



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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July 22, 2022

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “Enhancing Personnel Resources to Support a Stronger, More Resilient Coast Guard”

PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation will hold a hearing on Wednesday, July 27, 2022, at 10:00 a.m. EDT in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building and via Zoom to examine the current state of the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG or Coast Guard) workforce and highlight the investments and resources needed to support the servicemembers and civilian personnel executing the Coast Guard’s diverse array of missions. The Subcommittee will hear testimony from the U.S. Coast Guard.

BACKGROUND

The Coast Guard operates as the nation’s premier maritime law enforcement agency, charged with primary responsibility to enforce or assist in the enforcement of all applicable federal laws in, under, and over the high seas and waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States to ensure safety of life and property at sea; protect the marine environment; carry out icebreaking activities; and ensure the safety and security of vessels, ports, waterways, and related facilities.¹ As one of the six Armed Forces, the Coast Guard also maintains defense readiness and may be called upon to operate as a specialized service in the Navy upon the declaration of war or at the direction of the president.²

¹ 14 U.S.C § 102.

² 14 U.S.C § 103.

In fiscal year 2021, the Coast Guard responded to over 16,400 search and rescue cases, saving 4,747 lives.³ Additionally, the Coast Guard conducted over 7,656 boardings of fishing vessels, issued 229,274 Certificates of Documentation to commercial and recreational vessels, maintained over 46,529 aids to navigation, investigated 11,062 pollution incident reports, performed 4,555 hours of icebreaking, and detained 635 suspected smugglers carrying over 380,000 pounds of cocaine.⁴

As the second smallest branch in the military, the Coast Guard achieved these mission objectives on a modest budget with just about 40,456 active-duty military members, 8,034 reservists, and 9,012 civilian employees.⁵ For fiscal year 2022, the Coast Guard received an overall appropriation of \$13.2 billion, of which \$9.16 billion was dedicated to Operations and Support, a portion of which covers military pay and allowances for its servicemembers.⁶

In 2004, the Coast Guard began its largest recapitalization effort since World War II, investing billions of dollars in updating its legacy assets to enhance its capability to respond to an unprecedented demand for Coast Guard services.⁷ By 2038, the Coast Guard will have invested well over \$26.8 billion in its acquisition program.⁸ Alongside these extraordinary investments in Coast Guard assets, it's imperative that the concerns and needs of its servicemembers are equally addressed and resources are targeted toward enhancing their quality of life.

Housing

Housing poses a unique challenge for members of the Coast Guard stationed in high-cost areas. Due to the nature of Coast Guard missions, Coast Guard installations are based near desirable coastal cities, which have higher than average living costs as illustrated in *Figure 1*.⁹ To offset the cost of housing, the Coast Guard provides a basic allowance for housing (BAH) to all active-duty servicemembers stationed in the United States. It helps cover a majority of monthly rent and utility costs for servicemembers.¹⁰ The amount of BAH a servicemember is entitled to depends on that member's pay grade, dependency status, and the geographic location the member is assigned to.¹¹ The Secretary of the Department of Defense (DOD) sets the BAH rates for all uniformed services, including the Coast Guard, for the various military housing areas in the United States.¹² The rates are based on "the costs of adequate housing for civilians with comparable income levels in the same area" and are designed to cover approximately 95 percent of a member's housing costs.¹³

³ U.S. Coast Guard. *Posture Statement: 2023 Budget Overview* available at <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2023/FY%202023%20Posture%20Statement.pdf?ver=nSIvAr6imO5IsOC3m0PMsg%3D%3D×tamp=1648484300591>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.* at 8.

⁶ Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law 117-103), available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2471>.

⁷ Congressional Research Service. *Coast Guard Cutter Procurement: Background and Issues for Congress*. <https://www.crs.gov/reports/pdf/R42567> Updated April 13, 2022.

⁸ U.S. Coast Guard FY2022-2026 *Capital Investment Plan, Fiscal Year 2021 Report to Congress*, December 9, 2021.

⁹ Trulia, "Stationed in the Nation: Best Rental Markets for U.S. Military and Their Families," Trulia.com May 11, 2016, <https://www.trulia.com/research/military-rentals/>.

¹⁰ GAO, "Military Housing: Actions Needed to Improve the Process for Setting Allowances for Servicemembers and Calculating Payments for Privatized Housing Projects," p. 17 GAO-21-137. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-137.pdf> January 2021.

¹¹ 37 U.S.C. § 403.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*

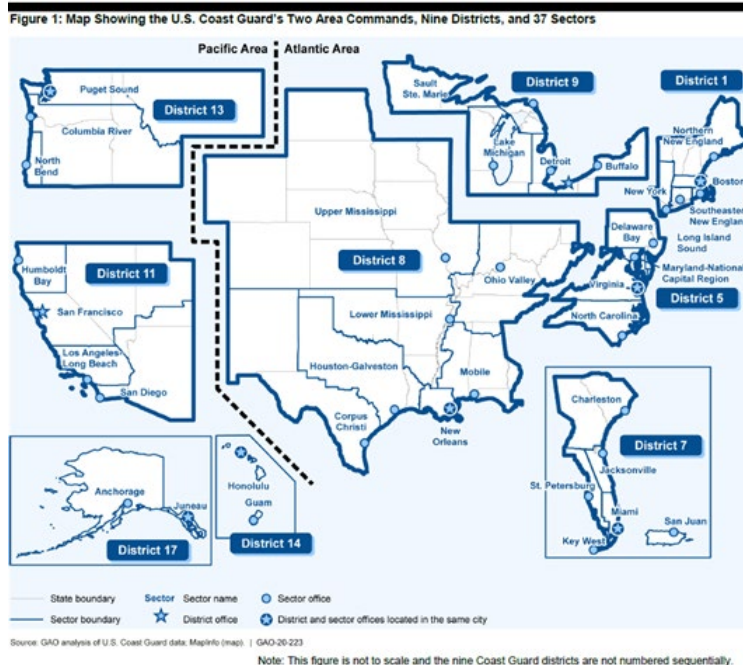


Figure 1- Location of Coast Guard's nine Districts and 37 Sectors (GAO-20-223)

BAH is calculated by a concerted effort of military representatives and contractors who gather data on rental rates of various housing types (e.g. one-bedroom apartment, two-bedroom townhouse, four-bedroom single-family home) in the private sector housing market one year in advance of each fiscal year for each of the 301 military housing areas in the U.S.¹⁴ The Military Compensation Policy directorate within the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Military Personnel Policy reviews the data and makes adjustments where appropriate to calculate BAH rates for each of the 27 pay grades by dependency status.¹⁵ The directorate then briefs each of the services on the rates, and the services approve the final rates after review.¹⁶ During the process, each service is afforded the opportunity to provide ancillary information to be used in the BAH calculus, such as rental housing referral lists, apartment complex lists, and real estate contacts.¹⁷

During its 2021 review of DOD's process for setting housing allowances, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) identified a few discrepancies in DOD's methodology for determining BAH rates. It found that for certain locations DOD did not collect enough data to adequately meet its sample size targets and it did not always rely on current-year rental housing data.¹⁸ Accordingly, there are concerns that these shortcomings could result in an insufficient housing allowance provided to members of the Coast Guard. For instance, an E-5 rated servicemember with dependents stationed at USCG Station Golden Gate in Sausalito, California receives a housing

¹⁴ GAO, "Military Housing: Actions Needed to Improve the Process for Setting Allowances for Servicemembers and Calculating Payments for Privatized Housing Projects," p. 18 GAO-21-137. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-137.pdf> January 2021.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 17.

¹⁶ *Id.* at 18.

¹⁷ U.S. Coast Guard. *Coast Guard Housing Manual*. p. 2-1 Available at https://media.defense.gov/2017/Mar/29/2001723590/-1/-1/0/CIM_11101_13G.PDF.

¹⁸ GAO, "Military Housing: Actions Needed to Improve the Process for Setting Allowances for Servicemembers and Calculating Payments for Privatized Housing Projects," p. 12 GAO-21-137. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-21-137.pdf> January 2021.

allowance of \$3,126 per month,¹⁹ but a two-bedroom apartment in this vicinity has an average monthly rental rate of \$4,500, or \$1,374 more than the housing allowance, and this does not include utilities which BAH is intended to cover.²⁰ In contrast, the nearest DOD installation to USCG Station Golden Gate is Travis Air Force Base (Travis AFB) in Fairfield, CA, where an E-5 with dependents is entitled to \$2,811 per month for BAH.²¹ The housing allowance provides that airman an excess of \$421 over the average rental rate of \$2,390 for a two-bedroom apartment in this area.²²

Coast Guard policy states that the housing program strives to ensure access to adequate housing that is within two hours or less round-trip travel distance of a member's permanent duty station during peak commute times.²³ However, there are concerns that in order to obtain housing within the BAH allotment, junior members must endure longer commutes. For example, the drive from Fairfield, CA, to Sausalito, CA, is 90 minutes.

Service members are provided alternative housing options so that they do not have to obtain private sector housing, such as military housing or leased housing, but housing on base is awarded based on rank and dependency status, driving more junior members to join a lengthy waiting list and endure housing expenses above the BAH allotment until a home becomes available.²⁴ Moreover, many Coast Guard housing units are deteriorating and in dire need of recapitalization. According to GAO, the Coast Guard has 2,901 housing assets, 28 percent of which are past their service life and received a B- rating from the American Society of Civil Engineers.²⁵

Healthcare

In the area of healthcare, the Coast Guard faces several challenges to meet the needs of its servicemembers. The Coast Guard has 43 clinics, 65 shore-based sickbays, and 57 vessel-based sickbays which it staffs with enlisted members (health service technicians) and officers (physician assistants), as well as contractors, and physicians and dentists serving in the U.S. Public Health Service.²⁶ In a recent study, GAO discovered that Coast Guard's current staffing approach is inadequate, as it fails to account for surge deployments of medical staff for disaster missions, which quadrupled from 4,111 days in 2018 to more than 16,000 days in 2021.²⁷

When healthcare staff are deployed to support surge operations, this exacerbates already strained staffing levels at Coast Guard clinics and sickbays. Clinics are forced to redistribute

¹⁹ Defense Travel Management Office. *BAH Calculator*. <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bahCalc.cfm> Accessed June 28, 2022.

²⁰ Rent.com *Rental market trends in Sausalito, CA*. <https://www.rent.com/california/sausalito-apartments/rent-trends> Accessed July 4, 2022.

²¹ Defense Travel Management Office. *BAH Calculator*. <https://www.defensetravel.dod.mil/site/bahCalc.cfm> Accessed June 28, 2022.

²² Rent.com *Rental market trends in Fairfield, CA*. <https://www.rent.com/california/fairfield-apartments/rent-trends> Accessed July 4, 2022.

²³ U.S. Coast Guard. *Coast Guard Housing Manual*. p. 4-2 Available at https://media.defense.gov/2017/Mar/29/2001723590/-1/-1/0/CIM_11101_13G.PDF.

²⁴ *Id.* at 7-3.

²⁵ GAO, "Coast Guard Actions Needed to Better Manage Shore Infrastructure," p. 3 GAO-22-105513. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105513.pdf> November 2021.

²⁶ GAO, "Coast Guard Health Care: Improvements Needed for Determining Staffing Needs and Monitoring Access to Care," p. 5 GAO-22-105152. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105152.pdf> February 2022.

²⁷ *Id.* at 13.

remaining staff to cover services, defer services, or reduce the number of patients they treat.²⁸ In a report on Coast Guard healthcare released February 2022, GAO determined that the Coast Guard lacked the necessary health care staffing standards relied upon by other health care organizations to determine staffing levels and staffing types needed to provide adequate medical care to servicemembers.²⁹ GAO assessed that the Coast Guard health services program's overall vacancy rate is seven percent as of July 2021.³⁰ The paper health record system used by the Coast Guard handicaps its ability to track the necessary information that would inform health care staffing standards and needs.³¹ The Coast Guard is now transitioning to Military Health System (MHS) Genesis, an electronic health care record system used by the DOD, and aims to complete the initial rollout of the system by September 2022.³² The Coast Guard hopes that the new system will enable it to determine appropriate medical staffing levels.³³

Equally concerning is the Coast Guard's inability to assess whether it is meeting its access-to-care standards as its current system wholly relies on manual estimates of wait times for available appointments.³⁴ Coast Guard medical standards dictate that members needing specialty medical care, such as behavioral health care, should receive an appointment for such care within 28 days.³⁵ However, the Coast Guard cannot accurately determine whether it meets this medical standard because its current process for collecting access-to-care data does not reliably track appointment timelines and wait times.³⁶

This is particularly concerning given the Coast Guard's role as a first responder and the impact that role has on mental health. The most common mental health conditions diagnosed in military servicemembers are posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression.³⁷ As mentioned previously, in 2021 the Coast Guard responded to over 16,020 search and rescue cases.³⁸ The search and rescue mission in particular levies a heavy burden on the mental wellness of Coast Guard personnel who not only save lives, but also face traumatic experiences of recovering lifeless bodies or witnessing firsthand the death of an attempted rescue. The Coast Guard has just 20 mental health providers servicing over 40,000 active duty members.³⁹ In 2021, RAND Corporation identified psychological distress (depression and PTSD) as having a "strong association" with military separation among all the services; servicemembers with depression or PTSD are 22.5 percent and 23.1 percent more likely to separate from service, respectively, than servicemembers who do not

²⁸ *Id.* at 14.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.* at 12.

³¹ *Id.* at 15.

³² *Id.*

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ *Id.* at 16.

³⁵ U.S. Coast Guard, Coast Guard Medical Manual, COMDTINST M6000.1F.

³⁶ GAO, "Coast Guard Health Care: Improvements Needed for Determining Staffing Needs and Monitoring Access to Care," p. 16 GAO-22-105152. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105152.pdf> February 2022.

³⁷ RAND corporation, "*Military Mental Health Care*," August 14, 2017 Available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/infographics/IG131.html>.

³⁸ U.S. Coast Guard. Posture Statement: 2023 Budget Overview available at <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2023/FY%202023%20Posture%20Statement.pdf?ver=nSIvAr6imO5IsOC3m0PMsg%3D%3D×tamp=1648484300591>.

³⁹ GAO, "Coast Guard Health Care: Improvements Needed for Determining Staffing Needs and Monitoring Access to Care," p. 10 GAO-22-105152. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105152.pdf> February 2022.

report having depression or PTSD.⁴⁰ RAND opined that improved care for employees experiencing psychological distress could increase retention in the military.⁴¹

Recruiting and Retention

Although the Coast Guard has the highest retention rate of all the services, it struggles with recruiting and retaining members in a tight job market as all military services are struggling to reach fiscal year 2022 recruiting numbers.⁴² In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic created significant obstacles to traditional recruiting mechanisms that all services had to navigate.⁴³ Each military branch restructured its recruiting policies and procedures to acclimate to a virtual setting.⁴⁴ DOD military branches actually achieved end-strength goals in fiscal year 2020 due to creative retention policy adjustments and recruiting strategies.⁴⁵ For instance, the Army offered short-term extension contracts to its enlisted soldiers ranging from three to 23 months to retain its members who would have likely separated during the pandemic.⁴⁶ End-strength is the number of individuals a service aims to have in its ranks at the end of the fiscal year and is approved by Congress.⁴⁷ The Coast Guard is authorized an active-duty end-of-year strength of 44,500 for fiscal year 2021,⁴⁸ but currently has a deficit of over 4,000 active-duty personnel.⁴⁹ In April 2018, the Coast Guard reported to Congress that it did not have enough personnel to meet its mission needs.⁵⁰

A shortage of personnel not only leaves gaps in mission capability but also strains the physical and mental capacities of the workforce. When members go on surge deployments for a humanitarian mission, take parental leave, or go on extended medical leave, the workers left behind must absorb the duties of those on temporary leave.⁵¹ If that unit is already understaffed, this only exacerbates the stretched capacities of the workforce. In the major cutter community, the effects are especially onerous as RAND highlighted in its 2019 report, “Balancing Quality of Life with Mission Requirements.”⁵² A major cutter is a large ocean-going vessel that spends significant amounts of time away from home port and includes the Coast Guard’s high-endurance cutters (378 feet in length), medium-endurance cutters (270 feet or 210 feet in length), the polar ice breakers, and the

⁴⁰ RAND corporation, “Symptoms of Depression and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder as Predictors of Separation from the U.S. Military,” p. 4 October 26, 2021 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1520-1.html.

⁴¹ *Id.* at 5.

⁴² Boigon, Molly and Kube, Courtney, “Every branch of the military is struggling to make its 2022 recruiting goals, officials say,” nbcnews.com, June 27, 2022, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/military/every-branch-us-military-struggling-meet-2022-recruiting-goals-officia-rcna35078>.

⁴³ RAND, “What Happened to Military Recruiting and Retention of Enlisted Personnel in 2020 During the COVID-19 Pandemic?” January 18 2022 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA1092-1.html.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 4.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ *Id.* at 6.

⁴⁷ *Id.* at 4.

⁴⁸ 14 U.S.C § 4904.

⁴⁹ U.S. Coast Guard. Posture Statement: 2023 Budget Overview available at <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/documents/budget/2023/FY%202023%20Posture%20Statement.pdf?ver=nSivAr6imO5IsOC3m0PMsg%3D%3D×tamp=1648484300591>.

⁵⁰ GAO, “Actions Needed to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Organizational Changes and Determine Workforce Needs,” p. 1 GAO-20-223. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-223.pdf> February 2020.

⁵¹ RAND, “Balancing Quality of Life with Mission Requirements,” July 29, 2019 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2731.html.

⁵² *Id.*

282-foot medium-endurance cutter known as the *Alex Haley*.⁵³ These cutters are normally deployed out to sea for 60 to 90 days at a time under physically strenuous conditions.⁵⁴ Every summer, these cutters lose approximately one-third to one-half of its crew during transfer season, and when the new crew reports to the vessel they have to get qualified, meaning they have to meet a set of professional qualification standards before they can be considered certified to perform their job.⁵⁵ When there's a shortage of personnel or a shortage of qualified crew members aboard the cutter, the remaining workforce is required to stand watch more frequently and take on additional duties beyond their primary jobs. This can lead to severe sleep deprivation and overexertion, which in turn can adversely impact the Coast Guard's retention numbers.⁵⁶ More manning for major cutters and other specialties and units is necessary to relieve members of the hefty workload, but the process the Coast Guard uses to assess manning needs is also understaffed, making it nearly impossible for the Coast Guard to develop a clear understanding of its manning requirements.⁵⁷ As of February 2020, the Coast Guard had completed manpower requirements determinations for just two percent of its workforce.⁵⁸

All the services, including the Coast Guard, offer enlistment bonuses of up to \$50,000 for qualified active-duty recruits; the amounts and disbursement timeframes depend on the type of rating or specialty and service commitment length.⁵⁹ However, it's clear that DOD is better resourced to offer these sizable incentives. In fiscal year 2022, DOD received \$4.7 billion allocated for Special and Incentive (S&I) pays, or bonuses, to aid with recruiting and retention.⁶⁰ Earlier this year, the Navy offered a \$25,000 signing bonus to any recruit, regardless of rating, who enlisted active duty in the Navy between April and June 2022; the highest offer of all the services.⁶¹ The Army provides a selective reenlistment bonus (SRB) in the form of a lump sum cash payment to soldiers who reenlist for approximately 120 military occupational specialties (MOS) (out of over 150 MOSs).⁶² SRB has been proven to increase the likelihood of reenlistment.⁶³ Moreover, the Army alone boasts a robust recruiting program comprised of approximately 10,900 soldiers and civilians stationed at more than 1,400 recruiting offices not just in the United States, but overseas as well.⁶⁴ Comparatively, just 58 offices divided into four regions across America make up the Coast Guard's recruiting program as depicted in *Figure 2*. Due to its budget constraints, the Coast Guard judiciously

⁵³ RAND, "Balancing Quality of Life with Mission Requirements," p. 1 July 29, 2019 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2731.html.

⁵⁴ *Id.*

⁵⁵ *Id.* at 60.

⁵⁶ *Id.* at 62.

⁵⁷ GAO, "Actions Needed to Evaluate the Effectiveness of Organizational Changes and Determine Workforce Needs," p. 32 GAO-20-223. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-20-223.pdf> February 2020.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 24.

⁵⁹ Toropin, Konstantin, "Navy offers \$25,000 to All Recruits to Ship Out Quickly," Military.com, April 8, 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/04/08/navy-offers-25000-all-recruits-ship-out-quickly.html>.

⁶⁰ Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year 2023 Available at https://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/FY2023/FY2023_m1.pdf.

⁶¹ Toropin, Konstantin, "Navy offers \$25,000 to All Recruits to Ship Out Quickly," Military.com, April 8, 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/04/08/navy-offers-25000-all-recruits-ship-out-quickly.html>.

⁶² U.S. Army, *MILPER Message Number: 22-237 Selective Retention Bonus (SRB)*, June 23, 2022 Available at https://armyreup.s3.amazonaws.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/23222247/SRB_22_237_20220623.pdf.

⁶³ RAND, "Increasing Efficiency and Incentives for Performance in the Army's Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) Program" p. v October 5, 2021 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA803-1.html.

⁶⁴ U.S. Army Recruiting Command. *Recruiting*.

<https://recruiting.army.mil/aboutUSAREC/#:~:text=There%20are%20approximately%2010%2C900%20Soldier,stations%20across%20America%20and%20overseas> Accessed June 30, 2022.

offers SRB bonuses to only three of its 24 ratings identified as in critical need.⁶⁵ To further aid its recruiting efforts, the Coast Guard is currently offering \$500 cash bonuses for the first time in its history to personnel, both military and civilian, who help recruit qualified members to the Service.⁶⁶

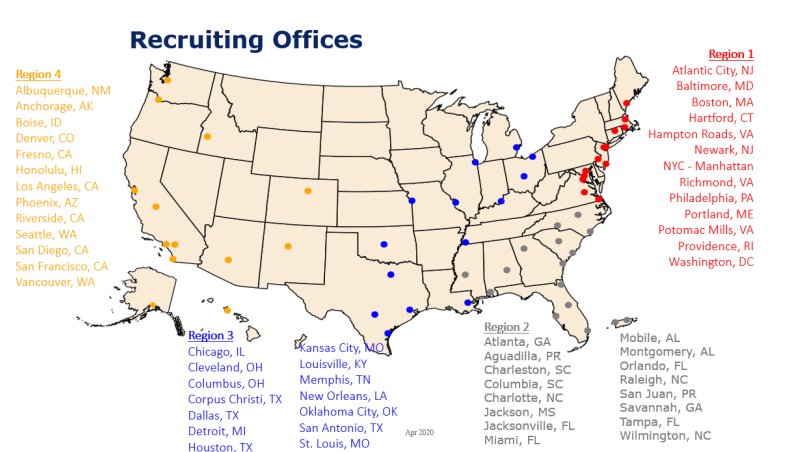


Figure 2. Coast Guard Recruiting Offices (provided by the U.S Coast Guard)

Diversity and Inclusion

In spite of the Coast Guard's efforts to improve representation of women and minorities within its workforce, the Service still struggles to reflect the demographics of the nation.⁶⁷ This underrepresentation becomes more salient as members climb the upper echelons of military ranks.⁶⁸ For instance, a RAND report published in 2021 examined the demographics of the officer ranks in the Coast Guard and found that representation of racial and ethnic minority groups is 32 percent at the O-2 level, but drops to 11 percent at the flag officer level.⁶⁹ For enlisted personnel, 35 percent of E-5s are of racial or ethnic minority groups, but only 18 percent are E-9s (master chief petty officer).⁷⁰

⁶⁵ U.S. Coast Guard, *ACN 104/21 – OCT 2021 FY22 Military Workforce Planning Team Results – Enlisted Monetary Interventions*, Oct 19, 2021 Available at <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDHSCG/bulletins/2f8314d>.

⁶⁶ U.S. Coast Guard, *Here's your chance to grow the Coast Guard's workforce*, May 11, 2022 Available at <https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/3028003/heres-your-chance-to-grow-the-coast-guards-workforce/#:~:text=The%20program%20called%20for%20all,%2C%20reserve%2C%20and%20civilian%20employees.>

⁶⁷ RAND corporation, *Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among U.S. Coast Guard Active-Duty members*, p. 1 August 11, 2021 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA362-2.html.

⁶⁸ *Id.*

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ *Id.*

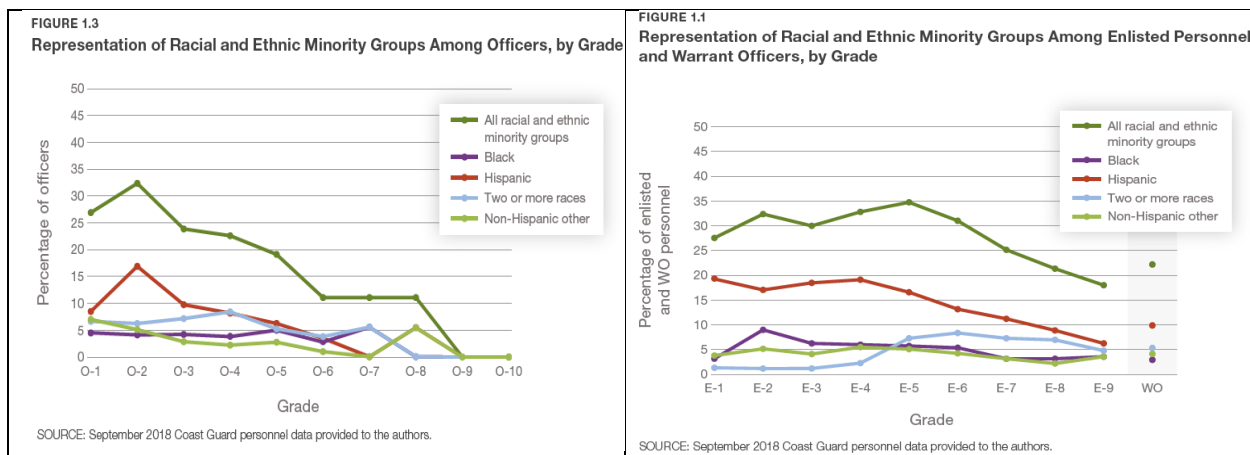


Figure 3. Coast Guard racial and ethnic demographics among officers and enlisted personnel.

https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA362-2.html

Female representation in the officer ranks is equally low—women comprise 33 percent of O-1s but just 11 percent of O-6s and 14 percent of flag officers.⁷¹ “This representation problem is not only critical but also potentially growing, given that half the Coast Guard’s future recruiting pool (Americans younger than 15) are members of racial or ethnic minority groups.”⁷² As the U.S. population is expected to be “minority white” by year 2045, the Coast Guard’s diversity problem will exist in perpetuity if it’s not able to adjust to the country’s changing demographics.⁷³

In 2019, RAND published a report on ways that the Coast Guard can improve gender diversity in its workforce. The report notes female retention in the Coast Guard is 12.6 percent lower than males for officers and 12.3 percent lower for enlisted members at the tenth year of service mark.⁷⁴ Female retention rates are highest in service or support ratings while operational ratings have the lowest retention rates for women.⁷⁵ Female attrition in the Coast Guard may be attributed to several factors, but none more consequential than the impact having children has on a woman’s career.⁷⁶ Pregnancy and maternity leave can cause women to submit “sparse or noncompetitive” performance evaluations compared to their peers making promotion acutely challenging because performance evaluations cannot indicate that a member was out due to pregnancy or parental leave.⁷⁷ Furthermore, pregnancy can affect the opportunities for women to attain the necessary qualifications and experiences for certain specialties and ratings. For example, once a pilot becomes pregnant, she is grounded and can no longer achieve needed flight hours or a female in an afloat billet can no longer go underway while pregnant, sacrificing the requisite sea time needed to rise in rank.⁷⁸ Not surprising, “the most common family status for active-duty women is

⁷¹ *Id.* at 2.

⁷² RAND corporation, “*Shaping Coast Guard Culture to Enhance the Future Workforce*,” November 1, 2021 Available at <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PEA872-1.html>.

⁷³ Frey, William, “The US will become ‘minority white’ in 2045, Census projects,” Brookings, March 14, 2018 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2018/03/14/the-us-will-become-minority-white-in-2045-census-projects/>.

⁷⁴ RAND, “*Improving Gender Diversity in the Coast Guard*,” p. 1 March 29, 2019 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2770.html.

⁷⁵ *Id.* at xviii.

⁷⁶ *Id.* at 49.

⁷⁷ *Id.* at 50.

⁷⁸ U.S. Coast Guard, *Military Assignments and Authorized Absences*, COMDTINST M1000.8A, June 2019.

to be unmarried without children.”⁷⁹ Conversely, male active-duty members have the polar opposite status.⁸⁰ In general, women in the afloat community face limited options for going underway due to berthing requirements.⁸¹ The conversion of the 210s (*Reliance*-class medium-endurance cutters) has made it difficult for women to serve on these vessels due to limited berthing spaces and Coast Guard requirements for female sleeping quarters to be separate “with privacy provided by rigid bulkheads.”⁸² Some specific ratings require sea time, but if women are unable to acquire the necessary time underway to advance, they remain in lower ranks. In the study, RAND also identified lack of childcare availability and costs as major concerns for women.⁸³

Child Care

Coast Guard families experience unique hardships when it comes to finding quality care for their children. Depending on their duties, military personnel may work duty shifts at odd hours, including overnight, and on weekends. Additionally, when changing duty stations, they may be challenged to find a child care provider, especially in remote or high-cost areas.⁸⁴ The Coast Guard has a total of nine Child Development Centers (CDC) with a capacity to serve up to 704 children.⁸⁵ As of March 2022, the Coast Guard had 361 children on its waitlists for enrollment in a CDC, most of whom were infants and toddlers.⁸⁶ By comparison, DOD has 761 CDCs with a capacity to serve approximately 104,000 children.⁸⁷ The Coast Guard also provides a Fee Assistance program called “Military Child Care in Your Neighborhood” to help personnel pay for care by community-based providers and has a Family Child Care program whereby individuals certified by the Coast Guard residing in Coast Guard-controlled housing provide child care in their homes.⁸⁸ The fee assistance program provides subsidies of up to \$900 per month for full-time care and \$450 per month for part-time care; in high-cost areas the subsidies are capped at \$1,200 for full-time care and \$600 for part-time care per month.⁸⁹ The Fee Assistance program provides care for 82 percent of the children enrolled in Coast Guard’s child care programs; it is the “most effective way” for the Coast Guard to provide affordable child care for its members.⁹⁰ Coast Guard personnel are also able to access DOD CDCs and vice versa through a memorandum of agreement formed in 2003.⁹¹

Families receiving care from community-based providers encounter space limitations, especially in the nine locations the Coast Guard has dubbed “child care deserts”: Alameda, California; Astoria, Oregon; Elizabeth City, North Carolina; Honolulu, Hawaii; Ketchikan, Alaska;

⁷⁹ RAND, “*Improving Gender Diversity in the Coast Guard*,” p. 61 March 29, 2019 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2770.html.

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ RAND corporation, “*Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among U.S. Coast Guard Active-Duty members*,” p. 32 August 11, 2021 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA362-2.html.

⁸² U.S. Coast Guard, *Military Assignments and Authorized Absences*, COMDTINST M1000.8A, June 2019.

⁸³ RAND, “*Improving Gender Diversity in the Coast Guard*,” March 29, 2019 Available at https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2770.html.

⁸⁴ GAO, “*Military Child Care: Coast Guard is Taking Steps to Increase Access for Families*,” GAO-22-105262. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-22-105262.pdf> June 2022.

⁸⁵ *Id.* at 9.

⁸⁶ *Id.* at 10.

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 9.

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 4.

⁸⁹ *Id.* at 5.

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 12.

⁹¹ *Id.* at 17.

Los Angeles, California; New London, Connecticut; Petaluma, California; and Valdez, Alaska.⁹² These are areas where only 33 percent or less of the total number of children from birth to age five were able to receive care in that community mostly due to lack of availability.⁹³ As for the Family Child Care program, the number of certified families qualified to provide care in their homes dropped from 19 in 2019 to five in 2022 due to the pandemic.⁹⁴ Normally, these are providers capable of providing care during non-traditional hours and are more heavily relied upon by personnel stationed in remote or geographically isolated areas.⁹⁵ The Coast Guard plans to use \$120 million authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to build three new CDCs at bases that do not have them—Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Alabama; Astoria, Oregon; and Base Elizabeth City, North Carolina—and renovate existing ones.⁹⁶

Conclusion

The newly appointed Commandant of the Coast Guard, Admiral Linda Fagan, indicates in the 2022 Commandant's Intent that the Coast Guard workforce is her highest priority and promises to deliver innovative tools, inclusive policies, and reliable technology to support Coast Guard personnel in their mission objectives.⁹⁷ In this era of “the Great Resignation,” it is critical that the Coast Guard adapts to changing workforce dynamics to make it an employer of choice.

⁹² *Id.* at 13.

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.* at 14.

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *Id.* at 16.

⁹⁷ U.S. Coast Guard, *Commandant's Intent 2022*, June 1, 2022 Available at <https://www.uscg.mil/Portals/0/seniorleadership/alwaysready/2022-Commandant-Intent-Hi%20Res.pdf>.

WITNESS LIST

Admiral Linda L. Fagan

Commandant

United States Coast Guard