
Military Leadership Diversity Commission

Decision Paper #3: Retention



February 2011

MLDC decision papers present the Commission-approved, subcommittee-specific recommendations. These recommendations are the product not only of the logic and evidence presented in the decision papers but also the values and judgments of the Commissioners. Legally imposed time constraints naturally limited the Commission's ability to undertake extensive research. Thus, the decision papers present the evidence that was available and that could be collected during the discovery phase of the Commission. The decision papers were reviewed by subject-matter experts external to the Commission.

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INTRODUCTION

In the military's closed personnel system, the demographic diversity of leadership depends largely on the relative career progression rates of members of each demographic group: If women and racial and ethnic minorities advance at lower rates than white men, they will not be represented in the top ranks. Career progression in the military has two components: rates of retention to each promotion window and rates of promotion to each pay grade. To explore the role that retention rates play in determining the demographic profiles of senior leadership, the Military Leadership Diversity Commission (MLDC) created a subcommittee tasked with determining whether there are racial, ethnic, and gender differences in retention rates, and, if so, why such differences exist. The goal of this decision paper is to provide an overview of the subcommittee's findings and to show how they support the Commission's final recommendations related to retention.¹

Strategy to Address the Charter Task

The MLDC charter contained one task directly related to retention: "Examine the ability of current activities to increase continuation rates for ethnic- and gender-specific members of the Armed Forces."

To address the charter task, the Retention Subcommittee collected information from many different sources, including data on recent retention behavior from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), information on past retention behavior from publicly available studies by military personnel researchers, data on retention attitudes from surveys conducted by DMDC and the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI), and updates on current retention policies from Service representatives. This fact-finding mission served two fundamental purposes:

- First, it allowed the Commission to ascertain whether or not differences in actual retention behavior (i.e., retention rates), as well as attitudes about retention (e.g., career intentions), exist between men and women and between minority race and ethnicity groups and whites.
- Second, when differences between demographic groups were found, it provided the Commission with an opportunity to develop recommendations aimed at better understanding why those disparities exist.

Ultimately, the Commission used this information to formulate two retention-related recommendations. These recommendations were judged based on six criteria set forth by the chairman of the Commission, General Lester Lyles. All recommendations were judged on whether they

- are relevant to the charter and congressional intent
- are supported by empirical evidence
- are strategic rather than tactical
- are executable

¹ Most of these findings are also documented in MLDC issue papers, which are available on the MLDC website (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, n.d.).

- meet legal requirements
- have a quantifiable component.

Commission-Approved Recommendations Related to Retention²

From the information gleaned during its fact-finding mission, the Retention Subcommittee concluded that retaining female servicemembers poses more challenges to the Department of Defense (DoD) than retaining servicemembers from minority groups defined by race or ethnicity. Specifically, the evidence did not support the implicit assumption in the MLDC charter task that racial and ethnic minorities have lower retention rates than whites. In contrast, *female officers and enlisted personnel have had persistently lower retention rates than their male counterparts*. Underlying this gender gap in retention behavior, survey results show that female officers and enlisted servicemembers are less likely than their male peers to see the military as a career. The subcommittee did not find an explanation for this gender gap in attitudes or any other explanation for the gender gap in behavior.

Based on these findings, the Commission approved two recommendations regarding retention and its relationship to the racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of top leadership:

Recommendation 1—

DACOWITS should expand its current focus on retention to include an explanation of the gender gap in retention. As part of this renewed focus, DACOWITS should examine the effects of retention programs, such as the sabbatical programs currently offered by the Navy and the Coast Guard, as well as any other innovative Service-specific approaches to retention. Findings and recommendations from this research should be presented to the Secretary of Defense.

Recommendation 2—

DoD shall establish a universal qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis system that tracks career progression over time, including branching and assignments, promotion, and retention.

These recommendations were determined to meet the criteria outlined above and reflect the Commission's position that DoD must better understand the gender gap in retention before implementing policy changes aimed at changing retention behavior among female servicemembers.

Organization of This Paper

In the remaining sections of this decision paper, the Commission presents the data and information that were used to formulate the recommendations listed above. First, the subcommittee addressed the issue of racial, ethnic, and gender differences in actual retention *behavior*. This analysis includes a

² The recommendations discussed in this decision paper are the Commission-approved, topic-specific recommendations that resulted from the Commission's understanding and interpretation of the findings from this subcommittee. Following the approval of all of the subcommittee-specific recommendations, the Commission developed its final recommendations by combining recommendations across subcommittees to reduce overlap and repetition. Therefore, the recommendations presented in this paper do not map directly to the recommendations presented in the Commission's forthcoming final report.

literature review of existing retention studies, as well as a cross-Service analysis of recent retention outcomes. Second, the Commission addressed the issue of retention *attitudes* in an attempt to explain observed differences in retention behavior. This analysis utilized data from surveys, as well as information sessions with servicemembers. Third, the Commission gathered information on the Services' existing retention-related policies and programs to determine whether any of them are intended or are likely to differentially affect retention behavior by race, ethnicity, or gender. Finally, the decision paper concludes with a discussion of the recommendations in light of the evidence collected by the subcommittee and the Commission's interpretation and evaluation of that evidence.

EVALUATING RETENTION BEHAVIOR IN THE MILITARY

The subcommittee's first step in addressing its charter task was to determine whether or not there are differences in retention behavior by race, ethnicity, and gender. Here, the focus was not on absolute levels of retention but rather on the *differences* between men and women and between whites and members of minority race and ethnicity groups. Thus, the analysis conducted by the Commission was not intended to address the adequacy of current retention rates for Service needs. Rather, emphasis was placed on locating where gaps in retention may exist. The amassed evidence led the Commission to conclude that there is no consistent or large gap between white and minority retention rates; however, large and persistent gaps do exist between men and women such that women have lower retention rates than their male counterparts across all Services and ranks, and this gap has existed for at least the past decade. The following subsections address the data, methods, and results used to assess retention of the demographically diverse officers and enlisted personnel in the military.

Approach and Data Sources

To identify possible gaps in retention rates, the Retention Subcommittee used a two-pronged approach. First, the subcommittee analyzed recent retention behavior for men and women and for whites and minorities, applying a consistent methodology for all four DoD Services; Coast Guard rates were calculated separately. Second, the subcommittee reviewed publicly available literature on retention among enlisted servicemembers and officers to add depth to the analysis.³

Analyzing Current Retention Behavior

Before discussing retention among enlisted servicemembers and among officers, it is important to explain how personnel management differs for these two communities. Enlisted servicemembers enlist for a set period of time and after the completion of that term of service must make the decision to leave or to reenlist for another term. If the servicemember chooses to stay, another stay-leave decision will be made at the end of the second service obligation, and so on. Therefore, retention behavior among enlisted servicemembers can be studied at the time of a decision point using *reenlistment rates* or at times in between decision points using *attrition rates*. In contrast, officers are free to leave active-duty service at any point after an initial obligation period. Officers do not have to make specific recommitment decisions at any particular point. Therefore, retention behavior among officers is usually measured as *continuation rates*. Ultimately, the Commission decided to focus on reenlistment rates among enlisted servicemembers and continuation rates among officers. The sections below will define reenlistment, attrition, and continuation rates in more detail, as well as discuss the implications of using each type of measure of retention behavior.

Data for the Commission's calculations of cross-Service reenlistment and continuation rates came from a personnel file called the Proxy Personnel Tempo (PERSTEMPO) file provided by DMDC. The file was built using extracts from the active-duty personnel and pay files maintained by DMDC

³ Issue Paper #27 summarizes the results of peer-reviewed studies of enlisted retention. Issue Paper #24 and Issue Paper #31 provide original data analysis and present retention rates by race, ethnicity, and gender.

and includes records from fiscal years (FYs) 2000 through 2008.⁴ Using a common data set and methodology for making its calculations allowed the subcommittee to analyze recent retention behavior across the DoD Services. Because the DMDC data did not contain information from the Coast Guard, the Commission sent a specific request for comparable retention data for officers and the enlisted corps. Although the Coast Guard rates are not directly comparable to the rates calculated for the DoD Services, they are useful in determining whether trends in retention by race, ethnicity, and gender in the Coast Guard are similar to those in the DoD Services.

The following race and ethnicity categories were used to analyze differences in retention behavior:

- white non-Hispanic
- black non-Hispanic
- Asian and Pacific Islander (API) non-Hispanic
- other non-Hispanic (which includes American Indians, Alaska natives, and individuals of more than one race)
- Hispanic.⁵

For ease of readability, the following shorthand is used for each race and ethnicity group: white for white non-Hispanic; black for black non-Hispanic; Asian/Pacific Islander, Asian/PI, or API for Asian non-Hispanic; and “other” for other non-Hispanic.

Using Existing Literature

The review of retention studies added to the retention subcommittee’s own analysis of current retention rates (described in more detail below) in three key ways. First, the reviewed studies cover a longer time span than the analysis of current retention data. This allowed the subcommittee to assess whether demographic differences in retention have been persistent over time. Second, the studies used a statistical methodology called *regression analysis* to isolate the effect of demographic characteristics from the effects of other personal characteristics and career experiences on retention behavior. These studies identify the effect of being a female or a minority on retention behavior by holding constant the effect of other individual characteristics (e.g., marital status, the presence of dependents, years of service [YOS], civilian education level, Armed Forces Qualification Test score, expected promotion rates, and pay grade) on retention behavior. For example, an individual’s deployment history and eligibility for a selective reenlistment bonus (SRB) may differentially affect retention behavior; enlisted servicemembers who have previously been deployed may be more likely to remain on active-duty service. Likewise, individuals in certain occupations targeted by SRBs may also be more likely to remain in the military. These more-comprehensive studies are able to isolate the separate effect of demographic characteristics from other factors that may be associated with both demographic characteristics and retention behavior.⁶ Finally, for enlisted personnel, studies of reenlistment and first-term attrition provided a complete picture of enlisted retention, and for officers, one study helps disentangle the effects of retention from those of promotion.

⁴ Because of differences in the data-cleaning procedures and measurement techniques used by individual MLDC subcommittees, some results using the same data sources may be slightly inconsistent across issue papers.

⁵ See Issue Paper #1. For the present analysis, Asian and Pacific Islander are combined into a single category because data collected before 2003 do not separate Pacific Islanders from Asians.

⁶ For a discussion of how to interpret raw rates, see Issue Paper #17.

Retention Behavior of Enlisted Personnel

Retention, Reenlistment, and Attrition

As indicated above, enlisted retention has two components: completion of the obligated period of service and reenlistment at the end of the obligated period of service. Members who do not complete their obligations are considered to have attrited. Attrition can occur for many reasons and can be both voluntary (e.g., for personal reasons) and involuntary (e.g., for health or performance reasons). In some cases, enlisted personnel attrite from active duty but complete their service obligations by affiliating with a National Guard or Reserve unit.⁷

Once a servicemember fulfills an obligated period of service (i.e., as the expiration of term of service [ETS] date approaches), he or she has four options: (1) reenlist, (2) extend the current service contract, (3) transition to the officer ranks, or (4) exit the military. Reenlistment can occur only if the servicemember is eligible—specifically, if he or she has no legal or health problems and meets his or her Service's and/or occupation's specific requirements (e.g., high-year tenure [HYT]/retention control-point cutoffs, recommendations and evaluations, examinations, selection boards at senior enlisted ranks). Servicemembers who are ineligible because of legal or health problems, a failure to meet requirements, or both separate from active-duty service. The others are considered eligible to reenlist. Some of these eligible personnel separate and leave active-duty service.⁸ Thus, *reenlistment rates only capture the choice of individuals who have reached a decision point and who are eligible to reenlist.*

Initial and subsequent obligations vary in length, so servicemembers who make enlistment decisions after an initial obligation, a second obligation, or a later obligation make these decisions at different points in their careers. Thus, reenlistment decisions can be made in different periods, or zones, that roughly correspond to first enlistments, second enlistments, etc. Zone A is composed of reenlistments executed between 17 months and six years of active service. Zone B is composed of reenlistments executed between six and ten years of active service. Zone C is composed of reenlistments executed between ten and 14 years of active service.

An enlisted servicemember's zone is important because it affects his or her eligibility for an SRB and the expected size of that bonus. Although there are many common requirements for reenlistment eligibility across zones, some requirements are zone specific. In addition, many of the unique requirements vary by pay grade within a single zone. Furthermore, enlisted servicemembers are subject to certain promotion schedules that delineate the maximum YOS that an enlisted servicemember can serve, and these tenure barriers are pay grade-specific. After reaching a cutoff point, members must either be promoted to the next pay grade or separate from the Service. This point in a servicemember's career is known as HYT. Table 1 shows the HYT for pay grades E-5 through E-9 in each of the five Services.

⁷ In general, there is no punishment for *voluntary* early attrition, but servicemembers who do not fulfill specified obligations associated with certain benefits (e.g., enlistment bonuses or educational benefits through the Montgomery GI Bill) will forfeit those benefits. In many cases, the obligation associated with benefits is shorter than the overall service obligation.

⁸ These are often referred to as *voluntary separations*. *Involuntary separations* occur when individuals leave active-duty service after completing their service obligation because they are ineligible to reenlist.

Table 1. HYT, by Pay Grade and Service

	E-5	E-6	E-7	E-8	E-9
Army	15	23	26	29	32
Air Force	20	24	26	28	30
Coast Guard	20	22	26	28	30
Navy	14	20	24	26	30
Marine Corps	13	20	24	26	30

SOURCES: Army and Air Force information from Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010; Coast Guard information from U.S. Coast Guard, 1993; Navy information from U.S. Department of the Navy, 2007; Marine Corps information from U.S. Marine Corps, 2004.

NOTE: HYT is called the *retention control point* in the Army and the *enlisted career force control* in the Marine Corps.

Based on these descriptions of attrition and reenlistment, it is clear that individuals who leave before their current contract is up (i.e., prior to ETS) are included in the calculation of attrition rates but are not included in the calculation of reenlistment rates. This means that reenlistment rates are an incomplete measure of overall retention. Nevertheless, the Commission chose to use reenlistment rates as its primary indicator of enlisted retention behavior. This could be problematic if racial, ethnic, and gender trends in reenlistment rates are the opposite of racial, ethnic, and gender trends in attrition rates. That is, any racial, ethnic, and gender differences in the rates of leaving before completion of the first term of enlisted service could be masked by using reenlistment rates (or vice versa). To check this possibility, the literature review covers studies of both reenlistment and first-term attrition.

Retention of Enlisted Personnel: Recent Reenlistment Rates

By definition, the focus on reenlistment restricts the analysis to servicemembers who are eligible to both voluntarily leave active-duty service and to reenlist. For the purposes of the Commission analysis, an “eligible” servicemember is one who has completed at least 17 months of service and is within six months of zero ETS. The PERSTEMPO data do not indicate whether a servicemember is “eligible” in the sense that he or she meets his or her Service’s requirements to reenlist. Reenlistment rates are presented by zone and fiscal year.⁹

The subcommittee defined *reenlistment* as a change in ETS date of 36 months or more. This cutoff was chosen because the PERSTEMPO data do not indicate if an ETS change is the result of an extension of service or a true reenlistment, and a change of fewer than 36 months may reflect the former.¹⁰ This definition of reenlistment could be problematic for three reasons. First, it may underestimate *reenlistment rates* because it does not include reenlistments of shorter than 36 months. Second, it may underestimate *retention rates* because servicemembers who extend up to the 35th month are not captured even though they remain on active duty. Third, if certain demographic groups (e.g., women or minorities) are disproportionately more likely to extend, the results presented here may misrepresent race, ethnicity, or gender differences in retention rates.¹¹ For example, if

⁹ Although results for Zones D (14–20 YOS) and E (20+ YOS) are not presented here, reenlistment rates for these zones can be found in Issue Paper #31.

¹⁰ Thus, the reenlistment rates can be defined as the number of servicemembers who reenlist for 36 months or more divided by the number of servicemembers who do not reenlist plus those servicemembers included in the numerator.

¹¹ The same would be true if one demographic group were more likely to move to the officer corps than another.

women have higher *extension* rates than men, relying only on *reenlistment* rates, which are higher among men than women, may result in overestimated gender differences in overall retention. However, when the subcommittee examined the percentages of men and women who extended, a larger percentage of men extended than women in all Services other than the Navy. This finding suggests that the gender gap in retention would be even larger if extensions were included. Similarly, a slightly larger percentage of minorities extend their contracts compared with whites, implying that the reenlistment rates presented here may underestimate white-minority differences in retention. Taken together, these results suggest that the definition of reenlistment the Commission used does not misrepresent racial, ethnic, and gender differences in retention rates.

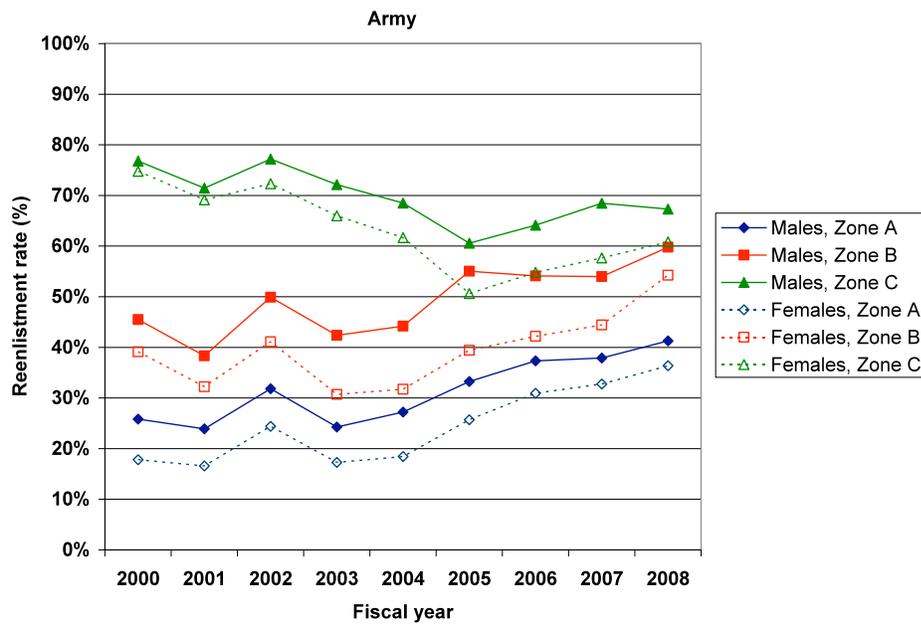
Overall, the results show two general trends in reenlistment rates across the Services. First, moving from Zone A to Zone B to Zone C, reenlistment rates increased regardless of branch of Service, race, ethnicity, or gender. Second, reenlistment rates were generally highest among airmen regardless of zone, but there was considerable variability among soldiers, sailors, and marines. Among Zone A reenlistments, marines typically had the lowest reenlistment rates, but in Zones B and C, soldiers and sailors typically had the lowest reenlistment rates. These trends tended to hold for men and women, as well as whites and minorities.

Reenlistment Rates by Gender

Figures 1–4 show reenlistment rates by Service, zone, and gender from FY 2000 through FY 2008. In all of the figures, women’s reenlistment rates are lower than men’s. That is, regardless of Service branch, the dashed lines are generally always lower than the solid lines.¹² There are two notable exceptions: In the Air Force, women’s Zone A reenlistment was higher than men’s during the mid-2000s, and, in the Marine Corps, Zone A men and women had very similar reenlistment rates over the period observed.

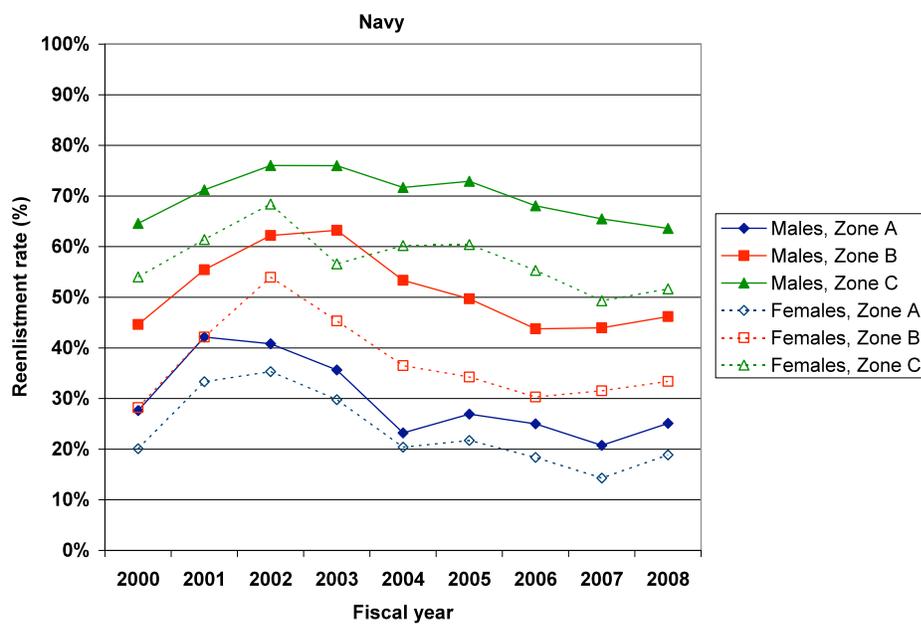
¹² Actual reenlistment rates by gender and zone are presented in Issue Paper #31. Note that none of the calculations focus on the statistical significance of differences in reenlistment rates between gender, race, and ethnicity groups, primarily because of small sample sizes that could skew significance tests.

Figure 1. Reenlistment Rates, by Gender and Zone, Army, FY 2000–FY 2008



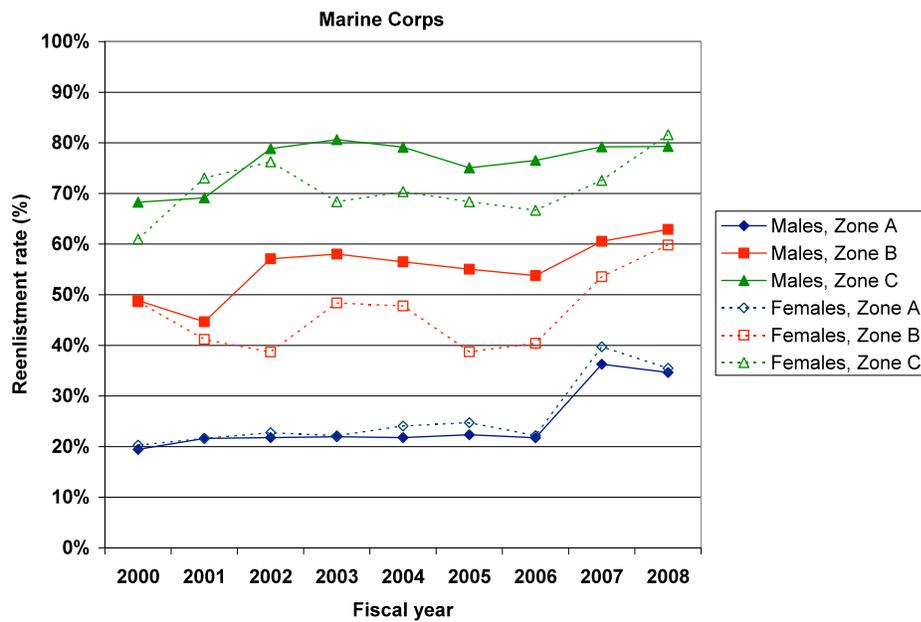
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 2. Reenlistment Rates, by Gender and Zone, Navy, FY 2000–FY 2008



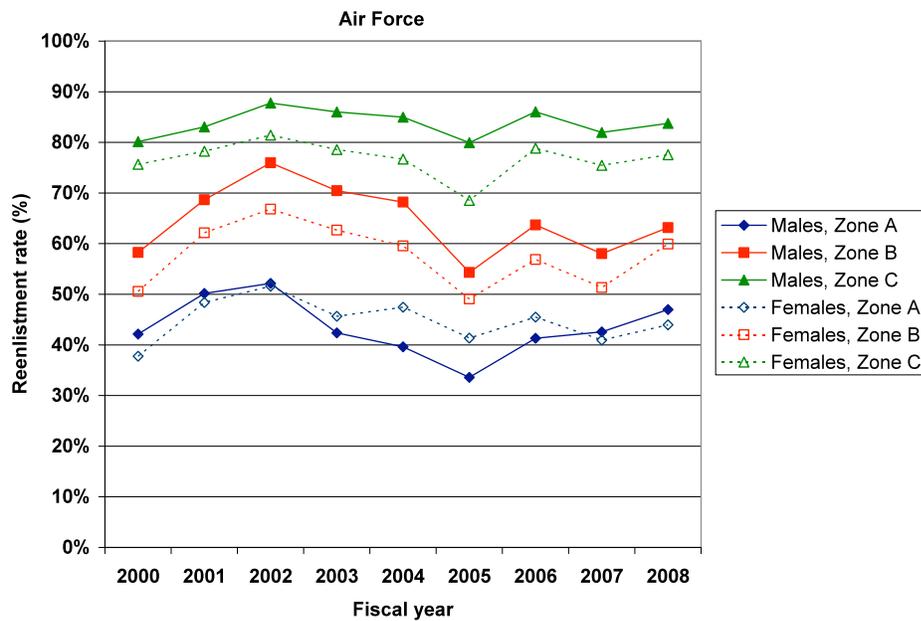
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 3. Reenlistment Rates, by Gender and Zone, Marine Corps, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 4. Reenlistment Rates, by Gender and Zone, Air Force, FY 2000–FY 2008



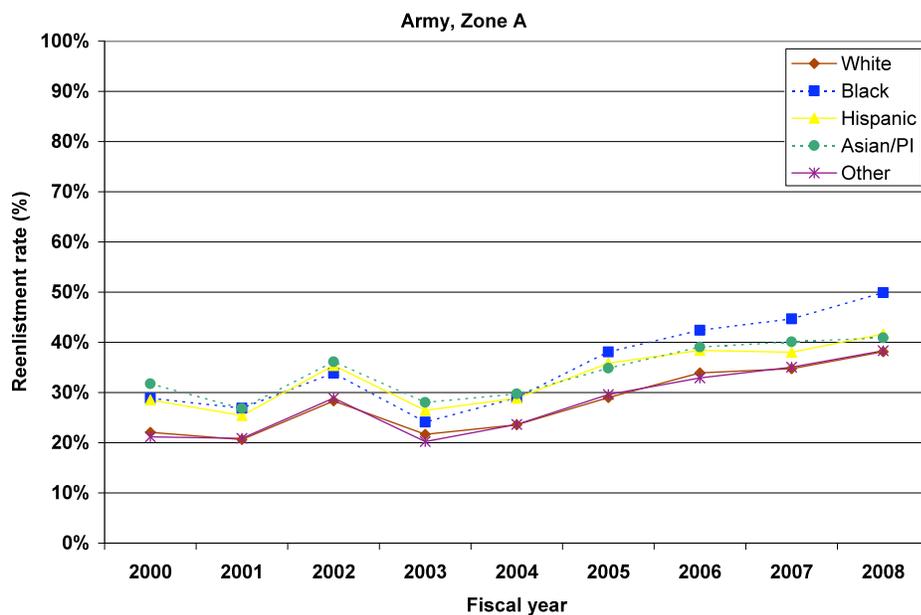
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Reenlistment Rates by Race and Ethnicity

The next 12 figures show reenlistment rates by Service, zone, race, and ethnicity.¹³ Results for Zone A (Figures 5–8) show that, regardless of Service branch or FY, racial and ethnic minorities (i.e., blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders [Asian/PI]) had the highest reenlistment rates, and whites and servicemembers who classify themselves as being of “other” race or ethnicity had the lowest reenlistment rates.

Results for Zone B (Figures 9–12) are similar to results for Zone A: Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders had higher reenlistment rates than either whites or members of other races and ethnicities. The one exception occurred in the Navy after 2003. From that point, trend lines for whites, blacks, Hispanics, and other races and ethnicities were roughly equal through 2008. Reenlistment rates for Zone B Asian/Pacific Islander sailors were consistently higher than those of the other race and ethnicity groups.

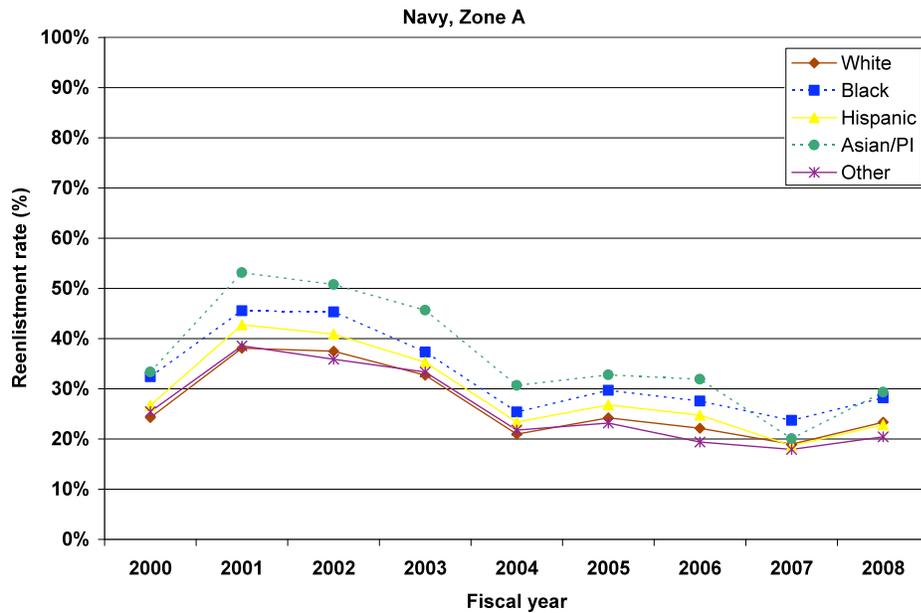
Figure 5. Zone A Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Army, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

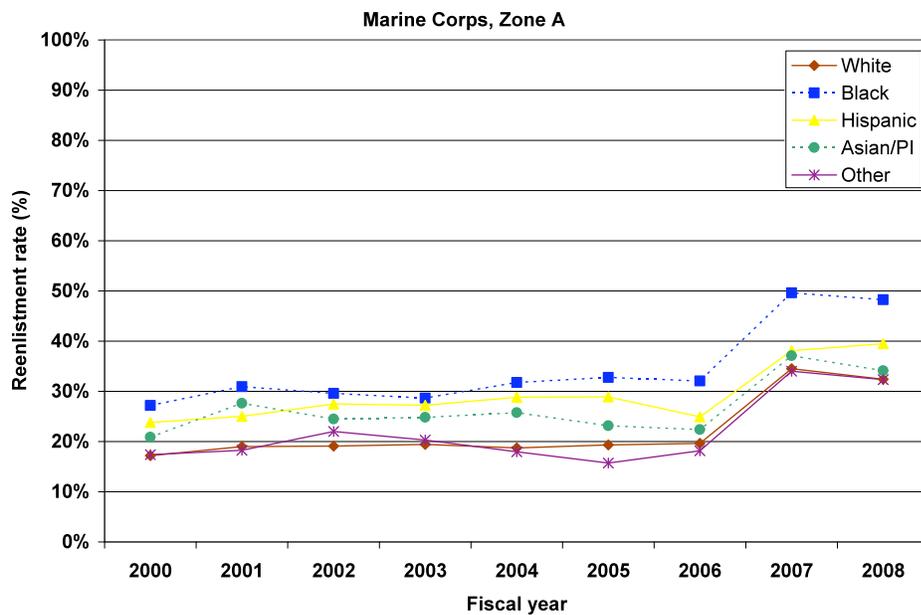
¹³ Actual reenlistment rates by race, ethnicity, and zone are presented in Issue Paper #31.

Figure 6. Zone A Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Navy, FY 2000–FY 2008



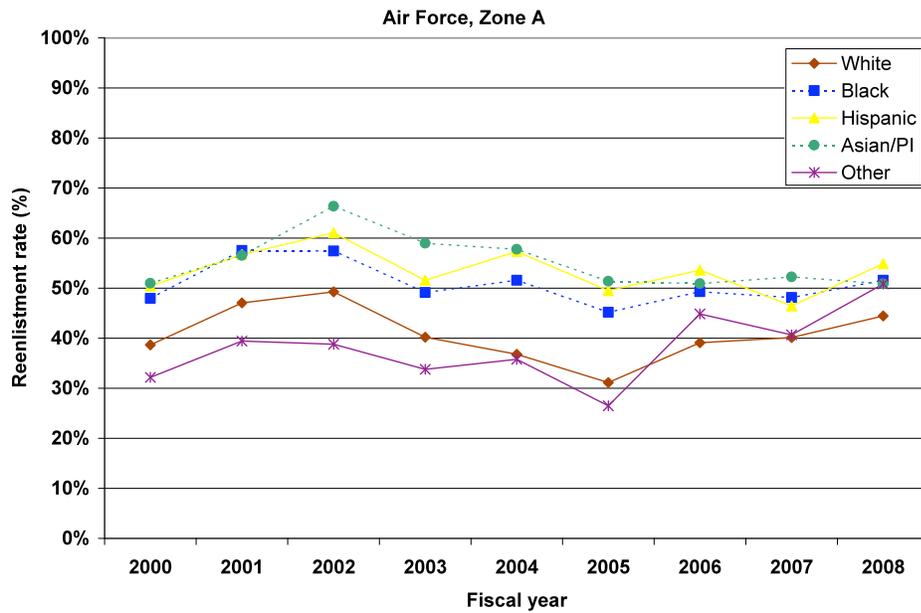
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 7. Zone A Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Marine Corps, FY 2000–FY 2008



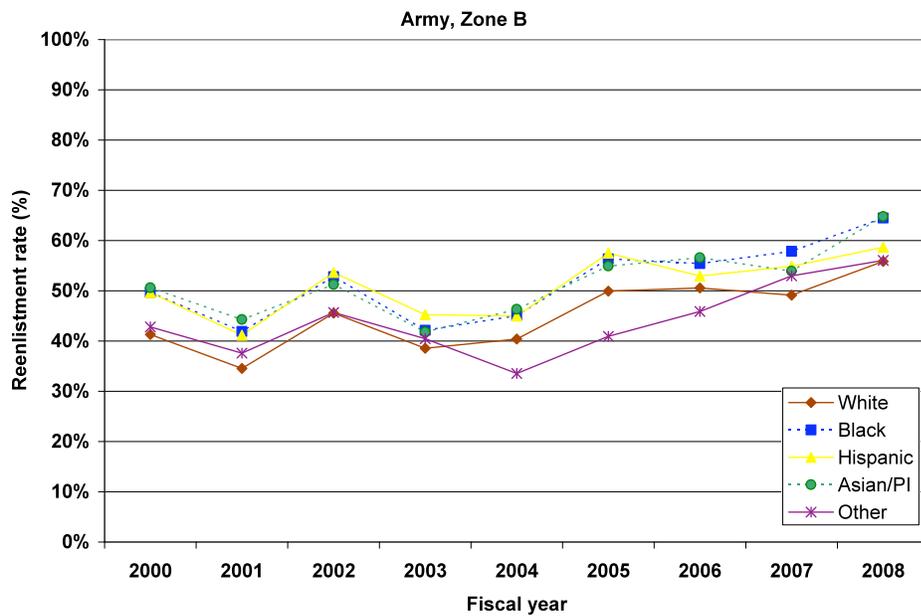
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 8. Zone A Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Air Force, FY 2000–FY 2008



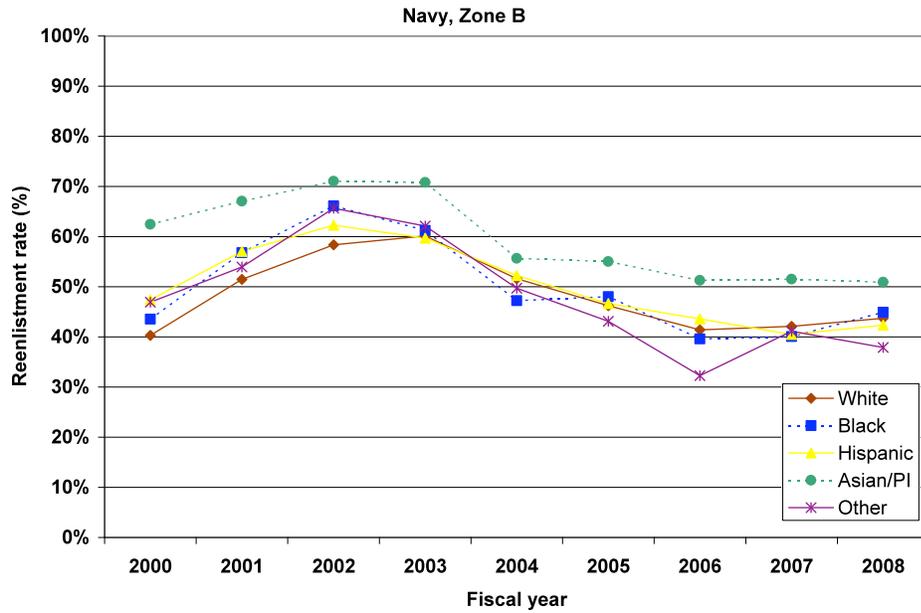
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 9. Zone B Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Army, FY 2000–FY 2008



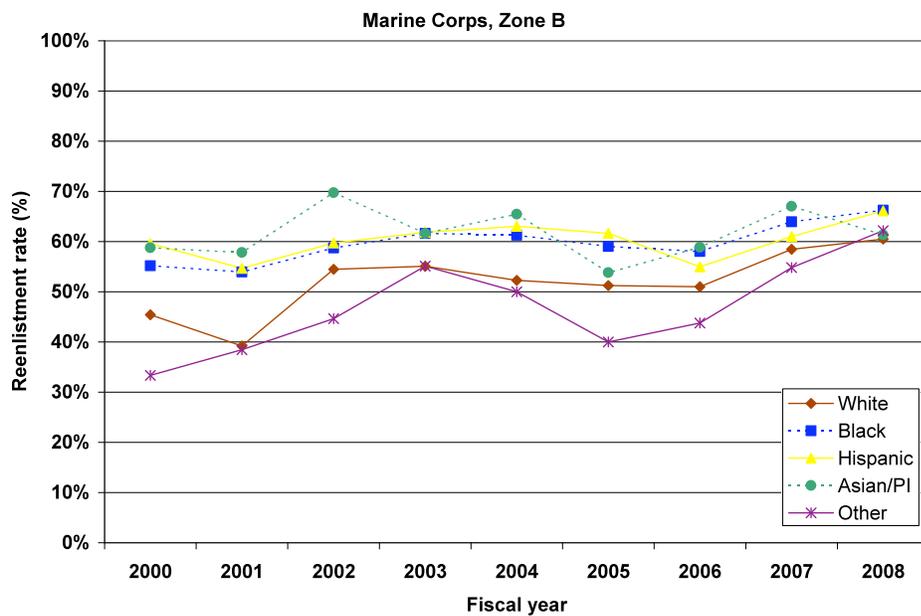
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 10. Zone B Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Navy, FY 2000–FY 2008



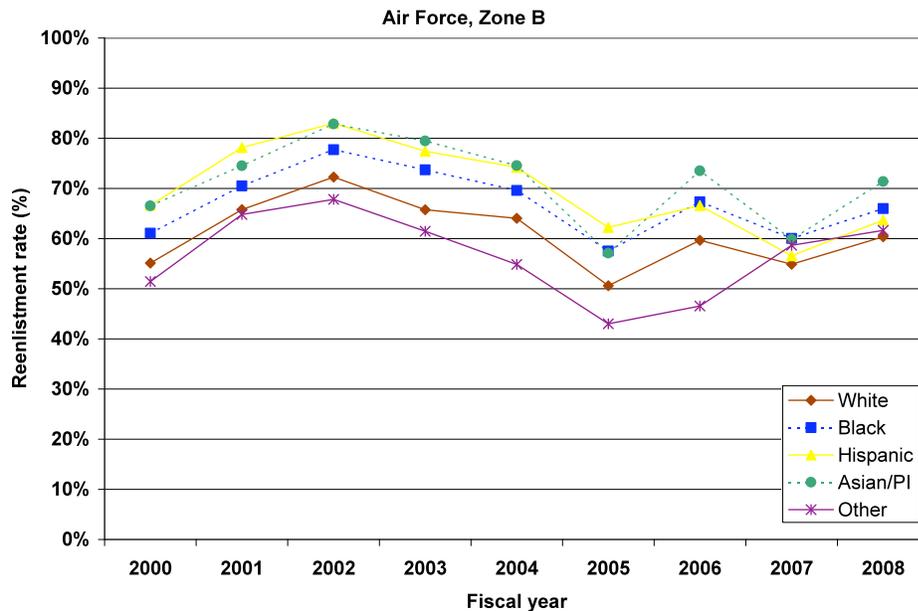
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 11. Zone B Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Marine Corps, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 12. Zone B Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Air Force, FY 2000–FY 2008

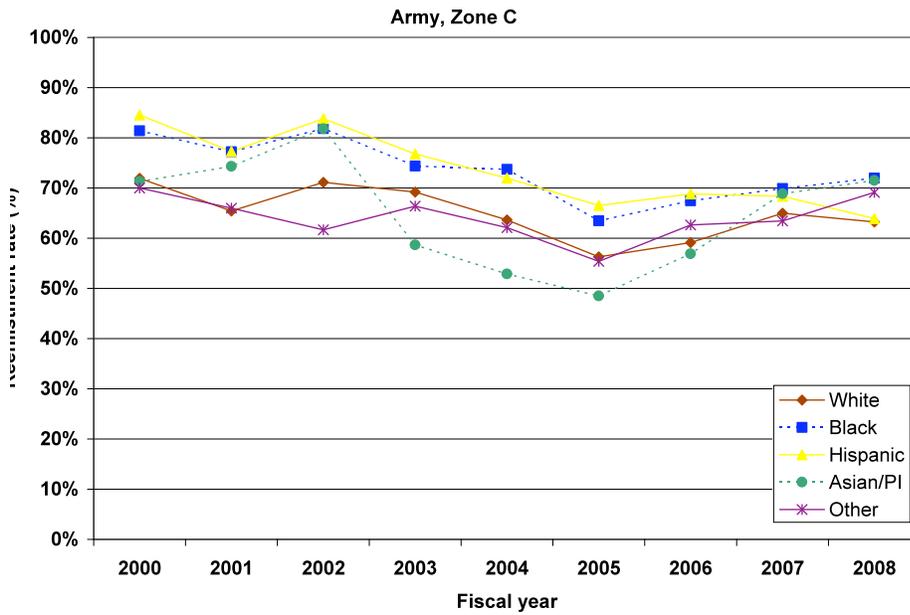


SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Finally, Figures 13–16 show Zone C reenlistment rates, or what are sometimes referred to as *career reenlistments*. These are individuals who, after 14 years of service, are likely to continue in service until eligible for full military retirement at 20 years of service.¹⁴ In general, the racial and ethnic trends for Zone C are similar to those for Zones A and B, with a few notable exceptions. First, in the Navy, reenlistment rates for blacks, Hispanics, and whites clustered together after FY 2000, with no group showing consistently higher rates than the others. However, reenlistment rates among Asian/Pacific Islander sailors were consistently above those of the other race and ethnicity groups. Second, among marines, black and Asian/Pacific Islander reenlistment rates trended with those of their white counterparts, but Hispanic rates were consistently higher than white rates after FY 2000. Third, reenlistment rates for black and white servicemembers in the Air Force are virtually indistinguishable between FY 2000 and FY 2008, but reenlistment rates among Hispanics and Asian/Pacific Islanders remained above those of both whites and blacks. Thus, in the earlier stages of the career, racial and ethnic minority reenlistment rates are equal to or greater than those of whites. By later career stages, these differences diminish. It is important to keep in mind, however, that this convergence may not reflect a change in behavior over time. Rather, convergence may be the result of a selection effect: individuals who are best suited to a military career may be more likely to reenlist, thus resulting in higher reenlistment rates among all groups in higher zones.

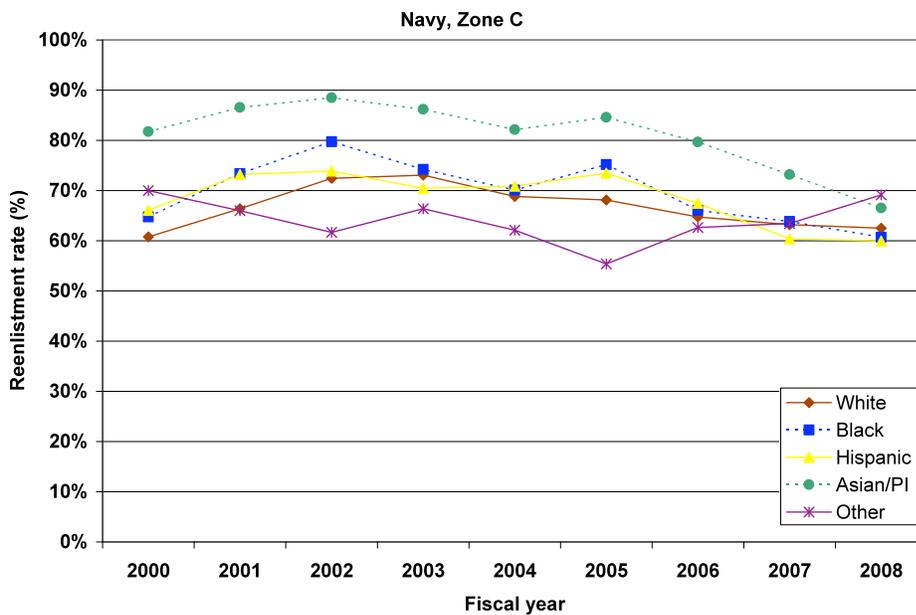
¹⁴ However, because the promotion system also plays an important role in the development of senior leadership, one cannot always assume that simply because an individual has remained in service until YOS 14 and is likely to continue that he or she will advance to the senior enlisted ranks. Thus, YOS does not always equal rank.

Figure 13. Zone C Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Army, FY 2000–FY 2008



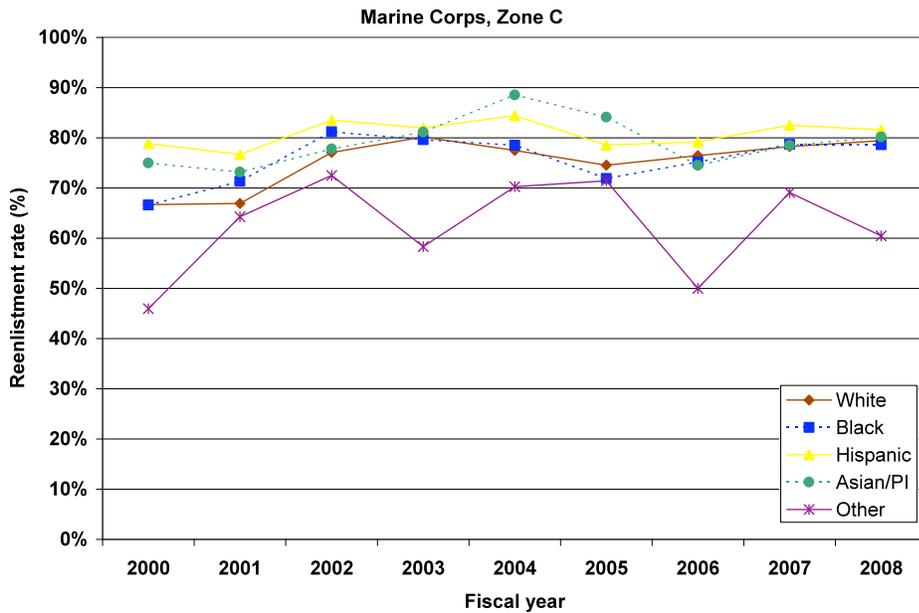
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 14. Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Navy, FY 2000–FY 2008



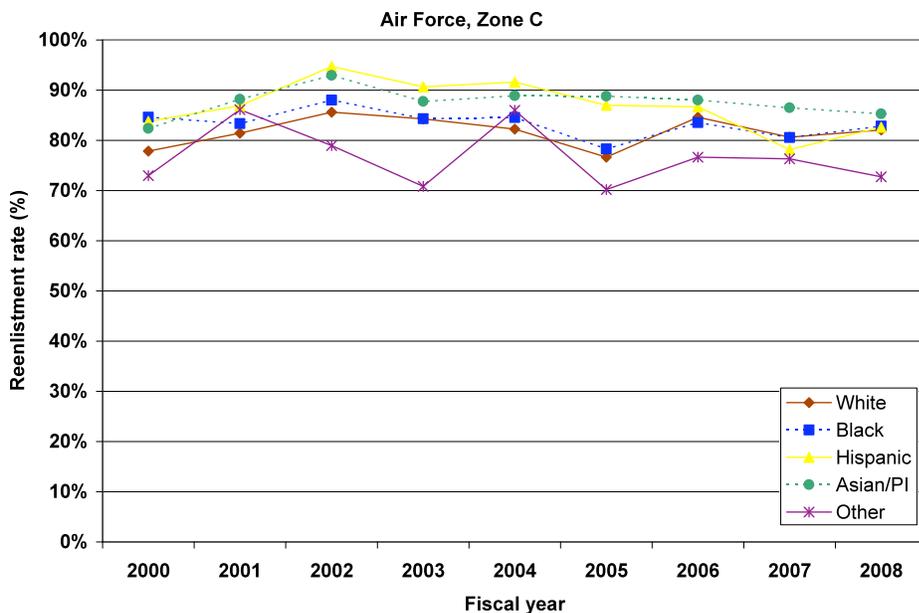
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 15. Zone C Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Marine Corps, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 16. Zone C Reenlistment Rates, by Race and Ethnicity, Air Force, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Reenlistment in the Coast Guard

As noted earlier, the Coast Guard provided the Commission with data on retention. Table 2 presents reenlistment rates for FY 2008 and FY 2009 by race, ethnicity, gender, and term. The first term is

comparable to Zone A, and the subsequent term is comparable to Zone B. Based on these data, women in the Coast Guard currently have *lower* reenlistment rates than men, regardless of term, and, with a few exceptions, racial and ethnic minorities have *higher* reenlistment rates than whites. Thus, although the data are not directly comparable, the racial, ethnic, and gender reenlistment patterns in the Coast Guard are broadly consistent with those of the other Services.¹⁵

Table 2. Coast Guard Reenlistment Rates (Percentages), by FY and Term

	FY 2008		FY 2009	
	First Term	Subsequent Term	First Term	Subsequent Term
Gender				
Male	65	89	71	90
Female	62	84	66	85
Race				
Black	68	84	75	92
American Indian/Alaska Native	69	89	69	87
Asian	67	67	71	100
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	75	100	93	80
White	64	88	69	89
Multiracial	73	90	75	93
Ethnicity				
Hispanic	67	88	74	88
Non-Hispanic	65	88	69	90

SOURCE: Based on Coast Guard information from Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010.

NOTE: The first term is comparable to Zone A, and the subsequent term is comparable to Zone B.

Retention of Enlisted Personnel: Literature Review

Studies of Reenlistment

The subcommittee’s review of the literature on reenlistment behavior draws from ten publicly available, peer-reviewed studies spanning reenlistment decisions from 1979 to 2007.¹⁶ Of these ten studies, five focus explicitly on demographic differences in retention behavior. The other five include race, ethnicity, and gender only as control variables; thus, identifying demographic differences in retention behavior was a secondary objective for these studies. Fewer of the reviewed studies address gender than race and ethnicity.

¹⁵ Incomparability between the Coast Guard data and the DMDC data is mainly due to differences in definitions of race and ethnicity categories: First, in the Coast Guard data, Hispanic is not a mutually exclusive category, and thus a servicemember can be counted as both Hispanic and in one of the race categories. Second, the Asian group does not include Pacific Islanders.

¹⁶ The ten studies are Asch et al., 2009; Buddin et al., 1992; Cooke et al., 1992; Hattiangadi et al., 2004; Hogan et al., 2005; Hosek & Martorell, 2009; Kraus et al., 2004; Quester & Adedeji (1991); Quester et al., 2006; and Tsui et al., 2006. Hosek et al., 2001, is also included in the review; however, it focuses on retention behavior among officers.

The review finds that, across the Services, blacks and Hispanics have been more likely to reenlist than their white counterparts, although the size of these differences decreases as time in service increases (i.e., as zone changes from A to C).¹⁷

In terms of gender differences in reenlistment rates, the review finds mixed evidence of a gap. Analyses that only control for differences in the retention behavior of men and women (i.e., those that rely on gender differences in raw rates) typically report a much larger reenlistment rate among men than women compared with studies that control for other factors, such as marital and parental status.¹⁸

Thus, studies that control for other factors and that cover a longer time span than that covered by the Commission data found similar results regarding racial, ethnic, and gender differences in reenlistment rates.

Studies of First-Term Attrition¹⁹

First-term attrition is defined as leaving before the end of the first contracted term of service. The actual operationalization of where in the first term attrition is observed varies from study to study, but most focus on 36- or 48-month attrition rates. Thus, the rates capture individuals who leave at or before the three- or four-year mark in terms of YOS.

Evidence suggests that first-term attrition has been higher among women than men (Asch et al., 2009; Buddin, 1998, 2005; Wenger & Hodari, 2004), but there is also some evidence that this varies across the Services. For example, in one Navy study, attrition rates during the earliest months of terms of service were higher for women, but as time in service increased, attrition rates between men and women converged (Fletcher et al., 1994). Martin (1995) found similar results in the Army, once attrition due to pregnancy was excluded. When pregnancy-related attrition was included, the gender convergence in attrition rates did not occur. These studies suggest that women do in fact have higher first-term attrition than their male counterparts, which indicates that reenlistment rates are likely to underestimate the gender gap in retention.

In terms of race and ethnicity, prior research suggests that minorities have lower first-term attrition than their white counterparts (Asch et al., 2010; Buddin, 2005; Schmitz et al., 2008).²⁰ For example, Martin (1994) found that minority recruits in the Army generally have lower first-term attrition than whites. Being a black female was particularly predictive of continuation. At least one study has reported no difference between white and nonwhite minority attrition rates (Antel et al., 1987). In a study of enlisted sailors, Wenger and Hodari (2004) found that Hispanics, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and those of other races and ethnicities had significantly lower 36-month attrition than whites but that blacks had significantly higher attrition than whites. Despite these inconsistent findings, the majority of studies appears to support the idea that minority first-term attrition is at or below the attrition level of whites. If this is true, the higher minority reenlistment rates found by the Retention Subcommittee will not have been offset by losses occurring before the end of the first term of service.

¹⁷ See Asch et al., 2009; Hattiangadi et al., 2004; Hogan et al., 2005; Hosek & Martorell, 2009; Kraus et al., 2004; and Quester et al., 2006.

¹⁸ See Hogan et al., 2005; Quester et al., 2006; and Tsui et al., 2006.

¹⁹ Note that the articles reviewed in this section are not included in Issue Paper #27, which reviews studies of reenlistment outcomes.

²⁰ Schmitz et al. (2008) use data from the Navy and find that all racial and ethnic minorities, with the exception of Native Americans, have higher 48-month continuation rates than whites. Continuation rates can be thought of as the opposite of attrition. Thus, lower attrition is comparable to higher continuation, and vice versa.

Officer Retention Behavior

Continuation Rates: Conditional and Cumulative

Once commissioned, officers do not incur the same type of service obligation as enlisted personnel. The Defense Officer Personnel Management Act (DOPMA) defines a minimum service requirement (MSR) of six to eight years for most officers, which can be filled with either active-duty or reserve service. After completing the MSR, however, officers can generally resign their commissions at any point. Thus, the concept of reenlistment does not apply to officers. Instead, continuation rates are the most common measure of retention for officers and the measure used by the Commission.

Continuation rates are calculated as the percentage of officers in the same Service observed at year t and again at year $t + 1$. Because they measure the likelihood of continuing to year $t + 1$ conditional on having reached year t , these rates are also known as *conditional* continuation rates. For example, the continuation rate of officers to YOS 5 measures the proportion of officers who reached YOS 4 and remained on active duty into a fifth year. Conditional continuation rates do not distinguish between voluntary and involuntary separation, nor do they distinguish between the effects of retention and promotion on overall career progression.

Conditional continuation rates are frequently presented as *cumulative continuation rates* (CCRs). These are the successive products of consecutive YOS-specific conditional rates. Specifically, the conditional rates for each YOS are transformed to cumulative, or continuous, rates by successively applying each YOS-specific conditional rate to a starting point of 100 percent. Thus, CCRs capture the average rates at which officers remain on active duty in a specific Service branch through a given year of service.

Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or branch of Service, CCRs decline as years of service increase because of the cumulative effect of the previous years' losses. Thus, CCR curves are downward-sloping. Their shapes are further defined by various features of officer personnel management as defined by Title 10 and DOPMA, especially the promotion and retirement systems.

In the figures below, the curves have a slight downward slope from YOS 0 (or accession) to YOS 3 or YOS 4, and this is followed by a steeper decline from that point to YOS 10. At YOS 10, the curves level off and are almost flat until YOS 19 (which marks the probability of continuing to 20 years of service). At that point, after which officers are completely vested in the military retirement system, the slope of the CCR drops off again through YOS 22 but ultimately flattens as it approaches YOS 30.

The general downward trend can be explained by DOPMA's up-or-out system, in which officers must be promoted in order to continue past certain YOS milestones. Promotion to ranks O-2 and O-3 is based on being "fully qualified," and promotion to the rank of O-4 and beyond is based on being "best and fully qualified." Further, DOPMA defines specific promotion probabilities at each rank above O-3, and those probabilities decrease as rank increases. CCRs also decline over time because members voluntarily resign their commissions or move to the Guard or Reserve Components for any number of reasons. In addition, some officers leave involuntarily for such reasons as health or behavioral problems. Taken together, all of these factors result in CCRs of less than one at all YOS points.

Other features of the officer personnel management system address key points in officer career progression and define the inflection points seen in CCR curves (i.e., points where they change slope). First, consistently high continuation rates are seen before YOS 3, but steep declines occur from YOS 4 through YOS 10. Leaving during this period can be attributed to completion of the

MSR, a failure to pass training, a failure to fulfill the requirements needed to advance to the rank of O-2 or O-3, or to health or behavioral problems.

The second inflection point occurs after YOS 10, where CCR curves level off. Officers who remain on active duty beyond the MSR are likely choosing the military as a long-term career. In addition, between YOS 10 and YOS 19, officers become increasingly motivated to stay to qualify for full retirement benefits. The third inflection point occurs after YOS 19, when CCR curves drop precipitously. At this point, military members become vested in the retirement system and may voluntarily retire with benefits.²¹

The promotion system affects interpretation of the CCR curves in another key way. The first competitive promotion point is O-4, which occurs at roughly YOS 10. Until this point, promotion is guaranteed for all who are fully qualified and who present no issues. This means that demographic differences in conditional and cumulative continuation from YOS 0 to YOS 10 would be primarily the result of demographic differences in retention behavior rather than in the promotion outcomes. Beyond YOS 10, however, demographic differences in continuation rates would be the combined result of differences in retention and promotion outcomes.

Officer Retention: Recent Cumulative Continuation Rates

The Retention Subcommittee's focus on the role of retention in determining the demographic diversity of senior leaders defined its approach to calculating CCRs.

First, the focus on senior leaders required the subcommittee to analyze continuation for the full length of the officer career—from YOS 0 (less than one complete YOS) to YOS 30 (the year at which an O-6 must retire if he or she is not promoted to O-7).²²

Second, the need to look at differences by race, ethnicity, and gender, combined with the need to analyze continuation behavior for the full career, led the subcommittee to analyze the data using “synthetic” cohorts. Synthetic cohorts combine data for officers from all the different accession cohorts (i.e., year groups) who are in the inventory at the beginning of a particular FY. By observing the continuation behavior of the entire inventory over the next year, all the CCRs from YOS 1 through YOS 30 can be calculated to estimate the continuation behavior over an entire career.²³ The synthetic cohort approach offers several advantages. First, it increases the sample size for each demographic group, permitting race-, ethnic-, and gender-specific analyses. Second, and related, the synthetic cohort approach allows for smoothing across years.²⁴ Finally, synthetic cohorts allow for the behavior of very recently accessed cohorts to be incorporated in the calculation of continuation rates.

²¹ See Warner, 2006, for a more detailed discussion of the way the retirement system affects continuation patterns.

²² See 10 U.S.C. 634.

²³ For example, the CCR at YOS 4 is calculated by multiplying the single-year CCRs from accession to YOS 1, YOS 1 to YOS 2, YOS 2 to YOS 3, and YOS 3 to YOS 4 using all the data from FY 2000–FY 2008. Note that no actual single-accession cohort would necessarily follow this precise CCR pattern over an entire career because the synthetic cohort CCRs combine data from multiple year groups and average the behavior over all the FYs in the sample.

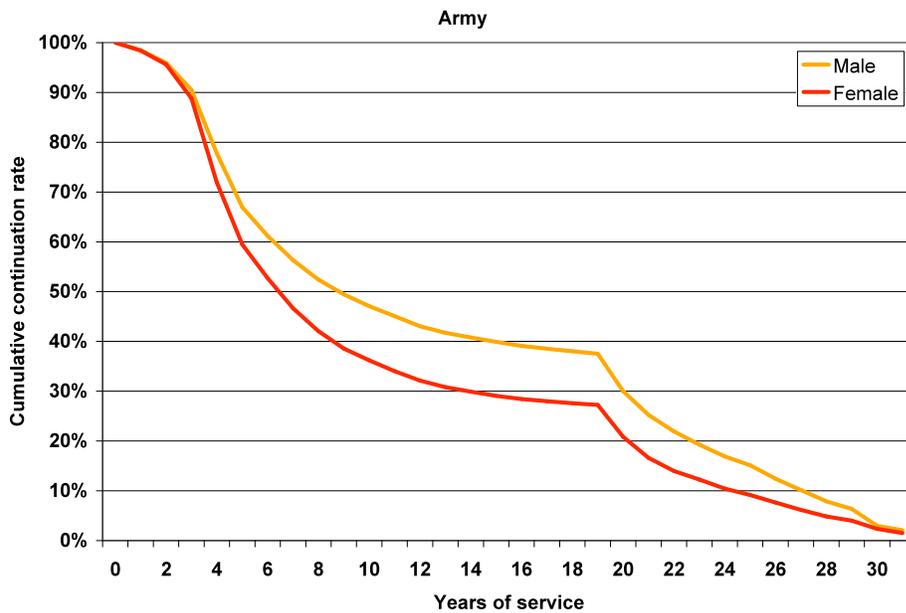
²⁴ For example, if a single cohort contains only four women, then the continuation outcomes for just two women will have a profound impact on the calculation of the CCR.

Cumulative Continuation Rates by Gender

As shown in Figures 17–20, female officers have lower continuation rates than male officers. That is, regardless of Service branch, the red lines are always lower than the orange lines.²⁵

Through the first three years of service, men and women in the sample had similar continuation rates. By the time they completed their fourth year of service, however, gender differences in continuation rates began to emerge and increased with YOS through roughly YOS 8 to YOS 12, depending on the branch of Service. By YOS 10, the percentage-point difference between male and female CCRs is 10 in the Army, 15 in the Navy, and 20 in both the Marine Corps and the Air Force. In other words, although continuation rates decreased as YOS increased for both men and women, women’s continuation rates declined at a faster rate than men’s. This difference in slopes is likely the result of retention rather than promotion because it occurs before the first competitive promotion point.²⁶

Figure 17. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the Army, FY 2000–FY 2008

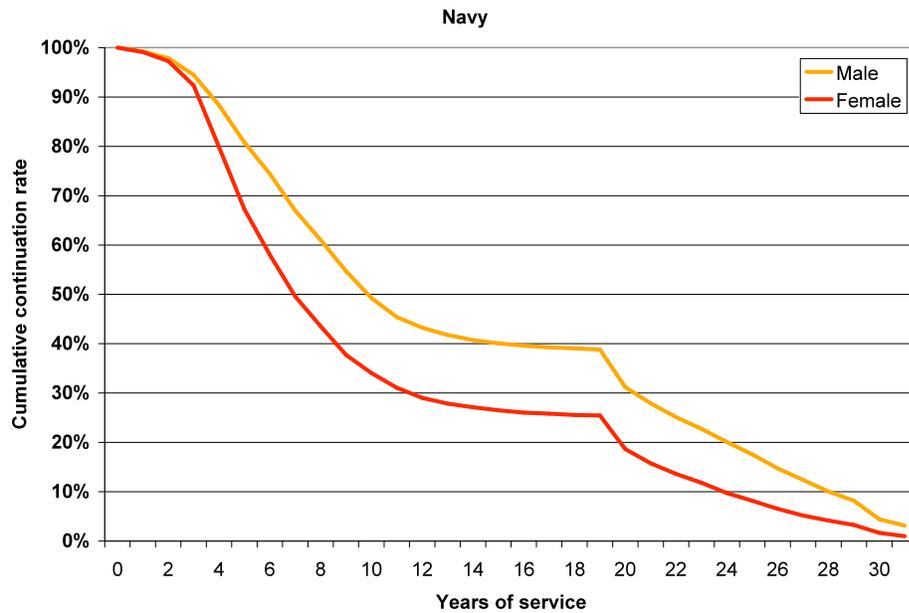


SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

²⁵ The annual rates from which the cumulative rates are calculated, as well as the CCRs, are presented in Issue Paper #24. Note that none of the calculations focus on the statistical significance of differences in continuation rates between race, ethnicity, and gender groups, primarily because of small sample sizes that could skew significance tests.

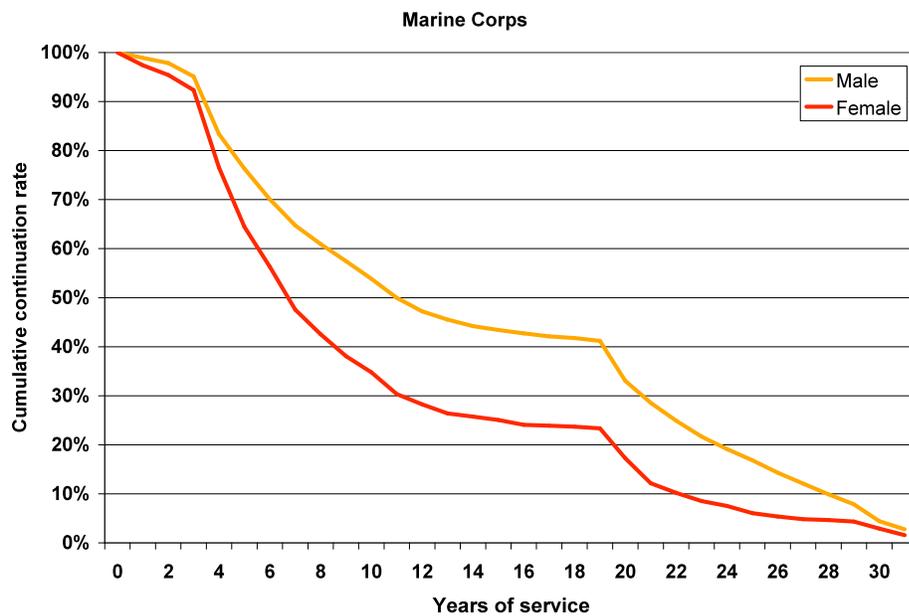
²⁶ This may not be true if women are not becoming fully qualified or are leaving in anticipation of *not* being promoted.

Figure 18. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the Navy, FY 2000–FY 2008



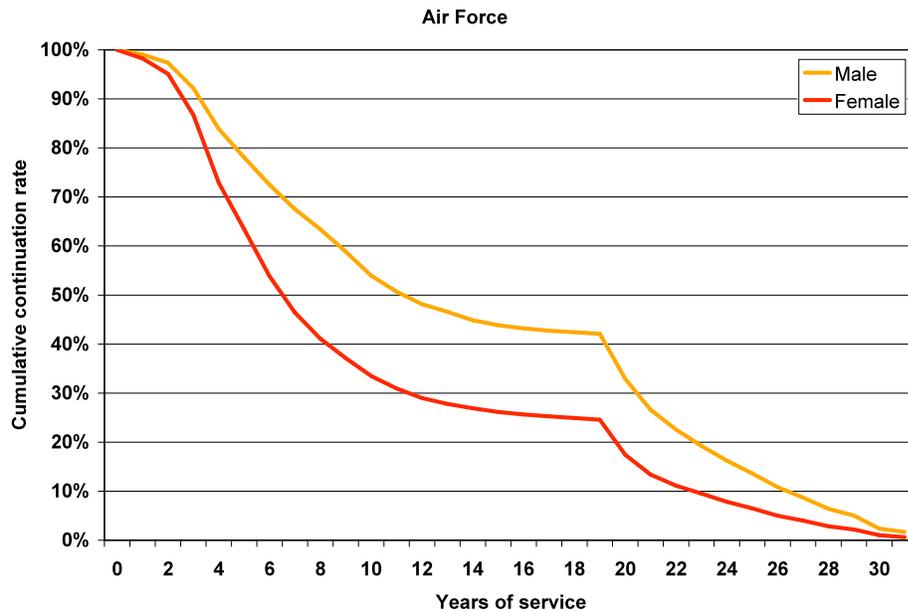
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 19. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the Marine Corps, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 20. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates for Men and Women in the Air Force, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Between YOS 12 and YOS 19, the gender gap remained almost constant. At YOS 19, the male-female differences were similar to those at YOS 10: 10 percentage points in the Army, 13 percentage points in the Navy, 18 percentage points in the Marine Corps, and 15 percentage points in the Air Force. These roughly parallel cumulative continuation rates suggest that continuation behavior was similar for men and women during these years and that the factors that differentially affect continuation occurred earlier, between four and ten years of service.

After YOS 20, the gender gap narrowed. At YOS 30, the difference in CCRs between men and women was less than 5 percentage points across all components. This convergence suggests that women’s continuation rates were higher than men’s during this late-career period. It should be noted, however, that the sample of men and women who remain on active duty past the 25-year mark is a small and select group of people.

Cumulative Continuation Rates by Race and Ethnicity

Figures 21–24 present CCRs by race and ethnicity for each Service branch.²⁷ As the charts for most of the Services show, after YOS 4, blacks and Hispanics had consistently higher rates of continuation than whites and other minority groups. The difference between blacks and Hispanics and whites became more pronounced as YOS increased but tapered again after reaching YOS 20. The one exception to this trend is found in the Air Force, where blacks had consistently *lower* continuation rates than whites, although the gap did close after YOS 20.

The picture for Asians and Pacific Islanders is more complicated. In the Army, API continuation rates were very similar to those of whites, especially after YOS 13. In the Navy, members of the API group and whites had similar continuation rates across all YOS points. In the Marine Corps and the

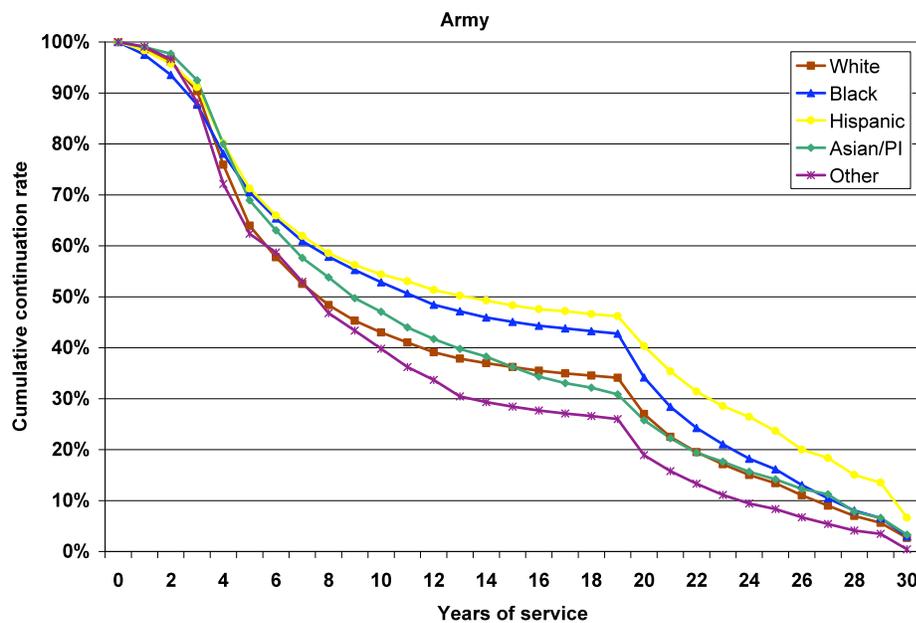
²⁷ The annual rates from which the cumulative rates are calculated, as well as actual CCRs, are presented in Issue Paper #24. When reviewing the results for race and ethnicity, it is important to keep in mind that sample sizes for some minority groups (e.g., Asian/Pacific Islander, other) is quite small at higher YOSs.

Air Force, Asians and Pacific Islanders had higher continuation rates than whites, but this difference did not emerge until after roughly YOS 8 to YOS 10.

Those in the “other” non-Hispanic race and ethnicity group had lower continuation rates than did whites and other minority groups in both the Army and the Air Force, but continuation rates among this group in the Navy tracked much more closely with those of blacks and Hispanics. In the Marine Corps, this group’s continuation rates were similar to those of whites.

Two other patterns are worth noting. First, the spread of continuation rates across race and ethnicity groups was larger for the Army and the Air Force than for the Navy and the Marine Corps. Second, continuation rates among minority officers, primarily blacks and Hispanics, were highest in the Air Force, followed by the Army, the Marine Corps, and the Navy.²⁸

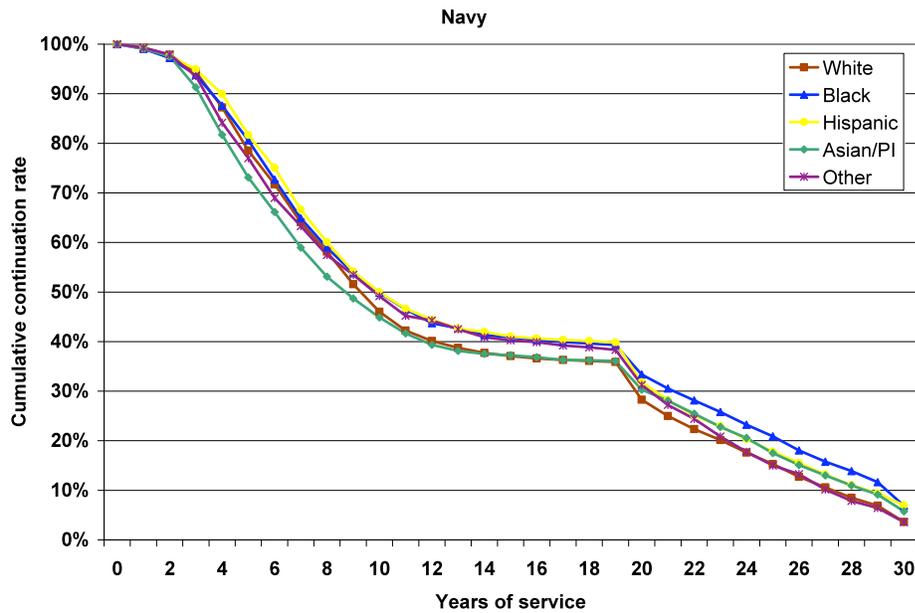
Figure 21. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates in the Army, by Racial and Ethnic Status, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

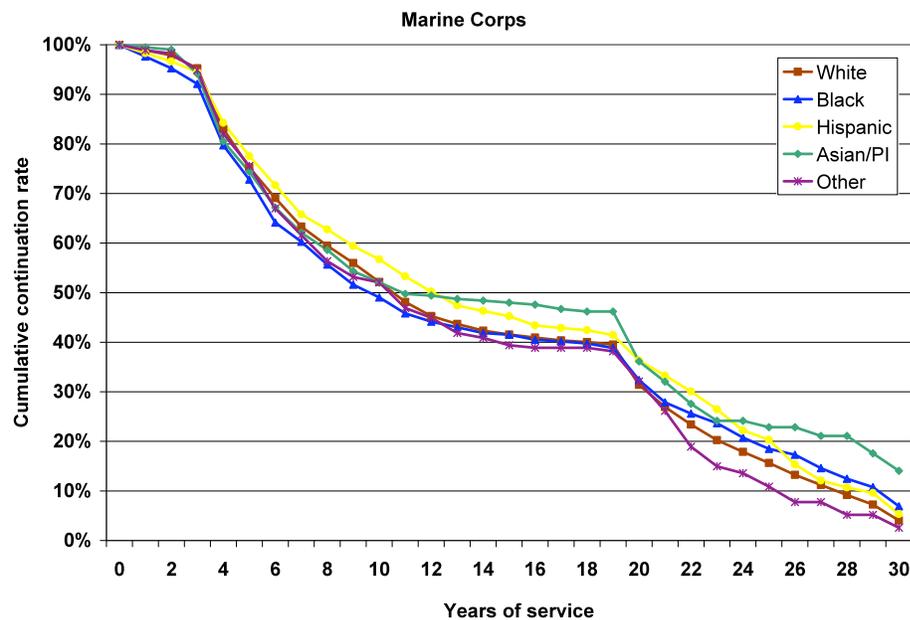
²⁸ Although black continuation rates are lower than those of whites in the Air Force, blacks in the Air Force remain on active duty at higher rates than do blacks in the other branches. At the same time, blacks in the other Services still have higher continuation rates than do their white counterparts.

Figure 22. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates in the Navy, by Racial and Ethnic Status, FY 2000–FY 2008



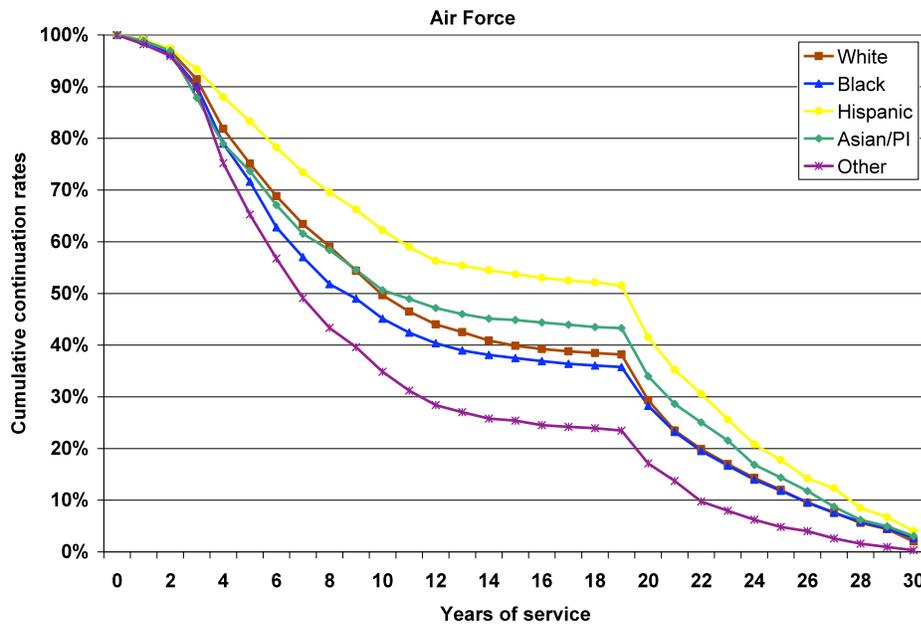
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 23. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates in the Marine Corps, by Racial and Ethnic Status, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Figure 24. Officer Cumulative Continuation Rates in the Air Force, by Racial and Ethnic Status, FY 2000–FY 2008



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center West, 2000–2008.

Officer Continuation in the Coast Guard

The Coast Guard provided the Commission with five- and ten-year continuation rates by race and ethnicity (but not gender) for officers who accessed in FY 2000 through FY 2004 and FY 1995 through FY 1999, respectively. Table 3 shows the percentage (or continuation rate) of different cohorts from the Coast Guard Academy (commissioned officers) who were still on active-duty service five or ten years later. For example, in 2004, the Coast Guard Academy commissioned five black officers (as shown in the parentheses). As of October 1, 2009, all of those individuals were still serving on active duty, resulting in a 100-percent continuation rate.

The data in the table show that, in general, continuation among racial and ethnic minority officers in the Coast Guard has not been consistently or persistently lower than that of their white counterparts, which is consistent with the patterns for the other Services. This interpretation of the data should be balanced with the caveat that the sample sizes for racial and ethnic minorities and Hispanic officers are quite small.

Table 3. Coast Guard Officer Continuation Rates (Percentages and Sample Sizes) by Race, Ethnicity, and Year of Commissioning

		Retention Following Initial Five-Year Obligated Service by Year of Accession				
		FY 2000	FY 2001	FY 2002	FY 2003	FY 2004
Race						
Black		67 (2/3)	86 (6/7)	100 (10/10)	80 (4/5)	100 (5/5)
American Indian/Alaska Native		67 (2/3)	100 (2/2)	N/A (0/0)	100 (2/2)	100 (1/1)
Asian		69 (9/13)	100 (1/1)	100 (1/1)	100 (1/1)	100 (1/1)
White		87 (130/149)	82 (112/136)	89 (109/122)	93 (128/137)	91 (114/158)
Multiracial		50 (1/2)	75 (3/4)	63 (10/16)	35 (7/20)	91 (10/11)
Ethnicity						
Hispanic		63 (5/8)	78 (7/9)	100 (7/7)	92 (12/13)	100 (8/8)
Non-Hispanic		86 (141/164)	86 (122/142)	91 (127/140)	92 (135/146)	91 (154/169)
		Retention Following Initial Ten-Year Obligated Service				
		FY 1995	FY 1996	FY 1997	FY 1998	FY 1999
Race						
Black		50 (2/4)	63 (5/8)	63 (5/8)	67 (4/6)	75 (3/4)
American Indian/Alaska Native		100 (2/2)	100 (1/1)	67 (2/3)	0 (0/1)	50 (1/2)
Asian		69 (11/16)	0 (0/5)	50 (1/2)	67 (2/3)	0 (0/2)
White		59 (84/142)	64 (115/181)	67 (85/127)	64 (87/137)	62 (67/108)
Multiracial		100 (1/1)	88 (7/8)	80 (12/15)	64 (7/11)	100 (5/5)
Ethnicity						
Hispanic		50 (3/6)	0 (0/6)	90 (9/10)	83 (5/6)	57 (4/7)
Non-Hispanic		60 (99/164)	63 (126/200)	68 (99/146)	64 (94/148)	62 (73/118)

SOURCE: Based on Coast Guard information from Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010.

NOTES: Percentages are reported in the table. Actual sample sizes are presented in parentheses below the continuation rate.

Officer Retention: Literature Review

Compared to studies on reenlistment and enlisted attrition, there are fewer studies that report or focus on demographic differences in retention or continuation among officers. Thus, the literature review for officers summarizes the results of one 2001 study by the RAND Corporation (Hosek et al., 2001) that covers all four DoD Services and directly addresses the issue of officer retention among women and minorities compared to their white male peers. This study used personnel records from officers commissioned between 1967 and 1991 to assess the separate effects of promotion and retention on overall continuation.²⁹ Promotion and retention were both defined by rank such that officers could, for example, promote to O-2, retain through O-2, and subsequently promote to O-3. These promotion points and retention windows were examined up to the rank of O-6. The report found two important retention trends. First, compared with white men, black men were 20 percent more likely to stay in the military during retention windows, and black women were 14 percent more likely to *remain*. Second, also compared with white men, white women were 14 percent more likely to *leave* during retention windows.

Also relevant to this investigation are the Hosek et al. findings regarding overall continuation. When the effects of promotion and retention were combined, this study found that the higher retention rates for black male officers were offset by lower promotion rates, thus resulting in very similar overall continuation rates, as found by the Commission. For female officers, low promotion rates counteracted the higher retention rates of black women and exacerbated the lower retention rates of white women, thus implying lower overall female continuation rates compared with white men.

Summary of Findings on Retention Behavior

Enlisted

Reenlistment rates were calculated by zone to assess whether female and minority enlisted servicemembers have been less likely to remain in active-duty service at key decision points. Two general conclusions can be drawn:³⁰

- *Reenlistment rates among women are lower than among men*, and this holds regardless of Service branch or zone; the gender gap in reenlistment rates grows from Zone A to Zone B, then shrinks once servicemembers reach Zone C.
- Across the Services, *reenlistment rates are higher for blacks, Hispanics, and Asian/Pacific Islanders than for whites*, but the gap shrinks as time in service (or zone) increases.

Officers

The Commission estimated CCRs by YOS to assess whether female and minority officers are less likely to remain in active-duty service at different points throughout their military careers. Two general conclusions can be drawn:

- *Continuation rates among women are lower than among men*. On average, regardless of Service branch, women's CCRs are lower than men's for every YOS beyond YOS 2 or

²⁹ The Promotion Subcommittee also reviews this report in its decision paper. Note also that Hosek et al. (2009) limit analyzed retention and promotion outcomes by race and gender simultaneously for whites, blacks, and others. The results for others were, however, limited because of small sample sizes.

³⁰ Again, differences are not tested for statistical significance because of sample size issues.

YOS 3. The divergence occurs between YOS 3 through YOS 10, which indicates that the career-long difference in cumulative continuation is the result of early career differences in retention rather than promotion.

- *On average, blacks' and Hispanics' CCRs are greater than or equal to whites' rates at every YOS point, while Asian/Pis' and others' rates are less than or equal to whites' rates.* There are some exceptions (e.g., blacks in the Air Force), but, in general, these data indicate that retention among minority officers is not lower than among white officers.

EVALUATING SERVICEMEMBERS' ATTITUDES ABOUT RETENTION

Based on the results of the Commission's analysis of retention behavior among enlisted personnel and officers, the Services do not need to act to increase the retention rates of racial and ethnic minorities: There is no white/minority gap to close. In contrast, retention rates among women, both officers and enlisted, are consistently lower than the rates of their male counterparts. Therefore, the Commission focused its attention on examining why this gender gap in retention exists and what, if anything, can be done to close it.

One possible explanation for gender differences in retention behavior is gender differences in retention *attitudes*. Closer examination of these attitudes may be informative in addressing not only why women are more likely to leave active-duty service but also in highlighting areas for policy intervention. Retention attitudes are closely related to retention intentions. Retention *intentions*, in turn, have proven to be a strong predictor of actual retention behavior among military samples (Guthrie, 1992; Marsh, 1989; Janega & Olmstead, 2003). Although intentions based on survey data tend to overestimate the likelihood of separating, individuals who report a desire to leave an organization are more likely to actually leave the organization than counterparts who do not express a desire to leave (Jans & Frazer-Jans, 2006). Thus, retention attitudes influence retention intentions, and together attitudes and intentions are reflected in retention behavior. According to Jaros (1997), in a study of civilians, "turnover intention is the strongest, most direct precursor of turnover behavior, and mediates the relationship between attitudes like job satisfaction and organizational commitment and turnover behavior" (p. 321).

Data from the Status of Forces Survey

The first analysis in this section addresses whether there are differences in job satisfaction (specifically, satisfaction with the military way of life) and organizational commitment that may indicate that climate is perceived and experienced differently by women versus men.³¹ If this is the case, then retention attitudes, and especially career intentions, may be one important contributing factor to unequal representation by gender at higher ranks.

The data for this analysis come from DMDC's November 2008 Status of Forces Survey (SOFS) of Active Duty Members (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009). The sample consisted of 37,494 active-duty members of the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force who had completed at least six months of service and were below flag rank six months prior to data collection. The Coast Guard does not participate in the SOFS. A total of 10,435 eligible members returned usable surveys (3,474 officers, 6,303 enlisted servicemembers, and 658 warrant officers).³²

³¹ The Commission also investigated servicemembers' attitudes toward retention and intentions to remain in the military by race and ethnicity. It did so for two important reasons. First, by examining *current* retention attitudes and intentions, one can assess whether potential *future* differences in actual retention rates may occur. Second, retention intentions can be a signal of job satisfaction, or lack thereof, and may indicate problems with morale and perceptions of climate. Racial and ethnic differences in retention attitudes can be found in Issue Paper #40 (enlisted) and Issue Paper #41 (officers). In general, no significant differences in retention attitudes emerged between whites and minorities.

³² A usable survey is one in which at least 50 percent of applicable survey questions are answered.

The data contain four indirect measures of retention attitudes:

- *satisfaction*: i.e., satisfaction with the military way of life
- *affective commitment*: an individual's emotional attachment to, identification with, or involvement with the military³³
- *continuance commitment*: an individual's attachment to the military based on the perceived costs of leaving that organization³⁴
- *normative commitment*: an individual's sense of obligation to remain in the military.³⁵

The active-duty SOFS also contains two questions regarding retention intentions. The first asks respondents how likely they would be to remain on active duty if they were faced with that decision. The second asks respondents how much they agree (or disagree) with a statement indicating positive commitment to the military as a career. For ease of presentation, answer categories are combined for all relevant survey items into three categories: "very satisfied and satisfied" (or "very likely and likely/strongly agree and agree"), "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied" (or "neither likely nor unlikely/neither agree nor disagree"), and "very dissatisfied and dissatisfied" (or "very unlikely and unlikely/strongly disagree and disagree"). Figures generally present only those who are very satisfied and satisfied (although there are some exceptions). Issue Papers #40 and #41 contain figures for those who are very dissatisfied and dissatisfied. In the figures and tables that follow, an asterisk indicates a significant difference between men and women.³⁶

Enlisted Retention Attitudes

Gender Differences in Satisfaction with Military Life

Figure 25 shows the percentages of male and female enlisted members across all Services who were (very) satisfied or (very) dissatisfied with the military way of life. Overall, the majority of men and women reported being satisfied with the military way of life. There were no statistically significant differences between male and female personnel.

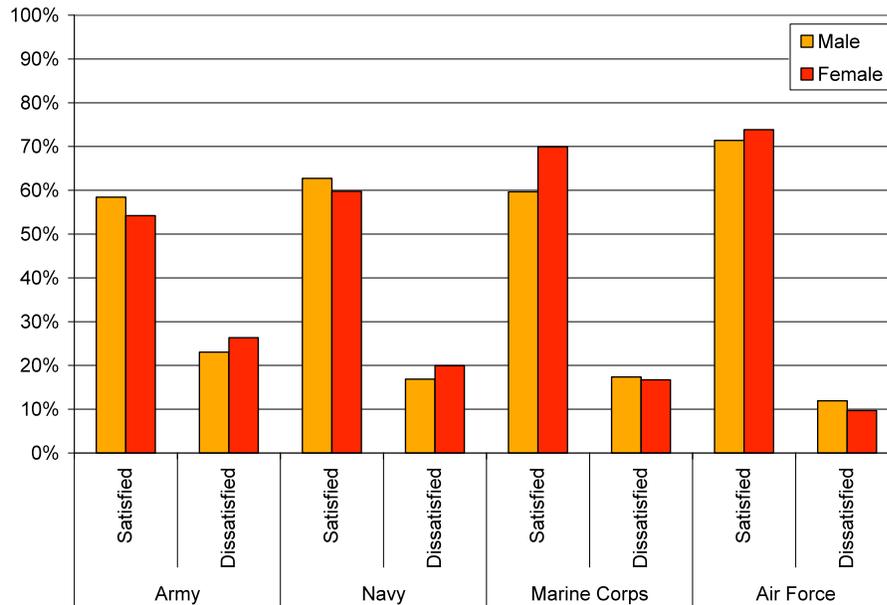
³³ *Affective commitment* was the mean of five survey items: "I enjoy serving in the military"; "Serving in the military is consistent with my personal goals"; "Generally, on a day-to-day basis, I am happy with my life in the military"; "I really feel as if the military's values are my own"; and "Generally, on a day-to-day basis, I am proud to be in the military." The range of the scale was 1 to 5, with five indicating a higher level of commitment. The scale was created by DMDC.

³⁴ *Continuance commitment* was the mean of five survey items: "If I left the military, I would feel like I am starting all over again"; "It would be difficult for me to leave the military and give up the benefits that are available in the Service"; "I would have difficulty finding a job if I left the military"; "I continue to serve in the military because leaving would require considerable sacrifice"; and "One of the problems with leaving the military would be the lack of available alternatives." The range of the scale was 1 to 5, with five indicating a higher level of commitment. The scale was created by DMDC.

³⁵ *Normative commitment* was the mean of three survey items: "I would feel guilty if I left the military"; "I would not leave the military right now because I have a sense of obligation to the people in it"; and "If I left the military, I would feel like I had let my country down." The response categories to all of these items were "strongly agree," "agree," "neither agree nor disagree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The range of the scale was 1 to 5, with five indicating a higher level of commitment. The scale was created by DMDC.

³⁶ In order to identify these significant differences, the 95-percent confidence interval around subgroup parameters (e.g., percentages or means) was estimated. When confidence intervals overlap between males and females, the difference in percentages (or means) is not statistically significant. When confidence intervals do not overlap, the difference between groups is statistically significant.

Figure 25. Satisfaction with the Military Way of Life, by Service and Gender, Enlisted



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

Gender Differences in Commitment to the Military

Both men and women report high levels of satisfaction with the military. Given this finding, one might also expect similarly high levels of organizational commitment for both groups. By Service and gender, Table 4 shows means for the three measures of organizational commitment in the SOFS: affective, continuance, and normative. The data show no significant gender differences for any of the three measures in any Service.

Table 4. Means of Organizational Commitment for Enlisted Personnel, by Service and Gender

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
Affective Commitment				
Male	2.19	2.36	2.25	2.13
Female	2.29	2.33	2.26	2.14
Continuance Commitment				
Male	2.84	2.96	2.83	3.11
Female	3.01	3.15	3.06	3.12
Normative Commitment				
Male	3.42	3.43	3.52	3.41
Female	3.36	3.42	3.41	3.42

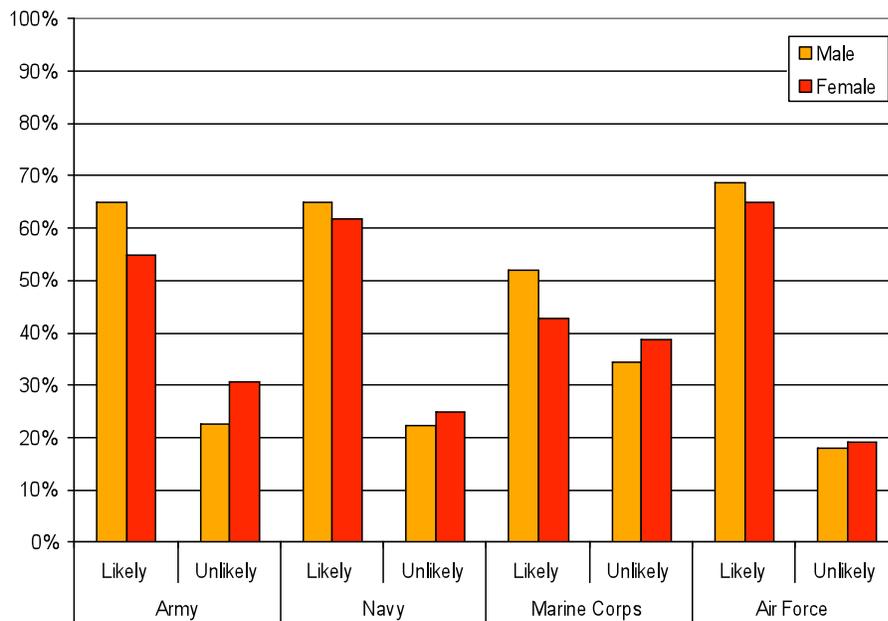
SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

NOTES: The range is 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of commitment.

Gender Differences in Retention Intentions

Given that men and women in the survey sample had similar levels of satisfaction with military life and similar commitment attitudes, it is reasonable to expect that they would have similar retention intentions as well. Figure 26 presents the percentages of male and female enlisted servicemembers who were (very) likely or (very) unlikely to stay in active-duty service. Across all the Services, there were no statistically significant differences in the percentages of male and female enlisted servicemembers who were likely (or unlikely) to continue their active-duty service, although a smaller percentage of women in all Services reported that they were likely to stay (and a larger percentage reported that they were unlikely to stay).

Figure 26. Retention Intentions, by Service and Gender, Enlisted

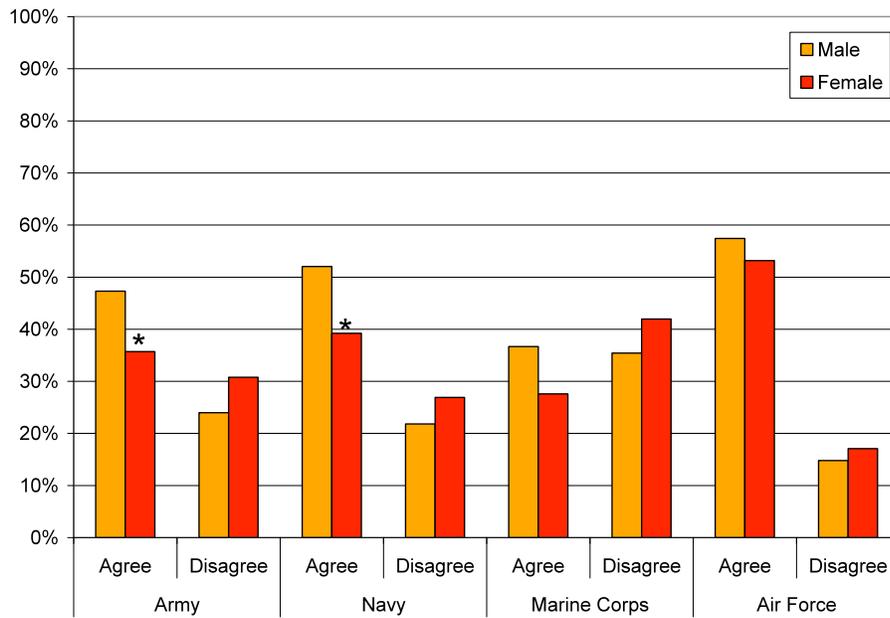


SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

Gender Differences in Career Intentions

Even though most enlisted servicemembers reported positive retention intentions, reenlisting for another term of service is not the same as making the military a career. Thus, the Commission examined whether there are gender differences in intentions to making military service a career. Specifically, SOFS asks individuals to indicate how committed they are to making the military a career. Figure 27 shows career commitment by gender and Service. Career commitment is lower among some female enlisted servicemembers: Compared to their male counterparts, significantly fewer female soldiers and sailors reported that they (strongly) agree that they are committed to making the military a career. These differences are indicated by an asterisk in the figure.

Figure 27. Percentage Who Agreed/Disagreed with the Statement “I Am Committed to Making the Military My Career,” by Service and Gender, Enlisted



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

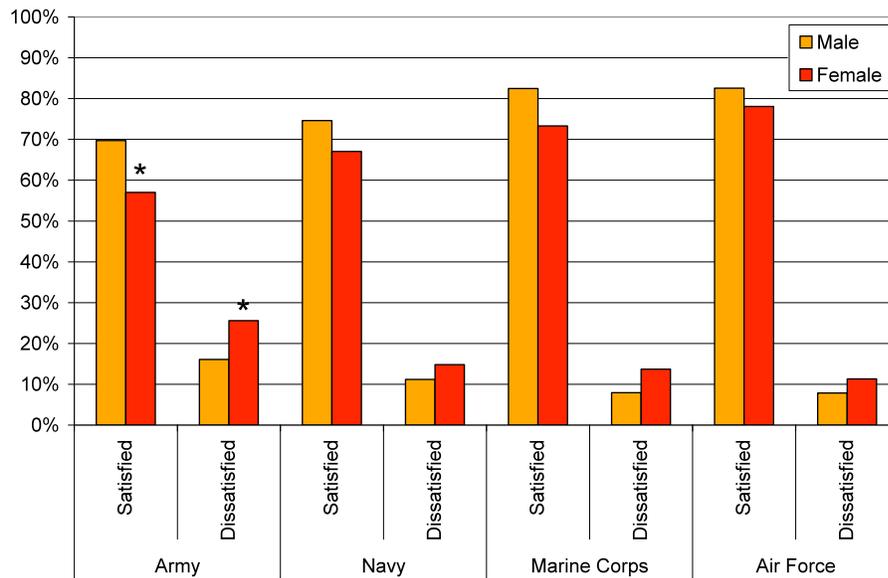
NOTE: * indicates a statistically significant difference between males and females at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Officer Retention Attitudes

Gender Differences in Satisfaction with Military Life

Figure 28 shows the percentages of male and female officers across all Services who were (very) satisfied or (very) dissatisfied with the military way of life. Overall, the majority of men and women reported being satisfied with the military way of life. Only one significant difference occurred: In the Army, significantly more female officers than male officers said that they were dissatisfied with the military way of life, and significantly fewer said that they were satisfied.

Figure 28. Satisfaction with the Military Way of Life, by Service and Gender, Officers



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

NOTE: * indicates a statistically significant difference between males and females at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Gender Differences in Commitment to the Military

As did enlisted servicemembers, both male and female officers reported high levels of job satisfaction. By Service and gender, Table 5 presents means for the three measures of organizational commitment in SOFS: affective, continuance, and normative.

Table 5. Means of Organizational Commitment for Officers, by Service and Gender

	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
Affective Commitment				
Male	1.99	1.99	1.82	1.86
Female	2.28*	2.19*	1.96	2.04*
Continuance Commitment				
Male	2.39	2.52	2.59	2.62
Female	2.35	2.20*	2.71	2.52
Normative Commitment				
Male	3.38	3.57	3.36	3.50
Female	3.53	3.58	3.42	3.48

SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

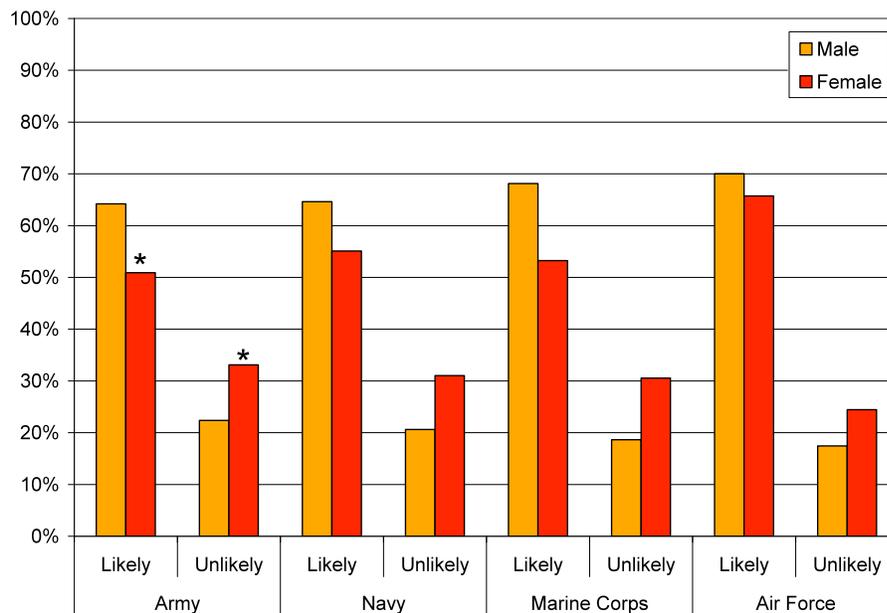
NOTES: The range is 1 to 5, with higher scores indicating higher levels of commitment. * indicates a statistically significant difference between males and females at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Overall, there are few significant gender differences across the three measures of organizational commitment. The one fairly consistent difference is that women in the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force displayed significantly higher levels of affective commitment (i.e., an individual’s emotional attachment to, identification with, or involvement with the military) than their male counterparts. In terms of continuance commitment, the results suggest that women in the Navy saw fewer obstacles to shifting to a civilian career than did their male counterparts. No statistically significant differences emerged between men and women in terms of normative commitment.

Gender Differences in Retention Intentions

Figure 29 presents the percentages of male and female officers who indicated that they were (very) likely or (very) unlikely to stay in active-duty service. Across all the Services, both male and female officers indicated that they were more likely to stay than to leave. However, in the Army, significantly fewer female than male officers reported positive retention intentions.

Figure 29. Retention Intentions, by Service and Gender, Officers



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

NOTE: * indicates a statistically significant difference between males and females at the $p < 0.05$ level.

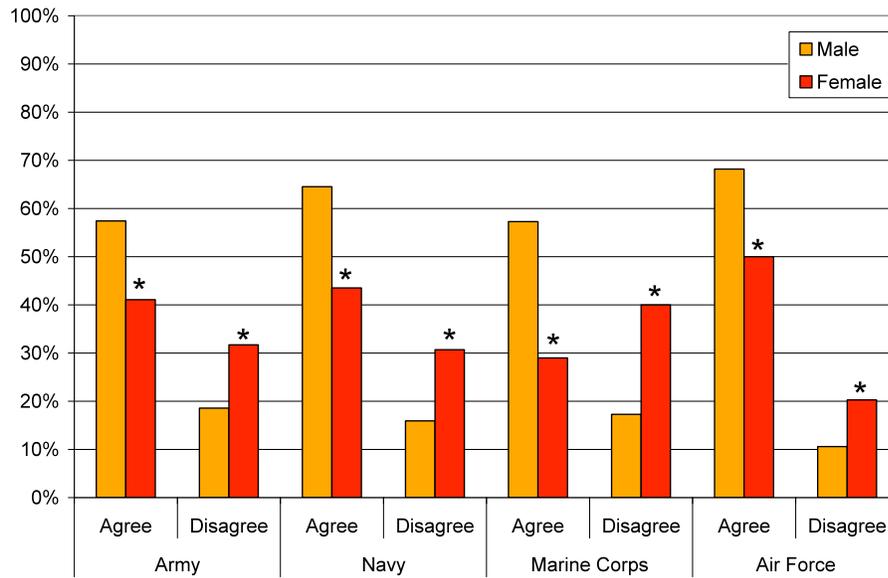
Gender Differences in Career Intentions

Even though most officers reported positive retention intentions, as for enlisted servicemembers, continuing for additional years of service is not the same as making the military a career. Thus, the Commission next examined whether there are gender differences in intentions to making military service a career. Figure 30 shows career commitment by gender and Service.

Regardless of Service, significantly fewer women than men reported that they (strongly) agreed that they were committed to making the military a career. This finding is consistent with the Commission’s estimates of continuation rates among officers, where female rates were consistently lower than those of their male counterparts, especially during the early career phase (i.e., between

YOS 3 and YOS 10). It also highlights a specific area for future study—why women are less likely to view the military as a career.

Figure 30. Percentage Who Agreed/Disagreed with the Statement, “I Am Committed to Making the Military My Career”



SOURCE: Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009.

NOTE: * indicates a statistically significant difference between males and females at the $p < 0.05$ level.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS REGARDING SERVICEMEMBERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD RETENTION

Using DMDC's 2008 Status of Forces Survey among active-duty servicemembers (Defense Manpower Data Center, 2009), the Commission assessed whether there were gender differences in satisfaction with military life, organizational commitment, and retention intentions.

For enlisted personnel, the data show that

- Female enlisted servicemembers were as likely as their male counterparts in the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps, and the Air Force both to be satisfied with the military way of life and to report that they intend to remain in the Armed Forces.
- The results also show, however, that enlisted female soldiers and sailors were less likely than their male counterparts to report positive career intentions. That is, enlisted women in the Army and the Navy were less likely to report that they see the military as a career.

For officers, the data show that

- Across all four Services, female officers reported being less satisfied with the military way of life, as well as less likely to remain in the Armed Forces, than their male counterparts. However, these gender differences only reached statistical significance in the Army.
- Across all four Services, women were significantly less likely than men to report positive career intentions. That is, female officers were less likely to report that they saw the military as a career.

Additional Data on Attitudes Collected by the Retention Subcommittee

As the findings in the previous sections of this decision paper show, compared with men, women leave active-duty service at a higher rate and are less likely to view the military as a career. This is despite the fact that men and women report being equally satisfied with military life and report equally positive retention intentions. To try to understand the underlying reasons for these gender differences, the Subcommittee on Retention engaged in two additional fact-finding activities. First, it analyzed data collected via a supplement to DEOMI's Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS). The DEOCS is designed to assess a number of aspects of organizational climate, including military equal opportunity, civilian equal employment opportunity, and organizational effectiveness. Second, researchers and subcommittee members held information sessions with male and female servicemembers who were making the transition to the civilian world.

DEOCS Survey Data

To a gain a better understanding of why women leave active-duty service at a higher rate than men, the Commission added two retention-related questions to the online DEOCS. The first was, "To what extent was each of the following a reason for your decision to leave the service, using the numbers provided in the rating scale below?" The item was followed by a list of 36 factors. For each, respondents indicated the extent to which the factor was related to their decision to leave: not at all (1), a slight extent (2), a moderate extent (3), a great extent (4), or a very great extent (5) (see Appendix A for the list of factors). For each factor a mean score, or average importance score, was

calculated.³⁷ The higher the mean score, the more influential the factor was for making the decision to leave. It is important to note that the reasons for leaving encompass both voluntary (e.g., low job satisfaction) and involuntary (e.g., failure to promote) reasons. Although voluntary reasons may tell us something about individuals' attitudes about military service, involuntary reasons may highlight organizational issues that may be keeping women from a career in the military.

The second item asked respondents to rank the top five reasons why they were leaving the service using the same 36 factors as above. This question also allowed individuals to write in their own responses if they felt that their most important reason for leaving was not represented in the list of factors.

Survey data were collected in two periods during February/March and May 2010. Although a total of 3,419 servicemembers completed the survey during this time frame, the Commission focused its attention on the 1,111 active-duty officers and enlisted servicemembers who reported that they were either leaving at the end of their current obligation ($n = 592$) or were not sure if they were leaving at the end of their current obligation ($n = 519$) and who had no missing data on race, ethnicity, gender, branch of Service, or rank.

Just over half of the servicemembers in the analytic sample were in the Army (616) and just over one-fourth were in the Navy (315). The rest were spread throughout the Marine Corps (87), Coast Guard (70), and the Air Force (23). The distribution of respondents across Services reflects differences in how each of the Services uses the DEOCS. It is typically not used by the Air Force, which relies on its own internal climate survey. Therefore, it is likely that the Air Force respondents in the sample were in a cross-Service command. In the Navy and the Marine Corps, unit participation in the DEOCS is required within 90 days of a new commander taking command and annually thereafter.³⁸ The Army has its own climate survey that must be given to units within 90 days of a new commander taking command, but the DEOCS is also available to commanders, should they choose to use it.³⁹ The Coast Guard requires administration of the DEOCS to each unit annually, as long as the unit contains at least 16 members. In general, DEOMI does not generate a DEOCS report unless at least 16 assigned personnel complete the survey.⁴⁰

In terms of rank, 15 percent were officers (46 percent were between O-1 and O-3, and 54 percent were between O-4 and O-6), and 85 percent were enlisted (68 percent were between E-1 and E-5, and 32 percent were between E-6 and E-9).⁴¹ The sample contained 738 male enlisted servicemembers, 203 female enlisted servicemembers, 138 male officers, and 32 female officers. The small number of female officers suggests that any analysis using this data should be interpreted with caution. Also, keep in mind that none of the data is representative but rather represents a

³⁷ Table A.1 presents mean importance factors for each of the 36 factors by gender for officers and enlisted servicemembers.

³⁸ According to the U.S. Department of the Navy (2007), "commanders" are defined as "Commanders, Commanding Officers (COs), and Officers-in-Charge (OICs)."

³⁹ This policy is set to change in the near future. The Army will then require use of the DEOCS and discontinue use of the Army's Command Climate Survey. Current policy requires commanders of company-size units to assess command climate via the Army's Command Climate Survey (U.S. Department of the Army, 2010).

⁴⁰ For purposes of conducting a unit climate assessment, a "unit" is any command possessing a Unit Identification Number (UIC), independent of the number of personnel assigned to that unit. It is also important to note that regardless of a Service's stated policy on utilizing the DEOCS or any other climate survey, the degree to which these policies are enforced varies.

⁴¹ Although the analysis separates officers and enlisted servicemembers, sample size does not permit examination of Service-specific groups.

nonrepresentative, convenience sample of servicemembers whose units participated in the survey at the time when the Commission supplement was available.⁴² As such, the results should not be generalized to all servicemembers.

Reasons for Leaving by Gender: Enlisted

The following list presents, overall and by gender, the five highest-rated factors for leaving by gender among enlisted servicemembers (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2010). Note that the women's list contains more than five factors because of ties between the second-most and third-most important factors:

- Overall ($n = 894$)
 - Low pay and allowances (2.9)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (2.9)
 - Low job satisfaction (2.9)
 - Desire to continue my education (2.8)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.7).
- Male ($n = 700$)
 - Low pay and allowances (3.0)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (2.9)
 - Low job satisfaction (2.9)
 - Desire to continue my education (2.8)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.7).
- Female ($n = 194$)
 - Desire to continue my education (3.0)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (2.9)
 - Low job satisfaction (2.9)
 - Low pay and allowances (2.8)
 - Inherently unfair level of fairness in performance evaluation system (2.8)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.8).⁴³

Among enlisted servicemembers, regardless of gender, low pay, perception of poor advancement and promotion opportunities, and low job satisfaction are given the highest average importance ratings in terms of reasons for leaving. Men ranked low pay and allowances as their most salient reason for leaving (or considering leaving) active duty-service. Women rated a desire to continue their education as their most important factor for leaving. It is also worth noting that female enlisted servicemembers, but not male enlisted servicemembers, listed unfairness in the performance evaluation system as a top five reason for leaving.

⁴² Convenience sampling is a type of sampling by which subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility to the researcher. It is a "nonprobability" sampling technique because the probability of being included in the sample cannot be accurately determined. This, in turn, means that it is not possible to use convenience samples to make scientifically valid generalizations about the total population from which they are drawn.

⁴³ Importance scores are in parentheses. Higher scores indicate a higher influence of the reason on the separation decision (range = 1 to 5). Missing data resulted in sample sizes that do not match those reported above.

Recall that a second survey item asked respondents to rank their top five reasons for leaving. The following list shows, by gender, the five reasons that were most frequently listed as the primary, or top, reason for leaving (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2010):

- Male ($n = 700$)
 - Low pay and allowances (97)
 - Involuntary retirement or separation/ineligibility to reenlist (77)
 - Low job satisfaction (77)
 - Too many deployments (48)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (46).
- Female ($n = 194$)
 - Involuntary retirement or separation/ineligibility to reenlist (23)
 - Low job satisfaction (16)
 - Too many deployments (15)
 - Low pay and allowances (15)
 - Desire to continue education (11).⁴⁴

For enlisted men and women, a top reason for leaving was involuntary separation, suggesting that these were individuals whom the Services had decided not to retain. Note that the survey data did not indicate why these individuals were ineligible to reenlist. For some, HYT may have been an issue. For others, medical issues may have prevented them from being eligible to reenlist.⁴⁵ It is also possible that some individuals were not offered reenlistment because their occupational specialty, or MOS, did not have any available positions when it came time for them to make a reenlistment decision. The Commissioners frequently heard this complaint when talking to enlisted servicemembers during information sessions. Thus, these “ineligible” individuals were retained in the analysis because the reasons for their ineligibility could be associated with personal characteristics (e.g., poor performance), Service characteristics (e.g., a full MOS), or both (e.g., lack of promotion opportunities combined with low performance ratings).

Reasons for Leaving by Gender: Officers

The following list presents, overall and by gender, the top five most important factors for leaving among officers (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2010):

- Overall ($n = 160$)
 - Not getting desirable or appropriate assignments (2.9)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.9)
 - Low job satisfaction (2.9)
 - Desire to start a second career before becoming too old (2.7)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (2.7)
 - Failed to be promoted (2.7).

⁴⁴ The number of respondents indicating each reason as the primary reason for leaving is in parentheses.

⁴⁵ Although medical problems was also a separate option for respondents and among women, it was one of the most frequently listed primary reasons for leaving active-duty service. Despite the fact that medical problems was an option, we cannot assume that individuals who listed involuntary separation as their primary reason for leaving *were not* eligible to remain because of a medical condition.

- Male ($n = 128$)
 - Not getting desirable or appropriate assignments (2.9)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.9)
 - Desire to start a second career before becoming too old (2.9)
 - Low job satisfaction (2.8)
 - Poor promotion/advancement opportunities (2.7)
 - Failed to be promoted (2.7).
- Female ($n = 32$)
 - Low job satisfaction (3.2)
 - Not getting desirable or appropriate assignments (3.1)
 - Too many deployments (2.9)
 - Not assigned to jobs offering technical/professional development (2.8)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2.8)
 - Desire to continue my education (2.8).⁴⁶

Among officers, regardless of gender, not getting desirable or appropriate assignments, low job satisfaction, and a desire to settle in a particular location were among the most common factors in the decision to leave (or in some cases, uncertainty about leaving). Although men rated not getting desirable or appropriate assignments as their most important reason for leaving, women rated low job satisfaction as their most influential factor. Women, but not men, listed deployment tempo and a desire to continue an education as a top five most salient factor for leaving active-duty service.

The following list shows, by gender, the five reasons that were most frequently listed as the primary, or top, reason for leaving (Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2010):

- Male ($n = 128$)
 - Failure to be promoted (17)
 - Low job satisfaction (14)
 - Poor promotion or advancement opportunities (13)
 - Involuntary retirement or separation/not eligible for reenlistment (11)
 - Low pay and allowances (9)
 - Desire to start a second career before becoming too old (9).
- Female ($n = 32$)
 - Too many deployments (5)
 - High level of work/family conflict (4)
 - Desire to continue education (3)
 - Desire to settle in a particular location (2)
 - Too many permanent-change-of-station moves (2)
 - Problems with superior(s) (2)
 - Low job satisfaction (2)
 - Failure to be promoted (2).⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Importance scores are in parentheses. Higher scores indicate a higher influence of that reason on the separation decision (range = 1 to 5).

⁴⁷ The number of respondents indicating each reason as the primary reason for leaving is in parentheses.

Male officers most frequently listed failure to be promoted as their primary reason for leaving active-duty service, although it is not clear from the data why these officers did not promote (e.g., HYT, limited available promotion opportunities, poor job performance). For female officers, too many deployments was the most frequently listed primary reason for leaving. Interestingly, too many deployments was ranked sixth on the list for male officers. Although it did not make the top five list for men, a high level of work/family conflict was the second most listed primary reason for leaving among women.⁴⁸ However, it is important to keep in mind that the small number of female officers limits the generalizability of the results to the entire population of female officers who leave active-duty service.

Write-In Responses

As noted, respondents were also given the option to write in an additional primary reason for leaving if they felt it was not covered by the list provided or they wanted to expand on a reason that was listed. Appendix B provides those responses. In order to protect confidentiality, the results indicate the gender of the servicemember but not officer versus enlisted status. The most common reasons for leaving in the write-in section were perception of poor leadership, desire to spend more time with family or go to school, lack of advancement opportunities, and an unfair promotion system; these reasons crossed gender lines.

Summary of Findings from DEOCS Data

Overall, the results from the DEOCS survey suggest that men and women cite similar reasons for leaving active-duty service. Both reported job dissatisfaction, low pay, and lack of promotion or advancement opportunities as reasons for leaving. For male officers, the most frequently cited primary reason for leaving was failure to be promoted. Although there were fewer female officers to analyze, the high frequency of deployments and the desire to settle in one location were both listed as a primary motivation for separating. Among male enlisted servicemembers, low pay and allowances was the most frequently cited primary reason for leaving, whereas for females involuntary separation or ineligibility to reenlist was the most cited reason. However, two data limitations limit the ability to make strong conclusions about reasons for the gender gap in retention based on these findings. First, the small number of females in the sample, particularly female officers, severely limits the variance in responses. Having responses from just ten more female officers could dramatically change the results. Second, without further knowledge about *why* individuals, especially women, involuntarily separate or are ineligible to reenlist, it is not possible to make any conclusions as to whether there may be organizational impediments to women's military careers or whether this reflects a gender difference in occupational choice.

Information Sessions and Exit Interviews

Information Sessions

To supplement the data from the DEOCS, the Commission held information sessions with servicemembers from the Navy, Marine Corps, Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Commission staff contacted representatives from each Service and asked for volunteers from among those who were attending Transition Assistance Program (TAP) courses. TAP offices are designed to help active-duty servicemembers make the transition to the civilian sector, helping them find jobs and

⁴⁸ Five male officers listed work/family conflict as their primary reason for leaving active-duty service.

apply for veterans' assistance programs (e.g., the GI Bill, medical benefits). Family members were encouraged to attend with their military spouses. Using an interview protocol, these information sessions were designed to discover, in servicemembers' own words, why they chose to leave active-duty service; who, if anyone, spoke to them about their decision to leave; whether they felt that they had a mentor (or mentors) throughout their career; and what one policy change they would make to increase retention.

The first set of information sessions was held the week of May 10, 2010. Two information sessions were conducted at the Norfolk Naval Base in Norfolk, Virginia, and two additional information sessions were held at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. Forty-eight sailors, one member of the Coast Guard, and 32 marines attended these sessions. In addition, three spouses (two wives and one active-duty marine husband) were present during the sessions at Camp Lejeune. The majority of attendees were male; of the 48 sailors, only six were female, and of the 32 marines, four were female. The final two information sessions were held at Joint Base Lewis-McChord near Seattle, Washington, the week of May 24, 2010. In total, seven airmen and 12 soldiers attended the sessions. Again, the majority were male; of the seven airmen, two were female, and of the 12 soldiers, only one was female. Participants across the information sessions ranged from first-term enlisted servicemembers to officers retiring after 20 or more years of service.

The information sessions revealed a number of key themes that mirrored those found in the DEOCS data. Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, rank, or branch of Service, servicemembers noted low job satisfaction, lack of fit between their skills and their actual job, not being able to do the job they were trained for, poor leadership, deployment cycles and operational tempo (OPTEMPO), and lack of promotion opportunities as reasons for leaving active-duty service. A number of individuals simply stated that it was "time to go."

One of the most common reasons the subcommittee heard for leaving was HYT. Each Service sets the maximum number of years of service that an enlisted servicemember or officer can serve at a specific rank. This ties retention to the promotion system because if a servicemember fails to be promoted to the next rank, he or she will eventually meet HYT requirements and will be forced to involuntarily separate.

Enlisted promotion is also tied to the number of vacancies that are available for each MOS. Often, enlisted attendees noted that they would have remained on active-duty service had positions been available to them. In the case of the Marine Corps, several of the younger first-term enlisted marines noted that by the time they were able to complete their paperwork, all of the slots in their MOS were full. Several admitted that they had been told that their MOS might fill up but did not actually believe that would be the case. As seen in the MLDC calculation of reenlistment rates, the Marine Corps has lower first-term reenlistment rates than other services, and this is deliberate on the part of the Corps.

During the information sessions, the Commissioners also asked attendees whether anyone had helped them during the period in which they made the decision to leave. Many noted high levels of support and mentorship from senior officers and senior NCOs. Among sailors, several mentioned having a "sea daddy" or a "sea mama," an out-of-date term used for informal mentors. Some sought advice from their military peers. Some mentioned talking their decision over with family members, especially spouses in dual-military couples. In terms of more-formal mentoring, a number of servicemembers stated that their branch of Service had some type of career development board or panel, but attendees said that this was just a formality.

In contrast, other participants reported that no one talked with them during their decisionmaking process. It was not clear from the information sessions how many of those individuals who said that

they had no form of mentorship throughout the decisionmaking process had available mentors but simply chose not to reach out to that person or persons. And at least one individual suggested that formal mentoring, where a senior service member is assigned to a subordinate, does not actually benefit the mentee.

More generally, attendees also noted that poor mentoring and poor leadership were problems that led to lower retention. Many of the junior enlisted sailors, marines, airmen, and soldiers felt that their commanding officers did not listen to them and suggested that too many lacked the experience necessary to truly lead others. Other attendees noted that their senior NCOs were only interested in retention, and once it was known that an enlisted servicemember did not plan to reenlist, he or she would be treated differently. One attendee suggested that the pace of promotions was so fast that individuals were not ready to be leaders and to mentor individuals below them. These sentiments were not exclusive to enlisted servicemembers. As one female officer stated, “Leaders need leaders.” The idea that, even among officers, senior leadership was not as effective as it could be was echoed by a number of attendees across all branches of Service.

Attendees offered a number of suggestions for policy changes that they believed would increase retention. However, we caution that the Commissioners did not specifically ask for changes that would differentially affect females. Thus, it is not clear that any of the ideas would in fact close the gender gap in retention.

Some suggestions, like revamping the Navy’s Perform to Serve Program (PTS) or the Marine Corps Lifelong Learning Program, were service-specific.⁴⁹ Others could be implemented DoD-wide. For example, a number of attendees suggested policy changes that affect how the Services are staffed or are related to personnel issues—allotting more down time between deployments, allowing individuals to pick their rating or MOS only after some work experience, changing HYT rules, and creating tests used for promotion that more accurately reflect ability. Some mentioned reevaluating the fitness and weight standards, suggesting that fit individuals were being removed from active-duty service because they were just above cutoff scores. Offering more military educational opportunities was also mentioned, including leadership training and familiarization with new technology. And for many of the servicemembers, there was no single policy change that they believed would influence retention.

Coast Guard Exit Interviews

Because of low attendance by Coast Guard members in the Commission information sessions, the Coast Guard provided the subcommittee with additional information from a small sample of third-party exit interviews.⁵⁰ Data from 22 participants were gathered using an online virtual conference

⁴⁹ The PTS program is a force-shaping tool used by the Navy that levels overmanned and undermanned rates (or occupations). It is also intended to act as a quality control by screening reenlistments for all sailors in Zones A, B, and C. However, many of the sailors with whom the subcommittee spoke anecdotally said that PTS was not working in the way in which it was intended. Through the Marine Corps Lifelong Learning Program, the Corps has taken a “cradle-to-grave” approach in training marines to maximize combat efficiency. The idea is that from the beginning of their military career through the end of their career, marines are trained continuously. Again, anecdotally, attendees at the information sessions suggested that, in practice, this policy was not living up to its expectations.

⁵⁰ Though the Coast Guard schedules exit interviews prior to a servicemember’s departure, the information has not traditionally been formally collected and analyzed. However, the Coast Guard is moving toward a third-party exit interview process so that the data can be analyzed and used to address barriers to retention. The information summarized here is from preliminary results from this new process.

room (VCR) in which exiting Coast Guard members could log in to a secure account and respond to a series of questions, as well as respond to the comments that others in the VCR had submitted. Given the small sample size, racial, ethnic, and gender differences in responses were not computed. Nonetheless, the results do give us some insight into why these individuals chose to leave active-duty service in the Coast Guard.

The five most common reasons for leaving involved difficulties managing a career and dissatisfaction with human resources policies, poor leadership, pursuing higher education, work-life balance, and low job satisfaction. Nine of the 14 respondents who cited work-life balance as a reason for leaving also mentioned that the problems they experienced were associated with the frequency of moving.

Participants in the VCR also addressed what the Coast Guard could have done to prevent them from leaving. Individuals suggested that they might have remained on active duty if more opportunities for professional development had been available; if moves were less frequent; if they had experienced a better match between their skills and their jobs; and if they had better quality leadership, as well as better relationships with superiors and leaders. Some said that there was nothing that the Coast Guard could have done to have kept them in active-duty service. Finally, VCR participants were asked about what the Coast Guard actually did to prevent them from leaving. Some participants said that they were approached by supervisors and others and asked to stay, some said that supervisors offered more job flexibility (i.e., working from home and telecommuting), some were reminded of the poor civilian job market and guaranteed retirement benefits after 20 years of service, some were offered a transfer or a civilian position, and, for some, nothing was done. One individual, who was approached by his chain of command to discuss his decision to leave, agreed to join the Reserves after leaving active-duty status.

Summary of Findings from Information Sessions and Exit Interviews

Although the subcommittee was not able to draw on a representative sample of servicemembers, the information sessions along with the Coast Guard's exit interviews provided supplemental information to the data collected from DEOCS. Key themes that emerged from the qualitative data—low job satisfaction, lack of fit between skills and actual job, not being able to do the job for which they were trained, poor leadership, deployment cycles and OPTEMPO, HYT, and lack of promotion opportunities—mirrored those gleaned from the quantitative DEOCS data. None of the attendees suggested that they had been treated unfairly, and many noted that they were proud of their service and had only positive things to say about their experiences. More importantly for the Commission, men and women cited similar reasons for leaving active-duty service. Yet, according to the retention rates the subcommittee calculated, retention is lower among female servicemembers than their male counterparts.

CURRENT RETENTION POLICIES IN THE ARMED SERVICES

The final fact-finding mission of the subcommittee was to ascertain what, if any, existing retention policies were specifically targeted at women (or other minorities). Specifically, the subcommittee asked each Service, including the Coast Guard, “What policies, practices, or initiatives do you currently have in place to increase retention?” and “Are any of these focused specifically on women or minorities?” These questions were answered during the January 2010 MLDC meeting at which each Service presented briefings on the programs and incentives it is using to retain personnel in both the enlisted and officer communities. Details of the briefings can be found on the MLDC web page.⁵¹ When necessary, the subcommittee engaged in follow-up contact with Service representatives for further information with respect to these policies, practices, and programs.

Overall, the briefings showed that the Services’ retention policies are generally gender-, race-, and ethnicity-neutral. Rather than focusing on diversity, the emphasis of retention policies is on end strength and force shaping. One new program in the Navy and two existing programs in the Coast Guard, however, did appear to have the potential for decreasing the gender gap. These policies are gender-, race-, and ethnicity-neutral by design and promote equal treatment but, in actuality, may have a disparate impact on retention.

Both the Navy and the Coast Guard currently have *sabbatical*, or extended leave, programs. In FY 2009, the Navy began the Career Intermission Pilot Program to encourage retention through enhanced career flexibility.⁵² The program allows 20 officers and 20 enlisted sailors, male or female, to temporarily take time off from active duty for a period of up to three years. During the sabbatical period sailors transition to the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) and do not receive active-duty pay or allowances but do retain both medical and dental care benefits, as well as continued access to commissaries; exchanges; and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs. Sailors who participate in the sabbatical program are required to complete an additional active-duty service obligation of two months for every month spent in the IRR on sabbatical. Once they return to active duty, participants are reinstated at the same rank as when they left. A key provision for officers is that their seniority (date of rank) is adjusted to account for the time away, which ensures that they do not go up for promotion at the same time as their counterparts who did not take a career intermission.

The Coast Guard has two sabbatical programs, both available to men and women: Care for Newborn Children (CNC) and the Temporary Separation Program. Both are restricted to personnel who are at the rank of E-4/O-3 or above, and both have YOS requirements: four years of active-duty service in the Coast Guard for CNC and six years for the Temporary Separation Program. Both programs allow for up to a 24-month absence, and the servicemember receives no pay or benefits while he or she is away. On return, individuals are reinstated at the same rank they left, assuming they meet physical fitness requirements and return within two years of leaving. Servicemembers can use one sabbatical program but not both.

⁵¹ See Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2010.

⁵² The pilot was authorized in the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2009 (10 U.S. Code § 533, 2008).

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Recommendations

Based on the evidence it collected, the Commission concluded that, currently, retention is primarily an issue among female servicemembers, both officers and enlisted personnel, who leave active-duty service sooner than their male counterparts. The data indicate that the broad reason for lower female retention may be that women are less likely than men to be committed to a military career. However, none of the data that were collected points to a single reason, or even a set of reasons, that can explain why this may be so.

Recommendation 1—

DACOWITS should expand its current focus on retention to include an explanation of the gender gap in retention. As part of this renewed focus, DACOWITS should examine the effects of retention programs, such as the sabbatical programs currently offered by the Navy and the Coast Guard, as well as any other innovative Service-specific approaches to retention. Findings and recommendations from this research should be presented to the Secretary of Defense.

Because the data do not clearly indicate *why* women leave active-duty service earlier and at greater rates than men, the first recommendation of the Commission is to put retention on the list of focus areas covered by the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services (DACOWITS). Specifically, the Commission recommends that *DACOWITS should expand its current focus on retention to include an explanation of the gender gap in retention. As part of this renewed focus, DACOWITS should examine the effects of retention programs, such as the sabbatical programs currently offered by the Navy and the Coast Guard, as well as any other innovative Service-specific approaches to retention. Findings and recommendations from this research should be presented to the Secretary of Defense.*

According to its charter, DACOWITS “shall examine and advise on matters relating to women in the Armed Forces of the United States.” With recent authorization to increase its number of members from 15 to 35, DACOWITS may be able to expand its focus. Currently, retention is not explicitly mentioned in the charter, although it is explicitly acknowledged in the Mission Statement provided on the DACOWITS web page,⁵³ and it has been the focus of attention in previous DACOWITS annual reports.

In particular, two DACOWITS annual reports from early in the decade put special emphasis on retention. In 2003, DACOWITS analyzed DMDC data and conducted 61 focus groups with men and women to discuss retention issues. The personnel data showed that women had lower retention rates than men. The report also noted that “[f]amily considerations remain key to retention for both men and women” (p. iv). Ultimately, the report concluded that more work was needed to understand why female retention rates are lower before any recommendations could be made. However, the report also noted that leave programs may be an option to address low rates of female attrition, especially among officers. At the time, only the Coast Guard had sabbatical programs.

⁵³ See Defense Department Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, n.d.

Based on the findings of the 2003 report, DACOWITS expanded its investigation in the 2004 report, which devotes an entire section specifically to retention. New focus groups found that men and women cite similar reasons for leaving: work/family balance, workload and schedule, frequency of moves, poor leadership, and career and job opportunities both within and outside the military. It is worthwhile to note that the Retention Subcommittee found very similar results, six years later.⁵⁴

The 2004 DACOWITS report formally recommended leave programs as an answer to family/life imbalance. In addition, the notion that leave or sabbatical programs might be especially effective for women is supported by the academic literature, which generally finds that women are more susceptible to experiencing work/life, or work/family, conflict because they are typically viewed as primary caretakers of children and other family members, such as elderly parents (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Thus, as part of DACOWITS's continued investigation of female retention, the Commission particularly recommends that it examine the available data on the previously described Navy and Coast Guard sabbatical programs to assess whether they have had a positive, negative, or neutral impact on female retention.

Of course, the Services may have other policies or programs that may influence retention decisions. For example, some servicemembers have the opportunity to telecommute, or work from home, when necessary (i.e., when a child is sick), or to have flexible hours where they may only be in a work environment four rather than five days a week. Another example is increased flexibility in career paths, allowing individuals to be cross-trained and/or shift fields if one provides more forward advancement than the other. Although such programs are typically considered to be general retention tools, they may be particularly appealing to certain groups of individuals, such as working mothers. Thus, the Commission also encourages DACOWITS to include these types of programs in their evaluation of female retention and to focus specifically on whether they have the potential to close the gender gap.

If the sabbatical or any other programs are deemed effective at reducing the gender gap in retention, the Commission further encourages DoD to create model programs that would be available to servicemembers across all branches of Service. Such programs, however, must be designed with careful consideration of what options will and will not be legally permissible: Any program that is available only to women (or any other protected group) could be challenged and, if tested in court, would be subject to strict scrutiny.⁵⁵

Finally, whatever findings and recommendations the DACOWITS review produces should be disseminated to a wide audience, including the Secretary of Defense. This will facilitate the development of retention policies that close the gender gap across Services.

Clearly, the examinations by DACOWITS and the Commission indicate that women have lower actual retention rates than their male counterparts, but they also indicate that men and women cite similar reasons for leaving the service. Thus, what is still needed is research that can explain how the link between attitudes and retention differs for men versus women. This should be the key focus of any future investigation on retention: the linkage of attitudes to behavior, with the intent of explaining the gender gap.

⁵⁴ Since the 2003 and 2004 reports, DACOWITS has focused on more-specific retention issues: the effect of deployment on retention in 2005; retention among female doctors, lawyers, and clergy in 2006; the effect of spouses' employment opportunities on retention in 2007; and the association between educational opportunities and retention in 2008. The most recent report, in 2009, did not address retention.

⁵⁵ See the issue papers written for the Legal Subcommittee for more information on how the law informs and shapes diversity and equal opportunity policies and programs.

Recommendation 2—

DoD shall establish a universal qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis system that tracks career progression over time, including branching and assignments, promotion, and retention.

In its attempt to address its charter task, the largest obstacle the Retention Subcommittee faced was getting comparable retention statistics from all Services: The Services do not use the same procedures for estimating retention rates or even consistent race and ethnicity categories for making their calculations, nor do they regularly release to the public reports on retention results. This made it very difficult to make comparisons across Services, but, more importantly, it also made it difficult to formulate any DoD-wide assessments of retention patterns. Thus, this Commission recommendation asks DoD to establish a universal system of data collection, analysis, and reporting that will allow for meaningful comparisons and aggregations across the Services of not only retention rates but also other important aspects of career progression. The system should, however, be flexible enough to allow the Services to calculate whatever statistics may be required to meet their Service-specific needs.

The Commission recommends that three different types of data be collected for the purpose of tracking career progression across diverse groups: personnel data, survey data, and focused qualitative data. First, *personnel data* can be used to show actual behavior and outcomes. For example, in this decision paper, the Retention Subcommittee used personnel data from DMDC to calculate comparable reenlistment and continuation rates across all of the DoD Services, using the same race and ethnic categories. Relevant demographic trends should not be limited to only race, ethnicity, and gender, however. Personnel data should also include other aspects of diversity as need dictates (e.g., religion, language ability, or other low-density, high-demand skills).

Second, *survey data* that shows attitudes and opinions can be used to assess why group-level differences in career progression may be occurring. For example, exit surveys could be used to collect information about reasons for leaving active-duty service. Currently, not all Services conduct exit surveys and, in instances where exit data is available, it is often specific to a particular unit. Thus, there is no centralized system for collection or analysis of this type of data. In the National Defense Authorization Act for FY 2000, Congress required that every member separating from active-duty service during a six-month period be surveyed regarding his or her reasons for leaving. The survey was conducted once by DMDC and never repeated (see Deak, Helba, et al., 2001).

Although each individual Service may wish to gather different information from its members, utilizing a core set of survey items will facilitate comparable data analysis across Services. For example, at a minimum, a Service-wide exit survey should include items about the specific reasons why individuals leave, with what aspects of military life the respondent was and was not satisfied, who influenced the decision to leave, and what, if anything, would have altered the decision to leave. It is also important to link these surveys to servicemembers' administrative records so analysts can link characteristics like race, ethnicity, gender, YOS, MOS, deployment history, and promotions to retention decisions and reasons for leaving. The subcommittee also notes that there currently exists a natural forum for an exit survey. All Services have their own versions of Transition Assistance Programs and Classes (TAP). These TAP activities could be used to provide respondents for exit surveys.

Third, *focused qualitative data* can more specifically address the issues identified by personnel and/or survey data. Although exit surveys can be helpful in terms of quantitative analysis, they sometimes cannot provide the nuanced reasons why an individual chooses to leave active-duty

service. And, as shown in this chapter, raw statistics alone cannot untangle why women leave the Services at a higher rate than their male counterparts. Thus, the Commission also recommends the use of focused qualitative data to study personnel and manpower issues. For example, information sessions, similar to those used in the Commission analysis of retention, are often quite helpful at providing detailed information that is sometimes missed in more-restrictive quantitative survey methods where selecting a response from a list is the respondent's only option.

Regardless of the type of data that is collected, it must be consistent not only across Services but also over time. This can be achieved through the use of common methodologies (e.g., a universal exit survey), variable definitions (e.g., the Office of Management and Budget's race and ethnicity categories), and reporting conventions (e.g., cumulative continuation rates). Although retention among minority racial and ethnic groups does not currently appear to be a problem, this may not always be the case. As such, part of the Commission's recommendation about data collection is continued monitoring of trends in retention.

Conclusion

This decision paper has reviewed the results of the Commission's effort to address the charter task on retention: "examine the ability of current activities to increase continuation rates for ethnic- and gender-specific members of the Armed Forces." Based on calculations of continuation and reenlistment rates, the Commission determined that women have consistently lower retention than their male counterparts, but the same is not true of racial and ethnic minorities compared with their white peers. The investigation also found that women are less likely to report that they have career aspirations for the military. Therefore, the Commission focused its attention on uncovering why the gender gap in retention exists. Through the use of survey data from DEOMI's Climate Survey, as well as information sessions with servicemembers across DoD and the Coast Guard who were ending their military careers, the Commission found that the reasons that men and women cite for leaving are very similar. Both gender groups cited low job satisfaction, low pay, deployment cycles and high OPTEMPO, failure to promote and HYT, ineligibility to reenlist and involuntary separation, poor leadership, and family as reasons for their separation.

Because the reasons for leaving were similar across genders and because none of the Services reported gender-specific retention policies, the Commission focused its recommendations on continued study of the issue and consistent collection and reporting of qualitative and quantitative personnel and manpower data and statistics that will allow for comparisons within and across Services over time. This will enable the Services to identify emerging trends in retention with the goal of taking appropriate action as those trends may shift.

APPENDIX A: MEAN IMPORTANCE SCORES FOR REASONS FOR LEAVING ACTIVE-DUTY SERVICE

Table A.1. Mean Importance Scores for Reasons for Leaving, by Officer/Enlisted Status and Gender

	Officer			Enlisted		
	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female
Involuntarily retiring or separated/not eligible for reenlistment	2.04	2.13	1.72	2.25	2.20	2.43
Approaching maximum age eligible to serve	1.86	1.95	1.50	1.87	1.87	1.88
Sexual harassment	1.778	1.75	1.88	1.85	1.73	2.28
Approaching maximum total time in grade	2.13	2.26	1.63	2.15	2.12	2.25
Religious discrimination	1.62	1.66	1.44	1.81	1.76	1.98
Low job satisfaction	2.90	2.83	3.19	2.85	2.85	2.86
Age discrimination	1.63	1.66	1.50	1.88	1.86	1.95
Low pay and allowances	2.35	2.38	2.25	2.91	2.95	2.83
Racial discrimination	1.79	1.83	1.66	2.01	1.93	2.28
Failed to be promoted	2.66	2.70	2.50	2.68	2.65	2.77
Sex discrimination	1.84	1.78	2.09	1.94	1.82	2.41
Poor promotion/advancement opportunities	2.69	2.72	2.56	2.88	2.88	2.91
Inherently unfair level of fairness in performance evaluation	2.32	2.26	2.56	2.68	2.63	2.84
Not getting desirable or appropriate assignments	2.94	2.91	3.06	2.66	2.64	2.72
Not assigned to jobs offering technical/professional development	2.40	2.29	2.84	2.52	2.50	2.61
Lack of training opportunities	2.32	2.24	2.62	2.49	2.48	2.53
Desire to continue my education	2.34	2.23	2.78	2.82	2.76	3.01
Desire to get out while jobs are easy to get	1.86	1.93	1.59	2.23	2.22	2.29
Desire to start second career before becoming too old	2.69	2.86	2.03	2.55	2.59	2.54
Desire to start second career before having to pay for children's education	1.93	2.01	1.63	2.19	2.21	2.10
Desire to settle in a particular location	2.88	2.88	2.84	2.74	2.72	2.80
Family problems at home	2.08	2.02	2.31	2.16	2.14	2.23
Family wanted me to separate/retire	2.33	2.31	2.38	2.28	2.28	2.24
Too many PCS moves	2.20	2.19	2.25	2.04	2.05	1.98
Too many deployments	2.35	2.22	2.88	2.38	2.40	2.30
Too few deployments	1.46	1.51	1.25	1.76	1.80	1.61

	Officer			Enlisted		
	Overall	Male	Female	Overall	Male	Female
One or more serious (UCMJ) offenses	1.53	1.55	1.41	1.81	1.77	1.93
Minor offenses or disciplinary problems	1.46	1.49	1.34	1.68	1.66	1.77
Homesickness	1.48	1.42	1.66	1.84	1.80	2.00
High level of work/family conflict	2.20	2.15	2.41	2.33	2.28	2.48
Lack of motivation/boredom	2.14	2.18	2.00	2.67	2.64	2.75
Problems with superior(s)	2.10	2.07	2.22	2.45	2.40	2.62
Medical problems	1.76	1.80	1.59	2.21	2.12	2.56
Difficulty meeting physical fitness requirements	1.51	1.51	1.53	1.92	1.86	2.12
Difficulty maintaining weight/body fat standards	1.53	1.49	1.69	1.83	1.80	1.97
Inadequate access to the Internet/World Wide Web	1.51	1.53	1.41	1.67	1.68	1.62
<i>N</i> (group sample size)	160	128	32	894	700	194

SOURCE: Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute, 2010.

NOTES: Respondents indicated to what extent each item on a list of factors would impact their decision to leave: not at all (1), a slight extent (2), a moderate extent (3), a great extent (4), or a very great extent (5).

APPENDIX B: WRITE-IN RESPONSES TO MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR LEAVING

“68K points are too friggin high. Our job is awesome and we are very smart, but really, 798 is pretty ridiculous.” (female)

“Anything to do with family.” (male)

“Call into full-time ministry—Number [one] reason.” (female)

“Forgetting to take care of their [servicemembers].” (female)

“I want to be able to be with my family, not work so they can live life without me while I earn a paycheck that is small to begin with.” (male)

“I will have done 20 years active duty.” (male)

“Keep me in USAREC and you will [lose] a soldier.” (male)

“Officer leadership is very poor. We’ve [built] an Action Officer corps, without leadership skills. Meetings, slides, action trackers, and program management are robbing the officer corps of leadership skills.” (male)

“Overworked Understaffed” (male)

“THERE IS NEVER ANY TIME TO GO TO SCHOOL OR EVEN DO ONLINE SCHOOL BECAUSE WHEN IT’S TIME TO WORK IT’S WORK, THEN I NEED TO DO WORK AT HOME FROM WORK, SPEND TIME WITH THE FAMILY, THEN DO HOMEWORK FOR SCHOOL, IT’S PRETTY HARD TO TIME MANAGE THAT SCHEDULE. THEN THE DEPLOYMENT ISSUE ON TOP OF FAMILY TIME. WELL I GUESS I’M BEING GREEDY TO WANT TO BE WITH MY FAMILY MORE, BUT I RARELY HAVE TIME WITH THE FAMILY, I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED THE LACK OF TIME WITH THE FAMILY WORKING A CIVILIAN JOB. WHEN IT’S TIME TO GO HOME IT’S TIME TO GO HOME AND THAT’S IT. THERE ARE SOME GOOD THINGS THOUGH ABOUT THIS JOB, SUCH AS I CAN LEAVE WORK TO TAKE CARE OF AN EMERGENCY OR APPOINTMENT AND STILL GET PAID FOR IT BUT THAT’S ABOUT IT.” (male)

“The main issues that most sailors are facing today are things like High Year Tenure and PTS. Mind you that most of the Navy’s good sailors that can’t get promoted due to lack of advancement opportunities for their particular rate are forced to separate. Advancement should be fair across the board!! A lot of sailors with easy opportunities to advance are not deserving of those promotions and are not qualified to lead anyone into the future of the Navy. In fact they are still in need of much leadership due to their lack of.” (male)

“Tired of dealing with inept leadership and watching better officers and leaders being passed over to promote not as qualified minorities to meet quotas.” (male)

“Truthfully—this unit is unfair and totally ruined life in general for me, and i can’t wait to get the hell away from here.” (female)

“Unfortunately the organization is too big—information from above is often disorganized and unclear, representation and consideration from above (upper leadership) is nearly impossible for the individual.

The strain of too many local tasking (with questionable utility) make it so local leaders are often too stretched [too] thin to be able to know and appreciate individual talent/capability.” (male)

“Watching duds go through the ranks faster than some of my well deserving peers or myself” (male)

“You have family men who have been deployed every other year. When they pcs to a unit that is deploying they are seen as [an] undesirable soldier if they do not want to waive their year of stabilization in between deployments. There is no reason why the Army should have year long deployments. This is why the suicide rate is so high, and there is [an] issue with insubordination.” (male)

“clearance was revoked after completing my LOI and sticking to it.” (female)

“for every good chief in the navy [there] are 5 poor ones. unfortunately these chiefs all hold important task[s], for what better way to hide that you suck than to suck at a lot of things.” (male)

“I want to reclass and none of the jobs I would like are open.” (male)

“I’m a single dad. Lost my wife in a divorce after . . . two consecutive short tours.” (male)

“I was raised to always do what I feel is right. My family would be ashamed if they knew how things around here really work. I [won’t] disrespect my family by being [a part] of something that I know I am better than.” (male)

“Continued IA hits after already serving in combat zone!” (male)

“The way the command ran their company would be my first factor in deciding if I wanted to continue my career with the military.” (male)

“Civilian leadership of the military with no military experience being ineffective at leading the military.” (male)

“#1 Navy’s obsession with alcohol and how they think everyone has a drinking problem. Micromanagement” (male)

“Family/Personal time” (male)

“CMD Leadership” (male)

“I’m just not liking it it has too much drama going on.” (female)

“I am trying to find my opportunity for higher education and leadership as always, however sometimes I have to look for what is the best choice for me and for my family while I am [doing] my active duty. Thank you for asking.” (female)

“Current Unit has single-handedly destroyed my opinion of the military as a whole” (male)

“3rd discrimination due to profile” (male)

“Number 1 reason is branch assignment” (male)

“get out and buy a home where I want before interest rates sky rocket.” (male)

“Army Culture is set up that it teaches higher enlisted/commissioned personnel to keep vital information from the soldier, in order to coerce the mass through empty threats because of their lack of ignorance. When the soldier attempts to educate [or] actually educates him/her selves, they find themselves intimidated through a series of techniques that allows the leadership to threaten the soldier by making them feel isolated in the mass without singling them out.” (male)

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