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## Common Myths and Misconceptions About Women in Combat Arms February 13, 2026

1. **FALSE:** The standards for women are lower at combat schools like Ranger School.

There are not (and never have been) gender-based standards at the US Army Ranger School, the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program, or any Army Special Operations Forces Assessment or Selection (Special Forces, Civil Affairs, or Psychological Operations). There is one baseline physical fitness standard that all Ranger candidates must meet to gain entry into the Ranger course. During the course, women carry the same amount of weight as the men (close to 100 pounds at times), are graded on the same patrol tactics and even shave their heads just like the male students. Over 375 women have attempted the course and 175 have earned their Ranger tabs. Since 2015, not a single woman has voluntarily quit Ranger School (“LOM” or “Lack of Motivation”). In the most recent class (January 2026), ten men quit.

2. **FALSE:** Ranger School destroyed women’s records, gave women special accommodations, and was ordered to pass women.

Ranger students patrol records have always been destroyed (WiSCI can verify this back to at least 1985.) Given that over 375 women have attempted Ranger school over 550 times with 175 completing the course, it is very hard to argue that the initial women did not also earn their Tab. Once through the initial week of training, women earn their Tab at nearly the same rate as men (around 45% graduation rate.) A woman has “won” the 12 mile foot march event and another woman was selected as the Distinguished Honor Graduate of the course.

3. **FALSE:** A USMC study proved that all-male infantry teams outperform infantry mixed-gender teams.

- The oft-cited 2015 USMC study on all-male vs. mixed-gender teams showed the former group outperformed the latter. **However**, the men in the study were trained, experienced infantry men; the women had minimal training and no infantry experience.
- The all-male units had fewer injuries and higher performance on purely physical tasks. **However**, the women were not screened for physical fitness. When results were normed for physical fitness, the injury rate was the same.



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Women screened to meet the high physical standards of the infantry would doubtless have changed the team results on highly physical tasks as well.

- Experienced/trained Marines outperformed the mixed group on most measures, including the purely physical. **However**, even with less training, the mixed-gender units outperformed the male units on complex problem-solving tasks.

[This study was flawed](#), and essentially demonstrated only that training, experience, and fitness make a difference in mission performance.

**4. FALSE: Men in combat arms don't want to serve with women.**

In 2021, a [peer-reviewed study](#)<sup>1</sup> published in the journal *Armed Forces & Society* surveyed male soldiers from the formerly all-male Infantry and Armor branches of the U.S. Army to evaluate the effects of serving with women. This mixed-methods study used primary survey data collected from soldiers. A total of 8,798 respondents, serving in the 33 active-duty Army brigade combat teams, answered the anonymous electronic questionnaire. Results indicated that the presence of women within an infantry or armor platoon or squad, or exposure to a female leader, predicted that a male respondent was significantly more likely to support gender integration in combat arms and less likely to worry about effects on unit cohesion and performance. **Serving with women gave men more confidence, rather than less, in their capabilities.**

**5. FALSE: Physical fitness is the most important criteria for success in combat operations.**

Physical fitness is one of many [attributes that lead to success on the battlefield](#). Arguably the most physically challenging competition in the Army is the annual [Best Ranger](#) competition, in which participating Rangers are evaluated in [a variety of areas](#), including technical skill, tactical skill (how to deploy your skills/equipment), physical fitness, and cognitive skill (problem-solving).

Much of our learning from Iraq and Afghanistan echoes lessons from battles past: failure on the battlefield is primarily due to leadership/decisionmaking. Other key factors include morale, risk assessment/intelligence, or failure to adapt to

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<sup>1</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0095327X241298608>



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changing situations. [There is no evidence](#) suggesting inadequate physical fitness played a key role in battlefield failure.

**6. FALSE: Most Americans oppose women serving in combat roles.**

[72% of Americans surveyed in 2024](#) oppose new restrictions on women's ability to serve in military combat roles. Americans want politicians to focus on real issues that affect our quality of life like healthcare, the cost of living, and unemployment. Stop politicizing our warfighters and let them do their jobs.

**7. FALSE: Women don't need to be in combat arms specialties; they can be plugged-in to roles as needed on short notice.**

**Integration must be conducted early and often to increase unit effectiveness.** Women must be established members of a unit like their male counterparts. [A study from Norway](#) shows that unisex berthing increases unit cohesion and information flow. Experience with Cultural Support Teams (CSTs) in the US military showed that women in combat units improve mission success and intelligence-gathering – but denying those women the infantry training (including Ranger School) the men had put them at greater risk and reduced unit cohesion, jeopardizing the missions. Using women who had not been integrated into the unit meant things as simple as hand-and-arm signals were not understood, and led to bad outcomes.