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Field Listing —

Military service age and obligation

177 Results

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This entry gives the required ages for voluntary or conscript military service and the length of service obligation.

Afghanistan

service is voluntary; there is no conscription (2023)

note: the Taliban dismissed nearly all women from the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces, except those serving in detention facilities and assisting with body searches

Albania

18-30 for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription abolished 2010 (2025)

note: as of 2024, women comprised about 15% of the military's full-time personnel

Algeria

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 19 years of age for mandatory national service for men (all Algerian men must register at age 17); 12 months national service obligation (2025)

Angola

20-45 years of age for compulsory and 18-45 years for voluntary military service for men; 20-45 years of age for voluntary service for women; 24-month conscript service obligation; the Navy is entirely staffed with volunteers (2025)

Antigua and Barbuda

18-23 years of age for voluntary military service for both men and women; no conscription (2025)

Argentina

18-24 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription suspended in 1995; citizens can still be drafted in times of crisis, national emergency, or war, or if the Defense Ministry is unable to fill all vacancies to keep the military functional (2025)

note 1: as of 2024, women comprised nearly 20% of the active-duty military

note 2: in 2025, the Argentine Government announced the creation of a Voluntary Military Service program for people aged 18–28 to be managed by the Ministries of Defense and Human Capital; the program's goals include to instill values like discipline and patriotism while offering training in trades such as

cooking, mechanics, and security, alongside opportunities to complete compulsory education

Armenia

18-27 for voluntary (men and women), contract (men and women) or compulsory (men) military service; contract military service is 3-12 months or up to 5 years; conscripts serve 24 months; all citizens aged 27-50 are registered in the military reserve and may be called to serve if mobilization is declared (2025)

note: in 2023, Armenia approved six-month voluntary service for women, after which they have the option to switch to a five-year contract; previously, women served on a contract basis; as of 2021, women made up about 10% of the active-duty military

Australia

17 years of age (with parental consent; 18 years of age to deploy) for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (abolished 1972) (2025)

note 1: as of July 2024, New Zealanders who are permanent residents and have lived in Australia for at least 12 months could apply to join the ADF; from January 2025, eligible permanent residents from Canada, the UK, and the US were also to be allowed to apply

note 2: women have served in all roles, including combat arms, since 2013; in 2024, they comprised slightly more than 20% of the military

Austria

registration requirement at age 17, the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; men above the age of 18 are subject to compulsory military service; women may volunteer; compulsory service is for 6 months, or optionally, alternative civil/community service (Zivildienst) for 9 months (2025)

note: Austria also has a One-Year Volunteer Program (Einjährig-Freiwilligen-Ausbildung) for men and women, which substitutes for compulsory military service and serves as a gateway for those interested in a long-term military career

Azerbaijan

18-30 years of age for compulsory military service for men; 18-35 years of age voluntary/contractual service for men (18-40 for women volunteers); 18 months service for conscripts, 36 months for voluntary/contractual service (2025)

Bahamas, The

18-30 years of age for voluntary service for men and women (18-60 for Reserves); no conscription (2025)

Bahrain

18 years of age for voluntary military service; 18-55 to voluntarily join the reserves (2025)

Bangladesh

varies by service, but generally 17-23 for voluntary military service; length of service also varies (2025)

Barbados

18-25 for voluntary active service at the start of recruit training; 18-30 for reserves (2025)

Belarus

18-27 years of age for compulsory military or alternative service; conscript service obligation is 12-18 months, depending on academic qualifications, and 24-36 months for alternative service; 17-year-olds are eligible to become cadets at military higher education institutes, where they are classified as military personnel (2025)

note: conscripts can be assigned to the military, to the Ministry of Interior, or to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection (alternative service)

Belgium

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; maximum age varies by position; conscription abolished in 1995 (2025)

note 1: in 2024, women comprised about 11% of the military's full-time personnel

note 2: foreign nationals 18-34 years of age who speak Dutch or French and are citizens of EU countries, Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland may apply to join the military

Belize

18-23 years of age for voluntary military service; laws allow for conscription only if volunteers are insufficient, but conscription has never been implemented; initial service obligation is 12 years (2025)

Benin

18-30 years of age for voluntary and selective compulsory military service for men and women; compulsory service is 18 months (2025)

Bermuda

men and women who are Commonwealth citizens and 18-45 years of age can volunteer for the Bermuda Regiment; service is for a minimum period of three years and two months from the date of enlistment; after completing their initial service, soldiers in the Regiment can choose to extend their service (2025)

Bhutan

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; militia training is compulsory for men aged 20-25 over a 3-year period (2025)

Bolivia

voluntary service for men and women 18-22 years of age; selective 12-month compulsory service for men, 18-22 (24 months of search and rescue service can be substituted for military service) (2025)

note: as of 2024, women comprised about 11% of the Bolivian military's personnel

Bosnia and Herzegovina

18 -27 years of age for voluntary military service; conscription ended in January 2006 (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up about 9% of the military's full-time personnel

Botswana

18-24 years of age (men and women) for general recruits and officer candidates; 18-40 for special entrant officers; no conscription (2025)

Brazil

18-45 years of age for compulsory military service for men (only 5-10% of those inducted are required to serve); compulsory service obligation is generally 12 months; 17-45 (18 for women) years of age for voluntary service (2025)

note: in 2024, women were reported to comprise approximately 10% of the Brazilian military

Brunei

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service (2025)

note: the Gurkha Reserve Unit (GRU) employs hundreds of Gurkhas from Nepal, the majority of whom are veterans of the British Army and the Singapore Police Force who have joined the GRU as a second career

Bulgaria

18 years of age for voluntary service for men and women (2025)

note: in 2020, Bulgaria announced a program to allow every citizen up to the age of 40 to join the armed forces for 6 months of military service in the voluntary reserve

Burkina Faso

generally, 18-35 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; citizens 18-77 years of age are eligible to volunteer for the VDP (2025)

note: the military regime implemented an emergency law in 2023 that allows the president extensive powers to combat terrorist groups operating in the country, including conscripting citizens into the security services; the VDP reportedly has been used by the military regime as a platform for the forced recruitment of dissidents and activists to silence critics

Burma

18-35 years of age (men) and 18-27 years of age (women) for voluntary and conscripted military service; 24-month service obligation; conscripted professional men (ages 18-45) and women (ages 18-35), including doctors, engineers, and mechanics, serve up to 36 months; service terms may be extended to 60 months in an officially declared emergency (2025)

note: in February 2024, the military government announced that the People's Military Service Law requiring mandatory military service would go into effect; the Service Law was first introduced in 2010 but had not previously been enforced; the military government also said that it intended to call up about 60,000 men and women annually for mandatory service; during the ongoing insurgency, the military has recruited men 18-60 to serve in local militias

Burundi

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (2025)

Cabo Verde

17 years of age for voluntary service (with parental consent); 18-35 years of age for selective compulsory service (14-month service obligation) (2025)

Cambodia

18 is the legal minimum age for military service for men and women (2025)

note: in 2006, Cambodia's parliament approved a law requiring all Cambodians aged 18 to 30 to serve in the military for 18 months, although the law has never been enforced (service was to be voluntary for women); in 2025, the Cambodian Government announced that the 2006 conscription law would be enforced beginning in 2026 and have a 24-month service requirement

Cameroon

18-23 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (18-28 for medical services); no conscription; service obligation 4 years (2025)

Canada

17 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service (with parental consent); 16 years of age for Reserve and Military College applicants; Canadian citizenship or permanent residence status required; service obligation 3-9 years depending on the position (2025)

note 1: Canada opened up all military occupations to women in 2001; women in 2024 comprised about 16% of the CAF

note 2: the CAF offers waivers to foreign nationals applying for military service only in exceptional cases — to individuals on international military exchanges, for example, or to candidates who have specialized skills in high demand

Central African Republic

18-22 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription although the constitution provides for the possibility of conscription in the event of an imminent threat to the country (2025)

Chad

18-25 for voluntary service; men subject to 18-36 months of compulsory service at age 20; women are subject to 12 months of compulsory military or civic

service at age 21 (2025)

Chile

18-24 for voluntary military service for men and women (17 for men with parental permission); selective compulsory service for men 18-24 (there are usually enough volunteers to make compulsory service unnecessary); service obligation is a maximum of 24 months (2025)

note: as of 2024, women comprised approximately 21% of the armed forces

China

18-26 years of age depending on education level for men and women for both volunteer and selective compulsory military service; 24-month service obligation (2025)

note: the PLA's conscription system functions as a levy; the PLA establishes the number of enlistees needed, which produces quotas for the provinces; each province provides a set number of soldiers or sailors; if the number of volunteers fails to meet quotas, the local governments may compel individuals to enter military service

Colombia

18-24 years of age for compulsory (men) and voluntary (men and women) military (and police) service; conscript service obligation is 18 months or 12 months for those with a college degree; conscripted soldiers reportedly include regular soldiers (conscripts without a high school degree), drafted high school graduates (bachilleres), and rural (campesino) soldiers who serve in their home regions (2025)

note: women comprised a little more than 3% of the active military in 2024

Comoros

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2023)

Congo, Democratic Republic of the

18-35 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 18-45 years of age for compulsory military service for men; it is unclear how much conscription is used (2025)

note: in eastern Congo, fighters from armed groups, including some associated

with government security forces, have been accused of forced recruitment of child soldiers

Congo, Republic of the

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (2025)

Cote d'Ivoire

18-26 (up to 35 for healthcare professionals) years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription is authorized but reportedly not enforced (2025)

Croatia

18-29 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription abolished in 2008 but will be reinstated in 2026 when it will become mandatory for men aged 19-29 to undergo two months of basic military training (2025)

note: as of 2024, women comprised about 14% of the military's full-time personnel

Cuba

military service is mandatory for all men and voluntary for women (ages 17-28); service obligation is 24 months with the Armed Forces or the Ministry of Interior; reserve commitment for men until age 45 (2025)

Cyprus

all Cypriot men must complete 14 months of compulsory service upon reaching the age of 18; women may volunteer for 6 months of service at age 18; men and women may also enlist as contract soldiers up to age 42 (2025)

Czechia

18-28 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription abolished 2004 (2025)

note: as of 2023, women comprised nearly 14% of the military's full-time personnel

Denmark

18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service for men and women; draftees serve 11 months, including five months of basic training, followed by six months in an operational unit (2025)

note 1: Denmark has had compulsory military service since 1849; conscripts are chosen by lottery; conscientious objectors can choose to instead serve 6 months in a non-military position, for example in Beredskabsstyrelsen (dealing with non-military disasters like fires, flood, pollution, etc.) or overseas foreign aid work

note 2: women have been able serve in all military occupations, including combat arms, since 1988; military conscription was extended to women in June 2025

Djibouti

18-26 years of age for voluntary military service (2025)

Dominican Republic

17-early 20s for voluntary military service for men and women (ages vary depending on military service and position; under 18 admitted with permission of parents) (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up approximately 17% of the active-duty military

Ecuador

18-22 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 12-month service obligation; conscription abolished in 2008 (2025)

note: in 2024, women made up about 5% of the active military

Egypt

voluntary enlistment possible from age 16 for men and 17 for women; 18-30 years of age for compulsory service for men; service obligation 14-36 months, followed by a 9-year reserve obligation; active service length depends on education; high school drop-outs serve for the full 36 months, while college graduates serve for lesser periods of time, depending on their education level (2025)

El Salvador

18-30 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (17-22 for military schools); men are subject to selective compulsory military service; service obligation up to 18 months (2025)

note: in 2024, women comprised over 11% of the active military

Equatorial Guinea

18-25 for voluntary military service; selective compulsory military service for men; 24-month service obligation (2025)

Eritrea

Eritrea mandates military service for all citizens age 18-40; 18-month conscript service obligation, which reportedly includes 4-6 months of military training and 12 months of military or other national service (military service is most common); in practice, military and national service is often extended indefinitely; citizens up to the age of 59 eligible for recall during mobilization (2025)

Estonia

18-27 for compulsory military or governmental service for men; conscript service requirement 8-11 months depending on education; non-commissioned officers, reserve officers, and specialists serve 11 months; women can volunteer, and as of 2018 could serve in any military branch (2025)

note 1: conscripts comprise approximately 3,000-3,300 of the Estonian military's active-duty personnel and serve in all branches, except for the Air Force; after conscript service, reservists are called up for training every 5 years; Estonia has had conscription since 1991

note 2: in 2024, women comprised about 8% of the full-time professional military force; the Defense League includes a Women's Voluntary Defense Organization

Eswatini

18-35 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

Ethiopia

18-22 years of age for voluntary military service; 24-month service obligation; no compulsory military service, but the military can conduct callups when necessary and compliance is compulsory (2025)

Fiji

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (2026)

Finland

all Finnish men are obligated to serve 5.5-12 months of service within a branch of the military or the Border Guard upon reaching the age of 18 (length of service depends on the type of duty); women 18-29 may volunteer for service; there is also an option to perform non-military service which lasts for 8.5 or 11.5 months; after completing their initial conscript obligation, individuals enter the reserves and remain eligible for mobilization until the age of 50 for rank-and-file and 60 for non-commissioned and commissioned officers (2025)

note: Finland has had conscription since 1951; each year, the military inducts and active-duty units train approximately 21,000 conscripts; the resulting pool of trained reservists gives the FDF a wartime strength of approximately 280,000 and a total reserve of some 900,000 citizens with military service

France

generally 17-30 years of age for both men and women with some variations by service, position, and enlisted versus officer; 17-40 for National Gendarmerie; basic service contract is for 12 months; no conscription (abolished 2001) (2025)

note 1: a 10-month voluntary military service program for French citizens 18-19 is scheduled to start accepting recruits in September 2026; afterwards, the volunteers can integrate into civilian life, become a reservist, or stay in the armed forces

note 2: in 2024, women comprised about 17% of the uniformed armed forces

note 3: men between the ages of 17.5 and 39.5 years of age, of any nationality, may join the French Foreign Legion; those volunteers selected for service sign five-year contracts

Gabon

18-24 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription (2025)

Gambia, The

18-28 years of age for men and women depending on enlisted, officer, or specialized positions (2025)

Georgia

18-35 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription was abolished in 2016, but reinstated in 2017 for men 18-27 years

of age; conscript service obligation is up to 11 months depending on the assigned ministry, job specialty, and if the service is carried out in a combat unit (2025)

note: conscripts serve in the Defense Forces, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or the Ministry of Corrections

Germany

17-23 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (must have completed compulsory full-time education and have German citizenship); service obligation 7-23 months or 12 years (2025)

note 1: conscription ended in 2011; in 2020, the German Government launched a new voluntary conscript initiative focused on homeland security tasks, with the volunteers serving for 7 months plus 5 months as reservists over a 6-year period

note 2: in December 2025, Germany passed a law reforming military service; from 2026, the new regulations require German males residing in Germany who have reached the age of 18 to complete a questionnaire, including questions about their willingness to serve; participation will remain voluntary for women

note 3: women have been eligible for voluntary service in all military branches and positions since 2001; in 2025, they accounted for more than 13% of the active-duty German military

Ghana

18-27 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription (2025)

note: as of 2024, women comprised approximately 15% of the military; Ghanaian women first began serving in the late 1950s

Greece

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; all Greek men 19-45 are subject to compulsory military service; 12-month obligation for all services (note - as an exception, the duration of the full military service is 9 instead of 12 months if conscripts, after the initial training, serve the entire remaining time in certain areas of the eastern borders, in Cyprus, or in certain military units) (2026)

note 1: in July 2025, the Greek Government unveiled several defense reforms which went into effect on 1 January 2026, including abolishing mandatory military service for the Air Force and Navy, with exceptions only for specialized roles such as aircraft engineers and ship captains; all conscripts are to be classified exclusively into the Army; ground forces will also take over facility security duties previously managed by the other branches

note 2: as of 2025, women comprised about 17% of the military's full-time personnel

Guatemala

18-28 for voluntary service for men and women (17-21 for military schools); all Guatemalan men 18-49 are subject to selective compulsory service; service obligation is 12-24 months (2025)

Guinea

18 years of age for voluntary and selective conscripted service; 9-12 months of service (2025)

Guinea-Bissau

18-25 years of age for selective compulsory military service for men and women (Air Force service is voluntary) (2025)

Guyana

18 years of age or older for voluntary military service; no conscription (2026)

Haiti

men and women 18-25 may volunteer for the FAdH (2023)

Holy See (Vatican City)

Pontifical Swiss Guard Corps: 19-30 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription; must be a single Roman Catholic male with Swiss citizenship who has completed basic training with the Swiss military and can obtain a certificate of good conduct; qualified candidates must apply to serve; the service contract is between 2 and 25 years (2025)

Honduras

18-22 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 24–36 month service obligation; no conscription (2026)

Hungary

18 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription (abolished 2005) (2026)

India

ages vary by branch of service and positions, but generally 17-27 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

note 1: in 2022, the Indian Government began recruiting men aged 17.5-21 annually to serve on 4-year contracts; at the end of their tenure, 25% would be retained for longer terms of service, while the remainder would be forced to leave the military, although some of those leaving would be eligible to serve in the Coast Guard, the Merchant Navy, civilian positions in the Ministry of Defense, and in the paramilitary forces of the Ministry of Home Affairs

note 2: the Indian military accepts citizens of Nepal and Bhutan; descendants of refugees from Tibet who arrived before 1962 and have resided permanently in India; peoples of Indian origin from nations such as Burma, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam with the intention of permanently settling in India; eligible candidates from “friendly foreign nations” may apply to the Armed Forces Medical Services

note 3: the British began to recruit Nepalese citizens (Gurkhas) into the East India Company Army during the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816), and the Gurkhas subsequently were brought into the British Indian Army; following the partition of India in 1947, an agreement between Nepal, India, and Great Britain allowed for the transfer of the 10 regiments from the British Indian Army to the separate British and Indian armies; six regiments of Gurkhas (aka Gorkhas in India) regiments went to the new Indian Army; a seventh regiment was later added

Indonesia

18 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; upper age limits vary by military service, position, specialty; compulsory service authorized but not utilized (2025)

Iran

16 for voluntary military service for men; military service is compulsory for all Iranian men at age 18 or 19 years of age; compulsory service obligation 14-21 months, depending on the location of service; women exempted from conscription but may volunteer (2025)

note: conscripts may serve in the Artesh, IRGC, or Law Enforcement

Iraq

18 years of age for voluntary military service; no conscription (2025)

Ireland

18-38 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service (2026)

note 1: as of 2025, women made up about 7.5% of the military's full-time personnel

note 2: the Defense Forces are open to refugees under the Refugee Act of 1996 and nationals of the European Economic Area, which include EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway

Israel

18-28 years of age for voluntary military service; 18 months service for men, 12 months for women; 18-21 years of age for compulsory military service for men and women; Jews and Druze can be conscripted; Christians, Circassians, and Muslims may volunteer; conscript service obligation is up to 36 months for enlisted personnel (depending on sex, marital status, and military occupation); officers serve 48 months; Air Force pilots commit to 9 years of service (2024)

Italy

17 or 18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women ; voluntary service is a minimum of 12 months with the option to extend in the Armed Forces or compete for positions in other government security organizations; conscription abolished 2004 (2025)

note: women serve in all military branches; as of 2023, women made up about 8% of the military's full-time personnel

Jamaica

18-23 for voluntary military service (17 with parental consent) for men and women; 18-28 for the reserves; no conscription; since 2017, the JDF's standard mode of recruitment is to enroll recruits ages 18-23 through the Jamaica National Service Corps (JNSC), which has a service requirement of 12 months (2025)

note 1: the Jamaica Combined Cadet Force (JCCF), a youth organization under the Ministry of Security, also provides a recruitment pool for the JDF, as well as other government agencies

note 2: as of 2022, women made up about 20% of the JDF's uniformed personnel

Japan

18-32 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

note: as of 2023, women made up about 9% of the military's full-time personnel

Jordan

17 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; initial service term is 24 months; selective compulsory military service (3 months) for men turning 18 will be reinstated in 2026; compulsory military service for jobless men aged 25-29 was reinstated in 2020 (12 months; 3 months of military training and 9 months of professional and technical training) (2025)

Kazakhstan

men 18-27 are subject to conscription for 12-24 months; conscripts may be assigned to the Armed Forces, the National Guard, the Border Service, the State Security Service, or the Ministry of Emergency Situations; women may volunteer (2025)

Kenya

18-26 years of age for voluntary service for men and women (under 18 with parental consent; upper limit 30 years of age for specialists, tradesmen, or women with a diploma; 39 years of age for chaplains/imams); 7-9 year service obligations (2026)

Korea, North

compulsory military service for men (17-30 years of age) and women (17-23 years of age); service obligation is reportedly up to 10 years for men and up to 7 years for women (2025)

Korea, South

18-29 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; mandatory military service for all eligible men 18-35 years of age (typically served from 20-28 years of age); compulsory service obligation is 18-21 months based on the branch of service and up to 36 months for alternative service (2025)

note: women, in service since 1950, are able to serve in all branches and as of 2024 more than 15,000 served in the armed forces

Kosovo

any citizen of Kosovo over the age of 18 is eligible to serve in the Kosovo Security Force; upper age for enlisting is 30 for officers, 25 for other ranks, although these may be waived for recruits with key skills considered essential for the KSF
(2025)

Kuwait

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 12-month compulsory service for men aged 18-35; mandatory service is divided into two phases – 4 months for training and 8 months for military service (2025)

note: the National Guard is restricted to citizens, but in 2018, the Army began allowing non-Kuwaitis to join on contract or as non-commissioned officers; that same year, it also began allowing stateless people (Bidoon) to join

Kyrgyzstan

18-27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary service for men in the Armed Forces or Interior Ministry; 12-month service obligation (9 months for university graduates), with optional fee-based 3-year service in the call-up mobilization reserve; women may volunteer at age 19; 16-17 years of age for military cadets, who cannot take part in military operations (2025)

Laos

18 years of age for voluntary military service; mandatory military service for men 18-35 with a minimum 18-month service obligation (2025)

Latvia

mandatory military service for all men 18-24; men and women 18-27 may volunteer for military service; service length 11 months in the Armed Forces or National Guard, or 5 years in the National Guard as a whole, with a minimum of 21 days of individual training and a maximum of 7 days of collective training each year (2026)

note 1: conscription was reintroduced in 2024

note 2: as of 2024, women comprised about 16.5% of the military's full-time personnel

Lebanon

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2026)

Lesotho

20-30 years of age for voluntary military service for both men and women (2026)

Liberia

18 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service (2025)

Libya

not available

Lithuania

19-26 years of age for conscripted military service for men; 9-month service obligation; 18-38 for voluntary service for men and women; 18-60 for the National Defense Volunteer Services (2025)

note 1: in 2015, Lithuania reinstated conscription after having converted to a professional military in 2008; it conscripts up to 4,000 men each year; conscripts are selected using an automated lottery system

note 2: as of 2020, women comprised about 12% of the military's full-time personnel

Luxembourg

18-26 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (abolished 1969) (2025)

note 1: since 2003, the Army has allowed EU citizens 18-24 years of age who have been a resident in the country for at least 36 months to volunteer

note 2: 2024, women made up about 12% of the military's full-time personnel

Madagascar

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; service obligation 18 months; conscription available in times of national emergency or war (2025)

Malawi

18-24 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service (2025)

Malaysia

17 years 6 months of age for voluntary military service for men and women (younger with parental consent and proof of age); mandatory retirement age 60; no conscription (2025)

Maldives

18-25 years of age for voluntary service; no conscription (2025)

note: in 2025, the Maldives began allowing Maldivians 16-28 (under 18 with parental consent) who lacked access to further education after completing their secondary education or employment could join the Maldives National Service Program and be recruited to the Army or Police

Mali

18 years of age for men and women for selective compulsory and voluntary military service; 24-month compulsory service obligation (2025)

Malta

18-30 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service; no conscription (2026)

Mauritania

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; has a compulsory two-year military service law, but the law has reportedly never been applied (2025)

Mexico

18 years of age (16 with parental consent) for voluntary service for men and women; men at age 18 subject to lottery-based 12-month compulsory military service (2025)

Moldova

18-27 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service; male registration required at age 16; 12-month service obligation; conscientious objectors can perform non-military service in public institutions for a longer period (up to 24 months) (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up about 23% of the military's full-time personnel

Mongolia

18-25 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; initial service 24 months; compulsory service for men at 18; service obligation is 12 months in the military or police, which can be extended to 15 months under special circumstances; compulsory service can be exchanged for a 24-month stint in the civil service or a cash payment determined by the Mongolian Government; after conscription, soldiers can contract into military service for up to 4 years (2025)

Montenegro

18-30 for voluntary military service; conscription abolished in 2006 (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up over 11% of the military's full-time personnel

Morocco

19-25 years of age for 12-month compulsory and voluntary military service for men and women (2025)

Mozambique

registration for military service is mandatory for all men and women at 18 years of age; 18-35 years of age for selective compulsory military service; 18 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; initial 60-month service obligation (2025)

Namibia

18-25 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service; no conscription (2026)

Nepal

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; upper age limit varies; no conscription (2025)

Netherlands

17 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; the military is an all-volunteer force; conscription remains in place, but the requirement to show up

for compulsory military service was suspended in 1997 (2025)

New Zealand

17 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; soldiers cannot be deployed until the age of 18; no conscription (2025)

note: New Zealand opened up all military occupations to women in 2000; as of 2024, women accounted for about 20% of Regular Force personnel

Nicaragua

18-30 years of age for voluntary military service (16-20 for cadets); no conscription; tour of duty 18-36 months (2025)

Niger

18 is the legal minimum age for selective compulsory or voluntary military service for unmarried men and women; 24-month service term (2025)

Nigeria

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

North Macedonia

18 years of age for voluntary military service; conscription abolished in 2007 (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up about 10% of the military's full-time personnel

Norway

17 (men) or 18 (women) for voluntary military service; all Norwegian citizens 19-44 are subject to selective compulsory military service; 19-month service obligation for those selected (12 months plus 4-5 refresher training periods) (2025)

note 1: Norway has had compulsory military service since 1907; individuals conscripted each year are selected from a larger cohort who are evaluated through online assessments and physical tests

note 2: Norway was the first NATO country to allow women to serve in all combat arms branches of the military (1985); it also has an all-female special

operations unit known as Jegertroppen (The Hunter Troop), which was established in 2014

Oman

18-25 for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

note: women have served since 2011

Pakistan

16-28 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; lower and upper age limits vary by military branch, position, and role; personnel cannot be deployed for combat until age 18 (2025)

Papua New Guinea

18-27 (30 for officers) for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

Paraguay

18-25 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; all men 18-25 are required to perform military service for at least 12 months (2025)

Peru

18-30 years of age for voluntary military service (12-24 months) (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up about 11% of the active-duty military

Philippines

some variations in age based on the branch of service, but generally 18-27 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

note: as of 2023, women made up about 8% of the active military; women have attended the Philippine Military Academy and trained as combat soldiers since 1993

Poland

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription; professional soldiers serve on a permanent basis (for an unspecified period of time) or on a contract basis (for a specified period of

time); initial contract period is 24 months (2025)

note 1: as of 2024, women made up about 16.5% of the military's full-time personnel

note 2: in 2022, Poland announced a new 12-month voluntary military service program with recruits going through a one-month basic training period with a military unit, followed by 11 months of specialized training; upon completion of service, the volunteers would be allowed to join the Territorial Defense Forces or the active reserve, and have priority to join the professional army and be given preference for employment in the public sector; the program is part of an effort to increase the size of the Polish military

Portugal

18-30 years of age for voluntary or contract military service for men and women (upper age limit varies by military branch, position, role); no compulsory military service (abolished 2004) but conscription possible if insufficient volunteers available; contract service lasts for an initial period of 2-6 years, and can be extended to a maximum of 20 years of service; initial voluntary military service lasts 12 months; reserve obligation to age 35 (2025)

Qatar

typically 18-30 for voluntary service for men and women; compulsory military service for men 18-35; compulsory service is from 4-12 months, depending on educational and professional circumstances (2025)

note: the military incorporates about 2,000 conscripts annually and recruits foreign contract soldiers to overcome manpower limitations

Romania

typically 18-35 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; compulsory service ended in 2007 (2025)

note: in 2025, the Romanian Government approved a voluntary service plan for citizens aged 18 to 35 to apply for a four-month basic military training programme, open to both men and women who have not completed active military service or not already in reserve; participants would subsequently be registered as reservists

Russia

18-30 years of age for compulsory service for men; 18-65 years of age for voluntary/contractual service; women and non-Russian citizens (18-30) may volunteer; minimum 12-month service obligation (2025)

note 1: in 2022, Russia removed the previous upper age limit of 30 for contractual service in the military; that same year, began drafting dual-national Russians and those with permanent residency status in foreign countries for military service

note 2: since 2015, foreigners 18-30 with a good command of Russian have been allowed to join the military on five-year contracts and become eligible for Russian citizenship after serving three years; in 2022, Russia began recruiting foreigners for one-year service contracts with armed forces participating in the invasion of Ukraine with the promise of simplifying the process of obtaining Russian citizenship

Rwanda

typically 18-30 years of age for men and women for voluntary military service (including officer candidates and those with university degrees and specialized qualifications); enlistment is either as contract (5-years, renewable twice) or career professional; no conscription (2025)

Saint Kitts and Nevis

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (under 18 with written parental permission); no conscription (2025)

San Marino

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; no conscription; government has the authority to call up all San Marino citizens from 16-60 years of age to serve in the military (2025)

Sao Tome and Principe

limited information; 18 is the minimum age for compulsory military service (reportedly not enforced) and 17 years of age (with parental permission) for voluntary service (2024)

Saudi Arabia

voluntary military service for men (17-40) and women (typically 21-40, although maximum age may vary by role); no conscription (2025)

Senegal

18-28 (up to 35 for specialized roles); 24-month service commitment (2025)

Serbia

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; conscription abolished in 2011 (2025)

note: as of 2024, women made up about 11% of the military's full-time personnel

Seychelles

18-35 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2026)

Sierra Leone

18-25 for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2025)

Singapore

18 years of age for voluntary enlistment for men and women (16.5 for early enlistment program with parental consent); 18-21 years of age for compulsory military service for men; 24-month conscript service obligation (2026)

note 1: all male Singaporean citizens and permanent residents, unless exempted, are required to enter National Service (NS) upon attaining the age of 18; most NS conscripts serve in the Armed Forces, but some go into the Police Force or Civil Defense Force; conscripts comprise over half of the defense establishment

note 2: the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) also has a uniformed volunteer auxiliary branch known as the Volunteer Corps (SAFVC); the SAFVC allows citizens and residents not subject to the National Service obligation, including Singaporean women, first generation permanent residents, and naturalized citizens, to contribute towards Singapore's defense; the volunteers must be 18-45 and physically fit

note 3: members of the Gurkha Contingent (GC) of the Singapore Police Force are mostly recruited from a small number of hill tribes in Nepal; the GC was formed in 1949 originally from selected ex-British Army Gurkhas

Slovakia

minimum age is 18 for voluntary service for men and women; citizens 18-65 can volunteer for the military reserves (2026)

Slovenia

18-30 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; recruits sign up for 3-, 5-, or 10-year service contracts; no conscription (2026)

note: as of 2025, women comprised about 16% of the military's full-time personnel

Somalia

18-22 for voluntary military service for men and women in the Somali Armed Forces; compulsory service is reportedly authorized, but not currently utilized (2025)

South Africa

18-22 (18-26 for college graduates) years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; initial 24-month service obligation (2025)

note: in 2023, women comprised nearly 30% of the military

South Sudan

18 (legal minimum age)-35 for voluntary military service for men and women; 12-24 months service (2025)

note: the UN reports that there are thousands of child soldiers in South Sudan serving in the SSPDF and militia forces although the South Sudanese Government has pledged to end the practice

Spain

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (upper age limits depend on branch of service, roles, specialties, etc); 24-36 month initial obligation; no conscription, but the Spanish Government retains the right to mobilize citizens 19-25 years of age in a national emergency; 18-58 for the voluntary reserves (2026)

note 1: as of 2024, women comprised about 13% of the military's full-time personnel; they serve in all branches, including combat arms

note 2: the military recruits foreign nationals with residency in Spain from countries of its former empire, including Argentina, Costa Rica, Bolivia, Colombia, Chile, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela

Sri Lanka

generally 18-24 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women, although upper age limits may vary by branch of service, roles, specialties, etc; no conscription (2026)

Sudan

18-33 years of age for compulsory or voluntary military service for men and women; service obligation 12-24 months (2025)

note: official implementation of compulsory service is reportedly uneven; both the SAF and the RSF have been accused of engaging in forced recruitment of men and boys during the ongoing conflict

Suriname

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription (2024)

Sweden

18-47 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; service obligation: 7-15 months (Army), 7-15 months (Navy), 8-12 months (Air Force); after completing initial service, soldiers have a reserve commitment until age 47; compulsory military service, abolished in 2010, was reinstated in January 2018; conscription is selective, includes both men and women (age 18), and requires 6-15 months of service (2024)

note 1: Sweden conscripts about 5,500 men and women each year; it plans to increase this number to 8,000 by 2025; conscientious objectors in Sweden have the right to apply for alternative service (called vapenfri tjänst); after completing alternative service, the conscript then belongs to the civilian reserve

note 2: as of 2024, women made nearly 25% of the military's personnel

Switzerland

18-30 years of age for compulsory military service for men; 18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; every Swiss male has to serve at least 245 days in the armed forces; conscripts receive 18 weeks of mandatory training, followed by six 19-day intermittent recalls for training during the next 10 years (2024)

note: conscientious objectors can choose 390 days of community service instead of military service; as of 2023, women comprised about 1% of the active Swiss military

Syria

prior to the fall of the ASAD regime in December 2024, men 18-42 were obligated to perform military service; compulsory service obligation was up to 30 months; women were not conscripted but could volunteer to serve, including in combat arms (2024)

Taiwan

men 18-36 years of age may volunteer or must complete 12 months of compulsory military service; civil service can be substituted for military service in some cases; women may enlist but are restricted to noncombat roles in most cases (2024)

note 1: in January 2024, Taiwan extended compulsory service from 4 to 12 months for men born in 2005 and thereafter

note 2: as of 2023, women made up about 15% of the active-duty military

Tajikistan

18-27 years of age for compulsory (men only) or voluntary (men and women) military service; 24-month conscript service obligation or 12 months for those with a higher education (2024)

note: in August 2021, the Tajik Government removed an exemption for university graduates but began allowing men to pay a fee in order to avoid conscription, although there is a cap on the number of individuals who can take advantage of this exemption

Tanzania

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 6-year commitment (2-year contracts afterwards); selective conscription for 2 years of public service (2025)

Thailand

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; 21 years of age for compulsory military service for men; men register at 18 years of age; volunteer service obligation may be as short as 6 or 12 months, depending on educational qualifications; conscript service obligation also varies by educational qualifications, but is typically 24 months (2024)

note: serving in the armed forces is a national duty of all Thai citizens; conscription was introduced in 1905; it includes women, however, only men over the age of 21 who have not gone through reserve training are conscripted; conscripts are chosen by lottery (on draft day, eligible draftees can request

volunteer service, or they may choose to stay for the conscription lottery); approximately 100,000 men are drafted for military service each year

Timor-Leste

18 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women; compulsory service was authorized in 2020 for men and women aged 18-30 for 18 months of service, but the level of implementation is unclear (2023)

Togo

18 years of age for military service for men and women; 24-month service obligation; no conscription (2023)

note: as of 2022, about 7% of the military's personnel were women

Tonga

voluntary military service for men and women 18-25; no conscription (2023)

Trinidad and Tobago

18-25 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (some age variations between services, reserves); no conscription (2024)

Tunisia

18-23 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; 20-23 years of age for compulsory (national) service for men with a 12-month service obligation; individuals engaged in higher education or vocational training programs prior to their military drafting are allowed to delay service until they have completed their programs (up to age 35); exemptions allowed for males considered to a family's sole provider (2023)

note: women have been allowed in the service since 1975 as volunteers; as of 2023, women constituted about 8% of the military and served in all three services

Turkey (Turkiye)

mandatory military service for men at age 20; service can be delayed if in university or in certain professions (researchers, professionals, and athletic, or those with artistic talents have the right to postpone military service until the age of 35); 6-12 months service; women may volunteer (2023)

note 1: after completing six months of service, if a conscripted soldier wants to

and is suitable for extending his military service, he may do so for an additional six months in return for a monthly salary; all male Turkish citizens over the age of 20 are required to undergo a one month military training period, but they can obtain an exemption from the remaining 5 months of their mandatory service by paying a fee

note 2: as of 2021, women made up about 0.4% of the military's full-time personnel

Turkmenistan

18-27 years of age for compulsory military service for men and volunteer service for men and women; 24-month conscript service obligation (2025)

Uganda

18-22 years of age for voluntary military duty for men and women; 9-year service obligation (2025)

Ukraine

18 years of age for voluntary service for men and women; 25 years of age for conscription for men; 18-24 months service obligation (2025)

note 1: conscription was abolished in 2012, but reintroduced in 2014; following the Russian invasion in 2022, all non-exempt men ages 18-60 were required to register with their local recruitment offices and undergo medical screening for possible service; the Territorial Defense Forces accept volunteers, 18-60 years of age

note 2: in February 2025, the military implemented a new option for volunteers age 18-24 to sign one-year contracts in return for higher wages, a signing bonus, exemption from mobilization for 12 months, and other social benefits

note 3: women have been able to volunteer for military service since 1993; as of 2024, nearly 70,000 women were serving in the armed forces in both uniformed and civilian positions

note 4: since 2015, the Ukrainian military has allowed foreigners and stateless persons, 18-45 (in special cases up to 60), to join on 3-5-year contracts, based on qualifications; following the 2022 Russian invasion, the military began accepting medically fit foreign volunteers on a larger scale into an International Legion

United Arab Emirates

18-30 years of age for compulsory national service for men (compulsory service initiated in 2014); 18-40 for voluntary service; 36-month service obligation for

men without a secondary education and 11 months for secondary school graduates; women may volunteer for national service (11-month service obligation regardless of education) (2025)

note 1: compulsory service may be completed in the uniformed military, the Ministry of Interior, or other security institutions designated by the military leadership

note 2: the UAE military employs a considerable number of foreign personnel on contracted service

United Kingdom

some variations by service, but generally 16-36 years of age for enlisted (with parental consent under 18) and 18-29 for officers; minimum length of service 4 years; women serve in all military services including combat roles; conscription abolished in 1963 (2024)

note 1: women made up 11.7% of the military's full-time personnel in 2024

note 2: the British military allows Commonwealth nationals who are current UK residents and have been in the country for at least 5 years to apply; it also accepts Irish citizens

note 3: the British Army has continued the historic practice of recruiting Gurkhas from Nepal to serve in the Brigade of Gurkhas; the British began to recruit Nepalese citizens (Gurkhas) into the East India Company Army during the Anglo-Nepalese War (1814-1816); the Gurkhas subsequently were brought into the British Indian Army and by 1914, there were 10 Gurkha regiments, collectively known as the Gurkha Brigade; following the partition of India in 1947, an agreement between Nepal, India, and Great Britain allowed for the transfer of the 10 regiments from the British Indian Army to the separate British and Indian armies; four of the regiments were transferred to the British Army, where they have since served continuously as the Brigade of Gurkhas

United States

17 years of age (under 18 with parental consent) for voluntary service for men and women; maximum enlistment age 35 (Army), 42 (Air Force/Space Force), 41 (Navy), 28 (Marines), 41 (Coast Guard); 8-year initial service obligation, including 2-5 years active duty depending on the particular military service (2025)

note 1: the US military has been all-volunteer since 1973, but an act of Congress can reinstate the draft in case of a national emergency; males aged 18-25 must register with Selective Service

note 2: all military occupations and positions open to women; in 2022, women comprised 17.5% of the total US regular military personnel

note 3: non-citizens living permanently and legally in the US may join as

enlisted personnel; they must have permission to work in the US, a high school diploma, and speak, read, and write English fluently; under the Compact of Free Association, citizens of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands may volunteer

Uruguay

18-30 years of age (18-22 years of age for Navy) for voluntary military service for men and women; up to 40 years of age for specialists; enlistment is voluntary in peacetime, but the government has the authority to conscript in emergencies (2025)

note: as of 2023, women comprised nearly 20% of the active military

Uzbekistan

18-27 years of age for compulsory military service for men; 12-month service obligation (those conscripted have the option of paying for a shorter service of one month while remaining in the reserves until the age of 27) (2024)

note: Uzbek citizens who have completed their service terms in the armed forces have privileges in employment and admission to higher educational institutions

Venezuela

18-30 (25 for women) for voluntary service; the minimum service obligation is 24-30 months; 17-39 for Militia service; all citizens of military service age (18-50) are obligated to register for military service and subject to military training (2025)

Vietnam

18 years of age for compulsory and voluntary military service for men and women (in practice only men are drafted); service obligation is between 24 (Army, Air Defense) and 36 (Navy and Air Force) months (2024)

Yemen

18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary military service; conscription abolished in 2001; 2-year service obligation (note - limited information since the start of the civil war in 2014) (2022)

note: as late as 2022, all parties to the ongoing conflict were implicated in child soldier recruitment and use; during the beginning of the truce in April 2022, the Houthis signed a plan with the UN to end the recruitment and use of child

soldiers; Houthi leaders previously pledged to end the use of child soldiers in 2012, as did the Government of Yemen in 2014

Zambia

18-25 years of age (17 with parental consent) for voluntary military service for men and women; no conscription; initial service of 7 years followed by 5 in the Reserves (2025)

Zimbabwe

18-22 years of age for voluntary military service for men and women (enlisted personnel); 18-24 for officer cadets; 18-30 for technical/specialist personnel; no conscription (2025)

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