

SIDEBAR

College-Educated Individuals with a Military Background

Since 2017, the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) has been obtaining data on veteran status among those with a bachelor's or higher-level degree. According to the most recent estimates (as of February 2017) of the 61 million college graduates in the United States, approximately 3.7 million had served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces in the past and another 241,000 were currently serving on active duty (Milan 2018). This section analyzes veterans with a bachelor's degree or higher, who served on active duty in the past; the analysis does not include those who are currently on active duty or in the Reserves or National Guard.

Relative to nonveterans, veterans were more likely to be older, male, and have a disability. About three-quarters of veterans and nonveterans were white. There was a higher share of black veterans (13%) than nonveterans (7%). Among female veterans, 28% were black and 14% were Hispanic compared to 9% each among nonveteran women. Veteran women were also younger than male veterans with median ages of 49 and 63, respectively.

Current data on the college-educated veteran workforce reveals that many veterans are not working in S&E or S&E-related occupations nor have they received training in S&E or S&E-related fields of study. Among the 2.4 million employed veterans, a large number worked in non-S&E occupations (1.6 million), followed by S&E-related (426,000) and S&E occupations (358,000). About one-third of veterans were not in the labor force and 85,000 were unemployed. Most veterans with a bachelor's or higher-level degree (57%) had earned their highest degree in a non-S&E field, followed by nearly a third in S&E and 12% in an S&E-related field.

However, this is not the case across all demographic categories. Female veterans were more likely to work in S&E-related occupations (28%) or have a highest degree in an S&E-related field of study (25%) relative to nonveteran women (19% and 16%, respectively).

Most veterans find their veteran financial assistance for education and community college courses valuable toward their future education and career paths. Over half (53%) had used financial assistance from the Veterans Educational Assistance Act (GI Bill) to fund their undergraduate education. In addition, many had attended community college courses (57%); among them, 27% did so "to earn credits for a bachelor's degree."

Veterans (15%) were more likely to work in the federal government system relative to nonveterans (3%). However, the for-profit business sector remained a large employer of both veterans and nonveterans with over half of each (53%) working in for-profit businesses.