

Military 101
Handout to accompany the Museums Serving the Military [Webinar](#)
February 2022

WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT

BRANCHES

The Department of Defense has six branches of service: the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Space Force. (The Coast Guard is currently part of Homeland Security Department but most consider it as a branch of the military.)

The oldest you can be to enlist for active duty in each branch is:

- Marines: 28
- Navy: 39
- Army: 35
- Air Force: 39
- Space Force: 39
- Coast Guard: 31

As a background, the average age of a Union soldier in the Civil War was 25.8 years. A typical Doughboy in World War I was 24.5, while the average of a GI in World War II was 26. In Vietnam the average age was 22.8. Military personnel are getting younger.

Active Duty Warfighters

Active Duty service members commit to the military full time often as a career. Reservists support active duty by being ready and "in reserve" in case Active Duty troops are stretched thin and more support is needed. Reservists are likely to have civilian jobs outside their Reserve commitments. National Guard members defend the homeland. National Guard units operate on a state level. These "citizen soldiers" are generally called to serve after Reservists have been activated.

A total of 1.4 million active duty; this number is 30.8 percent smaller than it was in 1990, when there were 2.1 million active duty members.

- Army (561,979)
- Air Force (329,640)
- Navy (323,139)
- Marine Corps (202,612)
- Coast Guard (41,327)

What about women and minorities?

- Women now comprise 14.4 percent (about 200,000) of the active duty force
- Minorities comprise 30 percent (about 425,100) of the active duty force

What about their family status?

Active duty service members have more family members (1.9 million) than there are service members (1.4 million). Approximately 56 percent are married:

- 70 percent of officers
- 53 percent of enlisted personnel
- 7 percent are in dual-military marriages
- 39 percent of active duty members who are married have children
- 5 percent are single parents
- (The largest group of children is between birth and 5 years old, about 527,670.)

Where are Active Duty personnel stationed?

The 10 states with the highest Active Duty military populations are:

- California (159,380)
- Virginia (127,981)
- Texas (123,879)
- North Carolina (116,114)
- Georgia (74,235)
- Washington (62,409)
- Florida (57,558)
- Hawaii (47,531)
- Kentucky (45,568)
- Colorado (36,998)

No Longer e pluribus unum

Seven states now contribute the majority of our Active Duty military forces. This greatly troubled former Defense Secretary Jim Mattis because it didn't contribute to the creation of a national military force. It didn't support e pluribus unum.

Reserve and National Guard Service Member Data

The Reserve and Guard Force consists of 857,261; the Reserve force is 29 percent smaller than it was in 1990, when there were almost 1.2 million reservists.

What about women and minorities?

- Women comprise about 18 percent (153,071) the Reserve force.
- Racial minorities comprise 24 percent (206,161) of the Reserve force.

What about their family status?

These service members have more family members (1.6 million) than there are service members (857,261). Just under half, or 48 percent, are married:

- 71 percent of officers
- 44 percent of enlisted personnel
- 3 percent are in dual-military marriages
- 34 percent of those who are married have children.
- 9 percent are single parents.

- The largest group of children is between the ages of 12 and 18 years (225,937) and the next largest group is between the ages of 6 and 11 years (224,085).

Where do they are Stationed?

The 10 states with the highest numbers of Reserve and Guard troops are:

- California (58,844)
- Texas (55,971)
- Florida (36,971)
- Pennsylvania (32,494)
- New York (30,353)
- Georgia (29,964)
- Ohio (28,455)
- Virginia (25,841)
- Illinois (25,417)
- North Carolina (22,753)

Retired Military

According to the Defense Department, there are approximately 1.87 million military retirees, with an annual average retirement payment of \$30,265.

Enlisted personnel retire at an average age of 41 and officers at an average age of 45. Officers with the rank of O-4 (Major / Navy Lieutenant Commander) must retire immediately upon completion of 20 years; O-5s (Lieutenant Colonel / Navy Commander) must retire after 24 years of service, and O-6s (Colonel / Navy Captain) must retire after 30 years.