Data Brief

*missing perspectives:* Black and african American In the Military - From Service to Civilian Life

To date, existing research related to the experiences of Black and African American service members, veterans, and military families has been either limited or lacking entirely. This data brief addresses a critical gap in understanding their experiences, particularly in the transition from the military to civilian life. The information and data in this document are from various sources centered on military life, transition, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education.

# Service Member Population

## Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve

350,000 + active duty and select reserve members

*Total Military Force*

* Over 229,000 active duty service members
  + - Of the Black or African American active duty population, 91% are enlisted and 9% are officers
* Over 127,000 select reserve members

## Veterans

Over 2.4 million Black and African American veterans in the U.S

**Period of Service**

Currently in the US, there are over

* 549,000+ served during WW II, Korean War, and Vietnam era veterans
* 544,000+ served during Gulf War Era I
* 797,000+ served during Gulf War Era II (Post 9/11 Veteran)
* 558,000+ served during *Other* service period

**Post 9/11 Veterans**

* Of all Post-9/11 veterans, 17% are Black and African American (this is higher compared to the 13% of the nonveteran counterparts)
* Of all female post 9/11 veterans, 30% are Black and African American

# Views of 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 country 40%

## 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%

## WAS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH IT?

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

However, Black active-duty service member respondents indicated that

* 56% have considered “racial/ethnic discrimination” in their decision-making process
* 53% have “concerns about safety regarding base/ installation preferences due to my (or my family member’s) racial/ethnic identity

# TRANISITON

## Perceptions of Service

* 93% of Black/African American veteran respondents felt pride from their accomplishments during service.

YET

* 56% of Black/African American veteran respondents reported they would be happy if their child(ren) were to join the military\*
* 49% of Black/African American veteran respondents believe their racial/ethnic identity has hurt their ability to get ahead at work.
* 45% of Black/African American veteran respondents felt retaliated against or penalized after standing up for something

## Services or programs used or needed since January 2020

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Services or programs | Yes, used | Needed but couldn’t access | No, did not need |
| Benefits and claims assistance (e.g., assistance with Veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs) | 53% | 13% | 34% |
| Behavioral and mental health care (e.g., access to and availability of mental health services) | 50% | 13% | 37% |
| Medical care (e.g., access to and availability of medical care for military members, Veterans, and their families) | 70% | 13% | 17% |
| Community service (e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support) | 37% | 20% | 43% |
| Employment and career development (e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business) | 30% | 22% | 47% |
| Food and nutrition (e.g., food stamps) | 14% | 18% | 68% |
| Food and nutrition from school (e.g., meals from school, free lunch program) | 21% | 12% | 67% |
| Housing services or assistance (e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing) | 14% | 14% | 72% |
| Legal services (e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefit appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support) | 28% | 20% | 52% |
| Caregiving resources (e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community) | 13% | 19% | 68% |

Top Reasons for not using services

* Stigma
  + Worried about what others (family, friends, coworkers/ supervisor) would think if used this service
* Navigation
* Didn't know how to access this service
* Didn't think was eligible for this service

## 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.

# Employment

## Post Service Career

* 46% want to/have pursue a DIFFERENT career to their military specialty
* 39% want to/have pursue a SIMILAR career to their military specialty
* 15% Unsure if they want to pursue a SIMILAR career to their military specialty

## Unemployment

IN 2021, Black and African American veteran unemployment was 5.0% {this was HIGHER compared to White non Hispanic veteran counterparts but LOWER compared to Black and African American nonveteran counterparts}

* + The unemployment rate for male Black and African American veteran was 5.1%
  + The unemployment rate for female Black and African American veteran was 4.8%

## Earnings

In 2019, $50,000 median earnings for Black and African American veteran {HIGHER compared to the total median of the US population who earn about $42,600; LOWER compared to non-minority veteran counterparts who earn about $31,400}

*CALL OUT BOX*

## Military Spouses Underemployment

Female Black and African American military spouses are 3Xs more likely to be unemployed, compared to civilian counterparts and earn 54% less than the total population ($24,500 compared to $42,600).

## Entrepreneurship

* 58% indicate that entrepreneurship helped them find a purpose after military
* 43% indicate that entrepreneurship made their transition into civilian life easier
* 58% consider themselves social entrepreneurs
* 73% believe the certification process is difficulty
* 63% indicated that the capital they need is not readily available
* 69% applied for funding (compared to 52% white counterparts)
  + 57% of those that applied for funding were turned down (compared to 29% white counterparts))
    - 67% that were turned down did not apply again (compared to 66% white counterparts)
* 40% have difficulty navigating the resources in their local community

# Education Attainment

Afford school without the GI Bill?

* No 67%
* Yes 7%
* Unsure 13%
* Does not 13%

In 2020, Black and African American post 9/11 veterans have achieved:

* 34% bachelor degree or higher
* 30% some college or associate degree
* 22% high school degree
* 4% less than high school degree

## Barriers in Higher Education

* Lack of financial resources/ Financial burden 62%
* GI Bill benefits expire before complete degree 30%
* Personal/family obligations 24%

## Helpful Resources on Campus

* Military/veteran friendly campus 68%
* Flexible class schedules 67%
* Academic advising/counseling 65%

# Reference

*Population*

Data for Black and African American Active Duty Service Members and Selected Reserves are from 2020 Demographics Profile of the Military Community. Retrieved from

<https://download.militaryonesource.mil/12038/MOS/Reports/2020-demographics-report.pdf>

Data for Black and African American Veterans are from U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey- 2021 Annual Average. Washington, D.C.

*Views of Military Service*: This section predominately uses data from Black and African American veterans unless otherwise noted

Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers’ Transition from Service to Civilian Life data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Data reported for racial/ethnic discrimination and concerns about safety was analyzed for Black and African American Active Duty Service Members respondents using Blue Star Families. (2022). Blue Star Families’ social impact research 2021: The diverse experiences of military & veteran families of color. Blue Star Families’ Department of Applied Research.

*Transition*: This section predominately uses data from Black and African American veterans unless otherwise noted

Some of the perceptions to service, transition difficulties, and time to employment were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2018-2016 Blue Star Families’ annual Military Family Lifestyle Surveys (\* is 2017 and 2018 only). Please note these findings are limited due to small sample size (n< 200) for Black and 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/

Blue Star Families. (2022). Blue Star Families’ social impact research 2021: The diverse experiences of military & veteran families of color. Blue Star Families’ Department of Applied Research.

Some results in this section (unused services and programs) are unpublished result size (n< 200 for Black and African American veteran respondents) from the effort related to Blue Star Families. (2022). Blue Star Families’ social impact research 2021: The diverse experiences of military & veteran families of color. Blue Star Families’ Department of Applied Research.

*Employment/Entrepreneurship*: This section predominately uses data from Black and African American veterans unless otherwise noted

Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers’ Transition from Service to Civilian Life data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

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Maury, R.; Tihic, M., Feng., R. (2022). Data Brief: Black & African American Veteran Entrepreneurs. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

*Higher Education*: This section predominately uses data from Black and African American veterans unless otherwise noted

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Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2020 American Community Survey 1-year estimates]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>.

*ABOUT IVMF*

Syracuse University’s Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF) is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation’s military, veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the post service lives of those who have served in America’s armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

SUGGESTED CITATION

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