistant Commandant for Human Resources/Senior Advisor to the Commandant for Diversity and Inclusion; and Dr. Terri Dickerson, Director of Civil Rights Staff, U.S. Coast Guard.



DACOWITS leadership met with ADM Lisa Franchetti, Vice Chief of Naval Operations, during an office call, March 20, 2023. Pictured from left to right are VADM (Ret.) Robin Braun, DACOWITS Vice Chair; ADM Lisa Franchetti, Vice Chief of Naval Operations; Ms. Shelly O'Neill Stoneman, DACOWITS Chair; and COL Seana Jardin, DACOWITS Military Director.

Appendix A provides the Committee’s charter, Appendix B presents biographies for current DACOWITS members, Appendix C describes the Committee’s research methodology, and Appendix D lists the installations visited by DACOWITS members in 2023 to collect focus group and survey data. Appendix E outlines the Committee’s RFIs for each of its quarterly business meetings and the responses received. Appendix F shows the percentages of women in each Service during the past 5 years, Appendix G lists the abbreviations and acronyms used in the report and appendices, and Appendix H provides the reference list for the report. Appendix H is organized by study topic to enable readers to quickly locate topics of interest.

The sources referenced in this report are available for review and download on the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>). They consist of the 2023 quarterly business meeting minutes, RFIs sent to DoD and the Military Services, briefing materials and written responses delivered to the Committee, and a collection of recent news articles relevant to the issues DACOWITS examined in 2023.



U.S. Marines with Lima Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, march in formation during a graduation ceremony at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Sept. 22, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Jacob B. Hutchinson)



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Lillian Sai, 366th Civil Engineer Squadron engineering assistant, and Senior Airman Alyssia Grundy, 366th CES operations manager, update a log of events during Exercise Agile Flag 23-1, March 4, 2023 at a forward operating site at Hunter Army Airfield, Ga. (U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Anne Ortiz)

Chapter 2

Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act

Chapter 2. Commemorating the 75th Anniversary of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act

June 12, 2023 marked the 75th anniversary of the WASIA of 1948, which granted women permanent status in both the Active and Reserve forces.¹ Under this Act, women could compose no more than 2 percent of the Total Force, and female officers were not to exceed 10 percent of women serving. Service Secretaries could discharge female Service members without cause, and women’s service was restricted; women were not allowed on aircraft or ships engaged in combat.² Less than 1 month later, President Truman signed Executive Order (EO) 9981, which ended racial segregation in the U.S. military, allowing women of color equal access to serve.^{3,4}

Section A features text and images from the Pentagon’s exhibit commemorating this important legislation. Section B uses 2023 data to provide a brief overview of the status of women in the military today.

A. 75th Anniversary of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act

Since the colonial period, women had cared for wounded soldiers, gathered military intelligence, and served alongside men on the battlefield. They did not, however, qualify for military status until 1901, when Congress established the Army Nurse Corps, the first all-female unit in the Armed Forces.

During World War I, female Army recruits provided administrative support and performed jobs that men called up for military service left vacant, while the Navy and the Marine Corps placed nearly 13,000 women designated Yeomen (F), including the first African-American enlistees, in a variety of noncombat occupations. The same pattern repeated in World War II on a much larger scale. More than 350,000 women served in the Army and Navy nurse corps, in the newly established Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC); the Navy’s Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), the Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, the Coast Guard Women’s Reserve (known as SPARS), and the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs).

“As we reflect on the progress the Department has made to swing its doors open to women, to expand opportunities, and to achieve gender equity and equality, we also acknowledge that there is more work to do ... more barriers to break down and overcome ... and a new, younger generation rising through the ranks that is watching us and deserves to inherit an even better work place and world—like prior generations ensured for us.”

**—Deputy Secretary of Defense
Dr. Kathleen Hicks**

¹ Within 1 year of establishment, the WAAC became the Women’s Army Corps (WAC).

Demobilization did not mark a return to normalcy for women in military service. Falling male enlistment rates and increasing demand for personnel that accompanied rising Cold War tensions favored their retention in the Armed Forces. On June 12, 1948, shortly before he approved legislation that reinstated the draft, President Harry Truman signed the WASIA. Female personnel acquired permanent military status in the regular and reserve forces and access to a new air arm split off from the WAC called the Women in the Air Force. These outcomes, however, reinforced rather than overturned established gender roles. In the Army, for example, combat duty and the command of male personnel remained off limits, marriage and child rearing triggered discharge proceedings, promotions topped out at the rank of lieutenant colonel, and quotas capped female enlistments at 2 percent of the Army's total regular strength. Some restrictions eased to meet urgent personnel requirements during wartime. Congress suspended the 2 percent limit to expand the WAC after hostilities broke out on the Korean Peninsula in 1950.

In July 1948, not long after he had signed WASIA into law, President Truman issued EO 9981, which directed the Armed Forces to end racial segregation. Over time, the commitment to racial equality proclaimed in EO 9981 removed many of the impediments that blocked the participation of minorities and women in the full range of military jobs and occupations.

Two decades later, during the Vietnam War, the women's movement, combined with broad support for equal rights legislation in Congress, challenged the legitimacy of all-female units in the military departments. Restrictions on family life and enlistment quotas gave way to more flexible entrance requirements,

and women gained entry to the general officer and flag officer ranks. The transition from the draft to the AVF and the withdrawal of combat forces from Vietnam also drove a surge in female enlistments to compensate for the anticipated decline in male recruitment, while the opening of more occupations previously reserved for men, such as law enforcement and flight training, added to the appeal of military service. These and other sweeping changes brought the era of gender-segregated units to an end in the 1970s. The Coast Guard Women's Reserve disbanded in 1973, followed by the Women in the Air Force two years later, and the WAC in 1978.

The 50th Anniversary of the AVF

Every year, over 150,000 young adults enlist in the active duty military, and another 80,000 enter the National Guard and Reserves. They join the more than 11 million Americans who have served in the AVF since 1973. Drawing on a rich legacy of professionalism, the AVF is held in high esteem at home and around the world. Its well-trained and highly skilled volunteers work collectively to advance democracy, peace, and freedom.

"The Armed Forces henceforth will depend exclusively on volunteer Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Use of the draft has ended."

—Former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, 1973

More barriers to equality fell as the number of women in uniform continued to grow. In 1979, the first African-American woman promoted to brigadier general became the first black Chief of the Army Nurse Corps. In 1993, 20 years after the Navy opened flight training to women, the Air Force put the first female fighter pilot on Active Duty. The Army promoted the first woman to the rank of four-star general in 1998, and in 2015, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter announced the opening of all military occupations and positions to women without exception. Today, women serve in all branches of the Armed Forces and are no longer banned from combat units.



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Damali Williams, assigned to Naval Base Ventura County (NBVC), dons her Officer combination for the first time during her Fouled Anchors removed during her Commissioning Ceremony onboard Seabee Chapel, Port Hueneme, Mar. 31, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Dakota Rayburn)

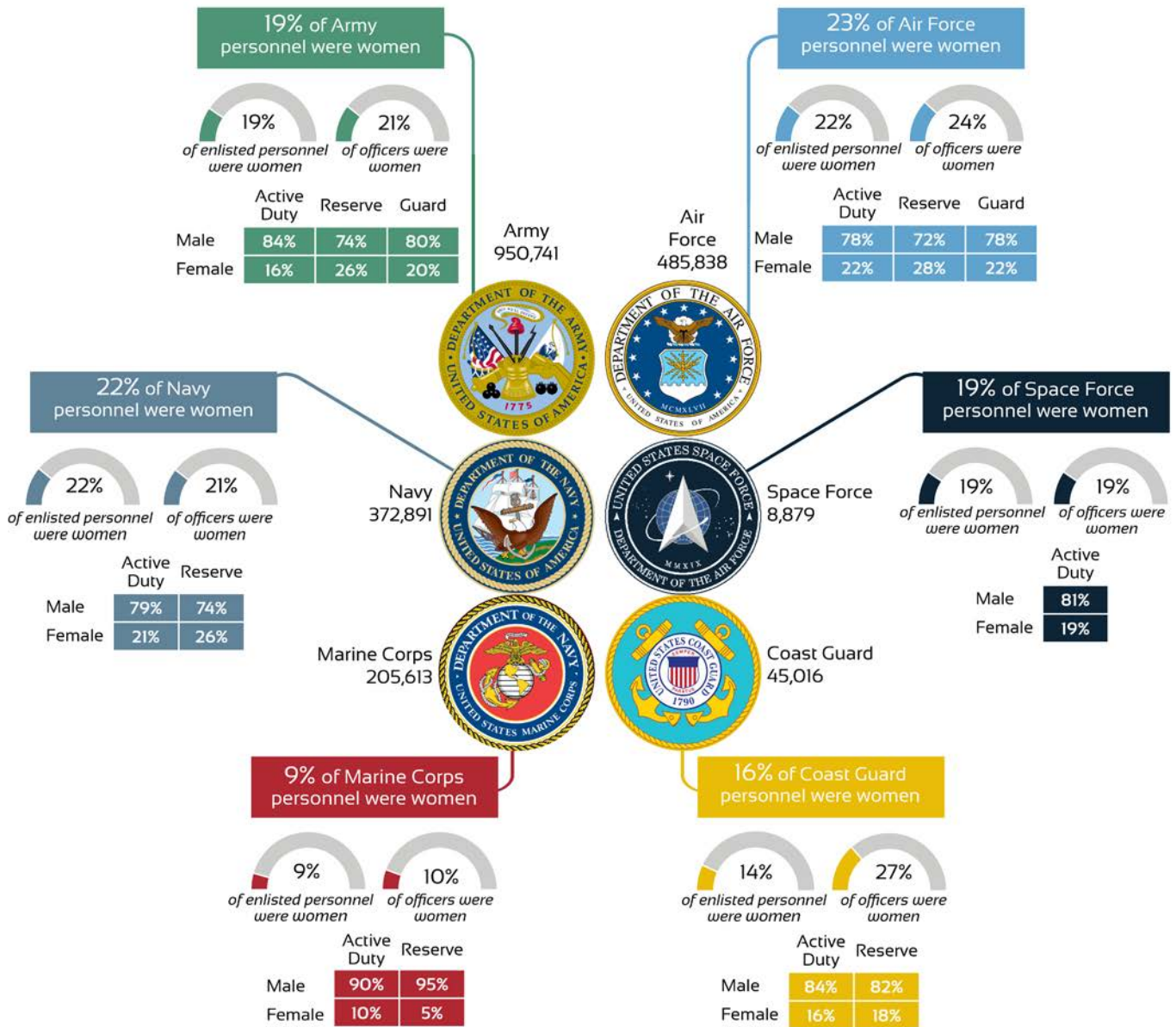


1. Harriet Tubman served as a nurse, spy, and scout in the U.S. Army. While raiding plantations along the Combahee River in South Carolina in 1863, Tubman and Black soldiers of the 2nd South Carolina Volunteer Infantry Regiment rescued more than 700 slaves. —Library of Congress; 2. Army nurses and their patients at Sternberg Hospital, Chickamauga Park, Georgia, ca. 1898. More than 1,500 women served as contract nurses in Cuba, the Philippines, and the United States during the Spanish-American War. —National Archives; 3. The first women to enlist in the Armed Forces, designated Yeoman (F), joined the Naval Reserve. Eight new enlistees stand at attention in San Francisco, June 1918. —National Archives; 4. MAJ Charity E. Adams inspects members of the 6888th Central Postal Battalion, the first and only Black unit in the WAC to serve overseas, in February 1945. Promoted to lieutenant colonel early in 1946, Adams became the highest ranking African-American woman in the Armed Forces. —Library of Congress; 5. An Air Force flight nurse and a Red Cross nurse attend to wounded Servicemen aboard an Air Force C-141 prior to an aeromedical evacuation from Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, to the United States, 1967. —National Archives; 6. Women Marine recruits perform close drill at the MCRD, Parris Island, South Carolina, 1981. —U.S. Marine Corps; 7. An all-woman aircrew prepares to board a B-52H Stratofortress bomber at Barksdale Air Force Base in Louisiana for a flight to commemorate Women's History Month, March 2020. —U.S. Air Force; 8. COL Anna Mae Hays (left), Chief of the Army Nurse Corps, and COL Elizabeth Hoisington (right), Director of the WAC, share a celebratory moment with former First Lady Mamie Eisenhower at the Pentagon after their promotion to brigadier general on June 11, 1970. Hays and Hoisington are the first women promoted to general officer rank in the U.S. Armed Forces; 9. Secretary of the Army Clifford Alexander announced the promotion of COL Hazel Johnson to brigadier general and chief of the Army Nurse Corps at the Pentagon on June 5, 1979. Johnson is the first African-American woman to achieve general officer rank and also the first to head the Army Nurse Corps; 10. Trained to fly the F-15E Strike Eagle, 1st Lt Jeannie Flynn broke new ground in 1993 as the Air Force's first female fighter pilot and went on to become the first woman to command a combat fighter wing.

B. State of Women in the Military Today

Nineteen percent of the Total Force was female as of 2023; the representation of women varied by Service (see Figure 2.1). The Air Force has the highest percentage of women (23 percent), followed by the Navy (22 percent), the Army and Space Force (both 19 percent), the Coast Guard (16 percent), and the Marine Corps (9 percent).

Figure 2.1. Gender Representation in the Armed Forces, 2023



Figures 2.2. through 2.4. presents the gender distribution of women in each Component by rank. The proportion of women in each rank generally decreases in higher ranks for both officers and enlisted personnel.

Figure 2.2. Gender Distribution of Active Component Service Members by Rank, September 2023

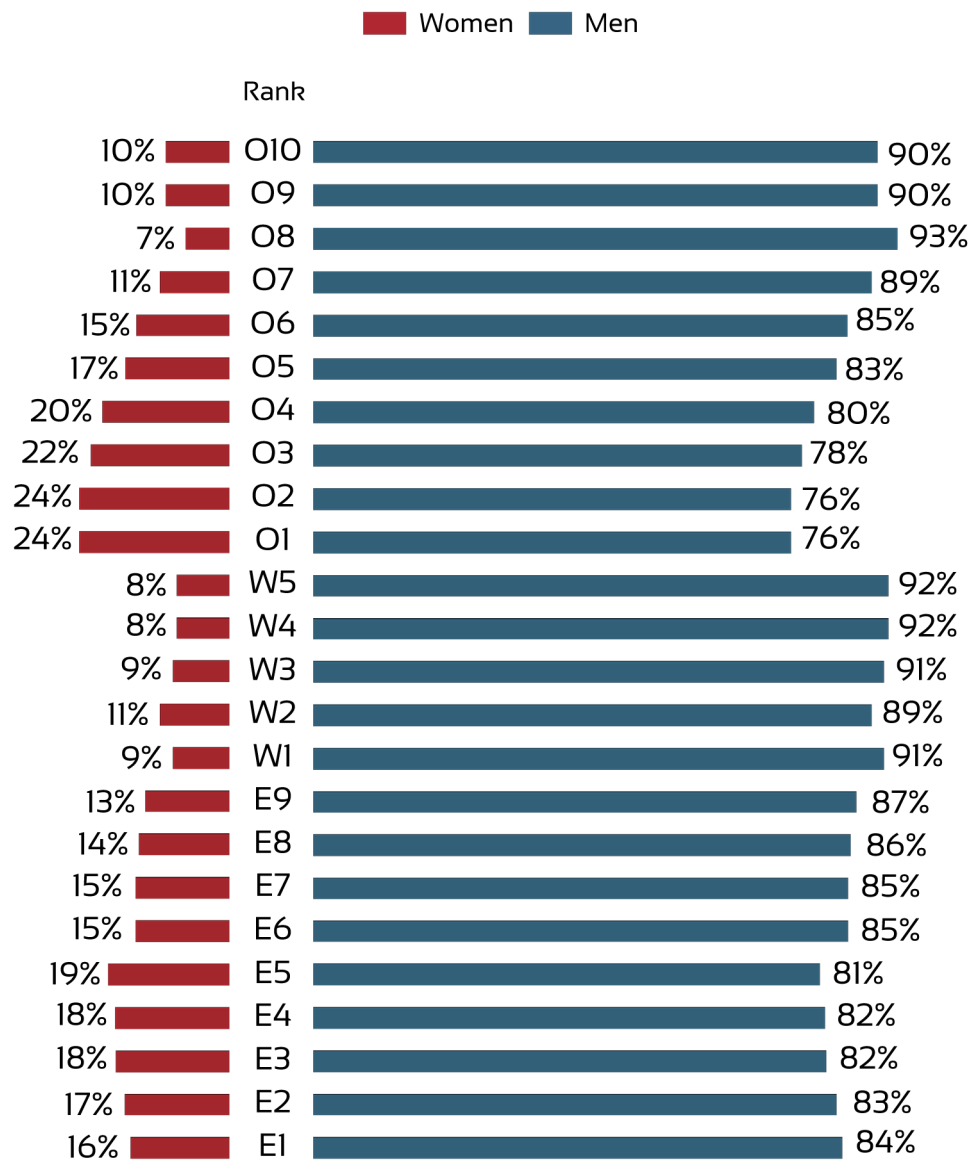


Figure 2.3. Gender Distribution of Reserve Component Service Members by Rank, September 2023

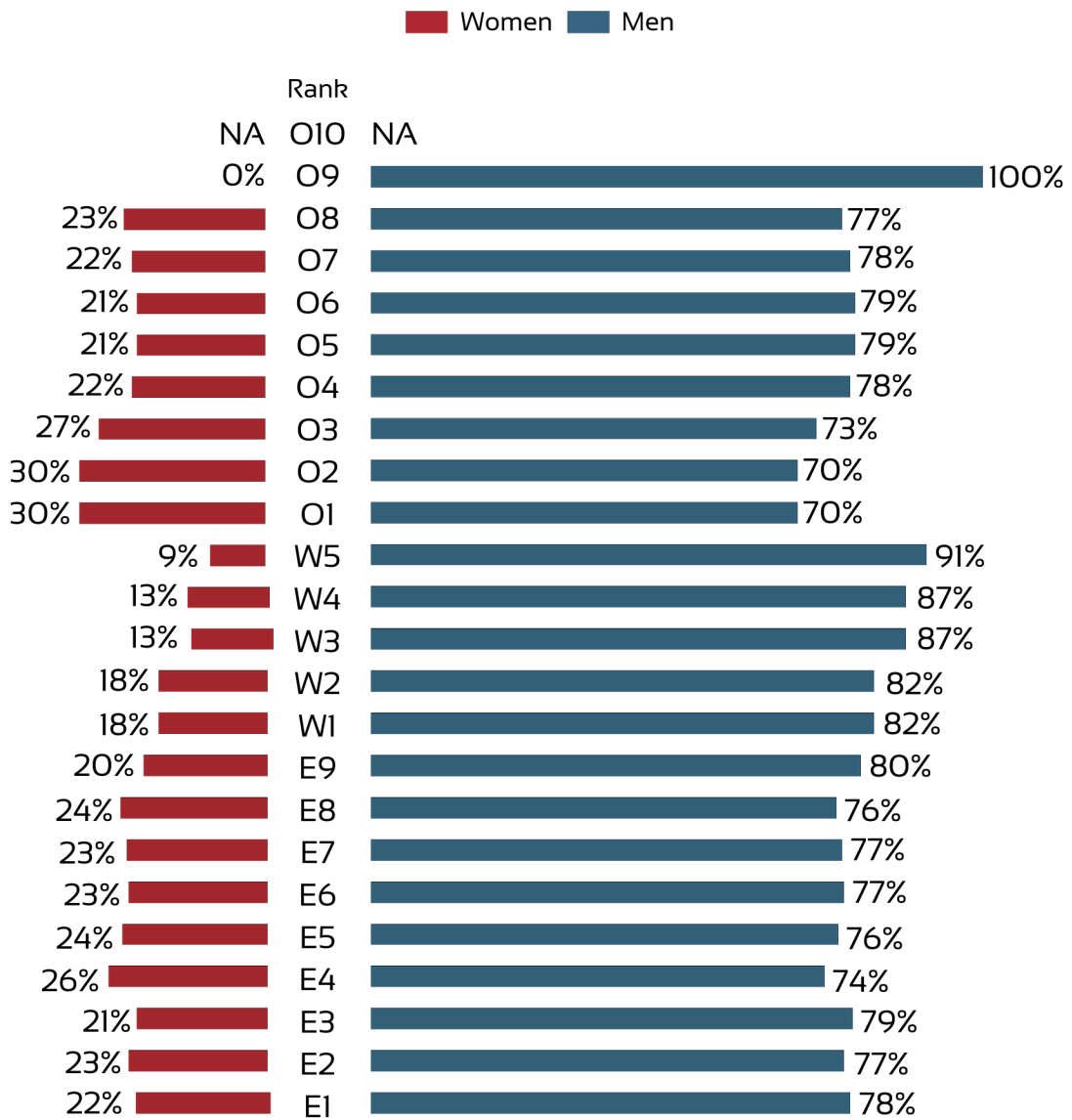
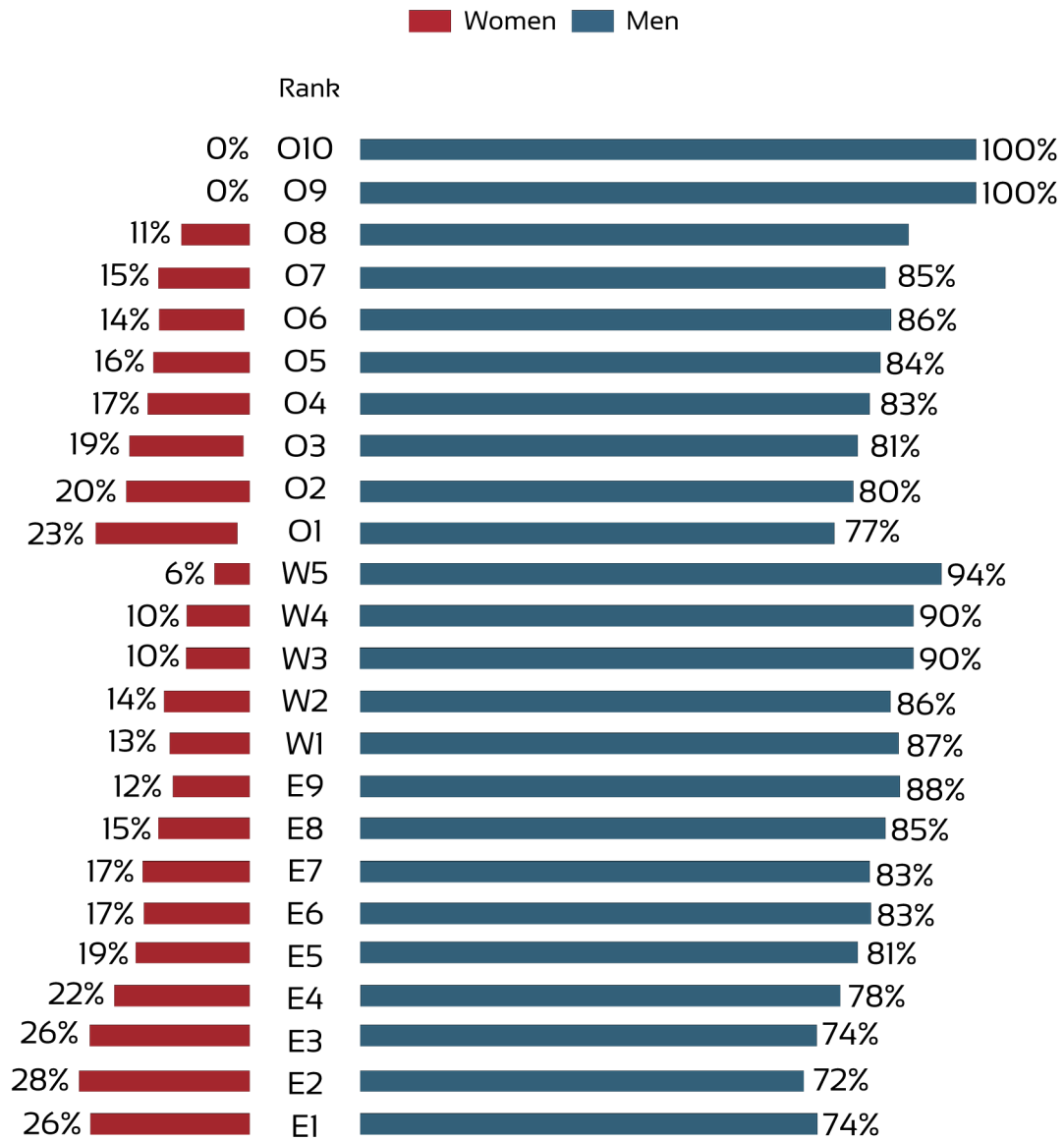


Figure 2.4. Gender Distribution of National Guard Service Members by Rank, September 2023



A photograph of 1st Lt. Kristin Eslinger, a mission management operator from the 2nd Space Warning Squadron, posing for a photo at Buckley Space Force Base, Colo., on March 31, 2023. She is wearing a camouflage uniform with patches for 'ESLINGER' and 'U.S. SPACE FORCE'. She has her arms crossed and is smiling broadly. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees and a red circular graphic element in the top right corner.

1st Lt. Kristin Eslinger, a mission management operator from the 2nd Space Warning Squadron, poses for a photo at Buckley Space Force Base, Colo., March 31, 2023. Eslinger told her story of being a female Guardian and her motivations to serve. (U.S. Space Force photo by Airman 1st Class Aleece Williams)

Chapter 3

Recruitment and Retention Recommendations

Chapter 3. Recruitment and Retention Recommendations

This chapter presents DACOWITS' 2023 recommendations related to recruitment and retention, organized by study topic. Each recommendation or set of recommendations is followed by a short synopsis of the topic and an explanation of the Committee's reasoning for presenting the recommendation, which is based on its investigation of the topic. This chapter provides recommendations for recruitment initiatives to increase women's propensity to serve.

A. Recruitment Initiatives to Increase Women's Propensity to Serve

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to review and revise their enlisted accessions programs to incorporate best practices from the Army's Future Soldier Preparatory Course to increase the pool of qualified applicants.

Synopsis

Recruitment for the Military Services is at its lowest since the implementation of the AVF in 1973. Three major factors disqualify candidates from joining the military—inability to meet academic, physical fitness, or body fat standards. DACOWITS commends the Army for its implementation of an innovative program to increase the pool of propensed, yet unqualified or underqualified, recruits to join the Army while maintaining current academic and physical fitness accession standards. The FSPC prepares potential recruits academically and physically prior to basic training through a 3-week course. The Navy began a Future Sailor Preparatory Course in 2023 modeled after the Army's program. DACOWITS believes the other Military Services would benefit from adopting similar programs as a way to increase the recruitable population, especially in today's challenging recruiting environment.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services' senior enlisted recruiting personnel on the barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and strategies for recruiting women (March 2023, RFI 1)⁵
- A briefing from the Army on its FSPC, including a description of the program's development and challenges or obstacles encountered during the pilot (March 2023, RFI 4)⁶
- Written responses from the Military Services on results or plans for preparatory courses, similar to the Army's FSPC or the Navy's Future Sailor Preparatory Course (September 2023, RFI 1)⁷

The Committee remains concerned about the Military Services' ability to meet their annual recruiting goals and sustain the readiness of the AVF. Data from the DoD Office of People Analytics (OPA) suggests three major reasons American youth are disqualified from military service without a waiver is due to an inability to meet the Military Services' academic, physical fitness, and body fat standards. Specifically, OPA reported 35 percent of the recruitable population (17–24 years old) is disqualified from military service in part due to being overweight, while 9 percent of the population is disqualified in part for aptitude challenges.⁸ DACOWITS considers the Army's FSPC to be a best practice that could help expand the pool of American youth eligible and motivated to join the military. The Committee's reasoning supporting this recommendation follows.

The Army FSPC

The Army implemented FSPC as a pilot program in August 2022 to help recruits improve their Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) scores or physical fitness before joining the Army. The Army's FSPC is an incremental 3-week course, which takes place ahead of basic training, developed to help potential recruits overcome academic and physical fitness barriers to service. The FSPC features two tracks, the Academic Skills Development Program (ASDP), designed to help recruits improve AFQT scores prior to joining the military, and the Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength (ARMS) track to help recruits meet fitness/body composition requirements. Recruits can participate in multiple 3-week increments to improve their academic scores or physical fitness.⁹

Recruits must score at least 21 points on the AFQT to participate in the ASDP, meaning participants in the program are already qualified to serve in the Army as Category (Cat) 4 recruitsⁱⁱ. However, the purpose of the program is to help recruits raise their scores by at least

ⁱⁱ Category 4 recruits have a high school diploma or General Education Development (GED) certificate and score within the 10th and 30th percentile on the AFQT.

10 points to enable them to join the Army at a level higher than Cat 4, thereby opening up more Cat 4 positions to other recruits. DoD policy caps Cat 3ⁱⁱⁱ and Cat 4 recruits at 36 percent and 4 percent of total recruits, respectively. Participants are recruited and accessed into the Army, paid and governed under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).¹⁰

Although recruits were allowed to enroll in only one track initially, the Army now allows recruits to enroll in both the ASDP and ARMS tracks if they need academic and physical fitness support.¹¹ Successful completion the FSPC provides individuals who meet all other qualifications for enlistment an opportunity to serve and expands the availability of Cat 4 positions to others joining the military.

The Navy has also implemented a course modeled on the FSPC titled the Future Sailor Preparatory Course. The first course was completed in April 2023. However, the first class of Future Sailor Preparatory Course recruits included only men and focused on meeting the Navy's fitness requirements, but the course did not have an academic improvement track. The Navy expanded the Future Sailor Preparatory Course to include women during summer 2023, and the Navy Under Secretary testified to the Senate Armed Services Committee that an academic track is expected to be implemented in summer 2023 as well.¹² As of September 2023, the other Military Services had not implemented similar, formal, preparatory courses for underperforming applicants.^{13, 14, 15}

Increasing the Pool of Potential Recruits

The Army's FSPC is an innovative program that helps increase the pool of motivated recruits eligible to join the Army. As of 2020, only 23 percent (7,617,383) of America's youth (17–24 years old) were eligible to join the Military Services without a waiver due to various disqualifying factors, such as obesity, medical challenges, drug use, and others.¹⁶ Further, OPA estimates only 400,000 recruits qualified to serve are also motivated to join the military.¹⁷ The Committee believes the Army's FSPC will help increase the pool of potential recruits by opening more Cat 4 recruitment spots that may have otherwise been filled by FSPC participants with lower aptitude scores. Further, the Committee believes the other Military Services could learn from the Army's FSPC to increase opportunities for recruits to serve.

The Committee also believes the ARMS track of the FSPC could help reduce the burden on recruiters who currently spend a significant amount of time with recruits helping them meet the physical fitness standards of their Military Services. DACOWITS suggests recruiters' time could be better spent building rapport and relationships with young people in the community and encouraging them to serve, while the FSPC helps recruits who are close to meeting the physical fitness and body composition requirements of the Army.¹⁸ Again, the Committee believes the other Military Services could implement FSPC-like programs that could also reduce burden on recruiters.

ⁱⁱⁱ Category 3 recruits have a high school diploma or GED and score within the 31st and 64th percentile on the AFQT.

Maintaining Standards and Improving Rates of Success

The FSPC does not lower the standards recruits must meet to join the Army but instead prepares recruits to meet the Service’s established academic and physical requirements. FSPC prepares recruits for basic training by immersing them in a military environment before basic training begins.¹⁹ The Committee believes outcomes from the FSPC thus far are promising for both men and women, but they may be even more valuable for women hoping to join the Army based on recent graduation and discharge rates from the program. Program data as of September 2023 indicates women are graduating from both the ASDP and ARMS tracks at higher rates than men, are being discharged from the program less frequently, and have higher average AFQT score increases upon taking their second AFQT (Table 3.1 and Table 3.2). Among both men and women, 97 percent of students in the ASDP track completed the course within the first 6 weeks of the program and increased in at least one test category in their first two attempts, while 94.5 percent of ARMS track students graduated within the first 6 weeks of the program.²⁰

Table 3.1. Army FSPC Academic Skills Development Program (ASDP) Results by Gender

Women	Statistic	Men
1,934	Number of graduates	5,194
96%	Graduation rate	94%
78	Discharged from program	279
3.9%	Discharge rate	5.1%
80.8%	Pass rate first test	77.0%
+25.5 points	Average AFQT increase at second test	+21.9 points

AFQT = Armed Forces Qualification Test; FSPC = Future Soldier Preparatory Course
 Source: Army response to RFI 1, September 2023 QBM²¹

Table 3.2. Army FSPC Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength (ARMS) Results by Gender

Women	Statistic	Men
719	Number of graduates	1564
97%	Graduation rate	97%
22	Discharged from program	51
3%	Discharge rate	3.2%
1.66%	Average weekly body fat percentage lost	1.34%

Note: FSPC = Future Soldier Preparatory Course
 Source: Army response to RFI 1, September 2023 QBM²²

An Investment in Our Nation's Youth and Security

The Army describes the FSPC as “a vehicle to transport fully qualified recruits into basic combat training, and it should be considered an investment in those individuals desiring to serve in the Army.” For example, the Army briefer to DACOWITS indicated recruits who graduated from the FSPC were more likely to attain leadership positions at basic training and perform better at basic training than recruits who did not participate in the FSPC.²³

The FSPC also embraces the societal changes and generational differences that have changed the perceptions and understanding of military service among America's youth.²⁴ For example, both ASDP and ARMS coaches are not portrayed as stereotypical drill sergeants. These coaches promote a supportive, campus-like, academic setting, while establishing and enforcing expectations in a disciplined environment. The FSPC uses both civilian instructors and military drill sergeants to prepare recruits for basic training. The civilian instructors teach the course curriculum, while the drill sergeants seek to inspire students and strengthen their mental resilience.²⁵ Drill sergeants also share with recruits their own experiences overcoming obstacles during their time in the Army, enabling them to connect with recruits as mentors and identify factors that may be limiting recruits' academic or physical performance. Once these factors are identified, program staff can help recruits address these performance barriers to meet or exceed the requirements for joining the Army.²⁶

Recruits in the ARMS track are taught lifelong tools they can use to stay fit and healthy. As a way of investing in our Nation's youth, the Army features dietitians, nutritionists, and physical therapists in the FSPC to ensure students learn basic knowledge about good nutrition and physical conditioning.²⁷ The Army noted recruits in the ASDP track, although recruited into the program as Cat 4 recruits, are actually at a higher academic level than true Cat 4 recruits. Demonstrating their academic capacity is easier when they do not have to worry about their basic needs, such as food and housing insecurity.²⁸

The FSPC is building recruits' competence and confidence, which are needed to succeed.²⁹ As the Army continues to expand and build on the initial success of the program, the Commanding General for U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) reported that “the Army will not sacrifice quality for quantity. We are confident given the right instruction and support, these recruits will be able to perform successfully and meet or exceed the standards expected of every Soldier.”³⁰

Summary

The Army's FSPC is helping to increase the pool of potential recruits who are already propensed to serve during one of the worst recruiting climates since the beginning of the AVF. The FSPC provides an innovative approach to increasing accessions to meet the needs of the AVF by creating opportunities for propensed, yet unqualified or underqualified, recruits to join the Army while maintaining academic and physical fitness accession standards.³¹ Based on positive results from the pilot program, the Army is expanding the program, adding additional locations, which will allow more recruits to join both the ASDP and ARMS tracks before going to basic training. The FSPC is investing in our Nation's youth and helping them overcome

academic and physical fitness barriers to service. The Committee believes the other Military Services should consider the FSPC to be a best practice and implement their own similar programs to further expand the recruitable population. Therefore, the SecDef should direct the other Military Services to review and revise their enlisted accessions programs to incorporate best practices from the Army's FSPC to increase the pool of qualified applicants.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should assign an Assistant Secretary of Defense-level official to coordinate and synchronize Department of Defense and Service efforts to increase and inspire our Nation's youths' propensity to serve.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should implement the military service recommendations published by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service's Final Report, "Inspired to Serve," to more effectively educate and inspire America's youth to serve in the Military Services.

Synopsis

DACOWITS remains concerned about the declining numbers of young adults eligible and interested in military service. The DoD OPA reports that, in 2020, 23 percent of 17- to 24-year-olds met minimum service qualifications without a waiver. In response to these recent trends in propensity and eligibility to serve, DACOWITS believes recruitment rates could be improved with coordinated and synchronized efforts to encourage propensity and inspiration for service among America's youth. DACOWITS also endorses implementation of the military service recommendations in the "Inspired to Serve" report from the NCMNPS as part of this effort.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the DoD Civil-Military Program Office on steps taken to address DACOWITS' 2020 recommendation to increase the oversight and assessment of its outreach programs (December 2022, RFI 1)³²

- Briefings from the Military Services’ senior enlisted personnel on the barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and strategies for recruiting women (March 2023, RFI 1)³³
- A written response from the USD(P&R) identifying the office of primary responsibility to promote adolescent women’s propensity to serve in the military (March 2023, RFI 2)³⁴
- A written response from the USD(P&R) on DoD’s implementation of the military service recommendations in the NCMNPS report, “Inspired to Serve” (March 2023, RFI 3)³⁵
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of recruitment and retention (Focus Group Report 2023)³⁶

The Committee continues to be concerned about the need to increase and inspire young women to serve in the military to maintain a diverse force and meet the recruiting needs to sustain the AVF. In 2020, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women’s propensity for military service. However, other than DoD continuing to monitor existing programs, the Committee has not seen any progress on its 2020 recommendation and remains concerned as American youth’s propensity to serve continues to decline. The reasoning supporting DACOWITS’ 2023 recommendation on youth propensity follows.

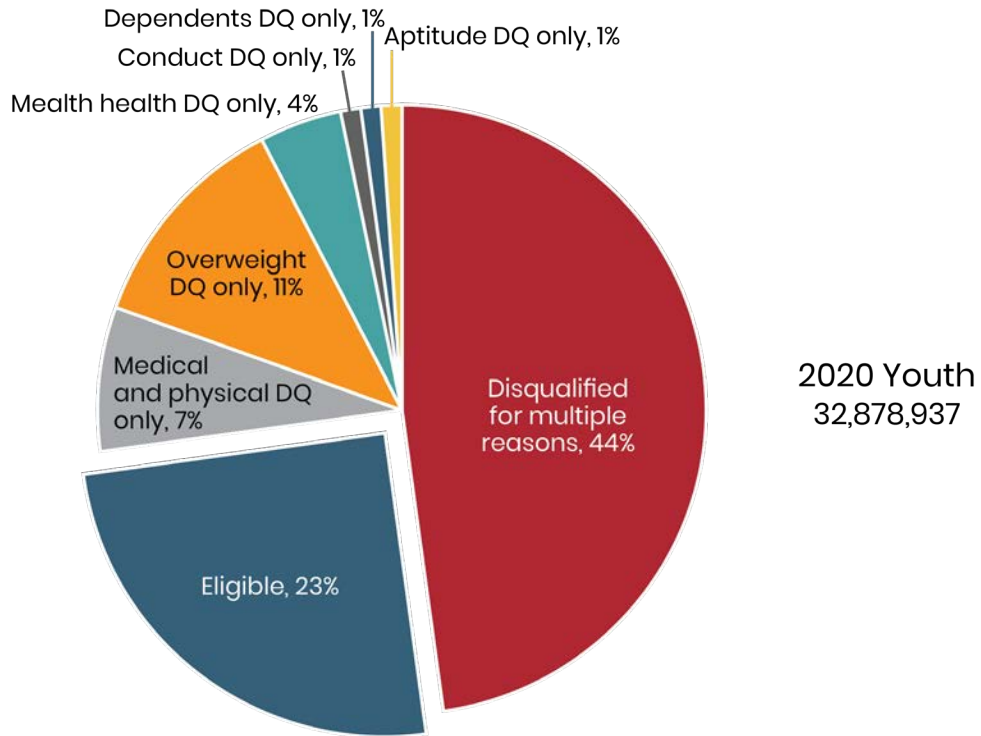
Declining Pool of Eligible and Motivated American Youth for Military Service

The Committee remains concerned about the declining pool of American youth who are both eligible and motivated to serve in the military. Specifically, OPA briefed the Committee in September 2022 and highlighted that only 23 percent of America’s recruitable population (17- to 24-years old) meet the minimum qualifications to serve in the military without a waiver (see Figure 3.1).³⁷ More importantly and of greater concern, OPA’s briefing indicated only 9 percent of American youth who are eligible for military service without a waiver show a propensity to serve (see Figure 3.2). As a result, only 2 percent of all American youth are both qualified and motivated to serve in the military without a waiver, equating to about 400,000 youth of the entire 32,878,937 recruitable youth population in 2020.³⁸



Recruits with Delta Company, 1st Recruit Training Battalion, conduct Marine Corps Martial Arts Program techniques while aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., Jan 31, 2023. The Marine Corps Martial Arts Program is taught to Recruits during boot camp to put them in a combat mindset and equip them with techniques that will assist them in future hostile situations. (U.S. Marine Corps photos by Cpl. Andres McDade)

Figure 3.1. Military Service Disqualifiers for Eligible Population



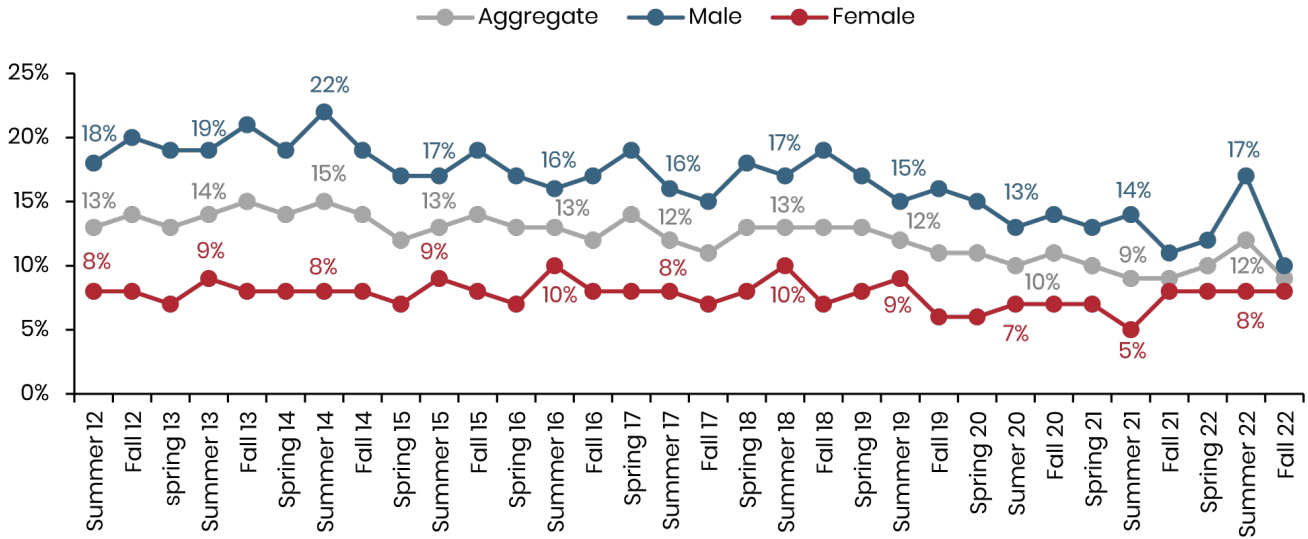
Note: DQ = disqualifier

* Includes a history of alcohol and drug abuse (including pharmaceutical medications, illegal drugs, and other substances of abuse)

Source: OPA response to RFI 1, June 2023 QBM³⁹

Figure 3.2. General Military Service Propensity by Gender

Percentage of respondents reporting they will definitely or probably serve in the military in the next few years



Source: OPA, Fall Propensity Update⁴⁰

Military Service Efforts to Increase Propensity Among the Recrutable Population

The Committee is impressed by some of the Military Services' efforts to increase the number of motivated youth eligible to serve in the military. For example, the Army implemented the FSPC in 2022 (1) to improve recruits' AFQT scores that qualified them as Cat 4 recruits, resulting in scores that qualified them as higher level recruits, and (2) to help recruits meet the physical fitness requirements of the Army before attending basic training. The Committee believes the FSPC has shown impressive results thus far, such as significant average AFQT score increases for women (25.5 points) and men (21.9 points), and a 97-percent graduation rate for men and women in the physical fitness track of the program. As a result, the Army expanded the program in 2023.⁴¹ The Navy also launched a pilot Future Sailor Preparatory Course program in 2023 based on the Army's success.⁴² The Committee is also impressed with the DAF's efforts to create a cross functional team (CFT) focused on eliminating barriers to recruit women into the Air Force and Space Force. The CFT's review of current accessions policies highlighted opportunities to increase the number of women who join, and all three of the team's recommended policy changes were implemented.⁴³

However, the Committee is concerned that, as innovative and exciting as the efforts highlighted above are, they focus on expanding the pool of young people who are already motivated to serve, rather than seeking to build propensity in uninterested but otherwise eligible recruits. DACOWITS believes a two-pronged approach is needed to increase both the pool of eligible youth who are already motivated to serve and the pool of eligible youth who are not yet motivated to serve. This approach will help the Services attract the human capital our Nation needs to meet the recruitment goals of the AVF. Further, OPA's DoD Youth Poll found only 8 percent of female youth aged 16 to 21 were motivated to serve as of fall 2022, and as a result, the Committee believes female youth may offer the greatest opportunity to increase the number of motivated and qualified applicants to meet national security needs.⁴⁴

Need to Coordinate DoD Youth Outreach Programs

DACOWITS believes a synchronized campaign to inspire our Nation's youth and increase propensity to serve in the military is an urgent national security issue. OPA estimates 150,000 new recruits are required annually to sustain Active Duty end strength requirements, with an additional 70,000 recruits necessary to meet Reserve manning requirements. As of 2020, only about 400,000 military-aged youth were both motivated and eligible to join the military.⁴⁵ The Committee believes the eligible and motivated population of recrutable youth is not large enough to meet the Military Services' recruiting missions year after year. While the Committee recognizes the DoD and Military Services employ a wide range of programs to engage America's youth to inform them about what life is like in the military, DACOWITS believes these programs remain unsynchronized and not centrally coordinated. The Committee believes synchronizing these programs could help increase interest or propensity to serve (see Table 3.3) among young men and women by ensuring efforts are not duplicated and are coordinated in a wider Department-based plan.

Table 3.3. Key DoD Youth Program Descriptions

Program Name	Program Description
Army Educational Outreach Programs (AEOP)	“AEOP offers our nation’s youth and teachers opportunities for meaningful, real-world STEM experiences, competitions and paid internships alongside U.S. Army researchers.” ⁴⁶
Civil Air Patrol Cadet Programs (CAP)	“Civil Air Patrol’s cadet program transforms youth into dynamic Americans and aerospace leaders through a curriculum that focuses on leadership, aerospace, fitness, and character. As cadets participate in these four elements, they advance through a series of achievements, earning honors and increased responsibilities along the way. Many of the nation’s astronauts, pilots, engineers, and scientists first explored their careers through CAP.” ⁴⁷
DoD Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration (STARBASE)	“To expose our nation’s youth to the technological environments and positive civilian and military role models found on Active, Guard, and Reserve military bases and installations, nurture a winning network of collaborators, and build mutual loyalty within our communities, by providing 25 hours of exemplary hands-on instruction and activities that meet or exceed the National Standards.” ⁴⁸
Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC)	“The JROTC program prepares high school students for leadership roles while making them aware of their rights, responsibilities and privileges as American citizens. ... This program is conducted at accredited secondary schools throughout the Nation, by instructors who are retired Navy, Army, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard officers and enlisted personnel.” ⁴⁹
U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps (Sea Cadets)	“The United States Naval Sea Cadet Corps (Sea Cadets) is the Navy’s youth development program. We give young Americans skills, knowledge, and confidence through an amazing variety of training opportunities. Sea Cadets wear uniforms, work as teams in a disciplined environment, and adhere to our core values of honor, respect, commitment, and service.” ⁵⁰
National Guard Youth Challenge	“The mission of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is to intervene in and reclaim the lives of 16–18 year old high school dropouts, producing program graduates with the values, life skills, education, and self-discipline necessary to succeed as productive citizens.” ⁵¹

Note: STEM = science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

The Committee recognizes there are contrasting efforts from the DoD, Military Services, and nonprofit organizations to introduce American youth to the military, such as DoD youth outreach programs. The Committee also understands that OPA tracks trends in the propensity of American youth to serve. However, DACOWITS is concerned that no office or agency is tasked with orchestrating a deliberate campaign to reverse or mitigate declining propensity trends. OUSD(P&R) verified this concern in a written response to a Committee RFI in March 2023, stating, “In so far as being responsible for improving propensity of women (adolescent or otherwise), there is no one DoD office solely responsible for growing propensity among American youth.”⁵² The Committee believes that 2022 and projected 2023 failures to meet recruiting goals for many Military Services highlight the urgent need for a concerted effort to increase the pool of motivated, recruitable youth and that better coordinating youth outreach programs and other mechanisms for introducing the military to America’s youth could help address this need.

Overcoming Barriers to Recruiting Women

The Committee believes an orchestrated effort to contrasting the diverse and disparate DoD and Military Service youth outreach programs in a cohesive campaign is necessary to demonstrate opportunities for military service coherently and consistently to American youth. A coordinated effort to expose female youth specifically to the military and female role models in the military could play a central role in showing female youth they can serve and excel in the military.

Outreach to young women may help dispel inaccurate preconceived notions about serving in the military as a woman. Most female youth have never considered joining the military, and among those who have, they worry about the risks involved and the sacrifices that might be required for them to serve in the military. Research OPA gathered in 2020 shows female youth are more apprehensive about joining the military in comparison with their male counterparts.⁵³ Similarly, the military has struggled with female recruitment following the #MeToo movement^{iv} and sexual misconduct reports released by the Services and Military Service Academies (MSAs).^{54, 55} For example, in 2022, the Army Recruiting Command noted, “the majority of females ages 16-to-28-years-old report that they believe they will be sexually harassed (64 percent) or sexually assaulted (61 percent) in the Army.”⁵⁶

DACOWITS asked about factors that might discourage women from joining the military during 2023 focus groups with Service members. In some focus groups, participants stated women are more likely to be discouraged from joining due to concerns about sexual assault. Select comments from focus group participants include the following:⁵⁷

Sexual assault is something men don't think about or worry about. They aren't brought up thinking about that. That is a conversation people, when joining, they will bring that up. Regardless of the stats, your parents care about you, and women who join are more likely than not to be sexually assaulted ...

—Female Officer

I think the obvious one is women and people who care about that woman will discourage her from joining because she would be vulnerable for sexual harassment and sexual assault; that's a number one thing. If my sister told me she was joining, I would support her, but let's talk about the realities of some of this stuff. My dad would be uncomfortable with that [his daughter joining]. Dads in the current generation would be like, "I'm worried about you." It's not coming from a bad place; it's a place of concern. Women see that it was I could be at risk for something. It's like going to a male prison where males are stuck and can't leave. The male-to-female ratio is way out of whack; it's on a lot of people's minds. If no one said that, I was going to have to.

—Male Officer

^{iv} The #MeToo movement, which gained national attention in 2017, was a grassroots social media movement that created awareness about sexual harassment and sexual assault of women in the workplace and more broadly in society.

A 2020 DACOWITS literature review indicated introducing military marketing outreach programs to female youth (specifically, 11–14 years old) could favorably affect military career choices.⁵⁸ Given feedback from the Military Services and current Service members and evidence from academic literature, the Committee believes that better coordinated and synchronized youth outreach activities could help dispel female youth’s fears about sexual harassment and assault in the military and make them more comfortable considering military service later in life.

NCMNPS Study Recommendations

In addition to the Committee’s belief that improved coordination and synchronization of DoD and Military Service efforts focused on increasing propensity to serve could help address current recruiting shortfalls, the Committee also endorses recommendations made by the NCMNPS.

The fiscal year (FY) 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) initiated the NCMNPS to focus on “two primary tasks: (1) to conduct a review of the military selective service process and (2) to consider methods to increase participation in military, national, and public service to address national security and other public service needs of the Nation.”⁵⁹ The Commission’s major goals regarding the military service recommendations were to strengthen the military to meet current and future national security needs or create a more resilient, capable, and stronger AVF and to address the civil-military divide, raising awareness and support pathways to military service, helping narrow the civil-military divide and increase the long-term sustainability of the AVF.⁶⁰

In its final report, the Commission provided four broad military specific recommendations.⁶¹ These recommendations, and a brief description of the Commission’s rationale, are included in Table 3.4, along with the DoD’s response on the status of actions as of March 2023. The Committee commends the DoD’s efforts thus far, but hopes to see continued efforts to implement the recommendations from the NCMNPS moving forward.



Chief Hospital Corpsman Alma Cannon, a native of Fayetteville, North Carolina, conducts a uniform inspection on Hospital Corpsman 3rd Class Andreana Franco, a native of San Francisco, in the hangar bay aboard USS Boxer (LHD 4), Sept. 22, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Connor Burns)

Table 3.4. NCMNPS Recommendations and Their Status

Recommendation	Description	Status of Recommendations
Improve Military Outreach Around the Country	<i>“Expanded community building efforts, including greater access to military bases and facilities via public tours, partnerships between National Guard and Reserve units and local schools, and enhanced promotion of military service by Members of Congress, will significantly increase engagement between the military and the broader American public, shatter myths, and provide a new generation of Americans with firsthand information about military life.”</i>	Department and Services have only recently returned to more robust programs, continuing to expand partnerships and engage affinity groups to reach targeted audiences.
Increase Opportunities for Youth to Explore Service	<i>“Expanding Junior Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (JROTC) and other youth programs, along with promoting administration of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Career Exploration Program—currently taken by less than 5 percent of U.S. secondary students—will enable more students to learn about citizenship and service, gain familiarity with the military, and understand how their own strengths could translate into military careers and other service options.”</i>	The JROTC continues a strong demographically diverse representation with 42 percent female participation. Other programs include DoD STARBASE with 83 locations and the free Career Exploration Program designed for students in grades 10–12.
Strengthen Military Recruiting and Marketing	<i>“Greater investment of recruiting resources in underrepresented markets and hometown recruiting programs, in combination with new funding mechanisms for marketing, will help the military in meeting its recruiting goals while improving the geographic and demographic balance of the Armed Forces to better reflect the diversity of the Nation.”</i>	In 2021, a marketing content review was completed as a response to the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service Report. The Services continue to analyze their campaigns ensuring inclusive and diverse content. A representative recruiter force is also a focus. Army National Guard marketing efforts were highlighted.
Effectively Manage Personnel	<i>“Enabling greater movement between all components of military service and between military service and the private sector—facilitated by recently enacted personnel management authorities and expanded use of warrant officers—will offer the services a more effective approach to continual access to individuals with key skills, such as digital talent or engineering.”</i>	A streamlined process for qualified individuals has been implemented by the Services. “The approved authority to allow the Services to directly hire from the private sector has been explored and will be used where appropriate.”

Note: NCMNPS = National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service; STARBASE = Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration

Sources: NCMNPS, 2020;⁶² DoD Response to RFI #3, 2023⁶³

Summary

The number of motivated, recruitable youth continues to decline despite concerted efforts by DoD and the Military Services to educate and attract young people to serve. Addressing declining propensity in our Nation's youth will take a whole-of-government approach to educate, promote, and inspire youth to serve. The Committee agrees with the National Committee on Military, Public, and National Service's statement that "bold action is required."⁶⁴ Therefore, the Committee recommends 1) the SecDef should assign an Assistant Secretary of Defense-level official to coordinate and synchronize DoD and Service efforts to increase and inspire our Nation's youth's propensity to serve, and 2) the SecDef should implement the military service recommendations published in the NCMNPS's Final Report, "Inspired to Serve," to more effectively educate and inspire America's youth to serve in the Military Services.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to develop and implement consistent policies regarding the accession of single custodial parents, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity for potential single custodial parent recruits—especially women—to serve, in order to increase the pool of qualified recruits.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the impacts of declining recruitment rates across the Military Services and encourages the Services to reduce unnecessary barriers for potential recruits. In 2016, DACOWITS recommended the Military Services adopt a policy to increase the accession of single custodial parents. Without these policies or waivers, parents are required to surrender full legal custody of their children to join the military. While some progress has been made since 2016, policies on single custodial parent accessions still vary widely across the Military Services, and the Committee believes they continue to be unnecessarily restrictive. Barriers to single custodial parent accessions disproportionately affect potential female recruits because women are much more likely to be single custodial parents than men. Implementing consistent policies across the Military Services and allowing more single custodial parents to serve could increase the pool of qualified recruits, ultimately strengthening the military's talent pool and readiness.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services' senior enlisted personnel on the barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and strategies for recruiting women (March 2023, RFI 1)⁶⁵
- Written responses from the Military Services on single parent accession policies, waivers, and implementation of the CADET Act (March 2023, RFI 5)⁶⁶
- A written response from the OPA via the Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies Division (JAMRS) providing updates on the target population for military recruitment and an estimate of single parents in the recruitable population by gender (June 2023, RFI 1)⁶⁷
- A written response from the Air Force on its single custodial accession policy, first implemented in 2014 (June 2023, RFI 3)⁶⁸
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of recruitment and retention (Focus Group Report 2023)⁶⁹

DACOWITS studied single custodial parent accession policies in 2016 and recommended the SecDef require each of the Military Services to adopt a policy regarding the accession of single custodial parents into the military to allow such accessions when they accord with facts, circumstances, and occupational requirements and when the Military Services would benefit.⁷⁰ DACOWITS remains concerned about impacts on the recruitment of women if single custodial parent accession policies across the Military Services are not modernized. The year 2023 has proven to be one of the most challenging recruiting years since the inception of the AVF; the Army, Navy, and Air Force collectively missed their recruiting goal by 25,000.⁷¹

DACOWITS believes the Military Services' single custodial parent accession policies should be reviewed to determine whether they are inadvertently reducing the pool of eligible or motivated recruits. Restrictive single custodial parent policies could be disproportionately discouraging young women from joining the military, as women currently make up about 80 percent of single custodial parent-led families.⁷² The Committee believes establishing consistent, less restrictive single custodial parent accession policies across the Military Services would help maximize opportunities and motivate qualified, young women to join the military. The reasoning supporting this recommendation follows.

Progression of Single Custodial Parent Policies in the Military Services Since 2016

In 2016, all the Military Services other than the Air Force and the Army Reserve required single custodial parent recruits to surrender full legal custody of their dependent children before

enlisting in the military.⁷³ DACOWITS' 2016 Annual Report outlined how relinquishing legal custody of dependents is unnecessary, because servicewomen can utilize an FCP to ensure their dependents were cared for during training or while on deployment.⁷⁴ Single custodial parent accession policies disproportionately affect potential female recruits because women are much more likely to be single custodial parents than men.⁷⁵

In March 2023, DACOWITS received written updates from the Military Services describing their current single custodial parent accession policies.^{76, 77, 78, 79, 80} While there have been some policy updates since 2016, the Services' policies on single custodial parent accessions still vary widely, and the Committee believes they continue to be unnecessarily restrictive. For example, while some Military Services allow single custodial parents to enlist with a waiver pending certain circumstances (such as their number of dependents), the Marine Corps still requires the relinquishment of custody of minor dependents prior to enlistment,⁸¹ and the Army maintains a complete prohibition of enlistment for single custodial parents.⁸² Table 3.5 summarizes current single custodial parent accession policies by Military Service as of March 2023.⁸³

Table 3.5. Current Single Custodial Parent Accession Policies by Military Service as of March 2023

Service	Waiver for Active Component	Waiver for Reserve Component	Officer Waiver Granted
Army	No ^a	Yes	Yes
Navy	Yes ^b	Yes	Yes ^b
Marine Corps	Yes ^c	Yes	Yes
Air Force	Yes ^d	Yes	Yes
Coast Guard	Yes ^e	Yes	Yes

^a The Army prohibits single custodial parents from enlisting if their dependent is under 18. The Service does not offer waivers for enlisted single custodial parents.⁸⁴

^b Waivers for Active Component and Reserve Component enlistments for single custodial parents are offered under a Navy pilot program if recruits have no more than two dependents under 18 and no dependents under 12 months. Recruits requiring a waiver under this pilot program must assess into a rating with skill-based enlistment bonuses, execute family care plans, acknowledge that dependents may not accompany them to initial training, and present a court order indicating who has physical custody of the dependent. The Navy's pilot program will end October 1, 2024.⁸⁵

^c Both male or female single custodial parent applicants to the Marine Corps must relinquish physical custody of any dependents under 18 at least 90 days before initiating enlistment processes.⁸⁶

^d The Air Force does not enforce any restrictions on single parents in basic training. However, Airmen must implement a family care plan during basic training to be eligible.⁸⁷

^e Single parent recruits can apply to the Coast Guard with an approved waiver and family care plan, including a special power of attorney assigned to care for children when the recruit is absent from the family.⁸⁸

Sources: Military Service responses, March 2023 RFI 5^{89, 90, 91, 92, 93}

The Committee believes some of the Military Services' policies described are unnecessarily restrictive, and the high variance in policies across the military likely causes confusion among male and female single custodial parent recruits considering a military career. Confusion with different policies and requirements may deter them from enlisting or negatively affect their propensity to serve.

Barriers to the Recruit Pool and the Need for New Solutions in an Unprecedented Recruiting Environment

Given the military's current recruiting crisis, DoD needs to consider eliminating barriers that deter potential recruits from pursuing careers in the military, such as restrictive and confusing single custodial parent accession policies. Growing the pool of eligible recruits should be a priority for DoD and the Military Services because only 23 percent of Americans aged 17–24 were qualified to serve in the military in 2020, and only 9 percent of the qualified population was motivated to serve.⁹⁴ OPA estimates 6 percent of the recruitable population was disqualified from military service at least partially for being single custodial parents (about 2 million individuals) in 2020. This is a significant portion of the recruitable population that may be deterred from serving due to the waiver process and having to give up full custody of their child. The Committee believes making single custodial parent policies more consistent across the Military Services and more accessible for those who want to serve will help increase the pool of eligible recruits.

The Military Services cannot reliably track reasons recruits disengage from the recruiting process, including otherwise qualified single custodial parents who are discouraged by inconsistent Service policies. The Services cannot reliably track reasons recruits disengage from the recruiting process.⁹⁵ However, any actual or perceived barriers to service should be removed, when appropriate, given how competitive job markets are for young Americans and the Services' need for personnel to meet end strength goals. The Air Force reported benefits since updating its policy to allow single parents to join through a broad waiver process, accessing 2,798 single custodial parents since 2014.⁹⁶ Specifically, 1,511 single parent waivers were granted to men and 1,180 single parent waivers were granted to women joining the Air Force between 2015 and 2023.⁹⁷

Single Custodial Parent Policies and Their Disproportionate Effect on Servicewomen

Single custodial parent accession policies may disproportionately and unfairly affect female recruits. OPA estimates 7 percent of the female recruitable population was disqualified from military service at least partially due to being a single custodial parent in comparison with only 4 percent of the male recruitable population.⁹⁸ Similarly, Census data indicates four of five single parent homes are led by mothers. Therefore, women are likely disproportionately impacted by the Military Services' single custodial parent accession policies.⁹⁹ Given women compose more than 46 percent of the American workforce, the Committee believes it is necessary for the Military Services to adjust policies that disproportionately impact women's ability to serve to address current and future recruiting challenges.¹⁰⁰

Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups felt single custodial parent accession policies were more likely to affect women during the recruitment process than men. Focus group participants also confirmed the requirement to give up custody of children was a barrier for women in joining the military in some Services.¹⁰¹

There are a large demographic of women who are stuck in situations who would probably join [if they could]. They will not give up custody of kids because of trust. It is not legal to get military married [married on paper] just to join. There are family care plans, so allow the family care plan in order to join [for single parents].

—Enlisted Woman

Single Parent Accession Policies and the Propensity of Young Women to Serve

In addition to expanding the pool of American youth eligible for military service, the Committee believes adjusting single custodial parent accession policy barriers to service could help increase the propensity of young women to serve. An OPA briefer presenting to the Committee noted the female youth market has always had lower propensity than male youth, a trend that has continued in recent years.¹⁰² Results from OPA's DoD Youth Poll from




U.S. Air Force Airman Samantha Fox, Operational Medical Readiness Squadron bioenvironmental engineering technician monitors noise levels March 14, 2023 at Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, Fla. Collecting accurate data helps quantify exposure to identify and mitigate overexposure risks. (U.S. Space force photo by Senior Airman Samuel Becker)

fall 2021 indicate 8 percent of female youth aged 16 to 21 years old have propensity to serve in comparison with 11 percent of men of the same age.¹⁰³ The Committee believes inconsistent, confusing single custodial parent accession policies could negatively influence single custodial parents, especially women, from believing they can serve in the military, thereby reducing their propensity to serve.

DoD and the Military services have made significant investments to improve the quality of life for Service members and their families in recent years. Many improvements have focused on making serving in the military, while raising a family, easier for women, such as increasing days of parental leave, providing lactation rooms and opportunities to nurse, allowing rated women to fly while pregnant, and improving maternity uniforms. While many successful single custodial military members have served in the past, these enormous improvements make successful service by single custodial mothers even more attainable. The Committee believes the DoD and Military Services should encourage otherwise qualified single custodial women to serve rather than turning them away from service. Allowing single custodial parents to serve with an approved FCP, coupled with the many notable improvements already implemented to better support families and women, in particular, could make military service a more viable option for young women with children. The Committee believes it is important that young women be able to see a path to military service and an opportunity to successfully navigate that path to ensure they are propensed to serve.

Summary

Given the current recruiting crisis facing the Military Services, the DoD needs to reduce barriers to service and expand the pool of eligible youth to address the recruiting challenges of today and tomorrow. The Committee supports developing and implementing consistent accession policies across the Military Services that allow single custodial parents to join. Addressing these barriers would be especially helpful for improving the recruitment of women, because single custodial parent accession policies disproportionately and unfairly affect women interested in serving in the military. Allowing single custodial women to serve could increase the propensity of young women to serve who might otherwise be confused about their eligibility for service. In the SecDef's Message to the Force, dated March 2, 2023, he said, "To remain the strongest fighting force in the world, we must recruit and retain the best of America. That means building pathways of opportunity for all qualified American patriots who choose to serve their country."¹⁰⁴ The Committee concurs with this call to action, which should include otherwise qualified men and women who are also single custodial parents. DACOWITS recommends the Military Services develop and implement consistent policies for the accession of single custodial parents, with the intent of maximizing the opportunity for potential single custodial parent recruits—especially women—to serve, thereby significantly increasing the pool of qualified recruits.



A Marine Corps drill instructor leads a platoon in warmup exercises before a motivational run at Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Sept. 21, 2023. (Photo by Marine Corps Corporal Elliott Flood-Johnson).

Chapter 4

Employment and Integration Recommendations

Chapter 4. Employment and Integration Recommendations

This chapter presents DACOWITS' 2023 recommendation related to employment and integration, organized by study topic. Each recommendation or set of recommendations is followed by a short synopsis of the topic and an explanation of the Committee's reasoning for presenting the recommendation, which is based on its investigation of the topic. The recommendations and supporting reasonings for gender integration are provided in Section A, the recommendation and supporting reasoning for women in aviation is provided in Section B, and the recommendations and supporting reasonings for physical fitness standards are provided in Section C.

A. Gender Integration

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to integrate recruit training at the platoon level, where recruits are formed into integrated platoons after basic daily routine. Maximizing integration, at the platoon level, develops the foundation of a successfully integrated Force. This would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Synopsis

DACOWITS commends the Marine Corps' recent progress toward gender-integrated recruit training, beginning with the first integrated company at MCRD Parris Island in 2019. However, male and female recruits train in gender-segregated platoons, which reduces the opportunity for recruits to develop mutual respect and cohesion for one another during this formative training process. DACOWITS recommends the Marine Corps fully integrate recruit training by gender at the platoon level—like the other Military Services—to best prepare recruits for operating in an integrated fleet. The Committee believes the Marine Corps' current integrated company model with gender-separate platoons does not meet a true definition of integration nor the intent of Congressional legislation.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year. The following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the Marine Corps on updates to gender integration at the MCRDs since September 2020 and an overview of the University of Pittsburgh study results and plan to address its recommendations (December 2022, RFI 4)¹⁰⁵
- A written response from the Marine Corps on implementation of the University of Pittsburgh study's alternate models and policy recommendations (June 2023, RFI 5)¹⁰⁶

DACOWITS first studied gender integration and recruit training in 1988. Now, 35 years later, the Committee remains committed to ensuring gender parity, equity, and full integration in this formative training phase. DACOWITS' first recommendation on Marine Corps recruit training came in 1991 when the Committee recommended a review of Basic Warrior Training (BWT) and Marine Combat Training (MCT) programs to address syllabus differences for women and men. Gender integration at Marine Corps recruit training was identified as a continuing concern in the Committee's 2018, 2019, and 2020 annual reports.^{107, 108, 109} In 2023, the Committee reviewed the University of Pittsburgh's "USMC Gender-Integrated Recruit Training Study" conducted for the Marine Corps,¹¹⁰ received responses from the Marine Corps about its recent integration efforts and actions following the study,^{111, 112} and visited MCRDs San Diego (July 2023) and Parris Island (August 2023) at the invitation of then-Commandant David H. Berger. While the Marine Corps has made recent strides to increase gender integration at recruit training, the Committee believes full integration of recruits at the platoon level is needed. The reasoning supporting the Committee's first recommendation on gender integration at Marine Corps recruit training follows.

Gender Integration Progresses in Marine Corps Recruit Training

In recent years, the Marine Corps has made significant strides in integrating male and female recruits at the MCRDs. Historically, women were trained only at MCRD Parris Island and were segregated in the 4th Battalion.¹¹³ In 2019, the Marine Corps piloted its first integrated company at MCRD Parris Island composed of five male platoons and one female platoon.¹¹⁴ Integrated companies are housed in the same barracks with separate squad bays for each platoon. Since 2019, the Marine Corps has increased the number of integrated companies at MCRD Parris Island and incorporated a 4-and-2 model with companies composed of four male platoons and two female platoons.¹¹⁵

The FY20 NDAA mandated the Marine Corps to "not segregate training by gender" at MCRD Parris Island within 5 years and MCRD San Diego within 8 years.¹¹⁶ As a result, MCRD San Diego began training female recruits in integrated companies in 2021.¹¹⁷ MCRD San Diego has continued to increase the number of female recruits training in integrated companies in 2022

and 2023.¹¹⁸ Lance Corporal Madison D. Franklin, who graduated in December 2022, was the first female company honor graduate at MCRD San Diego.¹¹⁹

Since the implementation of the integrated company model, the Marine Corps has sought additional ways to increase gender integration

at recruit training. In 2021, both MCRDs began integrating select training events at or below the platoon level, including the Crucible.¹²⁰ At both Depots, the Marine Corps has made concerted efforts to instill officer and enlisted female leadership at the battalion, company, and series levels.¹²¹ On June 15, 2023, the Marine Corps deactivated 4th Battalion at MCRD Parris Island because all female recruits were being trained in integrated companies in the previously all-male 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Battalions.¹²² The Marine Corps reports it is on track to train half of all female recruits at MCRD San Diego in the coming years and feels this satisfies the mandate of the FY20 NDAA.¹²³

Despite this progress, the Marine Corps remains the only Service without fully integrated recruit training at the lowest unit level. The other Military Services train in gender-integrated units (platoon equivalent) for the entirety of their training cycle and in all training events.¹²⁴ Recruits are separated only for sleeping and hygiene purposes in gender-separate accommodations per 10 U.S.C. § 8431.¹²⁵ Whereas the other Military Services train recruits with mixed-gender drill instructor teams, the Marine Corps maintains same-gender drill instructor teams (e.g., a team of three to four female drill instructors trains a female platoon).¹²⁶

DACOWITS commends the Marine Corps for the steps it has taken since 2020 to increase gender integration at recruit training. However, the Committee feels more integration is necessary to better prepare male and female recruits as they become Marines, to operate within an integrated operational force, and to better align the Marine Corps with its Service counterparts.



U.S. Marine Corps recruits with Charlie Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, stand on line in a squad bay at MCRD San Diego, July 25, 2023. Recruits follow a stringent morning routine that includes doing their hair, brushing their teeth, and dressing in the uniform of the day. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elliott A. Flood-Johnson)

“Knowing I’m the first female company honor graduate from the West Coast ... it’s not even about me. It’s so that every other female out there who has doubts knows that anything is possible. People say that, but not everybody believes it.”



LCpl Madison D. Franklin, the first female company honor graduate at MCRD San Diego

Recommendations From the 2022 University of Pittsburgh Study

In 2020, the Marine Corps commissioned an independent academic study to analyze its current approaches to gender integration and provide alternate models to increase gender integration in Marine Corps recruit training. Completed in June 2022, the University of Pittsburgh study outlined 3 alternate models to increase gender integration for recruits and drill instructors, as well as provided 18 secondary recommendations to support current and future gender integration efforts at the MCRDs.¹²⁷

One of the alternate models proposed in the study is an integrated-platoon model where recruits sleep in gender-separate squad bays and merge into fully integrated training platoons following completion of basic daily routine (BDR). In this model, all training throughout the day is conducted as integrated platoons, including training events that occur in the squad bay.¹²⁸

DACOWITS' 2023 Visits to MCRDs San Diego and Parris Island

The Committee visited MCRD San Diego (and associated training areas at Camp Pendleton) in July 2023 and MCRD Parris Island in August 2023, at the invitation of the Commandant of the Marine Corps, to observe gender-integrated training. At both Depots, the Committee observed a wide variety of training activities, including classroom instruction, physical fitness training, marksmanship, core values guided discussions, close-order drill, tactical training, and the Crucible. The Committee also observed daily training activities, such as morning BDR, mealtimes at the chow hall, and training in the squad bay. DACOWITS received briefings from leadership teams at both MCRDs on the mission of recruit training, Depot operations, and gender integration progress. The Committee also engaged with training staff and leaders at all levels during the visit, including drill instructors.

Recruit Training Is Foundational to Making a Marine

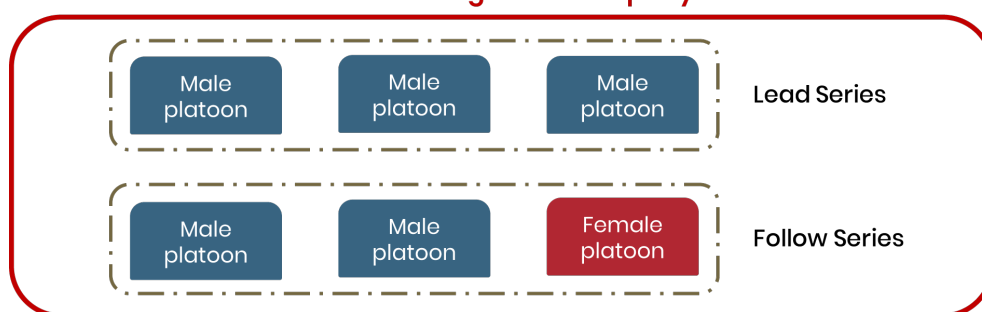
Marine Corps recruit training is a critical foundation to the institution—it is where civilians are transformed into Marines. This occurs over an intense 13-week training program divided into four progressive phases.¹²⁹ The training is designed to teach necessary skills and instill critical values each Marine must embody.¹³⁰ The Marine Corps has touted the importance of gender integration in recruit training, noting it enables female and male recruits to develop mutual respect, develop better cohesion, and view one another as equals.¹³¹

The Commander's Intent for the MCRDs describes the mission to produce "basically trained Marines who are prepared for follow-on training and the challenges of service in the Operating Forces."¹³² The training curriculum is designed to enable recruits to "train as they fight," by replicating operational situations in a training environment.¹³³ In a 2018 RAND Corporation study, more than two-thirds of respondents from the Army, Navy, and Air Force believed having both genders together in recruit training made it easier to adapt when joining integrated operational units.¹³⁴ For the Marine Corps, all follow-on entry-level training and the operational force are integrated; therefore, providing recruits the opportunity to learn alongside the opposite gender is critical to replicate operational situations.

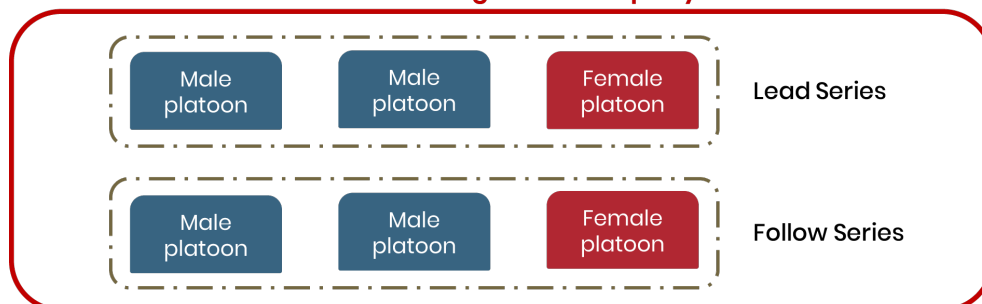
Recruits Are Still Gender-Segregated During Many Aspects of Their Training Even Within the Marine Corps Integrated Company Training Model

In the Marine Corps' current approach to gender integration at the MCRDs, recruits are integrated at the company level. Platoons remain segregated by gender. An integrated company is typically composed of five male platoons and one female platoon, but sometimes integrated companies have four male platoons and two female platoons (see Figure 4.1).¹³⁵ Platoons are the primary training unit during Marine Corps recruit training—recruits “eat, sleep, train, live, learn, and work with their platoon. Recruits go everywhere and do everything with their platoon.”¹³⁶

Figure 4.1. Marine Corps Integrated Company Model
5-and-1 Integrated Company



4-and-2 Integrated Company



Source: Nindl et al., 2022¹³⁷

The Committee noted during its visits to both MCRDs that, even with integrated companies, recruits are seated or arranged by platoon; therefore, genders are physically separated. For example, when recruits in an integrated company conduct the Confidence Course, they are largely separated by gender because recruits start the event within their platoons. While classroom training is integrated, recruits primarily sit in their platoons, which leads to physical separation between male and female recruits.

Further integration of some training events at or below the platoon level, which the Marine Corps began in 2021, appeared inconsistent during the Committee's visits and incongruent with previous briefings DACOWITS received from the Marine Corps. Most notably, DACOWITS observed vast differences in the level of integration during the Crucible between the two MCRDs. In December 2022, the Marine Corps stated, "Male and female recruits are integrated into the same small teams during the Crucible."¹³⁸ The Committee observed an integrated company conducting the Crucible at MCRD San Diego. Training events were run by platoon, and therefore male and female recruits were not working together, and in some cases not even seeing each other, while completing the events. Conversely, at MCRD Parris Island, recruits in integrated companies were integrated at the squad level, conducting the training events together as a team. DACOWITS observed male and female recruits interacting and working together to solve a problem at a training station.

Even at MCRD Parris Island, where male and female recruits have some opportunity to train shoulder to shoulder at or below the platoon level, recruits still spend significant time in their platoons fully segregated by gender. Recruits in integrated companies do not have the opportunity to build strong bonds, respect, and cohesion with their opposite-gender counterparts.¹³⁹

Based on these observations, the Committee believes the Marine Corps' current integrated company model does not meet a full definition of integration. The Marine Corps has even previously described the integrated company model as "co-located, gender-separate."¹⁴⁰ Recruits who have experienced the integrated company model consider it to be mostly segregated due to low interaction with each other. One female recruit from an integrated company described the segregation: "How much are we integrated? Not much. They threaten to drop us if we speak to the males in the same company. The guys are forbidden to speak at us."¹⁴¹

The University of Pittsburgh study recommended further integration at or below the platoon level within the integrated company model as one of its proposed alternate models. The study organized training events into three priority tiers for integration based on training that provides meaningful integration opportunities, events that most align with Marine skills in follow-on training and the fleet, and dialogues where gender-diverse perspectives are important.¹⁴²

The Marine Corps has integrated 19 of these events (see Table 4.1), but did not provide a plan to integrate the remaining events.^{143, 144} Though the Marine Corps reported to DACOWITS that these training events were already integrated at or below the platoon level,^{145, 146} during the Committee's MCRD visits, most of these integrated events did not provide meaningful opportunities for women and men to work together. In the Committee's observations, most recruits were not integrated during these events because integration was happenstance rather than intentional. Integration occurred when groups were not evenly numbered, requiring male recruits to join a female group or vice versa as opposed to an intentional effort to maximize integration during the event. Notable exceptions include the Crucible and BWT at MCRD Parris Island and combatives, such as Pugil Sticks at MCRD San Diego.

Table 4.1. University of Pittsburgh Study Priority Tiers for Further Integration in Training Events at or Below Platoon Level

Priority 1		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic Warrior Training ■ Crucible ■ Warrior’s Breakfast ■ Endurance Course (Parris Island) ■ Land Navigation ■ Confidence Course 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Select Core Value Guided Discussions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Equal Opportunity – Sexual Harassment – Sexual Assault 2 – Hazing – Personal Conduct – Combat Leadership – Fraternalization – Sexual Responsibility – Marriage and First-Term Marine – Marine Leader Development – Social Media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical fitness events that use ability grouping (e.g., runs, physical training bases) ■ Academic study time ■ Table 1 and Table 2 pits and target factory
Priority 2		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bayonet Assault Course ■ Obstacle Course ■ Swim Qualification ■ Rappel Tower ■ Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) ■ Hikes ■ Tactical Combat Casualty Care ■ Gas Chamber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Academic Classes ■ Team Week ■ Grass Week ■ Table 1 and Table 2 firing line (not recommended as first exposure to integration) ■ Field Meet 	
Priority 3		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Initial Strength test ■ Physical Fitness Test 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Combat Fitness Test ■ 3-mile moto run 	

Note: Red highlights indicate events the Marine Corps has integrated since the conclusion of the study, per DACOWITS Requests for information in December 2022¹⁴⁷ and June 2023.¹⁴⁸
 Source: Nindl et al., 2022¹⁴⁹

One Marine Corps argument against gender-integrated training platoons is the amount of training conducted inside the squad bay.¹⁵⁰ The Commanding General of MCRD Parris Island feels platoons segregated by gender are the key to effectively training Marines. He described, “We have a tried-and-true manner by which we train Marines that proves effective in transforming young Americans,” and further elaborated, “being the same gender at the platoon level allows us to optimize the training schedule every single day and every hour of the day.”¹⁵¹ Recruits, drill instructors, and training cadre continually recognize the importance of the squad bay in the transformation and training process.¹⁵²

The fundamentals of the squad bay experience—the fact that they are pressured 24/7—that’s the secret sauce to everything we do here.

—Male Marine Corps officer, MCRD San Diego

The biggest point of when you become a platoon, the time you become a platoon, is the time in the squad bay. That’s where you become a family.

—Male recruit, MCRD Parris Island

To consider training fully integrated, recruits must have an opportunity to interact with opposite-gender peers during these transformational training moments that turn recruits into Marines. With fully integrated platoons, recruits would participate in all training events as an integrated team, to include training within the squad bay, with the exception of showering and sleeping.¹⁵³ DACOWITS believes this level of integration is imperative to full compliance with the FY20 NDAA. Despite the NDAA’s vague language to “not segregate recruit training by gender,” lawmakers’ intent has been described as full integration of training at the platoon level.¹⁵⁴

Other Services Have Recognized the Benefit of Gender-Integrated Training

The Marine Corps stands alone in its approach to gender-integrated training. The other Military Services have fully integrated recruit training and have recognized the benefit of this approach.¹⁵⁵ The Army believes working together in the training environment prepares Soldiers to work together in the professional environment of the Army and eliminates any perception that recruits went through different training experiences. The Navy shares similar sentiments that recruits must be prepared to work together when they enter the operational fleet.¹⁵⁶ Recruits, both men and women, across all Services want gender-integrated recruit training because they believe it will best prepare them to work in integrated units following training.¹⁵⁷

The other Military Services execute gender-integrated training at the basic unit level (e.g., platoon equivalent); having taken this approach for many decades, the other Services recognize integration provides an opportunity to cultivate equity and respect with the opposite gender. In the University of Pittsburgh study focus groups, Marine Corps recruits wanted more integrated training than they were currently experiencing and saw value in integrated physical, tactical, and educational training to better prepare them for working in an integrated fleet. Recruits from the other Military Services who experienced integrated training believed it was essential for their preparation to work in integrated operational environments.¹⁵⁸

One of the largest objections from the Marine Corps to executing integrated platoons is the amount of training that occurs in the squad bay. However, the other Services conduct similar training in comparable open-style recruit berthing locations (particularly the Navy and Coast Guard),¹⁵⁹ so training in the squad bay should not limit the Marine Corps in its ability to further integrate. The other Military Services can provide best practices and lessons learned to the Marine Corps on gender integration, training, and training spaces based on their experience.

Limiting Opportunities for Genders to Interact in Training Affects Readiness and Cohesion

Unit cohesion is an essential part of how the Marine Corps operates, and gender-integrated training can improve unit cohesion. Recent studies show cohesion degrades in segregated units, and gender-integrated training does not cause harm and may actually foster better cohesion.^{160, 161} Within the Marine Corps, physical training is particularly important to integration because it is a core tenet of training where recruits are challenged and where they learn to build camaraderie and develop mutual respect for one another.¹⁶²

The Marine Corps has stated it values integrated recruit training, recognizing it “contributes to cohesive units capable of diverse thought and intelligent action necessary for combat effectiveness,” but it appears to limit itself in providing opportunities to maximize cohesion and increase combat effectiveness.¹⁶³ To meet these goals, the Marine Corps must ensure further integration and provide better opportunities for both genders to interact during recruit training. Recruit training should signal that all Marines are to be respected for their ability to perform and execute, regardless of gender.¹⁶⁴ Developing mutual respect between women and men during the foundation of recruit training is essential as these new Marines move into the operational force. This respect must be established at the beginning, when a recruit is formed into a Marine, to truly be impactful throughout the remainder of their military career.¹⁶⁵

Segregation Breeds Unhealthy Perceptions of the Opposite Gender

Interaction, socialization, and working with the opposite gender are critical to dismantling negative stereotypes and fostering positive inclusion across an organization. Training separated by gender appears to have unintentional consequences to include perpetuating feelings that men are superior to women and promoting fear and suspicion of women.^{166, 167} These outcomes directly contradict efforts to prepare recruits to operate in the Marine Corps. Research suggests significant exposure to and interaction with peers of the opposite gender during recruit training can reduce gender discrimination and biased attitudes.¹⁶⁸

Gender-segregated training may also increase the level of benevolent sexism^{iv} by reinforcing the stereotype that women need special treatment and protection.^{169, 170} Although this type of sexism is less overt, it can be just as detrimental as hostile sexism and affects women’s ability to lead in fully integrated units. Ultimately, segregation can hinder unit cohesion and readiness.¹⁷¹

Gender discrimination remains a reported issue across all the Military Services. In DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups, participants in the majority of groups considered gender discrimination to be a problem in their Service.¹⁷² Participants in most groups felt gender discrimination has a corrosive effect on unit cohesion, morale, and readiness, validating research findings on the negative impact gender segregation has on readiness. One enlisted woman shared her experience, stating “it [gender discrimination] kills the morale. No one wants to come to work,” while another servicewoman described gender discrimination as “a problem multiplier.”¹⁷³

^{iv} Benevolent sexism is defined as “a subjectively positive orientation of protection, idealization, and affection directed towards women that, like hostile sexism, serves to justify women’s subordinate status to men.” (Glick et al. 2000, p. 763).

Male Marine Corps recruits showed statistically significant higher levels of sexist attitudes, both benevolent and hostile, compared with their male peers in other Services and female recruit counterparts. These attitudes are not transformed during their time at MCRDs and therefore will persist in follow-on integrated training and operational environments.¹⁷⁴ Due to this finding, it is even more critical the Marine Corps maximize opportunities for women and men to train directly with each other. The Marine Corps shared in 2019 one of the biggest challenges during recruit training is “teaching men to appropriately treat women.” However, this was followed by the sentiment that integrating recruit training at the platoon level will not solve this issue.¹⁷⁵ Research counters this supposition and indicates earlier and further integration will engender more cohesive units for an organization.¹⁷⁶ Meaningful interactions with the opposite gender, as with the interactions that occur during platoon-level training events, break down barriers between the genders and enable women and men to see themselves as equals.

Summary

Recruit training is the foundation of making a Marine. This process occurs over a 13-week period and incorporates many types of training events in different training environments. The Marine Corps is currently employing an integrated company model whereby platoons remain segregated by gender. Although the Marine Corps has made progress toward fully integrated recruit training, women and men are physically separated by gender during many critical events due to gender-separate platoons. This separation eliminates the opportunity for men and women to fully develop mutual respect and prevents unit cohesion in training and in the operational environment. Gender-separated training has been shown to have negative consequences on gender perceptions and even reinforce benevolent sexism, which Marines may take with them throughout their entire military career.

To maximize its combat force and overall mission effectiveness, the Marine Corps should learn from the other Military Services that employ and recognize the benefits of gender-integrated recruit training. Therefore, the Committee recommends the SecDef should direct the Marine Corps to integrate recruit training at the platoon level, where recruits are formed into integrated platoons after BDR. Maximizing integration, at the platoon level, will cultivate a successfully integrated force. This would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 NDAA directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Marine Corps to institute mixed-gender drill instructor teams for all integrated companies at recruit training to reinforce the operational environment and present women and men as equally capable and competent Marines and leaders. This would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the Marine Corps has made progress integrating recruit training by gender among recruits with the company-integrated model. However, recruits remain separated by gender in platoons, and drill instructor teams are also segregated by gender (e.g., female drill instructors are assigned only to female platoons). The Committee believes mixed-gender drill instructor teams are essential to providing recruits training and mentorship from opposite-gender role models as they prepare to enter an integrated operational environment. The other Services have trained with mixed-gender drill instructor teams for decades, with both recruits and drill instructors reporting positive benefits. Restricting drill instructor team assignments by gender hinders female drill instructors' ability to train recruits and promote to higher positions of leadership and creates unnecessary challenges for personnel staffing. DACOWITS recommends the Marine Corps continue its efforts to integrate recruit training by assigning mixed-gender drill instructor teams to integrated companies.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendation on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year. The following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the Marine Corps on updates to gender integration at the MCRDs since September 2020 and an overview of the University of Pittsburgh study results and the Marine Corps' plan to address its recommendations (December 2022, RFI 4)¹⁷⁷
- A written response from the Marine Corps on implementation of the University of Pittsburgh study's alternate models and policy recommendations (June 2023, RFI 5)¹⁷⁸

Gender integration at Marine Corps recruit training was identified as a continuing concern in the DACOWITS' 2018, 2019, and 2020 annual reports.^{179, 180, 181} Over the past several years, the Committee was encouraged by the Marine Corps' progressive steps toward increasing gender integration but felt the Service needed to further promote a culture of inclusion and better prepare recruits to serve in an integrated operational environment. DACOWITS' first recommendations on gender integration at Marine Corps recruit training occurred in 1991. Part of this recommendation addressed the limited numbers of female instructors for male recruit training. Thirty-two years later, DACOWITS continues to raise the importance of mixed-gender instructors at Marine Corps recruit training.

In 2023, the Committee reviewed the University of Pittsburgh's "USMC Gender-Integrated Recruit Training Study" conducted for the Marine Corps,¹⁸² received responses from the Marine Corps about its recent integration efforts and actions following the study,^{183, 184} and visited MCRDs San Diego (July 2023) and Parris Island (August 2023) at the invitation of then-

Commandant David H. Berger. While the Marine Corps has made recent strides to increase mixed-gender training cadre above the platoon level, drill instructors assigned to training platoons are restricted to the same gender as the recruits they train. The Committee believes mixed-gender drill instructor teams are essential to



A U.S. Marine Corps drill instructor with Charlie Company, 3rd Recruit Training Battalion, observes recruits online in a squad bay at MCRD San Diego, July 25, 2023. Recruits follow a stringent morning routine that includes doing their hair, brushing their teeth, and dressing in the uniform of the day. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elliott A. Flood-Johnson)

demonstrating women and men are equally capable role models and Marines, who should be worthy of emulation by either gender. The reasoning supporting the Committee's second recommendation on gender integration at Marine Corps recruit training follows.

Drill Instructors Are Critical to Recruit Development

Drill instructors in all the Military Services are critical role models for recruits throughout their time in training. They are present throughout a recruit's training and influence values and norms formed throughout the process. Drill instructors set the tone for mixed-gender interactions, model professional relationships between genders, and ensure all recruits are treated with equal respect.^{185, 186}

At Marine Corps recruit training, a team of three to four drill instructors are charged with the development of recruits 24-hours a day throughout the entirety of the 13-week training program. They provide constant oversight and command of the recruits to reinforce the values a Marine must embody, ultimately developing recruits into Marines.¹⁸⁷ Drill instructors serve as role models and are always present during the training program.¹⁸⁸ The Marine Corps is the only Military Service that requires drill instructors to maintain a 24/7 presence and stand duty overnight with recruits in the squad bay.¹⁸⁹ Each drill instructor on the team serves a different role, with the most influential being the senior drill instructor who is largely responsible for instilling the intangibles of leadership and reinforcing core values. The senior drill instructor tries to be an approachable "parent figure" and mentor for the recruits, creating the space for recruits to have open and honest conversations throughout training.¹⁹⁰ Senior drill instructors have dedicated daily time in the training schedule, aptly named "SDI time," to impart wisdom and reinforce core concepts of recruit training. Many recruits describe this as some of the most transformational time during their recruit training, and many Marines remember their senior drill instructor's name forever.¹⁹¹

The 2022 University of Pittsburgh Study Recommends Three Models, Including Mixed-Gender Drill Instructor Teams

In 2020, the Marine Corps commissioned an independent academic study to analyze its current approaches to gender integration and provide alternate models to increase gender integration in Marine Corps recruit training. Completed in June 2022, the University of Pittsburgh study outlined 3 alternate models to increase gender integration for recruits and

drill instructors and 18 secondary recommendations to support current and future gender integration efforts at the MCRDs.¹⁹²

One of the alternate models proposed by the study is mixed-gender drill instructor teams for integrated companies. An integrated company is typically composed of five male platoons and one female platoon, but sometimes integrated companies have four male platoons and two female platoons (see Figure 4.1). In this recommended alternate model, mixed-gender drill instructor teams would lead recruits in all aspects of recruit training except for hygiene, sleeping, and overnight duty when same-gender drill instructor teams would be paired with same-gender platoons (to abide by 10 U.S.C. § 8432^{vi}).^{193, 194} Each platoon would retain a same-gender senior drill instructor, while other drill instructors would form mixed-gender drill instructor teams across the integrated company.¹⁹⁵

DACOWITS Visits MCRDs San Diego and Parris Island in 2023

The Committee visited MCRD San Diego (and associated training areas at Camp Pendleton) in July 2023 and MCRD Parris Island in August 2023 at the invitation of the Commandant of the Marine Corps to observe gender-integrated training. At both Depots, the Committee observed a wide variety of training activities, including classroom instruction, physical fitness training, marksmanship, core values guided discussions, close-order drill, tactical training, and the Crucible. The Committee also observed daily training activities such as morning BDR, mealtimes at the chow hall, and training in the squad bay. DACOWITS received briefings from leadership teams at both MCRDs on the mission of recruit training, Depot operations, and gender integration progress. The Committee was also able to engage with training staff and leaders at all levels during the visit, including drill instructors.



DACOWITS members pose for a group photo with U.S. Marines Corps drill instructors from Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, July 26, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elliott A. Flood-Johnson)



DACOWITS members and Designated Federal Officer pictured with training personnel at MCRD Parris Island while observing recruits execute the Confidence Course.

^v 10 U.S.C. § 8432 mandates sex-based limitations for drill instructors and other personnel present in recruit living areas after the end of the training day.

Marine Corps Drill Instructors Are Currently Segregated by Gender: Same-Gender Drill Instructor Teams Train Same-Gender Recruits

Drill instructor teams at the MCRDs are currently restricted by the gender of the recruit platoon and are comprised of same-gender drill instructors. For instance, a team of three to four female drill instructors are assigned to a female platoon, and three to four male drill instructors are assigned to a male platoon. The Marine Corps structures drill instructor teams to support the continuous nature of recruit training whereby training happens alternatingly in and outside the squad bay.¹⁹⁶

The Marine Corps also values having the same drill instructor team with recruits 24/7 throughout the 13 weeks of training and therefore feels prohibited by current laws to integrate drill instructor teams because opposite-gender drill instructors cannot stand duty overnight with opposite-gender recruits (i.e., a male drill instructor could not stand duty overnight with a platoon of female recruits).¹⁹⁷ Operationally, this approach means female drill instructors are not tasked with training and developing male recruits, and male drill instructors are not training and developing female recruits as their primary drill instructors.¹⁹⁸ The Marine Corps has stated that “having strong leaders of both genders as role models for young recruits is integral to their assimilation into our ranks,” yet in its current approach, recruits are not benefiting from direct, consistent training from both genders as drill instructors.¹⁹⁹

Officer and enlisted training personnel above the platoon level, such as at the battalion, company, and series level, are mixed gender.²⁰⁰ Specialized instructors, such as mixed martial arts, marksmanship, and swimming instructors, are also mixed gender. DACOWITS commends the Marine Corps for its continued efforts to install mixed-gender leadership, such as female leaders at the company level in all-male companies. While recruits may be exposed to mixed-gender leadership or drill instructors at integrated training events, the primary development and responsibility for transforming recruits into Marines continues to be gender-segregated. Marine Corps recruits have the most exposure to same-gender drill instructors because they spend the most time with their drill instructor team.²⁰¹

The Marine Corps’ approach of pairing same-gender drill instructor teams with same-gender recruits stands in stark contrast to the other Military Services. The other Services have trained with mixed-gender drill instructor teams for decades. Some Services, such as the Air Force, trained with mixed-gender drill instructor teams before integrating male and female recruits.²⁰²

During the Committee’s 2023 visits to both MCRD locations, Committee members had the opportunity to observe training events where recruits and drill instructors interacted, including inside the squad bay. In training events where



A U.S. Marine Corps drill instructor with Golf Company, 2nd Recruit Training Battalion, presents a new Marine their Eagle, Globe, and Anchor (EGA) emblem during an EGA ceremony at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, July 26, 2023. The EGA ceremony is the culminating event that follows the Crucible, after which a recruit can then forever call themselves a Marine. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Elliott A. Flood-Johnson)

recruits are formed or organized by platoon, which are the majority of events, they are led by their same-gender drill instructor.

One important event the Committee observed was the Crucible, which is the pinnacle of Marine Corps recruit training. At MCRD San Diego, recruits were observed completing this event by platoon, and therefore, were led by their same-gender drill instructor. In some cases, these same-gender platoons are not even in sight of an opposite-gender drill instructor. At MCRD Parris Island, the Committee observed recruits integrated at the squad level where a female drill instructor led integrated squads during a training event.

The FY20 NDAA mandated that “training may not be segregated by gender” at the MCRDs.²⁰³ While this language is notably vague, DACOWITS believes the Marine Corps’ approach of pairing same-gender drill instructors with a same-gender platoon of recruits is a form of segregation by gender. Female and male drill instructors are restricted by their gender in whom they can train at the platoon level, creating structural barriers whereby recruits are trained and led by Marines only of their same gender. The Committee feels this practice does not fulfill the spirit or letter of the Congressional mandate. The proposed mixed-gender drill instructor model from the University of Pittsburgh study,²⁰⁴ or something similar, would ensure the Marine Corps fully complies with the FY20 NDAA mandate and would provide Marine Corps recruits the opportunity to be shaped into Marines by both women and men.

Mixed-Gender Drill Instructor Teams Provide Positive Benefits for Both Recruits and Drill Instructors

Female drill instructors serve as strong, positive role models for new recruits.²⁰⁵ Enabling male recruits to see women as successful leaders and Service members can mitigate negative or harmful stereotypes about women and build respect between both genders. Negative views of women and gender discrimination continue to persist across all Military Services. In DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups, participants in the majority of groups considered gender discrimination to be a problem in their Service. One male officer described²⁰⁶

It’s an elephant in the room that we have not addressed, and most of the time it was ... with all-male units. In terms of how it’s viewed, when you’re young and impressionable in boot camp, [instructors] referred to women in all types of ways. If I take myself over these past 20 years and reflect on how I view females, it’s a 180-degree turn. I grew from then to now. I didn’t interact with them for the first 10 years of my career. ... Most of the time, I think in most units, it has not been addressed. It cannot be undone overnight.

Mixed-gender drill instructor teams would also enable recruits to experience male and female leaders working together, exemplifying healthy and positive interactions.^{207, 208.} ²⁰⁹ It is critical for male recruits to begin their careers observing female drill instructors performing at the same level as their male counterparts to ingrain a positive perspective of servicewomen.²¹⁰ Recruits will be led by both genders in operational settings; therefore, it is critical they are exposed to both in their foundational training, which teaches them how to be Marines. When recruits interact only with the same gender as a drill instructor, recruits

may experience a distorted view of gender integration and be less prepared for their future careers when their leaders may be a different gender or when they may lead fellow Marines of the opposite gender.^{211, 212}

The Marine Corps must model behavior that meets the values they are trying to instill, to include women and men working together as a team. In an article focused on the importance of integration in Marine Corps recruit training, a male Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant who was a chief drill instructor at MCRD Parris Island stated, “If the Marine Corps does not trust noncommissioned and staff officers of different genders to conduct themselves appropriately and effectively, there is no one to set the example.”²¹³

Even recruits themselves recognize the need to experience leaders of both genders, understanding women and men will lead them throughout their military career. During focus groups conducted in the University of Pittsburgh study, male and female Marine Corps recruits overwhelmingly supported training with mixed-gender drill instructor teams:²¹⁴

Having more female drill instructors is important, and we need to implement it. Because they can't instill into our recruits' heads, into their minds, what the fleet will be like. There will be females you have to work with. Having a female DI [drill instructor] to tell stories and to get used to having more than a bunch of men ... also, women have a different way of teaching, and it is important to get that.

—Male Marine Corps recruit, MCRD San Diego

It would even it out because female DIs mess with your head more. They're known for that, but the males are blunt: "Do this." But the women play mental games, and you need that balance because we're all mentally exhausted, but the males have it easier than us and everybody knows it. They [female drill instructors] play mind games. If you even it out by having a few males ...

—Female Marine Corps recruit, MCRD Parris Island

Until a long time I had not had a female boss. Having a female boss changed my perspective on how things should be run. It will break a lot of modes for males. "It has to be a man to command me." No one cares about man or woman in the military; it's about rank. At some point ... for some task and events in recruit training to have females ... I felt great about being led by a female ... carry down to SDI [senior drill instructor] and all DIs [drill instructors] will help with understanding of instruction.

—Male Marine Corps recruit, MCRD Parris Island

Similarly, a Marine Corps veteran interviewed by the University of Pittsburgh study team stated, “I'm totally supportive of mixed-gender DI [drill instructor] teams because that's what they are going to see in the fleet. Male and female officer leadership. It's part of the acculturation process. You want the most realism for what will be reflected in their experience once they're in the Fleet Marine Force.”²¹⁵ The male Marine Corps Gunnery Sergeant, mentioned earlier, is one of the only Marine Corps drill instructors with the unique experience of training female recruits as one of their primary drill instructors. He shared his positive experiences and continued support for mixed-gender drill instructor teams:²¹⁶

In spring 2020, because of a manning issue, I had the privilege of being a drill instructor with a female platoon. ... For the next two months, the recruits learned from my perspective, and I learned from theirs. Together we cultivated an identity and idea that turned many heads on Parris Island, but the platoon flourished and built esprit de corps. ... Unfortunately, this occurred in a bubble and has yet to be repeated. ... If recruits do not see their drill instructor teams working together as men and women, what message does this send?

The other Military Services employ mixed-gender drill instructor teams and have been training with them for decades, recognizing the benefit of both genders serving as role models during their respective recruit trainings. A gender-integrated drill instructor team reinforces the message to recruits that leadership in the military is integrated, and they will be led by both genders.²¹⁷ Recruits from the other Services, who were trained by mixed-gender drill instructor teams, recommended mixed-gender drill instructor teams as a foundational step in integration for the Marine Corps in the University of Pittsburgh study. A female Navy recruit summarized these sentiments:²¹⁸

The point of basic training is to build you up after breaking you down. That starts with teaching people—some people know how to respect genders, but some people don't. So by breaking that part down and then building it up, they can get rid of that or filter out the bad apples. Filter out the bad mindsets with leadership so they now that even if they have an opposite-gender [instructor], they're in charge no matter what gender they are. It doesn't matter who they are. If they're a rank above you, you have to listen them.

Male and female drill instructors also reported benefiting from working alongside their opposite-gender counterparts and leading opposite-gender recruits. Mixed-gender drill instructor teams can share best practices and observe different approaches. Even working in integrated company settings, Marine Corps drill instructors noted how they have learned from one another and enjoyed the camaraderie of working more closely with their fellow Marine peers.²¹⁹ In a mixed-gender model, male drill instructors are exposed to female recruits and observe them performing up to the standard and pushing themselves to the same limits as the male recruits, which also affects how they view and perceive female recruits. Ultimately, this experience can lead to enhanced mutual respect for female recruits and female Marines.²²⁰

Cited Challenges for Marine Corps Female Drill Instructors Can Be Overcome With Mixed-Gender Drill Instructor Teams

The Marine Corps is in the process of expanding its female drill instructor population by 54 percent to accommodate training 50 percent of female recruits at MCRD San Diego.²²¹ Implementing the company-integrated model at MCRD Parris Island and extending female training to MCRD San Diego has brought growing pains to the Service, with the greatest impact felt by female drill instructors. At MCRD Parris Island, female drill instructors faced

heavier workloads, greater movement between companies and battalions, and fewer opportunities to progress through leadership positions within companies.²²²

MCRD San Diego has been steadily growing the population of female drill instructors, a process that must be carefully balanced with the number of female recruits training there because drill instructors are currently restricted to platoon training roles by their gender. During this growth period, female drill instructors at MCRD San Diego find themselves serving more often in support roles and working fewer training cycles compared with their male peers. As a result, male drill instructors may be able to advance more quickly to senior drill instructor roles, have better records for promotion, and improve their chances for a second MCRD tour in the future. During the Committee's site visits, Marine Corps leadership relayed to DACOWITS this is a temporary issue. However, the real-time impact on today's female drill instructors remains concerning, especially when a mixed-gender drill instructor team approach would alleviate most of these staffing challenges because drill instructors could be used in different, more flexible configurations.

The Marine Corps continues to state the implementation of mixed-gender teams is infeasible because it would require an increase of female drill instructors that cannot be supported with current personnel levels.²²³ However, the University of Pittsburgh study commissioned by the Marine Corps outlines how the Service can implement mixed-gender teams without any additional female manpower. In the study's recommended approach, only integrated companies would employ mixed-gender drill instructor teams, thereby relying on current male and female drill instructor staffing levels at both MCRDs. In this model, the platoon senior drill instructor would be the only role prescribed to be the same gender as the platoon. Implementing mixed-gender drill instructor teams within preexisting integrated companies would alleviate the previously outlined workload and advancement challenges the female drill instructor population currently faces.²²⁴

The Commanding General of Marine Corps Training and Education Command has stated a desire to employ only mixed-gender drill instructor teams if implemented for all recruits and not just a portion, such as those in the integrated company model.²²⁵ This strategy would require a larger increase in the female drill instructor population than the Marine Corps is already contending with as it integrates MCRD San Diego. DACOWITS believes the Marine Corps should prioritize mixed-gender drill instructor teams for integrated companies to expedite the implementation of this important step while working toward integrating all drill instructor teams in the future. The Marine Corps' reluctance to integrate only some drill instructor teams appears to contradict its approach to gender integration among recruits in which only some companies are integrated due to the small population levels of female accessions. The Committee believes direct training and mentorship from mixed-gender drill instructor teams in Marine Corps recruit training, which lays the foundation for a Marine's service, is critical to developing Service members who are prepared to operate in integrated working environments and mission sets.

Summary

Drill instructors drive a recruit's transformation from civilian to Marine. Currently, Marine Corps drill instructors are assigned only to same-gender platoons and thus are segregated by gender for training. As recruits graduate and move through their career in the operational fleet as Marines, they will have leaders of both genders and become leaders of both genders. Mixed-gender drill instructor teams are essential for recruits to be trained by strong opposite-gender role models and experience a foundation of positive interactions with both female and male leaders as they enter military service.

The other Services have trained with mixed-gender drill instructor teams for decades, with both recruits and drill instructors reporting positive benefits. Although the Marine Corps has cited challenges with manning and training that occurs in the squad bay as reasons for not implementing mixed-gender drill instructor teams, the model designed by the University of Pittsburgh study, commissioned by the Marine Corps, overcomes both objections.

The Committee recommends the SecDef should direct the Marine Corps to institute mixed-gender drill instructor teams for all integrated companies at recruit training to reinforce the operational environment and present women and men as equally capable and competent Marines and leaders. This achievement would be a milestone toward compliance with the 2020 NDAA directing the Marine Corps to not segregate training by gender.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a working group focused on women in special operations forces (SOF), led by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness. This group should comprise Service SOF communities, Special Operations Command, and the Joint Staff to provide strategic oversight on and direction of current integration plans and challenges, metrics, lessons learned, and best practices. This would enhance recruitment, integration, growth, and retention of women in SOF.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should implement all recommendations from the 2022 Government Accountability Office report on Women in Special Operations, which would increase women serving in previously closed special operations forces positions.

Synopsis

DACOWITS is concerned about the inconsistent and lack of DoD oversight of SOF integration efforts. Recruitment and qualification of women in SOF communities have remained slow, and in some cases, are nonexistent. Despite the 2016 policy changes mandating the integration of women into all military specialties, gender integration implementation gaps persist within SOF, and cultural and social challenges remain. Responsibility and oversight of gender integration implementation currently resides with the ASD(SO/LIC) and USSOCOM; however, no authority, fiscal resources, or leadership exists for these commands to direct the Military Services to improve recruitment, integration, or retention of women in SOF. Greater leadership and collaboration are needed to strengthen our Nation's warfighting capability by fully integrating, growing, and retaining women in SOF.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year. The following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Written responses from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force on progress toward gender integration of women in previously closed occupations, including women in SOF (September 2022, RFI 6)²²⁶
- Written responses from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force with FY16–21 data on the number of women accessed into, currently serving in, and attrited from previously closed occupations, including women in SOF (September 2022, RFI 7)²²⁷
- A briefing from the Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Special Operations Service Components (U.S. Army Special Operations Command [USASOC], U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command [NAVSPECWARCOM], U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command [MARSOC], and U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command [AFSOC]), in coordination with the ASD(SO/LIC), on findings and updates following the December 2022 GAO report, "Women in Special Operations: Improvements to Policy, Data, and Assessments Needed to Better Understand and Address Career Barriers" (March 2023, RFI 6)²²⁸
- Written responses from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and SOCOM, in coordination with the ASD(SO/LIC), on the integration of women into previously closed occupational specialties within the Service SOF community, including data on women in the training pipelines and those currently serving in career fields (September 2023, RFI 3)²²⁹

DACOWITS has communicated the importance of monitoring, validating, and verifying the implementation efforts of gender integration and highlighted the difficulty over visibility of these efforts by DoD for nearly a decade. The Committee continues to review the Military

Services' progress on their gender integration implementation plans and has made 13 recommendations urging continued progress on gender integration since 2016.^{230, 231, 232, 233, 234}

Most recently in 2020, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef should designate a single office of primary responsibility to provide active attention and oversight on the Military Services' gender integration plans.²³⁵ The Committee is concerned about the lack of robust, strategic-level oversight of women's integration in SOF, and the reasoning supporting the 2023 recommendations follows.

DoD Oversight of Gender Integration Progress: Stalled Momentum in Recent Years

On January 24, 2013, then-SecDef Leon Panetta and then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Martin Dempsey announced the rescission of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule (DGCDAR), which had restricted women's assignment to combat units. As a result, the DoD required the Military Services and USSOCOM to conduct a Women in Service Review (WISR) to develop plans ensuring women's unrestricted service in all military occupations and roles.²³⁶

Initially, the Secretaries of the Military Departments and USSOCOM were required to provide quarterly implementation progress updates to the SecDef outlining their plans to open all combat roles to women. These implementation plans outlined formal processes for "reviewing any changes that might need to be made to their doctrine, organizations, training and education pipelines, or facilities" and also addressed strategies for "any potential cohesion, morale, or leadership issues."²³⁷

Continuing from 2013 through 2015, the Joint Chiefs of Staff reviewed the Military Services and USSOCOM's progress quarterly, and the SecDef monitored through semiannual updates. USD(P&R), the Military Services, and USSOCOM regularly met to "review progress, share best practices and lessons learned, and glean insight from each other's implementation planning progress."²³⁸ During WISR, more than 30 primary studies and reviews were conducted to support the implementation of this major policy change, including three USSOCOM studies. After continued planning and implementation efforts, the DoD opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women January 1, 2016, ending DGCDAR—the last remaining restriction on women's military service.²³⁹

Following the conclusion of the WISR, DoD-level awareness and engagement overseeing gender integration progress has continued to decline. In 2020, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef designate a single office of primary responsibility to ensure active attention and oversight to the implementation of the Military Services' gender integration plans.²⁴⁰ Implementation of this recommendation remains outstanding, and DACOWITS continues to be concerned with the lack of active attention, oversight, and intentional tracking of gender integration progress, including work toward resolving persistent barriers and challenges for women in the military.

Oversight Responsibility for Women’s Integration in SOF Still Unclear

A 2022 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on women in SOF provided several recommendations for the SecDef and USD(P&R) to establish clear processes and an office of responsibility to better support the integration of women in previously closed SOF positions:²⁴¹

- “The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, in coordination with the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command; the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness; and the Secretaries of the military departments, establishes a collaborative process for the timely sharing of accurate and complete data on SOCOM personnel, including data on incidents of gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault.” (Recommendation 4, status remains open)
- “The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness clearly documents and communicates which office has responsibility for the required annual assessments regarding the full integration of women into previously closed positions.” (Recommendation 5; status remains open)
- “The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness establishes a consistent process for the use of the required annual assessments regarding the full integration of women into previously closed positions. The process should include a plan of action to guide efforts to address any barriers to women’s service in U.S. Special Operations Forces identified in the assessments.” (Recommendation 6; status remains open)
- “The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, in coordination with the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, completes a comprehensive analysis of barriers regarding women in U.S. Special Operations Forces.” (Recommendation 7; status remains open)
 - “The Secretary of Defense should ensure that the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, in coordination with the Commander, U.S. Special Operations Command and the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, upon completion of a comprehensive analysis of barriers regarding women in U.S. Special Operations Forces, develops a plan of action to address any barriers or career impediments to women’s service in U.S. Special Operations Forces identified in the analysis, with goals, objectives, metrics, and milestones.” (Recommendation 8; status remains open)

With the following WISR tasks, the DoD required the Military Services and USSOCOM to support opening all remaining closed career fields to women:

- Review and validate all occupational standards to ensure they are occupationally and operationally relevant.
- Complete all studies by fall 2015.
- Ensure full implementation by January 1, 2016, or submit an exception to policy to the Secretary of Defense.

These recommendations resulted from GAO identifying numerous issues related to the responsibility, authority, data, review processes, and communication on women in SOF between the DoD, the ASD(SO/LIC), and USSOCOM.²⁴² DACOWITS supports these five recommendations in addition to the first three recommendations from the GAO report on gender discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual assault data sharing and for the Military Services to establish provisions for prohibited discrimination policies in joint environments.²⁴³

Current responsibility for the oversight of women in SOF resides with the ASD(SO/LIC) office and USSOCOM. However, the ASD(SO/LIC) and USSOCOM do not have the authority to direct the Military Services on any aspect of recruiting, integration, training pipelines, or retention of women in the SOF communities. To the Committee's knowledge, USSOCOM has incomplete or limited access to data on its personnel, and no collaborative data sharing process is currently in place between USSOCOM and the DoD.²⁴⁴

The GAO report acknowledged USSOCOM has taken steps to identify and address barriers for women in SOF, but without the USD(P&R) identifying an office of primary responsibility, USSOCOM's annual assessment on the integration of women in previously closed career fields has information with little ability to act. The annual assessment requires detailed descriptions of challenges and requires mitigation strategies to address the integration of women into SOF and other previously closed occupations. The GAO report also identified missing required elements in SOCOM's FY21 annual assessment, including a lack of plans to remove barriers and enable women to fully serve to the best of their capacity in the SOF community.²⁴⁵ Officials from the ASD(SO/LIC) and USSOCOM "expressed concerns about the lack of a direction on how to use the assessments to identify next steps ... [and] stated that in the 6 years Personnel and Readiness has required the assessments, SOCOM has not received any feedback or strategic guidance regarding next steps" to address identified findings.²⁴⁶

USSOCOM's "Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Action Plan FY2022–2023," released in April 2022, calls for the identification of trends or disparities for gender integration. It also notes the need for a more detailed analysis of potential barriers and calls for the development and recommendation of strategies to improve female participation in SOF career fields. However, the implementation plan does not contain specific details or results-oriented elements such as goals, objectives, metrics, and milestones to help ensure progress is made toward improving recruitment, inclusivity, or retention.²⁴⁷

The continued lack of proper ownership, responsibility, oversight, collaboration, and sustained execution on women in SOF limits women's integration into these previously closed positions in which women are a significant minority.

Seven Years Later: Limited Growth of Women in SOF

The growth of women in SOF over the past 7 years has been slow, and in some cases, remains nonexistent. USSOCOM reported the number of servicewomen in the SOF community has increased from 7.9 percent in FY16 to 11.0 percent in FY22.²⁴⁸ However, this growth represents a general increase across all career fields within USSOCOM and is not specific to growth in

special warfare military occupational specialty (MOS)/Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC) and Service SOF-specific career fields.

Operational security considerations prevented the Committee from receiving complete data on all of its publicly available information requests from USSOCOM and the Military Services on the number of women in SOF roles and training pipelines. However, data provided indicates few women (enlisted and officer) are serving in previously closed SOF career fields today:

- **USASOC:** A total of 248 female Soldiers are serving in Army Special Forces, 3 female Soldiers are assigned to Special Forces Groups.²⁴⁹
- **U.S. Navy Special Warfare Command (NSWC):** Two female Sailors are Combatant Crewman (SB).²⁵⁰
- **AFSOC:** Five female Airmen are serving in a previously restricted career field.²⁵¹
- **MARSOC:** A total of 262 female Marines are serving in a previously restricted MOS, and 18 female Marines are serving as Special Operations Capable Specialists (SOCS).²⁵²

Women have yet to serve or even enter the training pipeline in some previously closed roles, most notably in Navy Sea, Air, and Land (SEAL) teams.²⁵³ For the Marine Corps, no women are currently serving as a Special Operations Officer (SOO) or Critical Skills Operator (CSO).²⁵⁴

The Committee acknowledges the Military Services' efforts to instill diverse leadership and training personnel in SOF communities while women's representation in these communities continues to grow. AFSOC reported female leaders in all echelons of command from squadron, group, and wing and at AFSOC headquarters. NSWC has permanent staffing lines for female Naval Special Warfare (NSW) instructors as part of their Women in Special Operations (WISOF) cadre to ensure women are represented in training cadre for NSW training, including Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL (BUD/S).²⁵⁵

Individually, the Military Services' SOCOMs conduct outreach activities to generate interest and recruit women into SOF. Primarily, these efforts consist of mentoring initiatives, representation at community events, and education activities (e.g., forums, question and answer sessions, and townhalls) for both prospective and current servicewomen.²⁵⁶ While these individual efforts are commendable, DACOWITS believes regular, intentional efforts to share best practices and lessons learned across the Services, USSOCOM, and the DoD will strengthen the Total Force's collective ability to recruit and integrate women into SOF and retain them. The Committee has also noted a lack of open-source marketing or recruitment efforts designed to attract women into SOF career fields or grow awareness of their ability to serve in SOF specialties.

Women continue to have an extremely limited presence in SOF, even 7 years after the opening of all combat roles. Reestablishing a dedicated working group led by USD(P&R), specifically focused on women in SOF, will ensure strategic awareness, communication, and synchronization of the Military Services' efforts to recruit, integrate, and expand the inclusion and growth of women in the SOF career fields while preserving unit effectiveness, readiness, cohesion, and quality of the AVF.

Ongoing Social and Cultural Challenges for Women in SOF

Recent internal analyses from USSOCOM and reports from GAO (2022)²⁵⁷ and AFSOC (2023)²⁵⁸ document the significant, ongoing social and cultural challenges for women in SOF. Once excluded from SOF altogether, women remain an extreme minority within these communities. In 2022, USSOCOM identified 10 barriers to women serving in SOF, most of which are commonly identified barriers to recruitment and retention of women in the military more broadly (see Figure 4.2).²⁵⁹

Figure 4.2 Barriers and Challenges Identified by USSOCOM for Women Serving in SOF



Note: SOF = special operations forces; USSOCOM = U.S. Special Operations Command
Source: GAO, 2022²⁶⁰

Gender discrimination, gender bias, and sexism fueled by a male-dominated environment were among the most prevalent findings from women in SOF in the GAO and AFSOC reports. Women serving in SOF reported a culture where women are not considered as equals and are seen as weakening the SOF community.^{261, 262} The AFSOC report highlighted overtly sexist comments from male Soldiers, such as the following: "Women in 18 series MOSs are/will not be welcomed on a Team" and "Females have no place on a Team. It's an unnecessary wrench in a perfectly functional system in the name of 'political correctness.'"²⁶³ The study authors noted these types of comments were a common sentiment among male respondents but acknowledged male Soldiers who welcomed women and were frustrated with the sexist culture.²⁶⁴

Relatedly, sexual harassment and sexual assault were also identified as widespread concern by women in SOF. Thirty percent of female Soldiers reported sexual harassment as a major challenge in the “Women in ARSOF” (Army Special Operations Forces) survey; however, in focus groups with junior servicewomen (E1–E6 and O1–O3), “nearly every woman reported experiencing some degree of sexual harassment while assigned to an ARSOF unit.”²⁶⁵ Thirteen percent of women interviewed by GAO, who were currently or formerly serving in SOF, reported experiencing sexual assault. Women reported their assault made it hard to do their jobs, impacted their careers, and made them feel unsafe in their working environments.²⁶⁶ Fear of retaliation and reprisal in their units dampened servicewomen’s desire to report, or their reporting behavior for, incidents of sexual harassment and assault.^{267, 268}

Other common social and cultural barriers these reports identified include pregnancy and postpartum, child care, social support, women’s healthcare, morale and well-being, and equipment fit. Women in SOF also reported many positive aspects of their time in SOF, including recent improvements to policy and culture and supportive and engaged leaders.^{269, 270} In the “Women in ARSOF” survey, 62 percent of women intended to remain in ARSOF, and 72 percent of women would support their daughter serving in ARSOF.²⁷¹ A male Soldier respondent shared how more women in SOF would benefit the entire community, noting—

*There is only one thing that will reduce sexual bias in SOF—the most masculine community on earth—and it will take decades: putting women in positions where they can succeed alongside their male counterparts, and stand up for themselves to call out the ridiculous, sexist BS that plagues our formation.*²⁷²

Ongoing social and cultural challenges in the military are exacerbated in SOF because these elite units were some of the last to integrate and so few women have ever served in these roles. As the Services continue to tackle these challenges separately and individually, the Committee believes collaboration, communication, and proper strategic oversight will better equip all Service SOF communities to identify and employ best practices.

Potential Best Practices for Gender Integration Plans and Implementation

While there are numerous barriers and challenges, there are also best practices to be noted and used by the DoD and the Military Services to better the recruitment, full integration, and retention of women in the SOF. A successful strategy that could be mirrored by a SOF working group is the Navy’s approach for gender integration in submarines. The Navy began with a deliberate plan for officer integration derived from a flag-level task force. It used lessons learned and recommendations from the integration of surface and aviation communities and established baseline policies and a strategic integration plan for the submarine force.²⁷³

²⁷⁴ A key aspect of its approach was intentional placement of female leadership (e.g., O-3 level) to advise the command leadership team and mentor incoming female junior officers. The Navy also tracked interest and retention rates as key metrics throughout the integration process.²⁷⁵

DACOWITS also wants to highlight recommendations from a 2016 RAND Corporation study outlining considerations for the integration of women into closed occupations in SOF. DoD and the Service SOF communities should continue to reference and use these recommendations:²⁷⁶

- **Leadership:** This key to integration success includes monitoring the command climate, setting the tone for integration, enforcing good order and discipline, and combating bias.
- **The implementation process:** For long-term viability and integration success, the process must include equitable organizational cultural opportunities for women to showcase their competence and policy and practices to minimize and mitigate social isolation of women in the SOF communities.
- **Valid, gender-neutral standards:** These standards can help ensure mission ability and effectiveness. Establishment of these standards will also counter stereotypes and mitigate implicit and even explicit bias.
- **Targeted recruitment and adequate preparation of female candidates:** These elements are required to increase the number of women wanting to participate in the community and help them complete training programs and attain success once in the career field.
- **A deliberate pace of integration:** This requirement will ensure a purposeful and predictive implementation plan to grow women's representation and growth within the SOF communities.
- **Monitored integration progress:** Monitoring will assess implementation and full integration. Oversight at an independent level provides different perspectives and helps the Military Services hold accountability to achieve fully integrated SOF service members for combat execution and effectiveness.
- **Expectation management:** Growing women in the SOF communities will not happen overnight. Reviewing allied militaries showcases a concerted effort is needed, but expectation that growth will be slow is important. Aligning the other six areas for implementation will provide realistic expectations for DoD, the Services, and women in the SOF world.

Summary

The challenges of increasing women's representation and retention in SOF communities are apparent but not insurmountable, and much depends on a deliberate implementation process. Despite the 2016 policy changes mandating the integration of women into all military specialties, gender integration implementation gaps persist within SOF, and cultural and social challenges remain. Oversight of women's integration into SOF has waned since the

2016 implementation order and WISR's work through 2015. Responsibility and oversight of implementation currently resides with the ASD(SO/LIC) office and USSOCOM; however, no authority, fiscal resources, or leadership exists for these commands to direct the Military Services to better recruitment, integration, or retention of women in the SOF communities.

DACOWITS recommends the SecDef act on previous Committee and GAO recommendations by establishing a women in SOF working group, led by the USD(P&R). This working group would provide strategic oversight on the future roadmap and progress of women's integration into SOF. This working group should consist of representatives from all Service SOF communities, SOCOM, and the Joint Staff. The DoD should also implement all recommendations from the 2022 GAO report "Women in Special Operations" to increase women serving in these previously closed SOF positions to bolster our Nation's warfighting capability by fully integrating, growing, and retaining women in SOF.

B. Women in Aviation

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a joint working group within the Office of the Secretary of Defense to synchronize and expedite the development, distribution, and accessibility of female-specific aviation gear. These efforts will maximize human performance, combat lethality, and readiness and ensure the overall health of servicewomen in aviation.

Synopsis

Women have been serving in aviation for 50 years, yet significant barriers persist in equipping the female-aviation force with functional, well-fitting, gender-specific gear they need to execute the mission. While the Military Services—particularly the Air Force and Navy—have made progress in the development of new gear, stagnation, and production delays plague these efforts. Duplicative Service efforts cost DoD more time and money, while still not solving the problem of getting needed gear to female aviators. A lack of properly fitting gear, such as in-flight bladder relief systems, reduces combat lethality and increases the potential for short- and long-term health issues in the female aviation force. Establishing a dedicated joint working group would help coordinate and expedite the design, production, and distribution of necessary female-specific aviation equipment.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year. The following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services on the development, assessment, and timeline of personal protective equipment and gear updates or modifications for women (December 2022, RFI 5)²⁷⁷
- Written responses from the Military Services on the availability, funding, training, and dissemination of female in-flight bladder relief systems and/or female urinary devices (March 2023, RFI 7)²⁷⁸

DACOWITS identified women in aviation as a continuing concern in 2020 due to stagnations in the percentage of women in aviation and ongoing challenges with the design, fit, and timely procurement of properly fitting equipment for women.²⁷⁹ The Committee saw a need for greater strategic oversight on the recruitment, retention, promotion, and qualify-of-life issues affecting female aviators. In 2023, the DoD celebrated 50 years of women in military aviation and 30 years since lifting of the Combat Exclusion Policy enabling women to fly combat-coded aircraft.^{280, 281}

Despite decades of women's integration in aviation and the tremendous efforts and initiatives the DoD has made over the last 5 years to increase female recruitment and retention, critical gaps remain. The Committee remains concerned about the progress toward functional female-specific aviation gear (e.g., female flight suits, urinary relief devices, anti-exposure suits, flying masks, chemical flying ensembles) that will enable female aviators to perform and serve in these career fields, maximize readiness and capability, and ensure the short- and long-term health and welfare for women in aviation. As a female Lieutenant Colonel^{vii} explained at a 2023 Air and Space Forces Association (AFA) webinar, these "aren't women's issues, these are leadership issues. I want those tackled so they can do their job as well as they possibly can."²⁸² The reasoning supporting DACOWITS' recommendation on women in aviation follows.

Stalled and Duplicative Efforts to Develop Aviation-Specific Female Equipment Reduces Combat Readiness and Lethality

DACOWITS' 2020 annual report highlighted "stalled progress for women in aviation" mentioning "fit and availability of flight clothing and equipment" as an area that "may degrade readiness and impact an aviator's quality of service."²⁸³ Briefings from the Military

^{vii} At the time of this event, this Service member was the Mobility Requirements Branch Chief at Headquarters AFSOC. She oversaw a \$22 billion program to modernize and sustain 94 special operations C-130 aircraft. She also served as the co-lead for AFSOC's Women's Initiative team and a member of AFSOC's Dagger Athena.

Services, specifically the Air Force and Navy, in December 2022 highlighted continued stagnant and stalled progress in providing the female warfighter with devices for in-flight urination and duplicative design and development efforts.²⁸⁴ While multiple design efforts can generate more solutions and provide better options for servicewomen, the Committee feels these duplicative efforts are a detractor rather than an asset. The disjunction between the Navy's and Air Force's timelines for design, development, and distribution of female-specific gear has delayed support to female aviators and will cost the DoD more time and money.

Consolidating current and future efforts into a joint working group at the Office of the Secretary of Defense level is more effective, efficient, cost productive, and, most importantly, expeditious in providing necessary resources to servicewomen. During the June 2023 AFA webinar, a senior female officer shared AFSOC has a line of effort focused on female fitment in special tactics career fields to ensure women can do their job properly. Air Combat Command (ACC) commented on similar needs for female fitment and discussed equal and equitable treatment with respect to the accessibility of equipment for servicewomen.²⁸⁵

Delayed Development and Production of Female-Specific Gear Reduces Mission Effectiveness and Combat Execution

Although female-specific equipment is—and has been—under development for some time in several Service branches, it will not be ready for production and distribution for several years. For example, ACC discussed its initiative to design and develop a female bladder relief system to better assist women in aviation but noted the device would not even reach Initial Operating Capability until at least 2025, 32 years after women entered combat-coded cockpits and flight decks.²⁸⁶

The Air Force also highlighted its design contest, which began in 2020, but noted a contract was not awarded until March 2022. The Air Force's plan for a urinary relief device for women will not achieve low-rate initial production until at least the fourth quarter of 2024. The Air Force has not indicated when its product will be easily available or ready for distribution to the female warfighter.²⁸⁷

The Navy has two new devices in development (excluding Skydrate), but they will not be ready for sustainment from the Defense Logistics Agency until the fourth quarter of 2025. The Triton System was under contract with the Navy in 2019 but will not be fielded to the fleet for years to come.²⁸⁸

Heightened and directive action from DoD is warranted to enable the necessary support, advocacy, and equipment for servicewomen to fully do their jobs in aviation across the Military Services. At the 2023 AFA webinar, a female Command Sergeant Major^{vii} characterized the funding situation for female fitment in a dire state, describing how creativity was necessary to “find smaller pockets of funds.”²⁸⁹ The Commander of Air Force Materiel

^{vii} At the time of this event, this Chief Master Sergeant was serving as the Senior Enlisted Leader, Personnel Division at Manpower, Personnel and Services Directorate at the Headquarters ACC.

Command in 2022 asked, “What are we doing for Female Fitment, where’s the money, how do we get after this?” noting he had to “shame” the Air Force Guard and Reserve “into buying for their Airmen so that we were/are the same.”²⁹⁰

The DoD needs to prioritize, fund, and lead efforts to ensure women have the proper equipment and gear they need to preserve and increase their combat effectiveness. Finding money to enable combat readiness and lethality should not require creative scrambling; it must be a focused initiative of the annual and Future Years Defense Program budgetary process.

Ill-Fitting and Ill-Functioning Equipment Reduces Performance and Increases Health Issues

Because women in aviation have limited options in-flight to urinate, many rely on “tactical dehydration,” or avoid drinking liquids prior to a flight to avoid urination during the mission.²⁹¹ ²⁹² Hydration is essential to human performance. A female aviator who avoids drinking water to enable her to fly without urinating decreases her mental acuity and physical ability to fly tactically. The lack of equipment to enable safe and comfortable urinary relief puts women at a performance disadvantage, increases likelihood of physical health issues, and contributes to lower qualities of life and service. During the 2023 AFA webinar, ACC representatives recognized Airmen could be made more lethal by ensuring they can take care of their basic physiological needs, including improving female fitment equipment for flyers.²⁹³

Lack of proper fitting female urination devices and workarounds such as “tactical dehydration” contribute to medical issues for women including urinary tract infections, bladder infections, and weakened pelvic floor and urinary muscles.²⁹⁴ These health problems could lead to increased healthcare costs for women (including increased costs for Department of Veterans Affairs disability claims) and less effective combat lethality due to the short- and long-term medical repercussions of holding urine and not expelling it as needed. A 2022 RAND Corporation report on women’s reproductive health for the DoD



Petty Officer 2nd Class Melissa Hiatt, a boatswain's mate stationed at Coast Guard Station Barnegat Light, New Jersey, participates in night operations underway in the Barnegat Inlet Oct. 26, 2023. The station crew conducted tow training and performed an area of responsibility patrol. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Kimberly Reaves)

recommended developing better “strategies [to improve] access to feminine hygiene supplies, facilities, and treatment for urinary or vaginal infections during training and deployment.”²⁹⁵

Lack of Awareness and Coordinated Distribution Across the DoD Reduces Mission Effectiveness and Accomplishment for Female Aviators

DACOWITS found a lack of sufficient coordination across the Military Services to share current issues, proposed solutions, design, development, and distribution of equipment.²⁹⁶ Women in aviation across the DoD are left with do-it-yourself solutions, a lack of support and advocacy, and unreasonably long timelines while they await properly fitting gear and equipment.²⁹⁷

^{298, 299, 300, 301} The Air Force funds needed equipment such as the first urinary relief device with the Advanced Mission Extender Device, but ensuring it is being fielded to the squadrons and Airmen is another aspect of female fitment and readiness that must be addressed. Women frequently discuss knowing gear exists, but they do not have the ability to obtain or use it for their individual mission effectiveness or accomplishment.³⁰²

Summary

Current timelines associated with providing female aviators with necessary gear to execute their mission safely and effectively has been delayed for too long and to the detriment of female aviators. By the time current urinary relief devices are easily and readily available for female aviators (estimating 2028), DoD will be celebrating the 55th anniversary of women in military aviation and the 35th anniversary of women in combat aviation. The Committee recommends the SecDef take ownership of these initiatives by establishing a joint working group to facilitate expedited identification, design, development, and distribution of female-specific flight equipment. This working group should also strive to increase the knowledge and awareness of all aviators across the DoD about the needed equipment. Cross-Service communication, equipment development, leadership, and expedient production of female aviator gear initiatives will maximize the combat lethality and readiness of all Military Services and the DoD as a whole. This centrally focused working group will enable opportunities for women in aviation to serve to the best of their abilities, including human performance through best fitment, gear, procurement, training, and availability.

C. Physical Fitness Standards

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should adopt a Department-wide, contemporary, scientifically based body composition standard and measurement technique to reflect gender, racial, and ethnic differences of today’s Force because current policies and practices disproportionately affect servicewomen’s health and military careers.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should decouple the physical fitness and body composition (B/C) program by reassigning B/C policy development and execution to medical professionals. This will ensure consistent and precise measurement, provide servicewomen with relevant gender-based resources, and promote greater focus on the holistic health pillars of Total Force Fitness.

Synopsis

DACOWITS encourages the DoD to establish a Department-wide and science-based body composition standard and measurement technique that accounts for the diversity of today's force. The military's body composition standards have not adequately accounted for gender, racial, and ethnic differences in body types, which has disproportionately affected servicewomen. Current science demonstrates widely used metrics, such as body mass index (BMI), inaccurately measure body fat for some groups. Implementing scientifically based body composition standards and decoupling body composition from physical fitness assessments will better align with the military's holistic health approach to TFF. Updated body composition standards and measurement techniques will also mitigate unhealthy behaviors some Service members use to meet standards that put their health and operational readiness at risk.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several data sources during the past year. The following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A written response from DoD Health Affairs on the physiological science and studies used to revise DoD Instruction (DoDI) 1308.3 (September 2022, RFI 10)³⁰³
- Briefings from the Military Services on updates to the Military Services physical fitness programs since March 2019, including body composition measurement, and modifications from DoD's revised 1308.03 (December 2022, RFI 7)³⁰⁴
- A written response from the Space Force on the status of its physical fitness training program (March 2023, RFI 8)³⁰⁵
- A written response from the Air Force on scientific and medical justification to keep situps as part of its physical fitness assessment (March 2023, RFI 9)³⁰⁶

- Briefings from the Military Services on their body composition assessments, including current procedures and forms of measurement, anthropometric research used to derive policies, photos demonstrating how body fat is assessed, margin of error by gender, and separations due to body composition assessment failures (June 2023, RFI 6)³⁰⁷
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of physical fitness and body composition assessments (Focus Group Report 2023)³⁰⁸

In 2019, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef conduct a comprehensive, scientific review of height, weight, and body composition standards, as well as body fat measurement techniques to establish a baseline for setting a Department-wide standard for measurement and acceptable levels.³⁰⁹ Since then, little has changed to ensure women’s physiological differences are accounted for in the Military Service’s current methodologies, evaluation procedures, and assessment standards. This inattention to gender-based physiological differences—coupled with outdated standards, inconsistent measurement procedures, and continued alignment of body composition evaluations with physical fitness assessments—disproportionately affects servicewomen and contributes to negative health, welfare, and retention outcomes in the female force. Notably, the FY22 NDAA also identified the military’s body composition standards as an issue of special interest:³¹⁰

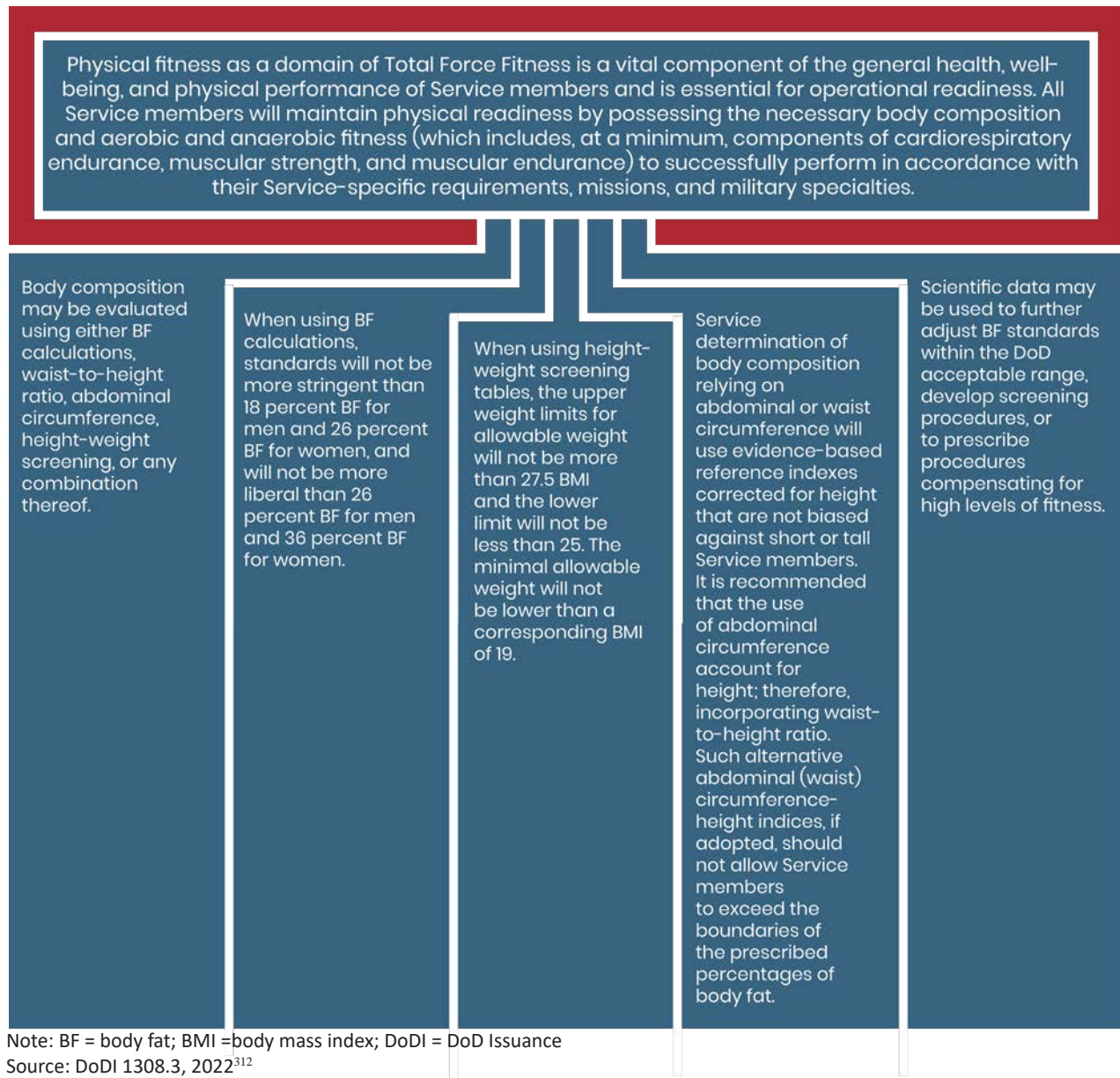
Currently, military body composition standards are based on archaic, homogeneous data and standards that can be discriminatory. These standards appear to be based on the goal of ensuring a “military appearance.” Attempts to comply with body composition standards frequently contribute to unhealthy eating disorders that can be hazardous in career fields where focus and attention to detail can be impacted by the disorder.

DACOWITS’ current and previous research concurs with these Congressional concerns. Adopting a body composition standard and measurement technique that is scientifically based on physiological gender, racial, and ethnic differences will more accurately assess the overall health of Service members and further help address bias in the Military Services because women will be evaluated by a physiologically accurate standard. The reasoning supporting DACOWITS’ recommendations on body composition follows.

DoD’s Body Composition Guidelines and TFF Framework

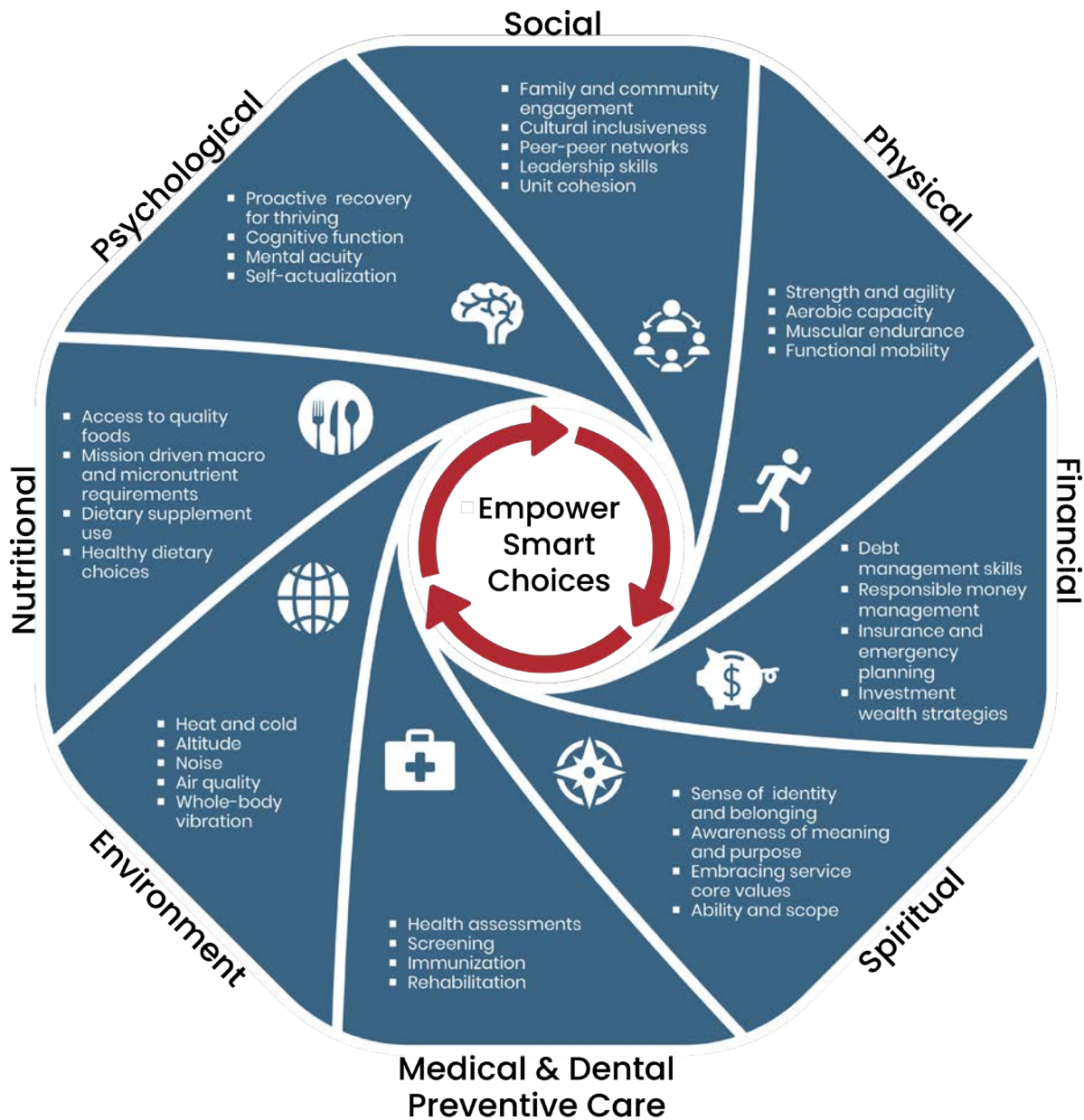
Updated in 2022, the DoD Physical Fitness/Body Composition Program (DoDI 1308.3) provides guidelines for maintaining physical readiness within the Military Services.³¹¹ The relevant body composition standards as outlined in the instruction are featured in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3. DoD Body Composition Standards as Outlined in DoDI 1308.3



The TFF framework referenced in the updated DoDI 1308.3 was first adopted by DoD in 2009, formalized through the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction (CJCSI) 3405.01.³¹³ TFF is designed to help Service members identify and take a holistic approach to their health and performance. TFF designates eight interrelated domains of fitness: physical, financial, spiritual, medical and dental preventive care, environmental, nutritional, psychological, and social (see Figure 4.4).^{314, 315} This framework was intended to be used by individual Service members and military leaders to understand, assess, and maintain the fitness of the Force and to increase resiliency, readiness, and well-being.³¹⁶

Figure 4.4. Graphic Representation of DoD's Total Force Fitness



Source: Consortium for Health and Military Performance University Services University, 2022³¹⁷

CJCSI 3405.01 provides the following definitions for TFF physical fitness and medical and dental fitness:

- Physical fitness:** “Physical fitness includes a set of characteristics that people have or can achieve relating to their ability to perform physical activity. Our Service members must demonstrate the ability to physically accomplish all aspects of the mission while remaining healthy and meet the criteria for deployment, retention, and continued military service.”

- **Medical and dental fitness:** “Medical and dental fitness is a condition of mental and physical well-being as determined by medical standards and prerequisites for individual mission accomplishment and worldwide deployability. Medically fit Service members can perform their job without risk to themselves or others, and possess the physiological, anatomical, and psychological capacities to adapt to their specific occupational environment.”

Interestingly, both TFF domains cite metrics related to body composition in CJCSI 3405.01. In a list of example metrics for physical fitness, body composition is suggested with “skinfold measurement” described as “measures using calipers is an effective way to assess and monitor changes in body fat composition.” Under medical and dental fitness, BMI is suggested as a “metric for medical fitness at the individual and aggregate levels.”³¹⁸

Current guidance lacks clarity on the specific relationship between physical fitness and body composition, often conflating them with each another. DoDI 1308.3 defines body composition as one component measuring Service members’ overall physical fitness, whereas the TFF framework addresses body composition metrics in both the physical and mental and dental fitness domains.

The Committee recommends DoD and the Military Services decouple its physical fitness and body composition programs to ensure medical professionals are used to develop and execute such measurements and provide better support and resources for Service members who do not meet their Service’s standards. Ensuring trained, professional medical technicians execute body composition measurements reduces the margin of error for current tape-testing body composition assessments. While the current methods are considered easy and affordable measures, erroneous results can be obtained if proper techniques are not followed.

Medical professionals are educated and properly trained to consider all components of health to better understand a Service member’s needs. A medical professional can also provide direction and recommendations to improve overall health (e.g., nutritional guidance, gender-specific resources) and reduce chances of obesity-related diseases. A 2023 American Security Project report on obesity in the military also recommended Service members who are overweight or obese receive direct care and counsel from medical professionals, including credentialed obesity physicians, registered dietitians, or bariatric physicians.³¹⁹ Many healthcare facilities maintain more accurate, scientifically based equipment providing more precise measurements to determine body composition when Service policies allow this option. Service members in DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups supported more standardization for taping procedures and technology that more accurately assesses one’s body composition.³²⁰

Inconsistent Body Composition Standards and Measurement Techniques Across the Military Services

DoDI 1308.3 allows several ways the Military Services can evaluate body composition, including “body fat calculations, waist-to-height ratio, abdominal circumference, height-

weight screening, or any combination thereof.³²¹ As a result, the Military Services can employ different approaches and methodologies to their evaluation of body composition without clear reasoning, purpose, or mandated consistency. For instance, measurement of abdominal circumference (e.g., location of measurement at the naval, natural waist, or iliac crest) is not clearly defined and differs among the Military Services.

Inconsistencies across Services could mean servicewomen are disproportionately affected by different measurement methods depending on their Service. Table 4.2 provides an overview of the Military Services' assessments, including the defined purpose, measurement methods, and frequency.

Table 4.2 Body Composition Assessment Information, by Military Service

Service Branch	Purpose of Assessments	Body Composition Assessment Information
Army ³²²	<i>"The primary objective of the ABCP (Army Body Composition Program) is to ensure all Soldiers achieve and maintain optimal well-being and performance under all conditions."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Soldiers are screened every 6 months. ■ If weight and height standards are not met, Soldiers will be taped. Women have a three-site taping method (neck, waist, and hips), men have a two-site tape method (neck and waist). In 2024, all Soldiers will have single-site taping across the waist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Soldiers who fail a tape test can have one supplemental body fat assessment (such as DEXA scan). ■ There are a minimum of 7 days between BCA and ACFT. ■ Soldiers who score 540 points+ on the ACFT (80 points in each event) are exempt from BCA.
Air Force ³²³ and Space Force ³²⁴	<i>"The goal is to empower Airmen/Guardians to take charge of their health and fitness through lifestyle enhancement to optimize readiness."³²⁵</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Airmen/Guardians undergo a BCA at their annual medical physical during their birth month. ■ DAF decoupled PFT and BCA assessments and outcomes. ■ USAF/USSF uses a waist-to-height ratio (WhtR) method to calculate body composition as "Meeting Standard" or "Not Meeting Standard." <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Waist measurements are performed at the midpoint between the iliac crest and the lowest rib.
Navy ³²⁶	<i>"It is important for all Service members to maintain an optimal level of physical fitness necessary for world-wide deployment, whenever or wherever needed."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ BCA is performed annually. ■ If weight and height standards are not met, Sailors are measured using single-site abdominal circumference at the top of the iliac crest. If abdominal circumference standard is not met, women undergo body circumference measurement at three sites (neck, waist, and hips). For men, body measurement is performed at two sites (neck and abdomen). ■ BCA is coupled with PFA in sequential order. The BCA must be completed within 45 days of, but not less than 24 hours prior to, participation in the PRT. Failure to pass the BCA is automatic failure of the PFA.

Service Branch	Purpose of Assessments	Body Composition Assessment Information
Marine Corps ³²⁷	<i>“The MCBCMAP establishes, evaluates and enforces compliance with optimal weight, body composition, and military appearance standards that are essential to the preservation of good order and discipline and necessary for the maintenance of combat readiness Marine Corps-wide.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All Marines weighed semi-annually. ■ If height and weight standards are not met, Marines are measured using a body circumference (tape) method. Women have a three-site taping method (neck, waist at thinnest portion of abdomen, and hips), and men have a two-site tape (neck and waist at the naval). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Marines who do not meet the body circumference standard will have body fat verified using BIA. ■ Marines who score 285+ on both the PFT and the CFT are exempt from weight and body fat limits. A score of 250+ on both the PFT and the CFT allows an additional 1 percent of body fat. ■ BCA may be conducted on same day as the PFT or the CFT.
Coast Guard ³²⁸	<i>“The Coast Guard needs to maintain a physically and mentally mission ready workforce. Updating the body composition program is one step in improving the culture of health and wellness within the Coast Guard.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ DoD 1308.3 does not apply to the Coast Guard. ■ When a member exceeds their maximum allowable weight, they have the option to be taped at their abdominal circumference (one site for all), have body fat assessment standard taping (three sites for women, two sites for men), or both.

Notes: ACFT = Army Combat Fitness Test; BCA = body composition assessment; BIA = bioelectrical impedance analysis; CFT = Combat Fitness Test; DEXA = dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry scan; MCBCMAP = Marine Corps Body Composition and Military Appearance Program; PFA = physical fitness assessment; PFT = Physical Fitness Test; PRT = Physical Readiness Test

The Military Services have varying levels of emphasis on maintaining “military appearance” within their body composition policy guidance using descriptors such as “suitable military appearance,” “squared away,” “commensurate with high standards,” and “contributes to a favorable Military image.”³²⁹ The 2023 American Security Project report on military obesity notes, “External appearance is an unreliable way of determining internal health status, [and] judgments of ‘good military appearance’ may be affected by stereotypes based on age, race, gender, and sexual orientation.”³³⁰

In DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups, Service members in most groups reported they did not find their Service’s current body composition standards and forms of measurement useful. Women were more likely than men to express this sentiment. When describing reasons that their Service’s current body composition standards and forms of measurement are not useful, participants stated they felt the body composition standards and approaches to measurement are inaccurate, ineffective, and unrealistic. Participants in most groups also questioned the purpose of the body composition assessments and whether the standards are about readiness, health, or maintaining a professional look. Conversely, Service members in some groups felt current body composition measurements were useful as a general assessment of health and physical wellness. Select quotes from DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups are featured:³³¹

I don't know what it serves. To make sure I look a certain way? Or to make sure I'm healthy? It doesn't do either. It encourages unhealthy behavior to look professional. It doesn't serve either.

—Female Officer

First, they're not close to accurate. They're too generalized. I almost don't see the need for it. In my career, I've had people who fail the BCA [body composition assessment] but outperformed me on the test [physical fitness assessment].

—Enlisted Man

With taping, not everyone tapes the same. She tapes another way than he tapes than she tapes. It's not fair across the board. I think the tape is not good.

—Female Officer

The tape test is for the masses, not a bad system; it's not a caliper, but it works for the masses. People don't like it, but if they get into a better and more accurate system, it won't be to their benefit.

—Enlisted Man

I am small; I am a small person. I joined at 120 lb. When I got done with boot camp, I gained 10 lb from eating three meals a day and working out, the muscle weight. I'm 5' 3", and the most I can be is 145 lb. If I go over that, I'm considered obese. The most I've weighed is 155 lb. I'm still small, but I don't look like I'm 155 lb. To the [Service], I'm obese, and now I have to lose 10 lb because of their standards; it's unrealistic. Everyone has a different body type; I'm smaller, but for other women it's genetic, it's a genetic thing. If you have big-bodied people in your family, the genetics go down to you; it's an unrealistic standard for yourself.

—Enlisted Woman

There are some individuals that you would say, we should measure you because I'm concerned for your health. I'll be honest. If you can run the [PFA], but long term you are carrying around extra weight ... scientifically, we know that's not healthy.

—Male Officer

DACOWITS is concerned about the number of variations present in the Military Services' policies. Differences exist in the frequency of Service members' body composition assessments, methods of measurements, sites of measurements on the body, exceptions for high-performers on physical fitness tests, and linkages between physical fitness assessments and body composition. The Committee feels this variation is unproductive toward ensuring a ready Force and recommends DoD establish a Department-wide body composition and measurement technique based on current science. Service members' body composition is assessed differently in each Service, which may amplify the risk of disproportionate impacts to some groups in some Services, such as servicewomen and/or women who are racial or ethnic minorities.

Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups recommended body composition standards should be reviewed and updated for today's human physiology and operational fitness demands.³³² A new Department-wide standard should take into account gender, racial, and ethnic differences of today's military population to ensure greater equity in body composition considerations based on contemporary science.

Inaccuracies of BMI Highlighted in Scientific Literature Because It Does Not Properly Account for Gender, Race, and Ethnic Differences

Most Military Services use BMI as the first step in assessing a Service member's body composition. A 2023 American Medical Association report outlined the problematic history of BMI because its standards were designed with non-Hispanic White populations. Furthermore, the report emphasized BMI does not accurately account for the heterogeneity across race/ethnic groups, sexes, and age, rendering it an inaccurate measurement of body fat for some groups. BMI also does not account for different kinds of body composition (lean mass versus fat mass), body fat location, and lifestyle or genetic risk factors among other things. The report recommends more accurate measurements to include waist-to-hip ratio measurement and body adiposity, which can be derived from dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry (DEXA) or qualified bioelectrical impedance analysis (BIA).³³³

BMI can be an inaccurate measurement of lean body mass and has been shown to inaccurately reflect physiological differences in gender and race. BMI tables were drawn from White populations and may disproportionately affect people who are racial or ethnic minorities and women, particularly women of color.³³⁴ A 2011 study of ethnicity and BMI showed that Black women had less metabolic risk—were at lower risk for cardiovascular disease and diabetes—at higher BMIs than White women.³³⁵ Mexican-American women tend to have more body fat than White and Black women, indicating BMI is a less-than-perfect indicator of physical capability or even health predictor for future diseases.³³⁶ Additional research demonstrates that predicting body fat from anthropometric measurements is a bigger challenge for women than men, due to the wider variability of body fat deposition in women as compared to men, and even between racially and ethnically diverse women.³³⁷

BMI has been proven to be a poor predictor of body composition, especially in a fitness-oriented military population. Studies have shown that BMI does not appear to be a useful measure of body fat percentage or physical performance. BMI also does not account for the physiological changes based on training priorities. In a 2022 study by U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine, BMI showed poor correlations with physical performance testing.³³⁸ Certain genetic factors also affect BMI accuracy, such as an individual's weight distribution and muscle mass. As a result, BMI can overestimate body fat in athletes and others with a muscular build.³³⁹

DACOWITS believes it is critical DoD's body fat standards account for differences of race, ethnicity, and gender for today and tomorrow's Force. An abundance of scientific research and support from the American Medical Association shows the faulty nature of BMI. The

2023 American Security Project report also recommended “body composition and military appearance regulations across the Armed Forces should be wholly reviewed and brought in line with evidence-based research on health and fitness.”³⁴⁰ Recruitment and retention are affected by the disproportionate outcomes of the body composition assessments for certain groups, and DoD will continue to see declines across racial, ethnic, and gender groups until physiological differences are accounted for.

Service Members’ Reliance on Unhealthy Behaviors to Meet Body Composition Standards

To pass current body composition standards, some Service members frequently engage in unhealthy behaviors that can affect their physical readiness, cognitive functioning, short- and long-term mental health and lead to reproductive and skeletal problems, depression, and risk for suicide.³⁴¹ In a meta-analysis of eating disorder symptoms and diagnoses in the Military Services, researchers found military weight standards and fitness tests contribute to eating disorder symptoms, more predominantly in women as compared with men.³⁴² Between 2017 and 2021, the rate of eating disorders among Active Duty Service members and veterans rose 79 percent.³⁴³ A 2022 RAND Corporation study on Marine Corps body composition standards found Marines are diagnosed with eating disorders at a higher rate than other Service members, with female Marines showing some of the highest rates of eating disorders and disordered eating behaviors. The Marine Corps has the most restrictive body composition standards compared with the other Military Services.³⁴⁴ Servicewomen show higher rates of disordered eating, whereas servicemen are more likely to engage in other unhealthy behaviors to lose weight, including vomiting; strenuous exercise; diuretics; and an excessive use of saunas, sauna suits, and/or steam rooms.³⁴⁵

Service members in DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups described how they prepare for body composition assessments. Participants in most groups stated they or someone they know change and/or monitor their eating habits leading up to the assessment. Common preparation methods shared include not eating, not drinking liquids, and crash dieting. Focus group participants also described extremely unhealthy ways Service members use to drop weight quickly before their body composition assessment, including weight-loss wraps, weight trainer corsets/belts, excessive sauna use, and weight-loss pills and supplements. Both men and women described how they or someone they know have used unhealthy methods to pass their body composition assessment:³⁴⁶

I do everything for 2 weeks beforehand, like going to the sauna, changing my diet, taking water pills, eating celery.

—Enlisted Woman

I lost like 40 lb. over the course of 8 months and still had 1 [pound] to go, and I just straight up didn’t eat for days and like, took sips of water, and got in a sauna, and lost a crazy amount of weight that way to pass.

—Female Officer

The methods are different but depending on the level of waist that the circumference is, you could do a crash diet, which is don't eat anything for a long time and just drink water. Or wrap yourself in saran wrap, which works for 3 hours. If you're a big-waisted person, you take extreme measures.

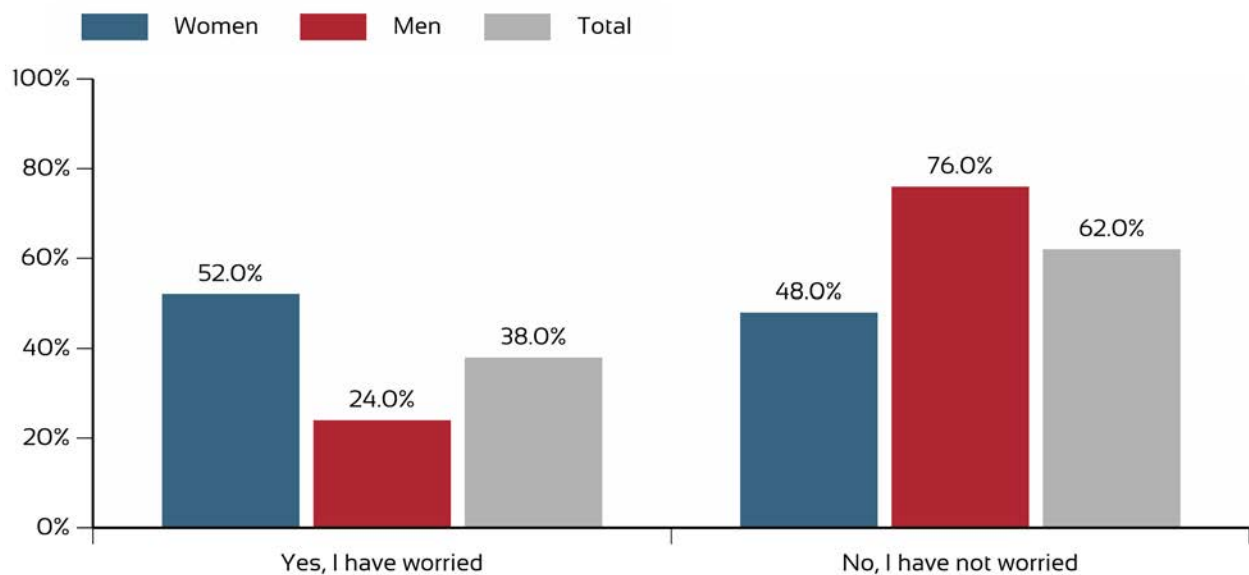
—Male Officer

My eating pattern definitely changes in the months leading up [to BCA]. I'm not starving myself anymore, but I used to use the sauna. The [Service] used to have saunas at the fitness center, but they took them out because people were being hospitalized trying to lose water weight, and for me, when I did it, I dehydrated too much and rehydrated too quickly and threw up and ruptured my esophagus and ended up in the hospital for a week.

—Enlisted Man

Servicewomen are more likely than servicemen to worry about meeting their Service's height and weight standards. Through the mini-survey questionnaire in DACOWITS' 2023 installation visits, the Committee asked participating Service members if they had ever worried about not meeting their Service's height and weight standards (measuring body composition) during their military career. Though most participants (62 percent) reported not ever worrying about failing to meet the height and weight standards, women were twice as likely as men to worry about failing (see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Percentage of Women and Men Who Ever Worried About Not Meeting Height and Weight Standards



Source: DACOWITS Focus Group Report, 2023³⁴⁷

These unhealthy behaviors hurt the readiness and resiliency of individual Service members and the Armed Forces overall. Temporary weight reduction methods can lead to dehydration, intestinal disorders, throat and mouth cancers, and cardiac arrest, while eating disorders are linked with cognitive function declines, reproductive and skeletal health concerns, depression, and increased risk for suicide.³⁴⁸ Servicewomen show greater concern about not meeting their Service's body composition standards and are at greater risk of developing eating disorders, with long-term impacts on their health, wellness, and operational capabilities.

Promising Recent Developments With Body Composition Assessments

The Committee is pleased with recent actions taken by the Military Services to improve body composition methods of measurement and standards.

Army Moves to a Single-Site Standard Taping Location for Both Genders, Reducing Unequal Rate of Inaccurate Body Composition Failures Between Female and Male Soldiers

In 2024, the Army will move to a one-site taping measurement whereby female and male Soldiers who do not meet height and weight standards will be taped at the umbilicus. The Army reported this single-site taping method equalizes inaccurate failures to 2 percent for all Soldiers as opposed to the previous higher rate of inaccurate failure for female Soldiers (5 percent versus 1 percent for male Soldiers) with multisite taping. Soldiers who fail the tape test will be allowed to undergo a supplemental body fat assessment method, such as a DEXA scan. The Army estimates these actions, combined with the high-score Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) exemption (540+ on ACFT with at least 80 points in each event), will reduce the inaccurate failure rate from 2 percent to 0 percent for all Soldiers.^{349, 350}

The Air Force Decouples the Body Composition Assessment and Physical Fitness Assessment

In 2020, the Air Force decoupled the body composition assessment from the physical fitness assessment so a Service member's body composition was no longer a scored component of their overall physical fitness assessment. This change was in response to a series of Airmen deaths over the past 10 years associated with the physical fitness assessment. The Air Force was concerned Service members were using extreme measures to pass their body composition assessment and then attempting to max their physical fitness assessment while their bodies were improperly fueled leading to exertional collapse and death. Airmen now take their annual body composition assessment in their birth month. DACOWITS highlights the Air Force's separation of these two assessment as a best practice and recommends DoD require this in their instruction.³⁵¹

Service members are required to complete an annual Periodic Health Assessment (PHA) intended to assess their health and medical readiness, identify and document potential duty-limiting or deployment-limiting conditions, and connect them with preventive health

information and services.^{352, 353} The PHA includes self-reported health status information, measurement of vitals (i.e., height, weight, blood pressure), vision screening, review of current medical conditions, and a behavioral health screen.³⁵⁴ DACOWITS believes it would be feasible for the Military Services to add the body composition assessment to the PHA to enact the Committee’s recommendation for medical professionals to conduct these measurements as weight is typically recorded as part of the medical screening process.

New Research and Body Composition Standard Modernization in the Marine Corps to Address Inequities for Female Marines

A 2022 study conducted for the Marine Corps by the U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine (USARIEM) provided valuable new insights and informed the most significant modernization of human performance standards in recent Marine Corps history. Key findings from this study identified disproportionate outcomes for women based on current methodologies used to evaluate body composition.³⁵⁵ Table 4.3 highlights some of the study’s key findings.

Table 4.3 Key Gender-related Findings from 2022 USARIEM Study on Marine Corps Body Composition and Military Appearance Program

Key Findings	Women	Men
Screening standards	A total of 99 percent of women who fail the weight screening will also fail the body fat percentage by taping	A total of 70 percent of men who fail the weight screening will also fail body fat percentage by taping
Weight standards	Screening weights have a low/moderate correlation to body fat percentage and a very low correlation to Physical Fitness Test and Combat Fitness Test performance of Marines	
Tape test	A total of 6.3 percent of women were overestimated by tape but within limits by DEXA	A total of 0.6 percent of men were overestimated by tape but within limits by DEXA
Percent body fat	Average body fat percentage across all four age groups of Marines represent a lean and healthy force (men, 22.0 ± 6.3 percent; women, 29.8 ± 6.6 percent by DEXA) that is below national averages (men, 3–4 percent lower; women 8–10 percent lower)	
Verification assessment	Study data confirmed some Marines are misclassified by BMI and/or the tape test and benefit from a higher quality “second chance” assessment of body fat (e.g., DEXA or BIA)	

Note: BIA = bioelectrical impedance analysis; BMI = body mass index; DEXA = dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry scan; USARIEM = U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine
 Source: Potter et al., 2022³⁵⁶

The Marine Corps used the key findings to implement immediate changes to its program, to include the use of the BIA to collect more precise information and increased body fat allowance by 1 percent for women.³⁵⁷ The SecDef should use this recent study and others to develop a DoD-wide body composition standard and evaluation method for all Service members.

Summary

Based on the Committee's extensive research and analysis on body composition assessments and Service members' health, DACOWITS recommends the SecDef adopt a Department-wide, contemporary, scientifically based body composition standard and measurement technique and decouple body composition and physical fitness programs. Body composition policy development and execution should be reassigned to medical professionals. The Air Force's recent decoupling of its body composition and physical fitness assessment programs is a best practice to be emulated by all the Military Services. These recommendations provide a better alignment and focus on TFF, holistic health, and prevention for future disease and would mitigate the practice of unhealthy behaviors that disproportionately effect servicewomen. Implementing these recommendations will ultimately support the mission of the Military Services by ensuring ready and capable warfighters.



Quartermaster Seaman Alyson Ruiz, from Long Island, New York, assigned to U.S. 7th Fleet flagship USS Blue Ridge (LCC 19), performs a takedown maneuver after being sprayed with oleoresin capsicum (OC) spray during a security reaction force basic (SRF-B) course at Commander, Fleet Activities Yokosuka March 31, 2023. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Sarah C. Eaton)



Army Spc. Joslynn Carochi checks equipment during the Rangers Stake event at the 2023 Colorado National Guard Best Warrior Competition in Fort Carson, Colo., Oct. 19, 2023.

Chapter 5

Well-Being and Treatment Recommendations

Chapter 5. Well-Being and Treatment Recommendations

This chapter presents DACOWITS' 2023 recommendations related to well-being and treatment, organized by study topic. Each recommendation or set of recommendations is followed by a short synopsis of the topic and an explanation of the Committee's reasoning for presenting the recommendation, which is based on its investigation of the topic. The recommendations and supporting reasoning on pregnancy in the military are provided in Section A, and the recommendations and supporting reasonings for gender discrimination are provided in Section B.

A. Pregnancy in the Military

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct immediate implementation of the Candidates Afforded Dignity, Equality and Training (CADET) Act retroactive to December 27, 2022, to include grandfathering affected cadets and midshipmen, and publish guidance for the development of new policies related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care and, more immediately, provide leave with healthcare for a cadet's or midshipman's period of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care, as well as healthcare coverage for the child.

Synopsis

The deadline for implementation of the CADET Act was December 27, 2022; however, as of the Committee's vote on this recommendation in September 2023, the law had not yet been implemented, and no DoD directive or guidance had been issued. During the publication of this report, DoD revised DoDI 1322.22 on November 1, 2023, allowing cadets and midshipmen the option to maintain parental rights if they become biological parents while attending an MSA. The implementation of the CADET Act effectively ends previous policies forcing students at the MSAs to permanently withdraw or give up their children should they become pregnant or father a child. DACOWITS commends the MSA's efforts to comply with the intent of the CADET Act ahead of its implementation while awaiting DoD policy change.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Written responses from the Military Services and National Guard providing information on DoD's pregnancy discrimination policy and policies related to female cadets or midshipmen at the MSAs who become pregnant (September 2022, RFI 13)³⁵⁸
- Written responses from the Military Services on single parent accession policies, waivers, and implementation of the CADET Act (March 2023, RFI 5)³⁵⁹
- Written responses from the USD(P&R) and the Military Services on implementation of the CADET Act (September 2023, RFI 6)³⁶⁰

Throughout its history, DACOWITS has supported gender equity at the MSAs and recommended policies to better support Service members who become parents. DACOWITS' first recommendations for MSAs came in 1974 and 1975 when the Committee advocated for the admission of women with the first class entering in 1976. More recently, DACOWITS recommended gender-integrated boxing programs at the MSAs in 2017.³⁶¹ DACOWITS also remains committed to policies supporting Service members with children given the overlap of military service with prime years for family formation. The reasoning supporting the Committee's recommendation on implementation of the CADET Act follows.

Current Policy (Prior to the Implementation of the CADET Act)

MSA students are prohibited from having dependents, including a spouse or children.³⁶² This policy applies to both men and women; however, the Committee is concerned this policy primarily affects women who become pregnant while enrolled. If a cadet or midshipman were to become pregnant while enrolled at one of the MSAs, they are left with three options:³⁶³

1. Terminate the pregnancy and remain enrolled.
2. Carry the pregnancy to term, give the baby up for adoption (severing all parental rights), and remain enrolled.
3. Carry the pregnancy to term, maintain parental rights, and resign or be involuntarily disenrolled from the Service academy as a result.

Students who leave an MSA in their third or fourth year may be required to repay the value of their tuition, because they will not fulfill their commitment to serve in the military.³⁶⁴ One year of tuition is estimated at \$82,000.³⁶⁵

The offices of Senators Ted Cruz and Kirsten Gillibrand reported several cadets or midshipmen drop out annually to have children.³⁶⁶ Many more students are likely affected

than officially reported because women do not need to disclose abortions and men can neglect to disclose paternity to the MSAs. Senator Cruz’s office has received several dozens of letters from women affected by the issue, many of whom reported feeling pressured to terminate their pregnancies.³⁶⁷

The CADET Act

The FY22 NDAA included the CADET Act, which directed the Military Services and MSAs to “prescribe regulations that include the option to preserve parental guardianship rights of a cadet or midshipman who becomes pregnant or fathers a child while attending a military service academy, consistent with the individual and academic responsibilities of such cadet or midshipman.”³⁶⁸ The CADET Act effectively ends policies forcing students at the MSAs to permanently withdraw or give up their children should they become pregnant or father a child. In announcing the introduction of the CADET Act, Senator Cruz commented—

*The [current] policy is unfair, antiquated, and unacceptable. The CADET Act is a commonsense step to ensure the brave young women of our Armed Forces have the right level of support to continue their academy training and go on to fulfill their future service as commissioned officers while raising their family.*³⁶⁹

The deadline for implementation of the CADET Act was December 27, 2022; however, as of the Committee’s vote on this recommendation in September 2023, the law had not yet been implemented, and no DoD directive or guidance had been issued.³⁷⁰

Interim Actions From DoD and the MSAs (prior to November 1, 2023 revision of DoDI 1322.22)

Prior to DoD revising DoDI 1322.22 to implement the CADET Act, the Committee received responses for its September 2023 business meeting indicating the DoD and MSAs had sought to implement the Act to the extent possible in the interim. Reported actions include the following:

- **DoD:** The Military Services were asked to provide the MSAs with interim guidance should a cadet or midshipmen identify themselves as a new parent or parent-to-be. DoD confirmed all three MSAs are in compliance with the intent of the CADET Act while waiting for the final policy guidance.³⁷¹
- **The Air Force Academy (USAFA):** USAFA has approved FCPs for several cadets allowing them to maintain their parental rights while enrolled at USAFA. Cadets who had children prior to the passage of the CADET Act were given the opportunity to regain or maintain their parental rights through an approved FCP. All submitted FCPs have been approved. USAFA currently has five cadets with dependent children who have an approved FCP or a temporary guardianship agreement in place. Two male USAFA cadets who are expecting children soon have started the FCP progress.^{372, 373}

- **United States Military Academy (USMA):** USMA stated it will accommodate any cadet who reports having or expecting a child while enrolled. Currently, three cadets identify as biological parents who are creating FCPs.³⁷⁴
- **United States Naval Academy (USNA):** USNA has not separated any midshipman based on parenthood since the CADET Act was passed, stating decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis supportive of Congressional intent. Three midshipman currently have children.³⁷⁵
- **United States Coast Guard Academy (USCGA):** USCGA will implement the CADET Act legislation by June 2024 in accordance with the Congressional mandate. USCGA is not aware of any cadets who are currently parents.³⁷⁶

2023 RAND Corporation Report and Recommendations on Implementation of the CADET Act

In 2022, DoD commissioned the RAND Corporation to assess the legal, policy, practice, and cost implications of the CADET Act and make recommendations on changes to policies and practices. The report, published in August 2023, provided seven policy recommendations:³⁷⁷

- “DoD should adopt policy options for cadet and midshipman parents that are consistent with its policies for other active-duty personnel, leveraging the strengths of its Military Family Readiness System.”
- “DoD, the military departments, and the MSAs should create detailed policies on MSA practices related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care.”
- “In the short term, while other policy options might be under development, DoD should take some basic steps to ensure the health and well-being of cadets and midshipmen who are becoming parents and their children.”
- “DoD and the MSAs should develop and implement plans to ensure that applicants as well as cadets and midshipmen understand new policies regarding their parental rights and responsibilities.”
- “DoD should conduct or support further qualitative research needed to evaluate possible changes to housing, child development centers, and cadet and midshipman privileges.”
- “While new and revised policies are being established, DoD and the MSAs should collect, monitor, and analyze data on the parenthood status of cadets and midshipmen and the potential impacts of the policy changes.”
- “DoD should also require the MSAs to collect and analyze data and submit an assessment of the implementation of parental rights-related policy changes on the MSAs’ ability to execute their missions and any associated impacts to cadet and midshipman culture, morale, and quality of life.”

Revision of DoDI 1322.22 Issued by DoD on November 1, 2023

DoD issued a revised DoDI 1322.22 on November 1, 2023 which provides cadets and midshipmen the option to maintain parental rights if they become biological parents while attending one of the MSAs.³⁷⁸ Cadets and midshipmen can implement a FCP following DoD and Military Service policies to maintain their parental rights for the duration of their time at an MSA. The dependent child cannot reside with the cadet or midshipman at an MSA and the cadet or midshipmen parent will not receive additional benefits, pay, or allowances as the result of their dependent until they are commissioned into Active Duty service. Cadet or midshipmen dependents will be eligible for TRICARE as well as commissary and exchange privileges. Physical fitness requirements are temporarily waived for pregnant cadet or midshipmen until they are medically cleared to resume; all physical fitness requirements must be met before graduating and commissioning from an MSA.³⁷⁹

Summary

Implementation of the CADET Act was long overdue and the Committee is pleased to see the recent adoption of these policies in DoD Instruction. DACOWITS commends the MSAs' efforts to comply with the intent of the CADET Act in the interim while awaiting the publication of DoD's guidance. In September 2023 prior to full implementation of the CADET act, the Committee recommended the SecDef direct immediate implementation of the CADET Act retroactive to December 27, 2022, to include grandfathering affected cadets and midshipmen; publish guidance for the development of new policies related to pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care; and, more immediately, provide leave with healthcare for a cadet's or midshipman's period of pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum care and healthcare coverage for the child.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should establish a more robust women's healthcare directory on Military OneSource to include topics such as reproductive health, pregnancy, mental health, and contraceptive care. This directory should provide information and links to all Department of Defense, Service, and Defense Health Agency resources, information, and publications to more effectively aid servicewomen in locating and easily navigating to relevant healthcare information.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes the importance of ensuring servicewomen have ready access to information about women's healthcare resources, their TRICARE coverage, and related benefits. The Committee commends recent improvements from DoD in the amount of available information specific to women's healthcare. However, this information is scattered

across various DoD and Military Services' websites, potentially making it difficult or confusing for servicewomen to find the information they need when they need it. Centralizing links to women's healthcare information on Military OneSource—a well-known, well-marketed DoD directory recognized as a “one-stop shop”—can improve servicewomen's knowledge about the health information available to them and further enhance use of these existing resources.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the DoD on the Women's Health Structure, including an overview of the Military Health System (MHS) and current initiatives and working groups related to women's health (June 2022)³⁸⁰
- A briefing from the DHA on assisted reproductive services (December 2022, RFI 8)³⁸¹
- A briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs on the Department's response to the Supreme Court's ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, Service members' access to noncovered reproductive healthcare, and findings from the 2022 Women's Reproductive Health Survey conducted by the RAND Corporation (March 2023, RFI 10)³⁸²
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)³⁸³

DACOWITS has advocated for the improvement of servicewomen's health and well-being for decades. While DoD and the Military Services offer more information than ever before specific to women's health, the Committee is concerned this information is located across too many DoD and Military Service websites, which may confuse or frustrate servicewomen seeking healthcare information. The Committee believes a centralized directory of women's healthcare resources could help support servicewomen and their families seeking information and may also improve servicewomen's satisfaction with military service and likelihood of retention. The reasoning supporting this recommendation follows.

Challenges of Disparate Information Sources

The Committee commends the DoD for recent efforts to improve timely, affordable access to multiple women's healthcare services and resources. However, information and resources related to women's health are dispersed across various DoD and Military Service websites, which can make it difficult and frustrating for servicewomen and their families to find

information to inform their healthcare decisions. The Committee believes that direct efforts to better organize the robust level of currently available information is warranted to ensure servicewomen can easily find the resources they need. Access to information is especially necessary as servicewomen continue to be a growing portion of the military population and a vital part of Force readiness.³⁸⁴

The Committee does not feel it is necessary for the DoD to create an entirely new resource that would be costly and duplicate the preeminent military directory of information: Military OneSource. Military OneSource is an already established, readily available, well-marketed resource that could be used as a starting point for collating all women's healthcare resources from DoD and Military Services websites. Although information would not be posted directly on Military OneSource, the site could provide links to all primary sources for various women's healthcare topics, substantially easing the burden of having to search for information related to women's healthcare resources and policies on multiple DoD or Military Service websites.

Overview of Military OneSource

Military OneSource describes itself as “your connection to information, answers and support when MilLife happens. We can help you overcome challenges, reach your goals and thrive.”³⁸⁵ Military OneSource organizes information by generalized topics and offers easily identifiable resources for Service members, referring them to more specific topics from each generalized topic page. For example, when a user selects the health and wellness “MilLife” topic, they have the option to select various subtopics, such as prevention and care, mental health, nutrition and fitness, and substance abuse. Selecting any of these subtopics will take users to a page that highlights benefits, resources, and products (such as flyers) related to the chosen subtopic. Military OneSource defines its mission as providing a connection to information, answers, and support, and is well marketed and understood by Service members as a centralized location for information in the military community. The Committee believes it is the best suited directory for organizing policies and resources related women's healthcare.

Although Military OneSource currently features resources related to women's healthcare topics, these resources are not collated under a “women's health” subtopic, instead being dispersed across other subtopics, such as parenting and mental health. DACOWITS believes Military OneSource lacks information on the full range of women's healthcare topics, such as assisted reproductive health services and policies, unintended pregnancy resources, CONLV policies, counseling for postpartum depression resources, and health implications of pregnancy. The Committee believes Military OneSource should provide clearly identifiable links to the DoD's and Military Services' policies addressing these women's healthcare-related topics and others.

Important Sources of Information on Women's Health to be Added to Military OneSource

The Committee has identified various sources of information currently missing from Military OneSource that could help reduce the burden associated with finding policies and resources

related to women's healthcare. The DHA is a joint integrated Combat Support Agency providing a medically ready force across the MHS. DHA oversees MHS, TRICARE, and medical care provided by each Military Service. The following DoD health-related resources contain information on women's healthcare that the Committee believes should be featured on Military OneSource, allowing it to become a comprehensive "one-stop shop" for women's healthcare information:

- **Health.mil.** The [MHS Women's Health webpage](#) offers the most comprehensive information identifying women's health benefits and resources with specific links to resources across DHA facilities. For example, links to various women's healthcare-related services and policies can be found on the MHS Women's Health page, including well woman exams and screenings, pregnancy and reproductive health, comprehensive TRICARE coverage, pain management, mental health, sexual trauma, TRICARE contraceptive care, and reproductive health.³⁸⁶ Specifically, the reproductive health link directs users to a page featuring frequently asked questions about a variety of reproductive healthcare topics, including policies, such as command notification of pregnancy requirements; definitions, such as assisted reproductive technology (ART); and other related topics.³⁸⁷ [Health.mil](#) is the official website of MHS and DHA.³⁸⁸

The Committee commends the breadth of information available on [Health.mil](#), but believes links to the information should also be featured on Military OneSource, to serve as a starting point for servicewomen seeking information about women's healthcare in the military. Because of the prominence and comprehensiveness of [Health.mil](#), both MHS and DHA should support posting links on women's health issues to Military OneSource as the primary reference website to direct additional traffic to their resources.

- **TRICARE.** TRICARE is a component of MHS and the "health care program for uniformed Service members, retirees, and their families around the world."³⁸⁹ TRICARE provides information about what healthcare services are available and covered for Service members and their families, including healthcare services specific to women. TRICARE's website features information about women's healthcare issues, including services available and insurance coverage information for various women's healthcare services, such as reproductive health services, including assisted reproductive services, infertility services, abortion, postpartum care, mental health, and contraception.³⁹⁰ However, explanations for coverage of some services are not consistent, with the explanation for multiple service coverages being listed as "it depends."³⁹¹

TRICARE's website primarily addresses insurance coverage for reproductive health and other healthcare services rather than comprehensive information about military policy.³⁹² The Committee believes servicewomen seeking information about women's healthcare services may not fully comprehend the resources and care available to them if policies, resources, and insurance coverage information are not listed in the same location.

For example, some servicewomen may miss out on treatment options because TRICARE does not cover assisted reproductive services not related to service-

connected injuries. However, Army, Navy, and Joint Service medical centers have ART programs that offer ART services at reduced costs to Service members, although no information about these Service-specific programs are listed on the TRICARE website. Therefore, insurance coverage information from TRICARE is one more source of information that should be featured on Military OneSource to ensure Service members have access to all appropriate resources in one location.

- **Service-specific resources.** Each Military Service has implementation guidance in their publishing directories where Service members can search for a topic and find links to women's healthcare information specifically related to their Service. However, Service members must search individual Service websites, and these websites may not be updated with the latest DoD or Service policy information.

Although the websites described above offer important information about women's healthcare services, none of these websites provide a comprehensive overview of women's healthcare services, resources, policies, and insurance coverage options in one location. As a result, servicewomen may misunderstand policies or misinterpret information that could otherwise support them in their journey to receive care. Incorporating links from all the sources described above into Military OneSource and routinely updating this information would help servicewomen seeking information and benefits, as well as help navigate leaders within the Services to resources that will bolster their commitment to serving Service members and their families.

The Impact of Disparate Information Sources on Service Members' Understanding of Available Resources and Healthcare Coverage

Although DoD has improved access to women's healthcare services recently, finding information on policies, services, and procedures can inhibit use of and access to healthcare benefits. The Committee believes that servicewomen frustrated with the difficulty of finding relevant women's healthcare information may lose morale, while servicewomen unable to access some services may experience reduced well-being and force readiness and be more likely to leave the military. Enhancing the process of finding information to inform healthcare decisions could positively influence servicewomen's likelihood of remaining in the military as they become more aware of benefits and services available to them.

Relatedly, during the Committee's 2023 focus groups, Service members reported factors that would encourage women to stay in the military, including additional reproductive healthcare benefits, regular obstetric/gynecological (OBGYN) care and assisted reproductive care, and mental health support. Due to limited marketing, Service members indicated they felt more women's healthcare services are available to Services members than are known or used. Service members from DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups recommended healthcare services and resources should be better advertised.³⁹³ Consolidating information about benefits, policies, and coverage would likely help improve servicewomen's knowledge of the resources available to them.

Summary

Information regarding the full range of women's healthcare resources is located across many DoD and Service websites. To assist servicewomen in finding the specific information they need, the Committee recommends a single, centralized directory of women's healthcare with links to specific DoD and related Service websites. Military OneSource could be used as the centralized directory to provide easily searchable information in a well-marketed DoD resource. Making women's healthcare information more accessible to servicewomen will increase women's well-being in the military. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef should establish a more robust women's healthcare directory on Military OneSource to include topics such as reproductive health, pregnancy, mental health, and contraceptive care. This directory should provide information and links to all DoD, Service, and DHA resources, information, and publications to more effectively aid servicewomen in locating and easily navigating to relevant healthcare information.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should: (1) direct the Defense Health Agency (DHA) to publish guidance for the Services, their medical providers, commanders, and pregnant servicewomen regarding the necessity, authorization, and recommended minimum length of maternity convalescent leave (CONLV) for birth events; (2) prescribe necessary procedures to ensure servicewomen who give birth in civilian facilities receive the necessary maternity CONLV; and (3) require the Services, with DHA guidance, to define the limited circumstances under which commanders may disapprove maternity CONLV or, preferably, prohibit commanders from denying recommended maternity CONLV.

Synopsis

Parental leave and maternity CONLV are important benefits available to new parents in the military. These benefits serve distinct purposes: parental leave provides birth and nonbirth parents time to bond with their new child, while maternity CONLV provides time for the birth parent's physical and mental recovery from childbirth. Recent legislation revised previous maternity CONLV policies by removing the 6-week minimum, requiring recommendation by a medical provider for a diagnosed medical condition, and making maternity CONLV authorization dependent on approval from commanders. DACOWITS believes further action is required to ensure servicewomen are afforded the necessary time they need to recover from birth events, are not unreasonably denied maternity CONLV, do not face pressures to combine maternity CONLV and parental leave, or have to sacrifice their maternity CONLV due to their entitlement to extended parental leave.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Written responses from the Military Services on implementation of the Mothers of Military (MOMS) Leave Act and the expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP) (March 2023, RFI 12)³⁹⁴
- Briefings from the Military Personnel Policy (MPP) and Military Compensation, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, and the Military Services on guidance and authorization for CONLV following birth events (September 2023, RFI 4)³⁹⁵

For decades, DACOWITS has made recommendations to promote servicewomen's health and well-being during and after pregnancy. The Committee's first recommendation on maternity leave was in 1988 when it recommended all Military Services provide servicewomen with 6 weeks of postpartum nonchargeable leave.³⁹⁶ Although parental leave options have greatly expanded since then, DACOWITS is committed to ensuring servicewomen are granted the time they need to medically recover from a birth event and return to duty because individual readiness directly equates to Force readiness. Recent legislative changes to maternity CONLV put servicewomen in a position where their leave period, intended for them to recover from a birth event, may be denied or shortened by their commanders. DACOWITS' reasoning on the recommendation for maternity CONLV follows.

Recent CONLV Policy Changes

The FY22 NDAA updated the DoD's parental leave and maternity CONLV policies in 10 U.S.C. § 701 (h)(3)(A)(i-ii):^{ix}

*(3)(A) A member who has given birth may receive medical convalescent leave in conjunction with such birth. Medical convalescent leave in excess of the leave under paragraph (1) may be authorized if such additional medical convalescent leave- (i) is specifically recommended, in writing, by the medical provider of the member to address a diagnosed medical condition; and (ii) is approved by the commander of the member.*³⁹⁷

DoD directive-type memorandum (DTM) 23-001, attachment 3 (2)(b)(1)(a) contains the following implementation guidance:^x

(a) Convalescent leave may be authorized for the recovery of the birth parent from giving birth if such leave is specifically recommended, in writing, by the health care provider of the birth parent to address a diagnosed medical condition and is approved by the unit commander. The period of convalescent leave immediately following childbirth will be taken in one increment. Such leave will begin on the first full day after the birth of the child or the date of release of the member from the hospital or similar facility where the birth took place, whichever is later.³⁹⁸

Prior to these recent legal changes, DoD policy provided servicewomen with a minimum of 6 weeks of maternity CONLV after birth events. Commanders had approval authority for maternity CONLV requests under most circumstances.³⁹⁹ The Military Services had their own unique guidance for servicewomen while still maintaining compliance with DoD policy. For example, the Air Force prohibited commanders from denying medically recommended maternity CONLV,⁴⁰⁰ while the Marine Corps specified 42 days of postpartum CONLV after birth and stipulated that commanders could not deny such leave.⁴⁰¹ Alternatively, hospital commanders were the approval authority for maternity CONLV in the Army.⁴⁰²

The FY22 NDAA revised DoD's previous maternity CONLV policies in the following ways:

- It removed the minimum 6 weeks of maternity CONLV following birth. Now there is no specified length for maternity CONLV in favor of an individualized plan for each servicewoman.
- Maternity CONLV must address a diagnosed medical condition as recommended by a medical provider.
- Maternity CONLV may be authorized, dependent on approval from the commander.

Although the Committee appreciates the DoD's efforts to continuously improve parental leave and maternity CONLV policies, DACOWITS believes further action is necessary to clarify the new maternity CONLV policies and ensure servicewomen are afforded the necessary time to recover from birth events.

Further Clarification Needed to Distinguish Between Maternity CONLV and Parental Leave and Ensure Servicewomen Who Give Birth Are Afforded Both

DACOWITS recognizes that DoD and the Military Services have worked together since the issuance of the new maternity CONLV policy to clarify confusion about policy implementation. For example, DACOWITS learned from Military Service briefers in September 2023 that the Navy,⁴⁰³ the Secretary of the Army,⁴⁰⁴ and the Marine Corps⁴⁰⁵ issued Service-level guidance clarifying that the 12-week parental leave benefit and maternity CONLV are distinct and

that the parental leave benefit should not influence medical provider recommendations for maternity CONLV. Specifically, the Army’s guidance stated, “Six weeks remains the appropriate amount of time for recovery from childbirth,” and parental leave may not be substituted for maternity CONLV.⁴⁰⁶

The Marine Corps guidance affirmed the distinction between parental leave and maternity CONLV but did not specify the 6-week maternity CONLV period. Instead, the Marine Corps indicated maternity CONLV recovery time is flexible, and the length should be recommended by a medical provider.⁴⁰⁷ Although the Committee recognizes that most Military Services have shared guidance internally to ensure leaders are aware that maternity CONLV and parental leave are distinct benefits, DACOWITS still believes this message should be emphasized to ensure servicewomen receive their full leave entitlements.

Similarly, a bipartisan group of U.S. Senate and House members penned a letter to the USD(P&R) on November 15, 2022, titled, “Bipartisan, Bicameral Group of Members Urge Department of Defense to Follow Congressional Intent and Provide Equal Access to Parental Leave.”⁴⁰⁸ They urged maternity CONLV and parental leave are separate and distinct benefits that should not be considered the same, nor should these leave statuses run concurrently for servicewomen. The full letter signed by Congresswomen Chrissy Houlahan, Jackie Speier, Sara Jacobs, and Stephanie Bice and Senators Tammy Duckworth, Mazie K. Hirono, and Kirsten Gillibrand reads—⁴⁰⁹

We write to encourage the Department to properly implement Sec. 621 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, which expanded parental leave to 12 weeks for all servicemembers and removed the designation of primary and secondary caregiver status. We want to ensure that the Department’s implementation of this provision will maintain the historical separation of medical convalescent leave from parental leave (previously known as caregiver leave). Our military must support our servicemembers who are building a family – it is a matter of military readiness and national security.

The clear congressional intent of Sec. 621 is for parental leave to be equal for both the birth parent and nonbirth parent (or an adoptive or foster parent) and provided separate and apart from any medical convalescent leave received following childbirth. Convalescent leave is intended to provide time for healing for the birth parent, while parental leave is intended for bonding and adjusting to life with a child. Additionally, the newly designated paragraph (i)(7) of 10 USC § 701, states that medical convalescent leave is in addition to any other leave provided in that section. Given that a servicemember cannot be in two different leave statuses at the same time, language allowing for convalescent leave and parental leave to run concurrently would cause birth parents to receive 6 weeks of medical convalescent leave and only 6 weeks of parental leave, while the nonbirth parent would receive 12 weeks of parental leave. This inequity would only impact female servicemembers at a time when recruiting and retention of servicewomen already remains an issue.

The purpose of this provision was to expand leave for new parents, whether the birth parent or otherwise. Once implemented, we believe that birth parents should receive a minimum of 6 weeks of convalescent leave in addition to the 12 weeks of parental leave, for a minimum of 18 weeks of total leave, while non-birth, adoptive, and foster parents should receive the 12 weeks of parental leave. Any attempt to overlap parental leave and convalescent leave would be contrary to congressional intent and would lead to additional congressional action if the Department is unwilling to implement this policy properly.

This provision is critical to the retention and health of servicemembers and military families, and we have great interest in seeing it properly implemented. Families across the country should not have to worry or fear that time with their infants will be cut short simply because of a misinterpretation of the statute. I ask that you give this request your personal attention and ensure the forthcoming policy reflects congressional intent before implementation. We thank you for considering this request and for everything you do to ensure the readiness of our force and the wellbeing of our servicemembers.

DACOWITS Concerned New Maternity CONLV Policy Grants Too Much Room for Denial of Leave

The Committee is concerned the wording of the updated maternity CONLV policy allows too much leeway, and servicewomen could be denied this essential form of leave. While DACOWITS trusts medical providers and commanders to prioritize servicewomen's health and readiness, the Committee sees three steps in which a denial or reduction of maternity CONLV could be possible. First, medical providers must be able to diagnose servicewomen with a medical condition following their birth event. Second, medical providers must recommend a prescribed amount of leave related to the diagnosis of that medical condition. Third, commanders must approve the recommended maternity CONLV. For a servicewoman to receive this form of leave enabling their full recovery from a birth event, all three steps of this process must occur; a breakdown at any of these steps could put a servicewoman's maternity CONLV leave in jeopardy.

Again, DACOWITS trusts commanders and medical providers but feels the policy as written now leaves too much room for denials, albeit probably a rare occurrence. However, an unwarranted denial would be detrimental to a servicewoman's health and may influence her desire to stay in the military. Unverified anecdotal information shared through social media suggests servicewomen have been denied maternity CONLV since this legislation went into effect.

DoDI 1327.06 Leave and Liberty Policy and Procedures currently stipulates that "commanders (or other designated approval authorities under procedures established by the Secretary concerned) may not deny maternity leave to eligible Service members" because it has not yet been updated following the FY22 NDAA.⁴¹⁰ However, the OUSD(P&R) MPP briefed

the Committee in September 2023 and stated DoD planned to eliminate these current prohibitions in the DoDI 1327.06 rewrite that barred commanders from denying maternity CONLV.

The Committee recognizes the important role of a commanders and their need to control unit members' absences, but DACOWITS is also deeply concerned that birth parents may not receive the recovery time they need and believes there are very few, if any, reasons to deny maternity CONLV after birth as recommended by medical providers. Consequently, the Committee urges the DoD to retain the prohibition on command authority to deny maternity CONLV. Alternatively, the Committee recommends DHA provide guidance outlining the very limited circumstances, if any, under which a commander may deny maternity CONLV to ensure any future denials are justified.

Additional Guidance on Maternity CONLV for Military and Civilian Healthcare Providers

The Committee implores DoD and the Military Services to document the necessary procedures for recommending maternity CONLV to ensure both military and private-sector healthcare providers understand the appropriate considerations for maternity CONLV in the military. The Committee is also concerned medical providers may be discouraged from recommending appropriate maternity CONLV for Service members if they are not given guidelines, such as minimum and maximum lengths.

Summary

The FY22 NDAA established expansions to the MPLP for both birth and nonbirth parents and changed the maternity CONLV policy for birthing parents. New maternity CONLV policies removed the minimum length of time for maternity CONLV, previously 6 weeks, and now require medical provider recommendation for maternity CONLV commensurate with a diagnosed medical condition. Commanders are responsible for approving the recommended maternity CONLV from medical providers.

DACOWITS believes further action is necessary to clarify these new maternity CONLV leave policies. The Committee wants to ensure servicewomen are afforded the necessary time they need to recover from events, are not unreasonably denied maternity CONLV, and do not face pressures to combine maternity CONLV and parental leave or sacrifice their maternity CONLV due to their entitlement to extended parental leave. Therefore, the Committee recommends the SecDef should (1) direct DHA to publish additional guidance on the necessity, authorization, and recommended minimum length of maternity CONLV for birth events; (2) ensure servicewomen who give birth in civilian facilities receive the necessary maternity CONLV; and (3) define the limited circumstances under which commanders may deny this form of leave or, preferably, prohibit them from denials.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should issue additional guidance to the Military Services on implementation of the Family Care Plans Instruction (DoDI 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being utilized as intended for operational readiness, program elements are tracked adequately, Department guidance is executed consistently across the Services, and policy application is aligned to appropriately support Service members.

Synopsis

DACOWITS continues to be interested in ensuring FCPs are being used appropriately. FCPs are tools intended to support Force readiness, by ensuring a caretaker is available for dependents of Service members during activities that take them away from home, such as deployments or training. However, DACOWITS believes FCPs are being used inappropriately to undermine and stigmatize Service members, in particular servicewomen. Service members have reported inappropriate applications of the FCP, including FCP requests for short-term absences such as caring for a sick child or FCPs being used as a determining factor for training or school selection. Implementation and enforcement of FCPs also vary considerably across the Military Services, and women are disproportionately affected by voluntary or involuntary separations due to parenthood status. In 2017, the Committee recommended a review be conducted to ensure FCPs were being used appropriately. The Committee maintains its stance on this topic and believes additional DoD guidance will help ensure FCPs are implemented as intended and are being used uniformly across the Military Services.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services on providing updates on the use, implementation, and consistency of FCPs in each Service (March 2023, RFI 11)⁴¹¹
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)⁴¹²

In 2017, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef conduct a review of the Military Services' implementation of the FCPs to ensure the policy was being used as intended for operational readiness and not used inappropriately. DACOWITS has a longstanding history of studying pregnancy, child care, and other family aspects related to servicewomen's well-being

and treatment. The Committee reemphasizes its 2017 recommendation on ensuring the appropriate utilization of FCPs and adds additional elements such as consistent tracking, execution, and policy application based on its recent briefings from the Military Services and focus groups with Service members. The reasoning supporting the Committee’s 2023 recommendation on FCPs follows.

FCPs

FCPs originated in 1992 as a tool to ensure force readiness and help Service members prepare for deployment and temporary duty by establishing definitive dependent caretaking responsibilities in their absence.⁴¹³ The DoDI for FCPs (1342.19), last updated in 2017, “establishes policy, assigns responsibilities, and proscribes procedures for the care of dependent family members of Service members, including Reserve Component members, and of members of the DoD Civilian Expeditionary Workforce CEW)” and applies to Service members who are—⁴¹⁴

- Single parents
- Dual-military couples with dependents
- Parents married with custody or joint custody of a child whose noncustodial biological or adoptive parent is not the current spouse of the Service member or who otherwise bears sole responsibility for the care of children under age 19 or for others unable to care for themselves in the absence of the Service member
- Parents with primary responsibility for dependent family members

Military Services’ Implementation of FCP Instructions

Each Military Service is responsible for deciding how it will implement DoDI 1342.19. For example, each Service may have slightly different guidelines for when the FCP must be created or updated, what documentation a Service member must provide with the FCP, and when the FCP must be implemented. Table 5.1 summarizes current FCP instructions and policy by Military Service.

Table 5.1 FCP Policies for the Military Services

Governing Instructions	
Air Force and Space Force	Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-2908, Family Care Plans ⁴¹⁵
Army	Army Regulation (AR) 600-20, Army Command Policy ⁴¹⁶
Marine Corps	Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1740.13D, Family Care Plans ⁴¹⁷
Navy	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction (OPNAVINST) 1740.4E, U.S. Navy Family Care Policy ⁴¹⁸

Governing Instructions

Guidance Regarding When to Implement Family Care Plans

Air Force and Space Force	<p>“Only Members identified in para 1.b. are required to have a formal family care plan documented on AF Form 357, Family Care Certification; however, all Department of the Air Force members with dependent family members, not just those identified in paragraph 1.b., should have family care arrangements that reasonably cover situations that require Members be separated from their family even if a formal family care plan is not required by this instruction. These situations include, but are not limited to, contingency operations, severe weather evacuations, exercises, operational requirements, and overseas assignments to dependent-restricted areas. All Members should develop and have a plan in place in the event one or both caregivers are absent. Each Department of the Air Force member is responsible for the care of their family members during these circumstances.” (p. 4)</p>
Army	<p>“Plans must be made to ensure Family members are properly and adequately cared for when an RA Soldier is deployed, on TDY, or otherwise not available due to military requirements. USAR Soldiers will implement Family care plans during any period of absence for annual training, regularly scheduled unit training assemblies, emergency mobilization and deployment, or other type of active duty.” (pp. 49–50)</p>
Marine Corps	<p>“The FCP is used when the Service Member and other primary caregiver are unavailable to care for dependent family members due to deployment, abandonment, incapacitation, Temporary Additional Duty (TAD), or other reasons until a natural or adoptive parent or legal guardian assumes custody either by order from a court of competent jurisdiction, by operational law, or pursuant to a properly executed legal document indicating care for the dependent. The FCP is not intended to replace routine family care arrangements, such as those used during normal training or garrison duties.” (p. 2)</p>
Navy	<p>“The Service member has the responsibility to ensure dependent family members are cared for during deployments, reserve mobilizations, and TDY, as well as at all other times during which the Service member is unavailable. The primary responsibility for initiating and developing a workable family care plan rests with the individual Service member.” (p. 3)</p>

Note: The Coast Guard is not included in this table because it is not governed by the FCP DoDI.
 AF = Air Force; RA = Regular Army; TDY = temporary duty; USAR = U.S. Army Reserve

During a March 2023 briefing from the Military Services, the Committee noted several disparities in Service policies, regulations, and processes for FCPs:⁴¹⁹

- **Required completion timelines:** The Army requires Active Duty Service members to complete their FCP within 30 days, while the Air Force and Marine Corps provide up to 60 days for completion. The Navy does not specify timelines but notes general practice is to allow Active Duty Service members 30 days to complete their FCP.
- **Number of required elements:** The Marine Corps requires three elements in addition to several recommended components, while the Army requires seven elements.
- **Documentation and delivery:** The Navy requires Service members to produce hardcopy documentation, some of which requires notarization. The Navy reviews documents but returns them to the Service member. The Marine Corps allows members to sign and certify electronically, cutting down on administrative burden and speeding up processing time.
- **Approval authority:** The Navy requires an O-4 or above, while the Marine Corps designates FCP validators in grades E-6, O-2, and W-1 or above.

Inappropriate Use of FCPs Reported by Service Members

Service members continue to report inappropriate use of FCPs by commanders or other unit leaders. DACOWITS' 2017 and 2023 focus groups highlighted this finding from Service members, indicating the persistent nature of this issue.^{420, 421} Service members describe how FCPs are sometimes being requested by their leadership for short-term, late-notice absences to care for a child who is sick or whose daycare is closed. "Where is your FCP?" or "what about your FCP?" is a common retort reported by Service members, primarily women. FCPs also come into question ahead of training or other career-enhancing opportunities as a prejudgment of one's readiness.⁴²²

A 2023 "Women in ARSOF" report also found that many junior Soldiers reported their first-line supervisors were requesting FCPs for short-term training events, such as morning training

operations or staff duty.⁴²³ First-line supervisors "acting unilaterally," likely without the knowledge of their unit commanders or first sergeants, was identified as the main cause of inappropriate FCP use.⁴²⁴ Child care closures, health concerns, and an overtaxed military child care system exacerbated these issues related to FCPs. Servicewomen shared their experiences in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups.⁴²⁵

My kids are always sick, and so I have to stay home with them, especially now that the CDCs [child development centers] have changed the rules after COVID. I don't know if that is something the [Service] can necessarily work on, but it is a challenge. And when I have had issues before, I have been told that that is what the family care plan is for, and I'm like, that is not what that is for. That is for when my husband and I are both TDY or when we are both deployed. They want us to have other options, but we move and don't always have people we know or can trust.

—Female Officer

We went through this with a couple [Service members] recently within my tour where I'm at. It was perhaps the availability of child care. We had a [Service member] who—she has now transferred. She is dual-military and couldn't find child care. The CDC wasn't available, and she had trouble finding other child care. She had to come in late, miss the [unit] meetings when she was in an [leadership] position. The [unit] shop was, "Now, where is your family care plan?" holding that over people's heads. I see that more often than not. The FCP is supposed to be a tool if they come in need of it instead of utilizing it as a weapon; that's something that should not happen. There is a stigma that needs to change. What are you going to do with that family care plan? You are making their life harder; all you are doing is causing them undue stress.

—Enlisted Woman

[This one male leader], it's "Hey, where do you want to go for next job in brigade? Deployment? Do you have an FCP issue?" I'm like, "No, I want to go this battalion. This is the mission, and I want to do it. It's not an issue." Their brain is going to jump immediately to me not being ready in some way. It's not career goal planning, it is, "You are unable to take care of your stuff." There's a bias there whether he recognizes it or not.

—Female Officer

DACOWITS continues to be concerned about the inappropriate use of FCPs for short-term absences or as an inequitable judgment tool determining whether a Service member should be considered for training or schools. These uses are inconsistent with DoD's and the Military Services' intent for the policy and can be corrected with additional policy guidance and definition of FCP use for operational readiness.

Broad Disparities Exist in Military Services' Enforcement of FCP Regulations, With Noncompliance Disproportionately Affecting Women

DACOWITS identified substantial differences in the way the Military Services enforce Service members who are noncompliant with FCP regulations from the March 2023 briefing.⁴²⁶ From FY18 to FY22, the Army separated (voluntary or involuntary) nearly 4,000 Soldiers for parenthood-related issues, including noncompliance with Army FCP regulations.⁴²⁷ Conversely, during the same period, the Marine Corps did not separate anyone due to failure to submit or maintain their FCP.⁴²⁸ The Navy separated 273 individuals (voluntary or involuntary) within this timeframe.⁴²⁹ The DAF was unable to provide data on how many Service members had been separated due to noncompliance with FCP requirements.⁴³⁰

Between FY18 and FY22, Army separations due to parenthood were almost 4,000 Service members, while the Marine Corps separated zero Service members.

Available Army and Navy data show women are disproportionately affected by separations, voluntary or involuntary, due to parenthood. Seventy percent of Army parenthood separations from FY18 to FY22 were women,⁴³¹ and 87 percent of Navy parenthood separations from FY20 to FY22 were women.⁴³²

Summary

While the DoD's FCP instruction provides overarching policy guidance, it allows each Military Service to determine how the policy will be implemented and executed. As a result, the Service branches inconsistently apply FCP policies, leading to a significant disparity in the number of separations. Servicewomen are disproportionately affected by these policies, including variations across Service branch. Service members continue to report inappropriate use of FCPs within their units for short-term, late-notice absences or as a judgment tool of readiness for potential career-enhancing opportunities. In today's challenging recruiting

and retention environment, DoD must ensure the FCP policy is being used as intended for operational readiness and not separating otherwise qualified Service members inappropriately. The SecDef should issue additional guidance to the Military Services on implementation of the Family Care Plans Instruction (DoDI 1342.19) to ensure the policy is being used as intended for operational readiness, program elements are tracked adequately, Department guidance is executed consistently across the Services, and policy application is aligned to appropriately support Service members.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services to update maternity uniforms to present a professional, modern appearance while providing functionality, comfort, and ease of movement for the wearers.

Synopsis

Functional, well-fitting uniforms are essential to ensure Service members are protected, and comfortable, and can take pride in their professional appearance. Military pride is essential to individual and unit morale and directly impacts unit cohesion, retention, and recruiting. Maternity uniforms, while temporary in use, should afford pregnant servicewomen the same level of function and professionalism as regular nonmaternity uniforms. DACOWITS has made several recommendations related to women's uniform items and identified maternity uniforms as a continuing concern in 2016 and 2019. While some progress has been made toward improving the functionality and professional appearance of maternity uniforms since 2019, more work is needed. Recent updates and revitalization efforts to modernize maternity uniforms are inconsistent across the Military Services, and some uniform items continue to be outdated, lacking proper functionality and fit.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services on the development, assessment, and timeline of personal protective equipment and gear updates or modifications for women, including maternity uniforms (December 2022, RFI 5)⁴³³
- Written responses from the Military Services on maternity uniform pilot programs, current maternity uniforms, and plans to update maternity uniforms (September 2023, RFI 5)⁴³⁴

DACOWITS has researched and made recommendations related to women's uniform items and personal protective gear since the 1970s.⁴³⁵ Most recently, DACOWITS noted maternity uniforms as a continuing concern in 2016 and 2019 due to deficiencies in the appearance, functionality, affordability, and availability of current options.^{436, 437} While the Military Services have made substantial progress in updating some maternity uniform items, more work remains to be done. DACOWITS' reasoning supporting the recommendation on maternity uniforms follows.

Brief History of Maternity Uniforms in the Military

Women serving in the military could be involuntarily discharged when they became pregnant until 1975 when a Federal court ruled this policy unconstitutional.⁴³⁹ Initially, the Military Services offered no maternity uniforms, so women had to wear larger sizes or men's uniforms. The first sets of Service-specific maternity uniforms, unveiled in the late 1970s, were shapeless with excess fabric to accommodate a woman's changing body during pregnancy.⁴⁴⁰ While those limited maternity options afforded pregnant servicewomen the opportunity to continue serving in an equivalent uniform, elements of the actual uniforms themselves, such as the "tunics," resembled large smocks. These types of maternity uniforms diminished the professional appearance of pregnant servicewomen and were noticeably distinct from nonmaternity uniforms.



Navy maternity service dress, summer whites, and winter blues
Source: Bemis, 2011⁴³⁸

In focus groups conducted by DACOWITS in 2019, servicewomen felt maternity uniforms did not look professional or function the same way as regular uniforms. For example, participants described maternity uniforms as a "potato sack" or a "tent" that look "ugly" and "unprofessional."⁴⁴¹ Servicewomen also remarked how maternity uniforms "stick out like a sore thumb" and serve as "a daily reminder that you are in a different category."⁴⁴² Focus group participants shared maternity uniforms lack enough pockets, have an uncomfortable waistband, or needed more adjustable features to improve the utility and functionality of the uniforms.⁴⁴³



Four Soldiers and SMA Dan Dailey display the “pinks and greens” uniform prototypes on Capitol Hill, February 1, 2018. The Greens maternity uniform is displayed at right. Source: Cox, 2020⁴⁴⁴

How Uniforms Impact Performance, Inclusion, and Self-Esteem

Recent studies on women in foreign militaries and policing roles have demonstrated the importance of properly fitted uniforms and gear for unit cohesion, integration, and safety. A 2022 military study from Sweden concluded how the uniform fits “matters for whether or not a soldier is deemed high-performing and whether or not they are seen as part of the uniform(ed) collective.”⁴⁴⁵

A March 2023 study conducted in the United Kingdom regarding the fit of police uniforms on women found the “design of the women’s police uniform is fundamental to their integration, acceptance, health, and safety in policing” and impacts their feelings of inclusion within the police community.⁴⁴⁶ The researchers also found that properly fitting uniforms and gear can be a supportive element for the recruitment and retention of women because “ill-fitting designs can cause health issues, reduce officers’ safety, exacerbate body dysmorphia and lead to low self-esteem.”⁴⁴⁷

Omission of modern, professional, and functional maternity options for the full range of required uniforms can have performance and self-esteem impacts on women serving. Ill-fitting and low-functioning maternity uniforms can also exacerbate the stigma of pregnant Service members in the military and signal a lack of inclusivity to women serving today.⁴⁴⁸ Servicewomen should have the opportunity to wear well-fitting uniforms in any situation, including during pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Recent Updates to Maternity Uniforms

Since 2019, some Military Services have made progress toward updating and modernizing their maternity uniforms. Updates have focused primarily on the combat uniform and

physical training apparel. However, many other versions of maternity uniforms are in need of redesign or attention. Approaches, updates, and timelines differ across the Military Services, producing inconsistently updated maternity uniform items for servicewomen in different Services.

Combat Uniforms

The Marine Corps unveiled new elements of its maternity combat uniform in 2020, including adjustable side tabs on the existing service uniform maternity tunic and maternity khaki shirts. The Service also made new maternity and nursing undershirts available for purchase.⁴⁴⁹



Emily Madden, a U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Soldier Center clothing designer supporting Marine Corps Systems Command (MCSC), adjusts a prototype version of the modified maternity tunic's side tabs on MAJ Calleen Kinney, March 4, 2021, aboard Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia. In April 2021, MCSC will begin gradually releasing a series of updated maternity items in response to concerns about fit, comfort, and appearance. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Tonya Smith)

During the December 2022 DACOWITS quarterly business meeting, the Air Force displayed a prototype combat maternity uniform tailored for a woman's body yet able to expand to accommodate a changing shape during different stages of pregnancy.⁴⁵⁰ These uniforms are designed to enhance the professional appearance of the pregnant servicewoman while providing a better fit that adjusts throughout pregnancy. The women who wear them can be comfortable while also taking pride in their uniform appearance because they share a similar look to their fellow nonpregnant Service members.

Flight Suits

In 2021 and 2022, the Air Force and Navy rolled out the first maternity flight suits for pilots and air crew members, despite women serving in military aviation for nearly 50 years.^{451, 452} Previously, pregnant aircrew resorted to ordering a larger flight suit or wearing maternity uniforms other than flight suits to accommodate their expanding waistline. Although the larger (unisex) flight suit fit around the waist, the shoulders, sleeves, and legs were too large

to tailor, presenting a potential safety hazard.⁴⁵³ Pilots who had to wear other maternity uniforms rather than flight suits noted feeling less professional. Navy Lieutenant Commander Jacqueline Nordan received one of the Navy's first maternity flight suit uniform prototypes in 2021. She recalls—

Wearing clothing that is clearly too large for you presents a less professional appearance for daily business. Pregnant aircrew who are not flying are still conducting squadron business. They're still instructing classes, working in simulators, giving briefings, and representing their organizations. It makes a big difference to be able to continue to represent ourselves professionally in a well-fitting uniform throughout a pregnancy.⁴⁵⁴



LCDR Jacqueline Nordan, Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve's (CNAFR) mobilization program manager, poses in the first Navy maternity flight suit. CNAFR was recently selected to participate in a preliminary rollout of a new maternity flight suit in a step to better support expecting mothers. (Stephen Hickok/U.S. Navy)

Current Status of Maternity Uniforms and Future Directions

In response to DACOWITS' September 2023 request for information, the Military Services provided the status of their current and proposed maternity uniforms.⁴⁵⁵ Of note, none of the Military Services have maternity outer garments available. Servicewomen are expected to wear jackets or coats unbuttoned or unzipped, or, in the case of the Coast Guard, they may be authorized a civilian clothing option or provided organizational clothing.⁴⁵⁶

Guidance on how long maternity uniforms may be worn postpartum varies across the Military Services. While DAF and the Army allow maternity uniforms to be worn 6 and 12 months postpartum, respectively, the Coast Guard allows maternity uniforms to be worn only for 60 days postpartum without doctor or command approval. The Navy expects servicewomen to

wear regular uniforms immediately upon returning from CONLV unless they have a special recommendation or diagnosis from a medical officer. In the Marine Corps, the timing of returning to regular wear is at the discretion of the commanding officer.⁴⁵⁷

While updates to individual garments and certain uniforms are important milestones of progress, clear and comprehensive guidance across the Military Services is needed. Outdated uniform items such as maternity tunics should be prioritized for immediate phaseout. All maternity uniforms, including the various garments for combat, physical training, service, and dress items, should be updated to project a professional, Service-specific appearance akin to their equivalent nonmaternity uniform. Uniforms should be designed to provide a comfortable and functional fit; uniforms should also be adjustable to avoid a too-loose appearance early in pregnancy while still allowing ease of movement in the final trimester.



Lt Col Anderson is pictured wearing the Air Force's prototype maternity Service dress wrap (photo provided to DACOWITS)

Summary

Pregnant servicewomen should be afforded professional, modern, and functional maternity uniforms to wear during and after their pregnancy. While the Military Services have made some recent progress toward updating maternity uniforms, pregnant servicewomen still await a full and complete modernization and redesign effort of all maternity uniforms. Outdated uniforms distract and isolate pregnant servicewomen while diminishing the uniform's functional capabilities, comfort, and overall fit. DACOWITS has reiterated its concerns about maternity uniforms in its 2016 and 2019 reports. This year, the Committee recommends the SecDef direct the Military Services to update maternity uniforms to present a professional, modern appearance while providing functionality, comfort, and ease of movement for the wearers.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to closely monitor Service implementation of DTM 23-001, Expansion of the Military Parental Leave Program, to ensure timely issuance of final policy directives, consistency of key policy elements and processes across the Services (e.g., disapproval authorities and appeals, distinction between maternity convalescent and parental leave), and proper implementation of legislative intent.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct that only a senior Service leader (first O-6 in the chain of command) be authorized to disapprove Service members' parental leave requests for incremental or single block parental leave to ensure reasonableness of disapproval actions and consistency of policy application across the Military Services.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to routinely survey Service members to assess whether those eligible for parental leave have been treated equitably by their chain of command and were not unreasonably denied or discouraged from taking their full parental leave entitlements.

Synopsis

DACOWITS applauds the recent expansion of paid parental leave for both birth and nonbirth parents to 12 weeks. The Committee seeks to ensure that parental leave benefits are being provided consistently and equitably to all Service members and that Service members feel comfortable taking the full amount of leave allotted to them if desired. Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups reported facing pressure from their units to forgo some or all of their parental leave benefit or take incremental leave as opposed to block leave. Implementation of expanded parental leave should be closely monitored and routinely assessed by DoD to ensure the Military Services uphold the legislative intent that Service members are being authorized to fully maximize use of this benefit. DoD should also direct the Military Services to place disapproval authority with the first O-6 in a Service member's chain of command to emphasize the importance of affording parental leave to Service members and denying only when necessary or in limited, well-substantiated cases.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Written responses from the Military Services on implementation of the MOMS Leave Act and the expansion of the MPLP (March 2023, RFI 12)⁴⁵⁸

- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)⁴⁵⁹

The Committee commends recent legislative changes expanding the length of paid parental leave for Service members and their families. Military service is demanding, and Service members have consistently reported time away from their families adds additional strain. Parental leave and balancing military and family obligations are a particularly crucial issue for servicewomen, who show lower retention rates compared with their male counterparts. DACOWITS made its first recommendation related to family leave policies in 1988, suggesting servicewomen should be authorized 6 weeks of nonchargeable postpartum CONLV.⁴⁶⁰

More recently, the Committee made recommendations regarding flexible leave policies for primary and secondary caregivers in 2017,⁴⁶¹ 2018,⁴⁶² and 2020.⁴⁶³ In 2020, the Committee recommended the elimination of barriers in the designation of primary and secondary caregivers to provide families greater mobility with caregiver decisions and recommended DoD consider longer term sabbatical-type options for Service members to care for young children.⁴⁶⁴

The Committee remains committed to ensuring that birthing and nonbirthing parents receive the leave they need to bond with and care for new children and that servicewomen especially have options to better balance their military careers and family life. The reasoning supporting DACOWITS' recommendations on parental leave follows.

Expanded MPLP

The FY22 NDAA,⁴⁶⁵ implemented by DTM 23-001,⁴⁶⁶ enacted the expanded MPLP, which guarantees 12 weeks of paid family leave for Active Duty birth parents and nonbirth parents and for adoption and long-term foster care placement. This legislation effectively eliminated previous policy distinctions between primary and secondary caregivers by affording both the birthing and nonbirthing parent 12 weeks of paid leave. As of February 2023, all Military Services have issued initial MPLP implementation guidance and directives pending full update of Service regulations.^{467, 468, 469, 470}

Provisions in the FY21 NDAA also established a maternity leave entitlement for servicewomen in the Reserve Component to provide parity with Active Duty servicewomen's maternity benefits and to ensure they earn creditable service time during the period of maternity leave.⁴⁷¹ This legislation was implemented by DTM 22-004, Reserve Component Maternity Leave Program (RCMP), effective June 9, 2022.⁴⁷²

This DTM provides drill-status birth parents excused absences with pay and retirement points for 12-unit training assemblies, the equivalent of 3 monthly weekend drills, within 12 months of a qualified birth. Nonbirth parents are not eligible for RCMP or any military parental leave. The program is in effect across all Military Service Reserve Components, including the Air National Guard and Army National Guard.⁴⁷³ Notably, the Coast Guard was the first Service to issue guidance, in April 2022, before DoD issued its June 2022 implementation directive.⁴⁷⁴

Implementation of MPLP

DTM 23-001 on MPLP specifies Service members may request to take their 12-week parental leave in one continuous period or increments of at least 7 days. At this time, almost all the Services specify parental leave will be approved in at least one single block; however, the Navy’s interim guidance did not explicitly state that block leave would be automatically approved, and the Army’s guidance suggests block leave can be disapproved for nonbirth parents. The Military Services differ in what command level must review a unit commander’s disapproval of Service member requests for incremental parental leave periods (see Table 5.2).^{475, 476, 477, 478}

The Committee believes incremental leave is an especially important entitlement because it affords birth- and nonbirth parents the flexibility to design care schedules around the other parent’s needs to ensure appropriate child care is available throughout parental leave. It also enables Service members to schedule their parental leave around important unit training, TDY, or mission events, benefiting both the Service member’s unit and the Service member, a particularly valuable option for dual-military couples. Incremental leave can also afford servicewomen the opportunity to attend important occupational or professional education courses that can help minimize the career impact of the pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Most servicewomen are keenly aware of the mission impact their maternity CONLV imposes on their units and may wish to break up their leave to assist the unit for important events. Incremental leave provides Service members flexibility and may reduce the guilt they feel for the common perception that they are a “burden” on the unit.⁴⁷⁹

Table 5.2. Overview of Key Differences in Military Services’ Implementation of MPLP

Military Service	Approval Authority Parental Leave	Disapproval Authority: Single Block Parental Leave	Disapproval Authority: Incremental Parental Leave	Appeal Process
Army ⁴⁸⁰	Unit commander	Only the first general officer in a Soldier’s chain of command may disapprove a request for parental leave ⁴⁸¹	Only the first general officer in a Soldier’s chain of command may disapprove a request for parental leave ⁴⁸²	Automatic escalation of parental leave request upon denial ⁴⁸³
Navy ⁴⁸⁴	Leave approvers	Not addressed	Commanding officer	Member may appeal disapproval of incremental leave to the Immediate Superior in Command of their respective unit
Marine Corps ^{485, 486}	Unit commander	Not addressed	May disapprove incremental leave requests for operational reasons	Member may appeal disapprovals through “authorized channels”

Military Service	Approval Authority Parental Leave	Disapproval Authority: Single Block Parental Leave	Disapproval Authority: Incremental Parental Leave	Appeal Process
Air Force and Space Force ⁴⁸⁷	Unit commander	May not disapprove	Unit commander	Member may appeal disapproval of incremental leave request to the next level in the chain of command

Note: All Service issuances except the Navy’s Naval Administrative (NAVADMIN) clearly specify a single continuous parental leave period request will or shall be approved; the NAVADMIN does not specify it must be approved, just that it is authorized.

The new 12-week parental leave entitlement is a longer period than previously authorized and expands eligibility to nonbirthing parents. It may take time before this longer parental leave benefit becomes a culturally accepted norm, especially for nonbirth parents. To encourage DoD and Service leader support for parental leave and to help ensure Service members receive their full requested leave entitlement, the Committee recommends the Military Services implement automatic appeal processes for denied parental leave and require minimum O-6 level disapproval authority to help forge a culture more supportive of parental leave.

Service Members Hesitant to Take Full Parental Leave

DACOWITS feels it is imperative Service members are treated equitably and have leadership support to take their full amount of parental leave, if desired, either in one continuous block or in increments when possible. However, DACOWITS heard through its 2023 focus groups that Service members, particularly men, may face unit-level pressure to forgo some or all of their parental leave benefit or take incremental leave as opposed to block leave.⁴⁸⁸ DACOWITS’ focus groups occurred in April and May 2023, after the recent implementation of these new parental leave policies. The expanded MPLP provided a significant expansion of leave time, and there appears to be cultural resistance to lengthy parental leave for nonbirth parents. Service members, both men and women, described pushback at the unit level related to the expanded parental leave policies.⁴⁸⁹

Men are receiving more pressure than women. Women are able to take leave with less issue, take the full block of leave. I’ve seen ... I follow [Service] Reddit. I see the unfiltered commenting on there. There are pushes towards men to take a week of block leave here or there instead of being able to let them take the block where they really need to have another supportive parent there. I had a C-section. I am so glad I had my husband for the 21 days I had him. It would have been lovely to have him for 3 months. Units are pushing back on males. Someone was like, “You need to come back; you can [take] your week of leave another time; you need to come back earlier.” It’s the culture. There needs to be stronger enforcements that you can take the block. But what works for your unit, you can take it, but you have to make sure you are playing within your unit.

—Female Officer

Female Officer number 1: This is from the top three [leaders] in the command saying, “You will not progress if you take all your benefits.”

Female Officer number 2: Correct. The message is, “We will meet the policy, but you will have consequences on the back end.”

—Female Officers

My thoughts on the policy change ... when my last unit officer, who was a [unit leadership position], he was going through something like that. He had his child, and the policy just went into effect. It was a very rough time because there were a lot of things going on. They were kind of worried because it was 90 days, worried about how we were going to be able to function without him being there. We made it, but there was a stigma of “I’m going to be gone for 3 months.” We have this additional workload. It’s good you can be with your wife and child for 90 days. But there’s definitely a stigma for that and for being gone that long if it’s during [high operational tempo] cycle.

—Enlisted Man

Yeah, my husband is senior Captain, and if he takes all 3 months ... he feels like he can’t do it because he is the most qualified in his unit, so it’s like, if you do it, you won’t progress, or you feel like you can’t.

—Female Officer

It’s great for the family member that gave birth, but it’s a long time. Right now, it’s tricky the way retention and manning is. I just lost three of my [Service members] for 4 months. So, that’s 30 percent of my workforce. It’s good for them, but how do I fill those gaps? Usually, it’s me filling those gaps.

—Enlisted Man

Service members described other pressures and stigmas related to maternity CONLV and parental leave that may affect their decisions on whether they take the full amount of leave. These included feeling as though they were a burden on their unit or concerns that parental leave would leave gaps in their performance evaluations, which would affect their promotions:⁴⁹⁰

What does everyone say? “Aw man, we are all screwed now because this person is leaving; they will be gone for X months. You are hurting the unit.” If it’s not said out loud, someone is thinking it nearby. You can feel the animosity of how you are inconveniencing the unit because you are trying to have a family and a life. ... I want a family. I am not going to wait until I am 45 to have a child. I have seen that with friends of mine: “I can’t slow down my career, and I can’t get pregnant.” But now they are 45, and they can’t have a kid. They lost out on something they desperately wanted in life because the [Service] says it’s not okay to hurt the [Service]. It’s [expletive].

—Female Officer

It is [career field]-specific because if you're flying or you're a [leadership position] and your community is already hurting, you have to consider scheduling, and so they do degrade what the [unit] is able to do and put more of a burden on people that aren't pregnant. So, whether we can create a policy where we can backfill for 6 months, unfortunately in some cases, they [pregnant Service members] place a bigger burden.

—Female Officer

Has anyone here been on a promotion or selection board? (No one raises their hand.) I haven't either, but I don't know if the board knows if a [Service member] was out on maternity, but if they can recognize that, that would be beneficial. If they see a gap in someone's record, that could impact their career. I don't know if they see it, but that is what I heard during my time in service.

—Male Officer

When it comes to promotions and promotion boards and having [specialty] leadership, you have to rack and stack people for promotion. Just yesterday, we had two people that were very similar, and because one was pregnant, we couldn't consider the time that they had been out due to the pregnancy. I think that could affect who gets ranked as higher or lower, so it can definitely impact the way leadership recommends promotions.

—Female Officer

I don't think it affects it negatively too much, but I know the time away on leave or when having the baby, they can miss a lot of time when qualifications can be put in, or they can strengthen their evaluation. So, they could lose those opportunities. There are extra things they can do, but as far as leadership getting eyes on them and wanting to rank them higher, it might be hard.

—Enlisted Man

Similarly, 23 percent of Army Special Forces Soldiers reported parental leave is a challenge because of factors such as guilt or burdening the unit and its impact on evaluations.⁴⁹¹ DACOWITS recommends the DoD take proactive action to assess implementation of this new policy by routinely surveying Service members to capture whether they are treated equitably by their leaders and are not unreasonably denied or dissuaded from using their full parental leave entitlements. This information could be obtained through existing DoD surveys, informal feedback mechanisms (e.g., relevant social media sites, media articles), and other processes. Services with WIT-type or comparable structures could also provide helpful feedback to the DoD on how new parental leave policies are being implemented on the ground.

Summary

The Committee commends the actions of both Congress and the DoD for their work in expanding parental leave in the military to 12 weeks for both birth parents and nonbirth parents. The additional parental leave time and scheduling flexibility options, such as incremental leave options, are a welcome accommodation for the immensely taxing, tiring,

and stressful situation that parents find themselves in after the birth or adoption of a child, particularly in the context of military service demands. The expanded parental leave period and option for incremental scheduling will significantly enhance the opportunity for parent-child bonding and afford parents more time to find suitable child care.

The Committee understands these reforms impose a greater scheduling and planning burden on Service units that may already be understaffed, but DACOWITS believes expanded parental leave will result in increased service satisfaction and retention by a segment of the workforce that may otherwise be more likely to separate from the military. The Committee has listened to Service members describe the challenges of having a family and a military career for decades, with many declaring that it is just “too hard,” forcing a member to choose between separation or career.

With the recruitment and retention challenges facing today’s military, the Committee believes the expansion of parental leave is a step in the right direction to help improve retention and potentially recruitment if recruits have concerns about creating and maintaining a family in the military. To ensure the most effective parental leave program, one that will aid in both recruiting and retaining a strong and growing women’s workforce and demonstrate a commitment to family support, the SecDef should (1) ensure timely and consistent implementation of MPLP across the Military Services, (2) direct that only a senior Service leader (first O-6 in the chain of command) can disapprove parental leave requests, and (3) routinely survey Service members to ensure they are treated equitably and not unreasonably denied or discouraged from taking their full MPLP entitlements.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Defense Health Agency to further study and take proactive action to improve quality of and access to care for servicewomen’s unique reproductive healthcare needs (e.g., fertility, assisted reproductive technology, pregnancy, depression) that could adversely impact their well-being, readiness, and retention.

Synopsis

Supporting the reproductive healthcare needs of servicewomen is an essential aspect of maintaining force readiness and retaining women in the military. Limited research exists on the reproductive healthcare needs and challenges of servicewomen. The 2020 “Women’s Reproductive Health Survey (WRHS) of Active Duty Service Members” was the first DoD-wide survey of servicewomen in more than 20 years and findings on contraceptive use, pregnancy, and infertility indicate more research is warranted. Servicewomen in DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups reported significant barriers to accessing basic reproductive healthcare services, including maternity care, obstetric and gynecological services, and fertility care. Further study and action to improve access and quality of care are essential to improve servicewomen’s well-being, readiness, and retention.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the DHA on Assisted Reproductive Services (December 2022, RFI 8)⁴⁹²
- A briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs on the Department's response to the Supreme Court's ruling on *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, Service members' access to noncovered reproductive healthcare, and findings from the 2022 WRHS conducted by the RAND Corporation (March 2023, RFI 10)⁴⁹³
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)⁴⁹⁴

DACOWITS has issued past recommendations related to reproductive healthcare in the military, including a continuing concern in 2012 about expanding reproductive healthcare availability and a continuing concern in 2014 about access barriers to family planning, contraception, and general reproductive healthcare. The reasoning supporting the Committee's 2023 recommendation on women's unique reproductive health follows.

Limited Studies on Reproductive Healthcare for Servicewomen

As a result of the FY17 NDAA, DoD conducted a survey of Active Duty Service members' experiences with reproductive healthcare services, including access to counseling and contraception.⁴⁹⁵ The 2020 WRHS of Active Duty Service Members, developed and administered by the RAND Corporation, was the first DoD-wide survey of servicewomen in more than 20 years and included questions on contraceptive use and preferences, pregnancy, and infertility.⁴⁹⁶ The RAND Corporation's report on WRHS findings emphasized the connection between maintaining force readiness and supporting healthcare needs of Active Duty servicewomen. At a March 2023 Committee briefing, DoD indicated the RAND Corporation will also be conducting family planning focus groups in late 2023 or early 2024 to further explore WRHS findings.⁴⁹⁷

In 2019, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs directed the Defense Health Board (DHB) to recommend ways to expand research on Active Duty servicewomen's healthcare and address healthcare access and quality. Among the goals of the DHB's subsequent 2020 report was to "determine how the DoD should improve research, quality of care, and access to health services for Active Duty women, while maintaining a focus on readiness." The report identified the need for DoD to further study healthcare issues specific to servicewomen's medical readiness, including reproductive health issues such as unplanned pregnancies.⁴⁹⁸

DACOWITS concurs and recommends the DoD further study servicewomen’s reproductive healthcare issues and experiences.

Gaps in Access to and Quality of Reproductive Healthcare for Servicewomen

Potential benefits of comprehensive reproductive healthcare include improved readiness and retention outcomes and more control over family planning for Service members. However, gaps persist in access to reproductive healthcare that may have adverse consequences for military service and readiness, particularly related to access to contraception, general OBGYN care, pregnancy and postpartum care, and fertility care and ART.^{499, 500} During DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups, servicewomen identified limited access to reproductive health services among the factors that might discourage Service members, particularly servicewomen, from staying in the military beyond their service obligation.⁵⁰¹

Contraception

A goal of the 2020 DHB report was to “evaluate access to reproductive health services, including preventive care, for Active Duty women throughout the deployment cycle.”⁵⁰² The study found the unintended pregnancy rate among Active Duty servicewomen was 50 percent higher than the unintended pregnancy rate among civilian women and recommended increased education for Service members to promote “knowledge [of] and access to contraception options.”⁵⁰³

A majority of servicewomen who had an unintended pregnancy were not using contraception, and many were using less effective means or using contraception improperly.⁵⁰⁴ Although DoD is required and does provide comprehensive contraception counseling and benefits to Service members, gaps persist with contraceptive counseling. For example, the 2020 DHB report identifies differences in the contraceptive counseling and access for recruits in basic training across the Military Services (see Table 5.3).⁵⁰⁵

Table 5.3. Basic Training Contraceptive Education and Access Policies, by Military Service

Contraceptive Education and Access Policy	Army	Air Force and Space Force	Navy	Marine Corps
Contraceptive education is part of standard basic training curriculum	Yes	No	Yes	No
Tiered education emphasizes the most effective methods	No	Yes	Yes	No
Contraceptive-specific appointments are available outside of sick call	No	Yes	Yes	No
All LARC methods available during basic training	Yes	No	Yes	No
Availability of LARC methods is restricted	No	Yes	No	Yes

Contraceptive Education and Access Policy	Army	Air Force and Space Force	Navy	Marine Corps
LARC methods available without a referral to an outside provider	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Same-day insertion of LARC methods is available	No	No	Yes	No

Note: LARC = long-acting reversible contraceptive
Source: Defense Health Board, 2020506

The 2023 Army SOCOM report “Breaking Barriers: Women in Army Special Operations” found that access to contraceptives among female Soldiers in ARSOF units was limited due to supervisor perceptions of promiscuity, provider religious beliefs, lack of Service member awareness of installation contraceptive clinics and options, and lack of appropriate care for Service members after obtaining intrauterine devices (IUDs). One junior enlisted Soldier reported having her mother mail birth control because “she didn’t know where to go and it was easier that way.”⁵⁰⁷

An enlisted male Service member from the DACOWITS 2023 focus groups felt there needed to be more communication about the availability of contraceptives: “The majority of cases I’ve seen have been unplanned pregnancies at a lower rank. There needs to be a clear line of communication that Service members have available options for prevention if necessary, anything in that area.”⁵⁰⁸

OBGYN Care

In recent findings from DACOWITS and ARSOF focus groups, servicewomen reported difficulty in accessing women-specific healthcare, which many noted is considered “specialty care.”⁵⁰⁹ ⁵¹⁰ ARSOF focus group participants had difficulty in obtaining referrals and lacked awareness of individual installations’ processes for referrals, which vary, for female-specific healthcare.⁵¹¹ Service members in DACOWITS focus groups expressed similar frustrations and concerns with accessing OBGYN care.⁵¹²

I would like to 2nd, 3rd, and 17th that women’s health is not specialty care! Anything involving women’s health is astronomically difficult [to schedule appointments and be seen for care], and it’s not different. It’s just care.

—Enlisted Woman

The fact that you can’t see OBs unless you’re pregnant is an issue. They don’t let us see a normal OBGYN. A lady got mad at me for asking for an exam after my checkup appointment. ... It’s every 3 years, and if you ask for more, they get mad.

—Female Officer

There’s no women’s health clinic on base ...

—Female Officer

OBGYN health for females—they have had to wait. For an OB [obstetrician] appointment, there were shortages on base, so they have to get a referral to off-base clinics. That's a uniquely female problem. In TRICARE there are not enough specialists. The [Service] and [Service] are not having an issue adequately staffing their clinics. ...

—Male Officer

Pregnancy and Postpartum Care

Problem pregnancies and negative pregnancy outcomes (e.g., miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, depression) impact quality of life, motivation, job performance and satisfaction, recruitment, and retention. The RAND Corporation's 2020 WRHS found more than half of Active Duty servicewomen pregnant in the previous year experienced perinatal depression.⁵¹³ Some DACOWITS focus group participants shared difficulties accessing the care they needed during their pregnancies:⁵¹⁴

Here, there was no military fetal healthcare. There is no maternity care in [installation]. My healthcare for my pregnancy was at another base.

—Female Officer

I think they need to prioritize prenatal care. At my last base, it was 1.5 hours away, and I didn't have those options (to be seen by an off-base provider).

—Enlisted Woman

More specialized training for physical therapists, nutritionists—not dietitians, and physician assistants assigned to clinics. There is something related to the physiology of a woman's body for prepregnancy and post-, in addition to those that don't have kids. ... And as I get closer to the menopause age, I need assistance to continue to maintain that strength and endurance. It looks different in different aspects of ages. I come from a family that is heavy weighted and big hips. I need experts to guide and coach what is good for my body type; that can help with the retention and recruitment aspects you are asking about. Someone who wants to stay longer to have kids but needs assistance for whatever is going on with their bodies and lives.

—Female Officer

Access to postpartum care may also be limited for some servicewomen. ARSOF focus group participants reported typically receiving one postpartum checkup visit and difficulty maintaining their specialty referral when postpartum issues arose.⁵¹⁵

Fertility and ART

TRICARE covers medically necessary ART combined with coital—but not artificial—insemination, some diagnostic services, and further care if infertility is related to service. Findings from DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups show Service members' need and desire for assistance with ART. While the military provides assistance for women with fertility problems

resulting from military service, servicewomen may also have needs for ART resulting from other military circumstances that may have affected their ability to conceive naturally.⁵¹⁶

To maintain steady career progression, servicewomen may defer starting a family until later in their career, which may result in higher risk pregnancy and/or lower fertility. TRICARE does not cover expensive in vitro fertilization (IVF) and cryopreservation procedures, unless rendered necessary due to “specific duty exposures,” further restricting access to reproductive healthcare that may encourage servicewomen to remain in the service and maintain their readiness.⁵¹⁷

DACOWITS focus group participants expressed a desire for better fertility care and ART options for Service members. They recommended better support for women’s reproductive health issues, including expanded financial support for fertility challenges:⁵¹⁸

[I would like] a program that makes it easier for females who want family someday but haven’t been proposed to or haven’t tried to have children for other reasons, to help them store their eggs. Then I don’t have to stress about my age or marital status. Then I can store my eggs, and when the time is right, they’re available. Maybe it’s closer to when I’m 40, but that’s not feasible now.

—Female Officer

For me and my wife when we’re trying to have kids, we have to go through IVF. The [Service] does not cover IVF. It’s harder for us to think about kids because it’s \$30K for IVF, so that’s definitely a factor [for retention].

—Enlisted Woman

Improvement to the family planning process. You shouldn’t have to fit it into a timeline. I’m career-oriented, so I asked my husband about freezing my eggs. So, then we did three tours, came back to [installation], and I said I’ll get advice from someone that isn’t a [occupational specialty] doctor, and they said you have to be 35 or try for a year continuously before you can even talk about freezing your eggs. I told her we’re in a long-term relationship and we’re dual-military, and we’re not going to have bad timing to make biology happen.

—Female Officer

Also covering reproductive healthcare. TRICARE does cover some but continuing to advocate for TRICARE coverage. Especially for women who put off having a family when they’re younger because they want to prove themselves, but when they do get to that point, at the O5 and O6 level, when they want to have a family, it backfires.

—Female Officer

Summary

DACOWITS recommends DoD conduct further study on servicewomen’s reproductive health and needs and take proactive action to improve access to and quality of such care. The

2020 WRHS was the first DoD-wide survey of servicewomen in more than 20 years. It made clear that additional research is needed to comprehensively understand servicewomen's reproductive healthcare needs and gaps.

Evidence from recent DACOWITS and Military Service data collection efforts reflects gaps in servicewomen's access to and quality of reproductive healthcare, especially contraception, general OBGYN care for pregnant and nonpregnant servicewomen, postpartum care, and fertility care and ART. Limited reproductive healthcare access was among the factors Service members felt might discourage women from joining the military or staying beyond their service obligation. Lack of adequate reproductive healthcare may contribute to loss of motivation, reduction of productivity, health and well-being impacts, diminished quality of life, and family problems and, overall, may negatively impact the Military Services' readiness, all of which affect military retention.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to review, and revise as needed, DoD and Military Services' parental leave and operational deferment policies to ensure they do not adversely impact servicewomen's career progression, including training, professional education opportunities, promotions, and performance evaluations.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct a study of the feasibility of and the implementing actions necessary to establish programs enabling servicewomen to (1) transfer from the Active to Reserve Component for a temporary period and (2) elect a later promotion year group to recover lost training, education, or operational opportunities resulting from pregnancy duty reassignments, operational deferments, and maternity convalescent and parental leave absences.

Synopsis

Service members continue to report pregnancy negatively affects a servicewoman's career trajectory. In particular, findings from DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups noted three major areas that present challenges related to pregnancy and career progression: (1) promotion and career advancement; (2) removal from key roles, leadership opportunities, and advanced training; and (3) physical fitness test requirements for schools and training. Lost time and work experience from pregnancy and the postpartum period compound, affecting servicewomen's evaluations and promotion potential, leaving women at a disadvantage relative to their male peers. DACOWITS recommends the SecDef take more proactive action to identify and remove unnecessary career barriers and employ innovative solutions to

ensure servicewomen's careers are not impacted as a result of a temporary medical condition, such as pregnancy.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and National Guard on initiatives and actions, anticipated or taken, following the SecDef's November 2020 memo "Career Enhancement of Pregnancy U.S. Service Members" (September 2022, RFI 11)⁵¹⁹
- Written responses from the Military Services and National Guard providing information on DoD's pregnancy discrimination policy and policies related to female cadets or midshipmen at the MSAs who become pregnant (September 2022, RFI 13)⁵²⁰
- Written responses from the Military Services and National Guard on work reassignments for pregnant servicewomen, pregnancy and postpartum physical fitness testing requirements, and postpartum operational deferment (September 2022, RFI 14)⁵²¹
- A literature review from the research contractor on pregnancy and parental status discrimination, including career impacts and mitigation strategies (September 2022, RFI 16)⁵²²
- Briefings from the Military Services on policies and procedures to prevent conscious and unconscious bias within the promotion processes, including the removal of gender-specific information in promotion packages, and recent data or trends following these changes (December 2022, RFI 9)⁵²³
- Written responses from the Military Services on documentation and guidance related to career progression and promotion for servicewomen who have given birth (June 2023, RFI 8)⁵²⁴
- Written response from the Military Services on barriers, prohibitions, or other restrictions preventing pregnant or postpartum servicewomen from attending professional military education schools (September 2023, RFI 7)⁵²⁵
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)⁵²⁶

The fair and equitable treatment of pregnant servicewomen has been a longstanding concern for DACOWITS. One of the Committee's earliest recommendations regarding career progression and pregnancy was in 1967 and 1968 when DACOWITS made recommendations about involuntary separation due to pregnancy.⁵²⁷ More recently, in 2019, the Committee recommended the Military Services should develop and implement policies to ensure a servicewoman's career is not negatively affected as a result of pregnancy.⁵²⁸ Since then, the

DoD updated its discrimination policy in 2020 to explicitly include pregnancy as a prohibited form of discrimination.⁵²⁹

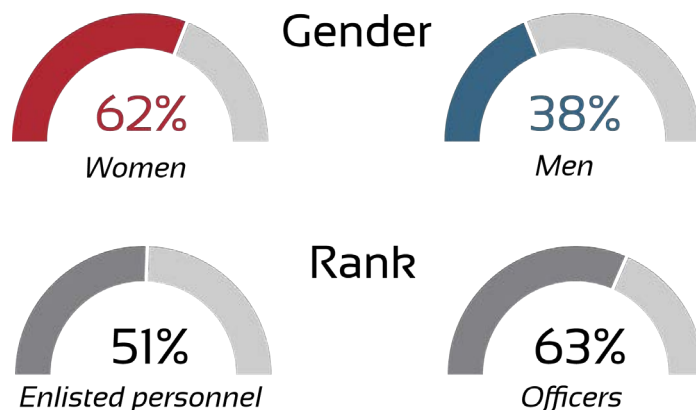
Service members continue to report that pregnancy negatively affects a servicewoman's career trajectory, including short-term consequences for evaluation reports and long-term ramifications on promotion, leadership roles, and key opportunities. DACOWITS continues to be concerned about servicewomen's challenges in balancing career and pregnancy and seeks to identify how the Military Services can mitigate the difficulties encountered without sacrificing mission readiness. The reasoning supporting DACOWITS' 2023 recommendations on pregnancy and career barriers follows.

Pregnancy and Its Impact on Servicewomen's Career Progression

Pregnant servicewomen have long encountered obstacles toward their career progression. Until 1976, servicewomen who became pregnant or gave birth while serving could be discharged from the military.^{530, 531} Today, women routinely serve during pregnancy, and most Service members report knowing someone who has been pregnant during their military service.⁵³² The DoD recently updated its discrimination policy (DoDI 1350.02) to include pregnancy as a form of prohibited discrimination.^{533, 534}

While significant progress has been made with legal protections, pregnant servicewomen still report encountering obstacles and setbacks toward their career progression and an overall stigma of pregnancy in the military. In DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups, participants were asked to rate their agreement with the following statement: "Women in my Service who become pregnant are more likely to encounter obstacles toward advancing their career." More than half of participants (63 percent) agreed or strongly agreed that servicewomen who become pregnant would encounter obstacles toward advancing their career. Women were more likely than men and enlisted personnel were more likely than officers to agree or strongly agree (see Figure 5.1).⁵³⁵

Figure 5.1. Proportion of Participants by Gender and Rank Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That Women in Their Service Who Become Pregnant Are More Likely to Encounter Obstacles Toward Career Advancement



Note: Enlisted personnel includes E1–E6. Officers include W01–W06 and O1–O4 and higher.

Source: DACOWITS 2023 Focus Group Report⁵³⁶

In both DACOWITS' 2019 and 2023 focus groups, Service members shared how pregnancy can hinder servicewomen's career progression during the pregnancy, the postpartum period, and beyond:^{537, 538}

In [my Service], there are three genders: men, women who never have children, and women who have children. I don't mean it in that way, but I mean it in a way that you won't be successful if you have children. Our commander has no children, no spouse. She goes home to an empty house every night. There's something to be said for that.

—Female Officer (2023)

I got pregnant when I was a [rank] ... [my unit] hated me. They were mad I got 3 months of maternity leave. They thought they were doing all the hard work while I was sitting at a desk all day ... no one would help me when I got back. ... I think about it now. If I want to have another kid, I'm scared it will set me back in my career, and I'm afraid the [unit] will hate me again. It makes you feel guilty about wanting to have a family.

—Enlisted woman (2019)

Pregnancy could affect a servicewoman's career because it becomes a roadblock. They view it as a roadblock instead of trying to find ways to accommodate someone who is pregnant. They will wait until you have your baby; they don't see the potential in them being pregnant or let them have an opportunity to figure things out postpartum.

—Enlisted Man (2023)

I did get pregnant, I did. ... I decided to have an abortion (participant starts crying); I did it out of fear of not being able to move forward with my career because I did advance at a fairly swift pace compared to the average [Service member] coming up in the [Service]. I didn't want to get pregnant and then go on a pregnancy tour and then get held back 2 to 3 years from pursuing the ultimate goal for my career in the military.

—Enlisted Woman (2023)

[Pregnant Service members] are viewed as dead weight, [and] from the leadership level, too. ... It can be an issue because they try to make them feel [bad] for being pregnant or unable to do certain things. That's been my experience. ...

—Enlisted man (2019)

In particular, Service members noted three major areas of challenge related to pregnancy and career progression: (1) promotion and career advancement, (2) removal from key roles, leadership opportunities and advanced training, and (3) physical fitness test requirements for schools and training.

Promotion and Career Advancement

Service members describe how a pregnant servicewoman's absence and time away from her occupational specialty during pregnancy and the postpartum period (due to convalescent and parental leave) can negatively affect her performance evaluation and future promotions.⁵³⁹ Pregnant servicewomen have less observable time during an evaluation

period or may be delayed in completing qualifications or other requirements, leading them to fall behind their peers or feel as though they should return to work earlier.^{540, 541, 542} Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups shared their perspectives and experiences:⁵⁴³

I had a fantastic Sergeant, and when she came back from maternity leave, I only had 4 months to evaluate her. I had to mark her lower compared to everyone else because I only had that time to evaluate her.

—Male Officer

When it comes to promotions and promotion boards and having [specialty] leadership, you have to rack and stack people for promotion. Just yesterday, we had two people that were very similar, and because one was pregnant, we couldn't consider the time that they had been out due to the pregnancy. I think that could affect who gets ranked as higher or lower, so it can definitely impact the way leadership recommends promotions.

—Female Officer

I know the time away on leave or when having the baby, they can miss a lot of time when qualifications can be put in, or they can strengthen their evaluation. So, they could lose those opportunities. There are extra things they can do, but as far as leadership getting eyes on them and wanting to rank them higher, it might be hard.

—Enlisted Man

As a senior NCO, I would say it's absolutely detrimental [to become pregnant at this rank]. At least that's the way it feels.

—Enlisted Woman

When you're in a career field where the numbers of flight-hours have effects on your career. ... There is a time to be pregnant, but it will still delay things. If you accidentally get pregnant, you're toast.

—Male Officer

The first tour is probably the worst time, though, if there was a worst time because that's when you are trying to establish yourself and get all the qualification you can in and you're trying to progress.

—Female Officer

A 2019 RAND Corporation report on barriers to female retention in the Coast Guard also highlighted similar issues for women in the Coast Guard. A female Coast Guardsman shared the following:⁵⁴⁴

I have three months in my job before I gave birth. I then had zero, nothing to put on my Officer Evaluation Report (OER) from being gone three months, and the type of work I'm doing now takes nine months to get products out, so I have nothing on my OER except collaterals. Recovering from that is impossible.

Women report feeling pressure to have children within a certain timeframe; otherwise, they fear completely derailing their military careers.^{545, 546} One female Coast Guardsman stated she was advised to pick a time window to have children that is ideal for her career progression because, “if you have a kid outside this gap, you probably won’t stay in the Coast Guard very long.”⁵⁴⁷ Similarly, a 2018 RAND Corporation report on female officer retention in the Air Force found women felt they needed to “program” their pregnancies at specific times to minimize the inevitable negative effects of pregnancy on their careers.⁵⁴⁸ Some female officers did not feel comfortable discussing these family planning issues in career discussions with their command leaders for fear of stigma or judgment.⁵⁴⁹

Removal From Key Roles, Leadership Opportunities, and Advanced Training

Service members in more than half of DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups provided examples of how pregnant servicewomen were removed from their current job role or were prevented from pursuing advanced training or other opportunities due to their pregnancy. Women were more likely than men to provide this response, and female officers raised this concern more frequently than female enlisted personnel:⁵⁵⁰

I was up for a special board to go to school, and I was excited when I got in; it’s a big deal because not everyone gets selected. The next day after I got selected, they sent me an email and said that I was an alternate and not a primary and that the list was wrong and that “we didn’t realize you were pregnant,” so they cut me because I was pregnant. I would have had to do a year of school and would have had plenty of time to recover before I went to a leadership role, but I was cut because I was pregnant.

—Female Officer

When I was a Private, we had a team leader, and she was a very competent, very good leader. When she became pregnant and the chain of command was aware, they moved her out of her leadership position and put her at staff. Not because she couldn’t lead or be able to do simple tasks but supervising the [unit], I’m guessing, they were scared of something happening to her. They wanted to protect her. It could have hindered her from getting that experience time while she was able and capable before she took time away from the unit.

—Enlisted Man

They lose opportunities to go to school and to go to MOS schools. I know a woman who just got pregnant, and she was a superstar [at physical fitness], and now she’s just a pregnant [Service member]. It’s hard for junior women, and I just see them getting out because they don’t want to deal with it.

—Female Officer

When I was pregnant, ... I was supposed to go to this unit, and I got surprised and told that I was going to [a different type of unit], which was a step backwards [for my career]. Afterwards, my commander told me that they really thought that job was going to be a great job for my new timeline. I think it came from the goodness of his heart, but it still felt like a jab. I felt like I was looked at differently for being a new mom.

—Female Officer

I've seen it multiple times in the three flying units I've been in. They pull you out of the cockpit earlier because they don't want to deal with the risk. They'll just pull you from school.

—Female Officer

Similarly, two female Soldiers from the 2023 “Women in ARSOF” report shared their experiences being removed from or not considered for leadership positions and advanced training because of their pregnancy or parental status:⁵⁵¹

When I had my last child, I was on orders to come to this unit. I already knew that I was coming to be the XO [Battalion Executive Officer], but when I arrived I was told that the leadership was afraid of my emotions and I was moved to a non-KD [key developmental] position in the S3.

—Female Field Grade Officer

Before having my child I was doing very well and my career was progressing. After I had a child, it was the end of my career. Even though it's been over two years, since then I've never been allowed to go to schools, TDY, or deployments even though I have a family care plan.

—Female Junior Noncommissioned Officer

The 2018 RAND Corporation report on female officer retention in the Air Force characterized these types of instances as “perceived pregnancy discrimination.” Focus group participants described examples such as “moving one pregnant female officer out of a leadership position because she was told she would miss too much work, and another not receiving a career-enhancing assignment when the issue of having children came up in the interview for the position.”⁵⁵²

Physical Fitness Test Requirements for Schools and Training

Service members in some of DACOWITS’ 2023 focus groups described how their Service’s fitness and body composition standards affected servicewomen’s career progression during pregnancy and the postpartum period. They mentioned how the use of fitness and body composition scores for admission into career schools and for promotion could cause pregnant servicewomen to be left out or unable to qualify.

In these instances, the Military Services’ policies pose unnecessary and unreasonable obstacles to career enhancement for pregnant or postpartum servicewomen. For example,

if a servicewoman elects to take a TDY or training opportunity during a deferment period and is otherwise eligible and medically cleared to do so, she should not be disqualified because it occurs during the deferment period or because she has a medical profile excusing her from fitness assessments when a fitness test is an ancillary requirement unrelated to the required core curriculum or training elements.

Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups shared their experiences with school and training requirements:⁵⁵³

A lot of time, commands don't want to allow you to go to school. If you take a [physical fitness] test within a certain timeframe, you miss out on the opportunity. Let's say prior to recent body fat composition changes, if you were flagged for body composition and then get pregnant, you were flagged for the duration of that pregnancy. That could cause issues because you can't overcome that "deficiency"; you are missing out on opportunities.

—Enlisted Woman

The way we do performance reviews and physical fitness, if you take someone who was a rock star prior to pregnancy, their performance was really good, and they had a good [physical fitness test]. All of those scores stay the same when they can't do it [physical fitness tests because of pregnancy]. If they continue to perform at that rate, then they continue to look like they perform well, but on the flip side if you had lower scores [before the pregnancy], your scores are being carried forward, and you don't have the opportunity to increase those marks during pregnancy. And, like it or not, those things matter in the [Service], and so if you have a bad [physical fitness test] score, you're stuck with it for 2 to 3 years, and you're not going to get promoted.

—Enlisted Man

It's easier as an officer because we have a longer time in our MOS resident programs, where like, I have an enlisted [Service member] who is pregnant that could go to [training], but she needs a [physical fitness test] to pass, and I'm fighting it because, does she really need to run the [physical fitness test] to pass? Why? I am trying to build a Sergeant that is making [Service members], and she will pass the [physical fitness test] at some point. Why does she need to do this now?

—Female Officer

Especially since COVID, we went how many years without having a [physical fitness] test, and the [Service] didn't fall apart. They need to individualize policies for the school[s], have a flowchart, rather than a blanket policy for all schools. ... Those directly tied to promotion, some are career enhancing. ... Let's say I'm going to take a class for 30 days in front of a computer, but you can't go because you don't have a [physical fitness] test within 30 days? It's not a physical school, so why do we have this policy?

—Enlisted Woman

Recent Progress and Promising Initiatives

Although servicewomen will continue to grapple with the hard reality of juggling a service career and parenthood, the Military Services can help attenuate obstacles to career progression by eliminating unnecessary restrictions or assignment limitations related to a servicewoman's pregnancy or postpartum leave and operational deferment absences.

Recent notable policy changes from the Air Force include (1) removing restrictions on flying while pregnant—pregnant aviators can now return to flying status with medical consultation and medical provider concurrence⁵⁵⁴—and (2) allowing women, both enlisted and civilian, to apply and compete for Officer Training School commission while pregnant and defer attendance 6 to 14.5 months following birth.⁵⁵⁵

The DAF WIT, one of seven teams under the DAF's Barrier Analysis Working Group (DAFBAWG), has demonstrated tremendous success in using a grassroots approach to identifying and remediating barriers for pregnant Airman and Guardians. Several of the DAF WIT's 2021 and 2022 initiative wins related to revising outdated pregnancy and postpartum restrictions or policies. DACOWITS identified the DAF WIT as a best practice and recommended all Military Services' ensure senior leaders support and foster barrier analysis or initiatives teams focused on servicewomen (recommendation and associated reasoning are featured in this chapter).

Across the DoD, the Military Services have implemented many recent initiatives and policy changes in the areas of lactation and breastfeeding accommodation to include reimbursement of breast milk shipping costs,⁵⁵⁶ delayed notification of pregnancy,⁵⁵⁷ design of aviation maternity uniforms,⁵⁵⁸ and maternity uniform fitment improvements.⁵⁵⁹ DACOWITS commends the DoD Military Services for their many initiatives and urges continued identification and remediation of unnecessary restrictions and development of options enabling women to remain working in their career fields whenever possible for as long as medically reasonable.

Proposed Avenues for Mitigating the Impact of Pregnancy on Servicewomen's Career Progression

The Committee believes more needs to be done to reduce the impact of pregnancy on a servicewoman's career progression. DACOWITS has consistently found Service members feel having a family and progressing one's career in the military are very difficult or incompatible.^{560, 561, 562} In 2023, 71 percent of DACOWITS focus group participants felt it was somewhat or very difficult to have a family and advance one's military career. Servicewomen were slightly more likely than servicemen to respond this way (55 percent versus 45 percent, respectively).⁵⁶³

A 2020 GAO report found "the likelihood of separation for female Service members is 28 percent higher than that of males."⁵⁶⁴ Family planning and dependent care are among the top reasons that women leave the military. For example, pregnancy was one of the top three

reasons female enlisted personnel with 5 or fewer years of service left the military between 2004 and 2013. However, pregnancy was not among the top separation code reasons for female enlisted Service members in 2014 to 2018.⁵⁶⁵

DACOWITS recommends the SecDef act more proactively to identify and remove unnecessary career barriers and employ innovative solutions to ensure servicewomen's careers do not suffer as a result of pregnancy. Committee suggestions include the following:

1. **Comprehensive review of current policies to eliminate outdated or unnecessary career barriers for pregnant and postpartum servicewomen.** The SecDef and the Military Services should undertake a comprehensive review of all policies and guidance documents to remove unnecessary career barriers and restrictions affecting pregnant and postpartum servicewomen's career progression. This recommendation builds on DACOWITS' 2019 recommendation that the SecDef should direct the Military Services to develop and implement policies to ensure a servicewoman's career is not negatively affected as the result of pregnancy.⁵⁶⁶ Recent DACOWITS focus groups indicate servicewomen are experiencing detrimental impacts to their careers because of their pregnancies.⁵⁶⁷
2. **Enable easier transfer between the Active and Reserve Components.** Retaining already trained, capable servicewomen is an operational imperative for the Military Services. Allowing greater flexibility in moving between Active and Reserve Components could be a way to reduce attrition, retain talent, and provide servicewomen with another way to balance service and family life while maintaining their occupational proficiency. DACOWITS outlined this option in its 2020 report⁵⁶⁸ as an alternative to providing a caregiver sabbatical or extended parental leave, and the RAND Corporation also recommended this as an initiative to increase female officer retention in the Air Force.⁵⁶⁹
 - A male officer in DACOWITS' 2023 focus group recommended additional flexibility in career progression, stating, "If you're going to continue on the aviation side, there is the golden path you have to follow, and it's inflexible. So, if you can introduce flexibility into that path, that would be good. They've encouraged the use of CIP [career intermission program] to have a child, but you're out of the [Service] not getting paid and not getting benefits during that time."⁵⁷⁰
 - Currently the Space Force and Coast Guard are considering new talent management strategies to increase recruitment and retention, such as allowing Service members to serve in a part-time status and lateral entry in and out of the civilian workforce.^{571, 572} Although those might not be the best or final solutions, the DoD must continue its efforts to develop more innovative and forward-looking talent management models to make military service a viable full-career option for servicewomen while simultaneously enabling them to better manage career and family obligations.

3. **Create options to extend, delay, or work around parental leave absences for evaluations and promotions.** Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups felt more needed to be done to address the impact of pregnancy on a servicewoman's evaluations and promotions. Mainly, Service members wanted changes to ensure equitable promotion and performance evaluations for Service members who took convalescent and/or parental leave. Men were more likely than women to vocalize this recommendation. Recent expansion of the MPLP dictates an even greater need for the Military Services to ensure all Service members can take advantage of time to care for and bond with their new children without harming their career trajectory or potential for promotion.
 - A 2019 report from the RAND Corporation on barriers to female retention in the Coast Guard outlined several ways to account for extended absences by building in greater evaluation flexibility.⁵⁷³ First, the Military Services could extend evaluation periods when parental leave or pregnancy restrictions affected an evaluation report. This would give Service members extra time to ensure their evaluation reports are more competitive for promotion. Second, the Military Services could grant Service members the option to extend their current assignment to allow additional time within their unit to complete qualifications or milestones that pregnancy and parental leave affected. Third, the Military Services could allow Service members to delay their promotion window and work additional time to be rated against those with the same amount of equivalent experience. The RAND Corporation report noted these proposed policy options would also benefit men taking parental leave and could be expanded to cover personnel with medical or other issues that take them away from job performance for an extended period of time.⁵⁷⁴

DACOWITS does not present these as an exhaustive list of options but rather as a starting point to think differently about how the DoD and Military Services can implement new approaches to career management and retention. While these strategies are intended to support pregnant and postpartum servicewomen, they will benefit all Service members who choose to expand their family while serving.

Summary

A common finding among recent studies on female retention and DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups is that pregnancy harms servicewomen's career progression. Both servicewomen and servicemen report absences from convalescent and parental leave, removal from key leadership roles or opportunities, and challenges with physical fitness test requirements for training and schooling as considerable obstacles for servicewomen who become pregnant and give birth. Lost time and work experience from pregnancy and the postpartum period compound, affecting a servicewoman's evaluation and promotion potential, which leaves her at a disadvantage relative to her peers. Building on DACOWITS' previous recommendations, the Committee recommends the SecDef should ensure DoD and Military Service parental leave and operational deferment policies do not adversely impact servicewomen's career progression. The SecDef should also study the feasibility of enabling greater career flexibility, such as transferring from the Active to Reserve component or providing an option to elect

a later promotion year group, to potentially mitigate negative impacts of pregnancy on a servicewoman's promotion opportunity and career advancement.

B. Gender Discrimination

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness to update Department of Defense policies to: (1) distinguish between sexual harassment and gender-based discriminatory harassment; (2) define how gender-based, nonsexual discriminatory harassment can occur; and (3) clarify reporting mechanisms so that Service members can better comprehend, identify, and report discriminatory behavior.

Synopsis

DACOWITS recognizes that DoD and the Military Services have various policies and support resources in place related to harassment. However, the Committee believes updates and clarifications delineating gender-based discriminatory harassment as separate from sexual harassment would benefit Service members and the military as a whole. Gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment are often conflated—harassment against women does not need to be sexual in nature to harm servicewomen and engender a toxic environment and culture. Many support resources, such as hotlines, are branded or known for sexual harassment even if they serve as support for other forms of harassment and prohibited discrimination. Comprehensive, updated policies and trainings about the types and means of gender-based discriminatory harassment can help Service members identify and confidently report any inappropriate behaviors to ensure perpetrators receive appropriate consequences and make the military a safer and more professional work environment for all Service members.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Briefings from the Military Services on gender bias and discrimination, including an overview of policies, educational curriculum, training, monitoring, measurement, and surveys or research (September 2022, RFI 17)⁵⁷⁵

- Written responses from the Military Services on information and metrics the Services use to detect, identify, and monitor the occurrence of gender discrimination (September 2022, RFI 18)⁵⁷⁶
- A literature review from the research contractor on gender discrimination in the workplace (September 2022, RFI 19)⁵⁷⁷
- A briefing from the OPA on findings from the 2021 “Workplace and Gender Relations Survey” related to gender discrimination (March 2023, RFI 13)⁵⁷⁸
- Findings from 16 focus groups with Service members on the topic of pregnancy and gender discrimination (Focus Group Report 2023)⁵⁷⁹

DACOWITS continues to be interested in how the DoD and Military Services respond to and prevent a variety of discriminatory behaviors, including gender-based discriminatory harassment. Most recently in 2018, DACOWITS recommended the SecDef should conduct a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the Military Services’ policies, standards, training, and enforcement to eliminate gender discrimination and sexual harassment.⁵⁸⁰ In 2015 and 2017, DACOWITS urged the inclusion of online forms of harassment, including through social media, to policy documents, training, and education for Service members.^{581, 582} The Committee’s reasoning on the recommendation to clarify gender-based discriminatory harassment as distinct from sexual harassment follows.

Defining Sexual Harassment and Gender-Based Discriminatory Harassment

While sexual harassment can be a form of gender discrimination,⁵⁸³ sexual harassment and other forms of discriminatory harassment (to include gender-based harassment) are defined in distinct ways:

- Sexual harassment: “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.”⁵⁸⁴
- Discriminatory harassment: “any unwelcome, typically repeated offensive conduct that is directed at an individual because of his/her membership in a legally protected class.”⁵⁸⁵ Legally protected classes include race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, sexual orientation, or gender identity), national origin, age, disability, and genetic information (including family medical history).⁵⁸⁶

DoD policy (DoDI 1020.03) elaborates harassment “may include offensive jokes, epithets, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, displays of offensive objects or imagery, stereotyping, intimidating acts, veiled threats of violence, threatening or provoking remarks, racial or other slurs, derogatory remarks about a person’s accent, or displays of racially offensive symbols. Types of harassment include, but are not limited to, discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment, hazing, bullying, and stalking.”⁵⁸⁷

Discriminatory harassment encompasses a variety of behaviors, jeopardizes combat readiness and mission accomplishment, weakens trust within the ranks, erodes unit cohesion,

and can also affect recruitment and retention.^{588, 589} Discriminatory harassment has been shown to be a risk factor of sexual harassment and assault and is a symptom of ambivalent sexism—all of which harm servicewomen and affect retention and recruitment by creating a toxic environment and culture.^{590, 591, 592}

Means of Discriminatory Harassment and a Need to Expand Descriptions of Online Forms of Harassment

Discriminatory harassment can be oral, written, or physical. Harassment can occur in person or through virtual communication forms, including social media. DoD policy also now specifies harassment can occur through “wrongful broadcast or distribution of intimate visual images and other forms of communication”⁵⁹³ as was done in the Marines United case.^{xi, 594}

The Committee believes more specificity about the means of harassment is warranted in DoD and Military Service instructions to ensure Service members know and can quickly identify harassment in all its forms. With the continued evolution of social media and our increasingly digitally connected lives, it is even more important to outline unique ways digital and online discriminatory harassment can occur. Forty-one percent of American adults report they have experienced some form of online harassment.⁵⁹⁵ Unique forms of digital harassment include the following:

- **Cyberbullying:** “bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.”⁵⁹⁶
- **Cyberstalking:** “the act of persistent and unwanted contact from someone online. It may involve any number of incidents including threats, libel, defamation, sexual harassment, or other actions in which to control, influence, or intimidate their target. Stalking a person online may also involve stalking the person in real life.”⁵⁹⁷
- **Doxing:** “public release of private and sensitive personal identifying information about an individual without their consent.”⁵⁹⁸
- **Swatting:** “false report of an emergency to trigger an emergency response, specifically deployment of a SWAT [special weapons and tactics] team, to a location where no emergency exists.”⁵⁹⁹

DoD and the Military Services’ discriminatory harassment and related regulations, education, and training should be updated to include various means of online discriminatory harassment to further clarify forms of this prohibited behavior.

^{xi}In March 2017, investigative journalist Thomas James Brennan broke the story that the DoD was investigating an invitation-only Facebook group called “Marines United” where male Service members shared servicewomen’s photographs, including nude images and details such as their name, rank, and duty station without their consent.

Prevalence of Gender Discrimination Among U.S. Service Members

Gender-based discriminatory harassment is a recurrent problem in the military, particularly for women.⁶⁰⁰ DoD’s 2021 “Workplace and Gender Relations Survey” found Active Duty servicewomen were more likely to experience gender discrimination (16.1 percent) than their male counterparts (1.4 percent). Similarly, the rate for Reserve and Guard servicewomen was higher than for servicemen (9.9 percent compared with 0.8 percent).

Prevalence rates of gender discrimination varied by Service branch (see Table 5.4), with Active Duty Air Force women reporting the lowest rate of gender discrimination (11.8 percent) and Marine Corps women the highest (21.9 percent). Among servicemen, Active Duty Navy men reported the highest prevalence rates of gender discrimination (2.1 percent) and Marine Corps men the lowest (0.8 percent).⁶⁰¹

Table 5.4. Estimated Past-Year Gender Discrimination for Active Duty Personnel by Service Branch and Gender

Service Branch	Gender	
	Women	Men
Army	18.2%	1.4%
Air Force	11.8%	1.1%
Navy	16.9%	2.1%
Marine Corps	21.9%	0.8%

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022⁶⁰²

Rates of gender discrimination by race for servicewomen showed statistically significant differences. Active Duty servicewomen who are a racial or ethnic minority reported lower overall prevalence rates of gender discrimination than White women (14.3 percent compared with 18.4 percent). Comparatively, Active Duty men showed no significant differences by race or ethnicity.

Respondents who indicated they have experienced gender discrimination were asked to provide more detailed information about the situation that was the worst or most serious to them. The majority of Active Duty women (89 percent) and men (87 percent) in 2021 reported their gender discrimination experience involved being mistreated, ignored, or insulted because of their gender. Most alleged offenders were other military members and someone in their chain of command.⁶⁰³

While the gender discrimination prevalence rate for junior enlisted women has increased, senior enlisted women were significantly more likely to experience gender discrimination. Among Service members who reported experiencing gender discrimination in the past year, their odds of also experiencing sexual assault increased: double for women and tenfold for men.⁶⁰⁴

DoD and Military Service Policies on Harassment and Discriminatory Harassment

The DoD and Military Service instructions outline definitions of harassment, discriminatory harassment, or prohibited forms of discrimination. These policies vary in terms of what is defined, how it is defined, and how much detail is provided within the definition. Table 5.5. provides examples of relevant policy definitions for DoD and the Military Services. Note that this table is not exhaustive of all information on harassment, discriminatory harassment, and prohibited discrimination within DoD and Military Service instructions. National Guardsman face additional challenges due to their predominant nonduty status, unless deployed or mobilized, with unique laws by State and local jurisdiction.⁶⁰⁵

DACOWITS wants to ensure policies and instructions provide Service members with a clear understanding of the differences between the terms “discriminatory harassment” and “sexual harassment” given the two are often colloquially conflated. The Coast Guard’s Anti-Harassment and Hate Incident (AHHI) policy is a best-practice example to be emulated across the Military Services. The AHHI policy “consolidates all procedures relating to harassment and other harassing behavior, standardizes corrective actions for substantiated incidents committed by civilian and military members, creates an appeals process, establishes consequences for those who fail to fulfill their obligations under this policy, and includes updated administrative templates to assist commands in executing this policy.”⁶⁰⁶ The Coast Guard created an easy-to-navigate instruction and policy manual that defines all forms of harassment and provides Coast Guardsman clear guidance on reporting avenues.

Table 5.5. DoD and Military Service Policies and Relevant Definitions of Harassment or Discriminatory Harassment

Entity	Policy	Relevant Definitions of Harassment or Discriminatory Harassment
DoD	DoDI 1020.03 “Harassment Prevention and Response in the Armed Forces” ⁶⁰⁷	<p>“3.1. Harassment. Harassment may include offensive jokes, epithets, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, displays of offensive objects or imagery, stereotyping, intimidating acts, veiled threats of violence, threatening or provoking remarks, racial or other slurs, derogatory remarks about a person’s accent, or displays of racially offensive symbols. Types of harassment include, but are not limited to, discriminatory harassment, sexual harassment, hazing, bullying, and stalking. Stalking must be reported to the appropriate military criminal investigative organization.”</p>
		<p>“3.2. Means of Harassment. Harassment can be oral, written, or physical. Harassment can occur in person, through electronic communications, including social media; and through wrongful broadcast or distribution of intimate visual images and other forms of communication.”</p>
	DoDI 1350.02 “DoD Military Equal Opportunity Program” ⁶⁰⁸	<p>“Definition of prohibited discrimination: Discrimination, including disparate treatment, of an individual or group on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), gender identity, or sexual orientation that is not otherwise authorized by law or regulation and detracts from military readiness.”</p>

Entity	Policy	Relevant Definitions of Harassment or Discriminatory Harassment
Army	Military Equal Opportunity (MEO) Army Regulation, (AR) 600-20 "Army Command Policy" ⁶⁰⁹	<p>"(3) Discriminatory harassment. A form of harassment that is unwelcome conduct based on race, color, religion, sex (including gender identity), national origin, or sexual orientation."</p>
Navy	OPNAVINST 5354.1H, "The Navy Harassment Prevention and Military Equal Opportunity Program Manual" ⁶¹⁰	<p>"a. Discriminatory Harassment. Unwelcome conduct based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy), gender identity, national origin or sexual orientation. Discriminatory harassment occurs when the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile or abusive. Discriminatory harassment can be conducted through the use of electronic devices or communications and by other means including social media, as well as in person."</p>
Marine Corps	Marine Corps Order (MCO) 5354.1F, "Marine Corps Prohibited Activities and Conduct (PAC) Prevention and Response Policy" ⁶¹¹	<p>"5. Harassment. Any conduct, whereby a Service member knowingly, recklessly, or intentionally and with a nexus to military service engages in behavior that is unwelcome or offensive to a reasonable person that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment." a. Harassment may include, but is not limited to, unwanted physical contact; offensive jokes; epithets or name calling; ridicule or mockery; insults or putdowns; displays of offensive objects or imagery; offensive non-verbal gestures; stereotyping; intimidating acts; veiled threats of violence; threatening or provoking remarks; racial or other slurs; derogatory remarks about a person's accent or disability; displays of racially offensive symbols; and interference with work performance (to include unwillingness to train, evaluate, assist, or work with an individual)."</p> <p>"7. Prohibited Discrimination. Any conduct whereby a Service member knowingly, recklessly, or intentionally and with a nexus to military service discriminates, including disparate treatment, of an individual or group on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex (including pregnancy), gender identity, or sexual orientation that is not otherwise authorized by law or regulation and detracts from military readiness. Prohibited discrimination includes actions or efforts that detract from equal opportunity, with respect to the terms, conditions, or privileges of military service including, but not limited to, acquiring, assigning, promoting, disciplining, scheduling, training, evaluating, compensating, discharging, or separating. This definition excludes justifiable conduct that discriminates on the basis of characteristics (including, but not limited to, age, height, and weight) that serve a proper military or other governmental purpose as set forth in other military policies. Prohibited discrimination is evaluated by a reasonable person standard."</p>

Entity	Policy	Relevant Definitions of Harassment or Discriminatory Harassment
Department of the Air Force	Department of the Air Force Instruction 36-2710 "Equal Opportunity Program" ⁶¹²	<p>"2.2. Unlawful Discrimination Against Military Members. Unlawful discrimination against military members is any unlawful action that denies equal opportunity to persons or groups based on their race, color, sex (including sexual harassment), national origin, religion, or sexual orientation."</p> <p>"2.4. Unlawful Harassment. Unlawful harassment includes creating an intimidating, hostile working environment for another person on the basis of the protected classes enumerated in paragraphs 2.3 of this instruction. A hostile work environment is a series of acts which are so severe or pervasive as to alter the terms and conditions of employment. The acts which make up the hostile environment may be discreet acts or may be ones which, taken alone, do not rise to the level of an adverse employment action. The use of disparaging terms with respect to a person's protected class contributes to a hostile working environment and will not be tolerated."</p>
Coast Guard	COMDTINST 5350.6, "Harassing Behavior Prevention, Response, and Accountability" ⁶¹³	<p>"a. Harassment. Harassment is unwelcome conduct, whether verbal, nonverbal, or physical, that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment. Harassment includes conduct - whether or not based on a protected status - that includes, but is not limited to, race, sex, gender, or gender identity (see Appendix A). Hate-based harassment that targets one or several people requires special reporting and investigation (see section 20)."</p>
National Guard Bureau	Chief National Guard Bureau Instruction (CNGBI) 9601.01, "National Guard Discrimination Complaint Program" ⁶¹⁴	<p>"Harassment—Any unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy) or sexual orientation, national origin, age (40 or older), disability, or genetic information. Harassment becomes unlawful where enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment or the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive."</p>

Note: Bolded added for emphasis

COMDTINST = Coast Guard Commandant Instruction; DoDI = Department of Defense Instruction; OPNAVINST = Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction

Reporting Discriminatory Harassment in the Military Services

In addition to increasing awareness of gender-based discriminatory harassment and its distinction from sexual harassment, the Military Services should ensure robust education and training on how Service members can report discriminatory harassment. Active Duty Service members can report sexual, discriminatory, or other types of harassment through the same mechanisms. Service members can file informal, anonymous, or formal complaints.⁶¹⁵ Reporting mechanisms currently include the following:

1. **Chain of command:** The immediate chain of command is typically the first point of contact for reporting harassment. This includes a Service member's supervisor, commanding officer, or unit leadership.⁶¹⁶

2. **Equal opportunity representative:** Each military unit has an equal opportunity representative who is responsible for addressing issues related to harassment, discrimination, and equal opportunity. The Service member can contact their equal opportunity representative for guidance and support.⁶¹⁷
3. **Inspector General (IG) office:** The IG’s office is responsible for investigating complaints within the military. If a Service member believes their concerns are not adequately addressed through the chain of command or the equal opportunity representative, they can submit a formal complaint through the IG office.⁶¹⁸
4. **Military law enforcement:** If the harassment involves criminal behavior or poses a threat to the Service member’s safety, they should report it to the appropriate military law enforcement agency.⁶¹⁹

Harassment Hotlines Need Further Clarification That Service Members Can Use Them for Gender-Based, Nonsexual Discriminatory Harassment

DoDI 1020.03 requires the Military Services to ensure Service members have access to at least one 24-hour toll-free or local hotline that “provides information on harassment policies and procedures covered within this issuance, including how and where to file complaints, the behaviors that constitute harassment, and information about the DoD-wide hotline for sexual assault at <https://www.SafeHelpline.org>.”⁶²⁰ Table 5.6. details the types of hotlines and hotline names currently available to Service members in the DoD and Military Services.

Table 5.6. DoD and Military Service Policies and Relevant Definitions of Harassment or Discriminatory Harassment

Entity	24/7 Hotlines
DoD ⁶²¹	DoD Safe Helpline for members of the DoD affected by sexual assault: 1.877.995.5247
Army ⁶²²	Installation-Based Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Hotlines: various telephone numbers
Navy ⁶²³	Navy Sexual Harassment Prevention and Equal Opportunity advice line: 1.800.253.0931
Marine Corps ⁶²⁴	Inspector General of the Marine Corps Hotline: 1.866.243.3887
Department of the Air Force (DAF) ⁶²⁵	DAF Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment Hotline: 1.888.231.4058
Coast Guard ⁶²⁶	Anti-Harassment and Hate Incident Complaint Line: 1.833.403.2476
National Guard	DoD Safe Helpline: 1.877.995.5247 ⁶²⁷ National Guard Equal Opportunity Hotline: 1.800.371.0617 ⁶²⁸

The Committee is concerned that many hotlines include the word “sexual” in the hotline name or description, which may inadvertently discourage Service members from using or reporting other forms of discriminatory harassment. DACOWITS commends the Air Force for a clear name indicating all forms of discrimination and harassment can be served by its hotline. “Sexual” nomenclature in names or hotline descriptions could be a barrier for Service members who need to call and report nonsexual, gender-based discriminatory harassment concerns.

Summary

Discriminatory harassment can present in many types of behaviors and through different forms of communication, including in person and virtually. The DoD and the Military Services have instructions and policies to combat such behaviors; however, DACOWITS believes these policies and regulations should be updated to make it easier for Service members to comprehend the full range and sources of discriminatory harassment behaviors and the means by which they can occur. Policies and regulations should be clearly written to enable Service members to know how to report problems, seek help, and understand the consequences for offenders—particularly because gender-based discriminatory harassment continues to persist and is colloquially confounded with sexual harassment. Hotlines should be clarified to include all forms of discriminatory harassment rather than those that are sexual in nature. The SecDef should direct the USD(P&R) to update DoD policies to (1) distinguish between sexual harassment and gender-based discriminatory harassment; (2) define how gender-based, nonsexual discriminatory harassment can occur; and (3) clarify reporting mechanisms to ensure Service members can better comprehend, identify, and report discriminatory behavior.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the Military Services’ senior leadership to support and foster women’s barrier analysis/initiative teams in order to identify and remediate unique challenges faced by servicewomen.

Synopsis

While the DoD and Military Services have made recent strides in updating numerous policies related to servicewomen, more work remains to remove unnecessary barriers and eliminate antiquated policies. The DAF WIT has shown the power of harnessing Service members’ experiences in an organic working group to elevate concerns and policy solutions to senior champions who are prepared to take action. A unique strength of barrier analysis working groups or WITs is their ability to use sustained effort and focus to identify issues from the ground level. Equally as important is connecting these groups with senior leaders and champions who can effectively make policy and programmatic changes. DACOWITS feels it is imperative for the Military Services to have dedicated, sustained groups working to identify

and eliminate barriers impeding the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of servicewomen.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- A briefing from the DAF WIT on its 2021 accomplishments and an overview of its current top 10 initiatives (June 2022)⁶²⁹
- Written responses from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard on whether their Services have a working group, similar to the DAF WIT, focused on identifying and resolving barriers affecting the retention of servicewomen (September 2022, RFI 5)⁶³⁰
- Written responses from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard on whether they have implemented a WIT focused on identifying and resolving barriers affecting the retention of servicewomen (September 2023, RFI 2)⁶³¹

Women are a demographic minority in the Military Services, composing only 17.3 percent of the Active Force and 16.1 percent of the Reserve Force.⁶³² Although women have served in some capacity since the Revolutionary War, their service has been marked by restrictions for much of history. The Military Services, with the exception of the Space Force, were institutions derived by men for men. Even though all formal restrictions on women's service ended in 2016 with the opening of combat roles, barriers and outdated policies persist or have yet to be recognized.⁶³³ Organized and sustained efforts to identify and remediate problems and advance solutions are a successful strategy with a proven track record. The reasoning supporting DACOWITS' recommendation on women's barrier analysis groups and initiative teams follows.

Success of the DAF WIT in Eliminating Barriers for Servicewomen

The DAF WIT is an all-volunteer team, composed of more than 600 Service members and DAF civilians, whose mission is to "identify barriers to women's service in the DAF and DoD that influence and impact women's propensity to serve and advocate to eliminate those barriers through policy change."⁶³⁴ The DAF WIT is one of seven

DAF Barrier Analysis Working Group Teams

- BEST: Black and African American Employment Strategy Team
- DAT: Disability Action Team
- HEAT: Hispanic Empowerment and Advancement Team
- INET: Indigenous Nations Equality Team
- LIT: LGBTQ Initiatives Team
- PACT: Pacific Islander/Asian American Community Team
- WIT: Women's Initiative Team

teams in the Department of the Air Force Barrier Analysis Working Group (DAFBAWG) charged to bring a “grassroots perspective” to analyze anomalies, identify root causes, and eliminate barriers to equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion.⁶³⁵ The DAF WIT covers 11 lines of effort addressing a broad range of aspects related to women’s service:⁶³⁶

1. Child care programs, policies, and entitlements
2. Pregnancy discrimination
3. Female-specialized healthcare programs
4. Space Force development—inclusivity for women Guardians
5. DAF development
6. Parental and family leave programs
7. One size does not fit all (anthropometrics)
8. Countering sexual assault and harassment
9. Awards and decorations
10. Gender-neutral language
11. External engagement



DAF WIT logo

DACOWITS highlights the DAF WIT, and broader DAFBAWG structure, as a best practice for its innovative approach in identifying and eliminating outdated policies and unnecessary barriers for servicewomen. These groups harness Service members’ tactical, day-to-day experiences within a dedicated structure connected with senior leadership support and champions. The DAF WIT has a proven track record of success for improving policies for all servicewomen, not only female Airman and Guardians.

In June 2022, the DAF WIT briefed DACOWITS on its recent initiative wins and current focus areas, including the following in 2021 and 2022:⁶³⁷

- Updates to the hair policy: updated women’s hair policy allowing women to wear their hair in a bun, braid, ponytail, or other similar style with broader width requirements extending from the head
- Greater commander accountability for climate: required commanders who score 49 percent or less in diversity, inclusion, belonging, or equality opportunity topics on the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) to create a command action plan within 60 days
- Maternity flight suits: redesigned and funded purchase of new maternity flight suits
- Flying while pregnant: updated policy allowing pregnant aviators the option to return to flying status during all trimesters, in all crew positions, and on all types of aircraft with medical consultation and concurrence

- Breastmilk transport cost reimbursement: updated the Joint Travel Regulation to allow lactating Service members and civilians reimbursement for transporting breastmilk with TDY for longer than 3 days
- Permissive TDY for fertility treatment: authorized commanders to approve permissive TDY for Service members undergoing fertility treatment
- Bluetooth breast pumps in secured spaces: reduced administrative hurdles that deterred or prohibited women from using Bluetooth breast pumps in secured spaces

Current initiatives the DAF WIT is working on, as of June 2022, include child care, masking pregnancy notification upon initial positive pregnancy test, female-specialized healthcare, implementation of the CADET act, sexual assault and harassment, availability and access to women's uniform items and equipment, and implementation of parental leave parity for Reserve and Guard maternity leave.⁶³⁸

The DAF WIT has made tremendous progress through its efforts, especially as an all-volunteer team with no funding infrastructure in place. DACOWITS commends the ongoing work of DAFBAWGs, including the WIT, and encourages DAF to continue to ensure all DAFBAWGs maintain strong connections with senior champions and potentially consider funding in-person events (e.g., meetings, conferences, or other gatherings) to promote further in-person collaboration, networking, discussion, and advocacy.

Status of the Other Services' Working Groups, WITs, Committees, or Offices Related to Servicewomen

In September 2022 and 2023, DACOWITS gathered information from the other Military Services and National Guard Bureau on whether they have a WIT or other structures focused on identifying and resolving barriers affecting the retention of servicewomen. Service methods varied in their approach, operationalization, and proactive stance toward barrier analysis working groups or WITs. The Marine Corps is the only Service without a sustained, dedicated group or office focused on identifying and remediating barriers for women's service. This is particularly concerning given women comprise only 9.1 percent of the Marine Corps' Active Duty force, far lower than the other Services.⁶³⁹

Army

The Army WIT was established and chartered on December 15, 2022. Its mission is to "advocate for Army policy, program, and resource changes to set conditions for women's recruitment, retention, readiness, health, well-being, empowerment, and advancement across the Total Army."⁶⁴⁰ The Army WIT reports to and receives direction from the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs (ASA(M&RA)), who then makes recommendations to other senior Army leaders including the Secretary, Under Secretary, Chief of Staff, Vice Chief of Staff, and Sergeant Major of the Army. Unlike the Air Force WIT, composed of a large group of volunteers, the Army WIT ASA(M&RA) appoints 30 members who meet quarterly. An advisory board to the Army WIT includes nonvoting standing members who can attend meetings.⁶⁴¹

Navy

The Navy plans to launch a WIT in FY24, but no further details about its structure or mission were provided.⁶⁴² The Office of Women's Policy advises on policy, programs, recruitment, and retention of women in the Navy. This office has four lines of effort: (1) policy development and alignment; (2) program management and development; (3) policy, program analysis, and assessments; and (4) strategic communications and engagement.⁶⁴³

Marine Corps

As of September 2023, the Marine Corps does not have a WIT and has no plans to establish one, noting the Service looks at “resolving barriers that impact retention for both women and men.”⁶⁴⁴ The Marine Corps noted it has women-oriented outreach events that can be used as a platform to discuss barriers for women, including the Federally Employed Women Conference; Officer Women Leadership Symposium; Joint Women Leadership Symposium; Women of Color Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math Conference; Women Marines Association; and Women in Defense.⁶⁴⁵



Lieutenant General (Ret.) Kevin Mangum promoting his daughter, First Lieutenant Anela Mangum, to Captain at Ft. Campbell, KY.

National Guard

The Air National Guard, along with the Air Force Reserve Command, recently started Air Reserve Component (ARC) Athena—a committee to address female and family-centric barriers to readiness. ARC Athena is sponsored by the Director Air National Guard and the Commander Air Force Reserve Command in fulfillment of the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017. The committee's goal is to gather and use grassroots insights from Airmen to propose solutions to ARC leaders.⁶⁴⁶

The Army National Guard participates in a Total Force Women's General Officer (GO) Quarterly Forum, which is in the process of developing and standing up a WIT. Many states and individual wings or units have councils or teams working to identify and resolve barriers for servicewomen.⁶⁴⁷

Coast Guard

In accordance with 14 U.S.C. § 2521, the Coast Guard is in the process of establishing an Advisory Board on Women in the Coast Guard. This Federal Advisory Committee will identify and resolve barriers associated with women's service in the Coast Guard. The Coast Guard also reported the Gender Policy Branch within the Coast Guard's Office of Diversity and Inclusion works with workforce, affinity groups, employee resource groups, and other entities to identify issues affecting women in the Coast Guard.⁶⁴⁸

Benefits of Barrier Analysis Working Groups and WITs

A unique strength of barrier analysis working groups and/or WITs is their ability to identify and elevate issues from the ground level. These groups create a bridge between top-level leaders implementing policy and strategic direction with the realities of those serving in the air, on land, or at sea. Barrier analysis working groups or initiative teams focused on servicewomen have several benefits:⁶⁴⁹

- **Equality and diversity:** They can actively promote and advocate for gender equality within the military. By fostering an environment that values diversity and inclusion, these groups can help ensure that women's perspectives, experiences, and contributions are recognized and valued.
- **Harassment and discrimination:** They can play a crucial role in combating harassment and discrimination within the military. They can raise awareness, provide education on appropriate behavior, and ensure each Service has a safe environment for reporting incidents.
- **Leadership development:** They can focus on leadership development programs specifically designed to nurture and empower women leaders within the military. This effort can help bridge the gender gap in higher ranking positions.
- **Mentorship and networking:** They can establish mentorship programs and networking opportunities that connect servicewomen with experienced leaders and peers. This support can be invaluable for career guidance and personal growth.
- **Organizational effectiveness:** They can contribute to a more cohesive and successful military force. Embracing diversity and promoting gender equality have been shown to enhance organizational effectiveness and performance.
- **Policy changes:** They can advocate for policy changes that promote gender equity and inclusivity. These groups can work with military leadership and policymakers to address systemic issues and ensure policies and practices are fair and unbiased.
- **Recruitment and retention:** They can focus on recruiting and retaining women in the military. These groups can develop targeted outreach strategies to attract more women to join their Service and implement programs that support their career advancement and professional development.
- **Unique Service-specific challenges:** They can identify and address these challenges, creating solutions and support systems tailored to the needs of servicewomen. Women in the military may face unique challenges related to career progression, worklife balance, and gender-related issues.

Importance of Senior Leader Support and Champions for Barrier Analysis Working Groups and WITs

DACOWITS feels it is imperative for the Military Services to have dedicated, sustained groups working to identify and eliminate barriers impeding the recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of servicewomen. Women have had a permanent place in the military for 75 years, yet numerous antiquated policies and practices that hinder

servicewomen's day-to-day lives remain. Foundational to the demonstrated success of the DAF WIT in eliminating longstanding barriers, such as restrictions on flying while pregnant, is senior leadership support. Senior leader champions are essential to ensuring barriers and issues identified by these groups are acted on. Without established senior leadership support or communication channels, these groups could become merely an exercise rather than a tool for real improvement and change.

Summary

Tens of thousands of women contribute, serve, and defend the Nation. While the DoD and Military Services have made recent strides in updating numerous policies related to servicewomen, more work remains to remove unnecessary barriers and update antiquated policies. The DAF WIT, one of seven teams in the DAFBAWG, has proven success in its novel approach to identifying and eliminating barriers for women's service. DACOWITS believes the key to its effectiveness has been providing Service members with a dedicated outlet to raise issues and having the support of senior leader champions. For these reasons, DACOWITS recommends the SecDef direct the Military Services' senior leadership to support and foster women's barrier analysis/initiative teams to identify and remediate unique challenges servicewomen face.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should direct the USD(P&R) to conduct (1) a comprehensive review of promotion rates of Service members from the last 10 years across the Military Services, Reserve Component, and National Guard by gender, race/ethnicity, and occupational specialty/community to identify trends in servicewomen's career progression and promotion rates and (2) additional studies and research (e.g., via mock boards) to assess whether eliminating gender and race/ethnicity indicators in promotion board records reduces bias against women, in all of their diversity, in promotion selection.

Recommendation

The Secretary of Defense should require the Military Services to provide education, in appropriate professional development courses, to Service members in supervisory enlisted and officer grades to prevent and reduce gender bias in performance evaluations and selection boards. Curriculum should (1) identify gendered language and descriptors, (2) describe how gender status expectations and biases can impact the way performance evaluations are written and rated, (3) indicate how to recognize and remediate unconscious bias and gender behavioral expectations, and (4) provide Service members the opportunity to participate in mock boards with postexercise analysis to enhance their learning experience.

Synopsis

The Committee recognizes the many initiatives and policy improvements the DoD and Military Services have undertaken in recent years to mitigate gender bias and its impact on the career progression of servicewomen. Research shows women in military and civilian workplaces continue to face gender bias and discrimination in evaluation descriptions of their attributes, differential perceptions of competency as managers and leaders, and their overall promotion rates as compared with men. Current data shows mixed results as to whether women are promoted at equal rates in the military, but seems to be trending in a positive direction. However, Service members in DACOWITS' 2023 focus groups reported gender discrimination continues to affect the climate and culture of military units and negatively affects servicewomen's careers. While DoD and the Military Services have taken actions to remove photos from promotion records, used methods to mask gender information, and implemented bias training or education before promotion board meetings, more can and should be done to improve the career progression for women and eliminate corrosive cultural remnants of gender bias and discrimination in the military.

Reasoning

Introduction

To inform its recommendations on this topic, DACOWITS collected information from several sources during the past year. In addition to the academic literature cited throughout the reasoning, the following primary sources are available on the DACOWITS website:

- Written responses from the Military Services providing accession and promotion rates for the Active and Reserve Components (FY17–FY21), their recruitment goals by gender, and the number of male and female recruiters (September 2022, RFI 1)⁶⁵⁰
- Written responses from the Military Services providing more information and data by gender on “opt out” requests submitted by Service members for promotion to the grades of E7 through E9 and O4 through O6 (March 2023, RFI 14)⁶⁵¹
- Written responses from the Military Services on documentation and guidance related to career progression and promotion for servicewomen who have given birth (June 2023, RFI 8)⁶⁵²
- Written responses from the DoD and Military Services on promotion rates and trends by gender, grade, and occupational specialty (June 2023, RFI 9)⁶⁵³

DACOWITS has addressed promotion and career advancement of servicewomen in every decade from the 1960s to the present.⁶⁵⁴ Over the course of seven decades, the Committee has examined and identified barriers to women's career progression in the military. DACOWITS continues to be interested in the career progression barriers servicewomen confront because of their gender. For example, in 2019 the Committee recommended the SecDef establish a DoD policy that defines and provides guidance to eliminate conscious

and unconscious gender bias to address biases that have impeded servicewomen's promotion and advancement.⁶⁵⁵

The Committee believes understanding and reducing the impacts of gender bias on Service members will directly improve unit cohesion, the workplace environment, and retention. This year, the Committee recommends the DoD and Military Services build on previous efforts to further mitigate gender bias in performance evaluations and promotions. The reasoning supporting these recommendations follows.

Women in the Workforce

As of 2022, women represented approximately 47 percent of the U.S. labor force, and nearly half of women aged 25 to 64 held a bachelor's degree or higher.^{656, 657} Women also make up the majority of the college-educated labor force in the United States.⁶⁵⁸ Women in the military and in the civilian labor force have historically lagged behind men in career progression opportunities and promotion rates.^{659, 660, 661, 662}

Although women have made great progress entering highly skilled occupations over the past 50 years, disparities remain in rates of hiring, promotion, and pay in comparison with men.⁶⁶³ Women in male-dominated industries, such as the military, typically encounter even greater barriers and resistance to career progression than women in other industries. Overall, female employees are less likely to be promoted than their male counterparts even when outperforming male colleagues and showing greater loyalty to their organizations.⁶⁶⁴

Promotion Rates for Women in the Military

Similar evidence of gender bias and its impact on women's career progression has been observed in the military, though recent evidence indicates rates of career progression may be improving for servicewomen in comparison with men. Historically, women have faced restrictions on their military service affecting their ability to earn leadership positions. Rates of promotion in the military have generally been higher for men than for women, which has also affected representation in leadership positions.⁶⁶⁵ For example, a 2012 RAND Corporation study cited the Military Leadership Diversity Commission's report that lower promotion and retention rates among female officers at certain levels led to an underrepresentation of women in senior leadership grades.⁶⁶⁶

However, a more recent 2020 GAO analysis of enlisted promotions from FY04 through FY18 estimated promotion rates were only slightly lower for female enlisted members in most years of that time period, but higher for female officers in general. Specifically, female enlisted promotion rates ranged from 0.1 to 2.5 percentage points lower than male enlisted promotion rates between FY04 and FY18, while female commissioned officer promotion rates ranged from 3.3 to 5.3 percentage points higher than the rates of their male counterparts.⁶⁶⁷ While the Committee believes it may be premature to claim that promotion rates are equalizing between male and female Service members, these data trends suggest forward progress.

The Committee recommends DoD and the Military Services undertake a robust review of servicewomen's promotion data by Military Service, component (Active, Reserve, and Guard), race/ethnicity, marital status, parenting status, and occupational specialty/community for the last 10 years to develop a more comprehensive picture of servicewomen's promotion trends. Such a study will provide a more accurate portrayal of trends by subgroup and highlight areas where DoD and Military Services need to focus their efforts related to gender bias and promotion.

Recent Initiatives to Reduce Gender Bias in Promotion Boards

DACOWITS recognizes and appreciates that the Military Services have taken various actions to mitigate the impact of gender bias on promotions:

- Removal of photos from promotion files. In July 2020, DoD mandated the removal of photos from promotion record files to reduce the potential for racial bias.⁶⁶⁸ This directive also served to mitigate gender bias. Evidence thus far on the effectiveness of removing photos from promotion files is mixed. For example, an Army study found “when you remove the ... photo, the voters’ scores became more precise ... [a]nd the outcomes for minorities and women improved.”⁶⁶⁹ Conversely, a Navy study indicates that no significant changes in promotion trends by gender have been observed since photos were removed.⁶⁷⁰
- Gender masking/removal for promotion boards. The DoD has been considering removing gender indicators, including names and gendered pronouns, from selection boards since at least 2020.⁶⁷¹ Similarly, all the Military Services except for the Marine Corps have implemented policies to remove gender information from promotion boards to some extent. For example, the Air Force removed race, ethnicity, and gender indicators from officer selection briefs in 2002, but these indicators remain in supporting documents and evaluation documents. The Navy removed gender information (other than name) from information available to officer selection board members, but gendered language is still included in enlisted selection boards.⁶⁷² The Marine Corps is considering strategies to remove demographic information from promotion boards.⁶⁷³
- Service-level gender bias trainings for promotion boards. The Military Services have all implemented efforts to train or inform promotion board members about gender bias and how to avoid it. For example, the Army,⁶⁷⁴ Navy,⁶⁷⁵ and Air Force⁶⁷⁶ have implemented trainings for promotion board members encouraging equal consideration of Service members for promotion, while the Marine Corps⁶⁷⁷ and Space Force⁶⁷⁸ inform promotion board members that equal opportunity is an important aspect of the promotion boards process. The Coast Guard creates promotion boards composed of “diverse backgrounds representative of the candidates under consideration” and has a Coast Guard Office of Personnel Service Center staff present to ensure deliberations and conversations pertain to the record in review.⁶⁷⁹

The Committee considers each line of effort previously described as steps in the right direction to remove gender bias from promotion boards. However, the Military Services should routinely seek feedback from board members about the effectiveness of training and other antibias initiatives to ensure improvements are made as necessary. DACOWITS believes further research and efforts are needed to determine best practices for removing gender bias, corrosive cultural attitudes, and subjectivity from promotion boards.

Impact of Gender Bias on How Women Are Perceived

The Committee recognizes DoD and Military Services have made considerable efforts to improve life in the military for servicewomen in recent years, such as expanded parental leave benefits and physical fitness assessment adjustments for pregnant and postpartum women. However, many Service members in the 2023 DACOWITS focus groups expressed gender discrimination persists in their Service and affects their career progression and likelihood for retention.⁶⁸⁰ Many participants also commented that gender bias may be more prevalent in certain occupational specialties. Select quotes from focus group participants describing their experiences with gender bias and how it affects their careers follow:⁶⁸¹

Gender discrimination will be something that is always in the Service, unfortunately. Whether in your face or inadvertently, you realize you are in a unit with different people from different places, and everyone has [a] different mindset. They are raised differently or stuck in their ways about something. What's right to them might not be to someone else. It could be innocence or ignorance.

—Enlisted Man

I've been told by males that women shouldn't be in the military and watch them treat female junior [Service members] differently, where they put resources into male [Service members] but not female. That's what I've seen.

—Female Officer

Women have to work 10 times harder than men to get on the same playing field, not even accelerated but the same playing field as men. We are at a deficit when we come into the [Service]. Master degree, it doesn't matter; we are at a deficit.

—Enlisted Woman

My opinion, there are a lot of females who are in male-dominant battalions, MOSs, or brigades that have to work twice as hard to prove they are as fit to keep up with the guys. Sometimes they are pushed to the back if they don't step up. The men will just do it and take over.

—Enlisted Man

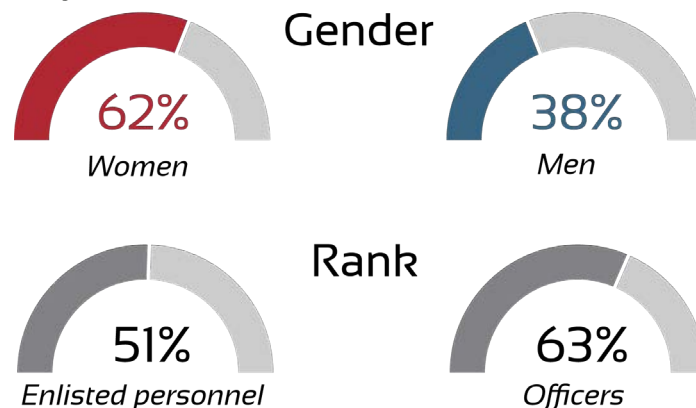
I think it depends on your MOS and if you're still learning your job. When I came to my unit, I was the only female mechanic. They talked to me like I didn't know anything. I was given the easier tasks and was not challenged. The person who controlled, who got to work on the trucks, spent more time with the male I came to the unit with than with me.

—Enlisted Woman

DACOWITS believes factors related to servicewomen's role as a wife or a mother may also create biases against them from leadership and their fellow Service members. For example, a 2016 RAND Corporation report on officer career progression states, "Family factors—specifically, marital status and age and presence of dependents—were consistently important and were major contributors to gender differences in officer career progression."⁶⁸²

Pregnancy and motherhood have been shown to negatively influence evaluations of female employees across various industries, reflecting a cultural tension between an "ideal worker" versus a "good mother." Conscious and unconscious presumptions (i.e., bias) are made about the nature of pregnancy and, by extension, women and motherhood.⁶⁸³ Working mothers are often viewed as determined, career-focused, and less competent, and their decision to work may be viewed as violative of a social norm because they are "putting work ahead of children."⁶⁸⁴ Further affirming this perception, more than half of the servicewomen who participated in the 2023 DACOWITS installation visit focus groups reported that servicewomen who become pregnant will experience associated barriers progressing in their career (see Figure 5.2).⁶⁸⁵

Figure 5.2. Proportion of Participants by Gender and Rank Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed That Women in Their Service Who Become Pregnant Are More Likely to Encounter Obstacles Toward Career Advancement



Note: Enlisted personnel includes E1–E6. Officers include W01–W06 and O1–O4 and higher.
Source: DACOWITS 2023 Focus Group Report⁶⁸⁶

2023 DACOWITS installation visit focus groups participants also described how family factors, such as wanting a family and becoming pregnant, negatively impact their careers. Select quotes of experiences shared by Service members follow:⁶⁸⁷

In [my Service], there are three genders: men, women who never have children, and women who have children. I don't mean it in that way, but I mean it in a way that you won't be successful if you have children. Our commander has no children, no spouse. She goes home to an empty house every night. There's something to be said for that.

—Female Officer

I don't have a challenge as far as having a kid because I've never had one. I did get pregnant, I did. ... I decided to have an abortion (participant starts crying); I did it out of fear of not being able to move forward with my career because I did advance at a fairly swift pace compared to the average [Service member] coming up in the [Service]. I didn't want to get pregnant and then go on a pregnancy tour and then get held back 2 to 3 years from pursuing the ultimate goal for my career in the military. I guess that is a challenge. Thinking about how it sets you back and the obstacles you encounter in being pregnant.

—Enlisted Woman

When it comes to promotions and promotion boards and having [specialty] leadership, you have to rack and stack people for promotion. Just yesterday, we had two people that were very similar, and because one was pregnant, we couldn't consider the time that they had been out due to the pregnancy. I think that could affect who gets ranked as higher or lower, so it can definitely impact the way leadership recommends promotions.

—Female Officer

I was up for a special board to go to school, and I was excited when I got in; it's a big deal because not everyone gets selected. The next day after I got selected, they sent me an email and said that I was an alternate and not a primary and that the list was wrong and that "we didn't realize you were pregnant," so they cut me because I was pregnant. I would have had to do a year of school and would have had plenty of time to recover before I went to a leadership role, but I was cut because I was pregnant.

—Female Officer

There are a whole lot of different wickets that having a child could be a detriment to, or where it wouldn't be an advantage. For example, the way we do performance reviews and physical fitness, if you take someone who was a rock star prior to pregnancy, their performance was really good, and they had a good [physical fitness test]. All of those scores stay the same when they can't do it [physical fitness tests because of pregnancy]. If they continue to perform at that rate, then they continue to look like they perform well, but on the flip side if you had lower scores [before the pregnancy], your scores are being carried forward, and you don't have the opportunity to increase those marks during pregnancy. And, like it or not, those things matter in the [Service], and so if you have a bad [physical fitness test] score, you're stuck with it for 2 to 3 years, and you're not going to get promoted. Once you have a child, you have 3 months when you're not going to be at work, so that is 3 months you are not going to be observed, but you are going to get promoted on. So, if you were knocking it out of the park before, your scores aren't going to change much, but if you weren't knocking it out of the park before, you don't have the chance to change. ... Getting pregnant doesn't allow you to improve in the [Service] if you weren't in a good situation before.

—Enlisted Man

When I was a Private, we had a team leader, and she was a very competent, very good leader. When she became pregnant and the chain of command was aware, they moved her out of her leadership position and put her at staff. Not because she couldn't lead or be able to do simple tasks but supervising the [unit], I'm guessing, they were scared of something happening to her. They wanted to protect her. It could have hindered her from getting that experience time while she was able and capable before she took time away from the unit.

—Enlisted Man

I had a fantastic Sergeant, and when she came back from maternity leave, I only had 4 months to evaluate her. I had to mark her lower compared to everyone else because I only had that time to evaluate her.

—Male Officer

Most importantly, “participants in half the [focus] groups said servicewomen are forced to choose between their family and their military career.”⁶⁸⁸ Servicewomen’s decisions about whether and when to start a family affect their career progression. However, efforts should be made to ensure family factors do not influence the performance evaluation and promotion of servicewomen to the extent possible.

Additional Strategies to Consider in Addressing Gender Bias in Promotions and Evaluations

Considerable research has been conducted to examine how performance evaluations can be made more objective by mitigating the potential for gender and other types of bias. The

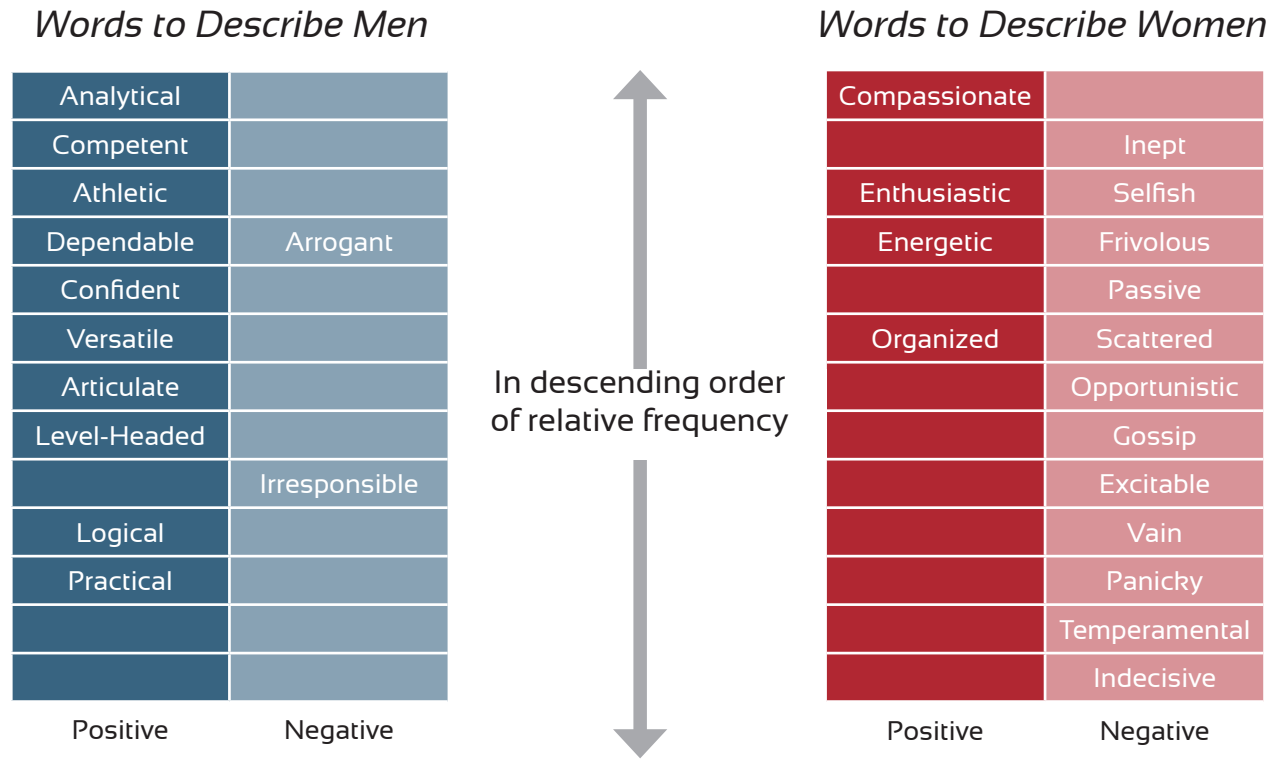
Committee believes DoD and Military Services should consider implementing some of the strategies described below to further prevent gender bias from affecting servicewomen's career progression.

Gendered Descriptors of Performance

Recent studies have identified various key findings on how gendered descriptors and language may influence performance evaluations and promotions. This research validates the Committee's concern about the potential for gender bias to negatively affect servicewomen during performance evaluations and promotion boards, which could affect their careers and likelihood of retention.

- Women need to perform at a higher level to achieve comparable ratings to men. Conversely, women may also suffer a “backlash” related to lower ratings for behaviors considered too “assertive” or displaying a “take charge” (agentic) attitude in violation of gender status expectations.⁶⁸⁹
- Managers appear to expect men and women to enact their jobs as gendered people and police behaviors that fall outside those expectations, such as calling out gender-typical behavior (aggressiveness in women, softness for men). Managers often penalize women in evaluations for highly agentic behavior, such as taking charge. Consequently, although managers may view behaviors similarly, they tend to value them differently (i.e., awarding higher ratings for “potential” to men than women for the same agentic behaviors).⁶⁹⁰
- A 2018 “Harvard Business Review” study suggested military supervisors use different language to describe men and women. For example, the study found the most common term used when describing men positively was “analytical,” whereas the most common term used when describing women positively was “compassionate.”⁶⁹¹ The study also reported positive attributes were most commonly used to describe men, whereas negative attributes were significantly more likely to be used to describe women (see Figure 5.3).⁶⁹²
- A 2019 study of performance evaluations conducted at the Naval War College; at the United States Naval Academy; and for Marine Corps members stationed in Okinawa, Japan, also suggests an association between gender bias and attributes used to describe men and women in performance evaluations. The study found that, in the absence of objective performance measures, evaluators were more likely to employ gender stereotypes in performance evaluations.⁶⁹³

Figure 5.3. Findings From “Harvard Business Review” Study on Language Used During Military Performance Reviews to Describe Men Versus Language Used to Describe Women



Source: Smith, Rosenstein, & Nikolov, 2018⁶⁹⁴

Performance evaluation comments and ratings remain key drivers of promotion probability in the military. Rater characterizations of performance and potential are the single most important and influential element in promotion board selections. As discussed above, the language and descriptors used in performance evaluations and ratings of Service members are often influenced by gender stereotypes and biases, and such gendered language can negatively affect servicewomen’s promotion selection opportunities. DACOWITS believes recent Military Service efforts to reduce gender bias in promotion boards has helped servicewomen receive more equitable treatment, but more research is necessary to draw formal conclusions.

The Committee also understands that rating subordinates is not an easy task, and raters vary in their skill in characterizing and rating performance. To that end, the Committee recommends incorporating training on writing performance evaluations into all levels of professional development courses for both enlisted personnel and officers. Incorporated in that education process should be a discussion of how gender stereotypes and biases can influence the words used in an evaluation and the ratings assigned. To give greater meaning and impact to that discussion, the Committee also recommends students in these courses participate in mock boards with sample promotion files to more fully comprehend and experience the impact of how evaluation descriptors and ratings can influence their selection decisions.

Rating Scales

Recent studies have highlighted that the design of rating scales have a significant impact on how workers are valued. One study found, when a university changed its faculty rating scale from between 1–10 to between 1–6, women’s scores significantly improved and equalized the rate of men and women who received perfect scores around 41 percent. The researchers theorized that narrower rating scales may present “fewer opportunities to translate subtle differences [such as gender stereotypes] in perceived performance ... into numerical differences in ratings.”⁶⁹⁵ Other studies indicate that “quantitative performance ratings are not objective and are riddled with gender bias.”⁶⁹⁶ Men consistently receive higher performance ratings than women even in circumstances when their respective qualifications and behaviors are identical. The same result occurs when performance evaluations are rated by artificial intelligence algorithms.⁶⁹⁷

The Committee recognizes the Military Services differ in the design of their performance evaluation rating systems. However, the Committee recommends DoD and the Military Services continuously evaluate and adjust rating systems as needed to ensure the evaluations are objective and rid of gender bias.

Anonymizing Performance Evaluations by Removing Gender Indicators

Finally, DACOWITS acknowledges most of the Military Services have implemented efforts to remove names and pronouns from some promotion board documentation to mitigate the potential for gender bias. Key findings from the literature on the impact of removing names and pronouns from the application and evaluation processes in other industries include the following:

- Removing gender from applications to work on a Hubble Telescope research project resulted in female scientists being selected for hire at higher rates than before applications were anonymized, rising from 18 percent to 23 percent of accepted applicants when names were removed, and from 23 percent to 30 percent when applications were fully anonymized.⁶⁹⁸
- Anonymizing applications has been found to disadvantage women in some contexts, advantage them in others, and make no difference in others. For example, one study found, when gender indicators were removed from applications, hiring managers sought implicit gender cues in the materials available for their review.⁶⁹⁹

It is unclear whether full anonymization of promotion records would be an effective solution to mitigating gender bias in promotion boards. However, some research suggests it may provide some improvement. Still, even if promotion records are anonymized, all records within a promotion selection folder would also need to be anonymized (e.g., award citations, personnel information) to keep promotion board members from noticing gender cues in these additional documents. This stricter anonymization standard is not currently practiced by any of the Military Services. However, the Army is developing a software program, programmed for testing in FY23–FY24, that will extract all gender references from selection

board information.⁷⁰⁰ The effectiveness of this program at scrubbing gendered information, especially for senior Service members who may have 20 or more years of records, remains unknown. Even if all gender indicators are anonymized in materials available to promotion board members, the person evaluating the Service member will still know their gender, which could influence the language used in evaluations. Therefore, the Committee believes the solution to the issue of gender bias in promotions requires a multipronged approach.

The Navy briefed the Committee at its December 2022 Quarterly Business Meeting that DoD had commissioned a study by the Institute of Defense Analysis focused on bias removals from promotion boards.⁷⁰¹ Results from the study are expected in late 2023. The Committee believes this study may provide additional insight into the value or the efficacy of removing gender indicators from promotion board materials.

Summary

DACOWITS acknowledges the many initiatives and policy improvements the DoD and Military Services have undertaken in recent years and understands gender bias is a cultural phenomenon that must be overcome through education, good leadership, and the opportunity to witness successful female role models. However, immediate initiatives may speed the process of improving career progression for women and disruptive corrosive cultural remnants of gender bias and discrimination. To that end, the Committee recommends the SecDef should conduct a comprehensive review of promotion rates of Service members from the last 10 years as well as additional studies and research on eliminating gender indicators in promotion board records. DACOWITS also recommends that the SecDef should provide education, in appropriate professional development courses, to prevent and reduce gender bias in performance evaluations and promotion boards.



Friends change the rank on (center) 18th Medical Command (Deployment Support) Commander Maj. Gen. Paula Lodi's shirt during her promotion ceremony at Fort Shafter, Hawaii, Feb. 10, 2023. Lodi became the first female Medical Service Corps active duty 2-star general. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Hughes)



Illinois Army National Guard Spc. Daisy La Rosa learns how to put a muzzle on Laska, a military working dog, from Army Cpl. Dulce Turrubiarres during training at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, Sept. 22, 2023. (Photo by Army Sergeant 1st Class Shane Hamann, National Guard).

Appendix A

DACOWITS Charter

Appendix A. DACOWITS Charter

Committee’s Official Designation: The committee will be known as the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS).

Authority: The Secretary of Defense, in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) (5 U.S.C., Appendix) and 41 C.F.R. § 102-3.50(d), established this discretionary advisory committee.

Objectives and Scope of Activities: The DACOWITS provides advice and recommendations on matters relating to women in the Armed Forces of the United States, as set out in paragraph four below.

Description of Duties: The DACOWITS shall provide independent advice and recommendations on matters and policies relating to recruitment, retention, employment, integration, well-being, and treatment of servicewomen in the Armed Forces of the United States. All DACOWITS work, including subcommittee work, will be in response to written terms of reference (ToR) or taskings approved by the Secretary of Defense or the Deputy Secretary of Defense (“the DoD Appointing Authority”), or the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) unless otherwise provided by statute or Presidential directive.

Agency or Official to Whom the Committee Reports: The DACOWITS reports to the Secretary of Defense and the Deputy Secretary of Defense, through the USD(P&R), who may act upon the DACOWITS’ advice and recommendations in accordance with Department of Defense (DoD) policy and procedures.

Support: The DoD, through the Office of the USD(P&R), provides support for the DACOWITS’ functions and ensures compliance with requirements of the FACA, the Government in the Sunshine Act (‘the Sunshine Act’) (5 U.S.C. § 552b), governing Federal statutes and regulations, and DoD policy and procedures.

Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years: The estimated annual operating cost for the DACOWITS, to include travel, meetings, and contract support, is approximately \$1,200,000. The estimated annual personnel cost to the DoD is 4.0 full-time equivalents.

Designated Federal Officer: The DACOWITS’ Designated Federal Officer (DFO) shall be a full-time or permanent part-time DoD Federal civilian officer or employee, or active duty member of the Armed Forces, designated in accordance with DoD policy and procedures.

The DACOWITS’ DFO is required to attend all DACOWITS and subcommittee meetings for the entirety of each meeting. However, in the absence of the DACOWITS DFO, a properly approved Alternate DFO, duly designated to the DACOWITS in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, shall attend the entire duration of all DACOWITS and subcommittee meetings.

The DFO, or the Alternate DFO, calls all DACOWITS and subcommittee meetings; prepares and approves all meeting agendas; and adjourns any meeting when the DFO, or the Alternate DFO, determines adjournment to be in the public interest or required by governing regulations or DoD policy and procedures.

Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings: The DACOWITS shall meet at the call of the DACOWITS' DFO, in consultation with the DACOWITS' Chair and the USD(P&R). The estimated number of meetings is four per year.

Duration: The need for this advisory function is on a continuing basis; however, it is subject to renewal every two years.

Termination: The DACOWITS shall terminate upon completion of its mission or two years from the date this charter is filed, whichever is sooner, unless the DoD renews the DACOWITS in accordance with DoD policy and procedures.

Membership and Designation: The DACOWITS shall be composed of no more than 20 members who have prior experience in the military or with women-related workforce issues. Members will include leaders with diverse and inclusive backgrounds, experience, and thought relating to the recruitment and retention, the employment and integration, and the well-being and treatment of women. These members will come from varied backgrounds including academia, industry, private and public sectors, and other professions.

The appointment of DACOWITS members shall be approved by the DoD Appointing Authority for a term of service of one-to-four years, with annual renewals, in accordance with DoD policy and procedures. No member, unless approved by the DoD Appointing Authority, may serve more than two consecutive terms of service on the DACOWITS, to include its subcommittees, or serve on more than two DoD federal advisory committees at one time. DACOWITS members who are not full-time or permanent part-time Federal civilian officers or employees, or active duty members of the Uniformed Services, shall be appointed as experts or consultants pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 3109 to serve as special government employee (SGE) members. DACOWITS members who are full-time or permanent part-time Federal civilian officers or employees, or active duty members of the Uniformed Services, shall be appointed pursuant to 41 C.F.R. § 102-3.130(a) to serve as RGE members. The DoD Appointing Authority shall appoint the DACOWITS' leadership from among the membership previously appointed in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, for a term of service of one-to-two years, with annual renewal, not to exceed the member's approved appointment.

All members of the DACOWITS are appointed to exercise their own best judgment, without representing any particular point of view, and to discuss and deliberate and in a manner that is free from conflict of interest. With the exception of reimbursement of official DACOWITS-related travel and per diem, DACOWITS members serve without compensation.

Subcommittees: The DoD, when necessary and consistent with the DACOWITS' mission and DoD policy and procedures, may establish subcommittees, task forces, or working groups ("subcommittees") to support the DACOWITS. Establishment of subcommittees shall be based

upon a written determination, to include terms of reference (ToR), by the DoD Appointing Authority or the USD(P&R), as the DACOWITS's Sponsor. All subcommittees operate in accordance with the FACA, the Sunshine Act, governing Federal statutes and regulations, and DoD policy and procedures. If a subcommittee duration, as determined by the ToR, exceeds that of the DACOWITS and the DoD does not renew the DACOWITS, then the subcommittee shall terminate when the DACOWITS does.

Individual appointments to serve on DACOWITS subcommittees, which are separate and distinct from appointments to the DACOWITS itself, shall be approved by the DoD Appointing Authority for a term of service of one-to-four years, with annual renewals, in accordance DoD policy and procedures. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms of service on the subcommittee, unless approved by the DoD Appointing Authority. Subcommittee members who are not full-time or permanent part-time Federal civilian officers or employees, or active duty members of the Uniformed Services, shall be appointed as experts or consultants pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 3109 to serve as SGE members. Subcommittee members who are full-time or permanent part-time Federal civilian officers or employees, or active duty members of the Uniformed Services, shall be appointed pursuant to 41 C.F.R. § 102-3.130(a) to serve as RGE members. The DoD Appointing Authorities shall appoint the subcommittee leadership from among the membership previously approved to serve on the subcommittee in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, for a one-to-two year term of service, with annual renewal, which will not exceed the member's approved appointment.

Each subcommittee member is appointed to exercise their own best judgement on behalf of the DoD, without representing any particular point of view, and to discuss and deliberate in a manner that is free from conflicts of interest. With the exception of reimbursement of travel and per diem related to the DACOWITS or its subcommittees, subcommittee members shall serve without compensation.

Subcommittees shall not work independently of the DACOWITS and shall report all of their advice and recommendations solely to the DACOWITS for its thorough deliberation and discussion at a properly noticed and open DACOWITS meeting. Subcommittees have no authority to make decisions and recommendations, orally or in writing, on behalf of the DACOWITS. Neither the subcommittee nor any of its members may provide updates or report directly to the DoD or any Federal officer or employee, wither orally or in writing. If a majority of DACOWITS members are appointed to a particular subcommittee, then that subcommittee may be required to operate pursuant to the same notice and openness requirements of FACA which govern the DACOWITS' operations.

The USD(P&R) has established three permanent subcommittees. While the number of individuals appointed to each subcommittee may vary, as determined by the DoD Appointing

Authority, no individual subcommittee shall have more than 15 members. The three permanent subcommittees are:

1. **Employment and Integration**—This subcommittee, when tasked in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, will examine the Military Services' gender integration efforts to determine whether existing policies and programs inhibit the full integration of servicewomen into all military career fields, and identify innovative solutions as necessary. In addition, the subcommittee will review occupational policies and programs that may limit servicewomen's career progression. Members shall have experience in the military or with women-related workforce issues, specifically pertaining to the employment and integration of women serving in the Armed Forces.
2. **Recruitment and Retention**—This subcommittee, when tasked in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, will examine current military recruitment and retention programs to determine whether existing policies and procedures inhibit the recruitment and retention of servicewomen. In addition, the subcommittee will identify innovative solutions to increase women's propensity to serve and further expand opportunities for women to continue serving. Members shall have experience in the military or with women-related workforce issues, specifically pertaining to recruitment and retention.
3. **Well-Being and Treatment**—This subcommittee, when tasked in accordance with DoD policy and procedures, will examine whether existing DoD and Military Services institutional policies and procedures safeguard the well-being and treatment of servicewomen, and provide recommended policy changes as gaps are identified. Members shall have experience in the military or with women-related workforce issues, specifically pertaining to well-being and treatment.

Recordkeeping: The records of the DACOWITS and its subcommittees shall be managed in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2, Federal Advisory Committee Records, or other approved agency records disposition schedule, as well as the appropriate DoD policies and procedures. These records will be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act of 1966 (5 U.S.C. § 552, as amended).

Filing Date: April 22, 2022



U.S. Navy Recruit Training Command's Pass in Review in Great Lakes, Illinois, Mar. 24, 2023. More than 40,000 recruits train annually at the Navy's only boot camp (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Christopher M. O'Grady)

Appendix B

Biographies of DACOWITS Members

Appendix B. Biographies of DACOWITS Members

Ms. Shelly O’Neill Stoneman (Chair)

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chair
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Senior Vice President of Government Affairs, Lockheed Martin ▪ Board Director, Leadership Council of Women in National Security (LCWINS) ▪ Former Senior Vice President for Government Relations, BAE Systems, Inc.
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special Assistant to the Secretary of Defense (White House Liaison) ▪ Special Assistant to the President for Legislative Affairs, The White House ▪ Liaison to the House of Representatives on all Defense and National Security Issues, 2008 Obama/Biden Presidential Transition Team ▪ Deputy Chief of Staff and Appropriations Associate Staff for Member of Congress on House Appropriations Committee’s Subcommittee on Defense ▪ Married to Army Infantry Veteran
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master of Arts, National Security Studies, Naval War College ▪ Master of Arts, International Relations, University of Oklahoma (Program in Europe) ▪ Harvard University Business School Executive Education, Finance for Senior Executives
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BAE Systems, Business Leader Award—“Innovating for Success” (2018) ▪ BAE Systems, Business Leader Award—“Exceeding Customer Expectations” (2018) ▪ BAE Systems, Business Leader Award—“Innovating for Success” (2015) ▪ Department of Defense Outstanding Public Service Award (2013) ▪ Council on Foreign Relations, Lifetime Member ▪ Council on Foreign Relations, Term Member ▪ “Emerging Leader,” Stennis Center for Public Service (2008)

Vice Admiral (Retired) Robin R. Braun, USN (Vice Chair)

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chair
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vice Chairman, Naval Aviation Museum Foundation, Pensacola, Florida Treasurer, Northern Arizona University Foundation Pilot, FedEx Corporation (Retired) Board of Directors, Identiv, Inc. (Retired)
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired from the U.S. Navy in 2016 with 37 years of Active and Reserve service Last assignment: Chief of Navy Reserve and Commander, Navy Reserve Force Naval Aviator; first woman to command a Navy Reserve aviation squadron
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master's, Public Administration, University of Washington Bachelor of Science, Northern Arizona University Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters, Northern Arizona University Honorary Doctorate of Laws, Concordia University of Chicago
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguished Service Medal Defense Superior Service Medal Legion of Merit (three awards) Honorary Chief Petty Officer Daughters of the American Revolution Patriot Award 2015 Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award, Northern Arizona University

Colonel (Retired) Nancy P. Anderson, USMC

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment and Integration Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired ▪ Served as Interim CEO, Westmoreland Cultural Trust (2019) ▪ Volunteer ▪ Excelsa Health Westmoreland Hospital for 20 years ▪ Westmoreland Hospital Auxiliary (board member for 10 years and past president) ▪ YWCA of Westmoreland County (board member for 8 years and board treasurer for 2 years) ▪ YWCA Thrift Shop Volunteer (for 8 years) ▪ American Red Cross ▪ Westmoreland County Historical Society volunteer and cochair of multimillion dollar capital campaign ▪ Westmoreland County Food Bank ▪ Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church ▪ Military Officers Association of America (MOAA) (at the local/chapter and state/ council levels)
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired Colonel, U.S. Marine Corps
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master of Science, Naval Postgraduate School (1985) ▪ Naval War College (1988) ▪ National War College (1995)
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Women in NAACP Community Service Award (2009) ▪ YWCA President's Award for significant volunteer service (2011) ▪ Red Cross Carol Navarre Memorial Award for outstanding volunteerism (2011) ▪ National Board Member, MOAA (2009–2014) ▪ Secretary, MOAA Pennsylvania Council of Chapters (2013–present) ▪ MOAA Leadership Award for exceptional volunteer contributions (2019) ▪ Westmoreland County Lifetime of Service celebration, with husband, Charles, with proclamations from the Pennsylvania Senate and House of Representatives and the Westmoreland County Commissioners (2019)

Captain (Retired) Kenneth J. Barrett, USN

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Former Global Chief Diversity Officer, General Motors ▪ Board of Trustees, St. John's High School, Shrewsbury MA
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired from the Navy in 2012 after 28 years ▪ Surface Warfare Officer, Diversity Director for the U.S. Navy ▪ Last assignment: Acting Director, Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity, OSD
Highest Education (Military/ Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Federal executive fellow, Harvard University, Olin Institute for Strategic Studies ▪ Executive Master of Business Administration, Naval Post Graduate School ▪ Master of Arts, National Security Affairs and Strategic Studies, Naval War College ▪ Bachelor of Arts, Political Science, College of the Holy Cross
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Defense Superior Service Medal ▪ Legion of Merit ▪ Defense Meritorious Service Medal ▪ Meritorious Service Medal (two gold stars) ▪ Ted Childs Life Work Excellence Award ▪ Global Diversity and Inclusion Leadership Award, World Diversity and Inclusion Congress

Dr. (Captain Retired) Catherine W. Cox, USNR

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Associate Professor, George Washington University School of Nursing
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired U.S. Navy Nurse
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fellow, American Academy of Nursing (2020) ▪ Fellow, Academy of Nursing Education (2022) ▪ Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two) (2005, 2008) ▪ Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (1998) ▪ Meritorious Unit Commendation Medal (three) ▪ National Defense Service Medal (two) ▪ Global War on Terrorism Service Medal ▪ Navy and Marine Corps Overseas Service Ribbon ▪ Armed Forces Reserve Medal with the “M” and Hourglass Devices

Dr. Trudi C. Ferguson

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emeritus Professor, University of Southern California, Marshall School of Business ▪ Chair, LA's BEST Governing Board ▪ Previous Adjunct Professor, Stanford University; University of California, Los Angeles; Antioch; Loyola Marymount ▪ Previous Dean, National Training Laboratories
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Organizational Development with OSD, U.S. Army Ground Warfare
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Doctor of Philosophy, Business Administration Behavioral Science, University of California, Los Angeles ▪ Master of Arts, Dance, California State University ▪ Bachelor of Arts, History, University of California, Berkeley

Command Master Chief (Retired) Octavia D. Harris, USN

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment and Integration Subcommittee Chair
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Committee Member, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Advisory Committee for Women Services ▪ Committee Member, NAACP Armed Services and Veterans Affairs ▪ Former Chair, Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) ▪ Texas Ambassador for the Women in Military Service for America Memorial (Women’s Memorial) ▪ Member, San Antonio, Texas, Women Veterans Association ▪ Disabled American Veterans (DAV), active in local chapter/state chapter and National ▪ Military and Veteran Women Military Consultant on transition support (volunteer)
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired from the U.S. Navy in 2012, after 30 years ▪ Program Manager Naval Medical Center, San Diego Comprehensive Advanced Restorative Effort (CARE program) managing care and “warm handoffs” from DoD to VA care of the DoD’s most critically injured service members to VA advanced care
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master of Science, Operations Management, specializing and certified in Healthcare and Safety Management, University of Arkansas
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal (three) ▪ Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (two) ▪ Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (three) ▪ Other medals and campaign awards recognizing overseas service and deployments to the Mediterranean, South China Sea, Persian Gulf/Middle Eastern region, Horn of Africa, and other parts of the world in support of Global War on Terrorism ▪ Other various operations and unit achievements, including Battle Efficiency

Ms. Robin S. Kelleher

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Employment and Integration Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ President/CEO, Hope For The Warriors ▪ Board Member, Military Family and Veterans Service Organizations of America (MFVSOA) ▪ Member, Virginia Chamber's Military & Veterans Affairs Executive Committee ▪ Member, Washington Board of Trade and serves on the Membership Committee and Health & Wellness Solution Group ▪ Board Member, Mystic Schooners
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Former Military Spouse ▪ Military Child/Grandchild
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bachelor of Arts, Business/Economics at Randolph-Macon College ▪ Specialized Education in Leadership from Duke Fuqua School of Business ▪ Specialized Education in the Psychology of Leadership from Cornell University

Ms. Marquette J. Leveque, USN Veteran

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Employment and Integration Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Group Marketing Manager, Boston Scientific
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ U.S. Navy, Submarine Officer (2010–2018)
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Master of Engineering Management, Old Dominion University ■ Bachelor of Science, Aerospace Engineering, United States Naval Academy
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One of the first female Submarine Officers ■ Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (three) ■ Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medal (two)

Lieutenant General (Retired) Kevin W. Mangum, USA

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee Chair
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Senior Vice President, Teamalytics Managing Partner, KW Mangum & Associates, LLC Member of Board of Directors, Sentient Science Corporation Member of Board of Directors, Night Stalker Foundation (501c3 charitable foundation)
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired from the Army in 2017 after 35 years of service Last assignment: Deputy Commanding General/Chief of Staff, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Fort Eustis, Virginia
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master of Business Administration, Webster University U.S. Army War College Fellow, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University Bachelor of Science, United States Military Academy
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster Distinguished Flying Cross American Legion Valor Award 2019 Inductee, U.S. Aviation Army Hall of Fame

Brigadier General (Retired) Jarris J. Sanborn, USAF

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-Being and Treatment Subcommittee Chair
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VP/General Counsel, Falcon Foundation ▪ Trustee, The Air Force Judge Advocate General's School Foundation Inc. ▪ Advisory Director, Center for National Security and Human Rights Law, Chicago-Kent College of Law, Illinois Institute of Technology ▪ General Counsel and Associate Executive Director, American Bar Association, 2011–2019
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired from U.S. Air Force after 33 years of service ▪ Last assignment: Dual-hatted Staff Judge Advocate of Air Mobility Command and Chief Counsel, U.S. Transportation Command ▪ Previous: First Staff Judge Advocate of U.S. Northern Command ▪ Previous: Triple-hatted Staff Judge Advocate of Air Force Space Command, U.S. Space Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD)
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Juris Doctor, Magna Cum Laude, Creighton University School of Law ▪ Master of Science, National Security Studies, National War College ▪ Bachelor of Arts, Magna Cum Laude and Phi Beta Kappa, Psychology, Randolph-Macon Woman's College
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Distinguished Service Medal ▪ Defense Superior Service Medal with oak leaf cluster ▪ Legion of Merit ▪ Bronze Star Medal ▪ 1985 Air Force Outstanding Young Judge Advocate of the Year ▪ 1985 Younger Federal Lawyer of the Year Award, Federal Bar Association ▪ DoD Inspector General: Led Congressionally mandated review of Navy Post-Trial Review Processes—awarded Best Project of Year

Honorable (Colonel Retired) Dawn E.B. Scholz, USAF


DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comparative Systems subcommittee member of Congressionally directed Response Systems to Adult Sexual Assault Crimes Panel ▪ Three-time Federal Judge: U.S. Air Force, Social Security Administration, and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ▪ Member of the International and National Association of Women Judges
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Retired from the U.S. Air Force in 2010 after 30 years ▪ Last assignment: Staff Judge Advocate, Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, Hickam Air Force Base
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Air War College ▪ Graduate Law Degree, The George Washington University School of Law ▪ Juris Doctorate, University of Oklahoma School of Law ▪ Bachelor of Arts, University of Miami, Florida
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters ▪ Defense Meritorious Service Medal ▪ Lance Sijan Award for Leadership ▪ Air Force General Counsel's Award ▪ Department of Justice Commendation for Outstanding Performance

Brigadier General (Retired) Allyson R. Solomon, ANG

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment and Retention Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> President, National Guard Youth Foundation Serves on the Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Council for Strong America, Armed Forces Benefits Association board of directors
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retired from the Air National Guard in 2015 after nearly 36 years Last assignment: Assistant Adjutant General for Air, Maryland Air National Guard
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master of Arts, Public Administration, Auburn University at Montgomery Bachelor of Arts, Business Administration, Loyola University
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinguished Service Medal State of Maryland Distinguished Service Cross Maryland Women's Hall of Fame

Dr. (Colonel Retired) Samantha A. Weeks, USAF

DACOWITS Position	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Employment and Integration Subcommittee Member
Other Positions/ Employment/ Community Involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Chief Transformation Officer, Shift4 Payments ■ Mission Director, Science & Research, Polaris Dawn
Prior Military Service or Affiliation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Retired from the Air Force in 2020 after 23 years of service ■ United States Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron (USAFADS), Thunderbirds, first female solo demonstration pilot ■ Last assignment: Commander, 14th Flying Training Wing, Columbus Air Force Base, Mississippi
Highest Education (Military/Civilian)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Executive and Professional Coaching Certificate, University of Texas, Dallas, 2022 ■ Doctor of Philosophy, Military Strategy, Air University, 2019 ■ Master of Science, Military Strategy, Air University, 2011 ■ Master of Human Relations, University of Oklahoma, 2005 ■ Bachelor of Science, Biology, United States Air Force Academy, 1997
Achievements/ Awards/ Recognition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ International Women's Forum (IWF) Fellow, 2019–2022 ■ Robert J. Collier Trophy recipient, National Aeronautical Association, 2018 ■ Defense Superior Service Medal ■ Legion of Merit

A photograph of Air Force Staff Sgt. Quinn Ball, a woman in a camouflage uniform, wearing large green headphones. She is looking upwards and to the right, focused on her work. Her name tag reads "BALL". She is standing next to a red vertical support structure with the words "REMOVE BEFORE" printed on it. The background shows the interior of an aircraft fuselage.

Air Force Staff Sgt. Quinn Ball secures an AIM-9X Sidewinder missile for an F-35A Lightning II during a weapons load competition at Luke Air Force Base, Ariz., Oct. 6, 2023. (U.S. Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Katelynn Jackson)

Appendix C

Research Methodology

Appendix C. Research Methodology

This appendix provides an overview of DACOWITS’ research methodology. The Committee normally conducts its research on a yearlong research cycle; however, the Committee’s work on the 2023 study topics began one quarter earlier than the normal research cycle as a result of the timing of its restoration.

Study Topic Development

The current research cycle began in June 2022. DACOWITS gathered input on study topics from DoD, the Military Services, Service members, and the general public. The Committee analyzed the study topic inputs and identified potential areas of concern, which were briefed to USD(P&R). The SecDef, via USD(P&R), designated the Committee study topics for DACOWITS to examine for 2023 based on the synthesis of study topic inputs, current issues affecting servicewomen, and lingering concerns carried over from previous research cycles.

Following the receipt of the approved study topics, the Committee developed clear, testable research questions to guide its work on these topics. The Committee then identified the most appropriate methodologies to address each research question (e.g., soliciting written or verbal Service input through RFIs, performing literature reviews). This methodology information was entered into a research plan matrix and revisited quarterly to address new information obtained during the Committee’s business meetings and track new questions that arose. This research plan formed the basis for the development of the RFIs the Committee distributed in preparation for each of its quarterly business meetings (see Table C.1).

Table C.1. DACOWITS 2023 Study Topics and Data Sources

Study Topic	Data Sources	
	Responses to RFIs	Other Sources
Recruitment and Retention		
Recruitment Initiatives to Increase Women’s Propensity to Serve	●	●
Retention Initiatives for Servicewomen	●	●
Employment and Integration		
Gender Integration	●	●
Women in Aviation	●	●
Physical Fitness Standards	●	●

Study Topic	Data Sources	
	Responses to RFIs	Other Sources
Well-Being and Treatment		
Pregnancy in the Military	●	●
Gender Discrimination	●	●

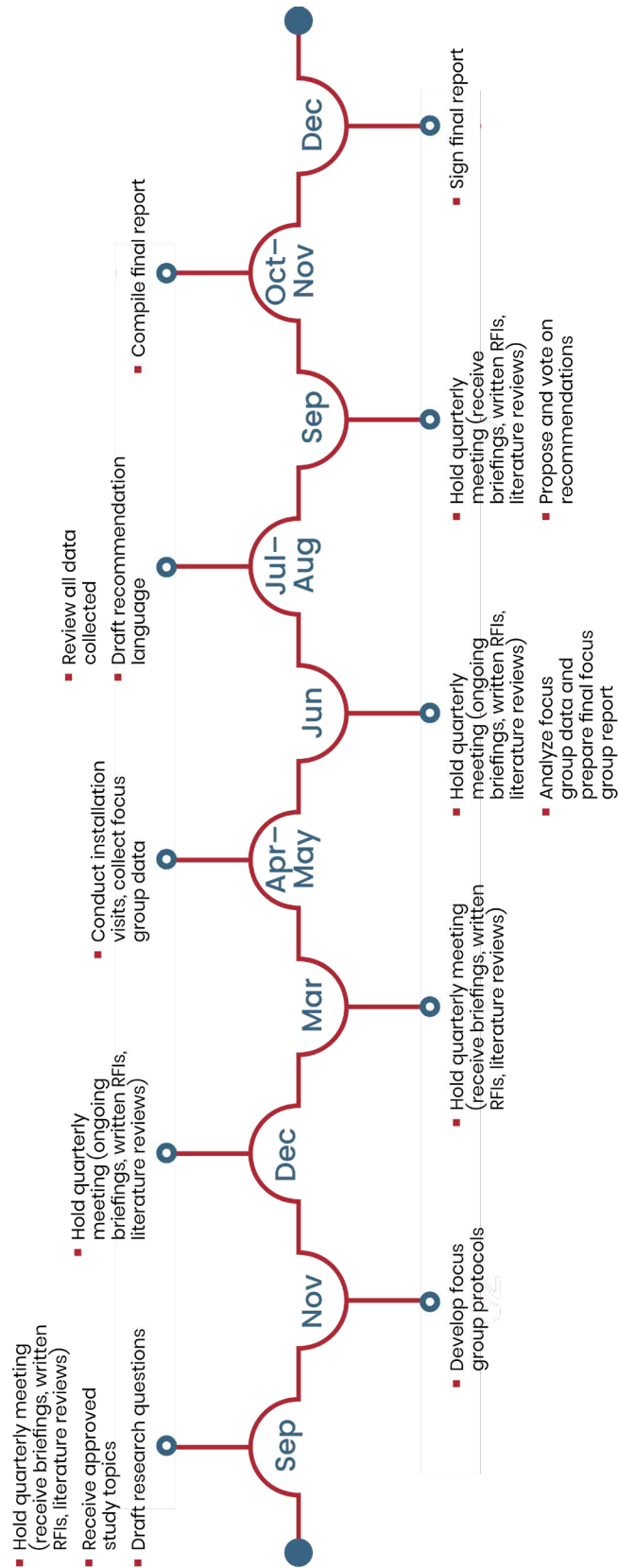
Note: RFI = request for information

As the timeline presented in Figure C.1 shows, data collection activities progressed throughout the research year after the Committee developed its study plan. As noted previously, the Committee received the 2023 study topics one quarter earlier than normal (in June instead of September).



From the left, U.S. Space Force Alexander Colla, 8th Combat Training Squadron military satellite communications flight commander, administers the oath of enlistment to Spc. 4 Mark Casner, 8th CTS staff evaluator, and Sgt. Jessica Hall, 8th CTS staff instructor, while a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook hovers behind them at Training Area – 51 on Fort Carson, Colorado, Oct. 24, 2023. Seven Guardians reenlisted into the Space Force during a partnership effort with the 4th Combat Aviation Brigade, 4th Infantry Division. (U.S. Space Force photo by Airman 1st Class Cody Friend)

Figure C.1. Standard Timeline of Key Research Activities for DACOWITS Research Lifecycle



Note: RFI = request for information

Focus Groups

Between the September 2022 and December 2022 meetings, the Committee worked with its research contractor to develop preliminary and final focus group protocols and mini-surveys to administer to focus group participants.

The Committee collected qualitative data during site visits to eight military installations^{xii} representing four of the five DoD Service branches (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force, excluding Space Force)—from April to May 2023 (see Appendix D for the full list of installations visited and dates). During the focus groups at these sites, the Committee administered focus group protocols on three topics:

- Recruitment and Retention
- Physical Fitness and Body Composition Assessments
- Pregnancy and Gender Discrimination

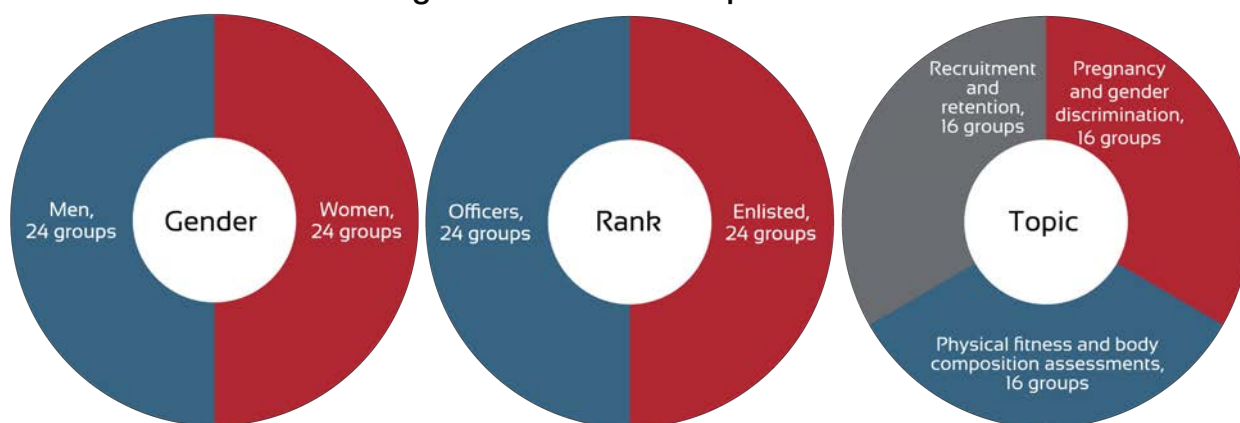
Each focus group focused on one of the three protocols to ensure each study topic was addressed by each Service, gender, and military pay grade group. Each focus group lasted 90 minutes. Committee members facilitated the focus group discussions to elicit and assess Service members' views, attitudes, and experiences about the study topics. The Committee also distributed mini-surveys to participants to determine the demographic composition of the groups. All the data collection instruments were reviewed and approved by the Office of

Management and Budget (Control No. 0704-0656) and considered exempt from institutional review board requirements by the Defense Human Resources Activity Component Office of Human Research Protection.

DACOWITS conducted 48 focus groups in 2023. Of the 48 groups, 24 were held with men, and 24 were held with women. Twenty-four of the groups were conducted with enlisted personnel (pay grades E3–E8), and 24 were held with officers (pay grades O1–O5 and W1–W5). There were 481 participants with an average of 10 participants per session. DACOWITS addressed the topic of recruitment and retention in 16 groups, physical fitness and body composition assessments in 16 groups, and pregnancy and gender discrimination in 16 groups. Each installation was responsible for recruiting focus group participants from the demographic categories specified by DACOWITS (see Figure C.2). The results of these focus groups are posted to the DACOWITS website (<https://dacowits.defense.gov>).⁷⁰²

^{xii} The eight installations were Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty), Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, Camp Lejeune, Fort Benning (now Fort Moore), Moody Air Force Base, Naval Station Norfolk, Naval Air Station Oceana, and Langley Air Force Base.

Figure C.2. Focus Group Breakdown



RFIs

In advance of each quarterly business meeting, DACOWITS prepares RFIs for DoD, the Military Services, and other entities as appropriate. These requests include targeted research questions and the preferred delivery method for each request (i.e., briefing during a quarterly meeting or a written response). The Committee's RFIs take many forms, including requests for data, policy briefs, literature reviews, and status updates.


DACOWITS received responses to RFIs during each of its quarterly business meetings (held in September 2022, December 2022, March 2023, June 2023, and September 2023). The Committee acknowledges each of the Service representatives for the numerous briefings and written responses they developed to respond to DACOWITS' requests. Appendix E presents all the DACOWITS 2023 RFIs and the corresponding responses.

Review of Other Data Sources

Throughout the year, Committee members reviewed data sources in addition to responses to RFIs. DACOWITS Executive Staff prepared research reports and digests of timely news articles for Committee members. The DACOWITS research contractor conducted formal literature reviews on DACOWITS' behalf; these studies included detailed reviews of recent peer-reviewed literature and data on the civilian population and international militaries. The research contractor team also assists DACOWITS by conducting ad hoc data analyses.

Recommendation Development

During the September 2023 and December 2023 quarterly business meeting, the Committee members voted on their recommendations. Members developed these recommendations after thoroughly examining the RFI responses and all other information received and uncovered throughout the year. These recommendations were then compiled into this final report, which the Committee approved and signed.

A woman wearing a green hard hat with a white 'EP' logo, a dark blue uniform, and black gloves is focused on a small electronic component. She has a tattoo on her left forearm. In the background, there is a large, cylindrical buoy light assembly with a lens on top. The setting appears to be the deck of a ship.

Seaman Abigail Phillips tests
buoy lights aboard USCGC
William Tate, October 11, 2023,
while underway in the
Delaware River. (U.S. Coast
Guard photo by Petty
Officer 3rd Class
Carmen Cover)

Appendix D

Installations Visited for 2023 Focus Groups

Appendix D. Installations Visited for 2023 Focus Groups

Service	Installation	State	Date of Site Visit
Army	Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty)	North Carolina	April 12–13, 2023
Marine Corps	Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point	North Carolina	April 17–18, 2023
Marine Corps	Camp Lejeune	North Carolina	April 20–21, 2023
Army	Fort Benning (now Fort Moore)	Georgia	April 24–25, 2023
Air Force	Moody Air Force Base	Georgia	April 27–28, 2023
Navy	Naval Station Norfolk	Virginia	May 1–2, 2023
Navy	Naval Air Station Oceana	Virginia	May 4–5, 2023
Air Force	Langley Air Force Base	Virginia	May 11–12, 2023



Secretary of the Navy Carlos Del Toro promotes U.S. Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Samantha Logsdon, a hospital corpsman with Headquarters and Service Company, Battalion Landing Team 1/8, to the rank of petty officer 2nd class on Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, Oct. 24, 2023. Logsdon joined the Navy in August 2016, looking to pursue her passion of helping people by becoming a corpsman. The 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit's (MEU) investment in individual Marines and Sailors increases the capabilities of the 24th MEU team. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Victoria Hutt)



U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Kalilah Singletary prepares to refuel a Joint-Light Tactical Vehicle during Artillery Relocation Training Program 23.2 at Combined Arms Training Center, Camp Fuji, Japan, July 13, 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Evelyn Doherty)

Appendix E

Requests for Information and Responding Entities

Appendix E. DACOWITS Requests for Information and Responding Entities

This appendix presents a list of DACOWITS' RFIs and the corresponding responses. The list is organized chronologically, presenting the RFI from each quarterly business meeting that was part of the 2023 research year. Due to the Committee's restoration following the Secretary of Defense's Zero-Based Review, DACOWITS' 2023 research included the June and September 2022 business meetings. The September 2022 quarterly business meeting was the first in-person meeting held by DACOWITS since the COVID-19 pandemic. The RFIs are presented exactly as written by the Committee.

June 2022

DACOWITS received two briefings at the June 2022 quarterly business meeting: (1) an overview of the DoD women's health structure, and (2) updates from the DAF's WIT.

DoD Women's Health Structure

Two DoD personnel briefed the Committee about the DoD's women's health structure. This briefing included an overview of the Military Health System (MHS) and the organizational structure of the Health Services Policy and Oversight office within MHS, home of the women's health policy portfolio. The briefers also reviewed current priorities and initiatives for the women's health portfolio and DoD-level working groups focused on women's health. Lastly, the briefers provided information about the Women and Infant Clinical Community in the Defense Health Agency and its women's health initiatives.

Department of the Air Force's Women's Initiative Team

Two Air Force officers briefed the Committee on updates from the WIT, a team of 600 active volunteers working on 54 lines of effort. This briefing reviewed the WIT's 2021 and 2022 initiative wins and discussed the team's current initiatives.

September 2022

RFI 1: Over the last few years, the Military Services have begun developing and implementing creative, tailored marketing content to attract women to join the military. Nevertheless, the Committee continues to observe modest increases in the percentage of women joining the military and consistently lower rates of young women's propensity to serve compared with young men.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Statistics (raw numbers and percentages): Accession rates for the Active and Reserve components, broken down by rank (enlisted and officer), gender, race and ethnicity, spanning the last five years (FY17-21).
- b. Statistics (raw numbers and percentages): Promotion rates for the Active and Reserve components, broken down by rank (enlisted and officer), gender, race and ethnicity, spanning the last five years (FY17-21).
- c. Recruitment target/goals for both women and men, officer and enlisted, Active and Reserve components.
- d. Data on the number of male and female, officer and enlisted recruiters, for both the Active and Reserve components.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 2: The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Current marketing strategies being utilized to attract women (to include racially and ethnically diverse women) into the military. Include specific methods (e.g., events, social media, commercials, games, advertisements, materials, etc.), as well as an analysis of the effectiveness of each in increasing the propensity of women to serve (i.e., the percentage of female recruits increasing), examining the last five years (FY17-21).
- b. Existing policies and procedures used to assess the inclusivity of existing marketing strategies to encourage the recruitment of women and to determine their effectiveness in increasing the propensity of young women to serve.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force (provided a written response), Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 3: In December 2019, the Committee received a briefing from the DoD Office of People Analytics on trends in young women's propensity to serve. The Committee continues to be interested in and concerned about young women's propensity to serve and the attitudes of their key influencers on military service and requests an update on the latest data and trends.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of People Analytics (OPA), via the Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Division, on marketing data and findings regarding young women's propensity to serve and attitudes of their key influencers for the past five years (FY17-21).

Responding Entity: JAMRS, Defense Personnel Analytics Center

RFI 4: The Committee is examining the current retention rates for female servicewomen and understands that the Services conduct exit and retention surveys for separating Service members. The Committee requests an update on the status of these efforts, to include data on reasons for separation, as well as any relevant policy changes.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. When was your Service's exit survey implemented?
- b. What is the response rate for exiting Service members broken down by Active and Reserve components, rank (enlisted and officer), gender, race and ethnicity, and MOS/Rating (community/career field)?
- c. What findings/trends were gleaned from your Service's review of the exit survey review?
- d. What were the top five reasons (in order of frequency) that Service members are choosing to separate from your Service? Differentiate by gender.
- e. What is your Service doing or planning to do with the information ascertained from the exit survey findings?
- f. What were the retention rates for Service members over the past five years (e.g., FY17-21), broken down by Active and Reserve components, rank (enlisted and officer), gender, race and ethnicity, and MOS/Rating (community/career field)?
- g. What were the top reasons cited within the retention surveys that influenced Service members to leave the military? Differentiate by gender.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 5: Military personnel trends continue to reflect that the Military Services face ongoing challenges with the retention of servicewomen, particularly at the mid-grade levels. DACOWITS is assessing the extent to which the Services are identifying and taking action to eliminate the barriers to the retention of servicewomen. In June 2022, the Committee received a briefing from the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Women's Initiatives Team (WIT). DAF WIT is an all-volunteer team with 54 lines of effort and 600 volunteers. DAF WIT's mission is to *"identify barriers to women's service in the Department of the Air Force and Department of Defense that influence and impact women's propensity to serve and advocate to eliminate those arrears through policy change."* This all-volunteer team has accomplished significant progress toward effecting positive change for the female Airmen and Guardians in the areas of convalescent leave for pregnancy loss, Commander accountability for climate, flying while pregnant, postpartum travel allowances for nursing mothers, and temporary duty travel for fertility treatments. DAF WITs current initiatives include child care, Tricare doula shortfalls, reproductive health, and infertility.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, and National Guard on whether your Service has a working group like the DAF WIT, focused on identifying and resolving barriers that impact the retention of servicewomen?

- a. If so, please describe the composition of your organization's working group and outline what issues they have addressed since inception, as well as what policy or regulation changes have been implemented as a result of their efforts? In addition, what impact have these changes had on women's retention? If your Service does not currently have a working group equivalent to the DAF WIT, with an express task and purpose to identify barriers to retaining women, how is your Service identifying barriers to retaining women, how is your Service identifying those issues? Additionally, what is the process Service members can utilize to elevate such issues to senior leadership for resolution?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard (did not respond)

RFI 6: In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) opened all remaining occupations and positions to women with no exceptions. As a result, the Defense Department opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women for the first time. Afterwards, the SecDef directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed Gender Integration Implementation Plans no later than January 1, 2016. Once approved, the Military Services were tasked with executing their plans by April 1, 2016.

The Committee requests an updated briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force to address the following (include women in Special Operations Forces (SOF)):

- a. Adjustments made to the original 2016 Gender Integration Implementation Plans. Provide specific details on these adjustments, if applicable.
- b. Milestones not met in accordance with the originally published plan. Provide the reason for each milestone not being met, if applicable.
- c. Existing limitations that have stalled the progression (e.g., berthing and privacy, combat gear and/or equipment, etc.), if applicable.
- d. Projected timeline for the next 18 months to fully integrate remaining occupations and positions to women.
- e. Current or future initiatives being undertaken to increase female accession and retention in combat occupations and positions (e.g., mentorship and/or sponsorship programs, duty assignments, promotions, Army's "Leader's First" policy, etc.)?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force

RFI 7: The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force on the following:

- a. Data on the number of women (officer and enlisted) currently serving in previously closed combat occupations and positions, for the past six years (i.e., FY16-21), separated by fiscal year. Provide data broken out by MOS/rating and rank, to include women in SOF.

- b. Data on the number of women accessed into the previously closed combat training pipelines since January 1, 2016 (include women in SOF)? Of the women accessed to date, how many completed the training? Additionally, please provide the same statistical information for men.
- c. Data on attrition rates, by gender and category (e.g., failure to meet standards, self-initiated, medical (injury), etc.), from roles previously closed to women from January 1, 2016 to June 30, 2022, separated by fiscal year, to include women in SOF.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force

RFI 8: To better understand why women in aviation (specifically pilots, flight officers, and aircrew) are leaving military service and aviation-related duties, the Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. What is the total number of women (officer and enlisted) serving in aviation, for both the Active and Reserve components? Please provide for data for the following fiscal years: 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021. Provide whole numbers, percent of total community, and a breakdown by component, specialty/MOS, and rank (e.g., E1-E9 and O1-O10).
- b. Have the Services (to include the Reserves) conducted retention studies and/or administered surveys to women in aviation? If so, please provide relevant reports, executive summaries, and/or associated survey findings.
- c. Have the Services (to include the Reserves) conducted exit studies and/or administered exit surveys to women in aviation? If so, please provide relevant reports, executive summaries, and/or associated survey findings.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard (did not respond)

RFI 9: To better understand why women in aviation (specifically pilots, flight officers, and aircrew) are leaving military service and aviation-related duties, the Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. What initiatives have or are the Services (to include the Reserves) implementing to attract and recruit women into aviation?
- b. Are there initiatives being implemented to attract and recruit women from underrepresented communities? What associated policies and/or programs exist or are being developed to support the recruitment of women into aviation, to include underrepresented communities?

- c. What initiatives have or are the Services (to include the Reserves) implementing to retain women in aviation? What associated policies and/or programs exist or are being developed to support the retention of women in aviation throughout the Services (to include the Reserves)?
- d. What have or are the Services (to include the Reserves) doing to accommodate specific female fitment for flight gear and uniforms, to include accommodating gender specific physiological requirements? Provide the current state of these efforts as well as future plans to further develop and/or improve options for women in aviation.
- e. What have or are the Services (to include the Reserves) doing to ensure flight gear and flight uniforms are accessible to women, to include accommodating gender specific physiological requirements? Provide the current state of these efforts as well as future plans to further develop and/or improve options for women in aviation.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 10: In 2016, the Committee recommended that the “*Secretary of Defense should require a complete review and update of the 2002 DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures (DoDI 1308.3) with the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen.*” Following up in 2019, the Committee recommended that the “Secretary of Defense should conduct a comprehensive, scientific review of height and weight standards as well as body fat measurement techniques and use the findings as a baseline for setting a Department-wide standard for measurement and acceptable levels.” In 2020, the Defense Department published a revised DoDI 1308.3.

The Committee requests a written response from the Health Affairs on the physiological science and studies utilized to revise the instruction’s requirements and scoring of each of the Service’s physical readiness test(s) and body composition requirements.

Responding Entity: Health Affairs

RFI 11: The Committee continues to be concerned about the persistence of negative attitudes toward pregnancy and pregnant servicewomen in the military and the fact that their career progression may be adversely impacted by such attitudes. The DoD Military Equal Opportunity Program instruction (DoDI 1350.02) was revised in September 2020 to include pregnancy as a form of prohibited discrimination. Additionally, the Secretary of Defense’s *Career Enhancement of Pregnant U.S. Service Members* memorandum to the Services (dated November 3, 2020) directed a review of all Service directives, policies, and instructions not later than December 1, 2020, and a follow-on briefing of actions taken to implement the direction given by the Secretary to eliminate unnecessary obstacles and limitations on career development or progression of pregnant servicewomen. The Committee will examine pregnancy discrimination in the Services and, to that end, is interested in learning about Service actions, education, and other initiatives to eliminate pregnancy discrimination and to address the cultural bias and stigma that reportedly persists.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and National Guard identifying initiatives and actions, anticipated or taken, to affect the Secretary's direction in the November 3, 2020, memorandum. In your responses, please address the following:

- a. All Service actions taken or anticipated to comply with the SecDef's direction, to include legislative changes made or proposed, and the estimated time for implementation.
- b. Please provide a copy of the follow-on briefing provided to the SecDef pursuant to his November 2020 memorandum.
- c. How will the Services monitor, track, and enforce policy compliance?
- d. When will/did training begin to educate Service members that pregnancy discrimination is prohibited and on how to address pregnancy in their units? What audiences will be offered this training? Does this training include how to prevent and mitigate negative attitudes and bias toward pregnant and postpartum servicewomen?
- e. Does your Service have any measures in place to track career progression and promotion of pregnant and postpartum servicewomen? If so, what are they? What are the trends?
- f. Has your Service conducted or commissioned any surveys, studies, or taken other measures to solicit feedback from servicewomen about workplace and career experiences as a result of their pregnancy and/or postpartum leave and/or breastfeeding/lactation needs? If so, what were the key findings?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, National Guard

RFI 12: The Committee is concerned about the medical and mental health needs of pregnant servicewomen who experience an abortion, miscarriage (i.e., spontaneous abortion), still birth, or death of newborn after birth.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard, as well as the Health Affairs and the Defense Health Agency identifying:

- a. What medical, mental health, and other support and leave opportunities are provided to servicewomen who experience an abortion, miscarriage (i.e., spontaneous abortion), still birth, or death of newborn after birth?
- b. What directives, regulations, and policies address/provide for such care and leave?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard (did not respond), Health Affairs and Defense Health Agency

RFI 13: The Committee is interested in information the Military Services may have regarding the impact of pregnancy on retention and career advancement of servicewomen.

The committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard addressing the following:

- a. What complaint channels are or will be available to Service members to report violations of the pregnancy discrimination policy, and how will complaining Service members be protected from retaliation?
- b. Number of complaints your Service has received in the last three (or more) fiscal years - by number, time in service, and percentage of all servicewomen - that report adverse actions, treatment or career impact related to pregnancy (to include childbirth/caregiver leave utilization, lactation accommodations, postpartum health conditions, etc.), as well as survey information/findings that report adverse pregnancy-related impacts or treatment.
- c. Statistics/exit survey data/other reflecting the number of servicewomen over the last three years, who have separated from the military for reasons related to pregnancy discrimination - by number, time in service, and percentage of all servicewomen.
- a. Policies regarding female cadets/midshipmen at the Military Service Academies in the event they become pregnant. Are they required to resign or give up their children for adoption? May they continue their studies during the term of their pregnancy? What are the policies for male cadets who father children? Are any policy changes being considered? How many female cadets have been affected by these policies in the last five years? How many resigned from service?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 14: The Committee understands that there may be valid health or other reasons why servicewomen may be unable to continue work in their primary career field both during and after pregnancy. However, the Committee is concerned about the manner in which such work reassignments are determined and implemented, particularly when specialty-wide occupational reassignments are mandated. The Committee is also interested in the current policies outlining the physical fitness testing requirements applicable to pregnant or postpartum servicewomen.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard addressing the following:

- a. How does your Service make reassignment determinations when servicewomen must be temporarily reassigned to other duties due to pregnancy, regardless of whether for individual or occupational-wide profile reasons? Are meaningful assignments developed to ensure best utilization of servicewomen's skills? Do servicewomen have the opportunity to provide input on such reassignments? May servicewomen request waivers or the opportunity to continue working in their in their primary career specialty? Who within the command has decision authority for such reassignments?

- b. What is your Service's pregnancy and postpartum physical fitness testing requirements?
- c. What is your Service's postpartum operational deferment period?
- d. How does your Service document the above actions? Are safeguards put in place to prevent adverse career impacts to servicewomen?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard (did not respond)

RFI 15: The Committee understands the Defense Department will continue to ensure that servicewomen have access to reproductive health care in the wake of the Supreme Court decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade* (known as *Dobbs v. Jackson*), which ended constitutional protections for abortion. As the Defense Department continues to examine this Supreme Court decision and evaluate policies to ensure Service members, dependents, beneficiaries, and Defense Department civilian employees are provided seamless access to essential women's health care services, as permitted by federal law, the Committee is concerned about potential impacts to servicewomen.

The Committee requests a written response from the Department of Defense (via the organizations annotated below) on the following:

- a. **Military Services:** With the repeal, many of the restrictive states with trigger laws also have large military populations. Subsequently, servicewomen stationed in these restrictive states who seek a medical or surgical abortion will need to take leave and travel to states where it remains legal. How are the Military Services' assuring servicewomen's privacy and confidentiality are maintained, while leave requests are routed through various levels within the servicewomen's chain of command? Additionally, are the Military Services' preserving records (e.g., leave requests, electronic messages, etc.) that could potentially be used against servicewomen in states that criminalize abortion?
- b. **Health Affairs:** According to Air Force (AFI41-210), Army (AR 40-400), Navy and Marine Corps (BUMEDINST 6320.72), and Coast Guard (COMDTINST M6000.1E), Service members are required to complete a number of steps before obtaining an elective surgery. When servicewomen seek a surgical abortion, are they required to follow these same processes? Additionally, if a servicewomen returns from leave after obtaining a medical or surgical abortion and becomes ill, will she subsequently be admitted into military treatment facility (MTF) and/or placed on convalescent leave?
- c. **Health Affairs:** In 2010, the military lifted the ban on emergency contraception (e.g., Plan B), making it available to servicewomen without a prescription. However, as state trigger laws go into effect, some restrictive states have begun making it harder and sometimes illegal for women to obtain emergency contraceptives. Will these restrictions apply to servicewomen stationed within those states, seeking emergency contraceptives from their MTF? Additionally, will servicewomen be afforded access to the abortion pill (i.e., medication abortion) at MTFs?

- d. **Health Affairs:** In addition to restrictions on servicewomen obtaining safe and legal abortions, the Committee is also concerned about the unintended consequences related to servicewomen accessing assisted reproductive services (i.e., infertility care), which in some cases is contracted to civilian providers. How does the Supreme Court’s opinion now impact servicewomen’s access to assisted reproductive services, as some state-level abortion bans utilize broad or imprecise language that prohibits reproductive medicine?
- e. **Military Community and Family Policy (MC&FP) via the Family Advocacy Program (FAP):** In 2019, the Committee reviewed DoDI 6400.06, “DoD Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Abuse Involving DOD Military and Certain Affiliated Personnel.” As a result, the Committee made multiple recommendations related to domestic abuse that involves servicewomen. In 2021, a study published in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, indicated that homicide was the leading cause of death during pregnancy and the postpartum period in the United States. Additionally, according to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, one in six abused women is first abused during pregnancy. With some servicewomen now lacking safe and legal access to medical or surgical abortions in restrictive states, are additional processes being put into place to assist pregnant servicewomen who find themselves in a domestic abuse situation?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Health Affairs, MC&FP via FAP

RFI 16: The Committee requests a literature review from the DACOWITS Research Contractor on the following:

- a. Provide an overview of pregnancy discrimination in the civilian workplace, its prevalence and career impact, and to identify successful strategies businesses employ to combat the problem.
- b. Identify the career impacts of pregnancy generally and, more specifically, identify how medical and/or mental health complications experienced by pregnant and postpartum women impact career progression and retention in the civilian workforce with a focus on studies and data which identify career impact and attrition trends.
- c. Identify initiatives, resources and other support programs that have shown promise in mitigating impact and enhancing retention related to family planning (e.g., those planning to become pregnant, pregnant, and postpartum).
- d. The relevance of abortion access/availability to recruiting and retention of women in the workforce, specifically foreign militaries servicewomen if such studies are available.

Of note, the goal of this review is to gather objective data which speaks to impact on career and retention and which identify measures of potential value to the Services in developing and implementing strategies/programs to minimize adverse impact on service women and to enhance retention. If available, it would be helpful to have information about foreign

military practices. More relevant findings may come from more male-dominated career fields such as firefighters, police, construction etc.

Responding Entity: Insight Policy Research

RFI 17: The Committee has addressed the topic of gender bias and discrimination in past reports and commented on the importance of leadership in establishing a culture of respect in all work settings. Although there has been progress, the Committee remains concerned about the continuing matter of gender bias and the corrosive impact it can have on unit cohesion and on servicewomen's mental health, full integration and retention.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Identify all current policies, regulations, training, and other directives or policy sources that address the issue of gender bias/discrimination and summarize the key provisions.
- b. When training began to educate Service members that gender discrimination is prohibited, to include the nature and fora of trainings/education given to commanders, non-commissioned officers, basic training recruits, and their drill instructors, and the Service member population generally about the issue of gender discrimination. Does this training include how to prevent and mitigate negative attitudes and bias toward servicewomen?
- c. How will the Services monitor, track and enforce policy compliance?
- d. Does your Service have any measures in place to track career progression and promotion of servicewomen? If so, what are they and what are the trends?
- e. Has your Service conducted or commissioned any surveys, studies, or taken other measures to solicit feedback from servicewomen about gender discrimination and its impact on their workplace and career experiences? If so, what were the findings?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force (provided a written response), Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 18: The Committee is interested in learning about what information and metrics the Military Services have employed to detect, identify, and monitor the occurrence of gender discrimination.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Detail efforts/initiatives/actions, including measures, metrics, surveys, focus groups, studies or other mechanisms undertaken, to detect/identify and monitor the issue of gender bias in Service organizations. Provide findings and recommendations flowing from such reviews.

- b. Statistics/data reflecting the number of servicewomen, by number and percentage and grade, who have filed complaints alleging gender bias/discrimination or who have otherwise reported such discrimination via exit surveys or other tools. Identify the number of servicewomen who have cited gender bias/discrimination as their reason for separation or resignation.
- c. What tools does your Service use to measure climate and culture, in addition to surveys, metrics, or other tracking methods (e.g., Army Cohesion Assessment Teams pilot)? In addition, identify how any findings of gender discrimination have been or will be addressed and monitored.
- d. **For the Army:** In 2021, the RAND Arroyo Center conducted a survey on behalf of the Army titled, “Sexual Harassment and Gender Discrimination in the Active-Component Army.” Based on key findings from this survey, how does the Army intend to utilize the information?
- e. **For the Air Force:** The Committee was briefed at the June 2022 QBM about a policy that commanders whose units score less than 49 percent on diversity and equal opportunity assessments must prepare command action actions to address the unsatisfactory findings. How many unsatisfactory (<49 percent) assessments have identified gender discrimination as among the problems discovered, and what trends do these findings disclose (e.g., grade, type of behaviors identified, types of unit, grades of women subject to gender discrimination, etc.).

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force (provided a written response), Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 19: The Committee requests a literature review from the DACOWITS Research Contractor on the following:

- a. Provide an overview of gender discrimination in the civilian workplace, including its prevalence and career impact, and identify successful strategies businesses employ to combat the problem - with a focus on studies and data which identify career impact and attrition trends. Although this issue is not restricted to any career area, more relevant findings may come from more male-dominated career fields, such as firefighters, police, construction, etc. in which women had not historically been employed.
- b. Identify successful strategies businesses employ to combat gender discrimination, as well as initiatives, resources and other support programs which have shown promise in mitigating its impact and enhancing retention.

Of note, the goal of this review is to gather objective data and research which speaks to impact and which identify measures of potential value to the Services in developing and implementing strategies/programs to minimize adverse impact on servicewomen and to enhance retention. If available, it would be helpful to have information about foreign military practices.

Responding Entity: Insight Policy Research

December 2022

RFI 1: In 2020, the Committee made the following recommendation: *“The Secretary of Defense should increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women’s propensity for military service.”*

The Committee requests a briefing from the Defense Department’s Outreach, Policy & Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office on all steps taken or planned to address the above DACOWITS recommendation from 2020, as well as whether the Department has assessed the effectiveness of outreach programs to positively influence young women’s propensity for military service? If so, what were the findings of the assessment? If not, what is the plan to assess outreach programs for effectiveness, adequacy and scale?

Responding Entity: Policy & Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office

RFI 2: In September 2022, the Committee received a briefing from the Air Force, which mentioned that the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) Detachment (Det) 1’s mission is to *“inform, influence, and inspire tomorrow’s leader through innovative outreach opportunities.”* The Committee is interested in identifying best practices to increase young women’s propensity to serve in the military and how AFRS Det 1’s innovative approaches might be applied in a broader context.

The Committee requests a written response from the Air Force on the methods and effectiveness of AFRS Det 1 in increasing propensity to serve among America’s youth, particularly among adolescent women, to pursue careers in aerospace and the Air Force.

Responding Entity: Air Force

RFI 3: The Committee remains interested in the recruiting and accessions enterprise related to identifying, assessing and recruiting qualified candidates.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Provide accession targets/goals and actual accession numbers, separated by gender, for the last five years (FY18-22).
- b. Provide data related to whether female recruiters, compared to male recruiters, are more successful at accessing women into the military.
- c. What innovative methods or approaches (other than engagement with current affinity groups) are recruiters using to attract women into the military (to include racially and ethnically diverse women)?
- d. Provide plans for partnering with unofficial & non-traditional partners (i.e. trade associations, etc.).
- e. How do you measure the effectiveness of these partnerships?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 4: For three consecutive years, between 2018–2020, the Committee classified gender integration efforts at Marine Corps Recruit Training as a continuing concern, because the Marine Corps was the only Military Service operating without fully gender-integrated recruit training. In September 2020, the Marine Corps provided an update on the status of gender integrated Recruit Training and provided insight of short and long term plans to integrate recruit training and meet the intent of the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA).

The Committee requests a briefing from the Marine Corps on the following:

- a. Provide an overview of the Marine Corps gender integration efforts at Recruit Training since September 2020.
- b. How did the Marine Corps interpret the 2020 NDAA language directing that training at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) “may not be segregated by gender” by FY25 for MCRD Parris Island and FY28 for MCRD San Diego? Is the Marine Corps on track to meet these deadlines? If so, please provide the projected timeline and outline of your plan. If not, please explain why.
- c. How is the Marine Corps building capacity for training female recruits at MCRD San Diego? What challenges, if any, has the Marine Corps encountered in this process?
- d. In 2020, the Marine Corps commissioned an independent study from the University of Pittsburgh on gender integration at recruit training and stated it planned to incorporate findings and recommendations produced from this study. As a result:
 - i. What were major findings from this study about Marine Corps gender integration at recruit training?
 - ii. What alternate models and recommendations were proposed for increasing gender integration? What rationale was provided for these models and recommendations?
 - iii. How does the Marine Corps plan to address or incorporate the findings, alternate models, and recommendations made by this study?
 - iv. Please provide a copy of the full report for the Committee’s review.
- e. What are the Marine Corps future plans for gender integration at recruit training?
- f. Have platoons at recruit training been fully integrated, to include recruits and drill instructors? If so, please provide the projected timeline and outline of your plan. If not, are there plans to do so in the future?

Responding Entity: Marine Corps

RFI 5: In 2018, the Committee recommended that, “*The Secretary of Defense should require all Military Services, including the Reserve/Guard, provide servicewomen with gender appropriate and properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) and gear for both training and operational use.*” Though the Military Services have made strides in improving PPE and combat gear for women, the Committee remains interested in the development,

procurement, and timelines servicewomen must navigate to obtain gender appropriate and properly fitting PPE, combat gear, and uniforms.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. What process is currently being applied to evaluate the effectiveness of PPE and combat gear for women?
 - i. Provide date of last anthropometric study used to develop PPE and combat gear for women.
 - ii. Provide any additional technology/studies utilized to improve PPE and combat gear for women.
- b. What is the current timeline and process to procure equipment via existing supply channels?
- c. What is the current timeline and process to procure alternative equipment (e.g., unique fit) not obtainable via existing supply channels?
- d. Provide an update on modifications to or the development of gender specific PPE, combat gear, and uniforms since June 2018, to include:
 - i. Updates/modifications to maternity uniforms.
 - ii. Updates/modifications to grooming standards.
 - iii. Information related to studies conducted to improve female flight suits.
- e. Provide an onsite visual display that depicts new gender specific PPE and combat gear developed for women.
- f. **Army:** In NDAA FY17, the Army was directed to develop combat boots for female Soldiers. Did the Army ever conduct this study? If so, please provide findings from the study. If not, please provide an update on the status of this study.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, National Guard, Coast Guard

RFI 6: For over 45 years, the Committee has studied and provided recommendations to the Secretary of Defense regarding women in aviation. The Committee remains concerned that overall percentage of women in aviation remains low, despite the opening of many aviation career fields to women in the 1970s and combat aircraft in the 1990s.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. In September 2020, DACOWITS RFI 3, asked the Military Services for the total number of Service members selected for pilot training annually from FY09-19, separated by gender and accession source. The Committee requests an update to this 2020 RFI, which includes FY20-22 data.

- b. In September 2020, DACOWITS RFI 3, asked the Military Services to provide data on student attrition during undergraduate pilot training separated by gender, along with reasons for attrition. The Committee requests an update to this 2020 RFI, which includes FY20–22 data. In addition, has your Service identified any attrition trends? If so, what are they and how are they being addressed?
- c. Does your Service have a mentoring program to help retain female aviators? If so, please describe.
- d. Does your Service provide exit interviews to aviators separating from Active Duty? If yes, the Committee is interested in the top five reasons aviators leave the military, over the last five years (FY18–22), separated by gender. In addition, please provide separation trends and courses of action the Service has or will be implementing to help retain female aviators.
- e. What number and percentage of pilots depart Active Duty and transition to the Reserves or Guard? Provide data for the last five years (FY18–22), separated by gender, depicting these transition rates. Additionally, provide retention data for pilots, separated by gender, serving in the Reserves or Guard over the last five years (FY18–22).

Responding Entity: Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard

RFI 7: In 2016, the Committee recommended that the “*Secretary of Defense should require a complete review and update of the 2002 DoD Physical Fitness and Body Fat Programs Procedures (DoDI 1308.3) with the recent opening of more than 200,000 positions to servicewomen.*” Following up in 2019, the Committee recommended that the “Secretary of Defense should conduct a comprehensive, scientific review of height and weight standards as well as body fat measurement techniques and use the findings as a baseline for setting a Department-wide standard for measurement and acceptable levels.” In March 2022, the Defense Department published a revised DoDI 1308.3.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. In March 2019, DACOWITS RFI 6, asked the Military Services to provide update to physical fitness training programs. The Committee requests an update to this 2019 RFI. Provide all changes and modifications to your Service’s physical fitness instructions since March 2019, to include any updates to body composition measurements (e.g., height, weight, and body fat). In addition, provide the justification for each change/modification that has been implemented since March 2019.
- b. Based on the newly revised DoDI 1308.3, what changes or modifications to your Service’s physical fitness instruction have been or will be updated in the future? Include revisions to body composition measurements. In addition, provide projected implementation timelines for each change or modification.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 8: In 2020, the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs in coordination with Defense Health Agency sponsored a Women’s Reproductive Health Survey (WRHS). The purpose of the study was to assess the reproductive health of servicewomen. Survey findings indicate that 15 percent of active duty servicewomen and 11 percent of Coast Guard active duty servicewomen were unable to conceive after 12 months of trying, a common definition of self-reported infertility. In addition, 12 percent of active-duty service women (and 8 percent of Coast Guard active duty service women) reported an unmet need for fertility services since joining the military.

The Committee requests a written response from the Defense Health Agency (DHA) on the following:

- a. What directives regulate the utilization of Assisted Reproductive Services?
- b. How many MTFs provide Assisted Reproductive Services?
- c. Who is authorized to utilize Assisted Reproductive Services (e.g., married couples, non-traditional families, single members, etc.)?
- d. What outreach or marketing strategies have been implemented to ensure Service members are aware that Assisted Reproductive Services exist?
- e. During annual well-women exams, are servicewomen made aware that Assisted Reproductive Services are available (e.g., egg freezing)?
- f. With the merger of DoD/DHA:
 - i. Have Assisted Reproductive Services been standardized?
 - ii. Will Assisted Reproductive Services continue to be provided? If so, where (e.g., MTFs, civilian providers, etc.)?
- a. What accommodations are afforded to servicewomen receiving Assisted Reproductive Services (e.g., suspension of fitness testing)?
- a. Does any data exist that suggests the servicewomen’s career progression (retention and advancement) is positively impacted by having access to Assisted Reproductive Services?
- a. Over the last five years, how many servicewomen and servicemen have utilized Assisted Reproductive Services?
- a. At what point in their careers are servicewomen and servicemen using these Assisted Reproductive Services?

Responding Entity: Defense Health Agency

RFI 9: Since the 1960s, the Committee has examined and identified barriers to women’s career progression in the military, which included gender discrimination or gender bias that affected servicewomen’s promotion opportunities. Most recently in 2019, the Committee recommended that, *“The Secretary of Defense should establish a DoD policy that defines and provides guidance to eliminate conscious and unconscious gender bias.”* The Committee remains dedicated to the elimination of gender discrimination, to include within the

promotion board process by ensuring that performance is the lone criterion considered for selection.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. What policies and procedures are in place to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias within the promotion process (e.g., performance evaluations, board screenings, etc.)?
- b. What gender specific demographic information has been removed from promotion packages (e.g., first and last names, gender pronouns, photographs, etc.)? Specifically, state whether any gender specific demographic information is still being included. If so, are there plans to remove gender specific demographic information? Provide projected timeline for each demographic modification.
- c. What other actions have been taken to prevent conscious and unconscious gender bias from factoring in promotion reviews/scoring?
- d. Since these actions were taken to reduce conscious and unconscious gender bias, provide trends that have emerged and data on the impact of these policies, instructions, or guidance on selection results.
- e. Provide copies of policies, instructions, or written guidance delivered to selection boards, nomination boards, or promotion boards intended to mitigate conscious and unconscious gender bias.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

March 2023

RFI 1: In September 2022, via RFIs 1-3, the Committee received briefings from the Military Services and the Defense Department's Office of People Analytics (OPA) outlining strategies to attract young people, particularly women, to serve in the military and challenges in doing so. The Committee is interested in frontline perspectives on these challenges.

The Committee requests a briefing from the recruiting Chiefs (senior enlisted personnel) within the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. What barriers, inhibitors, challenges, and/or concerns are recruiters encountering when engaging with potential female applicants?
- b. What specific strategies are or could be used to address/mitigate these barriers/challenges?
- c. What training do recruiters receive to keep well-informed of current benefits of military service that appeal to and attract female applicants?

- d. Are there any additional challenges not already annotated that are impacting your Service's ability to recruit women?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 2: In 2020, the Committee made the following recommendation: "The Secretary of Defense should increase oversight and assess the effectiveness and scale of outreach programs with the objective of directing new programs and/or adjusting the purpose of existing programs to positively impact adolescent women's propensity for military service." In December 2022, via RFI 1, the Committee received a briefing from the Defense Department's Outreach, Policy & Programs (Civil-Military Programs) Office on youth outreach programs (e.g., DoD STARBASE); however, the Civil-Military Programs Office is not responsible for improving the propensity of adolescent women to serve.

The Committee requests a written response from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)) which identifies the office with primary responsibility to promote adolescent women's propensity to serve in the military.

Responding Entity: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

RFI 3: The Committee is concerned about the inability of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals and the continued underrepresentation of women in the Armed Forces. In March 2020, the Congressional National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service published a report, *Inspired to Serve*, which included a number of recommendations to help encourage a new generation of Americans to serve.

The Committee requests a written response from USD(P&R) on the following:

- a. Has the Defense Department taken steps to implement any of the military specific recommendations contained in the "Military Service" section of the Commission's report (pages 8-9)?
- b. Please describe the steps taken to specifically inspire young women to serve, based on the Commission's military recommendations.

Responding Entity: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness

RFI 4: The Committee remains concerned about the inability of some of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals. Data suggests that the two major reasons potential recruits are disqualified are due to low academic qualifications and the inability to meet physical fitness/body fat requirements. Recently, the Army implemented a pilot program, titled the Future Soldier Preparatory Course, to address these challenges. The Army's prep course is an incremental three-week, pre-basic training, aptitude improvement program for those who are not yet fully qualified to join the Army due to low test scores or an inability to meet fitness requirements. Access to this pilot program allows individuals who meet all of the other qualifications for enlistment a potential opportunity to serve.

The Committee requests a briefing from Army on their Future Soldier Preparation Course. Specifically, the Committee requests the briefing include:

- a. A detailed description of the pilot program for prospective future Soldiers, who lack either the academic aptitude and/or physical fitness/body fat requirements to otherwise enlist, to include entry requirements and curricula.
- b. How was the program developed? What subject matter experts (internal and external) assisted in the program's development?
- c. What is the duty status and pay grade of prospective future Soldiers, including provisions of their conditional enlistment?
- d. What authorities (e.g., statutory, policy, or regulatory) oversee the implementation and execution of the pilot program?
- e. Describe any obstacles, challenges, or resistance encountered during the implementation or execution of the pilot program. How were these resolved?

Responding Entity: Army

RFI 5: In 2016, Committee made the following recommendation: The Secretary of Defense should require each of the Military Services to adopt a policy regarding accession of single custodial parents into the military to allow such accessions when facts, circumstances, and occupational requirements would allow, and when the Military Services would benefit. At the time, the Air Force allowed single parent applicants (both male and female) to join via a waiver with up to three dependents whereas the other Services only allowed male applicants to join with a waiver. Female applicants were required to sign over custody of any minor children for the duration of their first enlistment to join the military.

The Committee requests an update via a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. The status of your Services' single parent policies regarding male and female applicant's ability to join via a waiver and the details of these policies.
- b. The status of your Services' single parent policies regarding male and female applicant's ability to commission via Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC), Officer Candidate School (OCS), Direct Commission Officer (DCO) programs, etc.
- c. The status of the Military Service Academies implementation of the CADET Act outlined in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY22, which ensures cadets and midshipmen preserve parental guardianship rights and can become commissioned officers while raising a family.
- d. Provide copies of these policies and instructions for both officer and enlisted applicants.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 6: In September 2022, via RFIs 6–7, the Committee received an update on the Military Services’ gender integration implementation plans, to include the status of women’s integration within special operations forces (SOF). In December 2022, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) released a report, “Women in Special Operations: Improvements to Policy, Data, and Assessments Needed to Better Understand and Address Career Barriers,” which indicates that more information is needed to fully assess barriers affecting women’s careers in SOF.

The Committee requests a briefing from following five organizations: Special Operations Command (SOCOM) and Special Operations Service Components (USASOC, NAVSPECWARCOM, MARSOC, and AFSOC), in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)) on the following:

- a. What is being done to recruit more women into SOF?
- b. What outreach efforts currently exist to mentor to encourage women to enter SOF?
- c. Provide an overview of the SOF selection process.
- d. How are you helping women prepare for the SOF selection process?
- e. How many Service members enter the selection process annually (broken down by gender and rank (enlisted and officer)), spanning the last five years (FY18–22)?
- f. Have you examined or established support systems for women to enter SOF (e.g., Army Rangers initially had senior enlisted female observers)?
- g. Have you considered or reviewed lessons learned from other military integration efforts (e.g., small cohort; buddy program; etc.)?

Responding Entity: Special Operations Command, Army Special Operations Command, Navy Special Warfare Command, Marine Force Special Operations Command, Air Force Special Operations Command

RFI 7: In December 2022, via RFI 5, the Military Services briefed DACOWITS on the updates to properly fitting personal protective equipment (PPE) and combat equipment for women.

As a follow-up, the Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard to provide more information on female in-flight bladder relief systems (IBRS) and/or female urinary devices, to include the following:

- a. Current IBRS or female urinary devices available to servicewomen, as well as options being evaluated. Provide pictures with detailed explanations.
- b. Provide the roadmap for implementation by FY23, broken down by quarter, annotating major milestones (e.g., initial production, final mass production, availability across the Services, and expert training).
- c. What is the planned funding and who is the specific Office of Primary responsibility (OPR)?

- d. What is your Service's plan to disseminate IBRS or female urinary devices (e.g., supply chain)?
- e. What training is provided once IBRS or female urinary devices are sent to installations?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 8: The Space Force was established three years ago under the Department of the Air Force. In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. The Space Force was unable to provide a response at that time, due to the information being pre-decisional.

The Committee requests a written response from Space Force on the status of their physical fitness training program (include a copy of the physical fitness assessment plan and body composition measurements). Additionally, provide justifications for each event/objective contained within the Space Force fitness assessment plan, to include body composition measurements.

Responding Entity: Space Force

RFI 9: In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. In 2020, the Navy shifted to planks vice sit-ups. Starting in 2023, the Marine Corps will mandate planks, which were added as an option to sit-ups in 2019. The Army's revised Army Combat Fitness Test (ACFT) requires planks in lieu of sit-ups. According to the Army, utilizing the plank as a sole core assessment allows the Service to properly measure soldiers' core strength consistently and equally, as well as reduce injury rates. The Air Force is the only Service that still allows Airmen to do sit-ups as part of their physical fitness assessment.

The Committee requests a written response from the Air Force which provides the scientific and medical justification to keep sit-ups as part of the physical fitness assessment.

Responding Entity: Air Force

RFI 10: In October 2022, Secretary Austin published a memorandum entitled, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," which examined the impacts of the Supreme Court ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* on Service members' access to reproductive health care, as well as readiness, recruiting, and retention implications for the Force.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs on the following:

- a. Provide an overview on the Defense Department's response to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*.
- b. Explain the policy initiatives to preserve privacy for Service members and to ensure access to non-covered reproductive health care.

- c. Provide information on the steps taken to protect health care providers who may be concerned about the outcome of the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision.
- d. Provide steps taken to improve awareness of resources about reproductive health care.
- e. Provide information from the 2022 Women’s Reproductive Health Survey and how the findings influenced the Defense Department’s actions regarding non-covered reproductive health care.

Responding Entity: Office of Military Personnel Policy and Health Affairs

RFI II: In 2017, the Committee identified concerns with inappropriate and inconsistent use of Family Care Plans (FCPs) across the Military Services and recommended greater DoD oversight of Service implementation. The Committee’s inquiry on this matter led to findings that FCP policies disproportionately impacted servicewomen, often causing them to change occupational specialties or separate from the military, either voluntarily or involuntarily. The Committee is interested in obtaining an update on the use, implementation, and consistency of FCPs across the Armed Services.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Space Force on the following:

- a. Provide a list and copies of (or links to) DoD and Service policies and regulations that detail FCP requirements, to include any pending changes to policies/revisions.
- b. Outline when a FCP required (e.g., what event(s) trigger the FCP requirement) and what categories of Service members are affected?
- c. Identify the elements of the Service’s FCP (e.g., what information and arrangements must be outlined)?
- d. What is the timeframe within which a FCP must be submitted and how often must an FCP be submitted/updated?
- e. When does the Service’s FCP policy require a Service member to surrender custody or guardianship of a dependent child(ren)?
- f. What command level is the Service approval authority for FCPs?
- g. What additional documents are Service members required to submit as part of their FCP package? Which documents must be notarized?
- h. What is the consequence of failure to submit a FCP plan on time, or to make arrangements the Service deems acceptable?
- i. Identify the number, gender, and category (e.g., single parents, dual military couples, etc.) of Service members separated (voluntarily or involuntarily) in the last five years (FY-18-22) for failure to submit and/or maintain a suitable FCP?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force

RFI 12: In 2017, 2018, and 2020, the Committee made multiple recommendations related to parental leave policies. Committee recommendations urged the Defense Department and the Military Services to implement flexible (non-continuous) parental leave options, to ensure primary and secondary caregivers have maximum flexibility in making caregiving arrangements best suited to their family and service circumstances. Similarly, in 2020, the Committee recommended that action be taken to ensure women serving in the National Guard and Reserves receive full creditable military service, similar to their Active Component counterparts, for unavoidable absences resulting from a pregnancy and/or a birth event. The Committee is interested in receiving an update on the Military Services implementation of the MOMS Leave Act, as well as the Services projected implementation of new parental leave requirements outlined by the Defense Department’s memorandum (dated Jan. 2, 2023), which expands the Military Parental Leave Program (MPLP).

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard, and National Guard on the following:

- a. Provide a list and copies of (or links to) DoD and Service policies/regulations that detail MPLP requirements to include any pending changes to policies/revisions. If different policies are in effect for the National Guard and/or Reserve Components, please provide that information as well.
- b. Has your Service updated parental leave policies to authorize flexible (non-continuous) leave options for or must parental leave be taken all at once?
- c. Do servicewomen in the National Guard and Reserve Components receive full creditable military service (e.g., pay and retirement points) for absences related to pregnancy or birth events, and for follow-on caregiver leave absences (e.g., postpartum)? Are servicewomen afforded the same amount of parental leave time as their Active-Duty counterparts? Are there any pending changes/revisions to these policies? If so, what is the status?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 13: The Defense Department’s Office of People Analytics’ (OPA) 2021 Workplace and Gender Relations (WGR) Survey reported that 16 percent of Active-Duty servicewomen experienced gender discrimination (ranging from 12 percent in the Air Force to 22 percent in the Marine Corps), a degree that has steadily increased over the last four surveys conducted since 2014.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of People Analytics (OPA) on their 2021 WGR Survey findings related to gender discrimination rates and complaints. Ensure the briefing discusses a comparison to historical rates, what types of behaviors comprise gender discrimination, and any identified reasons for the increase in reporting. In addition, the Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. What is your Service doing or plans to do with the data provided by the 2021 WGR Survey and/or prior year WGR Surveys, to include any additional research or studies on gender discrimination comparing or contrasting to the WGR findings?

- b. Have all Service regulations/policies been updated to include DoD's most recent definition of prohibited discrimination?
- c. Provide an update on your Service's position or considerations regarding the use or revision of gendered language in written materials, displays, and field use (e.g., Marine Corps' consideration of using non-gendered identifiers for drill instructors).

Responding Entity: Office of People Analytics, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 14: In December 2022, via RFI 9, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide varied sets of information regarding promotion trends and rates, broken down by gender. As the Committee continues to examine institutional policies and procedures to identify potential gaps that may unintentionally enable gender discrimination to occur, it will be useful to identify and analyze the reasons why servicewomen opt not to compete for promotion. The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. The number of "opt outs" (e.g., requests for withdrawal from promotion consideration), submitted by Service members for promotion to the grades of O-4 through O-6 and to the grades of E-7 through E-9, broken out by gender and the percentage of the total number of men and women being considered in their peer group.
- b. The top 5 reasons provided for these opt out requests, broken out by gender, if available.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

June 2023

RFI 1: In September 2016, via RFI 14, the Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Office provided a briefing to DACOWITS titled: "The Target Population for Military Recruitment: Youth Eligible to Enlist Without a Waiver." The briefer and presentation slides indicated the single parent female recruitable population was only 3%, which equated to 500,000 women. The Committee remains concerned that some of the Military Services' policies exclude the accession of women who are single custodial parents. The Committee requests a written response from the Office of People Analytics (OPA), via the Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) Division, on the following:

- a. Provide an update on the target population for military recruitment presented in September 2016.
- b. Provide the latest estimate of how many members of the recruitable population (17 to 24 years old) are disqualified for being single parents by gender (provide both percentage and raw numbers).

Responding Entity: Office of People Analytics

RFI 2: In March 2022, the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) launched the Military Health System (MHS) GENESIS across the nation. MHS GENESIS highlights potential medical factors for disqualification. MHS GENESIS was developed to increase efficiencies; however, the Committee was informed by recruiters in March 2023, that the adoption of the new platform has impacted the Services contracting production due lengthy processes. The Committee wants to determine whether there are ways to eliminate unnecessary barriers to military service, as well as remove or reduce extended timelines that cause the military to lose out on talent. In addition, the Committee understands the Defense Department is using medical data collected from MHS GENESIS to review whether 38 medical conditions that now disqualify individuals from military service should remain disqualifiers.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Office of Military Personnel Policy (MPP) and the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard) on the following:

- a. **MPP:** Please describe the process and purpose of the review of disqualifying medical conditions and how MHS GENESIS is used in that process.
- b. **MPP:** How was the review developed? Were subject matter experts included (internal or external)? Who participated in the design of the review?
- c. **MPP:** What objectives, outcomes, and metrics are being examined as part of the review?
- d. **MPP:** Describe the demographic makeup of the sample being reviewed (include breakout by gender).
- e. **Military Services:** Identify unique and the most frequent medical conditions leading to disqualification and waivers (specify both) being reviewed for females.
- f. **MPP:** When were the standards for these medical conditions originally established, and when were they last reviewed for validity to current population and treatment protocols?
- g. **MPP:** Who has authority (e.g., statutory, policy, or regulatory) to determine disqualifying conditions?
- h. **Military Services:** Who has authority (e.g., statutory, policy, or regulatory) to authorize medical waivers?

Responding Entity: Office of Military Personnel Policy ,Army,Navy,Marine Corps,Air Force,Space Force,Coast Guard

RFI 3: In March 2023, via RFI 5, the Committee received responses from the Military Services regarding their single custodial parent accessions policies. The Committee remains concerned about the significant recruiting challenges facing the military.

The Committee requests a written response from the Air Force on the following:

- a. Since implementing the change to the Active Component's single custodial accession policy in 2014, has the Air Force done a longitudinal study or any review to assess the impact of this policy change?
- b. Have there been any challenges or adverse impacts to the Air Force since permitting single custodial parent accessions?
- c. Are there any lessons learned?

Responding Entity: Air Force

RFI 4: In March 2023, via RFI 1, the Committee received a briefing on Recruitment Initiatives to Increase Women's Propensity to Serve. The Air Force briefer mentioned a cross functional team (CFT) sprint, focused on eliminating barriers to recruiting with key personnel.

The Committee requests a written response from the Air Force detailing the composition and focus of the Barriers to Service CFT Sprint (Tiger Team):

- a. What barriers were identified and what methodology was used to identify the barriers?
- b. How did they choose the barriers to address?
- c. Were there any barriers unique to women?
- d. What recommended policy changes were made?
- e. Which recommended policy changes were approved?
- f. When will these policy changes be implemented?
- g. How long will the CFT Sprint Tiger Team be in place?
- h. Were there any lessons learned?

Responding Entity: Air Force

RFI 5: In December 2022, the Marine Corps provided a briefing on the status of Marine Corps Recruit Depot (MCRD) integration, following the release of the University of Pittsburgh (UPITT) study. In this brief, the Marine Corps presented an update on the 18 secondary recommendations outlined in the study. As of December 2022, there were 12 recommendations that had been or were in the process of being implemented, of which 6 were pending further analysis and follow-on recommendations.

The Committee requests a written response from Marine Corps on the following:

- a. For the following alternate models from the study provide an update on planning and implementation:

- i. Alternate model #1 (mixed-gender drill instructors teams in integrated companies): In the December 2022 briefing the Marine Corps indicated it did not plan to implement this recommended model from the study. Please provide any updated information on implementation plans (including timelines) or justification if there are no plans for implementation.
 - ii. Alternate model #2 (Integrated Company Plus): Please provide the list of training events and activities where male and female recruits are currently integrated at or below the platoon level. Please include training events that are planned for further integration at or below the platoon level in the future, including timelines for implementation of integration.
 - iii. Alternate model #3 (integrated platoon model): In the December 2022 briefing the Marine Corps indicated it did not plan to implement this recommended model from the study. Please provide any updated information on implementation plans (including timelines) or justification if there are no plans for implementation.
- b. For the following recommendations that have been accomplished provide the specific actions taken to implement each one:
- i. Establish and use drill instructor working groups at each stage (before, during, and after) of gender integration to more readily anticipate and identify challenges, innovation solutions, and demonstrated successes.
 - ii. Incorporate explicit training and socialization on respect into all education materials and training opportunities.
 - iii. Incorporate primary prevention education on sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic abuse, and equal opportunity courses and Core Value Guided Discussions. Provide recruits education, training, and discussion about “what right looks like” in addition to course curriculum already delivered.
 - iv. Enforce a zero-tolerance policy for training cadre, drill instructors, and recruits using sexually explicit, gender-based, or derogatory language in the training environment.
 - v. Develop or task recruit leadership positions to aid drill instructors with recruit accountability checks when forming gender-integrated units.
- c. For the following recommendations that are currently underway provide an update and timeline for implementation for each recommendation:
- i. Provide explicit and consistent leadership statements about how current or future changes to gender integration approaches at MCRDs connect with the broader mission of producing basically trained Marines.
 - ii. Conduct regular evaluations of the recruit training “product”: a basically trained Marine. These evaluations should connect data from a basic Marine’s performance and outcomes in the ELT pipeline and their first fleet assignment and should be used as an opportunity to collect information relevant to the impact of the Service’s gender integration efforts.

- iii. Review and update educational curriculum and imagery in training environments to represent women and be more inclusive of their contributions to the Marine Corps institutional legacy.
 - iv. Increase number of female personnel at MCRD San Diego (training cadre and leadership) while growing female drill instructor and recruit population to fulfill NDAA mandate.
 - v. Increase efforts to recruit women into the Marine Corps.
 - vi. High initial workloads coupled with injury rates and decrements in strength and power performance – warrants incorporation of a periodized approach to physical training that emphasizes progression and proper technique development.
 - vii. High relative percentage of hip injuries in female Marine Corps recruits during gender-integrated training – investigation of causes and customized injury mitigation programs recommended.
- d. For the following recommendations that were still pending decision in December 2022, provide an update on the decision. For those recommendations that will not be implemented, provide a justification for why not. For those that will be implemented, provide implementation action steps, timeline, and plan.
- i. Establish a Marine Corps definition and/or strategic mission/vision for gender integration in recruit training.
 - ii. Restrict those who teach key/milestone sexual harassment and sexual assault courses to full-time SAPR personnel who are subject matter experts.
 - iii. Replace gendered identifiers (e.g., “sir,” “ma’am”) in the primary salutation or response to drill instructors with gender-neutral language such as “drill instructor,” “senior drill instructor,” “senior,” “DI,” or “SDI.”
 - iv. Build an additional competitive element for series or companies to work toward to facilitate drill instructor and recruit investment in a shared identity beyond the platoon.
 - v. Potential relationship between attrition among female Marine Corps recruits and psychological resilience measured on the Connor-Davidson scale – further investigation recommended.
 - vi. Association between previous quantity of strength training in female Marine Corps recruits, and attrition and preservation of neuromuscular function – further investigation recommended.

Responding Entity: Marine Corps

RFI 6: In December 2022, via RFI 7, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide updates to their physical fitness training programs. There have been numerous changes to the Military Services’ Body Composition (Body Fat) Assessments.

In order to better understand these new policies across the military, the Committee requests a briefing from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. Provide an overview of your Service's Body Composition (Body Fat) Assessment process for the past 5 years. If the process has changed within this time period, provide the impetus for the change(s), as well as describe what exactly was modified.
- b. Cite the anthropometric research utilized to support your Services' Body Composition (Body Fat) Assessment policy.
- c. Provide photos that demonstrate how Service members' body fat is assessed (by gender).
- d. What is the margin of error associated with your Services' Body Composition (Body Fat) Assessment process (e.g., percentage range)?
- e. Explain whether the method of Body Composition (Body Fat) Assessment has either increased or decreased separations (broken down by gender). Provide data/metrics for the last 5 years.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 7: In October 2022, Secretary Austin published a memorandum entitled, "Ensuring Access to Reproductive Health Care," which directed that policy be developed to allow for administrative absences for non-covered reproductive health care, to establish travel and transportation allowances to facilitate official travel to access non-covered reproductive health care, and to extend command notifications of pregnancy to 20-weeks unless specific circumstances require earlier reporting. The Committee would like to understand how these policies are being implemented.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard, regarding implementation of the SecDef memorandum. Please provide the following:

- a. What guidance and directives have been published to implement the SecDef's directives? Are those policies now in effect? If not, when?
- b. Provide copies or links to all relevant publications.
- c. Who/what position is the approval authority for granting non-covered administrative leave requests?
- d. What is the process or appeal mechanism for non-covered administrative leave requests which are disapproved? May the servicewoman appeal the disapproval? Is it a mandatory or discretionary appeal? Who/what position is the appeal authority and is there a minimum grade requirement?
- e. What are the published criteria and guidance defining whether and when a commander may disapprove a non-covered administrative leave request, and how does a commander document those reasons? Is a narrative reason required or just a "check the box" tick mark?

- f. How have servicewomen been made aware of the new policies regarding non-covered administrative leave requests, travel and transportation allowances, and delayed pregnancy notification policy provisions?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 8: Performance evaluations are the key documents in promotion packets. Language, report coding, and/or information about a lengthy absence from primary duties in promotion record files could result in intentional or unintentional bias toward servicewomen who are pregnant, have been exempted from weight standard testing, have taken their full convalescent leave (CONLV) and parental leave entitlement, and/or were afforded year-long operational deferments from deployments, Temporary Duty (TDY) by reason of giving birth. The Committee is interested in learning how the Services will address these challenges to ensure servicewomen compete on a level playing field with other candidates being considered for promotion, that they are not disadvantaged in their careers by their choice to have a family, and to ensure their promotion record files do not contain language, codes, or other irrelevant family, pregnancy and weight information.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard addressing the following questions:

- a. How will the Services prevent and ensure there will be no negative impacts on servicewomen's career progression and promotions arising from just the fact of:
 - (i) noncompliance with/exemption from weight standards due to a birth event, (ii) lengthy leave absences resulting from CONLV and parental leave, and (iii) lengthy operational deferment periods?
- b. Provide the specific guidance and copies/links to each applicable directive.
- c. How will promotion record files be managed to ensure inappropriate information related to birth events, weight, and associated duty absences is not included or visible to promotion board members? Alternatively, if such information can be discerned, how will that concern be mitigated so as not to adversely affect servicewomen?
- d. Describe any other pending changes to current regulations that have been developed, or are being considered to account for:
 - i. servicewomen's noncompliance with weight standards;
 - ii. lengthy CONLV and parental leave; and
 - iii. operational deferment absences during the one-year postpartum period.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

RFI 9: In 2019, the Committee recommended the Secretary of Defense "establish a DoD policy that defines and provides guidance to eliminate conscious and unconscious gender bias" with a view to tackling the bias that has impeded servicewomen's promotion and advancement opportunities. The Committee continues to be interested in the gender barriers

servicewomen confront during their service. Women in the military and across all industries have historically lagged behind men in career progression opportunities and promotion rates, and women in male-dominated industries (such as the military) typically encounter even greater barriers and resistance to career progression. Gender bias is among the barriers that servicewomen have and continue to experience in their career progression.

To better examine whether potential remedial measures should be undertaken, such as eliminating gender indicators, the Committee requests a written response from the Defense

Department, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard on the following:

- a. **Military Services:** Promotion results in 2010, 2015, 2020 and 2022:
 - i. by gender, grade, occupational specialty/MOS/community, number and percentage of males/females considered;
 - ii. by gender, grade, occupational specialty/MOS/community, number and percentage of males/females selected for enlisted (E-7 thru E-9) and officer (O-4 thru O-6) competitive promotion selection boards; and
 - iii. the top 5 gender promotion variances by MOS/rating, for enlisted (E-7 thru E-9) and officer (O-4 thru O-6).
- b. **Military Services:** Identify the trends and compare promotion rates of females and males by occupational specialty/MOS/community to the degree possible. In other words, in what occupational areas do servicewomen's promotion rates lag behind servicemen?
- c. **Navy:** Identify what gender information was removed from officer selection board records, when removed, and from which documents within the file, i.e. on some or all documents in the selection folder. Are gendered pronouns visible in any of the documents found in the promotion record file (e.g. on award citations); if so, on which documents.
- d. **Defense Department:** Provide the report and findings of the Institute of Defense Analysis study commissioned regarding bias removals including gender-specific biases.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard

September 2023

RFI 1: The Committee remains concerned about the inability of the Military Services to meet their annual recruiting goals. In March 2023, via RFI 4, the Committee received a briefing from the Army on its innovative Future Soldier Preparatory Course (FSPC). Since the time of that Army briefing, the Navy has created a similar Future Sailor Preparatory Course.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and the Department of the Air Force on the following:

- a. **Army:** For the Academic Skills Development Program, provide the number of participants, graduation rates, discharge rates, and average Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) increase rate by gender.
- b. **Army & Navy:** For the fitness and nutrition course, provide the number of participants, graduation rates, and average weekly body fat loss (e.g., percentage) by gender.
- c. **Navy:** What caused women to join later iterations of the program vice beginning the preparatory course alongside their male peers?
- d. **Army & Navy:** Identify any other challenges or successes with implementation of these programs, which have not already been provided.
- e. **Army & Navy:** Provide information on how graduates are performing in Basic Training post-preparatory course by gender. f. **Marine Corps & Air Force:** Does your Service plan to implement a similar preparatory course? If so, which portions and when?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force

RFI 2: In June 2022, the Committee received a briefing from the Department of the Air Force (DAF) Women’s Initiatives Team (WIT). In September 2022, via RFI 5, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide a status update on their potential Women’s Initiatives Team or working group like the DAF WIT. At the time, the Army was in the process of establishing a WIT and the Navy was in the process of developing one.

The Committee requests a written response update from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and National Guard on whether your Service has implemented a WIT focused on identifying and resolving barriers that impact the retention of servicewomen? If so, provide additional details about your Service’s WIT (e.g., policies, directives, charter, oversight authority, streamlined access to senior level decision-makers, etc.). If not, explain why a WIT has not or will not be founded.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, National Guard

RFI 3: In December 2015, the Secretary of Defense (SecDef) opened all remaining occupations and positions to women with no exceptions. As a result, the Defense Department opened approximately 213,600 closed positions and 52 closed military occupational specialties to women for the first time. Afterwards, the SecDef directed the Secretaries of the Military Departments and Chiefs of the Military Services to provide their final, detailed Gender Integration Implementation Plans no later than January 1, 2016. Once approved, the Military Services were tasked with executing their plans by April 1, 2016. In September 2022, via RFIs 6-7, the Military Services provided the Committee an update on adjustments made to the original 2016 Gender Integration Implementation Plans, current or future initiatives being undertaken to increase women in Special Operations Forces (SOF), and the data on women in SOF. In December 2022, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report titled, “Women in Special Operations” (GAO-23-105168), which outlined improvements to policy, data,

and assessments needed to understand and address career barriers for women in SOF. GAO made a total of 8 recommendations, of which DoD concurred, however, to date none have been implemented.

The Committee requests an updated written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Special Operations Command (SOCOM), in coordination with the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (ASD(SO/LIC)), to address the integration of women into the previously closed military occupational specialties within the associated-Service SOF (outlined in the “Positions to be Opened” fact sheet). Provide the following data for officer and enlisted career fields opened in 2016, utilizing the fact sheet provided:

- a. Number of women that entered the training pipeline (by fiscal year (FY) beginning in 2016 through current 2023 (e.g., 8 years)).
- b. Number of women that were removed from the training pipeline for failure to meet standards, along with denominator of total women who entered (should match bullet a above) (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years).
- c. Number of women who voluntarily left the training pipeline (self-induced elimination (SIE)), along with denominator of total women who entered (should match bullet a above) (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years).
- d. Number of women currently serving in each of these career fields since graduating from the initial training course (by FY beginning in 2016 through current 2023; 8 years). Ensure data is separated by officer, enlisted, and rank (e.g., O1, E5, etc.).

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Special Operations Command

RFI 4: The Committee is concerned about provision of medical convalescent leave (CONLV) for birth events considering new guidance in statute and SecDef policy, which suggests CONLV may not necessarily be authorized solely for a birth event without the requirement for a separate “medical condition.” SecDef guidance indicates CONLV “may” be authorized for the recovery of the birth parent, from giving birth, if such leave is specifically recommended, in writing, by the health care provider of the birth parent “to address a diagnosed medical condition” and is approved by the unit commander.” Of note, a congressional letter addressed to the USD(P&R), also recently expressed concern over this matter.

The Committee requests a briefing from the Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA), Military Personnel Policy (MPP), Military Compensation (COMP), Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs (OASD HA), and the Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard) regarding current guidance regarding medical recommendations and command authorizations for CONLV for birth events. Provide the following:

- a. **M&RA/MPP/COMP:** Has any guidance been issued to the Military Services regarding CONLV or birth events considering the new legislation? If so, provide copies of the guidance and/or directives issued.

- b. **OASD(HA):** Is CONLV recommended/directed for birth events? If so, what are the recommendations for duration? Please provide an overview of health provider considerations in making CONLV recommendations after a birth event.
- c. **OASD(HA):** Is there any medical guidance suggesting CONLV is not necessary or recommended for birth events? Is a birth event considered a “medical condition” eligible for CONLV without the need for some other medical condition?
- d. **M&RA/MPP/COMP/Military Services:** Have guidelines been provided addressing when commanders may disapprove CONLV, since such leave requires a commander’s approval? If so, provide copies of such guidance.
- e. **Military Services:** Are there differences in command consideration of CONLV recommendations made by network providers in the private sector versus those made by MTF providers?
- f. **Military Services:** What Service guidance has been published clarifying the provision of CONLV for birth events? Provide copies thereof.
- g. **Military Services:** Have the Services provided guidance regarding command authority to disapprove a medical provider’s recommendation for CONLV for birth events? What is that guidance and provide copies thereof.
- h. **Military Services:** Must commanders document their reasons for denying convalescent care following a birth event?
- i. **Military Services:** If a commander disapproves CONLV for a birth event, is there an appeal mechanism for the affected servicewoman? Is there an automatic escalation to higher command authority? How are servicewomen protected from retaliation if they elect to challenge/appeal a disapproval?

Responding Entity: Manpower & Reserve Affairs, Military Personnel Policy, Military Compensation, Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 5: In 2020, Congress passed the “Rent the Camo: Access to Maternity Wear Act” Bill (H.R. 7289), which directed the “Department of Defense to carry out a pilot program to establish an office for issuing maternity-related uniform items to pregnant members of the Armed Forces, on a temporary basis through FY26 and at no cost to such members.” In January 2022, the Navy launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is open to officer and enlisted personnel assigned CONUS and OCONUS. In March 2022, the Marine Corps launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is restricted to female officers located within 100 miles of MCB Quantico. In June 2022, the Department of the Air Force launched a maternity uniform pilot program, which is open to officer and enlisted Airman/Guardians, assigned to 10 specific bases. In December 2022, via RFI 5d.i, the Military Services provided updates to their maternity uniforms. During this meeting, the Department of the Air Force showcased their redesigned maternity dress and aviation uniforms.

The Committee requests a written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard detailing maternity uniform pilot programs, maternity uniforms currently in use, as well as plans to update maternity uniforms.

- a. Provide an update on the status of your Service's maternity uniform pilot program (e.g., utilization rate, findings, etc.).
- b. **Army:** Has a maternity uniform pilot program been implemented? If not, when is it expected to begin? Provide additional details (e.g., who can/will be able to participate (officer and/or enlisted); geographic location(s); etc.).
- c. **Marine Corps:** Provide the rationale for restricting the pilot to female officers within a 100-mile radius of MCB Quantico.
- d. In September 2016, via RFI 11, the Committee asked the Military Services to provide information/data on current maternity uniforms and any future prototypes (to include those being wear tested/piloted). Update this information/data utilizing a blank Maternity Uniforms Chart for questions 1-18.
- e. Do the Services collaborate on maternity uniform design concepts? If so, how and at what level?
- f. Do the Services separately contract for maternity uniform production, and do they use a common or separate vendor?
- g. Who has the lead for the procurement of maternity uniforms?
- h. How long does the process take for selection (e.g., award to contract to delivery)?
- i. Provide a flow chart which depicts the steps from design to production to procurement to receipt. Annotate the timeline between each phase.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 6: Congress enacted legislation in the FY22 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) which directed the SecDef to prescribe regulations by December 27, 2022, to preserve the parental guardianship rights of a cadet or midshipman who becomes pregnant or fathers a child, while attending a Military Service Academies (MSAs), consistent with the individual and academic responsibilities of such cadet or midshipman. It is important to note that this legislation did not provide guidance that pertains to enlisted Service members enrolled in Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) commissioning programs.

The Committee requests a written response from the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (USD(P&R)), the MSAs, and Military Services (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, and Coast Guard) to address the following questions:

- a. **USD(P&R):** Has this legislation been enacted, if so, when? If not yet enacted, what is the expected implementation date?
- b. **MSAs:** Will affected cadets and midshipmen in Service as of the Congressionally directed enactment date be grandfathered (i.e., able to avail themselves of the new rules)?
- c. **MSAs:** Provide copies of and links to the implementing DoD directives and guidance.
- d. **MSAs:** Has Service guidance been issued? If so, provide copies.

- e. **MSAs:** How many cadets and midshipmen are currently waiting for the Act to be implemented?
- f. **Military Services:** Provide the instruction(s) which delineate policy guidance for pregnant and postpartum ROTC students. In addition, provide the instruction(s) which delineate policy guidance for enlisted pregnant and postpartum Service members enrolled in ROTC commissioning programs.

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Department of the Air Force, Coast Guard

RFI 7: In December 2017, via RFI 4, the Committee asked about the Military Services related to pregnant/postpartum residency at development professional military education (PME) schools, to include Command and General Staff College, War College, Senior Enlisted Academies, Top Level Schools, or the Service equivalent. The Committee remains concerned about whether pregnant or postpartum servicewomen are being permitted to attend PME. In 2022, the Army published a new directive titled, “Army Directive 2022-06 (Parenthood, Pregnancy, and Postpartum),” which outlines that a pregnancy profile will not inhibit women from attending PME. In addition, in cases in which fitness testing is required to satisfy eligibility and/or graduation requirements, a passing physical fitness test of record dated within the last 24 months must receive a waiver from the school’s commandant.

The Committee requests an updated written response from the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard regarding current policies. Provide the following:

- a. Are there any barriers, prohibitions, or other restrictions preventing pregnant or postpartum servicewomen from attending? If so, what are they?
- b. Is completion of a fitness test or fitness assessment waived, if not an essential element of the PME?
- c. Does your Service have a similar regulation to the Army’s which delineates PME requirements for pregnant or postpartum servicewomen? If so, provide.
- d. Who has oversight of school commandant policies/regulations related to the approval/disapproval of eligibility and/or graduation requirements for the pregnant or postpartum servicewomen? Who has the authority to grant fitness waivers? Is there an appeal process?

Responding Entity: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, Coast Guard



U.S. Coast Guard crew
at the helm. (U.S. Coast
Guard Photo by
Telfair Brown)

Appendix F

Gender Distribution of Officers and
Enlisted Service Members in Each
Service and Across the Total Force,
2019–2023

Appendix F. Gender Distribution of Officers and Enlisted Service Members in Each Service and Across the Total Force, 2019–2023

This appendix presents the percentages of men and women in each rank for each Service, including the Reserve and Guard, in 2023. It also presents the changes in gender distribution within each Service from 2019 through 2023. The tables in this appendix were calculated using DoD data.⁷⁰³

Table F.1. Gender Distribution of Service Members by Component and Rank, September 2023

Rank	Active Component Total				Reserve Component Total				National Guard Total			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	4	10.3	35	89.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	1	100.0
O9	14	10.3	122	89.7	0	0.0	3	100.0	0	0.0	5	100.0
O8	19	7.0	254	93.0	16	22.5	55	77.5	16	11.1	128	88.9
O7	44	10.8	364	89.2	37	22.3	129	77.7	48	14.8	276	85.2
O6	1,681	14.9	9,621	85.1	886	20.6	3,419	79.4	345	14.2	2,085	85.8
O5	4,755	17.0	23,177	83.0	2,981	20.6	11,460	79.4	1,295	15.8	6,906	84.2
O4	9,351	20.0	37,316	80.0	4,710	21.9	16,773	78.1	1,921	16.9	9,415	83.1
O3	17,005	22.5	58,730	77.5	4,872	27.3	12,971	72.7	2,811	18.7	12,208	81.3
O2	7,612	23.7	24,487	76.3	2,179	30.1	5,065	69.9	1,982	20.4	7,746	79.6
O1	6,617	24.4	20,495	75.6	1,184	29.9	2,771	70.1	1,675	23.0	5,594	77.0
Officer Total	47,102	21.2	174,601	78.8	16,865	24.3	52,646	75.7	10,093	18.5	44,364	81.5
W5	63	8.5	680	91.5	12	9.3	117	90.7	28	6.5	404	93.5
W4	253	8.5	2,727	91.5	103	12.5	718	87.5	166	9.9	1,508	90.1
W3	467	9.3	4,580	90.7	143	13.3	932	86.7	253	9.7	2,360	90.3
W2	909	10.9	7,430	89.1	270	17.8	1,244	82.2	359	13.9	2,218	86.1
W1	396	9.1	3,951	90.9	87	17.6	406	82.4	206	12.8	1,408	87.2
Warrant Total	2,088	9.7	19,368	90.3	615	15.3	3,417	84.7	1,012	11.4	7,898	88.6
E9	1,392	12.7	9,530	87.3	568	20.3	2,230	79.7	506	12.4	3,564	87.6
E8	3,776	14.0	23,159	86.0	2,299	24.2	7,205	75.8	1,693	14.8	9,768	85.2
E7	13,932	14.6	81,453	85.4	6,446	23.3	21,172	76.7	6,405	17.3	30,681	82.7
E6	25,500	15.0	144,083	85.0	10,494	22.7	35,640	77.3	9,432	17.1	45,672	82.9
E5	42,269	18.6	185,346	81.4	14,059	24.0	44,536	76.0	14,633	18.5	64,397	81.5
E4	46,873	18.0	213,717	82.0	20,112	26.3	56,371	73.7	26,116	21.8	93,527	78.2
E3	31,041	18.0	141,403	82.0	6,070	21.4	22,264	78.6	11,408	25.8	32,807	74.2
E2	9,662	16.6	48,511	83.4	1,742	23.1	5,800	76.9	3,528	27.8	9,142	72.2
E1	7,759	16.5	39,324	83.5	1,454	21.9	5,189	78.1	2,121	25.8	6,095	74.2
Enlisted Total	182,204	17.0	886,526	83.0	63,244	24.0	200,407	76.0	75,842	20.4	295,653	79.6
Total	231,394	17.6%	1,080,495	82.4%	80,724	23.9%	256,470	76.1%	86,947	20.0%	347,915	80.0%

Table F.2. Gender Distribution of Active Component Service Members by Service and Rank, September 2023

Rank	Army						Navy						Marine Corps						Air Force						Space Force						Coast Guard					
	Female			Male			Female			Male			Female			Male			Female			Male			Female			Male			Female			Male		
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
O10	1	6.7	14	93.3	1	14.3	6	85.7	0	0.0	2	100.0	1	9.1	10	90.9	0	0.0	2	100.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0	1	50.0				
O9	5	11.4	39	92.9	3	10.7	25	89.3	0	0.0	16	100.0	5	12.8	34	87.2	1	20.0	4	80.0	4	0.0	0	0.0	4	100.0	0	0.0	4	100.0	0	0.0				
O8	5	5.3	90	97.8	2	3.8	51	96.2	2	6.7	28	93.3	8	11.8	60	88.2	0	0.0	6	100.0	0	0.0	2	9.5	19	90.5	0	0.0	2	9.5	19	90.5				
O7	18	15.9	95	93.1	7	6.7	97	93.3	2	5.4	35	94.6	13	10.6	110	89.4	0	0.0	11	100.0	4	20.0	4	20.0	16	80.0	0	0.0	4	20.0	16	80.0				
O6	552	15.1	3,102	88.0	421	13.3	2,733	86.7	42	6.1	645	93.9	562	17.7	2,615	82.3	28	12.6	194	87.4	76	18.6	76	18.6	332	81.4	0	0.0	76	18.6	332	81.4				
O5	1,549	17.8	7,146	87.5	1,025	15.6	5,561	84.4	128	6.6	1,813	93.4	1,719	18.9	7,379	81.1	112	16.3	576	83.7	222	24.0	222	24.0	702	76.0	0	0.0	222	24.0	702	76.0				
O4	2,984	18.8	12,973	85.4	2,220	20.9	8,379	79.1	317	8.0	3,628	92.0	3,256	24.3	10,169	75.7	191	16.8	949	83.2	373	23.4	373	23.4	1,218	76.6	0	0.0	373	23.4	1,218	76.6				
O3	5,829	21.8	20,925	82.3	4,503	24.2	14,142	75.8	564	9.8	5,186	90.2	5,290	25.1	15,814	74.9	241	18.4	1,069	81.6	578	26.6	578	26.6	1,594	73.4	0	0.0	578	26.6	1,594	73.4				
O2	2,874	23.4	9,428	84.1	1,778	24.1	5,592	75.9	573	14.7	3,330	85.3	1,887	27.3	5,024	72.7	146	28.0	375	72.0	354	32.4	354	32.4	738	67.6	0	0.0	354	32.4	738	67.6				
O1	2,318	24.4	7,170	82.0	1,576	23.5	5,132	76.5	409	15.0	2,925	85.0	1,868	27.5	4,920	72.5	140	27.0	379	73.0	311	35.3	311	35.3	569	64.7	0	0.0	311	35.3	569	64.7				
Officer Total	16,140	20.9	60,982	79.1	11,536	21.7	41,718	78.3	2,037	10.7	17,008	89.3	14,609	24.1	46,135	75.9	859	19.4	3,565	80.6	1,921	27.0	1,921	27.0	5,193	73.0	0	0.0	5,193	73.0	0	0.0				
W5	51	9.2	506	90.8	5	6.7	70	93.3	7	6.3	104	93.7	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
W4	161	9.2	1,593	90.8	44	9.6	416	90.4	14	4.6	288	95.4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	34	7.3	34	7.3	430	92.7	0	0.0	34	7.3	430	92.7				
W3	312	9.9	2,850	90.1	83	11.0	672	89.0	35	5.4	618	94.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	37	7.8	37	7.8	440	92.2	0	0.0	37	7.8	440	92.2				
W2	644	10.9	5,265	89.1	101	14.4	6,02	85.6	54	6.2	816	93.8	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	110	12.8	110	12.8	747	87.2	0	0.0	110	12.8	747	87.2				
W1	370	9.1	3,691	90.9	2	9.1	20	90.9	24	9.1	240	90.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0				
Warrant Total	1,538	10.0	13,905	90.0	235	11.7	1,780	88.3	134	6.1	2,066	93.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	181	10.1	181	10.1	1,617	89.9	0	0.0	1,617	89.9	0	0.0				
E9	436	12.5	3,043	87.5	305	10.9	2,499	89.1	90	5.3	1,593	94.7	513	20.2	2,025	79.8	13	27.1	35	72.9	35	9.5	35	9.5	335	90.5	0	0.0	35	9.5	335	90.5				
E8	1,394	13.6	8,872	86.4	848	12.2	6,095	87.8	289	7.1	3,795	92.9	1,132	23.9	3,610	76.1	32	24.6	98	75.4	81	10.5	81	10.5	689	89.5	0	0.0	81	10.5	689	89.5				
E7	4,462	12.3	31,880	87.7	3,376	14.8	19,436	85.2	655	8.1	7,451	91.9	4,897	20.4	19,132	79.6	107	18.2	480	81.8	435	12.4	435	12.4	3,074	87.6	0	0.0	435	12.4	3,074	87.6				
E6	7,519	12.9	50,597	87.1	8,449	17.0	41,369	83.0	1,273	9.9	11,545	90.1	7,083	17.2	34,147	82.8	133	16.1	693	83.9	1,043	15.4	1,043	15.4	5,732	84.6	0	0.0	1,043	15.4	5,732	84.6				
E5	11,153	16.3	57,171	83.7	15,423	22.0	54,801	78.0	2,804	11.6	21,266	88.4	11,612	20.7	44,513	79.3	172	16.3	886	83.7	1,105	14.1	1,105	14.1	6,709	85.9	0	0.0	1,105	14.1	6,709	85.9				
E4	16,025	15.4	87,821	84.6	12,236	22.7	41,549	77.3	2,918	9.3	23,360	90.7	14,672	22.6	50,138	77.4	113	18.1	510	81.9	909	14.5	909	14.5	5,339	85.5	0	0.0	909	14.5	5,339	85.5				
E3	7,289	16.5	36,779	83.5	9,561	23.8	30,695	76.2	3,506	8.9	35,881	91.1	10,019	22.5	34,471	77.5	211	22.6	724	77.4	455	13.8	455	13.8	2,853	86.2	0	0.0	455	13.8	2,853	86.2				
E2	2,933	14.5	17,354	85.5	3,192	24.1	10,040	75.9	1,793	11.1	14,312	88.9	1,618	21.0	6,096	79.0	23	20.4	90	79.6	103	14.3	103	14.3	619	85.7	0	0.0	103	14.3	619	85.7				
E1	1,608	13.7	10,127	86.3	3,215	25.1	9,576	74.9	1,264	9.2	12,537	90.8	1,599	19.4	6,627	80.6	24	17.8	111	82.2	49	12.4	49	12.4	346	87.6	0	0.0	49	12.4	346	87.6				
Enlisted Total	52,819	14.8	303,644	85.2	56,605	20.8	216,060	79.2	14,592	9.6	136,740	90.4	53,145	20.9	200,759	79.1	828	18.6	3,627	81.4	4,215	14.1	4,215	14.1	25,696	85.9	0	0.0	4,215	14.1	25,696	85.9				
AC Total	70,497	15.7%	378,531	84.3%	68,376	20.9%	259,558	79.1%	16,763	9.7%	155,814	90.3%	67,754	21.5%	246,894	78.5%	1,687	19.0%	7,192	81.0%	6,317	16.3%	6,317	16.3%	32,506	83.7%	0	0.0%	6,317	16.3%	32,506	83.7%				

Table F.3. Gender Distribution of Reserve Component Service Members by Service and Rank, September 2023

Rank	Army				Navy				Marine Corps				Air Force				Coast Guard				Total			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	N/A	N/A
O9	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O8	7	18.9	30	81.1	4	36.4	7	63.6	0	0.0	6	100.0	4	25.0	12	75.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	16	22.5	55	77.5
O7	20	25.3	59	74.7	2	6.3	30	93.8	1	16.7	5	83.3	13	27.7	34	72.3	1	50.0	1	50.0	37	22.3	129	77.7
O6	301	17.7	1,402	82.3	224	18.1	1,012	81.9	19	8.6	203	91.4	326	29.5	780	70.5	16	42.1	22	57.9	886	20.6	3,419	79.4
O5	1,174	20.3	4,609	79.7	586	17.4	2,789	82.6	80	10.5	685	89.5	1,102	25.2	3,263	74.8	39	25.5	114	74.5	2,981	20.6	11,460	79.4
O4	2,263	24.4	7,029	75.6	974	19.2	4,108	80.8	156	8.5	1,674	91.5	1,247	24.8	3,777	75.2	70	27.5	185	72.5	4,710	21.9	16,773	78.1
O3	3,020	27.9	7,819	72.1	738	26.7	2,026	73.3	78	7.6	953	92.4	958	32.6	1,983	67.4	78	29.1	190	70.9	4,872	27.3	12,971	72.7
O2	1,695	31.9	3,624	68.1	161	25.6	468	74.4	38	11.0	309	89.0	268	32.7	551	67.3	17	13.1	113	86.9	2,179	30.1	5,065	69.9
O1	884	33.4	1,765	66.6	106	21.8	381	78.2	14	8.1	159	91.9	151	29.0	369	71.0	29	23.0	97	77.0	1,184	29.9	2,771	70.1
Officer Total	9,364	26.2	26,338	73.8	2,795	20.5	10,822	79.5	386	8.8	3,995	91.2	4,069	27.4	10,769	72.6	251	25.8	722	74.2	16,865	24.3	52,646	75.7
W5	12	11.3	94	88.7	0	0.0	7	100.0	0	0.0	16	100.0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	12	9.3	117	90.7
W4	98	13.4	632	86.6	1	5.3	18	94.7	1	2.1	47	97.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3	12.5	21	87.5	103	12.5	718	87.5
W3	134	14.1	817	85.9	2	4.5	42	95.5	5	7.5	62	92.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2	15.4	11	84.6	143	13.3	932	86.7
W2	244	18.8	1,054	81.2	7	14.0	43	86.0	6	5.7	99	94.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	13	21.3	48	78.7	270	17.8	1,244	82.2
W1	85	17.9	390	82.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	11.1	16	88.9	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	87	17.6	406	82.4
Warrant Total	573	16.1	2,987	83.9	10	8.3	110	91.7	14	5.5	240	94.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	18	18.4	80	81.6	615	15.3	3,417	84.7
E9	241	20.4	938	79.6	70	18.2	315	81.8	5	3.5	138	96.5	237	23.0	795	77.0	15	25.4	44	74.6	568	20.3	2,230	79.7
E8	1,230	24.4	3,820	75.6	239	24.5	738	75.5	17	3.6	459	96.4	792	27.6	2,075	72.4	21	15.7	113	84.3	2,299	24.2	7,205	75.8
E7	2,752	22.1	9,716	77.9	1,000	25.3	2,949	74.7	89	8.2	999	91.8	2,517	26.7	6,918	73.3	88	13.0	590	87.0	6,446	23.3	21,172	76.7
E6	4,189	22.5	14,450	77.5	3,008	24.9	9,049	75.1	158	9.0	1,590	91.0	2,891	23.9	9,207	76.1	248	15.6	1,344	84.4	10,494	22.7	35,640	77.3
E5	6,524	23.4	21,315	76.6	3,921	28.1	10,056	71.9	297	7.3	3,786	92.7	3,052	27.6	8,014	72.4	265	16.3	1,365	83.7	14,059	24.0	44,536	76.0
E4	14,484	27.4	38,469	72.6	1,534	29.0	3,747	71.0	260	4.0	6,190	96.0	3,711	33.7	7,291	66.3	123	15.4	674	84.6	20,112	26.3	56,371	73.7
E3	3,796	32.1	8,037	67.9	1,000	32.3	2,095	67.7	242	2.3	10,128	97.7	980	34.9	1,830	65.1	52	23.0	174	77.0	6,070	21.4	22,264	78.6
E2	1,218	31.1	2,693	68.9	289	34.4	550	65.6	79	3.4	2,253	96.6	152	33.4	303	66.6	4	80.0	1	20.0	1,742	23.1	5,800	76.9
E1	915	25.8	2,628	74.2	257	33.2	518	66.8	56	3.3	1,655	96.7	226	36.9	387	63.1	0	0.0	1	100.0	1,454	21.9	5,189	78.1
Enlisted Total	35,349	25.7	102,066	74.3	11,318	27.4	30,017	72.6	1,203	4.2	27,198	95.8	14,558	28.3	36,820	71.7	816	15.9	4,306	84.1	63,244	24.0	200,407	76.0
RC Total	45,286	25.6%	131,391	74.4%	14,123	25.6%	40,949	74.4%	1,603	4.9%	31,433	95.1%	18,627	28.1%	47,589	71.9%	1,085	17.5%	5,108	82.5%	80,724	23.9%	256,470	76.1%

Table F.4. Gender Distribution of National Guard Service Members by Service and Rank, September 2023

Rank	Army National Guard				Air Force National Guard				Total			
	Female		Male		Female		Male		Female		Male	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	100.0
O9	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	4	100.0	0	0.0	5	100.0
O8	7	7.9	82	92.1	9	16.4	46	83.6	16	11.1	128	88.9
O7	24	14.0	148	86.0	24	15.8	128	84.2	48	14.8	276	85.2
O6	155	11.6	1,183	88.4	190	17.4	902	82.6	345	14.2	2,085	85.8
O5	501	13.2	3,304	86.8	794	18.1	3,602	81.9	1,295	15.8	6,906	84.2
O4	1,070	15.2	5,958	84.8	851	19.8	3,457	80.2	1,921	16.9	9,415	83.1
O3	1,937	17.3	9,276	82.7	874	23.0	2,932	77.0	2,811	18.7	12,208	81.3
O2	1,632	19.7	6,664	80.3	350	24.4	1,082	75.6	1,982	20.4	7,746	79.6
O1	1,397	22.3	4,879	77.7	278	28.0	715	72.0	1,675	23.0	5,594	77.0
Officer Total	6,723	17.6	31,496	82.4	3,370	20.8	12,868	79.2	10,093	18.5	44,364	81.5
W5	28	6.5	404	93.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	28	6.5	404	93.5
W4	166	9.9	1,508	90.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	166	9.9	1,508	90.1
W3	253	9.7	2,360	90.3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	253	9.7	2,360	90.3
W2	359	13.9	2,218	86.1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	359	13.9	2,218	86.1
W1	206	12.8	1,408	87.2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	206	12.8	1,408	87.2
Warrant Total	1,012	11.4	7,898	88.6	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,012	11.4	7,898	88.6
E9	165	8.1	1,873	91.9	341	16.6	1,713	83.4	506	12.4	3,564	87.6
E8	790	11.2	6,255	88.8	936	20.7	3,576	79.3	1,693	14.8	9,768	85.2
E7	3,171	15.3	17,570	84.7	3,434	20.8	13,070	79.2	6,405	17.3	30,681	82.7
E6	5,813	16.5	29,402	83.5	3,820	19.1	16,175	80.9	9,432	17.1	45,672	82.9
E5	10,488	18.0	47,625	82.0	4,400	21.5	16,056	78.5	14,633	18.5	64,397	81.5
E4	23,715	21.7	85,449	78.3	3,266	25.6	9,469	74.4	26,116	21.8	93,527	78.2
E3	6,757	26.6	18,687	73.4	2,486	26.3	6,971	73.7	11,408	25.8	32,807	74.2
E2	3,218	26.6	8,862	73.4	355	33.8	696	66.2	3,528	27.8	9,142	72.2
E1	2,137	26.5	5,921	73.5	638	32.4	1,334	67.6	2,121	25.8	6,095	74.2
Enlisted Total	56,257	20.2	221,650	79.8	19,676	22.2	69,060	77.8	75,842	20.4	295,653	79.6
Total	63,992	19.7%	261,044	80.3%	23,046	22.0%	81,928	78.0%	86,947	20.0%	347,915	80.0%

Table F.5. Distribution of Women in the Army by Service Component and Rank, 2019–2023

Rank	2019						2020						2021						2022						2023					
	AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	0	1	6.3	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	6.7	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	
O9	2	4.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	4.3	0	0.0	0	0	14	6.1	0	0	0	0.0	4	8.7	0	0.0	5	11.4	0	0.0	0	0.0		
O8	7	6.1	6	16.2	7	9.6	5	5.4	4	12.5	8	10.3	31	5.6	25	14.8	36	9.3	5	4.6	7	20.6	6	7.1	5	5.3	7	18.9	7	7.9
O7	12	9.4	20	23.0	15	8.8	15	10.9	18	20.2	19	10.3	61	9.2	84	19.9	78	8.9	14	11.9	14	17.3	21	12.3	18	15.9	20	25.3	24	14.0
O6	484	12.2	350	19.4	133	10.1	497	12.4	370	19.8	134	10.2	2,429	12.2	1,749	19	697	10.5	521	13.8	318	18.5	138	10.6	552	15.1	301	17.7	155	11.6
O5	1,399	15.9	1,059	20.4	442	12.1	1,515	16.8	1,105	20.5	467	12.6	7,021	15.8	5,265	20.3	2,179	12	1,559	17.5	1,139	20.8	477	13.1	1,549	17.8	1,174	20.3	501	13.2
O4	2,970	19.2	2,299	23.8	1,037	14.7	3,049	19	2,485	24	10,666	14.8	14,838	19.1	11,012	23.7	4,958	14.3	3,030	18.8	2,378	23.7	1,042	14.8	2,994	18.8	2,263	24.4	1,070	15.2
O3	5,702	20.1	2,905	27.8	1,710	15.9	5,509	20.3	2,829	27.9	1,690	16	28,284	20.1	14,794	27.7	8,538	15.9	5,776	21.2	2,687	27.3	1,773	16.6	5,829	21.8	3,020	27.9	1,937	17.3
O2	2,269	20.6	1,680	31.8	1,307	16.5	2,616	21.3	1,762	33.2	1,313	13.3	12,177	21.1	8,744	31.9	6,482	16.7	2,836	23.2	1,846	33.8	1,489	18.1	2,874	23.4	1,695	31.9	1,632	19.7
O1	2,285	22.3	755	30.9	1,155	19.2	2,303	23.4	767	30.3	1,297	19.9	10,828	22.2	3,802	31.2	6,280	19.3	2,337	23.1	941	33.6	1,549	21.3	2,313	24.4	884	33.4	1,397	22.3
Officer Total	15,130	19.4	9,074	26.0	5,806	15.7	15,511	19.7	9,320	26.2	5,994	16.2	75,683	19.4	45,475	26	29,228	15.7	16,083	20.5	9,330	26.3	6,495	17.1	16,140	20.9	9,364	26.2	6,723	17.6
W5	52	9.0	15	14.2	26	5.7	46	8.3	14	13.1	24	5.5	233	8.3	73	13.5	116	5.4	57	10.0	16	15.5	23	5.7	51	9.2	12	11.3	28	6.5
W4	192	9.9	78	13.2	124	8.3	174	8.9	83	12.7	147	9.2	922	9.2	404	13.3	638	8.5	181	9.8	92	12.7	165	10.2	161	9.2	98	13.4	166	9.9
W3	392	10.2	187	14.6	259	10.2	390	10.7	179	14.6	252	9.8	1,957	10.3	906	15	1,302	10.4	316	9.5	146	14.5	244	9.2	312	9.9	134	14.1	253	9.7
W2	489	9.3	191	17.1	310	10.8	526	9.5	201	17.9	299	11.2	2,609	9.5	989	17	1,486	10.4	629	10.6	223	19.1	320	12.6	644	10.9	244	18.8	359	13.9
W1	288	11.0	89	19.3	194	13.4	304	11.4	101	19.9	214	14.3	1,334	10.5	455	19	994	13.6	320	9.6	81	15.1	241	13.9	370	9.1	85	17.9	206	12.8
Warrant Total	1,413	9.9	560	15.7	913	10.4	1,440	10	578	16	936	10.7	7,055	9.8	2,827	15.9	4,546	10.4	1,503	10.0	558	15.8	993	11.1	1,538	10.0	573	16.1	1,012	11.4
E9	343	9.7	261	18.0	147	7.4	351	10.1	270	19.3	151	7.7	1,669	9.7	1,332	18.5	741	7.4	419	12.0	233	19.7	158	7.9	436	12.5	241	20.4	165	8.1
E8	1,441	12.8	1,205	23.1	732	10.3	1,445	13.2	1,155	23.3	725	10.4	6,908	12.8	6,025	23	3,585	10.1	1,436	13.4	1,290	24.4	774	11.2	1,394	13.6	1,230	24.4	790	11.2
E7	4,193	11.8	2,962	22.1	2,348	12.6	4,212	11.6	3,201	21.7	2,516	13.4	20,803	11.8	15,245	21.8	12,144	12.8	4,431	12.1	2,837	21.8	3,049	14.7	4,462	12.3	2,752	22.1	3,171	15.3
E6	7,054	12.7	4,110	21.6	4,670	14.5	7,299	12.4	4,727	22.1	4,706	15.1	34,776	12.3	21,601	21.8	24,471	14.5	7,377	12.8	4,567	22.8	5,706	16.1	7,519	12.9	4,189	22.5	5,813	16.5
E5	10,200	15.0	6,549	21.3	9,575	16.2	10,517	15.5	5,567	21.7	9,725	16.6	51,098	15.1	31,761	21.6	47,728	16.3	10,963	15.7	6,250	23.2	10,347	17.8	11,153	16.3	6,524	23.4	10,488	18.0
E4	17,119	15.5	12,753	24.2	18,484	18.9	17,559	15.6	12,564	24.8	19,454	19.5	87,201	15.6	62,993	24.3	97,291	19.1	18,245	16.1	13,070	26.6	23,059	21.4	16,025	15.4	14,464	27.4	23,715	21.7
E3	7,947	16.0	4,411	29.2	9,068	24.7	9,320	17.2	4,881	30.4	10,793	26.3	42,236	16.5	22,751	29.2	46,688	24.8	7,635	15.8	4,162	30.6	8,353	25.1	7,289	16.5	3,796	32.1	6,757	26.6
E2	4,323	16.2	1,810	28.2	5,236	25.5	4,036	16.4	1,983	28.9	5,584	26.7	20,129	15.5	8,688	27.9	23,444	24.7	2,243	13.7	1,122	30.0	3,116	27.0	2,933	14.5	1,218	31.1	3,218	26.6
E1	4,154	15.8	2,579	31.5	4,179	26.5	2,855	15	2,524	32	2,803	25.3	16,114	14.7	11,048	30.4	15,613	25	1,455	13.2	1,324	31.3	1,684	24.7	1,608	13.7	915	25.8	2,137	26.5
Enlisted Total	56,774	14.7	36,640	24.1	54,439	18.8	57,594	14.8	36,872	24.7	56,457	19.4	280,934	14.6	181,444	24.1	271,705	18.6	54,194	14.7	34,955	25.4	56,246	19.9	52,819	14.8	35,349	25.7	56,257	20.2
Total	73,317	15.3	46,274	24.3	61,158	18.2	74,545	15.5	46,770	24.8	63,387	18.9	363,672	15.2	229,746	24.3	305,479	18.1	71,780	15.6	44,743	25.4	63,734	19.3	70,497	15.7%	45,286	25.6%	63,992	19.7%

Note: AC = Active Component; RC = Reserve Component

Table F.6. Distribution of Women in the Navy by Service Component and Rank, 2019–2023

Rank	2019						2020						2021						2022						2023					
	AC		RC		%		AC		RC		%		AC		RC		%		AC		RC		%		AC		RC		%	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	1	2.3	N/A	N/A	1	10.0	N/A	N/A	1	14.3	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	14.3	0	0.0	0	0.0
O9	3	7.5	0	0.0	3	7.9	0	0	16	8.2	0	0	3	8.8	0	0.0	3	10.7	3	10.7	0	0.0	3	10.7	0	0.0	3	10.7	0	0.0
O8	5	7.9	2	10.0	6	9.4	1	5	24	7.6	13	14.1	3	4.4	5	29.4	2	3.8	2	3.8	4	36.4	2	3.8	2	3.8	4	36.4	2	3.8
O7	9	8.9	8	19.5	6	5.7	6	17.1	42	8	31	16.8	8	7.7	3	8.6	7	6.7	7	6.7	2	6.3	7	6.7	2	6.3	7	6.7	2	6.3
O6	364	11.6	200	16.2	398	12.1	212	16.5	1,877	11.7	1,023	16.2	401	12.3	226	18.3	421	13.3	421	13.3	224	18.1	421	13.3	224	18.1	421	13.3	224	18.1
O5	927	13.8	540	16.1	945	14	555	16.1	4,525	13.5	2,668	15.9	988	14.6	577	17.1	1,025	15.6	1,025	15.6	586	17.4	1,025	15.6	586	17.4	1,025	15.6	586	17.4
O4	1,929	18.3	901	17.7	2,063	19.3	976	18.6	9,773	18.4	4,514	17.8	2,210	20.4	960	18.9	2,220	20.9	2,220	20.9	974	19.2	2,220	20.9	974	19.2	2,220	20.9	974	19.2
O3	4,124	22.0	871	25.7	4,258	22.7	820	25.8	20,768	22.2	4,265	25.5	4,562	24.1	765	26.7	4,503	24.2	4,503	24.2	738	26.7	4,503	24.2	738	26.7	4,503	24.2	738	26.7
O2	1,587	23.2	200	31.8	1,605	23.4	189	30.1	7,776	22.8	912	29.8	1,699	23.2	140	23.6	1,778	24.1	1,778	24.1	161	25.6	1,778	24.1	161	25.6	1,778	24.1	161	25.6
O1	1,624	22.6	124	26.6	1,627	22.8	117	25.3	8,110	23	559	25.4	1,720	23.8	98	23.4	1,576	23.5	1,576	23.5	106	21.8	1,576	23.5	106	21.8	1,576	23.5	106	21.8
Officer Total	10,572	19.8	2,846	20.0	10,911	20.3	2,876	20.1	52,924	19.8	13,985	19.8	11,595	21.3	2,774	20.4	11,536	21.7	11,536	21.7	2,795	20.5	11,536	21.7	2,795	20.5	11,536	21.7	2,795	20.5
W5	6	7.0	0	0.0	6	6.9	0	0	29	6.8	0	0	6	7.1	0	0.0	5	6.7	5	6.7	0	0.0	5	6.7	0	0.0	5	6.7	0	0.0
W4	17	4.3	2	8.3	25	6.2	2	9.1	108	5.3	8	7	35	7.3	3	14.3	44	9.6	44	9.6	1	5.3	44	9.6	1	5.3	44	9.6	1	5.3
W3	57	8.1	2	6.7	65	8.6	1	3.4	280	8	9	5.8	76	10.2	0	0.0	83	11.0	83	11.0	2	4.5	83	11.0	2	4.5	83	11.0	2	4.5
W2	61	10.1	2	5.6	69	10.9	2	4.4	333	10.7	14	7	98	14.4	9	15.0	101	14.4	101	14.4	7	14.0	101	14.4	7	14.0	101	14.4	7	14.0
W1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5.0	0	0.0	2	9.1	2	9.1	0	0.0	2	9.1	0	0.0	2	9.1	0	0.0
Warrant Total	141	7.9	6	6.4	165	8.7	5	4.9	750	8.3	31	6.3	216	10.7	12	10.0	235	11.7	235	11.7	10	8.3	235	11.7	10	8.3	235	11.7	10	8.3
E9	219	7.9	55	15.6	238	8.8	50	14.7	1,106	8.2	268	15.3	281	10.2	67	17.1	305	10.9	305	10.9	70	18.2	305	10.9	70	18.2	305	10.9	70	18.2
E8	704	10.2	188	18.4	743	10.5	188	18.5	3,526	10.2	935	18.5	816	11.3	226	23.3	848	12.2	848	12.2	239	24.5	848	12.2	239	24.5	848	12.2	239	24.5
E7	2,924	13.3	917	24.4	3,058	13.5	934	25	14,644	13.3	4,586	24.3	3,306	14.4	977	25.2	3,376	14.8	3,376	14.8	1,000	25.3	3,376	14.8	1,000	25.3	3,376	14.8	1,000	25.3
E6	7,434	14.7	2,760	22.9	7,853	15.4	2,970	23.6	36,958	14.8	13,705	23.2	8,391	16.4	2,887	24.5	8,449	17.0	8,449	17.0	3,008	24.9	8,449	17.0	3,008	24.9	8,449	17.0	3,008	24.9
E5	14,778	21.0	4,197	27.2	15,265	21.3	4,205	27.2	71,335	20.6	20,010	26.8	15,487	22.0	3,936	27.6	15,423	22.0	15,423	22.0	3,921	28.1	15,423	22.0	3,921	28.1	15,423	22.0	3,921	28.1
E4	12,413	23.3	1,979	26.2	13,729	23.2	1,918	27.3	62,205	22.9	9,512	26.8	12,435	23.1	1,553	29.1	12,236	22.7	12,236	22.7	1,534	29.0	12,236	22.7	1,534	29.0	12,236	22.7	1,534	29.0
E3	10,592	25.0	1,035	30.0	10,502	25.5	939	30.6	55,421	25.1	4,984	29	12,043	24.0	1,054	32.0	9,561	23.8	9,561	23.8	1,000	32.3	9,561	23.8	1,000	32.3	9,561	23.8	1,000	32.3
E2	3,948	23.9	284	30.2	3,715	23	238	28.2	18,349	23.6	1,408	26.5	3,002	22.9	248	28.6	3,192	24.1	3,192	24.1	289	34.4	3,192	24.1	289	34.4	3,192	24.1	289	34.4
E1	2,912	23.7	215	28.2	3,450	23.5	193	28.3	14,773	24.2	1,101	26.9	2,781	23.6	255	34.0	3,215	25.1	3,215	25.1	257	33.2	3,215	25.1	257	33.2	3,215	25.1	257	33.2
Enlisted Total	55,924	20.2	11,640	25.7	58,553	20.4	11,635	26	278,317	20.1	56,509	25.5	58,542	20.6	11,203	27.0	56,605	20.8	56,605	20.8	11,318	27.4	56,605	20.8	11,318	27.4	56,605	20.8	11,318	27.4
Total	66,637	20.0	14,492	24.3	69,629	20.4	14,516	24.5	331,991	20.0	70,525	24.1	70,353	20.7	13,989	25.3	68,376	20.9%	68,376	20.9%	14,123	25.6%	68,376	20.9%	14,123	25.6%	68,376	20.9%	14,123	25.6%

Note: AC = Active Component; RC = Reserve Component

Table F.7. Distribution of Women in the Marine Corps by Service Component and Rank, 2019–2023

Rank	2019						2020						2021						2022						2023					
	AC		RC		RC		AC		RC		RC		AC		RC		AC		RC		AC		RC		AC		RC			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
O10	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0		
O9	1	6.3	0	0.0	1	5.9	0	0	3	3.2	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0		
O8	0	0.0	1	25.0	0	0	1	2.5	1	0.7	4	17.4	1	3.4	0	0.0	1	3.4	0	0.0	2	6.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0		
O7	2	5.4	0	0.0	2	5.3	0	0	8	4.3	1	3.2	2	5.6	1	14.3	2	5.6	1	14.3	2	5.4	1	16.7	1	16.7	1	16.7		
O6	18	2.8	21	7.5	21	3.2	25	9.3	99	3	10.7	7.7	37	5.6	22	9.6	42	6.1	19	8.6	19	8.6	19	8.6	19	8.6	19	8.6		
O5	108	5.7	59	8.5	125	6.4	60	8.4	531	5.5	291	8.2	132	6.8	85	11.2	128	6.6	80	10.5	128	6.6	80	10.5	128	6.6	80	10.5		
O4	250	6.4	152	8.8	260	6.5	159	8.9	1,264	6.4	745	9.1	284	7.1	141	8.3	317	8.0	156	8.5	317	8.0	156	8.5	317	8.0	156	8.5		
O3	526	8.7	78	8.0	538	9.1	72	7.5	2,565	8.5	392	7.6	541	9.3	66	7.4	564	9.8	78	7.6	564	9.8	78	7.6	564	9.8	78	7.6		
O2	359	9.9	4	1.4	396	10.2	16	6	1,933	10.6	50	3.5	514	13.3	31	9.0	573	14.7	38	11.0	573	14.7	38	11.0	573	14.7	38	11.0		
O1	369	12.0	22	7.6	378	13.6	17	7	1,806	12	78	6.1	453	15.7	18	8.5	409	15.0	14	8.1	409	15.0	14	8.1	409	15.0	14	8.1		
Officer Total	1,633	8.5	337	7.9	1,721	8.9	350	8.2	8,210	8.5	1,688	7.9	1,964	10.2	364	8.8	2,037	10.7	386	8.8	2,037	10.7	386	8.8	2,037	10.7	386	8.8		
W5	5	4.7	2	11.1	6	5.4	2	10.5	29	5.4	7	7.5	6	5.5	1	6.3	7	6.3	0	0.0	7	6.3	0	0.0	7	6.3	0	0.0		
W4	14	4.6	1	2.2	12	4	2	4.3	63	4.2	8	3.5	13	4.3	0	0.0	14	4.6	1	2.1	14	4.6	1	2.1	14	4.6	1	2.1		
W3	42	6.9	1	1.3	39	6.8	4	5.5	195	6.5	16	4.1	38	5.8	4	6.9	35	5.4	5	7.5	35	5.4	5	7.5	35	5.4	5	7.5		
W2	52	5.9	7	8.5	55	6	4	5.6	273	6.2	30	7.9	52	5.5	4	3.8	54	6.2	6	5.7	54	6.2	6	5.7	54	6.2	6	5.7		
W1	18	7.0	2	10.5	14	5.4	2	5.6	67	5.1	5	3.5	23	11.3	3	10.3	24	9.1	2	11.1	24	9.1	2	11.1	24	9.1	2	11.1		
Warrant Total	131	6.1	13	5.4	126	5.8	14	5.7	627	5.8	66	5.3	132	6.0	12	4.8	134	6.1	14	5.5	134	6.1	14	5.5	134	6.1	14	5.5		
E9	66	4.2	2	1.2	66	4.2	3	2.1	316	4	15	1.9	75	4.7	5	3.4	90	5.3	5	3.5	90	5.3	5	3.5	90	5.3	5	3.5		
E8	201	5.1	28	5.8	222	5.6	27	5.4	1,059	5.4	129	5.3	238	6.0	20	4.2	289	7.1	17	3.6	289	7.1	17	3.6	289	7.1	17	3.6		
E7	570	6.7	56	4.9	577	7	66	5.8	2,792	6.6	315	5.7	620	7.4	83	7.5	655	8.1	89	8.2	655	8.1	89	8.2	655	8.1	89	8.2		
E6	1,208	8.3	155	8.1	1,289	8.7	157	8.1	5,911	8.3	750	7.9	1,310	9.8	140	8.4	1,273	9.9	158	9.0	1,273	9.9	158	9.0	1,273	9.9	158	9.0		
E5	2,617	10.0	321	6.9	2,390	10	324	7.5	12,403	9.9	1,581	7.2	2,499	11.2	318	7.7	2,804	11.6	297	7.3	2,804	11.6	297	7.3	2,804	11.6	297	7.3		
E4	3,578	10.0	227	3.7	3,653	10.1	215	3.6	17,106	9.8	1,133	3.7	3,411	10.4	207	3.5	2,918	9.3	260	4.0	2,918	9.3	260	4.0	2,918	9.3	260	4.0		
E3	3,542	8.4	326	2.3	4,042	9.2	318	2.2	18,494	8.6	1,635	2.3	3,429	8.1	231	2.1	3,506	8.9	242	2.3	3,506	8.9	242	2.3	3,506	8.9	242	2.3		
E2	2,174	10.4	67	2.0	1,604	9	45	2	9,675	9.6	283	1.9	1,708	9.8	48	1.8	1,793	11.1	79	3.4	1,793	11.1	79	3.4	1,793	11.1	79	3.4		
E1	901	8.3	9	0.5	458	5.1	1	0.5	4,003	7.6	38	0.6	1,054	9.5	13	0.9	1,264	9.2	56	3.3	1,264	9.2	56	3.3	1,264	9.2	56	3.3		
Enlisted Total	14,857	9.0	1,191	3.5	14,301	9	1,156	3.7	71,759	8.9	5,879	3.6	14,344	9.4	1,065	3.8	14,592	9.6	1,203	4.2	14,592	9.6	1,203	4.2	14,592	9.6	1,203	4.2		
Total	16,621	8.9	1,541	4.0	16,148	8.9	1,520	4.3	80,596	8.8	7,613	4.1	16,440	9.4	1,441	4.4	16,763	9.7%	1,603	4.9%	16,763	9.7%	1,603	4.9%	16,763	9.7%	1,603	4.9%		

Note: AC = Active Component; RC = Reserve Component

Table F.8. Distribution of Women in the Air Force by Service Component and Rank, 2019–2023

Rank	2019						2020						2021						2022						2023					
	AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard		AC		RC		Guard	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	1	8.3	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	2	12.5	N/A	N/A	0	0	7	10.4	N/A	N/A	0	0	1	10.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	1	9.1	N/A	N/A	0	0.0
O9	3	7.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	5.9	0	0	0	0	18	7.9	0	0	0	0	5	10.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	5	12.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
O8	5	5.6	4	15.4	3	7.5	8	8.6	5	18.5	3	6.8	36	7.9	22	17.6	15	6.8	9	11.5	5	21.7	8	15.4	8	11.8	4	25.0	9	16.4
O7	16	11.1	13	25.0	16	11.8	17	12.6	16	30.2	17	12.1	77	10.8	64	24.3	92	13.6	13	11.3	14	25.5	22	15.7	13	10.6	13	27.7	24	15.8
O6	515	15.4	267	26.1	150	14.3	528	16	260	25.5	141	14	2,529	15.3	1,318	25.7	724	13.8	556	17.3	286	26.8	164	15.6	562	17.7	326	29.5	190	17.4
O5	1,612	16.5	981	24.3	674	16.1	1,648	16.8	1,050	24.6	734	16.9	8,057	16.4	4,941	24.3	3,375	16.2	1,677	18.1	1,096	25.5	771	17.7	1,719	18.9	1,102	25.2	794	18.1
O4	2,869	20.4	1,284	25.6	798	18.9	2,996	20.9	1,274	25.4	799	18.7	14,408	20.7	6,516	25.8	4,050	18.8	3,205	23.3	1,289	24.6	827	19.2	3,256	24.3	1,247	24.8	851	19.8
O3	5,088	24.6	920	31.9	848	24.2	5,218	25.1	916	31.7	859	23.4	25,435	24.4	4,628	32.4	4,278	23.8	5,086	24.8	978	33.3	885	23.2	5,290	25.1	958	32.6	874	23.0
O2	1,879	24.3	176	30.5	294	23.3	1,972	23.4	205	34.1	306	24.2	9,267	24.2	977	31.7	1,474	23.6	1,970	26.3	254	32.0	346	25.2	1,887	27.3	268	32.7	350	24.4
O1	1,944	24.1	132	30.3	249	23.1	1,933	26.3	154	26.7	294	23.8	9,169	24.6	644	27.5	1,350	23.3	1,722	27.4	170	29.1	299	25.6	1,868	27.5	151	29.0	278	28.0
Officer Total	13,932	21.8	3,777	26.9	3,032	19.6	14,325	22.3	3,880	26.8	3,153	19.7	69,003	21.8	19,110	27	15,358	19.6	14,244	23.4	4,092	27.3	3,322	20.4	14,609	24.1	4,069	27.4	3,370	20.8
E9	462	17.7	219	21.7	297	14.4	476	18.1	225	21.8	309	14.9	2,260	17.2	1,080	21.6	1,481	14.5	496	19.3	218	21.8	348	16.9	513	20.2	237	23.0	341	16.6
E8	1,133	21.1	748	26.5	899	19.7	1,170	22.2	794	27.4	924	20	5,520	21.5	3,886	26.9	4,421	19.4	1,085	23.2	809	27.3	919	20.3	1,132	23.9	792	27.6	936	20.7
E7	5,447	20.6	2,065	25.6	2,852	19.4	5,432	20.5	2,114	26	2,885	19.9	26,548	20.5	10,701	25.7	14,723	19.6	5,214	20.5	2,470	26.3	3,356	20.6	4,897	20.4	2,517	26.7	3,434	20.8
E6	7,093	17.9	3,212	24.0	3,967	19.3	7,453	17.6	3,349	24.1	4,049	19.3	36,871	17.9	15,719	24	19,320	19.2	7,582	17.2	2,926	23.7	3,726	18.9	7,083	17.2	2,891	23.9	3,820	19.1
E5	11,370	18.5	3,009	24.9	4,082	19.5	11,500	18.7	2,829	25.8	3,943	19.8	57,298	18.6	15,370	25.6	20,197	19.5	12,172	20.4	3,140	26.7	4,296	20.6	11,612	20.7	3,052	27.6	4,400	21.5
E4	11,312	20.7	3,517	30.2	3,155	23.6	12,613	22	3,789	31	3,147	23.5	57,513	20.7	18,203	30.3	15,992	23.2	13,774	22.5	3,819	34.0	3,057	25.6	14,672	22.6	3,711	33.7	3,266	25.6
E3	13,186	23.9	1,431	35.5	3,239	26.5	12,948	24.2	1,408	37.3	3,538	28.1	61,356	23.3	6,839	35.7	16,847	27.1	10,771	23.7	1,106	36.3	3,055	27.8	10,019	22.5	980	34.9	2,486	26.3
E2	1,794	23.7	364	42.4	490	43.4	1,882	23.8	336	44.1	504	42.1	8,917	22.9	1,534	41.7	2,092	43.9	1,644	20.8	213	36.7	412	36.4	1,618	21.0	152	33.4	355	33.8
E1	2,408	22.0	635	44.4	856	38.6	1,765	21.7	409	43.2	835	38.9	10,490	21.6	2,526	41.9	3,534	38.5	1,815	20.7	250	33.6	437	31.5	1,599	19.4	226	36.9	638	32.4
Enlisted Total	54,205	20.5	15,200	27.5	19,837	21.6	55,239	20.8	15,253	27.9	20,134	22.0	266,773	20.4	75,858	27.5	98,607	21.5	54,559	21.0	14,951	28.2	19,596	22.1	53,145	20.9	14,558	28.3	19,676	22.2
Total	68,137	20.8	18,977	27.3	22,869	21.3	69,564	21.1	19,133	27.7	23,287	21.7	935,776	20.6	94,968	27.4	113,965	21.3	68,803	21.5	19,043	28.0	22,918	21.8	67,754	21.5	18,627	28.1	23,046	22.0

Note: AC = Active Component; RC = Reserve Component

Table F.9. Distribution of Women in the Space Force by Rank, 2021–2023

Rank	2021		2022		2023	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
O10	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O9	0	0	1	16.7	1	20.0
O8	1	100	1	33.3	0	0.0
O7	0	0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O6	3	14.3	26	12.4	28	12.6
O5	5	6.8	100	15.0	112	16.3
O4	17	16.8	149	16.0	191	16.8
O3	61	17.6	245	18.4	241	18.4
O2	49	22	125	24.0	146	28.0
O1	6	25	149	29.3	140	27.0
Officer Total	142	17.8	796	19.0	859	19.4
E9	4	30.8	13	28.9	13	27.1
E8	7	29.2	32	26.4	32	24.6
E7	32	23	91	17.2	107	18.2
E6	32	17.6	113	16.1	133	16.1
E5	50	20.5	148	17.0	172	16.3
E4	37	22.2	124	20.4	113	18.1
E3	19	25.3	156	22.7	211	22.6
E2	1	33.3	39	29.5	23	20.4
E1	0	0	22	21.4	24	17.8
Enlisted Total	182	21.5	738	19.4	828	18.6
Total	324	19.7	1,534	19.2	1,687	19.0%

Note: The Space Force was founded December 20, 2019. Data for the Space Force was not provided for 2020.

Table F.10. Distribution of Women in the Coast Guard by Service Component and Rank, 2019–2023

Rank	2019						2020						2021						2022						2023					
	AC		RC		RC		AC		RC		RC		AC		RC		RC		AC		RC		RC		AC		RC			
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%		
O10	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	N/A	N/A	1	16.7	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	50.0	N/A	N/A	0	0.0	
O9	1	16.7	0	0.0	1	25.0	0	0.0	1	20.0	0	0.0	4	15.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O8	2	11.1	0	0.0	3	14.3	0	0.0	4	19.0	0	0.0	15	15.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	9.5	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O7	3	16.7	0	0.0	2	11.8	0	0.0	1	5.9	1	5.9	10	11.5	2	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4	20.0	1	50.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O6	46	11.7	10	27.8	51	12.7	11	28.2	58	13.8	11	29.7	251	12.5	56	29.2	76	18.6	15	41.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O5	167	18.7	35	25.0	162	18.0	40	29.2	190	20.1	45	31	884	19.4	194	28.2	222	24.0	47	29.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O4	287	19.5	81	25.6	317	21.7	74	23.3	326	21.7	71	24	1,519	20.5	367	24.5	373	23.4	69	26.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O3	542	24.1	73	24.3	554	24.4	75	26.7	563	25.1	74	26.8	2,789	24.7	373	25.2	578	26.6	83	28.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O2	251	28.3	17	28.3	273	28.9	12	17.9	285	28.9	15	20	1,361	28.8	86	25.1	354	32.4	25	26.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
O1	230	32.3	9	13.6	243	30.6	18	26.5	278	32.7	16	22.5	1,232	32.1	73	19.5	311	35.3	26	21.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Officer Total	1,529	23.0	225	24.4	1,606	23.6	230	25.2	1,706	24.4	233	25.8	8,066	23.7	1,151	25.1	1,921	27.0	267	27.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
W5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
W4	21	4.3	1	2.6	23	4.8	2	5.3	24	4.8	4	11.4	117	4.9	13	7.4	34	7.3	3	12.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
W3	34	7.0	5	13.2	45	8.5	4	11.1	39	7.9	2	7.7	185	7.3	19	11.7	37	7.8	3	17.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
W2	74	9.8	8	25.0	73	9.8	6	23.1	75	10	12	24.5	369	9.8	47	23.7	110	12.8	11	18.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
W1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Warrant Total	129	7.5	14	13.0	141	8.1	12	12.0	138	7.9	18	16.4	671	7.7	79	14.7	181	10.1	17	17.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E9	27	7.9	11	15.1	29	7.9	9	13.2	34	9	9	14.3	155	8.6	48	14.3	35	9.5	15	24.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E8	50	7.2	17	13.7	45	6.4	23	17.2	57	7.5	26	20.8	272	7.5	108	17.1	81	10.5	20	15.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E7	323	9.1	112	16.5	325	9.3	116	16.1	355	10	109	15.1	1,701	9.6	539	15.5	435	12.4	96	13.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E6	801	12.2	232	15.1	840	12.8	231	14.5	908	13.6	243	14.9	4,274	12.9	1,170	14.9	1,043	15.4	244	15.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E5	1,195	15.3	291	17.7	1,244	15.8	268	16.6	1,258	15.8	237	15.1	5,987	15.2	1,344	16.5	1,105	14.1	248	15.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E4	1,083	14.9	144	15.4	936	12.9	141	15.0	867	12.2	136	14.9	5,107	14.2	727	15.4	909	14.5	145	16.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E3	689	12.7	18	17.1	776	15.4	45	22.6	797	17.9	51	19.8	3,608	15	193	21.6	455	13.8	19.3	19.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E2	109	12.8	0	0.0	126	18.6	0	0.0	91	15	0	0	543	13.9	2	66.7	103	14.3	2	66.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
E1	30	9.2	0	0.0	45	15.0	0	0.0	34	12.2	0	0	206	12.8	0	0	49	12.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Enlisted Total	4,307	13.1	825	16.2	4,366	13.5	833	15.8	4,401	13.8	811	15.4	21,853	13.6	4,131	15.9	4,215	14.1	805	15.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	5,965	14.5	1,064	17.4	6,113	15.0	1,075	17.1	6,245	15.4	1,062	16.9	30,590	15.0	5,361	17.2	6,317	16.3%	1,089	17.6%	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

Note: AC = Active Component; RC = Reserve Component



U.S. Army Reserve field veterinary service officer performs surgery on July 14, 2023 in Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands. Service members provided no cost healthcare services to the communities of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. (U.S. Army Reserve Photo by Spc. Ronald D. Bell)

Appendix G

Abbreviations and Acronyms

Appendix G. Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABCP	Army Body Composition Program
ACC	Air Combat Command
ACFT	Army Combat Fitness Test
AEOP	Army Educational Outreach Programs
AFA	Air and Space Forces Association
AFI	Air Force Instruction
AFQT	Armed Forces Qualification Test
AFRS	Air Force Recruiting Service
AFSC	Air Force Specialty Code
AFSOC	U.S. Air Force Special Operations Command
AHHI	Anti-Harassment and Hate Incident
AR	Army Regulation
ARC	Air Reserve Component
ARMS	Assessment of Recruit Motivation and Strength
ARSOF	Army Special Operations Forces
ART	assisted reproductive technology
ASA(M&RA)	Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs
ASDP	Academic Skills Development Program
ASD(SO/LIC)	Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict
ASVAB	Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery
AVF	All-Volunteer Force
BDR	basic daily routine
BEST	Black and African American Employment Strategy Team
BIA	bioelectrical impedance analysis

BMI	body mass index
BUD/S	Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL
BWT	Basic Warrior Training
CADET	Candidates Afforded Dignity, Equality and Training
CAP	Civil Air Patrol Cadet Program
CDC	child development center
CFT	cross functional team
CIP	Career Intermission Program
CJCSI	Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction
CNAFR	Commander, Naval Air Force Reserve
CNGBI	Chief National Guard Bureau Instruction
CONLV	convalescent leave
CSO	Critical Skills Operator
DACOWITS	Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services
DAF	Department of the Air Force
DAFBAWG	Department of Air Force Barrier Analysis Working Group
DAT	Disability Action Team
DAV	Disabled American Veterans
DCO	Direct Commission Officer
DEOCS	Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey
DESRON	Commander, Task Force 71/Destroyer Squadron
DEXA	dual x-ray absorptiometry scan
DFO	Designated Federal Officer
DGCDAR	Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule
DHA	Defense Health Agency
DHB	Defense Health Board
DoD	Department of Defense
DoDI	Department of Defense Instruction

DTM	directive-type memorandum
EGA	Eagle, Globe, and Anchor
EO	executive order
FACA	Federal Advisory Committee Act
FCP	family care plan
FSPC	Future Soldier Preparatory Course
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GO	General Officer
HEAT	Hispanic Empowerment and Advancement Team
IBRS	in-flight bladder relief systems
IG	Inspector General
INET	Indigenous Nations Equality Team
IUD	intrauterine device
IVF	in vitro fertilization
IWF	International Women's Forum
JAMRS	Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies
JROTC	Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps
LARC	long-acting reversible contraceptive
LCWINS	Leadership Council of Women in National Security
LIT	LGBTQ Initiatives Team
M&RA	Manpower & Reserve Affairs
MARSOC	U.S. Marine Forces Special Operations Command
MC&FP	Military Community and Family Policy
MCBCMAP	Marine Corps Body Composition and Military Appearance Program
MCMAP	Marine Corps Martial Arts Program
MCO	Marine Corps Order

MCRD	Marine Corps Recruit Depot
MCT	Marine Combat Training
MEO	Military Equal Opportunity
MHS	Military Health System
MOMS Leave Act	Mothers of Military Service Leave Act
MOAA	Military Officers Association of America
MOS	military occupational specialty
MPLP	Military Parental Leave Program
MPP	Military Personnel Policy
MSA	Military Service Academy
MSCS	Marine Corps Systems Command
MTF	military treatment facility
NAVADMIN	Naval Administrative
NAVSPECWARCOM	U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command
NBVC	Naval Base Ventura County
NCMNPS	National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service
NDAA	National Defense Authorization Act
NORAD	North American Aerospace Defense Command
NSW	Naval Special Warfare
NSWC	Navy Special Warfare Command
OASD HA	Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
OBGYN	obstetric/gynecological
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OER	Officer Evaluation Report
OPA	Office of People Analytics
OPNAVINST	Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Instruction
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense

OUSD(P&R)	Office of the Under Secretary for Defense for Personnel and Readiness
QBM	quarterly business meeting
PAC	Prohibited Activities and Conduct
PACT	Pacific Islander/Asian American Community Team
PFA	physical fitness assessment
PFT	Physical Fitness Test
PHA	Periodic Health Assessment
PPE	personal protective equipment
RCMP	Reserve Component Maternity Leave Program
RFI	request for information
ROTC	Reserve Officers' Training Corps
SEALs	Navy Sea, Air, and Land Teams
SecDef	Secretary of Defense
SGE	special government employee
SHARP	Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention
SOCOM	Special Operations Command
SOCS	Special Operations Capable Specialists
SOF	special operations forces
SOO	Special Operations Officer
SPARS	Coast Guard Women's Reserve
STARBASE	Science and Technology Academies Reinforcing Basic Aviation and Space Exploration
STEM	science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
SWAT	special weapons and tactics
TAD	Temporary Additional Duty
TDY	Temporary Duty
TFF	Total Force Fitness
ToR	Terms of Reference

TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command
USAFA	Air Force Academy
USAFADS	U.S. Air Force Air Demonstration Squadron
USAR	U.S. Army Reserve
USASOC	U.S. Army Special Operations Command
USARIEM	U.S. Army Research Institute of Environmental Medicine
USCGA	United States Coast Guard Academy
UCMJ	Uniform Code of Military Justice
USD(P&R)	Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
USMA	United States Military Academy
USMEPCOM	U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command
USNA	United States Naval Academy
USSOCOM	U.S. Special Operations Command
VA	U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
WAAC	Women's Army Auxiliary Corps
WAC	Women's Army Corps
WASIA	Women's Armed Services Integration Act
WASP	Women Airforce Service Pilot
WAVES	Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service
WGR	Workplace and Gender Relations Survey
WHtR	waist-to-height ratio
WISOF	Women in Special Operations
WISR	Women in Service Review
WIT	Women's Initiative Team
WRHS	Women's Reproductive Health Survey

Marine Corps recruits participate in a swim qualification at Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island, S.C., Sep. 25, 2023. (Photo by U.S. Marine Corps Lance Corporal Ava Alegria).



Appendix H

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