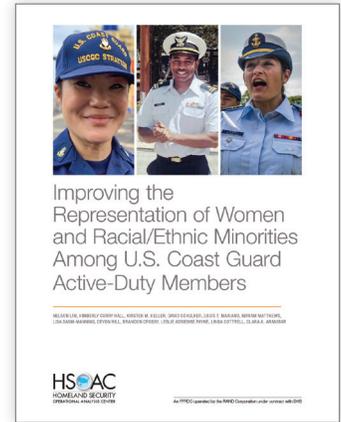


Improving the Representation of Women and Racial/Ethnic Minorities Among U.S. Coast Guard Active-Duty Members



NELSON LIM, KIMBERLY CURRY HALL, KIRSTEN M. KELLER, DAVID SCHULKER, LOUIS T. MARIANO, MIRIAM MATTHEWS, LISA SAUM-MANNING, DEVON HILL, BRANDON CROSBY, LESLIE ADRIENNE PAYNE, LINDA COTTRELL, CLARA A. ARANIBAR

www.rand.org/t/RRA362-2

Researchers sought to identify the root causes of underrepresentation for women and members of racial/ethnic minority groups in the U.S. Coast Guard; factors shaping representation at each phase of the career life cycle; and facilitators of and barriers to increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the root causes of underrepresentation of women and of racial and ethnic minority groups (to whom the Coast Guard refers collectively as “underrepresented minority” or URM groups) in the active-duty Coast Guard?
- What strategies could the Coast Guard implement to increase its diversity?

KEY FINDINGS

- Accessions: Mixed performance against population benchmarks highlights the importance of eligibility requirements and outreach practices on the Coast Guard’s ability to tap into diverse talent pools.
- Career development: There are inconsistent trends in career development indicators for enduring improvement. Survey and focus group findings highlighted concerns about the assignment process, particularly for women and black enlisted personnel.

- Advancement and promotion: According to available data, processes appear to treat personnel fairly, but career histories cause disparities. Survey findings show that, across all demographic groups, the majority of personnel understand the advancement or promotion process, but fewer view it as fair.
- Retention: Women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups have lower retention than their majority counterparts across the career life cycle. Focus group and survey findings highlight the importance of leadership as a key retention factor for all groups. These findings are also consistent with the study of retaining women in the Coast Guard previously conducted by Homeland Security Operational Analysis Center researchers.
- Climate: Survey and focus group findings highlight a lack of trust in leaders at all levels about diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) issues and about implementation of processes designed to protect against discrimination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement data-enabled outreach and recruiting policies and practices.
- Deliberately develop personnel throughout their careers so URM personnel are competitive.
- Improve perceptions of how development opportunities are distributed.
- Expand mentoring for URM personnel.
- Transform the assignment process to address fairness and transparency concerns.
- Ensure that current policies adequately address concerns about racism in local communities.
- Improve transparency and accountability in advancement and promotion processes.
- Expand opportunities for comprehensive leadership development training.
- Mitigate causes of involuntary separations for URM enlisted personnel.
- Review EO complaint process to improve trust and personnel perceptions.
- Foster an inclusive culture for all members to build trust in leaders' commitment to addressing DEI issues and bring about lasting improvements in representation of women and members of racial and ethnic minority groups among Coast Guard personnel.
- Establish and resource an office of DEI.
- To conduct consistent barrier analysis, establish and maintain a data-enabled talent management system.