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# NewsLines

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## WHO'S IN YOUR ARMY

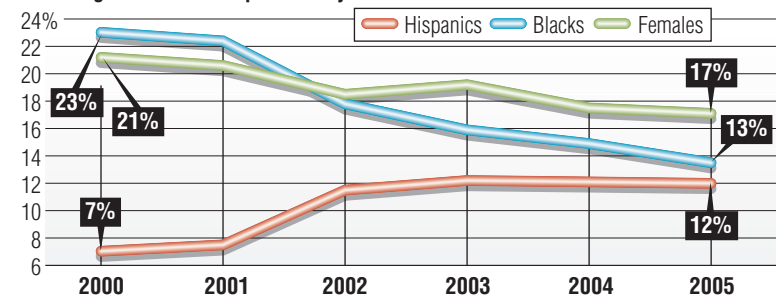
Nine months after fiscal 2005 ended, the Army has released a snapshot of who joined and who is already in the ranks. Here's a snapshot of data pertaining to the active-duty Army:

### RECRUITS

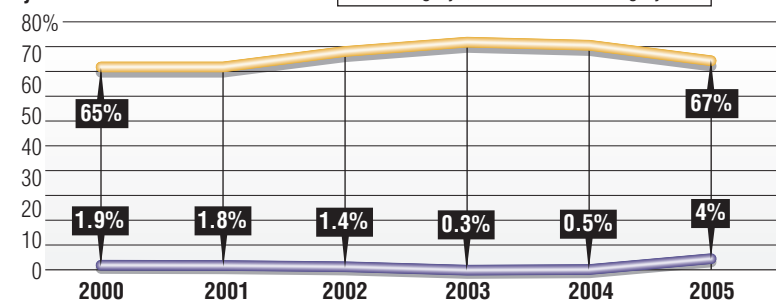
#### Number of enlistees per year

2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
80,113	75,855	79,584	74,132	77,587	73,373

#### Percentage of minorities per fiscal year



#### Percentage of enlistees by ASVAB score

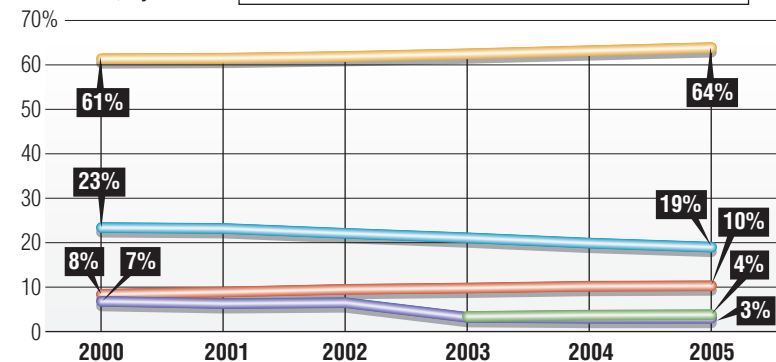


\*Soldiers in categories I, II & IIIA scored in the 50th percentile or higher on key sections of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery

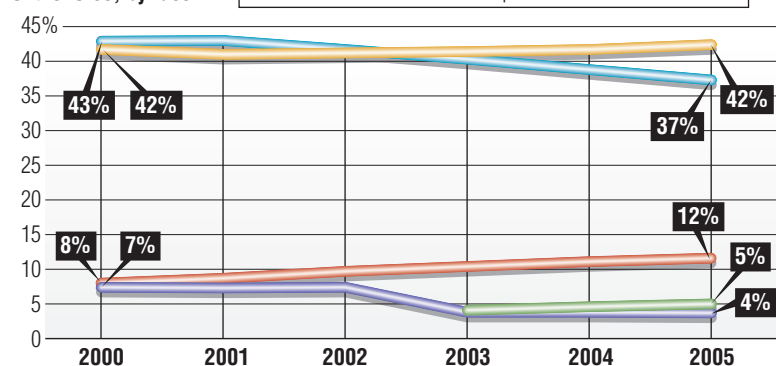
\*\*Category IV soldiers scored between the 10th and 30th percentiles (data for other scores not released)

### TOTAL ARMY — OFFICER AND ENLISTED

#### Males as a percentage of the force, by race



#### Females as a percentage of the force, by race



\*Included Asians until fiscal 2003  
Source: Office of Army Demographics

CHRIS BROZ, TIMES STAFF

# Minority enlistment continues to drop

## Low entrance exam scores may be reason

By Kelly Kennedy  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

As Army recruiters and marketers try to bring in more minority soldiers, they may have hit a hurdle good advertising can't help: low scores on the Army entrance test.

The fiscal 2005 Army demographics report shows the number of blacks and Hispanics enlisting in the Army dropped again — that marks the sixth year in a downward trend for black recruits.

"The reality is that minorities are much less likely to score high," said Beth Asch, who specializes in military manpower issues for Rand Corp. and wrote "What Factors Affect the Military Enlistment of Hispanic Youth" in 2005.

"That could come from language barriers — especially with Hispanic recruits — or education issues."

Since 1999, the number of recruits who have passed the job-skill predictor portion of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, or the Armed Forces Qualification Test, with a score in the 50th percentile or higher has consistently gone up.

Meanwhile, Army statistics show that 40 percent of whites who take the ASVAB score in the 50th percentile or lower, but 70 percent of Hispanics and 74 percent of blacks score in the 50th percentile or lower, Asch said.

The AFQT measures arithmetic reasoning, mathematics knowledge, word knowledge and paragraph comprehension.

Of course, another possible explanation for the decline in blacks enlisting is that fewer are attempting to join the Army. Indeed, recruiters have struggled to sign up new soldiers of all races since the start of the Iraq war.

Asch said a youth survey by the Defense Department asked 18- to

24-year-olds if the war on terrorism was affecting their decision to enlist.

"People always say they're not going to join the military, but then they do," Asch said. "But black kids were significantly more likely to say they're not going to join the military."

But in spring 2004, the reaction to a similar question was the opposite. Defense Human Resources conducted a survey asking 16- to 21-year-olds how likely they were to serve in the military over the next few years. They found that 24 percent of white men thought they would serve, 39 percent of black men said they were likely to serve and 25 percent of Hispanic men said they thought they might enlist. And, Asch said, it's important to remember the total percentage of blacks in the Army — 21.6 percent in fiscal 2005 — is still much higher than it is in the general population — 13 percent.

Asch was not surprised by the testing data, but neither are experts who study the relation between minority demographics and achievement or aptitude testing.

According to the Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, black and Hispanic youths are "overrepresented in low-track schools," and they tend to have teachers at the "lowest level of experience."

Hispanic students also have much higher high school dropout rates, at 30 percent compared with 12 percent of black youths and 7 percent of white youths.

In 2000, 23.3 percent of new enlistees were black. By 2005, that number fell to 13.5 percent. The demographics profile began keeping tabs on Hispanic troops in 2004, when they came in at 12.1 percent of total recruits. In 2005, it was down to 11.7 percent.

The Defense Department mandates that at least 60 percent of soldiers fall into categories I, II and IIIA, meaning they scored in the 50th percentile or higher on the AFQT.

The Army has strived for 67 percent for years, Asch said, though it has gone above and below that

number. In 2003, that number hit 73 percent, the highest it has been since 1991, when it stood at 80 percent. In 1999, only 63 percent of new recruits scored in the 50th percentile or higher on the AFQT and, Asch said, Army Recruiting Command worked to push the percentage back up.

"There's ample evidence that shows those recruits [who score in the 50th percentile or above] do well on hands-on military-related tasks," Asch said. "The Army had a very high-quality mission, and it kept going up."

In the first years of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it was fairly easy to keep test scores high. But in 2005, recruiting suddenly became harder as public opinion started going against the war in Iraq. The Army ended the fiscal year with 67 percent having a score in the 50th percentile or higher — a drop of 5 percentage points from 2004.

Cat IV recruits — or those with test scores between the 10th and 30th percentiles — had been capped at 2 percent of enlistees since the 1980s. But that cap was lifted in fiscal 2005, and 4 percent of total recruits were Cat IV. In 2004, it was 0.6 percent.

"I think they did it to make mission and as a morale booster," Asch said. "It's not so much that they're letting quality go to hell in a handbasket — they're just going back down to where they were."

The numbers of minorities who join likely will begin going up again as the testing restrictions loosen up to allow more recruits who score lower than the 50th percentile on the AFQT, she said.

Army spokesman Sheldon Smith agreed with Asch's assessment.

"We're not lowering the standards," he said. "We're returning the standards to what they were before."

The idea that blacks and Hispanics don't support the war in Iraq still plays a role in recruiting, experts say. Asch said black youths and their parents consis-

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