



Support the All-Volunteer Force

The 50th anniversary of the all-volunteer force (AVF) should be a celebration, not a crisis.

Since the end of the military draft in 1973, the AVF has protected our nation at home and abroad. But now, DoD finds itself in a war for talent: The active component faces an environment where personnel shortages result in increased workloads and reduced quality of life amidst a recruiting crisis, while the National Guard works to rebound from the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic and its largest mobilization since World War II.

We are struggling to recruit and retain the force we need to defend our country and support our allies when called upon. Reversing these worrying trends requires a whole-of-government approach, and Congress must use all the tools at its disposal to keep the AVF ready and capable.

BACKGROUND: A SHRINKING CANDIDATE POOL

Lawmakers can no longer ignore the decreased interest in – and eligibility for – military service.

Survey data from the Military Family Advisory Network revealed only 63% of servicemembers, retirees, military families, and veterans would recommend military life to someone, down from 75% just two years prior. A 2020 study from DoD shows 77% of young Americans would not qualify for military service without a waiver due to being overweight, drug

use, or having mental or physical health problems.

Figures are worse when factoring the willingness to serve, with only 9% of young people interested in military service (ages 16-21 per DoD's Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies). Taking into account these statistics, the dire picture for the all-volunteer force becomes clearer.

RECRUIT AND RETAIN

Roughly 83% of current recruits come from military families. It's a critical pool of potential servicemembers ... one that's being soured, as a 2021 poll found fewer military families would recommend service to others.


To ensure the future of the force, the current force and the pool of veterans and retirees who previously served must both be taken care of to ensure they exert a positive influence to serve for the next generation of potential recruits. The treatment of and perspectives of influencers across all aspects of their experience, both during and after they served, is often more impactful and important to recruiting than the actual marketing messages or efforts by recruiters. To help sustain the all-volunteer force, Congress can:

- Ensure safe and affordable housing by restoring the Basic Allowance for Housing to 100%.
- Protect the health care benefit by reversing cuts to the TRICARE

pharmacy network and resisting calls to shift health care costs to beneficiaries via TRICARE fee increases.

- Improve health care for our over-stretched Reserve Component to support their medical readiness.
- Restore child care availability by doubling Family Child Care providers via provider incentives.
- Support spouse employment by passing the Military Spouse Hiring Act (S. 596/H.R. 1277).
- Address out-of-pocket costs for PCS moves with an updated dislocation allowance.
- Improve community services, school quality, and morale, welfare, and recreation (MWR) facilities with timely appropriations.

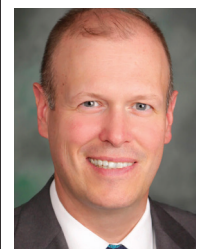
MOAA'S POSITION

The all-volunteer force is our national strategic advantage. Maintaining such a capability requires protecting the quality of life for our uniformed community. Deliberate steps, like improving physical fitness and health programs in our education system, will help increase the pool of eligibles over time, while investing in uniformed community housing, health care, child care, food insecurity prevention, and improved facilities and services will make a meaningful difference to those already in service. 

Congress, we need your help

- Use all available tools to combat the growing crises facing the all-volunteer force.
- Create long-term programs to widen the recruiting pool.
- Pass meaningful legislation to improve the quality of life of those in uniform and their families, to include the Military Spouse Hiring Act (S. 586).

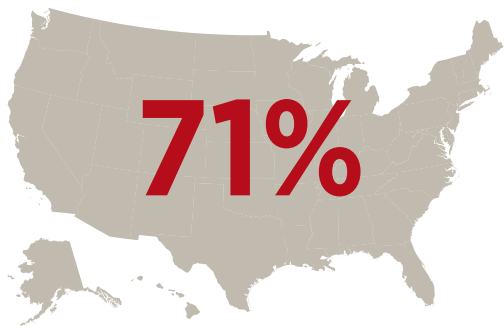
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INELIGIBLE TO SERVE

In 2018, **71%** of young people in the U.S. would not be able to join the military if they wanted to.

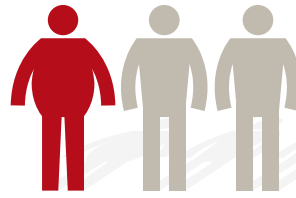


The 3 top reasons for ineligibility:

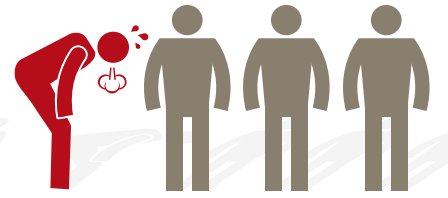
- Obesity
- Educational deficits
- Criminal or drug abuse record

THE PROBLEM

Approximately **1 in 5 children** and **2 in 5 adults** in the United States have obesity.



Just over **1 in 3 young adults** aged 17-24 is too heavy to serve in our military.



Among the young adults who meet weight requirements, **only 3 in 4** report physical activity levels that prepare them for challenges in basic training.

Consequently, **only 2 in 5 young adults are both weight-eligible and adequately active.**

SOURCE: CDC FACT SHEET 'UNFIT TO SERVE'

GRAPHIC BY JOHN HARMAN/MOAA

SHRINKING POOL OF RECRUITS – AN ANNUAL PROBLEM

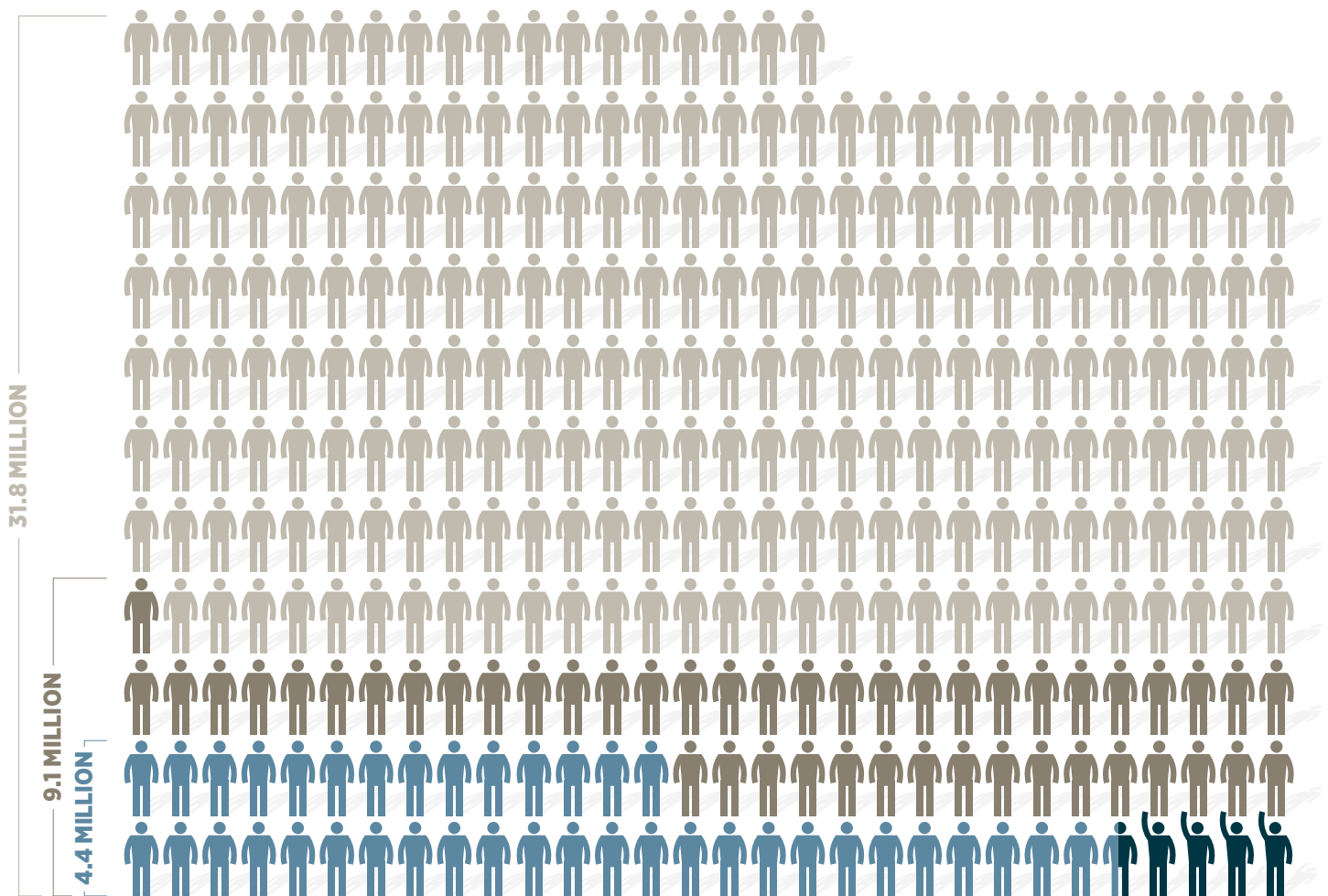
Bottom Line: We must ensure military pay and benefits stack up if recruiters are to have a chance in this competitive environment.

= 100,000 17-24 year olds...

... who meet standards...

... and who meet academic requirements...

... and have a propensity to join



Note: Ten states account for nearly one half of all active duty and reserve members in the military, in order: CA, TX, VA, NC, FL, GA, WA, SC, NY, and CO. The least represented regions are the northern Midwest and Northeast states.

SOURCES: DOD, DOD DEFENSE MANPOWER DATA CENTER; NATIONAL COMMISSION ON MILITARY, NATIONAL, AND PUBLIC SERVICE; THE ARMY MARKETING RESEARCH GROUP

~465,000

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