BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE MILITARY: FROM SERVICE TO CIVILIAN LIFE

This infographic provides key highlights of Black and African American service members and veterans. The information and statistics in this document are from our various data collection efforts centered on military life, transition, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education.

Service Members Population

ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, AND RESERVE

350,000+
Black & African American Active Duty and Selected Reserve members

Total Military Force
220,000+ Active Duty Service Members

130,000+ Select Reserve Members

VETERANS

2.3 MILLION+
Black & African American veterans in U.S.

POST-9/11 VETERANS
- Of all Post-9/11 veterans, 16% are Black and African American (this is higher compared to the 13% of the nonveteran counterparts)
- Of all female post 9/11 veterans, 23% are Black and African American

HISTORICAL NUMBERS OF BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS
- On the eve of the Revolutionary War, approximately 20% of the colonial population were Black and African American.
- Over 200,000, many of them former slaves, served in the U.S. military forces during the Civil War.
- Over 400,000 served in uniform during World War I.
- Over 900,000 served in uniform during World War II.

Views on Military Service

TOP MOTIVATIONS FOR MILITARY SERVICE

EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS 62%
OPPORTUNITY TO PURSUE NEW EXPERIENCES, ADVENTURES, OR TRAVEL 52%
CAREER OPPORTUNITIES 47%
DESIRE TO SERVE MY COUNTRY 40%
FINANCIAL SECURITY 31%
SENSE OF PURPOSE 31%

TOP SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES STRENGTHENED BY MILITARY SERVICE
- Teamwork (91%)
- Work ethic/discipline (89%)
- Leadership and management skills (83%)
- Mental toughness (81%)
- Professionalism (80%)
- Adaptation to different challenges (80%)
- Self-Discipline (80%)
- Ability to get things done (79%)
- Coping with adversity (78%)
- Social/Communication skills (78%)
- Working effectively with supervisors and other authorities (76%)

WAS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH IT?

89% of Black and African American service members reported that JOINING THE MILITARY WAS A GOOD DECISION

82% SERVED OUTSIDE OF THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES operating across different cultures, nations, and regions

STEM

41% reported that their military specialization is STEM RELATED

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FEBRUARY 2020
### Top Reasons for Leaving Armed Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lost faith or trust in military or political leadership</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Reasons</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pursue education and training opportunities</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military retirement (20 years or more)</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career change/alternative job opportunities</td>
<td>28%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Completion of military service obligation (less than 20 years)</td>
<td>27%</td>
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### Top Transitional Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting a job</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navigating VA programs, benefits, and services</td>
<td>58%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial struggles</td>
<td>44%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment preparation</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>38%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills translation</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Getting socialized to civilian culture</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contradictory information from different sources</td>
<td>32%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding GI Bill benefits</td>
<td>30%</td>
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</tbody>
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### Military Influence on Post-Service Aspirations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Military Career</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Indicated the desire to pursue a career different from their military specialty (MOS, AFSC, etc.)</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicated the desire to pursue a career similar to their military specialty</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicated they are unsure if they will pursue a career similar to their military specialty</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported a positive impact on their life*</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reported their service had a positive impact on their life*</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indicated they matured as a result of their service</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Positive Impacts of Service

- 93% Felt pride from their accomplishments during service
- 91% Reported their service had a positive impact on their life*
- 90% Indicated they matured as a result of their service
- 56% Reported they would be happy if their child(ren) were to join the military*

### Transition Difficulty

- **55% of Black/African American Veteran Respondents** characterized their financial transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 48% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

- **59% of Black/African American Veteran Respondents** characterized their employment transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 49% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

### Time to Employment

- 30% of Black/African American veteran respondents reported it took less than three months to find employment after their transition, compared with 51% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.
TOP FIVE OCCUPATIONS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS
1. Service Occupations (security guards, police officers, correctional officers and jailers, firefighters)
2. Transportation and Material Moving Occupation
4. Office and Administrative Support Occupation
5. Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media Occupation

TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS
1. Public Administration
2. Health Care and Social Assistance
3. Transportation and Warehousing
4. Manufacturing
5. Retail Trade

UNEMPLOYMENT
IN 2019 BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WAS AT 4.9%

IN 2019 BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN POST 9/11 VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WAS AT 6.8%

EARNINGS
58,351 AVERAGE EARNINGS BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS
HIGHER compared to Black & African American nonveteran counterparts who earn about $38,732
LOWER compared to non-minority veteran counterparts who earn about $77,217 counterparts

STEM WORKFORCE
OF THOSE VETERANS IN THE STEM WORKFORCE, 8% ARE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN A DECLINE IN BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS PARTICIPATING IN STEM SINCE 2012 (0.844 % POINTS PER YEAR)

$81,942 AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS IN STEM

$94,241 AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS IN STEM WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE OR HIGHER

Entrepreneurship
IN 2018 7% of Black and African American veterans were self-employed compared to 5% of their nonveteran counterparts.

REASONS FOR PURSuing ENTREPRENEURSHIP
- DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE
- CREATIVITY & FLEXIBILITY
- FINANCIAL & INDEPENDENCE
- RECOGNIZE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

OBSTACLES
BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS EXPERIENCE AT LEAST ONE OBSTACLE/BARRIER TO STARTING & OWNING THEIR BUSINESS
Top obstacles: 1. Lack of necessary networks 2. Lack of Capital

WiTHUS
Black & AfriCan American veterans are 1.275Xs more likely to be self-employed COMPARED TO BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN NONVETERANS

RESOURCES BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS FIND MOST HELPFUL:
- Information on/from Conferences and Workshops
- Education
- Networking/Peer Network

"If I was a white male, it would be easier."
"There are multiple financial options ...determining which services can be challenging."
In 2018, Black & African American post 9/11 veterans achieved:

- **Bachelor’s degree or higher**: 36%
- **Some college or associate degree**: 43%
- **High school degree**: 18%
- **Less than high school degree**: 4%

**BARRIERS THAT HINDERED PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

- Lack of financial resources/Financial burden (62%)
- GI Bill benefits expire before I complete my degree (30%)
- Personal/family obligations (24%)
- Health/disability issues (24%)
- Conflict between job and school (18%)
- Bureaucracy associated with VA paperwork and processing (18%)

**HELPFUL RESOURCES AND ASSETS FOR VETERAN SUCCESS**

- Military/veteran friendly campus (68%)
- Flexible class schedules (67%)
- Academic advising/counseling (65%)
- Preferred classroom settings & instruction (59%)
- Dedicated veterans office & administrators on campus (56%)
- Veterans supportive faculty (56%)
- Career services and counseling (54%)
- Academic preparation courses & remediation (53%)

**CHALLENGES WHILE PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION**

- Lack of financial resources (37%)
- Age differences (29%)
- Few veterans resources on campus (26%)
- Working full time job (26%)
- Family responsibilities (22%)
- Transferring academic credits (20%)

**REFERENCES**


- Positive impacts of service, transition difficulty, and time to employment were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2018-2016 Blue Star Families’ annual Military Family Lifestyle Surveys (*n = 2017 and 2018 only*). Please note these findings are limited due to small sample size (n < 200) for African American veteran respondents. This effort is from Blue Star Families in collaboration with the IVMF. For more information, see Blue Star Families, 2018-2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. Retrieved from https://bluestarfam.org/survey/