

WHO WE SERVE

Our Continuous Focus on the Veteran

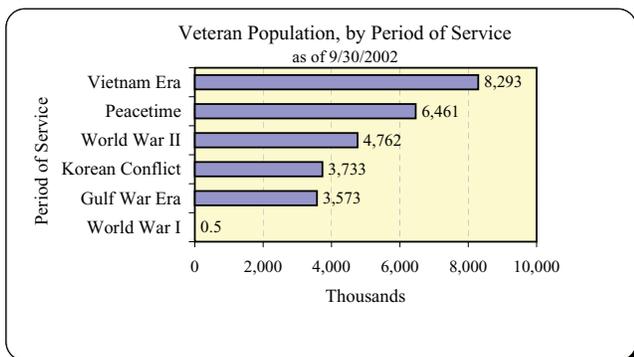
This section of the report presents social and demographic data on the veteran population. Data on the number of veterans by age, sex, period of service, and state of residence are from official VA estimates and projections based upon VetPop2001 data with initial adjustments to reflect the Census 2000 data.

Summary

Beginning with our Nation's struggle for freedom more than two centuries ago, approximately 42 million men and women have served our country during wartime. Of the 25.6 million living veterans, most (75 percent) served during a war or an official period of hostility.

Number of Veterans and Periods of Service

The veteran population decreased by 434,000 in 2002. Vietnam-era veterans account for the largest segment of the present veteran population.

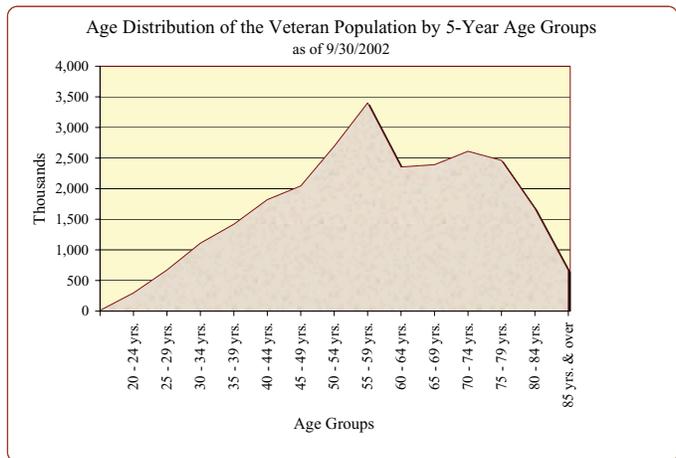


Data by period of service will add to more than total due to veterans who served in more than one period.

Age of Veterans

At the end of 2002, the median age of all living veterans was 58 years. Veterans under 45 years of

age constituted 21 percent of the total veteran population; veterans 45 to 64 years old, 41 percent; and veterans 65 or older, 38 percent.



The number of veterans 85 years of age and older totals over 672,000. In 1990, there were only 155,000 veterans in this age range. This large increase in the oldest segment of the veteran population has had significant ramifications on the demand for health care services, particularly in the area of long-term care.

Female Veterans

In 2002, the female veteran population of 1.7 million constituted 6.5 percent of all veterans living in the United States, Puerto Rico, and overseas. The female veteran population as a percentage of all veterans is expected to increase as the number of former military service women continues to grow. The demographic profile of the female veteran population is generally younger than that of male veterans with the median age of female veterans being 15 years

younger than that of male veterans, 42 versus 57. The growing involvement of women in the military in recent years is reflected in period-of-service differences between male and female veterans. About 61 percent of all female veterans served during the post-Vietnam era compared to only 24 percent of male veterans.

VA has seen a significant increase in the number of women veterans who receive benefits and health care services from the Department. The number of women veterans enrolled in VA's health care system grew from 226,000 in 2000 to 420,000 in 2002, an increase of 86 percent.

State of Residence

Veterans in just three states—California, Florida, and Texas—comprised over 23 percent of the veterans living in the United States and Puerto Rico at the end of 2002. The three next largest states in terms of veteran population are New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. These six states account for more than 37 percent of the total veteran population.

At the other end of the scale, the three least populous states in terms of veteran population—Wyoming, North Dakota, and Vermont—plus the District of Columbia collectively accounted for less than 1 percent of the total.

