

US military weight standards: what percentage of US young adults meet the current standards.

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Clinical study

### U.S. military weight standards: What percentage of U.S. young adults meet the current standards?

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#### Abstract

##### Purpose

Each branch of the U.S. military enforces maximum allowable weight standards that must be met to join the military. We wanted to determine what percentage of U.S. civilians between the ages of 17 and 20 years met these standards.

##### Methods

The height and weight of adults between the ages of 17 and 20 years, as measured in the nationally representative sample of the Third National Health and Nutritional Examination Survey, were matched against the height/weight charts of the military services. The percentage of men and women in each population subgroup who weighed

more than the maximum allowable weight was calculated.

## Results

The percentage of young adults whose weight exceeded the military weight standard ranged from 13% to 18% for men and 17% to 43% for women. When stratified by race, 15% to 20% of non-Hispanic white men and 12% to 36% of non-Hispanic white women were over the weight standards, 11% to 19% of non-Hispanic black men and 35% to 56% of non-Hispanic black women were over the standards, and 13% to 24% of Mexican American men and 26% to 55% of Mexican American women exceeded the military weight standards.

## Conclusion

A large percentage of the young adult population from which the U.S. volunteer military is drawn is over the military weight standards, particularly among minorities, who comprise a disproportionately large proportion of the military. There is a marked discrepancy between the weight standards for men and women, and the appropriateness of these standards needs to be assessed.



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## Keywords

Army; Navy; Body composition; Appearance standards; Fitness

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