

Veterans Day – November 11, 2006

History

- On November 11, 1921, an unknown World War I American soldier was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Located on a hillside overlooking the Potomac River and the city of Washington, this site is the focal point of reverence for America's veterans. In 1938, November 11th was designated Armistice Day to commemorate the end of World War I, which occurred on that day in 1918.
- In 1954 President Eisenhower signed a bill proclaiming November 11 as Veterans Day to honor those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. Each year a ceremony is officially undertaken at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington, VA. A combined color guard executes "Present Arms," a residential wreath is laid and a bugler plays "Taps." Veterans Day is always observed officially on November 11, regardless of the day of the week on which it falls.

Veteran Population

- In 2005, there were approximately 23.4 million living veterans in the United States, down from 26.4 million in 2000. This number represents a nine-percent decrease from the 1990 population of 28.1 million.
- During the last two decades the veteran population has declined significantly as older veterans, particularly Korean War, World War II and World War I veterans, have aged and died. However, while the total number of veterans decreased, the number of female veterans has increased over the last 20 years. This is because (a) of the increasing number and proportion of women entering (and leaving) the military, (b) a more favorable survival rate of women compared to men at any given age, and (c) the younger age distribution of women veterans.
- Among males aged 18 and over, about 20 percent are civilian veterans. Among the 20 to 40 age group, approximately 7 percent of the total population are veterans. In contrast, among females 18 and over and among females 20 to 40 years in age, just over one percent are veterans.
- Women represent about 7 percent of the veteran population, numbering roughly 1.6 million in 2005. Currently, women account for roughly 15 percent of active duty service members in the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT).
- Non-Hispanic white veterans comprise 82 percent of veterans (19.3 million); 10 percent are African-American (2.4 million); 8 percent are Asian (1.9 million); 3 percent Hispanic of any race (750,000); and one percent each are Native American and Asian/Pacific Islander (under 200,000 each).

- Almost 40 percent of veterans are ages 65 or older; 25 percent are between 55 and 64; 28 percent are between 34 and 54; and 8 percent are 18 to 34 years old. The median age for the total veteran population is 58 years.
- The median age of women veterans (45 years) is much lower than that of males (59 years), reflecting an increase in female service members since Vietnam.

Regional Distribution

- California had the largest veteran population of any state in 2005, with 2.3 million, followed by Florida (1.8 million), Texas (1.7 million), New York (1.2 million), Pennsylvania (1.1 million), and Ohio (1.1 million). The state with the smallest veteran population was Wyoming with 44,500 veterans.
- Alaska had the highest proportion of veterans as a percentage of the total population (17% of the population aged 18 and over), followed by Wyoming and Maine (15 percent each). New York and the District of Columbia had the lowest proportion at less than 8 percent.

Education and Employment

- Male veterans are more likely than male non-veterans to have a high school diploma. In 2005, 89 percent of veterans 25 years and older had obtained at least a high school diploma, compared to 84 percent of their non-veteran counterparts.
- However, non-veterans were more likely to have completed a bachelor's degree or more; 27 percent of the non-veteran population compared to nearly 25 percent of veterans 25 years or older. As of the 2001-2002 school year, approximately 1.1 million veterans were enrolled in college.
- Approximately 11.3 million veterans between the ages of 18 and 64 were in the labor force in 2005. The annual median income of veterans was \$33,973, in 2005 inflation-adjusted dollars.
- Unemployment was substantially lower for veterans (5.5 percent) than for non-veterans (6.7 percent) in 2005. However, the unemployment rate for female veterans (5.0 percent) was much closer to their non-veteran counterparts (5.1 percent).

Military Service

	Total Service Members (Deployed Worldwide)	Battle and Non-Combat Deaths	Non-mortal Woundings	Living Veterans
American Revolution (1775-1783)	217,000	4,435	6,188	
War of 1812	286,730	2,260	4,505	

(1812-1815)				
Indian Wars (approx 1817-1898)	106,000	1,000	N/A	
Mexican War (1846-1848)	78,718	13,283	4,152	
Civil War (1861-1865)	2,213,636 (Union) 1,050,000 (Conf.)	364,511 (Union) 164,821 (Conf.)	281,111 (Union) 137,000 (Conf.)	
Spanish-American War (1898-1902)	306,760	2,446	1,662	
World War I (1917-1918)	4,734,991	116,516	204,002	Less than 20
World War II (1941-1945)	16,112,566	405,399	671,846	3,525,769
Korean War (1950-1953)	5,720,000	36,576	103,284	3,256,925
Vietnam War (1964-1975)	8,744,000	58,241	153,303	8,054,993
Gulf War (1990-1991)	2,322,332	1,972	467	2,015,235
Global War on Terrorism (2003 to present)	1,390,765	3,152* (As of 10/30/06)	22,265* (As of 10/30/06)	433,398

Source: US Department of Veterans Affairs; Estimates from September 30, 2005. Available at <http://www1.va.gov/opa/fact/amwars.asp>

* Except for GWOT whose mortality statistics are updated daily and are available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>

- About three-fourths of living veterans served in wars. Vietnam veterans constituted the largest group of veterans, representing almost a third (7 million) of the living veteran population.
- 13 percent (3.1 million) served in World War II, 11 percent (2.6 million) served in Korea and 16 percent (3.7 million) served in the Gulf War. About 4 percent of veterans served in more than one war.
- As of September 2005, about 46 percent (11 million) of US veterans served in the Army; 23 percent (5.5 million) served in the Navy; 18 percent (4.4 million) served in the Air Force; and 10 percent (2.5 million) were Marines.
- Military experience is much more common in Congress than among the general population: 31 percent of Senators and 25 percent of Representatives in the 109th Congress had served in the military.
- Overall, fewer and fewer Americans serve in the military. During World War II, about 6.7 percent of Americans served in the Armed Forces, compared with 4.3 percent during Vietnam and 1.1 percent during the Gulf War.

- In 2003, about 1.4 million Americans were in active military duty and 1.2 million were reserve personnel, representing less than one percent of the total US population.

Disabled Veterans

- In 2005, 26 percent of living veterans, about 6 million, claimed a disability.
- Roughly 2.6 million veterans received compensation for service-connected disabilities totaling an aggregate amount of \$22.4 billion in fiscal year 2004. This is an increase of almost \$6 billion from the \$16.5 billion dollars being spent on benefits in 2001.
- One in four veterans of the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT) filed disability claims, according to records released by the U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) under the Freedom of Information Act.
- More than 150,000 deployed Operation Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan) and Operation Iraqi Freedom (Iraq) veterans, out of more than 560,000 veterans of the GWOT, filed disability compensation and pension benefits claims with the Veterans Benefits Administration. If the current trend continues, then VA could receive as many as 400,000 disability claims from the 1.6 million deployed active duty and reserve service members in the Global War on Terrorism.

Poverty, Homelessness, and Incarceration

- Nearly 6 percent of veterans were living below the poverty level in 2005 compared with a poverty rate of roughly 12 percent for the total non-veteran population.
- The National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients estimates that about 23 percent of all homeless people in the US – and a third of all homeless men – are veterans.
- The U.S. Department of Veterans' Affairs estimates that 250,000 veterans are homeless on any given night, and over 500,000 veterans are homeless during a year.
- Approximately 56 percent of homeless veterans are African American or Hispanic.
- About 45 percent of homeless veterans suffer from some form of mental illness.
- According to a report released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics in January 2000, over 225,000 veterans were held in prisons or jails in 1998. About 1 in every 6 incarcerated veterans was not honorably discharged from the military. Nearly 60 percent of incarcerated veterans had served in the Army.
- Among state prisoners, over half (53 percent) of veterans were non-Hispanic white, compared to nearly a third (31 percent) of non-veterans; Among Federal

prisoners, the percentage of veterans who were non-Hispanic white (50 percent) was nearly double that of non-veterans (26 percent).

- Veterans were more likely than others to be in prison for a violent offense but less likely to be serving a sentence for drugs. About 35 percent of veterans in State prison, compared to 20 percent of non-veterans, were convicted of homicide or sexual assault. However, veterans were more likely (30 percent) than other State prisoners (23 percent) to be first-time offenders.

This Fact Sheet was updated in November 2006 by the Population Resource Center. It is based on information from a number of sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the US Department of Homeland Security, and the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. For more information contact the Population Resource Center at (202) 467-5030, 1725 K Street NW, Suite 1102, Washington, DC 20006.