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Veteran Education and Employment Programs, 2016 - 2021

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This information paper explores potential factors contributing to the decrease in the Jobs for Veterans State Grant (JVSG) and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs. We summarized/analyzed a five-year trend in labor force statistics and program participation for VETS JVSG program, Employment and Training Administration (ETA) WIOA program, and Veterans Affairs (VA) Veteran Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program. We find that the decline in JVSG program participation is likely to be associated with people aging out of the labor force resulting in a decreased labor force participation.

Purpose/Introduction:

The purpose of this document is to provide research and data analyses information about the employment situation of veterans and service-connected disabled veterans, and how these veteran populations experience federal employment and education programs, American Job Center (AJC) services, and services provided by Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program (DVOP) specialists. Research and data analyses were conducted for veterans and service-connected disabled veteran populations, labor force participation rates, unemployment rates and participation rates for federal employment and training programs from October 2021 through December 2022. This paper also provides participation rates from Program Year (PY) 2016 through PY 2020 across WIOA services including programs for Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser, which serve both veterans and non-veterans, across AJCs.

- WIOA Adult Program: "Workforce services for eligible adults are available through one of the six core programs authorized by WIOA. The Adult program serves individuals and helps employers meet their workforce needs. It enables workers to obtain good jobs by providing them with job search assistance and training opportunities."
- WIOA Dislocated Worker Program: "The Dislocated Worker program is designed to help workers get back to work as quickly as possible and overcome barriers to employment. When individuals become dislocated workers as a result of job loss, mass layoffs, global trade dynamics, or transitions in economic sectors, the Dislocated Worker program provides services to assist them in re-entering the workforce. Services for dislocated workers are integrated and provided through a national network of AJCs. The AJCs provide significant resources to states to implement workforce education, training, and employment programs and help displaced workers."
- WIOA Youth Programs and Services: "The Division of Youth Services is primarily responsible for coordinating all youth-related workforce programs including the WIOA Youth Formula, YouthBuild, and Reentry Employment Opportunities. Our programs primarily serve young adults ages 16-24 that face a variety of barriers to employment. We provide leadership to the workforce system and our grantees, policy direction and guidance, support for program administration, and technical assistance."
- Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933, as amended: "The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices, now known as the Employment Service. The Employment Service seeks to improve the functioning of the nation's labor markets by bringing together individuals seeking employment with employers seeking workers."

(WIOA Workforce Programs, n.d.)

Additionally, this paper cites U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 - 2019 American Community Survey, 1-year estimates (US Census Bureau, 2022) for labor force participation rate and unemployment rate for 16 years of age and older. This paper also uses BLS data on labor force participation, employed, unemployed, and data for veterans 55 years of age and older.

Research Questions:

The data and information used in this paper are purely descriptive with the intent to inform and raise questions including the following:

1. Is the decline in veteran participation across veteran employment and education programs a direct result of the decline in the veteran population?
2. How do AJC- versus DVOP-served veterans and DVOP-served “Disabled” versus “All” veterans’ participation rates compare across PY 2016 – PY 2020?
3. What are the trends among disabled veterans across non-DOL federal programs with similar timeframes?

Data Tools and Timeframes:

- Annual Report to Congress (ARC), USDOL - VETS = PY 2016 – PY 2020¹
- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), Current Population Survey (CPS) = CY 2016 – CY 2021²
- Census Bureau, American Community Survey (ACS) = CY 2010 – CY 2019²
- Veterans Affairs (VA), Vocational Readiness & Employment (VR&E), VR&E Longitudinal Study = FY 2016 – FY 2020³
- WIOA by the Numbers Interactive Data Analysis Tool = PY 2016 – PY 2020¹
- Workforce Integrated Performance System (WIPS) = PY 2016 – PY 2020¹

Analysis:

The veteran population, labor force participation rate and participation with AJCs and DVOP specialists have been in decline over recent years. Total participation in programs including Adult, Dislocated Workers, Youth, and Wagner-Peyser⁴, served under WIOA across AJCs have also declined. It is important that not only the veteran participation in the VETS JVSG be the focus of this paper, but also the comparison to WIOA and other federal programs to show similarities and differences as these programs provide similar services and serve veterans. (*WIOA Workforce Programs, n.d.* and VRE Webmaster for VR&E Service Director., n.d.)

¹ Program Year (PY) = July 1 to June 30

² Calendar Year (CY) = January to December

³ Fiscal Year (FY) = October 1 to September 30

⁴ Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Services Results – “The Wagner-Peyser Act of 1933 established a nationwide system of public employment offices, known as the Employment Service. The Employment Service seeks to improve the functioning of the nation's labor markets by bringing together individuals seeking employment with employers seeking workers. The Wagner-Peyser Act was amended in 1998 to make the Employment Service part of the one-stop delivery system under the Workforce Investment Act. In 2014, the Wagner-Peyser Act was amended again under title III of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The Employment Service under WIOA builds upon the previous workforce reforms, requires colocation of the Employment Service offices into the nearly 2,500 AJCs nationwide, and aligns performance accountability indicators with other federal workforce programs.”

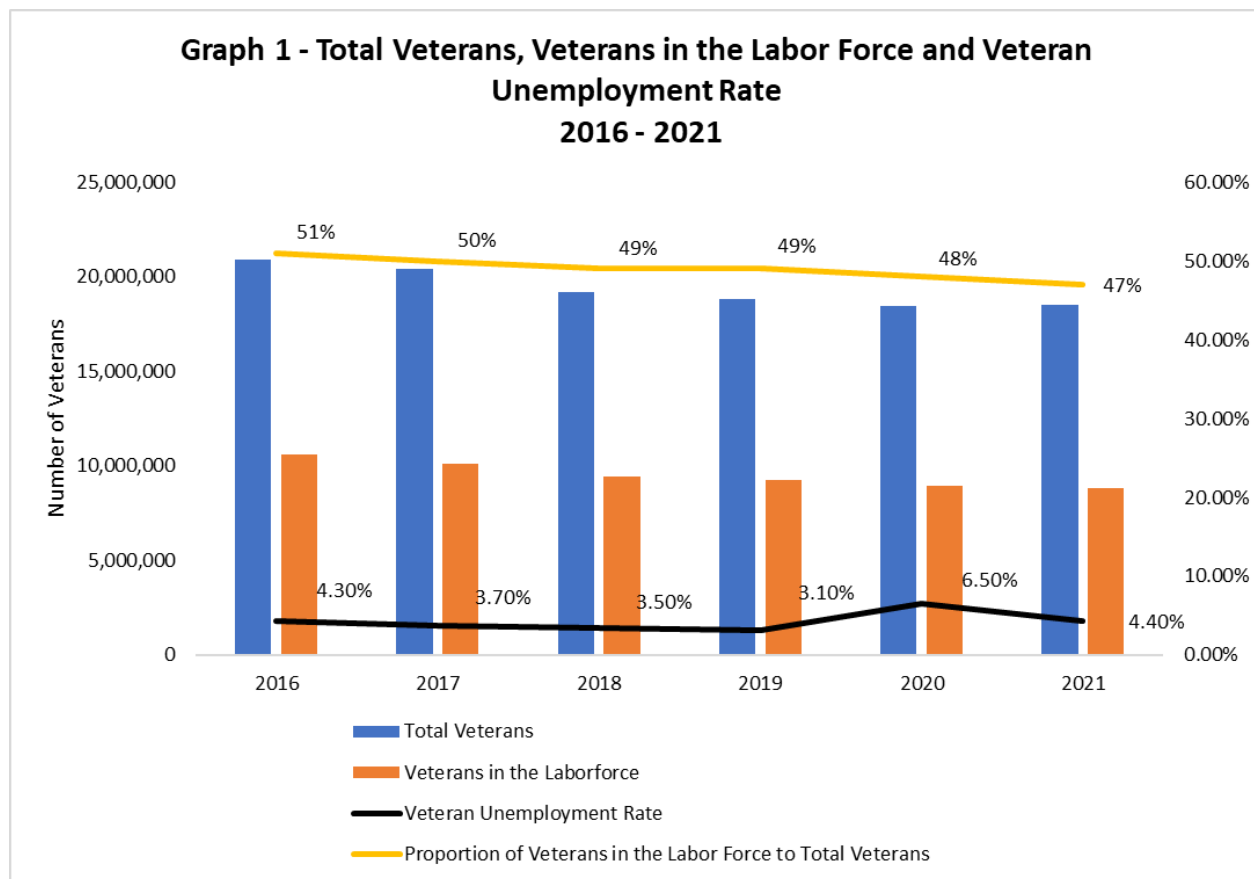


Table 1 – Veterans in the Labor Force, Total Veterans and Unemployment Rate

| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Total Veterans | 20,895,000 | 20,387,000 | 19,201,000 | 18,822,000 | 18,466,000 | 18,506,000 |
| Change over previous year (+/-), Percent Change (%) | -1.5% | -2.4% | -5.8% | -2.0% | -1.9% | +0.2% |
| Veterans in the Labor Force | 10,581,000 | 10,125,000 | 9,453,000 | 9,270,000 | 8,918,000 | 8,818,000 |
| Change over previous year (+/-), Percent Change (%) | -1.6% | -4.3% | -6.6% | -1.9% | -3.8% | -1.1% |
| Proportion of Veterans in the Labor Force to Total Veterans | 50.6% | 49.7% | 49.2% | 49.2% | 48.3% | 47.7% |
| Veteran Unemployment Rate | 4.3% | 3.7% | 3.5% | 3.1% | 6.5% | 4.4% |

(Archived News Releases: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023)

Graph 1 and Table 1 show, and strictly descriptive, while there has been a decline in veterans in the labor force, the total veteran population also declined. While in 2021, there was an increase in the total veteran population by nearly forty thousand. You can also see there is a decline in veterans in the labor force from 2016 to 2021. From 2016 to 2018, the proportion of veterans in the labor force to total veterans has decreased from 50% to 49%, remained at 49% through 2019, followed by a decrease to 48% in 2020 and a decrease to 47% in 2021. Additionally, you will see a decline in the unemployment rate (UR) from 2016 to 2019 (4.3% to 3.1%), followed by an increase to 6.5% in 2020, followed by a decrease to 4.4% in 2021.

According to the Current Population Survey (2021), there were approximately 19 million U.S. veterans in 2021 representing less than 10% of the total U.S. adult population. According to the Census Bureau, in 2018, about 7% of U.S. adults were veterans, down from 18% in 1980. “By 2046, the Department of Veterans Affairs estimates there will be around 12.5 million veterans, a decrease of about 35% from current numbers. By that time, Gulf War-era veterans are projected to make up a majority of those who served, and most veterans who served in the Vietnam era or earlier will have died.” (Schaffer, 2021)

It is important to consider the impact of COVID-19 with these descriptive data and understanding the shifts COVID-19 may have had on employees and employers with teleworking. According to, *Those Who Switched to Telework Have Higher Income, Education and Better Health*, (2021), “more than a third of U.S. households reported working from home more frequently than before the pandemic, but the percentage who made the switch varied widely across sociodemographic groups. Households with members who teleworked more frequently reported higher levels of income and education and better health than those in which no one changed their typical in-person work in response to the COVID-19 pandemic”. Another consideration when understanding the impact on unemployment and labor force participation were the stay-at-home orders issued by states, essentially mandating the transition from in-person to telework. According to the *COVID-19: State Health Actions* (2023), during the COVID-19 outbreak, 41 states issued stay-at-home orders forcing the closure of all non-essential business properties, millions of Americans were moving their workspaces to their homes, and high numbers of workers took sick leave. (*COVID-19: State Health Actions*, 2023)

According to Smith (2021), “the total civilian employment fell by 8.8 million over the year, as the COVID-19 pandemic brought the economic expansion to a sudden halt, taking a tremendous toll on the U.S. labor market. The unemployment rate increased in 2020, surging to 13.0 percent in the second quarter of the year before easing to 6.7 percent in the fourth quarter. Although some people were able to work at home, the numbers of unemployed on temporary layoff, those working part time for economic reasons, and those unemployed for 27 or more weeks increased sharply over the year.” However, in Graph 1 and Table 1, the unemployment rate from 2020 to 2021 declined from 6.5% to 4.4%. Additionally, and purely descriptive, you will notice the number of veterans in the labor force declined from 2016 to 2021. From 2016 to 2019 the unemployment rate for veterans decreased, increased in 2020, and decreased in 2021.

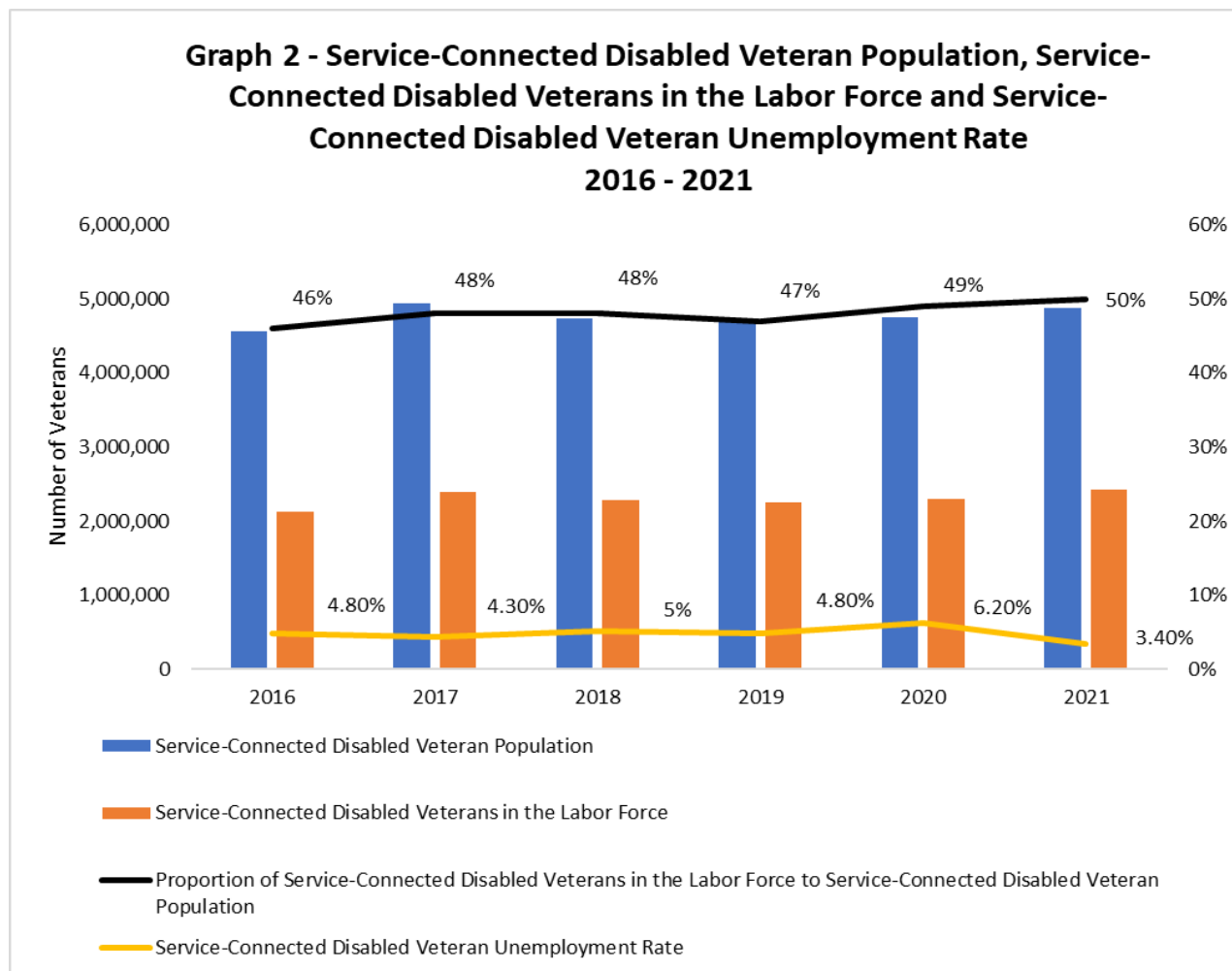


Table 2 - Service-Connected Disabled Veterans in the Labor Force, Population and Unemployment Rate

| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|---|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Service-Connected Disabled Veteran Population | 4,564,000 | 4,939,000 | 4,741,000 | 4,742,000 | 4,747,000 | 4,873,000 |
| Service-Connected Disabled Veterans in the Labor Force | 2,119,000 | 2,390,000 | 2,275,000 | 2,252,000 | 2,305,000 | 2,423,000 |
| Proportion of Service-Connected Disabled Veterans in the Labor Force to Service-Connected Disabled Veteran Population | 46% | 48% | 48% | 47% | 49% | 50% |
| Service-Connected Disabled Veteran Unemployment Rate | 4.8% | 4.3% | 5.2% | 4.8% | 6.2% | 3.4% |

(Archived News Releases: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023b)

Graph 2 and Table 2 illustrate the total service-connected disabled veteran population, service-connected disabled veterans in the labor force and service-connected disabled veteran unemployment rate from 2016 to 2021. Note that this data is from the Current Population Survey (CPS) supplement released once per year. (*Frequently Asked Questions About Disability Data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023.*) You will notice the total service-connected disabled veteran population increased from 2016 to 2017, followed by a decrease in 2018 and remained around 4.7M through 2020, followed by an increase to 4.9M in 2021. At the same time, the service-connected disabled veterans' labor force participation rate increased from 2.1M in 2016 to 2.4M 2017, followed by a decrease to 2.3M in 2018 and remained around 2.3M through 2020, followed by an increase to 2.4M in 2021. However, the unemployment rate during these years declined from 2016 to 2017, increased in 2018, decreased in 2019 and increased by 1.4% in 2020, and nearly a 3% decrease to 3.4% in 2021.

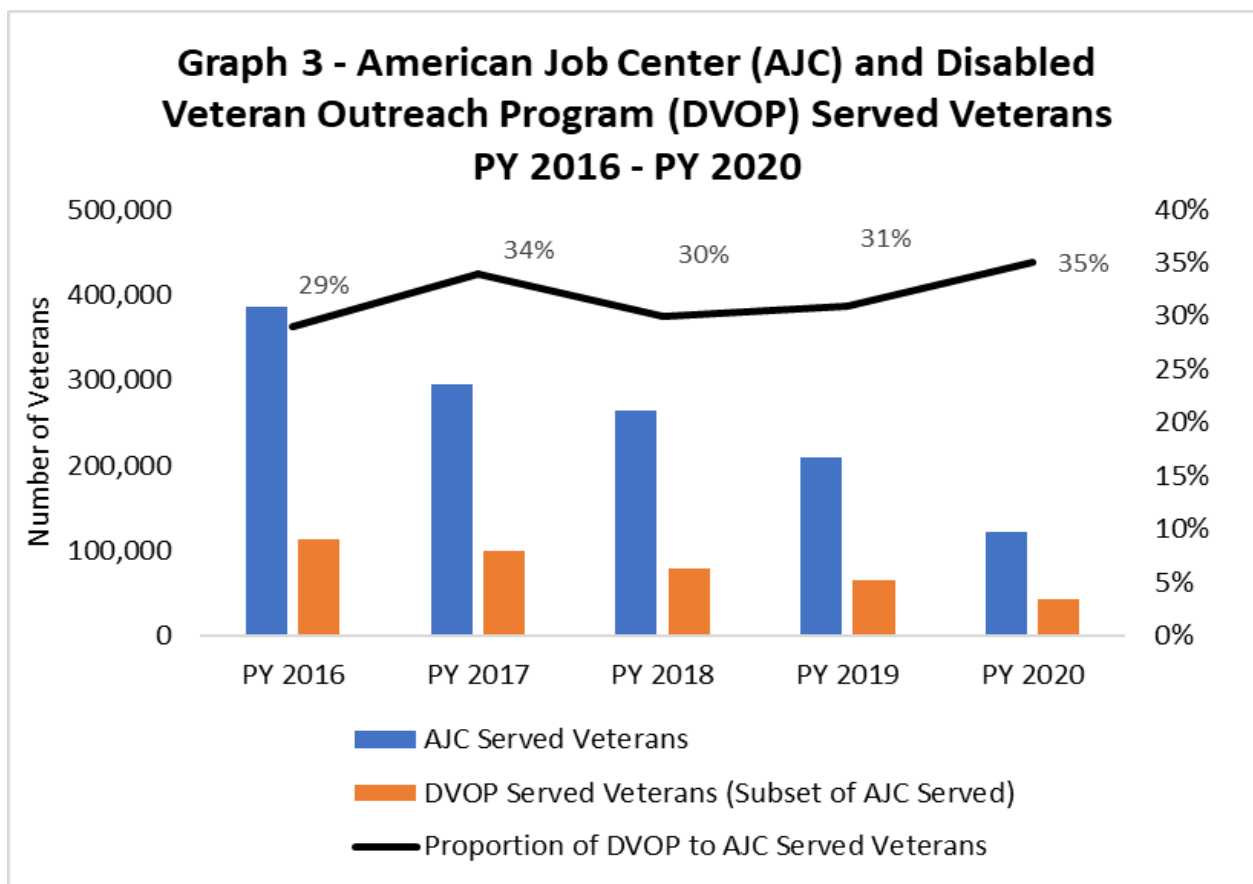


Table 3 – AJC and DVOP Served Veterans

| | PY 2016 | PY 2017 | PY 2018 | PY 2019 | PY 2020 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| AJC Served Veterans | 386,059 | 295,228 | 264,038 | 208,856 | 121,872 |
| DVOP Served Veterans (Subset of AJC served) | 113,211 | 99,296 | 79,082 | 64,623 | 42,384 |
| Proportion of DVOP to AJC Served Veterans | 29% | 34% | 30% | 31% | 35% |
| <i>(Fact Sheets, Updates & Reports, n.d.)</i> | | | | | |

In Graph 3 and Table 3, you will notice from PY 2016 to PY 2017 there was a 5% increase (29% to 34%), followed by a 4% decrease (34% to 30%) from PY 2017 to PY 2018, followed by an increase (30% to 31%) from PY 2018 to PY 2019, and up to 35%, from PY 2019 to PY 2020 for the DVOP to AJC Served veteran ratio. Indicating, the past few (PY 2018 to PY 2020) program years have seen a consistent increased level of veteran participation for DVOP services compared to AJC services.

Policy changes during Program Year 2016 to Program Year 2020 to be aware of include the addition of “Vietnam-era veterans.⁵” as a “Special Population” to Significant Barriers to Employment. The “The Bureau of Labor Statistics and the VA data indicate that there are still a sizeable number of Vietnam-era veterans in the workforce, and many face difficulty in finding and maintaining employment. In 2017, there were 1,689,000 Vietnam-era veterans in the workforce with 64,000 unemployed and actively seeking employment.” [Designation of Additional Population of Veterans and Other Populations Eligible for Services from the Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Program Specialists (dol.gov)]

Table 4 - Variables to Consider with Veteran Participation

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| Location/access to services | DVOP experience | Significant barriers to employment |
| Resources (i.e., supportive services) | Eligibility for services | Population/demographics |
| Funding for paid training (i.e., Work-Based Learning, Registered Apprenticeship, On-the-job training) | Veteran community | Veteran benefits (Retirement, Disability Compensation, VR&E, GI Bill, healthcare) |
| Prior experience with AJC/DVOP services | Occupational demand | Economy (i.e., cost of living, housing, economic development) |
| Local Veterans Employment Representative (LVER) job development/referrals/employer network. | DVOP outreach | Financial dependence [retirement, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), Social Security Income (SSI)] |

Could the decrease/stabilization in veteran participation with AJC/DVOP services be related to the decline in total veteran population? Urban⁶ and rural⁷ classification by the Census Bureau and population size, may account for the number of resources, location of services, the local economy, access to services and resources, and occupational opportunities. Veteran participation with DVOP/AJC services may depend on many variables listed above in Table 4 when considering the need for services from veterans.

⁵ In 2020, the median age of Vietnam-era veterans was 71. Reference: [Those Who Served: America's Veterans From World War II to the War on Terror \(census.gov\)](#)

⁶ For the 2020 Census, an urban area will comprise a densely settled core of census blocks that meet minimum housing unit density and/or population density requirements. This includes adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses. To qualify as an urban area, the territory identified according to criteria must encompass at least 2,000 housing units or have a population of at least 5,000.

⁷ Rural encompasses all population, housing, and territory not included within an urban area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023)

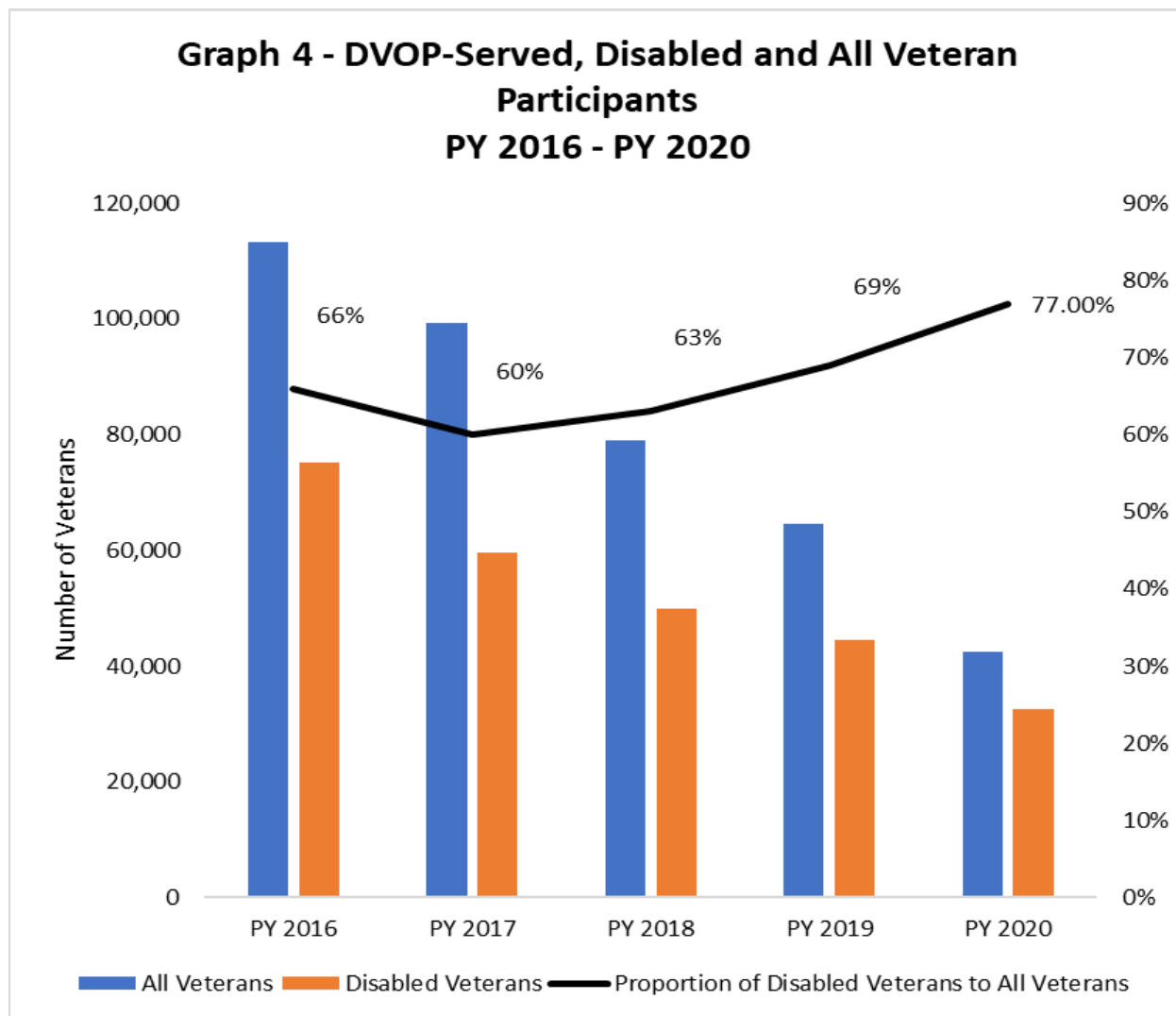


Table 5 - DVOP-Served, Disabled Veterans to All Veterans

| | PY 2016 | PY 2017 | PY 2018 | PY 2019 | PY 2020 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| All Veterans | 113,211 | 99,296 | 79,082 | 64,623 | 42,384 |
| Disabled Veterans | 75,222 | 59,717 | 49,877 | 44,595 | 32,503 |
| Proportion of DVOP-Served, Disabled Veterans to All Veterans | 66% | 60% | 63% | 69% | 77% |
| (Fact Sheets, Updates & Reports, n.d.) | | | | | |

Graph 4 and Table 5⁸ illustrate the DVOP-served Disabled veteran participants and DVOP-served All Participants⁹ from PY 2016 to PY 2020. This graph also shows the ratio of DVOP-served: disabled to all veteran participants. As you can see, from PY 2017 to PY 2020, there has been an increase in the ratio of DVOP-served disabled veterans to all DVOP-Served veteran participants. This indicates utilization of services by disabled veterans were increasing, while moving from 60% up to 77%.

We believe that the descriptive findings presented in Graph 4 and Table 5 warrant further investigation and research. First, do the observations noted in Graph 4 and Table 5 reflect statistically significant changes? If so, we propose exploring the following questions:

1. In general, are more veterans choosing to participate in the Veterans Affairs - Vocational Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program?
2. In general, are veterans using more or less of their Post 9/11 G.I. Bill?

It is important to consider these federal programs while reviewing VETS programs to understand any comparisons or contrasts during similar Program or Fiscal Years. This paper will later highlight VA – VR&E and Post-9/11 GI Bill participation across programs.

⁸ For Graph 4 and Table 5: Disabled veterans population includes both “special disabled” and “disabled” veterans, not reported in the Annual Report to Congress (ARC). “Special disabled” means **(A)** a [veteran](#) who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary for a disability (i) rated at 30 percent or more, or (ii) rated at 10 or 20 percent in the case of a [veteran](#) who has been determined under [section 3106 of this title](#) to have a serious employment handicap; or **(B)** a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of service-connected disability. “Disabled” means (A) a [veteran](#) who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary, or (B) a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability. (*38 U.S. Code § 4101 - Definitions*, n.d.)

⁹ Significant barriers to employment (SBEs) include: • A special disabled or disabled veteran • Homelessness • A recently-separated service member who’s been unemployed any time within the previous 12 months for 27 or more weeks • An offender who has been released from incarceration • Lacking a high school diploma or equivalent certificate • Low income Special Populations include: • Veterans aged 18 to 24 • A transitioning service member in need of intensive services • A wounded, ill, or injured service members receiving treatment at Military Treatment Facilities or Warrior Transition Units as well as the spouses and family caregivers of such wounded, ill, or injured service members

Reference:

- <https://www.dol.gov/vets/VMS/VPLs/VPL-03-14.pdf>
- <https://www.dol.gov/vets/VMS/VPLs/VPL-03-14-Change-1.pdf>
- <https://www.dol.gov/vets/VMS/VPLs/VPL-03-14-Change-2.pdf>
- https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_19_13.pdf

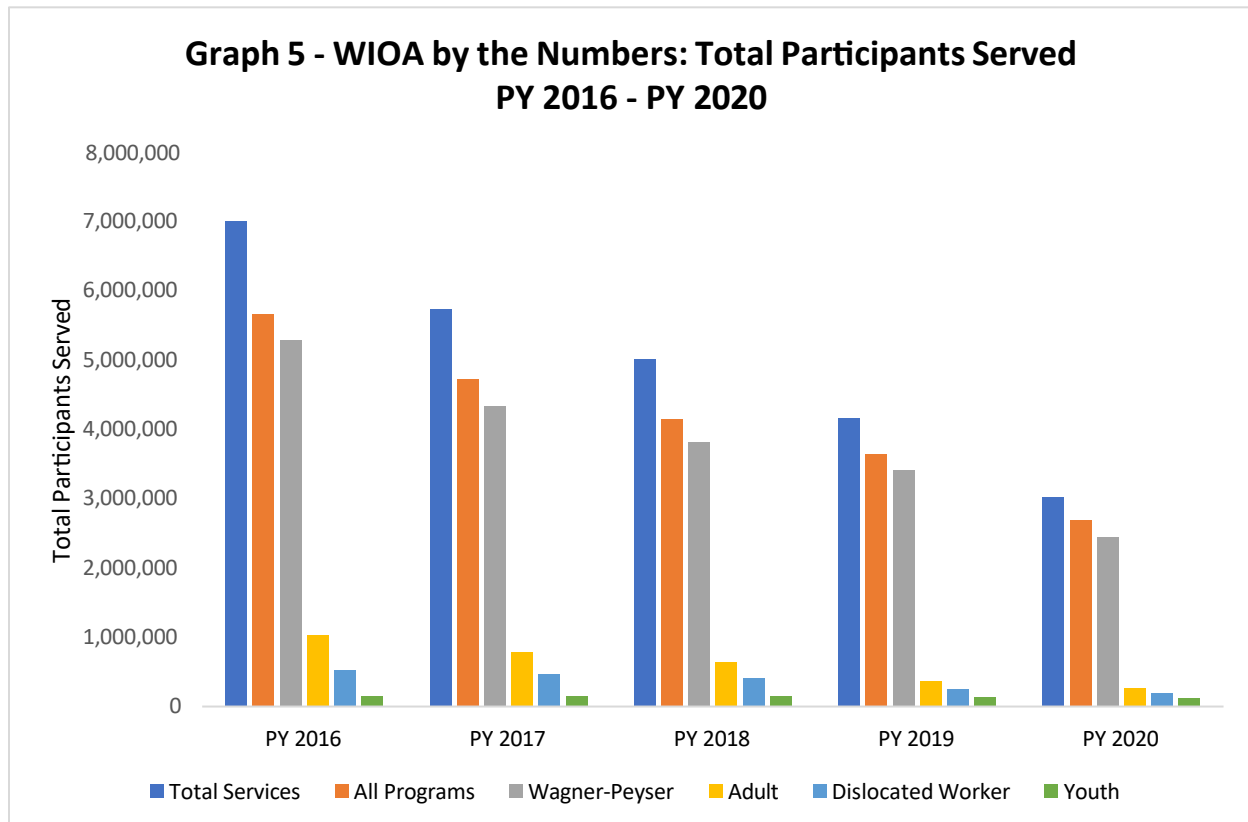


Table 6 - WIOA by the Numbers -Total Participants Served

| | PY 2016 | PY 2017 | PY 2018 | PY 2019 | PY 2020 |
|-------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Adult | 1,036,322 | 780,611 | 640,713 | 357,424 | 264,607 |
| Dislocated Worker | 526,981 | 469,352 | 413,887 | 256,410 | 191,039 |
| Youth | 153,812 | 148,102 | 153,986 | 137,192 | 123,200 |
| Wagner-Peyser | 5,276,780 | 4,330,281 | 3,806,932 | 3,409,596 | 2,434,869 |
| All Programs | 5,661,941 | 4,716,342 | 4,146,674 | 3,641,571 | 2,688,456 |
| Total Services | 6,993,895 | 5,728,346 | 5,015,518 | 4,160,622 | 3,013,715 |

(WIOA by the Numbers Interactive Data Analysis Tool, n.d)

To understand the veteran participation rate with DVOP/AJC served veterans, we must also understand the entire population served in our AJCs. The total participants served in Program years 2016 to 2020 in WIOA, which includes populations of Adult, Dislocated Worker, Wagner-Peyser and Youth can be seen in Graph 5. It is important to note that, these programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser) can overlap in services and the performance outcomes “All Programs” often do not align with the actual total services individuals receive, “Total Services”. For example, a customer could receive a service in both the Adult and Dislocated worker program. You can see there has been a 47% decline (PY 2020 - All Programs: 2,688,456, divided by PY 2016 – All Programs: 5,661,941) in participation across all programs. Therefore, not only has DVOP/AJC veteran served participation rates declined, but so has all other programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth and Wagner-Peyser) under WIOA during these program years. (WIOA Titles I and III National Performance Summary Program Year 2020, n.d.)

One source to consider in the decline of participation across programs, includes the “Aging Boomer” labor force participation rate. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) According to Howard (2021), “from 2010-2019, as the U.S. economy improved, the percentage of the population ages 65 and older grew nationally (from 13.1% to 16.5%) in all 50 states and the District of Columbia” and “these increases affected both the national and state labor force characteristics”. Additionally, Howard, 2021, stated that “because older Americans are less likely than younger ones to be in the labor force, this demographic shift reduced the overall labor force participation rate” and “as a result, demographic changes rather than economic and labor market conditions may be the driving factor behind labor force participation and unemployment rates.” This is an important consideration when there has been a decline in participation rates across some of the federal programs and labor force, mentioned throughout this paper.

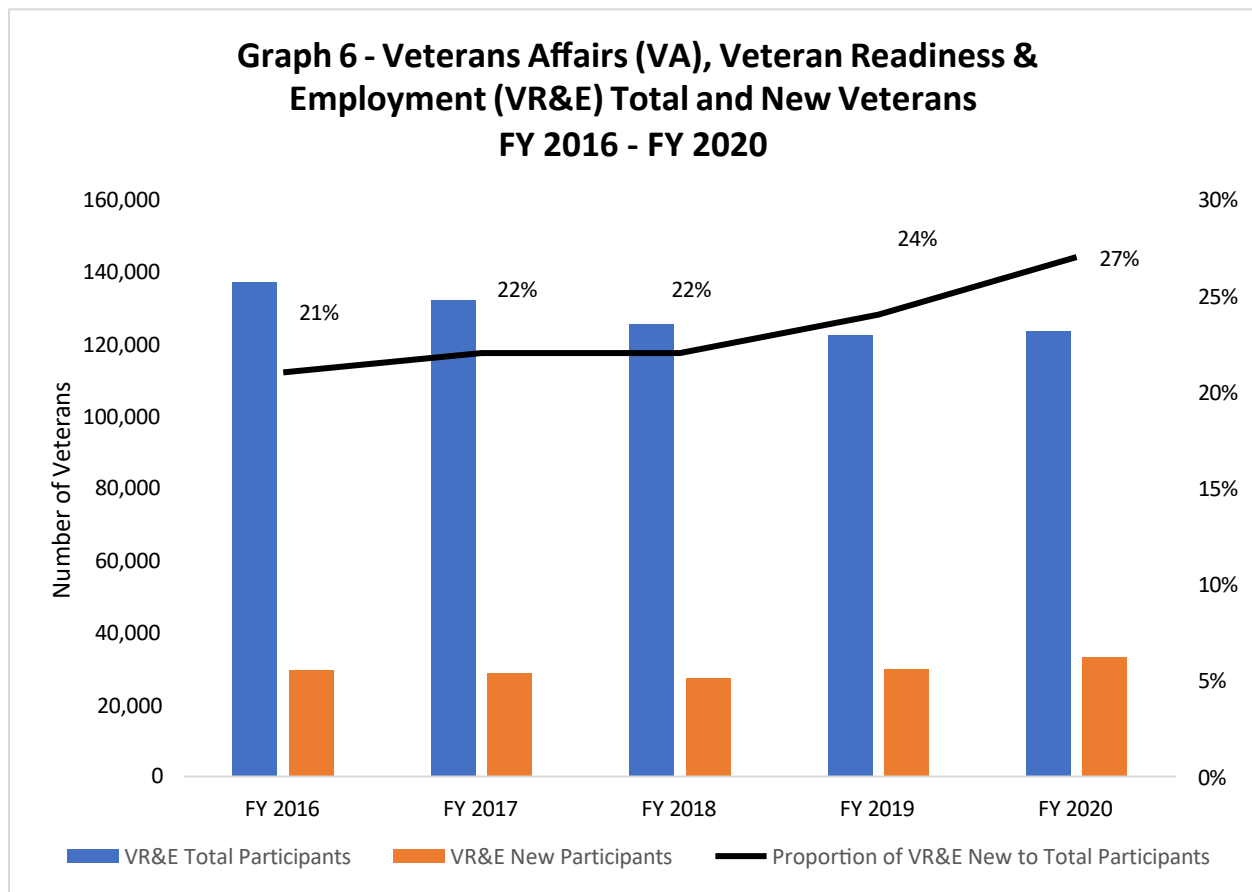
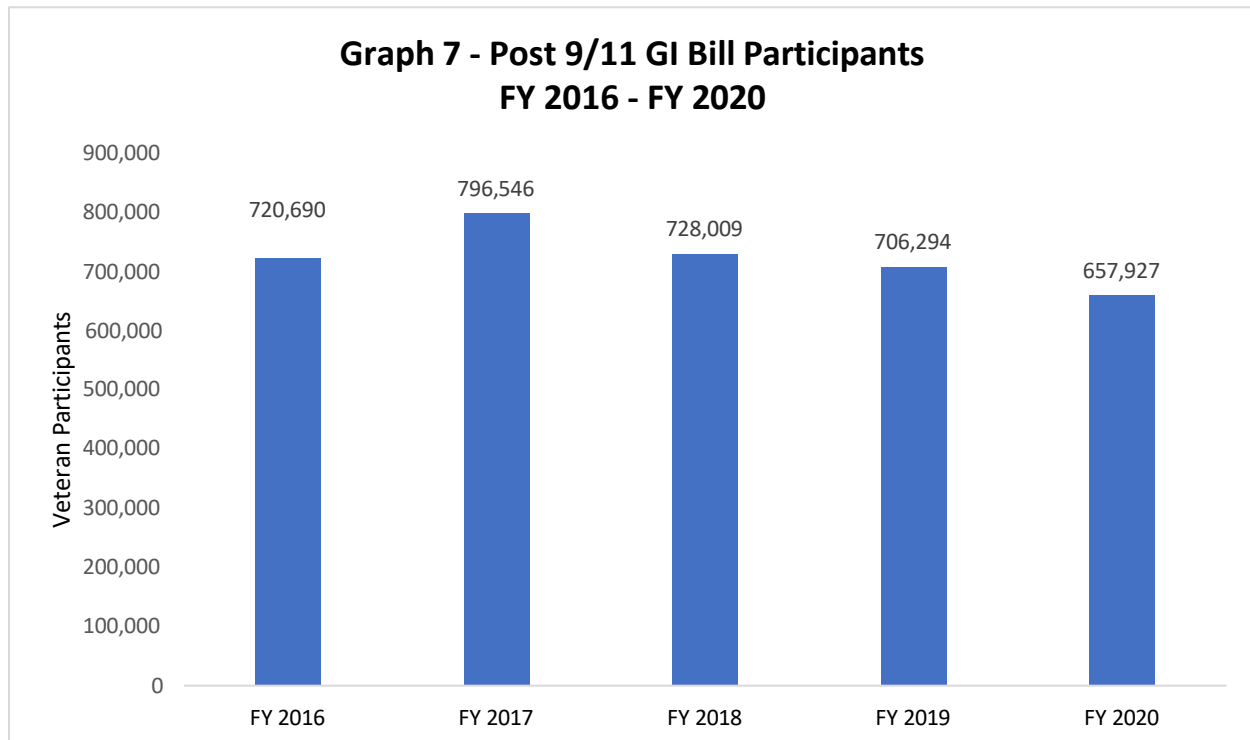


Table 7 – VR&E Total and New Veterans

| | FY 2016 | FY 2017 | FY 2018 | FY 2019 | FY 2020 |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| VR&E Total Participants | 137,097 | 132,218 | 125,513 | 122,249 | 123,490 |
| VR&E New Participants | 29,341 | 28,708 | 27,194 | 29,799 | 33,163 |
| Proportion of VR&E New to Total Participants | 21% | 22% | 22% | 24% | 27% |

(VRE Webmaster for VR&E Service Director., n.d.)

Graph 6 and Table 7 illustrate the amount of New, Total and Ratio: New to Total participants for the Veterans Affairs – Veteran Readiness & Employment program (formerly called Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment) program. The New Participant rate has declined from FY 2016 to FY 2018, followed by an increase in FY 2018 to FY 2020. Also, you can see the Total Participant rate has decreased from FY 2016 to FY 2019, followed by a slight increase in FY 2020. Lastly, the New Participant to Total Participant rate ratio has increased in VR&E from FY 2016 to FY 2020.



In Graph 7, the amount of Post 9/11 GI Bill participants has increased from FY 2016 to FY 2017, followed by a decline from FY 2017 to FY 2020. (VRE Webmaster for VR&E Service Director., n.d.) While at the same time (FY 2016 to FY 2020) in Graph 8 below, there has been an increase in dependent participation with Survivors' and Dependents' Educational Assistance (DEA) - Chapter 35, a VA educational assistance program designed for spouses and children of certain veterans or servicemembers benefits through the Veterans Affairs. This may or may not have correlation to the decline in Post 9/11 G.I. Bill participants but should be considered. It is important to note that the Forever G.I. Bill (Became Public Law 8/16/2017, *H.R.3218* - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act of 2017, n.d.) and Post-9/11 GI Bill, Chapter 33 (Went into effect 08/01/2009, *The Post-9/11 GI Bill: A Primer*, n.d.) fall under two categories:

- If your service ended before January 1, 2013, your Post 9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) benefits will expire 15 years after your last separation date from active service. You must use all of your benefits by that time, or you will lose whatever's left.
- If your service ended on or after January 1, 2013, your benefits would not expire thanks to a new law called the Forever GI Bill - Harry W. Colmery Veterans Educational Assistance Act. (D, n.d.-b)

The Post 9/11 G.I. Bill (Chapter 33) is a benefit that helps eligible veterans and dependents pay for school or job training pending eligibility for veterans who have served on active duty after September 10, 2001. [*Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33) | Veterans Affairs, 2023*] Post 9/11 G.I. Bill eligibility includes the following with at least 1 of the items must being true:

- You served at least 90 days on active duty (either all at once or with breaks in service) on or after September 11, 2001, or
- You received a Purple Heart on or after September 11, 2001, and were honorably discharged after any amount of service, or
- You served for at least 30 continuous days (all at once, without a break in service) on or after September 11, 2001, and were honorably discharged with a service-connected disability, or
- You're a dependent child using benefits transferred by a qualifying veteran or service member.

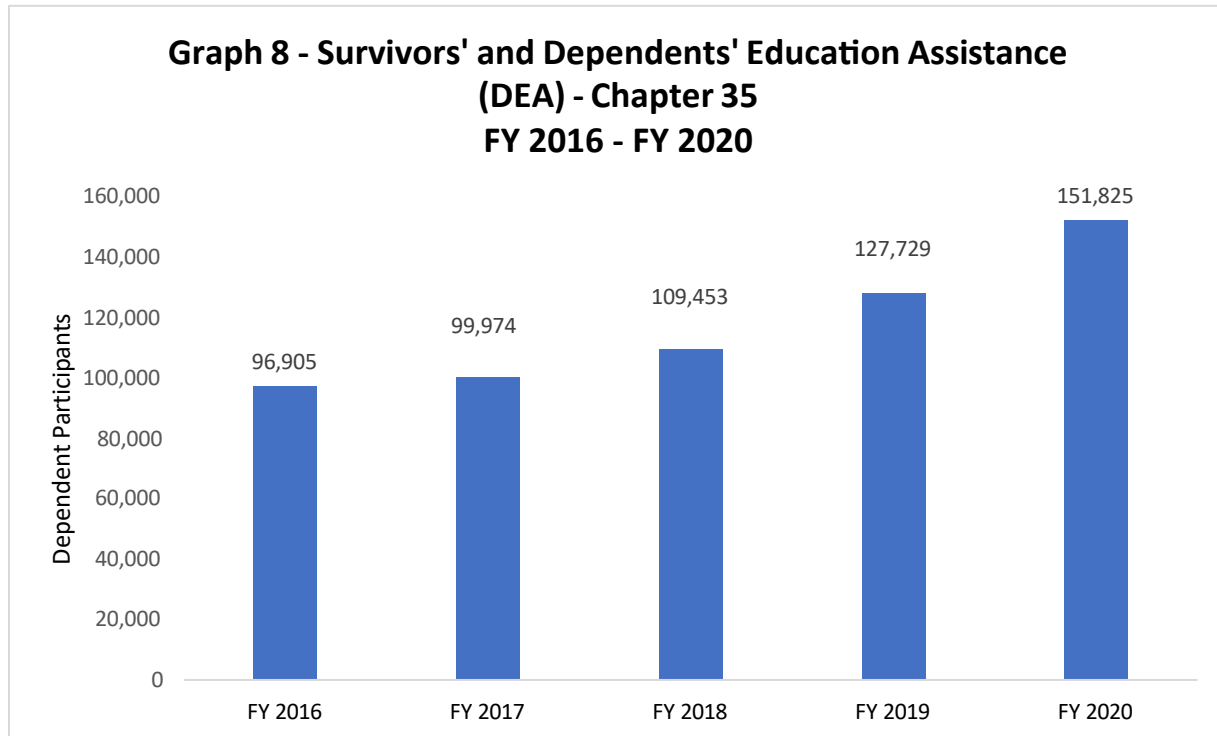
According to the Veterans Benefits Administration, Annual Benefits Report, Fiscal Year 2020, "in FY 2020, COVID-19 impacted worldwide in-person VA transition services. Outreach, Transition, and Economic Development (OTED) developed a remote support model to keep service members, veterans, and their loved ones in touch with VA Benefits Advisors for One-On-One Assistance sessions to preserve connectivity and keep them informed on critical VA benefits and services during these unprecedented times." (Veterans Benefits Administration, Annual Benefits Report, Fiscal Year 2020, n.d.)

On December 21, 2021, the H.R. 5545 – REMOTE (Responsible Education Mitigating Options and Technical Extensions) Act became public law, which extends certain expiring provisions of law relating to benefits provided under the Department of Veterans Affairs educational assistance programs during the COVID-19 pandemic, and for other purposes. (H.R.5545 - REMOTE Act, n.d.) Additionally, it is the "Extension of Period for Continuation of Department of Veterans Affairs Educational Assistance Benefits for Certain Programs of Education Converted to Distance Learning by Reason of Emergencies and Health-related Situations." (H.R.5545 - REMOTE Act, n.d.)

According to Shane (2022), "the pandemic protections affected about 57,000 students using the G.I. Bill benefit for the Spring 2022 semester along. Without them, those individuals faced a loss of thousands of dollars in housing support for the spring 2022 semester." (Shane, 2022)

Are these changes in the number of participants across veteran employment and education programs reflective of a significant decline? Questions to consider below:

- Are more Transitioning Service Members (TSMs) and/or veterans transferring their G.I. Bill benefit over to dependents?
- Are more veterans exiting the military with a DoD or VA service-connected disability and utilizing VR&E?
- How did the COVID-19 pandemic impact veteran participation rates across education and employment programs?



In Graph 8, you will see the steady incline from FY 2016 – FY 2020 in Dependent Participants for the Survivors’ and Dependents’ Education Assistance – Chapter 35 program through the Veterans Affairs. (Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity, Performance and Analysis Service, n.d.)

- How has the steady increase in DEA participation influenced Post 9/11 G.I. Bill participation?
- How has the steady increase in DEA participation influenced Veterans Affairs, Vocational Readiness & Employment participation?

The Survivor’s and Dependents’ Education Assistance (DEA) – Chapter 35 program became Public Law on October 24, 1968, and is as follows:

“The Congress hereby declares that the educational program established by this chapter is for the purpose of providing opportunities for education to children whose education would otherwise be impeded or interrupted by reason of the disability or death of a parent from a disease or injury incurred or aggravated in the Armed Forces after the beginning of the Spanish-American War, and for the purpose of aiding such children in attaining the educational status which they might normally have aspired to and obtained but for the disability or death of such parent. The Congress further declares that the educational program extended to the surviving spouses of veterans who died of service-connected disabilities and to spouses of veterans with a service-connected total disability permanent in nature is for the purpose of assisting them in preparing to support themselves and their families at a standard of living level which the veteran, but for the veteran’s death or service disability, could have expected to provide for the veteran’s family.” (38 USC Ch. 35: SURVIVORS’ AND DEPENDENTS’ EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE, n.d.)

Requirements and features of DEA include:

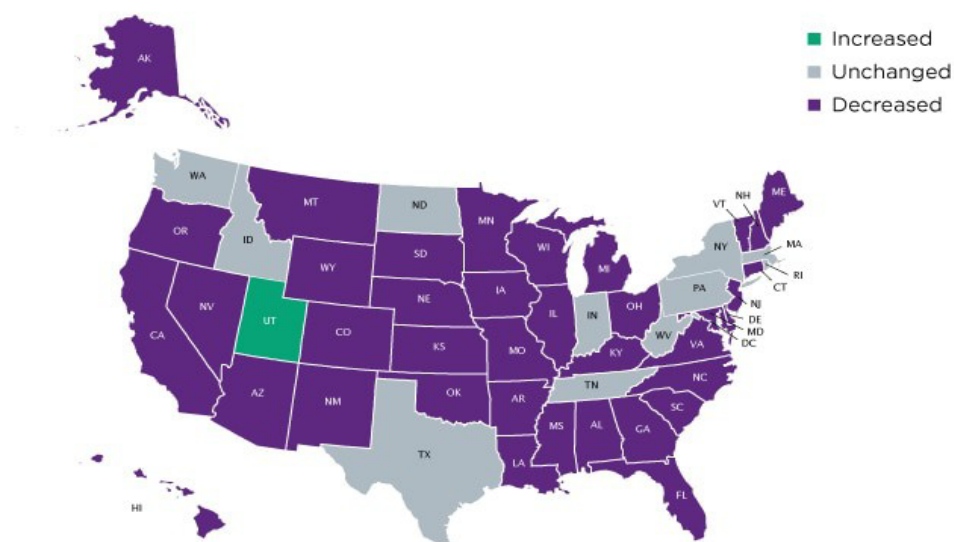
- Eligibility is based on the veteran’s service-connected death; service-connected disability rated as total and permanent; or Missing in Action (MIA), Prisoner of War (POW), or Hostage status,

- Effective December 22, 2006, the program was expanded to grant eligibility to spouses and children of Servicemembers who are hospitalized or receiving outpatient care for a permanent and total disability while still on active duty.
- Maximum entitlement is 36 months for individuals who first use DEA after August 1, 2018,
- Maximum entitlement is 45 months for individuals who first used DEA prior to August 1, 2018,
- Children generally have eight years in which to use benefits, usually between ages 18 and 26,
- Spouses generally have 10 years in which to use benefits, or 20 years if the veteran dies on active duty or if veteran receives a permanent and total rating within 3 years of release from active duty,
- A spouse loses entitlement if remarried before age 57 but may have entitlement restored if that marriage terminates by death or divorce.

(Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration, Office of the Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Management, Office of Facilities, Access and Administration, n.d.)

**Graph 9 – Labor Force Participation Rate of U.S. Population 16 and Up
2010 - 2019**

Labor Force Participation Rate of U.S. Population 16 and Up: 2010-2019



Note: The stated differences from 2010 to 2019 are statistically different at the 90% confidence level.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 and 2019 American Community Survey 1 year estimates. For more information on the American Community Survey, visit www.census.gov/acs. For more information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, check out Code Lists, Definitions, and Accuracy <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/code-lists.html>.

Table 8 - Labor Force Participation by Age, 2010 and 2019

Note: The stated differences from 2010 to 2019 are statistically difference at the 90% confidence level.

| | |
|------------------|----------------|
| Ages 16 and over | 64.4% to 63.6% |
| Ages 16 to 19 | 37.7% to 39.9% |
| Ages 20 to 64 | 77.5% to 78.3% |
| Ages 65 to 74 | 24.8% to 26.8% |

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Ages 75 and older | 5.7% to 7.2% |
| (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) | |

Labor Force Participation by Age

In this next section, the labor force participation by age is considered as we have seen the decline in veteran's labor force participation, and both increases and decreases in service-connected veteran's labor force participation. Here we look at the overall labor force participation ages 16 and older. The national labor force participation rate for the total population ages 16 and over was 64.4% in 2010 and 63.6% in 2019. These stated differences from 2010 to 2019 are statistically different at the 90% confidence level.

Graph 9 and Table 8, shows the labor force participation rate of the U.S. Population 16 and older from 2010 to 2019. You will notice the majority (38) of states indicate a decrease while 11 states show unchanged, with one state (Utah) having an increase from 2010 to 2019. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

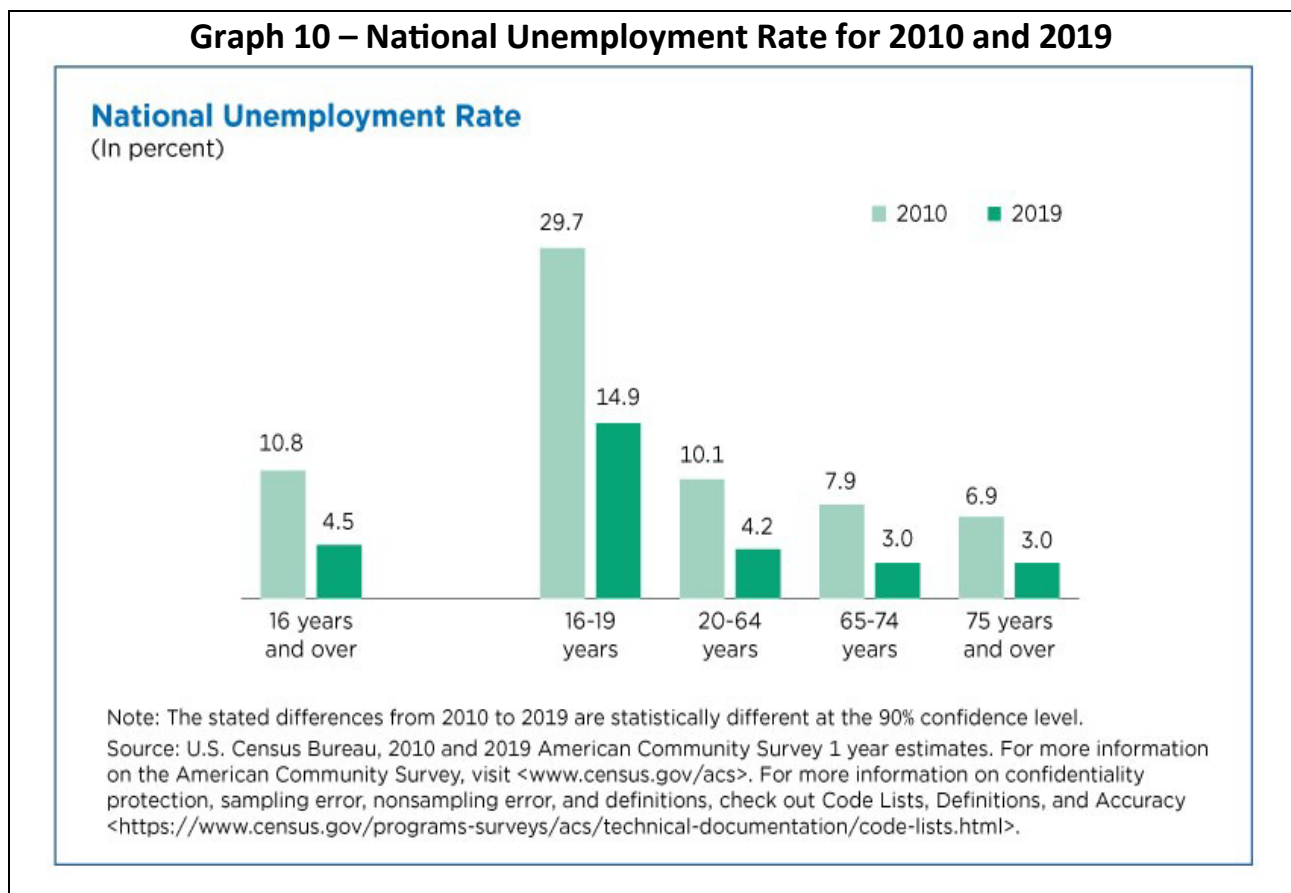


Table 9 - National Unemployment Rates, 2010 – 2019

Note: The stated differences from 2010 to 2019 are statistically difference at the 90% confidence level.

| | |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| Ages 16 years and over | 10.8% to 4.5% |
| Ages 16 to 19 | 29.7% to 14.9% |
| Ages 20 to 64 | 10.1% to 4.2% |
| Ages 65 to 74 | 7.9% to 3.0% |
| Ages 75 and older | 6.9% to 3.0% |
| (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022) | |

Aging and Unemployment

With the change in age distribution in the labor force participation rate, next we will consider the unemployment rates for ages 16 and older. The unemployment and labor force participation rates for ages 16 and older were considered in this paper to understand the broad outlook of a larger population while understanding similarities and differences among the veteran population in the labor force and across employment and training programs. The definition according to Census, is “all civilians 16 years old and over are classified as unemployed if the (1) were neither ‘at work’ nor ‘with a job but not at work’ during the reference week, and (2) were actively looking for work during the last 4 weeks, and (3) were available to accept a job. Also included as unemployed are civilians who did not work at all during the reference week, were waiting to be called back to a job from which they had been laid off and were available to work except for temporary illness.” (*Census Glossary*, n.d.)

From 2010 to 2019, the national unemployment rates declined significantly from 10.8% to 4.5%, and for each of the following age cohorts displayed in Graph 10 and Table 9, (National Unemployment Rate 2010 to 2019) above. From 2010 to 2019, there were statistical differences at the 90% confidence level for the unemployment rates for ages 16 years and over from 10.8% to 4.5%, ages 16 to 19 years from 29.7% to 14.9%, ages 20 to 64 from 10.1% to 4.2%, ages 65 to 74 from 7.9% to 3.0% and ages 75 and older from 6.9% to 3.0%.

According to Howard, 2021, “As the nation and labor force aged, older Americans’ lower unemployment rates and continued presence in the labor force drove down the overall unemployment rate. This effect was compounded by the improving labor market that reduced unemployment rates for all age groups between 2010 and 2019.” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

Aging Out, Not Dropping Out

Howard, 2021, also states “the economic health can be measured by the labor force participation and unemployment rates and considering the decline in labor force participation rate due to ‘discouraged workers’ dropping off can appear ‘misleading’. Especially when the country is experiencing demographic shifts, such as changes in the age distribution of the U.S. population the last decade” and that “demographic changes rather than economic and labor market conditions may be the driving factor behind labor force participation and unemployment rates.” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

Conclusion

From 2016 to 2021, the total veteran population (20.9M to 18.5M) and veteran labor force participation (10.6M to 8.8M) have seen a decline. While the veteran unemployment rate from 2016 to 2019, has declined (4.3%, 3.7%, 3.5%, 3.1%), followed by an increase to 6.5% in 2020, followed by a decline to 4.4% in 2021. During the same time, 2016 to 2021, the total service-connected disabled veteran population (4.6M to 4.9M) and service-connected disabled veteran labor force participation (2.1M to 2.4M) have increased, while the service-connected disabled veteran unemployment rate from 2016 to 2021 was (4.8%, 4.3%, 5.2%, 4.8%, 6.2%, 3.4%).

From PY 2016 to PY 2020, the AJC veteran participation (386K to 122K) and DVOP-served veteran participation (113K to 42K) have declined, however, the ratio of DVOP-served veterans to AJC veterans has increased from PY 2016 to PY 2017, 29% to 34%, declined from PY 2017 to PY 2018, 34% to 30%, and has increased from 30% to 34% from PY 2018 to PY 2020, respectively. While the ratio of DVOP-served “Disabled” to “All” veteran participants served has decreased from PY 2016 to PY 2017, 66% to 60%, and increased from PY 2017 to PY 2020, 60% to 77%, respectively.

From PY 2016 to PY 2020, the WIOA All Programs participation (5.7M to 2.7M) declined by 47%. WIOA All Programs includes Wagner-Peyser (5.3M to 2.4M), Adult (1M to 265K), Dislocated Worker (527K to 191K) and Youth (154K to 123K).

From FY 2016 to FY 2020, the Veterans Affairs, Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E) total participants (137K to 123K) have declined while the VR&E new participants (29K to 33K) have increased. Additionally, the disabled veteran participation ratio “New” to “All” has steadily risen from 21% to 27%, respectively. While during the same time, FY 2016 to FY 2020, the veteran participation in the Post 9/11 GI Bill (721K to 658K) has declined. At the same time, the Veterans Affairs – Dependents Education Assistance Program, Chapter 35 (97K to 151K) has continued to increase.

Descriptive observations from CY 2016 – CY 2021, PY 2016 – PY 2020, and FY 2016 – FY 2020 for the disabled veteran population:

- Total service-connected disabled veteran population continued to increase.
- Service-connected disabled veteran labor force participation continued to increase.
- Unemployment rate for service-connected disabled veterans increased from 2016 to 2018, decreased in 2019, increased in 2020, and decreased in 2021.
- JVSG, DVOP-served “disabled” to “all” veteran participation ratio continued to increase.
- VR&E “New” veteran participation continued to increase.
- VR&E “New” to “Total” veteran participant ratio continued to increase.

Possible Recommendations:

- Which is of higher priority to DOL – VETS programs?
 - a. The quantity of veteran participants in VETS programs.
 - b. The quality of services provided in VETS programs.
- With the decline in AJC and DVOP-served veterans across JVSG, should JVSG remain with the current Significant Barriers to Employment (SBE) population eligibility requirement/definition or consider expansion of SBEs?
 1. Consider expanding SBE population to include Post 9/11 veterans - (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021)
 2. Consider expanding SBE population to include Veteran Treatment Court (VTC) participants. “Veterans treatment courts have gained national prominence as the most innovative solution for veterans caught up in the criminal justice system due to substance use and/or mental health disorders and trauma. Veterans’ treatment courts connect these men and women to the benefits and treatment they have earned; saving their lives, families, and futures, and saving tax dollars for the American public.” According to Justice for Vets, they have “helped establish over 250 veterans’ treatment courts and trained over 3,000 court staff. In addition, Justice For Vets has conducted 40 volunteer veteran mentor boot camp training, serving thousands of veteran mentors.” (What Is a Veterans Treatment Court? - Justice for Vets, 2017)
 3. Consider expanding SBE population to include Post 9/11 women veterans with Military Sexual Trauma (MST). According to the Domestic Policy Council Briefing on Congressionally Mandated Report National Defense Authorization Act, Section 9104: Study on Unemployment Rate of Women veterans Who Served on Active Duty in the Armed Forces After September 11, 2001, the following are key findings to potentially support the expansion. Almost one in five Post-9/11 women veterans responding to the survey indicated they had experienced military sexual trauma (MST).

- a. Post-9/11 women veterans who reported MST were less likely to report labor force participation and employment in the three years after military separation than their peers who reported no history of MST.
- b. Post-9/11 women veterans who were not working reported the highest rates of housing instability. One in five Post-9/11 women veterans who were not working reported housing instability over the last year.
- c. Post-9/11 women veterans who were not working at the time of the survey were significantly more likely to report that COVID-19 disrupted their work than non-veterans (29.1% vs. 10.1%).

(Briefing document NDAA Employment Post 911 26 Aug 2022 (1).docx)

4. Consider expanding SBE population to include 55+ Age veterans. In Graph 11 and Table 10 below, 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, In the Labor Force has declined 4.2M to 3.8M from 2016 to 2018, followed by an increase to 3.9M in 2019, followed by a decrease to 3.5M in 2021. While the 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Employed, declined 4.1M to 3.7M from 2016 to 2018, followed by an increase to 3.8M in 2019, and declined to 3.4M in 2021. The 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Unemployed decreased from 180K in 2016 to 110K in 2019, followed by an increase to 240K in 2020, followed by a decrease to 151K in 2021. The 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Unemployment Rate decreased from 4.2% in 2016 to 3.4% in 2017, remained at 3.4% in 2018, followed by a decrease to 2.8% in 2019, an increase to 6.5% in 2020, and declined to 4.3% in 2021. [*CPS Home: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 - Employment status of persons by veteran status, age, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, Annual Average 2016 – 2021, not seasonally adjusted (Current Population Survey)*]

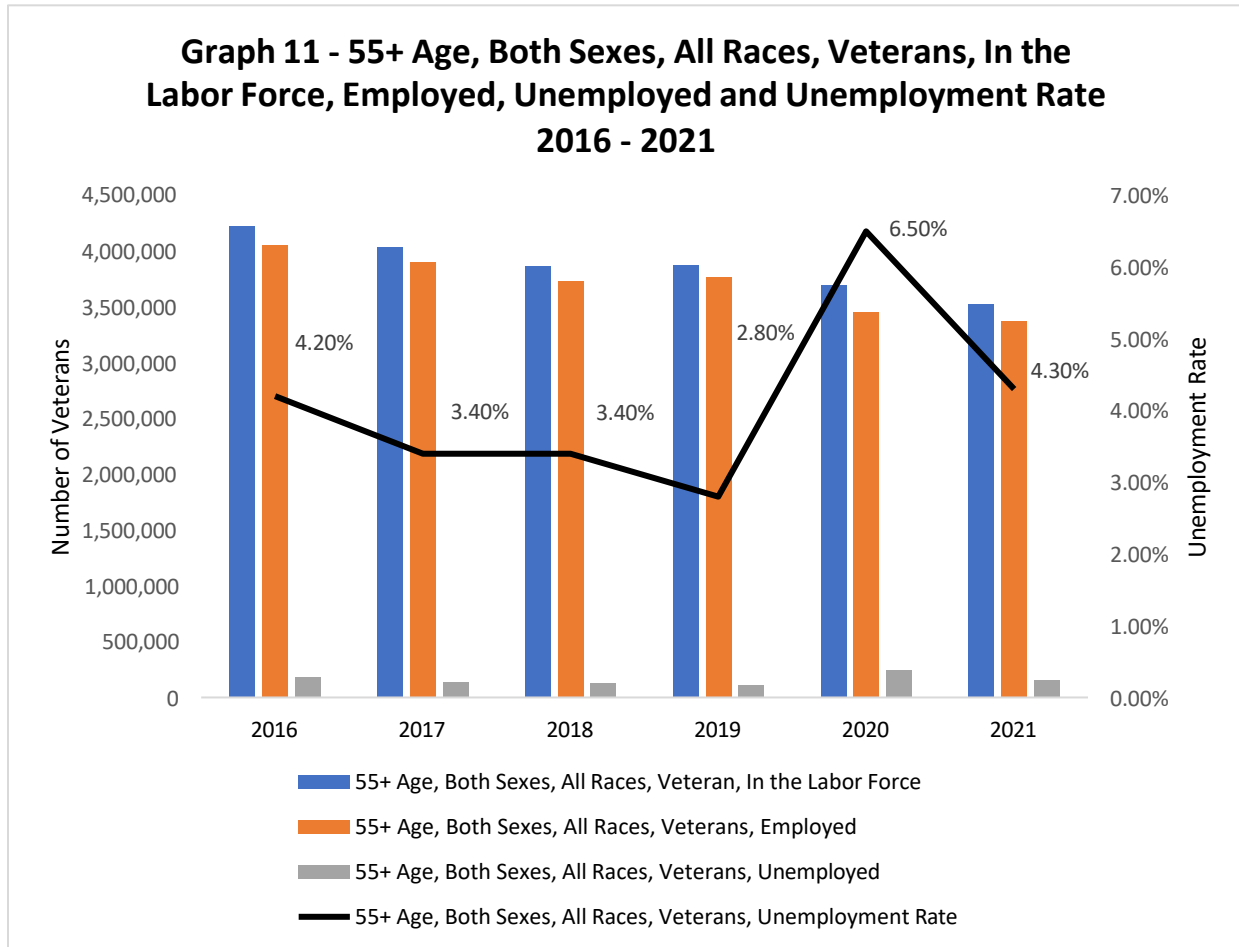


Table 10 – 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, In the Labor Force, Employed, Unemployed and Unemployment Rate

| | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, In the Labor Force | 4,227,000 | 4,038,000 | 3,861,000 | 3,876,000 | 3,693,000 | 3,522,000 |
| 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Employed | 4,051,000 | 3,902,000 | 3,731,000 | 3,766,000 | 3,455,000 | 3,371,000 |
| 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Unemployed | 176,000 | 136,000 | 130,000 | 110,000 | 239,000 | 151,000 |
| 55+ Age, Both Sexes, All Races, Veterans, Unemployment Rate | 4.2% | 3.4% | 3.4% | 2.8% | 6.5% | 4.3% |

[CPS Home: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022 - Employment status of persons by veteran status, age, race, Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and sex, Annual Average 2016 – 2021, not seasonally adjusted (Current Population Survey)]

Further Research

1. Could there be more veterans choosing to participate in the Veterans Affairs - Vocational Readiness & Employment (VR&E) program?
2. Could veterans be using more or less of their Post 9/11 G.I. Bill?
3. Could this mean more transitioning service members (TSMs) and/or veterans are transferring their Post 9/11 G.I. Bill benefit over to dependents?
4. Could this mean more veterans are exiting the military with a DoD or VA service-connected disability and utilizing VR&E?
5. Could the steady incline in DEA participation influence Post 9/11 G.I. Bill participation?
6. Could the steady incline in DEA participation influence Veterans Affairs, Vocational Readiness & Employment participation?
7. Could this mean COVID-19 pandemic have impacted veteran participation rates across the labor force and federal employment and training programs?
8. The Disabled Veteran Program (DVP), under the Office of Research and Policy (ORP), DOL – VETS, research JVSG program trends to understand the SBE population participation rates as they compare to each other and other programs. The concern with this comparison across all available SBE categories is the sample sizes will be small.
9. If possible, DVP research disabled veterans' participation across Employment and Training Administration (ETA) programs with WIOA/Wagner-Peyser. This may offer trends with Priority of Service (POS), placements into internships/Work-Based Learning (WBL), paid training, job placement and apprenticeships.
10. DVP research subpopulations across BLS data considering gender, ethnicity, age, education, occupation, and so forth.
11. DVP researches non-service-connected mental health and non-service-connected severely disabled veterans.

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