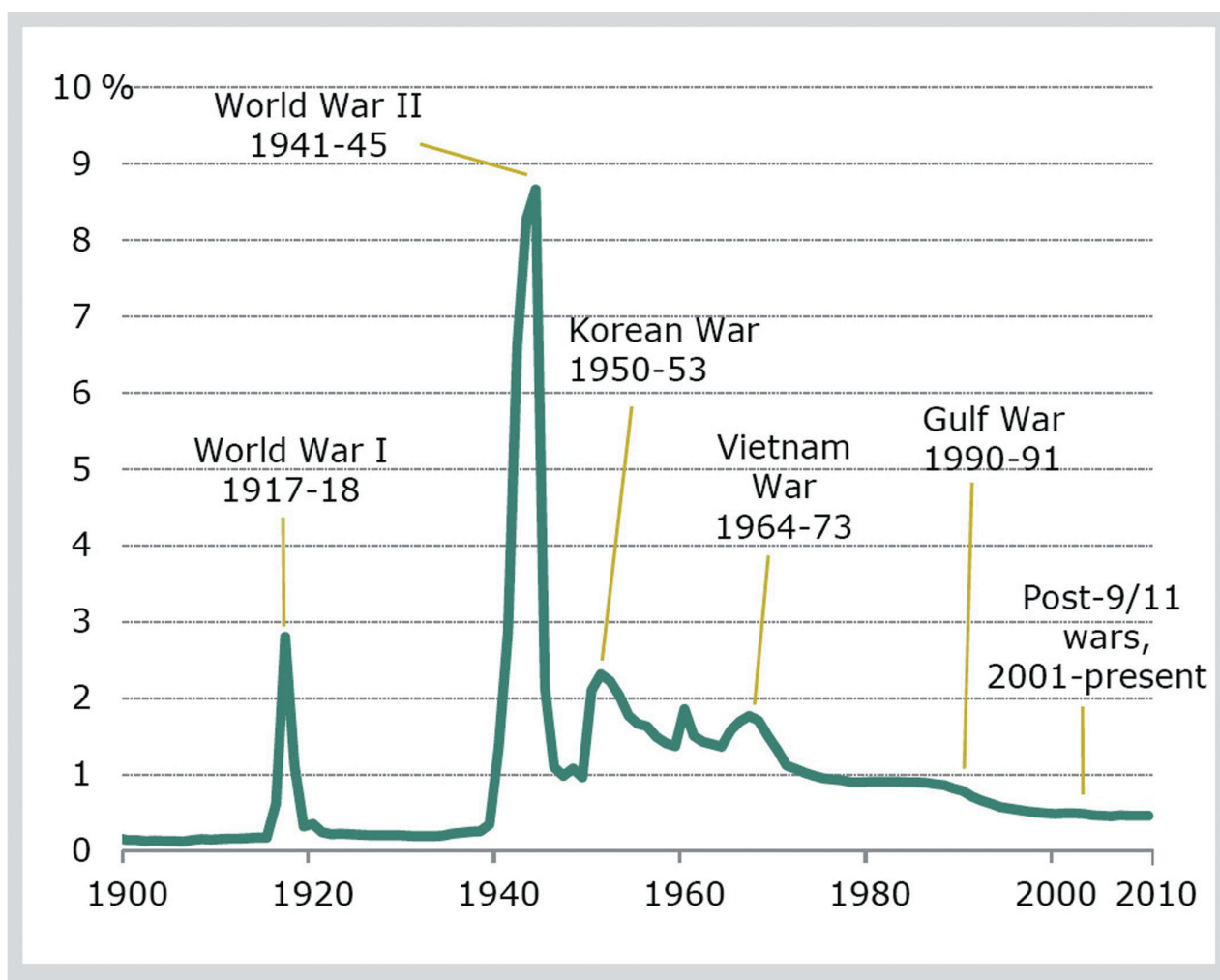


The Relative Handful in Uniform

America's military needs—including the fighting of its wars—increasingly are seen to by a smaller and smaller share of the US population. Participation peaked in World War II; by 1945, nearly nine percent of the citizenry was in arms. As shown in this chart, the proportion of citizens serving rose again in the Korean War, early 1960s, and Vietnam War. In the latter, 8.7 million served, though the share never reached

two percent. In the post-9/11 era, about four million men and women have worn the uniform, but the rate of participation has fallen below 0.5 percent of all Americans, the lowest since the interwar 1920s and 1930s. Much of the percentage decline can be chalked up to huge growth in population, from about 133 million in 1945 to nearly 310 million in 2010, though the absolute size of the armed forces has also fallen.

Percent of Americans in US Armed Forces, 1900-2010



Source: "War and Sacrifice in the Post-9/11 Era," Pew Research Center, Oct. 5, 2011, Washington, D.C. Basic data from Molly Clever and David R. Segal, "After Conscription: The United States and the All-Volunteer Force," forthcoming.