

Frequently asked questions about the Selective Service System and the military draft (required military service)

1. What is the Selective Service System (SSS)?

The Selective Service System (SSS) is a Federal government agency that plans and prepares to draft people into the U.S. military.

2. Will there be a military draft in the U.S.?

Maybe. The military says it doesn't need a military draft now, but wants to keep it as an option in case there is a war that not enough people volunteer to fight.

3. Who is supposed to register with the SSS?

The law says that all men who live in the U.S. and are between 18 and 26 years old must register with the SSS and notify the SSS every time they change their address.

4. Are women supposed to register? Is this going to change?

Women are not now required to register, but Congress might change this.

5. Are immigrants, citizens of other countries, dual citizens, and people living in the U.S. without papers supposed to register?

Yes. All men between ages 18 and 26 who live in the U.S., including undocumented people, are supposed to register, regardless of citizenship.

6. What happens if I register? Will I be drafted into the military?

If there is a draft, it will be based on the list of people who registered with the SSS. Registrants will be chosen by lottery and sent orders to report for military service.

7. If I register, and there is a draft, do I have to go into the military?

Maybe. After you receive an order to go into the military, you can try to prove that you are medically unfit for the military, or that you qualify for non-military alternative service as a "conscientious objector" who is opposed to all wars. But if you are physically fit, and there are any wars you would be willing to fight or you think that there are some "just" and some "unjust" wars, you have few legal options once you are drafted. You are much more likely to be prosecuted if you register with the SSS, and later refuse orders to go into the military, than if you never register with the SSS.

8. What happens if I don't register with the SSS?

If you don't register with the SSS, you won't be drafted into the military.

9. If I don't register with the SSS, will I go to jail?

No. Nobody has been prosecuted for refusing to register since 1986. So many people have not registered that the government gave up trying to enforce the law.

10. What if I get a letter saying I will be prosecuted if I don't register?

The SSS sends out hundreds of thousands of threatening letters every year, but they are legally unenforceable, and you can ignore them.

11. Are there other (non-criminal) penalties for not registering with the SSS?

Yes. Men age 18 and older who haven't registered with the SSS are ineligible for Federal government jobs or (in some cases) naturalization as U.S. citizens. In some states men ages 18-26 must register with the SSS to be eligible for other state programs. Registration with the SSS used to be required for Federal student aid, but that law was changed in 2020. You can now get Federal financial aid for college even if you never registered with the SSS.

12. If I don't register when I turn 18 years old, can I register later?

Yes. You can register without penalty at any time until your 26th birthday.

13. What happens if I don't tell the SSS when I move?

If the SSS doesn't know where to find you, they can't order you into the military. Nobody has been penalized since the 1970s for not notifying the SSS when they move.

14. Will registering with the SSS make me eligible for U.S. citizenship?

No. Even if you are drafted or enlisted in the military, that won't make you a U.S. citizen. Many soldiers and military veterans remain ineligible for U.S. citizenship, and some have been deported from the U.S. after their military service.

15. If I don't register, can I still become a U.S. citizen?

Maybe. People who "knowingly" refuse to register with the SSS may be deemed ineligible for U.S. citizenship. But you can become a U.S. citizen if you either:

- (a) Register with the SSS any time before your 26th birthday, or
- (b) Are 26 or older and prove that you didn't know that you were supposed to register. (A statement explaining that you didn't know you were supposed to register might be sufficient. Such statements have been accepted in many naturalization cases.)

16. What can I do if I don't want to be forced into the military?

- (a) Don't register with the SSS unless and until you need to register to apply for a Federal government job, U.S. citizenship, or some state program that requires it.
- (b) Don't tell the SSS when you move – that only makes it easier for them to find you if they want to draft you into the military.
- (c) If you might want to apply for a government job or U.S. citizenship later in life, consider registering with the SSS shortly before you turn 26. There is no penalty for registering late, as long as you register by your 26th birthday. After that, you can't register, but penalties for not having registered can continue for the rest of your life.
- (d) Most importantly, tell Congress to end draft registration, not expand it to women, and repeal all of the penalties for people who didn't register.

For more about Selective Service and the draft, scan the code at the right with your phone, or see: www.resisters.info

