



Written by [James Heiser](#) on December 23, 2010

Nearly One Quarter of Military Applicants Fail Basic Exam

While President Obama and the Congress were engaged in using the U.S. military as a pawn in the latest round of social experimentation, a review of test scores has called into question the intellectual fitness of military applicants.

The [repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" \(DADT\)](#) has drawn a great deal of media attention — and understandably so, since a political decision dominated by the homosexual agenda will fundamentally disrupt the functioning of the armed forces of these United States. But the future of a volunteer military is also dependent on attracting applicants who are capable of performing their duties. According to a report from the Associated Press, nearly a quarter of applicants are incapable of passing a basic entrance examination:



The report by The Education Trust found that 23 percent of recent high school graduates don't get the minimum score needed on the enlistment test to join any branch of the military. The study, released exclusively to The Associated Press on Tuesday, comes on top of Pentagon data that shows 75 percent of those aged 17 to 24 don't qualify for the military because they are physically unfit, have a criminal record or didn't graduate high school.

"Too many of our high school students are not graduating ready to begin college or a career — and many are not eligible to serve in our armed forces," U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan told the AP. "I am deeply troubled by the national security burden created by America's underperforming education system."

Americans *should* be troubled: If the cited statistics are accurate, the combination of mental and physical "flabbiness" could mean that a greater burden will fall on those who are capable of service, and that there will be a potential shortage of applicants if and when the economy begins to recover, as job prospects for high school graduates improve. *Time* quotes the blunt assessment of a former recruiter:

"I doubt we got over a 50 percent pass rate when I was down in Houston doing recruiting" a couple of years ago, says a veteran Army recruiter. "Some of these kids couldn't even get a 10 score — that is equal to guessing." The military's current ability to achieve its recruiting goals, he warns, is temporary. "Only the bad economy is saving them."

The comprehensive nature of the study indicates that the poor scores are not an anomaly; again, according to one [story](#):

This is the first time that the U.S. Army has released this test data publicly, said Amy



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Wilkins of The Education Trust, a Washington, D.C.-based children's advocacy group. The study examined the scores of nearly 350,000 high school graduates, ages 17 to 20, who took the ASVAB exam between 2004 and 2009. About half of the applicants went on to join the Army.

Recruits must score at least a 31 out of 99 on the first stage of the three-hour test to get into the Army. The Marines, Air Force, Navy and Coast Guard recruits need higher scores. Further tests determine what kind of job the recruit can do with questions on mechanical maintenance, accounting, word comprehension, mathematics and science.

The study shows wide disparities in scores among white and minority students, similar to racial gaps on other standardized tests. Nearly 40 percent of black students and 30 percent of Hispanics don't pass, compared with 16 percent of whites. The average score for blacks is 38 and for Hispanics is 44, compared to whites' average score of 55.

All of the average scores seem appallingly low, especially in light of the minimal standard set forth for a "passing grade," and the scores are an indictment of the public educational system. Nevertheless, the averages did vary on a state-by-state basis, with the highest average rate of ineligibility being found in Hawaii (38.3%), Mississippi (37.8%) and Washington, D.C. (32.5%) and the lowest in Wyoming (13.0%), Indiana (13.1%) and Idaho (14.1%). (A copy of the full report is available [here](#).) Certainly before busybodies in Congress and the bureaucrats filling the Department of Education imagine they will 'reform' education nationwide, the appalling condition of schools in the federal district ought to chasten their hubris. But if the military is to remain competent to defend the nation — and not simply serve as an government-administered experiment in social engineering, the Education Trust report is sobering news, indeed.



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