



THE ROLE OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN
**CALLING THE
NEXT GENERATION
TO SERVE**

DATA BRIEFING

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ZEROMILS

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Introduction

Over the last several years, we at Georgetown University have examined and advised on a wide variety of veterans’ issues. We have conducted 2 high level workshops entitled **Workshop I: Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward** (Spring 2021) and **Workshop II: Sustaining the All-Volunteer Force: The Role of Veterans and Veterans Issues** (Spring 2023). Both events were chaired by coauthors Dr. Joel Kupersmith, Professor Emeritus of Medicine, Georgetown University and GEN George W. Casey (Ret.), former Army Chief of Staff. Participants have been former VA Secretaries, other current and former VA officials, members of Congress, former high-level military officers, academics, leadership of VSOs and the private [sector](#). Workshop I resulted in a book with the same [title](#) and Workshop II in a Discussion Outline [here](#).

For this event **Military thriving Change Forum**, working with ZeroMils, we have assembled a group of bedrock business leaders to discuss issues related to military recruitment and veterans. This **Data Primer** supports the workshop providing source material that includes

discussions from both workshops, our book, additional conversations, writings from the participants in the workshops and other available data. Included are data and information on military recruitment and personnel, veterans and the Department of Veterans Affairs. We feel this information has general value over and above the workshop and therefore offer it to a wider audience with interest in veterans

We want to thank certain individuals who have been prominent in preparing background materials for this work including Paul R, Lawrence (Former Under Secretary of Benefits, Department of Veterans Affairs), Jeffrey Phillips (Executive Director, Reserve Organization of America) Kenneth Preston (Former Sergeant Major of the Army), and James Ridgway (Professorial Lecturer in Law, George Washington University Law School).

One note on the considerable data offered in this **Data Primer**: Available numbers may differ in time, causing variability.

We start with the Veteran's Creed.

Veteran's Creed

The Veteran's Creed

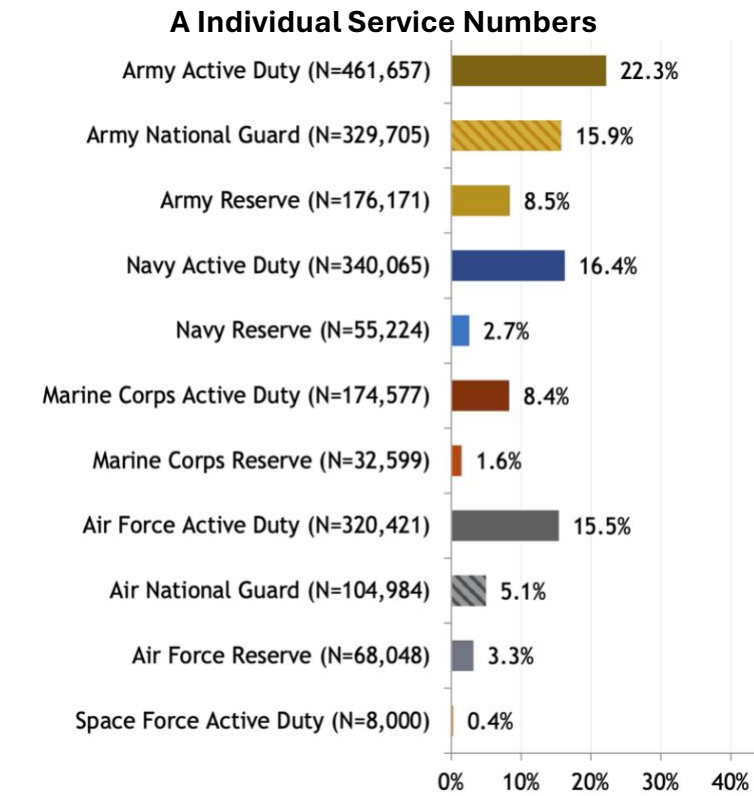
1. I am an American Veteran
2. I proudly served my country
3. I live the values I learned in the military
4. I continue to serve my community, my country and my fellow veterans
5. I maintain my physical and mental discipline
6. I continue to lead and improve
7. I make a difference
8. I honor and remember my fallen comrades

The Veteran's Creed is a statement of veterans' principles reflecting the positive traits instilled in our servicemen and women, traits which remain part of who they are. The principles along with the capabilities learned in the military foster excellence in employment as well as encouraging recruitment. The Creed was developed by a group of VSOs working with Dr. Kupersmith and GEN [Casey](#) and has been officially adopted by 17 major VSOs.

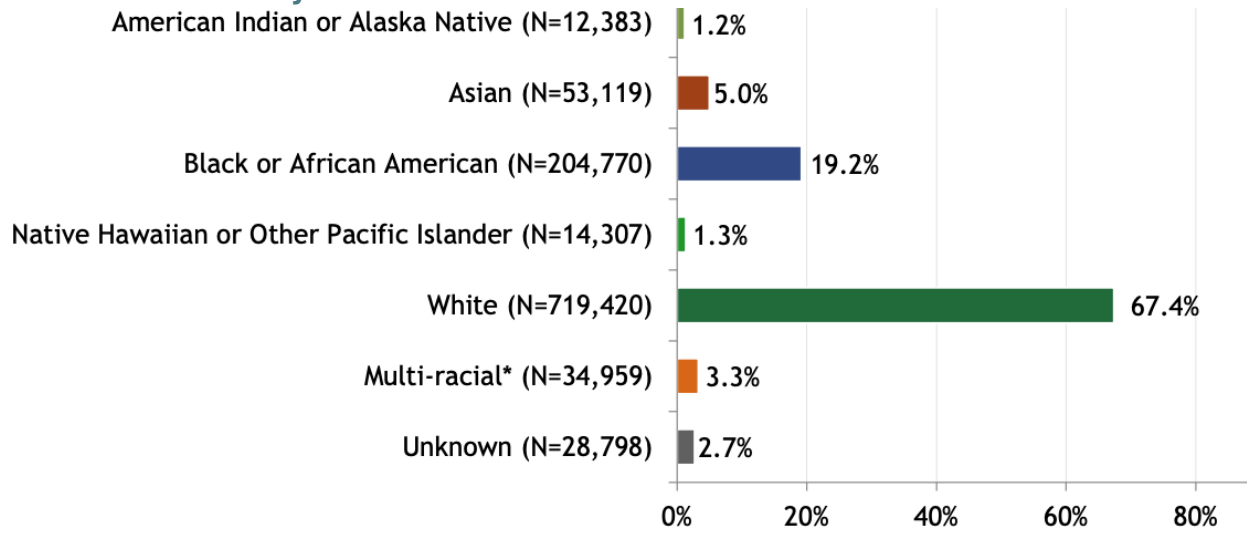
Military Numbers

Active-duty military personnel [numbers in Figure 1](#). Note the diversity and proportion of women in Figure 1B and C, which will be more and more reflected in the future veteran population.

Figure 1
A Active-Duty Military



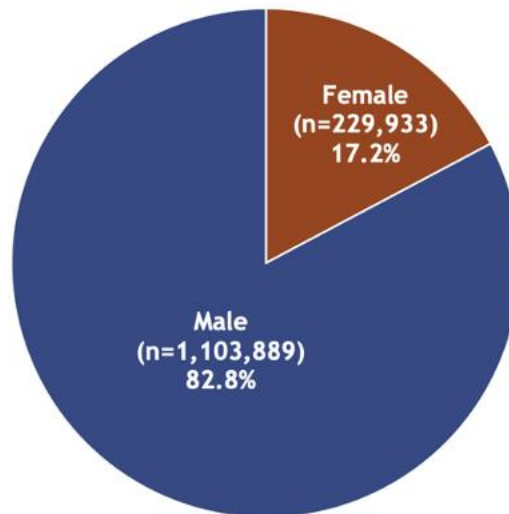
B. Race and Ethnicity



Categories are self-identified

From [DoD Demographics Profile, 2022](#)

C Gender of Military Active Duty Personnel



From Military Demographics [Profile 2022](#)

Military Recruitment Numbers

In 2022, after more than 50 years since the advent of the AVF force, a recruitment crisis emerged with military recruiting numbers falling well short of goals. In FY2023, Army, Navy and Air Force were all short in active duty, National Guard and Reserve recruiting (Figure 1A,B). Such shortfalls were a shock to the system.

After missing its goals in FY2023 for the 2nd straight year the Army took the reduced its FY24 goals from 58,038 to 46,400 active duty which was [met](#). The rationale for this reduction, according to Army Secretary Christine Wormuth, was that the Army was looking to eliminate already empty positions that had supported counterinsurgency but are no longer needed due to shifting strategic [priorities](#). The Army also instituted measures to improve the expertise of recruiters in modern methods such as evidence based learning, sophisticated collection and examination of data, labor market analysis and, modern [communications](#). With these measures, active duty recruiting numbers in FY2024 met goals and in addition, about 11,000 potential recruits were put into a delayed entry program, which will give “breathing room” for [FY2025](#).

The Navy continues to struggle despite providing cash bonuses and a student loan repayment program, raising the maximum enlistment age from 39 to 41 and accepting individuals with lower scores on military aptitude [tests](#). It was about 7,200 sailors short in FY2023. And for FY2024, it still had both an active-duty and a Reserve shortfall. The Air Force which had missed its FY2023 active duty goal (by 10%) for the first time since [1999](#) was on target in FY2024 (Figure 1A). In the Reserve and National Guard, there were persistent shortfalls in various groups. The Marines, who depend on *esprit de corps* for enlistments, consistently made target in all areas..

Table 1A
Military Recruitment Numbers – Active Component

<i>Military Recruiting Numbers</i>					
<i>Active Component</i>					
<i>FY2022-2024*</i>					
F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army	52,920	37,213	71.1	-15,077
2	Navy	30,860	30,848	99.9	-12
0	Marines	25,631	25,638	100	+7
2	Air Force	24,391	24,291	100	0
2	Space Force	506	532	105.1	+26
F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army	58,038	43,634	75.1	-14,404

2	Navy	34,543	27,326	79.1	-7,217
0	Marines	24,623	24,910	101.1	+287
2	Air Force	25,138	22,181	88.2	-2,957
3	Space Force	492	536	109.2	+45
F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army	46,400	49,307	106.3	+2,907
2	Navy	36,382	30,313	83.3	-6,069
0	Marines	23,484	23,861	101.6	+377
2	Air Force	25,200	25,349	100.6	+149
4	Space Force	691	716	103.6	+25

*On Target/Shortfalls FY2024 data through 8/31/2024
From DoD June 2024

Table 1B
Military Recruitment Numbers – Reserve and National Guard

<i>Military Recruiting Numbers</i>					
<i>Reserve and National Guard (NG)</i>					
<i>FY2022-2024*</i>					
F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army NG	35,475	23,064	65.0	-12,411
2	Army Reserve	13,214	8,179	61.9	-5,035
0	Navy Reserve	6,596	4,985	75.6	-1,611
2	Marine Reserve	7,143	7,711	107.9	+568
2	Air NG	7,630	5,228	68.5	-2,402
	Air Force Reserve	6,307	4,874	77.3	-1,433

F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army NG	28,533	27,836	97.6	-697
2	Army Reserve	13,214	8,409	63.6	-4,805
0	Navy Reserve	7,766	5,764	74.2	-2,002
2	Marine Reserve	6,198	7,017	113.2	+819
3	Air NG	10,486	6,366	60.7	-4,120
	Air Force Reserve	7,167	4,860	67.8	-2,307
F		Goals	Attained	%	Diff
Y	Army NG	31,570	32,989	104.5	+1,419
2	Army Reserve	13,449	9,949	73.98	-3,500
0	Navy Reserve	6,846	6,435	94.0	-411
2	Marine Reserve	5,458	6,473	118.6	+1,015
4	Air NG	7,582	7,842	103.4	+260
	Air Force Reserve	5,276	5,535	104.9	+259

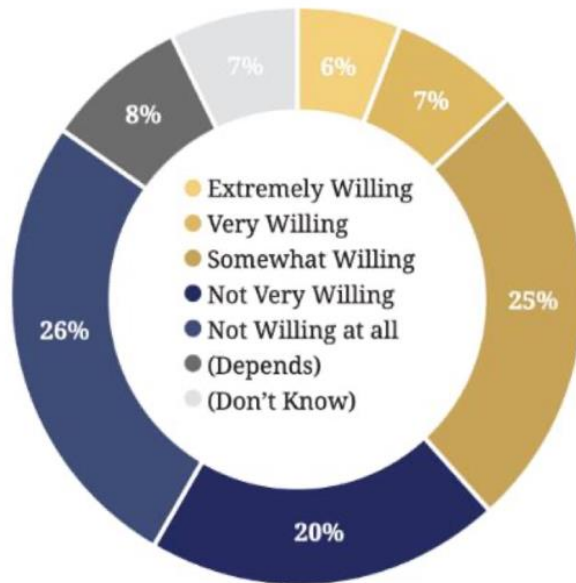
On Target/**Shortfalls** FY2024 data through 8/31/2024
From [DoD](#) June 2024

Why the AVF Recruitment Shortfalls?

Propensity to *Serve/Reasons*

The disappointing recruiting results fit in with the shrinking interest in military service (i.e. “propensity to serve”) among Gen Zers, who are in the 18-29-year-olds age group. Figure 2 displays these attitudes in a Reagan National Defense survey conducted in 2022.

Figure 2
Propensity to Serve Ages 18-29

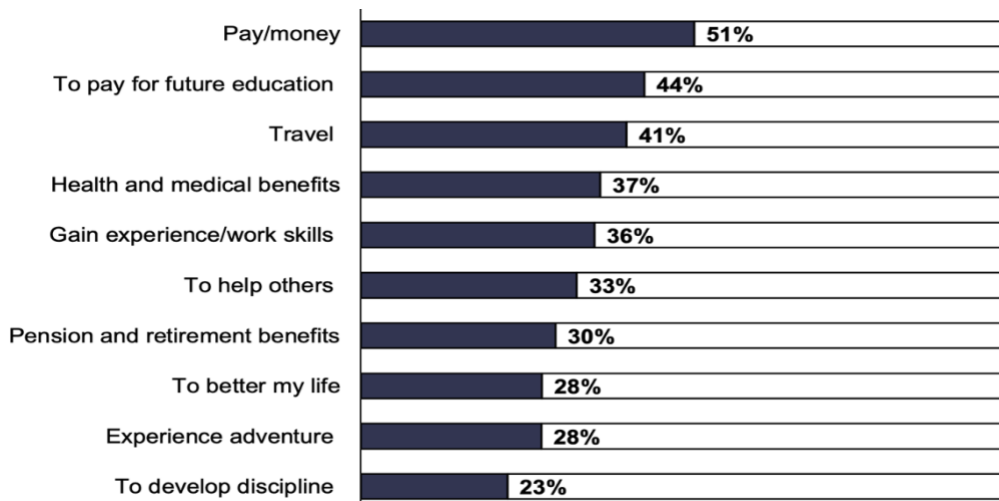


From Reagan National Defense [Survey](#) (2022)

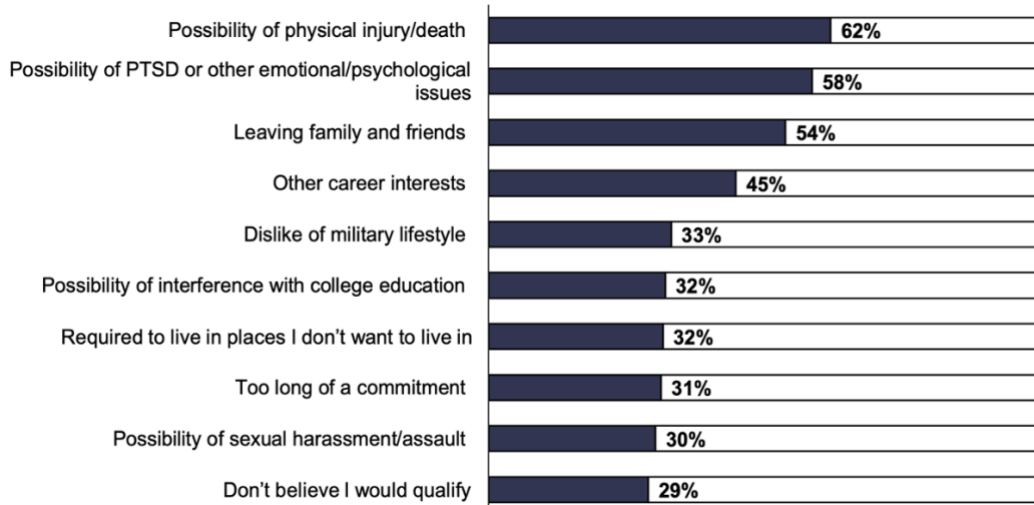
In this survey there were no notable disparities related to educational level. In separate Pentagon data, 9% of individuals aged 16-21 said they would consider military service (2022), down from 13% before the [pandemic](#).

The Joint Advertising Marketing Research and Studies (JAMRS) run by DoD does surveys on various issues related to recruitment in Gen Zers aged 16-21. Shown in Figure 3 are the top 10 reasons to serve and *not* to serve in this age group.

Figure 3
A. Top 10 Reasons to Serve



B. Top 10 Reasons Not to Serve



DoD [JAMRS](#) Summer 2023

Reasons to serve seem to center around benefits rather than patriotism. The top 2 reasons *not* to serve are possibility of physical injury/death (62%) and of PTSD or other emotional/psychological issues (58%). Some observers feel that the considerable public discussion of veterans' challenges puts these reasons not to serve in the forefront (see below "Broken Veteran [Narrative](#)"). Note also that the possibility of sexual harassment would dissuade 30% of 16-21-year-olds.

Erosion of Once Defining American Values.

A Gallop poll (Figure 4) showed that American adults have less pride in the country overall and especially in the 18-34 year-age group. The patriotic values that caused a flurry of recruitment after 9/11 have withered.

Figure 4A
US Adults' Pride in Being American 2001-2022

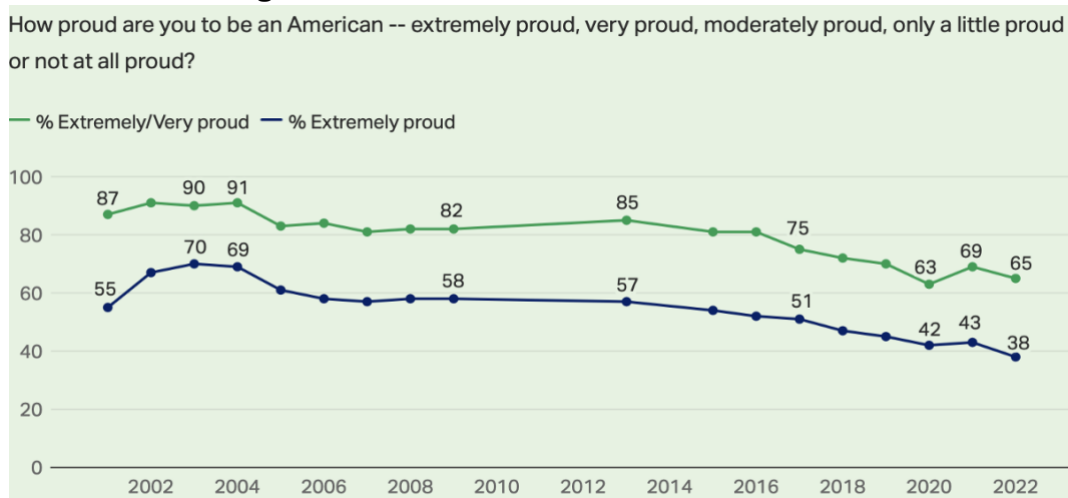
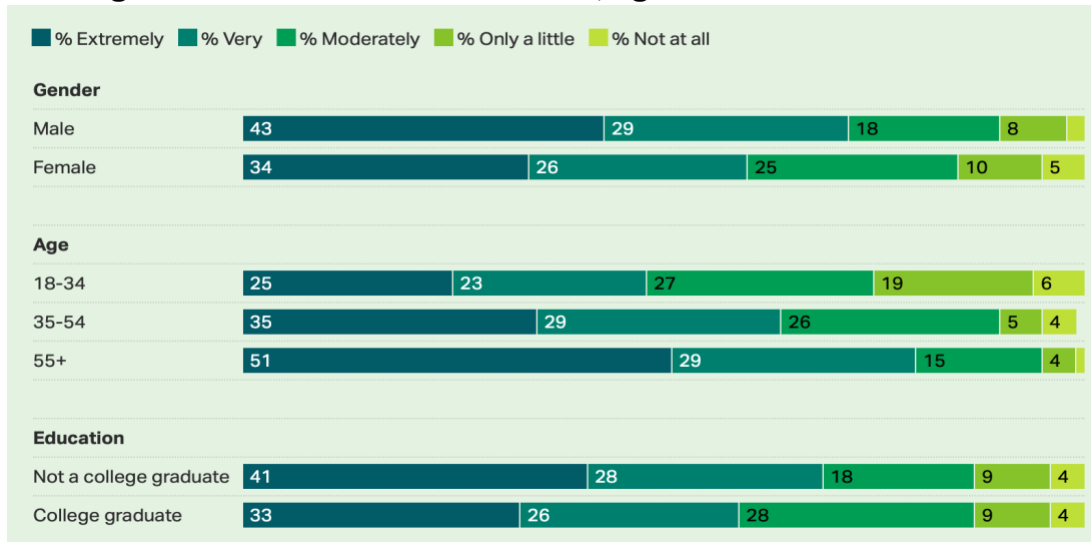


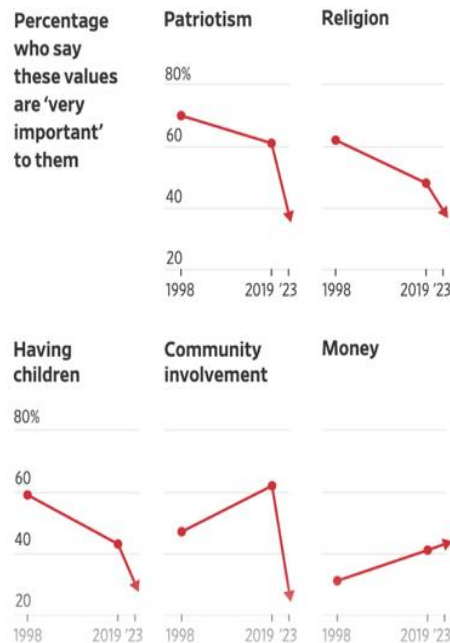
Figure 4B
Pride in being and American related to Gender, Age and Education



Gallop, ages 18+ 2001-2022

Similarly, a 2023 NORC/University of Chicago poll showed declines in values of patriotism, religion, and community involvement among 19-34-year-olds since 1998, with particularly large drops since 2019 (Figure 5). These values have been considered fundamental to military enlistment. On the other hand, interest in “Money” kept rising.

Figure 5
Decline in Values



WSJ funded survey conducted by NORC (University of Chicago) of US adults age ≥18 [years](#).

Gen Z the Recruitment Target

Gen. Z individuals (born 1997-2012) are in the target age group to volunteer for the AVF, and their composition, attitudes and goals are therefore central to the topic of recruiting.

Gen. Zers are racially and ethnically more diverse than any previous [generation](#) (Figure 6A). They are also more educated than their predecessors. (Figure 6B).

According to surveys, Gen Z's social and policy views are similar to Millennials - progressive, pro-government, favoring racial and ethnic diversity, comfort with gender-neutral pronouns, viewing societal change as a good, having less agreement with American exceptionalism and tending to have a global rather than a nationalistic [approach](#) and wanting an activist government. (Figure 6C).

Figure 6A
Gen Z Ethnic Composition

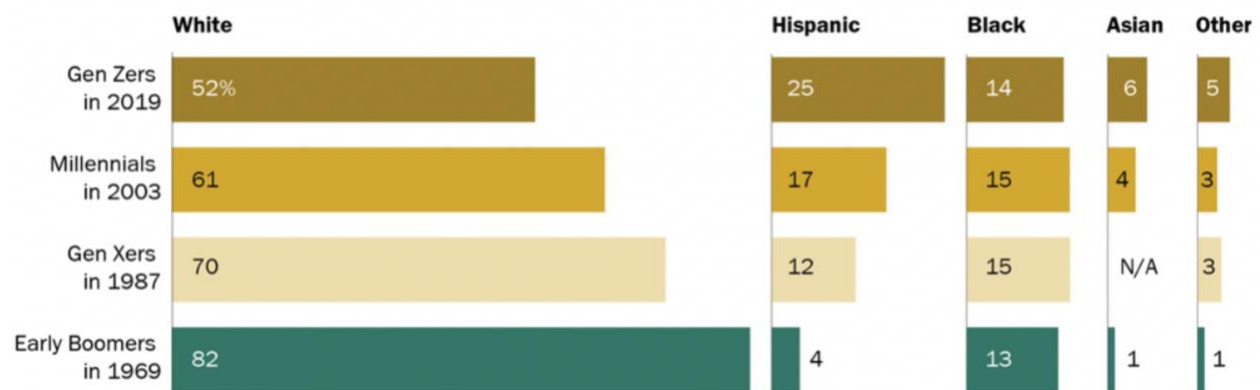


Figure 6B
Gen Z Education

Among 18- to 21-year-olds no longer in high school, % enrolled in college

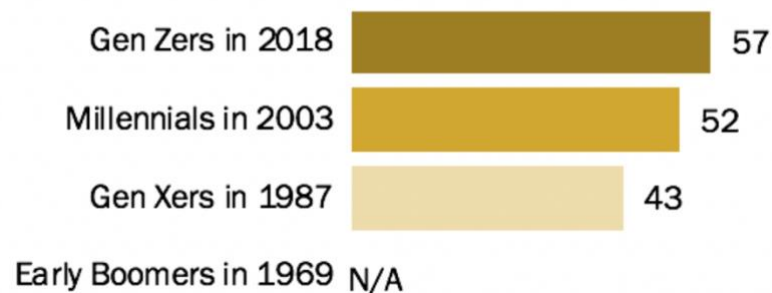
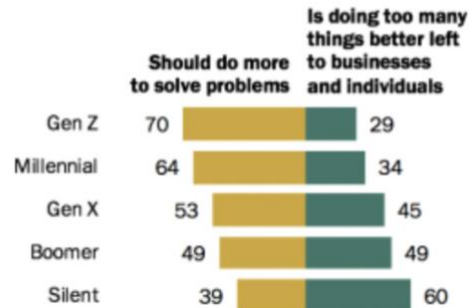


Figure 6C
Gen Z Views on government

Gen Z more likely than other generations to want an activist government

% saying government ...



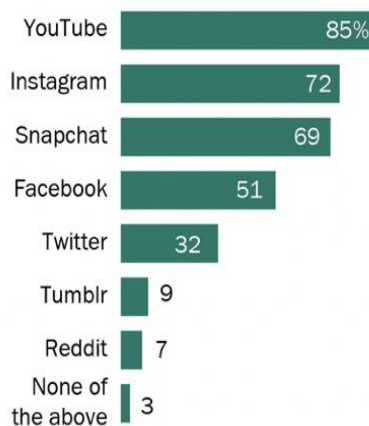
All from [Pew](#) Survey 2018

Gen. Zers, want greater work-life balance and personal well-being, tend to feel more disengaged from work and want employers who are ethical and [transparent](#). They value freedom and autonomy at [work](#) as well as transparency and authenticity and enjoy competition. They have more struggles with mental [health](#). Less Gen Z men and more women played competitive sports.

For Gen. Zers there is little or no memory of what existed before the IT revolution and smartphones. There is little peer pressure to join the military and appeals to patriotism clash with these substantially changed attitudes. And, of course, their primary source of information is social media, perhaps their most defining characteristic.

Figure 7
Use of Social Media

% of 13- to 17-year-olds who say they use ...



From [Pew](#) 2020

Possibly influencing their attitudes, Gen Zers have also had unique teen experiences, as shown in an American Survey Center poll (Figure 8). Likely important in the Gen. Z experience is the higher percentage who felt lonely or isolated compared to previous generations and the fact that less time was spent with friends as teenagers. This milieu was of course abetted by the COVID pandemic. Also, interestingly, less Gen Zers drink alcohol or smoke pot or tobacco than did earlier generations.

Figure 8A
Gen Z Unique Teen Experiences

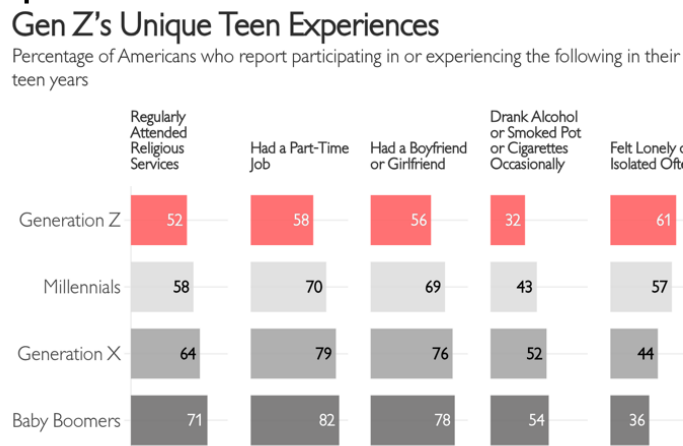


Figure 8B
Gen Z Time With friends



From American Survey [Center](#) 2023

The GENESIS System

The Military Health System Genesis is an Electronic Health Record platform unveiled in 2022 and now available online at military entrance processing stations. Many recruiters and others have blamed the system as a major roadblock to [recruiting](#). The cause for blame is that the system is meticulous in detecting any sort of past medical issue. So, while previously an applicant could ignore a minor medical problem, such as a broken bone or short-term use of ADHD drugs, these are now presented to the recruiter who has to make an assessment. This takes time and the delays may discourage recruiting apart from the fact that some issues may disqualify the individual when it is not completely appropriate. Parents may not want to expose their children's issues. Errors in the system have also raised [concerns](#).

While some jump on this as the major problem in recruiting, the Pentagon disagrees, saying that the system does not disqualify [anyone](#). It feels that the low willingness of young people to serve as well as the residual effects of the COVID pandemic are larger [problems](#).

Broken Veteran Narrative

Perceptions of veterans including the so called "Broken Veteran [Narrative](#) " relate to media descriptions of veterans that tend to focus only on their challenges such as PTSD, suicide and homelessness. The descriptions are well-meaning in trying to help individuals with these [conditions](#) but their pervasiveness creates a warped impression. Note above in Figure 3B that the two top reasons that for not enlisting are the possibility of physical injury (62%) and of PTSD or other emotional/psychological injury (58%) suggesting a relationship to the narrative though such is at this present conjectural.

In contrast to this pervasive narrative, veterans, in fact, do well in employment and incomes as we show below. Also, regarding combat, while 47% of post 9/11 combat veterans report emotionally traumatic or distressing experience and 36% report PTSD, 67% said their experiences show them "that they were stronger than they thought they [were](#)" In addition, 38% said combat had a positive financial impact and 51% that it improved chances for [promotion](#) (see Figure 27 under "Combat")

Media and entertainment input is important in military recruitment as it is in other areas. For example, the Navy estimated that the movie Top Gun boosted recruitment by [8%](#). With its emphasis on veterans' difficulties, the Broken Veteran Narrative may be a factor and potentially an important factor in recruiting difficulties.

Drop in Eligibility to Serve

There has been a decline in eligibility to serve from 29% (2017) to 23% (2020) due to a decline in fitness and ability to pass the qualifying [exam](#) - the Armed Forces Vocational Aptitude Battery) (ASVAB). Individual reasons for disqualification were obesity was a (11%) drug and alcohol abuse (8%), medical/physical health (7)%, mental health (4%), aptitude,

conduct or being a dependent (1% each); 44% were disqualified for multiple reasons including prominently [obesity](#).

Subsequently school closures and other COVID-related factors were thought to decrease the ASVAB By as much as 9% according to the US [Army](#).

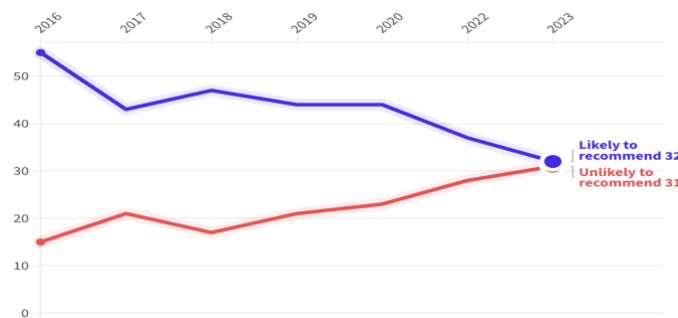
Decline in Military Family Recruitment

Military families have overwhelmingly been the source of recruits. As of a 2022 DoD report, 80% of young people in the military have a military family member, with nearly 25% of those having a parent who [served](#). It is therefore particularly alarming that fewer military families now recommend military service. In one survey, 65% of teens in military families wanted to serve in 2021, down to 44% the next [year](#). In 2019, almost [75%](#) of military families said they would recommend military service to someone they care about. That figure dropped to just under [63%](#) in 2021.

The overall milieu has changed. In 1995 the parents of 40% in the recruiting age range had served, moving to 13% in [2022](#).

Blue Star Families surveys have the same message (Figure 9). In 2016, military families strongly recommended military service to their sons and daughters, much more than nonmilitary families. This dropped to the point in 2023 where just about the same number of families were unlikely (31%) as were likely (32%) to recommend such service.

Figure 9
Family Recommendations for Military Service



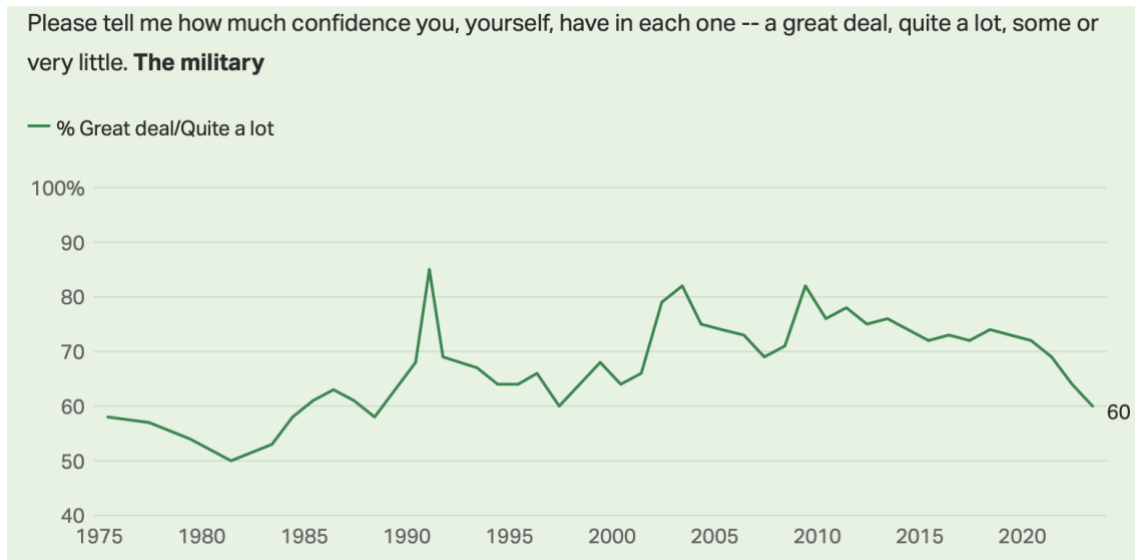
From Blue Star [Families](#) 2024

All of this is potentially devastating to the force which has strongly depended on these military families.

Weakening Public Confidence in the Military

Public confidence in the military has dropped in the past few years as shown in this Gallop poll (Figure 10).

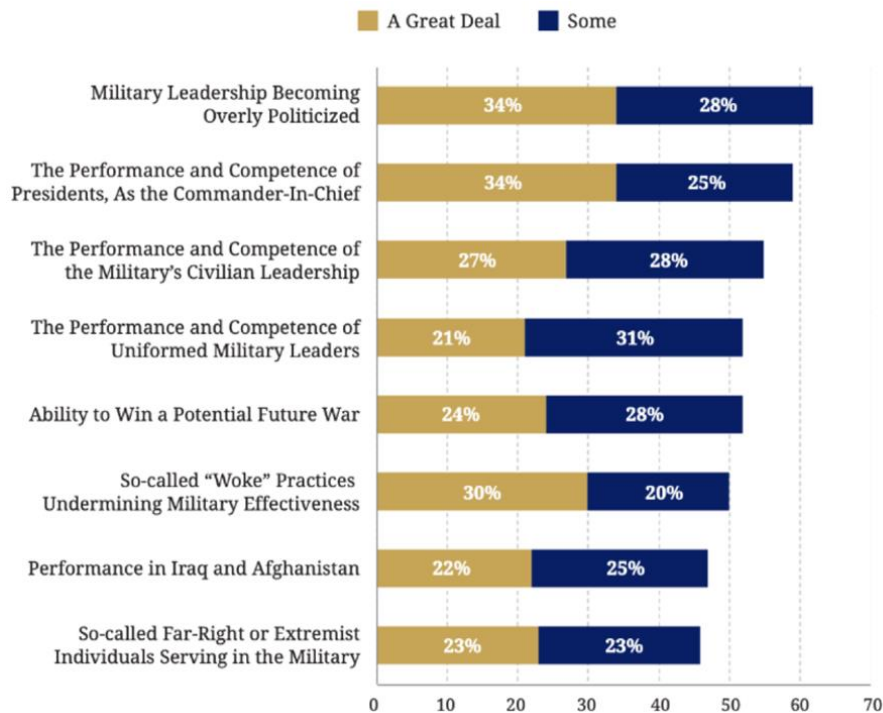
Figure 10
Public Confidence in the Military 1975-2023



Gallop

In agreement, a Ronald Reagan Institute poll showed that Americans expressing “a great deal of confidence” in the military dropped from 70% (2016) to [48%](#) (2022) with possible reasons in Figure 11.

Figure 11
Reasons for Decreased Confidence in the Military



From Reagan National Defense [Survey](#) (2022)

COVID Pandemic

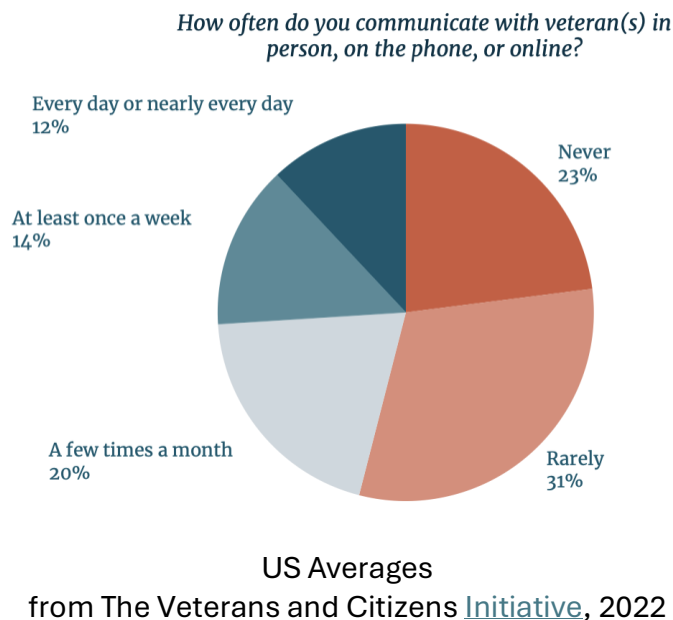
Among the military recruiting issues created by the pandemic (apart from the effects on test scores and health noted above) are the general labor shortage and the fact that young people have alternatives for employment besides the military. As of May 2024, there were 6.6 million unemployed workers and 8.1 million job [openings](#).

Closed schools during the pandemic made it difficult to meet young people and mentoring relationships with veterans and others favorable to the military, most important in recruiting, declined.

Insularity of Veterans

Contact with veterans and veterans' organizations is vital for military recruiting. In part because of their smaller numbers and because of the COVID pandemic, veterans have become more isolated. As shown in Figure 12, 54% of Americans rarely or never communicate with a veteran creating widening gaps between the veteran and civilian cultures. These gaps did not exist when veterans were more numerous and likely to be in one's family.

Figure 12
Veterans' Isolation



Afghanistan

The end of the Afghanistan war in 2021 made military service less compelling abetted by the chaotic withdrawal.

Veterans

George Washington Attribution on Treatment of Veterans

The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional to how they perceive the veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their nation. Attributed to George [Washington](#)

Current US Veteran Population and the Future

Over the course of U.S. history, more than 41 million individuals have served in the [military](#). The peak number of US veterans in was in 1980 (28.5 [million](#) veterans, 10.7 % of the population, 12.6% of the adult population) when there was a confluence of World War II, Korean and Vietnam veterans. Since then, the number of veterans has been steadily declining with further declines projected. At the same time the proportion of women and minorities is increasing. Gulf War veterans have been the most numerous group since [2016](#) while, according to the VA, as of Sept. 30, 2020, 56.3% of US veterans are from the All-Volunteer Force. Table 2 and Figures 13-15 show the veteran numbers and Figure 15 and Table 3 show era of service.

Table 2
Current Veteran Population

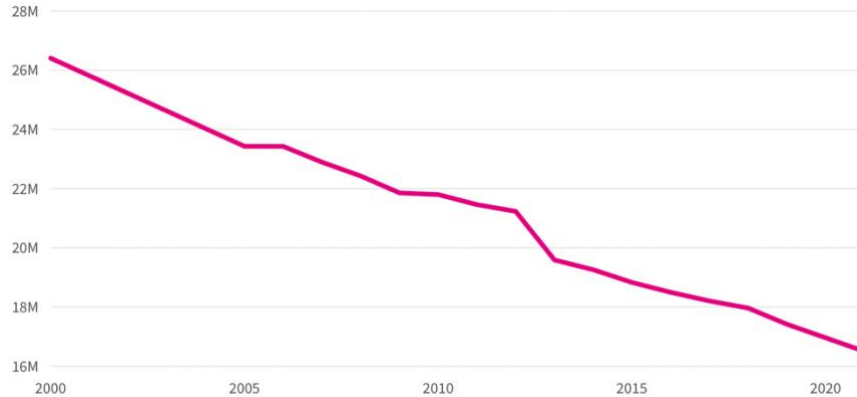
US Veteran Population	
US Vet Population	18.25M*
Female Veterans	2.07M**
Living WW2 Vets	119.6K
WW2 Vets Dying/Day (Est.)	131

*5.4% of US Population/7.1% of US adult population

**11.3% of veterans

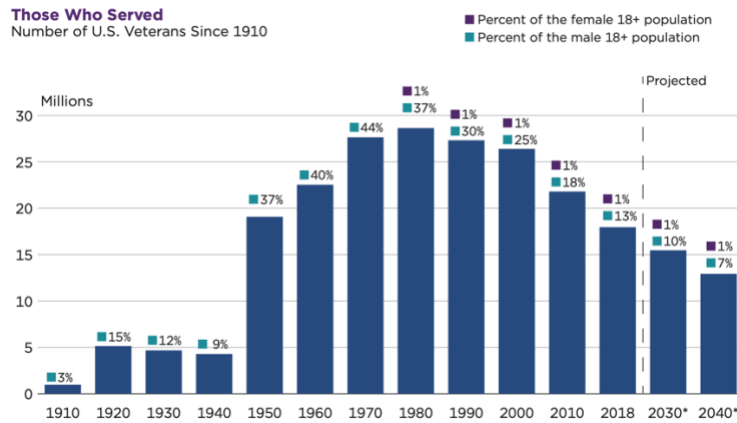
As of 9/30/2023, from [VA](#)

Figure 13
Decline in Veterans Population Since 1990



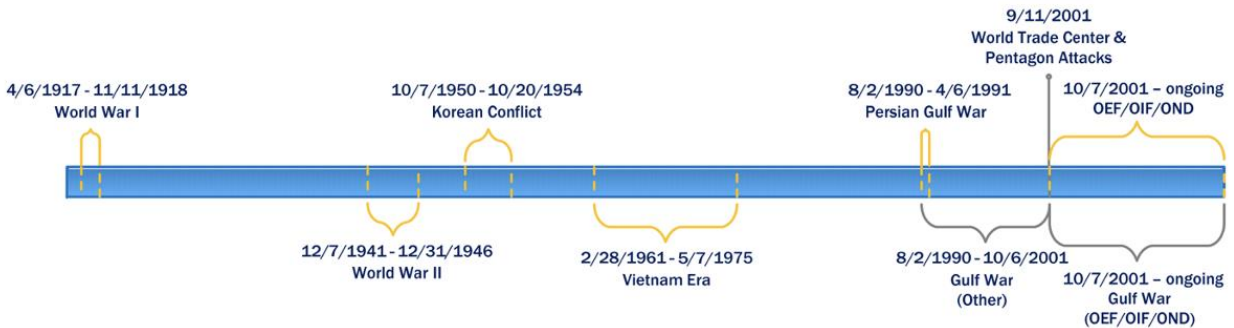
From USA [Facts](#)

Figure 14
Veteran Population 1910-Projected 2040



From American Community Survey Report, U.S Census [Bureau](#)

Figure 15
Timelines of US Period of Service Eras 1900-Present



From [VA](#)

Table 3
Era of Service Numbers

<i>Era of Service of Living Veterans (2023)*</i>			
	Era of Service	#	%
Gulf War (I and II)	8/2/1990- Present	7.8M	43
Vietnam War	2/1961-5/1975	5.6M	30
Korean War	6/27/1950- 1/31/1955	767K	4
World War II	12/7/1941- 12/31/1946	~120,000	<1

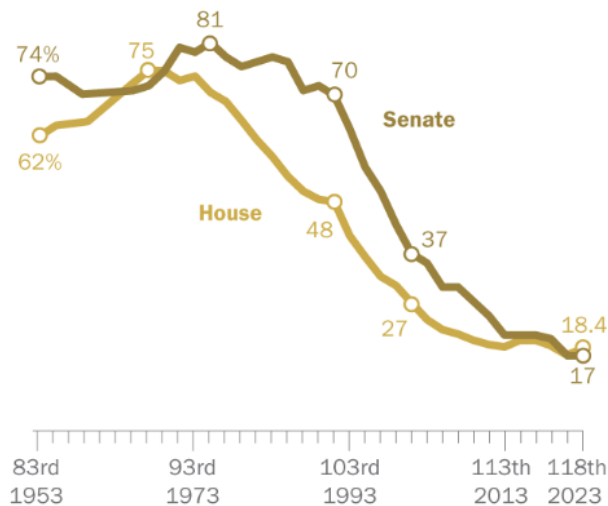
*In a recent release of new 2023 numbers, the Census Bureau estimates the following veteran numbers: Gulf War 7,995K; WW II, Korean War and Vietnam 5,968K and other [3,935K](#)
 From [Pew](#)

Veterans in Congress

Accompanying the declines in overall number of veterans, there was also a decline in the number of Congressional veterans as shown in Figure 20, though in the last 2 years there was a slight uptick.

Figure 16
Veteran Members of Congress

% of members with previous military service



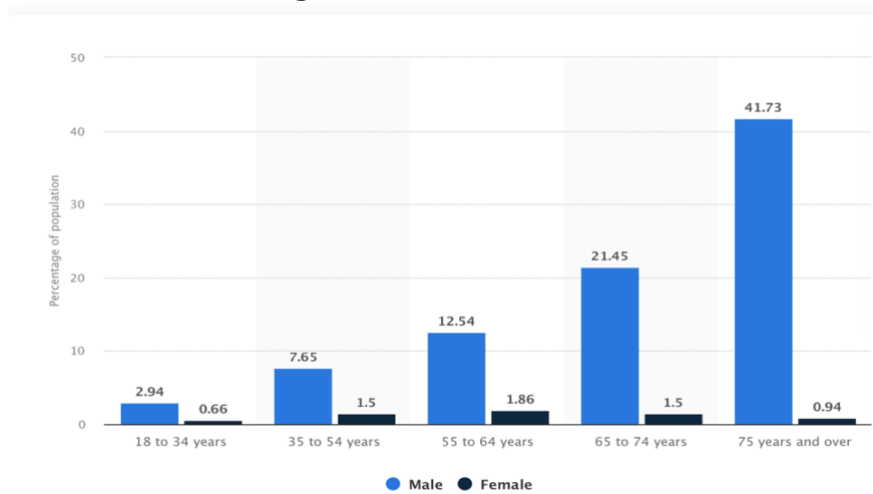
From [Pew](#)

There are 98 veterans in the 118th Congress, 18.1% of the total and 7 more than in the last Congress. Five House and 1 Senate member are in the Reserves. Numerous Congresspersons served in combat [zones](#).

Diversity

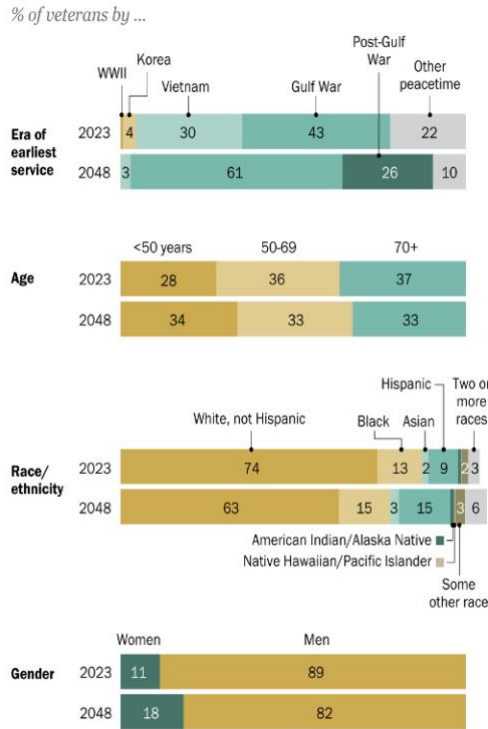
Figures 16-19 show the current and predicted future increase in minority and women veterans. The population of veterans will be more diverse, a change that will have important consequences. More detail is [here](#)

Figure 17
Percent of US Population Who are Veterans by Age and Gender
Age/Gender of Veterans



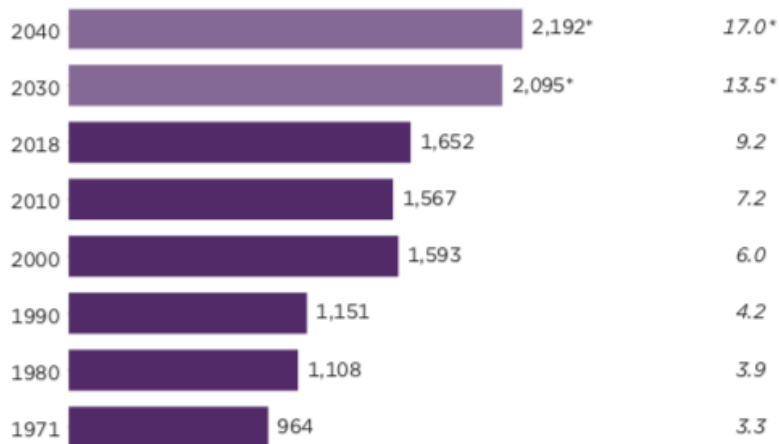
From Census Bureau via [Statista 2022](#)

Figure 18
Predictions of Veteran Era, Age, Race and Gender



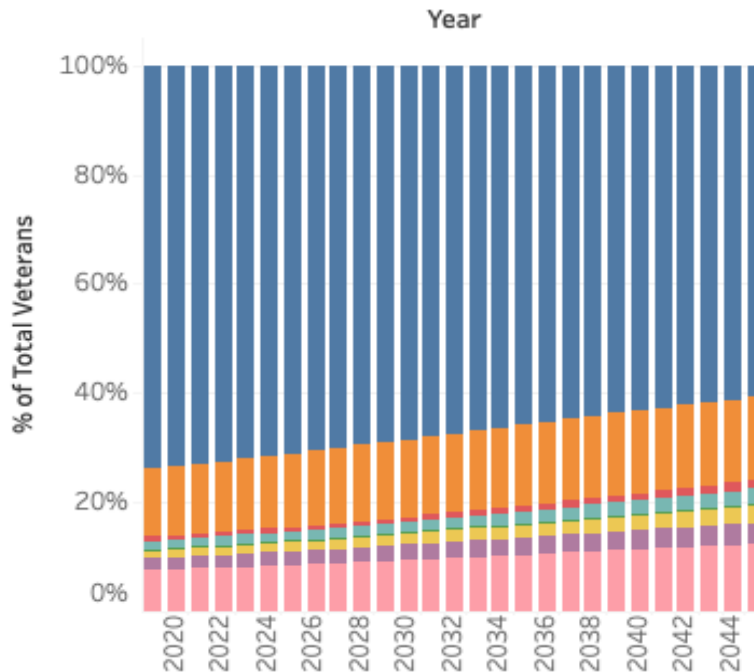
From [Pew 2023](#)

Figure 19
Past, Current and Prediction of Proportion of Female Veterans



From American Community Service, Census [Bureau 2022](#)
 #s in thousands adjacent to bars; %s in right column

Figure 20
Veteran Population Predictions: Diversity



White veterans will decline in proportion and all other groups will increase. Anticipated changes in proportions of veterans from 2019-2040 for each group: Whites (Blue) 74→61%; African Americans 12→15%; Hispanics (Pink) 8→12%; Multiple Race (purple) 2.1→3.9%; Other Race (Yellow) 1.5→3.3%; Asian (Light Green) 1.6→2.7%; American Indian and Alaskan Native American (Red) 0.7→1.6%; Pacific Islander (Dark Green) 0.2→0.3%.. From [VA](#) 2020

Veterans Assets for Employment

Assets

Veterans have numerous technical and other employment assets that are developed or fostered in the [military](#). They have considerable hands on, “lived” experiences as well. Non-technical skills that veterans possess include leadership, communication, teamwork, integrity, a strong work ethic, dedication, self-motivation, project management, persistence, compliance, decision making, core values, the ability to work in stressful situations, adaptability, flexibility, understanding diversity and inclusion, organization, problem solving, strategic planning, critical thinking, training, endurance, strength, motivation, [inspiration](#), and [resiliency](#). Their hands on experience is often in challenging conditions which requires them to develop communication skills, especially, of course, if they have been in battle.

Technical skills include IT, intelligence collection and dissemination, cyber theory, electromagnetic theory, understanding distributed operations with common operational pictures, understanding of supply chain issues, and experience managing large [datasets](#). *Overall, the business case for hiring veterans is thus very strong.*

it is important that veterans' talents be used appropriately in the private or nonprofit sectors. Part of the challenge of using these talents is for the civilian world to recognize them and place veterans properly in positions. To help in this has been a movement to get the military active-duty education components on an official par with civilian standards so that can be used more generally.

The VOW to Hire Heroes [Act](#) of 2011 was an important advance in the employment of veterans. It allows active-duty military about to be discharged to apply for jobs, expands noncompetitive hiring for disabled and certain other veterans and has other employment benefits for veterans.

Generation of Veterans' Assets

The advent of the AVF led to intense modernization of the military and enlistment of much more capable recruits. As a result, there was a powerful effect on the abilities of military personnel and veterans. Changes in doctrine that drove the organizational changes led to more concentration on modern, long-range [weapons systems](#), and, starting in 1973, a massive infusion of technology to sustain these systems that would dramatically improve training, communications and data management. The resulting exponential acceleration of knowledge [led to greater capabilities](#), including, for example, DARPA's involvement in the creation of the [internet](#). At present, the Army Futures [Command](#) keeps a commitment to sustain advances in technology and capabilities.

These changes vastly improve the skills that veterans possess when they returned to civilian life. The challenge is to build on these capabilities and employ them appropriately in the general economy as AVF veterans move into civilian employment.

The GI bills are also important elements of veterans' enhanced capabilities Before World War II and the first GI Bill, <7% of the adult population, had college degrees, now over 800,000 veterans are getting educational benefits. (see below Veterans Benefits). It is estimated that the 1944 GI bill returned \$7 to the economy for every \$1 [spent](#) and led to substantial growth in America's universities, as well as, of course, creating a body of educated and capable veterans.

Veteran Occupations

Veterans work in a broad array of sectors (Table 4) with over 22% of veterans in government. It has also been estimated that 8% of veterans work in STEM occupations versus 6% for non-[veterans](#) (2018). Given the high degree of technologic training that veterans received in the military, this number probably should be higher, and again, it reflects veteran "underemployment."

Table 4
Veteran Occupations

<i>Veteran Occupations</i>	
Occupation	Employed (%)
Total employed¹	100.0
Agriculture and related industries	1.4
Wage and salary workers²	0.7
Self-employed workers, unincorporated	0.7
Nonagricultural industries	98.6
Wage and salary workers²	93.1
Private industries	70.6
Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	0.7
Construction	6.3
Manufacturing	11.7
Wholesale trade	2.0
Retail trade	8.0
Transportation and utilities	8.2
Information	1.7
Financial activities	4.8
Professional and business services	11.1
Education and health services	9.0

Leisure and hospitality	4.0
Other services	3.2
Government	22.5
Federal	11.0
State	4.4
Local	7.1
Self-employed workers, unincorporated	5.4

¹Includes small # of unpaid workers

²Includes self-employed with unincorporated businesses

From [DoL 2023 Annual Averages](#)

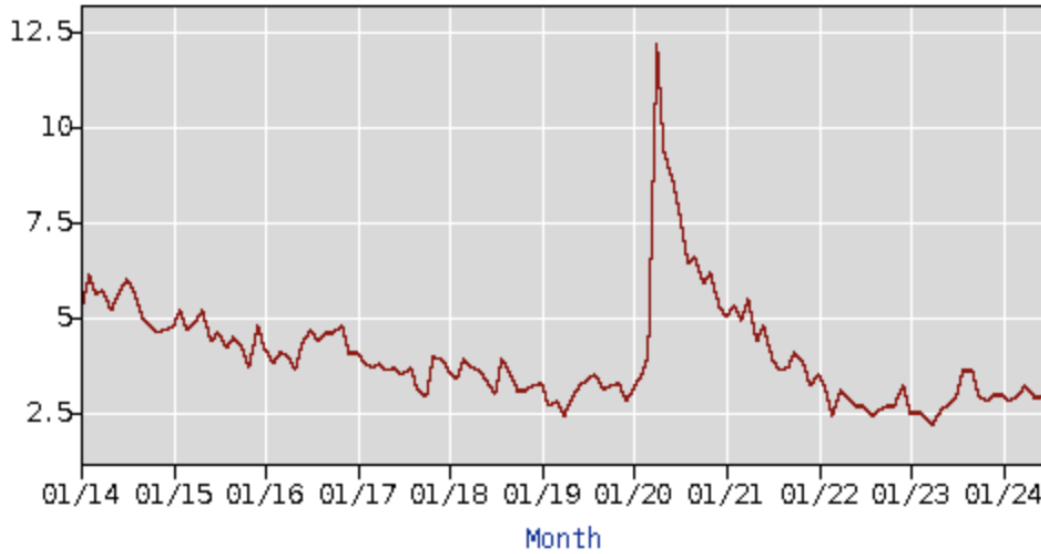
Total employed veterans 8,391 K

Veteran Employment/Unemployment

Overall, veterans do well in employment. Since the first decade of the 21st century, when unemployment among veterans was relatively high, it has been consistently lower than in veteran counterparts. Figure 21 shows variations in unemployment since 2014. Table 5 shows that veterans have a similar employment status as their counterpart but with less *unemployment*.

In June 2024, veterans' unemployment was 2.9%. Figure 22 shows the average June 2023-June 2024 unemployment rates in veterans and their counterparts when ethnicity, gender and disability are considered. Detailed employment rates relative to disability are in Table 6.

Figure 21
Veterans Unemployment Rates 2014-2024



From DoL

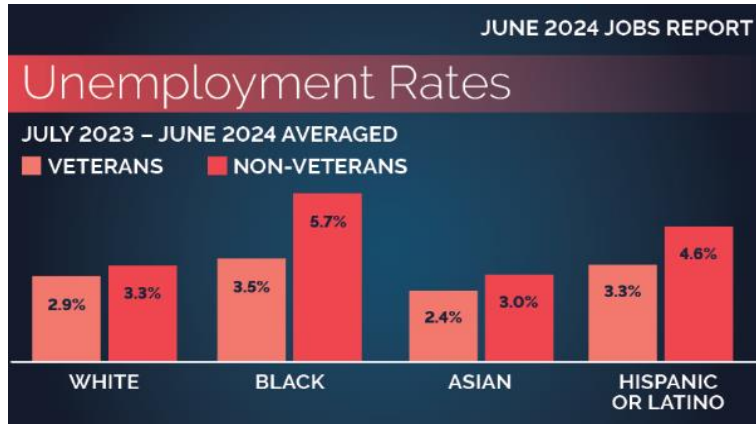
Table 6
Veteran/Nonveteran Employment Status

Veteran/Nonveteran Employment Status*				
	Veteran		Nonveteran	
	#	%	#	%
Total	8,217,339	100	193,576,062	100
In Labor Force	6,338,734	77.1	150,320,698	77.7
Employed	6,126,943	74.5	143,879,043	74.3
Unemployed	211,791	2.5	6,441,655	3.3
Not in Labor Force	1,878,605	22.7	43,255,364	22.3

*Age 18-64 yrs From Census Bureau FY2022

Figure 22
Current Veteran vs Nonveteran Unemployment Rates

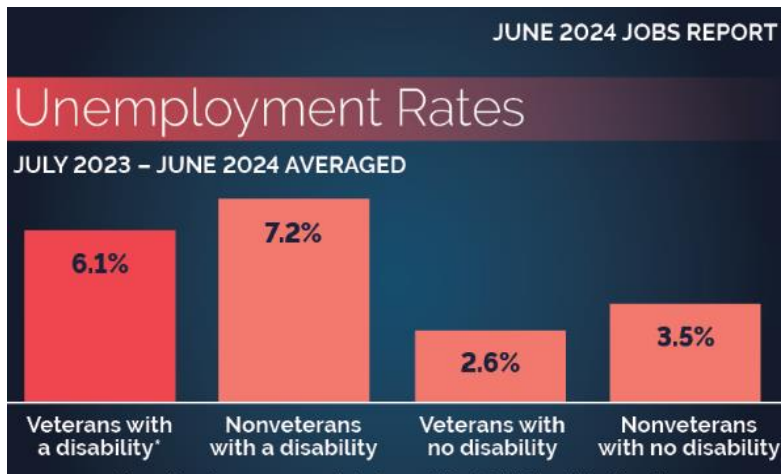
A.



B.



C.



From [DoL](#)

Table 6
Disability and Employment in Veterans

<i>Disability and Employment in Veterans</i>			
Disability	#s (thousands)	% in Labor Force	% Unemployed
Total Vets	17,879	48.1	3.9
With SCD	5,278	49.9	3.9
<30%	1,054	56.3	6.0
30-50%	917	54.6	3.9
≥60%	367	46.3	5.7
No SCD	11,742	47.4	3.1
Not Reported	859	47.5	1.2

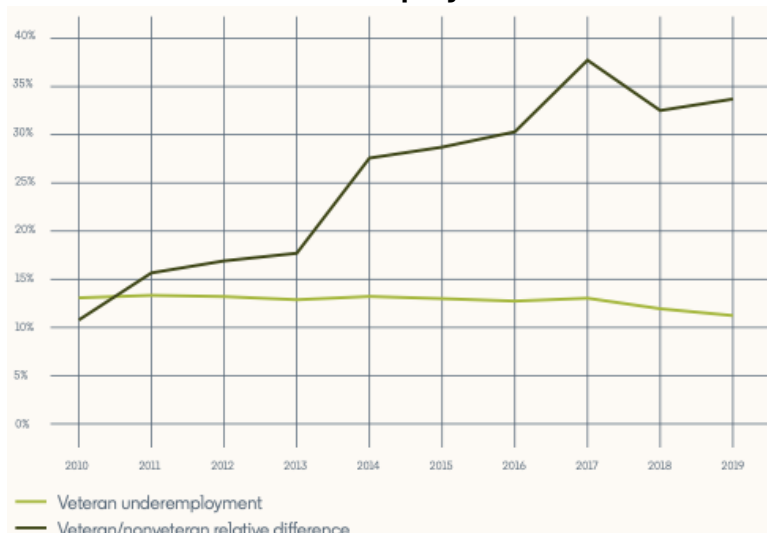
From [DOL](#) August 2023
 SCD = Service-Connected Disability
 Total veteran population 17,879 K

Veterans Underemployment

Despite the substantial assets that the modernized AVF has produced, many veterans are underemployed. That is, they are employed at a lower level than they should be based on their capabilities. Perhaps a better way of expressing this phenomenon is “inadequate utilization of veterans’ skills.” Even with economic attainments such as higher income and lower unemployment than counterparts, the skills of veterans are incompletely utilized, a circumstance that may begin with constrained job searches during the transition to civilian [life](#).

A LinkedIn survey found such underemployment among veterans with a widening gap (Figure 23).

Figure 23
Veteran Compared to Nonveteran Underemployment



LinkedIn survey showing veterans' [underemployment](#).²⁶²

Similarly, according to a ZipRecruiter estimate, 33% of veterans are [underemployed](#) they are 15.6% more likely to be so than nonveterans. Clearly, the military experience has produced important technological assets in veterans that are far from fully deployed in the US economy.

Retention of Veterans in Employment

A 2017 LinkedIn study found veterans remain at their initial company 8.3% more than others and are 39% more likely to be promoted, and veterans with bachelor's degrees have 2.9 times the work [experience](#). Veterans are more likely to take a step back in seniority when they take a job but are also to move into a leadership role in the first [year](#). LinkedIn has also debunked the widespread notion that 50% of veterans leave their first job in the first year. This impression refers to a commonly cited study which actually showed something different: Of veterans who had already left their company, half did so in the first [year](#).

Figure 24 shows reasons for leaving the first postmilitary job with a “New employment opportunity” being the most prominent (43.3%), lack of advancement second at 31.1%. Reasons to stay in the job are in Figure 25.

Figure 24
Reasons for Leaving First Post-Military Job



From IVMF Veteran Job Retention Summary [here](#).

Figure 25
Reasons to Stay in First-Post-military Job



From IVMF Veteran Job Retention Summary [here](#).

Veteran Owned Businesses

In 2022, there were 5.9M employer firms in the US, 304,823 (5.2%) of which were veteran owned. Veteran-owned businesses had an estimated \$922.2 billion in receipts, 3.3 million employees, and \$179.9 billion in annual payroll, according to the Census [Bureau](#).

The original GI bill paid a \$2000 grant for the purpose of starting a business. After World War II, 49.7% of veterans started their own businesses; while the post 9/11 that number was only [4.5%](#). Something to discuss.

Veteran Income

Overall Veterans Income

Veterans have higher incomes than their counterparts and are also less likely to be impoverished than the general [population](#) (Table 7, Figure 23). It is important to note that both income and employment may be influenced by veterans' benefits.

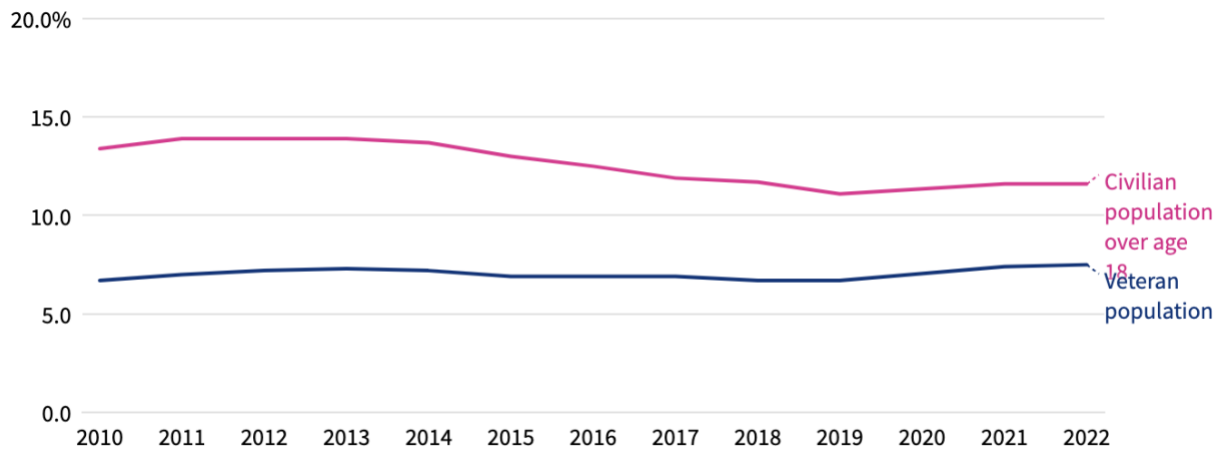
Table 7
Veteran/Nonveteran Counterpart Median Income 2022

Veteran Median Incomes*		
Overall	38,374	
	Veteran	Nonveteran
All Veterans	50,397	37,383
Male	51,151	46,006
Female	43,461	31,135

*Over 12 months of 2022 in 2022 inflation-adjusted dollars
 From Census [Bureau](#)

Veterans are also less likely to be impoverished and living in poverty than their counterparts (Figure 26). About 7.5% of veterans live in poverty (1.2 million) as against 11.6% for the entire US civilian population age ≥ 18 years.

Figure 26
Percent Living in Poverty

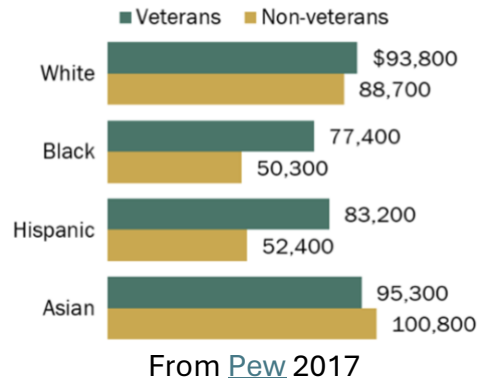


From USA [Facts](#) 2022

Minority Veterans Income

A 2017 Pew analysis found that incomes of Black and Hispanic veterans were substantially higher than nonveterans while incomes for Asian veterans were modestly lower (Figure 27).

Figure 27
Income in Blacks and Hispanics



Using American Community Survey data obtained 2017-2019, a 2024 CBO [analysis](#) found that African American veterans had higher earnings than their counterparts, but when adjusted for demographics there was no difference. A higher proportion of African American veterans owned their own home (55 vs 49%) and they also had a lower poverty [rate](#) (8 vs 14%)

For Latinos, a [study](#) from the Latino Policy and Politics [Institute](#), relying on information from 2017-2021 and based on 2022 census data, found that Latino veterans earned \$18,000 more than their civilian counterparts and 8% lived in poverty versus 15% in counterparts.

Veterans Education

Veterans have higher rates of “some college” or an equivalency degree but have somewhat lower rates of graduation and of graduate [degrees](#) (Table 8, 724).

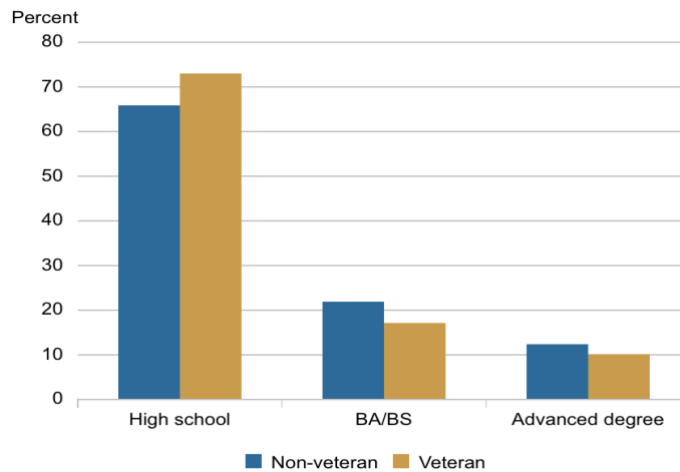
Table 8
Veterans’ vs Nonveterans Education

Veteran/Nonveteran Educational Attainment*				
	Veteran		Nonveteran	
	#	%	#	%
Total	15,987,493	100	212,844,159	100

< High Sch Grad	722,567	4.5	23,098,982	10.9
High Sch Grad	4,295,736	26.9	55,495,432	26.1
Some College/Assoc	5,913,431	37.0	57,767,909	21.3
≥BS/BA	5,055,759	31.7	76,481,836	35.9

*1 yr estimates, ages ≥25 yrs
 From Census [Bureau](#) 2022

Figure 28
Veterans' and Nonveterans' Education



From Liberty Street [Economics](#) based on Census Bureau Data 2022

Government/Private Collaborations in Technology - South Korea and Israel as Models

[South Korea](#) and [Israel](#) have built world-class technological enterprises based on military skills and close relationships between military sectors and civilians in private enterprise and academia. These include enterprises in cyber, signals technology, security and other [areas](#) that make the best use of military training in [technology](#). One example is the collaboration of Unit [8200](#) (Israel's equivalent of the U.S. National Security Agency) with new, specifically designed private sector companies. Part of the process is to build social and professional networks among collaborating military and civilian sectors to drive innovation and employment of veterans for years into the future. Former members of Israel's Unit 8200 have founded highly successful cyber businesses such as *The Me Group*, *Check Point*, *Forte*, *Armis Security*, *Guardicore*, *Fraud Science* and *Wiz*. Unit 8200 alumni also founded the NSO group which created the controversial Pegasus [spyware](#)

China has also achieved military/civilian [fusion](#), especially in AI which it uses extensively for personnel surveillance. Military civilian fusion is achieved under its Military Civil Fusion Intelligent Equipment Research Institute and Military-Civil Fusion National Defense Peak Technologies [Laboratory](#).

While public/private collaborations are common in the U.S., such as with [DARPA](#), perhaps a more comprehensive US approach is needed to enhance opportunities. Such opportunities could occur via further policy applications to boost social and professional networks, enable advancement of these enterprises and improve employment opportunities in the civilian sector. Policies that help support such programs would have to deal with sharing of intellectual property and security among other issues.

Aftereffects of Combat

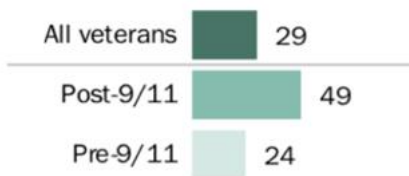
As of 2023, 78% of veterans have served during [wartime](#), 22% peacetime. As seen in Figure 29A, B, post 9/11 veterans saw more combat than their predecessors and this had negative physical and emotional consequences including PTSD (Figure 29C).

However, apart from these negative effects, for 67% of veterans, combat experience “showed them that they were stronger than they thought they were,” 38% said combat had a positive financial impact and 51% that it improved chances for [promotion](#). Those and other more positive post-battle consequences are in Figure 29D. The strengthening that individuals get after battle and other challenges of military life may be the phenomenon of “Post Traumatic Growth (PTG),” a form of [resilience](#). “That which does not kill us, makes us [stronger](#).”

Figure 29 Veterans’ Combat Experience

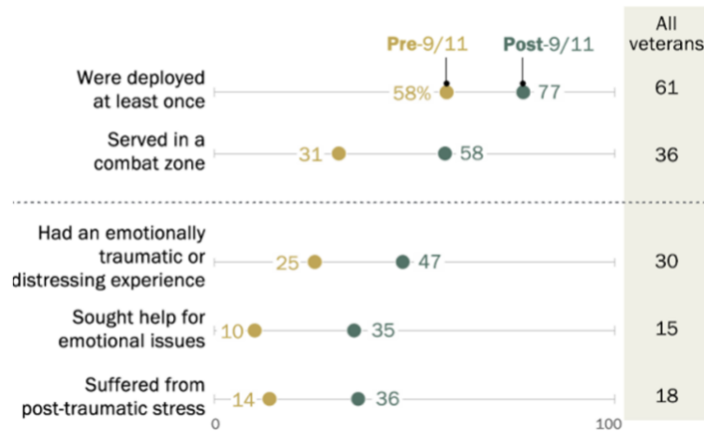
A. Post 9//11 Veterans 2X More Likely Combat

% of veterans who served in a combat zone and had at least one combat experience



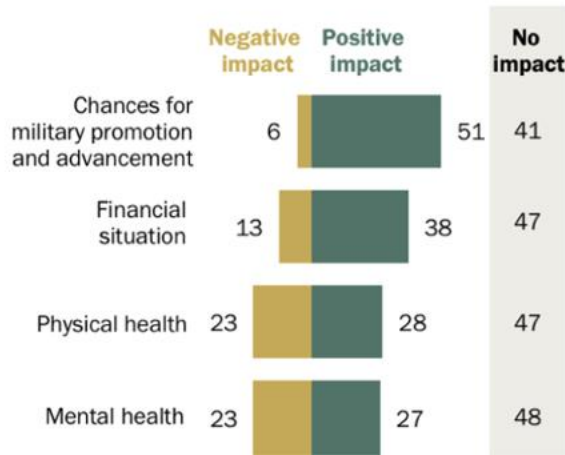
Pew [2019](#)

B. Increased Post 9/11 Veteran Deployments



C. Combat had negative Physical and Mental Effects in about 1/4th of Vets

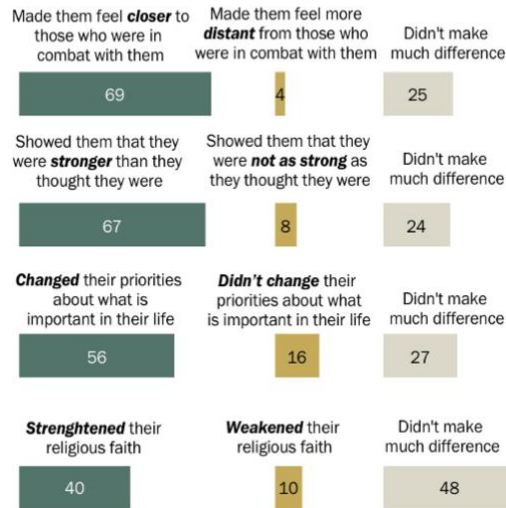
% of veterans who were ever deployed who say their deployment(s) had a ___ on their ...



From [Pew](#)

D. About 2/3 of Vets say Combat showed them they were stronger than they thought

% of veterans with combat experience who say their experiences in comba



From [Pew](#)

Post 9/11 Perceptions of Veterans

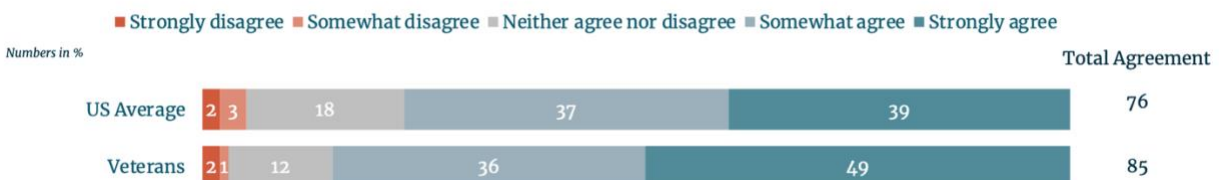
Survey Data

Overall, the public has positive images of veterans as seen in Figure 30. A large majority of Americans believe that veterans will do “what is right” for America (over 90%) and that they are role models for good [citizenship](#) (about 70%). In a recent Pew survey, Post 9/11 veterans were considered disciplined (67%) and [patriotic](#) (59%). These attitudes have helped in the substantial VA budget expansion described below (see “VA Budgets”) but, there are still negative perceptions of veterans about.

Figure 30

Survey on Veterans as Models for Citizenship

To what extent do you agree that, in general Veterans are role models for good citizenship?



From The Veterans and Citizens [Initiative](#), 2022

Hero, Threat, Victim

As a rule of thumb, we might put the perception of veterans in three categories - Hero, Threat, and Victim.

Hero: Our veterans are undoubtedly heroes. They have protected and safeguarded the country and after their years of active duty, they continue to perform heroic deeds. When we hear about a rescue after an automobile accident, we tend to think that it was carried out by veteran. The hero image has been particularly applied to Marines and special forces of all branches.

Threat: The threat image surfaces in two ways - individually and collectively. Individually there has been the image of the crazed veteran, especially the crazed Vietnam veteran. After mass shootings, the first question is often whether the individual was a veteran. However, that distinctive image of veterans is declining and that is good news - it is mythical.

A perception that has at times applied collectively to veterans is of extremism. Extremist veterans have been a historical concern especially since World I. In fact, one of the rationales for the formation of the American Legion was to forestall extremist attitudes among veterans (and we know the results of such attitudes in Europe). Veterans can bring outsized influences on extremist organizations because of their combat training, logistical knowledge, and leadership capabilities.

This perception of US veterans as extremists was fostered recently after the attack on the US capital on January 6, 2021. In that attack, there was a higher proportion of veterans among those arrested than their proportion in the population, i.e. 14.5% (82 of 563) as against the proportion of veterans in the population of about [6%](#).

More recently the RAND corporation surveyed 1,100 veterans (Table 9) and found that support for extremist groups was in *not* higher, and in fact mostly *lower*, than representative surveys of the general [public](#). The groups included Antifa, Proud Boys, Black Nationalists and White supremacists.

Table 9
Support for Extremist Groups and Ideologies Among Veterans

Support for Extremist Groups and Ideologies Among Veterans		
% Very or Somewhat Favorable		
	Veterans	General
Antifa	5.5	10.0

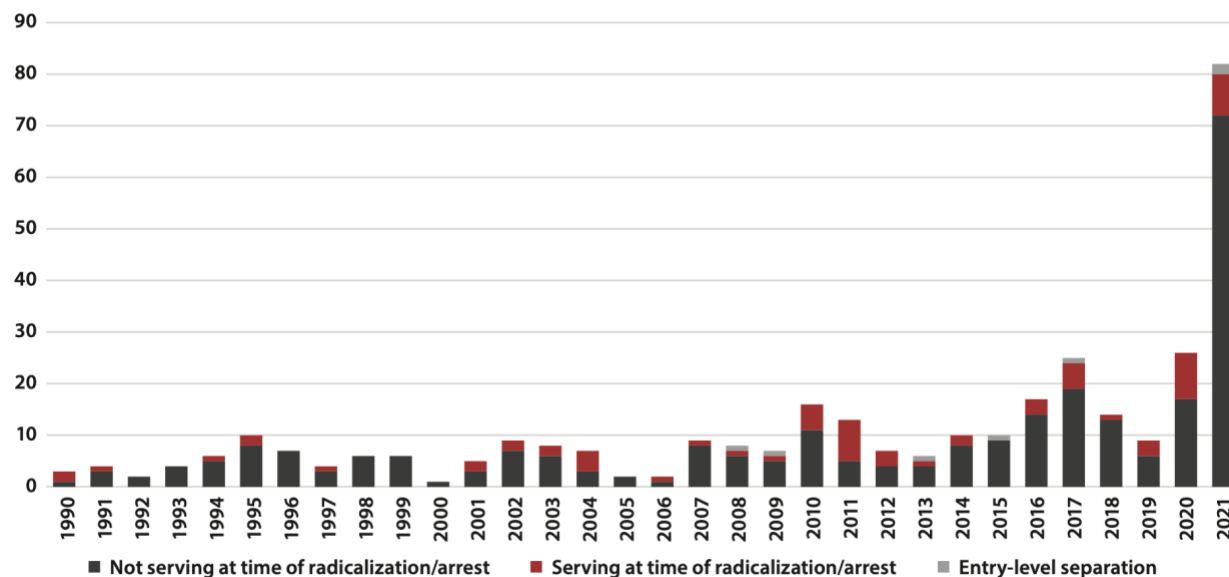
Proud Boys	4.2	9.0
Black Nationalists	5.3	No Data
White Supremacists	0.8	7.0
% Completely or Mostly Agree		
Political Violence	17.7	19
Great Replacement Theory	28.8	34
QAnon	12.5	17

From [RAND](#)

The Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) database, reported by the University of [Maryland](#).(Figure 31) is of “extremist crimes.” Uptick in 2021 was due to the January 6 attack on the Capitol. Taking the 2018 data (year of a Census Bureau report on the number of U.S. veterans), veterans accounted for 8.3% of the PIRUS data and were 7% of the U.S. population. Even with the 2021 numbers, overall veterans account for “a relatively small [portion](#)” of extremists of 11.5%.

Figure 31
US Extremists with Military Backgrounds

U.S. Extremists with Military Backgrounds, 1990-2021 (n = 354)



From PIRUS Database, University of [Maryland](#)

Victim: It is perhaps the perception of veterans as victims that may have the greatest influence on propensity to serve. There is a major contradiction in how many Americans view the military and veterans: While they serve, they are heroes who safeguard our country but when they leave active duty, they become victims.

The “Broken Veteran [Narrative](#),” as indicated above refers to depictions of veterans that focus on the challenges they have such as PTSD, suicide, and homelessness rather than on the positives - lower unemployment and higher incomes than counterparts and CEO positions in manor corporations. While this narrative is often referred to as a “media depiction” the media in fact is not the ultimate source but it reflects a more general discussion.

The “suffering soldier” has been with us since Revolutionary times. Part of the rationale for the Revolutionary War Pensions Act of 1818 was the popularized story of a homeless veteran named Joseph Winter who was taken in and cared for by artist John Neagle. Neagle also painted Winter’s portrait out of which was fashioned a widely distributed and very influential engraving. The “victim” approach was also as part of advocacy for veterans by the post-Civil War Grand Army of the Republic and its descendant veteran’s organizations.

While the challenges signified in the Broken Veteran Narrative” are real, veterans also have considerable assets and successes. As indicated above, they have higher incomes, lower unemployment and better education than [counterparts](#). And the aftermath of combat for veterans in strongly fostering self-confidence, strength, resilience and even financial improvement (see above “Combat” and Figure 29) may not be what the public thinks.

So, the well-meaning “Broken Veteran Narrative” has become a public perception of veterans. But does it influence recruitment? We do not know for sure. As indicated above, the JAMRS DoD Summer 2023 survey (Figure 3, above) shows that the possibility of physical injury/death (62%) and of PTSD or other emotional/psychological issues (56%) were the two most common reasons *not* to join the [military](#), a suggestion of the influence of the Broken Veteran Narrative. In this, the influencers of Gen. Z such as family, teachers, coaches, etc., are also important. When they see the images of the Broken Veteran Narrative, what advice do they give regarding future service? We need more data here.

In addition, as we look to presenting more accurate images of veterans, we face a major dilemma: On one hand, realistic positive images of veterans and their accomplishments in our public discussion foster employment and social interactions. On the other hand, images of those veterans who are mentally and physically disabled help in acquiring services and benefits for veterans in need. How these dual approaches play out in the public eye is a vital component of propensity to serve in the military.

Veteran Service Organizations

The general functions of VSOs are advocacy, benefits information, intermediaries with the VA and as fraternal organizations. In particular, the American Legion also sponsors community programs such as oratory contests, sports leagues, scholarships and youth summer programs. A number of new VSO's came on to the scene post 9/11.

VSOs have played an active and important role for veterans since the years after the Civil War. There are 41 congressional chartered VSOs and 100+ recognized by the VA. Notably, the first GI bill was put together by a committee formed by the American Legion and then presented to Congress.

Further information about VSOs is [here](#).

Department of Veterans Affairs

VA Budgets

The VA system is massive with 9.1 million healthcare enrollees, over 1300 healthcare facilities and budgets beyond \$300B (Table 10). Budget and FTEs are second only to DoD among government departments.

Via the VA, the US has been generous to its veterans with its budget almost tripling over the last 20 years. Figures 32A-C shows the growth of the VA budget since FY1995 including nominal and inflation adjusted dollar growth, and mandatory and discretionary portions. Benefits in the VA budget are predominantly “mandatory” dollars and do not have to be reappropriated every year while the health care budget is “discretionary” and requires annual reauthorization. VA budgets, number of veterans, and enrollee numbers in VHA (Veterans Health Administration – the VA healthcare system) are in Figure 32D.

Table 10
VA Numbers

VA Numbers*	
Full Time VA Employees	456.7K
Total VA Employees	481.7K
VAMC s	170
VA Outpatient Only Sites	1,386
Vets enrolled in VHA	9.1M

Unique Vets Treated/yr in VHA	6.7M
Vets with Amputations in VHA	97K
VA National Cemeteries	155
VA FY23 Appropriation	\$308.5B
VA FY24 Appropriation**	\$310.3B

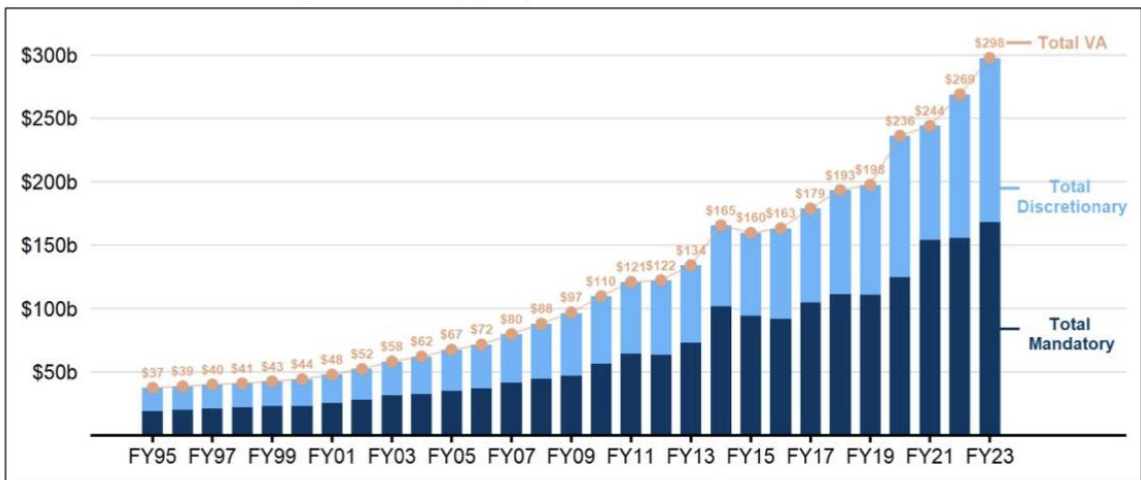
* As of 12/31/2023

**FY24 VA Budget includes \$137.8B Discretionary, a slight drop from FY23, and \$172.5B Mandatory.

From [VA](#)

Figure 32 VA Appropriations and Enrollees

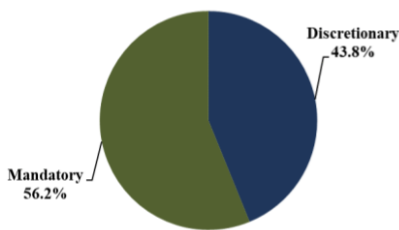
A. VA Appropriations FY 1995-2023



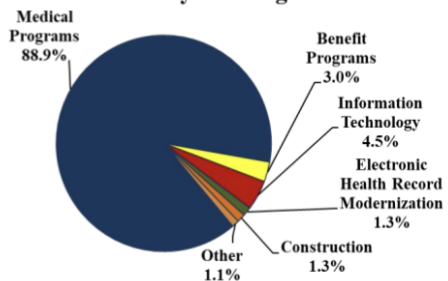
From [CRS](#)

B. Mandatory versus Discretionary Funding

Discretionary vs. Mandatory Funding

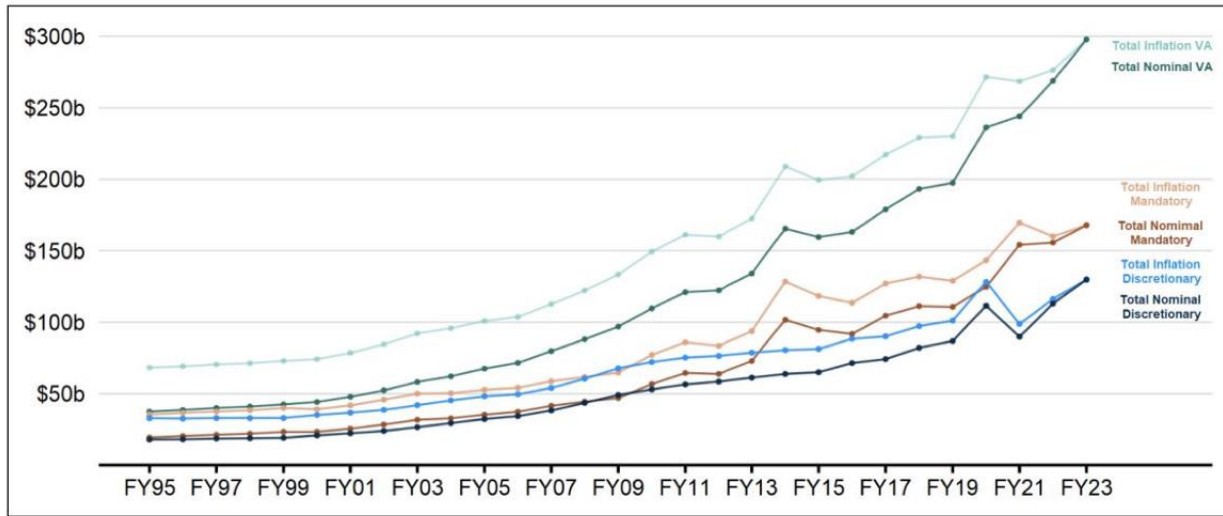


Discretionary Funding



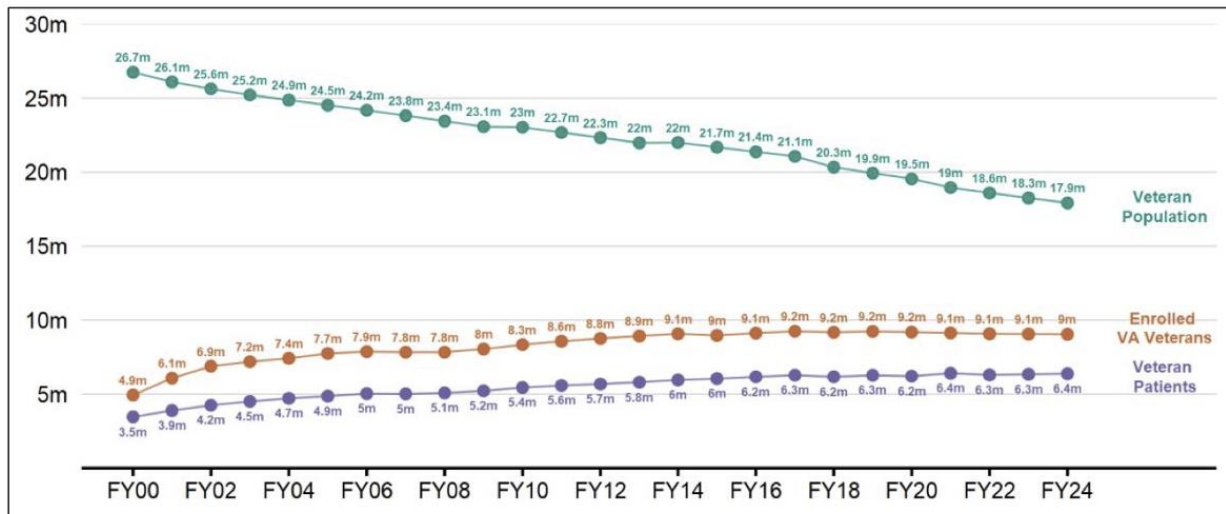
From VA Budget [Summary](#)

C. VA Appropriations: Nominal and Inflation-Adjusted FY1995-FY2023



From [CRS](#)

D. Veteran Population, Enrollees and Patients FY2000-2024

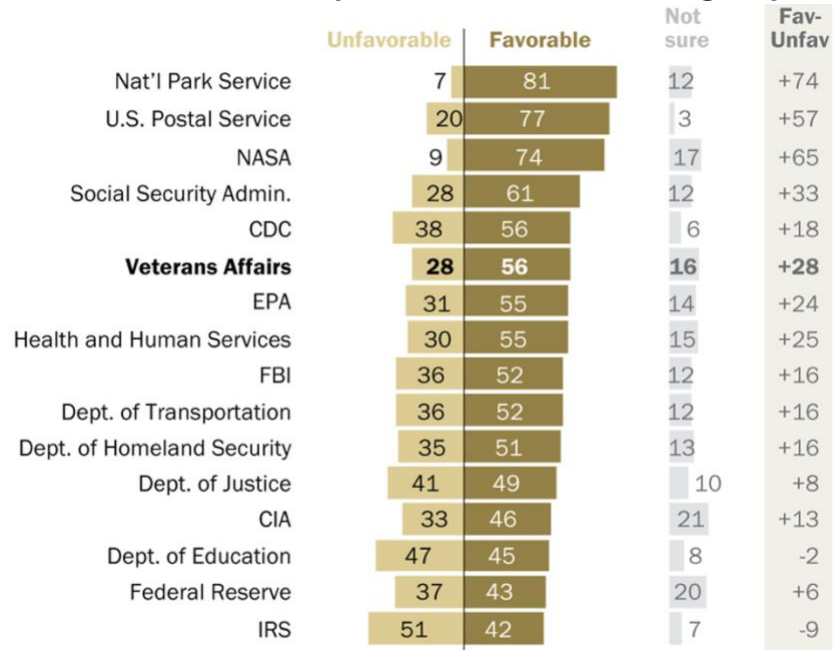


From [CRS](#)

Public View of VA

The public has a generally positive view of the VA compared to other government entities as seen in this Pew survey (Figure 33).

Figure 33
View of VA Compared to Other Government Entities
Percent Unfavorable and Favorable Opinions of Each Federal Agency



From [Pew 2023](#)

Veteran Service-Connected Disability

VA benefits obligations and recipients in each category of service-connected disability rating are in [Table 10.1](#)

Table 11
Veterans and Service-Connected Disability

<i>Veterans and Service-Connected Disability</i>		
	Numbers	Earnings/yr
Total	16,200,322	
No service-connected disability rating	11,418,880	\$62,400
Has a service-connected disability rating	4,781,442	\$52,200
0%	164,843	
0-20%	1,134,807	

30-40%	609,802	
50-60%	604,495	
≥70%	2,071,610	
Rating not reported	195,885	

Ages ≥19 yrs

SCD rating from Census [Bureau 2022](#); earnings from CBO [2022](#)

VA Benefits

Table 12 shows VA benefits categories and Figure 34 shows program obligations, total recipients for each, compensation by period of service and average SCDs by period of service. The top 5 VA disability awards were for tinnitus (7.9%), limitation of knee flexion (5.0%), Sciatic Nerve Paralysis (4.0%), hearing loss (4.0%) and lumbosacral or cervical strain (3.9%).

Table 12
VA Benefits Categories

<i>VA Benefits Categories*</i>		
Category	#s	\$s (M)
Compensation	6,159,448	149,405
Pension	262,932	3,820**
Fiduciary	104,209	
Education	862,750	11,125
Insurance	554,784	106
Home Loan Guarantee	400,659	775
Veteran Readiness/Employment	131,170	1,642
Total		166,872

*During or end of FY2023

**Also includes Burial

From the VBA Annual Benefits Report [2023](#)

Figure 34

A. Compensation Recipients by Period of Service



B. Average SCDs by Period of Service

Average SC disabilities per Veteran by period of service – all compensation recipients						
	World War II	Korean Conflict	Vietnam Era	Gulf War Era	Peacetime Periods	Total
All Veterans	11,448	59,092	1,385,131	3,374,670	831,932	5,662,273
Disabilities	27,482	148,354	5,978,296	28,060,575	3,082,195	37,296,902
Average # of SC disabilities per Veteran	2.4	2.5	4.3	8.3	3.7	6.6
Total Veteran population ^{7,8}	103,890	707,961	5,265,846	8,193,145	3,979,164	18,250,044 ⁹

From the VBA Annual Benefits [Report](#) 2023

See VBA Annual Benefits [Report](#) 2023 for details on these programs and Kupersmith, Casey ***Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20 Years of War: Ideas Moving Forward*** for discussion of benefits rationale, politics and other background.

VA Medical Research Program

The VA medical research program produces research tailored to veterans’ needs and has been a pioneer in systems and rehabilitation research. Over 60% of its research is performed by practicing [clinicians](#) and its FY2024 budget is \$943M. Many VA investigators also receive funding from NIH and other sources.

Among The VA research program’s pioneering discoveries are the value of hypertension treatment in reducing strokes and heart attacks (prolonging countless US lives), implantation of the first pacemaker, CT scanning, first liver transplant, the relationship between smoking and lung cancer, Functional Electric Stimulation, radioimmunoassay to measure levels of hormones and. many [others](#). VA researchers have won 3 Nobel Prizes, and an important achievement has been the Million Veteran [Program](#), the world's largest systems genetic [database](#).

Table 13 shows data related to the VA research program

Table 13
VA Medical Research Numbers

VA Medical Research Numbers	
Research Sites	108
Active Projects	7,431
Published Articles	11,107
Active Funded Principal Investigators	3,774
Congressional Appropriation	\$916M
Total Research Budget*	\$2.3B

*Includes extramural funding
From [VA](#) Fy2023

PACT Act of 2022

Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics

The PACT Act provides a major increase in VA [benefits](#) for toxic exposures including Agent Orange (Vietnam), Gulf War Illness and in particular Burn Pit exposure from Post 9/11 conflicts, this last a major rationale for the [legislation](#). Benefits include exposure screening, education and training, medical research and addition of 31 new medical [facilities](#). Besides compensation payments and health care services, the PACT Act directs

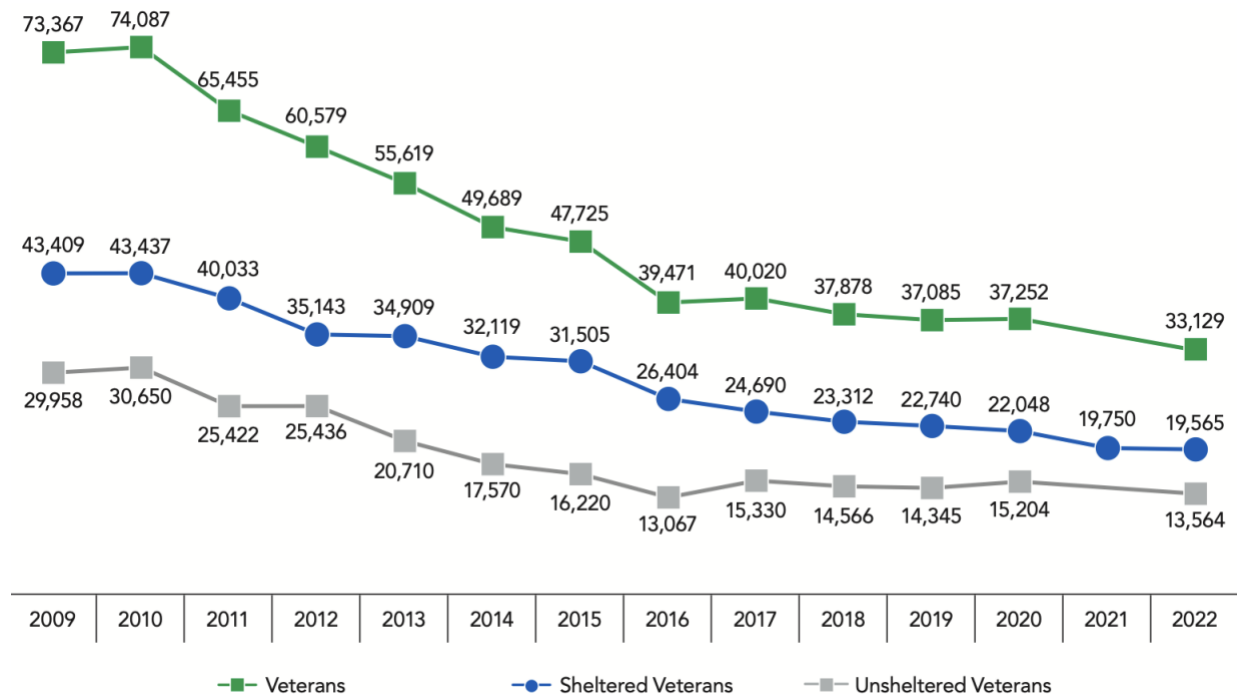
funding for infrastructure, information technology, staff, [and facilities](#). Importantly, many toxic conditions are now considered “presumptive” whereby VA presumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service, circumventing considerable effort on the part of the veteran to prove the relationship between a particular condition and exposure. Under the PACT [Act](#), VA processed 1,327,278 claims from Aug 10, 2022 to May 21, 2024 for a total of [\\$5.7B](#) disbursed.

Veteran Challenges

Homelessness

Veteran homelessness has been a problem in the public eye since the early 1829 when artist John Neagle brought homeless Revolutionary War veteran Joseph Winter into his home (see above “Perceptions”). Since 2010, there has been a combined and generally successful HUD-VA effort to combat homelessness (Figure 35). However, since 2020, with COVID, there was an uptick in veteran as well as non-veteran homelessness. Overall, 20/10,000 Americans are homeless with the number for veterans a bit [higher](#) at 22/10,000 (2023).

Figure 35
Veterans Experiencing Homelessness 2009-2022



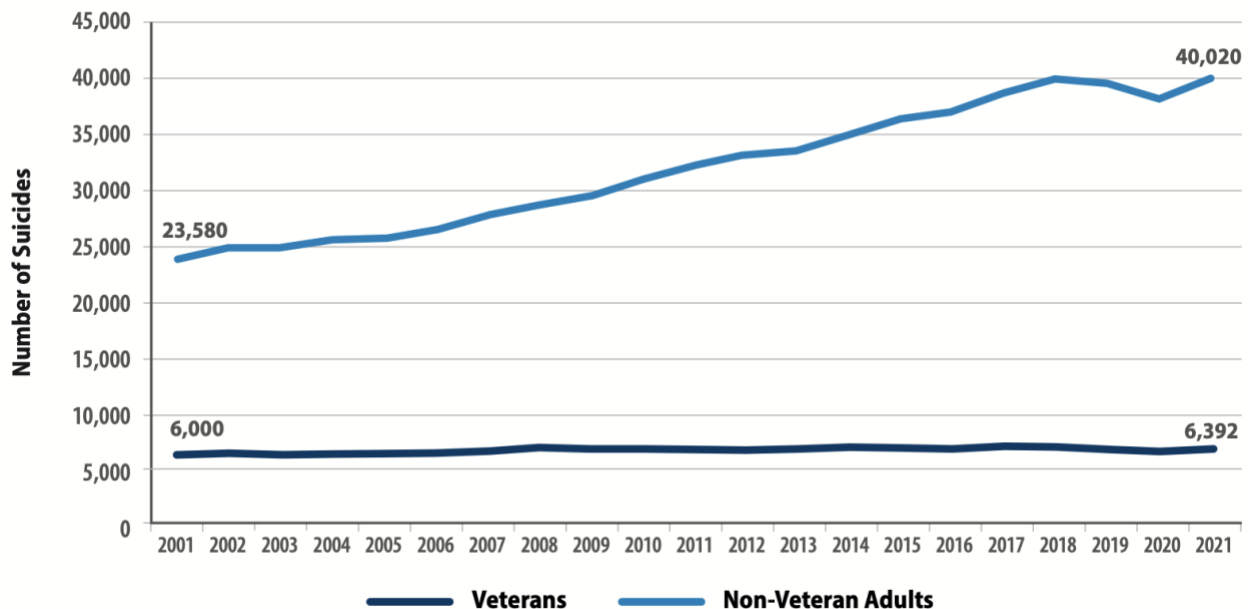
Note: 2021 data may have inaccuracies due to the pandemic
From [HUD](#)

Suicide

Suicide among veterans is a persistent and disheartening problem. As can be seen from Figure 35 the rate of suicide among veterans is higher than in others. There were 40,020 adult US suicides in 2021 of which 6,392 were in veterans (6,042 men and 350 women), 2,000 more than in 2020. From 2020 to 2021 suicide deaths increased in both veterans and [nonveterans](#). Among those who died from suicide in 2021, depression was diagnosed in 38.4%, anxiety 27.6%, PTSD 25.4%, alcohol use disorder 19.7%, bipolar disorder 8.7%, cannabis use disorder 8.6%, opioid use disorder 4.2%, personality disorder 4.2%, and schizophrenia [3.5%](#).

Homeless veterans had the highest rates of suicide at 112.9/100K in 2020-2021, likely associated with addiction. In 2021, suicide was the 13th leading cause of veteran [deaths](#). VA has a number of suicide [programs](#) and a well-regarded crisis [hotline](#).

Figure 35
Suicide deaths among veterans and Non-Veteran US Adults 2001-201-21



From the National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report [2023](#)

PTSD

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or post-traumatic stress (PTS) as it may be called reflecting the fact that the condition is perhaps an expected and predictable outcome of trauma among veterans, is well-known to the public. Table 12 shows the PTSD numbers emanating from several wars. As of 3/31/2024, 1.51M veterans receive compensation for

PTSD. One interesting note – the actor Jimmy Stewart, who had been a World War II fighter pilot, had severe PTSD during the making of the famous movie “It’s a Wonderful [Life](#).”

Further discussion of PTSD can be found in our book ***Supporting Veterans After 50 Years of the All-Volunteer Force and 20 Years of War: Ideas Moving [Forward](#)***.

Table 14
Rates of PTSD in Veterans

PTSD Rates in Veterans		
Service Era	PTSD Past Yr	PTSD in Life
OEF/OIF (Post 9/11 Wars)	15%	29%
Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm)	14%	21%
Vietnam War	5%	10%
World War II and Korean War	2%	3%

From [VA](#)

Traumatic Brain Injury

According to the CDC, Traumatic Brain [Injury](#) (TBI) is a “disruption of the normal function of the brain that can be caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or penetrating head [injury](#).” The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center report that nearly 414,000 U.S. Service members had TBI (2000-2019) and the VA reports more than 185,000 enrolled veterans with [TBI](#).

TBI can cause a wide range of symptoms including headaches, irritability, sleep disorders, mental problems, slower thinking, and depression that can disrupt employment and [families](#). It is classified as mild, moderate, or severe. Most TBI is “mild” and involves loss of consciousness of less than 30 minutes, posttraumatic amnesia for 24 hours or less and a certain score on the Glasgow Coma [scale](#). There is some controversy as to the long-term consequences of concussions and what represents true TBI. Severe TBI can be diagnosed by neuroimaging. We have few and desperately need treatments for TBI. Of post 9/11 veterans, 17.5% have had mild and 3.0% severe [TBI](#) (1/1/2002-12/31/2018).

VA investigators and others have also identified “Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy”, a long-term brain condition resulting from [repeated trauma](#). VA research on this condition stimulated changes in the National Football League approach to head trauma.