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**2022 MILITARY RECRUITMENT CRISIS: A HISTORICAL COMPARISON TO
IDENTIFY IMMEDIATE SOLUTIONS & STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

by

Timothy D. Rustad

Colonel, United States Army

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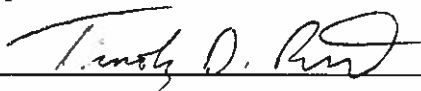
**2022 Military Recruitment Crisis:
A Historical Comparison to Identify Immediate Solutions & Strategic Initiatives**

by Timothy D. Rustad

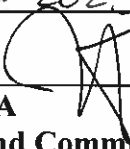
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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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Abstract

The military is facing the most challenging recruitment environment since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force in 1973. Considering the steady decline of citizens that qualify for military service and the historically low propensity of young people to enlist today, the five traditional recruitment levers may not be enough to overcome the current military recruitment crisis. The analysis of the current recruiting environment indicates the need for a two-pronged approach of leaning on the historic levers of the past to close the immediate recruiting gap in the near-term and implementing new strategic solutions to mitigate military end-strength challenges in the future. This research provides a historical analysis to determine intersecting considerations, challenges, and recovery strategies of the three periods to determine considerations to meet future manpower shortages during similarly difficult periods. The research identifies the similarities in the difficult recruiting periods through the four major categories of economic factors, educational factors, recruiting resources, and societal issues and views. The analysis indicates that several transactional policies and initiatives that were successful in the early 1980s and mid 2000s should once again be utilized to combat the recruiting crisis the Department of Defense faces today. Meanwhile, the research and discussion introduce transformational strategic solutions and potential organizational reforms meant to shape accessions and avoid these cyclical downturns in the future.

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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my wife and children who have gracefully supported me throughout my military career and sacrificed several traditional family experiences in exchange for the many adventures and challenges throughout our Army journey. The encouragement and feedback my family provided throughout the countless hours of reflection, research, and writing of this research allowed me to rediscover the amazing transformational benefits the military provides for their servicemembers and families. Additionally, I dedicate this research to all those- past, present, and future- that have served faithfully within a military recruitment organization. The recruitment mission underpins the ability for our country to meet our vital national security and defense objectives and our nation is grateful to the steadfast recruiting professionals networking within the civilian sector to win the war for talent in order to man the force.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This trend contributes to the steadily increasing cost because fragile recruiting and retention programs require strategic planning and timely execution. We seem destined to learn again and again that these programs cannot be optimally managed with supplemental funding inserted at the eleventh hour.

— Susan A. Davis, U.S. House of Representatives¹

As the U.S. approaches the 50th anniversary of the American All-Volunteer Force (AVF), the concern and need to ensure U.S. military force structure is manned at the required levels is just as important today as it was at the height of the Cold War. Since 1973, the United States Military has relied upon an All-Volunteer Force to deter and fight adversaries.² While facing the emergence of strategic great power competition from a revanchist Russia and emergent China, the US military services struggle to achieve their servicemember recruitment and retention goals. Although the Navy, Air Force, and Marines barely met their recruitment goals in Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22), the U.S. Army failed to reach Fiscal Year 2022 (FY22) recruitment goals by an alarming and historically low 25%.³ If environmental conditions do not change or the military does not take swift action in the short term, the services are likely to struggle to meet their military end-strength objectives again in 2023. The U.S. runs the risk of not having a trained and ready force to protect national security interests at home and abroad if the current military recruitment trend continues, potentially leaving the U.S. and allies vulnerable to attack and undermining U.S. political and economic influence abroad.

¹ *Hearing before the Committee on Armed Services, Budget Request on Overview of Recruiting, Retention, and Compensation*, 110th Cong., 2d sess., February 26, 2008, 1.

² Casper W. Weinberger, “The All-Volunteer Force in the 1980s: DOD Perspective,” in *The All-Volunteer Force After a Decade*, edited by William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1986) 1.

³ Ryan Morgan, “Army Misses Annual Recruitment by Massive 25%; Worst Miss Ever,” *American Military News*, October 3, 2022, <https://americanmilitarynews.com/2022/10/army-misses-annual-recruitment-by-massive-25-worst-miss-ever/>.

Military end-strength is a snapshot of the total personnel serving in a branch of service at that specific time. The two key determinants that affect end-strength are accessions of new servicemembers through recruiting and the retention of current servicemembers through career counselors. Accession and retention rates are directly related, as the higher the retention in the force the lower the requirements are for recruitment goals.⁴ Due to an extremely challenging recruitment year, military end-strength shrunk from FY21 to FY22 by over 31,000 with the Army detracting 65%.⁵ Couple the Army's 15,000 shortage in accessions along with a lower than expected retention year, and the active component Army stood nearly 20,000 Soldiers below their authorized end-strength of 485,000 at the end of FY22.⁶ If enlistment trends continue along a similar trajectory over an extended period of years, the military will fail to field operationally ready Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines to support national security interests during this increasingly challenging geopolitical period with China and Russia.

Table 3 Defense Manpower Data Center: FY 2022 End Strength Summary

	09/30/22	08/31/22	Amount	Percent	09/30/21
Total Armed Services	1,357,104	1,359,602	-2,498	-0.18%	1,389,636
Army	465,625	464,924	701	0.15%	486,490
Navy	344,441	346,303	-1,862	-0.54%	347,677
Marine Corps	174,577	174,540	37	0.02%	179,678
Air Force / Space Force	332,424	333,476	-1,052	-0.32%	334,634
Total DoD	1,317,067	1,319,243	-2,176	-0.16%	1,348,479
Coast Guard	40,037	40,359	-322	-0.80%	41,157

Source: Defense Manpower Data Center, *Armed Forces Strength Figures for September 30, 2022*, <https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/DOD-data-reports/workforce-reports>, (accessed November 14, 2022)

⁴ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, by Heidi Golding and Adebayo Adedeji, edited by John Skeen, Publication Number 2777, October 2006, xi.

⁵ Defense Manpower Data Center, *Armed Forces Strength Figures for September 30, 2022*, <https://dwp.dmdc.osd.mil/dwp/app/DOD-data-reports/workforce-reports>, (accessed November 14, 2022).

⁶ Ibid.

Since the inception of the AFV, there are three distinct time periods in which the military has missed the recruitment goals significantly, recruiting years 1979, 2005, and 2022. In the case of the first two periods, the nation was able to avert any long-lasting damage to readiness by immediately improving recruitment in the following years. The government took the recruitment shortfalls of 1979 and 2005 extremely seriously because the shortfalls occurred during times of heightened Cold War awareness and during direct conflicts with Iraq and Afghanistan. The 1979 and 2005 shortfalls came at a time when recruitment missions were much higher, and the shortfalls were miniscule compared to the dramatic 2022 recruitment deficit.

The Army, accounting for the majority of the DOD end-strength shortfalls during the timeframes, only missed their objectives by 16,000 and 6,600 recruits in 1979 and 2005 as authorized active-duty Army end-strength was respectively at 773,800 and 502,400.⁷ Ranking the Army end-strength shortfalls in the three timeframes, by percentage: 2022 at a 2.3% deficit, 1979 at a 2.0% deficit, and 2005 at a 1.9% deficit.⁸ Though 2022 is noticeably higher, it is within the realm of the 1979 and 2005 shortfalls, and that means the methods for recruitment increases in 1980 and 2006 might hold promise for improving outcomes in 2023.

The operational levers the military utilizes to enhance military recruitment operations have not substantially changed over the past fifty years. The five main levers that the individual services employ to improve recruitment still consist of a combination of: 1) increased enlistment bonuses; 2) increased educational incentives; 3) increased marketing; 4) increased recruiting

⁷ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1979*, edited by Edith M. Boldan, 1982, <https://history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1979/index.htm#Contents>, 48; Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, xii; Defense Manpower Data Center, *Armed Forces Strength Figures for September 30, 2022*.

⁸ Ibid.

personnel; 5) easing qualification standards.⁹ Analysis shows that the options were effective to rebound from previous recruiting shortfalls, which suggests similar efforts are likely to be effective in the short term today. However, as the military balances the operations and modernization budgets to ensure readiness, there is a finite number of resources that can be dedicated to the recruiting budget to increase bonuses, incentives, and marketing. Additionally, pulling manpower from the operational force to add recruiting personnel can further exacerbate unit manning shortfalls and negatively impact operational readiness. Meanwhile, easing current enlistment standards by substantially increasing waivers for certain aspects of qualification is considered a break-glass only in case of emergency option, as it signals to the public that those joining the military are unqualified and perpetuates an image that enlisting in the military is for individuals who cannot competently work in civilian professions.

Considering the steady decline of citizens that qualify for military service and the historically low propensity of young people to enlist today, the five operational levers may not be enough to overcome the current military recruitment crisis. The research indicates that a two-pronged approach of leaning on the operational levers of the past to close the immediate recruiting gap in the near-term, while implementing new strategic solutions to best mitigate military end-strength challenges in the future, has become necessary. Analysis of the previous timeframes indicates that several policies and initiatives that were successful in the early 1980s and mid 2000s should once again be utilized to combat the recruiting crisis the DOD faces today.

⁹ Richard Brady, “Recruiting the All-Volunteer Force: New Approaches for a New Era,” *Heritage Foundation 2023 Index of U.S. Military Strength* (October 2022): 38, https://thf_media.s3.amazonaws.com/2022/Military_Index/pdf/2023_IndexOfUSMilitaryStrength_ESAYS_BRADY.pdf.

Considering the long term, the analysis also suggests potential strategic solutions meant to shape the future of accessions to avoid similar cyclical downturns in recruiting.

Utilizing a historical comparison analysis approach, the research examines the lessons of the previous underperforming recruiting time periods to determine solutions for today and into the future. Although the research broadly examines the end-strength challenges across the DOD, the core of the study focuses on previous Army recruiting challenges and opportunities to improve in 2023 and beyond. Historical analysis to ascertain intersecting considerations, challenges, and recovery strategies of the three periods to determine considerations to meet future manpower shortages during similarly difficult periods finds key similarities. Across the difficult recruiting periods four major categories emerge: economic factors, educational factors, recruiting resources, and societal issues and views. Economic factors include all elements of the domestic economy, such as measurements of inflation and unemployment and also include military pay and available enlistment bonuses. Educational factors include the availability and affordability of college or vocational school and enlistment incentives available to servicemembers. Recruiting resources include the personnel manpower dedicated to the recruiting mission along with the marketing operations and budget. Societal issues and public perceptions include the current status of military conflicts, the public trust and confidence of government and military, and any special circumstances that impact support for the military. Some of the factors are quantitative and can be historically attained through objective measurements, while others are subjective and must be qualitatively evaluated through historical reviews. Taken together, the four categories provide a framework to assess the societal trends associated with historic downturns in military recruiting and highlight possible policy options to remedy recruitment shortfalls.

Chapter Two: Background & Literature Review

If Congress comes through with promised military pay raises and restores the GI Bill, a quality All-Voluntary Force is definitely “recruitable”.

— Major General Thurman, Commander United States Army Recruiting Command, 1980¹

The military recruiting operation is a complex system dependent on several interrelated external and internal factors. As Congressman Steiger observed during the 1978 hearings on the status of the AVF, “the military is often blamed for shortages or credited for successes in recruiting and manpower levels; however, as in the case of economy, many of the reasons for the failure or success are symptomatic of society as a whole.”² The literature review highlights Congressman Steiger’s symptoms, or in this case the internal factors— such as policies, initiatives, and strategies—that the government and the military utilize to enhance recruiting operations, noting the striking commonalities. Review of the literature from the late 1970s and mid 2000s recruiting environment provides the analysis of the historical solutions that are most useful in today’s recruiting challenge.

To fully understand the recruiting problem, it is necessary to comprehend the challenges recruiters face in finding qualified and interested individuals to join the service. Qualification to serve in the military is dependent on some basic standards such as age, citizenship, and dependency status. Qualification is also dependent on aptitude, medical/physical fitness, character/conduct, drugs/alcohol, and medical standards.³ Individuals that meet the current

¹ Bernard D. Rostker, *I Want You! The Evolution of the All-Volunteer Force* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2006), 407, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG265.html>.

² Ibid, 375.

³ Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies, *The Target Population for Military Recruitment: Youth Eligible to Enlist Without a Waiver*, <https://dacowits.defense.gov/portals/48/Documents/General%20Documents/RFI%20Docs/Sept2016/JAMRS%20RFI%202014.pdf>, (accessed October 14, 2022).

standards in the categories are considered Qualified Military Available or more colloquially, the qualified pool, and they are available to join without requiring a waiver. The qualified pool directly correlates with the prevailing attitude of the country. The more common the social attitude that accepts conditions and activities that result in disqualification are during a certain period, the smaller the qualifying pool becomes.

Over the nearly fifty-year period of the AFV, recruiting models reflect the disturbing trend that the qualified pool is continuously shrinking. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is responsible for conducting periodic surveys to identify the Qualified Military Available (QMA) population. The last official DOD release of the qualified pool was in 2013, which estimated that only 29% of individuals between the age of 17-24 could meet enlistment standards without a waiver.⁴ However, an official release is pending of the recent 2020 QMA Study that reflects another significant decrease, just 23% of 17-24 year olds across the country qualify for service without a waiver.⁵ Rising rates of adolescent obesity, crime, drug use, and increased medical diagnosis accompanied with prescription medication use across the U.S. continue to decrease the qualified pool. According to the September 2022 *Military Times* article, the most prevalent disqualifications remain medical—including obesity, medical conditions, prescription history, mental health, and drugs and alcohol.⁶ Youths disqualified for multiple reasons increased from 31% in 2003 to 44% in the 2020 study.⁷

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Thomas Novelly, “Even More Young Americans Are Unfit to Serve, a New Study Finds, Here’s Why,” *Military.com*, September 28, 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/09/28/new-pentagon-study-shows-77-of-young-americans-are-ineligible-military-service.html>, (accessed November 7, 2022).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.



Qualified Military Available

5.8 out of 34.4 million 17-24 year olds

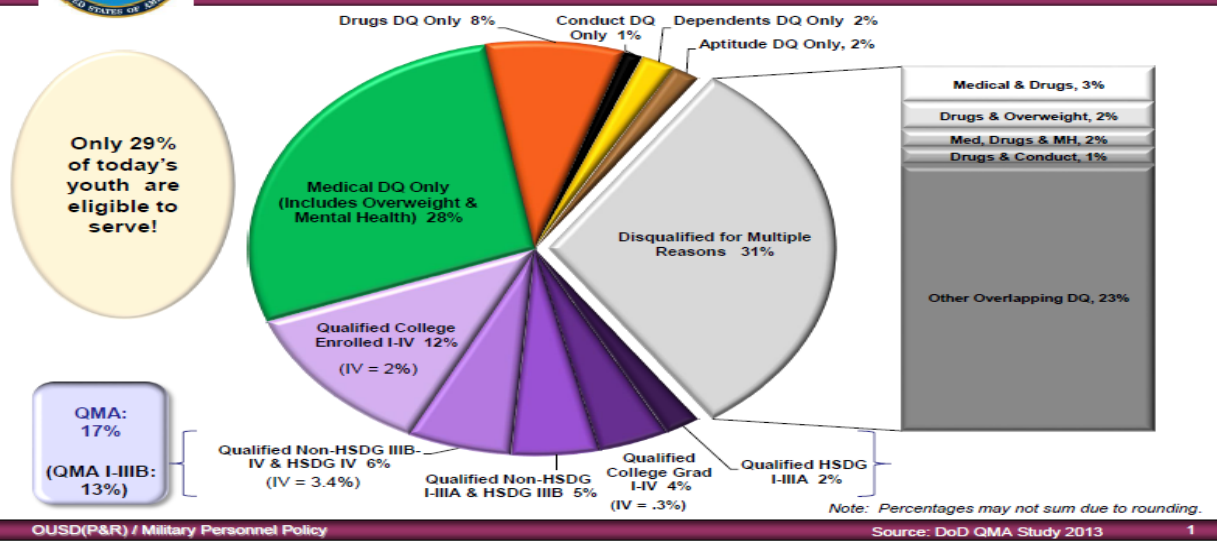


Figure 1 DOD Qualified Military Available Study 2013. Source: Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies, *The Target Population for Military Recruitment: Youth Eligible to Enlist Without a Waiver*.

As the qualified pool of candidates that recruiters must compete for in the marketplace shrinks, so does the propensity of the target audience to enlist.⁸ Looking back at data from the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) conducted from 1975 until 2000, youth propensity for military service dropped following Operation Desert Storm and declined through the 1990s.⁹ 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. The strong declines stabilized in June and December 2007 and improved in June and

⁸ Carlos Del Toro, Frank Kendall, and Christine Wormuth, "Uncle Sam Wants You for a Military Job That Matters," Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2022. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/uncle-sam-wants-you-military-job-america-china-russia-war-threat-defense-army-navy-air-force-recruits-leaders-soldiers-freedom-11666632449>.

⁹ Defense Manpower Data Center, Youth Attitude Tracking Study, <https://dmdc.osd.mil/yats/files2003/MonitoringtheFutureAttitudes.pdf>, (accessed November 7, 2022).

December 2008.¹⁰ The Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies (JAMRS) is the DOD’s program that studies the “perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes of American youth as they relate to joining the Military.”¹¹ In their most recent survey from Fall 2021, they determined that the overall propensity is at an average of 9%, with only 1% responding as “definitely” determined to serve in the military.¹² The propensity matches the lowest levels over the past 20 years, with 2006-2007 rates being equally as discouraging.¹³

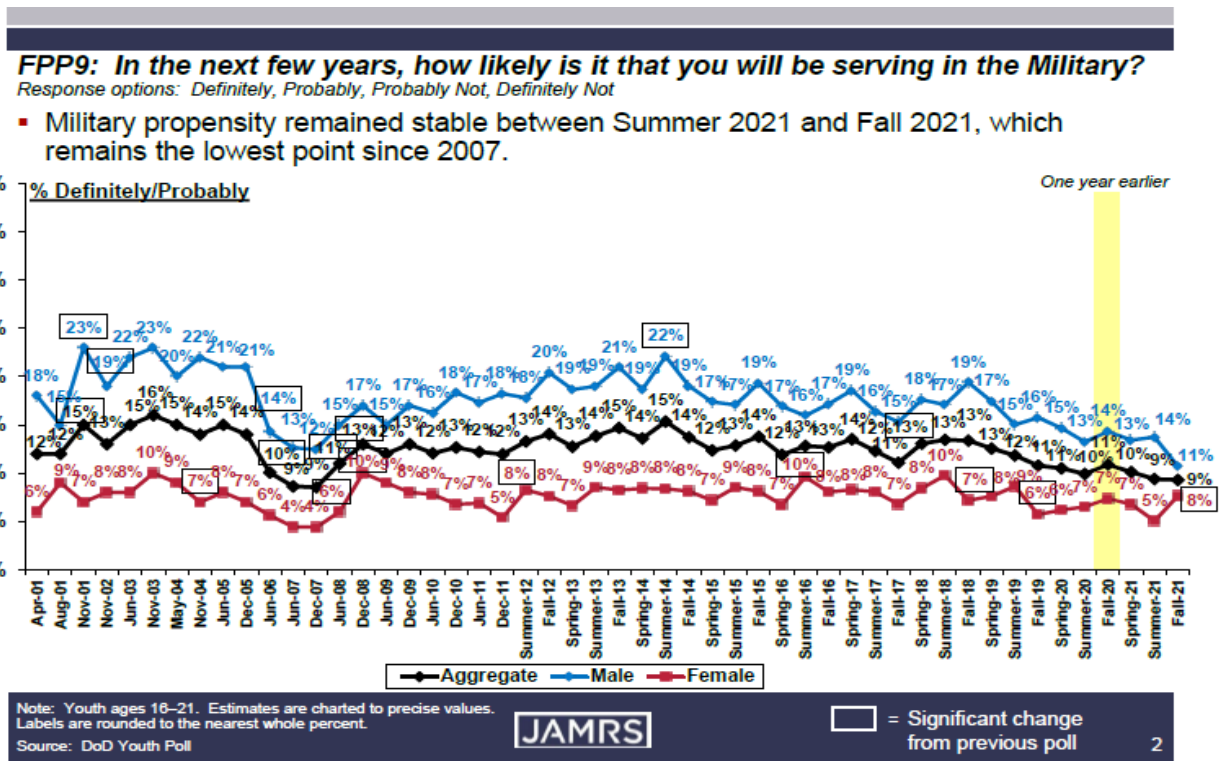


Figure 2 General Propensity to Enlist 2001-2021, by Gender. Source: Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies, Fall 2021 Propensity Update Public Release, August 9, 2022, <https://jamrs.defense.gov/Portals/20/Documents/YP51Fall2021PUBLICRELEASEPropensityUpdate.pdf>.

¹⁰ Joint Advertising Market Research & Studies, *Fall 2021 Propensity Update Public Release*, August 9, 2022, <https://jamrs.defense.gov/Portals/20/Documents/YP51Fall2021PUBLICRELEASEPropensityUpdate.pdf> (accessed on November 7, 2022).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

1979 and 2005 Recruiting Shortfall Overviews

The Department of Defense reduced by approximately 17,000 servicemembers or 10.7 percent short of their recruiting objectives in Recruiting Year 1979.¹⁴ Although none of the services were able to meet their accession goals in fiscal year 1979, the Army had the largest recruiting shortfall as they missed their objective by 17% or roughly 16,000 servicemembers.¹⁵ Several factors contributed to the recruiting problems and propensity of those eligible to enlist to decline during this period, including the combined impact of inflation and stagnated pay caps,¹⁶ loss of the G.I. Bill for new recruits, reduced recruiting resources, and the public perception of the government and military.¹⁷ The recruiting challenges of 1979 manifested through all four categories of factors that are historically associated with downturns in recruiting: Economic Factors, Educational Factors, Recruiting Resources, and Societal Issues and Views.

While all the other services met their active component enlistment target in 2005, the Army amounted to roughly 6,600 people short of its recruiting goal of 80,000.¹⁸ The Army's deficit represented the worst recruiting fiscal year results of an active component service since the Army missed their objective by 16,000 in 1979. Congress and DOD were extremely concerned with the Army's recruiting shortfall because it occurred at the same time they directed the active Army to grow by 30,000 Soldiers from 2004-2006, in order to ease the burden of deployments during the prolonged conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.¹⁹ Several factors contributed to the Army's recruiting problems in 2005, including a relatively low unemployment

¹⁴ Bernard D. Rostker, 750.

¹⁵ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1979*, edited by Edith M. Boldan, 1982, <https://history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1979/index.htm#Contents>, 48.

¹⁶ Bernard D. Rostker, 401.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 384.

¹⁸ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, xii.

¹⁹ *Ibid*, xiii.

rate, a protracted war on terrorism, a decline in propensity to serve, and a growing disinclination of influencers to recommend military service to the younger generation. Assessing the recruiting challenges of the mid 2000s through the lens of the four categories of factors historically associated with downturns in recruiting, the following three appeared to contribute most to the decline in enlistments in 2005: Economic Factors, Recruiting Resources, and Societal Issues & Views.

Recruiting Environments of 1979 and 2005: Economic Factors

Economic factors include all elements of the domestic economy such as measurements of unemployment and inflation and also military pay and available enlistment bonuses. While the military is often blamed for shortages or credited for successes in recruiting and manpower levels, many of the reasons for the failure or success are symptomatic of society as a whole.²⁰ The first two economic factors, unemployment and inflation, are external societal conditions not within the military's control; however, the military has the internal ability to influence the administration and Congress for pay increases and enhanced enlistment cash bonuses.

Unemployment

Unemployment is widely considered the most significant economic factor that drives the recruiting operational environment. Years when unemployment is considerably high, especially among young males, there are historically healthy accessions. A low unemployment rate in the civilian economy makes signing up new recruits harder because they have relatively more opportunities in the private sector.

²⁰ Bernard D. Rostker, 375.

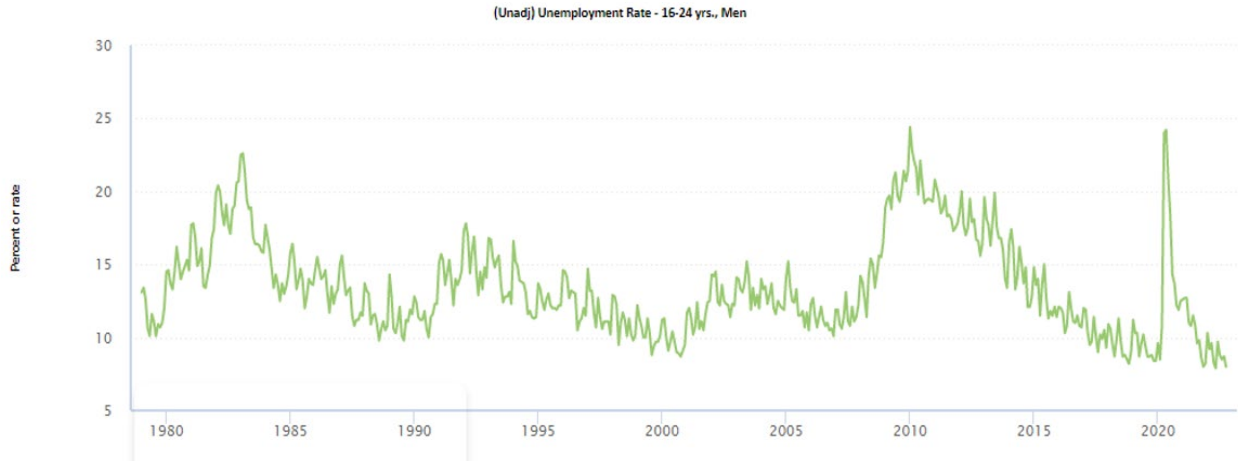


Figure 3 Unemployment Trend for 16-24 Year Males. Source: Bureau of Labor and Statistics, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04024885>, (accessed November 5, 2022).

Unemployment amongst youth males between the age of 16-24 at the beginning of FY79 was at 10.4% and remained relatively flat throughout FY79. The unemployment rate continued to climb throughout FY80 from 10.7% in October 1979 to 15% at the end of FY80.²¹ Meanwhile, at the beginning of FY05 unemployment was at 12.2% and continued to drop, ending at 10.7%. FY06 saw multiple fluctuations during the year, peaking at three times above 12%, but ultimately ending up at 10.5% in October 2006.²² As evidenced by the 2006 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report, the unemployment relationship to accessions is absolutely critical.²³ The CBO states that just a 1% increase in the civilian unemployment rate from its year-to-date average could increase enlistments by about 8,000 without any increase in recruiting resources.²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, 19.

²⁴ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, 19.

Inflation

Inflation rates at the beginning of FY79 stood at 8.9%, an increase of 4% over the previous year, and by October 1979 the rate had increased to 12.6%.²⁵ As the country was in a recession, the inflation rate climbed as high as 14.4% in June 1980, but reduced to 12.6% by the end of FY80.²⁶ Inflation was not a major economic factor throughout FY05-06, as it started at 3.5% in October 2004 and remained under 5% the entire two years, resting at 2.0% in October 2006.²⁷ However, inflation was a significant economic factor throughout FY22, as it started at a 40 year high of 6.8% and continued to rise throughout the year, resting at 7.7% for October 2022.²⁸

Military Pay

Military pay raises prior to 2003 were not mandated to follow a calculation comparison to civilian pay scales, which created pay gaps for servicemembers at times when inflation occurred and pay increases did not occur in a timely fashion. Since Section 1009(c) of Title 37 was adopted in 2003, pay increases for the military are scheduled annually through a Employment Cost Index (ECI) comparison to civilian workers conducted quarterly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.²⁹ The U.S. Senate voted on July 2, 1980, to increase base pay by 11.7% effective October 1980, an effort that was deemed necessary by senior military leadership to both retain the force and recruit, as the pay gap had grown significantly during the period due to increased

²⁵ U.S. Inflation Calculator, *Historical Inflation Rates: 1914-2023*, <https://usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/>, (accessed November 7, 2022).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Congressional Research Service, *Defense Primer: Military Pay Raise*, November 23, 2022, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/IF10260>.

inflation.³⁰ Additionally, the Reagan administration added another incremental pay raise in July 1981 of 5.3% on-top of another large annual raise of 9.1% in October 1981.³¹ Greater pay increases were not utilized as recruitment and retention instruments during the mid-2000s, as the National Defense Authorization Act has remained comparable to the ECI calculated raises.³²

The stagnant military pay during the period of high inflation through the recession aided the precipitous decline in recruitment in which the Army failed to meet accessions in 1979 for the first time in the AVF era. On March 10, 1980, Melvin Laird, former Secretary of Defense under Richard Nixon, in an op-ed article in the Washington Post, called for a 17% across-the-board pay raise, noting that, “since 1972, the consumer price index had risen 75%, while military compensation had risen only 51%.”³³ The New York Times reported on the military pay issue in the fall of 1979, interviewed military officers who stated that military pay was probably the primary reason for them missing their recruiting goals as purchasing power had eroded 16% since 1972 when compared with the civilian cost of living.³⁴ The multiple pay increases in 1980 and 1981 closed the pay gap of servicemembers likely had the most impact on increasing recruitment and maintaining retention throughout the armed forces.

Enlistment Cash Bonuses

Enlistment bonuses have been a staple of U.S. military recruitment and retention since the Revolutionary War, when General George Washington urged the Continental Congress in

³⁰ Congressional Research Service, Defense Primer: Military Pay Raise, November 23, 2022, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/IF10260>.

³¹ Bernard D. Rostker, 503.

³² Navy CyberSpace, U.S. Military Pay History, <https://www.navycs.com/charts/>.

³³ Bernard D. Rostker, 405.

³⁴ Richard Halloran, “Recruiting Inquiry by Army Nears End,” The New York Times, October 14, 1979, <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/10/14/archives/recruiting-inquiry-by-army-nears-end-reforms-already-begun-amid.html?smid=url-share>.

1776 to establish “bounties” for men who were already trained.³⁵ The Enlistment Bonus Program authorized by Congress in 1972 had served as an important recruiting incentive to encourage enlistments in critical military occupational specialties and the Army offered enlistment bonuses in thirty-five military occupational specialties ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Enlisted bonus payments for the year totaled \$34.6 million for the active Army.³⁶ In 1980, the Army proposed a legislative change to raise the maximum bonus from the 1979 level of \$3,000 to \$5,000; however, it was not approved in that fiscal year to effect recruiting efforts.³⁷

To meet the congressional mandate and test for market expansion effects, skill channeling effects, and term of enlistment effects, DOD and the Army undertook a two-year test from July 1982 to June 1984. As directed by Congress, an Enlistment Bonus Test was carried out by RAND in which they determined that of all the alternative policy options available, bonuses were the most flexible.³⁸ RAND found that without altering the fundamental structure or level of military compensation, bonuses can be swiftly changed in response to critical shortfalls in particular personnel categories.³⁹ The high degree of flexibility, combined with the dramatic impact of bonuses on occupations and term of service choices, make enlistment bonuses a useful option for short-term management of enlistment flows and for targeting incentives toward particular subgroups.⁴⁰

The DOD’s annual expenditure for enlistment bonuses—targeted to new recruits—fluctuated from approximately \$162.1 million to \$301.2 million from fiscal years 2000 to 2004,

³⁵ Bernard D. Rostker, 515.

³⁶ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1979*, 50.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 50.

³⁸ Bernard D. Rostker, 614.

³⁹ Bernard D. Rostker, 614.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 619.

and budgeted enlistment bonus expenditures for fiscal year 2005 were \$149.3 million, and for fiscal year 2006, \$175.0 million.⁴¹ In 2006, the active Army increased maximum enlistment bonus amount from the 2005 level of \$20,000 to \$40,000.⁴² This positive correlation between increased bonuses and increased enlistments from 2005 to 2006 supports RAND's Enlistment Bonus Experiment findings that enlistment cash bonuses provide the services with an effective and flexible means to meet immediate recruitment requirements.⁴³

Recruiting Environments of 1979 and 2005: Educational Factors

Educational factors include the external societal condition of other post-secondary education incentives for recent high school graduates and the enlistment educational incentives available to servicemembers for college or vocational school. While the civilian incentives are an external societal condition, the military does have the internal capacity to influence government to enhance military educational incentives to ensure they are more competitive than other civilian educational incentives.

Military and Civilian Educational Incentives

In December 1974, the federal government established the Comprehensive Education and Training Act (CETA) that incentivized unemployed and low-income youth with training and jobs in public agencies.⁴⁴ The competing program, which rolled out nearly simultaneous to the

⁴¹ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, 10.

⁴² *Ibid*, 7.

⁴³ Bernard D. Rostker, 614.

⁴⁴ Bernard D. Rostker, 384.

beginning of the AVF, had now grown in public familiarity and offered incentives without the perceived sacrifices of military service.

Prior to the start of the AVF, educational benefits were offered under the old GI Bill primarily to compensate servicemen for hardships associated with having been drafted. Congress terminated the GI Bill after 1976 and instituted a less lucrative educational incentive for recruits, the Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP).⁴⁵ While it is difficult to ascertain the effect the educational incentive change had on accessions, estimates from military manpower experts range the enlistment declines from anywhere to 5-25% are attributed to the loss of the GI Bill.⁴⁶

Although sweeping educational incentive initiatives were not realized in 1980, DOD did continue with the VEAP and also allowed the Army to test the Ultra VEAP with “kickers” or supplemental benefits of as much as \$12,000 given to high quality recruits for longer enlistments in certain occupations.⁴⁷ In 1984, congress passed the Veterans’ Educational Assistance Act that became known as the Montgomery GI Bill, which standardized educational incentives across the services and officially reestablished a peace time GI Bill.⁴⁸ The Army continued with the Ultra VEAP program until 1985 as an additional incentive to augment the Montgomery GI Bill, then they adopted a similar educational augmentation program, the Army College Fund, that lasted through 2012.⁴⁹ In 2005, the maximum payout from the Army College Fund was increased from

⁴⁵ Ibid, 474.

⁴⁶ Gary R. Nelson, “Supply and Quality of First-Term Enlistees,” in *The All-Volunteer Force After a Decade*, edited by William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey, 1986) 45.

⁴⁷ Bernard D. Rostker, 512.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 512.

⁴⁹ U.S. Army Human Resources Command, Army College Fund, October 26, 2022, <https://www.hrc.army.mil/TAGD/Army%20College%20Fund>, (accessed November 30, 2022).

\$50,000 to \$70,000, and the maximum benefit in the Student Loan Repayment Program was increased to \$65,000 for personnel in select occupations.⁵⁰

In 2005, Senator Dick Durbin sponsored the Welcome Home GI Bill that was intended to enhance the twenty-year-old Montgomery GI Bill and increase the scope of the incentive.⁵¹ Although the bill stalled discussion on the topic continued and many of the benefits were repackaged and later introduced in the 2008 9/11 GI Bill that passed in June 2008. Notable among the changes to the new 9/11 GI Bill was the ability to transfer the educational benefits to family members if the servicemember completes at least six years of active service.⁵²

Recruiting Environments of 1979 and 2005: Recruiting Resources

Recruiting resources include the initiatives and levels of personnel manpower and marketing efforts dedicated to the recruiting mission. All of the factors associated with recruiting resources are internal, as military leadership has direct influence over either recommending or actioning these policies and initiatives. At their core, recruiters are the true force multipliers. Recruiting manpower includes increasing assigned servicemembers to recruiting stations, enhancing recruiting units with temporary assistance, and initiatives from outside sources that increase referrals. Marketing operations includes the budget and targeted initiatives to increase awareness and persuasion.

Recruiting Manpower

⁵⁰ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, 7.

⁵¹ Brendan McCarthy, "Bill Seeks to Boost Benefits for New Veterans," *Chicago Tribune*, April 26, 2005, <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2005-04-26-0504260222-story.html>.

⁵² Veterans Affairs, *Transfer Your Post-9/11 GI Bill Benefits*, April 30, 2020, <https://www.va.gov/education/transfer-post-9-11-gi-bill-benefits/>, (accessed November 30, 2022).

In December of 1979, the Army placed Major General Max Thurman in command of the U.S. Army Recruiting Command (USAREC).⁵³ One of his first initiatives, in 1980, was the direct increase of frontline recruiters and manpower support directly aimed at operationalizing the recruiting mission. 845 military manpower spaces were added to USAREC in 1980, with 570 of the soldiers serving as frontline recruiters at the stations.⁵⁴ The remainder were fielded to headquarters elements to enhance the leadership and support structure along with establishing the critical analysis and evaluation programs required to operationalize the recruiting mission. The infusion of manpower occurred while Thurman instituted sweeping organizational changes focused on restoring leadership, ensuring accountability, demanding quality recruits, and creating intelligence driven marketing strategies widely used today.⁵⁵

The active Army reduced its recruiting force from an average of about 6,400 recruiters during 2002 to an average of 5,100 during 2004, a decline of almost 21%.⁵⁶ It then increased the number of recruiters from 5,200 at the beginning of 2005 to 6,500 by year's end.⁵⁷ The research shows that recruiters typically produce few recruits in their first six months on the job; it is not until eighteen months of recruiting duty that recruiters reach the height of their productivity. Thus, the majority of the 6,500 frontline recruiters were productive and directly aided in the 2006 recruitment rebound because the Army was able to read the environment and react quickly enough to reinforce the stations.⁵⁸

⁵³ Bernard D. Rostker, 619.

⁵⁴ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1980*, edited by Lenwood Y. Brown, 1983, <https://history.army.mil/books/DAHSUM/1980/ch05.htm>, 78.

⁵⁵ Bernard D. Rostker, 407.

⁵⁶ Government Accountability Office, "*Military Recruiting: DOD and Services Need Better Data to Enhance Visibility over Recruiter Irregularities*", August 2006, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-06-846.pdf>, 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 9.

⁵⁸ Heidi Golding and Adebayo Adedeji, "*Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*," 2006, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/18187>, 8.

Table 4 Summary of the Average Recruiters by Service for Fiscal Years 2002-2006

Service	Total recruiters					Frontline recruiters				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Army ^a	9,730	9,481	8,517	9,637	10,634	6,367	6,078	5,109	5,953	6,484
Navy	5,835	5,738	5,016	5,141	4,936	4,714	4,617	4,617	3,365	3,383
Marine Corps	3,401	3,494	3,287	3,343	3,641	2,650	2,650	2,650	2,650	2,650
Air Force	2,942	2,956	2,940	2,990	2,800	1,574	1,494	1,460	1,453	1,412
Total	21,908	21,669	19,760	21,111	22,011	15,305	14,839	13,836	13,421	13,929

Source: Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel, 2006*, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/18187>, page 8.

The Army utilized two additional recruiting manpower resources in 2006, as they increased the Special Recruiter Assistance Program (SRAP) and initiated the Army Recruit Referral Bonus Program (ARRBP). The Army increased support to local recruiters by encouraging operational commands to support sending Soldiers back to their local regions as Hometown Recruiters, following deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan. The returning soldiers were intended to increase high school graduate contacts and also provide influencers with a personal perspective of operations overseas to counterbalance media portrayals.⁵⁹ The ARRBP was an Army-wide referral program in which service members, civilians, and retirees who helped sign new recruits received up to a \$2,000 bonus. The now defunct and scandal ridden program ended in 2009, but it helped in the 2006 recruiting rebound and was attributed to approximately 24,000 enlistments over the four-year period.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Government Accountability Office, *Military Personnel: DOD Needs Action Plan to Address Enlisted Personnel Recruitment and Retention Challenges*, November 2005, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-06-134.pdf>, 30-31.

⁶⁰ Stewart Smith, “The History of the Army Recruiting Referral Bonus Program 2006-2009,” LiveAbout.com, June 19, 2019, <https://www.liveabout.com/recruit-referral-bonus-program-3344754>.

Marketing Operations

Upon taking command of USAREC, Thurman immediately recognized the marketing budget and strategy shortfalls and secured an additional \$10.7 million through an amendment and reprogramming to transform the image of the Army.⁶¹ Thurman used the funds to quickly work directly with the contracted advertisement agency, NW Ayer, to move away from the 1979 campaign focused on the “personal challenge of being a good soldier” and shift to the dynamic “Be All You Can Be” national campaign during FY80.⁶² Thurman spent considerable time with the NW Ayer staff to ensure they understood his vision and objectives for the target audience his recruiters were after. The 1980 roll-out of the “Be All That You Can Be” quickly became one of the most recognizable advertisement campaign slogans in history and remained the Army slogan until 2000.⁶³

Similar to the marketing transition made by Thurman in 1980, Lt. Gen. Robert Van Antwerp, Commander of U.S. Army Accessions Command, moved away from the “Army of One” slogan to a new “Army Strong” campaign in 2006.⁶⁴ Van Antwerp stated that, "This campaign will show Americans that there is strong, then there's Army Strong. I am both inspired and confident that the campaign will build on the positive momentum within our recruiting program."⁶⁵ Army Strong was developed to embody more than an individual soldier's strength, which Army of One was often criticized for. Instead, it focused on capturing the essence of

⁶¹ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1980*, 76.

⁶² U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1979*, 50.

⁶³ Bernard D. Rostker, 192-194.

⁶⁴ Office of the Chief of Staff of the Army Public Affairs, “U.S. Army Announces New ‘Army Strong’ Advertisement Campaign; National Advertising Begins Now,” www.army.mil, October 16, 2006, https://www.army.mil/article/363/u_s_army_announces_new_army_strong_advertising_campaign_national_advertising_begins_no.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

teamwork within a well-trained squad to accomplish something larger than themselves and spoke to those who supported the decision of a family member, friend, or employee to serve.⁶⁶ The campaign acknowledged that people were strong on their own, but by enlisting in the Army they would become Army Strong, stronger as a collective.⁶⁷

Recruiting Environments of 1979 and 2005: Societal Issues and Public Perception

Societal issues and public perception are affected by the status of military conflicts, the public perception on government and the military, and any special circumstances of that period. Although many societal issues and views are external conditions outside of the control of the military, the military does directly contribute to public perceptions both while deployed and domestically.

Status of Military Conflicts

Although servicemembers were not actively fighting in a major conflict during the 1979-1980 period, the nation was still in a state of combat fatigue and in the midst of the Cold War.⁶⁸ Much of the qualified pool were old enough to remember and struggle with the images from the Vietnam War and casualty reports on the nightly news.⁶⁹ The polarization of America and the pointed protests directed at servicemembers, and the lasting images of an American defeat when Saigon fell in 1975.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, the Iran Hostage Crisis of 1979 that resulted in the failed

⁶⁶ Wayne Shanks, "Why Army Strong," www.army.mil, October 31, 2006, https://www.army.mil/article/478/why_army_strong.

⁶⁷ Wayne Shanks, "Why Army Strong," www.army.mil, October 31, 2006, https://www.army.mil/article/478/why_army_strong.

⁶⁸ Bernard D. Rostker, 450.

⁶⁹ Bernard D. Rostker, 450.

⁷⁰ Bernard D. Rostker, 450.

Operation Eagle Claw rescue operation of 1980 – loomed over the military as a credible institution.⁷¹ Lastly, President Carter declared intentions of restarting a mandatory registration with the Selective Service during the 1980 State of the Union Address, citing the 1979 Russian invasion of Afghanistan as the impetus for the action.⁷²

Although opponents of peacetime draft registration mounted a well-organized campaign and the constitutionality of males-only registration was challenged in the courts, the registration proceeded smoothly. On 4 September 1980, the Director of Selective Service announced that 87% of the eligible population had registered on time and another 6% had registered by 22 August, for a compliance rate of 93%.⁷³ Reagan, as a candidate for President, had opposed President Carter's return to the registration process, but once in office, in 1981, called for a study on the issue. President Reagan reluctantly agreed to retain the registration policy after hearing from Congress and the Joint Chiefs of Staff that 83% of U.S. families supported the registration and that the act of registration tended to remind young men of the obligation of citizenship and rekindled pride in service and country.⁷⁴ Army Chief of Staff, General Shy Meyer, went even further as he lobbied that registration had a favorable impact on the armed services recruiting during the turn-around of 1980 and would likely have a negative impact on recruiting going forward if it was canceled.⁷⁵

As the recruiting year ended in October 2005, the U.S. military was five years into the War on Terrorism and nearly three years into Operation Iraqi Freedom. With no termination of

⁷¹ Bernard D. Rostker, 450.

⁷² *Ibid*, 417.

⁷³ U.S. Army Center of Military History, *Historical Summary Fiscal Year 1980*, 74.

⁷⁴ Bernard D. Rostker, 507.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 507.

the conflicts in sight, the potential recruits faced almost certainty that they would deploy at least once, and probably more, during the first term of their enlistment. For the first time since the draft ended in 1973, the military was recruiting and retaining an all-volunteer force during protracted wars. The Army faced a difficult recruiting environment with negative publicity focused on the violent battles for Fallujah in 2004,⁷⁶ the media exposure of U.S. Soldiers abusing Iraqis at Abu Ghraib prison,⁷⁷ and the stories of soldiers being caught in “stop-loss” when their contracts expired.⁷⁸

Public Trust & Confidence

The Pew Research poll measuring trust in government fell from 36% to a meager 25% between October 1976 to October 1980.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, Gallop’s poll of American confidence, measuring respondents replying “either a great deal/quite a lot” showed a general decrease, moving from 58% in 1975 to 50% by 1981.⁸⁰ Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, in October 2001, trust in government rose to 54%, which marked the first and last time that public trust eclipsed 50% since the Watergate scandal rocked America in the mid-1970s.⁸¹ As the war in Iraq dragged on and poor publicity began to envelope the conflict, American trust in government dropped consistently. Starting from 46% immediately after the March 2003 invasion down to

⁷⁶ BBC News, “Iraq’s hardest fight: The US battle for Falluja 2004,” November 10, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29984665>.

⁷⁷ George R. Mastroianni, “Looking Back: Understanding Abu Ghraib,” *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 43, no. 2 (June): 59, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.2896>.

⁷⁸ Andrew Exum, “Stop-Loss Contrary to Volunteer Military,” Tampa Bay Times, August 28, 2005, <https://www.tampabay.com/archive/2004/06/05/stop-loss-contrary-to-a-volunteer-military/>.

⁷⁹ Pew Research Center, “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2022,” www.pewresearch.org, June 6, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/06/06/public-trust-in-government-1958-2022/>, (accessed September 20, 2022).

⁸⁰ Gallup Inc., “Military and National Defense,” www.news.gallup.com, June 20, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1666/military-national-defense.aspx>, (accessed September 20, 2022).

⁸¹ Pew Research Center, “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2022.”

31% when the recruiting year closed in September 2005.⁸² Conversely, Gallop’s poll of American confidence in the military skyrocketed from 64% just before 9/11 to over 82% after the initial invasion of Iraq in 2003.⁸³ However, the increased confidence began to wane as the War on Terror and Iraqi Freedom continued, as nearly 24% of Americans, on average, held little to no confidence in the military during the period of 2004-2006.⁸⁴

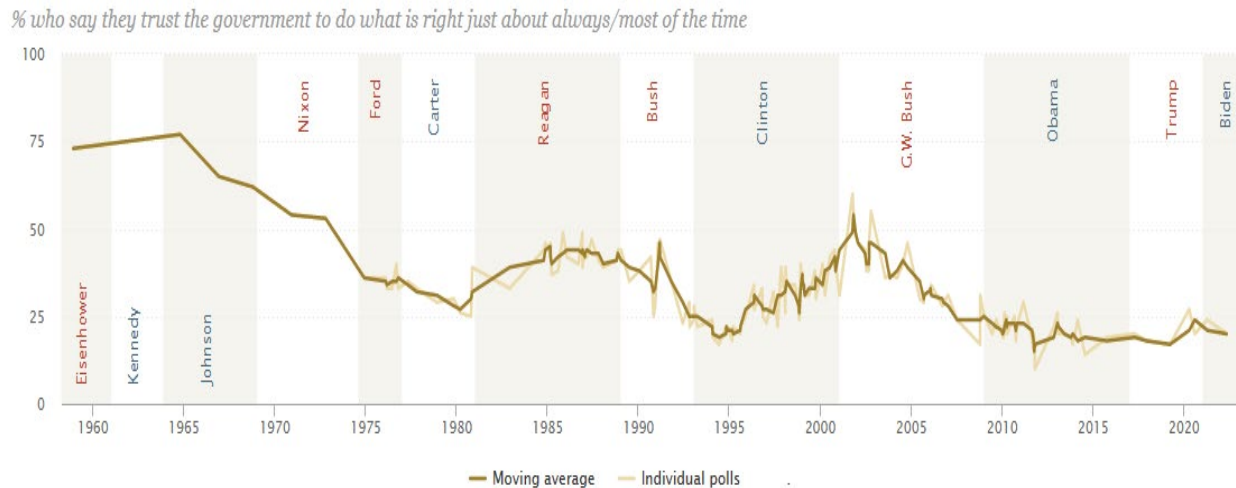


Figure 4 Public Trust in Government Trend 1958-2022. Source: Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/06/06/public-trust-in-government-1958-2022/> (accessed October 14, 2022).

Theory: Balance of Transactional and Transformational Incentives

The military uses a combination of transactional and transformational incentives to attract and retain recruits, with the goal of providing individuals with the support they need to succeed both during their military service and in the years to come. Requiring a balance between transactional and transformational incentives in military recruiting is supported by several studies and theories from the fields of management and organizational behavior to include James

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Gallup Inc., “Military and National Defense.”

⁸⁴ Ibid.

MacGregor Burns and Bernard M. Bass. Their associated work and interpretations on transactional versus transformational leadership provide a foundation for a new theory to interpret how the military attempts to attract candidates to join the military through both tangible rewards and intangible benefits.

James MacGregor Burns, introduced the concept of "transformational leadership" in his 1978 seminal book *Leadership*, as he explained that transformational leaders engage the follower as an individual as they inspire and motivate followers to not just achieve their own self-interests but also to advance the interests of the organization and society as a whole.⁸⁵ Bass expounds on Burns' theory and explains that transactional cultures focus on contractual relationships, while transformational cultures are leader focused, developing the organization's mutually shared values, beliefs, and purpose.⁸⁶

A transactional and transformational incentive theory in military recruiting, with an emphasis on the military as an engine of social mobility, proposes that individuals are motivated to join the military for both tangible rewards and intangible benefits. Transactional theory suggests that individuals are self-interested, make short-term commitments and are motivated by monetary incentives.⁸⁷ Applying transactional theory to military recruiting, potential enlistees are likely motivated by immediate financial assistance, housing, and food resources that the military offers. Meanwhile, transformational incentive theory suggests that recruits join the military with the expectation that they will be developed to their full potential.⁸⁸ Thus, applying

⁸⁵ James M. Burns, *Leadership*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 69.

⁸⁶ Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture," *Public Administration Quarterly* 17, no. 1, 1993: 116, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40862298>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 116.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 116.

transformational theory towards military recruiting would indicate that individuals are also motivated to join for the lifelong benefits of training, education, transition services, health care, and a network of veteran services and associations. However, the decision to join the military is not a simple one, as individuals are required to weigh the dangerous risk of serving their country in return for both the transactional and transformational incentives that the military offers.

Transactional incentives involve a give and take approach where the government acts as both givers and takers. The primary example in military recruiting is when the government gives cash bonuses in exchange for enlistments that benefit the government's immediate needs. In contrast, transformational incentives are value-creating and value-adding benefits the government offers to recruits that positively impact the individual lives of the recruits now and into the future. A limitation of military recruitment transformational incentives such as training, education, retirement benefits, medical benefits, and transition services is that they don't bring immediate gratification for the majority demographic of recruits. However, as Bass contends, transformational leadership ideals are essential to high performing organizations as the individuals are more likely to significantly contribute to the betterment of the organization when they feel valued.⁸⁹ Thus the military should continue to improve and advertise the many life-long transformational incentives and benefits that recruits earn during and after their service. Considering effective organizations operate under transformational cultures while balancing effective transactional activities, military recruiting should continue to offer transformational incentives to promote the life-long investments our nation has committed in our servicemembers

⁸⁹ Bernard M. Bass, "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision," *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter 1990, 25, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616\(90\)90061-S](https://doi.org/10.1016/0090-2616(90)90061-S).

and veterans while still leveraging contractual incentives are necessary when difficult recruiting environments exist.⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Bernard M. Bass and Bruce J. Avolio, "Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture," *Public Administration Quarterly* 17, no. 1, 1993: 116, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40862298>.

Chapter Three: Current Manpower Concerns and Relevant Reforms

As the U.S. refocuses on rising challenges from China and Russia, the armed forces are confronting a generational shortfall. As global threats loom, our respective services face a shrinking pool of qualified and willing applicants. Military communities are increasingly isolated. A strong U.S. job market in which there are nearly two open positions for every person seeking work increases the difficulty of attracting recruits. But the nation needs defending, even when the job market is historically strong.

— Honorable Ms. Christine Wormuth, Mr. Frank Kendall, and Mr. Carlos Del Toro, 2022⁹¹

Qualitatively, the recruitment shortfall of 2022 occurred during arguably the most volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment since the start of the AVF. Fueled primarily by the global life-altering events of the COVID-19 outbreak and associated lingering effects, the military recruiting apparatus emerged from the pandemic in 2022 and found that the operating environment had dramatically changed. The major obstacles the recruiting force faced included: volatile economic tension from high unemployment and competitive wages throughout the civilian sector; uncertain strategic and political futures as a result of the polarizing withdrawal from Afghanistan and Russian invasion of Ukraine; complex recruiting operations resulting from a reduction of frontline recruiters and adaptations to Generation Z through the pandemic; ambiguous understanding of when or if the pre-pandemic recruiting methods would prove successful.

Qualification & Propensity Issues

The shrinking qualified pool of candidates and the slumping propensity to enlist metrics remain top concerns for military recruiters. Secretary of the Army, the Honorable Ms. Christine

⁹¹ Carlos Del Toro, Frank Kendall, and Christine Wormuth, “Uncle Sam Wants You for a Military Job That Matters,” Wall Street Journal, October 24, 2022. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/uncle-sam-wants-you-military-job-america-china-russia-war-threat-defense-army-navy-air-force-recruits-leaders-soldiers-freedom-11666632449>.

Wormuth, expressed concern to CNBC in October 2022 after the Army missed recruiting goals by 15,000 enlistments. Secretary Wormuth stated, “Only about 23% of kids between 16-21 are able to meet our standards. . . . Only 9% of young Americans say that they’re interested in joining the military.”⁹² The common lever utilized in the short-term to overcome the shrinking qualified pool dilemma in previous recruiting shortfalls was to ease qualification standards. Meanwhile, while increasing and improving the marketing of the military will assist, there is no lever at the military’s disposal that directly influences the national propensity to enlist.

The Army was significantly scrutinized when they increased educational, mental aptitude, and character/conduct qualification waivers to rebound quickly in 1980 and 2005 from their previous year recruitment shortfalls. Understanding the public perceptions and potential harm to the force of universally lowering standards, the Chief of Staff of the Army, General James McConville, has made it clear in multiple occasions that they do not plan on sacrificing quality to overcome the 2022 recruitment shortfalls and increase the qualified pool of candidates in 2023.⁹³

The Army instituted a groundbreaking boot-camp initiative in 2022 that they are expanding in 2023. The 90-day pre-basic training course allows candidates to conditionally enlist with a waiver if they are slightly below the body-fat and aptitude scores required for full enlistment. Once candidates successfully meet the standards they are able to enlist and ship to basic training. General McConville stated, “the Future Soldier Prep Course is giving young

⁹² Ian Thomas, “The U.S. Army is struggling to find the recruits it needs to win the fight over the future,” CNBC, October 26, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/26/us-army-struggles-to-find-recruits-its-needs-to-win-fight-of-future.html>.

⁹³ Joe Lacdan, “Army leaders implement measures to bolster recruiting,” Army News Service, September 12, 2022, https://www.army.mil/article/260123/army_leaders_implement_measures_to_bolster_recruiting.

Americans who want to serve the chance to do so by helping them not only meet our standards but, in many cases, rise above them.”⁹⁴ The Army reported that 2,965 of the 3,206 candidates that participated since the inception of the boot-camp initiative have passed, and they are expanding the capacity of boot-camp candidates by 8,400 in 2023.⁹⁵

The easing of qualification standards to meet short-term enlistment goals remains a very lucrative tactical lever that can be turned on or off quickly as they were in 1980 and 2005. However, the strategic approach of officially adjusting enlistment standards or methods of testing candidates to match the current Generation Z environment is another approach that could be explored. Specifically, periodic reviews of disqualifying medical conditions and the risk to the force should be conducted to determine if additional candidates could be cleared to join. Additionally, a full review of the material utilized in the aptitude test and the way the test is conducted should be periodically evaluated to match currently utilized secondary school information and learning methods. Progressing from the Future Soldier Prep Course ideas, allowing non-High School Graduates with passing aptitude scores to join with the requirement that they attend adult high school through the already established military education center system to get their GED after Basic Training could meet the needs of the force without allowing unqualified recruits to serve.

Unlike the qualified pool that has consistently shrunk since the inception of the AVF, the propensity to enlist has ebbed and flowed throughout the past fifty years as it primarily hinges on the economic environment and current societal issues and public perceptions of the military. The

⁹⁴ Steve Beynon, “Army Expanding Course for Overweight and Low-Scoring Recruits in Bid to Fill the Ranks,” Military.com, January 9, 2023, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/01/09/army-expanding-course-for-overweight-and-low-scoring-recruits-in-bid-to-fill-the-ranks>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

leading contributing factors to the current challenging recruiting environment include the American youth's lack of public awareness of military service and the growing disconnect of military service with the general population.⁹⁶ United States Army Recruiting Command (USAREC) public affairs cites 50% of youth admit they know little or nothing about military service, less than 1% of the population serves in the military, and 79% of those that chose the military as a career path have close relatives that also served.⁹⁷ While the military has limited ability to overcome or effect the economic environment, they have an internal capability to influence the perception of military service through interaction with the public and marketing.

The Army immediately shifted to new marketing campaigns after the 1979 and 2005 recruiting downturns, with “Be All You Can Be” in 1980 and “Army Strong” debuting in 2006. Considering the qualitative correlation between the Army's shift in the 1980 and 2006 marketing campaigns to the quick rebound in recruiting within those same years, the Army could likewise utilize a new marketing campaign in 2023 to revitalize recruitment. Just two months after the historically poor 2022 recruiting year ended, the Army announced they would return to the familiar and wildly successful “Be All You Can Be” advertisement campaign in March of 2022. Major General Alex Fink, Chief of Army Enterprise Marketing, stated “After doing audience testing and research on about 200 different taglines, “Be all you can be” was a clear winner with each demographic. It appealed to young people, as well as those likely to influence a person's decision to join the Army, and veterans of the service.”⁹⁸

⁹⁶ United States Army Recruiting Command, “Facts and Figures: Recruiting Challenges,” https://recruiting.army.mil/pao/facts_figures/, (accessed November 7, 2022).

⁹⁷ United States Army Recruiting Command, “Facts and Figures: Recruiting Challenges,” https://recruiting.army.mil/pao/facts_figures/, (accessed November 7, 2022).

⁹⁸ Rose L. Thayer, “‘Be all you can be,’ Army to market for new recruits with old slogan,” Stars and Stripes, December 1, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2022-12-01/army-recruiting-slogan-advertising-campaign%C2%A0-8267208.html>.

Economic Factors

The current historically low unemployment trend is very similar to the 2005-2006 environment. The total unemployment and youth male unemployment during the mid-2000s also remained consistently low and did not fluctuate considerably until the effects of the 2008 recession caused monthly unemployment to double, moving from 4.52% in 2006 to above 9% throughout fiscal years 2009-2011.⁹⁹ 2022 saw the lowest youth male unemployment since 1969, starting at 8.6% and ending at a new 50 year record of 8.0%.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, the fiscal year 2022 total unemployment monthly average of 3.79% was a 50 year record and the first quarter of 2023 reflected an even lower average of 3.6%.¹⁰¹

While the military has little influence on the total economic measurement of unemployment, they can combat the effect by increasing the appeal of service through such things as economic and educational benefits. The Army used the lever of increasing enlistment bonuses to overcome the 2005 recruitment shortfalls, as they doubled the maximum enlistment bonus from \$20,000 to \$40,000 in 2006.¹⁰² Meanwhile as of November 2022, over a 16 year timeframe, the maximum enlistment bonus amount for the Army has only increased to \$50,000.¹⁰³ If maximum enlistment bonus would have grown at the same rate as the monthly base pay for a new Private has increased over the past 16 years, 44%, the maximum enlistment cash bonus would be nearly \$72,000. The 2006 rebound in recruitment demonstrates that

⁹⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Unemployment Rates 2000-2022,” Bls.gov, January 24, 2023, <https://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>, (accessed January 24, 2023).

¹⁰⁰ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Unemployment Rate 16-24 yrs Men,” Beta.bls.gov, <https://beta.bls.gov/dataViewer/view/timeseries/LNU04024885>, (accessed November 5, 2022).

¹⁰¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, “Unemployment Rates 2000-2022,” Bls.gov, January 24, 2023, <https://data.bls.gov/pdq/SurveyOutputServlet>, (accessed January 24, 2023).

¹⁰² Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, 7.

¹⁰³ Army Enlistment Bonus Program, <https://www.goarmy.com/enlistment-bonuses.html>, (accessed January 2, 2023).

increasing enlistment bonuses is an effective lever when unemployment is consistently low; therefore, the Army should increase the maximum enlistment bonuses in 2023 and beyond until unemployment rises to a level that naturally increases recruitment.

The current external economic measurement of inflation is very similar to the 1979-1980 recruiting environment. Inflation has a corollary relationship with recruitment and retention as competitive military pay rates are required to entice candidates and retain servicemembers. Inflation jumped from an average of 7.6% in 1978 to an annual average of 11.3%, 13.5%, and 10.3% from 1979 to 1981 respectively.¹⁰⁴ Inflation jumped from an average of 1.2% in 2020 to an annual average of 4.7% and 8.0% in 2021 and 2022.¹⁰⁵ Military pay raises were effectively used in 1980 and 1981 to bridge the stagnated military pay gap that was exasperated by the historic jump in inflation. Today, military pay rates are adopted annually in the National Defense Authorization Act after the Employment Cost Index (ECI) determines the comparison to civilian workers throughout similar positions throughout the nation. While inflation has once again exasperated the military pay gap, the statutory ECI requirement is an appropriate approach to ensure steady pay increases are conducted rather than overcorrecting whenever the economic environment changes. Therefore, enacting historic military pay raises like those in 1980 to overcome the military recruitment and retention challenges of 1979 are not required or recommended to increase recruitment today.

¹⁰⁴ U.S. Inflation Calculator, *Historical Inflation Rates: 1914-2023*, <https://usinflationcalculator.com/inflation/historical-inflation-rates/>, (accessed November 7, 2022).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

Educational Factors

The current military educational enlistment incentives and programs for servicemembers have continued to improve incrementally over the years and are sufficient to attract candidates. The military has established multiple education, training, and transition programs that enhances social mobility of servicemembers and their families. The programs demonstrate a commitment to the potential recruits and their family or influencers that the military will invest in them not only while they are serving but also throughout the entirety of their lives. Student loan repayment programs erase debt in exchange for service, tuition assistance programs and degree/certificate awarding programs are frequent while serving, dedicated skill-bridge civilian transition services allow for proper reintegration into civilian life, and the 9/11 GI Bill provides 36 months of tuition and housing stipends for servicemembers or their family members during or after they have served.

The civilian educational and training incentives provided through the government and the private sector today present competitive alternatives to the military programs. The 1979 military recruiting environment was challenged by a government education and jobs program, CETA, which incentivized the same youth that the military was attempting to recruit. Similarly, in 2022, President Biden signed an executive order to forgive up to \$20,000 of student loan debt, sparking some controversy that the loan forgiveness would negatively affect recruiting as it disincentives qualified young people to enlist for educational incentives such as the \$65,000 Loan Repayment Plan.¹⁰⁶ While there is little the military can do to influence the private sector when they create

¹⁰⁶ Leo Shane and Davis Winkie, "GOP Reps Fear Loan Forgiveness Plan Will Hurt Military Recruiting," *Military Times*, September 15, 2022, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/pentagon-congress/2022/09/15/gop-reps-fear-loan-forgiveness-plan-will-hurt-military-recruiting/>.

educational incentive programs, military leaders can present the risks associated with failing to meet recruitment goals while government funded programs rival military education incentives.

The military has established various education, training, and transition programs to enhance the social mobility of servicemembers and their families. These programs, which include student loan repayment, tuition assistance, skill-bridge transition services, and the 9/11 GI Bill, are not just financial incentives but transformational ones that demonstrate the military's commitment to the futures of its servicemembers. In addition to financial and educational incentives, the military has embraced a holistic approach to its servicemembers' development by providing transformational programs that focus on physical, mental, and emotional well-being. The military does not need to further enhance these incentives, but instead focus on marketing them to ensure candidates and influencers are aware of their offerings. In addition to advertisements, the military could explore a program to train influencers in presenting the benefits to students.

Recruiting Resources

Heading into fiscal year 2022, the Army reduced its recruiting force from roughly 10,000 down to 9,300 Soldiers and also reestablished the old approach of directly assigning the recruiters with quotas rather than assigning the recruiting station in that area with the consolidated mission requirement for their recruiters.¹⁰⁷ The Army used the lever of substantially increasing the number of recruiters in both 1980 and 2006 to overcome the previous year's

¹⁰⁷ Davis Winkie, "Fewer recruiters, individual quotas: How the Army is 'modernizing' recruiting," Army Times, November 7, 2021, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2021/11/07/fewer-recruiters-individual-quotas-how-the-army-is-modernizing-recruiting/>.

shortfalls. Understanding that the strategy of increasing frontline recruiters proved successful in aiding the rebound of recruitment in 1980 and 2006, the Army could explore an immediate increase of frontline recruiters in the short-term to assist in their efforts to recover the 2022 shortfalls. However, the USAREC Command General, Major General Johnny Davis, reported that they do not plan on increasing the number of recruiters in 2023.¹⁰⁸ The authorized 2023 Army end-strength was reduced from 485,000 down to 473,000 largely due to recruitment shortfalls. The decision not to increase the number of frontline recruiters presents a risk to the recruiting rebound strategy in 2023. Therefore, the Army's will rely heavily upon their enhanced marketing budget coupled and rejuvenated "Be All You Can Be" marketing campaign to mitigate this risk.

Considering the shrinking force structure that has resulted from the 2022 recruitment shortfall, the Army has less flexibility to augment with trained recruiters. The Army is attempting to mitigate the risk of not increasing frontline recruiters through a series of personnel and incentive programs. First, they are investing a significant amount of manpower into the expansion of the Future Soldier Prep Course to increase qualified applicants. Second, in January 2023 the Army established the Soldier Referral Program that incentivizes soldiers to provide referrals through the GoArmy website with the potential for the Junior Enlisted to receive an early promotion if a qualified referral enlists and awards the Army Recruiting Ribbon to all soldiers that refer a candidate that ships to basic training.¹⁰⁹ Lastly, they continue to utilize the

¹⁰⁸ Steve Beynon, "Army Sees Signs it Might Hit Recruiting Target This Year," Military.com, January 20, 2023, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2023/01/20/army-sees-signs-it-might-hit-recruiting-target-year.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Davis Winkie, "Promotions, ribbons established for Army recruiting referrals," Army Times, January 24, 2023, <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2023/01/24/promotions-ribbons-established-for-army-recruiting-referrals/>.

Special Recruiter Assistance Program, as they did after 2005, to temporarily augment stations with soldiers during time-periods with minimal impact to the operational readiness of the force.

Societal Issues and Public Perception

The 2022 recruitment year was mired with several societal obstacles and issues at a time in which public perception of both government and the military were at historic lows. The military conflicts in Afghanistan, Ukraine, and tension with China were significant military factors. Meanwhile, the effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to plague the recruiting environment as access to schools and face-to-face engagements with candidates was significantly constrained. Additionally, the lingering effects of the events surrounding the January 6th, 2021, riots at the U.S. Capital along with other criticism of military leadership within the media produced a public perception amongst many Americans that the military had become too politicized.¹¹⁰

The Pew Research Public Trust in Government latest available polling data reflects that, in May 2022, 20% of Americans said they could trust the government at least most of the time.¹¹¹ Meanwhile, the Gallup poll from June 2022 reflects the lowest amount of confidence in the U.S. Military since 2000, with only 64% of those polled indicating that they have “either a great deal/quite a lot” of confidence.¹¹² Of significant concern, both of the polls demonstrate that

¹¹⁰ Meghann Myers, “Is the military too ‘woke’ to recruit?,” *Military Times*, October 13, 2022, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2022/10/13/is-the-military-too-woke-to-recruit/>.

¹¹¹ Pew Research Center, “Public Trust in Government: 1958-2022,” www.pewresearch.org, June 6, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/06/06/public-trust-in-government-1958-2022/>, (accessed September 20, 2022).

¹¹² Gallup Inc., “Military and National Defense,” www.news.gallup.com, June 20, 2022, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/1666/military-national-defense.aspx>, (accessed September 20, 2022).

public perception of the government and the military is substantially lower than the two previous recruitment shortfall periods.

While the U.S. was not directly engaged in any large-scale military conflicts during the recruiting year, the much-criticized military withdrawal of Afghanistan occurred in August 2021, just one month before the start of the recruiting year. The graphic accounts of the withdrawal and the associated finger-pointing by pundits and veterans alike for how it was handled played out in real time throughout the press during the fall of 2021. Additionally, the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 presented an uneasy feeling throughout the world and the U.S. as many questioned whether the U.S. would become directly involved in a War against a nuclear adversary. Further, tensions with China and the real fear that the People’s Liberation Army will attempt reunification with Taiwan by force in the near future are discussed in open source media frequently.¹¹³ The tensions were exacerbated in August 2022 when the Speaker of the House, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi public visit to Taiwan sparked Chinese outrage and resulted in Chinese military exercises that included a demonstration of short-range ballistic missiles being sent over Taiwan.¹¹⁴

The restricting effects of the COVID-19 on military recruiting lasted well into the middle half of the 2022 recruiting year, as many locations throughout the nation were still experiencing outbreaks and community standards varied as to limitations to face-to-face activities. An additional obstacle surrounding COVID-19 was the military policy that required candidates to be

¹¹³ Courtney Kube and Mosheh Gains, “Air Force general predicts war with China in 2025, tells officers to prep by firing ‘a clip’ at a target, and ‘aim for the head’”, NBC News, January 27, 2023, [Air Force general predicts war with China in 2025, tells officers to get ready \(nbcnews.com\)](https://www.nbcnews.com/air-force-general-predicts-war-with-china-in-2025-tells-officers-to-get-ready-n128486).

¹¹⁴ Jude Blanchette, et al, “Speaker Pelosi’s Taiwan Visit: Implications for the Indo-Pacific,” csis.org, August 15, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/speaker-pelosis-taiwan-visit-implications-indo-pacific>.

fully vaccinated prior to shipping to basic training. Government directed immunization requirements are considered standard practice for military members. However, the public politicization of the mandated COVID-19 vaccination along with the DOD mandate to separate servicemembers that refused the immunization created an additional strain on the recruiting environment that was not experienced in 1979 or 2005.¹¹⁵

While the 1979 and 2022 recruiting environments were both laden with the uneasiness and unpredictability of the post-Vietnam War, Cold War, post-Afghanistan War, and Ukraine War, only the 2005 environment had ongoing direct conflicts that candidates were nearly assured of supporting. Additionally, the 1979 and 2022 recruiting environments are most similar in public perception as both faced significant hurdles and downturns in the trust in government and confidence in the military polling. The 1980 recruiting rebound strategy focused heavily on the marketing lever and improving the transformational benefits of servicemembers during that period to demonstrate a commitment to furthering the future of the candidates even past their period of enlistment. The “get an edge on life” portion of the “Be All You Can Be” marketing campaign stressed the transferrable training opportunities and educational benefits that soldiers gain to better themselves and position them to transition successfully into the civilian sector after service. The military could utilize similar transformational marketing to assist in the 2023 recruiting rebound strategy.

¹¹⁵ Rebecca Kheel, “Vaccine Mandate Is Hurting Recruiting, Top Marine General Says,” Military.com, December 4, 2022, [Vaccine Mandate Is Hurting Recruiting, Top Marine General Says | Military.com](#).

Chapter Four: Discussion

We are in a war for talent. It is a war that we have to win.
— General McConville, Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, 2023¹

The analysis shows that there are many parallels between the recruiting environment of today and the environments of the early 1980s and mid-2000s. Where the environments match and the solutions were successful in the 1980 and 2006 recruiting rebounds, the levers utilized to combat those economic, educational, recruiting resource, and societal tensions should be expediently utilized. Where the exigencies differ, the military should study and implement innovative and strategic ways to overcome the shrinking pool of qualified and interested candidates.

While most of the levers associated with a quick rebound are transactional, the transformational investments and incentives are key to growing a responsible force that is invested in the organization. The transactional incentives to entice candidates to join are necessary to meet expedient needs of the recruits, the transformational benefits demonstrate investments into individual futures which enables higher quality servicemembers and positive veteran influencers to sow the seeds for further generations of service. The five primary recruitment levers entail an easing of qualification standards and increases in enlistment bonuses, educational incentives, marketing, and recruiting personnel.

Recommendations

The recruiting rebounds of 1980 and 2006 both involved an easing of qualification standards at a time when the qualified and interested pools were higher than today. The Navy

¹ Kevin Couch, “McConville Reaches out for Recruits,” FEDweek, January 20, 2023, <https://www.fedweek.com/armed-forces-news/mcconville-reaches-out-for-recruits/>.

announced in November 2022 that they were easing aptitude qualifications and allowing up to 7,500 high school graduates to join if they score between the 10th and 30th percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT).² The Navy, having struggled to barely meet their 2022 recruitment mission, is taking this significant step as they attempt to attract an additional 3,400 recruits in 2023 for a total of 38,000 enlistments.³ The Army has chosen not to ease standards to meet recruitment goals in 2023, instead they are focused on expanding their future soldier prep course to enable recruits to meet aptitude and physical standards and enlist without requiring qualification waivers. While the Army's approach is transformational and will likely result in more vested servicemembers, it is time consuming and resource intensive. The Army should look to increase qualification waivers in a similar manner as the Navy during the 3rd or 4th Quarters of 2023 if the throughput at the pre-boot camps does not meet recruitment needs.

The military utilized an increase to the number and size of enlistment bonuses as a portion of their recruitment rebound strategies of 1980 and 2006. Considering the economic characteristics of these past timeframes are similar to today's volatile environment, the military should also enhance the enlistment bonus lever as a portion of their 2023 strategy. The military should explore increasing the maximum enlistment bonuses to requisitely match inflation and competing civilian signing bonuses. The over reliance on military families with a history of service to meet recruitment goals continues to widen a gap of unfamiliarity with the benefits of serving. Pew Research found that among new recruits, nearly 30% have or had a parent serve

² Heather Mongilio, "Navy Accepting Recruits with Lower Scores on Entrance Exam in Pilot Program," USNI News, December 5, 2022, <https://news.usni.org/2022/12/05/navy-accepting-recruits-with-lower-scores-on-entrance-exam-in-pilot-program>.

³ Ibid

and 70% have or had a family member serve in the armed forces.⁴ To combat the growing insularity between populations and increase exposure outside traditional servicemember supported communities, the military should explore establishing special cash bonus incentives for individuals with limited generational ties to the military. Tying a transactional bonus incentive to deepen familiarity and understanding of the life-long benefits of serving in the military facilitates the transformational vision of increasing the propensity to serve.

The 1980 and 2006 environments required further educational investments that proved that the military was invested in the futures of their servicemembers during and especially after their service. Considering the generous improvements in educational, training, and transition benefits the military has made over the past two decades, there is no need to further enhance education incentives as a lever to improve recruitment. Instead, the military should focus their efforts on marketing the vast incentives to ensure candidates and influencers are fully aware of the impressive programs. It is likely, given the disparity between families who have served and families who have not served, that many Americans are not fully aware of the educational incentives that exist. The military should explore a program that financially incentivizes influencers at secondary schools and post-secondary schools to be certified in presenting to students the educational, training, and transition benefits that the military offers. A program that trains influencers on the programs and places those influencers on the government payroll would expand the market by arming influencers with current information, create connections within the communities, and combat the increasing military knowledge gap.

⁴ Johnathan Ahl, “Most Military Recruits Come from Families of People Who Served. Experts Say That’s Not Sustainable,” TPR, June 14, 2022, <https://www.tpr.org/military-veterans-issues/2022-06-14/most-military-recruits-come-from-families-of-people-who-served-experts-say-thats-not-sustainable>.

The Army's increased marketing budgets in the immediate years following 1979 and 2005 were part of the successful equation of the rebound strategies that led to a quick turnaround in recruiting. Both the 1980 and 2006 rebound strategies included a roll-out of new marketing campaigns, the Army is following suit with that trend as they are set to release the reboot of "Be All You Can Be" in March of 2023.⁵ Utilizing the lever of enhancing the marketing budget, coupled with the new marketing campaign, should assist the Army's efforts to meet its recruitment mission in 2023. Additionally, the DOD should explore an expansion of "Their Tomorrow" advertisement campaign aimed at parents and influencers of young adults to include discussions of the transformational benefits associated with service in the armed forces. The advertisement campaigns developed by DOD's Office of People Analytics (OPA) are meant to open the minds and gain support of parents and influencers when their youth are exploring military service options.⁶ Increasing marketing investments in advertisements that inspire service while enhancing exposure to military benefits to diverse communities is critical for the 2023 recruitment rebound strategy.

Just as the successful rebound strategies of 1980 and 2006 incorporated an increase of frontline recruiters, the services should follow suit today and grow the recruiting force in the short term to gain an advantage on the competitive civilian marketplace. In 2006, the Congressional Budget Office examined the effectiveness of various recruiting resources—the number of recruiters, advertising, enlistment bonuses, and educational benefits—to determine

⁵ Rose L. Thayer, "'Be all you can be,' Army to market for new recruits with old slogan," Stars and Stripes, December 1, 2022, <https://www.stripes.com/branches/army/2022-12-01/army-recruiting-slogan-advertising-campaign%C2%A0-8267208.html>.

⁶ "General Advertising," OPA.gov, accessed January 30, 2023, <https://www.opa.mil/research-analysis/recruiting-awareness/marketing-efforts/general-advertising>.

which of the Army's options would be most effective in increasing enlistments and whether the Army's actions to date should be sufficient for meeting its recruiting goals. According to CBO's review of relevant analyses, placing more recruiters in the field has the largest effect on the number of enlistments as they determined that a 10% increase in the number of recruiters would boost enlistments by between 4-6%. Meanwhile, a 10% increase in the expenditures on advertising, enlistment bonuses, or educational benefits would only increase enlistments by 1%.⁷ However, expending more manpower from the operational force to meet recruitment goals increases the risk of lowering the readiness of the military. To buy down that risk, the military should explore strategic organizational structure initiatives that enhance the recruiting force without disturbing the operating force.

Potential Strategic Organizational Reform Initiatives

Major General Thurman's 1980 recruiting rebound strategy centered around not only an increase of recruiters, but also an organizational structure change that enhanced the headquarters elements with an intelligence and operations sections that enabled recruiters to better understand and target their market. The DOD should explore an organizational structure update to the recruiting force that would capitalize on the redundancies and combines the recruiting efforts of the services to eliminate overhead, decrease budgets, simplify processes, and free up man-power resources to increase the number of frontline recruiters.

⁷ Congressional Budget Office, *Recruiting, Retention, and Future Levels of Military Personnel*, by Heidi Golding and Adebayo Adedeji, edited by John Skeen, Publication Number 2777, October 2006, xii.

While the current structure does loosely invite cross-service sharing of recruitment activities and candidate information, it does not mandate nor incentivize support of the recruiters across the services to assist each other. A strategic solution could involve a Joint Recruiting Task Force to expand on Maj Gen Thurman's operationalization efforts by streamlining common recruiter training, consolidating service specific recruiting stations, and enabling recruiters of any service to work across the services to meet common enlistment goals. Candidates would directly benefit from a Joint recruiting office environment, as they would be better informed about the jobs available across the services and be able to compare the varying cultures to determine which service likely fits their personality.

The DOD should also examine the expansion of the Army's successful Future Soldier Prep Course to require all services to participate in the program. The program serves as a transformational good-faith investment in the candidates while directly enhancing the quality of the force. Considering the course is meant to enable interested candidates to meet the baseline aptitude and physical fitness standards common to all services, the DOD could utilize a Joint structure at the pre-boot camp locations to share resources and manpower. Establishment of a Joint Recruiting Task Force structure would assist in creating unity of effort across the services to best implement these types of innovative initiatives by introducing jointness earlier before servicemembers.

Lastly, the DOD should explore ways to transition many of the inherently commercial positions that servicemembers perform to civilian billets in order to focus the services on filling the essential occupational specialties. Most of the occupational specialties the services currently recruit must be filled by a uniformed servicemember due to the nature of the unique skillsets and

the legal authorities to operate overseas and in wartime environments.⁸ However, according to the most recent civilianization study conducted by the Institute for Defense Analyses in 2018, upwards of 14,000 military authorizations across the services could be transitioned to civilians.⁹ The military should conduct another analysis to determine the impact of transitioning all or a portion of these billets in an effort to either reduce the overall end-strength or recapitalize on the civilianization by creating more military specific occupational specialties to enhance warfighting capability of the force.

Conclusion

We know now that an All-Volunteer Force can succeed, and we know what it takes to make it succeed. We need have only the will, the perseverance and the commitment to quality.

— Caspar W. Weinberger, Secretary of Defense, 1981¹⁰

The military has not fundamentally changed many of their manpower initiatives in decades and, although the U.S. military is technically operating in a time of peace, the recent reckless Russian actions in Ukraine and rising threats from China demand that U.S. leaders have trained personnel to fight tonight. Historical comparative analysis of the previous recruiting operating environments informs the military of several operations, activities and investments that proved successful in the 1980 and 2006 recruitment rebound strategies. Furthermore, the analysis highlights and identifies recruitment strategies and approaches it can implement, such as agile

⁸ David Eisler, Stanley Horowitz, Nancy Huff, Julie Pechacek, Susan Whitehead, and Linda Wu, “Managing the Total Force: Using Civilianization to Militarize the Military,” Institute for Defense Analyses, November, 2018, <https://www.ida.org/research-and-publications/publications/all/m/ma/managing-the-total-force-using-civilianization-to-militarize-the-military>, iii.

⁹ Ibid, vii.

¹⁰ Casper W. Weinberger, “The All-Volunteer Force in the 1980s: DOD Perspective,” in *The All-Volunteer Force After a Decade*, edited by William Bowman, Roger Little, and G. Thomas Sicilia (Washington: Pergamon-Brasseyes, 1986), 5.

transactional solutions to quickly close the end-strength gap while also investing in transformational initiatives to increase the resiliency of the recruitment mission and enable operational readiness of the force throughout the future. Given the precarious state of diplomatic and political challenges, U.S. civilian leaders and U.S. military leaders need to be prepared to act quickly to ensure its forces are prepared for conflict.

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Vita

Colonel Timothy Rustad is a student at the Joint Advanced Warfighting School (JAWS), a campus of the National Defense University (NDU), located at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia. He has served in a variety of operating and generating force positions throughout his 24 years in the active-duty Army to include a three-year assignment with the Minneapolis Recruiting Battalion. While serving as both a Company Commander and the Battalion Executive Officer, he permanently earned the Basic Recruiter Badge and the Army Superior Unit Award for his contributions during the recruiting rebound of 2006. Colonel Rustad received a Bachelor of Science from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1999 and a Master of Art in Communication and Leadership from Park University in 2014. His operational experience has focused on Army and Joint integrated air and missile defense and served two tours in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. He is a simulation operations officer that previously served as the TRADOC Capabilities Manager for Constructive Simulations, responsible for the requirements of the Army's premier constructive simulation that supports Brigade to Combatant Commander exercise and rehearsal events. Upon graduation from JAWS, Colonel Rustad will be assigned to the Joint Staff as the Chief, Environmental Operations Division within the J-7.