

2019 Gender and Veteran Demographics Webinar

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My name is Nancy Glowacki. I am an Army veteran and I currently work for the Department of Labor Veterans' Employment and Training Service, known as DOL VETS. I'd like to talk to you a little bit today about demographics pertaining to women veterans and why those demographics are so important.

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Veterans make up 7.5% of the overall adult population in America. This means that approximately 1 in every 13 adults is a veteran.

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There are nearly 2 million living women veterans in the United States.

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Women currently make up approximately 10% of the overall veteran population. That means that 1 in every 10 veterans is a woman.

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Comparatively, 1 in every 2 adults in the general population is a woman.

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Veterans make up 14% of the men in America. 1 in 7 adult males in this country is a veteran. So, most Americans have had personal interactions with a male veteran.

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But among women in America, only 1.5% are veterans.

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This means that only 1 in every 69 women in this country is a veteran. So, in order to meet 1 woman veteran, you may have to meet 69 women. This is important for us all to remember – while everyone has had personal interaction with a woman, most people have not had personal interaction with a woman veteran.

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Perhaps this is why even as women veterans get more recognition than ever before as a population, individual women veterans still get forgotten.

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For those of us who provide veteran services, it is absolutely critical that we ask each and every potential female client, "have you ever served in the military?" Remember, we may have to ask 69 women just to hear 1 yes, but we must keep on asking.

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So, what does this look like when we combine men and women and veterans and nonveterans?

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For every 100 adults, 1 is a woman veteran, 7 are male veterans, 41 are male nonveterans, and 51 are women nonveterans.

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If we look at adults under 35 years old, we see an even greater divide between veterans and nonveterans, particularly for women.

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Only 2.5% of all 18-34 year olds in America are veterans – that's 1 in 40 adults under 35 years old.

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Women make up 20% of 18-34 year old veterans, which means that 1 in every 5 veterans under 35 years old is a woman.

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Comparatively, 1 in 2 18-34 year olds in the general population is a woman.

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Among men, veterans comprise 4% of 18-34 year olds. 1 in 25 men under 35 years old is a veteran.

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Meanwhile, among women 18-34 years old, 1% are veterans – 1%! To meet just one woman under age 35 who has served in the military, you may have to meet 102 women of that age group.

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Now how does this look in the overall population? Well, for every 200 18-34 year olds, 1 is a woman veteran, 4 are male veterans, 96 are male nonveterans, and 99 are women nonveterans.

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Now let's look at era of service, race and ethnicity, and age differences between male veterans and women veterans.

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Compared to male veterans, women veterans are twice as likely to have served in the Gulf War II era but not the Gulf War I era.

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Women veterans are more likely than male veterans to have served in the Gulf War I era but not the Gulf War II era.

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And women veterans are more likely than male veterans to have served in both Gulf War I and Gulf War II eras.

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Meanwhile, male veterans are three times as likely as women veterans to have served in the World War II era, the Korean War era, or the Vietnam War era.

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Looking at race and ethnicity – the majority of veterans are white, however women veterans are less likely than male veterans to be white.

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Women veterans are more likely than male veterans or nonveterans of either gender to be Black or African American.

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Veterans of both genders are less likely than nonveterans to be Asian or Hispanic or Latino.

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Looking at age – here is where we see some drastic differences. The median age of male veterans is 65 years, while the median age of women veterans is 51 years, a difference of 14 years.

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Half of male veterans are 65 years old or over, compared to 18% of women veterans. But, our focus at the Department of Labor is employment, and you may be wondering just how many of those males over 65 years old are still in the workforce.

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If we look only at veterans who are currently in the civilian labor force, we see that 19% of male veterans in the workforce are 65 years old or over, compared to 5.7% of women veterans. That's right – male veterans in the workforce are over 3 times as likely as women veterans in the workforce to be 65 years old or over.

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So what does workforce or civilian labor force really mean? The workforce, also known as the civilian labor force, includes both people who are currently employed and people who are not currently employed, but who are both available for work and actively seeking work – those known as unemployed.

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Women veterans are more likely than male veterans to be in the civilian labor force.

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Since our focus at the Department of Labor is the workforce, let's now look at those basic demographics again, but this time focusing only on people in the civilian labor force.

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The median age of male veterans in the civilian labor force is 52, while the median age of women veterans in the civilian labor force is 46, a difference of 6 years.

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1 in 17 adults in the civilian labor force is a veteran. You most likely work with, or have worked with, at least one veteran.

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1 in 2 adults in the workforce is a woman.

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But, only 1 in 8 veterans in the workforce is a woman.

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Only 1 in every 69 women in the workforce is a veteran.

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Comparatively, 1 in 10 men in the workforce is a veteran.

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Looking at 100 adults, including both genders and both veterans and nonveterans, we still see that only 1 is a woman veteran, but there are some differences in those around her. Here we see that 5 out of 100 adults in the workforce are male veterans, 48 are male nonveterans, and 46 are women nonveterans.

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Looking at 18-34 year olds in the workforce, veterans comprise only 2.7% - that means that 1 in every 38 adults under the age of 35 in the civilian labor force is a veteran.

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1 in 6 18-34 year old veterans in the civilian labor force is a woman.

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Slightly less than 1% - .9% - of women under 35 years old in the civilian workforce are veterans – that's 1 in every 112 women under 35 years old.

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Comparatively, 1 in 24 men under the age of 35 in the workforce is a veteran.

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Looking again to see just how many male veterans, male nonveterans, and women nonveterans we would see to see just 1 woman veteran— in 200 adults under 35 years old in the civilian work force, 1 is a woman veteran, 4 are male veterans, 101 are male nonveterans, and 94 are women nonveterans.

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I hope these demographics gave you a glimpse of why it is so vital that we refuse to make assumptions about who a veteran is and that as service providers we ask each and every person, “have you ever served in the military?” and that we continue asking no matter how many no’s we may hear from women. Our diligence could make a huge difference to a woman veteran in need of veteran services.

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It is also vital that women veterans own their service proudly, and tell people that they are a veteran. Every person who interacts with a woman veteran first-hand is less likely to assume all veterans are men, or to assume that the next woman they meet is not a veteran.

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