

OVERVIEW REPORT

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June 2009 Youth Poll 17 Report



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DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
YOUTH POLL WAVE 17 – June 2009

OVERVIEW REPORT

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	viii
Chapter 1. Introduction	
Overview of the Report	1-1
Methodology	1-2
Naming Convention	1-2
Respondent Profile.....	1-3
Chapter 2. Youth Population Trends Impacting Recruitment	
Introduction.....	2-1
Chapter Overview.....	2-2
Population Trends.....	2-2
Education Trends.....	2-3
Employment Trends	2-6
Veteran Population Trends.....	2-7
Summary.....	2-8
Chapter 3. Enlistment Propensity for Military Service	
Introduction.....	3-1
Chapter Overview.....	3-1
Propensity Measures.....	3-1
Propensity-Related Factors.....	3-2
Propensity for Specific Services.....	3-8
Propensity Trends.....	3-12
Summary.....	3-25

List of Tables

Chapter 3. Enlistment Propensity for Military Service

Propensity by Education, Gender3-4
Propensity by Employment, Gender3-4
Propensity by Income Prospects in Military vs. Civilian Jobs, Gender3-5
Propensity by Perceived Difficulty in Getting a Civilian Job, Gender3-5
Propensity by Race and Ethnicity, Gender3-6
Propensity by Geographic Division, Gender3-7
Cumulative Percentage of 2008 Enlistees by Age and Service3-8
Propensity: Active Duty and National Guard/Reserves by Gender.....3-8
**Percentage of Propensed Youth Indicating Propensity for Multiple Active
Duty Services by Gender3-9**
**Percentage of Youth Indicating Propensity for Both Active Duty and Reserve
or National Guard Service by Gender3-10**

List of Figures

Chapter 1. Introduction

Age.....	1-3
Gender.....	1-3
Race/Ethnicity	1-4
Current Education Level.....	1-4
Highest Level of School Completed.....	1-4
Average Grades in High School.....	1-5
Currently Employed Either Full- or Part-Time	1-5
Number of Hours Worked per Week.....	1-5
Geographic Division.....	1-6
Military Family Members	1-6

Chapter 2. Youth Population Trends Impacting Recruitment

Population Trends, 16-24 Year Olds.....	2-2
High School Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds	2-3
Median Income of Full-Time Workers by Gender, 25 Years Old and Over.....	2-4
Enrollment Rate in Degree-Granting Institutions by Race/Ethnicity, 18-24 Year Olds	2-4
Average Undergraduate Tuition, Fees, Room and Board Paid by Full-Time- Equivalent Students.....	2-5
Department of Education Budget for Student Financial Assistance and Educational Loans	2-6
Unemployment Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds	2-6
Median Usual Weekly Earnings by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds.....	2-7
Projected U.S. Veteran Population.....	2-7

Chapter 3. Enlistment Propensity for Military Service

Relationship Between Propensity and Age Among Males	3-3
Relationship Between Propensity and Age Among Females.....	3-3
National Guard and Reserve Propensity by Gender	3-11
Unaided Military Propensity Trends	3-13
Aided Military Propensity Trends	3-14
Aided Military Propensity Trends Among White Youth.....	3-15
Aided Military Propensity Trends Among Black Youth.....	3-16
Aided Military Propensity Trends Among Hispanic Youth	3-17
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Army	3-18
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Navy	3-19
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Marine Corps	3-20
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Air Force.....	3-21
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Coast Guard	3-22
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Reserve Components	3-23
Trends in Aided Propensity for Service in the Army/Air National Guard	3-24

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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 enlistment-related metrics.

The June 2009 Youth Poll collected information during 20-minute telephone interviews from a nationally representative sample of 3,035 youth between the ages of 16 and 21 and an additional 913 youth between the ages of 22 and 24. This report details the findings of the June 2009 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 (85%) report that 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 colleges and universities. Overall, higher educational goals among youth have translated into fewer youth strongly considering military service after high school.

Enlistment is also influenced by the economy and employment options for youth. In June 2009, unemployment among young people aged 16–24 increased to about 20 percent, and youth reported having more difficulty in finding a fulltime job in their community. In addition, youth more often believed that the Military pays as well as 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 42 percent of youth ages 16–21 had fathers who had served in the U.S. Armed Forces. As of June 2009, this proportion had dropped to only about 18 percent of youth ages 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^{i ii iii iv}. 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 Census division (propensity is relatively high in the South Atlantic, Pacific, Mountain, East South Central and West South Central divisions and is lowest in the New England division).

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 but began to trend downward in 2004. In June 2006, substantial declines in propensity occurred. These strong declines stabilized in June and December 2007, and propensity improved in June and December 2008. In June 2009, propensity remained stable.

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.

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.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ford, M., Griepentrog, B., Helland, K., & Marsh, S. (2009). *The Strength and Variability of the Military Propensity-Enlistment Relationship: Evidence from 1995–2003*. (JAMRS Report No. 2009-005) Arlington, VA: Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies.

^{iv} Stone, B.M., Turner, K.L., & Wiggins, V.L. (1993). *Population Propensity Measurement Model: Final Analysis Report*. Arlington, VA: Defense Manpower Data Center.

OVERVIEW REPORT

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 2009 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 has 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.

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.

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 2009 Youth Poll. It details the respondents' age, education level, employment status, geographic distribution, and history of family members who have served.

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

Chapter 3 provides a description of current youth propensity, correlates of propensity, and historical trends in propensity. This chapter 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 2009 Youth Poll data were collected between March 31, 2009 and June 8, 2009. The questionnaire was administered via computer-assisted telephone interviews. The sample size was 3,948 completed interviews.

The sample design for this survey was a stratified two-phase sample. In the first phase, landline telephone-equipped households were sampled from one of seven 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 have never served in the U.S. Armed Services, have not been accepted for military service, have not been in a Military Delayed Entry Program, were not enrolled in a postsecondary Reserve Officers' Training Corps program or one of the Service academies. 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 19 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 Bureau.

Youth above the age of 21 were surveyed starting with the June 2008 Youth Poll. Because estimates for the 22 to 24 year-old population are available for only three points in time, results in this report are presented only for youth ages 16 to 21. The sample size for youth ages 16 to 21 was 3,035.

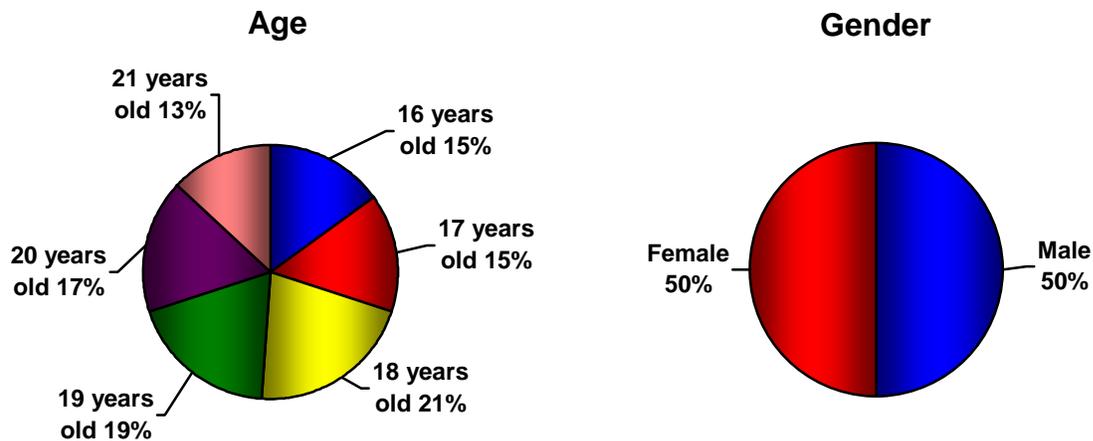
Naming Convention

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. The groups correspond to individuals who indicated that they were White and Non-Hispanic, Black and Non-Hispanic, or of Hispanic origin.

Respondent Profile

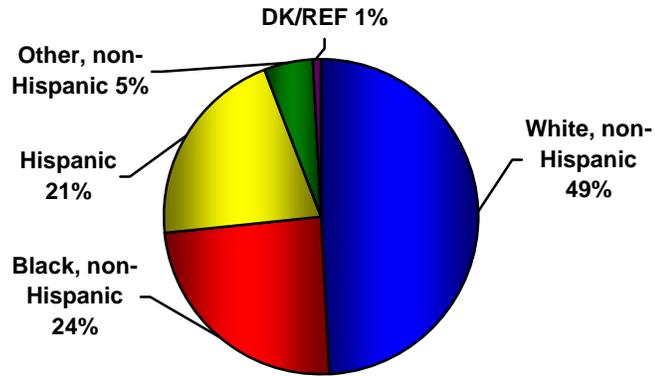
The June 2009 Youth Poll was conducted via telephone using random digit dialing. The following charts display the demographic segments of the 3,035 survey respondents aged 16 to 21¹:

- 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

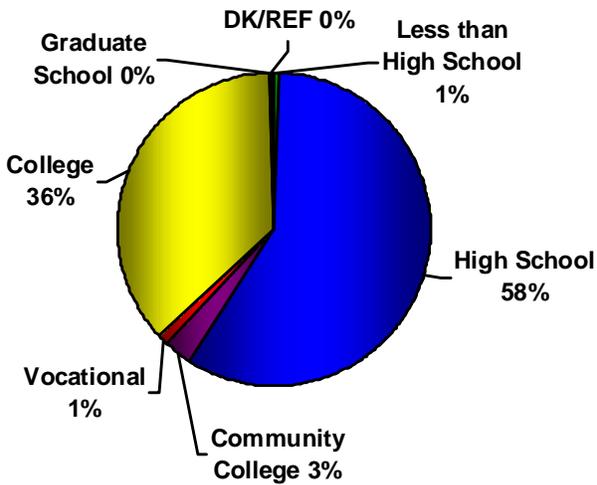


¹ Due to rounding, percentages may not total 100%. Frequencies are unweighted.

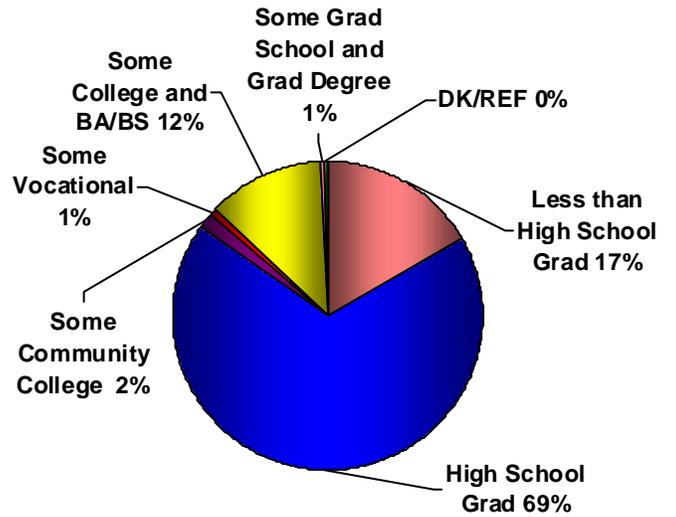
Race/Ethnicity



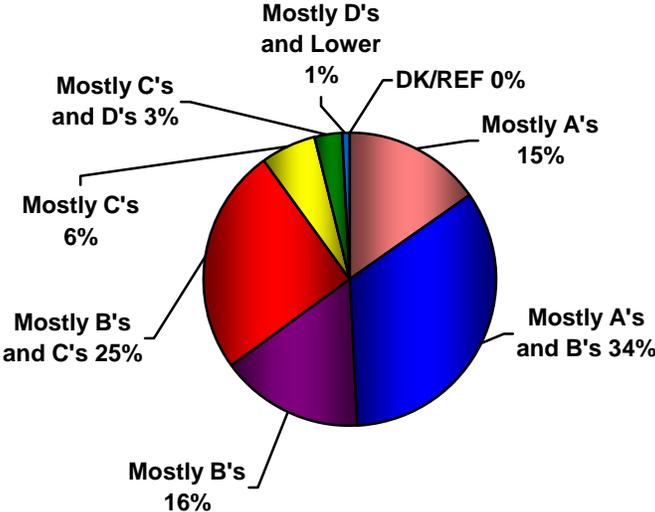
Current Education Level (those currently enrolled)



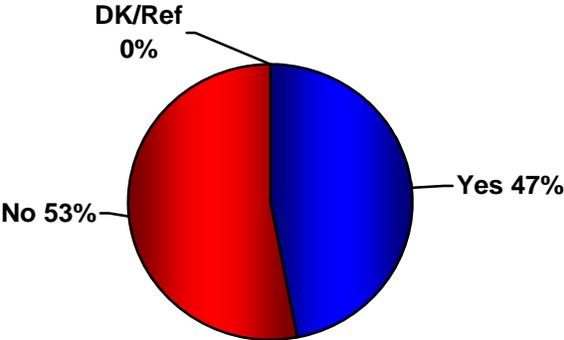
Highest Level of School Completed (those not currently enrolled)



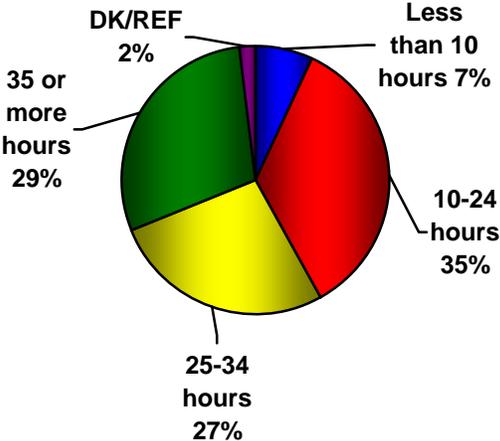
Average Grades in High School



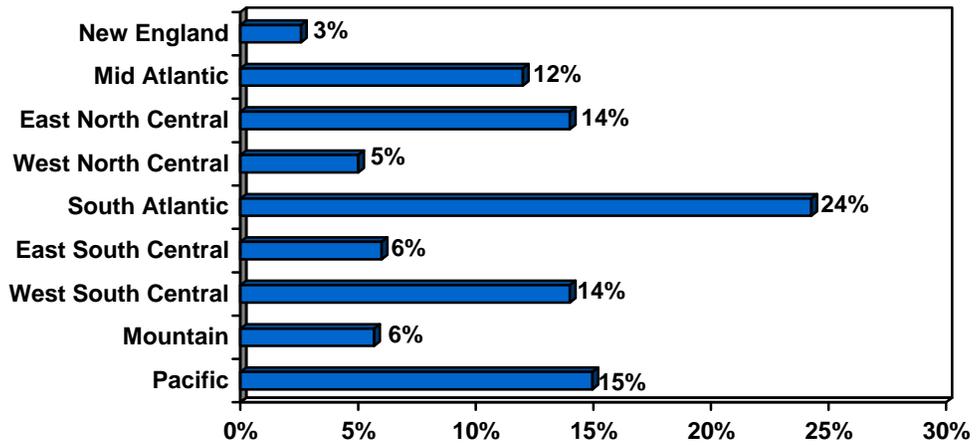
Currently Employed Either Full- or Part-Time



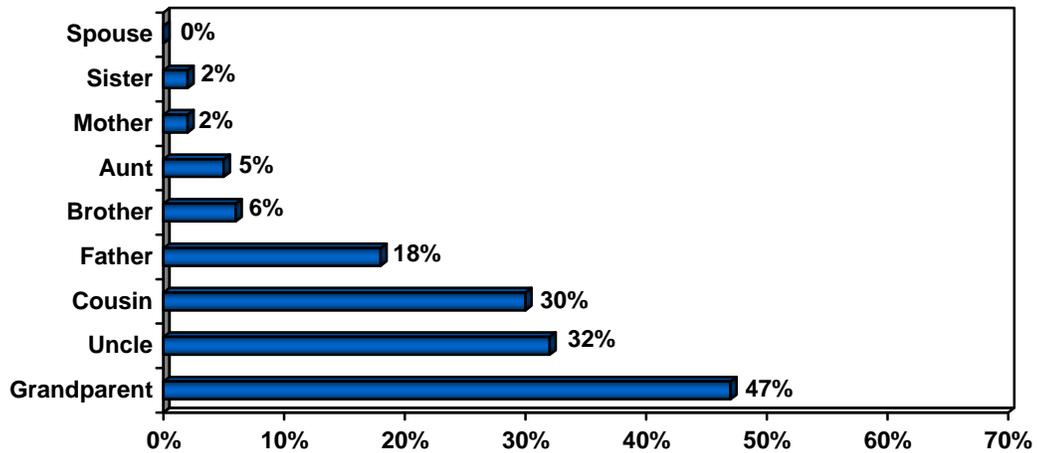
Number of Hours Worked per Week (those currently employed)



Geographic Division



Military Family Members



OVERVIEW REPORT

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

In recent years, the Armed Services have faced challenges in meeting their recruitment goals. Currently, the Active Duty Services are tasked with recruiting approximately 180,000 new members per year. Adding the enlistment goals of the Reserve and National Guard components brings this figure to over 300,000 individuals annuallyⁱ. With more than 4 million youth becoming age-eligible for military service each yearⁱⁱ, 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 for recruiting. The number of youth who are age-eligible for military service has been growingⁱⁱⁱ; however, military entry requirements have traditionally excluded more than half of these youth from military service.

According to the results of the June 2009 Youth Poll^{iv}, 51 percent of youth ages 16–21 would be ineligible for military service due to medical, moral, or legal reasons. The majority of these youth are ineligible primarily for 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. In President Barack Obama's first speech to a joint session of Congress, he stated that every American needs more than a high school diploma^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. The U.S. economy has been recently impacted by crises in the banking, housing, and automotive industries. Earnings for youth ages 16 to 24 have increased but so has unemployment^{vi}. Military recruiting may benefit from these economic trends as fewer youth have civilian employment options after high school, leading military jobs to appear secure and well-paying. However, up until recently, unemployment among youth was relatively low, and youth had a wide variety of employment options other than the Military.

Finally, the U.S. veteran population has been steadily declining over the past ten years^{vii}. Given the positive impact that veterans have on military recruiting^{viii}, the projected decline of the U.S. veteran population indicates a more difficult scenario for recruitment.

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^{ix}, 2007^x, 2008^{xi}, and 2009ⁱ, the Army fell just shy of its goal as recently as fiscal year 2005^{xii}. Furthermore, the Army National Guard and the Air National Guard fell short of their accession goals in fiscal years 2005^{xiii}, 2006^{ix}, and 2007^x.

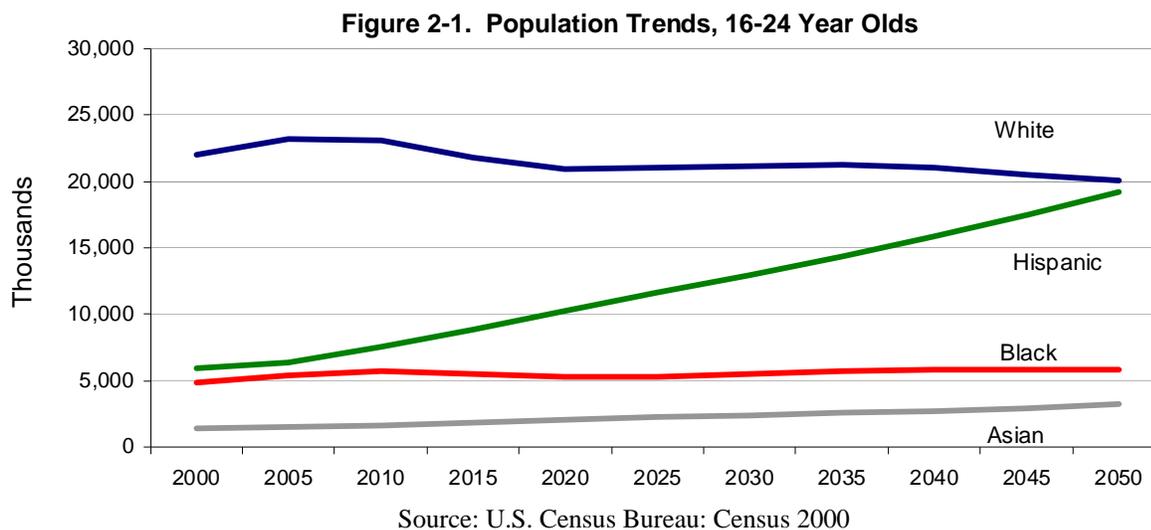
To help increase accessions, the Services have incorporated a number of substantial changes. For example, the Army boosted recruiter strength from just over 5,100 active-duty and 955 reserve recruiters in 2004 to about 7,000 active-duty and 1,700 reserve recruiters in fiscal year 2008^{xiii}. Similarly, the Marines brought on over 500 additional recruiters and increased the budget for recruiting bonuses from \$66 million in fiscal year 2007 to \$89 million in 2008^{xiv}. Despite such positive steps to increase accessions, recruiters continue to face a number of challenges.

Chapter Overview

This chapter provides an overview of a number of population characteristics and trends that may affect recruiting. The topics cover important demographic measures such as trends in the youth population, education, employment, and the declining veteran population.

Population Trends

Youth who are 16–24 years old make up the majority of new entrants to the labor force, college, and the Military. Figure 2-1 shows resident population trends for White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian youth¹. These trends begin in 2000 and are projected through 2050ⁱⁱⁱ. 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 genders.



The size of the resident 16–24 age cohort has fluctuated since the early 1980s. In July 1983, the size of this age group was 37.4 million^{xv} but by July 1996 declined to less than 32.4 million^{xvi}. Since 1996, this age group has grown, increasing to 35.3 million in July 2000ⁱⁱ and to 38.6 million by July 2009ⁱⁱ. This represents an increase of about 1.0 percent per year from 2000 to 2009. This age group is expected to reach the 40 million mark in 2020, with the largest increase expected among Hispanic youthⁱⁱⁱ.

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

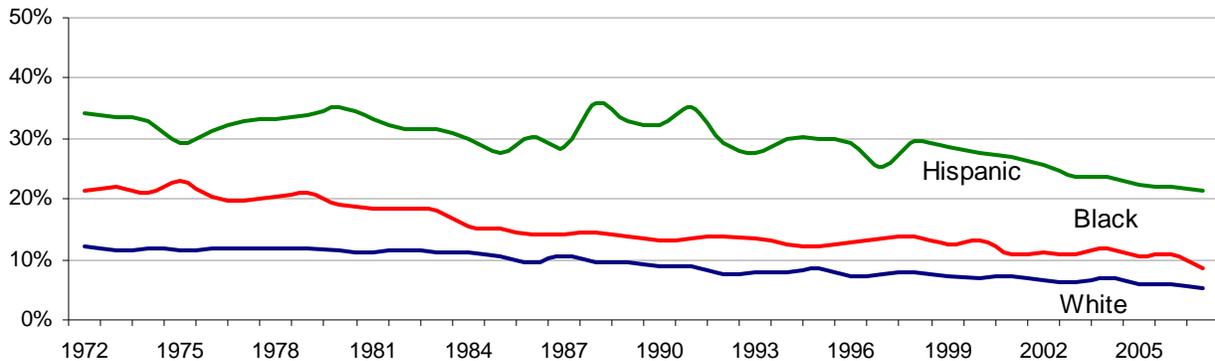
The Hispanic youth population is projected to increase by 45.6 percent between 2008 and 2020 (an average increase of 3.2 percent per year). Of additional interest is the expected increase among Asian youth. The Asian youth population is projected to increase 29.1 percent by 2020 (an average increase of 2.2 percent per year).

Education Trends

High School Dropout Rate

A high school degree is required for military service, though some exceptions to this rule do exist. Hence, the number of youth who finish high school is important to military recruitment. The proportion of high school dropouts² among 16 to 24 year olds has decreased considerably over the past 35 years^{xvii}. Most recently, from 1997 to 2007, the overall high school dropout rate declined from 11.0 percent to 8.7 percent. The dropout rate decreased significantly among Hispanic youth during this 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 Status Dropout Rate by Race/Ethnicity, 16-24 Year Olds



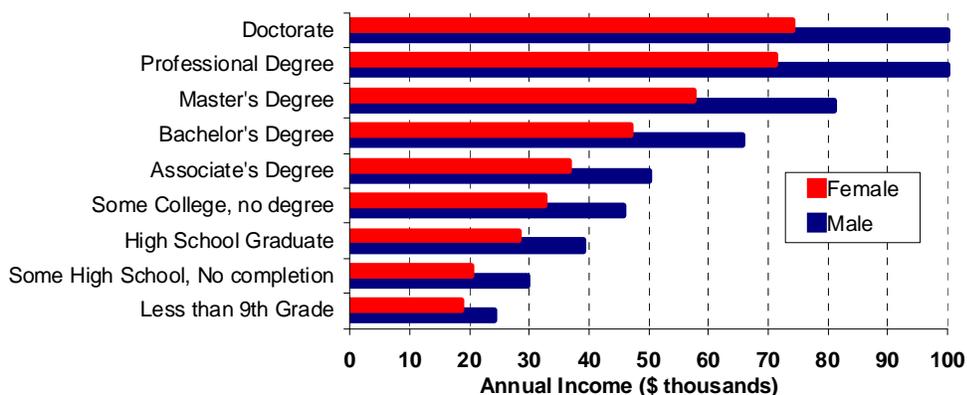
Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2009

Educational Attainment and Earnings

Most youth aspire to continue their education after they graduate high school rather than to pursue full-time employment or service in the Military. The June 2009 Youth Poll results supported this and showed that the vast majority (85.0%) 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 2008, male full-time workers aged 25 and older holding a bachelor's degree earned a median annual income (in current dollars) of \$65,800 compared to a median annual income of \$39,009 earned by males with only a high school diploma^{xviii}. 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, regardless of when they left school. 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 (Current Dollars)



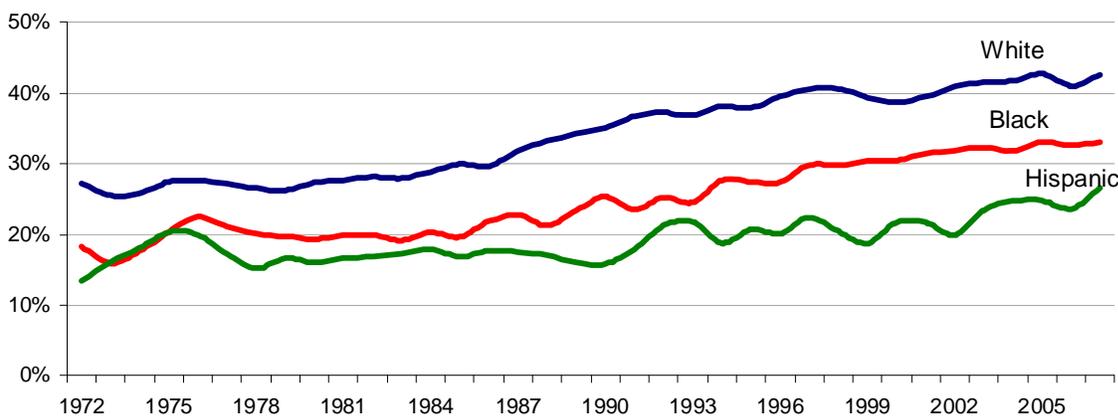
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2008

Enrollment in Post-Secondary Education

Further evidence of youths' desire to pursue post-secondary education can be found in the increased proportion of youth who are attending college. Between 1997 and 2007, the proportion of youth ages 18 to 24 enrolled in degree-granting institutions increased from 36.8 percent to 38.8 percent^{xix}. This increase in enrollment was due to more women attending college. The proportion of females enrolling in degree-granting institutions grew from 38.7 percent in 1997 to 42.1 percent in 2007. Enrollment of male youth was relatively unchanged over this same period (35.0 percent in 1997 and 35.5 percent in 2007).

The proportion of minorities who are enrolled in degree-granting institutions has also been increasing^{xix}. In 1997, 29.8 percent of Black and 22.4 percent of Hispanic youth ages 18–24 were enrolled in college. These proportions rose to 33.1 percent of Black and 26.6 percent of Hispanic youth in 2007. While the proportion of Hispanic youth enrolled in college showed strong growth over the past decade, the proportion of Hispanic youth enrolled in college remained considerably less than the proportion of White or Black youth enrolled. 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, 2009

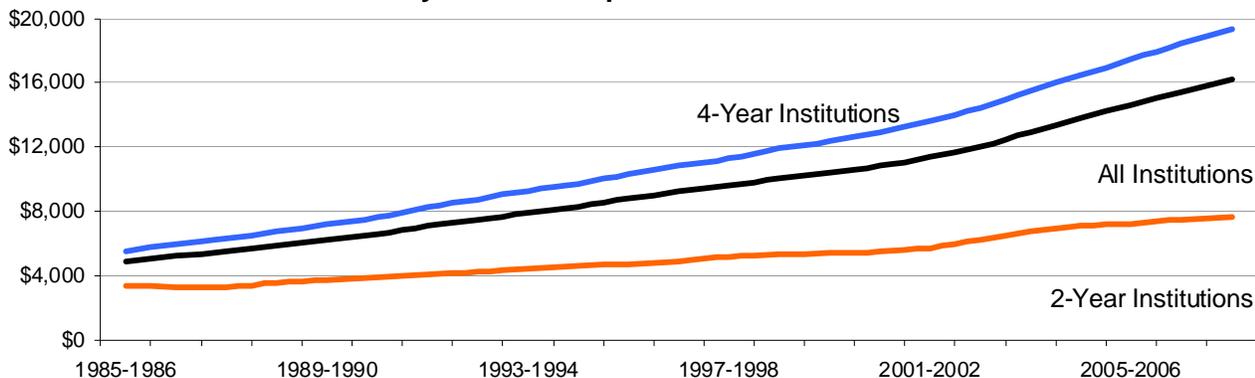
While overall enrollment in post-secondary institutions has increased over the past ten years, the proportion of recent high school graduates attending college immediately after graduation has remained stable. In October 2008, 68.6 percent of high school graduates from the class of 2008 were attending college in the following fall semester, with 93.2 percent of those graduates enrolled full-time^{xx}. These proportions are slightly higher than in October 1998, when 65.6 percent of recent high school graduates were enrolled in college in the fall following graduation and 90.8 percent attended full-time^{xxi}.

Approximately two-thirds of male (65.9%) and female (71.5%) graduates from the class of 2008 were enrolled in college after graduation. In addition, recent Asian graduates (87.5%) continued to be considerably more likely than White (70.8%), Black (54.9%), or Hispanic (63.8%) graduates to be enrolled in college in the fall following their graduation^{xx}.

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 of this degree. As Figure 2-5 demonstrates, the average cost, unadjusted for inflation, of an undergraduate education has steadily increased since 1985^{xxii}. For the 2007–2008 academic year, the average cost for undergraduate tuition, fees, and board was \$19,362 for 4-year institutions and \$7,645 for 2-year institutions. Compared to the 1997-1998 academic year, costs for 2-year institutions increased by 47.2 percent whereas costs for 4-year institutions increased by 71.7 percent.

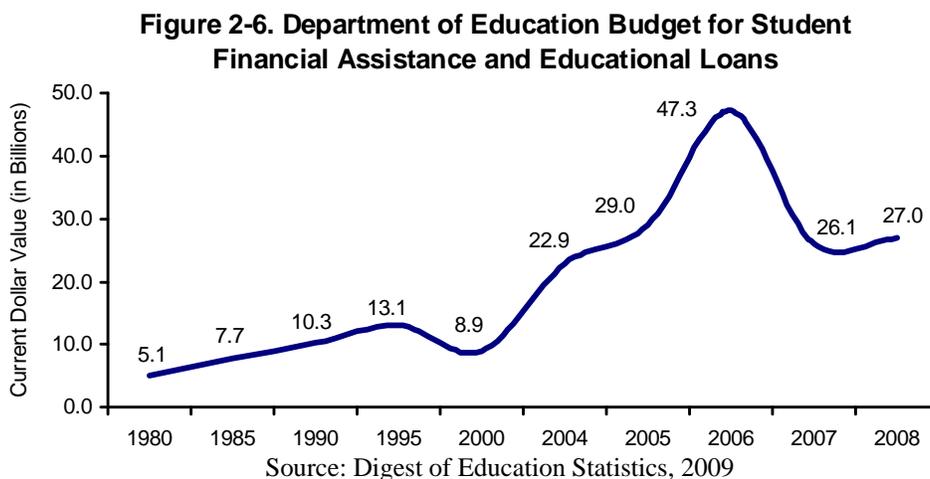
Figure 2-5. Average Undergraduate Tuition, Fees, Room and Board Paid by Full-Time-Equivalent Students



Source: Digest of Education Statistics, 2009

As these post-secondary education costs have risen, students increasingly rely on a variety of economic resources to cover tuition, fees, and board. For example, in the 1997-1998 academic year, about 4.1 million students took out Stafford loans. By the 2007-2008 academic year, the number of borrowers had grown by 58% to a total 6.5 million^{xxiii}. The debt burden also grew for bachelor’s degree recipients: those who had borrowed and graduated in 2000-2001 averaged a debt burden of \$19,300; by 2006-2007, this amount had grown to \$22,700 (in 2007 dollars)^{xxiv}.

Figure 2-6 shows how the Department of Education increased federal funding in the form of both financial assistance and educational assistance loans from \$13.1 billion in 1995 to \$47.3 billion in 2006^{xxv}. In 2007, total funding decreased to \$26.1 billion. This was caused by a sharp reduction in educational assistance loans, which decreased from \$33.2 billion in 2006 to \$10.4 billion in 2007. In 2008, overall funding increased slightly to \$27.0 billion.

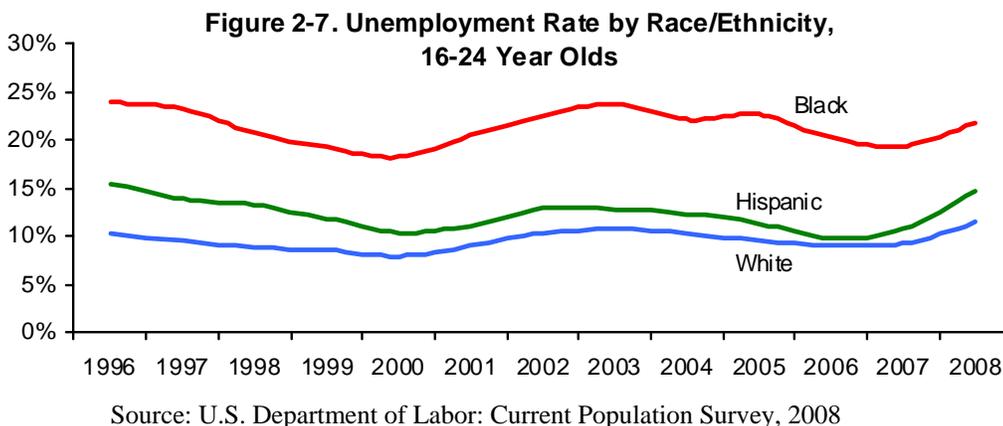


Employment Trends

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. Many recent high school graduates, however, are also interested in civilian employment. In October 2008, 52.2 percent of the graduating class of 2008 had entered the civilian workforce^{xx}, down from 1998, when 60.2 percent of the graduating class had entered the civilian workforce^{xxi}.

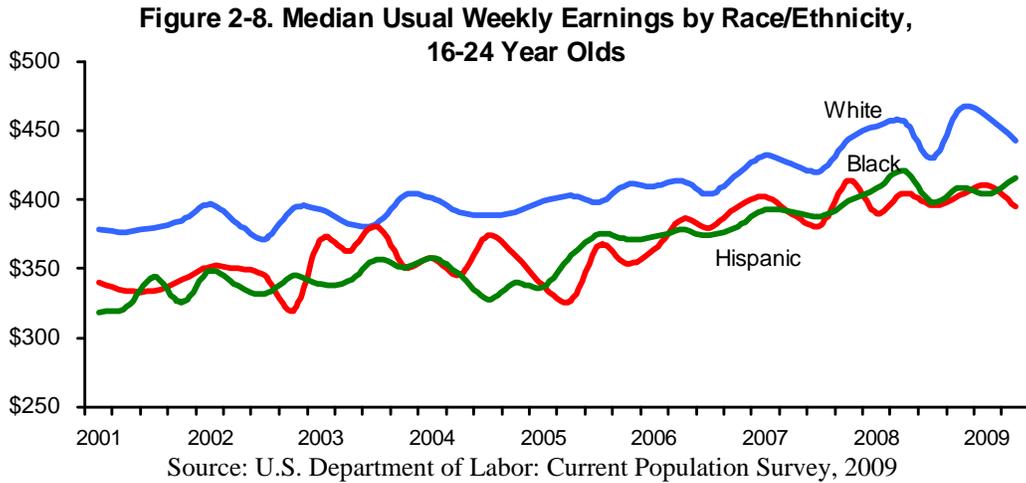
Unemployment

Figure 2-7 shows the unemployment rate among all individuals aged 16–24^{vi}. Unemployment increased slightly from 2000 to 2003 and declined through 2007 before increasing in 2008. Black youth ages 16 to 24 are considerably more likely to be unemployed than are White and Hispanic youth. As of September 2009, the unemployment rate for youth ages 16 to 24 was 18%^{vi}.



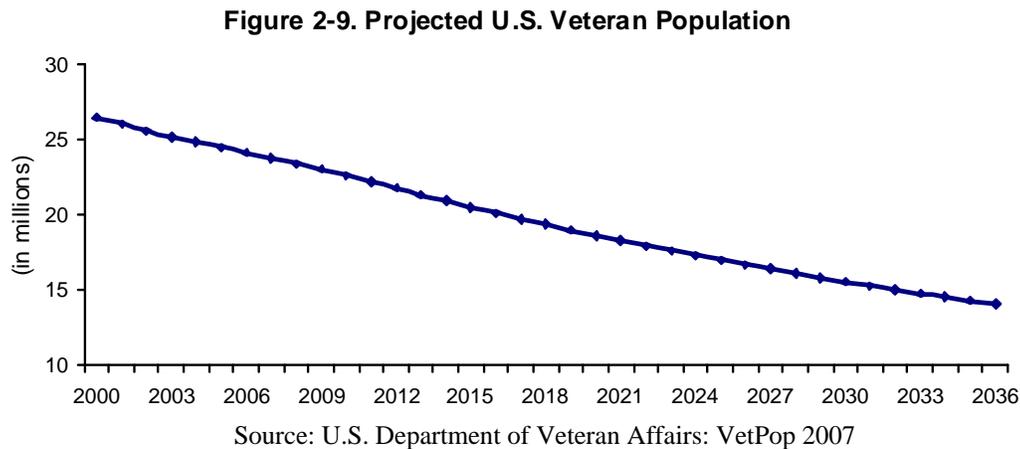
Earnings

Unemployment for youth has been relatively low, and average weekly earnings have also generally increased. Figure 2-8 shows the average weekly earnings³ of youth ages 16–24 who are employed full-time, regardless of educational level^{vi}. Median weekly earnings among youth aged 16 to 24 have been gradually increasing since 2001, with Black and Hispanic youth consistently earning less than White youth.



Veteran Population Trends

Although not a direct 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^{viii}, have found a link between knowing a veteran (particularly one’s father) and enlistment behavior. Nevertheless, the size of the veteran population has been steadily declining. In June 2009, the U.S. population included approximately 21.5 million military veterans, reflecting a decrease from an estimated 24.6 million veterans in June 1999^{xxvi}. As shown in Figure 2-9, the veteran population is expected to continue to decline to around 14.1 million by 2036^{xxvii}.



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 youths' interest in military service. As the number of veterans declines, so does the number of youth who have a father who served in the Military. For instance, at the end of the Cold War, 41.5 percent of youth ages 16–21 had fathers who were veterans^{xxviii}. Data from the DoD Youth Polls indicate that 25.3 percent of young adults aged 16–21 reported having a father with military experience in November 2003, but only 18.0 percent reported the same in June 2009. The declining number of fathers who have served in the Military and the increasing number of parents who have gone to college have contributed to today's recruiting challenges.

Summary

Overall, the market for youth recruitment has challenges: not only have youth shied away from enlistment, but many are also ineligible for military service. As more youth continue to seek post-secondary education, the pool of possible applicants shrinks. On the other hand, post-secondary education costs have risen and may become more prohibitive if the Department of Education does not increase its student aid. Furthermore, although unemployment levels increased in 2009, the median weekly earning has increased, and youth remain likely to turn to employment following high school graduation. Veterans, who may positively influence a youth to enlist, are a shrinking population and are expected to decrease by approximately 40 percent over the next 30 years^{xxvii}. These trends have changed the landscape of the youth market and increased the difficulty of recruitment.

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- ⁱⁱ U.S. Census Bureau (2009). *National Estimates*. Retrieved September 14, 2009 from <http://www.census.gov/popest/national/asrh/2008-nat-ni.html>.
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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 that 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, race/ethnicity, educational level, employment prospects, and geographic division.
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 Services and propensity for the Reserves and the National Guard.
4. **Propensity Trends:** This section displays trends for aided and unaided propensity, Service-specific propensity, and propensity among 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 that they will “definitely” or “probably” be serving in the Military in general or in a particular Service are counted as demonstrating “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 Services¹: 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 that 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 RANDⁱ 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 RANDⁱⁱ, the Defense Manpower Data Centerⁱⁱⁱ, and JAMRS^{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 many 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 for the May 2004 through June 2009 Youth Polls.

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

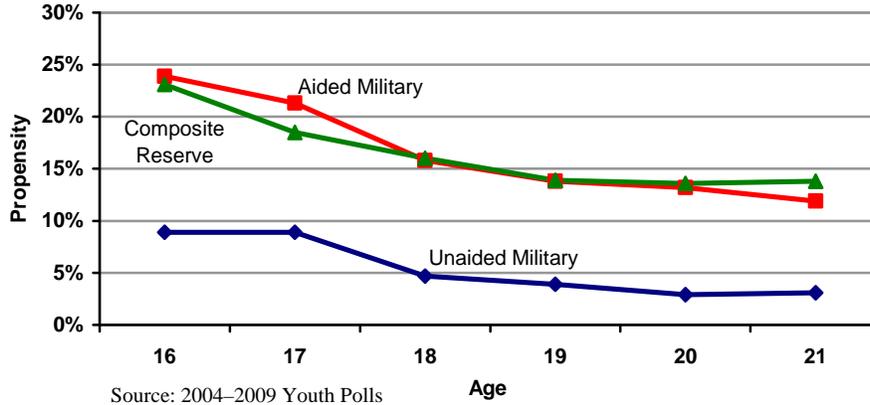
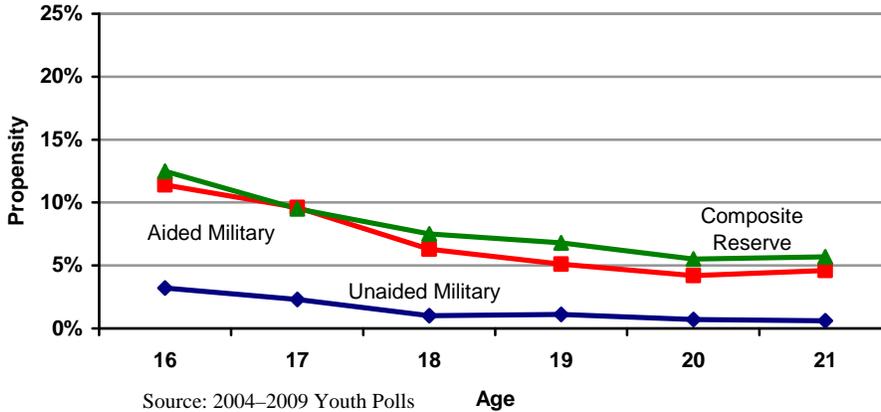


Figure 3-2. Relationship Between Propensity and Age Among Females



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 prior iterations of YATS suggests that this difference is to be expected^v. In-depth interviews with young women found that many of them 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

Prior studies have shown that propensity also varies by scholastic status. As shown in Table 3-1, propensity generally decreases with each additional year of education. High school students are more likely than college students to indicate propensity for military service. Additionally, propensity is generally higher among youth with a high school diploma or less than it is among those who have entered or completed some college.

Table 3-1. Propensity by Education, Gender

Education Level	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Students						
Less than 11 th Grade	11	27	26	4	14	16
H.S. Juniors	9	23	20	3	11	11
H.S. Seniors	6	16	16	2	7	8
Vo-Tech & 2-Yr	2	10	12	1	4	6
College						
4-Year College						
Freshmen	2	10	11	1	4	6
Sophomores	1	8	8	0	4	5
Juniors	2	6	7	0	1	2
Seniors or higher	3	7	8	1	3	3
Non-Students						
H.S. Dropouts ²	6	30	29	1	9	14
H.S. Grads (no college)	5	16	16	1	7	7
Some College or more	3	9	10	1	5	5

Source: 2004–2009 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, propensity is generally highest among youth who are not students and are unemployed.

Table 3-2. Propensity by Employment, Gender

Employment	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	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	9	10
Non-Students						
Employed	4	16	16	1	6	7
Unemployed	6	22	23	1	9	11

Source: 2004–2009 Youth Polls

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

Employment Prospects

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

Expected relative earnings	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
More in the Military	11	31	26	3	13	14
Military/civilian same	5	17	17	1	6	8
More in civilian job	3	9	10	0	4	4

Source: 2004–2009 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 in Getting a Civilian Job, Gender

Perceived difficulty in getting a job	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Almost impossible	9	26	23	2	11	12
Very difficult	6	18	19	2	8	9
Somewhat difficult	6	16	16	2	7	8
Not difficult	5	15	15	1	6	8

Source: 2004–2009 Youth Polls

Race/Ethnicity

Propensity also varies by race and ethnicity. In past years, aided military propensity for both males and females had been higher among Hispanic and Black youth than among White youth. However, from May 2004 to June 2009, 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, Hispanic and Asian youth than among White youth. Given the expected growth rate of the Asian population (see Chapter 2), this higher level of 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 Ethnicity³, Gender

Race/Ethnicity⁴	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
Total Population						
White	6	16	15	1	5	6
Black	5	17	20	2	11	14
Hispanic	6	24	24	2	12	13
Asian	3	15	20	1	9	11
HS Juniors and Seniors						
White	8	19	16	2	7	7
Black	5	19	23	3	13	16
Hispanic	8	28	27	3	16	15
HS Graduates, no college						
White	5	14	14	1	5	4
Black	6	19	19	1	12	15
Hispanic	4	19	22	1	13	11

Source: 2004–2009 Youth Polls

Gender Differences

The preceding tables demonstrate that between May 2004 and June 2009, fewer women than men have been interested in military service. In any particular category (e.g., H.S. seniors, Hispanics), the propensity of women has been lower than that of men. In general, it has been about half that of men.

³ Estimates for racial and ethnic categories were based on all respondents who indicated that 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 considerably 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 is relatively high in the South Atlantic, Pacific, Mountain, East South Central and West South Central divisions and remains relatively low in the New England division.

Reserve propensity appears to be largely driven by minority youth, as Composite Reserve Propensity in each division is lower among White youth than among all racial/ethnic groups combined.

Table 3-6. Propensity by Geographic Division⁵, Gender

Census Division	Men (%)			Women (%)		
	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve	Unaided Military	Aided Military	Composite Reserve
All Racial/Ethnic Groups						
New England	5	12	12	2	5	5
West North Central	5	14	15	2	5	7
East North Central	4	14	14	1	6	8
Mid-Atlantic	5	14	16	1	6	7
East South Central	7	20	19	1	6	9
South Atlantic	7	18	18	2	9	9
Pacific	5	19	18	2	8	8
Mountain	7	20	20	2	6	7
West South Central	7	21	19	2	10	11
Whites Only						
New England	5	11	11	2	4	3
West North Central	4	13	13	1	4	6
East North Central	4	13	12	1	5	6
Mid-Atlantic	5	12	11	0	3	4
East South Central	6	19	17	1	5	6
South Atlantic	8	19	14	2	5	6
Pacific	6	15	14	2	6	4
Mountain	7	18	17	2	5	6
West South Central	8	18	14	2	5	7

Source: 2004–2009 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 are 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 affecting 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 4 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 29 years old or over, while about 2 percent or less of enlistees for all other Services were at least 29 years old or over.

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 estimates in June 2009 for each Armed Service, the National Guard, and the Reserves. Males were more likely than females to be propensed for all Services and Components.

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

Service	Men (%)	Women (%)
Army	12	4
Navy	9	5
Marine Corps	9	4
Air Force	12	7
Coast Guard	9	4
National Guard	8	5
Reserves	12	7

Source: June 2009 Youth Poll

Propensity for Multiple Services

The majority of propensed youth are propensed for multiple Services. Table 3-9 shows the proportion of youth who indicated that they were propensed for a particular Service and for at least one additional Service in 1999 and 2009. In June 2009, male youth who were interested in the Army or Air Force were the most likely to be interested solely in joining that Service. Female youth who were interested in the Navy were 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

Service	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	1999	2009	1999	2009
Army	76	68	74	63
Navy	78	79	71	59
Marine Corps	73	73	89	81
Air Force	72	69	66	62
Coast Guard	80	85	79	62

Sources: 1999 YATS and June 2009 Youth Poll

Since 1999, multiple service propensity has not significantly changed for either male nor female youth. Though some large decreases were observed, the proportions of propensed youth indicating propensity for multiple Active Duty Services has remained statistically unchanged.

Propensity for National Guard and Reserves

There was 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 males and females propensed for either the National Guard or the Reserves were also propensed for at least one active duty Service.

Additionally, there was significant overlap between propensity for the Reserves and National Guard. Of those youth propensed for the Reserves, about 40% indicated that they were also propensed for the National Guard. Furthermore, about 55% of the youth propensed for the National Guard were also propensed for the Reserves. As seen for active duty propensity (Table 3-9), males were slightly more likely than females to express propensity for multiple Services and Components

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

Propensed for...	Men (%)		Women (%)	
	Active Duty	Other Reserve Component	Active Duty	Other Reserve Component
Reserves	77	39	73	42
National Guard	80	60	69	53

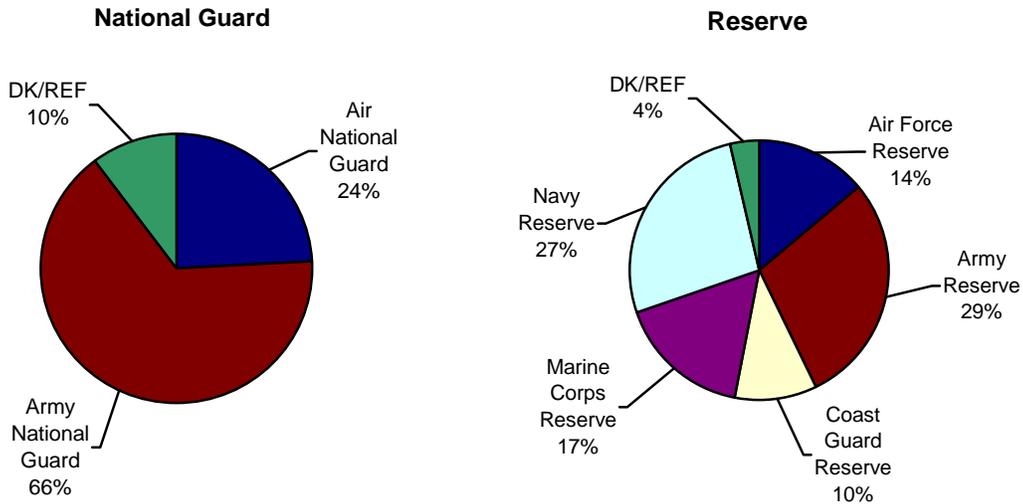
Source: 2004–2009 Youth Polls

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 that 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.

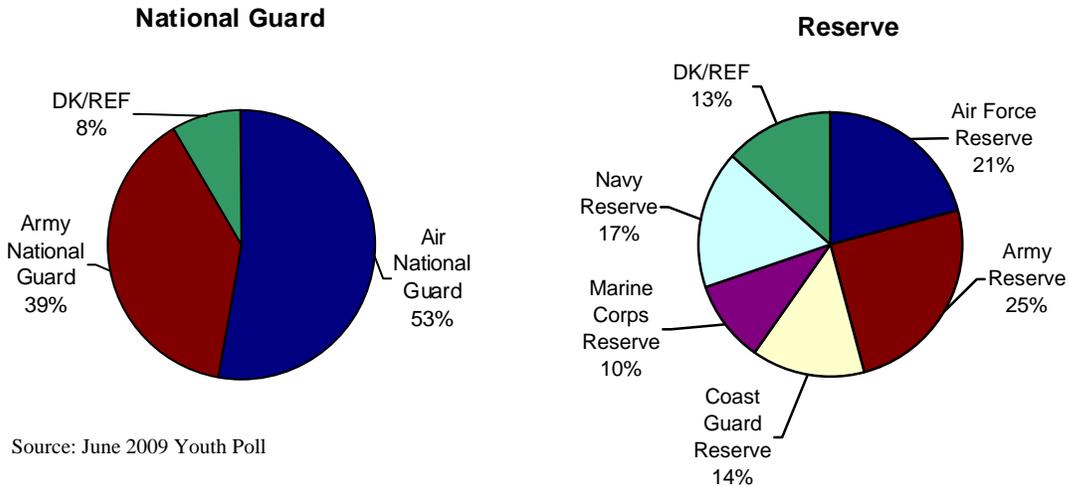
Figure 3-3 shows how youth responded to this follow-up question in June 2009. Among youth who stated that they might serve in the National Guard, the majority of males would join the Army National Guard, while the majority of females would join the Air National Guard. Among youth who stated that they may serve in the Reserves, males were most likely to mention the Army Reserve or the Navy Reserve, while females were most likely to mention the Army Reserve or the Air Force Reserve.

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

Men



Women



Source: June 2009 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 both unaided and aided military propensity decrease 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, youths' aided propensity for military service has fluctuated in response to current events. Male aided propensity for military service rose immediately following the events of September 11th, reached a high point in November 2001, and remained high until 2006. It dropped precipitously in June 2006 and began rebounding after December 2007. In general, aided propensity among females has not greatly varied, but it increased through May 2004 before experiencing smaller, more gradual declines through December 2007. Female aided propensity showed signs of rebounding in 2008 and has since remained stable. Trends differ for unaided and aided military propensity, for each race/ethnicity⁶, and for each 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.

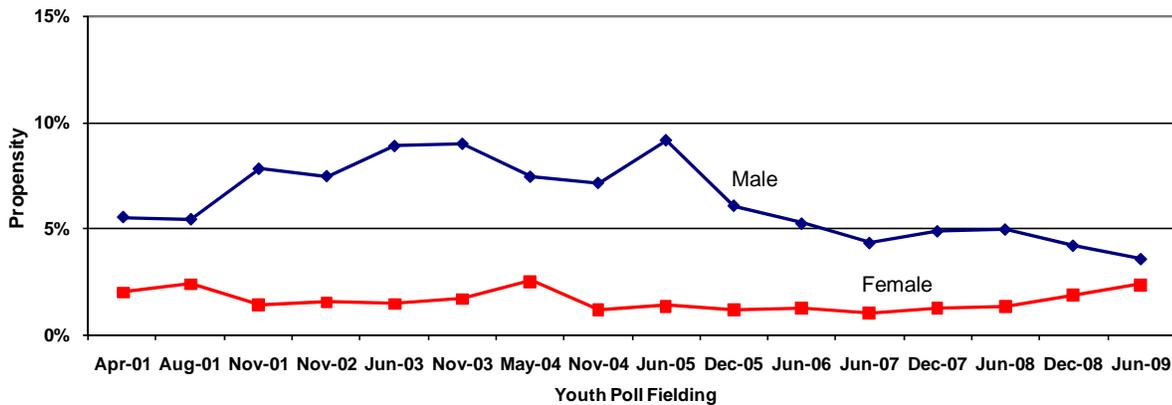
⁶ In this section, race and ethnicity categories are mutually exclusive (i.e., each respondent was counted only in one group). This was done to remain consistent with past trend lines reported by YATS and in the Youth Polls.

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 6.3 percent of males and 1.6 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 April 2001 through June 2005, it increased about 1 percentage point per year; then, between June 2005 and June 2007, it dropped approximately 2 percentage points per year. Unaided propensity among males has since been stable and low. Although unaided propensity among females has shown some fluctuation, the long-term trend is relatively stable.

Figure 3-4. Unaided Military Propensity Trends



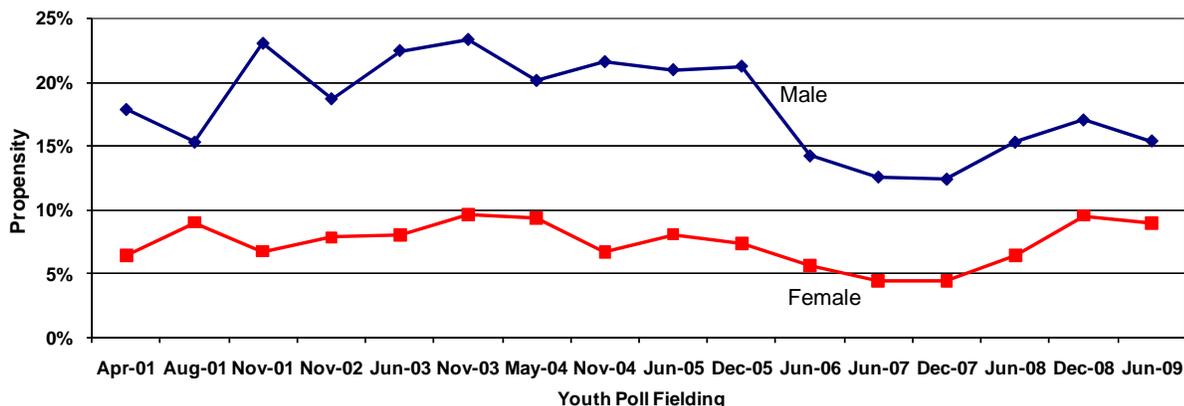
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

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. It was stable from 2004 to 2005. However, in June 2006, male propensity dropped by 7.0 percent points and remained low through December 2007. Since June 2008, aided military propensity among males has remained statistically stable despite fluctuations.

Aided military propensity among females generally increased from November 2001 through May 2004 and then decreased from November 2004 through December 2007, with aided military propensity among females in December 2007 being half of what it was in May 2004. Aided military propensity among females saw statistically significant and relatively large increases in June 2008 and December 2008 and remained stable in June 2009.

Figure 3-5. Aided Military Propensity Trends



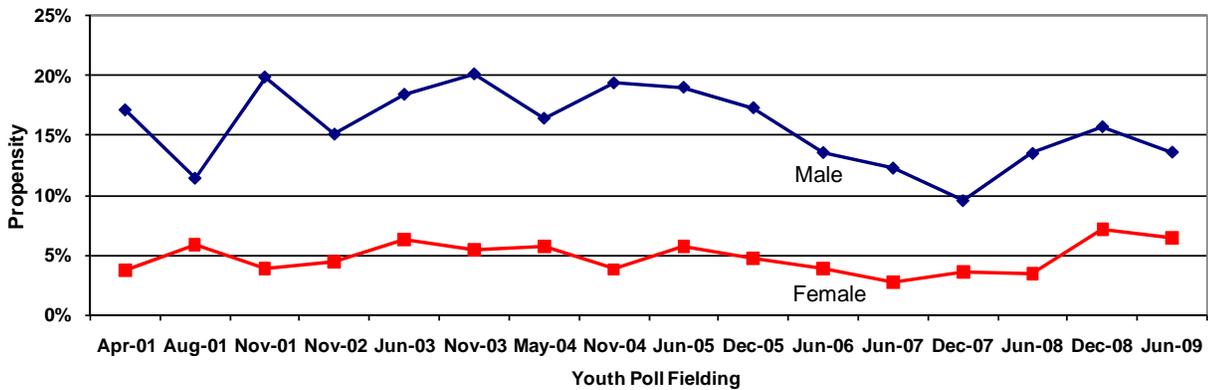
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

White Youth Propensity

Figure 3-6 shows aided military propensity trends among White youth. Given that approximately 60 percent of youth are White^{vi}, it is not surprising that trends in propensity among White youth closely resemble trends among all youth. Among White males, propensity fluctuated from 2001 through 2004, and from June 2005 to December 2007, it declined. White male propensity saw considerable growth in June and December 2008 and declined slightly in June 2009.

Aided military propensity among White females remained relatively stable from April 2001 to June 2005 with approximately five percent of White females reporting that they would “definitely” or “probably” serve. However, aided military propensity among White females steadily declined between June 2005 and 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. In December 2008, White female propensity increased significantly, reaching a historically high level, and remained stable in June 2009.

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



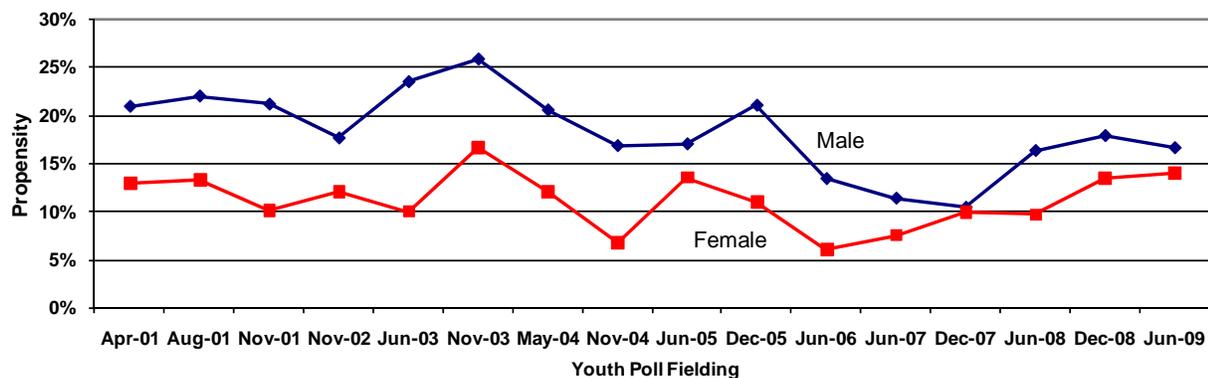
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

Black Youth Propensity

Figure 3-7 shows aided military propensity trends among Black youth. In the early 2000s, propensity among Black males appeared to be on the rise and reached a historic high in November 2003. 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. Black male propensity increased by approximately 6 percentage points in June 2008 and remained relatively stable through June 2009.

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. From June 2007 through June 2009, aided military propensity among Black females has steadily increased.

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



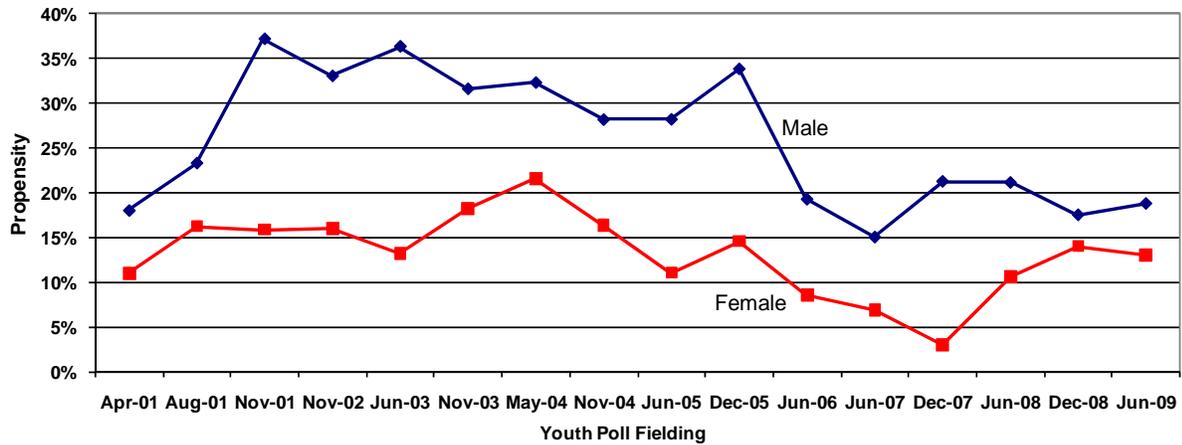
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

Hispanic Youth Propensity

Figure 3-8 shows aided military propensity trends among Hispanic youth. Among Hispanic males, aided military propensity increased at an average rate of 8.4 percentage points a year from April 2001 through June 2003. Hispanic male propensity remained high until June 2006, when it declined by 15 percentage points. Hispanic male propensity has not significantly improved since then.

Aided military propensity among Hispanic females increased from April 2001 through May 2004 at an average annual rate of 3.4 percentage points. Then, Hispanic female propensity declined sharply, at an average of 5.2 percentage points per year between May 2004 and December 2007. Hispanic female propensity increased by approximately 8 percentage points in June 2008 and remained relatively stable through June 2009.

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



Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

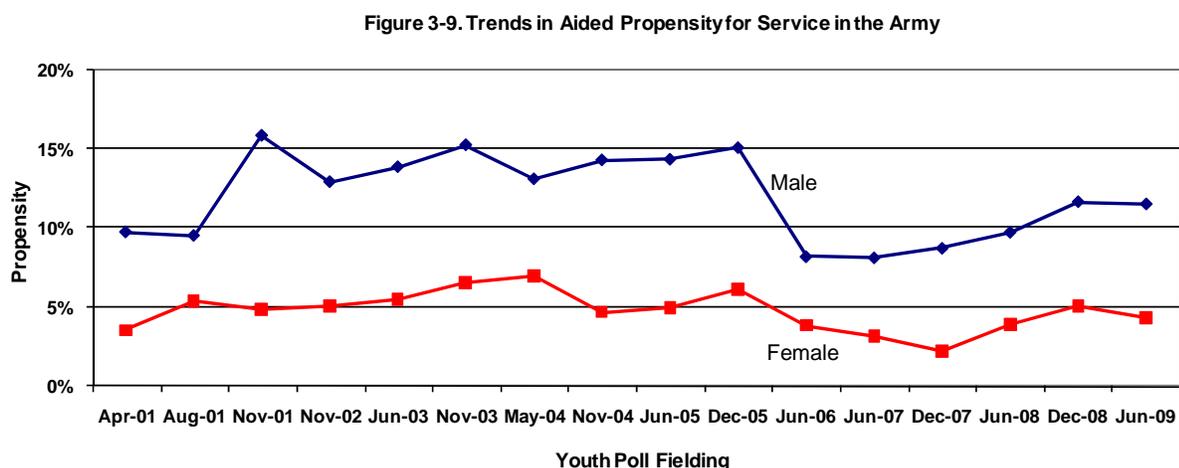
Service-Specific Propensity

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 significantly in November 2001 and then stayed relatively stable through 2005. Aided Army propensity among males significantly decreased in June 2006 but has been gradually increasing since then.

Aided Army propensity among females increased gradually through May 2004 and then declined through December 2007. Aided Army propensity among females significantly increased in June 2008 and was relatively stable through June 2009.



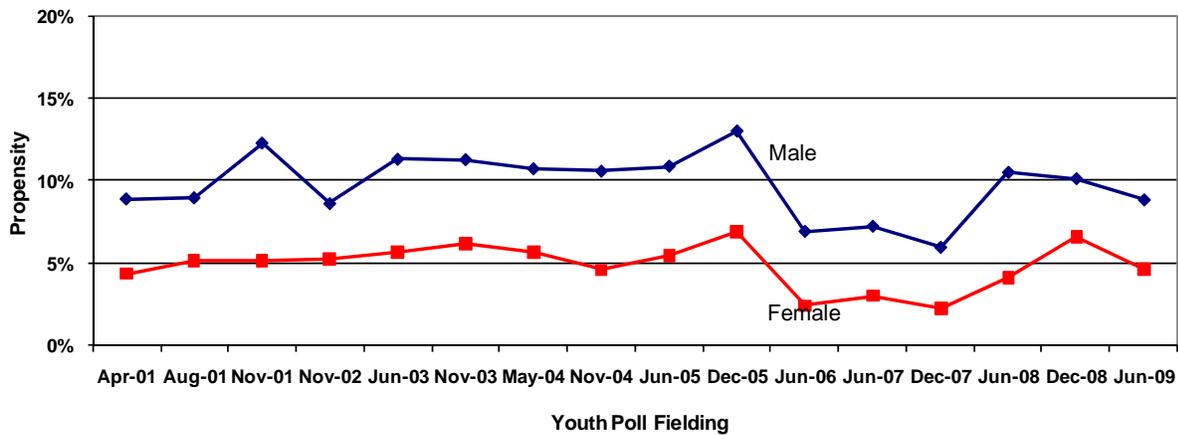
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

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, it significantly decreased. Aided Navy propensity among males rebounded significantly in June 2008, almost doubling from December 2007 levels, and remained relatively stable through June 2009.

Aided Navy propensity among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2005. After a significant decrease in June 2006, it remained stable through 2007 and then nearly tripled with significant increases in June 2008 and December 2008. Aided Navy propensity among females remained stable in June 2009.

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



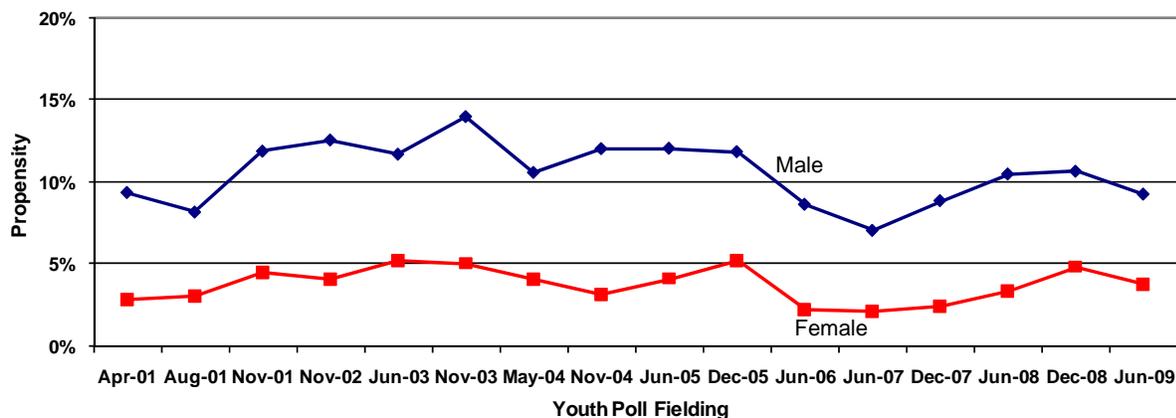
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

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. Beginning in May 2004, propensity began a downward trend that continued through June 2007. Modest increases occurred in December 2007 and June 2008. Male Marine propensity has since remained stable.

Aided propensity for the Marine Corps among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2005. It decreased significantly in June 2006 but steadily increased through December 2008 and remained stable in June 2009.

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



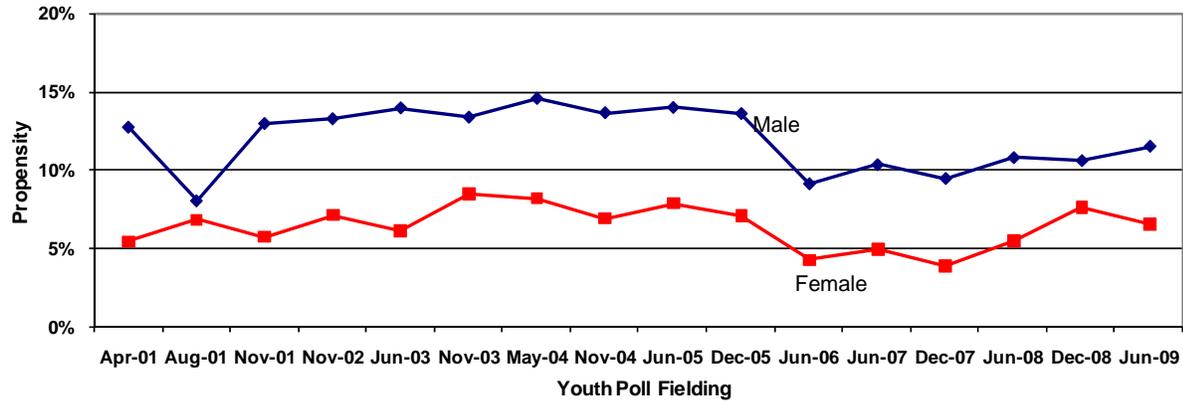
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

Air Force Propensity

Figure 3-12 shows trends for aided propensity for the Air Force. Propensity among males significantly decreased in August 2001 before rebounding in November 2001 and holding steady through December 2005. Air Force propensity among males declined sharply in June 2006 and has increased slightly since then.

Aided propensity for the Air Force among females increased gradually from 2001 through 2003, began trending downward in 2004, and decreased significantly in June 2006. Air Force propensity among females showed modest increases in 2008 and remained stable in June 2009.

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



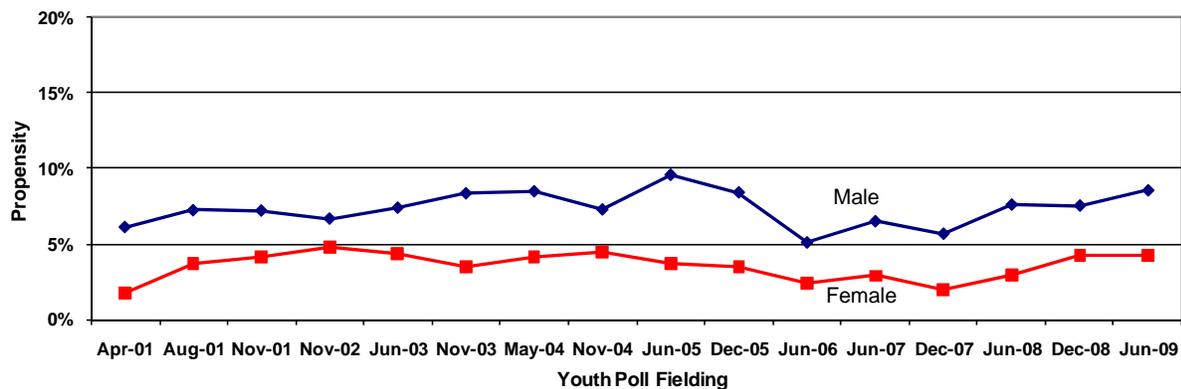
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

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 2005. It significantly declined in June 2006 and has increased gradually since then.

Aided propensity for the Coast Guard among females has consistently hovered between 2 percent and 4 percent. It increased significantly in August 2001 then remained relatively stable through 2004, and began trending downward from June 2005 to December 2007. In June 2008 and December 2008, aided Coast Guard propensity among female youth gradually increased, and it remained stable in June 2009.

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

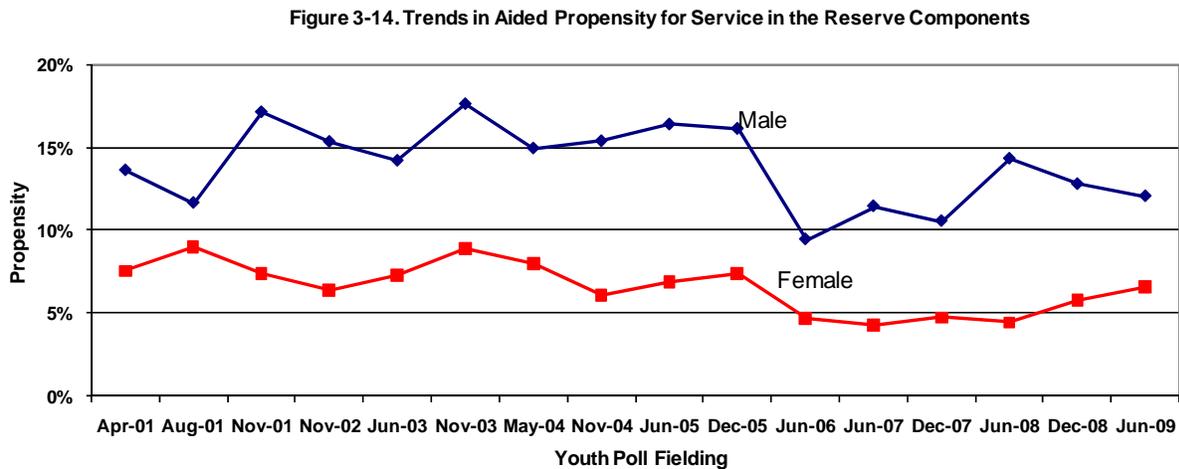


Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

Reserve Propensity

Figure 3-14 shows trends in aided propensity for the Reserves. Among males, propensity for the Reserves significantly increased in November 2001 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. It decreased significantly in June 2006 but showed signs of rebounding with significant growth in June 2008. Reserve propensity among males remained relatively stable through June 2009.

Aided propensity for the Reserves among females remained relatively stable from 2001 through 2005. Aided Reserve propensity among females fell significantly in June 2006 but has since rebounded.



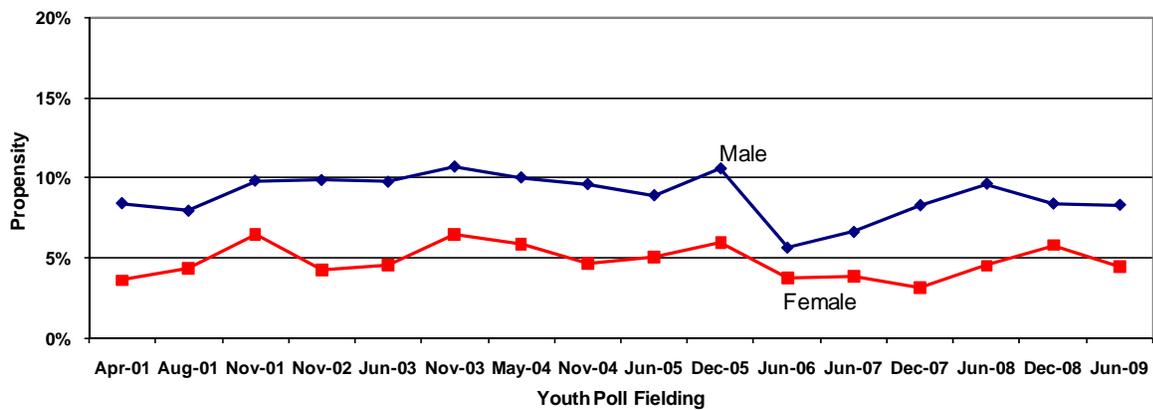
Source: 2001–2009 Youth Polls

National Guard Propensity

Figure 3-15 shows trends in aided propensity for the National Guard. Aided National Guard propensity among males increased from 2001 through 2003 and then remained relatively stable through 2005. In June 2006, it significantly declined. However, aided National Guard propensity among males increased gradually from June 2007 to June 2008 and remained stable through June 2009.

Aided National Guard propensity among females followed a similar pattern to that of males. In 2001, propensity increased and remained relatively stable through 2005. Aided National Guard propensity among females significantly declined in June 2006 but steadily increased through December 2008 and remained stable in June 2009.

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



Source: 2001–2009 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 2001⁷. Beginning in late 2001, propensity among males increased sharply as a reaction to the 9/11 attacks. Propensity remained high until June 2006 when significant declines in propensity occurred. In 2008, propensity showed signs of rebounding; however, estimates from June 2009 have remained relatively stable compared to six months ago.

Examining data from the May 2004 to June 2009 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 that it is difficult to get a job in their local community than among youth who believed that this is not difficult.
 - Propensity was higher among youth who believed that 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, East South Central, 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.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stone, B.M., Turner, K.L., & Wiggins, V.L. (1993). *Population Propensity Measurement Model: Final Analysis Report*. Arlington, VA: Defense Manpower Data Center.

^{iv} Ford, M., Griepentrog, B., Helland, K., & Marsh, S. (2009). *The Strength and Variability of the Military Propensity-Enlistment Relationship: Evidence from 1995–2003*. (JAMRS Report No. 2009-005) Arlington, VA: Joint Advertising Market Research and Studies.

^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.

^{vi} U.S. Census Bureau (2008). *National Population Projections: Released 2008 (Based on Census 2000)*. Retrieved September 19, 2009, from <http://www.census.gov/population/www/projections/downloadablefiles.html>.

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