



Developing a National Recruiting Difficulty Index

Jeffrey B. Wenger, David Knapp, Parag Mahajan, Bruce R. Orvis, Tiffany Tsai

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The U.S. Army recognizes that the recruiting environment has a significant impact on its ability to recruit, especially when the unemployment rate is lower, casualty rates increase, or operational difficulties mount. This report presents a forecasting model that provides a measure of the recruiting difficulty with up to a 24-month horizon. The resulting model forecasts whether the Army is likely to face a difficult or easy recruiting environment.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What types of environments contribute to recruiting ease or difficulty in the Army?
- What is the relationship between recruiting difficulty and the resources for recruiting?
- How can the Army understand the primary factors in recruiting difficulty?
- How much does each factor account for variations in recruiting difficulty?
- How do the relationships among the factors and conditions influence the recruiting environment?
- How can the Army predict the level of difficulty in future years and communicate future periods of potential difficulty to provide planners time to sufficiently resource the recruiting mission?



KEY FINDINGS

Recruiting resources are determined by several factors

- The Army decides how many soldiers it would like to enlist.
- Traditionally, resources have been allocated without regard to the recruiting environment.
- Recruiting resources may be insufficient when the recruiting environment is difficult and overly abundant during periods of easier recruiting, and the resulting mismatch is often difficult to correct.
- The unemployment rate is often used as a proxy for recruiting difficulty, but the unemployment rate

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alone has not been a sufficient signal to reprogram resources.

- Many of the Army's recruiting tools (e.g., recruiters, advertising campaigns) take time to develop in order to become fully productive.

To build a conceptual model of direct and indirect influences on desirable/adverse recruiting outcomes, researchers identified economic, world-event, and Army policy variables that predicted the recruiting environment with a sufficient lead time

- Key outcomes for the model include an accession mission and contracts written, DEP levels, and Training Seat Vacancies.
- Key variables for the model include economic and labor market conditions, news stories, recruiting resources, enlistment waivers, and recruit quality.



RECOMMENDATIONS

- Should the Army change its priorities (e.g., by eliminating waivers or accepting reductions in quality), the performance of the Recruiting Difficulty Index will likely decline and would have to be reoptimized in light of the new Army objectives.
- Recruiting difficulty predictions can be combined with the Recruiting Resource Model to inform policymakers preparing for resourcing requirements under alternative recruiting environments.