

OVERVIEW REPORT

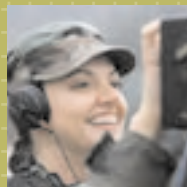
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Influencer Poll 10



**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE  
INFLUENCER POLL WAVE 10 – June 2008**

**OVERVIEW REPORT**

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# Influencer Attitudes

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## Introduction

Although information on youth attitudes has been tracked by the DoD for over thirty years, efforts to collect information regarding the attitudes of influencers—family members, educators, and other influential figures in the lives of youth—are a relatively new endeavor. Created in 2003, the Influencer Polls are designed to investigate the attitudes and knowledge of influencers toward military service.

Like the Youth Polls, data collected from the Influencer Polls have several important applications both within and outside of the Department. The information is used by the Services and by their advertising agencies to provide direction for outreach efforts intended to inform influencers how youth can benefit from service in the Military. The Influencer Poll's central function, however, is to measure an influencer's likelihood to recommend military service to youth and to support a youth's decision to join the Military.

## Purpose

The purpose of this report is to briefly describe past and current trends of influencers' attitudes about the Military. In particular, the report will focus on the primary metrics tracked as part of the Influencer Poll and on influencers' attitudes toward a young person joining the Military. The information contained here is not designed to be an all-encompassing review of findings.

## Overview

This report first defines the influencer population and describes research showing the role that influencers play in youth decision making. Next, the methodology of the June 2008 Influencer Poll is presented, followed by a brief discussion of trends that have affected influencers' attitudes and recommendations about youths' future plans. The last section of this report will focus on influencers' attitudes and recommendations regarding enlistment and military service.

## **Who Are Influencers?**

Influencers, as defined in the Influencer Polls, are adults ages 22–85 who report that they directly influence youth ages 12–24. The June 2008 Influencer Poll surveyed influencers of age 25–85 due to changes in the Youth Poll methodology. Influencers range from coaches and clergy to mothers and guidance counselors. The 1,320 adult influencers in the June 2008 Influencer Poll are split into two subcategories: parent and non-parent influencers.

### **Parents**

In the Influencer Polls, the term “parent” is reserved for those who have children ages 16–24. These influencers tend to have a close relationship with youth, with personal knowledge of a youth’s personality, character, and emotional well-being. These influencers tend to be direct and open with youth and protective concerning their well-being. In terms of access, parents influence fewer youth than do non-parents such as teachers and guidance counselors. However, parents typically have a stronger effect on youth than do non-parent influencers because of the amount and intimacy of their interactions with youth.

### **Non-parent Influencers**

Non-parent influencers (educators, relatives, and others) also hold significant sway over youth, though to a lesser degree than do parents. This influence is particularly relevant today, when nontraditional families are more common<sup>i</sup>. Non-parents, as defined in the Influencer Polls, may or may not have children outside the age range of 12–24.

Non-parent influencers typically have some type of formal authority over youth and provide another source of support to youth. Although non-parent influencers have an opportunity to influence a greater number of youth (one-to-many) than do parents, they usually do not have as strong of an impact as parents. The level of influence that non-parent influencers have over youth varies greatly due to the variety of roles available to them. Regardless of their degree of influence, non-parent influencers frequently open doors to a wider range of opportunities than parents.

### **Role of the Influencer**

Influencers’ attitudes are important to understand for those interested in youths’ decisions<sup>ii</sup>. Young people’s beliefs, values, and attitudes are forged and can be altered through their interactions with other people in their environment<sup>iii</sup>. Parents and non-parent influencers play a major role in youths’ decision making because of the influence that they have on adolescents’ educational goals, scholastic achievement, and appraisal of their self-efficacy.

Adult influencers have also been found to directly influence the norms and attitudes of youth<sup>iv</sup>. Research has demonstrated that a number of family variables (e.g., socioeconomic status, parental education) influence the career choices of young adults<sup>v</sup>. Thus, family and non-family interactions play an important role in youth aspirations and career decision making.

## **Naming Convention**

This report refers to three racial/ethnic groups: Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. These names correspond to the group names used by the U.S. Census Bureau. Unless otherwise noted, these groups correspond to individuals who indicated that they were White and Non-Hispanic, Black and Non-Hispanic, or of Hispanic origin.

## **Methodology**

The June 2008 Influencer Poll data were collected between April 7, 2008 and June 9, 2008. The questionnaire was administered via computer-assisted telephone interviews. The survey took an average of 20 minutes to complete, and 1,320 interviews were completed. The average overall margin of error for the 95% confidence interval for estimates based on the total sample is approximately 2.5 percentage points for proportions.

The total 1,320 adult influencers in the June 2008 Influencer Poll were split into parent and non-parent influencer subcategories.

### **Parents**

A total of 644 interviews were conducted with parents of youth who completed the June 2008 Youth Poll.

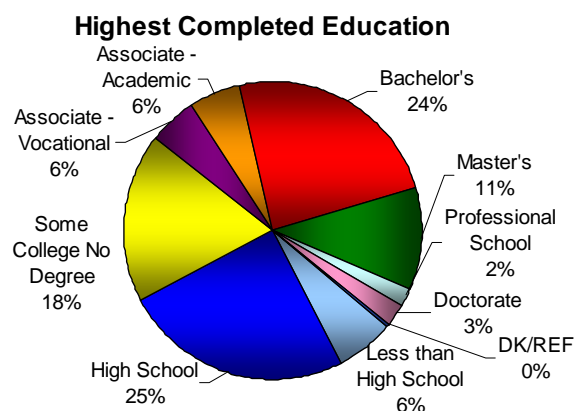
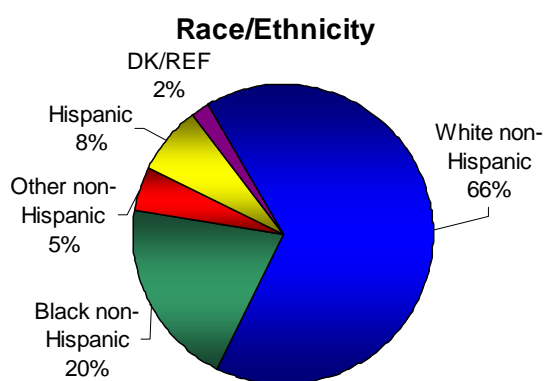
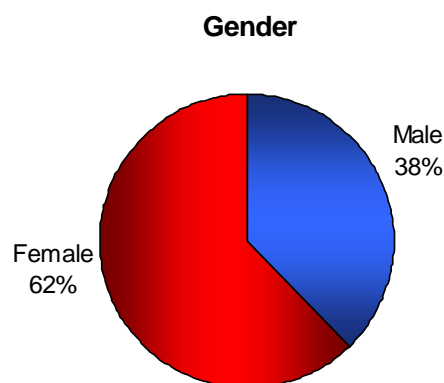
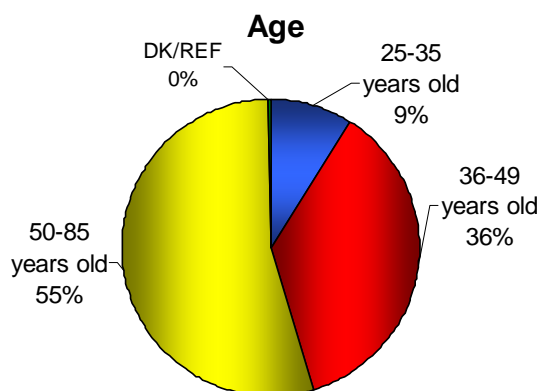
### **Non-parents**

An additional 676 non-parent adult influencers (i.e., American adults ages 25–85 who reported directly influencing youth ages 12–24) participated in the June 2008 Influencer Poll. Because of the change in the age range of non-parents from the December 2007 and June 2008 polls, significance testing was not conducted across the administrations for non-parent influencers and aggregate influencers.

## Respondent Profile

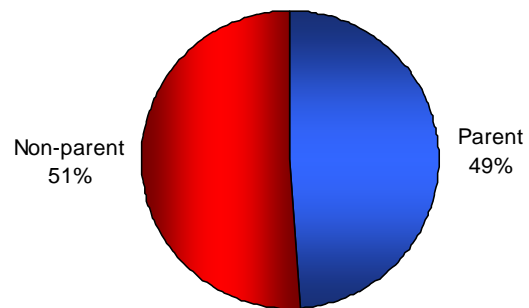
The following charts display the demographic segments of the 1,320 survey respondents in the June 2008 Influencer Poll<sup>1</sup>:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Highest Completed Education
- Type of Influencer
- Current Employment Status
- Type of Non-Parent Influencer
- Member of Armed Services
- Marital Status
- Annual Household Income

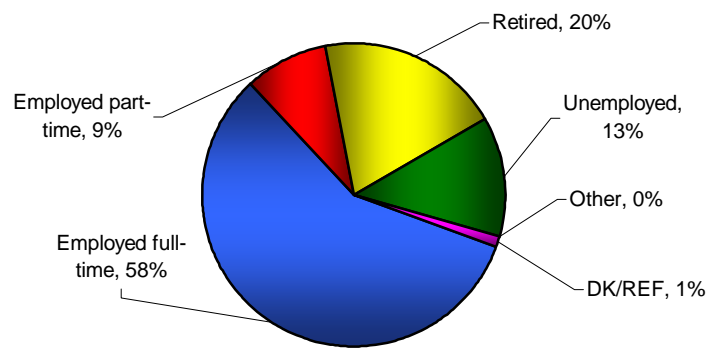


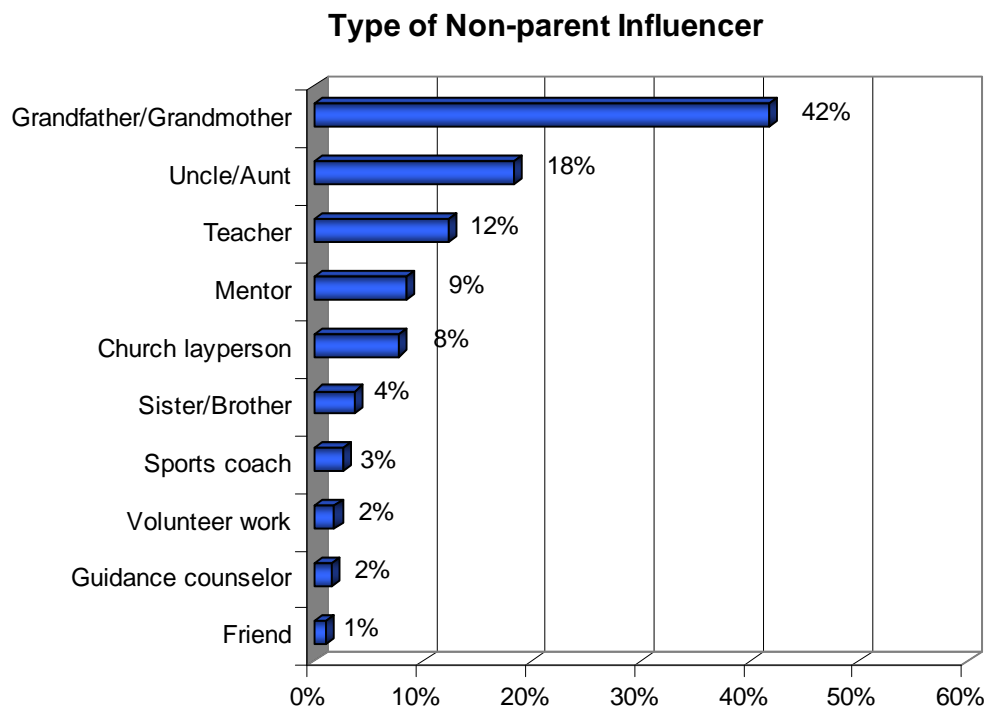
<sup>1</sup> Due to rounding, percentages might not total 100%.

### Type of Influencer



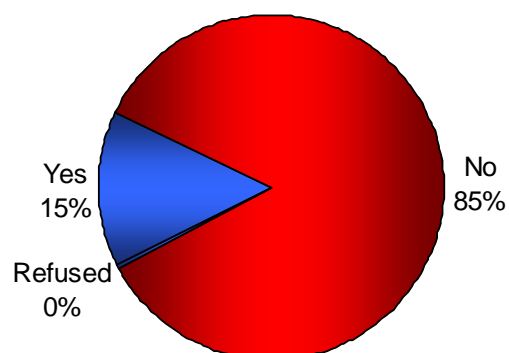
### Current Employment Status



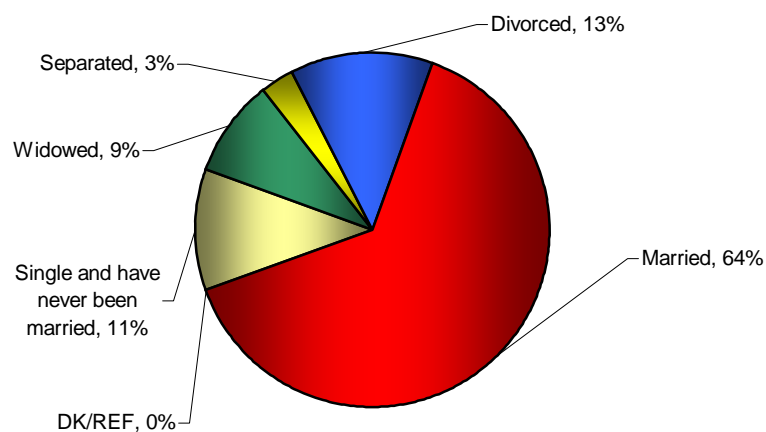




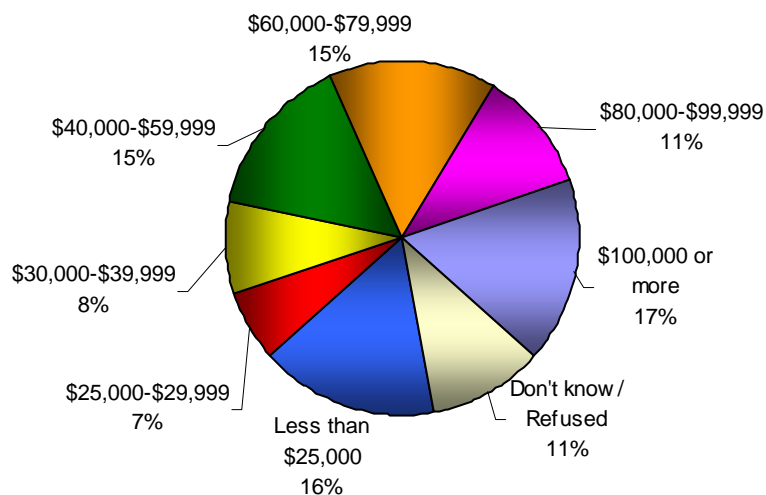
### Member of Armed Services



### Marital Status



### Annual Household Income



## **Trends Affecting Influencer Attitudes and Recommendations**

Recruiters have struggled to overcome the many obstacles that have arisen due to recent military and political struggles involving the United States. A number of recruiting goals set by the DoD have gone unmet in recent years (See Jun 08 Youth Poll report). One key obstacle is the declining number of influencers willing to recommend that young men and women join the Military.

This decline is due in large part to a fear that youth will face personal hardship, danger, and an unattractive lifestyle if they enlist<sup>vi</sup>. These fears likely stem in part from media coverage of the Military's ongoing operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Segments of the American population have questioned the justification of the use of military force in Iraq. A recent poll found that a growing majority of Americans now feel that it was a mistake to send troops to Iraq, and more than half feel that a significant number of troops would remain in Iraq for another two to five years<sup>vii</sup>.

The prolonged military engagement in Iraq has also caused service in the Military to become less attractive in the minds of many Americans, both young<sup>viii</sup> and old. The opportunity for adventure, service to country, job and skills training, and other benefits that the Military offers are now more likely to be overlooked or are simply seen as less enticing as the focus shifts to some less desirable aspects of being in the Military<sup>vi</sup>.

Additionally, both parents and non-parent influencers feel that general support for military service is waning<sup>vi</sup>. An increasing number of teachers, guidance counselors and other non-parent influencers feel that a child's parents, immediate family, and other non-parents would not look favorably on them if they were to recommend the Military to the children whom they influence. While parents typically do not let other people influence the advice that they give their children as much as non-parents, they also report feeling that others would not be supportive if they were to recommend the Military to their own children<sup>vi</sup>. Signs indicate that these trends might continue unless something is done to improve the image and appeal of service in the Military.

## **Influencer Attitudes and Likelihood to Recommend Military Service**

The remainder of this report will cover four topics:

1. **Likelihood to Recommend Measures:** This section explains the measures used to assess influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military and each of the individual Services. It describes the findings for these measures that have been tracked over time.
2. **Factors Related to Likelihood to Recommend:** This section discusses the different factors related to likelihood to recommend, including gender, age, and race/ethnicity.
3. **Likelihood to Support:** This section explains the measures for likelihood to support a youth's decision to join the Military and presents the main findings for these measures.
4. **Summary:** This section provides a concise overview of the report.

## **Likelihood to Recommend Measures**

The questions used to measure influencers' likelihood to recommend the Military have remained unchanged since the first Influencer Poll in 2003. Prior to any mention of military service by the interviewer, respondents were asked about the advice they would be likely to give to a youth.

**“Now let's talk about the choices (your child/your students/your players/young people) have. Suppose (your child/one of your students/one of your players/a youth you know) came to you for advice about the various post-high school options that are available. What would you recommend?”**

Common responses included going to school, working, and entering the Military. Respondents were encouraged to indicate all of the things that they might recommend. Those who mentioned military service in general or one of the Services specifically are counted as having provided an “unaided mention” of military service. The reference is considered to be “unaided” because the topic of military service was first mentioned by the respondent, and not by the interviewer. “Unaided likelihood to recommend” is the percentage of respondents providing an unaided mention of military service. As indicated by the parentheses, each respondent's question was keyed to the type of person that they were most likely to influence. For example, parents were asked specifically about their child, and teachers and guidance counselors were asked about one of their students.

After the open-ended question about future plans, each respondent was asked:

**“Suppose (your child/one of your students/one of your players/a youth you know) came to you for advice about various post-high school options. How likely is it that you would recommend joining a military Service such as the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Coast Guard?”**

and

**“Suppose (your child/one of your students/one of your players/a youth you know) came to you for advice about various post-high school options. How likely is it that you would recommend serving on active duty in the [Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force or Coast Guard]?”**

and

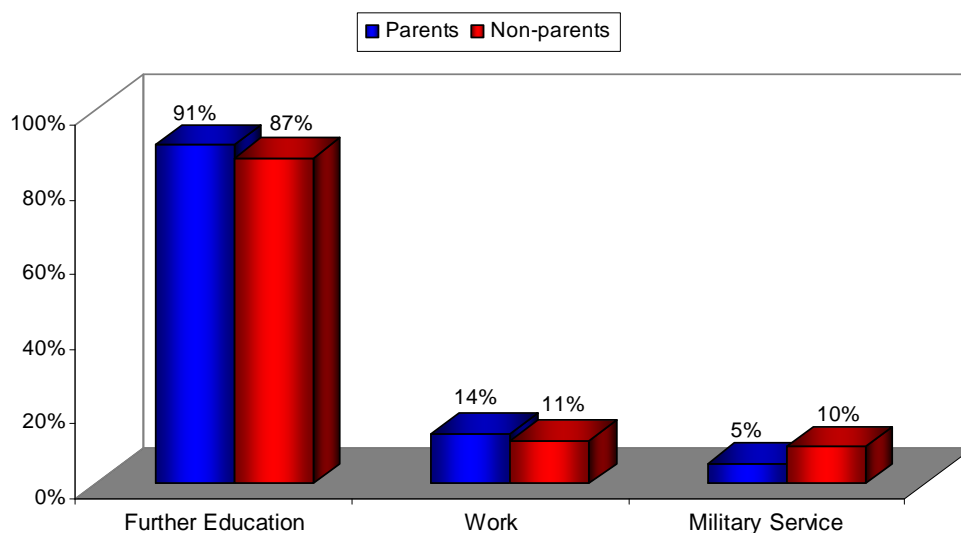
**“Suppose (your child/one of your students/one of your players/a youth you know) came to you for advice about various post-high school options. How likely is it that you would recommend serving in the [Reserves or National Guard]?”**

Influencers were asked first about recommending any of the military Services and then about recommending each specific Service, and finally about recommending the Reserves and National Guard. The order of the Service-specific and the order of the Reserve and National Guard questions changed from one respondent to the next to eliminate any question-order effects. Those who said they would be “very likely” or “likely” to recommend joining a military Service, serving on active duty in a specific Service, or serving in the Reserves or National Guard were counted as having demonstrated an aided likelihood to recommend each respective category of Service.

### **Unaided Likelihood to Recommend**

Influencers predominantly promote and recommend that youth go to college. In the June 2008 Influencer Poll, when asked what post-high school options they would recommend to youth, influencers most frequently mentioned further education. As seen in Figure 1, 91 percent of parents and 87 percent of non-parents would recommend further education. Fewer parents and non-parents would recommend work (14% and 11%, respectively) or military service (5% and 10%, respectively).

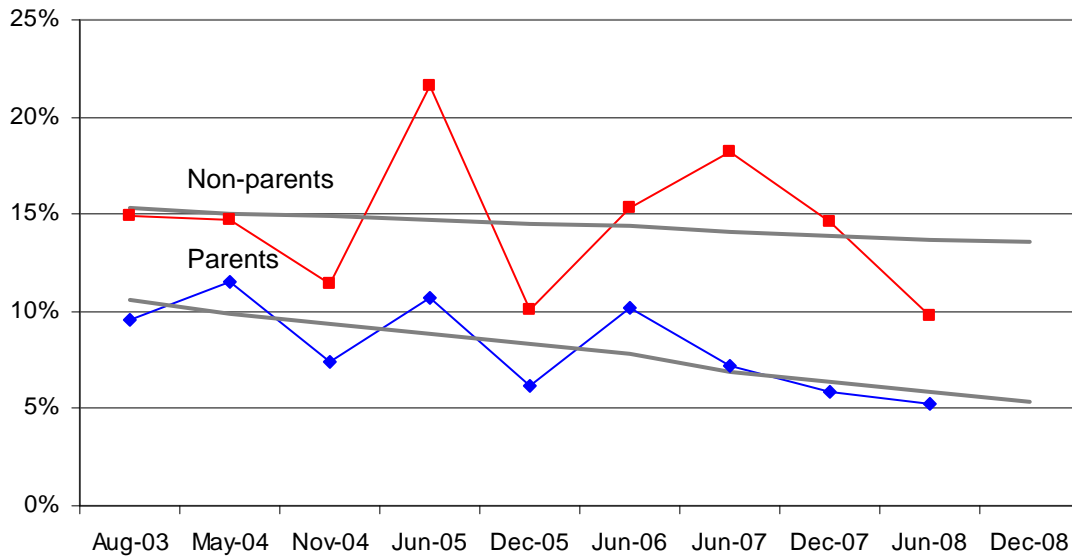
**Figure 1. Unaided Likelihood to Recommend**



Source: June 2008 Influencer Poll

Figure 2 shows the overall trends for parents’ and non-parents’ unaided recommendations for joining the Military. Both parents’ and non-parents’ unaided likelihood to recommend have fluctuated since August 2003 but have declined over the past year. Whereas parents have been relatively stable in their unaided likelihood to recommend over the past year, non-parents’ unaided likelihood to recommend has dropped from 18 percent to 10 percent.

**Figure 2. Trends in Unaided Likelihood to Recommend Military Service**



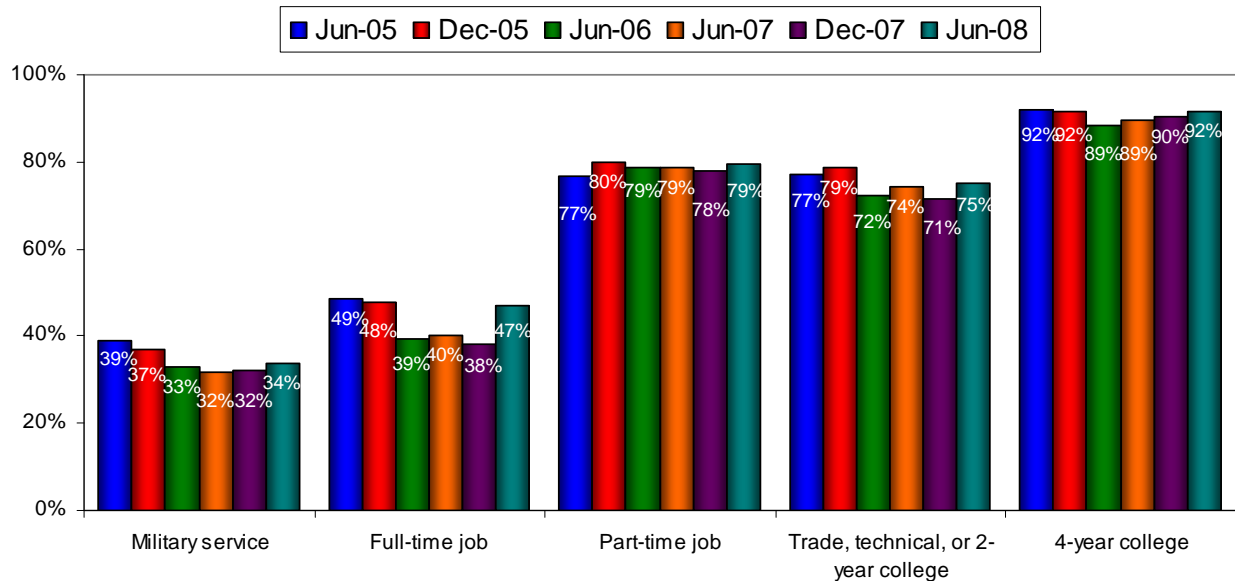
Note: The trend lines for both parents and non-parents are based on Aug 03–Jun 08.

Source: 2003–2008 Influencer Polls

### Aided Likelihood to Recommend

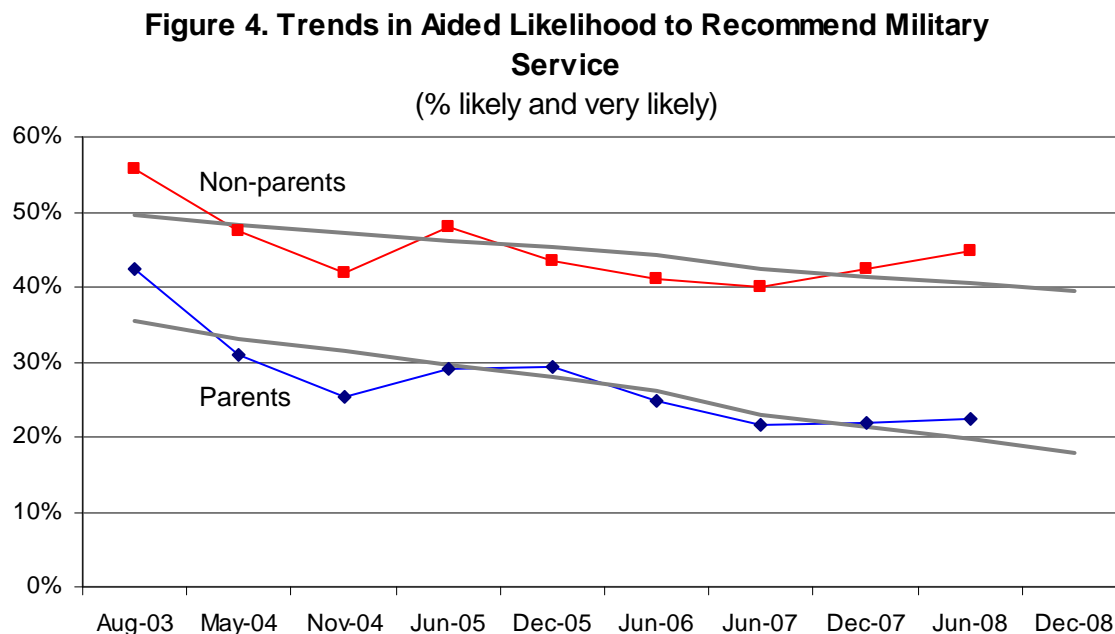
Figure 3 shows all influencers' aided likelihood to recommend joining the Military, getting a job, and furthering education. Aided recommendations for joining the Military have been stable, while increases were seen in June 2008 for recommending getting a full-time job or attending a trade, technical, or two-year college.

**Figure 3. Aided Likelihood to Recommend**  
(% likely or very likely)



Source: 2005–2008 Influencer Polls

Figure 4 shows the percentage of parents and non-parent influencers who described themselves as “likely” or “very likely” to recommend military service. Over the past year, non-parents’ likelihood to recommend the Military has increased slightly, and parents’ likelihood to recommend has been stable.



Note: The trend lines for both parents and non-parents are based on Aug 03–Jun 08.  
Source: 2003–2008 Influencer Polls

### Aided Likelihood to Recommend Specific Services

In addition to being asked if they would recommend the Military in general, influencers were asked the likelihood of their recommending active duty service for each of the specific Services or service in the Reserves and the National Guard. Table 1 shows the proportion of parents and non-parent influencers who were “very likely” or “likely” to recommend each of the active Services and Reserve components in June 2008.

**Table 1. Aided Likelihood to Recommend: Active Duty and the Reserves and National Guard**

| Service        | Parents (%) | Non-Parents (%) |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|
| Army           | 15%         | 37%             |
| Navy           | 18%         | 41%             |
| Marine Corps   | 13%         | 39%             |
| Air Force      | 22%         | 46%             |
| Coast Guard    | 18%         | 42%             |
| Reserves       | 23%         | 44%             |
| National Guard | 22%         | 44%             |

Source: June 2008 Influencer Poll

Aided likelihood to recommend military service for most influencers was not tied to a specific Service. However, influencers have generally been more reluctant to recommend the Army and Marine Corps and less hesitant to recommend the Air Force.

As discussed in the Jun 08 Youth Poll report, propensed youth typically indicated an interest in multiple active duty Services. As seen in Table 2, influencers who were likely to recommend one Service were likely to recommend multiple active duty Services. Influencers who would recommend the Air Force or Coast Guard were least likely to recommend another Service.

**Table 2. Percent of Influencers Likely to Recommend Joining a Specific Service and at Least One Other Service**

| Service      | %   |
|--------------|-----|
| Army         | 96% |
| Navy         | 98% |
| Marine Corps | 97% |
| Air Force    | 91% |
| Coast Guard  | 90% |

Source: June 2008 Influencer Poll

Table 3 shows trends in influencers' likelihood to recommend each individual active Service and Reserve component. Influencers' likelihood to recommend specific active Service and Reserve components have declined since August 2003, but since December 2007, increases were seen for the Army, Marine Corps, Reserves, and National Guard.

**Table 3. Trends in Aided Likelihood to Recommend**

|                | Aug-03 | May-04 | Nov-04 | Jun-05 | Dec-05 | Jun-06 | Jun-07 | Dec-07 | Jun-08 |
|----------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Military       | 48%    | 39%    | 35%    | 39%    | 37%    | 33%    | 32%    | 32%    | 34%    |
| Army           | 36%    | 29%    | 27%    | 31%    | 30%    | 23%    | 24%    | 22%    | 26%    |
| Navy           | 40%    | 32%    | 30%    | 36%    | 33%    | 28%    | 29%    | 27%    | 30%    |
| Marine Corps   | 34%    | 27%    | 25%    | 30%    | 28%    | 21%    | 24%    | 21%    | 26%    |
| Air Force      | 43%    | 36%    | 33%    | 39%    | 37%    | 33%    | 32%    | 32%    | 34%    |
| Coast Guard    | 37%    | 32%    | 30%    | 34%    | 34%    | 29%    | 30%    | 28%    | 30%    |
| Reserves       | 46%    | 36%    | 33%    | 37%    | 36%    | 28%    | 32%    | 30%    | 34%    |
| National Guard | 43%    | 33%    | 32%    | 34%    | 34%    | 27%    | 30%    | 27%    | 33%    |

Source: 2003–2008 Influencer Polls

## Factors Related to Likelihood to Recommend

A number of demographic variables including age, race/ethnicity, and gender are related to influencers' likelihood to recommend military service.

### Parents versus Non-parents

As previously shown in Figures 1 and 4, non-parents have consistently shown a higher likelihood to recommend military service than have parents.

### Gender

Among parents, fathers are more likely to recommend military service to their children than are mothers (Table 4). When considering the gender of the child, further differences become apparent<sup>2</sup>. While both parents are more likely to recommend military service to their sons than their daughters, fathers are more likely than mothers to recommend military service to their sons.

**Table 4. Parents' Aided Likelihood to Recommend Military Service, by Gender**

|                        | Fathers | Mothers | Total |
|------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| <b>Gender of Youth</b> |         |         |       |
| Parents of sons        | 35%     | 26%     | 30%   |
| Parents of daughters   | 24%     | 20%     | 21%   |
| <b>Total</b>           | 30%     | 23%     |       |

Source: 2004–2008 Influencer Polls

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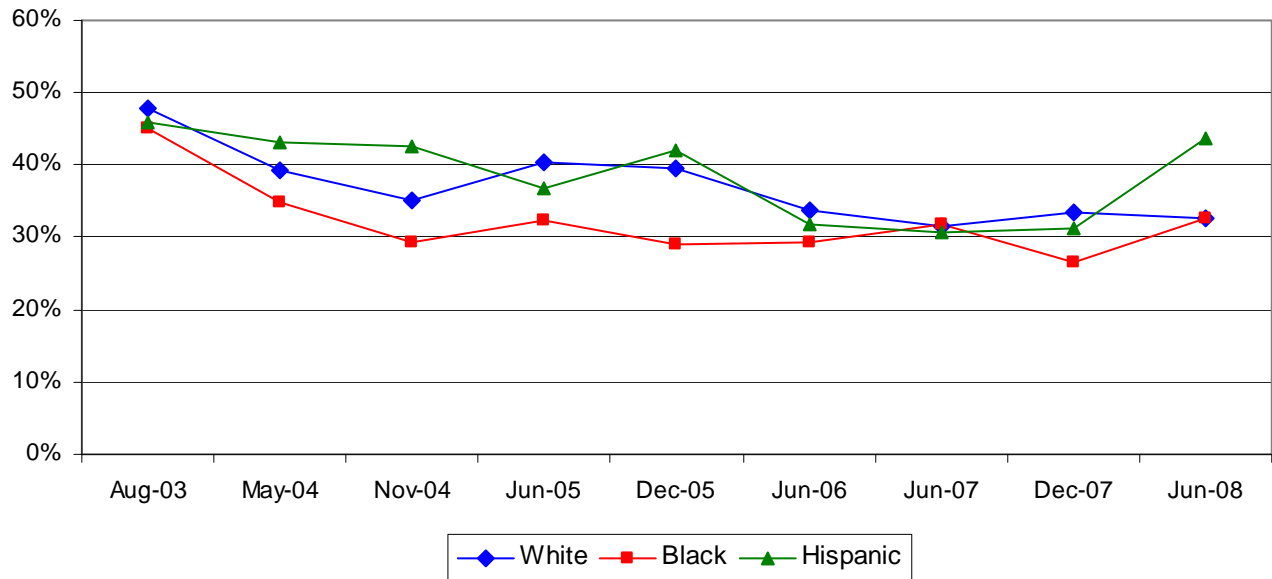
<sup>2</sup> Parents participating in the Influencer Poll are asked to consider only one child when responding. As a result, there is no overlap between parents of sons and parents of daughters in their responses.



### Race and Ethnicity

Differences can also be seen across different racial and ethnic groups. Black influencers have generally been the least likely group to recommend military service to youth. However, in June 2008 White and Black influencers were equally likely to recommend the Military. In addition, Hispanic influencers were more likely than White influencers to recommend military service (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Aided Likelihood to Recommend Military Service by Race/Ethnicity**  
(% likely and very likely)



Source: 2003–2008 Influencer Polls

As seen in Table 5, there were a few meaningful differences in aided likelihood to recommend military service across racial and ethnic groups and gender. Female influencers were consistently less likely than male influencers to recommend joining the Military, with Black females the least likely to recommend joining the Military. There were no significant differences in male likelihood to recommend military service across racial/ethnic groups.

**Table 5. Aided Likelihood to Recommend Military Service by Race/Ethnicity and Gender**

|                             | White | Black | Hispanic |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| <b>Role of influencer</b>   |       |       |          |
| Parent                      | 25%   | 24%   | 32%      |
| Non-parent                  | 46%   | 36%   | 43%      |
| <b>Gender of influencer</b> |       |       |          |
| Male influencer             | 41%   | 39%   | 40%      |
| Female influencer           | 32%   | 28%   | 36%      |
| <b>Gender of child</b>      |       |       |          |
| Parents of sons             | 30%   | 27%   | 36%      |
| Parents of daughters        | 20%   | 22%   | 29%      |

Source: 2004–2008 Influencer Polls

## Likelihood to Support

Influencers play a variety of roles in affecting youth decision making. One is introducing possible career avenues through their recommendations. Another important way in which influencers affect youths' career decision making is by encouraging or discouraging certain avenues that youth are considering. Since 2005, in addition to likelihood to recommend, the Influencer Polls have asked questions related to the level of an influencers' support of a youth's decision to join the Military:

**“Suppose (your child/your students/your players/a youth you know) told you they were planning on joining the Military. Would you strongly support, somewhat support, neither support nor oppose, somewhat oppose, or strongly oppose their decision to join?”**

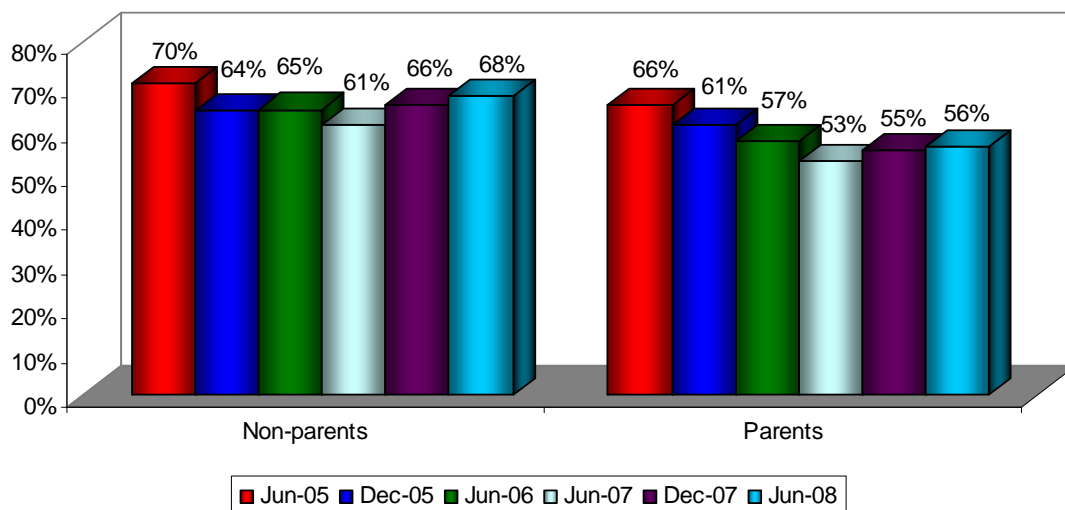
Examining the responses to this question across different demographic groups reveals patterns both similar and different to those seen in likelihood to recommend military service.

### Parents versus Non-parent Influencers

As shown in Figure 6, parent and non-parent influencers have consistently shown slight differences each time that the question of support has been asked. In June 2008, 68 percent of non-parent influencers and 56 percent of parents stated that they would strongly support or somewhat support a youth's decision to join the Military.

Similar to the patterns seen with likelihood to recommend military service, non-parent influencers were more likely than parents to support a youth's decision to join the Military. Support of a youth's decision to join the Military for both groups has also shown slight increases since June 2007; however, it remains at a lower level than in June 2005.

**Figure 6. Support of a Youth's Decision to Join the Military, Parents and Non-parents**  
(% strongly support and somewhat support)



Source: 2005–2008 Influencer Polls

**Gender**

Differences such as those seen in likelihood to recommend military service were also seen among mothers' and fathers' support of the decision to join the Military. As seen in Table 6, 60 percent of fathers and 53 percent of mothers would support their child's decision if their child decided to join the Military.

The Influencer Polls have shown no remarkable difference in parents' support of sons compared to their support of daughters. Approximately 58 percent of parents would support their son if he decided to join the Military, and approximately the same percentage, 55 percent, would support their daughter if she made the decision. This is in striking contrast to parents' likelihood to recommend the Military, where parents were much more likely to recommend the Military to their sons than to their daughters.

**Table 6. Parents' Support of Child's Decision to Join the Military, by Gender**

|                        | Fathers | Mothers | Total |
|------------------------|---------|---------|-------|
| <b>Gender of Youth</b> |         |         |       |
| Parents of sons        | 63%     | 53%     | 58%   |
| Parents of daughters   | 57%     | 53%     | 55%   |
| <b>Total</b>           | 60%     | 53%     |       |

Source: Dec 2005–Jun 2008 Influencer Polls

**Race/Ethnicity**

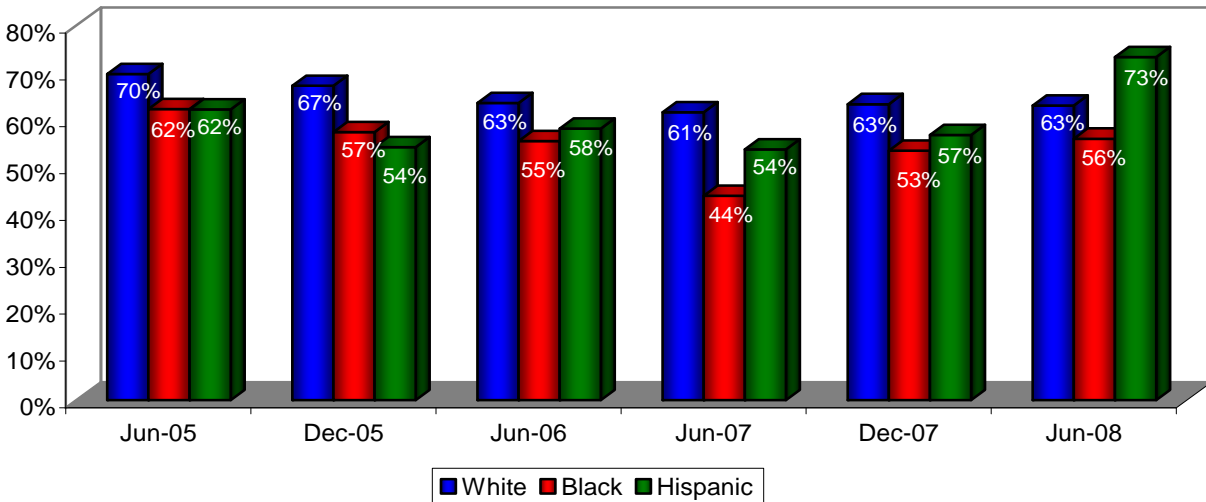
As shown in Figure 7, in June 2008, 63 percent of White influencers, 56 percent of Black influencers, and 73 percent of Hispanic influencers were likely to support a youth who planned to join the Military.

For each group, the likelihood of supporting a youth's decision to join the Military had steadily declined since June 2005 but began to rebound in December 2007. For the first time, White influencers were not the most likely group to support a youth's decision to join the Military in June 2008, as they were surpassed by Hispanic influencers. Support levels for White influencers have remained stable and unchanged since December 2005.

After holding relatively stable between December 2005 and June 2006, the level of Black influencers' support significantly declined in June 2007. In December 2007, however, Black influencers' support level significantly rebounded and showed slight increases in June 2008.

Hispanic influencers' levels of support held relatively stable since decreasing in December 2005. In June 2008, however, Hispanic influencers' levels of support showed a robust increase and surpassed White influencers' support level for the first time.

**Figure 7. Support of a Youth's Decision to Join the Military, by Race/Ethnicity**  
(% strongly support and somewhat support)



Source: 2005–2008 Influencer Polls

#### **Parents versus Non-Parent Influencers: By Race and Ethnicity**

As can be seen in Table 7, a greater proportion of White and Black non-parent influencers would support a youth's decision to join the Military than would White or Black parents. This pattern was contrasted with the difference between Hispanic parents and non-parent influencers. A similar proportion of Hispanic parents and non-parents would support a youth's decision to enlist.

There were no differences between levels of support between Black and Hispanic male and female influencers. However, examining differences between male and female White influencers shows that White male influencers were more likely to support a youth's decision to enlist than were White female influencers. Overall, White male influencers were most likely to support a youth's decision to join the Military.

Among parents, White, Black, and Hispanic parents were equally likely to support their sons' or daughters' decisions to enlist.

**Table 7. Support of Youth Joining the Military, by Race and Gender**

|                             | White | Black | Hispanic |
|-----------------------------|-------|-------|----------|
| <b>Role of Influencer</b>   |       |       |          |
| Parent                      | 59%   | 47%   | 59%      |
| Non-parent                  | 67%   | 59%   | 59%      |
| <b>Gender of Influencer</b> |       |       |          |
| Male influencer             | 67%   | 57%   | 59%      |
| Female influencer           | 61%   | 52%   | 58%      |
| <b>Gender of Youth</b>      |       |       |          |
| Parents of sons             | 61%   | 45%   | 61%      |
| Parents of daughters        | 58%   | 48%   | 56%      |

Source: Dec 2005–Jun 2008 Influencer Polls

## Summary

The June 2008 Influencer Poll saw a decrease in the proportion of non-parent influencers who, unprompted, said they would recommend joining the Military to youth. Parents remained stable in unaided recommendations of the Military. Aided likelihood of recommending military service—adults responding that they are “likely” or “very likely” to recommend when asked specifically about the Military—remained stable among parents and non-parent influencers. Further, the proportion of influencers who reported that they would support a decision by a youth to join the Military held steady in June 2008. These results provide preliminary evidence that the declining trend in likelihood to recommend observed between June 2005 and June 2007 has stabilized.

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