

6 U.S. Military Demographics 2020

7 **Introduction**

19 The U.S. military has taken significant steps over the past decade to
32 build a more diverse and inclusive force that attracts the country’s top talent.
44 In particular, the services have opened more doors for women in recent
55 years, ending restrictions on combat roles. However, women and racial and
64 ethnic minorities remain underrepresented in parts of the military,
76 particularly at the highest levels of leadership. The military has also opened
88 its ranks to openly gay individuals, but it has maintained broad prohibitions
93 on those who are transgender.

98 **What are the military services?**

109 The organizational structure of the U.S. military is complex. The
119 Department of Defense has three military departments—Army, Navy, and
132 Air Force—but there are six armed services. The Army is organized within
145 its own department, while the Navy and Marine Corps both fall under the
158 Department of the Navy, and the Air Force and the newly established Space
168 Force are services within the Department of the Air Force.

183 The Coast Guard is by law “a military service and a branch of the armed
196 forces” but is part of the Department of Homeland Security. That is because
207 the Coast Guard is predominantly a law enforcement agency, although it

218 does deploy with the Navy and Marine Corps on certain missions.
229 Collectively, the three maritime forces are sometimes called the sea services.
240 Additionally, there are seven reserve military forces, which will not be
242 discussed here.

248 **How big are the military services?**

260 The United States ended the draft for military service in 1973,
273 transitioning to the all-volunteer force that exists today. At that time, the
286 active component of the military, excluding the coast guard, comprised 1.9
299 million men and women, or about 1 percent of the population. Now, there
314 are about 1.3 million active-duty personnel, or less than one-half of 1
320 percent of the U.S. population.

333 The Army is the largest U.S. military service, followed by the Navy,
346 Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. The Space Force became its own
359 branch of the armed services in late 2019 and is still developing.

364 **How old are service members?**

376 The military, which has strict age limits, is younger than the civilian
387 population, but the numbers differ significantly by service. The age ranges
402 of the services vary most on the enlisted side: the Coast Guard tends to have
414 older members, and Marines tend to be younger. About 70 percent of

426 enlisted Marines are twenty-four years old or younger, compared with about
433 30 percent of enlisted Coast Guard members.

438 **How affluent are enlisted recruits?**

447 Most members of the military come from middle-class
456 neighborhoods. The middle three quintiles for household income were
466 overrepresented among enlisted recruits, and the top and bottom quintiles
468 were underrepresented.

473 **Where are enlisted recruits from?**

484 Enlisted military members come from all fifty states and the District
496 of Columbia, but some contribute more than others. In absolute terms, the
508 top five for recruitment in 2018 were California, Texas, Florida, Georgia,
520 North Carolina, and New York, which is reflective of their relatively large
521 populations.

533 Another way of analyzing this data is to look at representation ratios,
546 which show recruits as a share of a jurisdiction's residents between the ages
557 of eighteen and twenty-four. From this perspective, the picture is
569 significantly different. A ratio of 1.0 means the jurisdiction's share of
585 recruits in 2018 was equal to its share of eighteen to twenty-four year-olds.
597 South Carolina had the highest representation ratio, at 1.5, meaning it
609 contributed 50 percent more than its share of the country's eighteen to

619 twenty-four year-old population. Florida, Hawaii, Georgia, and Alabama
633 round out the top five. On the other end of the spectrum - jurisdictions that
644 contribute fewer recruits than their share of eighteen to twenty-four year-
658 olds, or those with ratios less than 1.0—are Washington, D.C., North
674 Dakota, Massachusetts, Utah, and Rhode Island.

682 **How racially and ethnically diverse is the military?**

692 Federal agencies categorize race into five groups—white, Black or
702 African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native
711 Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. Ethnicity, which the government
722 considers distinct from race, is divided into two categories: Hispanic or
734 Latino, and not Hispanic or Latino. The racial and ethnic diversity of
743 enlisted recruits varies considerably across the services and between
744 genders.

754 In all the services, minority representation is higher among female
759 recruits than among male recruits.

769 Among Army recruits, the portion of Black women is significantly
776 higher than in the civilian labor force.

788 The Coast Guard has the highest portion of white male and female
794 recruits out of all the services.

805 Notes: Only the three largest racial categories were included—white, Black,
817 and Asian. Numbers do not add to one hundred because of excluded groups
826 and because Hispanic ethnicity is considered separately from race.

837 Racial diversity decreases at the upper echelons of the military. While
849 the officer corps has similar levels of racial diversity as the general
861 population, those with higher ranks - generals in the Air Force, Army, and
872 Marine Corps, and admirals in the Coast Guard and Navy - are
884 disproportionately white. There is an even greater ethnic disparity in the top
885 ranks.

891 **At what levels are women serving?**

904 When the draft ended in 1973, women represented just 2 percent of
917 the enlisted forces and 8 percent of the officer corps. Today, those numbers
929 are 16 percent and 19 percent, respectively, a significant increase over the
932 past half century.

942 Again, the numbers vary widely by service. Women accounted for
955 about one-fifth of the officers in every military service except the Marine
970 Corps, where they made up just 8 percent of the total. In the Army, Air
984 Force, and Coast Guard, the ratio of women officers was higher than that for
986 women enlisted.