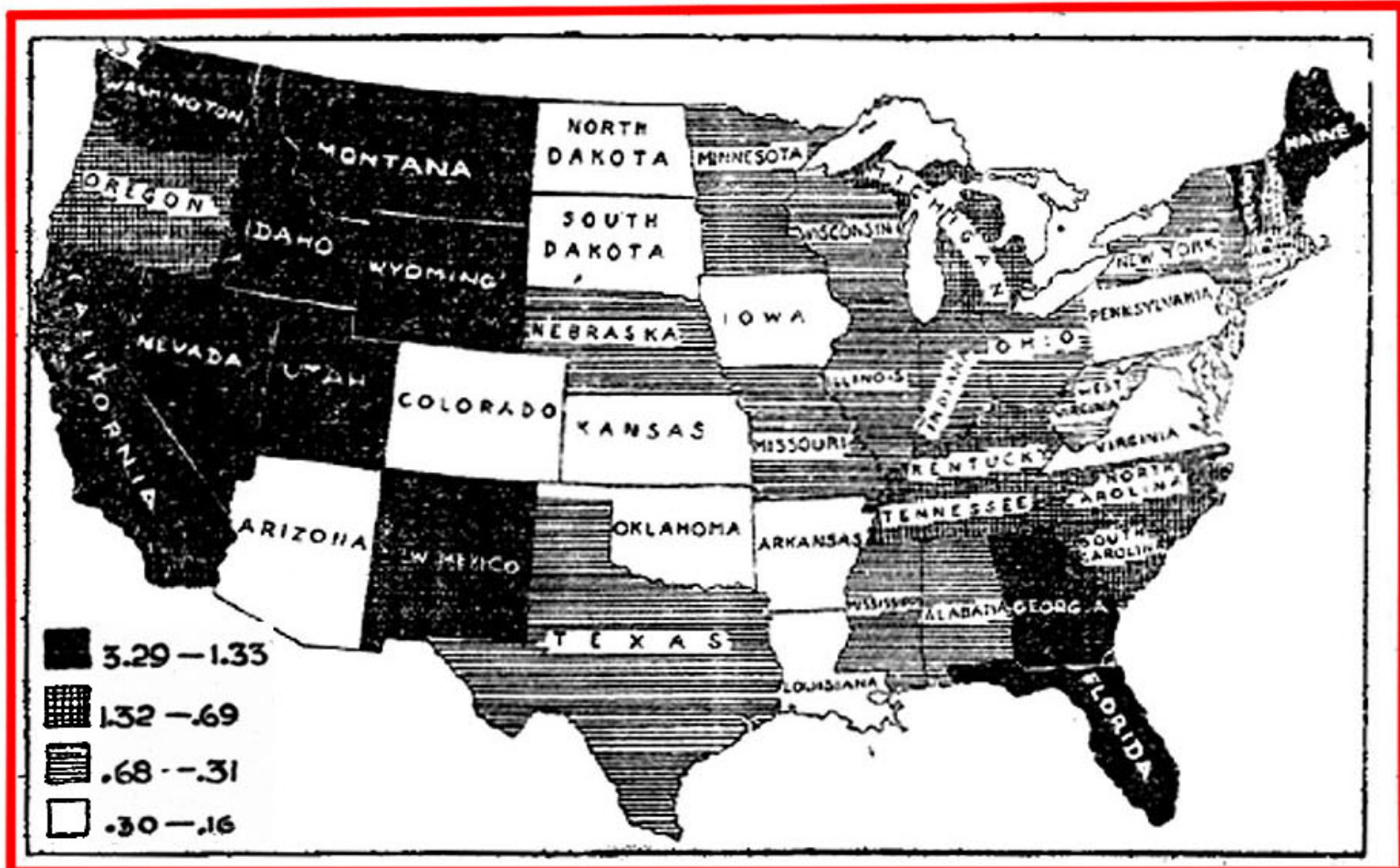


CURRENT OPINION

September, 1919

HOW THE FIRST MILLION DRAFT RECRUITS MEASURED UP PHYSICALLY

Nearly Thirty in Every Hundred were Rejected as Being Flat-footed —City and Country Boys Compared



HOW THE STATES RESPONDED TO THE SELECTIVE DRAFT CALL. Those that furnished the largest percentage of men are shown in white. The largest percentage of unfit physically appear in black. Figures in the corner show the percentage of unfit among the first million men examined.

THE first adequate physical survey in half a century was made possible when the selective draft system brought before medical examiners some ten million men. Of the 2,510,000 men between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one examined by local boards, 730,000, or 29.1 per cent., were rejected on physical grounds. It may surprise many to read that the malady raging with greatest frequency among those of military age is *pes planus*, an affliction that strikes one man in every five. Yet these men, despite their flat feet (which the army surgeons call *pes planus*), manage to get along very well in civil life, tho they make poor soldiers. Surgeon-General M. W. Ireland reveals some illuminating data in his War Department Bulletin No. 11 as regards the physical condition of "the first million draft recruits." Among other statements made by the Provost Marshal General and incorporated in the bulletin, we read that during the first four months of mobilization about one-third of the men who were examined were rejected on physical grounds, and during the next eight months almost one-fourth of such candidates were rejected. Also, states the *New York Tribune*, commenting on the report:

"The figures indicate that about twenty-two per cent. of the rejections were caused by some mechanical defect in the organism, or rather some defect or disease that would interfere with its mechanical performance, such as defects in the bones and joints, flatfoot and hernia. An additional fifteen per cent. were rejected because of imperfections of the sense organs and about thirteen per cent. for defects in the cardio-vascular system. About twelve per cent. were rejected on account of nervous and mental troubles, in part due to abnormal thyroid secretions. About ten per cent. were rejected on account of the two communicable disease groups — tuberculosis and severe cases of venereal diseases.

~the First Million Draftees~

"These facts about the amount and nature of disability have their importance in considering the military power of the United States. Their significance for civil life is less. Because one-third or even one-fourth of males twenty to thirty years of age are physically unfit to fight it does not follow that so large a proportion are handicapped in appreciable degree for civil life. Combatant forces have to move on their feet often great on the whole, more characteristic of cities than rural districts, tho both New York and Chicago give a ratio of 10 per 1,000, as contrasted with 16 for all cities. Drug addiction is strikingly more prevalent in the large cities, and above all in New York City, than it is in rural districts."

All counties, we read, having only one local board were considered rural districts. Those having two or more local boards were considered as cities or densely populated counties. The following table gives the frequency of each of the classes of recruits examined from rural and urban districts and from four large cities, with the results of classification at camp:

Number of recruits from urban districts	377,020	
		Per cent. of urban
Accepted without defect..	232,757	61.74
Accepted with defect.....	126,258	33.49
Rejected	17,965	4.77
Number of recruits from rural districts	506,965	
		Per cent. of rural
Accepted without defect...	338,356	66.74
Accepted with defect.....	143,446	28.30
Rejected	25,163	4.96
Total urban and rural recruits....	883,985	
Distribution unknown	110,221	
		—————
Grand total	994,206	

CURRENT OPINION

OldMagazineArticles.com