

GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-23-105857](#), a report to congressional committees

Why GAO Did This Study

The Senior ROTC program is DOD's largest source of military officers. It produced more than 94,000 officers since academic year 2011 from ROTC units in every U.S. state and many U.S. territories. As such, the program can make significant contributions to DOD's efforts to cultivate diversity.

Senate Report 117-39, accompanying a bill for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2022, includes a provision for GAO to review the ROTC program's contributions to a diverse military officer corps. GAO, among other things, (1) describes ROTC-commissioned officer diversity trends for academic years 2011–2021, by race, ethnicity, and gender, and socioeconomic makeup; (2) describes whether ROTC unit racial, ethnic, and gender makeup aligned with school makeup; and (3) assesses the extent to which the military departments have evaluated and, as necessary, modified ROTC programs to better ensure they contribute to a diverse officer corps.

GAO analyzed academic years 2011–2021 race and ethnicity and gender data for ROTC units and schools and Census Bureau socioeconomic data.

What GAO Recommends

GAO makes four recommendations including that the Army develop quantifiable diversity goals, DOD establish a consistent process to identify a comparison group, the military departments collect and analyze quantifiable diversity data in program evaluations, and the military departments evaluate both the performance and resources of ROTC programs. DOD concurred with the recommendations.

View [GAO-23-105857](#). For more information, contact Brenda S. Farrell at (202) 512-3604 or farrellb@gao.gov.

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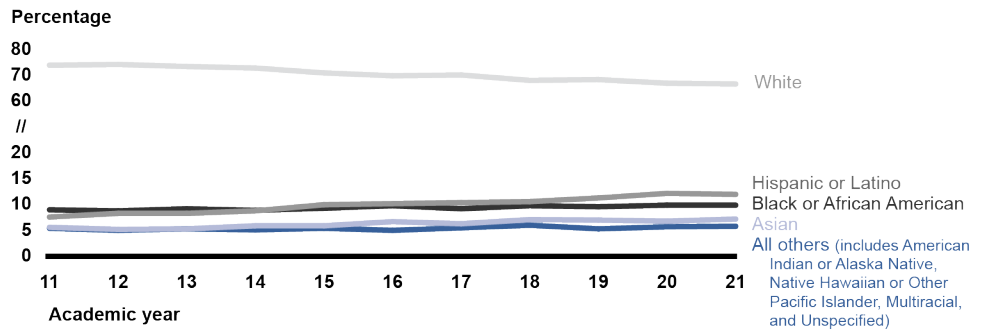
SENIOR RESERVE OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS

Actions Needed to Better Monitor Diversity Progress

What GAO Found

The population of Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)-commissioned officers became more diverse for race and ethnicity and gender in academic years 2011–2021. For example, during this period, the percentage of White officers decreased from 73.6 percent to 66.3 percent, while the percentages of Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and Asians increased. Also, ROTC-commissioned officers have increasingly come from economically advantaged areas—that is, from those with poverty and unemployment rates below the national average and household incomes above the national median.

ROTC-Commissioned Officer Trends for Race and Ethnicity, Academic Years 2011–2021



Source: GAO analysis of military department data. | GAO-23-105857

Generally, the racial and ethnic and gender makeup of ROTC units did not align with the student body of their host schools, most notably for gender. However, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) generally had a more racially and ethnically diverse population for ROTC units to draw from. The military departments had ROTC units at 69 percent of HBCUs and 19 percent of MSIs.

The military departments have not developed a comprehensive approach for evaluating ROTC program contributions to a diverse officer corps, limiting their ability to inform decisions regarding any appropriate program modifications.

- The Navy and Air Force developed applicant goals—based on the eligible population—to evaluate the diversity of ROTC applicants, but the Army has not.
- These applicant goals do not share a consistent comparison group with the Department of Defense's (DOD) stated diversity goal to reflect the U.S. population.
- Each military department has conducted the required performance evaluations of ROTC units, but has not fully evaluated the extent to which the units contribute to a diverse officer corps.
- The military departments have not submitted the required resource documents to ensure resources are allocated effectively within the ROTC program or to determine whether—based on resources and performance—modifications to the program are advisable.