

VITAL STATISTICS

Population

A total of 2.7 million servicemembers have served in the terror war sparked by the 9/11 attacks. Each year now about a third of a million individuals leave military service and become veterans. At present, terror-war vets make up 22 percent of all veterans. That will rise to 42 percent by 2030.

Current armed forces	2,152,164
Active duty	1,330,660
Reserve / National Guard	821,504

Deployments during terror war	
Servicemembers who were deployed at least once	2,726,102
Active duty	1,964,777
National Guard and Reserve	691,000

Veterans		
Individuals leaving military service in latest year (2015)	314,171	
Veterans by era served—today, and 2030 projection ¹		
	2016	2030
Terror war	4,633,481	7,358,833
Gulf war	4,482,618	4,340,291
Vietnam	6,953,004	4,098,108
Korea	1,592,188	142,639
World War II	695,637	29,757
Total	21,368,156	17,421,211

1. Approximation due to some serving in multiple eras.

Sources: Defense Manpower Data Center (2017); Defense Manpower Data Center Deployment File (2015); Department of Defense "2015 Demographics: Profile of the military community"; Department of Veterans Affairs Vet Pop Model

Jobs

Of the 4.6 million men and women who served during the war on terror and are now out of the military, 19 percent are not in the labor force—they are in school, raising children, living on disability payments, or retired. Of those who are in the labor force, 6 percent are unemployed. Spouses of members of the military, who must deal with moves and deployments, face special challenges getting jobs.¹

Unemployment rate		
	Veterans	Civilians
Men age 25-35	7%	5%
Women age 25-35	7%	6%
Men age 35-44	4%	4%
Women age 35-44	6%	4%

Labor force dropout rate		
	Terror-war veterans	Civilians
Men age 25-35	14%	11%
Women age 25-35	30%	27%
Men age 35-44	13%	9%
Women age 35-44	26%	26%

1. The average time spouses spend looking for work after each military-required move is five months.

Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics "Household Data Annual Averages, Employment Status of persons 18 and over by veteran status, age, and sex" (2015); DoD Defense Manpower Data Center "Active Duty Spouses and Active Duty Members; Spouse Employment, Satisfaction, Financial Health, Relationships, and Deployments" (2015)

Education

There is a common misperception that many of the Americans who volunteer for military service do so because they lack skills to make it in the civilian economy. Actually, the young people who serve today exceed national norms, on average, in education and intelligence, health, and character qualities. On the whole, it is most accurate to think of people who have served in the military as a national asset, rather than a problematic population.

Recruit quality		
	Enlisted (officers excluded)	Civilians of the same age
Scored above average on aptitude tests	76%	50%
Have a high school degree	98%	87%

Educational attainment				
	Servicemembers	All veterans	Terror- war vets	Civilians 25+
No high school diploma	1%	7%	~0%	14%
High school or some college	77%	66%	65%	56%
Bachelor's degree or higher	22%	28%	34%	31%

Main specialties the military trains enlisted for	
Electrical	20%
Infantry, weapons, etc.	16%
Administration	13%
Supply	11%
Communications	10%
Electronics	9%
Medical	8%
Craftsman	3%

Sources: DoD "Population representation in the Military Services" (2014); V.A. "Veterans Economic Communities Pilot: 2016 Program Report"; DoD "2015 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community"

Physical Injuries

Nearly all Americans agree that our society should pull out all the stops to heal and rehabilitate men and women injured during military service. Fortunately, compared to the millions who served in Iraq or Afghanistan, the number seriously hurt is much smaller than generally imagined.

Deaths during terror-war deployments	6,880
Wounded in action	52,482
Wounds serious enough to result in evacuation from theater	~15,000

	Casualty rate (wounded or killed)	Percentage of casualties wounded rather than killed	Percentage of veterans receiving (to date) disability compensation ¹
World War I	7%	64%	
World War II	7%	62%	11%
Korea	2%	74%	N.A.
Vietnam	4%	84%	16%
Gulf war	~0%	55%	21%
Terror war	1%	88%	33%

Major injuries during War on Terror

Amputations	1,645
Serious burns	991
Genital injuries	1,387

Top disabilities claimed by veterans of War on Terror

Ringing ears	434,094
Knee injury	316,792
Back pain	302,687
PTSD	269,556
Scars	218,910
Ankle injury	203,032
Migraine	168,415
Arthritis of spine	174,354
Sleep apnea	145,340
Hearing loss	146,429

1. Nearly half of all terror-war vets have already applied for disability, so the ultimate level of receiving benefits will eventually exceed that level.

Sources: Casualty Analysis System Defense (2017); Armed Forces Medical Surveillance Monthly Report (2012, 2013); DoD "Post-discharge Cause of Death Analysis" (2015); Congressional Research Service "A Guide to U.S. Military Casualty Statistics" (2015); V.A. "America's Wars" (2016); V.A. Annual Benefits Report (2015)

Mental Health

As in athletics, concussions are not uncommon in military life—with four out of five incidents taking place at U.S. bases rather than during deployments. Among recently deployed servicemembers, roadside bomb blasts and more routine events like vehicle accidents caused some concussions and some serious brain injuries. Post-traumatic stress diagnoses are rising for a variety of reasons. Compared to equivalent-age civilian counterparts, alcohol use is higher among servicemembers, and drug use is lower.

Total military concussions or brain injuries 2000-2016 (80% occurred in U.S., 20% during deployment)	
Severe concussion or brain injury	8,778
Moderate concussion	32,434
Mild concussion	294,010

Psychological and behavioral indicators			
	Deployed	Never deployed	Civilian Counterparts
War on terror veterans who experienced PTSD	2% to 17%	2% to 3%	4%
Active military who experienced depression at some point in career	13%	6%	16%
Active military using alcohol heavily within past 12 months	8%		5%
Active military using an illegal drug within the past month	~1%		22%
Active military misusing a prescription drug within the past month	~1%		6%
Annual suicides among servicemembers	475		
Increased risk of suicide for veterans compared to similar civilian population	21%		

Sources: DoD Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center "Worldwide Numbers for TBI"; Frueh, Richardson and Acierio "Prevalence Estimates of Combat-Related PTSD: A Critical Review" (2010); Gademmann, Engel, et al. "Prevalence of DSM-IV Major Depression Among U.S. Military Personnel: Meta-analysis and simulation"; DoD "2011 Dept. of Defense Health-Related Behaviors Survey of Active Duty Military Personnel" (2013); SAMHSA, "Results from the 2011 National Survey on Drug Use and Health" (2012); V.A., "Suicide Among Veterans and Other Americans 2001-2014" (2016)

Family and Geography

Most veterans and servicemembers these days are married. Most veterans and many servicemembers are also responsible for children. The ratio of single parents in the military is vastly lower than in the civilian population. A very small fraction of households have dual military heads. Veterans are somewhat likelier to live in rural areas. All big states have lots of veterans.

Marital status of veterans and others				
	Married	Divorced	Widowed /separated	Never married
Veterans of war on terror	55%	14%	4%	27%
Other veterans	66%	16%	11%	7%
Non-veterans	48%	11%	8%	33%
Military personnel	51%	5%	~ 0%	43%

Dependents of active military	
Servicemembers with children	873,884 (41%)
Dependents of servicemembers by age	
0 to 11	1,210,668
12 to 18	424,839
Servicemembers who are single parents	133,555 (6%)
Servicemembers whose spouse is also military	47,273 (2%)

Veterans living in urban vs. rural areas		
	Urban	Rural
Overall U.S. population	84%	16%
Veterans of war on terror	74%	26%

States with largest populations of veterans	
Texas	1,755,680
California	1,670,186
Florida	1,533,306
Virginia	894,681
North Carolina	834,526
Georgia	830,089
New York	784,771
Pennsylvania	772,421
Ohio	751,763
Illinois	690,040

Sources: V.A. "Profile of Post 9/11 Veterans: 2014"; DoD "2015 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community," V.A. VetPop Model; V.A. "Characteristics of Rural Veterans: 2010"

Financial

Veterans, even the comparatively young men and women who served in the war on terror, earn substantially more than non-veterans. They also have access to special public benefits, in addition to what they earn. Veterans are thus much less likely to be poor, and comparatively few are homeless.

Median 2014 earnings full-time workers		
	Male	Female
Non-veterans	\$46,989	\$37,965
Veterans of the war on terror	\$49,032	\$41,456
Other veterans	\$52,926	\$44,945

Median 2014 income earnings plus public benefits, all work statuses		
Non-veterans	\$27,297	\$16,691
Veterans of the war on terror	\$29,946	\$39,960
Other veterans	\$34,981	\$27,934

Percent living in poverty in 2014		
Non-veterans	13%	16%
Veterans of the war on terror	8%	10%
All veterans	7%	9%

Number of homeless veterans 2016 point-in-time count		
39,471		

Sources: V.A. "Profile of Post 9/11 Veterans: 2014" (2016); V.A. "Profile of Veterans in Poverty: 2014" (2016); HUD "2016 PIT Estimate of Veteran Homelessness in the U.S."