

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-16-55](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

Since the end of the Second World War, the role of women in the military has been evolving. Changes to laws and DOD policies have either eliminated or clarified restrictions on women serving in the military. A 2011 Military Leadership Diversity Commission reported that women comprise more than 50 percent of the recruiting pool for the officer corps.

Public Law 113-291 included a provision for GAO to review the Armed Forces' outreach and recruitment efforts directed at women's representation in the officer corps, among other things. GAO evaluated the extent to which (1) accessions of women into the officer corps have increased, and DOD and the Coast Guard have determined resources and funding to increase the accessions of women into the officer corps and (2) DOD and the Coast Guard have initiatives and an oversight framework to increase the recruitment and accessions of female officers.

GAO analyzed fiscal years 2010-14 female officer accessions data, reviewed budget reports, distributed a questionnaire to offices responsible for the recruitment and accessions of female officers, and interviewed agency officials about their efforts.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that DOD and the Coast Guard develop an oversight framework and conduct evaluations for initiatives. DOD concurred with the first recommendation and did not state whether it concurred with the second recommendation. The Department of Homeland Security concurred with both of the recommendations.

View [GAO-16-55](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

November 2015

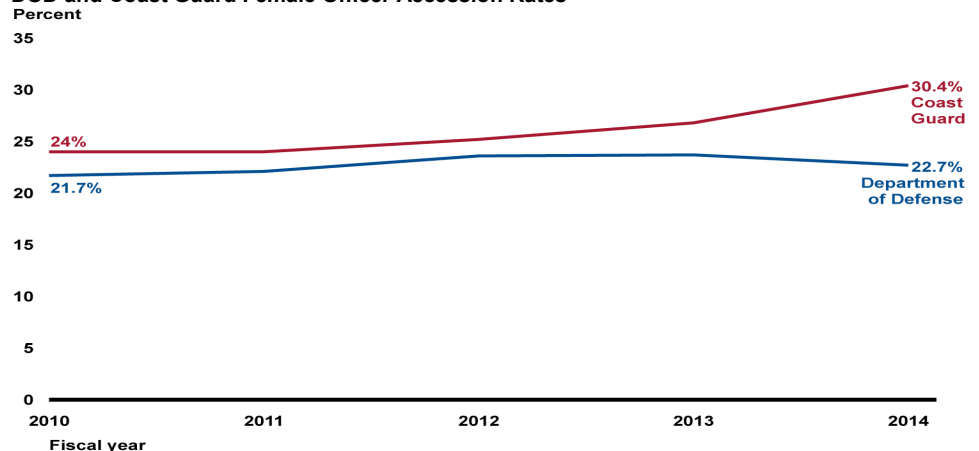
MILITARY PERSONNEL

Oversight Framework and Evaluations Needed for DOD and the Coast Guard to Help Increase the Number of Female Officer Applicants

What GAO Found

Department of Defense (DOD) and Coast Guard fiscal year 2010-14 data show an overall slight increase in female officer accessions rates (e.g. the number of female officer accessions during a period of time, expressed as a percentage of total accessions) for all of the Armed Forces, with the Coast Guard having the highest percentage increase. Female officer accession rates for the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force fluctuated from fiscal year 2010 through fiscal year 2014. The Marine Corps had slight increases from 7.6 percent to 11.8 percent.

DOD and Coast Guard Female Officer Accession Rates



Source: GAO analysis of Defense Manpower Data Center data. | GAO-16-55

DOD and the Coast Guard have not determined the resources and funding to increase accessions of women. DOD has requested \$1.36 billion in general for recruiting and advertising in its fiscal year 2016 operation and maintenance budget request. However, DOD and the Coast Guard have not identified resources for all initiatives directed at the recruitment and accessions of female officers.

In response to GAO's questionnaire, DOD and the Coast Guard reported 10 initiatives specifically designed to increase the recruitment and accessions of female officers. For example, Coast Guard officials reported that U.S. Coast Guard Academy admissions officers visit all-female high schools to promote the opportunities available for women at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy. However, DOD and the Coast Guard do not have an oversight framework for recruitment initiatives, to include program goals, performance measures, and resource allocation linked to program goals. One of the five Armed Forces has a goal related to the recruitment of women into the officer corps; however, the others do not. DOD and the Coast Guard also have not conducted evaluations of all 10 initiatives. Without an oversight framework and evaluations of initiatives, which can demonstrate that initiatives are achieving their intended purpose, DOD and the Coast Guard will be limited in identifying which initiatives are the most effective at increasing the recruitment and accessions of women, and in directing limited resources to the most effective initiatives.