

# Sociology II - Americans' Attitude Towards Service

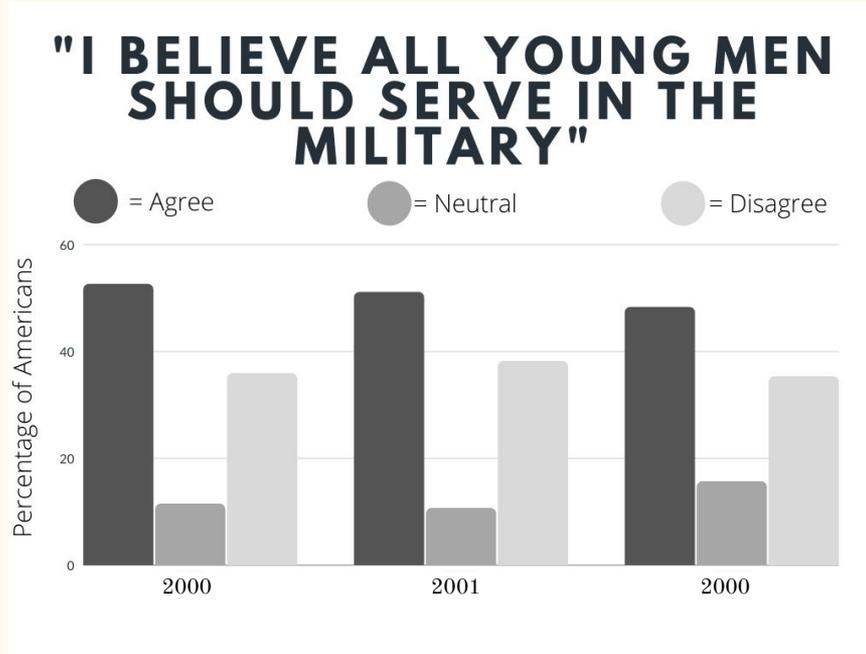
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# American Historical Precedents for Volunteerism

- A precedent for volunteerism can be seen all the way back to the American Revolution [DA8].
- In the colonial U.S., the local military forces were composed of conscribed militias.
- In response, the Continental Army was formed before the Revolution with a focus on volunteerism.
- This precedent would persist to military service today, only broken in times of great national stress (e.g. Civil War, WWII), and was officially terminated in 1973 [DA1].

# Attitudes of Americans Pre- and Post-9/11 [DA1]



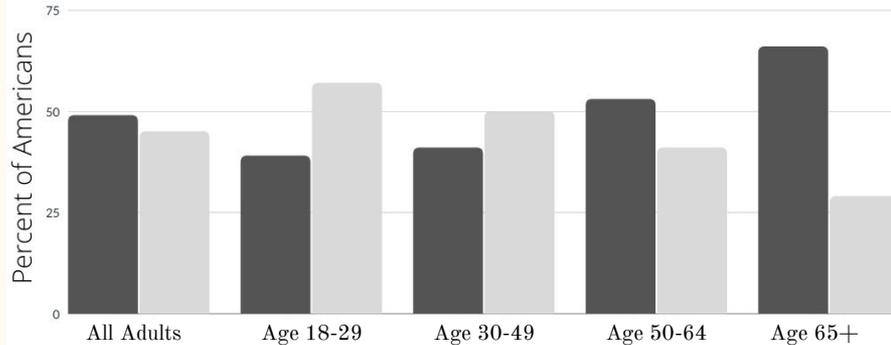
*Data from [DA1]*

- Historically, military conflicts were framed with a simplified “us” versus “them” mentality.
- With the War on Terror, former President George W. Bush tried to frame it as “you are either with [the United States] or you are with the terrorists”.
- The initial impact of the War on Terror produced an overall decline in support for mandatory military service

# Current Attitudes Towards Mandatory Service [DA24]

**“Would you favor or oppose requiring all young men and young women in the U.S. to give one year of service to the nation -- either in the military forces or in nonmilitary work here or abroad?”**

● = Agree ● = Disagree



- According to a 2017 Gallup survey, almost half of Americans (49%) favor implementing mandatory service. (Either military or civilian)
- However, a majority (57%) of Americans under 30 oppose the idea.

*Graph from data in [DA24]*

# Mandatory Service in Schools [DA14]

- A service program's success at increasing political engagement depends on:
  - Being framed within a wide political context
  - If it offers opportunities for public action.
- These programs can also be integrated into social studies/civics classes to similar effect.
- As of now, no studies on the long-term effects of school service programs have been found yet.
- There is a correlation between extracurricular involvement as adolescents and political participation as adults, which can often include voluntary service

# AmeriCorps: A History [DA22]

- AmeriCorps is a service corporation created in 1993 to give funding to various local agencies and nonprofit organizations.
- It is overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service.
- It was initially provided \$1.5 billion dollars for the fiscal years of 1994-1996 for 100,000 AmeriCorp participants.
- $\frac{2}{3}$  of these funds would be funneled through bipartisan state commissions to local agencies and nonprofit organizations.
- It also funded their VISTA and the National Civilian Conservation Corps programs.

# The Effects of AmeriCorps

- Individuals who participated in an AmeriCorps program have higher levels of commitment to public interest and civic awareness even seven years after their service [DA23].
- When individuals contribute to a public service, this experience may also have a lasting impact on said individuals' values.
- Anecdotally, while service members wanted to serve their country, they were put off by the stereotype of excessive military discipline [DA22].
  - One member described it as a “kind of in-between the army and going straight to college or getting a regular job.”

# Summary

- The precedent for volunteerism in the U.S. military goes back all the way to the Revolutionary War
- The initial impact of the War on Terror reduced public support for mandatory military service.
- Almost half of Americans support mandatory service. However, a majority of adults under 30, who would be most affected by this, oppose the idea.
- AmeriCorps is an organization created in

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