The Target Population for Military Recruitment

Youth Eligible to Enlist Without a Waiver

SLIDES ONLY

NO SCRIPT PROVIDED

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Eligibility Standards

- **Why?**
  - The Department establishes standards designed to ensure that individuals under consideration for enlistment, appointment, or induction are able to perform military duties successfully, and to select those who are the most trainable and adaptable to Service life.

- **What is considered?**
  - Standards considered are: age, aptitude, dependents, education, medical, character/conduct, physical fitness, drug use, and other conditions.

- **Are these standards reviewed on regular basis?**
  - Societal norms, medical findings, internal and external analyses of performance, and other studies help inform the Department in the establishment of these standards. Each area is reviewed by subject matter experts on a regular basis.

- **What is the "recruitable population"?**
  - DoD policy establishes a minimum baseline from which eligibility is derived. The Services have the latitude to be more restrictive as well as allow waivers for most standards they choose. These Service policies more aptly define the "recruitable population" and the type of youth that each Service seeks.

Estimating Eligibility: Qualified Military Available (QMA)

- **What is it?**
  - DoD's official metric estimating the number of youth who are eligible and available for enlisted military service without a waiver.
  - The basic ingredient of this metric is the size of the population aged 17–24 reduced by the number who are disqualified for one or more criteria within seven overarching categories: 1) Medical/Physical, 2) Overweight, 3) Mental Health, 4) Drug Abuse,* 5) Conduct, 6) Dependents, 7) Aptitude.

- **When was the metric last examined?**
  - The 2020 QMA Study revised and updated previous 2013 QMA estimations by using more recent data to estimate the prevalence of disqualifying conditions.

- **What criteria and rationale were used?**
  - After reviewing the particular guidelines established by DoD Instructions 1304.26, QUALIFICATION STANDARDS FOR ENLISTMENT, APPOINTMENT, AND INDUCTION, 6130.03, MEDICAL STANDARDS FOR APPOINTMENT, ENLISTMENT, OR INDUCTION IN THE MILITARY SERVICES, and 1308.3 PHYSICAL FITNESS AND BODY FAT PROGRAMS PROCEDURES, which govern military entrance eligibility criteria, disqualifying conditions were grouped into seven broad disqualification categories.

*Drug Abuse: includes a history of drug (including pharmaceutical medications, illegal drugs, and other substances of abuse) and alcohol abuse

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Estimating Eligibility: Qualified Military Available (QMA)
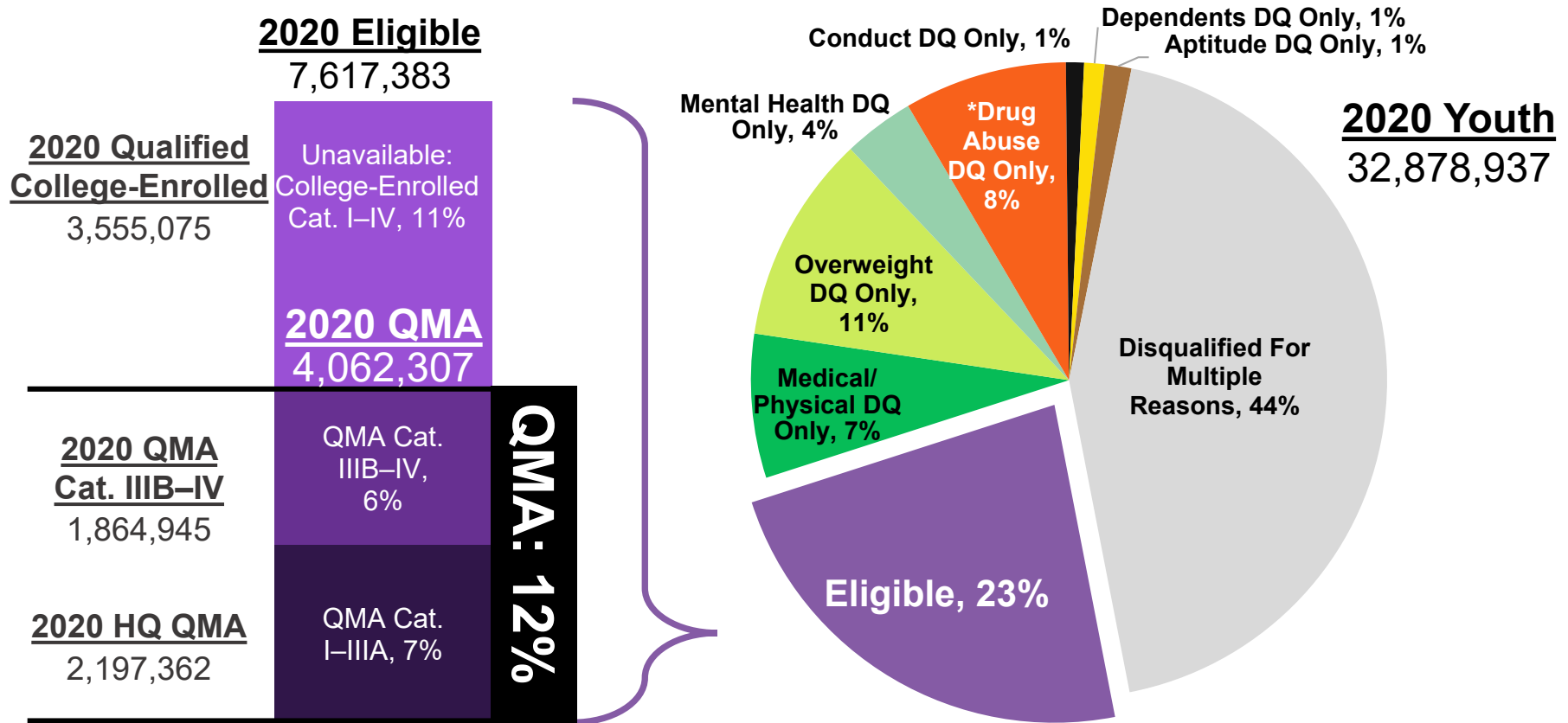
- **What data sources were used?**
  - The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)
  - National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)
  - DoD Joint Advertising, Market Research & Studies Youth Poll surveys (JAMRS – YP)
  - Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) Production Applicants Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) Score Database
  - 1997 Profile of American Youth (PAY97)
  - Woods & Poole Economics' Population Estimates
  - U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) Estimates

- **What are the key results?**
  - 23% of youth would meet all the core eligibility requirements.
  - 12% would qualify and be available (i.e., not enrolled in college) for enlisted active duty service.
  - 7% would qualify, be available, and score above the 50th percentile on the AFQT.

2020 Eligibility, QMA, and Disqualifier Rates

- Approximately 7.6 million youth were eligible to enlist in the Military without a waiver.

- Most ineligible youth were ineligible primarily due to multiple reasons.
  - Disqualification for multiple reasons increased from 39% to 44% between 2013 and 2020.

2020 Eligible
7,617,383

2020 Qualified College-Enrolled
3,555,075

Unavailable: College-Enrolled Cat. I–IV, 11%

2020 QMA
4,062,307

2020 QMA Cat. IIIB–IV
1,864,945

QMA Cat. IIIB–IV, 6%

2020 HQ QMA
2,197,362

QMA Cat. I–IIIA, 7%

QMA: 12%

2020 Youth
32,878,937

Conduct DQ Only, 1%
Dependents DQ Only, 1%
Aptitude DQ Only, 1%
Mental Health DQ Only, 4%
*Drug Abuse DQ Only, 8%
Overweight DQ Only, 11%
Medical/Physical DQ Only, 7%
Disqualified For Multiple Reasons, 44%
Eligible, 23%

Note: Youth ages 17–24. Category percentages may not sum to total due to rounding.

Source: Official DoD Qualified Military Available (QMA) Study (2013, 2020); Woods & Poole Economics, Inc. Projections (2018), 2020 Population Estimates
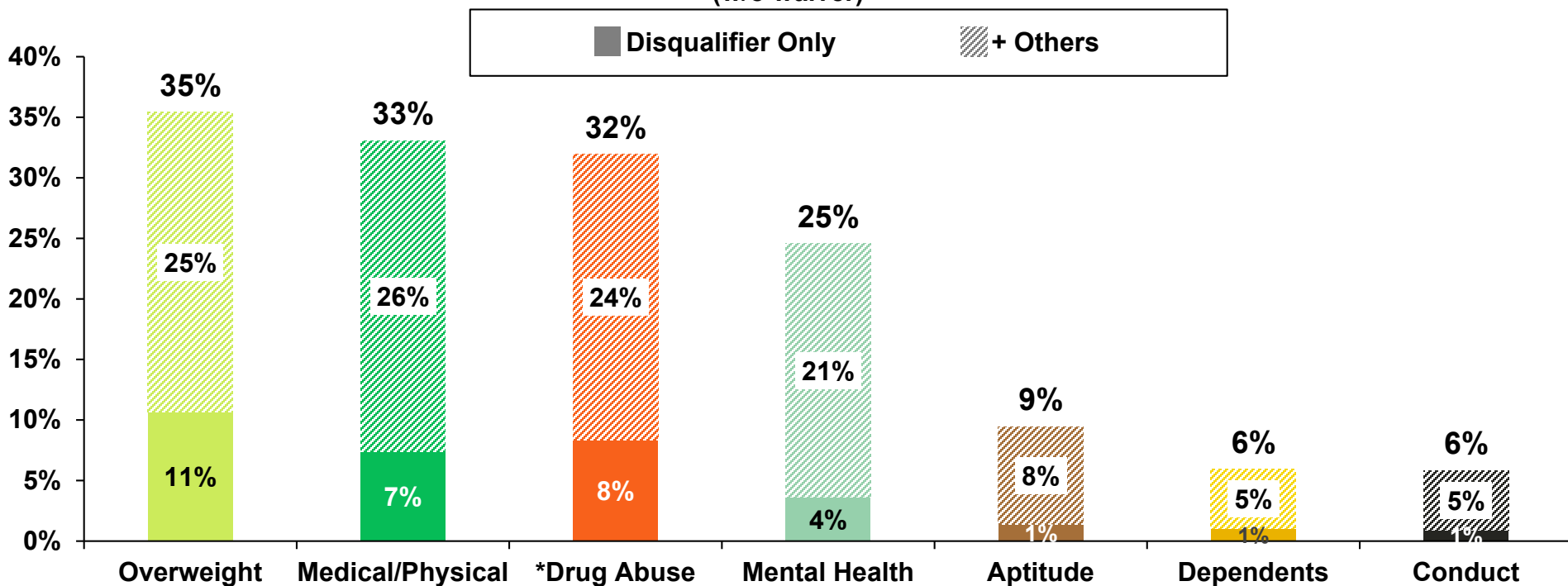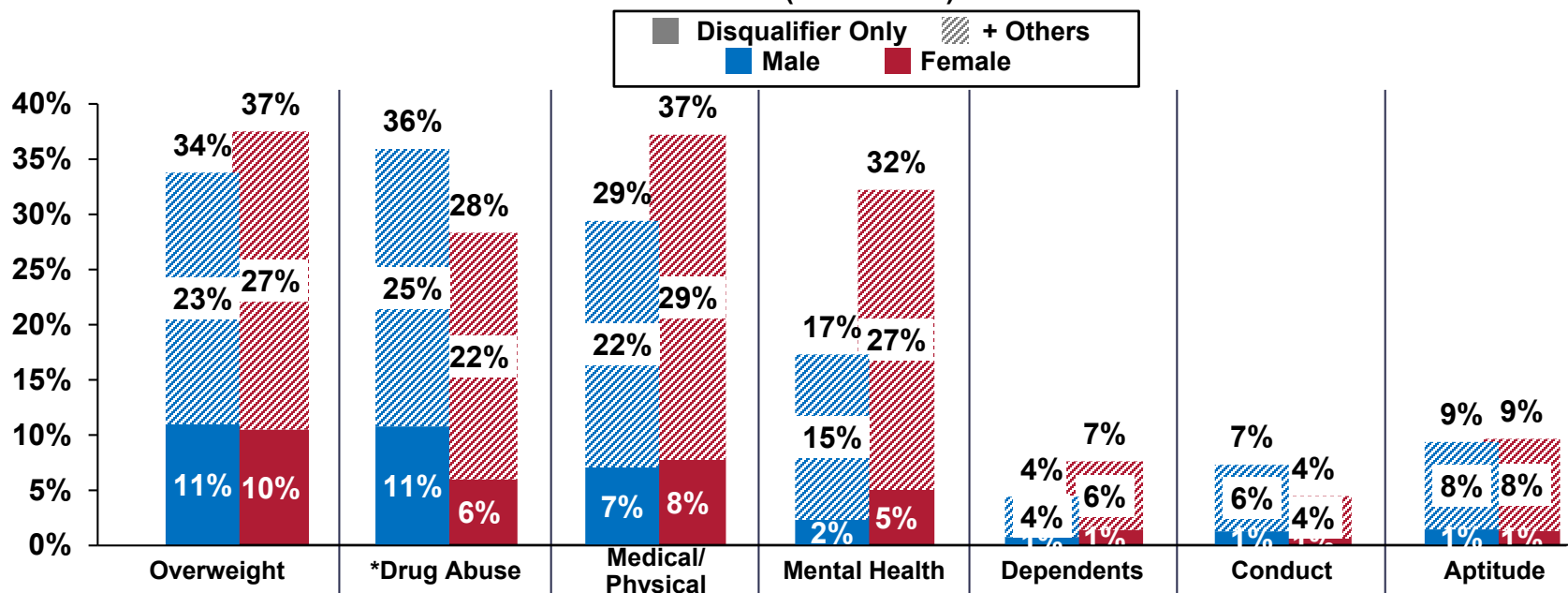
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Note: *Drug Abuse: includes a history of drug (including pharmaceutical medications, illegal drugs, and other substances of abuse) and alcohol abuse.

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Disqualification Categories: Unique and Combined Impact

- Youth were most frequently ineligible due to multiple reasons. As such, any single disqualifier has a limited impact on overall eligibility.

Percentage Disqualified for Single Reason Alone and in Combination with Other Reasons
(w/o waiver)

Legend: ■ Disqualifier Only ▨ + Others

Category	Disqualifier Only	+ Others	Total
Overweight	11%	25%	35%
Medical/Physical	7%	26%	33%
*Drug Abuse	8%	24%	32%
Mental Health	4%	21%	25%
Aptitude	1%	8%	9%
Dependents	1%	5%	6%
Conduct	1%	5%	6%

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Disqualifiers: Unique and Combined Impact
By Gender

- Male youth were more likely to be eligible for military service (25%) compared to female youth (21%).

- Disqualification due to medical/physical, mental health, and dependents was higher in total among female youth, whereas *drug abuse and conduct disqualification rates were higher among male youth.

  - Just 1% of both male and female youth were disqualified only for dependents, only for conduct, or only for aptitude.

Percentage Disqualified for Single Reason Alone and in Combination with Other Reasons
(w/o waiver)

Legend: ■ Disqualifier Only ▨ + Others ■ Male ■ Female

Category	Male Disqualifier Only	Male + Others Total	Female Disqualifier Only	Female + Others Total
Overweight	11%	34% (23% +)	10%	37% (27% +)
*Drug Abuse	11%	36% (25% +)	6%	28% (22% +)
Medical/Physical	7%	29% (22% +)	8%	37% (29% +)
Mental Health	2%	17% (15% +)	5%	32% (27% +)
Dependents	4%	4%	1%	7% (6% +)
Conduct	1%	7% (6% +)	1%	4% (4% +)
Aptitude	1%	9% (8% +)	1%	9% (8% +)

Note: Youth ages 17–24. Individual category percentages may not sum to total due to rounding.
Source: Official DoD Qualified Military Available (QMA) Study (2020)
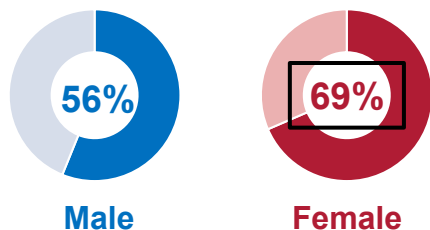
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Note: *Drug Abuse: includes a history of drug (including pharmaceutical medications, illegal drugs, and other substances of abuse) and alcohol abuse.
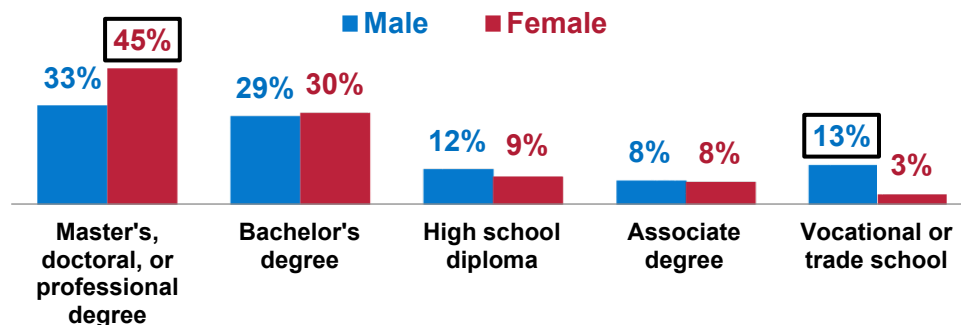
Youth Market: Academic Quality and Career Goals
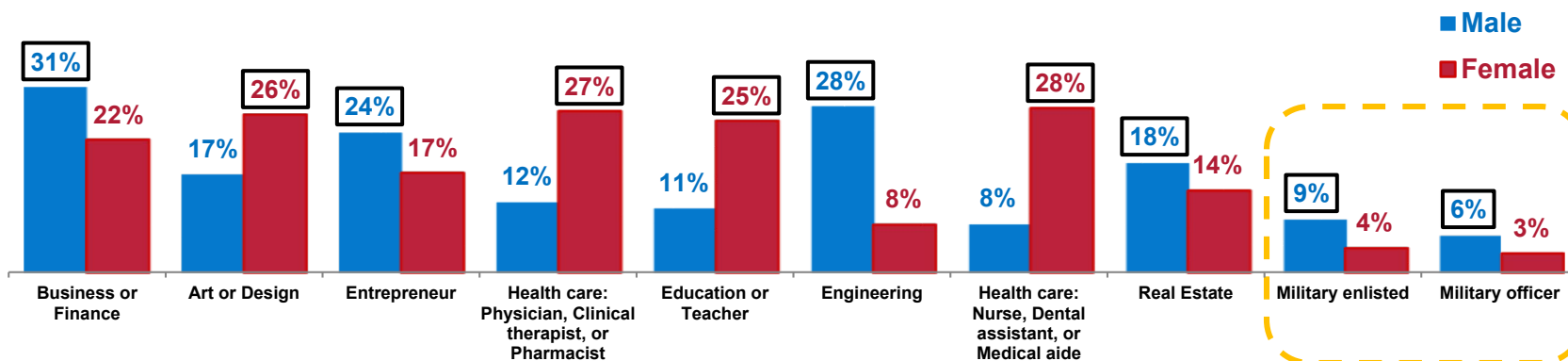## By Gender

High Academic Quality (As and Bs in High School)

Male: 56%
Female: 69%

What is the highest level of education you would eventually like to complete?

■ Male ■ Female

Education Level	Male	Female
Master's, doctoral, or professional degree	33%	45%
Bachelor's degree	29%	30%
High school diploma	12%	9%
Associate degree	8%	8%
Vocational or trade school	13%	3%

Which of the following careers are you likely to pursue?
Top Eight Careers Endorsed and Endorsement of Military Jobs

■ Male ■ Female

Career	Male	Female
Business or Finance	31%	22%
Art or Design	17%	26%
Entrepreneur	24%	17%
Health care: Physician, Clinical therapist, or Pharmacist	12%	27%
Education or Teacher	11%	25%
Engineering	28%	8%
Health care: Nurse, Dental assistant, or Medical aide	8%	28%
Real Estate	18%	14%
Military enlisted	9%	4%
Military officer	6%	3%

Note: Youth ages 16–21.

Source: DoD Youth Poll (Spring 2022)

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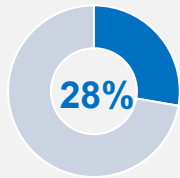□ = Significantly higher than other subgroup
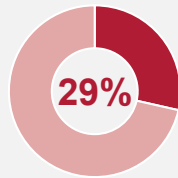
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Appendix

Youth Market: Barriers to Service
By Gender

How likely is it that joining the Military would allow you to have an attractive lifestyle?
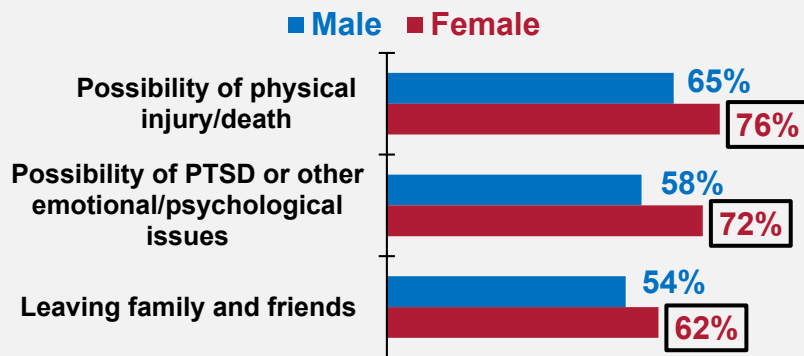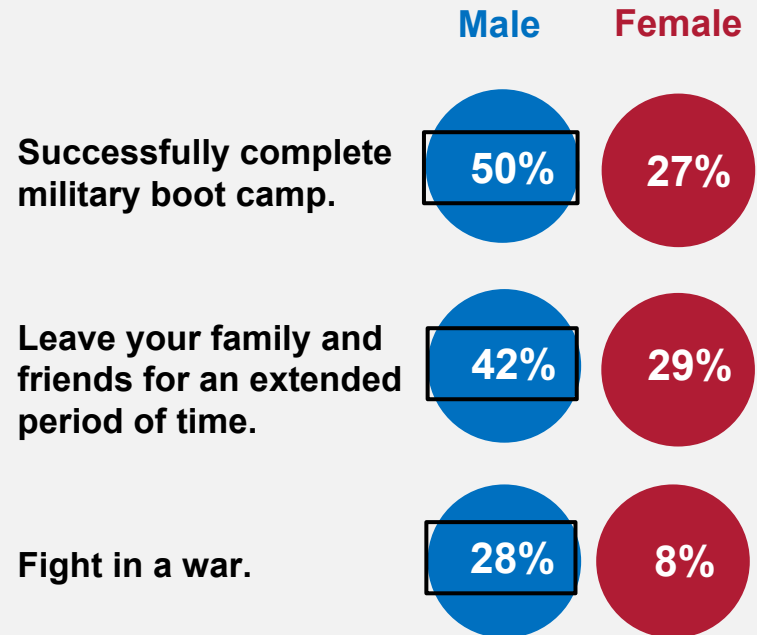*% 5–7, Likely/Extremely likely**

28% Male

29% Female

Reasons Not to Join
Top Three Reasons for Female Youth

■ Male ■ Female

Reason	Male	Female
Possibility of physical injury/death	65%	76%
Possibility of PTSD or other emotional/psychological issues	58%	72%
Leaving family and friends	54%	62%

Military Self-Efficacy:
How confident are you that you could do each of the following activities?
% Probably yes/Definitely yes

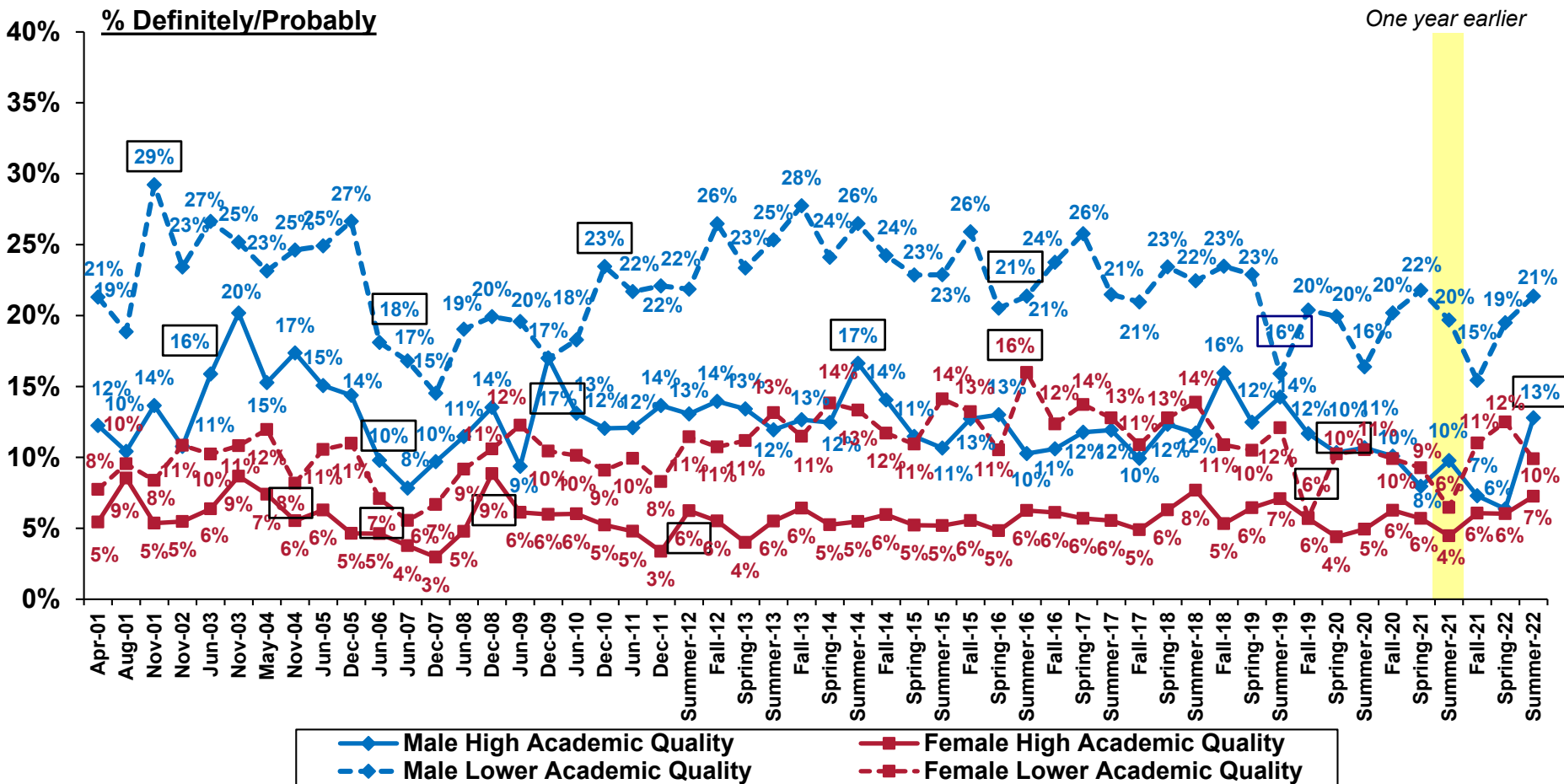|	Male	Female
Successfully complete military boot camp.	50%	27%
Leave your family and friends for an extended period of time.	42%	29%
Fight in a war.	28%	8%

*Item measured on a 7-point scale where 1=Extremely unlikely and 7=Extremely likely.

General Military Propensity
By Academic Quality and Gender

FPP9: In the next few years, how likely is it that you will be serving in the Military?
Response options: Definitely, Probably, Probably Not, Definitely Not

% Definitely/Probably

One year earlier

Legend:
- **Male High Academic Quality** (solid blue, diamond)
- **Female High Academic Quality** (solid red, square)
- **Male Lower Academic Quality** (dashed blue, diamond)
- **Female Lower Academic Quality** (dashed red, square)

Note: Youth ages 16–21. Estimates are charted to precise values.
Labels are rounded to the nearest whole percent.
Source: DoD Youth Poll

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☐ = Significant change from previous poll

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Note: Youth Poll "high-academic-quality" youth reported receiving average grades of either A's or "mostly A's and B's" in high school. These youth are more likely to receive high scores on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). Lower-academic-quality" youth refers to youth who reported receiving average grades lower than "mostly A's and B's."