

Black Veterans and Employment: A Literature Review



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), in partnership with DOL’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS), seeks to document evidence on Black Veterans’ experience transitioning from military to civilian employment. This literature review, conducted by The Manhattan Strategy Group LLC (MSG):

- synthesizes findings from recent research on employment outcomes;
- highlights factors associated with employment outcomes;
- describes best practices and interventions, services, and support needs; and
- identifies gaps in the existing body of literature that prevent the current state and needs of Black Veterans from being fully understood.

We summarize our findings below.

Overview of Black Veteran Employment

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data from 2022 revealed that nonveterans had an overall labor force participation rate¹ of 65% versus 48% for Veterans. The breakdown by demographics showed that Black Veterans and nonveterans had a slightly higher labor force participation rate (64%) than White Veterans and nonveterans (63%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023).

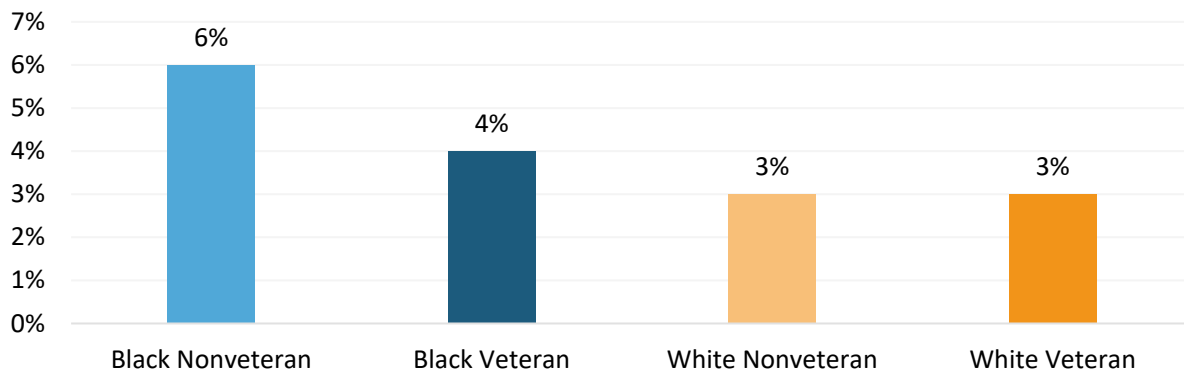
In terms of unemployment rates, Black Veterans (4%) had lower rates of unemployment than Black nonveterans (6%) but higher than both White Veterans and nonveterans (both approximately 3%) (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023). This data is displayed in Exhibit 1.

This literature review focuses on the following research questions:

- What are the labor force participation and employment rates for Black Veterans?
- What factors impact Black Veteran employment and labor force participation?
- What interventions have proven particularly effective—or ineffective—in service to Black Veterans and transitioning service members (TSMs)?
- What differences mark the ways Black Veterans and TSMs access and engage with the interventions that are available to them?

¹ The labor force participation rate represents the number of people in the labor force as a percentage of the civilian noninstitutional population.

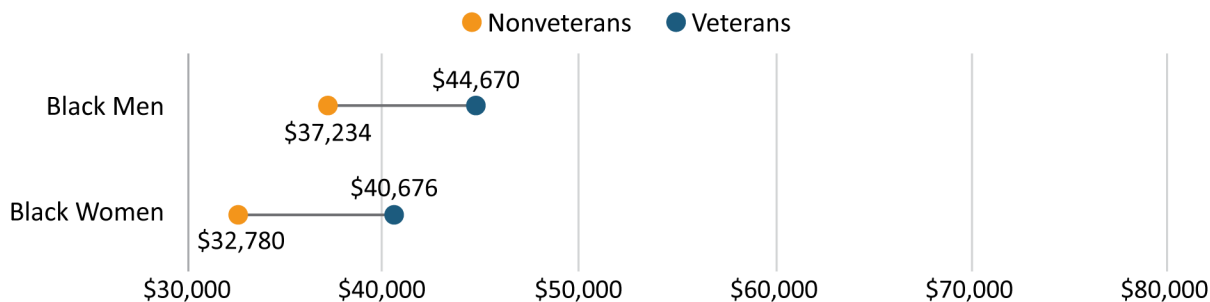
Exhibit 1: Comparison of Unemployment Rates among Black Nonveterans and Veterans and White Nonveterans and Veterans



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: *Table 1. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2022 annual averages.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

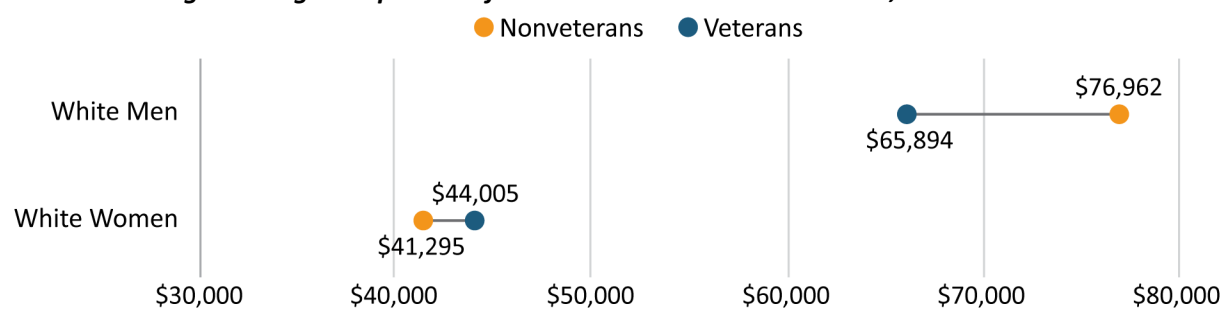
In terms of wages, the American Community Survey (ACS) Public Use Microdata Sample data (Piquado et al., 2022) for 2015–2019 reported that Black male and female Veterans earned approximately \$7,000 more annually than Black male and female nonveterans,² respectively (Exhibit 2). However, average earned incomes for Black Veterans were lower than the average earned incomes for their White Veteran and White nonveteran counterparts, as seen in Exhibit 3 (Piquado et al., 2022). Further breakdown by age and gender differences for Veterans was not provided in the source data.

Exhibit 2: Average Earnings Comparison of Black Veterans and Nonveterans, 2015–2019



Source: RAND analysis of ACS Public Use Microdata Sample data for 2015–2019 (Piquado et al., 2022).

² Some cited sources use the term "civilians" in their work when referring to those without a history of military service. Since military veterans are also technically "civilians" as they are no longer serving in the military, the term "nonveterans" is used across this literature review to refer to individuals who have not served in the U.S. military.

Exhibit 3: Average Earnings Comparison of White Veterans and Nonveterans, 2015–2019

Source: RAND analysis of ACS Public Use Microdata Sample data for 2015–2019 (Piquado et al., 2022).

Factors Associated with Black Veteran Employment Outcomes

Numerous factors influence employment and overall quality-of-life outcomes for Black Veterans. Some of the factors addressed in the literature include relevance of Veteran identity, non-Honorable discharge status,³ homelessness, and incarceration.

- Veteran identity is experienced similarly to other identities, such as ethnic identity (Daley, 1999). Intersectional identities should be examined when considering Black Veterans' social capital and the ease with which they will adapt to civilian employment and community.
- Between 2014 and 2020, Black service members accounted for 18% of separations while accounting for over 25% of Other Than Honorable discharges and over 30% of General discharges (The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 2022).
 - These non-Honorable discharge statuses restrict Veterans' eligibility for education benefits under the GI Bill as well as U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits (The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 2022).
 - Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharges have a greater likelihood of dying by suicide, facing challenges related to untreated mental illness, experiencing a substance use disorder, and/or experiencing homelessness in comparison to other Veterans (The Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 2022).
- According to 2022 data, Black Veterans made up 12% of the total population of Veterans while representing 31% of the total population of Veterans experiencing homelessness (de Sousa, 2022).
- Black male Veterans represented 23% and 24% of the total population of Veterans incarcerated in state and federal prisons, respectively, in 2016 (Maruschak et al., 2021).
- Employers, in assessing prospective Veteran employees, tend to value skills and training that are more readily transferable to civilian employment than skills and training that are specific to the military context (e.g., combat arms) (Kleykamp, 2009; Martorell et al., 2014).
- Veteran earnings—particularly the earnings of Black Veterans—appear to be influenced by employment in positions and communities with lower wages and fewer opportunities for employment growth (Makridis & Hirsch, 2021).
- Barrier reduction interventions (e.g., providing assistance with obtaining VA benefits, increasing motivation to change, and providing non-VA insurance or free medical care and non-VA tuition discounts/scholarships) are of high interest to Veterans regardless of racial

³ e.g., General, Other Than Honorable

background, but navigating and accessing these systems is reportedly challenging (Keeling et al., 2019).

Best Practices and Interventions

MSG's investigation into best practices and interventions that support Black Veterans centered on the following questions:

1. What interventions have proven particularly effective—or ineffective—in service to Black Veterans and transitioning service members (TSMs)?
2. What differences mark the ways Black Veterans and TSMs access and engage with the interventions that are available to them?

To answer these questions, we reviewed studies on Veteran experiences in the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) as well as other employment and training interventions (e.g., apprenticeship), with an emphasis on studies that specifically explored issues and outcomes pertinent to Black TSMs and Veterans. Limited evidence exists to demonstrate either the efficacy or inefficacy of these program models in serving Black TSMs and Veterans. The available data revealed that:

- Black TSMs and Veterans are more likely to take advantage of intervention services than their White counterparts (Aaronson et al., 2019).
- The intervention types that Black TSMs and Veterans accessed most were career fairs, job placement, career counseling, and training or certification (Aaronson et al., 2019).
- Further research on interventions that include barrier reduction elements—aspects of the intervention service delivery process that actively seek to limit roadblocks to intervention access—may provide insight into how interventions can be made more accessible to Black Veterans, among others (Morgan et al., 2020).

Research Gaps and Opportunities

Research that fully describes Black Veterans' employment experiences and identifies effective interventions to improve these experiences is limited. This literature review's findings highlight some current research gaps and opportunities:

- Many studies examining Veteran employment outcomes are not designed and conducted rigorously and often lack the data necessary to disaggregate outcomes by demographic subgroups such as Black Veterans.
- The aggregate nature of datasets on Veterans' employment experiences presents challenges in constructing research designs that tease out differences across subgroups such as Black Veterans.
- Data describing the experiences of Veterans with multiple intersecting identities (e.g., Black and female, female and LGBTQIA+) are limited and therefore insufficient to conduct comprehensive analyses.
- At present, the impact of Veteran discharge status, and its associated impact on access to Veteran benefits and civilian economic status, has not been rigorously examined. Future studies could examine the impact of service-earned benefits before and after benefit reinstatement.
- Studies examining Veteran identity longitudinally were not identified in this literature review. Examining the influence of Veteran identity over the course of a lifetime could assist in understanding its role on Veteran civilian life in various domains.

- Further examination of the relationship between military-acquired skills and their transferability to civilian employment could be used to inform future transition planning.
- Understanding the influence of social capital on Veterans' civilian transition may help inform future training and programming.
- As of Spring 2023, evaluations of the TAP are ongoing. Findings from DOL-CEO's current TAP study may reveal additional gaps and opportunities to improve civilian employment outcomes for all Veterans, including Black Veterans.

INTRODUCTION

Veterans provide a valuable service to our nation, but when they are ready to transition into civilian employment, they are likely to need access to supports and services to help them succeed in the civilian workforce. Many factors influence the Veteran transition experience, and this literature review seeks to detail the employment transition experiences of Black Veterans in particular.

To further understanding on this important topic, the U.S. Department of Labor’s (DOL) Chief Evaluation Office (CEO), in partnership with DOL’s Veterans’ Employment and Training Service (VETS), contracted with The Manhattan Strategy Group LLC (MSG) to conduct a literature review. In this literature review, MSG synthesizes recent research on Black Veteran employment and highlights successful interventions. This literature review aligns with VETS’ goal to “build opportunity and equity for all” (Strategic Goal 1) and “advance training, employment, and return-to-work opportunities that connect workers to higher-wage jobs, especially in ways that address systemic inequities” (Strategic Objective 1.1.) as outlined in the [*U.S. Department of Labor: FY 2022–2026 Strategic Plan*](#).

METHODOLOGY

MSG conducted its literature search with Google Scholar and JSTOR. MSG also used clearinghouses focusing on education and employment training initiatives (e.g., [DOL CLEAR](#), U.S. Department of Education’s [What Works Clearinghouse](#), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ [Pathways to Work Evidence Clearinghouse](#), and the Pennsylvania State University’s [Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness](#)) as well as several federal agency websites⁴ to identify additional sources. The search mainly focused on studies published from 2017 to 2023, but also included some from outside this period deemed to be significant. MSG conducted an additional review of literature based on datasets identified by DOL.

In collaboration with the CEO and VETS, MSG identified search terms for the literature search (Exhibit 4) to align with the following research questions:

- What are the labor force participation and employment rates for Black Veterans?
- What factors impact Black Veteran employment and labor force participation?
- What interventions have proven particularly effective—or ineffective—in service to Black Veterans and transitioning service members (TSMs)?
- What differences mark the ways Black Veterans and TSMs access and engage with the interventions that are available to them?

⁴ Examples: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, and the Small Business Administration.

Exhibit 4: Literature Search Terms

Search Term 1		Search Term 2		Search Term 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black • African American • Afro-American • People of Color • Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) 	AND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Military • Service Member • Military Service Member • Transitioning Service Member (TSM) • Transition Assistance Program (TAP) • Veteran • Commissioned • Enlisted • Post-Military 	AND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment • Civilian Employment • Unemployment • Earnings • Career • Civilian Career • Career Readiness

MSG combined terms from each of the three columns in Exhibit 4 to identify a broad collection of studies, including studies whose impact evaluation data were prioritized for review. During the literature search process, MSG maintained a master list of studies, including those outside the scope of this literature review, as well as a table of key topics of secondary interest for potential future use beyond this literature review. The table includes studies concerning Veteran employment for various demographics⁵ as defined by the [Executive Order on Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through The Federal Government](#).

FINDINGS

In this literature review, we first present summary statistics on Veterans, Black⁶ Veterans, and employment. We then discuss factors impacting Black Veteran employment outcomes according to the literature and report on best practices and interventions that support Black Veteran employment. We conclude with a discussion of knowledge gaps and research opportunities identified from the survey of literature as well as a summary of findings.

It is important to recognize that Veterans, regardless of racial background, cannot be defined or categorized solely by race. Additional intersecting factors—including but not limited to gender,⁷ sexual identity, social class, disability, and military discharge status—may impact Veterans’ experiences in transitioning from the military to civilian employment. When possible, this literature review provides information regarding the influence of these additional intersecting factors.

⁵ Additional demographics include Latino, Indigenous and Native American, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander persons and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; women and girls; LGBTQIA+ persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; persons who live in U.S. territories; persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality; and persons who belong to multiple such communities.

⁶ Some cited sources use the term “African American Veterans” in their work, but the term “Black Veterans” is used across this literature review. We acknowledge that some use these terms interchangeably and some do not. The term “Black Veterans” is used in this literature review for inclusivity and consistency.

⁷ This literature review uses the terms “women,” “men,” “male,” and “female” in reference to Veterans. The terms women Veterans, female Veterans, men Veterans, or male Veterans are used as reported in the cited work.

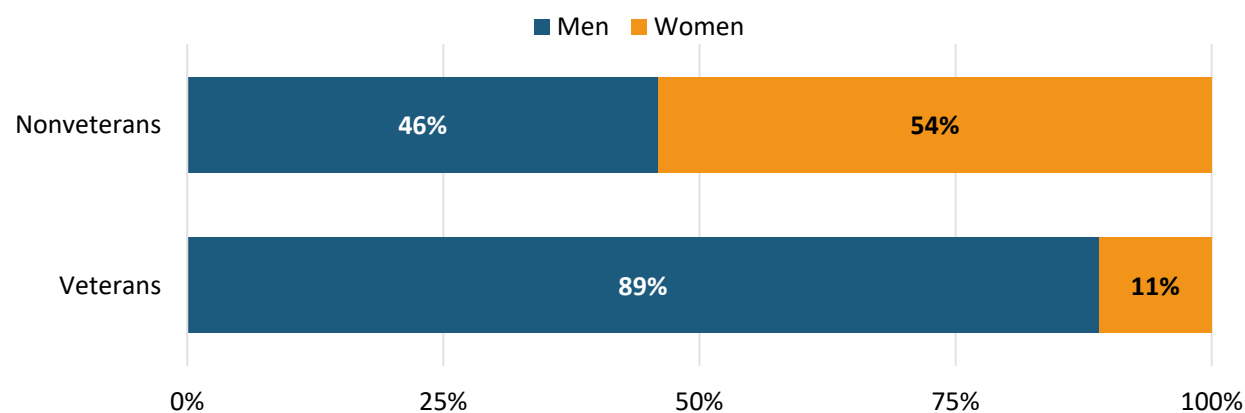
Overview of Black Veteran Employment

According to 2022 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data,⁸ Veterans make up about 7%⁹ of the civilian noninstitutional population over the age of 18.¹⁰ As shown in Exhibit 5, women make up 11% and men make up 89% of the 18.4 million total Veteran population. Within the nonveteran population, women hold a slight majority over men at 54% to 46%, respectively.

The section provides readers with an overview of Black Veteran employment, including:

- Labor force participation rates
- Unemployment rates
- Industry occupations
- Earnings
- Economic stability and adverse health effects

Exhibit 5: Civilian Noninstitutional Population by Veteran Status and Sex, 2022 Annual Averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). *Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 2A. Employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, and sex, 2021-2022 annual averages.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

The BLS data also provides a further breakdown of demographics for the Veteran population. Exhibit 6 shows that, of the 7% of the total U.S. noninstitutional population over the age of 18 who are Veterans, 81% are White, 14% are Black, 8% are Hispanic,¹¹ and 2% are Asian. For nonveterans over the age of 18, 77% are White, 13% are Black, 17% are Hispanic, and 7% are Asian. This indicates that proportionally higher percentages of Whites and Blacks have served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

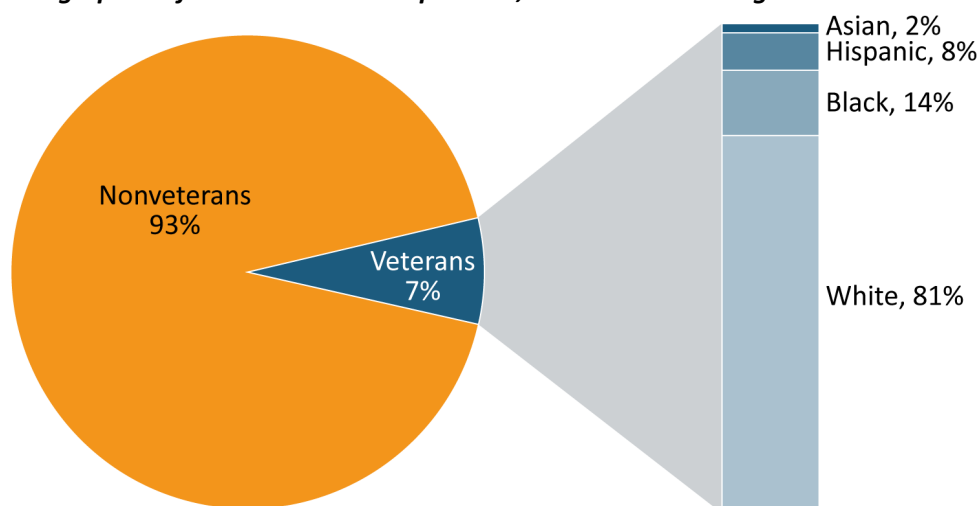
⁸ The Current Population Survey (CPS) conducted by the BLS and the U.S. Census Bureau is a monthly data collection of a sample of approximately 60,000 households focused on employment states of the U.S. noninstitutionalized civilian population. Every year, a supplement to the CPS is collected in August. The supplement focuses on Veterans and topics related to service-connected disability and personal military service, among others (see <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.toc.htm>).

⁹ Throughout the report the authors consistently round all numbers reported to the nearest whole number.

¹⁰ We define “civilian noninstitutional population” based on how it is used in the CPS. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, January 11). *Concepts and definitions (CPS)*. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#laborforce>

¹¹ Hispanic/Latino ethnicity can be identified in any race, which is why totals exceed 100%.

Exhibit 6: Demographics of the U.S. Veteran Population, 2022 Annual Averages

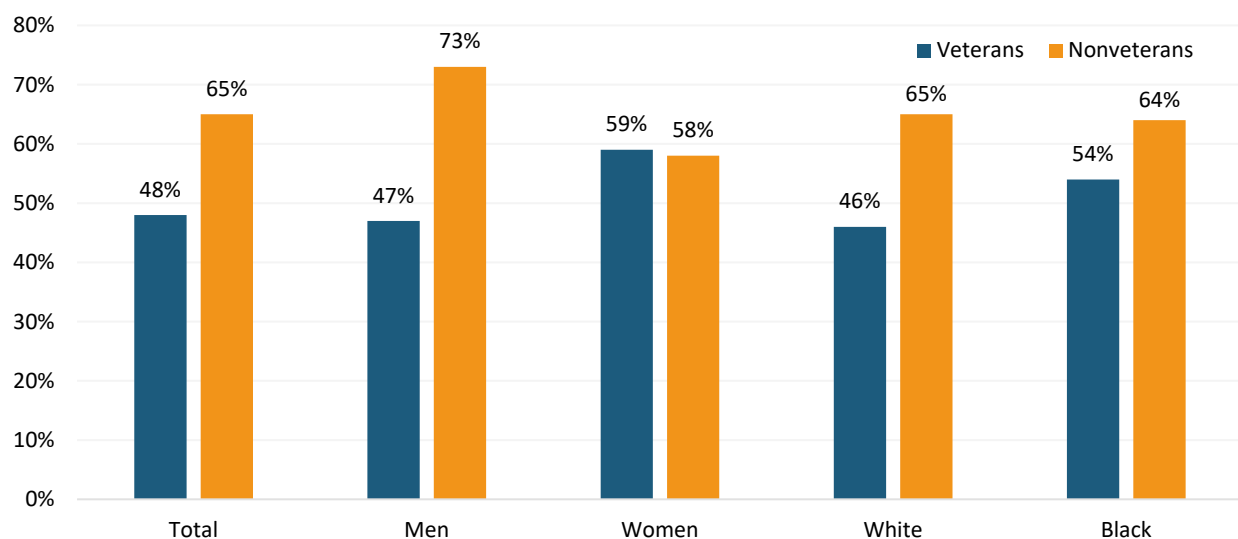


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). *Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 1. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2022 annual averages.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

Labor Force Participation Rates

Labor force participation¹² rates for Veterans and nonveterans are also included in the 2022 BLS data. As shown in Exhibit 7, nonveterans generally have higher labor force participation rates than Veterans, with the exception of the women subgroup, where women Veterans have a slightly higher labor force participation rate than their nonveteran counterparts.

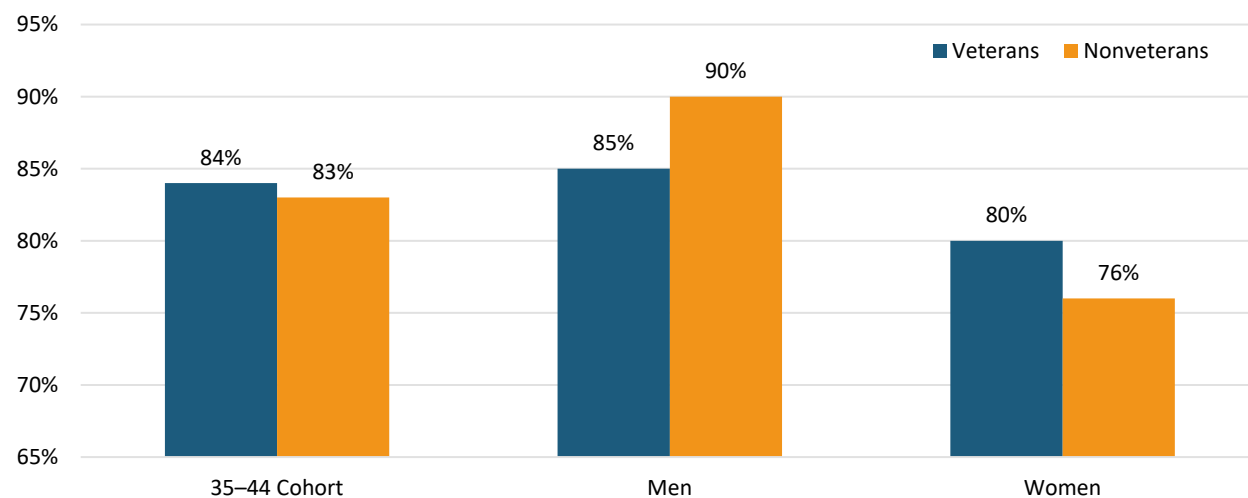
¹² Labor force participation is the number of individuals in the labor force (i.e., individuals who are currently employed or are looking for work) divided by the total civilian noninstitutional population, multiplied by 100. U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, January 11). *Concepts and definitions (CPS)*. Retrieved June 14, 2023, from <https://www.bls.gov/cps/definitions.htm#laborforce>

Exhibit 7: Labor Force Participation by Select Demographics, 2022 Annual Averages

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: *Table 1. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2022 annual averages.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

The data as shown in Exhibit 7 does not account for age, and some of the differences could be attributed to the differing age compositions across the Veteran and nonveteran populations. BLS data, for instance, indicates higher labor force participation rates for more recent Veteran cohorts (e.g., 81% for Veteran men of Gulf War era II), which may be due to older cohorts of Veterans retiring or aging out of the labor force. Looking at labor force participation by age cohort, we see that the cohort aged 35–44 had the highest labor force participation rates at 83% for Veterans and at 84% for nonveterans. The data for this age cohort also shows that among nonveteran men in this age range, 90% are in the labor force while only 85% of Veteran men are. Among women, 80% of women Veterans between the ages of 35 and 44 are in the labor force, but only 76% of nonveteran women are. This reinforces the importance of examining the breakdown by subgroups and drawing comparisons between similarly situated groups for a more comprehensive understanding of Veterans’ experiences in the civilian labor force.

Exhibit 8: Labor Force Participation by Veterans and Nonveterans Aged 35–44, 2022 Annual Averages

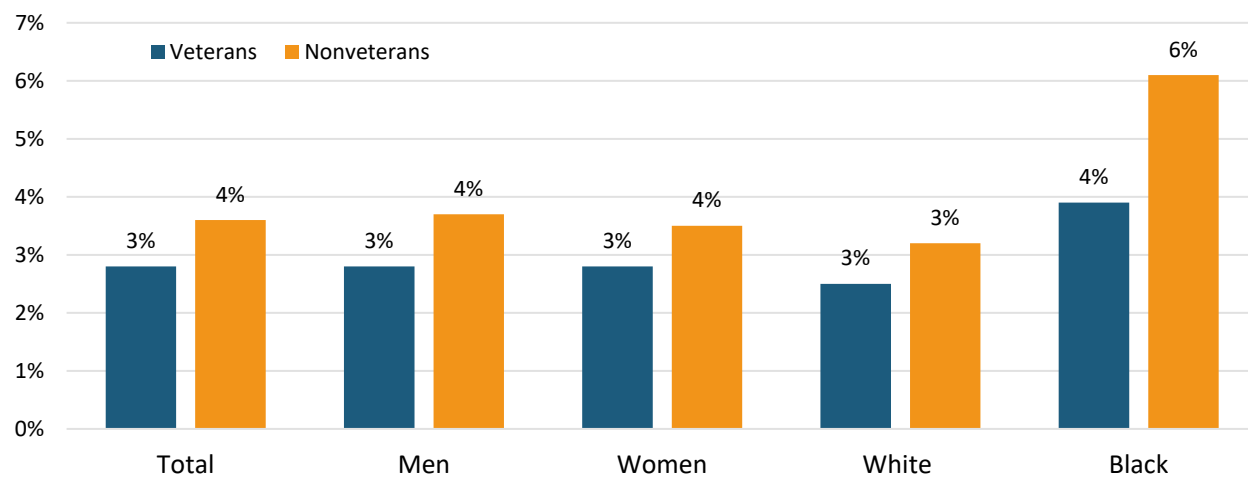


Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 2A. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, age, and period of service, 2022 annual averages. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

Unemployment Rates

According to BLS 2022 annual average estimates, there are approximately 2.5 million Black Veterans in the United States (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023, March 21). Exhibit 9 shows a comparison of overall unemployment rates for Veterans and nonveterans as well as for select demographic subgroups of Veterans. Nonveterans overall had higher unemployment rates than Veterans, but both Black nonveterans and Black Veterans had the highest unemployment rates among the included subgroups.

Exhibit 9: Unemployment Rates by Demographic and Veteran Status, 2022 Annual Averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 1. Employment status of persons 18 years and over by veteran status, period of service, sex, race, and Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, 2022 annual averages. <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

Per BLS data, employment rates for Black Veterans vary by period of service. In 2019, when the Black Veteran unemployment rate was at 5%, the post-9/11 Black Veteran¹³ unemployment rate was at 7%. The Black Veteran unemployment rate at 5% was also higher than the total Veteran and post-9/11 Veteran unemployment rates which were at 3% and 4%, respectively (Maury et al., 2020). In 2022, Gulf War era¹⁴ I and II Veterans overall had more favorable employment and unemployment rates than the nonveteran population. However, Black Veterans from Gulf War eras I and II had less favorable employment and unemployment rates than White Veterans from Gulf War eras I and II. Black Gulf War era I and II Veterans had employment and unemployment rates of 69% and 4%, respectively. White Gulf War era I and II Veterans had employment and unemployment rates of 76% and 2%, respectively.

According to findings from a study examining Veteran gender, race, and employment in the state of New York, Veteran status tends to protect against unemployment (Grogan et al., 2020). However, not all subgroups of Veterans were found to equally reap the benefits of this status in transitioning to civilian employment. Extant data from the Current Population Survey used in the Grogan study also revealed that Black Veterans had lower unemployment rates than Black nonveterans but higher unemployment rates in comparison to White Veterans.

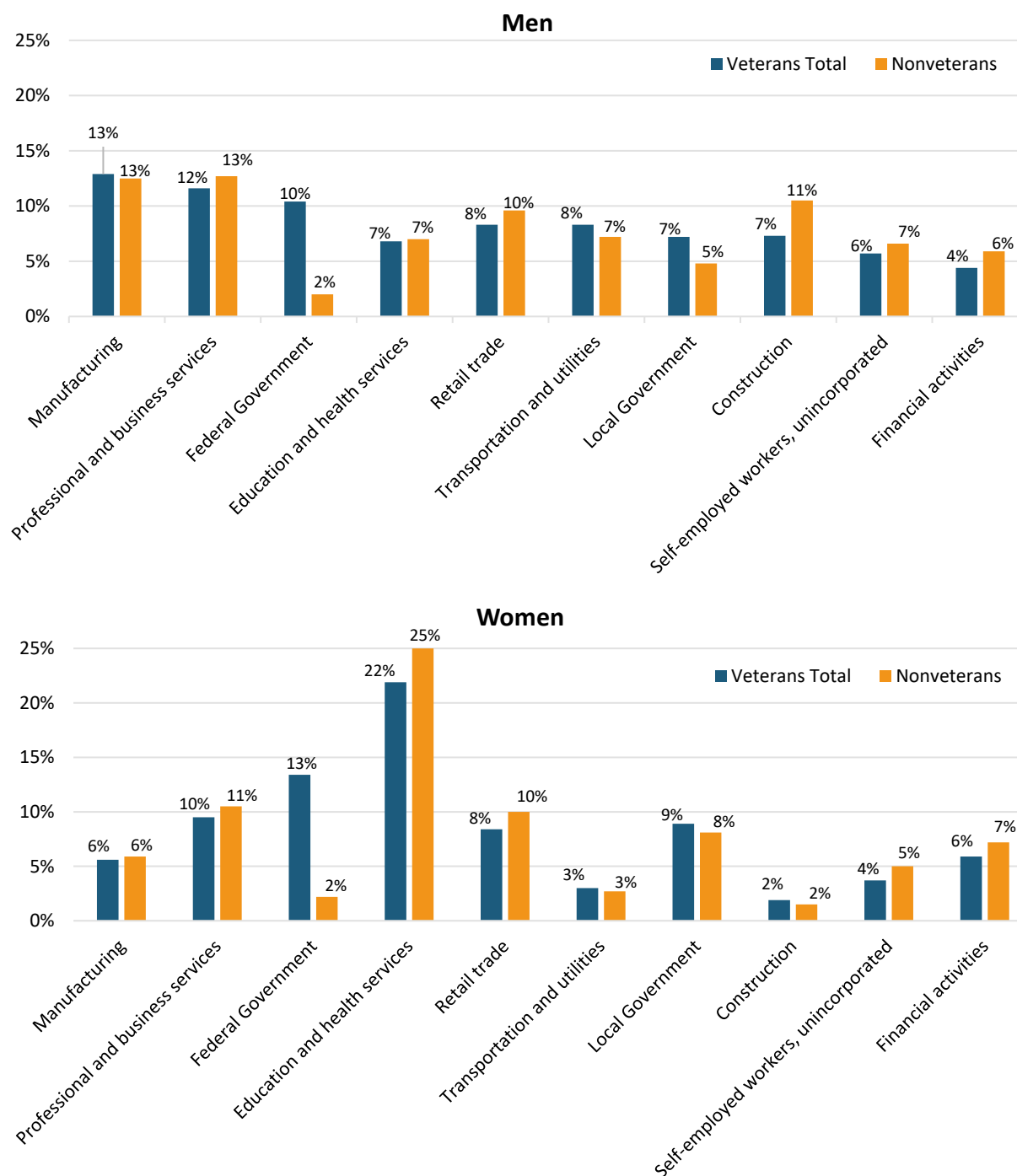
Industry Occupations

When service members transition to the civilian labor force, they seek occupations across a variety of industries. BLS survey data shows the prevalence of Veteran workers within certain industries and shows the breakdown of men and women Veterans and nonveterans across occupations. Exhibit 10 shows the top 10 industries employing men and women Veterans and nonveterans in the United States. The most common industry among women is education and health services, with employment of nonveteran women slightly higher than Veteran women. The most common industry among men is manufacturing, with employment of Veteran and nonveteran men at similar levels. Additionally, according to this data, men and women Veterans work for the federal government five times more than men and women nonveterans.

¹³ The term “post-9/11” service member or Veteran is typically used to denote the most recent era of service member, as we might also refer to “Civil War” or “WWII-era” Veterans. As the current era of service members and Veterans, many studies focus only on this group.

¹⁴ The Gulf War era includes two periods: Gulf War I, from August 1990 to August 2001, and Gulf War II, from September 2001 to the present (Williams, 2020).

Exhibit 10: Top 10 Industries Employing U.S. Veterans, 2022 Annual Averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). *Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 5. Employed persons 18 years and over by industry, class of worker, sex, veteran status, and period of service, 2022 annual averages.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

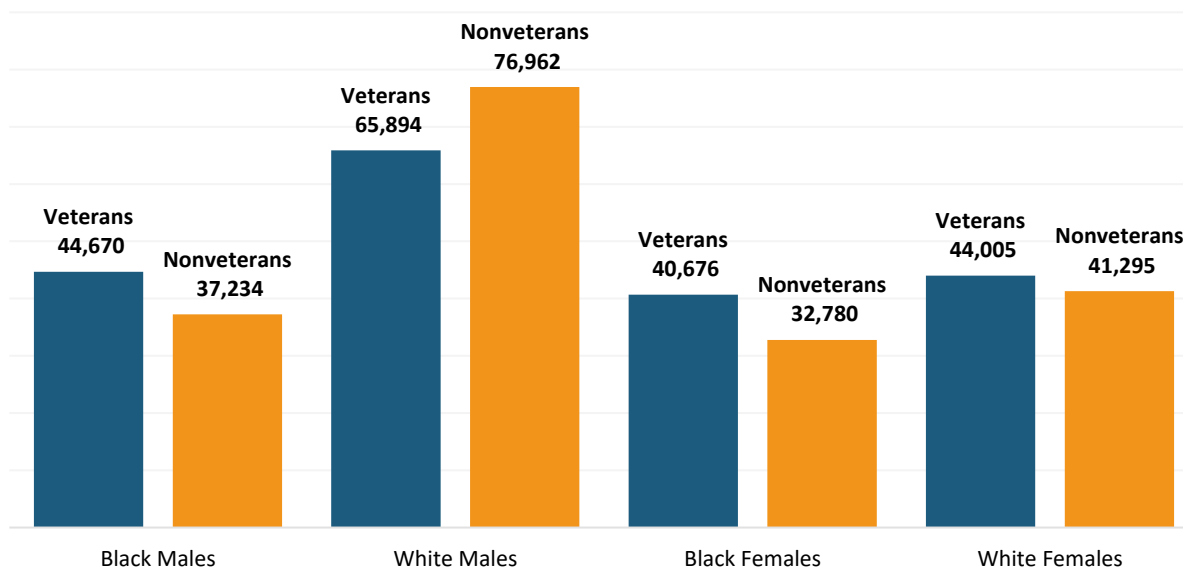
According to Makridis and Hirsch (2021), Veterans are often employed in occupations with lower hourly wages and employment growth opportunities. They are also more likely to live outside of larger urban areas where earnings tend to be lower (although wage information was not provided in the study). In examining Veteran trends in the civilian workforce, the BLS found higher concentrations of Veterans than nonveterans across four occupational groups: management,

business, and financial operations; transportation and material moving operations; installation, maintenance, and repair occupations; and production operations (Hylton, 2021). However, the occupational trend among Black Veterans in the civilian workforce shows a different pattern. The top five occupations among Black Veterans are service occupations (e.g., security guards, police officers, correctional officers and jailers, firefighters); transportation and material moving occupations; management, business, and financial occupations; office and administrative support occupations; and education, legal, community service, arts, and media occupations (D’Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2020).

Earnings

In the RAND Corporation’s analysis of the Census Bureau’s 2015–2019 American Community Survey (ACS), Black Veterans reported worse outcomes on a variety of socioeconomic indicators, including annual income and need for food assistance, in comparison to other Veteran subgroups as well as White nonveterans (Piquado et al., 2022). Although Black male and female Veterans reported earning \$7,000 more in average annual wages than Black male and female nonveterans, their average annual incomes were still lower than that of their White Veteran and nonveteran counterparts.¹⁵ Black male Veterans reported earning over \$20,000 less than White male Veterans, and Black male nonveterans reported earning over \$30,000 less than White male nonveterans (Exhibit 11).

Exhibit 11: Earnings Comparison by Race and Veteran Status, 2015–2019



Source: RAND analysis of ACS Public Use Microdata Sample data for 2015–2019 (Piquado et al., 2022).

Makridis and Hirsch (2021) conducted descriptive and regression analyses using monthly Current Population Survey Outgoing Rotation Group data (2005–2018) as well as Occupational Employment Statistics data from the BLS. The differences between the earnings of Black male Veterans and Black male nonveterans was found to be statistically significant ($p < .005$), with Black male Veterans earning 2.5% more on average than their Black male nonveteran counterparts. However, they identified no statistically significant difference between Black female Veteran and Black female nonveteran earnings.

¹⁵ This data for earnings refers solely to wage, salary, and self-employment income and not total personal income (e.g., interest, dividend, or rental income; retirement income; or other income).

Earnings differences between Veterans and nonveterans were also notable across other subgroups in Makridis and Hirsch’s study. Earnings data for Hispanic male Veterans showed a positive 10% difference in comparison to their Hispanic nonveteran counterparts—4 times the positive difference for Black male Veterans in comparison to their Black nonveteran counterparts. Hispanic female Veterans also experienced 6% higher earnings in comparison to their Hispanic nonveteran counterparts. However, the pattern differed for White males in that White male Veterans earned, on average, less than their White male nonveteran counterparts. The trend for White female Veterans was more on par with the Black Veteran subgroups in that they, on average, earned more than their nonveteran counterparts (Piquado et al., 2022; Grogan et al., 2020).

Collectively, these study findings indicate that Veteran status generally translates to increased earnings for demographic subgroups with historically lower wages while translating to decreased earnings for demographic subgroups with historically higher wages. The findings also point to the need for data on the experiences of Veterans with multiple intersecting identities (e.g., Black and female, female and LGBTQIA+) in order to be able to conduct more comprehensive analyses to tease out the variability of experiences and outcomes based on different Veteran identities.

Economic Stability and Adverse Health Effects

Piquado et al.’s 2022 study examined quality of life for Black Veterans using the key indicators of economic stability, behavioral health, physical health, and interpersonal relationships. Their study used ACS National Survey on Drug Use and Health data to analyze the earnings of 45–55-year-old U.S. workers. They found that, among Black Veterans surveyed, most reported experiencing greater economic stability¹⁶ in comparison to their Black nonveteran counterparts (Piquado et al., 2022). Survey results also indicated that fewer Black Veterans (12%) received some form of sustenance support (e.g., food assistance) in comparison to Black nonveterans (18%). Both percentages, however, were still higher than the percentages for White Veterans (5%) and White nonveterans (6%).

In the same study, Piquado et al. (2022) also conducted logistic regression and main-effects-only model analyses using 2019 National Health Interview Survey data to examine the effects of physical and mental health conditions on Black Veteran employment outcomes. Although the researchers identified positive earnings outcomes for Black Veterans in comparison to their Black nonveteran counterparts, the researchers also outlined negative health outcomes for Black Veterans.¹⁷ Their findings revealed that Black Veterans (32%) are more likely than Black nonveterans (22%) to report that their workload had to be limited as a result of physical, mental, or emotional health conditions. White Veterans (31%) are also more likely to report similar challenges in comparison to their White civilian counterparts (22%). Piquado et al. concluded that Veteran status is a contributing factor to physical and mental health conditions that may ultimately affect Veteran employment outcomes.

¹⁶ Economic stability is defined as “higher income, improved ability to cover costs of medical and dental care, higher rates of homeownership, and decreased reliance on food assistance programs” (Piquado et al., 2022, p. 1).

¹⁷ Black Veterans experience higher rates of adverse health conditions and diseases (Piquado et al., 2022).

Factors Associated with Black Veteran Employment Outcomes

This section describes factors associated with Veterans attaining and maintaining civilian employment. The studies referenced in this section examine the Veteran civilian employment experience, with an emphasis on the Black Veteran experience.

Veteran Identity and Self

Factors related to selfhood, identity, and belonging are central to service members' transition from military to civilian life. Daley (1999) defines Veteran identity as the prominence of past military service, beliefs, and norms within the individual's post-military sense of self and suggests that military identity can be so important to an individual that it can be understood as akin to a sense of ethnic identity. Embracing or rejecting this identity as well as intersectional identities (e.g., LGBTQIA+ identity, social class, religious affiliation) depends on how Veterans see themselves and also on the perceived value of their identity based on society's values and judgments. The significance of the Veteran identity may be an influential factor in how successfully Veterans can transition to civilian life.

Joining the military prompts changes in one's identity to match the demands and dynamics of the military context (Shepherd et al., 2020). The majority of one's basic and fundamental life needs are all met for active duty service members through their service alone (e.g., housing, sustenance, employment, healthcare, a sense of purpose, and community) within the all-encompassing and very structured military ecosystem.

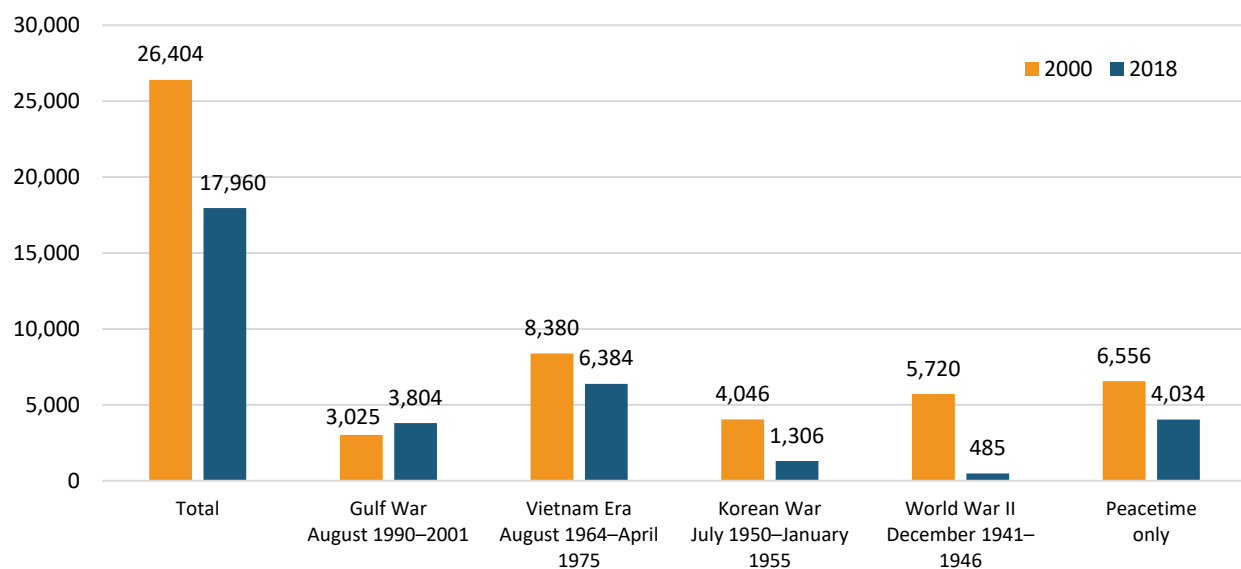
A survey study of 722 pre- and post-9/11 Veterans in the greater San Francisco area discussed self-reported challenges faced by Veterans during their transition to civilian life. Race/ethnicity were described in the study sample, with 24.6% (n=82) and 10.9% (n=42) of the pre 9/11 and post-9/11 Veterans, respectively, identifying as Black, though the researchers did not provide findings by race. Overall, Veterans reported positive views regarding the impact that their military experiences had on their lives, though less so for Veterans with a non-Honorable discharge status. A majority of the Veterans surveyed reported sensing that civilians do not understand the challenges Veterans faced (63% pre-9/11 and 83% post-9/11) nor appreciate the sacrifices Veterans made (59% pre-9/11 and 64% post-9/11) (Castro & Kintzle, 2017).

One factor contributing to the disconnect between those with military experience and those without is the diminishing proportion of Veterans within the U.S. population, which thereby decreases the nonveteran population's general familiarity with military culture (Carter et al., 2017). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the share of Veterans in U.S. society has decreased over time—from 35% of the male population in 1990 to 16% in 2014 (Carter et al., 2017). Rate of military service for U.S. men and women declined from 17% in 1990 to 8% in 2014. According to U.S. Census Bureau data, the military service rate fell to an estimated 7% in 2018 (Vespa, 2020). While Carter et al. (2017) do not explore the reasoning behind this decline at length, they offer declining application rates and declining quality of applications received as potential explanations. Exhibit 12 shows the overall Veteran population decline from 2000–2018.

This section informs readers of the following factors associated with Black Veteran employment outcomes:

- Veteran identity and self
- Military discharge status
- Homelessness
- Incarceration
- Health and disability
- Gender and health
- Social capital of enlisted service members and officers
- Veteran status and wages
- Military experience and occupation
- Perceived mismatch from military to civilian jobs
- Military transition

Exhibit 12: Declining Veteran Population, 2000–2018



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Veteran population declines*. <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/2020/comm/veteran-population-declines.html>

In a qualitative study involving interviews conducted with post-9/11 Veterans (n=8), one Veteran described their feeling of otherness within the civilian context as “a stranger in a strange land,” while others described difficulties developing relationships with nonveteran colleagues (Young et al., 2022). Carter et al. (2017) suggested that a familiarity gap between the civilian and military communities has created both a “military cultural competency” gap (i.e., challenges for civilians in understanding the military experience and lifestyle) and a “civilian cultural competency” gap (i.e., challenges for current and former service members in understanding the civilian employment experience and dynamic). Endured trauma may also contribute to the sense of “otherness” for Veterans, which can make bridging the cultural divide even more challenging.

Military Discharge Status

Based on 2014–2020 discharge data from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines (n=1,064,574), Black service members made up nearly 18% of the separations from the armed forces but only 17% of the Honorable discharges within that period of time (Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 2022). Across all branches of service, Black service members received an “Other Than Honorable” discharge 1.5 times more frequently than White service members and received a “General” discharge roughly twice as frequently as White service members. Exhibit 13 details the discharge status categories.

Exhibit 13: Discharge Status Categories

Category	Process of Characterization	Impact on Benefit Eligibility
Honorable Discharge	Determined at the discretion of chain of command for service members who receive a rating from good to excellent for their service, meet or exceed the required standards of duty performance and personal conduct, and complete their tours of duty.	No loss of eligibility for U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) or GI Bill benefits
General (Under Honorable Conditions) Discharge	Determined at the discretion of chain of command for service members whose performance is satisfactory but marked by a considerable departure from the performance and conduct expected of military members.	Loss of GI Bill benefits

Category	Process of Characterization	Impact on Benefit Eligibility
Other Than Honorable Discharge	Determined at the discretion of chain of command, and the only discharge category that makes a Veteran presumptively <i>ineligible</i> for VA benefits.	Loss of GI Bill benefits and loss of presumptive eligibility for VA benefits, with the possibility of appeal to the VA for a change in “character of discharge”
Bad Conduct Discharge*	A punitive discharge that can only be imposed after trial by court martial (special or general).	Loss of GI Bill and VA benefits
Dishonorable Discharge*	A punitive discharge that can only be imposed after trial by court martial (general) and results in the loss of Veteran status for benefits.	Loss of GI Bill and VA benefits

Note. *This status can only be imposed after court martial where the service member is provided legal representation.

Source: Connecticut Veterans Legal Center. (2022). *Discretionary injustice: How racial disparities in the military’s administrative separation system harm Black Veterans*. <http://ctveteranslegal.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Discretionary-Injustice-Report.pdf>

Changing the Character of Discharge

Veterans discharged with an “Other Than Honorable” status lose presumptive eligibility for VA services as well as education benefits under the GI Bill (Veterans Benefits Administration, 2022). In the case of a non-Honorable discharge status, Veterans have a limited number of options they can pursue to either upgrade their status or regain eligibility for some of the lost benefits. To change their discharge status in the event of either a General or Other Than Honorable discharge (i.e., non-Honorable discharges statuses that did not result from a court martial), a Veteran must appeal to the VA or their branch of service. However, these appeal proceedings often take years to be resolved, during which time the Veteran remains ineligible for VA benefits. Moreover, many Veterans are simply unaware of the possibility of making either this appeal to the VA or the possibility of an appeal to their branch of service (Connecticut Veterans Legal Center, 2022).

According to the VA (n.d.), Veterans can appeal for a change of discharge status in cases where the discharge was related to:

- mental health issues, including PTSD;
- traumatic brain injury;
- sexual assault, harassment, and/or military sexual trauma; or
- sexual orientation (e.g., “Don’t ask, Don’t tell”).

However, the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (2022) found that 90% of appeals cases are rejected by the review board and that the list of accepted appeal rationales does not include a provision for the “impacts of racial bias” (p. 17). Their study also found that Veterans with Other Than Honorable discharge statuses are more likely to:

- die by suicide;
- face challenges related to untreated mental health issues;
- have substance abuse issues; and/or
- experience homelessness.

Homelessness

Perkins et al. (2017) found that Veterans account for one-third of the homeless population in the United States though Veterans only represent 2% of the U.S. population. According to the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans (n.d.), Veteran overrepresentation in homelessness stems from a variety of causes:

In addition to the complex set of factors influencing all homelessness—extreme shortage of affordable housing, livable income and access to health care—a large number of displaced and at-risk veterans live with lingering effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance abuse, which are compounded by a lack of family and social support networks (para. 3).

In its 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) noted that the percentage of Black Veterans experiencing homelessness is much higher relative to the overall percentage of Black Veterans in the U.S. military (de Sousa et al., 2022). As shown in Exhibit 14,¹⁸ approximately 30% of Veterans experiencing homelessness are Black although Black Veterans make up 12% of the total Veteran population in the United States. In contrast, 58% of Veterans experiencing homelessness are White although White Veterans make up 75% of the total Veteran population in the United States. Female Veterans make up 10% of the Veteran population experiencing homelessness while accounting for 10% of the total Veteran population in the United States. The data for female Veterans was not broken down by race, ethnicity, or other demographic categorization.

Exhibit 14: Demographic Breakdown of Veterans Experiencing Homelessness, 2022

	Percentage of Total Veteran Population	Veterans Experiencing Homelessness
Black Veterans	12%	31%
White Veterans	75%	58%
Female Veterans	10%	10%

Source for Percentage of Total Veteran Population: U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *2021 American Community Survey 1-year estimates: Veteran status, Table S2101* [Data table].

<https://data.census.gov/table?q=female+veterans+&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S2101>

Source for Veterans Experiencing Homelessness: de Sousa, T., Andrichik, A., Cuellar, M., Marson, J., Prester, E., & Rush, K. (2022). *The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress*. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

The experience of homelessness creates additional challenges to attaining employment. For instance, the “homeless” identification is considered a “Significant Barrier to Employment” according to the VETS’ Jobs for Veterans State Grant program and as defined in Veterans’ Program Letter 03-14 (Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, 2014, April 10). The Homelessness Policy Research Institute (2020) detailed a number of additional challenges:

- The lack of a fixed address, access to reliable phone and Internet connections, and the appropriate tools and attire make applying for employment difficult or impossible.
- Homelessness is often accompanied by issues related to mental and physical health and substance abuse.
- People experiencing homelessness face bias and discrimination in the hiring process.

¹⁸ The 2022 Annual Homelessness Assessment Report provides data using point-in-time estimates for 2009–2021. The overall Veteran population for other racial/ethnic groups are not included, so other racial/ethnic groups do not appear in Exhibit 14.

- The support systems and services that are in place for people experiencing homelessness are challenging to navigate and often do not place employment as a top priority.
- People experiencing homelessness for extended periods of time have fewer up-to-date skills and more gaps in their recent work history.

Incarceration

Research on Veterans and incarceration shows that Black Veterans are overrepresented among the incarcerated Veteran population. As presented in Exhibit 15, Black Veterans account for 12% of the total Veteran population in the United States. However, Black Veterans represent 23% and 24% of state and federal prison populations, respectively (Maruschak et al., 2021). In contrast, White Veterans who account for 78% of the Veteran population in the United States represent 50% of both state and federal prison populations. Male Veterans far outnumber female Veterans in the overall incarcerated population. In 2016, there were an estimated 107,400 Veterans in state and federal prisons, of which approximately 2,000 were women.

Exhibit 15: Demographic Comparison of Veteran Incarceration Rates, 2016

	Overall Veteran Population (incarcerated and non-incarcerated)	State Prison Population (Nonveteran)	State Prison Population (Veteran)	Federal Prison Population (Nonveteran)	Federal Prison Population (Veteran)
Black	12%	36%	23%	34%	24%
White	78%	29%	50%	19%	50%
Hispanic	7%	22%	10%	39%	12%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1%	1%	2%	2%	1%*
Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	2%	1%	1%*	2%	1%*
Two or more races	2%	11%	14%	6%	12%
Male	91%	92%	98%	94%	98%
Female	9%	8%	2%	6%	2%

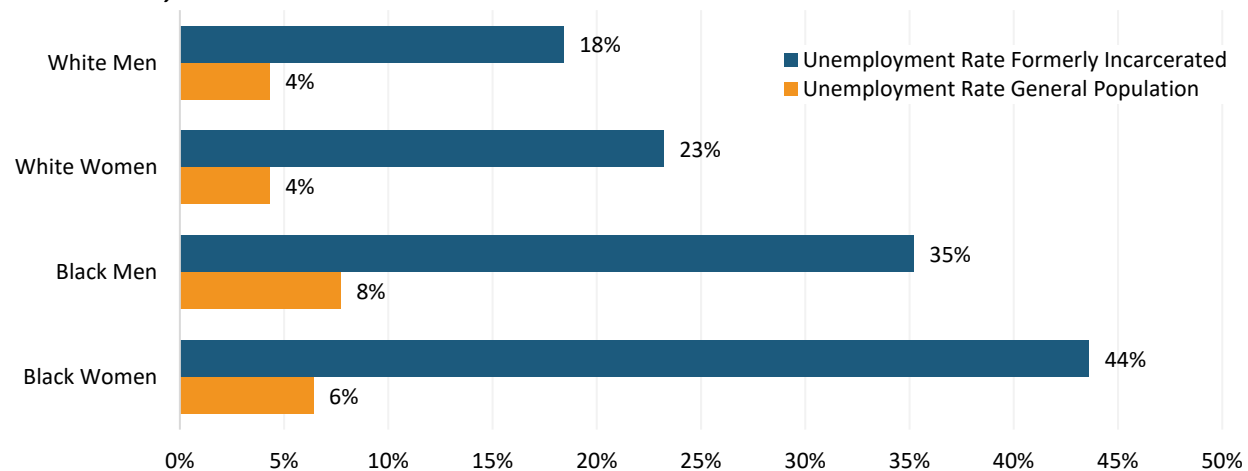
Note. The asterisk indicates that the estimates are based on 10 or fewer sample cases or coefficient of variation is greater than 50%. Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Source for Overall Veteran Population (incarcerated and non-incarcerated): U.S. Census Bureau. (2016). *2016 American Community Survey 1-year estimates: Veteran status, Table S2101* [Data table]. <https://data.census.gov/table?q=veteran+demographics+in+2016&tid=ACST1Y2016.S2101>

Source for all other columns: Maruschak, L. M., Bronson, J., & Alper, M. (2021). *Survey of prison inmates, 2016: Veterans in prison*. U.S. Department of Justice. <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/vpspi16st.pdf>

Using data from the National Former Prisoner Survey, the Prison Policy Initiative found the unemployment rate for all individuals who have been incarcerated to be 5 times higher than the national average unemployment rate (Couloute & Kopf, 2018). Although, without specific data on Veterans, the study noted large differences in the unemployment rates of formerly incarcerated Black men and women in contrast to White men and women, as shown in Exhibit 16.

Exhibit 16: Comparative Unemployment Rates of Black and White Men and Women by Former Incarceration, 2005–2008

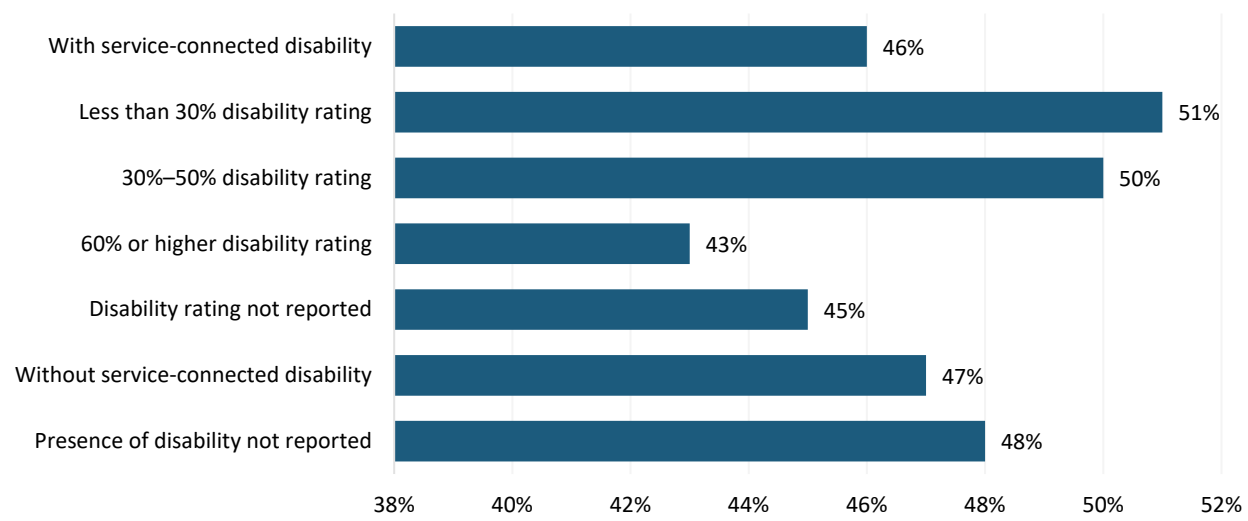


Source: Couloute, L., & Kopf, D. (2018). *Out of prison & out of work: Unemployment among formerly incarcerated people*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/outofwork.html>

Health and Disability

Researchers have found that disability status impacts labor market participation. Exhibit 17 describes the percentage of Veterans with disabilities who are employed in the civilian labor market. It shows that Veterans with a higher VA disability rating—indicating a more significant disability that, according to the VA, decreases the Veteran’s “overall health and ability to function”²¹—have lower representation in the civilian labor force.

²¹ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2022). *About VA disability ratings*. Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings/>

Exhibit 17: Veterans Employed in Civilian Labor Force by Disability Status, 2022 Annual Averages

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). *Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 7. Employment status of veterans 18 years and over by presence of service-connected disability, reported disability rating, period of service, and sex, August 2022, not seasonally adjusted.*
<https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

Cerully et al. (2015) examined the economic well-being of Veterans who had incurred physical or mental injury or illness during their military service using 2014 survey data from the Wounded Warrior Project Alumni Survey (n=21,120) focused on post-9/11 injured Veterans. According to the survey results, 51% were employed full-time, 7% were employed part-time, 8% were unemployed and seeking employment, and 34% were not in the labor force (i.e., not looking or unable to work). In addition, 30% of the Wounded Warrior Project alumni cited mental health challenges and 20% cited physical limitations to obtaining employment.

Cerully et al. found a correlation between VA disability ratings and employment outcomes through regression analysis. Higher VA disability ratings correlated with a greater likelihood of Wounded Warrior Project alumni reporting fair or poor health. According to Cerully et al., Wounded Warrior Project alumni self-reporting 50%–80% VA disability ratings are 2 to 3 times more likely to remain out of the labor force. Black and Hispanic alumni were found to be 1.4 and 1.2, respectively, times more likely than White alumni to report fair or poor health; additionally, Black and multiracial/multiethnic alumni were found to be less likely to be employed than White alumni.

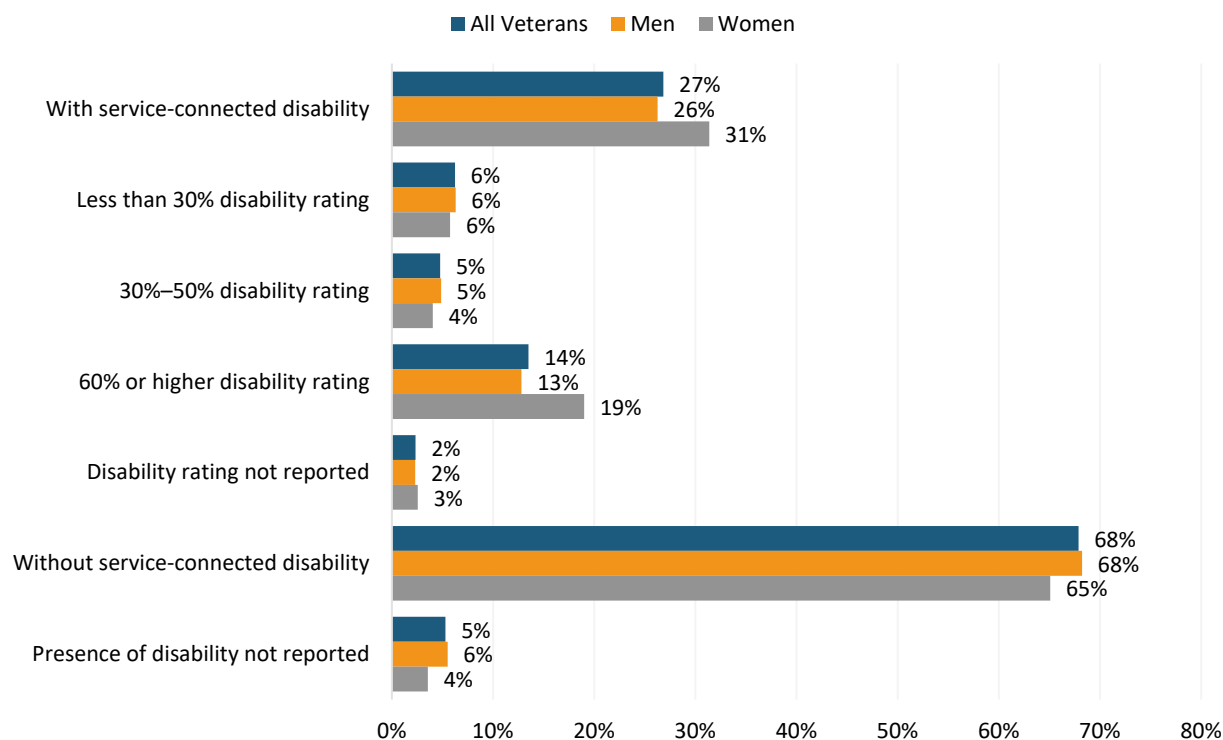
The study also revealed the likelihood of alumni subgroups taking advantage of various benefits and services afforded to injured Veterans. Cerully et al. found that Black and Hispanic/Latino alumni are 1.5 and 1.2 times more likely, respectively, than White alumni to use VA Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) benefits and that alumni reporting traumatic brain injury are 1.2 times more likely to use VR&E benefits than alumni not reporting such injury. VR&E is a service for Veterans with a 10% or higher disability rating from the VA and impairments to employability (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2022). It provides assistance through job training, employment preparation, and education and employment accommodations.

Exhibit 18 reveals 2022 data on disability status for men, women, and all Veterans across the VA disability rating categories. It shows that 68% of Veterans do not possess a reported service-connected disability, with an additional 5% not reporting either the presence or absence of a disability. While the proportions of men versus women Veterans across most of the disability

rating categories are similar, a higher percentage of women Veterans possess a 60% or higher disability rating in comparison to men Veterans.

Notably, the VA established a working group to study possible race- and gender-based disparities in the way VA benefits are awarded. This action was taken as part of a larger response to Executive Order 13985 on *Further Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government*²² and includes the establishment of a VA “Equity Action Plan.”²³ The newly established “Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access (I-DEA) Council”²⁴ will also seek to address other possible equity issues within the VA, including those related to recruitment, hiring, and promotion within the VA.²⁵

Exhibit 18: Veteran Disability Status, All Veterans, Men and Women Veterans, 2022 Annual Averages



Note. Disability status has been associated with lower labor force participation in the United States.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2023, March 21). *Employment situation of Veterans — 2022: Table 7. Employment status of veterans 18 years and over by presence of service-connected disability, reported disability rating, period of service, and sex, August 2022, not seasonally adjusted.* <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/vet.pdf>

²² The White House. (2023, February 16). *Executive order on further advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities through the federal government.* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2023/02/16/executive-order-on-further-advancing-racial-equity-and-support-for-underserved-communities-through-the-federal-government/>

²³ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2022). *Equity action plan.* Retrieved July 17, 2023, from <https://www.va.gov/equity/>

²⁴ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2022). *Agency inclusion, diversity, equity and access (I-DEA) strategic plan 2022.* https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/docs/EO_14035_VA_I-DEA_Strategic_Plan_March_22_2022.pdf

²⁵ U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2023, June 23). *VA stands up Agency Equity Team to ensure that all Veterans receive the world-class care and benefits they deserve* [News release]. <https://news.va.gov/press-room/va-stands-up-agency-equity-team-to-ensure-that-all-veterans-receive-the-world-class-care-and-benefits-they-deserve/>

Gender and Health

Prokos and Cabage (2015) examined how Veteran status and disability correlate to female Veterans' ability to work. Their study used regression-based analysis to examine a 2008–2010 data sample of women Veterans, female nonveterans, male Veterans, and male nonveterans (n=31,640). They found that women Veterans who served after 2001 are more likely to have a disability than male Veterans and female nonveterans, and women Veterans who reported a service-connected disability are 26% more likely to be unemployed than women Veterans without a service-connected disability. Though the study did not look at gender and race together, the results do show that non-Hispanic Black Veterans and Hispanic Black Veterans are more likely to have service-related disabilities than all other racial subgroups with the exception of multiracial Veterans. Prokos and Cabage did not provide explanations as to why women Veterans who served after 2001 are more likely to have a disability but suggested that their study simply offers a starting point to a fuller understanding of female Veterans' civilian experiences.

Hamilton et al. (2015) studied the relationships between women Veterans, mental health, and unemployment through a secondary analysis of employee data (n=1,605) from the National Survey of Women Veterans telephone survey and found links between mental health and unemployment. They conducted logistic regression to identify independent factors associated with unemployment and found that women Veterans who are unemployed:

- have a higher likelihood of being single;
- have less than a college degree;
- have no health insurance;
- live below the poverty line; and
- live in a household with an annual household income of less than \$20,000 (p. S34).

The study revealed the following factors to be independently associated with women Veteran unemployment:

- military service conducted during time of war;
- diagnosis of depression; and
- experience in a workplace that lacked respect for women Veterans and lacked an understanding of what women Veterans have gone through.

According to Perkins et al. (2017), reports of mental health conditions are more common among women and younger Veterans than men and older Veterans. Hamilton et al.'s findings also show that depression is more likely among women Veterans than men Veterans and help make the case for prioritizing treatment for woman Veterans with depression given the positive correlation between depression and unemployment. According to Hamilton et al. (2015), women Veterans diagnosed with depression are nearly 5 times more likely to be unemployed.

These findings do not imply that men do not experience mental health issues nor have other disabilities. Many studies highlight the challenges that women Veterans—including Black and other subgroups of Women Veterans—experience at disproportionate rates. Similar to Hamilton et al. (2015), Perkins et al. (2017) found that women Veterans tend to “live in poverty, have lower incomes, and experience military sexual trauma” or harassment at disproportionately higher rates than male Veterans (p. 23).

Social Capital of Enlisted Service Members and Officers

According to Coleman (1988), social capital is a social resource that facilitates action or achievement that may not be possible in its absence. With social capital, an individual can use

their social and professional connections to further their own careers. However, while social capital may be helpful in certain situations, it can be useless or harmful in others. It is built on relationships and shared expectations of norms, and individuals can lose social capital through disconnection from these relations. Parks-Yancy (2006), using a nationally representative sample, found that Black Americans often see the advantages associated with social capital diminish over time while White Americans typically see them increase. This is attributed to early-career advantages compounding over time for White Americans while early-career disadvantages similarly compound over time for Black Americans. In this way, differences in social capital can contribute to uneven career trajectories.

Coleman described how social capital can be developed through shared cultural experiences or shared community, school, and workplace bonds. In the employment context, this may translate to access to opportunities that others may not have. According to Coleman, the military is a social organization—a network that an individual can choose to join and one that can provide social capital. Per the Military Family Advisory Network (n.d.), military families move every 2.5 years on average. The development of social capital is reset for military service members with each move. This process, in turn, may contribute to their having stronger connections with fellow service members with whom they have much in common, share similar experiences, and find it easier to build relationships.

Educational attainment can also have an impact on one’s social capital development. Carter et al. (2017) examined education and race data for the enlisted and officer corps found in the [2015 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community](#). Enlisted service members made up 82% of the armed forces while officers accounted for 18%. Exhibit 19 shows the 2015 demographic makeup of the enlisted and officer corps of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force.

Exhibit 19: Percentage of Active Duty Enlisted Members and Officers by Race and Service Branch, 2015

Service Branch	Black or African American Enlisted/ Officers	Asian Enlisted/ Officers	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Enlisted/ Officers	Native American or Alaska Native Enlisted/ Officers	Multiracial Enlisted/ Officers	Other or Unknown Enlisted/ Officers	White Enlisted/ Officers
Army	24.1%/12.7%	4.2%/5.3%	1.2%/0.6%	0.8%/0.5%	N/A*	4.2%/7.3%	65.5%/73.5%
Navy	19.1%/7.9%	5.5%/4.7%	1.2%/0.5%	3.3%/0.8%	9.9%/3.4%	3.1%/3.8%	57.8%/79%
Marine Corps	11.4%/5.3%	2.6%/3.0%	1.1%/0.5%	1.1%/0.8%	1.0%/1.5%	3.5/8.1%	79.3%/80.8%
Air Force	16.2%/6.0%	3.1%/4.4%	1.3%/0.5%	0.7%/0.5%	4.0%/2.1%	4.1%/6.3%	70.6%/80.2%

Note. *The Army does not report “multiracial.”

Source: [2015 Demographics: Profile of the Military Community](#), Table 2.24 Percentage of Active Duty Racial Minority Enlisted Members and Officers by Race and Service Branch

Officers, who are required to have an undergraduate degree to be commissioned, often (42%) also possess an advanced degree—sometimes seen as a prerequisite for promotion to the upper officer ranks. A smaller share of enlisted service members hold an undergraduate degree (7%) while 1% hold an advanced degree. Possession of a college degree and the social capital associated with it, along with the prestige accompanying officer status, may contribute to officers in general leaving the military with social capital that is more readily transferrable to higher-status and higher-paying civilian employment.

This is supported by Parks-Yancy (2006) who found educational attainment to be an important factor in determining the amount of social capital held by people across racial subgroups. Doe (2020), in describing his own experience in the military, also implied that the social capital he gained from his experience and status as an intergenerational Army officer, West Point Academy graduate turned faculty member, and terminal degree holder offered him opportunities in the civilian sector that may not be afforded to Veterans without such social capital.

Yanchus et al. (2018), who used a qualitative employee satisfaction survey (n=210,372) to gauge the workplace perceptions of Veteran and civilian employees at the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), found that Veterans reported stronger connections to the VHA mission than civilians but also reported being discriminated against as Veterans and being overlooked for promotions due to differences in social capital in comparison to their nonveteran counterparts.

Veteran Status and Wages

Research shows that White Veterans experience a Veteran wage penalty. According to Renna and Weinstein (2019), Veterans overall may experience a Veteran wage premium in comparison to their civilian counterparts but may also experience a Veteran wage penalty when factoring in variables such as age, marital status, number of dependents, geographical location, and education. In their study, they used regression analysis to build on Browning et al.'s (1973) bridging hypothesis, which suggests that “military experience, training, and education benefits are especially important to Veterans from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds” (Renna & Weinstein, 2019, p. 1286).

Renna and Weinstein (2019) analyzed ACS data (n≥100,000) from 2005–2015 on recent Veterans’ transitions to examine the Veteran wage differential by factors such as education, occupation, industry, and location choice. Their sample included Black and White men and women. They found that Veterans in the top percentile of the earnings distribution experience various Veteran penalties depending on their race. White male Veterans see a penalty of nearly 7%, or an estimated dollar value of \$6,392 fewer earnings per year; Black male Veterans experience a penalty between 6%–7%, or an estimated dollar value of \$4,101 less per year. Female Veterans experience a penalty of 0.6%, or an estimated dollar value of \$401 less per year. Though White male Veterans appear to receive the highest Veteran penalty, the earnings of both White male Veterans and White male civilians are higher than the earnings of Black male Veterans and women in general.

The findings show that Black male Veterans who are older with higher educational attainment are more likely to experience a higher wage premium (Renna & Weinstein, 2019). Women also experience Veteran premiums for age and education, but educational attainment does not contribute to as large of a difference in earnings for women as it does for Black male Veterans. Though White male Veterans experience minor wage increases as well, the difference is not as marked as it is for Black male Veterans and women in general.

Renna and Weinstein (2019) also examined the correlation between earnings and geographic location. Black male Veterans and women in general experience higher unemployment rates and lower wages when they remain in “military towns” (i.e., areas near a military base with a large military presence) while White male Veterans experience higher wages. According to their analysis, Veterans tend to favor employment in the public sector to include local emergency services. Renna and Weinstein suggested that increased competition for military- or government-related employment in or near military towns could have had an influence on this data, but they did not offer any causal explanations for these outcomes.

Military Experience and Occupation

Martorell et al. (2014) analyzed differences in earnings for Veterans based on era of service and MOS (military occupational specialization, or equivalent in other branches of service). They found that Veterans with certain MOSs maintain higher earnings after leaving the military²⁶ and attributed Veterans' higher earnings within certain MOSs to skills gained that are relevant in the civilian labor market.

Kleykamp (2009) examined audit information for job application callback rates within a 6-month period (n=934). She found that employers showed higher callback rates for Black Veterans with transferrable skills over Black civilians. The study compared the callback rates for Veterans with administrative skills, including clerk training, against civilians with administrative skills.²⁷ Black Veterans with administrative skills were called back at a higher rate (7%) than Black civilians with administrative skills (5%). Hispanic Veterans with administrative experience had a callback rate of approximately 7% while Hispanic civilians had a callback rate of 6%. Kleykamp did not find the difference between Veterans and civilians with administrative experience to be statistically significant and recommended further study. Similar to Renna and Weinstein (2019), Kleykamp also suggested that the bridging hypothesis could help explain the higher employment rates for Veterans from economically disadvantaged backgrounds in that Black Veterans become more eligible job candidates in comparison to Black civilians as a result of their military experience (Kleykamp, 2009; Renna & Weinstein, 2019).

In a second callback rate comparative analysis, Black Veterans with combat arms experience contrasted against Black civilians with administrative experience yielded varied findings.²⁸ Black Veterans with combat arms experience had a callback rate of zero while Black Veterans with administrative training were called back 7% of the time. Black nonveterans with administrative experience were called back 5% of the time (Kleykamp, 2009). Though these differences are not statistically significant, Kleykamp attributed the differences to civilian employers generally perceiving Black Veterans with combat experience as not having transferable skills for the civilian sector.

Martorell et al. (2014) also found that Veterans with traditional military experience in combat arms have lower earnings and a lower likelihood of garnering employer interest. Interestingly, Kleykamp (2009) found that Hispanic Veterans with experience in combat arms do not receive a penalty for a combat-arms-related MOS. Instead, they were called back 2% more frequently than civilians with administrative work experience. White Veterans with administrative experience and combat-arms experience both had a callback rate of 9%, similar to the callback rate for White civilians.

Perceived Mismatch from Military to Civilian Jobs

Keeling et al. (2019) conducted five focus groups (male, n=12; female, n=6) as well as surveys to examine the experiences of Gulf War era²⁹ II Veterans in obtaining civilian employment. Their study found that Veterans and potential employers may face challenges in translating military experience to civilian careers. Factors contributing to skill mismatch include Veterans not

²⁶ MOSs providing the highest Veteran earnings (highest to lowest) are communication/intelligence, healthcare, service/supply, and combat arms.

²⁷ Four hundred thirty-eight tests were completed for the callback rates of Veterans with administrative skills. The demographic breakdown of the tests is: Black (150), Hispanic (162), and White (126).

²⁸ Four hundred ninety-six tests were completed for the callback rates of Veterans with a MOS in combat arms. The demographic breakdown of the tests is: Black (131), Hispanic (167), and White (198).

²⁹ The Gulf War era includes two periods: Gulf War I, from August 1990 to August 2001, and Gulf War II, from September 2001 to the present (Williams, 2020).

receiving adequate training and preparation within the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) and Veterans' unfamiliarity with translating their military experiences and skills to careers in the civilian sector. Keeling et al. also discussed structural and cultural differences between the military and civilian workplaces (e.g., increased individualism, autonomy, and creativity), which can present challenges for Veterans as they learn to adapt to their new civilian work environment.

Military Transition

Maury et al. (2020) used unpublished data from the 2016–2018 Blue Star Families Annual Military Family Lifestyle Surveys to produce a data brief that discussed the racial disparities impacting Veterans' abilities to find civilian employment following their transition from military service. The findings show that 55% of Black Veterans "characterized their financial transition as difficult or very difficult, compared to 48% of White/Non-Hispanic Veteran respondents" (p. 4). Also, 59% of Black Veterans described "their employment transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 49% of White/Non-Hispanic Veteran respondents" (p. 4). Additionally, 30% of Black Veteran respondents "reported it taking less than three months to find employment after their transition, compared with 51% of White/Non-Hispanic Veteran respondents" (p. 4).

Bartee and Dooley (2019) conducted a qualitative study (n=6) focusing on the Transition Goals, Plans, Success (GPS) Program,³⁰ an intervention in which TSMs are required to attend and meet three goals 180 days before separating from the military: (a) developing an Individual Transition Plan; (b) attending VA Benefits Briefings I and II which inform attendees of their benefits; and (c) attending the DOL Employment Workshop. Their study highlighted the benefits of programs that can help make the transition from military to civilian life more successful for Black Veterans. According to Bartee and Dooley (2019), an unspecified number of study participants reported that they held their military officers responsible for contributing to their ineffective transition assistance experience and that their military officers did not allow service members to attend the sessions mandated by the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Transition GPS Program. As a result, those service members were not able to begin planning for their transition early. These participants believed that an earlier and more effective preparation period would have contributed to their development of résumé writing and other skills to prepare them for civilian employment. Other study participants reported that their transitions were successful and attributed their success to finding civilian employment with responsibilities similar or comparable to their previous military roles. Also, some study participants noted experiencing racial discrimination in the military, and the study acknowledged that Black Veterans experience racial discrimination in the workforce (Bartee and Dooley, 2019).

Shue et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study to analyze the experience of Veterans transitioning to the civilian workforce. Based on participant feedback, the study (n=15) identified four themes relevant to Veteran career transition: (a) the need to actively prepare for the transition, (b) the factors impacting the transition process, (c) the fact that transition to civilian life entails a loss of structure, and (d) Veterans establishing themselves as civilians. Leadership is mentioned as a possible deterrent from beginning early transition preparation. Shue et al. noted that "some participants" mentioned their leaders being considerate and supportive of the time that they needed to prepare for their transition, but similar to findings of Bartee and Dooley (2019), "many participants" said they experienced resistance from their leadership when attempting to prepare for their transition (p. 364). Other aspects of the transition experience that Veterans identified as challenging included the psychological impact

³⁰ The Transition GPS curriculum is an early iteration of the many changes that have occurred to the TAP since 2012, meant to both provide more time for TSMs to access services and more information on available resources to support the transition process.

of the military, the stigma of being “labeled mentally defective,” the possibility of losing peer social support, the loss of structure, financial concerns, and establishing a new identity (Shue et al., 2021, p. 364).

Bradbard and Maury (2021) acknowledged that improvements have been made to TAP. Though it began as a single event in the form of a multiday class, TAP has become a more interactive process occurring over a slightly longer period of time prior to the service member’s discharge. In 2019, the National Defense Authorization Act mandated that TAP begin at least 365 days preceding transition and recommended that TAP participants retiring from the military start the program 2 years before their transition. According to a 2019 survey, Veterans noted the importance of TAP courses, and some stated interest in participating in TAP more than once. In spite of these changes, Bradbard and Maury reported that 60% of Veterans reported navigating their benefits as one of their top transition challenges.

Best Practices and Interventions to Support Black Veterans’ Civilian Employment Transition

MSG’s literature search for current studies on Veteran-focused employment interventions that have been reviewed for efficacy and research design quality resulted in the identification of 41 employment-oriented interventions. Several of these interventions are in the early stages of implementation, and therefore, lack findings. Of these, most studies demonstrated both impact and moderate-to-high causal evidence via randomized controlled trial or carefully constructed nonexperimental design.

These studies, which all focus on Veterans with disabilities, discuss:

- the use of benefits counseling with Veterans with a psychiatric condition (Rosen et al., 2014);
- the impact of the VA’s disability compensation program on labor force participation and earnings (Autor et al., 2016);
- the effect of the Work Opportunity Tax Credit on employment of Veterans with disabilities (Heaton, 2012); and
- implementing Individual Placement and Support principles with incarcerated Veterans (LePage et al., 2016).

There is, at present, little evidence on interventions that can be broadly applied to all available education, training, and career services and programs available to TSMs and Veterans, and Black Veterans specifically. As such, this section of the literature review aims to answer the following questions:

1. What interventions have proven particularly effective—or ineffective—in service to Black Veterans and TSMs?
2. What differences mark the ways Black Veterans and TSMs access and engage with the interventions that are available to them?

This section informs readers of the following best practices and interventions:

- Transition Assistance Program (TAP)
- Skills training curricula:
 - a. Technology training
 - b. Apprenticeships
- Veteran job fairs
- Navigators
- GI Bill and higher education
- Barrier reduction

Effective Interventions for Black Veterans and TSMs

Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

TAP is designed to support the roughly 200,000 service members who transition from the military to civilian lives and careers each year.³¹

Over the span of more than a decade, TAP has undergone a series of changes. Multiple programmatic elements have been added in recent years to better meet the diverse needs of Veterans. According to the DoD's website, the following types of changes have been (or are in the process of being) implemented:

- TAP should begin no later than 365 days prior to separation.
- The process begins with individualized counseling.
- Pre-separation counseling covers subjects such as benefits, entitlements, and resources that TSMs might be eligible for and benefit from.
- “Transition Day” curricula teaches TSMs to build resilience and financial literacy and learn to manage the transition process and translate military skills to their civilian context.
- The VA and DOL will provide briefings on available benefits and workforce development resources.
- The process culminates with a “Capstone” event in which the TSM’s commander (or the commander’s designee) verifies that the TSM has met the TAP Career Readiness Standards and has a viable Individual Transition Plan. A TSM who has not met these standards may receive more intensive support and services (e.g., TAP’s Employment Navigator and Partnership Pilot [ENPP]) (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019).

Keeling et al.’s (2019) analysis indicated that, among the participating Veterans, those who “thought ahead” about their transition (i.e., knew what they wanted to do upon leaving the military) had a more positive experience transitioning to civilian life and obtaining and maintaining civilian employment than Veterans who did not think ahead regarding their post-separation plans. According to the study, Veterans who thought ahead agreed on one or more of the following descriptors: found TAP more useful, connected with Veteran peers regarding civilian life and careers prior to separating from the military, connected with future employers, completed their education, and/or made financial considerations. The authors suggested that Veterans who “think ahead” minimize or eliminate some of the barriers they may face, which leads them to a successful transition to civilian employment.

Keeling et al. (2019) also found that Veterans who are “not thinking ahead”—those who are not focused on their civilian transition and career search while participating in TAP—generally did not find TAP useful and viewed it more as a compulsory aspect of the transition process. Additionally, some Veterans in this study reported that their transition was more challenging and that they experienced culture clashes with civilians that, in some cases, led to mental health challenges, alcohol use, and a loss of employment. The authors attribute these outcomes to Veterans not thinking ahead and not being engaged with TAP. However, 5 of the 8 Veterans who were described as “not thinking ahead” reported that they were not disengaged by choice, but that there were limited numbers of TAP classes at their base or that demanding work schedules prior to exit made it impossible for them to access TAP. Keeling et al. argued that service

³¹ The Transition Assistance Program, provided under [10 U.S.C. 1144](#), is a cooperative interagency effort among DOL, DoD, the VA, the U.S. Departments of Education and Homeland Security, the Small Business Administration, and the Office of Personnel Management (Veterans’ Employment and Training Service, n.d.).

members need to be free to access TAP without hindrance to learn about the transition process and adequately prepare for civilian employment.

Bartee and Dooley (2019) analyzed the use of TAP among 6 Black TSMs.³² Veterans in the study noted the importance of their families as networks of support in their transition process. However, the participants felt that the Transition GPS Program had failed them in their transition process, in large part due to the Veterans' lack of knowledge of the various programs and benefits that were available to them. Participants further noted that officers had not allowed them to attend GPS, as mandated by the DoD.

One participant who reported that their transition was “challenging,” was the only TSM who had not attained a postsecondary degree at the time of their transition, while the other study participants had. Based on this finding, Bartee and Dooley emphasized the importance and value of Black service members earning their college degrees before transitioning out of the military. Beyond the commonly cited theme of challenges in translating military skills to the civilian sector, this study also highlighted a disconnect between Veterans' career expectations and reality. The findings suggest that transition assistance programs such as GPS need to better prepare TSMs for accurate expectations of the civilian labor market, the TSM's likely role in it, as well as the social norms for the civilian context and civilian career.

The VA's Office of Outreach, Transition and Economic Development (OTED) designed and began conducting a long-term study intended to longitudinally track Veterans' experiences and outcomes as they transition through civilian life (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020, 2021). Within this study, a cross-sectional survey and longitudinal survey are administered annually to Veterans across 3 “cohorts” based on length of separation at the time of survey deployment. The study findings thus far are generally consistent with the current literature on Veterans overall and does not offer data specifically delineated by race or other demographic characteristics. However, study findings that touch on the experiences of Black TSMs and Veterans—accounting for 10–15% of all cross-sectional survey respondents in the 2019 and 2020 studies and 7–12% of each longitudinal survey respondent cohort from the 2020 study—include:

- The majority of Veterans who took TAP found it useful, but Black Veterans—along with Asian Veterans—found TAP most useful in comparison to other racial subgroups of Veterans;
- TAP generally had a positive impact on income, but Black Veterans—along with Hispanic Veterans—experienced negative impacts on income compared to other racial subgroups of Veterans;
- Veterans who took TAP generally indicated high levels of overall life satisfaction and future security satisfaction, but Black Veterans had the lowest overall life satisfaction scores in comparison to other racial subgroups of Veterans and were more likely to indicate dissatisfaction regarding future security; and
- A greater percentage of Black Veterans indicated feeling isolated, lacking in companionship, and less satisfied regarding their emotional/mental health compared to other racial subgroups of Veterans.

Additional analyses conducted to determine the key factors behind these disparities proved inconclusive, but the VA has launched further research efforts to identify potential causes for and ways to address the lower levels of satisfaction found among Black Veterans (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020, 2021).

³² Their study does not detail the frequency with which participants agreed with any of the sentiments recorded.

It is important to note that, while there is presently little rigorous data available on TAP that specifically examines Black service members' experiences with TAP, two studies by DOL VETS and CEO are underway as of Spring 2023. The first will be a quasi-experimental impact analysis that evaluates TAP using administrative data. The second will be a formative evaluation of the Employment Navigator Pilot Program (ENPP) that examines program data and administrative documentation while also conducting interviews and focus groups with staff and participants and observation of planning meetings. The study will also include an impact assessment and a customer experience component. While neither of these two studies are designed with a primary focus on Black TSMs and Veterans, they aim to fill an important gap in the existing literature on Black Veterans and their transition to civilian work and life.

Skills Training Curricula

Various job and skills training curricula are available for Veterans to increase their employability in the civilian labor market. Examples include [Operation REBOOT](#) (a computer skills training program) and [Operation Vetpreneur](#) (a curriculum developed to help Veterans become self-employed). Most of these curricula are linked to local organizations and have not been evaluated. Likewise, they have not been evaluated for effectiveness for Black Veterans. Given the prominence of these curricula in the field, we opted to discuss them as common interventions focused on Veteran employment.

Technology Training

The Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act was enacted in 2017. It directed the VA to develop a 5-year vocational training program pilot to help Veterans gain the high-technology skills necessary to obtain meaningful employment in the technology field (Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2022). As a result, the VA's Veteran Employment Through Technology Education Courses (VET TEC)³³ pilot program was created. From May 2019–May 2022, 6,793 eligible Veterans were enrolled in VET TEC, and the enrollees' outcomes were compared to other working-age Veterans through an analysis of VA-collected data. VET TEC served a diverse Veteran population, with Black and Hispanic Veterans representing 33% and 16% of participants, respectively.

Of the 66% of VET TEC participants who completed the program, 46% were subsequently employed. Veteran women's employment rate was 41%, while the employment rate for Veteran men was 47%. Black and Hispanic participants' employment rates were 41% and 44%, respectively, and White participants' employment rate was 51%. Regarding earnings, women earned approximately 3% less than men, and Black and Hispanic participants earned a salary 7%–9% lower than White, non-Hispanic participants (GAO, 2022).

One of the main benefits to the VET TEC programs was an accelerated path to employment via virtual programs and programs that were shorter than traditional degree-granting programs. However, the GAO (2022) also reported that some training providers cited program challenges such as delays in the training provider application process, poor instructions for demonstrating trainer expertise, lack of technical or industry knowledge to assess instructor expertise, limited benefits for providers identified as "preferred," lack of student accountability for veterans who did not become employed or report their employment status, and uncertain funding. Further, the GAO pointed out that the program lacked "consistent, clear, and measurable program objectives" (p. 2). While the program ultimately had a high completion rate, the GAO did not collect data on why 13% of participants did not complete the program.

³³ "To be eligible for VET TEC, a Veteran must not be on active duty or must be within 180 days of separating from active duty; qualify for VA education assistance under the GI Bill; and have at least 1 day of unexpired GI Bill entitlement" (Government Accountability Office, 2022, p. 4).

Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships may be offered as one component of TAP and are the subject of significant investment by DOL.³⁴ Lerman et al. (2015) conducted an implementation study and an impact feasibility study examining the U.S. Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP). USMAP brings together military occupational training and the registered apprenticeship system overseen by DOL's Office of Apprenticeship. The initiative is designed to align military training with civilian apprenticeship standards, leading to service members achieving civilian-recognized journeyman status in a profession.

Within their study, Lerman et al. (2015) noted that military apprentices and their supervisors possessed limited knowledge of the USMAP program requirements; and similarly, civilian employers lacked knowledge about the benefits of hiring apprentices from this training pipeline. Despite these challenges, the study highlighted the potential benefits of the program—most notably the mapping of service-acquired skills and competencies to the civilian context. Lerman et al. proposed several pilot projects based on the USMAP model, as well as evaluation approaches, to examine marketing of the program to service members at either the individual or command level. This could also allow researchers to identify variables to predict participation in or completion of the program and to test whether USMAP certification leads to more callbacks from civilian employers compared to Veterans with similar résumés but without a USMAP completion certification.

Veteran Job Fairs

Veteran-focused job fairs are a widely used career development strategy that connects Veterans directly with employers *en masse*, either virtually or on-site. Han et al. (2020) conducted an online survey (n=1,050) of Veteran experiences during their post-separation employment search, including job fair participation. Of the study's respondents who submitted narrative responses in addition to answering survey questions (12%), at least one noted that they felt the job fair(s) they attended were discriminatory and/or culturally insensitive. At least one respondent noted that some of the interactions they had revealed a lack of “cultural nuance or sensitivity” to their status as a Veteran, or that the fairs had few or no opportunities for Veterans with disabilities. Others noted they felt discriminated against on the basis of race. The study did not note the specific number of comments falling into each of these three distinct categories, or if some respondents indicated multiple responses for a given question.

The study also did not specifically identify any aspect of the job fair career development model that made it particularly susceptible to these kinds of experiences. There is no reason to infer any causal connection between these experiences and features of the model aside from the fact that almost any human service model will inevitably reflect the prejudices and cultural sensitivities of the people who designed and implemented it. Still, these findings do indicate the need for more employer and practitioner education and training on issues concerning Veterans, disability, and racial identities.

Navigators

Navigators are used in a wide variety of workforce development and other service delivery initiatives. While there are many variations across different programs and initiatives that go by the term “navigator,” the role of the navigator typically focuses on coordinating services to help people navigate complex systems, such as workforce development, education, and social service systems (Di Biase & Mochel, 2021). Navigator service recipients may not otherwise know all of

³⁴ “Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce and individuals can obtain paid work experience, classroom instruction, and a portable, nationally recognized credential” (ApprenticeshipUSA, n.d.).

their options or how best to access the services and supports they require or to which they are entitled. Though there is no direct evidence of the effectiveness of this model in service to Black Veterans, it is a model that is used widely in a variety of service delivery contexts including TAP ENPP (which is undergoing evaluation through another DOL-CEO research collaboration).

Di Biase and Mochel (2021) discussed an array of practical implementation styles of various navigator models in their literature review. Though the models differ on whether any services are provided directly, a core element found across models is the navigation of clients toward the variety of services and resources available to them.

Given the variety of possible implementation styles, a broadly applicable but rigorous evaluation of navigators would be challenging. However, various assessments and evaluations have found that navigators are associated with gains in student persistence and grade point average in educational settings as well as gains in the employment context, as was found with the Workforce Innovation Fund Housing and Employment Navigator (Di Biase & Mochel, 2021).

Differences in Black Veteran and TSM Access and Engagement with Available Interventions

Usage of and engagement levels with Veteran services seem to vary by race, but it is not clear exactly how the relationship should be understood. In examining the “military-civilian transition” within Canada’s armed forces, Eichler et al. (2021) suggested that:

- the stress of being part of an underrepresented group may hasten transition from the military and thus limit access to available services; and
- the racial prejudice of service providers, with an emphasis on healthcare providers, also limits use of these services among minority and Indigenous Veterans.

Alternatively, Aaronson et al. (2019) concluded that “Veterans from racial or ethnic minority groups (e.g., Black non-Hispanic, Asian) were more likely to utilize a variety of employment programs than their White non-Hispanic peers” (p. 14). The study used data from the longitudinal Veterans Metrics Initiative (n=9,466) and also found that Veterans who had been exposed to warfare and those with ongoing physical and/or mental health concerns were more likely to avail themselves of various services. In addition, male Veterans were found to be less likely to use services than female Veterans, as were junior enlisted service members (E1–E4) in comparison to more senior level service members.

The study examined usage of a variety of transition and employment services and explored factors associated with the usage rates for each. These factors include demographics, rank, and branch of service. The study does not, however, provide insight on the efficacy of these programs and services based on the experiences and career outcomes of Black Veterans or Veterans in general. Exhibit 20 provides a select snapshot of the results.

Exhibit 20: Demographic Predictors of Veterans' Employment Program Use (Odds Ratios, Weighted), 2016

Service	Black (Ref: White, Non-Hispanic)	Male (Ref: Female)	Ongoing Physical Health Condition (Ref: Absence of)	Ongoing Mental/ Emotional Health Condition (Ref: Absence of)	Combat Arms Occupation (Ref: Service Support Occupation)	Exposure to Warfare (Ref: Absence of)
Online Job Database	1.36*	0.69*	1.46*	0.99	0.77*	1.36*
Career Fair	1.68*	1.05	1.35*	1.12	0.95	1.59*
Résumé Writing Assistance	1.30*	0.80*	1.53*	0.97	0.83*	1.37*
Job Placement	2.14*	0.86	1.49*	1.01	1.03	1.68*
Career Counseling	1.59*	0.99	1.46*	0.83	1.18	1.62*
Training Or Certification	1.53*	0.95	1.49*	0.90	0.95	1.29*
Networking	1.37*	1.03	1.09	0.94	1.28*	1.21*

Note. *Statistically significant ($p < .05$)

Source: Aaronson, K. R., Perkins, D. F., Morgan, N. R., Bleser, J. A., Vogt, D., Copeland, L., Finley, E., & Gilman, C. (2019). Post-9/11 veteran transitions to civilian life: Predictors of the use of employment programs. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 5(1), pp. 14–22. <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v5i1.127>

GI Bill and Higher Education

As discussed earlier, Black male Veterans with higher educational attainment levels are more likely to earn higher wages (Renna & Weinstein, 2019). Morgan et al. (2020) conducted a logistic regression analysis of the first wave of longitudinal data collected from the Veterans Metrics Initiative, which primarily offered insight on the types of programs the 9,566 Veteran participants accessed. According to this data, Black TSMs and Veterans are 1.16 times more likely to use GI Bill education benefits than White Veterans. Degree completion and employment outcome data were not included in the study. Although Bartee and Dooley (2019) reported comparable rates of access to higher education and education benefits under the GI Bill, the 6 Veteran participants in their study had served in their respective branch for 20 or more years.

Barrier Reduction

Barrier reduction strategies help Veterans take advantage of the services offered to them, despite any barriers that might exist to hinder access. Morgan et al. (2020) examined barriers affecting Black Veterans and TSMs and identified barrier reduction components. They conducted a study to identify barrier reduction strategies offered by Veteran support programs based on the first

wave of data collected from the Veterans Metrics Initiative. Morgan et al. defined barrier reduction as program components that “assist veterans in accessing the support they need to make more successful transitions to civilian life and increase program participation by providing tangible supports, improving program access, and helping people make intra-individual changes to help reduce stigma around seeking help and to increase motivation for change” (2020, p. 3). The authors find that 84% of Veterans used a program that offered at least one barrier reduction component.

Barrier reduction components include tangible support components (e.g., financial support, food, legal advice, job placement services), program access components (e.g., transportation, lodging, childcare, online content availability), and intrinsic components (e.g., reduced stigma and increased motivation to change). Morgan et al. concluded that the following barrier reduction components were identified as most helpful to Veterans in achieving their goals as they transitioned to civilian life:

- assistance in obtaining VA benefits (24%);
- assistance in increasing their motivation to change (i.e., the motivation to seek out services and supports as part of a larger process of addressing needs and barriers to employment) (18%);
- provision of non-VA insurance/free medical care (16%); and
- provision of non-VA tuition discounts/scholarships (12%).

Despite limited disaggregated data, Morgan et al. did report that Black Veterans are most likely to use their VA hospital, clinic, or Vet Center, as well as housing benefits. However, the study revealed that few programs offer the barrier reduction component that Veterans are most interested in—assistance in gaining access to support resources. Morgan et al. found this support to be rarely offered as part of Veteran services and severely underutilized by Veterans. Moreover, they found that the individuals most at risk for a difficult civilian transition are least likely to engage with programs that offer barrier reduction components. The authors recommended further research on the value and impact of barrier reduction components.

CONCLUSION

Discussion of Research Gaps and Opportunities

An estimated 20,000 programs, resources, and other supports (inclusive of all services and not just workforce development) are available for Veterans as of 2022 (Bond et al., 2022). However, in our review of the literature, we found that very few of these have been rigorously evaluated. The limited number of studies with robust experimental evaluation designs that look at a variety of factors (e.g., participant demographics)—necessary to draw appropriate conclusions—hampered our ability to conduct a more robust exploration of the efficacy of programs, initiatives, services, and supports for Black TSMs and Veterans. Often, studies do not control for variables such as service MOS (or equivalent designation outside of the Army), prior education, or local community supports accessed when examining Veteran outcomes. Furthermore, Black Veterans with intersecting identities add an additional layer of complexity to understanding the differences in Veteran outcomes across various demographic subgroups and other variables in small-scale studies.

This section informs the reader of research gaps and opportunities regarding:

- Veteran identity and self
- Military discharge status
- Skills training
- Social capital
- Navigators

Our review of various datasets on Veteran outcomes also reveals the constraints of the data and limits the feasibility of certain research questions. For example, the ACS does not collect rank, MOS, discharge status, or TAP participation information; the Veteran Employment Outcomes survey (which only tracks Army Veterans) does not collect employment status, occupation, or discharge status information; and the VR&E Longitudinal Study does not collect data on race, ethnicity, MOS, discharge status, or TAP participation.

At the conclusion of this literature review, MSG recommends that additional, rigorous evaluations of that incorporate the following topics to further DOL's understanding of Veteran outcomes, including Black Veteran outcomes.

Veteran Identity and Self

None of the studies surveyed examined Veteran identity and related outcomes longitudinally (e.g., how the sense of feeling foreign in a civilian environment may change over time). One survey study did investigate Veteran identity at a single point in time (Castro & Kintzle, 2017). Research examining longitudinal trajectories of Veteran identity could reveal information that could potentially support Veterans of all racial backgrounds as they transition through different life stages following their service period.

Military Discharge Status

Limited research is available regarding how Veteran discharge status (for all racial backgrounds) affects civilian employment. According to the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center (2022), Black service members are more likely than White service members to receive an Other-Than-Honorable discharge. Service members who do not receive an Honorable discharge typically experience loss of benefits (e.g., education benefits under the GI Bill, VA benefits) that can impact their civilian employment prospects. Moreover, Veterans who appeal their discharge status find that 90% of cases are rejected by the review board. A study of appeal applicants could further describe the impact of service-earned benefits by examining the economic status of the Veteran before and after benefit reinstatement.

Social Capital

Carter et al. (2017), Doe (2020), and Yanchus et al. (2018) discussed social capital and its influence on civilian employment. Carter et al., in particular, described the influence that a college degree and military officer status could have in social capital development. Parks-Yancy (2006) described social capital as a resource that White Americans often accumulate over time and Black Americans often see diminish over time. Research focusing on the development and efficacy of social capital for Black Veterans could help inform future transition training and preparation programs for TMSs as well as programs and services offered through Veteran-focused advocacy groups.

Skills Training

Research shows that Veterans with more transferable skills, and skills training in general, are more likely to have positive civilian employment outcomes (Martorell et al., 2014; Kleykamp, 2009). For example, Martorell et al. (2014) highlighted that Veterans with certain MOSs maintain high earnings after leaving the military, and Kleykamp (2009) reported that Black Veterans with administrative skills are called back for job interviews at a higher rate than Black Veterans with traditional military experience in combat arms. Both studies discussed the impact of employer-perceived transferability of skills on Veterans' civilian employment. As such, Veterans' access to postsecondary education and skills training opportunities needs to be amplified. Further exploration of the post-service occupations of Veterans across all racial

subgroups could also help inform future transition programs and services. This may be possible through the development of datasets that include race, occupation, earnings, and MOS data.

Navigators

At present, limited evidence prevents an assessment of the effectiveness of navigators on Black Veteran employment outcomes. However, the TAP ENPP is currently under evaluation through a DOL-CEO collaborative research effort that is targeted for completion in August 2023. The TAP ENPP evaluation is expected to provide key insights regarding navigators assisting TSMs and Veterans. Given the variety of approaches to providing navigator services, future studies should seek to understand exactly which aspects of navigator services are featured in ENPP and how those specific programmatic elements affect Black TSM and Veteran outcomes.

Summary of Findings

Black Veterans as a subgroup are not easily defined. Intersecting identities and varying military experiences (e.g., gender, sexual orientation, disability status, religious affiliation, educational attainment, MOS, enlisted or officer rank) may impact transition to civilian life and employment (Shepherd et al., 2020). Available research findings reviewed in this literature show that Black Veterans are more likely to be employed and to earn more than nonveteran Black men and women. However, Black Veterans, particularly men, on average earn less than their White counterparts, though they do earn more than Black nonveterans (Piquado et al., 2022). The reasons why Black Veterans earn less than other Veteran subgroups are not fully understood; however, differences in military and civilian culture, enlisted versus officer status, postsecondary education, MOS, skills mismatch, discharge status, civilian employment sector, and available social capital may all have an influence on post-military service employment and earnings.

A considerable information on Black Veterans' economic status exists as of June 2023. However, a comprehensive analysis has not yet been conducted to fully understand the economic, employment, and other challenges Black Veterans face following separation from military service. Finally, few studies examine the efficacy of different transition assistance programs and interventions for Black Veterans. As such, evidence on the effectiveness of interventions intended to improve the economic prospects and outcomes of Black Veterans is limited. Most studies conducted up to this point have been hampered by small sample sizes or challenges to experimental control. An evaluation of the impact of the Transition GPS Program, an aspect of TAP, is currently underway and may provide insight that can inform future programming for all Veteran populations, and in particular, Black Veterans.

Key Findings

- Black Veterans, on average, earn more than Black nonveterans but less than White Veterans and White nonveterans.
- Combat arms experience and skills tend to be less desirable to civilian employers than experience and skills that are more easily recognized as transferrable to the civilian sector.
- Jobs and geographical locations traditionally associated with lower wages and fewer opportunities for career growth appear to have an overall impact on Veteran earnings, and in particular Black Veteran earnings.
- Barrier reduction interventions are of high interest to TSMs and Veterans regardless of racial background, but navigating and accessing support systems is described by many as challenging.

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