JAMRS

OVERVIEW REPORT

DECEMBER 2008

2008

JUNE 2008 Youth Poll 15 Report

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JAMRS Report No. 2008-002
December 2008

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
YOUTH POLL WAVE 15 – June 2008

OVERVIEW REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work that was done to collect this information and produce this report was the result of a collaboration of efforts between JAMRS, Fors Marsh Group, and HumRRO. The authors would like to thank the many youth who shared their time and opinions with us.

Executive Summary

For over three decades, the Department of Defense (DoD) has regularly surveyed youth ages 16 to 21 about their attitudes toward the Military and their interest in military enlistment. The DoD Youth Polls, which are conducted twice a year, are a part of that effort and are focused on measuring the likelihood of youth to join the Military and other metrics related to enlistment.

The June 2008 Youth Poll collected information during 20-minute telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 3,304 youth between the ages of 16 and 21 and an additional 1,056 youth between the ages of 22 and 24. This report details the findings of the June 2008 Youth Poll.

Demographic Profile

The characteristics of the American youth population, the primary recruiting market of the Armed Services, are always changing. The changes in the demographic profile of America's youth are of special interest to military recruiting officials because they directly impact enlistment.

Educational aspirations of youth have gradually increased over the years, and the vast majority of youth ages 16–21 (86%) report they plan to continue schooling and obtain higher education of one form or another. Consequently, there has been an increase in the number of high school graduates enrolling in college and universities. Overall, higher educational goals among youth have translated into fewer youth strongly considering military service after high school.

The economy and employment options for youth also influence enlistment. While unemployment among young people aged 16–24 continues to hover around 10 percent, weekly earnings for youth appear to be gradually increasing. In June 2008, however, youth reported having more difficulty in finding a fulltime job in their community and more often believed that individuals can get a good-paying job in the Military than in a civilian job.

Additionally, the U.S. veteran population has been decreasing in size. At the end of the Cold War, it was estimated that over 40 percent of fathers of 18 year olds had served in the U.S. Armed Forces. As of June 2008, this proportion has dropped to only about 20% for youth age 16–21. This decline in the veteran population is noteworthy because former service men and women have typically had a strong, positive influence on military recruiting.

Enlistment Propensity

Propensity is defined in the Youth Polls as the proportion of youth who say they will "definitely" or "probably" enter military service in the next few years. This propensity measure has been shown to be a valid indicator of enlistment behavior. For most youth, propensity for military service is general (i.e., not tied to only one specific component of the Military), as most youth who are interested in military service cite interest in two or more Services.

Executive Summary

(continued)

Propensity is related to several demographic characteristics. Generally, propensity:

- Is higher for men than women;
- Declines with age;
- Declines with increasing educational attainment;
- Is higher for unemployed than employed youth;
- Is highest among Hispanics;
- Varies by region (propensity is relatively high in the South Atlantic, Pacific, Mountain, West South Central regions and lowest in the New England region).

Looking back at data from the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS), which was conducted from 1975 until 1999, youth propensity for military service dropped following Operation Desert Storm and declined through 1999. Beginning in late 2001, propensity appeared to be on the rise. However, starting in 2004, propensity began to trend downward again. In June 2006, substantial declines in propensity occurred. These strong declines have stabilized and have shown some signs of improving in June 2008.

It is important to note that these generalizations pertain to propensity for general military service and do not necessarily hold for all racial and ethnic groups or for the different active duty Services, Reserve Components, or the National Guard.

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Chapter 3. Enlistment Propensity for Military Service

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The primary goal of the Youth Poll is to provide regular tracking of propensity - the likelihood that youth will join the Military. Chapter One covers the approach and methodology used in the June 2008 Youth Poll to track propensity.

Chapter 1

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Chapter 1. Introduction

Tracking youths' interest in military service—or propensity—has been a steady effort by the Department of Defense (DoD) since the mid-1970s; the set of questions asked about youths' future plans have gone relatively unchanged since that time.

Under the current administration's methodology, data is collected twice per year with fielding ending in June and December. A "topline" memorandum provides initial results to the Services and DoD leadership in approximately January and July.

The Youth Polls and their predecessor, the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS), have provided the Department with information on youth attitudes for over thirty years. Shortly after the termination of the military draft, DoD realized that in order to compete with commercial and educational institutions for youths' attention, it was vital to have ongoing information on youth attitudes. Particularly, DoD sought to survey youth about their future career plans and their views of military service. In 1975, YATS was created to address these needs. Changes were made to the YATS methodology after 1999 so that the Department would have information more frequently and in a more actionable time frame. These changes resulted in the creation of the Youth Polls.

Data collected from the Youth Polls have several important applications both within and outside of the Department. Given that the Youth Polls are the primary measures of youth propensity for military service, information from the Youth Polls is used by each of the Services and by their advertising agencies. The Youth Polls are also used by outside organizations to evaluate youth and military recruiting issues. This report is the primary vehicle for disseminating findings from the Youth Polls to non-military audiences.

Overview of the Report

This report provides information on two related aspects of the current recruiting market: demographics of the youth population and propensity for military service. This first Chapter describes the methodology and profile of the respondents in the June 2008 Youth Poll. It details their age, education level, income level, geographic distribution, employment status, and history of family members who have served.

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 explores demographic trends among youth that are shaping the recruiting market. The chapter focuses on education trends, post-secondary education enrollment and its cost, employment and earning trends for youth, and the decline of the veteran population.

Chapter 3 provides a description of current youth propensity, correlates of propensity, and historical trends in propensity. Chapter 3 first describes the Youth Poll propensity measures and their validity. It then covers the relationship between propensity and a variety of youth characteristics—gender, age, school status, educational prospects, employment, employment prospects, race/ethnicity, and geographic location.

Methodology

The June 2008 Youth Poll data were collected between April 7, 2008 and July 14, 2008. The questionnaire was administered via computer-assisted telephone interviews. The sample size was 4,360 completed interviews.

The sample design for this survey was a stratified two-phase sample. In the first phase, telephone-equipped households were sampled from one of six strata using stratified random sampling. The strata definitions were set to facilitate over-sampling of minority populations while maintaining precision of the study estimates. In the second phase, a respondent was randomly sampled from within the household. Once contact was made, the households were screened for the target audience: individuals between the ages of 16 and 24, who had never served in the U.S. Armed Services, and were not enrolled in a postsecondary Reserve Officers' Training Corps program. If more than one person in the household met these criteria, one of the eligible individuals was randomly selected to be the respondent.

On average, the survey took 20 minutes to complete. The data were weighted by gender, age, race/ethnicity, and Census region to reflect the general population based on Current Population Survey data from the U.S. Census.

The June 2008 Youth Poll marked the first time that youth above the age of 21 were surveyed. As current data do not provide tracking for the 22 to 24 year-old population, results are presented for youth ages 16 to 21. Altogether, the sample size for youth ages 16 to 21 was 3,304.

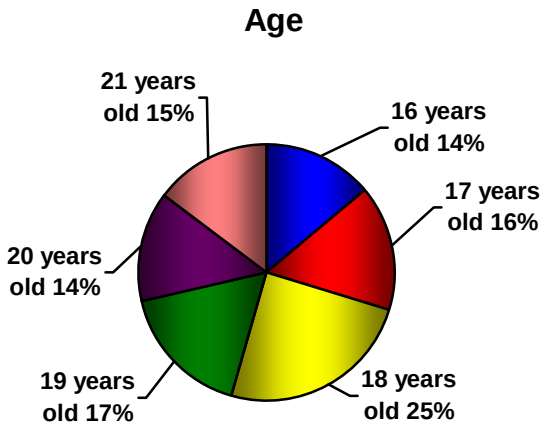
Naming Convention

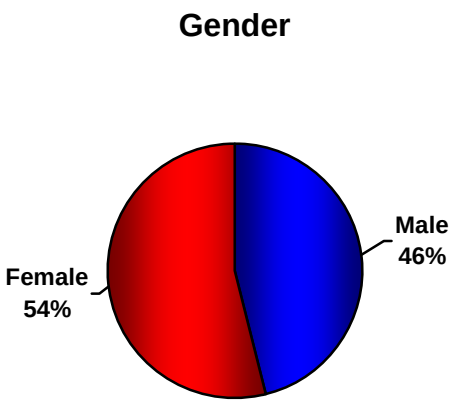
Unless otherwise noted, this report refers to three racial/ethnic groups: Whites, Blacks, and Hispanics. These names correspond to the group names used by the U.S. Census Bureau. These groups correspond to individuals who indicated they were White and Non-Hispanic, Black and Non-Hispanic, or of Hispanic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

Respondent Profile

The June 2008 Youth Poll was conducted via telephone using random digit dialing. The following charts display the demographic segments of the 3,304 survey respondents ages 16 to 21[1]:

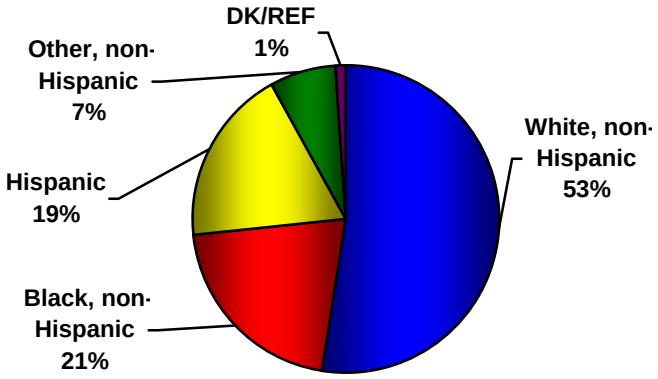
- Age
- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Education level (current and highest level completed)
- Average grades in high school
- Currently employed either full- or part-time
- Number of hours worked per week
- Geographic division
- Military family members





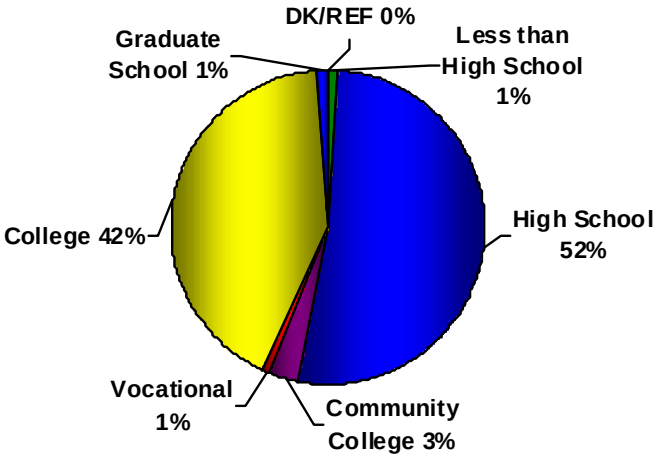
[1] Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%.

Race/Ethnicity



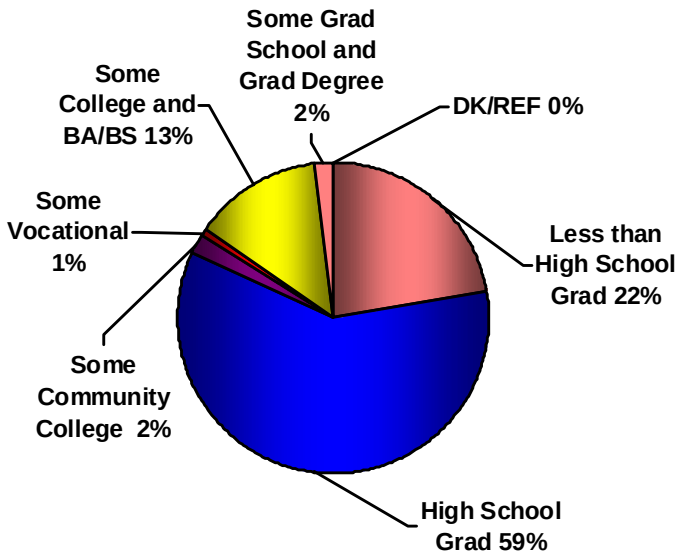
Current Education Level

(those currently enrolled)

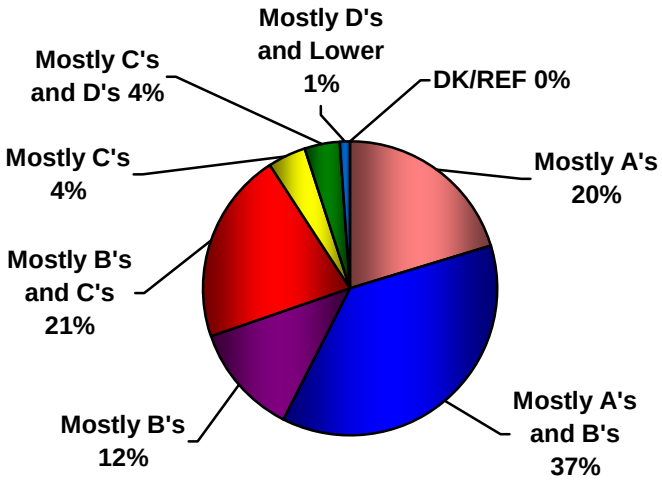


Highest Level of School Completed

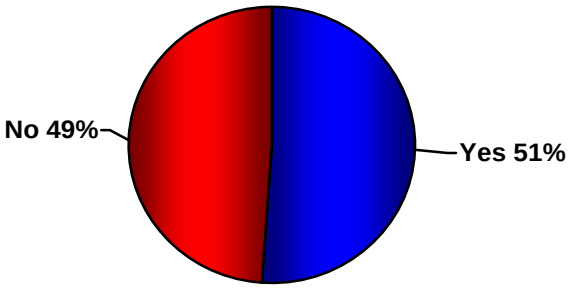
(those not currently enrolled)



Average Grades in High School

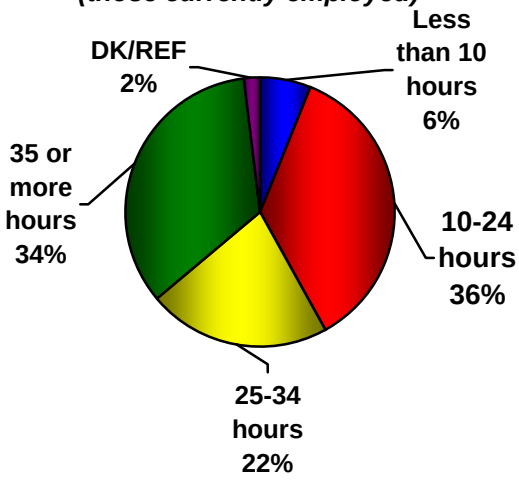


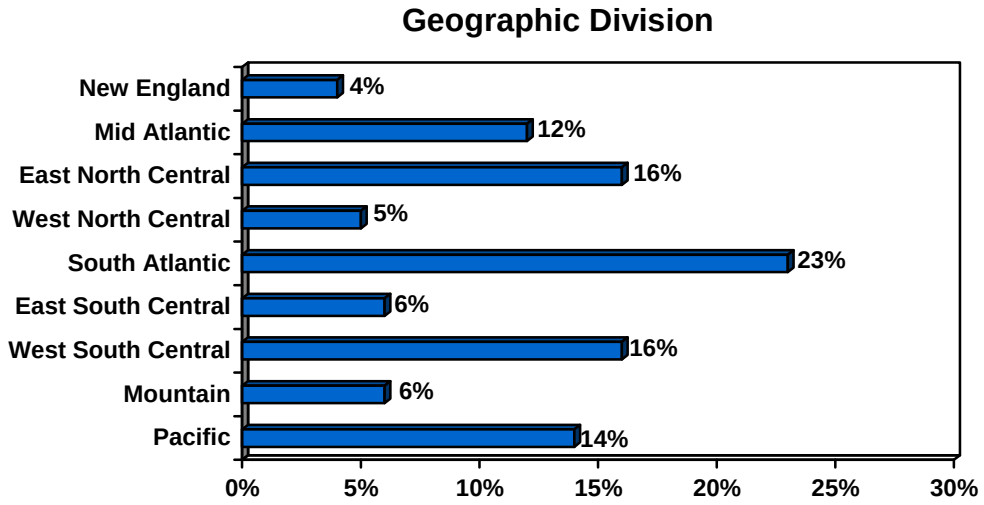
Currently Employed Either Full- or Part-Time

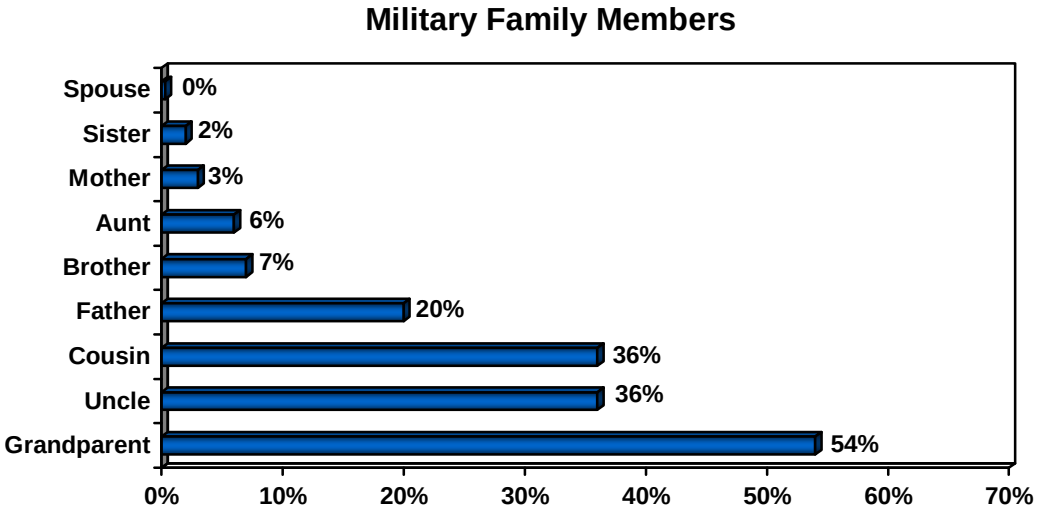


Number of Hours Worked per Week

(those currently employed)




Geographic Division
New England
4%
Mid Atlantic
12%
East North Central
16%
West North Central
5%
South Atlantic
23%
East South Central
6%
West South Central
16%
Mountain
6%
Pacific
14%
0%
5%
10%
15%
20%
25%
30%


Military Family Members
Spouse
0%
Sister
2%
Mother
3%
Aunt
6%
Brother
7%
Father
20%
Cousin
36%
Uncle
36%
Grandparent
54%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%

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Chapter Two provides an overview of demographic characteristics and trends in the youth population that are related to the recruiting challenge.

Chapter 2

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Chapter 2: Youth Population Trends Impacting Recruitment

Introduction

The Armed Services continue to face challenges in meeting their recruitment goals. Currently, the Active Duty Services are tasked with recruiting approximately 200,000 new members per year. Adding the enlistment goals of the Reserve and National Guard components brings this figure to over 300,000 individuals annually[i]. With more than 4 million youth becoming age-eligible for military service each year[ii], it would appear that the Services have sufficient numbers from which to recruit. However, many of the youth in America are not qualified for military service based on mental, physical, or moral standards. Additionally, the future plans of youth who are eligible for Service often do not include military service.

Eligibility remains a large problem hindering recruiting goals. While the number of youth who are age-eligible for military service has been growing[iii], more than half remain ineligible for military service. According to the results of the June 2006 Youth Poll[iv], 53 percent of youth ages 16–21 would be ineligible for military service due to medical, moral, or legal reasons. The majority of these youths are ineligible primarily due to physical reasons. The pool of potential recruits is reduced even further when considering only high-school graduates and youth who score in the upper half on military service aptitude tests.

The increasing importance of post-secondary education is leading the vast majority of youth to focus primarily on continuing their education after high school. President George W. Bush publicly echoed this reality when he declared that at least two years of college are needed to function effectively in today's workforce[v]. This increased focus on post-secondary education has led most youth to disregard the possibility of enlisting following graduation.

The employment opportunities available to youth often influence the plans that they have after high school. While the U.S. economy has been recently impacted by the mortgage crisis and rising oil prices, youth continue to have a variety of employment opportunities. Unemployment among youth ages 16 to 24 continued to be low and earnings have increased in the past year[vi]. While this is generally good news, these employment trends can present a challenge to military recruiting as youth have a wider variety of desirable employment options after high school.

Finally, the U.S. veteran population has been steadily declining over the past ten years. Given the positive impact that veterans have on military recruiting[vii], the decline of the U.S. veteran population is important. The projected decline of the U.S. veteran population indicates a more difficult scenario for recruitment, as the positive influence of veterans becomes less prevalent.

The strain that these trends have placed on recruiting is reflected in military accession statistics. Although all of the Active Duty Services met their accession goals for fiscal years 2006[viii], 2007[ix], and 2008[i], the Army fell just shy of its goal as recently as fiscal year 2005[x]. Furthermore, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard fell short of their accession goals in fiscal years 2005, 2006, and 2007.

To help combat these trends, the Services have incorporated a number of substantial changes. For example, the Army boosted recruiter strength from just over 5,100 active-duty and 955 reserve recruiters in 2004 to more than 6,300 active-duty and 1,700 reserve recruiters in fiscal year 2007[xi]. Additionally, the Army raised its maximum recruitment age from 35 to 42 and doubled its maximum cash enlistment bonus from $20,000 to $40,000[xii] in 2006.

Despite such positive steps to increase accessions, recruiters continue to face a number of challenges. This chapter summarizes several population trends that have impacted military recruiting.

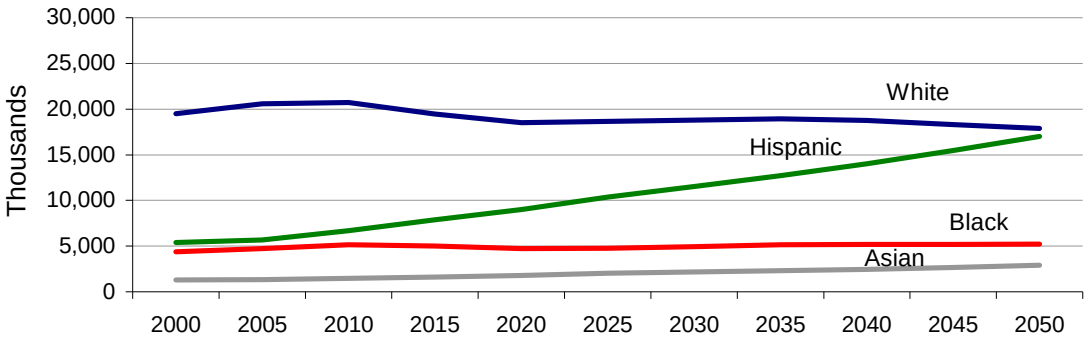
Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of a number of population characteristics and trends that may affect recruiting. The following section offers details on youth characteristics, such as education and employment, and shows how American youth are changing in ways that may affect recruiting.

Population Trends

Youth who are 17–24 years old make up the majority of new entrants to the labor force, college and the Military. Figure 2-1 shows population trends for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian youth[1]; these trends begin in 2000 and are projected through 2050[iii]. Figure 2-1 includes both male and female youth. In general, about half of the youth population is male and half is female; the population trends are essentially the same for both sexes.

Figure 2-1. Population Trends, 17-24 Year Olds



Source: U.S. Census Bureau: Census 2000; Population projections from 2008 data

[1] The population estimates and projections listed in Chapter 2 do not encompass the full matrix of race and Hispanic-origin categories. The race groups that are presented above include: (1) White alone, (2) Black alone, (3) Asian alone and (4) Hispanic origin (any race).

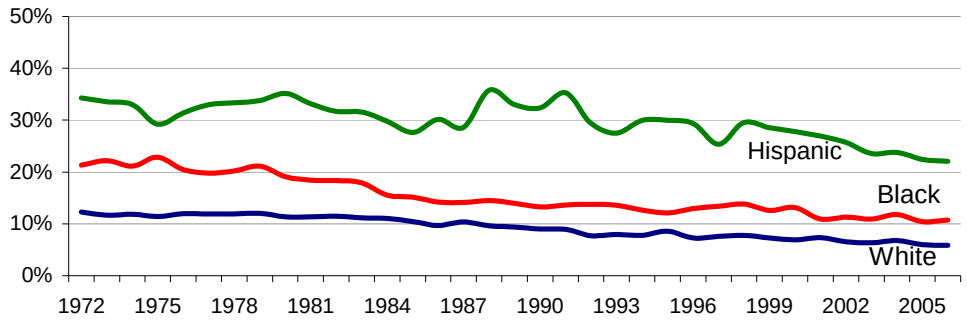
The size of the 17–24 age cohort has fluctuated since the early 1980s. In July 1983, the size of this age group was 33.7 million[xiii], but declined to less than 27.7 million by July 1996[xiv]. Since 1996, this age group has grown, increasing to 29.6 million in July 2000[xiv] and to 34.2 million by July 2008[ii]. This represents an increase of about 1.8 percent per year from 2000 to 2008. This age group is expected to eclipse the 35 million mark in 2015, with the largest increase expected among Hispanic youth[iii]. The Hispanic youth population is projected to increase by 27.7 percent between 2008 and 2015 (an average increase of 3.6 percent per year). Of additional interest is the expected increase among Asian youth. The Asian youth population is projected to increase by 16.1 percent over the next seven years (an average increase of 2.2 percent per year).

Education Trends

High School Dropout Rate

Given that a high school degree is required for military service, the number of youth who finish high school is important to Military recruitment. The proportion of high school dropouts[2] among 16 to 24 year olds has decreased considerably over the past 35 years[xv]. Most recently, from 1996 to 2006, the overall high school dropout rate declined from 11.1 percent to 9.3 percent. The dropout rate decreased significantly among Hispanic youth during this time period. Hispanic youth, however, continued to be much more likely than Black or White youth to drop out of high school. Figure 2-2 shows the high school dropout rate for men and women since 1972.

Figure 2-2. High School Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds



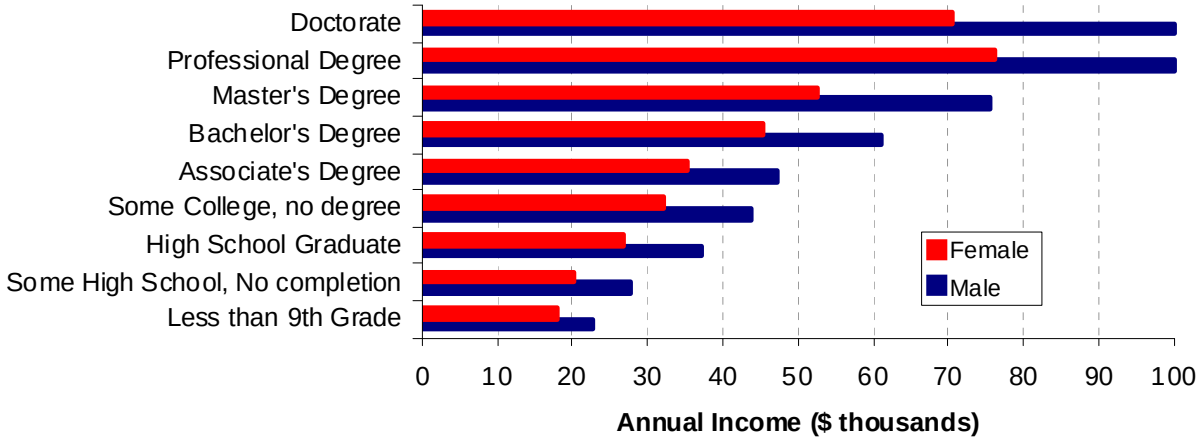
Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2007

Educational Attainment and Earnings

Most youth aspire to continue their education after they graduate high school rather than pursue full-time employment or service in the Military. The June 2008 Youth Poll results supported this contention and showed that the vast majority (86.0%) of youth ages 16–21 hope to pursue post-secondary education. The motivation for higher education is clear: more years of education typically result in higher salaries. In 2006, male full-time workers age 25 and older holding a bachelor's degree earned an average annual income of $60,910 compared to an average annual income of $37,030 earned by males with only a high school diploma[xvi]. Figure 2-3 shows the median income for men and women, 25 years old and over, by educational achievement.

[2] High school dropouts are defined as all persons who are neither enrolled in school nor recipients of a high school diploma. GED recipients are counted as having completed high school.

Figure 2-3. Median Income of Full-Time Workers by Gender, 25 Years Old and Over



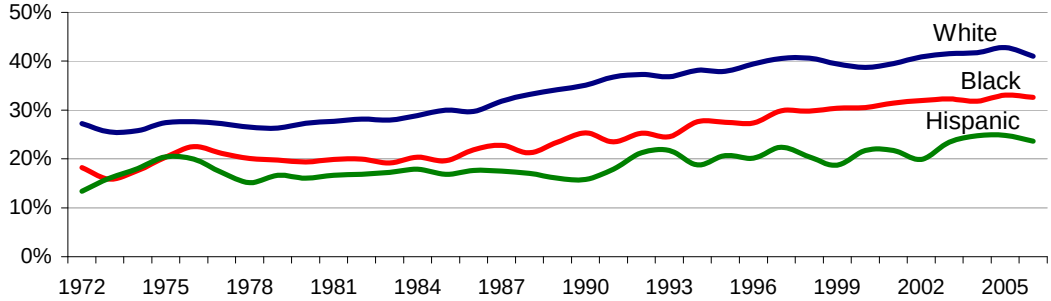
Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2007

Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education

Further evidence of the desire of youth to pursue post-secondary education can be found in the increased proportion of youth who are attending college. Between 1996 and 2006, the proportion of youth ages 18 to 24 enrolled in degree-granting institutions increased from 35.5 percent to 37.3 percent[xvii]. This increase in enrollment was due to more women attending college. In the past ten years, the proportion of females enrolling in degree-granting institutions grew from 37.0 percent in 1996 to 40.6 percent in 2006. Enrollment of male youth was unchanged over this same time period (34.1 percent in both 1996 and 2006).

The proportion of minorities who are enrolled in degree-granting institutions has also been increasing[xvii]. In 1996, 27.4 percent of Black and 20.1 percent of Hispanic youth ages 18–24 were enrolled in college. These proportions rose to 32.6 percent of Black and 23.6 percent of Hispanic youth in 2006. While the proportion of Hispanic youth enrolled in college has shown strong growth over the past ten years, the proportion of Hispanic youth enrolled in college remains considerably less than the proportion of White or Black youth enrolled in degree-granting institutions. Figure 2-4 provides enrollment rates in degree-granting institutions among 18–24 year olds.

Figure 2-4. Enrollment Rate in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity, 18-24 Year Olds



Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2007

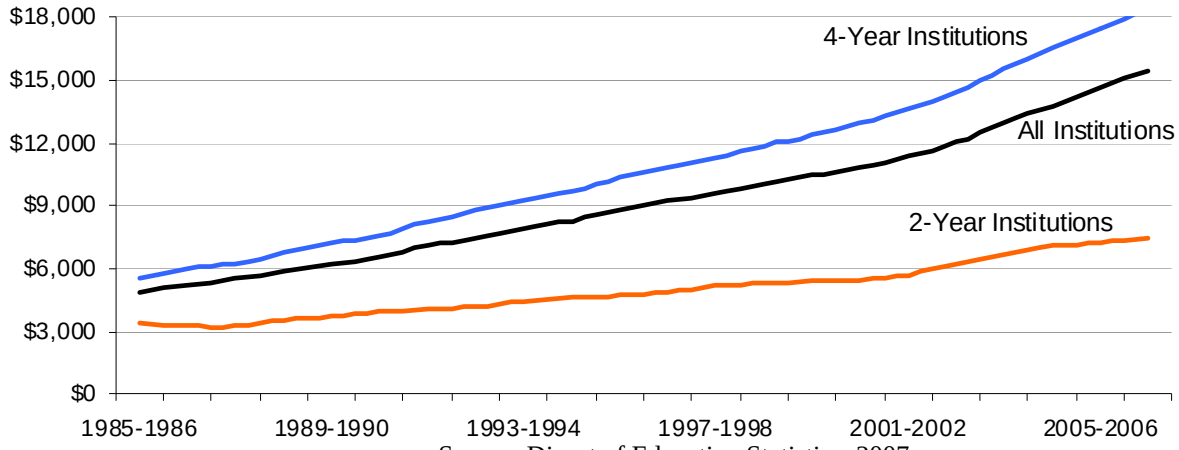
While overall enrollment in post-secondary institutions has increased over the past ten years, the proportion of recent high school graduates attending college immediately after graduation has remained stable over the past decade. In October 2007, 67.2 percent of high school graduates from the class of 2007 were attending college in the following fall semester, with 93.2 percent of those graduates enrolled full-time[xviii]. These proportions are virtually unchanged from October 1997, when 67 percent of recent high school graduates were enrolled in college in the fall following graduation and 90.5 percent attended full-time[xix].

Approximately two-thirds of male (66.1%) and female (68.3%) graduates from the class of 2007 were enrolled in college after graduation. In addition, recent Asian graduates (90.0%) continued to be considerably more likely than White (68.7%), Black (55.2%), or Hispanic (63.9%) graduates to be enrolled in college in the fall following their graduation[xviii].

Cost of Post-Secondary Education

As the desire of youth to obtain a post-secondary degree has increased over the past twenty years, so has the cost. As Figure 2-5 demonstrates, the average cost for an undergraduate education, adjusted for inflation, has steadily increased since 1985[xx]. In 2006, the average cost for undergraduate tuition, fees and board was $18,445 for 4-year institutions and $7,497 for 2-year institutions. While inflation-adjusted tuition and fees for 2-year institutions have increased by 62.7 percent since 1996, the costs of 4-year institutions increased by 78.4 percent.

Figure 2-5. Average Undergraduate Tuition, Fees, Room and Board Paid by Full-Time-Equivalent Students

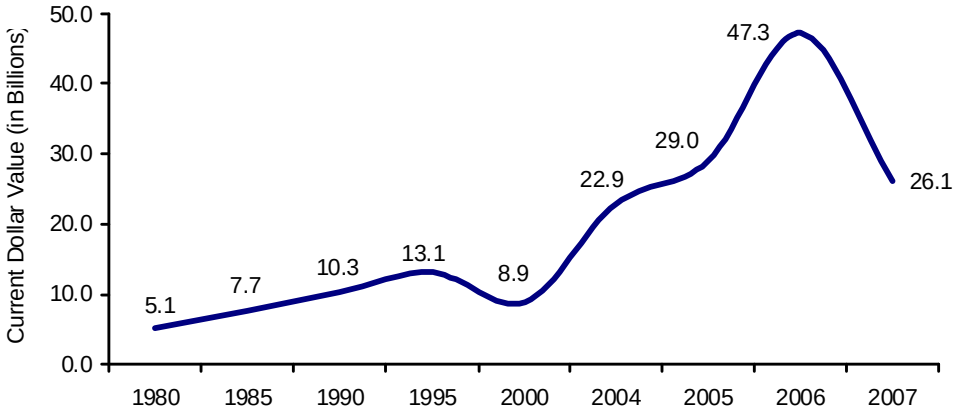


Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2007

As these post-secondary education costs have risen, students increasingly rely on a variety of economic resources to cover tuition, fees, and board. Today, a larger percentage of youth rely on student loans to pay for post-secondary education than ten years ago. For example, in 1992, 32.3 percent of full-time undergraduates received student loans. By 2003, this percentage had risen to 49.9 percent[xxi] with the average full-time college student borrowing approximately $7,336 in student loans for 2003–2004[xxii].

Figure 2-6 shows how the Department of Education has increased federal funding in the form of both financial assistance and educational loans from $13.1 billion in 1995 to $47.3 billion in 2006[xxiii]. However, the Department of Education reduced this figure to $26.1 billion in 2007 by decreasing educational loans from a total of $33.2 billion in 2006 to $10.4 billion in 2007, returning assistance to levels more consistent with 2004 and 2005. The decrease in educational funding could potentially enhance the appeal of educational benefits available through service in the Military.

Figure 2-6. Department of Education Budget for Student Financial Assistance and Educational Loans



Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2007

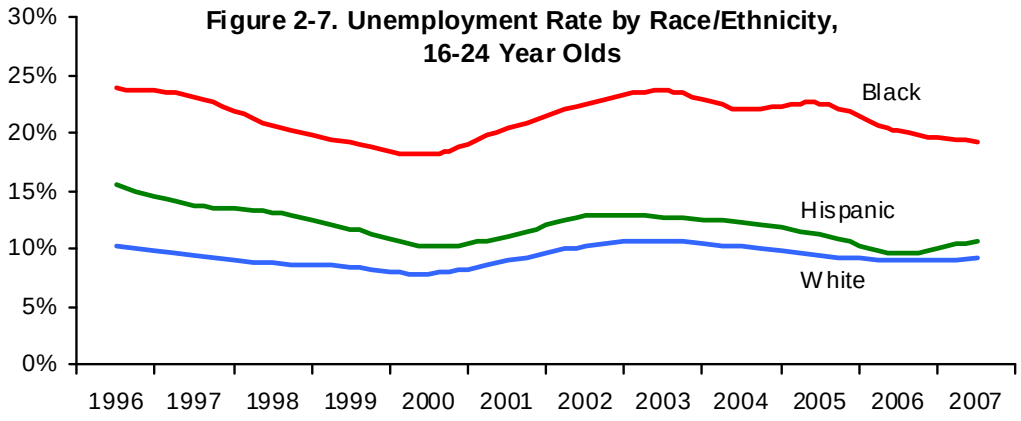
Employment Trends

Generally, youth leaving high school choose from among three options: college, civilian employment, or military service. As mentioned previously, most graduates enroll in college after high school. However, many recent high school graduates are also interested in civilian employment. In October 2007, 51.8 percent of the graduating class of 2007 entered the civilian workforce[xviii], down from ten years ago when 57.4 percent of the graduating class of 1997 entered the civilian workforce[xix].

Unemployment

Figure 2-7 shows that unemployment among all individuals aged 16–24 has remained relatively stable in the past ten years[vi]. Unemployment increased slightly from 2000 to 2003 but has since been declining. Black youth ages 16 to 24 are considerably more likely to be unemployed than White and Hispanic youth.

Figure 2-7. Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds

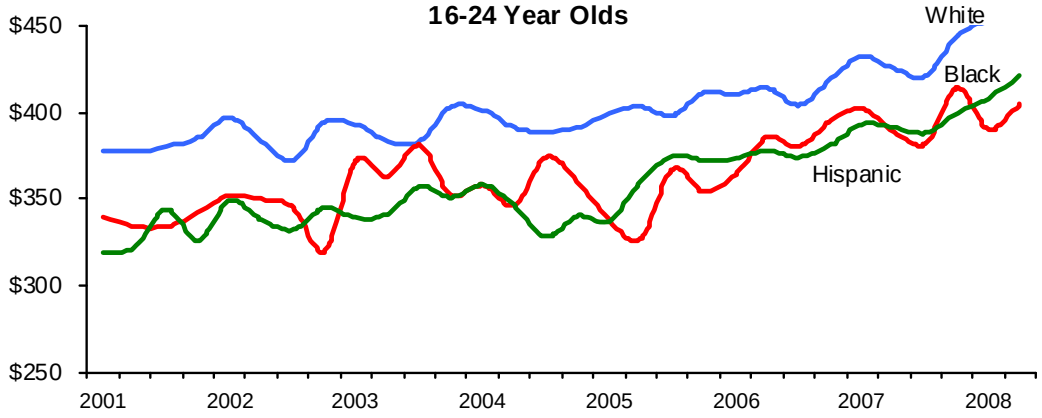


Source: U.S. Department of Labor: Current Population Survey

Earnings

While unemployment for youth has been relatively favorable over the past ten years, average weekly earning have generally increased over that same time. Figure 2-8 shows the average weekly earnings[3] of youth ages 16–24 that are employed full-time, regardless of education level[vi]. While median weekly earnings among young people ages 16 to 24 have been gradually increasing since 2001, Black and Hispanic youth have consistently had lower weekly earnings than White youth.

Figure 2-8. Median Usual Weekly Earnings by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds

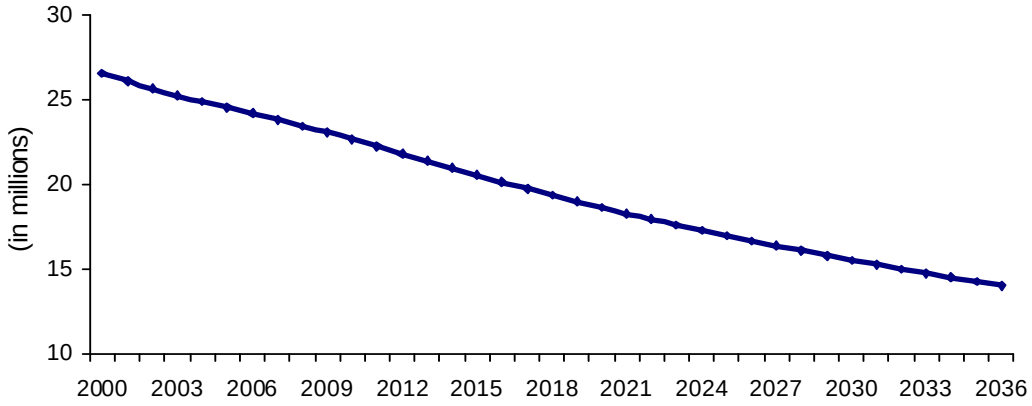


Source: U.S. Department of Labor: Current Population Survey

Veteran Population Trends

While not a characteristic of the youth population, the veteran population in the United States has a strong influence on military recruiting. Studies by individual Services, including the Navy[vii], have found a link between knowing a veteran (particularly one who is a father) and enlistment behavior. However, the size of the veteran population has been steadily declining. In June 2008, there were approximately 21.7 million military veterans in the U.S. population, reflecting a decrease from an estimated 25.1 million veterans in June 1998[xxiv]. As shown in Figure 2-9, the size of the veteran population is expected to continue to decline to around 14.1 million by 2036[xxv].

Figure 2-9. Projected U.S. Veteran Population



Source: U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs: VetPop 2007

[3] The earnings for the respondent's main job have been adjusted by the Consumer Price Index to reflect current dollars.

As mentioned previously, having a father who is a veteran plays an important role in youth interest in military service. As the number of veterans declines, so do the number of youth who have a father who served in the Military. For instance, at the end of the Cold War, over 40 percent of 18 year olds had fathers who were veterans[xxvi]. Data from the DoD Youth Polls indicates that this proportion has also been steadily decreasing: whereas 25.3 percent of young adults age 16–21 reported having a father with military experience in November 2003, only 20.1 percent reported the same in June 2008. The declining number of fathers who have served in the Military and the increasing number of parents who have gone to college have helped contribute to today's recruiting challenges.

Summary

Overall, the market for youth recruitment is challenging: not only have youth shied away from enlistment, but many are ineligible for military service. As more youth continue to seek post-secondary education, the pool of possible applicants shrinks. However, post-secondary education costs have risen and may become more prohibitive if the Department of Education continues to reduce its student aid. Youth are also likely to turn to employment following graduation: since unemployment levels have remained steady and the median weekly earning has increased, the appeal of post-high school employment may grow. Veterans, who may positively influence a youth to enlist, are a shrinking population and are expected to decrease by approximately 40% over the next 30 years[xxv]. These trends have changed the landscape of the youth market and raised the difficulty of recruitment.

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OVERVIEW REPORT

Chapter Three describes the propensity measures, the propensity-related factors, propensity for the specific Services and Reserve Components, and the trends in propensity.

Chapter 3

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Chapter 3. Enlistment Propensity for Military Service

Introduction

The DoD Youth Polls are best known for the information they provide on youth propensity for service in the Armed Forces. This chapter presents the most current estimates of propensity. For all measures of propensity referenced in this chapter, "propensity" is defined as the proportion of youth indicating that military service is a likely event in their future.

Chapter Overview

This chapter is divided into five sections:

1. **Propensity Measures:** This section explains the measures of propensity for the active duty and Reserve Services that are included in the Youth Poll. It also describes research showing that propensity is a strong predictor of later enlistment behavior.
2. **Propensity-Related Factors:** This section explains the relationship between propensity and several demographic factors, such as gender, age, and race/ethnicity.
3. **Propensity for Specific Services:** This section presents the latest information on propensity for the individual Services, demographic differences in Service-specific propensity, and the overlap in propensity across the different Services. Additionally, it demonstrates the correlation between propensity for active duty and propensity for the Reserves and the National Guard.
4. **Propensity Trends:** This section shows how propensity has changed over the past decade. It also displays trends for aided and unaided propensity, for Service-specific propensity, and propensity among the different racial/ethnic groups.
5. **Summary:** This section provides a concise overview of Chapter 3.

Propensity Measures

The same questions have been used to measure youth propensity since the first YATS survey was conducted in 1975. Prior to any mention of military service by the interviewer, respondents are asked an open-ended question about their future plans:

"Now let's talk about your plans (after you get out of high school/for the next few years). What do you think you might be doing?"

The most common responses include going to school, working, and entering the Military. Respondents are encouraged to indicate all of the things that they might be doing, and those who reference military service in general, or one of the Services specifically, are counted as demonstrating an "unaided propensity" for military service. The reference is considered to be "unaided" because the topic of military service is first mentioned by the respondent, and not by the interviewer.

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

"Now I'd like to ask you how likely it is that you will be serving in the Military in the next few years. Would you say definitely, probably, probably not or definitely not?"

and

"How likely is it that you will be serving on active duty in the [Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Coast Guard]?"

The question is asked first for the Military in general and then for each specific Service. The order of the Service-specific questions changes from one respondent to the next to eliminate any question-order effects. Those who say they will "definitely" or "probably" be serving in the Military in general or in a particular Service are counted as demonstrating an "aided propensity" for the Military or that Service. "Active composite propensity" is defined as the proportion of respondents who indicate propensity for at least one of the four active DoD Services[1]: Army, Navy, Marine Corps, or Air Force.

The Youth Polls also include similar questions about potential service in the Reserves and the National Guard:

"How likely is it that you will be serving in the [Reserves, National Guard]? Would you say definitely, probably, probably not or definitely not?"

Since 1990, these questions have immediately followed the questions about active duty. In order to avoid question-order effects, half of the respondents are randomly selected to be asked first about potential service in the Reserves and then about potential service in the National Guard; the other half of respondents are asked about potential service in the National Guard first. "Reserve composite propensity" is defined as the proportion of respondents who indicate they will "definitely" or "probably" serve in either the Reserves or the National Guard.

Research has shown that these propensity measures are valid measures of enlistment behavior. A study conducted by RAND[i] found that high-quality youth who offered an unaided mention of plans to enlist were seven times more likely to actually enlist than those who said that they will "probably not" or "definitely not" serve. Those who, in response to a direct question about the Military, said they will "definitely" or "probably" serve were three times more likely to actually enlist than those who said they will "probably not" or "definitely not" serve. Additional studies by RAND[ii], the Defense Manpower Data Center[iii], and Fors Marsh Group[iv] found similar results.

Propensity-Related Factors

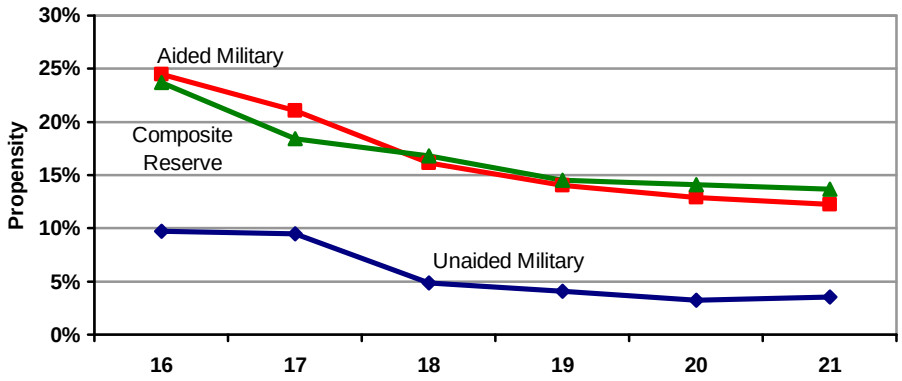
Youth Poll results demonstrate that propensity for military service is related to a number of demographic variables and that these relationships have been fairly stable over a number of years. The following section describes the relationship between several of these factors and propensity.

[1] Except in wartime, the Coast Guard is part of the Department of Homeland Security.

Gender and Age

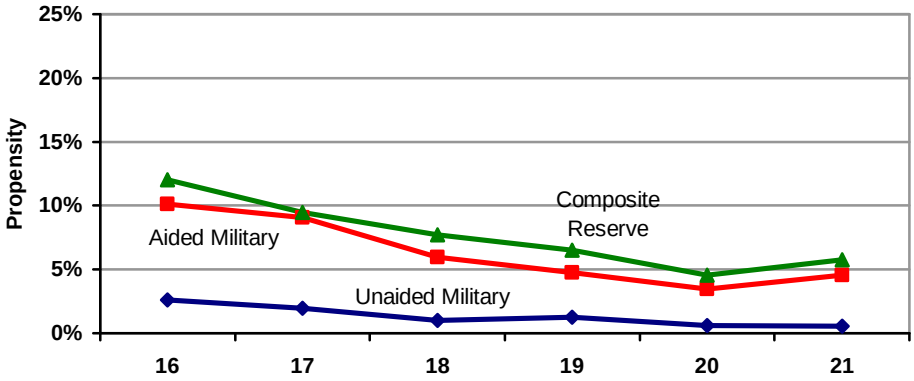
The proportion of youth propensed for military service decreases as age increases from 16 to 21 years of age. Figures 3-1 and 3-2 show this pattern for unaided military propensity, aided military propensity, and Composite Reserve Propensity between the May 2004 and June 2008 Youth Polls.

Figure 3-1. Relationship Between Propensity and Age Among Males



Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

Figure 3-2. Relationship Between Propensity and Age Among Females



Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

As shown in Figures 3-1 and 3-2, propensity declines rather dramatically with age: 16–17 year olds are about twice as likely to be propensed as 20–21 year olds. The majority of this decline occurs as youth age from 16 to 18 years old. At all ages, aided military propensity and Composite Reserve Propensity are at similar levels, while unaided military propensity is considerably lower.

Additionally, at all ages, propensity is lower among females than among males. Research from YATS suggests that this is to be expected[v]. In-depth interviews with young women find that many young women place a high value on maintaining close relationships with their family and friends and tend to be more reluctant than young men to break these ties by joining the Military.

Scholastic Status

Propensity has also been found to vary by scholastic status. As shown by Table 3-1, propensity generally decreases with each additional year of education. Specifically, high school students are more likely than college students to indicate propensity for military service. Additionally, aided military propensity and Composite Reserve Propensity is higher among youth with a high school diploma or less than among those currently enrolled in college.

Table 3-1. Propensity by Education, Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Education Level	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Students						
Less than 11th Grade	11	28	26	4	12	15
H.S. Juniors	10	23	21	2	9	10
H.S. Seniors	6	16	16	1	7	8
Vo-Tech & 2-Yr College	2	10	12	1	3	6
4-Year College						
Freshmen	2	10	11	1	3	6
Sophomores	1	7	9	0	3	3
Juniors	3	5	6	0	1	2
Seniors or higher	3	7	9	1	3	2
Non-Students						
H.S. Dropouts[2]	6	29	29	1	10	15
H.S. Grads (no college)	6	16	17	1	7	8
Some College or more	4	9	11	1	5	5

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

Employment Status

Propensity also varies by employment status. As Table 3-2 shows, unemployed youth (regardless of educational status) are more likely than employed youth to be propensed for military service. Further, aided military propensity and Composite Reserve Propensity is highest among youth who are not students and are unemployed.

Table 3-2. Propensity by Employment, Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Employment	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Students						
Employed	5	14	14	1	5	6
Unemployed	7	19	18	2	8	9
Non-Students						
Employed	5	17	18	1	6	7
Unemployed	7	23	24	1	9	11

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

Employment Prospects

[2] H.S. Dropouts include any non-student who did not complete high school.

Propensity for military service is also related to perceived income and employment prospects. Perceived income was evaluated by asking youth whether they would expect to earn more in the Military or in a civilian job over the next few years. As Table 3-3 shows, propensity is highest among those who expect to earn more in the Military than in a civilian job.

Table 3-3. Propensity by Income Prospects in Military vs. Civilian Jobs, Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Expected relative earnings	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
More in the Military	12	31	26	3	11	14
Military/civilian same	6	17	18	1	6	7
More in civilian job	4	10	10	0	3	4

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

To evaluate employment expectations, youth were asked how difficult they think it is to get a job in their community. As Table 3-4 shows, the more difficult that youth believe it is to get a job in their community, the more likely they are to be propensed for military service.

Table 3-4. Propensity by Perceived Difficulty Getting a Civilian Job, Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Perceived difficulty in getting a job	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Almost impossible	8	24	23	2	11	11
Very difficult	7	20	21	2	7	9
Somewhat difficult	6	17	16	1	6	7
Not difficult	5	15	15	1	5	7

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

Race/Ethnicity

Propensity is also found to vary by race and ethnicity. In past years, aided military propensity for both males and females has been higher among Hispanic and Black youth than among White youth. However, from May 2004 to June 2008, aided military propensity has been roughly the same for White and Black males (see Table 3-5).

Among both males and females, Composite Reserve Propensity has remained higher among Black and Hispanic youth than among White youth. Asian youth have also expressed higher propensity for Reserve service than have White youth. Given the expected growth rate of the Asian population (see Chapter 2), this elevated propensity may be of interest to the recruiting community in coming years.

As noted earlier, educational achievement is related to both race and ethnicity (see Chapter 2) and propensity (see Table 3-1). However, educational achievement alone does not explain differences in propensity across the different races/ethnicities (Table 3-5).

Table 3-5. Propensity by Race and Ethnicity[3], Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Race/Ethnicity[4]	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Total Population						
White	7	16	15	1	5	6
Black	5	16	20	2	10	13
Hispanic	6	25	26	2	12	13
Asian	4	14	18	1	9	10
HS Juniors and Seniors						
White	9	19	16	1	6	6
Black	5	18	23	3	11	15
Hispanic	8	29	28	3	14	15
HS Graduates, no college						
White	6	14	15	2	5	4
Black	8	18	20	1	12	14
Hispanic	5	21	26	1	12	13

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

Gender Differences

The preceding tables demonstrate that between May 2004 and June 2008 fewer women than men were interested in military service. In any particular category (e.g., H.S. seniors, Hispanics), the propensity of women is lower than that of men. In general, the differences are proportional: the propensity of women is generally about half that of men.

[3] Estimates for racial and ethnic categories were based on all respondents who indicated they belong to a particular group. Respondents who indicated membership to multiple groups were counted as part of each group mentioned.

[4] Separate estimates for Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians and Eskimos who were high school seniors or high school graduates were not included because of sample size restrictions (they represented significantly smaller portions of the population, and of the Youth Poll sample, than did White, Black, or Hispanic youth).

Geography

Propensity for military service also varies by geographic area. As shown in Table 3-6, propensity for military service remains relatively high in the South Atlantic, Pacific, Mountain, and West South Central divisions and remains relatively low in the New England division.

Reserve propensity among male youth in the Mid-Atlantic, Mountain, West South Central, and South Atlantic divisions appears to be largely driven by minority youth, as Composite Reserve Propensity in these divisions is considerably lower among White male youth than among all racial/ethnic groups combined.

Table 3-6. Propensity by Geographic Division[5], Gender

	Men (%)			Women (%)		
Census Division	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
All Race/Ethnic Groups						
New England	4	11	12	1	4	5
West North Central	5	15	15	2	5	8
East North Central	5	14	15	1	6	8
Mid-Atlantic	6	15	17	1	6	7
East South Central	7	17	18	1	5	9
South Atlantic	7	19	18	2	7	9
Pacific	6	19	18	2	8	8
Mountain	7	20	20	1	5	7
West South Central	8	22	20	2	9	10
Whites Only						
New England	5	10	11	1	3	2
West North Central	5	14	13	1	4	6
East North Central	5	13	13	1	5	6
Mid-Atlantic	5	13	13	0	3	3
East South Central	6	16	17	1	4	6
South Atlantic	9	19	14	1	4	5
Pacific	6	15	15	2	5	3
Mountain	7	17	16	1	4	6
West South Central	9	20	15	2	5	7

Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

[5] Census Divisions defined as follows: New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT); East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI); West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD); Mid-Atlantic (PA, NJ, NY); East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN); South Atlantic (DE, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, DC, WV); Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY); Pacific (CA, OR, WA, AK, HI); West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX).

Propensity for Specific Services

As mentioned earlier, Youth Poll respondents were asked how likely they were to serve on active duty in each of the Armed Services: the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, and Coast Guard. Respondents were asked about each of the Services one at a time in a randomized fashion to prevent order effects from impacting responses.

Historically, propensity has been most closely monitored for 16–21 year olds. This focus continues to be appropriate for evaluating the enlistment potential of the youth market: only about 1 in 5 enlisted active duty accessions are over 21 years old. However, the adjustment in enlistment standards for the Army has resulted in sizable increases in the proportion of older Army enlistees (see Table 3-7). In 2008, 10 percent of Army enlistees were at least 29 years old, while about 2 percent or less of enlistees for all other Services were at least 29 years old.

Table 3-7. Cumulative Percentage of 2008 Enlistees by Age and Service

Age	Army	Navy	Marine Corps	Air Force	Coast Guard
≤17	4.3	2.7	5.4	2.5	1.7
≤18	23.4	31.1	44.1	29.0	22.8
≤19	39.1	52.4	65.6	52.4	41.4
≤20	50.4	66.0	76.9	68.0	55.4
≤21	59.0	75.2	84.5	78.4	66.4
≤22	66.2	81.9	89.5	85.6	74.7
≤23	72.1	86.8	92.8	90.8	81.1
≤24	76.9	90.3	95.1	94.0	86.4
≤25	80.7	92.7	96.7	96.4	90.7
≤26	83.9	94.6	97.8	98.0	94.4
≤27	86.4	95.8	98.6	99.3	96.5
≤28	88.6	97.0	99.3	99.7	97.8
≤29	90.4	97.8	99.5	99.8	98.6
≤30+	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: FY08 Active Duty Accessions, Defense Manpower Data Center

Service-Specific Propensity

Table 3-8 shows the propensity for each Armed Service, the National Guard, and the Reserves in June 2008. For all Services and Components, males were more likely than females to be propensed.

Table 3-8. Propensity: Active Duty and National Guard/Reserves by Gender

Service	Men (%)	Women (%)
Army	10	4
Navy	11	4
Marine Corps	11	3
Air Force	11	5
Coast Guard	8	3
National Guard	10	5
Reserves	14	4

Source: June 2008 Youth Poll

Propensity for Multiple Services

Results from the Youth Poll also demonstrated that the majority of youth who were propensed were propensed for multiple Services. Table 3-9 shows the proportion of youth who indicated they were propensed for a particular Service and for at least one additional Service in 1999 and June 2008. Youth who were interested in the Marine Corps and Air Force were the most likely to be interested solely in joining that Service.

Table 3-9. Percentage of Propensed Youth Indicating Propensity for Multiple Active Duty Services by Gender

	Men (%)		Women (%)	
Service	1999	2008	1999	2008
Army	76	82	74	60
Navy	78	76	71	77
Marine Corps	73	71	89	58
Air Force	72	72	66	57
Coast Guard	80	76	79	66

Sources: 1999 YATS and June 2008 Youth Poll

It is worth noting that trends in multiple service propensity have changed since 1999. The proportion of male youth who were propensed for the Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard and at least one additional Service decreased from 1999 to 2008; that is, they were more likely to be interested solely in joining that one Service. In contrast, the proportion of male youth who were propensed for the Army and at least one other active duty service increased.

The proportion of female youth who were propensed for the Army, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard and at least one additional Service decreased from 1999 to 2008; that is, they were more likely to be interested solely in joining that one Service. However, the proportion of female youth who were propensed for the Navy and at least one other active duty service increased.

Propensity for National Guard and Reserves

There is also considerable overlap between composite propensity for active duty and propensity for either the National Guard or the Reserves. As Table 3-10 indicates, approximately 75 percent of the youth who are propensed for the National Guard or the Reserves are also propensed for at least one active duty Service.

Additionally, there is significant overlap between propensity for the Reserves and National Guard. Of those youth propensed for the Reserves, about 40 percent indicate they are also propensed for the National Guard. Conversely, over half of the youth propensed for the National Guard are also propensed for the Reserves.

Table 3-10. Percentage of Youth Indicating Propensity for Both Active Duty and Reserve or National Guard Service by Gender

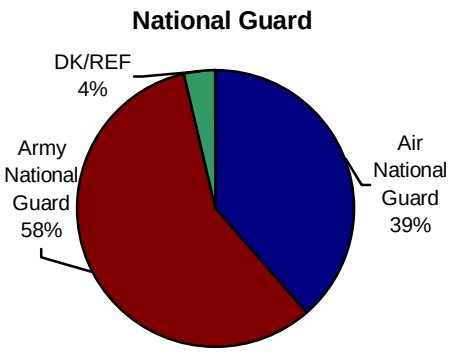
	Men (%)		Women (%)	
Propensed for…	Active Duty	Other Reserve Component	Active Duty	Other Reserve Component
Reserves	77	37	75	44
National Guard	79	58	72	55

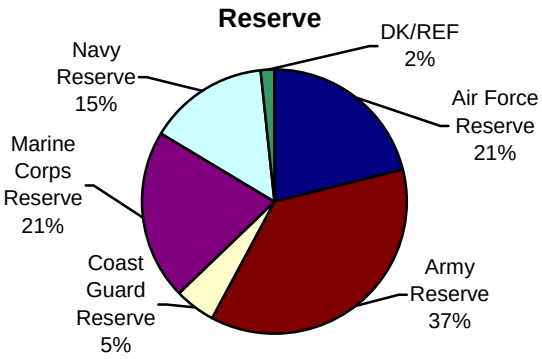
Source: 2004–2008 Youth Polls

As part of the Youth Polls, respondents who indicated that they would "definitely" or "probably" serve in the Reserves were asked in which branch (Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, or Coast Guard) they were likely to be serving. Similarly, those who indicated they may be serving in the National Guard were asked to indicate whether they were more likely to serve in the Army National Guard or the Air National Guard. Figure 3-3 shows how youth responded to this follow-up question in June 2008.

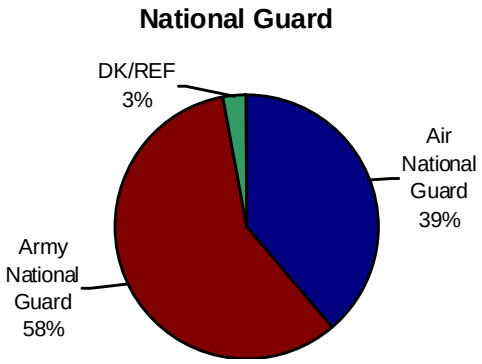
Figure 3-3. National Guard and Reserve Propensity by Gender

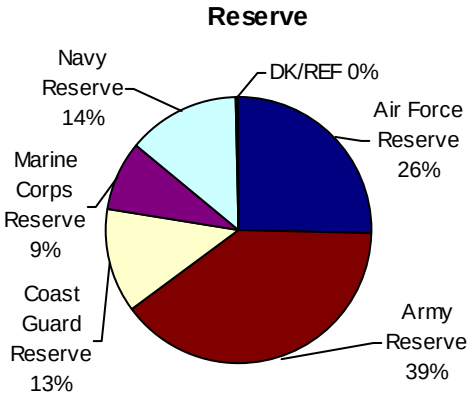
Men





Women





Source: June 2008 Youth Poll

Service Comparisons

Propensity is often higher for some Services than for others. In general, the factors influencing propensity were similar for all Services, as well as for the Reserves and National Guard. For example, Figures 3-1 and 3-2 show that unaided and aided military propensity decreases as youth get older. The relationship between age and propensity for each of the individual Services follows a similar pattern.

Propensity Trends

Since tracking began in 2001, youth propensity for military service has fluctuated in response to current events. Male propensity for military service rose immediately following the events of September 11th, reaching a high point in November 2001. Male propensity remained stable through November 2003 but began to decline in May 2004 as conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan persisted. Propensity dropped precipitously in June 2006 and rebounded slightly in June 2008. In general, propensity among females experienced smaller, more gradual declines over the same time period and showed signs of rebounding in June 2008. Trends differ for unaided and aided military propensity, by racial/ethnic group[6], and by Service.

The figures in the following section show observed values of propensity for each fielding of the Youth Poll since 2001. The observed values include a small degree of sampling error. In the following charts, the sampling error is almost always less than 3 percentage points—often it is less than 2 percentage points. Thus, the propensity estimate shown for a particular year is typically within 2 percentage points of what would have been found if every youth in America had been interviewed. For minority populations (particularly Black and Hispanic youth), the sampling error is larger because estimates are based on fewer observations. For minorities, sampling error is almost always less than 10 percentage points and is often less than 5 percentage points.

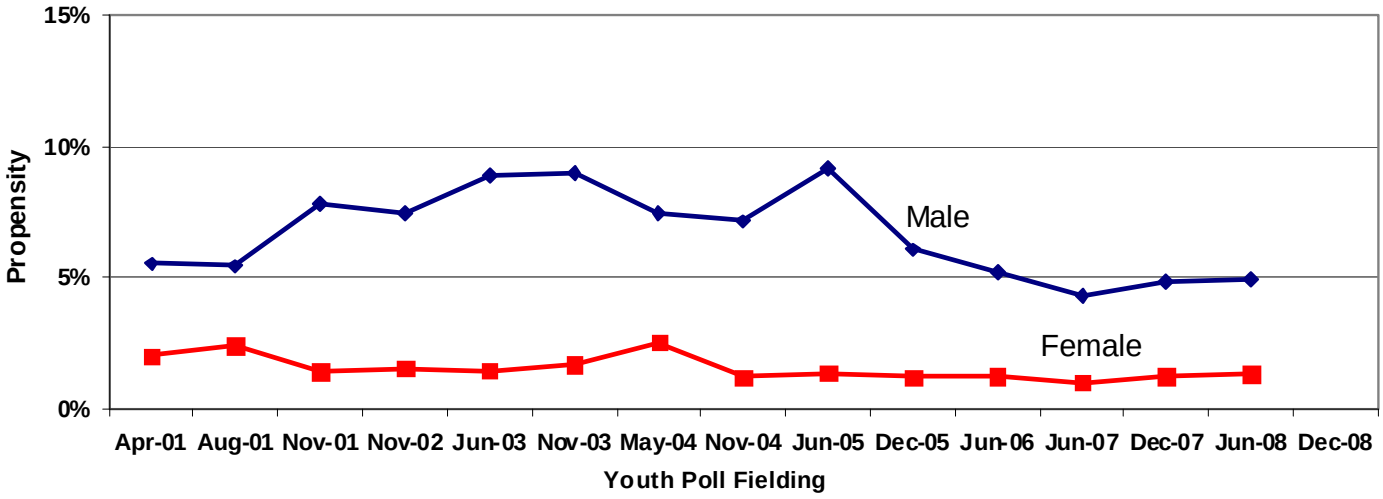
[6] In this section, race and ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive (i.e., each respondent was counted only in one group). This was done to remain consistent with past trend lines reported by YATS and in the Youth Polls.

Unaided Military Propensity

Figure 3-4 shows trends in unaided military propensity—the percentage of youth stating, without prompting from the interviewer, that military service was among their plans for the next few years. Since 2001, an average of 6.7 percent of males and 1.5 percent of females have volunteered that they expect to serve in the Military.

Unaided propensity has changed significantly in the past several years for males. From 2001 through 2003, unaided propensity for military service among males increased about 1.3 percentage points per year. Then, between 2003 and June 2007, it dropped at approximately the same rate. Male propensity has since then showed signs of slight increase. Although female propensity has shown some fluctuation, the long-term trend is relatively stable.

Figure 3-4. Unaided Military Propensity Trends



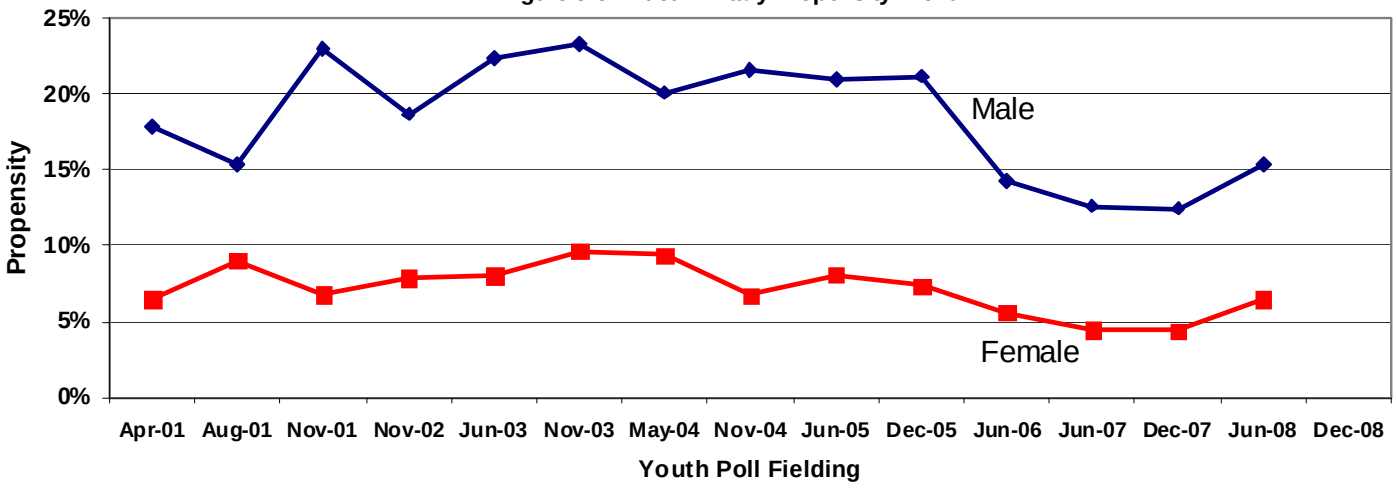
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Aided Military Propensity

Figure 3-5 shows trends in aided military propensity—that is, the percentage of youth responding that they will "definitely" or "probably" be serving in the Military in the next few years. Aided military propensity has changed significantly in the past several years. From 2001 through 2003, male propensity for military service increased about 2.1 percentage points per year. However, from May 2004 to December 2007 aided military propensity among males generally declined by the same rate. In June 2008, aided military propensity rebounded among males with a modest but statistically insignificant increase.

Aided military propensity among females has shown a similar trend to aided military propensity among males—generally increasing from 2001 to 2003 and then decreasing from May 2004 through December 2007. Although aided military propensity among female youth did not experience any specific substantial decline during this time period, aided military propensity in December 2007 was half of what it was in May 2004. However, aided military propensity did see a small but significant growth among females in June 2008.

Figure 3-5. Aided Military Propensity Trends



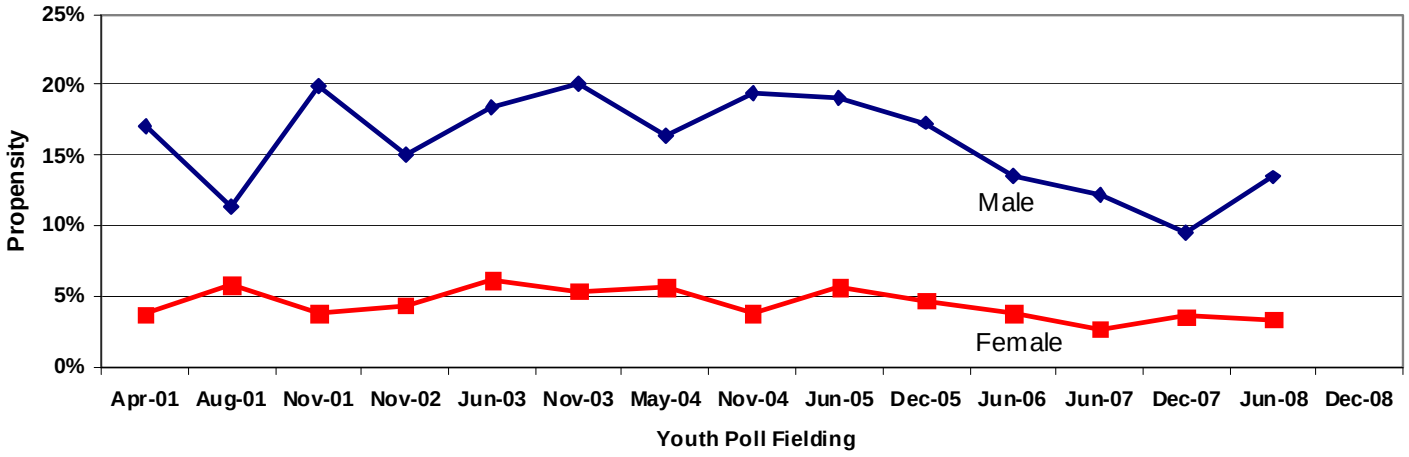
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

White Youth Propensity

Figure 3-6 shows aided military propensity trends among White youth. Given that approximately 70 percent of youth are White, it is not surprising that trends in propensity among White youth closely resemble trends among all youth. Among White males, propensity increased from 2001 through 2003. Between May 2004 and December 2007, aided military propensity among White males declined. In June 2008, however, White male propensity saw significant growth.

After fluctuating in 2001 and 2002, aided military propensity among White females remained relatively stable from June 2003 to June 2005 with approximately five percent of White females reporting they would "definitely" or "probably" serve. However, aided military propensity among White females steadily declined from June 2005 through June 2007, decreasing an average of 1.5 percentage points per year. In December 2007 and June 2008, aided military propensity among White females remained relatively low and stable.

Figure 3-6. Aided Military Propensity Trends Among White Youth



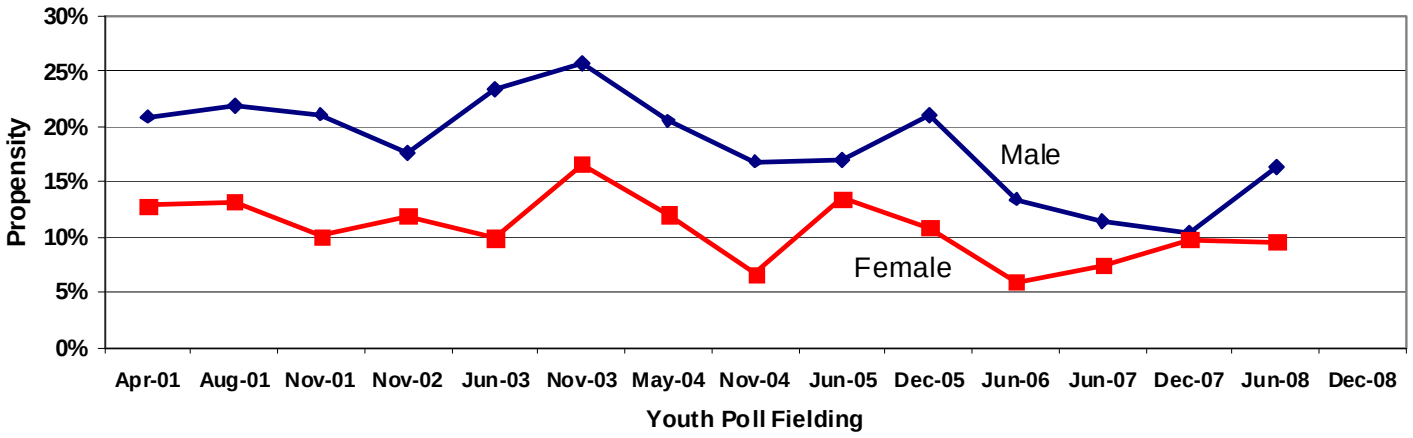
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Black Youth Propensity

Figure 3-7 shows aided military propensity trends among Black youth. In the early 2000s, following September 11th, propensity among Black males appeared to be on the rise. However, between November 2003 and December 2007, aided military propensity among Black males declined at an average rate of 3.7 percentage points a year. In June 2006, aided military propensity among Black males experienced a particularly large decline that continued through December 2007, albeit at a slower rate. In June 2008, however, Black male propensity significantly rebounded, increasing by approximately 6 percentage points.

Aided military propensity among Black females remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2003. Following a similar trend to Black males, aided military propensity among Black females declined at an average annual rate of 4.1 percentage points between November 2003 and June 2006. However, between June 2006 and December 2007, aided military propensity among Black females had risen and was equal to Black male propensity in December 2007. Black female propensity in June 2008 remained stable.

Figure 3-7. Aided Military Propensity Trends Among Black Youth



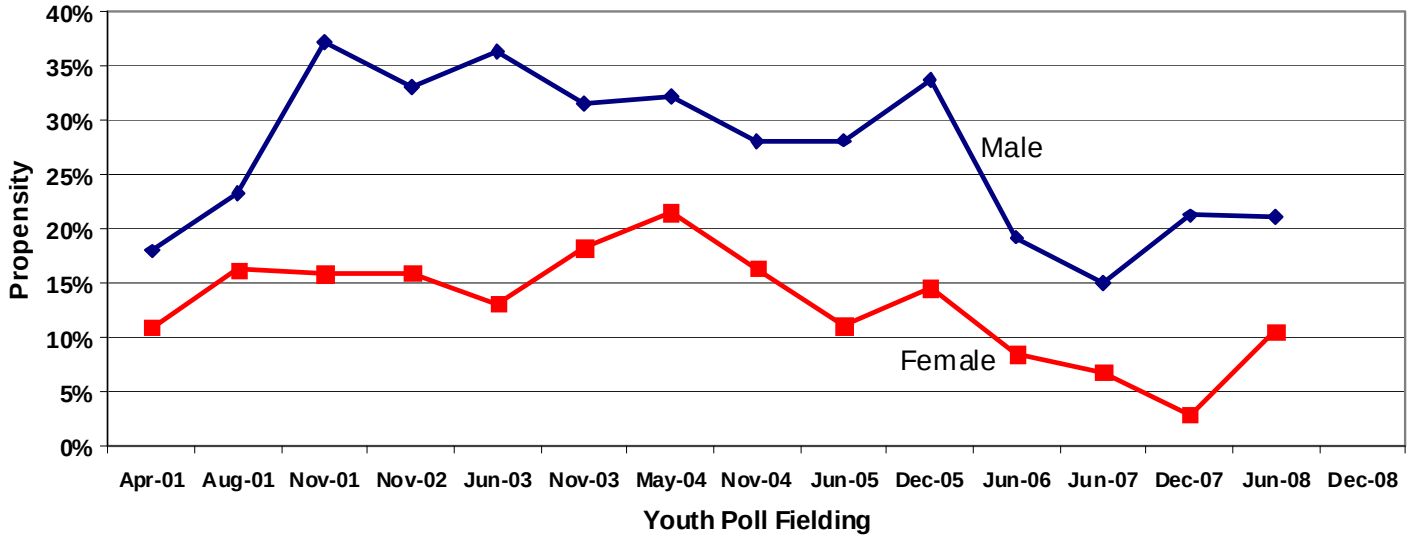
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Hispanic Youth Propensity

Figure 3-8 shows aided military propensity trends among Hispanic youth. Among Hispanic males, aided military propensity increased considerably from April 2001 through June 2003, increasing at an average rate of 8.4 percentage points a year. However, from June 2003 to June 2007, aided military propensity among Hispanic males decreased at an average annual rate of 5.3 percentage points. Hispanic male propensity was unchanged in June 2008.

Similar trends in aided military propensity were seen among Hispanic females. Aided military propensity increased from April 2001 through May 2004 at an average annual rate of 3.4 percentage points. Then, aided military propensity among Hispanic females declined sharply, at an average of 5.2 percentage points per year between May 2004 and December 2007. Hispanic female propensity, however, rebounded significantly in June 2008, increasing by approximately 8 percentage points.

Figure 3-8. Aided Military Propensity Trends Among Hispanic Youth



Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Service-Specific Propensity

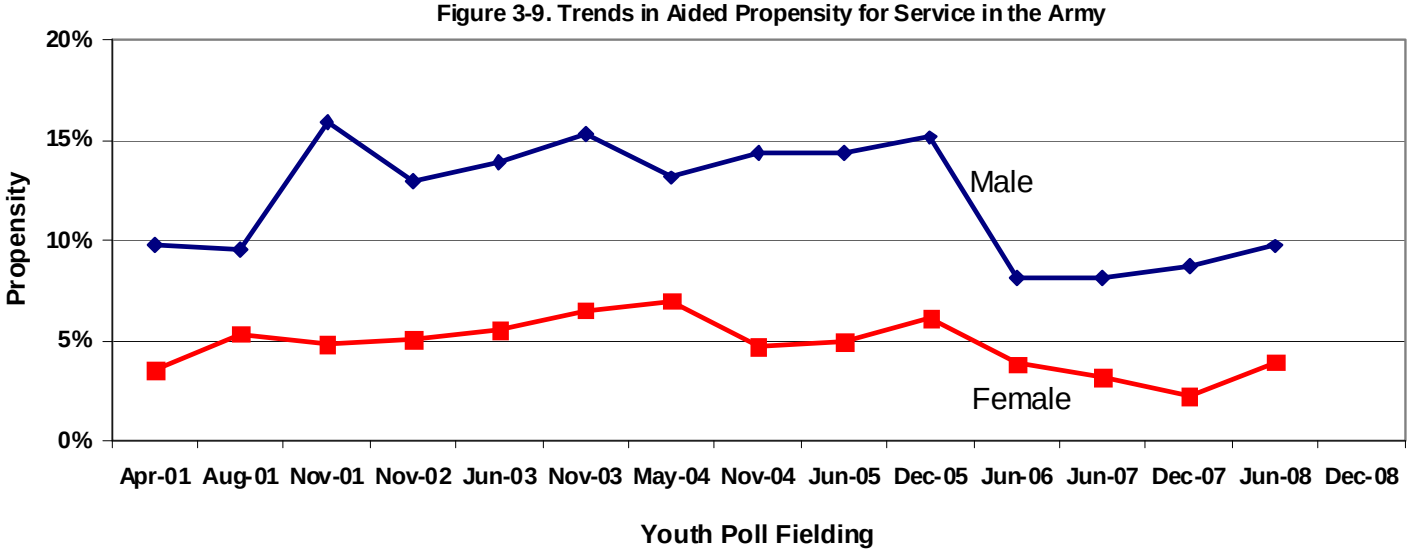
Figures 3-9 through 3-13 provide trends in aided propensity for each of the military Services. These trends are generally similar to the trends observed for aided military propensity.

Army Propensity

Figure 3-9 shows trends in aided propensity for the Army. Aided Army propensity among males increased substantially in November 2001 and then stayed relatively stable through 2005. In June 2006, there was a significant decrease in aided Army propensity among males. Aided Army propensity has remained at these low levels through June 2008.

Aided propensity for the Army among females exhibits a similar pattern to aided general military propensity for male youth: propensity increased gradually into 2004 and then began a pattern of steady decline through December 2007. In June 2008, however, female youth experienced a significant increase in Army propensity.

Figure 3-9. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Army



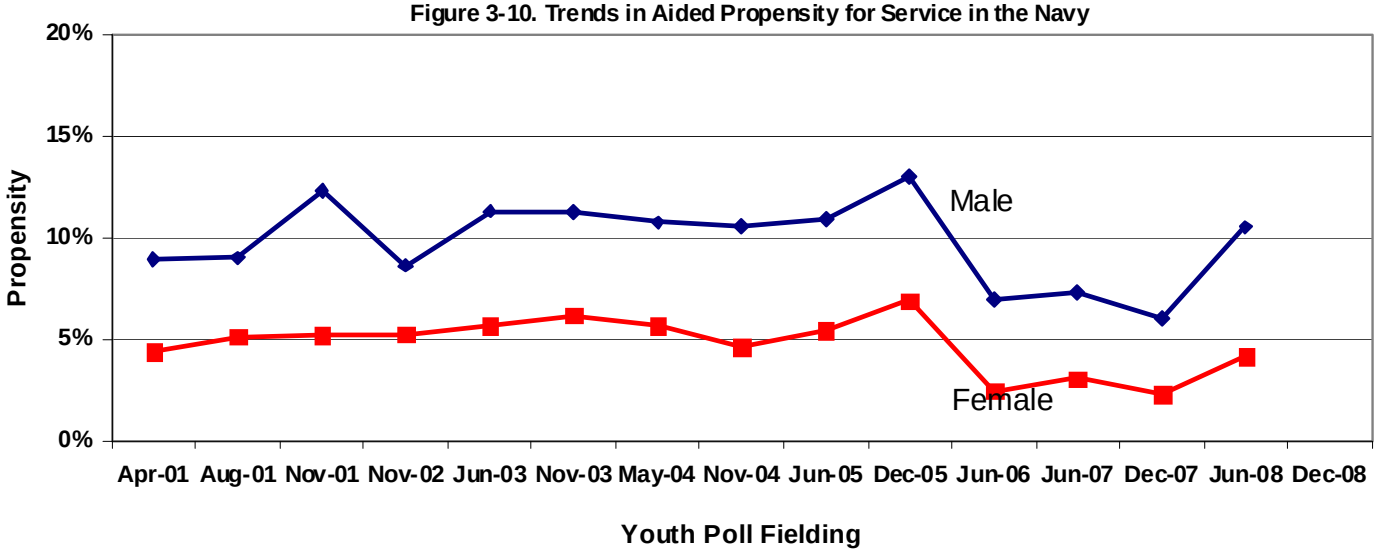
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Navy Propensity

Figure 3-10 shows trends in aided propensity for the Navy. Similar to the trends seen with the Army, aided Navy propensity among males increased sharply in November 2001 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. In June 2006, there was a significant decrease in aided Navy propensity among males. Navy aided propensity rebounded significantly in June 2008 among males, almost doubling from December 2007 levels.

Aided propensity for the Navy among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2005. After a considerable decrease in June 2006, aided Navy propensity among females saw a small but significant rebound in June 2008.

Figure 3-10. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Navy



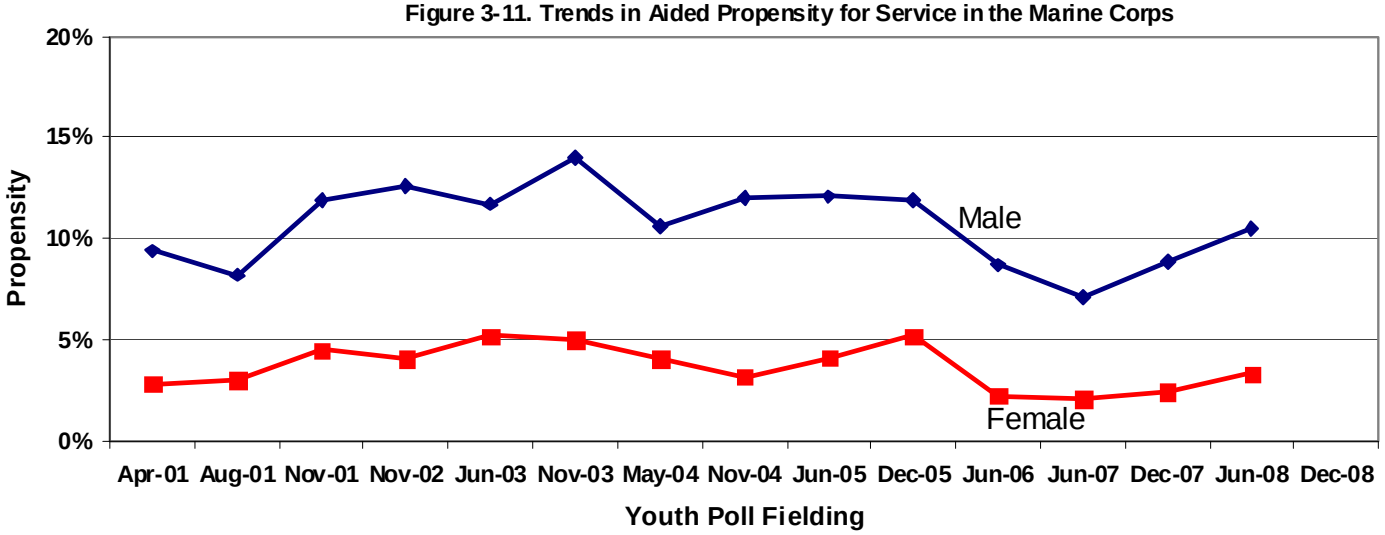
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Marine Corps Propensity

Figure 3-11 shows trends in aided propensity for the Marine Corps. Aided propensity for the Marine Corps among males increased steadily from 2001 through November 2003. Then beginning in 2004, propensity began a downward trend that continued through June 2007. However, this downward trend seems to have reversed itself, with modest increases shown between June 2007 and June 2008.

Aided propensity for the Marine Corps among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2005. In June 2006, aided Marine Corps propensity for females decreased significantly and did not shown signs of significantly rebounding in June 2008.

Figure 3-11. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Marine Corps



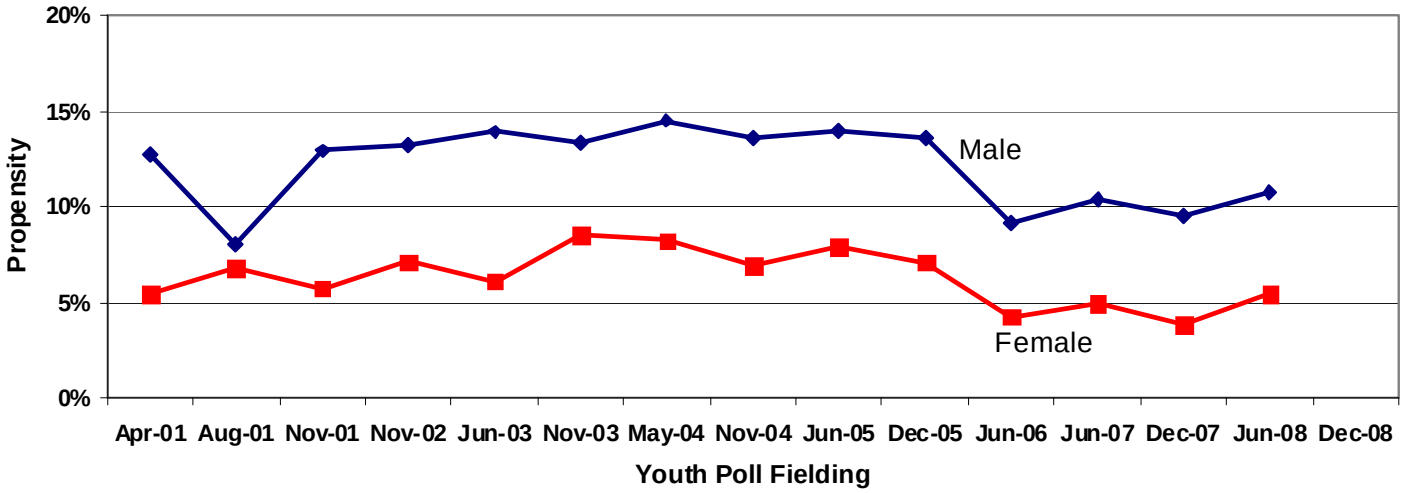
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Air Force Propensity

Figure 3-12 shows trends for aided propensity for the Air Force. Propensity among males increased gradually from 2001 though May 2004 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. Aided Air Force propensity among male youth decreased significantly in June 2006 and has not yet significantly rebounded.

Aided propensity for the Air Force among females increased gradually from 2001 through 2003. However, it began to trend downward in 2004, decreased significantly in June 2006, and has remained low in June 2008.

Figure 3-12. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Air Force



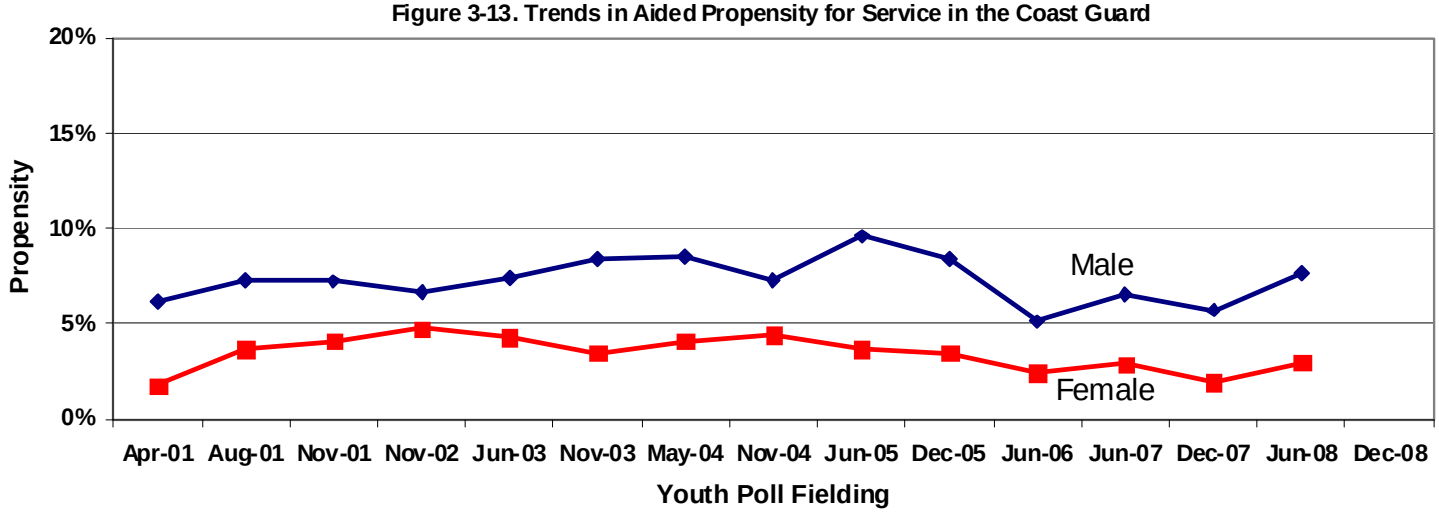
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Coast Guard Propensity

Figure 3-13 shows trends in aided propensity for the Coast Guard. Propensity for the Coast Guard among males increased gradually from 2001 through June 2005. However, aided male Coast Guard propensity declined from June 2005 through December 2007. In June 2008, male Coast Guard propensity showed some signs of rebounding.

Aided propensity for the Coast Guard among females increased steadily from 2001 to 2002 and then remained relatively stable between 2002 and 2004. However, in June 2005 it began to trend downward and has remained low in June 2008.

Figure 3-13. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Coast Guard



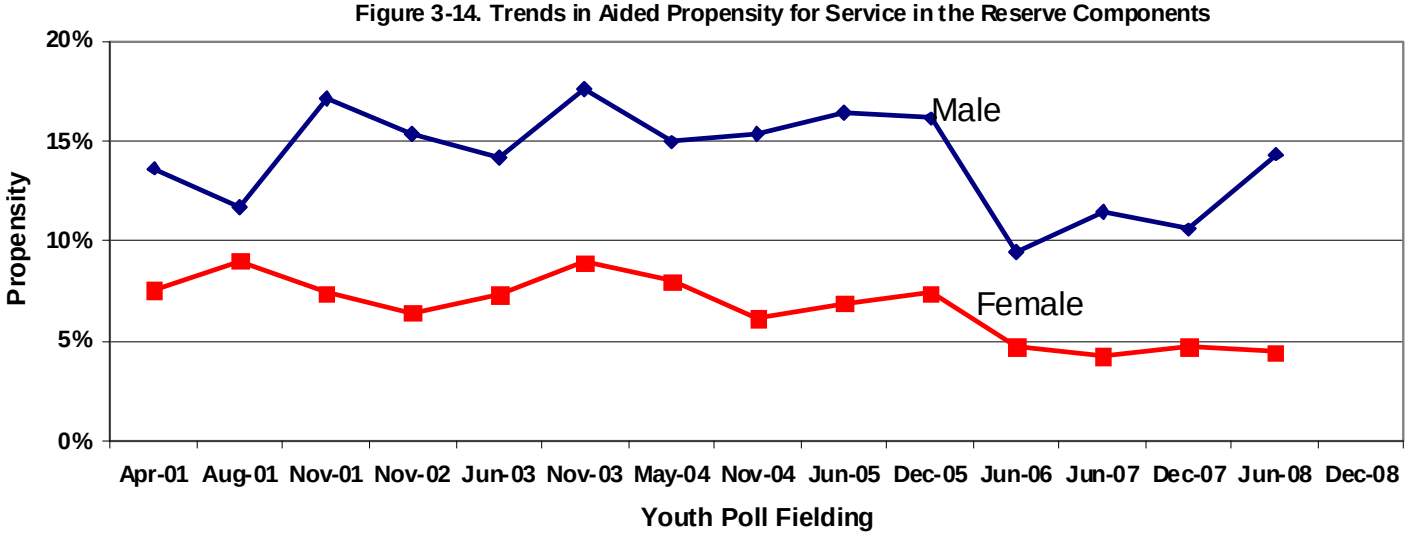
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Reserve Propensity

Figure 3-14 shows trends in aided propensity for the Reserves. Among males, propensity for the Reserves increased in November 2001 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. Aided Reserve propensity among males decreased significantly in June 2006, but has since then shown signs of rebounding, with significant growth in June 2008.

Aided propensity for the Reserves among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2003. However, between November 2003 and November 2004, aided Reserve propensity among females began steadily trending downward. After rebounding between November 2004 and December 2005, aided Reserve propensity among females fell significantly in June 2006 and has remained low through June 2008.

Figure 3-14. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Reserve Components



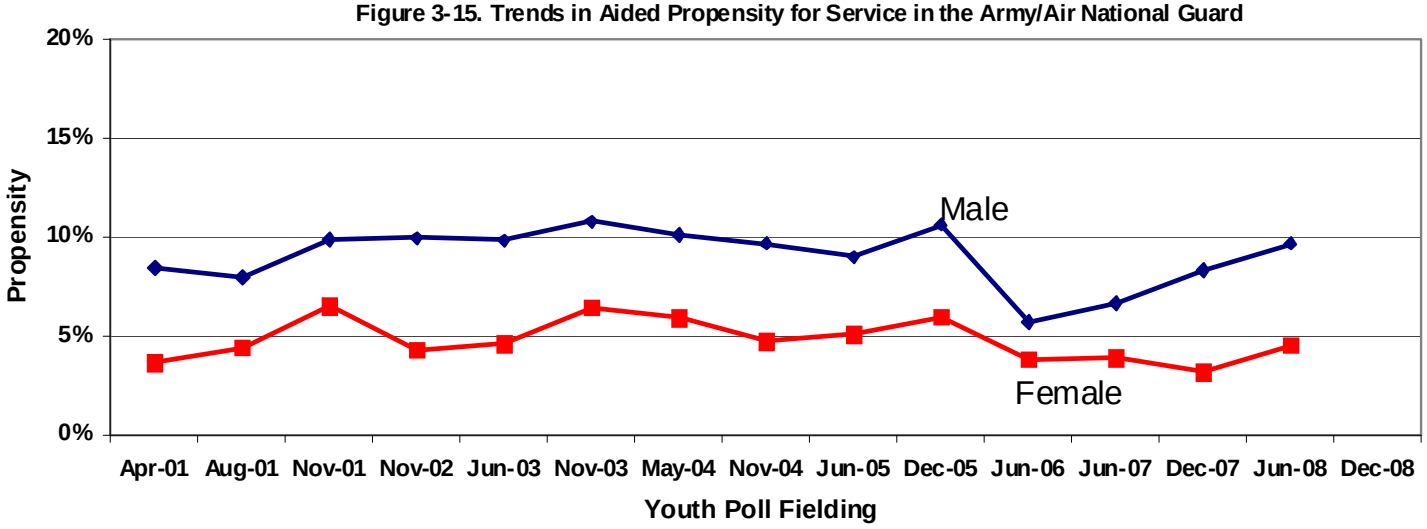
Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

National Guard Propensity

Figure 3-15 shows trends in aided propensity for the National Guard. Aided National Guard propensity among males increased in 2001 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. In June 2006, there was a significant decrease in aided National Guard propensity among males. However, between June 2006 and June 2008 aided National Guard propensity among males has increased.

Aided National Guard propensity among females followed a similar pattern to that of males. In 2001, propensity increased and remained relatively stable until 2005. In June 2006, there was a strong decline in aided National Guard propensity among females. Aided National Guard propensity among females has not rebounded, and has remained stable and low between June 2006 and June 2008.

Figure 3-15. Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Army/Air National Guard



Source: 2001–2008 Youth Polls

Summary

Propensity—defined in the Youth Polls as the percentage of youth stating they will "definitely" or "probably" enter military service in the next few years—is a valid indicator of enlistment behavior. Youth who say they are likely to join are more likely to do so than are those who say they are unlikely to join.

Historically, propensity for military service dropped following Operation Desert Storm and continued declining through 2001[7]. Beginning in late 2001, propensity among males appeared to be on the rise. However, starting in 2003–2004, propensity began to trend downward again. In June 2006, substantial declines in propensity occurred. However, propensity in June 2008 has shown some signs of rebounding.

Examining data from the May 2004 to June 2008 Youth Polls reveals that propensity was related to several demographic factors:

- Men showed higher levels of propensity than did women.
- Propensity declined with age.
- Propensity declined with increased education.
- Propensity was related to perceived employment prospects:
  - Propensity was higher among unemployed youth than among employed youth.
  - Propensity was higher among youth who believed it is difficult to get a job in their local community than among youth who believed this is not difficult.
  - Propensity was higher among youth who believed pay in the Military is better than pay in the civilian sector.
- Propensity was highest among Hispanics.
  - Propensity among Black male youth was slightly higher than among White male youth. Propensity among Black female youth, however, was substantially higher than propensity among White female youth.
  - Propensity among White and Asian youth was roughly equal.
- Propensity varied by census division with propensity being relatively high in the Pacific, Mountain, West South Central, and South Atlantic divisions and lowest in the New England division.

Propensity for military service was not tied to a specific Service for the majority of youth, as most youth who expressed propensity for military service expressed propensity for multiple Services. Most youth who expressed propensity for Reserve components also expressed propensity for one of the active Services.

[7] It is important to note that these historical trends pertain to propensity for general military service (aided) and do not entirely hold for specific racial and ethnic groups or for different active Services, Reserve components, or the National Guard.

[i] Orvis, B.R., Sastry, N., & McDonald, L.L. (1996). *Military Recruiting Outlook: Recent Trends in Enlistment Propensity and Conversion of Potential Enlisted Supply* (MR-677-A/OSD). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
[ii] Orvis, B.R., Gahart, M.T., & Ludwig, A.K. (1992). *Validity and Usefulness of Enlistment Intention Information* (R-3775-FMP). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
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[iv] Ford, M., Griepentrog, B., Helland, K., & Marsh, S. (2008). *Strength of and Variability in the Military Propensity-Enlistment Relationship Among American Youth: Evidence From 1995 to 2003*. Arlington, VA: Unpublished Report.
[v] Berkowitz, S., Achatz, M., & Perry, S. (1999). *Career Plans and Military Propensity of Young Women: Interviews with 1997 Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) Respondents* (*DMDC No. 2000-001).* Arlington, VA: Defense Manpower Data Center.

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