

The Chart Page

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USAF People: Recruiting, Retention, and

Service recruiting and retention in the 1990s reflect the effect of a massive post-Cold War force drawdown, a sharp rise in operations tempo, an exodus of experienced enlisted personnel, a long national economic boom, and a lower propensity among youth to serve in the armed forces.

When the drawdown ended, the Air Force, Army, and Navy found themselves short of recruiters, recruits, and experienced troops. For USAF, the problem became acute as it battled the civilian industry for technology-savvy personnel. By 1998, recruiting and retention levels for the three largest services had dropped. Only the Marine Corps, which had been spared major force cuts, held steady on personnel.

Intensive recruiting efforts, coupled with higher military pay and better benefits, helped all services meet recruiting goals in Fiscal 2000, which ended Sept. 30. Improvements in the military retirement system brought higher retention rates, reflected in the upticks by each service for Fiscal 2000.

Fig. 1, "US Military Recruiting," shows that 1990 recruiting figures for the Air Force, Army, and Navy marked the highs for the decade. From 36,200 recruits in 1990, the Air Force dropped to its lowest recruit total—30,000—in 1991 and again in 1994. By 2000, it had climbed to 34,400.

Army recruiting shows the greatest swing. From a 1990 high of 89,600, Army numbers fell to 62,900 in 1995, nearly a 30 percent drop. Two years later, the Army number rose to 82,100. But by 1999, the figure had fallen once again—to 68,200. Intensive recruiting efforts brought numbers back up to 80,000 in 2000.

Navy recruiting shows an overall downward trend from 1990 through 1996. The Navy experienced a decrease of about 33 percent from 1990 to 1996. Navy recruiting numbers then remained fairly flat until 1998, rising slightly in 1999 and then to 55,000 in 2000.

Marine Corps numbers held fairly steady throughout the period, peaking in 1993 with 34,800 recruits. USMC was the only service to meet its recruit quota each year.

Fig. 2, "US Military Retention," shows the overall retention record in percentages of actual first-term rates. The records of all four services in 2000 show an upturn from 1999. The Air Force achieved its highest retention percentage of first-term personnel over the decade in 1995. By 1999, the retention rate had fallen to 49.1 percent, down 13.9 from 1995.

The Navy's best year for first-term retention came in 1991, with 41.4 percent staying in. Declining retention rates dominated subsequent years, with the lowest—28.2 percent—retention in 1999.

The Army suffered its lowest retention rate of first termers in 1992, with just 30.7 percent. By 1997, that rate had climbed to its highest level of 54.4 percent.

The Marines' highest rate occurred in 1990, at 29.9 percent retention of first-term personnel. A subsequent downward trend hit a low of 17.2 percent in 1993, then began to rise throughout the rest of the decade. As of Aug. 31, 2000, the Marines had increased the retention of first termers to 26.3 percent, their next-best rate after 1990.

Fig. 3, "USAF/Navy Retention Rates," presents a comparison

Fig. 1 US Military Recruiting

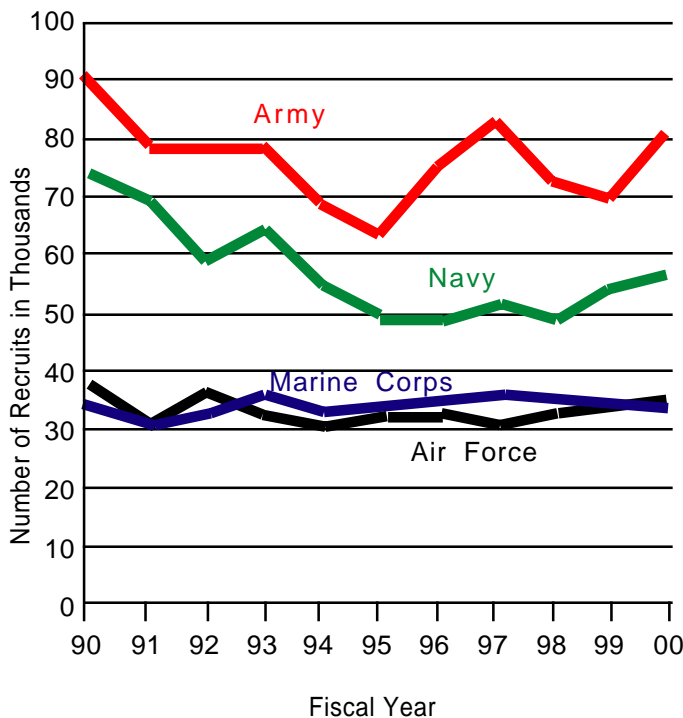
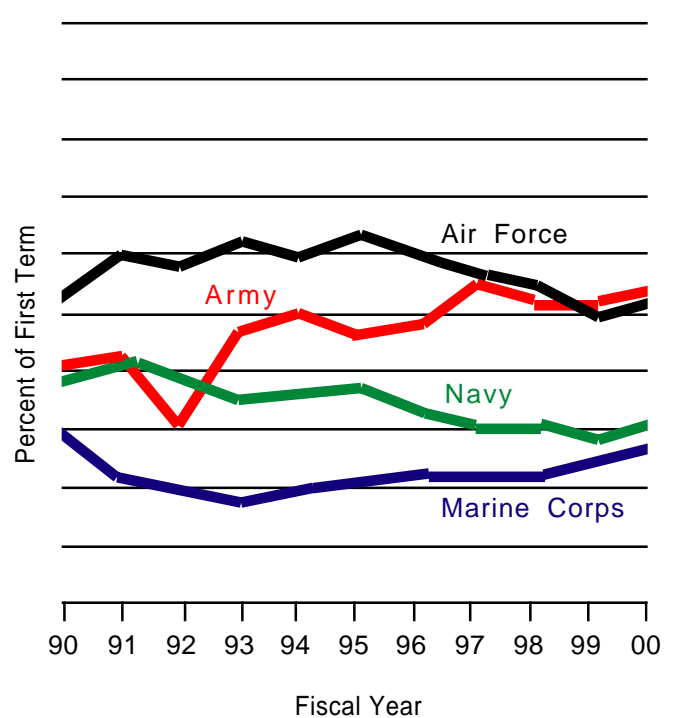


Fig. 2 US Military Retention



Demographics

of the two services' first- and second-term rates, in percentages achieved and in goals for the years 1996–2000. Fig. 4 on USAF retention charts Air Force first-term goals and percentages achieved for that five-year period. Fig. 5 on Navy retention tracks the record of Navy goals vs. percentages achieved from 1998 to 2000. Comparison with Army and Marines was not possible because those services use percentages for goals, and numbers for actual retention figures.

Sources: Secretary of Defense Annual Reports, 1991–2000; DefenseLink News; OSD Personnel and Readiness Office, Historical Retention Trend Data.

Fig. 3 USAF/Navy Retention Rates

	FY96	FY97	FY98	FY99	FY00
1st-Term Retention					
Air Force actual	59	56	53.9	49.1	52
Air Force goal	55	55	55	55	55
Navy actual	32.9	30.8	30.5	28.2	30.5
Navy goal	*	*	38	32	30.5
2nd-Term Retention					
Air Force actual	76	71	69	69.4	69.1
Air Force goal	75	75	75	75	75
Navy actual	48.9	48.4	46.3	43.8	47
Navy goal	*	*	54	48	45

* Percentage goals not established due to drawdown. Fiscal 2000 data through Aug. 31, 2000.

USAF People: Demographics

(July 1 through Sept. 30, 2000)

The Air Force has 351,379 active duty personnel. Of that number, 19 percent are women, up from 5.4 percent in 1975. Racial minority representation stands at 26 percent, up from 14 percent in 1975.

Strength

Enlisted: 282,356

Officers: 69,023

Total: 351,379

Sex

Men: 81 percent

Women: 19 percent

Race/Ethnicity

Caucasian: 74.3 percent

Black: 16.1 percent

Hispanic: 4.9 percent

Other: 4.8 percent

Marital Status

Married: 62 percent

Unmarried: 38 percent

Duty Station

US: 79 percent

Overseas: 21 percent

Enlisted Experience

1st term: 37 percent

2nd term: 16 percent

3rd term: 47 percent

Officer Education

Bachelor degree: 100 percent

Master degree: 44 percent

Professional degree: 10 percent

Doctorate: 2 percent

Enlisted Education

High school diploma: 100 percent

Some college credit: 90 percent

Associate degree: 14 percent

Bachelor degree: 4 percent

Master degree: 0.7 percent

Commissioning Source

ROTC: 42 percent

Officer Training School: 20 percent

US Air Force Academy: 20 percent

Direct appointment, other: 18 percent

percent

percent

percent

percent

Fig. 4 USAF Retention: 1996–2000

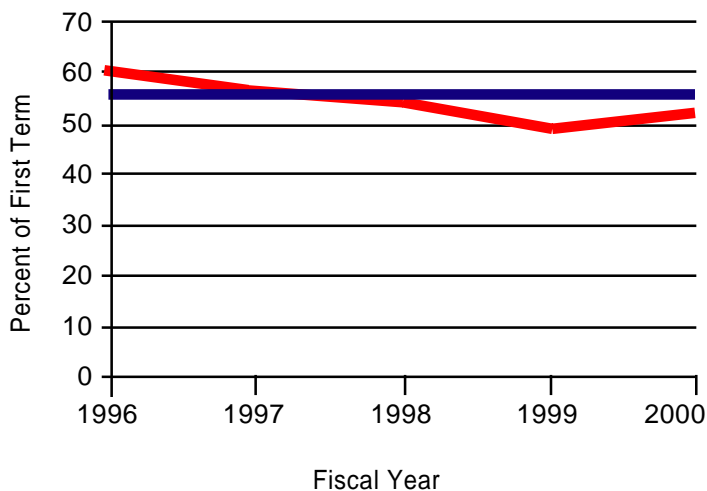


Fig. 5 Navy Retention: 1998–2000

