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# American Support of Public Programs for Veterans: Estimates from a National Survey Including a Discrete Choice Experiment

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"Do Americans see veterans as particularly deserving or simply as other members of their community? From a nationally representative survey fielded between June and September 2021 with over 2,000 respondents, we find that Americans state high levels of support for veterans and are willing to pay additional tax dollars to provide assistance programs. We find that most Americans support free health care, free college, and affordable housing for all Americans, and the support is notably stronger for programs for veterans. From a discrete choice experiment, we find that Americans are willing to pay hundreds of dollars in additional taxes to provide assistance programs to either veterans or to all community members, and Americans are willing to pay significantly more for certain programs for veterans. In addition, we look at differences in willingness to pay based on military and political affiliation and find significant differences in willingness to pay by political affiliation."

**RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS:**

- This study explores public support for community programs, such as affordable housing, free college, and physical and mental healthcare, for veterans and non-veterans.
- Surveying a nationally representative sample of American adults ages 25 and older, the authors find that there is strong support for community programs, particularly for veterans. Moreover, the study also suggest that most respondents do not believe the U.S. government is doing enough to support veterans.
- Specifically, using a discrete choice experiment, the authors find that there is a willingness to pay additional taxes to support public programs for veterans. The authors also find differences in willingness to pay for programs for veterans compared to non-veterans by political affiliation.
- The study concluded that Democrats tend to show stronger support for communitywide public programs compared to Republicans, who report greater willingness to pay for veteran programs compared to programs for all community members.
- Overall, this article suggested that there may be strong evidence that Americans view veterans as especially deserving and are more willing to support community programs for veterans with tax dollars compared to support for providing the same programs to the general population.

## Implications

### FOR PRACTICE

The study finds that most Americans (87%) do not believe that the U.S. government is doing enough to support veterans and only 3% believe that the care the government provides is excellent. The authors suggest that campaigns raising public awareness about the varied resources available to veterans may help those who are hesitant to seek out VA services. Additionally, public awareness campaigns may improve public perception about the quantity and quality of government support provided to veterans.

### FOR POLICY

The study finds that there is broad support among Americans, ranging between 56-81%, for affordable housing, free college, and physical and mental healthcare for the general population, and support for these programs is even greater for veterans (84-90%). The evidence suggests that Americans are willing to pay hundreds of dollars in additional taxes to support programs for veterans, and this is true for both Democrats and Republicans. Based on the authors' findings, there may be support for veteran focused programs to address social needs regardless of political affiliation, and there may be room for policymakers to work on bipartisanship initiatives that continue to address the needs of the veteran population.

### FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Eligibility for various programs varies and not all veterans are eligible for all government funded services. Future research should evaluate support for limiting or expanding eligibility criteria (e.g., military discharge type). The authors also suggest that future research can also expand upon this current study by evaluating willingness to pay for additional programs. For example, the authors find that Americans were willing to pay an additional \$202 in taxes to support affordable housing for veterans, but willingness to pay additional taxes may vary as respondents are faced with additional discrete choices, such as agricultural programs or programs aimed at bolstering domestic manufacturing.

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