

**Telling the Story of U.S. Army
Women:
Opportunities, Challenges and
Benefits of Service**

by

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About the U.S. Army Women's Foundation

The U.S. Army Women's Foundation is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization originally established in 1969. The mission of the U.S. Army Women's Foundation is to promote public interest in the Army and the women who serve in the Army. The Foundation recognizes and honors the service of Army women and supports the U.S. Army Women's Museum located at Fort Lee, Virginia.

The Army Women's Museum is a showplace for the history of women in the Army from the Revolutionary War to conflict in Iraq. The Museum preserves this history and captures our current history. It is the only museum in the world dedicated to Army women. In addition to supporting the Museum, other Foundation programs help to spread the word about service in the U.S. Army.

For more information about the U.S. Army Women's Foundation, visit the website at www.AWFDN.org.

About the George Mason University Center for Regional Analysis

The Center for Regional Analysis conducts research and analytical studies on economic, fiscal, demographic, and social and policy issues. Through its range of research and programs—major economic impact studies, economic forecasts, fiscal analyses, conferences and seminars, publications, information services, and data products—the Center's activities strengthen decision-making by businesses, governments, and other institutions.

The Center's research reports and analysis can be found at the website: www.cra-gmu.org.

Executive Summary

Service in the United States Army has had a substantial impact on the lives of respondents to the U.S. Army Women’s Foundation (USAWF) survey. Results from this pilot study indicate that service in the Army was a major influence on the educational advancement of respondents. Army service was also very important to respondents in the post-Army civilian careers. By and large, survey respondents were more economically successful than women nationally and many state that the Army was a primary reason for their achievements.

The following are some of the highlights from this report:

- The USAWF sample included women who joined the WAACs in 1942 up to women who began service in 2002. **The reasons respondents joined the Army varied significantly depending on the era in which they joined.** Nearly three-quarters of respondents who joined the Army during World War II stated that they joined the Army to serve their country. Respondents who had joined in 1975 or later were more likely to say they had joined to obtain an education compared with earlier cohorts.

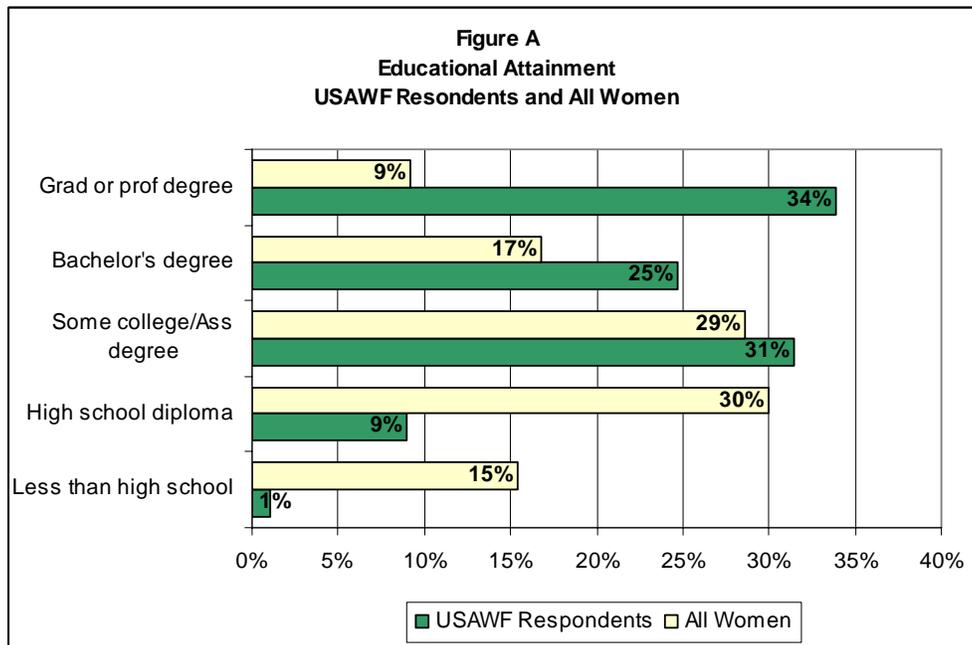
Table A
Most Important Reason for Joining
By Era

	Era			
	1942 - 1949	1950 - 1959	1960 - 1974	1975 – 2002
Gain Job Skills	1.6%	9.2%	7.0%	12.5%
Travel / Leave Home	8.5%	25.1%	16.2%	26.3%
Military career	2.3%	12.3%	9.7%	6.6%
Veteran's Benefits	0.8%	0.5%	4.3%	3.3%
To Serve Country	71.3%	35.9%	31.4%	23.7%
Obtain Education	1.6%	8.2%	11.9%	16.5%
Other	14.0%	8.7%	19.5%	11.2%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

- Respondents who joined the Army in the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s were **very likely to make a career out of the Army.** Almost 62 percent of these women served 20 years or more. The survey respondents were comprised by 59 percent enlisted personnel and 41 percent officers. Nearly half of the officers

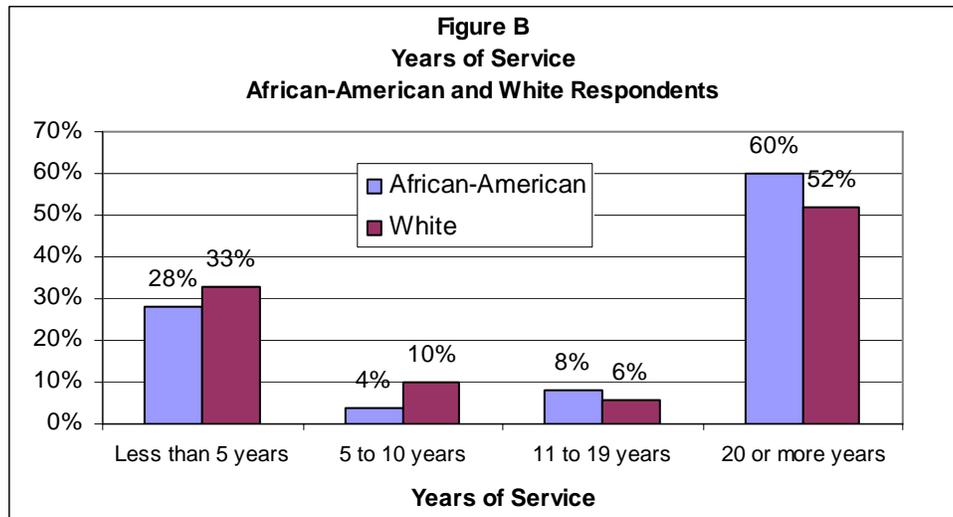
were commissioned directly into service. About one-quarter became officers through Officer Training School or Office Candidate School.

- Survey respondents were much more highly educated than women nationally and **many women advanced their education either while in the Army or when they left.** Nearly 60 percent of respondents had a bachelor’s degree or higher compared with 26 percent of women nationally. More than half of respondents had used the GI Bill to attend college or otherwise advance their education. Thirty-seven percent of respondents who had only a high school diploma when they entered the Army went on to complete a bachelor’s degree. More than two-thirds of women who were college graduates when they joined the Army eventually earned a graduate or professional degree.



- A large share of respondents made a career in the Army and many others had very accomplished civilian careers. As a result, **respondents had high personal incomes** compared with women nationally. More than one-third of respondents who had left the Army had annual *personal* incomes of \$60,000 or more, compared with only about 10 percent of women nationally. Many respondents received Army retirement benefits and others had successful employment after their Army service. Retirees generally had higher incomes than respondents who were either still serving in the Army or had civilian jobs.
- These survey results suggest that **Army service has an even bigger influence on the educational and employment achievements of minority women.** African-American survey respondents were more likely to make a career out of the Army

compared to white respondents. They made greater gains in their educational attainment levels. A greater share of African-American respondents used the GI Bill—59 percent compared with 53 percent of white respondents. Forty-one percent of African-American respondents had only a high school diploma at the time they joined the Army. At the time of the survey in spring 2006, all of these women had completed at least some college. Nearly 70 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher and 44 percent had earned a graduate or professional degree.



- Respondents to the USAWF survey felt strongly that their Army service was important to their economic success. Nearly 60 percent agreed with the statements that **the Army made them more economically successful today than if they had not served** and **the skills they learned in the Army were critical to their career advancement**. Many respondents wrote lengthy testimonials about the self-confidence and leadership skills they gained from their service.
- The professional opportunities afforded by the Army did not come without a cost. Many survey **respondents sacrificed personal or family experiences for their Army experience**. Forty-three percent of survey respondents had never been married and 59 percent had not had children. When asked explicitly, more than 85 percent of respondents indicated they had to make personal sacrifices as a result of serving in the Army.