



MLDC Research Areas

Definition of Diversity
Legal Implications
Outreach & Recruiting
Leadership & Training
Branching & Assignments
Promotion
Retention
Implementation & Accountability
Metrics
National Guard & Reserve

This issue paper aims to aid in the deliberations of the MLDC. It does not contain the recommendations of the MLDC.

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Demographic Profile of the Active-Duty Officer Corps

September 2008 Snapshot

Abstract

In this paper, we present a consistent demographic profile of the active-duty officer corps across the Services. We separate flag/general officers from officers in grades O-1 through O-6, and we display the data in charts and tables by gender and race/ethnicity categories. Data are reported as percentages and as raw counts to facilitate comparisons and illustrate differences in magnitude. Although the data presented here are in the form of 2008 snapshots, we also provide an appendix with yearly data starting in 2000.

During the September 2009 meeting of the MLDC, each of the Services presented a briefing with basic demographic statistics. However, because each Service gave slightly different information in a different format, it proved difficult to make comparisons across Services. Therefore, we have developed a series of issue papers (IPs) to present consistent gender and race/ethnicity profiles across all Services, focusing on four specific groups:

- active-duty officers
- active-duty enlisted
- active-duty warrant officers
- Reserve Component
- National Guard.

This IP looks at the active-duty officer corps.

Data

In the main text of this IP, we provide demographic snapshots from September

2008; the appendix contains yearly snapshots from 2000 through 2008. To ensure consistency, we use a common dataset from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) for all five Services.

To give a complete picture, we report both percentages and their underlying counts. Percentages allow the reader to make comparisons across the Services despite their differences in size. The counts show how much the Services vary in size. More importantly, the counts show which percentages are based on large numbers and which are based on small numbers—a factor with important implications for what to take away from the data.

Interpreting the Data: Care Is Required

This is primarily a descriptive paper, and two key features of the information presented limit the conclusions that can be drawn from it. First, small numbers of flag/general officers, especially in the smaller Services, mean that small differences in underlying counts can cause seemingly large differences in shares. This makes it difficult to determine whether differences in shares across Services are meaningful. For example, Figure 1 shows that women constitute 12.5 percent of flag officers in the Coast Guard and 6.9 percent of flag officers in the Navy. On its face, this difference of nearly 6 percentage points may seem large. However, if there were just two fewer female flag officers in the Coast Guard, the female share in that Service would decrease to 7.5 percent, nearly erasing the difference between the two Services.¹

Second, this paper includes no information about why differences across Services may exist. Thus, it would be inappropriate to interpret differences in the profiles presented here as evidence of the presence or lack of discrimination in any Service. Rather, differences in both percentages and counts reflect

the combined impact of institutional and structural differences across the Services, such as differences in

- the career-field mix and demographic distributions across career fields
- the application of the combat-exclusion laws
- accession profiles over time
- differences in average individual preferences to serve in one Service rather than another
- policies
- diversity climate.

Other IPs will address several of these topics.

Women Officers

Figure 1 compares the percentages of female officers in grades O-1 through O-6 with those of flag/general officers for all five Services. Table 1 shows the raw counts.

Points to Take Away from Figure 1

- Regarding O-1 through O-6 female shares,
 - With 15 to 18 percent women, the Air Force, the Army, the Coast Guard, and the Navy had similar percentages of female officers.
 - With 6 percent women, the Marine Corps stood out from the other Services.

- Regarding flag/general officer female shares,
 - A different picture emerges when looking at flag/general officers. For all Services, the female share of flag/general officers was lower than the female share of other officers. However, the percentages of female flag/general officers varied more across Services than for O-1 through O-6 officers (from 3.4 percent to 12.5 percent).
 - There were also Service-specific differences in the extent to which the gender profiles of flag/general officers mirrored those of O-1 through O-6 officers.² This can be seen by calculating, for each Service, the ratio of the female share of flag/general officers to the female share of other officers. For example, in the Air Force, the share of women in the O-1 through O-6 ranks was 18.4 percent, while the share in the flag/general ranks was only 9.2 percent, yielding a ratio of 0.50. The ratios for the other Services are as follows: Army = 0.26, Coast Guard = 0.73, Marine Corps = 0.59, and Navy = 0.45. We see that the Coast Guard and Marine Corps flag/general officers were most representative of other officers in their respective Services; the Army flag/general officers were least representative.

Points to Take Away from Table 1

- There was a large range in the total number of officers in the O-1 through O-6 ranks, from 72,610 in the Army to 6,508 in the Coast Guard. The total number of officers in the Coast Guard and Marine Corps was much smaller than in the other Services.

Figure 1. Percentage of Female Officers, by Service and Grade, September 2008

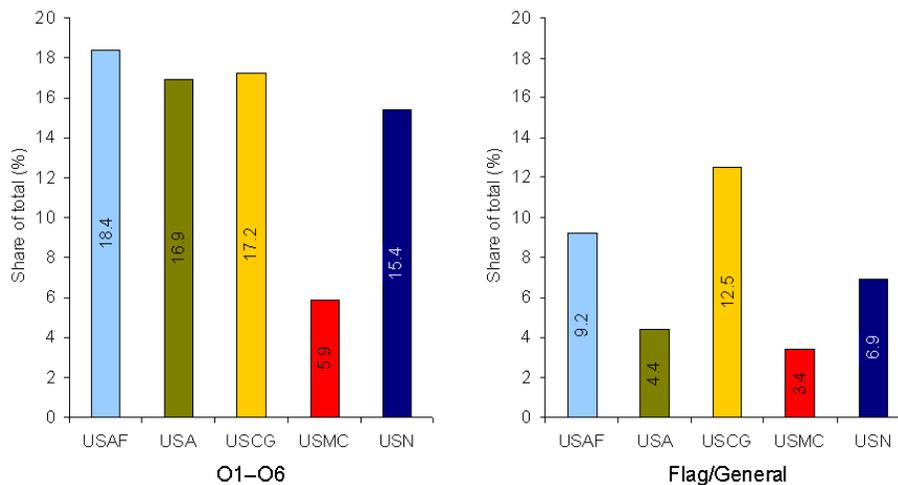


Table 1. Number of Officers, by Service, Gender, and Rank, September 2008

Service	O-1 Through O-6			Flag/General		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
USAF	64,512	52,670	11,842	293	266	27
USA	72,610	60,303	12,307	318	304	14
USCG	6,508	5,387	1,121	40	35	5
USMC	18,210	17,141	1,069	87	84	3
USN	49,503	41,864	7,639	232	216	16

- The total number of flag/general officers was very small in all the Services, especially the Coast Guard and the Marine Corps. Therefore, as noted above, any change in the numbers would have substantially changed the female share. For example, adding three women to the Marine Corps flag/general ranks, while holding the total number of flag/general officers constant, would have increased the female share from 3.4 percent to 6.9 percent.⁵

Minority Officers

In this section, we first combine all racial and ethnic minorities⁴ in order to contrast them with non-Hispanic whites and those whose race/ethnicity are unknown. Later, we examine each race/ethnicity category individually. We note that because our focus is specifically on race and ethnicity in this section, we do not further categorize by gender. That is, both women and men are included in the categories used in this section.

Figure 2 compares the percentages of minority officers in grades O-1 through O-6 with those of flag/general officers, for all five Services. Table 2 shows the raw counts for minority, non-Hispanic white, and unknown.

Points to Take Away from Figure 2

- Regarding “unknown,”
 - Officers who did not report a race/ethnicity are categorized as “unknown” and are not shown in this figure. The unknown shares for O-1 through O-6 were as follows: Air Force = 6.7 percent, Army = 4.6 percent, Coast Guard = 2.3 percent,

Marine Corps = 5.7 percent, and Navy = 2.3 percent.

- Flag/general officer shares of unknown race/ethnicity are tiny, ranging from zero for the Air Force, the Army, and the Marine Corps, to 0.4 percent for the Navy and 2.5 percent for the Coast Guard.
- Regarding O-1 through O-6 minority shares,
 - The Coast Guard and the Navy had similar minority shares (19.7 percent and 19.4 percent, respectively). The Army’s share of minority officers was the highest (22.6 percent).
- Regarding flag/general officer minority shares,
 - For flag/general officers, the Army, with a 10.4 percent minority share, was more in line with the Marine Corps, whose share was 9.2 percent. The Air Force and Navy had the lowest minority shares (5.5 percent and 6.5 percent, respectively).
 - For minority shares, the ratios of flag/general to other officers were as follows: Air Force = 0.39, Army = 0.46, Coast Guard = 0.38, Marine Corps = 0.58, and Navy = 0.33.

Point to Take Away from Table 2

- As with the female counts, the number of minority flag/general officers was very small, and, as can be seen in Table 4, the numbers become even smaller when further broken down into specific race and ethnicity groups.

Figure 2. Percentage of Minority Officers, by Service and Grade, September 2008

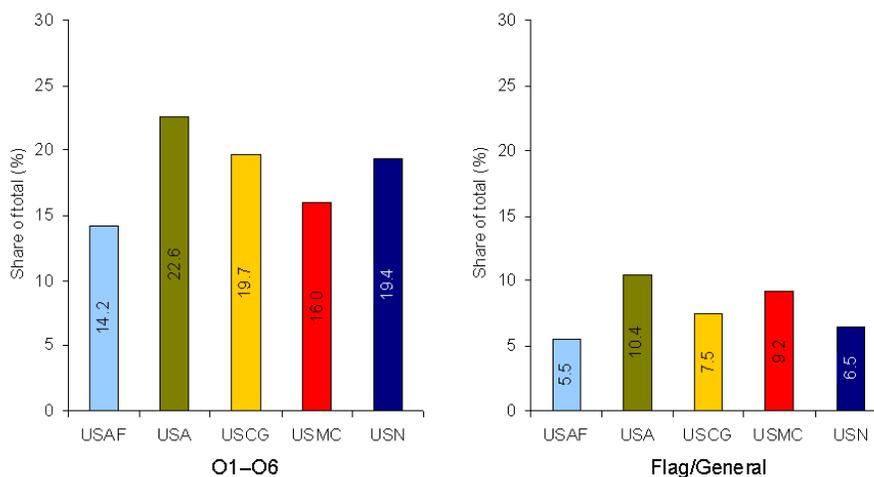


Table 2. Number of Officers, by Service, Race/Ethnicity, and Rank, September 2008

Service	O-1 Through O-6				Flag/General			
	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Minority	“Unknown”	Total	Non-Hispanic White	Minority	“Unknown”
USAF	64,512	51,033	9,142	4,337	293	277	16	0
USA	72,610	52,883	16,384	3,343	318	285	33	0
USCG	6,508	5,079	1,282	147	40	36	3	1
USMC	18,210	14,260	2,908	1,042	87	79	8	0
USN	49,503	38,782	9,595	1,126	232	216	15	1

Figure 3 shows detailed racial/ethnic shares of officers in ranks O-1 through O-6. Table 3 shows raw counts. The data are reported for the following race/ethnicity categories:

- non-Hispanic Asians and Pacific Islanders (API, NH)⁵
- non-Hispanic blacks (Black, NH)
- Hispanics
- non-Hispanic others (Other, NH), which includes American Indians, Alaska natives, and “more than one race”
- “unknown.”

Points to Take Away from Figure 3

- Non-Hispanic Asians and Pacific Islanders: There was low representation in the Coast Guard, both absolutely and when compared with other Services.
- Non-Hispanic blacks: Air Force, Coast Guard, Marine Corps, and Navy shares were between 5.1 percent and 7.7 percent; the Army stood out with a 12.4-percent share.
- Hispanics: With 3.7- to 6.5-percent representation, this was the most even group across the Services.

- Non-Hispanic others: With 8.6 percent, the Coast Guard had by far the largest share of “other” officers. The remaining Services have much lower percentages—between 0.5 percent and 2.0 percent.
- “Unknown”: The “unknown” percentages ranged between 2.3 percent and 6.7 percent.

Figure 4 shows detailed racial/ethnic shares of flag/general officers, and Table 4 shows raw counts. We reiterate that, as in the case of female shares of flag/general officers, the race/ethnicity categories should be interpreted with caution because the numbers are so small. This is especially true when looking at the percentages in Figure 4. Any change in raw counts could greatly affect the percentages.

Points to Take Away from Figure 4

- Only black and Hispanic officers had broken through to flag/general rank in any numbers.
 - However, even for black and Hispanic groups, there was variation across the Services:
 - Ratios of black flag/general officers to O-1 through O-6 were as follows: Air Force = 0.64, Army = 0.58, Coast Guard = 0.57, Marine Corps = 1.13, and Navy = 0.62. The Marine Corps stood out when comparing the officer groups.

Figure 3. Percentage of Minority and “Unknown” Race/Ethnicity Shares of Officers in Ranks O-1 Through O-6, September 2008

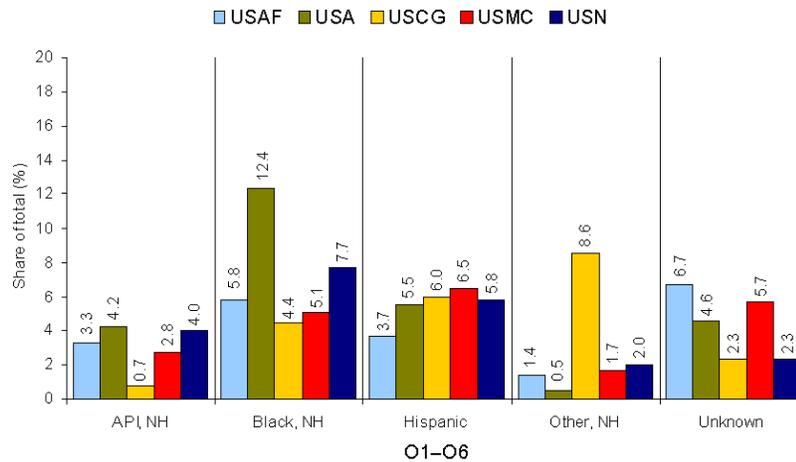


Table 3. Number of Officers in Ranks O-1 through O-6, by Service and Race/Ethnicity, September 2008

Service	API Non-Hispanic	Black Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Other Non-Hispanic	“Unknown”
USAF	2,099	3,766	2,379	914	4,337
USA	3,045	9,046	3,989	337	3,343
USCG	47	285	394	559	148
USMC	501	931	1,182	302	1,042
USN	1,966	3,818	2,860	966	1,127

- Ratios of Hispanic flag/general officers to O-1 through O-6 officers were as follows: Air Force = 0.37, Army = 0.34, Coast Guard = 0.83, Marine Corps = 0.53, and Navy = 0.15. Both the Coast Guard, with the highest ratio, and the Navy, with the lowest, stood out when comparing the number of Hispanic officers in the O-1 through O-6 ranks with the flag/general rank.

Point to Take Away from Table 4

- As mentioned above, the total number of flag/general officers was very small, and, when these numbers are broken out by race/ethnicity category, they become even smaller. Thus, it is important to interpret these numbers with caution. This is especially true in the case of the Coast Guard, whose flag officers included only three minorities and one “unknown” in September 2008, and the Marine Corps, which had only eight minority generals. The Air Force, Army, and Navy minority flag/general officers numbered 16, 33, and 15, respectively. For comparison purposes, see Table 2, which lists the total numbers of flag/general officers.

Summary

In this IP, we present consistent demographic profiles of the active-duty officer corps in all five Services. We look at both gender and race/ethnicity categories, and we present both percentages and raw counts to facilitate comparisons and show differences in magnitude. The snapshot data used in this paper are from September 2008 and come from DMDC. In an appendix, we display data from 2000 through 2008 to capture changes over time.

In this paper, we do not discuss factors that may explain any differences or similarities perceived in the numbers. We urge caution in any interpretation not only because the factors are not explored but because, in several cases, the sample sizes are very small.

Figure 4. Percentage of Minority and “Unknown” Race/Ethnicity Shares of Flag/General Officers, September 2008

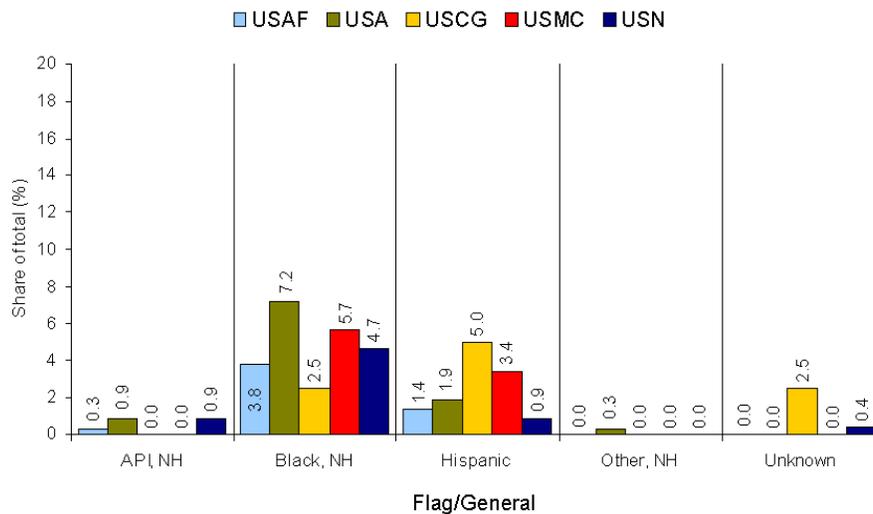


Table 4. Number of Flag/General Officers, by Service and Race/Ethnicity, September 2008

Service	Non-Hispanic API	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic	Non-Hispanic Other	“Unknown”
USAF	1	11	4	0	0
USA	3	23	6	1	0
USCG	0	1	2	0	1
USMC	0	5	3	0	0
USN	2	11	2	0	1

Notes

¹A standard indicator of whether differences in shares are large or small is whether they are statistically significant, which measures the likelihood that the differences could have occurred by chance alone. Whether a difference is statistically significant depends greatly on sample size: Very small differences can be statistically significant if the sample size is large enough; large differences can be statistically insignificant if the sample size is small enough. In this IP, we do not present tests of statistical significance because the results are sample-size driven and give little insight into the meaning of the differences across the Services.

²Differences in the profile of senior officers relative to other officers can occur for many reasons. In a closed personnel system, changes in the demographic makeup of accessions over time will cause demographic-diversity disconnects between senior and junior cohorts. Then, differences in promotion and continuation rates can either offset or exacerbate disconnects that arise due to changes in the accession mix. Additional information is required to understand what causes changes in the accession mix and differences in continuation and promotion rates. Such information includes data on changes in the external environment and knowledge of policies and practices that affect accessions, continuation, and promotion.

³It is important to keep this in mind when looking at the series of snapshots presented in the appendix: Small changes in numbers from year to year can produce apparently large changes in shares.

⁴These include non-Hispanic Asian Pacific Islander (API, NH), non-Hispanic black (black, NH), Hispanic, and non-Hispanic other (American Indians, Alaska natives, and “more than one race”).

⁵Because of the nature of our data, we deviate slightly from the MLDC race/ethnicity categories presented in IP #1. In our data, Pacific Islanders are grouped with “Asian” instead of under “Non-Hispanic others.”