

## America's Military Population

by David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal

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*The all-volunteer military has brought in more women and minorities.*

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*Today's military increasingly addresses complex family issues.*

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*The military is a short-term career for all but a few service men and women.*

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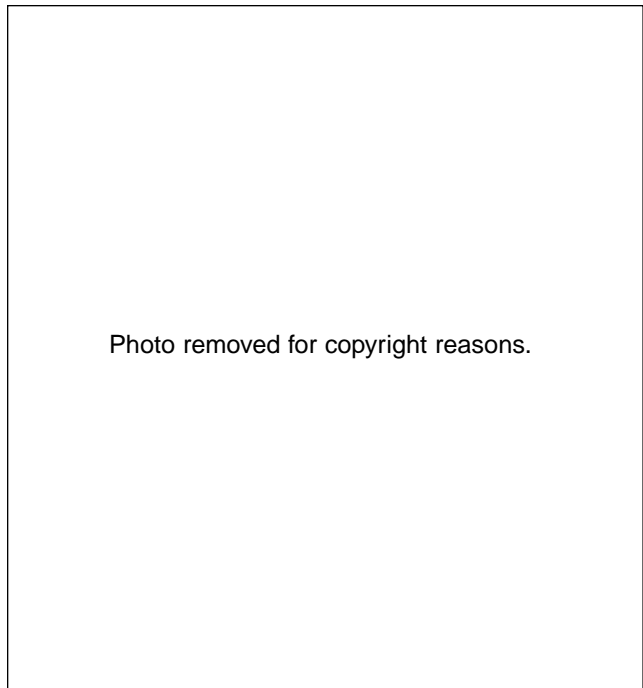
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# America's Military Population

*by David R. Segal and Mady Wechsler Segal*

The American military has been viewed as a form of national service, an occupation, a profession, a workplace, a calling, an industry, and a set of internal labor markets.<sup>1</sup> Military service has touched most American families; nearly 26 million Americans living today have served in the military—24 million of these veterans are men, 12 million are over age 60. But today's active-duty military is very different from the military of 30 and 50 years ago, when the military relied on the draft for personnel and warfare required more troops. The all-volunteer military is more educated, more married, more female, and less white than the draft-era military. And debates about the future size, structure, and composition of the U.S. military have assumed new prominence in the political landscape, especially as the country faces new security threats. Today's military is also grappling with such social issues as the inclusion of gays, the role of women, the well-being of military families, and the transition back into civilian life.<sup>2</sup> The specter of a new military draft—although unlikely to occur—has generated congressional activity and has grabbed the attention of young Americans. Such issues did not concern Americans for most of U.S. history, but are common today.

This *Population Bulletin* will focus on these issues with regard to the 1.4 mil-



*Since the end of the draft in 1973, the U.S. military has become more diverse—with more women and minorities than ever before.*

lion active-duty uniformed personnel currently serving in the four military branches of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and their 1.9 million dependents. This *Bulletin* addresses core demographic issues regarding the military population. Demography is the study of the size, distribution, and composition of a population, and focuses on such population processes

***The United States was founded with a militia tradition of citizen-soldiers.***

as fertility (additions to the population), mortality (subtractions from the population), and migration (population mobility). This report examines the size, distribution, and composition of the American military population, plus additions to (recruitment), departures from (retirement and other separations), and mobility of that population through reassignments.

The armed forces did not become a major institutional presence in the United States until the 20th century and did not become a major factor in the American occupational structure and labor force until the last quarter of that century. The United States was founded with a militia tradition of citizen-soldiers, and a cultural aversion to the excesses of the peacetime standing army of England's King James II.<sup>3</sup> A national army was raised during the American Revolution, but in 1783, after the United States won independence, the Congress discharged the Continental Army that had defeated the British, except for 80 soldiers retained to guard the military stores at West Point and Fort Pitt, plus a proportionate number of officers, none above the rank of captain. This congressional action set a precedent for a military force, composed exclusively of men, that was to be mobilized during wartime through calling up the militia, recruiting volunteers, and occasional conscription, and was to be demobilized during peacetime. This pattern persisted until the mid-20th century.

## **The Military in 20th-Century America**

For most of U.S. history, less than 1 percent of the population served in the military, except for brief periods when the country was at war (see Figure 1). There were notable surges in the relative size of the force during the first half of the 19th century for the War of 1812 and the Mexican War

of 1846-1848, but the annual military participation ratio (MPR)—the percentage of the total resident population serving in the active-duty military<sup>4</sup>—did not approach 3 percent of the population until the U.S. Civil War in the mid-1860s. More than 1 million men, mobilized largely by militia call-ups and conscription, served under arms between 1861 and 1865. The MPR then declined again until the First World War, when almost 3 percent of the population—almost 3 million men—served. Again, mobilization involved calling up the militia, supplemented by selective conscription.

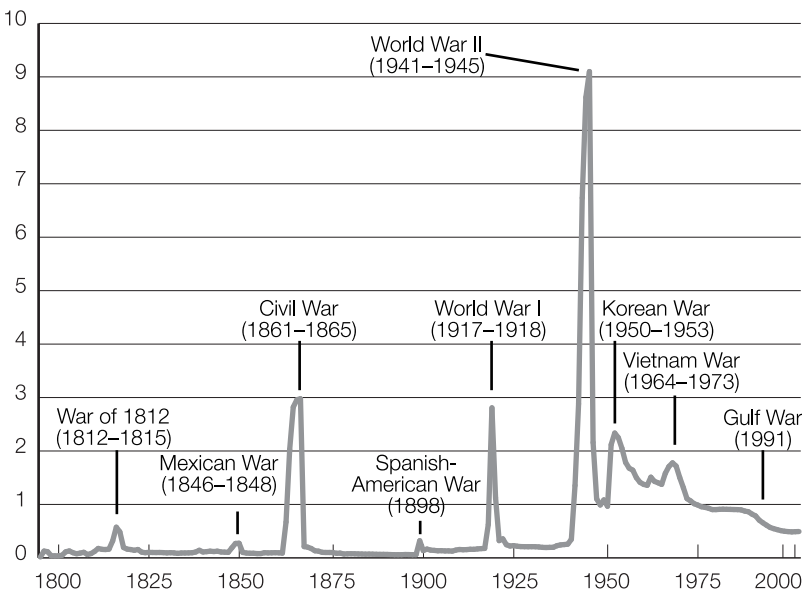
The pattern of surge and decline in the size of the armed forces changed when the country mobilized for World War II. About 16 million people were brought into the armed forces in the 1940s, including more than 200,000 women. The men were largely conscripts (10.1 million); women were not subject to the draft, and all women in uniform were volunteers. The World War II armed forces represented about 12 percent of the population and included about 56 percent of the men eligible for military service on the basis of age, health, and mental aptitude.

As America began to demobilize its military after World War II, North Korean forces, supported by the People's Republic of China, invaded South Korea, and the United States sent armed forces to South Korea. The remobilization drew heavily on the small generation of Americans born during the Great Depression.

The hostilities in Vietnam led to another remobilization in the late 1960s, this time calling up a relatively small proportion of the early baby-boom generation born in the 1940s and 1950s. The armed forces shrank after the United States withdrew from Vietnam, accompanied in 1973 by the end of military conscription. In that year, the United States armed forces entered the labor market for the first time in competition with civilian employers. The military sought to maintain a relatively large peacetime

**Figure 1**  
**Participation in the U.S. Armed Forces, 1793–2002**

Percent of population



Source: DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 2002* ([www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/M01/fy02/m01fy02.pdf](http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/M01/fy02/m01fy02.pdf), accessed Oct. 6, 2004); table 2-11; and these U.S. Census Bureau publications: *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1957* (1960); “Historical National Population Estimates: July 1, 1900 to July 1, 1999” (revised June 28, 2000; [www.census.gov/popest/archives/1990s/popclockest.txt](http://www.census.gov/popest/archives/1990s/popclockest.txt), accessed Dec. 6, 2004); and “Annual Estimates of the Population for the United States and States, and for Puerto Rico: April 1, 2000 to July 1, 2003” (revised May 11, 2004; [www.census.gov/popest/states/NST-EST2003-ann-est.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/states/NST-EST2003-ann-est.html), accessed Dec. 6, 2004).

force—about 2 million people in uniform, or 1 percent of the population—on a voluntary basis. During this period, the uniformed services became the largest U.S. employer.

A further demobilization came after the collapse of America’s primary Cold War adversaries—the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact alliance in Eastern Europe. Following historical patterns, this might be regarded as our post-World War II demobilization, delayed by the Korean War, the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. This drawdown of forces was paused at the end of the 1980s to provide personnel for the Persian Gulf War, and for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq in the early 21st century. In 2004, the military consists of about 1.4 million uniformed active-duty personnel.

These active-duty forces are supported by a wide array of people who are also part of America’s national security assets: the National Guard,

the military reserves, the Coast Guard, civilians working for the Defense Department, and employees of defense contractors who increasingly perform tasks that were traditionally done by military personnel.

## Geographic Distribution

In recent peacetime years, almost three-quarters of the active-duty personnel who serve in the DoD uniformed services, about 990,000 people, have been stationed in the United States; just over one-quarter have been stationed elsewhere in the world. These percentages change during periods of large-scale hostilities. The Navy has more of its personnel afloat or ashore in foreign ports than any other service. The percentage stationed in the United States ranges from 83 percent in the Army and Air

Force, and 80 percent in the Marine Corps to 58 percent in the Navy.

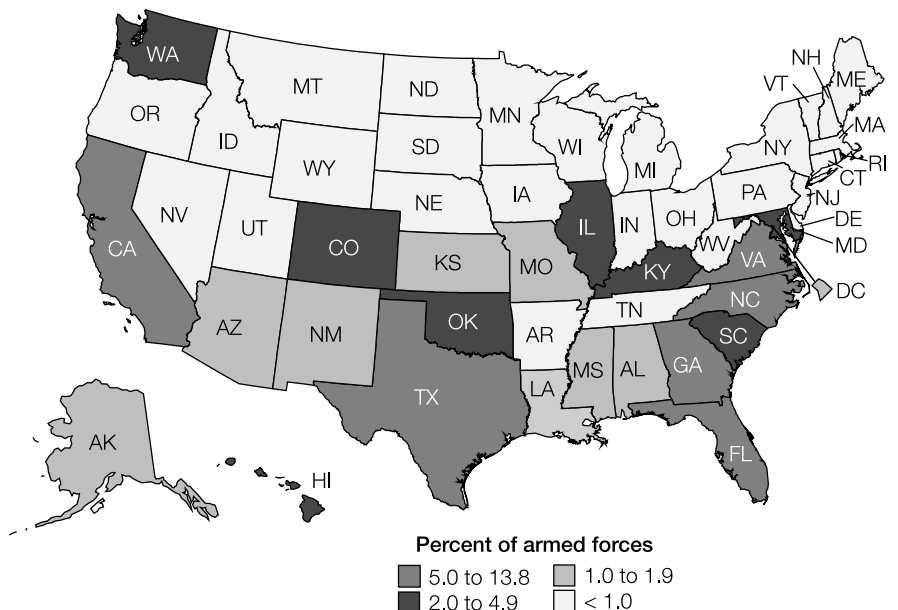
In general, the United States has more of its military personnel stationed outside its homeland than any other major modern nation. This reflects the prevailing view that the American military is primarily an expeditionary force, intended to project power abroad. Most other nations regard the primary missions of their armed forces to be homeland security and domestic social control. Only after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, did the United States establish a separate cabinet level Department of Homeland Security, with the U.S. Coast Guard as its military arm.

Personnel stationed in the United States are concentrated along the Eastern Seaboard, from the Mid-Atlantic states to Florida, on the West Coast, particularly in California, and in Hawaii (see Figure 2). New England, the North Central states, and Alaska have relatively small military populations. Texas, California, North Carolina, and Virginia have the most

military personnel—between 98,000 and 163,000 in 2002. Vermont has the fewest military personnel (about 60), followed by Wisconsin, West Virginia, Iowa, and Oregon, which have between 550 and 660 (see Box 1).

The Army, the largest of the services, has about 386,000 of its 466,000 soldiers in the 50 states, heavily concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic and South Central states, and in Hawaii. The Navy, with about 178,000 of 319,000 sailors stationed domestically, is located primarily on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, in Hawaii, and to a lesser extent, Illinois—the site of the Great Lakes Naval Training Center. The Air Force, with about 290,000 personnel assigned domestically, is the most widely dispersed of the services, with more personnel in the North Central states than any other service. The Marine Corps, which organizationally is part of the Navy Department, has about 137,000 personnel stationed domestically, concentrated in the Mid-Atlantic states (especially Virginia and the Carolinas), California, and Hawaii.

**Figure 2**  
**Armed Forces Personnel by State, 2002**



Source: DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 2002* (web1.whs.osd.mil/mmid/M01/fy02/m01fy02.pdf, accessed Oct. 4, 2004).



## Box 1

### Does Military Presence Matter?

Like many industries such as steel production, mining, and automobile manufacturing, military facilities are highly concentrated in a few geographic areas. Of the thousands of local labor markets around the country, there are only about 30 in which the armed services play a disproportionate role in the local economy. In some of these communities, however, a military installation is a dominant economic feature, recalling for some the image of the early 20th-century company town. In Kileen, Texas; Virginia Beach, Va.; and Jacksonville, N.C., for example, more than 15 percent of all employed people are in the active-duty armed forces. What difference does this military presence make to a community?

Cities with a large military presence are among the least racially segregated in the United States, according to a study by demographers Reynolds Farley and William Frey.<sup>1</sup> Among the least-segregated areas were Anchorage, Alaska; Clarksville, Tenn.; Fayetteville, N.C.; Jacksonville, N.C.; Lawton, Okla.; Cheyenne, Wyo.; Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; Honolulu, Hawaii; and Tucson, Ariz. All of these areas have a large military presence.

Labor markets with a large military presence not only have less residential segregation, but also less racial segregation in employment. Sociologist Seth Ovdadia found that the military presence softened or eliminated the effects of race on both the employment odds for black men and on the racial gap in quality of employment.<sup>2</sup>

The military-dominated labor markets are not as favorable for women's employment, however. A study by sociologist Bradford Booth and colleagues found that the unemployment rates were higher for women in areas of high military presence than among other areas in the United States—7.9 percent compared with 6.6 percent.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, women employed in labor markets characterized by high military presence earned on average about \$700 less annually than their counterparts employed elsewhere. In general, women in the labor force in areas with a high military presence were more likely to be unemployed, were likely to earn less, and were likely to get lower returns to human capital than were women in other labor markets in the United States.

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***It is not unusual for the armed forces to relocate their personnel every three years.***

### Geographical Mobility

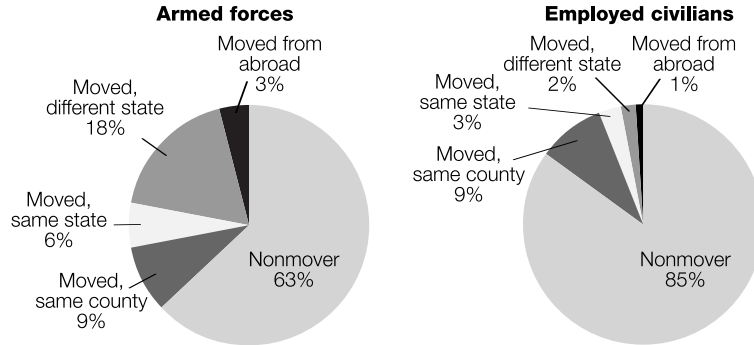
One distinguishing characteristic of employment in the American military is frequent relocation of serving personnel and their families. Many large corporations transfer executives and their families to different cities, particularly early in their careers. However, corporations tend not to ask their rank-and-file workers to move. Although some working-class occupations, such as merchant seamen, do require workers to relocate, workers'

families are not expected to move as well. The military is unique in the American labor force in the extent to which it expects its rank-and-file personnel and their families to relocate, and the long distances that it moves them. It is not unusual for the armed forces to move their personnel every three years.

Between 2000 and 2001, 37 percent of military personnel moved to a new residence, compared with 15 percent of civilians (see Figure 3, page 8).

Figure 3

### Mobility of Armed Forces Personnel and Employed Civilians, 2000–2001



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "General Mobility of Persons 16 Years and Over, by Region, Sex, and Labor Force Status: March 2000-2001" ([www.census.gov/population/socdemo/migration/cps2001/tab08.xls](http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/migration/cps2001/tab08.xls), accessed Oct. 14, 2004).

Not only were military personnel more than twice as likely as civilian workers to move in a year, they moved much farther. Compared with civilians, military personnel were nine times more likely to move to another state, and four times more likely to move from abroad. (These data do not reflect moves from the United States to locations overseas.)

## Recruiting Military Personnel

The active-duty services recruit about 200,000 enlisted personnel each year to maintain the current size. Almost all recruits are high school graduates—high school dropouts are essentially excluded from the military (see Box 2). The armed forces also commission 15,000 to 20,000 officers each year. Almost all officers are college graduates. About 40 percent of officers received their commissions through participation in Reserve Officer Training (ROTC) programs at civilian colleges and universities, about 22 percent through officer candidate schools (OCS) or officer training schools (OTS), and about 11 percent—primarily people with medical or legal training or the clergy—receive direct commissions. A significant minority (about 15 per-

cent) are commissioned through three federal military academies: the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.; the U.S. Air Force Academy at Colorado Springs, Colo.; and the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis, Md. Some Naval Academy graduates are commissioned to serve in the Marine Corps rather than the Navy.

If education is an indicator of social class, there is a class difference between enlisted personnel and officers, with officers having more formal education. However, increasing numbers of enlisted personnel have some college education. Indeed, one of the major motivations for young people to enlist is to earn educational benefits to use during service or after they leave the service. As more enlisted personnel take advantage of this benefit, the college education gap could narrow. At the same time, significant percentages of officers, and much smaller percentages of enlisted personnel, are earning college credits and degrees.

The three service academies draw on highly selective national pools of high school graduates. Their entering classes look very much like students entering elite civilian universities, with comparable high school grade-point averages and Scholastic Aptitude Test scores. Most cadets and midshipmen at West Point, the Air Force Academy, and the Naval Acad-

emy are nominated by their local U.S. senator or congressional representative, which helps guarantee geographical diversity in each entering class. Accordingly, high-achieving students

from smaller states such as North Dakota or Rhode Island have a much greater chance of admission into the academies than similar students from more-populous California or Texas.

## Box 2

### The Propensity to Serve

Who is most likely to join the military? This is a crucial question for the all-volunteer military, which must continually replenish its ranks because most military personnel leave the service within a decade. The most powerful predictors of who will serve in the military are survey responses indicating that people want to serve, or expect to serve, in the military.<sup>1</sup>

Enlistment is also predicted by parents' education (children of college-educated parents are less likely to serve), high school grades (those with higher grades are less likely to serve), college plans (college students are less likely to enlist), race and ethnicity (African Americans and Hispanics are more likely to serve than whites), and attractiveness of military work roles.

The propensity to serve increased in the early years of the volunteer military, but began to decline in the mid-1980s.<sup>2</sup> The University of Michigan's Monitoring the Future (MF) study, conducted annually since 1975, shows that among high school senior men who say they definitely expect to enlist, 70 percent do so within five years of high school graduation. High school senior women are less likely to indicate that they expect to serve, and among those who do, only 40 percent actually join the military.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, women are more likely to indicate on surveys that they would like to serve than that they expect to actually serve.<sup>4</sup> African American men and women have had higher levels of positive propensity to serve than have white men and women. However, only about 45 percent of those expressing positive propensity actually serve. Hispanics also have higher levels of propensity than whites, and about 60 percent of high-propensity Hispanics serve in the military.<sup>5</sup>

The percentage of survey respondents who say they want or expect to join the military has declined among both male and female high school seniors, and among blacks, whites, and Hispanics. A decline has also been noted among 8th and 10th grade students since 1991.<sup>6</sup> A recent study by the National Research Council suggested countering the decline with targeted advertising and promoting the propensity to serve in the military among young people.<sup>7</sup>

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Table 1

**Regional Distribution of the Youth Population, New Military Recruits, and New Officers, by Service, 2002**

Region	Recruits					Officers					Total population	
	Total recruits	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Total officers	Army	Air Force	Marines	Navy	Total accessions	ages 18–24
Total U.S. (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Northeast	14	13	12	16	14	14	18	8	20	17	14	18
Midwest	21	20	21	22	20	16	18	15	17	14	21	23
South	42	41	42	39	41	39	41	35	40	42	42	36
West	23	22	22	23	26	18	18	19	19	18	23	23
Unknown	—	4	3	1	—	13	5	24	5	9	1	—

— Less than 0.5 percent.

Sources: Defense Management Data Center (DMDC), U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command (USMEPCOM) Edit Files, October 2001–September 2002; DMDC Officer Gain Files, October 2001–September 2002; and U.S. Census Bureau, "Estimates of the Population by Selected Age Groups and Sex for the United States and States: July 1, 2002" ([www.census.gov/popest/states/files/ST-EST2003-AS2002.txt](http://www.census.gov/popest/states/files/ST-EST2003-AS2002.txt), accessed Oct. 4, 2004).

The overall recruitment base for both officers and enlisted personnel is less dispersed. More than 40 percent of all new personnel enlisted or commissioned in 2002 came from the South, where about 36 percent of the total U.S. population ages 18 to 24 lives (see Table 1). Southerners were overrepresented among new recruits in all services, ranging from 39 percent in the Marines to 42 percent in the Air Force in 2002.

The West accounted for 23 percent of new personnel, about the same as the region's share of the young adult population, but accounted for only 18 percent of new officers. By contrast, 26 percent of Navy enlistments were from the West, primarily from California. Northeastern states accounted for less than 15 percent of accessions, below their share of the U.S. population.

The concentration of Southerners in the military is frequently attributed to a tradition of military service in this region.<sup>5</sup> While a military culture may exist in the South, the geographical recruitment pattern primarily reflects the location of the military enlistment pool—Americans ages 18 to 29. The Western states of Nevada, Idaho, and Montana contribute the most recruits as a proportion of the state's military-age population (see Figure 4).

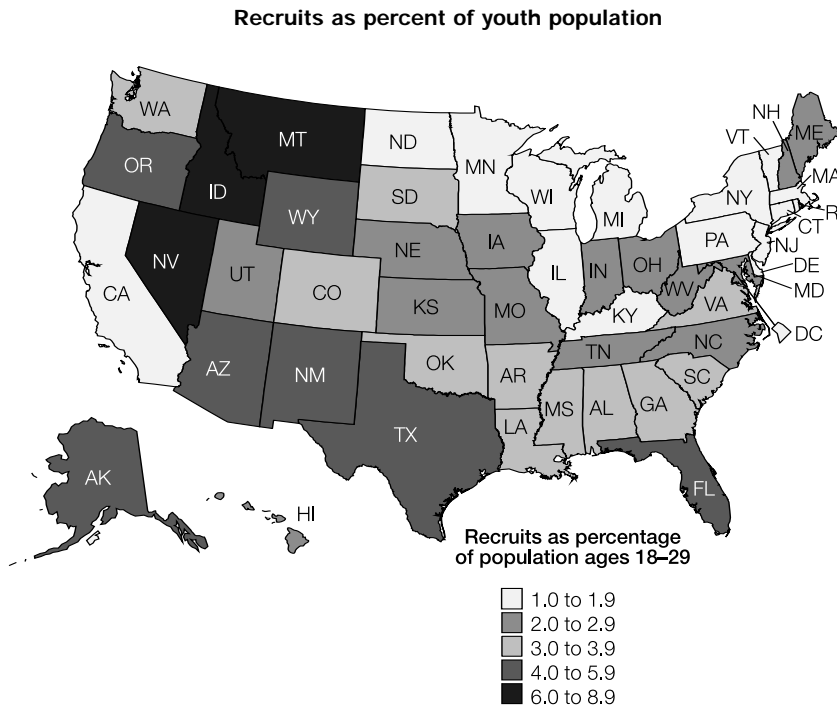
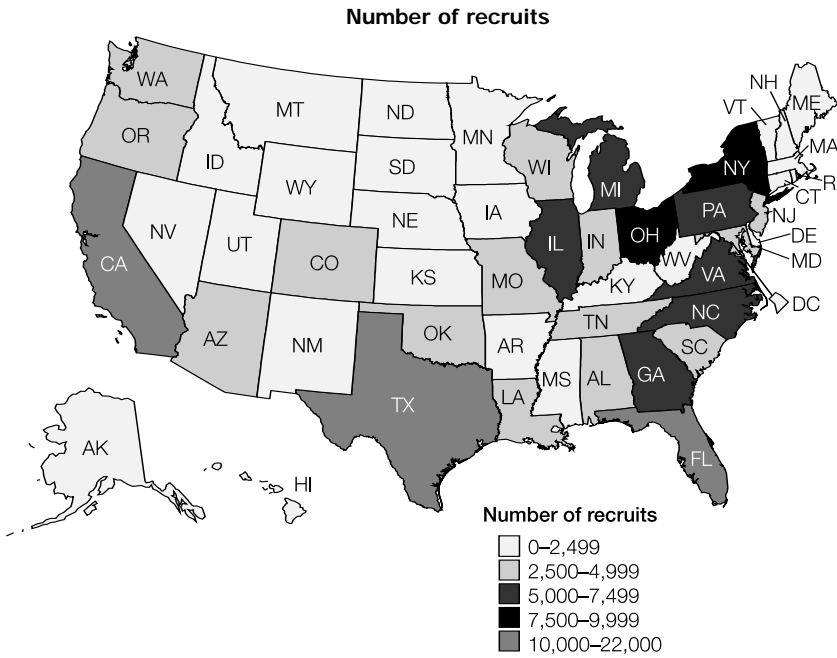
Wyoming, Oregon, and Alaska are also major contributors of military personnel on a proportional basis, as are Florida, Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. California is relatively underrepresented in the military as a proportion of its military-age population.

## Leaving the Military

While the military population grows through recruitment and accessions, it loses personnel through deaths, separations, and retirements. In the all-volunteer service, people sign up for a specific length of duty—which usually includes two to six years of active duty and several years of duty in the reserves. Most of the turnover in the active-duty forces occurs when people leave at the end of their contracts. A significant minority “re-up” for at least one more tour, and a much smaller minority serve for a full career of 20 or more years. The average length of service is less than 10 years.

The military encourages this high turnover with its “up or out” policy. If service members fail to get promoted within a specified time frame, they usually must leave active-duty forces. The policy is meant to maintain a young force and prevent a top-heavy rank structure.

**Figure 4**  
**New Military Recruits by State, 2002**



Source: DoD Defense Management Data Center, U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command Edit Files; and U.S. Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States 2000*.

Many soldiers are discharged before the end of their contract because of medical or other reasons. In recent years, homosexuality has been among the most highly publicized reasons for involuntary discharge. Openly gay men and women are excluded from joining the military, but policies have varied regarding service members whose sexual orientation becomes known after they have joined (see Box 3).

Deaths of young men and women are the most wrenching and distressing source of military population losses. About 900 deaths occur every year among active service personnel

in peacetime—with spikes in deaths during wartime.

## Mortality

While military personnel die from most of the same causes as do civilians of similar ages, their jobs put them at a unique risk of dying in the conduct of war. Military deaths increase during wartime—though many do not occur in combat but from accidents or illnesses related to the mobilization. American wartime fatalities during World War I and World War II exceeded 115,000 and 400,000, respectively.<sup>6</sup> While combat deaths

### *Box 3*

#### **Sexual Orientation in the Military**

The history of the American military has been characterized by increasing diversity, as non-English-speaking European immigrants, nonwhites, and, most recently, women, have been incorporated into the force. The inclusion of new groups has always generated debate and opposition. One of today's most contentious debates about diversity within the ranks involves allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military.

There is historical evidence that gays and lesbians have always served in the American armed forces. During the Civil War period and for most of the 20th century, homosexuality in the military was treated largely as a medical problem, usually (but not always) a bar to enlistment. At times, homosexual soldiers were treated medically and returned to duty; at other times, they were required to leave the service.<sup>1</sup> Even the current Uniform Code of Military Justice does not have clear statutes relating to homosexuality. In the 1970s, President Jimmy Carter's administration established a policy that homosexuality was incompatible with military service. The incompatibility position was adopted as Department of Defense policy in 1981, and remained in effect until 1993.

In the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton promised to lift the ban on gays in the military, but this change was

strongly resisted after the election by the Department of Defense and by the Senate Armed Services Committee. In July 1993, President Clinton announced a compromise "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy that precluded asking recruits about their sexual orientation, required that gays and lesbians stay "in the closet," and prevented the services from investigating personnel's sexual orientation. In the Defense Authorization Act of November 1993, however, Congress allowed the military to ask service members about their sexual orientation on a discretionary basis.

After the "don't ask, don't tell, don't pursue" policy was enacted, discharges because of homosexuality increased markedly, from 617 in 1994 to 1,273 in 2001.<sup>2</sup> This rise in discharges also coincided with the large post-Cold War downsizing of the military. Discharges for homosexuality have decreased since 2001, which some analysts tie to the slower overall rate of military separations after the initiation of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The discharge of active-duty personnel can be viewed as lost investment by the military. A recent study shows that many of the 6,300 military personnel discharged for homosexuality between 1998 and 2003 were in specialties that required expensive training and were essential for current military operations:

often do not account for the majority of military deaths during wartime, they are the most dramatic and visible cause. The largest number of combat fatalities—almost 300,000—was associated with the largest U.S. military mobilization, World War II; the second-largest number—more than 50,000—was associated with the second-largest mobilization, World War I (see Table 2, page 14). The relationship between size of mobilization and number of combat fatalities seems to break down with the Korean and Vietnam wars. The Korean War lasted for a little over three years, June 1950 to July 1953. American involvement in

the Vietnam War, by contrast, lasted eight and a half years, from the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August 1964 to the Paris Peace Accords in January 1973. Peak strength during the Vietnam War was 543,400, in April 1969, while peak strength in Korea was 325,270, in July 1953.

As a function of troop strength, annual combat fatalities were lower in Vietnam than in Korea. This decline was reflected in the deadliest battles of these wars. In the deadliest Korean War engagement, the battle of the Pusan Perimeter, in August and September 1950, the United States lost 3,603 soldiers. By contrast, Vietnam's

including Arabic linguists; rocket and missile specialists; and nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare specialists.<sup>3</sup>

One of the major questions raised when policies regarding sexual orientation were debated in 1993 was how many gays and lesbians serve in the military. Using data from Census 2000, sociologist Gary Gates estimates that there were 1 million gay and lesbian veterans in the U.S. population in 2000—some of whom had served in World War I.<sup>4</sup> This gay and lesbian veteran population was concentrated in the District of Columbia, California (which has the nation's only gay American Legion post), Florida, Texas, New York, and Georgia. Lesbians with partners report higher rates of military service than other women for every military period in the late 20th century, and they report longer terms of military service than other female veterans. But gay male veterans serve about the same number of years as other male veterans.

Gay veterans are more likely to be Hispanic than the overall male veteran population. Lesbian veterans, in contrast, are more likely to be white and less likely to be African American than are other women veterans.

Gates also estimated that 36,000 gay men and lesbians were serving on active duty in the U.S. armed forces in 2000, representing about 2.5 percent of the force. Gates estimates that nearly

5 percent of women in the military are lesbians; nearly 2 percent of military men are gay.

Proponents of gays argue that the ban on gays and lesbians excludes many specialists the military sorely needs and patriots who want to serve their country. Those who argue for banning gays and lesbians from the military maintain that allowing gays and lesbians in the military would disrupt cohesion, would discourage enlistment and retention of heterosexuals, and would violate the right to privacy of heterosexual personnel.

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*Table 2***U.S. Combat Fatalities From World War I to Operation Iraqi Freedom**

War	Years	Combat fatalities
World War I	1917–1918	53,402
World War II	1941–1946	291,557
Korean War	1950–1953	33,741
Vietnam War	1961–1973	47,415*
Persian Gulf War	1991	147
Operation Iraqi Freedom	2003–2004	857**

\* There were almost 11,000 additional deaths in Vietnam due to nonhostile causes. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., has a higher total because it adds postwar deaths of soldiers wounded in action.

\*\* Combat deaths as of Oct. 31, 2004; military operations are ongoing. This number does not include 259 nonhostile deaths.

Sources: DoD, "Principal Wars in Which the United States Participated: U.S. Military Personnel Serving and Casualties"; and Operation Iraqi Freedom—U.S. Casualty Status ([www.defenselink.mil](http://www.defenselink.mil), accessed Oct. 31, 2004.)

deadliest battle, in the Ia Drang Valley in October and November 1965, caused only 300 fatalities.<sup>7</sup>

Through the Vietnam War, war deaths numbered in the tens or hundreds of thousands. The technology and strategy by which America wages wars changed drastically in the late 20th century, substituting capital—in the form of long-range highly lethal weapons—for labor, and combat fatalities have fallen markedly.<sup>8</sup> The 1991 Persian Gulf War saw even more dramatic decreases in combat deaths, because of a greater reliance on American air power and use of increasingly precise long-range munitions, such as cruise missiles. U.S. combat deaths in the more recent war in Iraq were below the total for the Gulf War when President George W. Bush declared major combat operations over on May 1, 2003. However, continuing military actions brought the combat death toll in Iraq to 857 by the end of October 2004, more than five times the total for the first Gulf War.

Most military deaths are not combat related (see Figure 5). Mortality rates in the American military are lower than the general population because military personnel are younger and healthier than the average American. Servicemen and women undergo a rigorous health screening prior to induction or commissioning, and they have access to the largest health care delivery system in the world. In the early

1980s, there were slightly more than 110 deaths per 100,000 active-duty personnel per year, and the trend has been generally downward, albeit with dramatic reversals during the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War, and from 2001 to 2002 (the most recent data available by cause), reflecting the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and subsequent military operations. The percentage of military deaths due to hostile action or terrorist attacks has not exceeded 1 percent, except in 1983, when a Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed; in 1991, during the Persian Gulf War; and in 2001, when the Pentagon was attacked on Sept. 11.

Military service is not necessarily a safe occupation even in peacetime. In most years, more than one-half of active-duty fatalities, and in some years as many as two-thirds of such fatalities, are attributable to accidents—primarily vehicle and training accidents. Far fewer fatalities are attributed to illness. On average, 18 percent of active-duty fatalities each year are due to illness, with relatively little variation.

More than 100 military personnel take their own lives each year. When the armed forces were larger, the number exceeded 200 each year, although there is considerable annual variation.<sup>9</sup> In the early 1980s, about 10 percent of military fatalities were self-inflicted. Military suicides rose in the late 1980s and peaked in the mid-1990s at a rate more than double that



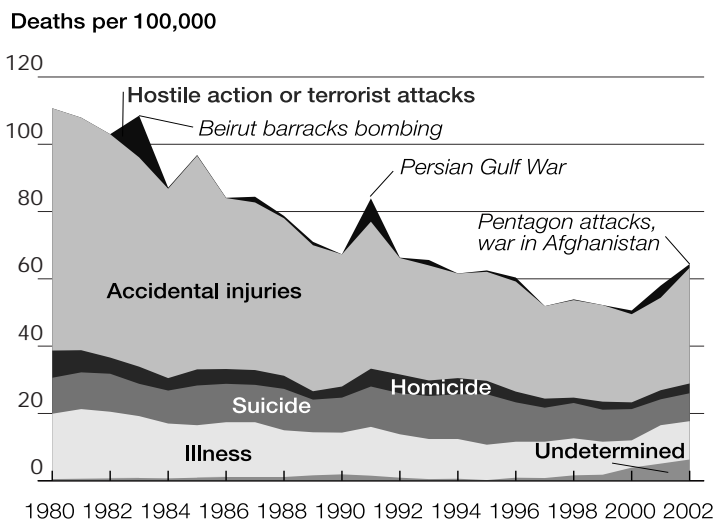
of the early 1980s. Some analysts have attributed the increase in the 1980s in part to the Army's experimental unit manning system, which made personnel management much more rigid and was accompanied by an increase in stress-related symptoms.<sup>10</sup> The continued increase in suicides in the 1990s might have been affected by an increase in the rate of peace-keeping deployments after the end of the Cold War in Europe, resulting in increased family separations. The military suicide rate declined initially in 2001 and 2002, to about 11 percent, which is well below the rate for civilians of comparable ages. But the suicide rate did not recede to the level of the early 1980s; in fact it appears to have risen again during the military campaign in Iraq. In 2003, at least 22 service members committed suicide in Iraq alone.<sup>11</sup> This represented about 14 percent of the non-hostile fire deaths in Iraq. Suicides accounted for 13.5 percent of deaths in the Army. Even with this recent increase, suicides represent a similar percentage of deaths in the military as among American civilians ages 20 to 34, which in 2000 was 14.6 percent of deaths among men, and 6.8 percent of deaths among women.

Homicides in the military are relatively low, around 5 percent of all military deaths—less than half the rate accounted for by suicide. In contrast, homicide is a major cause of death among young African American men in civilian life—accounting for 35 percent of deaths to African American civilian men ages 20 to 34 in 2000, and 11 percent of deaths among African American civilian women in this age group. The comparable 2000 figures for whites were 8 percent for men and 6 percent for women. African Americans face a lower risk of homicide in the military than in civilian life.

## Retirement and Separation

Although it is common to refer to America's volunteer military as a

**Figure 5**  
**Causes of Deaths Among Active Military Personnel, 1980–2002**



Note: Rates include reservists on active duty.

Source: Authors' calculations based on DoD, "U.S. Active Duty Military Deaths From 1980-2002" ([www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/casualty/Death\\_Rates.pdf](http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/casualty/Death_Rates.pdf), accessed Oct. 12, 2004).

career force, only a minority remain in service for a full military career. Even a full military career is relatively short by civilian standards. Because the history of the American military was one of mobilization and demobilization, there was no comprehensive military retirement system until fairly recently. Prior to the Civil War, the military benefit system was restricted to men who had been mobilized for war and who had participated in combat and had service-related disabilities. The number of benefit recipients was very small. This changed as the large generation of Civil War veterans became a very powerful political lobby in the postwar years, and the definition of war-related disability was broadened. In 1890, a new Civil War disability pension act was passed, extending benefits to veterans of the Union army or navy who had served for 90 days, had been honorably discharged, and subsequently had become disabled. In 1906, attainment of age 62 was legislatively defined as a disability within the intent of the pension laws, providing old-age insurance for almost

***Most military personnel leave the service before they are eligible to retire.***

760,000 former military personnel.<sup>12</sup> However, aside from disabilities, variously defined, the actual retirement rolls remained fairly small.

This relatively small pension population has continued to the present day. Most military personnel do not serve until they are eligible to retire. Pension rights become vested and personnel can retire after 20 years of service. Enlisted personnel who enter at around age 18 can retire with benefits before age 40; officers who are commissioned around age 22 can retire in their early 40s. Even with this young retirement age, most military personnel do not serve the required 20 years (see Box 4).

During the 1980s, prior to the end of the Cold War in Europe, the United States maintained a large standing military force, with 300,000 to 400,000 people leaving the service

in most years. Separations declined sharply in 1991, when military personnel were prevented from retiring or leaving the service during the Gulf War, then saw an offsetting increase at war's end in 1992, but the general trend has been downward. The military downsizing of the 1990s brought the separation figure increasingly closer to 200,000 people per year, balancing new accessions to the force and maintaining relatively constant force size. However, less than 10 percent of separations were retirements in most years. The majority left because they completed their contractual period of service or for disciplinary, medical, or other reasons. In 1993, after 20 years of the all-volunteer military, the retirement figure reached 15 percent of separations, showing that while the volunteer force became more career-oriented

*Box 4*

**After Military Service, What?**

Most people who enter the American armed forces serve for fewer than 10 years. Many express patriotic reasons for joining the armed forces, but their motivations for serving also include the desire to learn a skill applicable in the civilian labor force, or to earn educational benefits that will enable them to go to college. Even the relatively small proportion of personnel who serve for a military career return to civilian life in their late 30s or early 40s, too young to truly retire, and with a pension too small to support a family. What happens on their return to the civilian labor force?

The results of three decades of research on this question are mixed, but they suggest that the educational and financial returns to military service (which may also be viewed in economists' terms as the costs of military service) vary by race and ethnicity, by gender, and by period of military service.

Men who served during the World War II and Korean War draft years—America's largest mobilizations as a proportion of the total U.S. population—achieved higher subsequent civilian socioeconomic status than their peers who did not serve.<sup>1</sup> In contrast, men

who served during the Vietnam War tended to do less well than their peers who did not serve.<sup>2</sup>

One explanation for this decline in the returns to military service after Vietnam focuses on changes in the post-World War II GI Bill. The GI Bill gave veterans of World War II and the Korean War access to educational benefits that were not broadly available to civilians, benefits that yielded veterans better jobs and higher incomes. But federal aid for higher education was decoupled from military service during the Vietnam War era, and civilians could get educational benefits similar to veterans' without delaying their education and entry into the civilian labor force by joining the military.<sup>3</sup>

The financial returns to service in the all-volunteer force are not as clear. Several studies suggest that minority veterans have not benefited greatly from service in the all-volunteer forces, but that, in the aggregate, military service brought greater economic benefits to minority men than to white men, particularly during the military draft years.<sup>4</sup>

We know less about female veterans largely because, except for World War

than the conscription-era force, the great majority of volunteer force personnel did not make the military a long-term career.

The percentage of personnel staying until retirement varies greatly by branch of service, reflecting the differential premium placed on youth.<sup>13</sup> The ground combat forces have placed a premium on youth and vigor, and the Marine Corps in particular discourages long-term service. The typical Marine generally leaves after completing a single enlistment contract of three to four years. The Air Force, on the other hand, invests heavily in technical training and seeks to retain personnel to increase the return on its investment. The Air Force is more career-oriented, and between 20 percent and 30 percent of separations have been retirements since the 1980s. Since 1990, fewer

than 30 percent of Air Force separations have been attributable simply to fulfillment of enlistment contracts.

## Personal Characteristics

The armed militias that formed during the American colonial era were fairly homogeneous. Members were all male and predominantly from white European backgrounds: British at first, with other nationalities added as the nation expanded and as waves of immigration made the nation's population more diverse. All social classes were represented, although most of the early colonies granted exemption from service to major property owners. From the time of the American Revolution, military

II, relatively few women served in the American military prior to the end of the draft in 1973. But recent studies suggest that women who served in the all-volunteer service have found it easier to transfer their military skills to the civilian labor market than have men, but male veterans gain greater earnings in the civilian labor market because of their military service than women veterans. In fact, women—especially young and white women—appear to suffer a wage penalty for military service.<sup>5</sup>

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service was linked to citizenship and helped define the relationship between the individual and the state.<sup>14</sup> Military service was expected of male citizens, and at times it was a way of expediting citizenship for noncitizens.

## Race

While the early militias and the Continental Army were predominantly white, blacks, American Indians, and Asians served in various capacities for years, although they were often separated from the white soldiers. American Indians served in the military beginning in colonial times. They were segregated in separate units as scouts and auxiliaries during the 19th century, but by the Spanish-American War in 1898 they were serving throughout the Army despite political pressure to continue their segregation. The major exceptions to this pattern were communications units—the famous American Indian Code Talkers—recruited in the two World Wars. American Indians helped convert their unwritten native languages into virtually unbreakable codes for transmitting sensitive information.

The first Asian or Pacific people to serve in the U.S. Army were the Philippine Scouts, who were organized in company-sized units of about 100 soldiers starting in the late 19th century, and who remained a separate unit until World War II. Late in the 19th century, the Navy opened the Messmen's and Steward's Branch—previously reserved for African Americans—to Asians. Filipino messmen outnumbered African Americans in the Messman's and Steward's Branch by the beginning of World War I.

The Navy halted Filipino enlistments in the 1930s, resuming them only after the Philippines gained independence in 1946. Filipinos were recruited into the only racially segregated branch of the Navy. The Navy had briefly experimented with segregated ships in World War I—the entire crew of one destroyer was from the Philippines and another was from

Guam—but the experiment was abandoned in 1920 in part because it was difficult to recruit all the specialties and ranks required for a ship from a limited population.

During World War II, most Japanese American men who had been drafted into the Army, and all those who volunteered during the war, were segregated in the 100th Infantry Battalion and the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. These units were kept out of the Pacific theatre so they would not be fighting against Japanese forces, but both units distinguished themselves in combat in Europe.

The War Department allowed up to 500 second-generation Japanese American women to join the Women's Army Corps during World War II, with a smaller number joining the Army Medical Corps.<sup>15</sup> After the war, Japanese Americans were integrated into all branches of the U.S. armed services.

Black men have served in every war that America ever fought, but African Americans were not integrated into the military as rapidly as American Indians or Asian Americans.<sup>16</sup> Although they held lower status than white soldiers, thousands of black men fought in the American Revolutionary War and in the naval forces in the war against France from 1798 to 1800. In the War of 1812, Andrew Jackson used free black men in Louisiana to help defend New Orleans from the British. But blacks were generally not allowed to serve during peacetime.

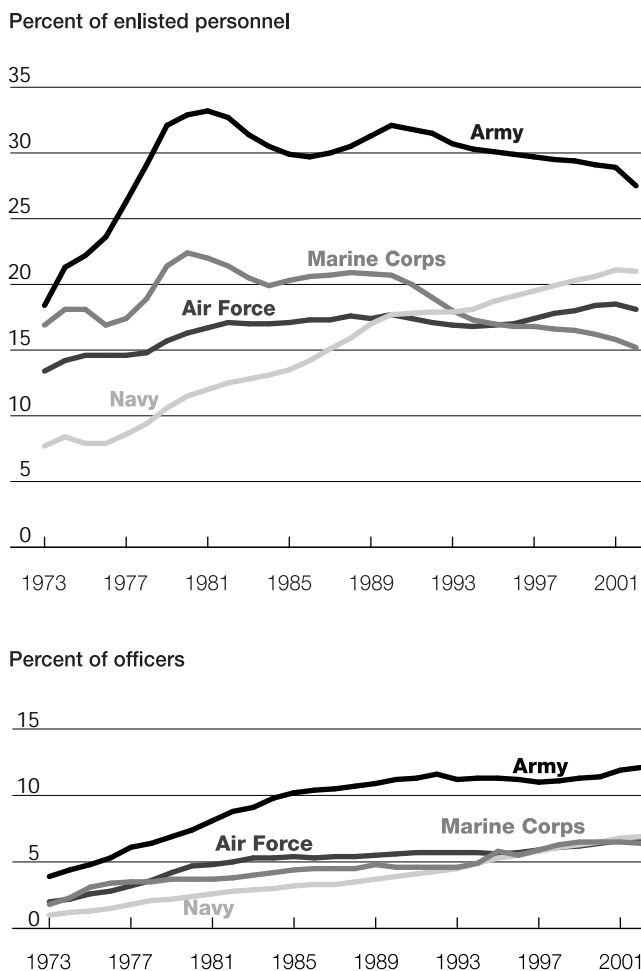
Congress authorized the service of black men in the Union forces during the Civil War. Blacks served in racially segregated units and accounted for about 10 percent of Army personnel. In the Navy, blacks served on integrated crews, although primarily at the lowest ranks and in menial jobs, making up about a quarter of Navy personnel. At the end of the war, Congress established four black regiments—the 24th and 25th Infantry, and the 9th and 10th Cavalry—which represented about 10 percent of Army personnel.

The mobilization for the Korean War in 1950 essentially forced the Army to end racial segregation. One-quarter of the new Army's recruits were black—more than the segregated training bases and operational units could absorb, and blacks were brought into formerly all-white units. Research showed that integrated units performed better than segregated units, bolstering the case for wider racial integration.<sup>17</sup> By 1954, all-black units were abolished and the Army was racially integrated.

During the Vietnam War, the Kennedy administration departed from past practice and used the draft rather than the overwhelmingly white reserve components to mobilize American forces for Southeast Asia. When Kennedy assumed office, blacks were underrepresented in the military, but the Selective Service System disproportionately drafted the poor during the early years of the Vietnam War, and black men were overrepresented among the poor. In the early months of the Vietnam War, blacks accounted for about 20 percent of combat deaths in Vietnam, although they were only 11 percent of the military-age population. The high death toll for black soldiers led to claims of racial injustice—that blacks were fighting and dying to further the interests of white men, while still treated unfairly at home. Some critics saw further injustice in the fact that U.S. blacks were fighting and killing other nonwhites—the Vietnamese. To avoid the appearance of racial discrimination, the Pentagon reduced the assignment of blacks to combat jobs, and combat deaths for blacks fell to about 12 percent, closer to their share of the total U.S. population.<sup>18</sup>

Blacks assumed even greater representation in the military after the draft ended in 1973—a result not intended or expected by the architects of America's post-Vietnam volunteer military (see Figure 6). The relative number of black enlistees was especially high among ground combat forces in the Army and Marine Corps.<sup>19</sup> Black men (and, increas-

**Figure 6**  
**African American Share of Enlisted Personnel and Officers, by Service, 1973–2002**



Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): tables D-17, D-27.

ingly, black women in noncombat forces) perceived the military to be a more racially fair employer than the civilian labor force, and indeed the volunteer force would not have met its manpower goals without the increased representation of blacks. But the overrepresentation of black men in combat units again raised the politically unpopular specter of disproportionate casualties among blacks in the case of war. While the representation of blacks in the labor force was increasing, personnel poli-

Photo removed for copyright reasons.

*African Americans served in segregated combat units in World War II. The military was integrated during the Korean War in 1950.*

cies deliberately reduced the share of blacks in combat units in the late 20th century.<sup>20</sup> The African American share of all military personnel stabilized after 1990 at just above 20 percent, and declined between 2001 and 2002.

In 2002, blacks made up about 22 percent of enlisted personnel in the armed forces (20 percent of men and 34 percent of women), while blacks made up 13 percent of civilians ages 18 to 44 (see Figure 7). In 2002, the black component ranged from 28 percent in the Army and 21 percent in the Navy to 18 percent in the Air Force and 15 percent in the Marine Corps.

Black enlisted personnel are more likely than other racial groups to be in functional support and administrative specialties, especially compared with whites (see Table 3, page 22). Blacks are also more likely than whites to be in service or supply specialties and less likely than whites to be in electronic, electrical, or mechanical equipment repair, or combat specialties.

Blacks are underrepresented in the officer ranks compared with their share of enlisted personnel or the civilian labor force. At the same time, African Americans' share of officers has been increasing, from about 3 percent at the beginning of the volunteer force to about 9 percent in 2002—similar to their share of civilian college graduates.<sup>21</sup> Blacks follow a slightly different path to becoming officers than do whites. They are less

likely than white officers to have been commissioned through the military academies. In 2002, 11 percent of black officers entered through the academies compared with 16 percent of white officers. Black officers were also more likely than white officers to have been commissioned through ROTC without scholarship support (23 percent of blacks versus 14 percent of whites). Blacks were about as likely as whites to gain their commission through other avenues, including ROTC scholarships, officer candidate schools, or direct commission.

Black officers are more likely than whites to be in the lowest officer ranks (Army second lieutenant to captain and their equivalents in the other services); this racial gap is especially pronounced among Naval officers (see Table 4, page 22). Black officers are also less likely than white officers to be in career-enhancing tactical operation specialties (25 percent versus 39 percent in fiscal year 2002), and more likely to be in administration, supply, procurement, and allied occupations (26 percent versus 14 percent for white officers).

Black officers are likely to be younger than white officers, in part because the increase in black officers is relatively recent. Black officers also wait longer for promotions, in part because they are disproportionately in support rather than tip-of-the-spear combat fields in which promotions happen faster. Because black officers are less likely than white to be promoted, they are also more likely to leave the service earlier in an up-or-out system, which keeps the average age of black officers lower.

## Ethnicity

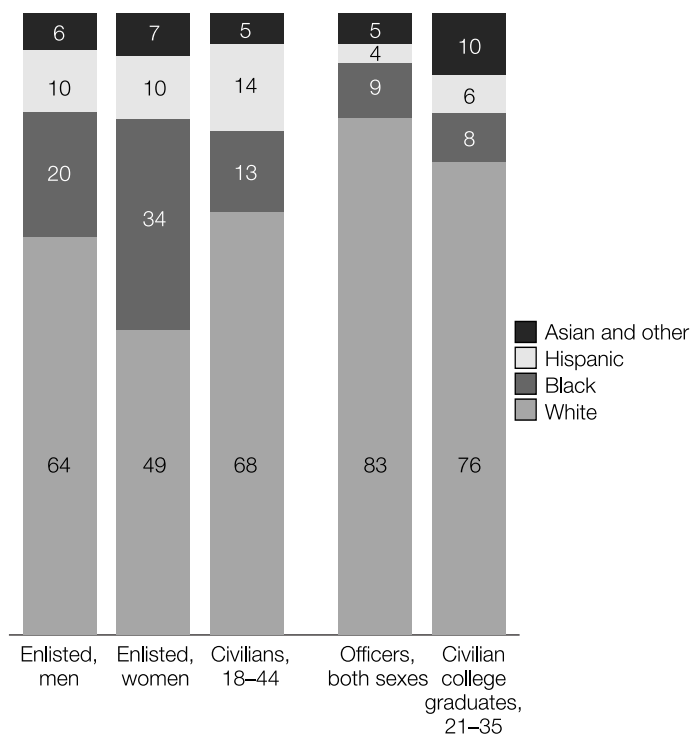
Men from a range of European national backgrounds served in the colonial militias in the 18th century. Some served in units defined by ethnicity and language. In 1776, Congress authorized a German Battalion for the Continental Army, with companies drawn from Maryland and Pennsylvania. The annexation of the

Republic of Texas in 1845, and the influx of immigrants in the middle of the 19th century (2.6 million arrived in the 1850s) gave a particularly international flavor to the Civil War. Mexican Americans served on both sides in the war. State militias supplied to the Union Army units such as the First German Rifles (8th New York Infantry) and the Irish Brigade (drawn from the Massachusetts and New York militias). About 22 percent of the Union Army was foreign-born, as were at least a third of the Navy personnel. The foreign-born share of soldiers increased to about half in the decade following the Civil War, as new immigrants found military service to be a good source of employment and a convenient path of transition to a new society.

Concern about the economic and political consequences of having such a large “non-American” force led to the passage of a law in 1894 that limited new enlistments to American Indians, citizens, and men who indicated that they intended to become citizens and could read, write, and speak English. By the time the United States went to war with Spain in 1898, the Army was “only” 25 percent foreign-born. About 15 percent of the total U.S. population was foreign-born in 1890.<sup>22</sup>

The mobilization for World War I provided a polyglot army through a conscription law that made all aliens who declared an intention to become citizens, other than those from Germany and the Central Powers, subject to the draft. For example, the commander of the 77th Infantry Division, manned by draftees from the New York area, claimed that 43 languages and dialects were used in his unit. Large numbers of draftees could not speak English, and initially they were assigned to units that performed menial labor. The Army also became an English-language training institution, and thousands of immigrants learned English through military service. For the most part, European ethnic group members were integrated throughout the army, with occasional

**Figure 7**  
**Active-Duty Military and Civilians by Race/Ethnicity, 2002**



Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): tables 4.5 and B-24, and page 4-9.

exceptions. The 99th Infantry Battalion in World War II, for example, was all Norwegian American and was trained for an invasion of German-occupied Norway. Also in World War II, two primarily Spanish-speaking New Mexico National Guard units—the 200th and 515th Coast Artillery battalions—were stationed in the Philippines before the war, captured on the Bataan Peninsula, and had to endure the 85-mile “death march” to Japanese prison camps. Other largely Spanish-speaking units from the Arizona and Texas National Guard saw extensive combat in the Pacific and in Europe. After the Spanish-American War, with a great interest in the annexation of Puerto Rico, Congress authorized the formation of a battalion of Puerto Rican troops. This unit evolved into the 65th Infantry, which

**Table 3**  
**Occupational Areas of Active Enlisted Personnel**  
**by Race/Ethnicity, FY2002**

Occupational area	Total	White	Black	Hispanic	Other
All occupations (%)	100	100	100	100	100
Combat—infantry, gun crews, and seamanship <sup>1</sup>	17	18	12	18	14
Technical	49	52	41	45	49
Electronic <sup>2</sup>	30	33	22	27	30
Communications	9	10	8	8	7
Medical	7	6	8	8	10
Other technical	3	3	2	2	2
Administrative/other	35	30	47	37	36
Administrator	16	12	27	18	18
Craftsman	4	4	3	3	4
Supply	9	7	13	9	9
Nonoccupational <sup>3</sup>	6	7	5	7	6

<sup>1</sup> Women do not serve in infantry positions but do serve in other positions, such as gun crews, air crews, and seamanship specialties, which are included in the "infantry" area.

<sup>2</sup> Electronic equipment repairers and electrical/mechanical equipment repairers.

<sup>3</sup> Includes patients, students, those with unassigned duties, and unknowns.

Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): table B-30.

guarded the Panama Canal for most of the two World Wars.

The descendents of European ethnic groups that arrived in earlier immigration waves have been integrated into the military and are no longer monitored. About the time the United States adopted an all-volunteer military, however, the U.S. Census Bureau began to monitor the rapidly growing U.S. Hispanic population—an amalgam of several ethnic groups of Spanish or Latin American

descent, dominated numerically by Hispanics of Mexican origin. The military recognized that this rapidly growing segment of the youth population was an important part of the recruiting pool.<sup>23</sup> In 1995, 15 percent of the civilian youth population was Hispanic, although this group accounted for only 9 percent of military personnel.<sup>24</sup> The percentage of 18-year-old civilians who are Hispanic is projected to reach at least 22 percent by 2020.<sup>25</sup>

**Table 4**  
**Active-Duty Officers by Rank, Service, and Race/Ethnicity, FY2002**

Rank	Army			Navy			Marines			Air Force		
	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic	White	Black	Hispanic
All officers (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Company grade <sup>1</sup>	57	61	71	58	69	73	62	71	79	57	63	64
Field grade <sup>2</sup>	42	39	29	42	30	27	37	29	20	43	37	36
General/flag <sup>3</sup>	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—

— Less than 0.5 percent.

<sup>1</sup> Up to captain (lieutenant in the Navy).

<sup>2</sup> Major through colonel (lieutenant commander to captain in the Navy).

<sup>3</sup> General (admiral in the Navy).

Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): table B-49.



Hispanic representation increased in the enlisted ranks of the military in the era of the volunteer force, from about 2 percent in 1975, when the Hispanic category was first used, to 10 percent in 2001. But the Hispanic share is still below that of African Americans, who have twice as many enlisted men and more than three times as many enlisted women. Hispanic representation has been greatest among the Marine Corps, where it reached almost 15 percent among enlisted personnel in 2001; the Hispanic share is lowest among Air Force personnel, where it hovered at about 4 percent until the late 1990s (see Figure 8).

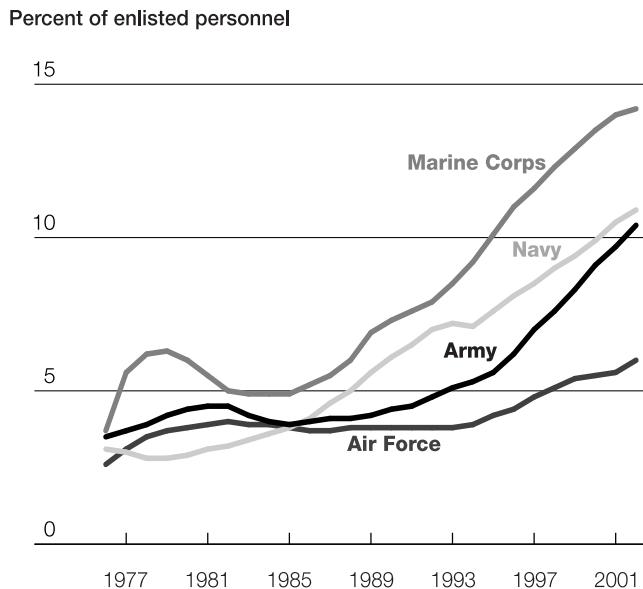
As with blacks, the commissioning of Hispanics as officers has lagged well behind their recruitment into enlisted ranks and falls below their share of civilian college graduates. Four percent of officers are Hispanic, compared with 6 percent of college graduates ages 21 to 35 and 10 percent of enlisted personnel.

Hispanics are more likely than blacks to be in combat specialties, and less likely than blacks to be in administrative or supply occupations (see Table 3). Hispanic officers in the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps are more likely than either white or black officers to be at the lowest officer grades (see Table 4).

## Age

The military labor force is significantly younger than the civilian labor force: The armed forces place a premium on youth over experience, albeit with significant differences among the branches of service.<sup>26</sup> More than half the enlisted women in the armed forces are below age 25, as are almost half the enlisted men. Women leave the service at younger ages than men, however, and few enlisted men or women remain in the service after age 50. The military work force is highly concentrated in the younger age groups, in sharp contrast to the civilian labor force, which

**Figure 8**  
**Hispanic Share of Enlisted Personnel by Service, 1976–2002**



Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): tables D-18.

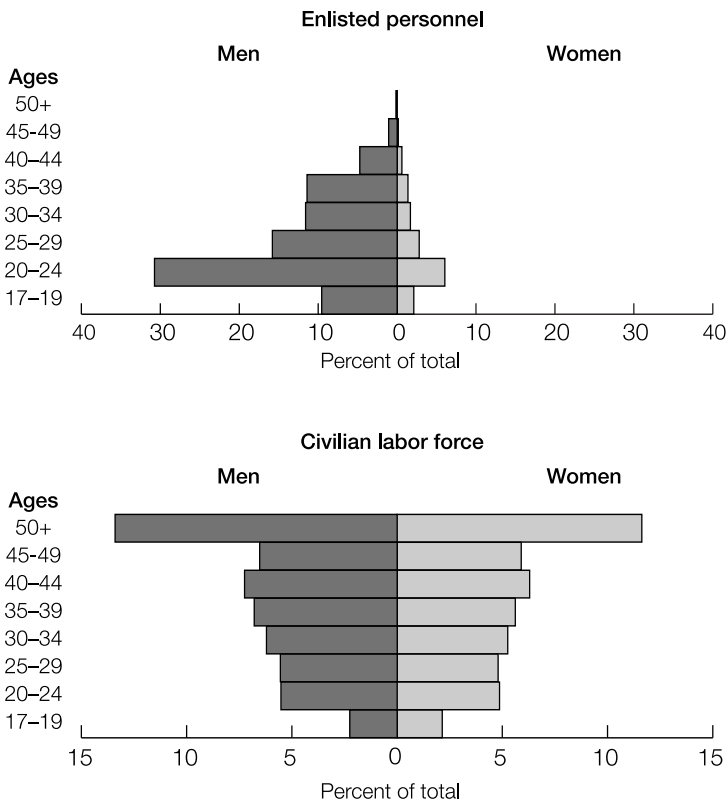
includes a large share over age 50 (see Figure 9, page 24).

Enlisted personnel tend to enter the military after high school or a year of college, and they leave the service after just a few years, accentuating the young age structure among enlistees. Most officers complete at least four years of college before entering the service, and they remain in service longer—giving them an older age profile.

Marines are the youngest service and the Air Force the oldest. Almost 60 percent of Marines are younger than 25 years of age, compared with about 42 percent of Army and Navy personnel, and about 35 percent of Air Force personnel. By contrast, more than 30 percent of Air Force personnel are age 35 or older, compared with about 15 percent of Marines.

In the civilian labor force, men and women below age 25 make up only 15 percent of the labor force; labor force participation increases

**Figure 9**  
**Enlisted and Civilian Men and Women by Age, 2002**



Source: DoD, *Population Representation of the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): table B-23.

with age, and the broad age distribution of workers does not differ much by gender. Also, men and women over age 50 make up a large group of employed civilians, some of whom had military service prior to entering the civilian work force.

### Socioeconomic Status

A long-standing myth about the American armed forces was that military conscription functioned as a social leveler, distributing the burden of military service equitably across all sectors of society.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the various systems of selective conscription used to staff the military, from the first days of the American Republic, have privileged the wealthy and politically powerful and have placed the

burden of defending the nation on the less wealthy and less powerful, although not necessarily on the lowest income groups. A corollary myth during the 1960s and early 1970s was that if the United States abandoned the system of selective conscription it had used since World War II, it would place the burden of national defense on the shoulders of the American underclass.<sup>28</sup>

Throughout U.S. history, the larger the wartime mobilizations were, the more equitably they distributed the burden of military service, but the wealthy and privileged were often able to avoid service.<sup>29</sup> The Civil War draft, which allowed conscripts to buy their way out of service or to provide replacements, favored the wealthy. The World War I draft also allowed the wealthy and privileged to avoid serving, and the wartime armed forces overrepresented African Americans, immigrants, and men with lower levels of education.

Our largest mobilizations in proportion to the U.S. population were for World War II and the Korean War, the former because of the large size of the force, and the latter because it drew from the small generation born during the Great Depression. The socioeconomic homogeneity of the force during this period suggested that both the very rich and the very poor were somewhat underrepresented. The Vietnam War mobilization, which drew a small proportion of the very large baby-boom generation, by contrast, opened up many avenues for the privileged to avoid military service,<sup>30</sup> or to avoid being sent to war, for example, by joining the National Guard; applying for conscientious objector status; or seeking educational, occupational, or medical deferments. At the same time, the very lowest social strata were disproportionately rejected for service because of poor medical conditions, low mental aptitude scores, or criminal records.

This pattern of the military not attracting the highest or lowest socioeconomic groups continued into

the current volunteer force. The National Longitudinal Study of the high school class of 1972—the first class to enter the military after conscription ended—found that those who joined the military were of lower socioeconomic status and more likely to be black than those who did not serve.<sup>31</sup> But the differences were relatively small and did not suggest that the volunteer military was becoming a force made up of the American underclass. A recent analysis of survey data on 100,000 high school seniors from the classes of 1984 to 1991 showed that parents' level of education—a measure of socioeconomic status—was negatively related to joining the armed forces within two years of high school graduation. Again, however, the data suggest that the military does not draw from the very lowest social strata.<sup>32</sup>

## Religion

When sociologist Morris Janowitz reported on the social origins of soldiers in 1960, he was able to identify general patterns and trends in their religious affiliation, albeit from fairly poor data. He found an overwhelmingly Protestant majority, disproportionately Episcopalian, but with an increasing representation of Catholics and a small percentage of Jews. Soldiers were less likely to be Catholic than the general public, but the military reflected the general range of religious diversity in America.<sup>33</sup>

While Janowitz was writing about the conscription-era military and his data on religion were weak relative to other variables, his findings provide a baseline for studying the religious affiliation of today's volunteer military. There are few comprehensive statistics on religious affiliation in the civilian population, in part because the principle of separation of church and state precludes federal statistical programs, such as the decennial census and current population surveys, from collecting data on religion. We do know the civilian American population has been moving away from

the traditional Christian religions and toward other religious groups or eschewing any religious affiliation.<sup>34</sup> This latter trend is particularly pronounced among young adults, exactly the age groups most likely to enter the military. In general, the armed forces show lower religious affiliation than the civilian population, even among civilians ages 20 to 39 (see Table 5). A larger share of military than civilians reported they are Christians but are not Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox or Protestant, or do not specify a denomination. This category includes such Christian groups as Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, and Jehovah's Witnesses, as well as the Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God, Seventh Day Adventist, and Assemblies of God. Smaller Protestant groups have been increasing since the 1960s, while the older, larger Protestant denominations such as Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Lutherans, and Methodists have declined. But religious affiliation data are often inconsistent because of the different ways the data were collected and analyzed: Religious affiliation for military personnel is recorded regularly by the Department of Defense, while religious data for civilians is obtained

*Table 5*  
**Religious Preferences of the U.S. Population and Military Personnel, 2001**

Religious preference	Military	Civilians	
		Ages 20-39	Ages 18+
All preferences	100	100	100
Protestant	35	45	53
Catholic/orthodox	22	26	25
Other Christian	11	3	2
Atheist/no religion	21	19	14
Jewish	—	1	2
Muslim/Islam	—	1	1
Buddhist/Hindu	—	2	1
Other religions/ unknown/refused	11	3	2

— Less than 0.5 percent.

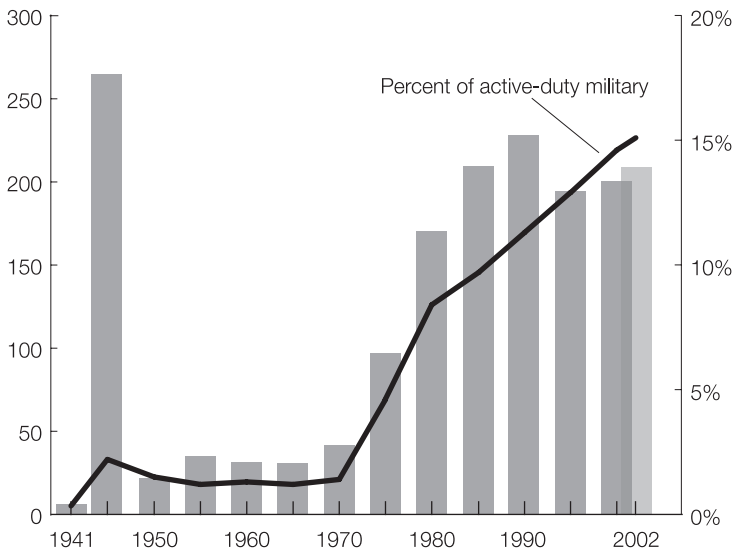
Note: Other Christian includes Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of God, Seventh Day Adventist, Assemblies of God, and other Christian religions.

Sources: DoD Defense Manpower Data Center; and authors' calculations using the General Social Survey 2002, National Opinion Research Center.

Figure 10

## Women in the Military: Number and Share of Military Personnel, 1941–2002

■ Number of women in military, in thousands



Source: DoD, *Selected Manpower Statistics, Fiscal Year 2002* ([www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/M01/fy02/m01fy02.pdf](http://www.dior.whs.mil/mmid/M01/fy02/m01fy02.pdf), accessed Dec. 6, 2004); tables 2-11 and 2-19; and U.S. Department of Commerce, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1955*.

from surveys such as the results from the 2002 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center reported in Table 5.

About one-quarter of the American population considers itself to be Roman Catholic, according to the GSS survey. Catholics are slightly underrepresented in the armed forces, as are almost all other traditional religions.

There have been indications of increasing religious diversity in the armed forces, including growing numbers of Muslims.<sup>35</sup> However, Jews, Buddhists, and Muslims are underrepresented in the military relative to their share of the civilian population. The number of American military personnel who claimed to be atheists or to have no religion was slightly higher than the GSS estimate for civilians ages 20 to 39, the age range for about 80 percent of military personnel. About 11 percent of mili-

tary personnel did not provide religious affiliation data or claimed affiliation with other religions, almost four times as high as the GSS data for the 20-to-39-year-olds. Other recent surveys also have reported greater identification with no religion or other nontraditional religions than the GSS, but results vary greatly depending on how data are collected. Recent data suggest that military personnel generally have a lower affiliation with mainstream religious groups than the general population.

### Gender

Military service in most countries and at most times has been a predominantly male occupation. Women have served in the U.S. military throughout its history, but never on an equal basis with men. During the Revolutionary War, women posed as men in order to participate. During the Civil War, women's contributions to military efforts increased dramatically as they performed vital support services such as nursing, cooking, and laundering. However, these services were outside the regular structure of the military. Women were first accepted into official roles in the military only in the 20th century.<sup>36</sup>

A common historical and cross-national pattern is that women's military roles expand during times of war and tend to contract when the war is over. Women's military roles are also responsive to cultural values about gender and family, but military necessity often takes precedence.<sup>37</sup>

The U.S. military employed women in unprecedented numbers in World War I—approximately 34,000 served in uniform.<sup>38</sup> Both the Navy and Marine Corps established women's auxiliary units in which women were granted official military status and assigned to traditionally female jobs such as telephone operators and clerks. Women also served in the Army and Navy Nurse Corps. At the end of the war, the women's units (other than the nursing units) were disbanded.

Table 6

**Percent of Military Positions and Occupations Open to Women, Selected Years, 1971-2003**

Year	Positions				Occupations			
	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
2003	70	91	62	99	91	94	92	99
1994	65	62	34	100	—	—	—	—
1983	52	40	21	90	90	86	96	98
1980*	—	—	—	—	95	86	96	98
1971*	—	—	—	—	39	24	57	51

— Less than 0.5 percent.

\* Enlisted only.

Note: Occupations refer to specific military job categories (for example infantry rifleman or tank driver), while positions refer to the people actually employed in these occupations.

Sources: L. Manning and V.R. Wight, *Women in the Military*, 4th ed. (2003); A. Maisels and P.M. Gormley, *Women in the Military* (1994); DoD, Manpower, Installations and Logistics, *Military Women in the Department of Defense*, vol. 2 (1984); and Assistant Secretary of Defense, *Manpower, Reserve Affairs and Logistics, Background Review: Women in the Military* (1981).

The next large expansion of women’s military roles came, not surprisingly, with U.S. involvement in World War II. In 1941, approximately 6,000 women were on active duty and they constituted less than one-half percent of the total forces. By 1945, there were about 265,000 women in uniform, representing 2 percent of the forces (see Figure 10). Women not only served in larger numbers than ever before, but in expanded roles. A similar transformation took place in civilian employment for women during World War II, as more women were employed and more worked in nontraditional jobs. Women served in auxiliary units in all the services and performed both traditionally female jobs, as health care and administration, and such traditionally masculine jobs such as parachute rigger, aircraft mechanic, and weapons instructor. In addition, several hundred women served as WASPs (Women’s Airforce Service Pilots). These women, although not granted full military status and benefits until decades after the war, performed the vital and dangerous jobs of ferrying military aircraft to overseas theaters of operations. As before, the end of the war brought a return to legal limitations on women’s military roles that constrained their participation for over 40 years.

Women’s representation remained a little over 1 percent of the force throughout the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>39</sup> The percentage of military personnel who were women began to rise in the 1970s and reached 1.9 percent in 1972, on the eve of the all-volunteer military.

The end of military conscription and the establishment of the all-volunteer force in 1973 brought a dramatic shift in women’s military roles. Although the architects of the volunteer force had anticipated an all-male force, the military was forced to rely increasingly on women to meet its personnel needs in the face of shortages of qualified male volunteers. Women’s share rose to almost 8.4 percent by 1980. Their representation continued to increase, though more slowly, reaching 15 percent by 2002.<sup>40</sup>

The first 30 years of the all-volunteer force, from 1973 to 2003, witnessed an expansion of job opportunities for military women (see Table 6). Legal and regulatory changes eliminated many of the gender-based restrictions on the assignment of women to military jobs and positions. In 1991, Congress repealed the provisions of a 1948 law that prohibited women from flying aircraft on combat missions. Since 1994, women have been allowed to serve on Navy

surface combatant ships. However, women are still excluded from military units that engage in direct ground combat. This restriction means that women are legally barred from serving in approximately 20 percent of all military positions.<sup>41</sup>

Occupations and positions that involve direct offensive ground combat remain closed to women. In the Army, the largest branch of the services, women are prohibited from serving in units of battalion size or smaller whose primary mission is ground combat, or with units that are routinely located with combat units.<sup>42</sup> Women are excluded from the occupational fields of infantry, armor, and Special Forces. Also closed to women are units at the battalion level or below in cannon field artillery and multiple launch rocket artillery. Women are also excluded from ranger units at the regiment level and below, ground surveillance radar platoons, combat engineer line companies, and short-range air defense artillery units.<sup>43</sup> Women are permitted to serve in 91 percent of Army occupational categories, but in only 70 percent of the actual positions. Women make up 15 percent of Army enlisted personnel and officers.<sup>44</sup>

In contrast to the Army, women are permitted to serve in 94 percent of Navy occupations and 91 percent of Navy positions.<sup>45</sup> Women serve on almost all classes of ships; they are excluded from submarines, special forces (SEALS), coastal patrol boats, special boat unit crews, and support positions with Marine Corps ground combat units. Women also may not work as fire control technicians, missile technicians, and sonar technicians (submarine) because these occupations require submarine service. Although theoretically all Navy surface ships (except the restrictions above) are open to women, not all Navy ships can accommodate women because separate berthing areas are not available. Most Navy ships have limited berth capacity for women and can only accommodate women for about 20 percent of the crew. This

restriction limits women's chances for sea duty even on ships with a personnel slot (called a "billet") open for women. Women constitute 14 percent of Navy enlisted personnel and 15 percent of officers.<sup>46</sup>

The Air Force, which has the smallest proportion of enlisted positions considered direct combat, has few restrictions on women's service: 99 percent of occupations and positions are open to women. Women are excluded from positions that are physically located with ground combat units, such as combat control, tactical air command and control, and pararescue. Restricted assignments include special operations force (SOF) rotary aircraft (helicopters); combat liaison officer assignments with infantry battalions; and radio communications positions that collocate with ground combat units. The Air Force has the largest percentage of women of all the military branches: Women make up 20 percent of enlisted personnel and 18 percent of officers.<sup>47</sup>

The U.S. Marine Corps, the smallest Department of Defense service, has the largest proportion of ground combat personnel and the greatest restrictions on women's assignments. While women can enter 92 percent of occupations, only 62 percent of positions are open to them.<sup>48</sup> Women are excluded from occupations in infantry, armor, and artillery, as well as from serving as security force guard, close-quarter battle team member, and 15 other occupations that routinely collocate with ground combat units. As with the Army, positions in units below the battalion level are closed. Additionally, eight specialties that are open to women have restricted assignment to certain units. Some Marine Corps positions are closed because they are on Navy ships that may not yet accommodate women. The Marine Corps has the smallest representation of women: 6 percent of both enlisted personnel and officers.<sup>49</sup>

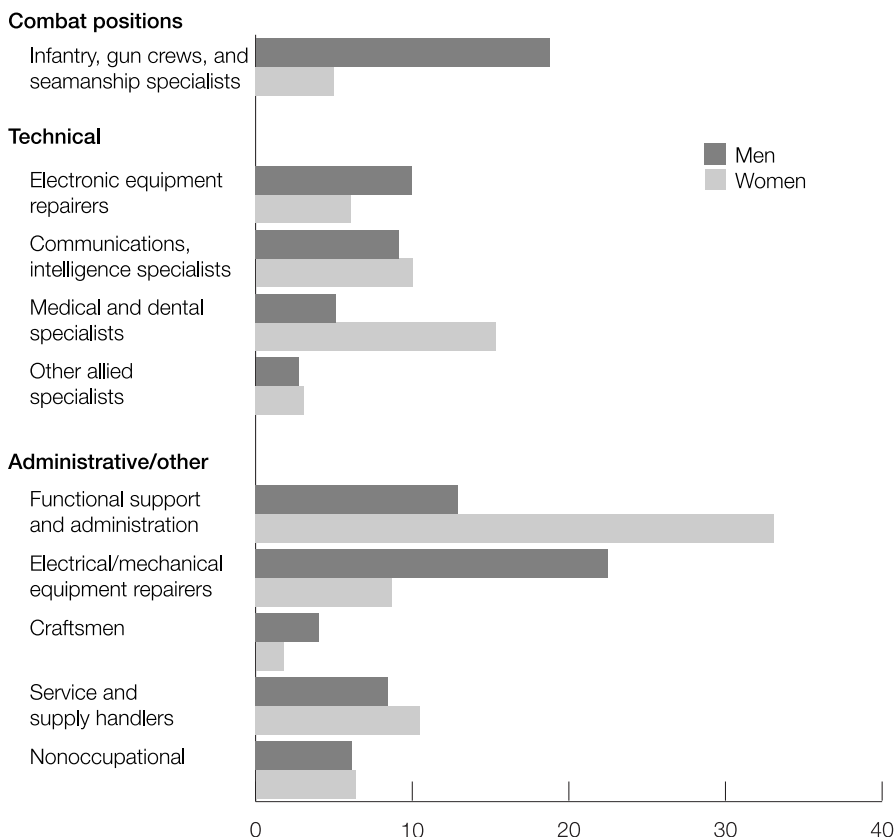
The distribution of jobs that women actually fill is affected by

these exclusions, and also by women's preferences and their recruiters' influence. Women's occupational distributions vary by rank. Most women officers are in support jobs, primarily in health care and administrative specialties; together these two occupational areas account for 55 percent of women (see Figure 11), compared with only 20 percent of men. Health care and administration account for nearly one-half of enlisted women but less than one-fifth of enlisted men. Thus, roughly one-half of women officers and enlisted women are in fields that are not traditional for military women. Nearly 11 percent of women officers are in engineering and maintenance, for example, about the same

as for men, and 9 percent are in tactical operations occupations, compared with 42 percent of men. Among enlisted personnel, women are about as likely as men to be in service and supply specialties or communication and intelligence specialties, which are not traditionally female jobs. Enlisted women's concentration in these nontraditional specialties has increased over time.

The types of jobs held by women officers, relative to male officers, reflect gender differences in how men and women gain officers' commissions. Only about 10 percent of women officers, compared with about 20 percent of men, were commissioned through the military acad-

**Figure 11**  
**Occupational Areas for Enlisted Men and Women, 2002**



Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): table B-29.

Photo removed for copyright reasons.

*The needs of military family members are a growing concern for the U.S. armed forces.*

mies; only about 14 percent of women, compared with about 21 percent of men, were commissioned from the enlisted ranks through officer candidate schools or officer training schools (OCS/OTS). Women officers are about as likely as men to have been commissioned through ROTC with scholarships, although women are somewhat less likely than men to have gone through ROTC without scholarship support (11 percent vs. 15 percent). The most dramatic difference is that more than one-third of the women commissioned officers in the American armed forces received their commissions through direct appointment, compared with about 13 percent of male officers; these officers serve primarily as health care professionals.

One interesting phenomenon in the military is that black women have a greater representation than black men. Sixteen percent of female officers and 34 percent of enlisted women are black compared with 9 percent of male officers and 20 per-

cent of enlisted men.<sup>50</sup> The Army has the highest percentage of black women: Nearly one-fourth of women officers and close to one-half of enlisted women are black. Many black women see the military as providing greater opportunities and benefits than the civilian labor market.

Seventy-one percent of women officers and 48 percent of enlisted women are white. In the Army, only 37 percent of enlisted women are white, meaning that a majority (63 percent) of Army enlisted women are from “minority” racial groups, compared with only 32 percent of civilians ages 18 to 44.

Latinas, in contrast, have a smaller share of the military than of the civilian population, but their share has been growing. In 2002, Hispanic women constituted only 10 percent of enlisted women and 4 percent of female officers, up from 4 percent and 2 percent, respectively, in 1975, but well below their 13 percent of the general population. Hispanic women are nearly 18 percent of enlisted women in the Marine Corps, however.<sup>51</sup>

Despite the historical status of the military as a gender-defining institution,<sup>52</sup> women have always served in the armed forces and their participation has increased, in numbers, percentages, and types of jobs. These changes reflect changes in civilian society in gender norms and women’s roles, as well as the evolution of the nature of the military itself.<sup>53</sup> Further changes—both toward expansion and contraction of women’s military participation—are likely to be a function of these factors and the political and social views of those in power.

## Military Families

For most of U.S. history, military forces consisted primarily of young single men. The few women in the military were not allowed to remain in service with children and at times were not even allowed to serve if they were married. Men needed their commanding officer’s permission to



get married. Over the past 40 years, the proportion of military personnel who are married has risen, due in large part to the increased emphasis on reducing turnover and retaining trained and experienced personnel.<sup>54</sup> The end of the draft in 1973 intensified the need to attract and retain qualified personnel. One way to keep personnel was to provide an acceptable lifestyle and support for families to help compensate for the demands on service members and their families (see Box 5, page 32).

Just over half of today's military personnel are married (about 51 percent), and 73 percent of married personnel have children.<sup>55</sup> America's 1.4 million active-duty service members have 1.9 million family members, including spouses, children, and adult dependents (such as siblings or parents).<sup>56</sup> Thus, the services are responsible for more family members than personnel in uniform.

Military women are less likely than military men to be married or to have children. In 2002, 51 percent of women officers and 42 percent of

enlisted women were married. In contrast, one-half of enlisted men and nearly three-fourths of male officers were married. Among civilians ages 18 to 44—the prime military ages—about one-half of men and women are married.

In a substantial number of military couples, both husband and wife are in the service. There were more than 77,000 dual-military couples in 2002, accounting for about 12 percent of all military marriages. Nearly one-half of married enlisted women and more than one-third of married female officers were married to servicemen in 2002. The percentage in dual-military marriages is much lower for men (see Table 7).

Most dual-military couples do not have children, but the share with children is growing. The military requires dual-military couples and single parents to have a written plan for the care of their children in the event of deployment.

Most married military women have civilian husbands, who have a nontraditional role as the spouse who is

***Most married military women have civilian husbands.***

**Table 7**  
**Selected Marriage Statistics for Active Military Personnel by Gender and Service, FY2002**

Gender	All services	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force
<b>Percent married</b>					
Enlisted personnel	49	49	45	41	56
Men	50	50	47	41	58
Women	42	43	33	41	47
Officers	68	69	62	68	71
Men	71	73	65	70	74
Women	51	52	44	41	55
<b>Married personnel in dual-service marriages (%)</b>					
Enlisted personnel	13	11	8	9	20
Men	7	7	4	6	12
Women	49	42	41	66	58
Officers	9	11	5	6	11
Men	5	6	2	4	7
Women	39	46	23	68	41

Source: DoD, *Population Representation in the Military Services, FY2002* (2004): tables 3.6, 4.12, and B-32.

expected to leave his job and move when his wife is transferred. Very little research has been conducted on how well civilian husbands adjust to being a military spouse. Some of these husbands have had prior military service. The husbands who have not served in the armed forces are likely to experience special social and interpersonal difficulties resulting from their treatment by other members of the military community.<sup>57</sup> Since military culture has tradition-

ally assumed that military personnel are men, military family policies and programs tend to be oriented toward traditional gender roles and traditional family structures—a male breadwinner with a dependent wife. While this male focus has changed somewhat in recent years, civilian husbands of military wives are still treated as oddities.

Some research shows that these civilian husbands face treatment similar to that experienced by women

### *Box 5*

## The Military Family Lifestyle

A social institution is considered “greedy” when it requires great commitment, time, and energy and seeks to limit participants’ other roles. Both the military and families qualify as “greedy institutions.”<sup>1</sup> The military’s distinct lifestyle affects service members and their families—especially their spouses and children. Some civilian occupations share similar lifestyle aspects: Police work and mining are dangerous, for example, corporate executives move often, physicians are on call even when at home, and professors work long hours. But the armed forces are unique in that career military personnel are likely to experience all these demands. There are also benefits to a military lifestyle: financial benefits, job security, access to medical care, discount shopping on post, a sense of belonging and community (with social support during times of stress), and pride in contributing to national security. But the demands of the military life affect the quality of family life; and family experiences affect service members’ commitment to the military.<sup>2</sup>

Service members’ family responsibilities have grown with higher marriage rates, increased numbers of women (who tend to shoulder greater family burdens), single parents, and dual-service couples; and a greater commitment to family life.

Many aspects make the armed forces a “greedy” institution, including:

- **Risk of injury or death of the service member.** The risk is not only in

wartime, but also in training exercises and the operation of military equipment.

- **Separations from family.** Service members are often separated from their families by deployments for military missions, sea duty, unaccompanied tours, field exercises, and training.

Long separations can bring financial hardship and logistical burdens as well as stressful shifts in family dynamics—both during the absence and after reunion with the family.<sup>3</sup> Reunited family members need to get used to living together again and to changes in family dynamics.<sup>4</sup>

- **Frequent geographic relocation.** Service members and their spouses and children move frequently, necessitating adjustment to new surroundings and changes in friendships and social support networks. Children must adjust to a new peer group and school system, often with different curricula. Civilian spouses of military personnel are disadvantaged in the job market, because they must find jobs around military installations and their temporary status makes it hard for them to secure promotions.

- **Residence in foreign countries.** American military personnel generally spend some part of their service stationed outside the United States, sometimes without their spouses and children.

Living in foreign countries requires adjustments: family mem-

who represent a small, “token” minority in their occupation.<sup>58</sup> Typical negative social experiences include a disproportionate amount of attention, exaggerated military culture when they are present, social isolation, and being assumed to be the service member in the family. Recent research also shows that civilian men married to military women are more dissatisfied with their employment opportunities than civilian women married to military men and have

higher rates of unemployment (see Box 6, page 34).<sup>59</sup>

As among civilians, the share of young military adults who are single—because they never married or are divorced or separated—has increased since 1990. A growing percentage of single military personnel have children. Although women are more likely than men to be single parents, the much larger numbers of men than women in the armed forces means that there are more single

bers can experience “culture shock,” which involves the disorientation of an unfamiliar language and customs, along with the stress and adjustments required in any move. Expensive and unreliable long-distance telephone service often hinders communication with friends and family back in the United States, adding to the feeling of isolation.

- **Long and often unpredictable duty hours and shift work.** Military personnel must be available for duty at any time. Work hours are often long and unpredictable and may involve overnight duty, limiting time with families and making the scheduling of family activities difficult. Service members report working an average of more than 50 hours per week (about 54 hours for enlisted personnel and almost 60 hours for officers).<sup>5</sup>
- **Pressures to conform.** Family members are expected to conform to accepted standards of behavior, especially when they live on military installations. Violation of these standards reflects poorly on the service member.
- **Masculine nature of the organization.** Armed forces’ personnel are overwhelmingly men, and even services geared for families have a traditionally masculine culture and structure.<sup>6</sup> An example of masculine culture is the military’s tendency to impose hierarchy when it

is not necessary or appropriate, such as in family support groups.

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## Box 6

### Spouse Employment in the Military

As the armed forces compete for quality personnel in the labor market, they are seeking ways to keep trained personnel in the service longer. Family satisfaction is an important factor in the retention of personnel. Service members whose family members are not happy with military life are likely to seek jobs in the civilian sector. The service then bears the expense of recruiting, training, and retaining replacements. There are, therefore, clear economic payoffs to military family satisfaction. Spouses' employment has been a special issue for military families because that employment affects financial well-being and satisfaction with military life, which in turn affect retention.

A wife's or husband's employment satisfaction is a major determinant of family satisfaction with military life.<sup>1</sup> Military wives today, like other American women, are more likely to work outside the home than in the past. But spouses' support for their husbands (or wives) staying in the military is not affected by whether they are working, but by whether their job situation, salary, and type of work meet their expectations.<sup>2</sup>

The 1992 Department of Defense Survey of Spouses found that 54 percent of military wives were employed, compared with 73 percent of military husbands (although this difference primarily reflects white couples; black wives and husbands do not differ significantly in their employment rates). Military spouses experience higher rates of unemployment and lower earnings than their peers who are married to civilians.<sup>3</sup> Unemployment rates were 10 percent for wives and 17 percent for husbands in 1992. The employment difficulties are attributable in part to the need to relocate when a spouse is transferred, and in part to the labor market in areas where the family lives. Women living in local labor markets with high proportions of military personnel are more likely to earn less money and to be unemployed than women living in areas without military installations.<sup>4</sup> And military wives have higher unem-

ployment and lower wages than other women in the same areas.<sup>5</sup>

The armed services have attempted to address spouse employment issues by, for example, helping wives become more employable with workshops on how to write a résumé and how to dress and act for job interviews. Some military installations provide listings of jobs available in the local area. While job listings and employment skills training are useful, they will not help if appropriate jobs do not exist in the local labor market. Some recent initiatives to address the job supply issue involve the military working with civilian employers to increase the jobs available to military spouses.<sup>6</sup>

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fathers than single mothers in the military. In 2001 the number of single fathers exceeded 64,000; the number of single mothers in uniform exceeded 23,000.<sup>60</sup>

Within enlisted and officer categories, higher-ranking personnel are more likely to be married than single, since rank and age are closely related. Only lower-ranking enlisted personnel are more likely to be single than married. Men are more likely than women to be married, except in the lowest enlisted ranks. The large gender differences among senior enlisted personnel and officers reflect the difficulty for women of balancing work and family life in the military, especially for women with children.

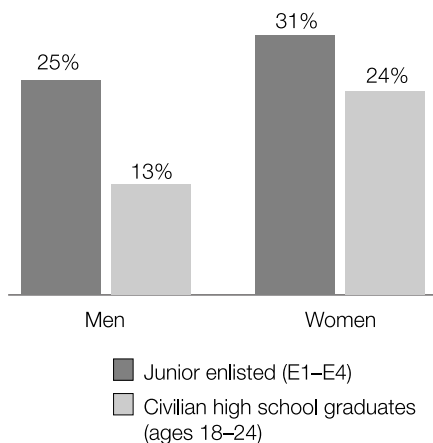
There are differences among the military services in the percentage of personnel who are married and these differences vary by officer-enlisted status and by gender. Enlisted personnel are less likely to be married than officers, reflecting their younger ages. Air Force personnel are more likely to be married than their rank and gender peers in the other services, perhaps reflecting the fact that Air Force personnel are the most likely to be viewing military service as a career. While Marine Corps enlisted personnel overall are younger and less likely to be married than their counterparts in the other services, enlisted women in the Navy are less likely to be married than other enlisted women. Similarly, women officers in the Marine Corps and the Navy are less likely to be married than women officers in the Army and the Air Force.

In each of the services, men are more likely to be married than their female peers, especially among officers. And, among married military women, substantial proportions are married to military men. Across all services, a substantial share of married enlisted women (47 percent) are in dual-service marriages. The largest percentages occur in the Marine Corps (64 percent) and in the Air Force (56 percent). A smaller percentage of married women officers are in dual-service marriages (37 per-

cent), with the greatest share in the Marine Corps and smallest share in the Navy.

Though higher-ranking (and therefore older) personnel are more likely than junior personnel to be married, there is a special concern about the high rate of marriage among junior enlisted personnel compared with their civilian counterparts (see Figure 12). Enlisted men in the four lowest pay grades are almost twice as likely to be married (25 percent) as civilian male high school graduates of about the same age: 18 to 24 years. While the ratio is smaller for women, junior enlisted women are also more likely than their civilian peers to be married. The differences are even greater among enlisted personnel in the lowest three pay grades compared with civilians ages 18 to 24. The relatively high marriage rates among the lowest pay grades have created a problem for the military. Junior enlisted wages and benefits are not designed to support a family; the low military wages make some enlisted families eligible for

*Figure 12*  
**Percent of Junior Enlisted Men and Women Married Compared With Similar Civilians, 2002**



Source: Author's calculations using 2002 DMDC data; and U.S. Census Bureau, March 2002 Current Population Survey.

civilian welfare benefits—a situation often considered a disgrace in the media and by Congress.<sup>61</sup>

Similar to the situation in civilian families, black military women are less likely (35 percent) than other women to be single and childless, and more likely to be single parents (24 percent). Black women are also more likely than other servicewomen to be in dual-service marriages with children (14 percent) and less likely to be in dual-military marriages without children (7 percent); this difference may at least partly reflect the higher ranks of black women, who remain in service longer than white women.

Like black women in the military, black military men are less likely than other men to be single and childless (see Table 8). They are also more likely than Asian/Pacific Islander,

white, and Hispanic men to be single parents; men in some other racial/ethnic minority groups share this higher rate of sole parenthood.

Over time, the military has been under pressure to respond to the increases in the proportion of personnel with spouses and/or children, in single parents, in dual-service couples, and in spouse employment desires. These include the provision of a wide array of support services.<sup>62</sup> As demands on military personnel and their families have increased in recent years—including more frequent deployments and more dangerous missions—the military has been under greater pressure to respond to greater service member and family dissatisfaction with the military lifestyle and consequent difficulty in retaining experienced personnel. It remains to be seen whether the mili-

**Table 8**  
**Family Status of Military Personnel by Race/Ethnicity and Gender, FY2002**

Race and gender		Total	With dependent children (%)				Without dependent children (%)			
			Total with children	Single parent	Married, civilian spouse	Married, military spouse	Total without children	Single	Married, civilian spouse	Married, military spouse
All races	Both sexes	100	44	6	35	3	56	42	11	3
White	Men	100	44	5	39	1	56	41	13	2
	Women	100	33	10	13	11	67	44	9	14
Black	Men	100	53	9	41	3	47	36	8	3
	Women	100	52	24	14	14	47	35	5	7
Hispanic	Men	100	42	5	36	1	58	45	11	2
	Women	100	34	12	12	10	67	47	8	12
Asian/ Pacific Islander	Men	100	43	4	38	1	57	46	10	1
	Women	100	34	10	14	11	66	45	8	13
Amer. Indian/ Alaska Native	Men	100	34	5	28	1	66	53	11	2
	Women	100	33	13	10	9	68	51	7	10
Other	Men	100	50	9	39	2	50	37	11	2
	Women	100	40	16	14	11	60	39	8	13

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, December 2002.

tary can ease the burdens borne by military families and make the military more family-friendly, or whether the increasing family difficulties may encourage more married personnel to leave the service.

## Conclusion

The American military has evolved from a small institution to a major presence in society, albeit highly concentrated in a few states and regions. With the end of military conscription in 1973, the armed forces have become the nation's largest employer and reflect America's racial, ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic diversity. Indeed, African Americans are drawn to it as a more color-blind employer than they are likely to find in the civilian labor market. The armed forces started integrating racially in the 1950s, and have made great strides among enlisted personnel and small gains among officers. Gender integration did not begin in earnest until after the end of the draft in 1973, and women are still restricted from many military jobs. Increasing adaptation of the armed forces to a variety of family forms also began with the end of conscription, as more service personnel served beyond a single tour, and for a minority, until retirement. As military personnel age, they are more likely to marry and to have children, and family satisfaction is an important determinant for retention.

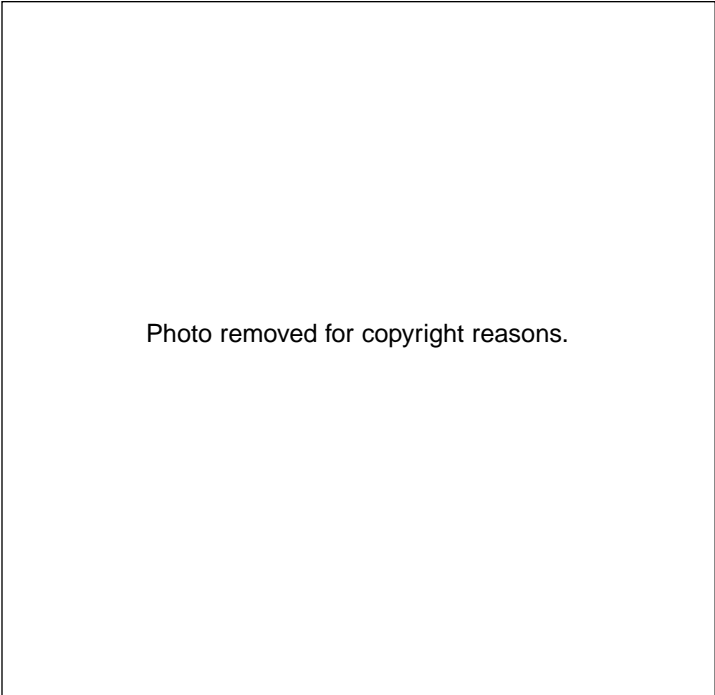


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The military population will continue to change as the U.S. armed forces adapt to a new security environment. The future profile of servicemen and servicewomen will be affected by new strategies for military recruitment and retention, increased reliance on reserve forces, and increased use of civilians to perform tasks that traditionally have been done by military personnel. The military also will continue to reflect demographic trends that are altering the entire American population.

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 Source for monthly and annual manpower DoD statistics for active-duty, reserve, and civilian personnel, and casualty information.
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**America's Military Population**

Military service has touched most American families; nearly 26 million Americans living today have served in the military—12 million are over age 60. But today's active-duty military is very different from the military of 40 years ago, when men were subject to the draft and wars required more troops. The all-volunteer military—1.4 million strong—is more educated, more female, more married, and less white than the draft-era military. Today's military also grapples with such issues as inclusion of gays, the role of women, the well-being of military families, and the transition back into civilian life. And debates about the future size, structure, and composition of the U.S. military have assumed new prominence in the political landscape, especially as the country faces new security threats.