

# THE CIVIL WAR SOLDIER



Almost 3 million men fought in the American Civil War, 2 million for the North and about 1 million for the South.

The average soldier was single, male, native born, between 18 and 29 years old. He stood 5 feet 8 inches tall and weighed about 140 pounds. Most soldiers averaged just under 26 years of age.

The majority of soldiers on both sides listed their occupation as "farmer". Union troops alluded to a higher number of other occupations, including everything from attorney to mechanic. Because the South was more agrarian based a higher percentage of Southern troops came from the farm.

Large numbers of immigrants contributed to the ranks on both sides, particularly in the North. Almost one quarter of all Union troops were immigrants, including:

200,000 Germans, 150,000 Irish, 45,000 English and 15,000 Canadians.

France, Italy and Poland contributed lesser numbers but the aggregate was still significant.

Fewer immigrants rallied to the Confederacy but the mix of nationalities mirrored those of the North.

Most of the men on both sides were volunteers, but in later years of the war, the Union Army conscripted about 5-6% of its manpower.

Religion played a big part in the lives of many soldiers on both sides. Many carried New Testaments and prayer cards with them. Most men followed a Protestant denomination, but a large percentage of the immigrants, German and Irish troops especially, were Roman Catholic. About 7,000 Union troops were Jewish as were about 3,000 Southern troops.



The Civil War was unique in that almost all military units on both sides were identified by the state from which they served. Companies and regiments were raised locally and thus many members of the units knew each other. Because of the high casualty rates, this often resulted in a majority of young men from a particular town or region being lost at the same battle.

Over 360,000 men died in service to the Union and the South lost over 260,000 men. More than two-thirds of all deaths in the Civil War were from disease or infection.