

Here are the statistical profiles of the men and women who fly USAF's aircraft and the unfavorable trends USAF now confronts.

Pilots

The Air Force's pilot force is key to the strength and effectiveness of the service, but today it is somewhat beleaguered. Officials said that their numbers and capability are adequate to the mission at this time. However, USAF is tracking unfavorable trends that portend future readiness problems.

Figure 1: Pilots in USAF Officer Corps

Category	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
Pilot	17,808	16,950	15,963	15,362	14,774
Total USAF Officer	90,376	84,073	81,003	78,444	76,388
Percent of Total	19.7	20.2	19.7	19.6	19.3

The pilot force usually comprises about a fifth of all USAF officers, as seen in Fig. 1. However, pilots form the largest single occupational group in the Air Force, rivaled only by the medical corps (Fig. 2).

Pilot	14,774
Medical	13,771
Space, Missile, Command & Control	5,707
Navigator	4,756
Aircraft Maintenance and Munitions	4,489
Communications, Computer Systems	4,466
Developmental Engineering	3,442
Intelligence	2,853
Acquisition	2,521
Civil Engineering	1,704
Other Fields (17)	17,905
Total	76,388

Figure 3: **Where They Are**

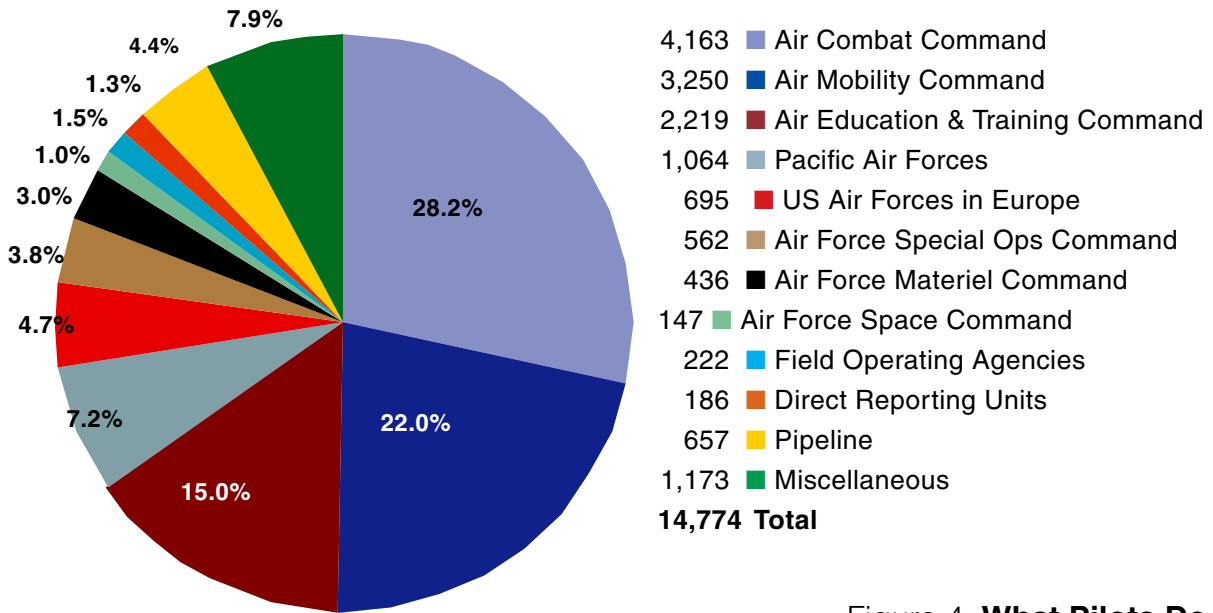


Fig. 3 shows that the pilot force is concentrated in Air Combat Command and Air Mobility Command. Taken together, they account for some 50 percent of all pilots. More than 40 percent are deployed in operational forces (Fig. 4). As seen in Figs. 5 and 6, a high proportion is actually engaged in flying, and a large number of officer/pilots receive incentive pay.

Figure 4: **What Pilots Do**

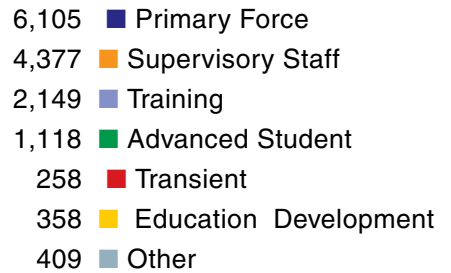


Figure 2: **Share of Occupations**

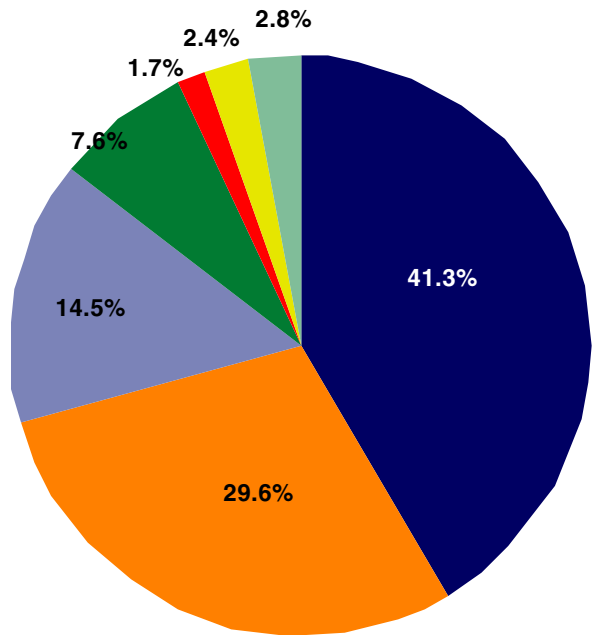
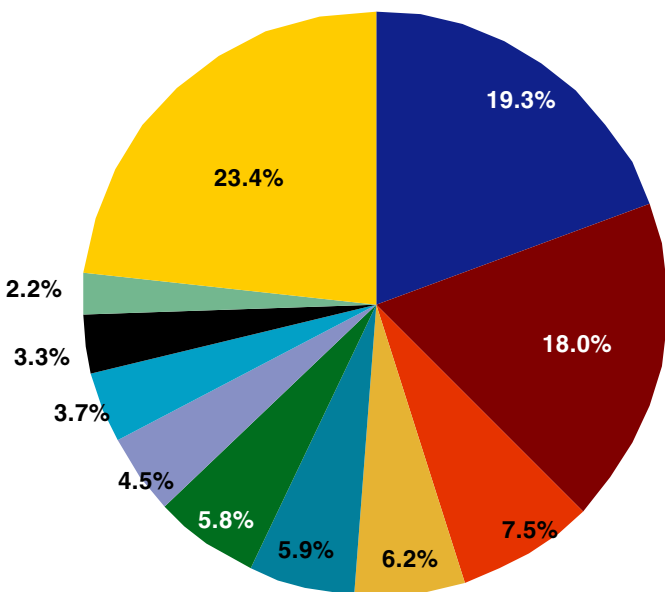


Figure 5: Air Force Pilots Actually Flying

Grade	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
General and Colonel	581	523	479	481	435
Lt. Colonel and Below	12,948	12,020	11,574	11,605	11,040
Total	13,529	12,543	12,053	12,086	11,475

Figure 6: Air Force Pilots Receiving Incentive Pay

Grade	FY 92	FY 93	FY 94	FY 95	FY 96
General and Colonel	1,179	1,082	1,062	1,023	888
Lt. Colonel and Below	17,620	16,610	15,953	15,398	14,778
Total	18,799	17,692	17,015	16,421	15,666

Figure 7: Pilot Retention Ups and Downs
6–11 Year Cumulative Continuation Rate

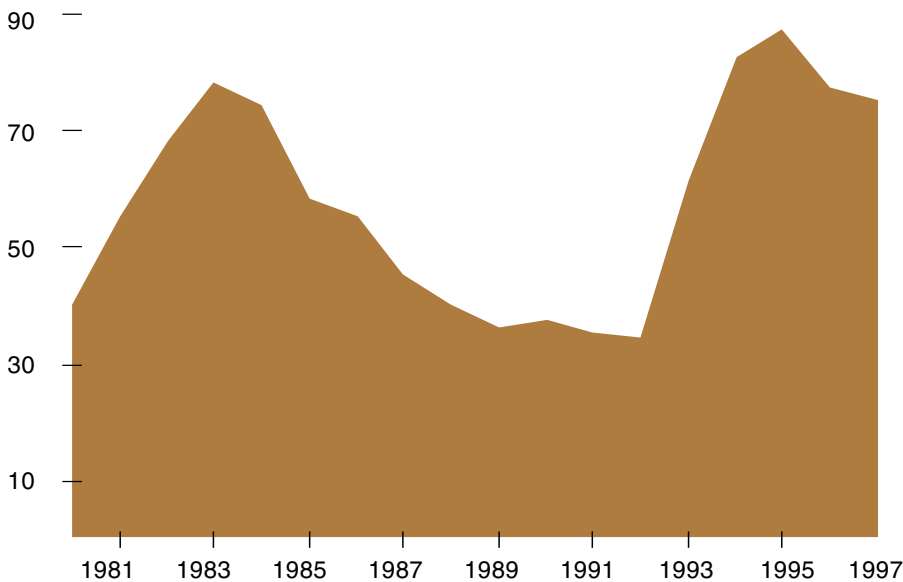


Fig. 7 shows cumulative continuation rates, a key indicator of pilot retention. It expresses—as a percentage—how many pilots on active duty with six years of service decide to stay in the Air Force and are still on duty at their 11th year. The CCR hit a peak of 87 percent in 1995. In 1996 the rate turned down to 77 percent and to 75 percent this year.

Figure 8: Fewer Take the Bonus

Related to the CCR trend is a drop in the “take rate” for Aviator Continuation Pay, a bonus offered to pilots completing service commitments from initial pilot training. As Fig. 8 shows, the take rate hit a high in 1994 (81 percent accepted and stayed in the Air Force). By last year, the rate had fallen to 59 percent and this year was down to 32 percent. Traditionally, 90 percent of those who decline ACP leave within two years. Fig. 9 indicates the problem exists in all weapon systems and commands.

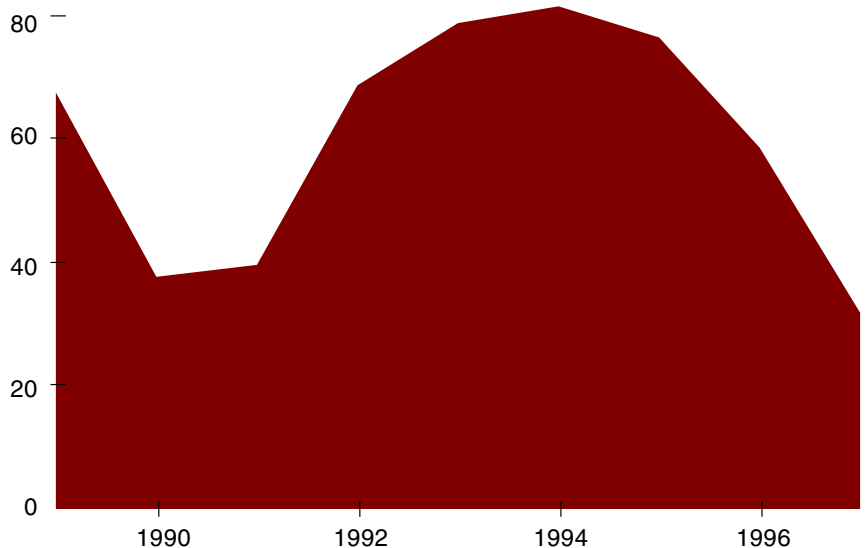


Figure 10: Exodus of Experienced Pilots

As Fig. 10 shows, pilot separations are on the rise. After the big drawdown, the proportion of eligible pilots leaving USAF went down as the force stabilized. Since 1994, though, the share has climbed steeply. In surveys, pilots cite high optempo, poor quality of life, and eroding pay and benefits.

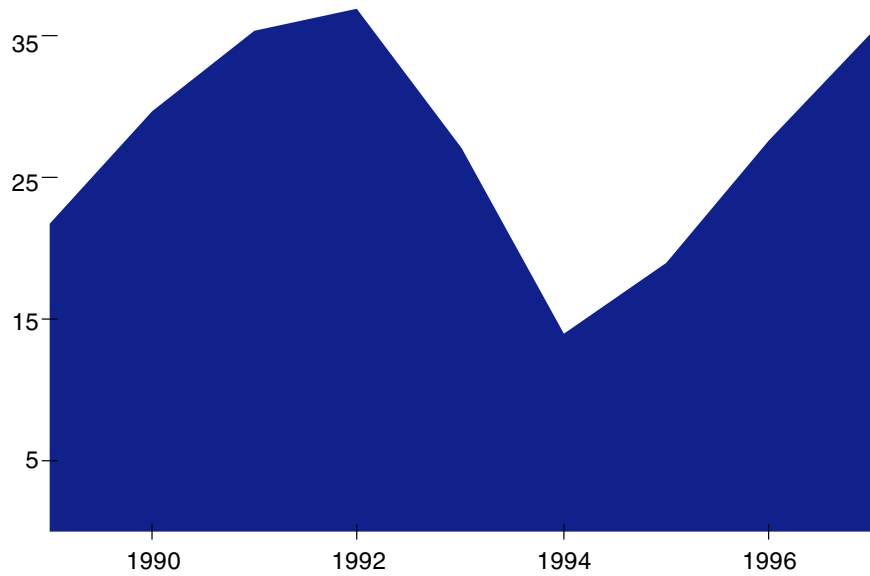


Figure 9: Snapshots of the Take Rate, 1997

By Weapon System	Eligibles	Decline	Accept	Percent
Fighter	152	103	49	32.2
Bomber	37	23	14	37.8
Strategic Airlift	158	117	41	25.9
Theater Airlift	76	49	27	35.5
Tanker	96	74	22	22.9
Helicopter	15	8	7	46.7
Trainer	7	7	0	0.0
Total	541	381	160	29.6

By Major Command	Eligibles	Decline	Accept	Percent
ACC	119	82	37	31.1
AETC	151	116	35	23.2
AMC	169	126	43	25.4
PACAF	22	16	6	27.3
AFSOC	16	9	7	43.8
USAFE	17	6	11	64.7
USAF Academy	12	5	7	58.3
AFMC	20	14	6	30.0
Undistributed	15	7	8	53.3
Total	541	381	160	29.60

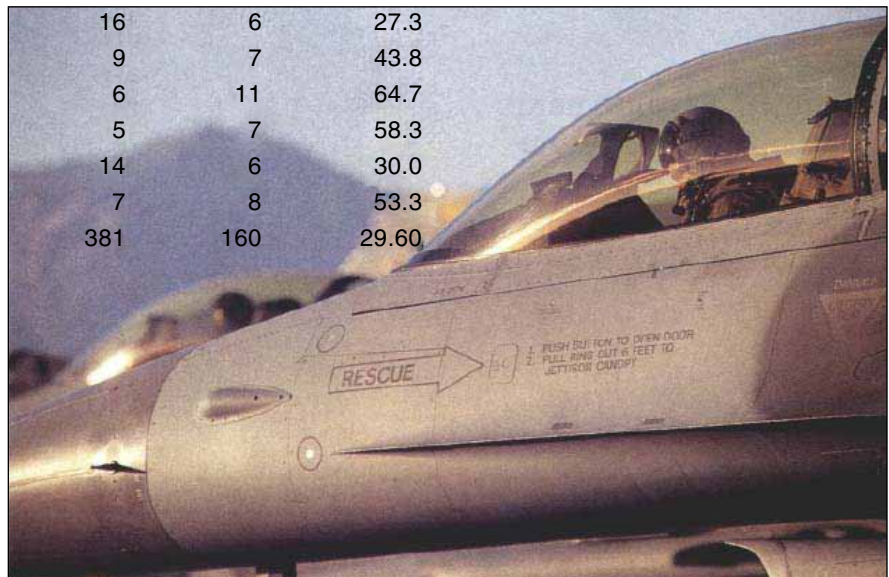


Figure 11: The "Pull" of Airline Hiring

Aggravating such problems is the lure of the airlines. Airline hiring spiked in 1997 and is expected to taper off some, but it will stay strong for years. As Fig. 11 shows, the majors could absorb all military pilots who will become eligible to separate in the next few years, with room to spare.

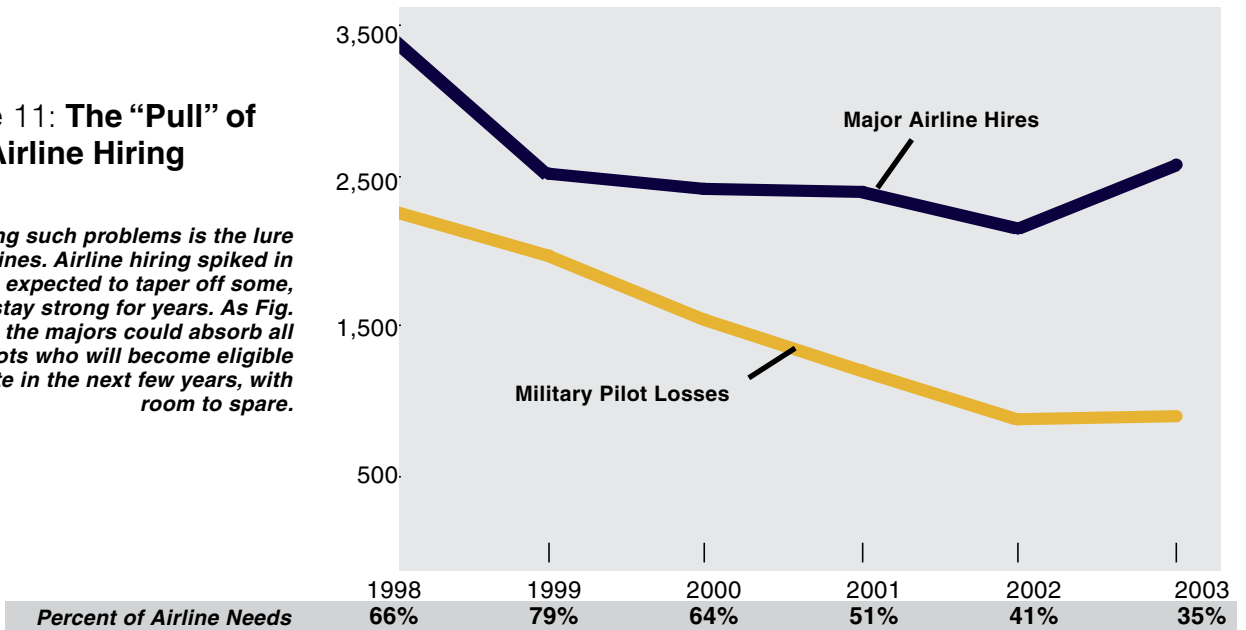


Figure 12: Requirements and Inventory, Recent Past

Fig. 12 shows that a "surplus" of pilots has been shrinking since 1993. Today, the total pilot number still exceeds requirements, but USAF is experiencing spot shortages of fighter and C-130 pilots. USAF says it will run a deficit of 350 pilots next year and that, by 1999, all combat and mobility systems will be undermanned as the gap widens (Fig. 13). The service has launched a major get-well effort to reduce requirements and increase pilot production and retention, with no assurance of success.

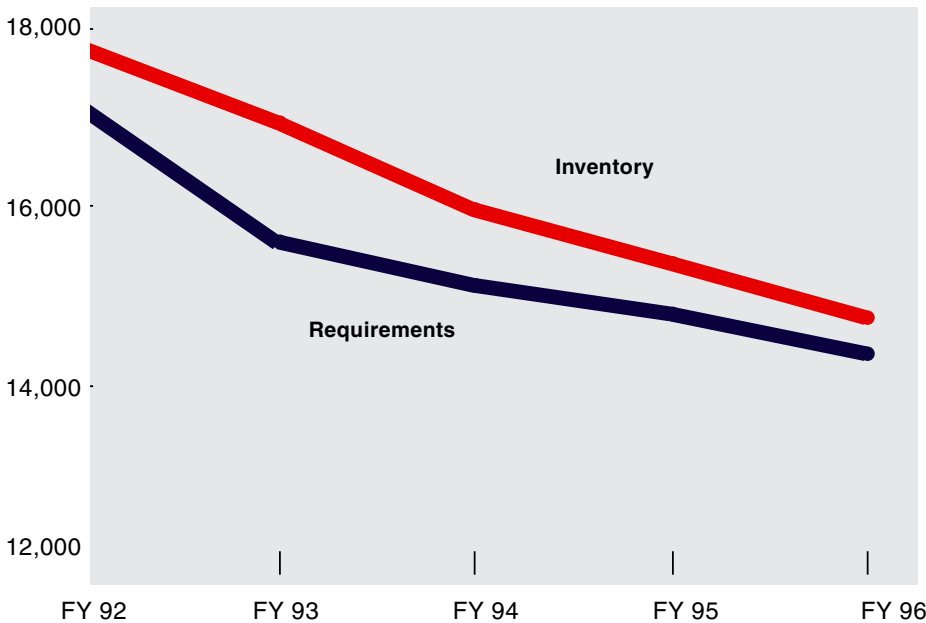


Figure 13: Requirements and Inventory, Future

