

## Veterans Hiring Strategies – The Financial Advantages

The ECIA Foundation is committed to encouraging member companies to hire our country's veterans. While most businesses know that it is the "right thing to do" in concept, many aren't aware of the financial benefits. With over 220,000 veterans transitioning from service each year, the military represents a continually renewing source of talent from which to hire. Companies are learning the advantages of greater diversity and inclusion in the workplace. The veteran population represents an avenue to increasing that value.

In 2015, ECIA Foundation partnered with the US Chamber of Commerce Foundation's Hiring Our Heroes initiative. [Hiring Our Heroes](#) is a nationwide program to help veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses find meaningful employment opportunities. ECIA members are encouraged to take part in the organized local career fairs across the country.

From the intrinsic benefits of a skilled and loyal employee to available tax credits – we are pleased to provide you with the latest research and approaches to implement a hiring strategy that strengthens your business.

### The Skill Sets:

Numerous studies confirm the logic and business value of hiring veterans. They represent a workforce pool with unique skill sets very easily adaptable to the electronic components industry. Generally speaking, veterans possess technical know-how, leadership skills and the ability to learn quickly. Hiring can reduce turnover and decrease training time.

According to the Institute for Veterans and Military Families ([IVMF](#)), there are significant advantages to consider:

- Veterans have valuable problem-solving, collaborative and entrepreneurial skills
- Veterans know how to maximize time and resources
- Business officials attest to the teamwork and ethics difference veterans bring to the workplace
- Veterans rise to the top—and excel there
- Veterans come with advanced technical training that leads to more efficient solutions
- Hiring veterans can result in less employee turnover
- Veterans are the ultimate team players
- Veterans are cost-effective to recruit
- Veterans are highly skilled, trained and experienced
- Hiring veterans increases your overall brand equity

### Compliance:

The U.S. Department of Labor requires most federal contractors to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans. For electronics industry companies who regularly do business in this arena, it makes a lot of sense to increase veteran's hiring to meet these requirements.

### Tax Credits:

The [Work Opportunity Tax Credit](#) (WOTC) may be available to your business. The WOTC is a Federal tax credit available to employers who hire veterans and individuals from other eligible target groups with significant barriers to employment. *As with any tax issues, you are advised to consult with your tax professional to determine the likelihood of qualifying for any tax credit.* A [variety of States](#) also offer hiring incentives.

Taxable employers claim the WOTC as a general business credit on Form 3800 against their income tax. The WOTC is calculated using Form 5884. The credit can be as high as \$9,600 per qualified veteran for taxable employers or up to \$6,240 for qualified tax-exempt organizations, but the amount of the credit will depend on a number of factors, including the length of the veteran's unemployment before hire, the number of hours the veteran works, the hire date of the veteran, and the veteran's first-year wages.

Before an employer may claim the WOTC, the employer must obtain certification that the hired individual is a targeted group member. You must submit [IRS Form 8850](#), Pre-Screening Notice and Certification Request for the Work Opportunity Credit and [ETA Form 9061](#) or [9062](#), Individual Characteristics Form (ICF) Work Opportunity Tax Credit, to the WOTC Coordinator within your [State Workforce Agency](#) within 28 days from when the veteran begins work. After the target group employee is certified by the State Workforce Agency, file for the tax credit with the Internal Revenue Service.

### Hiring Fairs:

[Hiring Our Heroes](#) has a number of job fairs set up across the country. They do the promotion and work with the local community. As an employer, all you have to do is register to attend. There is normally no fee involved to register as an employer, although there are paid sponsorships available as well. Read the [FAQ](#) to learn more



### Resources:

Employer Roadmap from Institute for Veterans and Military Families (IVMF):  
<http://www.employerroadmap.org/article/veterans-improve-business>

Bersin by Deloitte: [From the Armed Forces to the Workforce. Why Veteran Hiring Is Both the Right Thing to Do and a Smart Move to Make](#)

[Got Your Six](#): 2015 Veterans Civic Health Index

### Tax Credits for Hiring Veterans:

IRS: <http://www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed/Work-Opportunity-Tax-Credit-Frequently-Asked-Questions-and-Answers>

Orion International: [http://www.orioninternational.com/employers\\_TaxCreditsHiringVeterans.aspx](http://www.orioninternational.com/employers_TaxCreditsHiringVeterans.aspx)

State Tax Credit: <http://www.orioninternational.com/state-tax-credits-for-hiring-veterans.aspx>

U.S. Department of Labor:  
[http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/employers\\_wotc\\_veterans\\_brochure\\_5\\_24\\_12.pdf](http://www.doleta.gov/business/incentives/opptax/PDF/employers_wotc_veterans_brochure_5_24_12.pdf)

# From the Armed Forces to the Workforce

*Why Veteran Hiring Is Both the Right Thing  
to Do and a Smart Move to Make*

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## Overview

Today more than ever, American organizations are acknowledging that hiring veterans is the *right* thing to do. However, many companies still don't recognize that it's also the *smart* thing to do. Veterans embody many of the characteristics and possess many of the skills that employers need, making them likely to become valuable employees. This research report is designed to inspire employers to develop veteran hiring initiatives that can take advantage of this valuable candidate pool while also benefitting veterans and their families.

## In This Report

- Why hiring veterans is both the *right* thing to do and a *smart* move for today's organizations
- What other companies are doing to increase veteran hiring
- Resources for organizations and veterans to assist with and promote veteran hiring

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## Introduction: Why Is Hiring Veterans the *Right* Thing to Do?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the U.S. veteran population is over 21 million strong,<sup>1</sup> and growing by 240,000 to 360,000 each year.<sup>2</sup> The obstacles these service members face as they try to obtain civilian jobs have been widely covered by the media in recent years.



### KEY POINT

According to the Monster Veterans Talent Index, 55 percent of surveyed employers do not participate in a veteran-specific recruiting initiative.

Employees at Monster have tracked the transition of veterans to civilian life since 2011 to create the Veterans Talent Index.<sup>3</sup> Those surveyed include veterans who have been out of the military for less than five years, active duty service members who intend to leave the military within a year, and employers that have hired at least one veteran in the past year. The May 2014 index report revealed that Gulf War II veterans (those who served after September 11, 2001) are growing in numbers, yet 55 percent of the employers surveyed do not yet participate in a veteran-specific recruiting initiative.

In an effort to address this issue, in 2011, First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden, launched the “Joining Forces” initiative, a nationwide effort to support service members, veterans, and their families. Joining Forces works with both the public and private sectors to promote the employment, education, and wellness of veterans and their families.<sup>4</sup> Many organizations have responded by developing and implementing veteran hiring initiatives.

With this report, it is our intention to inspire those organizations that have still not implemented veteran hiring efforts. We believe there are three reasons why hiring veterans is the *right* thing to do:

<sup>1</sup> Source: “Employment Situation of Veterans Summary,” United States Department of Labor / Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 20, 2014, [www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/vet.nr0.htm).

<sup>2</sup> Source: *The Fast Track to Civilian Employment: Streamlining Credentialing and Licensing for Service Members, Veterans, and Their Spouses*, Executive Office of the President / National Economic Council and the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, February 2013, [www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/military\\_credentialing\\_and\\_licensing\\_report\\_2-24-2013\\_final.pdf](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/military_credentialing_and_licensing_report_2-24-2013_final.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Source: “Veterans Talent Index,” Monster.com, 2014, [www.monster.com/about/veterans-talent-index](http://www.monster.com/about/veterans-talent-index).

<sup>4</sup> For more information, see [www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces](http://www.whitehouse.gov/joiningforces).

- Combatting higher veteran unemployment
- Aligning with diversity and inclusion efforts
- Complying with legal requirements

## Combatting Higher Veteran Unemployment



### KEY POINT

The unemployment rate for veterans has been higher than the nonveteran unemployment rate since the start of the recession.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics stated that the unemployment rate for Gulf War II veterans was 9.0 percent as of November 2014—25 percent higher than that for nonveterans at 7.2 percent.<sup>5</sup> Further, the unemployment rate for veterans has been higher than the nonveteran unemployment rate since the start of the recession.<sup>6</sup>

Veterans often face obstacles when seeking civilian employment upon discharge from the military. According to a survey conducted by the Center for Research and Public Policy (with a sample size of 864 veterans and active duty personnel nationwide), the most serious concerns among veterans upon returning home include the applicability of military training to education / jobs (at 84 percent), job placement (at 82 percent), and career counseling (at 79 percent).<sup>7</sup>

## Aligning with Diversity and Inclusion Efforts

Veterans are an underrepresented demographic in American workplaces. However, many organizations are now paying more attention to veteran hiring due to the increasing numbers of veterans in the workforce.<sup>8</sup>

Bersin by Deloitte defines “diversity and inclusion” as the variety of people and ideas within a company, and the creation of an environment in which people feel involved, respected, valued, connected, and able

<sup>5</sup> Source: “Employment and unemployment among all veterans, Gulf-War era II veterans, and nonveterans,” United States Department of Labor / Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 10, 2014, [www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted\\_20141110.htm](http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2014/ted_20141110.htm).

<sup>6</sup> Source: “Why is joblessness for veterans so high?” MoneyWatch / Constantine von Hoffman, May 23, 2014, [www.cbsnews.com/news/why-is-joblessness-for-veterans-so-high/](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/why-is-joblessness-for-veterans-so-high/).

<sup>7</sup> Source: “Veteran Unemployment,” Forbes.com / John Ebersole, November, 15, 2013, [www.forbes.com/sites/johnebersole/2013/11/15/veteran-unemployment/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/johnebersole/2013/11/15/veteran-unemployment/).

<sup>8</sup> For more information, *The Diversity and Inclusion Framework: A Guide to Transforming Organizations*, Bersin by Deloitte / Stacia Sherman Garr, March 2014. Available to research members at [www.bersin.com/library](http://www.bersin.com/library).

**KEY POINT**

Employees are more likely to believe that their organization is high performing if it demonstrates a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

to bring their “authentic” selves (e.g., their ideas, backgrounds, and perspectives) to the team and to the business.<sup>9</sup> Why does paying attention to diversity matter? A recent Deloitte Australia study found that “when employees identified their organization as having a high focus on both diversity and inclusion (as separate concepts), employees were 80 percent more likely to believe they work in a high-performing organization, in comparison with a workplace perceived as having low commitment and support for diversity, and employees not feeling included.”<sup>10</sup>

Bersin by Deloitte further classifies veteran status as a diversity trait that may or may not be visible, making it similar to sexual orientation, religious beliefs, or language.<sup>11</sup> Although many veterans may not see themselves as part of an underrepresented or marginalized group, organizations should consider including veterans in their diversity and inclusion practices.

## Complying with Legal Requirements

The need to comply with legal requirements has always been a driving force behind the creation of diversity and inclusion efforts, and this remains true today for veteran hiring efforts. For example, an organization’s level of compliance can impact its ability to do business with the government. Further, it is generally illegal under federal law for employers to discriminate against employees on the basis of military service or affiliation.<sup>12</sup> Finally, regulations issued in August 2013 by the U.S. Department of Labor require most federal contractors to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain veterans in an effort to have at least 8 percent of their employee population made up of veterans.<sup>13</sup>

**KEY POINT**

New U.S. Department of Labor regulations require most federal contractors to take proactive steps to ensure that at least 8 percent of their employee population is made up of veterans.

<sup>9</sup> For more information, *The Diversity and Inclusion Primer: An Introduction*, Bersin by Deloitte / Stacia Sherman Garr, March 2014. Available to research members at [www.berstin.com/library](http://www.berstin.com/library).

<sup>10</sup> Source: *Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup?: A new recipe to improve business performance*, Deloitte Australia and the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, November 2012, <http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au/index.php/our-resources-and-publications/reports/item/529-waiter-is-that-inclusion-in-my-soup-a-new-recipe-to-improve-business-performance-nov-2012%20%20%20>.

<sup>11</sup> For more information, *The Diversity and Inclusion Framework: A Guide to Transforming Organizations*, Bersin by Deloitte / Stacia Sherman Garr, March 2014.

<sup>12</sup> For more information, see [www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination/vetsdisc.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/discrimination/vetsdisc.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Source: “The New Regulations: Vietnam Era Veterans’ Readjustment Assistance Act,” United States Department of Labor / Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs, n.d., [www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/vevraa.htm](http://www.dol.gov/ofccp/regs/compliance/vevraa.htm).

## Why Is Hiring Veterans a *Smart* Move to Make?

While including veteran status in an organization's push for diversity and inclusion is a practical step in the right direction, this valuable talent pool has much more to offer companies. Central to the business case for hiring veterans is that these individuals make up a skilled workforce that has been found to be 4 percent more productive and 3 percent less likely to turn over than the overall civilian workforce.<sup>14</sup>

In 2012, Syracuse University's Institute for Veterans and Families published a comprehensive review of academic literature that supports the hiring of individuals with military backgrounds.<sup>15</sup> This research included not only comparisons of skills sets possessed by military members as opposed to civilians but also evaluations of skills determined to be required for success in given job roles. The result is an impressive list of attributes that any employer would be hard-pressed to ignore (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Research Shows Veterans Bring Unique Value to Competitive Business Environments**

	1. Veterans are entrepreneurial.	Veterans possess a high need for achievement, high levels of self-efficacy, and are highly comfortable with autonomy and ambiguity—valuable traits often possessed by successful entrepreneurs.
	2. Veterans assume high levels of trust.	The high level of trust veterans place in leadership is attractive because academic literature consistently shows that organizations outperform their counterparts when trust between employees and leadership is strong.
	3. Veterans are adept at skill transfer across contexts / tasks.	The ability to transfer skills learned in a specific context to another, disparate context represents a valuable organizational resource.
	4. Veterans have (and leverage) advanced technical training.	Military experience typically exposes individuals to highly advanced technology training at a rate that is accelerated relative to nonmilitary age-group peers.

Source: Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> Source: *The Business Case for Hiring Veterans*, the Corporate Executive Board Company, / CEB Corporate Leadership Council, 2013, [www.callofdutyendowment.org/content/dam/atvi/callofduty/code/media\\_kit/CEB\\_Hiring\\_Veterans\\_Study.pdf](http://www.callofdutyendowment.org/content/dam/atvi/callofduty/code/media_kit/CEB_Hiring_Veterans_Study.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Source: *The Business Case for Hiring Veterans: Beyond the Clichés*, Syracuse University / Institute for Veterans and Military Families, March 5, 2012, [www.dol.gov/vets/vrap/Syracuse%20Business%20Case%20to%20Hire%20a%20Vet.pdf](http://www.dol.gov/vets/vrap/Syracuse%20Business%20Case%20to%20Hire%20a%20Vet.pdf).

**Figure 1: Research Shows Veterans Bring Unique Value to Competitive Business Environments (cont'd)**

	5. Veterans are comfortable/adept in discontinuous environments.	Business environments are dynamic and uncertain, and research has highlighted the organizational advantage enjoyed by firms that act quickly and decisively in the face of uncertainty and change.
	6. Veterans exhibit high levels of resiliency.	Research suggests that military experience enhances the ability to bounce back from failed professional and / or personal experiences more quickly and more completely.
	7. Veterans exhibit advanced team-building skills.	Several studies illustrate that veterans are more adept at organizing and defining team goals and missions, defining team member roles and responsibilities, and developing a plan of action.
	8. Veterans exhibit strong organizational commitment.	The military experience engenders a strong linkage between the individual and the organization, and veterans bring this strong sense of organizational commitment and loyalty to the civilian workplace.
	9. Veterans have (and leverage) cross-cultural experiences.	Multiple studies highlight that veterans have more international experience, speak more languages more fluently, and have a higher level of cultural sensitivity as compared to nonveterans.
	10. Veterans have experience and skill in diverse work settings.	Given the military's heterogeneous workforce across educational backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and values, veterans are often highly accepting of individual differences and exhibit a high-level of cultural sensitivity.

Source: Syracuse University Institute for Veterans and Military Families, 2012.

While the 10 research-based propositions in Figure 1 are compelling, there are three qualities displayed by veterans that we would like to explore further: technical expertise, leadership skills, and the ability to learn quickly.

## Technical Expertise



### KEY POINT

All military personnel receive technical training specific to their roles and the majority of military jobs have civilian equivalents.

Part of the employee value proposition for serving in the armed forces is that all military personnel receive technical training specific to their role in the military. Orion International, a job recruitment firm for officers and enlisted technicians, finds that the level of field experience and technical expertise possessed by veterans often exceeds that of a civilian with a degree or certification. According to Orion's vice president of sales (who also happens to be a former army officer):

*"Military technicians today are trained so they can troubleshoot down to the component level. Most field-service companies only require someone to be trained down to the card level, where they swap out a card to fix a problem after identifying it through a computer interface. Military*

*technicians' level of expertise sometimes surprises people that we talk to once we explain the schooling they've had, the real-world experience, and the systems that they work on today.*<sup>16</sup>

Companies should also be aware of the transferability of veterans' skills sets. In fact, according to the CEO and founder of The Value of a Veteran, approximately 80 percent of military jobs have direct or very similar civilian equivalents:

*"[The military has] x-ray technicians, financial specialists, human resources people, and legal specialists. You name it, and the chances are we've got that already in the military."*<sup>17</sup>

Further, many veterans appear to be more concerned with finding a job than returning to school; therefore, they are particularly interested in short certification programs that lead to a credential valued by corporate employers, such as project management and software or IT certificates.<sup>18</sup> For veterans who want to pursue higher education, GI Jobs.com offers a school matchmaker that includes a search option that lists only military-friendly schools.<sup>19</sup>

## Leadership Skills



### KEY POINT

Veterans often have strong leadership skills that include the ability to foster cultural inclusion, promote teamwork, motivate a diverse workforce, and attain goals.

Veterans often have strong leadership skills that include the ability to foster cultural inclusion, promote teamwork, motivate a diverse workforce, and attain goals. Further, they are able to demonstrate these leadership skills in stressful situations.<sup>20</sup>

As the managing director of Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance and Financial Services (who is also a veteran) explains:

*"Employers should recognize that most veterans are foisted into situations where they experience a larger amount of*

<sup>16</sup> Source: "The Value of Veterans," Military.com / Ho Lin, n.d., [www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/value-of-veterans-in-civilian-jobs.html](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/value-of-veterans-in-civilian-jobs.html).

<sup>17</sup> Source: "Military Vets Bring Talent, Leadership To The Workforce," Forbes.com / Lisa Wirthman, February 5, 2014, [www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> For more information, see [www.gijobs.com/schools/](http://www.gijobs.com/schools/).

<sup>20</sup> Source: "The Value of Veterans," Military.com / Ho Lin, n.d., [www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/value-of-veterans-in-civilian-jobs.html](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/military-transition/value-of-veterans-in-civilian-jobs.html).

*responsibility than the average 22-year-old would experience right out of college. They can make decisions, they can work under pressure, and they're usually natural leaders.”<sup>21</sup>*

## The Ability to Learn Quickly



### KEY POINT

Veterans' ability to learn quickly is an asset to employers, especially in fast-paced and constantly changing working environments.

Armed service members are also used to learning new skills, often in stressful situations. This ability is an asset to them—and their employers—especially in fast-paced and constantly changing work environments.

*“Everything that they're asked to do in the military, they are provided with training to do. Nobody goes into the military at 18 knowing how to operate lasers and tanks in crazy conditions.”<sup>22</sup>*

—Vice President, the Buller Group, LLC, and Author of *Field Tested: Recruiting, Managing, and Retaining Veterans*

The following Case in Point shares the story of one veteran who demonstrated the ability to learn quickly and perform well in civilian organizations thanks to his training and experience in the military:

### Case in Point: Translating Skills and Behaviors to the Civilian Workforce

One veteran spent four years in the army learning mechanical, computer, and mapping skills, in addition to effective communication skills and discipline. After his honorable discharge from active duty, he continued to serve in the army reserve.

One of the contacts in this veteran's network was a regional sales manager for an office equipment company. The sales manager told the veteran that even though he had no sales experience, he'd be perfect for sales given the following:

<sup>21</sup> Source: “Military Vets Bring Talent, Leadership To The Workforce,” Forbes.com / Lisa Wirthman, February 5, 2014, [www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

*Case in Point: Translating Skills and Behaviors to the Civilian Workforce (cont'd)*

- Behaviors and traits that include being mission-focused, loyal, disciplined, and tenacious
- Leadership skills honed through army leadership schooling, hands-on team leadership, and other experience
- Communication, public relations, and customer service skills
- Indifference to inclement weather (apparently this organization's sales team numbers typically plummeted during inclement weather)
- Lack of sales experience (which was appealing because the organization had its own sales training and the veteran hadn't developed bad habits due to conflicting instruction)

The veteran was successful and, in time, he was named the top sales person of the year. He subsequently went on to two additional sales organizations where he also became the top sales person. Today, this veteran is a director of veteran recruiting at a global organization.<sup>23</sup> 

<sup>23</sup> Source: Bersin by Deloitte interview.

## What Are Other Companies Doing?

Many organizations are committed to helping veterans find civilian jobs, and some also sponsor programs targeted at putting military spouses back to work. Many organizations see supporting veteran hiring initiatives as an important part of their employment brand. Military.com publishes a list of the top 35 “Best Veteran Employers,”<sup>24</sup> and Military Times publishes its own list of the best employers called “Best for Vets.”<sup>25</sup> There are many different ways that companies are raising the bar for veteran hiring, five of which are outlined below with illustrative organizations (see Figure 2):

- Significant veteran hiring targets
- Business skills training
- Military-friendly hiring websites
- Military job fairs
- Internships and scholarships



Source: Bersin by Deloitte, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> For more information, see [www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/job-hunting/top-35-veteran-employers.html](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/career-advice/job-hunting/top-35-veteran-employers.html).

<sup>25</sup> For more information, see <http://projects.militarytimes.com/best-for-veterans/best-employers-for-veterans/2014/>.

## Significant Veteran Hiring Targets

In response to the White House's Joining Forces initiative and increased media coverage, many organizations have committed to significant veteran hiring targets. For example, insurance and financial services group USAA has one of the more aggressive veteran hiring targets, committing that 30 percent of its hiring will come from the military community (including both veterans and their spouses). According to USAA's chief executive officer:

*"With 1 million service members set to transition to the civilian world between 2011 and 2016—and unemployment already high among the youngest veterans—companies need to do more. And USAA is one of those companies. This is no act of altruism. Our experience is that veterans and military spouses make great employees: [They are] natural leaders, flexible, and mission-oriented."*<sup>26</sup>

Media and broadcasting giant Comcast Corporation has partnered with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's "Hiring Our Heroes" initiative to increase veteran hiring. Since January 2012, media and entertainment company NBCUniversal and Comcast have hired over 3,000 veterans, far exceeding their goal of hiring 2,000 by 2015.<sup>27</sup> NBC Publishing also recently released two free eBooks and guides for veterans, *Heroes Get Hired: How to Use Your Military Experience to Master the Interview*<sup>28</sup> and *Everyone Serves: A Handbook for Family & Friends of Service Members During Pre-Deployment, Deployment and Reintegration*.<sup>29</sup>

Home improvement retailer Lowe's was founded by a WWII veteran and has made a public commitment to veteran hiring programs.<sup>30</sup> Lowe's has taken part in both the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR)<sup>31</sup> and the Military Spouse Employment Partnership

<sup>26</sup> Source: "Military and Spouses," [usaajobs.com](http://usaajobs.com), n.d., [www.usaajobs.com/military/index.html](http://www.usaajobs.com/military/index.html).

<sup>27</sup> Source: "Comcast and NBCUniversal Hire 3,000 Veterans as Part of U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation's "Hiring Our Heroes" Initiative," [MarketWatch.com](http://MarketWatch.com), August 13, 2014, [www.marketwatch.com/story/comcast-and-nbcuniversal-hire-3000-veterans-as-part-of-us-chamber-of-commerce-foundations-hiring-our-heroes-initiative-2014-08-13](http://www.marketwatch.com/story/comcast-and-nbcuniversal-hire-3000-veterans-as-part-of-us-chamber-of-commerce-foundations-hiring-our-heroes-initiative-2014-08-13).

<sup>28</sup> For more information, see [www.heroesgethired.com/](http://www.heroesgethired.com/).

<sup>29</sup> For more information, see [www.everyoneservesbook.com/](http://www.everyoneservesbook.com/).

<sup>30</sup> For more information, see <http://careers.lowes.com/our-military-commitment.aspx>.

<sup>31</sup> For more information, see [www.esgr.mil/](http://www.esgr.mil/).

(MSEP).<sup>32</sup> Lowe's took an even bigger step in its commitment to military employment when it publicly signed a statement of support for the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) in April 2014.<sup>33</sup> Through this public signing, the company pledged to support not only veteran hiring but also the management of military personnel through their career development within the Lowe's organization.

A May 2014 Forbes article highlights an additional 15 organizations that are leading the way in hiring veterans. Among those listed are weapons and security companies such as L3 Communications, aerospace companies such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing, information technology companies such as CACI International, and even government agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Defense.<sup>34</sup>

## Business Skills Training

Many companies have internal initiatives aimed at educating veterans. These programs are often headed by in-house veterans.

Financial services firm Edward Jones Investments has developed its FORCES Program to train veterans for careers in finance. Veterans who have left the military within the past 12 months and active members of the National Guard or Army Reserve are eligible to apply. For the first two months, participants go through a full-time training program in which they study for regulatory exams and learn basics such as presentation skills. After that, they go through advanced training and work closely with an existing financial advisor until they are ready to work independently.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> For more information, see <https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil/video/military-spouse-employment-partnership>.

<sup>33</sup> Source: "Lowe's Companies Reaffirms Support for Guard and Reserve Employees, Signs Statement of Support," ESGR, April 25, 2014, [www.esgr.mil/News-Events/Press-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2881/Lowes-Companies-Reaffirms-Support-for-Guard-and-Reserve-Employees-Signs-Statement-of-Support.aspx](http://www.esgr.mil/News-Events/Press-Releases/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/2881/Lowes-Companies-Reaffirms-Support-for-Guard-and-Reserve-Employees-Signs-Statement-of-Support.aspx).

<sup>34</sup> Source: "Top 15 Employers For Veterans," Forbes.com / Kathryn Dill, April 22, 2014, [www.forbes.com/sites/kathryndill/2014/04/22/top-15-employers-for-veterans/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/kathryndill/2014/04/22/top-15-employers-for-veterans/).

<sup>35</sup> Source: "Companies look for creative ways to bring veterans into their workforce," *The Washington Post* / Sarah Halzack, November 10, 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78_story.html).

Technology giant Cisco Systems, Inc., has taken the proactive approach of offering technology training to returning veterans and active military personnel. The Cisco Networking Academy offers information and communication technology (ICT) and networking courses at community colleges, universities, and military bases nationwide.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to holding Deloitte Day Open Houses for veterans, international professional services firm Deloitte LLP (parent company of Bersin by Deloitte) conducts biannual skills training workshops for veterans at Deloitte University, its U.S. leadership and learning campus. Through Deloitte's Career Opportunity Redefinition and Exploration (CORE) program, veterans can attend an all-expense-paid, three-day workshop in which participants build their personal brand by identifying their strengths and communicating their valuable skills; learn innovative networking strategies; and gain access to successful alumni of the CORE program.<sup>37</sup>

## Military-Friendly Hiring Websites



### KEY POINT

To help bridge the résumé gap, recruiters should endeavor to understand veterans' experiences in order to determine how to transfer their skills to the corporate work world.

One of the biggest challenges faced by veterans reentering the civilian world is effectively communicating the value of their experience and training to a recruiter. Résumés are not used in the military, and military job descriptions use technical jargon not easily understood by corporate recruiters. Both veterans and recruiters must attempt to bridge this gap. Veterans should reach out to contacts already in the workforce to find out how to translate their experiences, while recruiters should endeavor to understand veterans' experiences in order to determine how to transfer their skills to the corporate work world.<sup>38</sup>

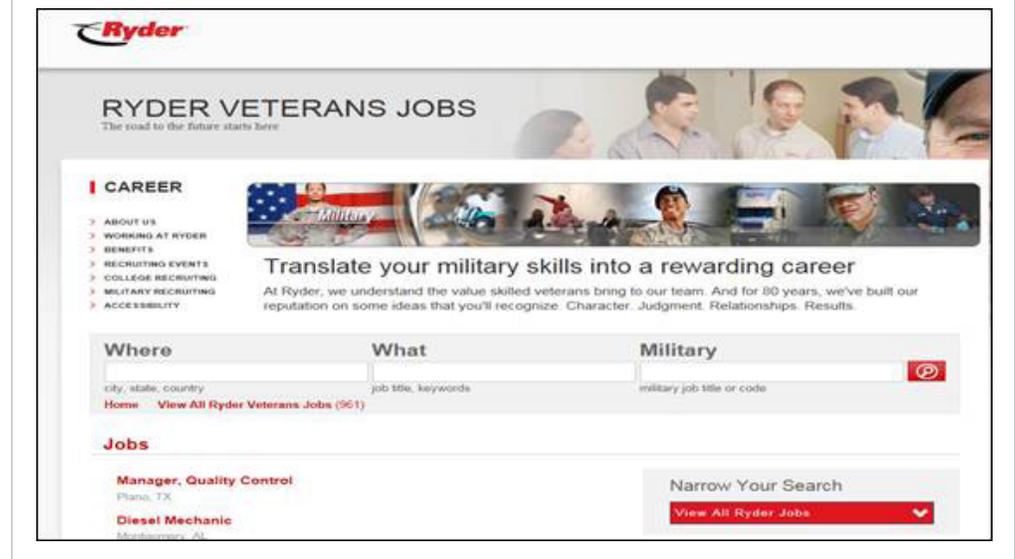
Some companies foster this transition and bridge the gap using technology. Transportation and supply chain management provider Ryder System, Inc., hosts a veterans jobs webpage that connects veterans to a military translator (see Figure 3). Veterans log into the site, enter their military job code and title, and are able to translate their military skills into civilian terms. This resource helps veteran candidates parlay their military skills and experiences into language used in the private sector.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>36</sup> For more information, see [www.cisco.com/web/learning/netacad/us-can/veterans.html](http://www.cisco.com/web/learning/netacad/us-can/veterans.html).

<sup>37</sup> For more information, see <http://mycareer.deloitte.com/us/en/whatwedo/industries/core-leadership-program>.

<sup>38</sup> Source: "Military Vets Bring Talent, Leadership To The Workforce," Forbes.com / Lisa Wirthman, February 5, 2014, [www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/](http://www.forbes.com/sites/northwesternmutual/2014/02/05/military-vets-bring-talent-leadership-to-the-workforce/).

<sup>39</sup> Source: Bersin by Deloitte interview.

**Figure 3:** Ryder's Veterans Jobs Website

Source: Ryder, 2015.

Similarly, multinational hospitality company Marriott International has added a military skills translator tool to its career website. Developed with assistance from Military.com, the tool allows service members to enter their military occupational specialty code and other key information about their skills and specializations. Based on that information, the software suggests job openings at Marriott for which the individual might be qualified.<sup>40</sup> The military skills translator is also available on Military.com.<sup>41</sup>

Amazon.com, the United States' largest Internet-based retailer, also has a dedicated veteran hiring webpage that features a video and links to a number of related resources. Many of Amazon's fulfillment centers are run by veterans who have the logistic and supply chain skills required to effectively manage these busy locations.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Source: "Companies look for creative ways to bring veterans into their workforce," *The Washington Post* / Sarah Halzack, November 10, 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78_story.html).

<sup>41</sup> For more information, see [www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/).

<sup>42</sup> Source: "How Amazon learned to love veterans," *Fortune.com* / Adam Lashinsky, May 7, 2012, <http://fortune.com/2012/05/07/how-amazon-learned-to-love-veterans/>.

NBC News is another company using technology to facilitate veteran hiring; along with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Foundation, the company recently launched a jobs and education resource website called “Next Steps for Vets.” Through the website, veterans and their families can get help with résumés, job searches, and information on how to launch a business.<sup>43</sup>

## Military Job Fairs



### KEY POINT

Military job fairs are a common and effective way of connecting local businesses in a community and military veterans who are looking for career opportunities.

Military job fairs are a common and effective way of connecting local businesses in a community and military veterans who are looking for career opportunities. Hundreds of these fairs are held across the country each year. They vary in size, with the largest fair hosting over 4,000 veterans.<sup>44</sup>

To recruit for their FORCES program, Edward Jones utilizes military job fairs such as Military MOJO.<sup>45</sup> <sup>46</sup> Recruiters from Edward Jones also frequently attend luncheons at the Marine Corps base at Quantico, where they meet with service members who are considering a civilian career.

## Internships and Scholarships

Some organizations are extending common undergraduate recruiting practices to enhance opportunities for veterans. The hospitality and food services corporation Sodexo has opened its 10-week college internship program to active and former members of the military.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, the banking and financial services firm JPMorgan Chase offers a nine-week internship in which veterans join specific teams and work on business

<sup>43</sup> For more information, see <http://veterans.nbcnews.com/>.

<sup>44</sup> Source: “JBLM hosts nation’s biggest military jobs fair,” *The News Tribune* / Rob Carson, October 23, 2014, [www.thenewstribune.com/2014/10/23/3448428/jblm-hosts-nations-biggest-jobs.html](http://www.thenewstribune.com/2014/10/23/3448428/jblm-hosts-nations-biggest-jobs.html).

<sup>45</sup> Source: “Companies look for creative ways to bring veterans into their workforce,” *The Washington Post* / Sarah Halzack, November 10, 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78_story.html).

<sup>46</sup> For more information, see [www.militarymojo.org/](http://www.militarymojo.org/).

<sup>47</sup> Source: “Companies look for creative ways to bring veterans into their workforce,” *The Washington Post* / Sarah Halzack, November 10, 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78_story.html).

projects. While these internships do not necessarily lead to full-time employment, the interns are exposed to various bank functions and given a chance to build their network.<sup>48</sup>

Some companies offer scholarship programs to boost training and skill development opportunities for veterans. In June 2013, real estate firm Long & Foster began a scholarship program that allows veterans and their families to attend a real estate training program for free.<sup>49</sup> *US Veterans Magazine* has compiled a list of scholarships available to veterans and their families.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For more information, see <http://careers.jpmorgan.com/student/jpmorgan/careers/military/us>.

<sup>49</sup> Source: "Companies look for creative ways to bring veterans into their workforce," *The Washington Post* / Sarah Halzack, November 10, 2013, [www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/business/capitalbusiness/companies-look-for-creative-ways-to-bring-veterans-into-their-workforce/2013/11/08/28d9296e-40aa-11e3-a624-41d661b0bb78_story.html).

<sup>50</sup> For more information, see [www.usveteransmagazine.com/article/list-military-scholarships-service-members-spouses-and-dependents](http://www.usveteransmagazine.com/article/list-military-scholarships-service-members-spouses-and-dependents).

## Conclusion

The number of veterans returning to the civilian workforce is predicted to increase significantly in the coming years as troops return home from Afghanistan. It is our hope that given the information shared here concerning what makes veterans such valuable employees—as well as what other companies are doing and the many resources available—more organizations will be inspired to embark on their own veteran hiring initiatives. It is, after all, not just the *right* thing to do but also a *smart* move to make.



## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- According to the Monster Veterans Talent Index, 55 percent of surveyed employers do not participate in a veteran-specific recruiting initiative.
- The unemployment rate for veterans has been higher than the nonveteran unemployment rate since the start of the recession.
- Employees are more likely to believe that their organization is high performing if it also has a high focus on diversity and inclusion.
- New U.S. Department of Labor regulations require most federal contractors to take proactive steps to ensure that at least 8 percent of their employee population be made up of veterans.
- All military personnel receive technical training specific to their roles, and the majority of military jobs have civilian equivalents.
- Veterans often have strong leadership skills that include the ability to foster cultural inclusion, promote teamwork, motivate a diverse workforce, and attain goals.
- Veterans' ability to learn quickly is an asset to employers, especially in fast-paced and constantly changing working environments.
- To help bridge the résumé gap, recruiters should endeavor to understand veterans' experiences in order to determine how to transfer their skills to the corporate work world.
- Military job fairs are a common and effective way of connecting local businesses in a community and military veterans who are looking for career opportunities.

# Appendices

## Appendix I: Selected Resources

### Organizations That Educate Companies on How to Build Veteran-Friendly Hiring Practices

- ***The Freedom Award***, [www.freedomaward.mil/](http://www.freedomaward.mil/). This site provides further information on the Freedom Award. This recognition is awarded by the U.S. government to employers who have hired and supported veterans of the Guard and Reserve. History of the award, recipients, and nominations are available online.
- ***Guide to Leading Policies, Practices & Resources: Supporting the Employment of Veterans & Military Families***, <http://vets.syr.edu/pdfs/guidetoleadingpractices.pdf>. This comprehensive guide was created by the Institute for Veterans and Military Families, which is the first national center in higher education focused on issues impacting veterans. It aims to identify challenges that the veteran community faces and consequently create leading practices to overcome them. Contents of the guide include seven main challenges, methods to counter the challenges, and checklists to ensure diligence.
- ***Hire Military Blog***, [www.hiremilitary.com/2012/03/how-to-develop-a-military-hiring-plan/](http://www.hiremilitary.com/2012/03/how-to-develop-a-military-hiring-plan/). This article lists effective tips for developing a hiring plan that will attract qualified veterans. The tips include getting insight from currently employed veterans, building a team, achieving buy-in, conducting in-person interviews, being timely, establishing career paths, and providing sufficient onboarding.
- ***Institute for Veterans and Military Families***, <http://vets.syr.edu/>. This database was launched by Syracuse University and JPMorgan Chase to leverage the capabilities of higher education to service U.S. veterans and their families. The Institute for Veterans and Military Families investigates the variety of issues that impact the veteran community. In turn, it develops programs that address these challenges.
- ***Measuring Diversity***, <http://hr.wa.gov/diversity/DiversityManagement/Pages/MeasuringDiversity.aspx>. This article focuses on methods to measure diversity in the workplace, whether they are quantitative, qualitative, or activity-based. The aim is to provide clarification on how to measure and what to measure in order to create the most effective diversity initiative possible.

- **Search & Employ**, <http://recruitmilitary.com/search-and-employ/>. This magazine has bimonthly issues that provide veterans information about job and business opportunities and continuing education programs. For organizations that are interested in hiring veterans, advertisement placement is available.
- **Support from Behind the Lines: 10 Steps to Becoming a Military-Ready Employer**, [www.shrm.org/templatestools/toolkits/documents/12-0177%20behind\\_the\\_lines\\_toolkit\\_fnl.pdf](http://www.shrm.org/templatestools/toolkits/documents/12-0177%20behind_the_lines_toolkit_fnl.pdf). This guide focuses on assisting organizations and their leaders in recruiting, retaining, and supporting veterans and their families in the workplace. The article lists 10 steps that can be followed in order or implemented in different stages depending on the state of the organization.
- **United States Department of Labor**, [www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit/Resources/](http://www.americasheroesatwork.gov/forEmployers/HiringToolkit/Resources/). This site supplies organizations with a hiring toolkit to launch a veterans hiring initiative. Steps include designing a strategy, educating, recruiting, hiring, retaining, and supplying tools and resources. Further details concerning each step are included in the online guide.
- **The Value of a Veteran**, [www.thevalueofaveteran.com](http://www.thevalueofaveteran.com). This is a resource for corporate, government, and higher education organizations that are looking to recruit and retain military veterans and their families. The program provides consulting and training for said organizations and helps in transitioning veterans by offering seminars and matchmaking services.
- **Veteran Talent Index**, [www.monster.com/about/veterans-talent-index](http://www.monster.com/about/veterans-talent-index). Employees at Monster.com have tracked the transition of veterans to civilian life since 2011 to create their Veterans Talent Index, which includes a Veteran Career Confidence Index, Veteran Job Search Activity Index, and Employer Veteran Hiring Index. Those surveyed include veterans who have been out of the military for less than five years, active duty service members who intend to leave the military within a year, and employers that have hired at least one veteran in the past year.

## Job Boards to Post and Search for Jobs

- **GI Jobs**, [www.gijobs.com/hot-lists-for-veterans-2014/](http://www.gijobs.com/hot-lists-for-veterans-2014/). This website combines a large amount of job search advice with a job list search tool. This site not only contains job postings for veterans but also provides information on what jobs best suit veterans and where veterans are being hired. It also provides insight into veterans and their overall career. For those more interested in pursuing education, the site has information about the most useful types of degrees for veterans.
- **Hire Heroes USA**, [www.hireheroesusa.org/](http://www.hireheroesusa.org/). This site contains a job search database and job listings for veterans. Additionally, it contains advice on job search techniques such as resume and cover letter writing.
- **Hire Veterans: Jobs for America's Veterans**, <http://www.hireveterans.com/>. This database provides veterans with updated job openings, both in list form and in the form of a searchable database. Listings come from a wide variety of sources in both manual and nonmanual labor settings.
- **Military.com**, [www.military.com/veteran-jobs](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs). This organization works in conjunction with Monster.com, the popular job search tool. It provides visitors the opportunity to search for jobs, network, and search for events. It also has a military skills translator, which maps military skills to their potential uses in the job market. This can be useful for both potential and current employees in job searching.
- **Military Friendly**, <http://militaryfriendly.com/>. This site contains top job listings and military-friendly schools for veterans looking for employment and education opportunities. Postings and lists are based on objective surveys, ensuring that the data is unbiased.
- **Military Spouse Employment Partnership**, <https://msejobs.militaryonesource.mil/success-stories>. This job search site is for those who have spouses in the military, regardless of whether they are of active duty. Job-seeking individuals can search by job title and/or location, and resources are available to prepare the applicants.
- **Next Steps for Vets**, <http://veterans.nbcnews.com/>. This portal is a job site sponsored by NBCUniversal and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce that provides a number of resources and tools for veterans to find

employment and education opportunities. Resources include job postings, resume building help, and a GI Bill calculator that estimates monetary benefits.

- **VetCentral**, <http://vetcentral.us.jobs/veteransmembers.asp>. This database presents a list of agencies and other organizations that actively partake in hiring veterans. Clicking on the name of an organization directs the user to a list of open positions at the organization.

## Services and Publications to Prepare Veterans for Employment

- **AdvisorNet**, <https://acp-advisornet.org/>. This site connects currently employed advisors with veterans who are searching for a new career. The advisors assist the veterans with building a resume and interview preparation as well as answer questions.
- **Be a Hero—Hire a Hero**, [www.beahero-hireahero.com/index.php/about/about-be-a-hero-hire-a-hero](http://www.beahero-hireahero.com/index.php/about/about-be-a-hero-hire-a-hero). This is a program seeking to place veterans in successful roles and careers by hosting expos and developing hiring initiatives, creating support systems, and establishing relationships between job seekers and employers. The program includes candidate mentoring, family relocation services, a military database, and temporary to permanent placement services.
- **Best for Vets: Employers 2013**, <http://projects.militarytimes.com/best-for-veterans/best-employers-for-veterans/2013/>. This article lists the top employers for veterans based on recruiting processes, policies, and benefits. The list includes data surrounding an industry, percentage of veteran employees, and ratings of the onboarding process.
- **eBenefits**, [www.ebenefits.va.gov/](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov/). This portal provides veterans, service members, and their families an all-in-one location to research, apply for, and manage benefits. A personalized dashboard includes account information and quick links to various tools and additional information.
- **Feds Hire Vets: The One-Stop Resource for Federal Veteran Employment Information**, [www.fedshirevets.gov/Index.aspx](http://www.fedshirevets.gov/Index.aspx). This site is mostly informational in nature. Information includes advice for job searches as well as technical advice. It also includes a section of networking events and informational sessions.

- ***G.I. Jobs***, [www.gijobs.com/verizon.aspx](http://www.gijobs.com/verizon.aspx). This site provides several resources for veterans to utilize in order to find the best-fitting employer or school. Resources include a school matchmaker tool, a list of the top education opportunities, a calculator to estimate future salary, and job postings.
- ***Hiring Our Heroes***, [www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes](http://www.uschamberfoundation.org/hiring-our-heroes). This initiative serves to support U.S. veterans, transitioning service members, and military spouses in finding employment opportunities. Resources include hiring fairs, mentor programs, and resume building, which in turn will solidify connections with employers.
- ***Military.com—Skills Translator***, [www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/](http://www.military.com/veteran-jobs/skills-translator/). This site collaborates with Monster.com, a job search tool, to help veterans find potential employment opportunities. One particular feature includes a Skills Translator, which allows users to match their capabilities acquired through their military experience to future jobs with comparable skills sets. Searching by service and job title allows for more customizable results.
- ***O\*Net Online***, [www.onetonline.org](http://www.onetonline.org). This is an online search database for those looking for detailed information about different occupations and the skills and abilities necessary to perform the job. The database includes key information for over 900 occupations and is available to the general public.
- ***The RecruitMilitary Blog***, <http://blog.recruitmilitary.com/>. RecruitMilitary is a recruiting firm that aims to provide resources to job seeking veterans. The firm has a blog with a variety of posts including notices for job fairs, news, and general advice for those first entering the civilian workforce.
- ***Search & Employ***, <http://recruitmilitary.com/search-and-employ/>. This print and digital magazine assists veterans and their families in transitioning into civilian careers. The magazine features job postings and advertisements for continuing education programs.
- ***United States Department of Labor***, [www.dol.gov/dol/topic/hiring/veterans.htm](http://www.dol.gov/dol/topic/hiring/veterans.htm). This database provides numerous links to various programs and informational sites that assist veterans in the hiring process. Also included are links to the laws and regulations regarding the employment rights of veterans and service members.

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# 2015 VETERANS CIVIC HEALTH INDEX



**AMERICA'S GREATEST ASSETS:**  
*How Military Veterans Are Strengthening Our Communities*



**GOT YOUR SIX**

**AMERICAN  
EXPRESS**

POINTS  
OF LIGHT



**National Conference on Citizenship**  
*Connecting People. Strengthening Our Country.*



## ABOUT THE PARTNERS

### **GOT YOUR 6**

Got Your 6 is a campaign that unites nonprofit, entertainment industry, and government partners in collective action to empower veterans and strengthen communities. Got Your 6 reinforces the fact that veterans are trained leaders, team builders, and problem solvers. As a coalition, Got Your 6 works to integrate these perspectives into popular culture, engage veterans and non-veterans together to foster understanding, and empower veterans to lead here at home. Got Your 6 knows that most veterans leave the military seeking new challenges, and the campaign ensures that there are opportunities for them to continue their service.

### **AMERICAN EXPRESS**

Through its Community Service funding theme, the company invests in projects that provide meaningful volunteer and civic engagement opportunities so that community members can play an active role in strengthening their neighborhoods from within. American Express recognizes that veterans continue to lead the way in serving our communities and we are proud to support the efforts to highlight their role as leaders and civic champions.

American Express is a global services company, providing customers with access to products, insights and experiences that enrich lives and build business success. Learn more at [americanexpress.com](https://www.americanexpress.com).

### **POINTS OF LIGHT**

Points of Light is the world's largest organization dedicated to volunteer service—it mobilizes millions of people to take action that is changing the world. POL's Military Initiatives helps organizations that serve veterans increase capacity and provide volunteer opportunities for the community. Through the Community Blueprint Initiative, organizations collaborate and share resources to better serve veterans and their families, uniting communities nationwide.

### **NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CITIZENSHIP**

The National Conference on Citizenship (NCoC) is a congressionally chartered organization dedicated to strengthening civic life in America. We pursue our mission through a nationwide network of partners involved in a cutting-edge civic health initiative, an innovative national service project, and our cross-sector conferences. At the core of our joint efforts is the belief that every person has the ability to help their community and country thrive.



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## INTRODUCTION

Unless otherwise cited, all findings presented in this report are based on the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE)'s analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data from 2012 and 2013.

### Goals of this Report

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- Foster shared understanding between the military and civilian communities about the civic strengths and opportunities of the veteran population
- Provide a data-informed platform through which to eliminate misconceptions about veterans
- Provide specific recommendations related to the report findings

### What is Civic Health?

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Civic health is a community's capacity to work together to resolve collective problems. It is defined by the degree to which people trust each other, help their neighbors, and interact with their government.

On an individual level, civic health is shown to improve people's overall health—physical, emotional, social, and mental.<sup>1</sup> On a community level, civic health forms the foundation for growth and improvement. Strong civic health positively affects local GDP<sup>2</sup>, economic resilience<sup>3</sup>, upward income mobility<sup>4</sup>, public health<sup>5</sup>, and student achievement.<sup>6</sup> Simply put, when people are civically engaged, they are healthier and their communities are stronger.

For the purpose of this report, civic health is determined by examining Census data related to volunteering, voting, political participation, group membership, and social connectedness.

### A Focus on Veterans

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Each year, about a quarter-million veterans return to communities across the country. Like the community itself, veterans reach their full potential when given meaningful opportunities to engage. The majority of veterans return home seeking new challenges and opportunities—ways to continue serving their community and country.<sup>7</sup>

Almost half of today's veterans are members of the all-volunteer force (AVF). The AVF removed the burden of military service from those who did not explicitly sign up for it. Combined with military downsizing, the result has been a shrinking veteran population made up of Americans with a strong desire to serve their country—both in and out of uniform.

Because of their experience, training, and skillsets, veterans are uniquely suited to provide solutions to some of our nation's toughest challenges. In recent years, we have seen veterans leading movements across the country to: improve disaster relief and community preparedness;<sup>8</sup> promote physical fitness;<sup>9</sup> combat homelessness;<sup>10</sup> increase educational attainment;<sup>11</sup> and more.

But too often, negative stereotypes about veterans dominate the public dialogue. The average American believes that, in general, veterans are significantly more likely than non-veterans to experience unemployment, incarceration, homelessness, and various other issues.<sup>12</sup> These notions are largely misconceptions. They paint a picture of veterans as "broken." As a result, veterans often say they feel more pity than respect from the civilian population.

This report aims to foster understanding about the civic strengths of the veteran population, and provide a data-informed platform through which to eliminate misconceptions about veterans.

# 250,000

Every year, about a quarter-million veterans return to communities across the country.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Findings from this report suggest that **military service positively affects civic health**. When analyzing individuals' civic engagement profiles, we see that military service alters one's civic health trajectory. So by virtue of their military service alone, veterans are likely to demonstrate high levels of civic engagement throughout their lifetime.

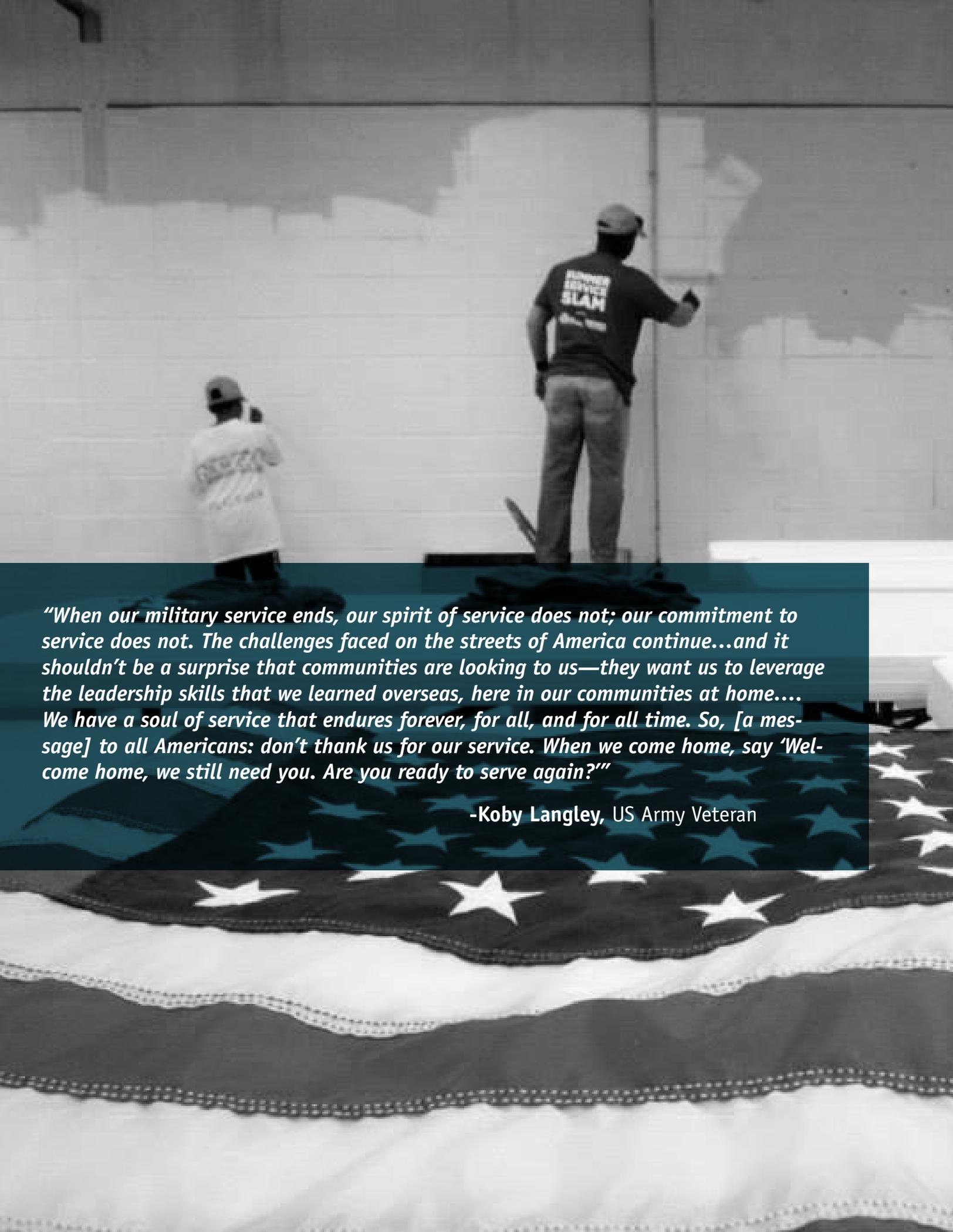
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Veterans are critical assets to the nation, and they are civic leaders in communities across the country. When they exit the military and return home, our country has an enormous opportunity to leverage their skills to strengthen communities.

Data presented in this report indicate that veterans strengthen communities by volunteering, voting, engaging in local governments, helping neighbors, and participating in community organizations—all at higher rates than their non-veteran counterparts. Key findings include:

- **Veteran volunteers serve an average of 160 hours annually—the equivalent of four full workweeks.** Non-veteran volunteers serve about 25% fewer hours annually.
- **Veterans are more likely than non-veterans to attend community meetings, fix problems in the neighborhood, and fill leadership roles in community organizations.**
- **17.7% of veterans are involved in civic groups,** compared to just 5.8% of non-veterans.
- **Veterans vote, contact public officials, and discuss politics at significantly higher rates** than their non-veteran counterparts.
- **Compared to non-veterans, veterans are more trusting of their neighbors. 62.5% of veterans trust “most or all of [their] neighbors”** compared to 55.1% of non-veterans. Veterans are also more likely to frequently talk with and do favors for their neighbors.





*"When our military service ends, our spirit of service does not; our commitment to service does not. The challenges faced on the streets of America continue...and it shouldn't be a surprise that communities are looking to us—they want us to leverage the leadership skills that we learned overseas, here in our communities at home.... We have a soul of service that endures forever, for all, and for all time. So, [a message] to all Americans: don't thank us for our service. When we come home, say 'Welcome home, we still need you. Are you ready to serve again?'"*

*-Koby Langley, US Army Veteran*

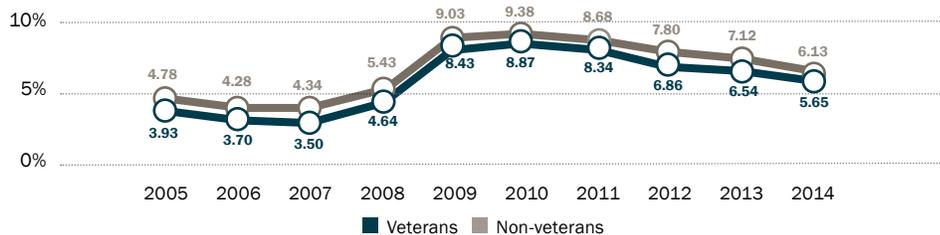
# COMBATTING MISCONCEPTIONS: *The Facts*

A 2014 study revealed that the general population views veterans as “broken heroes” who are more likely than non-veterans to be unemployed, undereducated, homeless, and experiencing mental health issues.<sup>13</sup> The reality, however, is much more complex, and challenging these claims is an important step in changing public perceptions of veterans. Here are the facts:

## Employment

**The veteran unemployment rate has been below the non-veteran rate every year for the last decade.** From 2005-2014, the average unadjusted non-veteran unemployment rate (6.73%) is 13% higher than the veteran rate (5.95%).<sup>14</sup>

**Chart 1. Unemployment Rates of Veterans vs. Non-veterans**

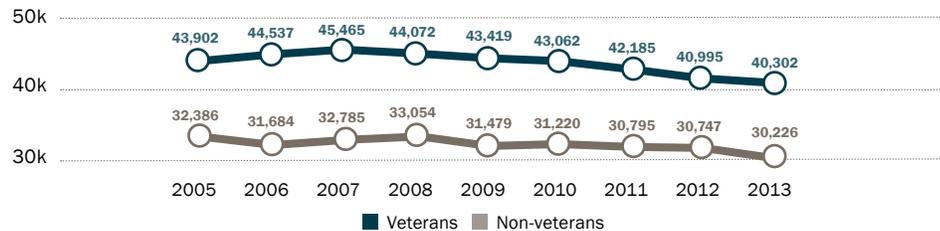


Source: The US Department of Veterans Affairs 2015 Veterans Economic Opportunity Report

## Income

From 2005 to 2013, **veterans have consistently earned significantly more than non-veterans.**<sup>15</sup>

**Chart 2. Median Income Levels of Veterans vs. Non-veterans**



Source: The US Department of Veterans Affairs 2015 Veterans Economic Opportunity Report

## Homelessness

Non-veterans comprise 91.4% of the homeless population; veterans comprise 8.6% of the homeless population—there are 578,424 homeless individuals across the US; 49,933 of them are veterans.<sup>16</sup>

## Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD)

The US Department of Veterans Affairs estimates that between 11-20% of veterans experience PTSD. Even when considering the highest end of this broad spectrum, it is still true that **the vast majority of veterans do not experience PTSD.**<sup>17</sup>

PTSD is a human condition, not a veteran condition—about 5.2 million adults experience it during a given year, and about 7-8% of the population will have PTSD at some point in their lives.

## Education

Four-year college completion rates are higher among non-veterans (33.2%) than veterans (28.1%). However, veterans participating in the GI Bill program are completing degree programs at a rate (48%) similar to traditional beginning postsecondary students in the general population cohort (49%).<sup>18</sup>

## AT-A-GLANCE: America's Veteran Population

There are 21.3 million veterans in the United States—that is 9% of the adult population. The median age of all veterans is 62 years old. In general, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be married, are more likely to have completed high school, and are also more likely to progress to college.

Though veterans are far more likely than non-veterans to have some college experience, they are slightly less likely to have a four-year degree—college completion rates among non-veterans are 33.2%, versus 28.1% for veterans overall. This trend does not exist for female, Hispanic, or African American veterans however. In fact, veterans in these groups display significantly better educational profiles than their non-veteran counterparts. Additionally, veterans participating in the GI Bill program complete degrees at a rate (48%) similar to traditional beginning postsecondary students in the general population (49%).<sup>19</sup>

Overall, veterans are slightly less likely than non-veterans to be unemployed—5.7% of veterans are unemployed, compared to 6.1% of non-veterans. Veterans under 35 years old, however, do have higher unemployment rates than non-veterans of the same age. However, veterans in this group who are employed earn significantly more (with 11% higher median earnings) than their non-veteran counterparts.<sup>20</sup> So, while veterans under 35 years old have the highest unemployment rate, those who do secure employment are faring better than non-veterans of the same age.

*Female, Hispanic, and African American veterans display significantly better educational profiles than their non-veteran counterparts.*

**21.3**

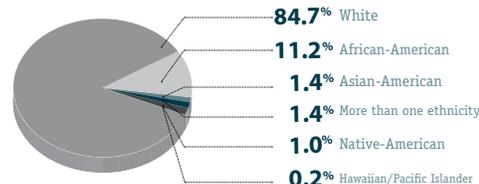
million total veterans

**9%** of the adult population



**93%** Male

**7%** Female



**75%** 50 years and older

### Young Veterans vs. Older Veterans

In this report, veterans and non-veterans aged 20-49 are referred to as “young veterans” and “young non-veterans,” respectively. Veterans aged 50 and over are referred to as “older veterans” and “older non-veterans,” respectively. Segmenting by age in this manner allows for clearer analysis of how different generations engage in communities.

All young veterans are members of the AVF—meaning they volunteered to serve in the military. 44.3% of them are post-9/11 veterans—meaning they served after September 11, 2001. On average, young veterans are 38 years old (four years older than their non-veteran counterparts).

The majority (78.7%) of older veterans first served in the Vietnam era or earlier. They are 67.7 years old—almost five years older than their non-veteran counterparts. It is important to note that in 2015, Gulf War-era veterans and Post-9/11 veterans—all veterans who served during the first Gulf War and after—will overtake Vietnam veterans as the largest segment of the veteran population.<sup>21</sup>

The young generation of veterans is more diverse than the older generation. The younger generation is 2.8 times as likely to be female, 2.3 times as likely to have Hispanic origin (regardless of race), and 1.6 times as likely to be African American.



*“Our young troops and their families have done everything their country has asked of them. Their lives have been changed forever by war, but their dreams haven’t changed at all. They want to raise their children, own a home, go to school, find work and even find new ways to contribute. Most of all, they want to be good citizens. They want to reconnect and renew their relationship to their local communities.”*

**-Admiral Michael Mullen, Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff**

## ARE VETERANS MORE CIVICALLY HEALTHY THAN NON-VETERANS?

When analyzing important civic health indicators (detailed in the following sections), we see that veterans are indeed more civically healthy than non-veterans—they consistently show higher levels of engagement in their communities. In fact, over the last century, veterans from all generations have outpaced the general population in their habits of service and civic engagement.<sup>22</sup>

Veterans show more mature civic engagement profiles than their non-veteran peers, as indicated by their deep and broad involvement in communities. Data presented in this report indicate that veterans today contribute to strong bonds in communities by participating in local government, volunteering, discussing political issues, and helping neighbors.

### Civic Indicators

#### Service

Service—which includes both formal and informal volunteering—is an important indicator of civic health because volunteers greatly impact the health and well-being of communities. Not only do volunteers deliver critical services, but the act of volunteering has been shown to increase other civic health indicators like trust in others, community involvement, and political participation.<sup>23</sup>

Young veterans have the highest rate of volunteering among all Americans, and older veterans volunteer the most hours annually. The majority of veterans who volunteer (56.7%) do so regularly. In fact, they are 11% more likely than non-veterans to be regular volunteers. It is estimated that veteran volunteers serve an average of 160 hours per year—the equivalent of four full workweeks per year. Non-veteran volunteers serve about 25% fewer hours per year.

Veteran volunteers offer skills that community organizations and nonprofits need, including: management and supervision skills; ability to lead diverse groups of people; team-building skills; operational skills; and, logistical skills.<sup>24</sup>



Veterans contribute to **strong bonds in communities** by participating in local government, volunteering, discussing political issues, and helping neighbors



*"Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia has benefited tremendously through the engagement of veteran volunteers. Arriving early to the work sites — and more often than not, staying well past our usual wrap-up time — Habitat's veteran volunteers bring their experienced and authentic leadership skills, as well as a commitment to the community. With their boots on the ground, Habitat has found veteran volunteers are willing to step up to any challenge, lead other non-veterans in the task, and are determined to get the job done well."*

**-Frank Monaghan, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity Philadelphia**

## Social Capital

“Social Capital” is defined as the networks of relationships among people who live and work in a particular community, enabling that community to function effectively. Important measures of social capital include how much people trust one another and how often they talk with neighbors and exchange favors.

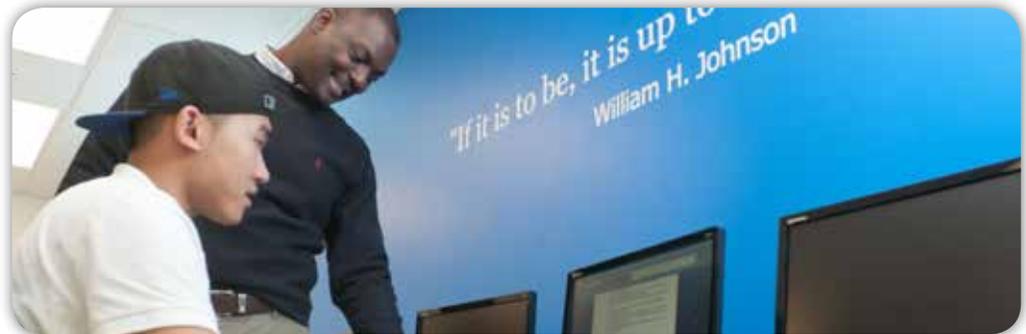
Compared to non-veterans, veterans are more trusting of their neighbors. 62.5% of veterans trust “most or all of [their] neighbors” compared to 55.1% of non-veterans. Generally, trust increases as people age, but this trend was found in young veterans as well as older veterans.

Consistent with their trust of neighbors, veterans are almost 18% more likely than non-veterans to talk frequently with their neighbors. They are also more likely to do some kind of favor for their neighbors.

These findings are important because they show that veterans have strong connections with the people around them. The extent to which a person is strongly rooted within his or her neighborhood is considered an important marker of civic health because these connections, together, make up a strong community.

# 18%

Veterans are 18% more likely than non-veterans to talk frequently to their neighbors.



### ***Team Red, White, & Blue***

*Founded in 2010, Team Red, White & Blue (RWB) is among a new wave of veteran organizations that is attracting veterans of the all-volunteer force, who return home seeking new ways to engage in their communities.*

*Team RWB is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to enrich the lives of America's veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity. In over 115 communities across the country, Team RWB delivers consistent, local opportunities for veterans and non-veterans to connect through weekly fitness activities, monthly social events, participation in local races, and more.*



***“I am the proud Chapter Captain for Team RWB Charlotte. Team RWB’s mission is so important, but not just because we aid in the transition from military service to civilian life. Team RWB is an organization that empowers [veterans] to become leaders again; to be productive and contribute to their community. [Team RWB] is not a group of people who want to do things for you; they want to do things with you. They want to give you the tools to take care of yourself and the biggest one is to be in a community, be active and always remember that you have people nearby who care.” - Eric Browy***

## Political Engagement & Voting

Veterans are avid participants in both local and national elections. Young veterans, especially, show a high level of political engagement that out-paces their non-veteran peers. Almost 60% of them “sometimes” or “often” vote in local elections, compared to 48.7% of their non-veteran counterparts. Additionally, young veterans’ estimated turnout rate (61.2%) from the 2012 Presidential election is substantially higher than the rate among their non-veteran peers (55.7%).

Veterans as a whole are also more likely than the general public to contact public officials and engage in political discussion with family and friends.

**Table 1. Veterans’ Political Involvement**

	Non-veterans under 50	Veterans under 50	Non-veterans over 50	Veterans over 50
Vote in local elections (sometimes or often)	48.7%	59.5%	71.2%	78.4%
Contacted public officials	7.8%	12.2%	14.3%	18.1%
Voted in 2012 Presidential Election	55.7%	61.2%	69.7%	74.0%
Registered to vote in 2012	67.1%	72.1%	77.0%	80.5%
Discussed politics with family and friends frequently	23.0%	27.7%	31.1%	39.3%

### Veterans in Congress

Veterans and active duty service members comprise 18% of the 114th Congress. This number has drastically decreased since the early 1970s, when nearly three-quarters of Congress members were veterans.<sup>25</sup> Even so, veterans are still technically over-represented in Congress today—the percentage of veterans in Congress is double the percentage of veterans in the US population—demonstrating that voters value veterans in public service.

Public service is a natural progression for those who have served in uniform. Veterans have experience with many of the issues facing the country today, from foreign policy to counter-terrorism to government spending. Elected veterans comprise a cohort poised to serve and work together for the betterment of the nation.



**“As far as I’m concerned, service to the country is far more important than service to any political party.”** - Rep. Seth Moulton (D-MA6)

**“It’s not about earning a paycheck. It’s about doing something good that you believe in.”** - Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-IL16)

**“I have found that my service in the military has been a complement to my public service, and my public service has been a complement to my military service.”**  
- Rep. Tulsi Gabbard (D-HI2)

**“We must rise to the occasion, as we always have; change what must be changed; and make the future better than the past.”** - Sen. John McCain (R-AZ)

## Community Involvement

“Community involvement” includes participation in various community organizations such as school groups, sports and recreation leagues, and civic associations.

Veterans are more likely than non-veterans to attend community meetings—11.2% of veterans attend public meetings, compared to 8.2% of non-veterans. Veterans also fix problems in the neighborhood by working with others at a higher rate than non-veterans—10.6% of veterans reported fixing something in the neighborhood, compared to 7.4% of non-veterans. And, about 20% more veterans than non-veterans make some kind of charitable contribution worth 25 dollars or more annually.

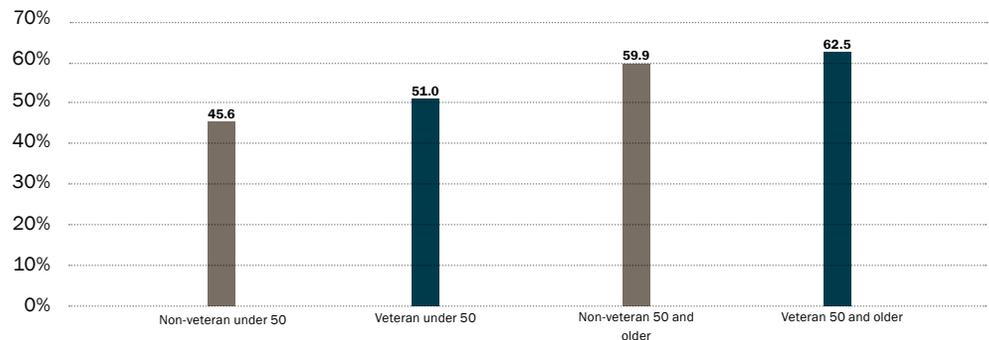
Additionally, veterans are more likely than non-veterans to be involved in some kind of community organization, and a larger percentage of veterans (12.5%) take a leadership role in those organizations, compared to non-veterans (9.4%). Most notably, far more veterans are involved with a civic or service group (17.7%) than the general population (5.8%).

However, it is clear that young veterans and older veterans differ in the way they associate with groups in their community—nearly half of older veterans belonged to some kind of group, while just over one-third of young veterans reported having a group affiliation.

Traditional veteran organizations—which are considered civic groups—attract a significant portion of older veterans (20.3%), but engage less than 10% of young veterans. A possible explanation for this is that post-9/11 veterans are bypassing traditional veteran groups to engage, instead, with modern organizations that highlight service, fitness, mentorship, and active ways to be involved in communities.<sup>26</sup>

Traditional veteran organizations attract **20.3% of older veterans**, but engage less than **10% of younger veterans**.

**Chart 4. Veteran Status and Charitable Giving**



**Table 2. Veterans' Group Participation**

	Non-veterans under 50	Veterans under 50	Non-veterans over 50	Veterans over 50
Belong to any group	34.4%	34.8%	37.5%	46.1%
Participate in service or civic association	<b>4.5%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>7.7%</b>	<b>20.3%</b>
Participate in any other type of organization	3.8%	6.3%	6.4%	7.9%
Officer or committee member of a group	7.7%	9.1%	12.1%	13.6%

**12.5%**

of veterans fill leadership roles in community organizations compared to 9.4% of non-veterans.

***The Mission Continues***

*The Mission Continues (TMC) is a nonprofit organization that empowers veterans to serve in new ways by engaging in two innovative and action-oriented programs.*

*TMC's Fellowship Program harnesses veterans' strengths, skills, and compassion through daily work at nonprofit organizations in their community. In 2014, 260 Fellows at The Mission Continues served over 100,000 hours at nonprofits across the country—the equivalent of 11.5 years of service.*

*Additionally, TMC's Service Platoon Program brings together teams of veterans and local partners to tackle pressing issues and strengthen the community. Nearly 3,000 veterans have signed up for 30 service platoons in 25 cities since the program's launch in 2013.*

*Through a unique model that provides reciprocal benefit for the veteran and the local community, veterans volunteer to help others, and through their service, they build new skills and networks that help them successfully transition home.*



***"A veteran's desire—and need—to serve doesn't end when he or she hangs up the military uniform. Veterans want to help build a brighter future for their communities and nation. Their communities need them, and they need their communities. The Mission Continues reignites veterans' desire to serve and supports them. They reenlist in the tough work of strengthening the country, one community at a time. These men and women are showing current and future generations of Americans that veterans' legacy extends well beyond their military commitment."***

- Alex Horton, US Army veteran

## DOES MILITARY SERVICE CHANGE ONE'S CIVIC HEALTH TRAJECTORY?

Veteran status is a powerful predictor of civic engagement. Previous studies have shown that the military promotes responsible family relationships and membership in the wider community,<sup>27</sup> partly because military training emphasizes group solidarity, socializes members into norms of service, and provides experiences of diversity.<sup>28</sup>

Data analyses for this report show that veterans' civic engagement levels are comparable to non-veterans with a higher level of educational attainment. For example, we see that veterans with a high school education have civic engagement profiles comparable to non-veterans with a college education. Similarly, veterans with some college education are civically engaged like non-veterans with four-year college degrees.

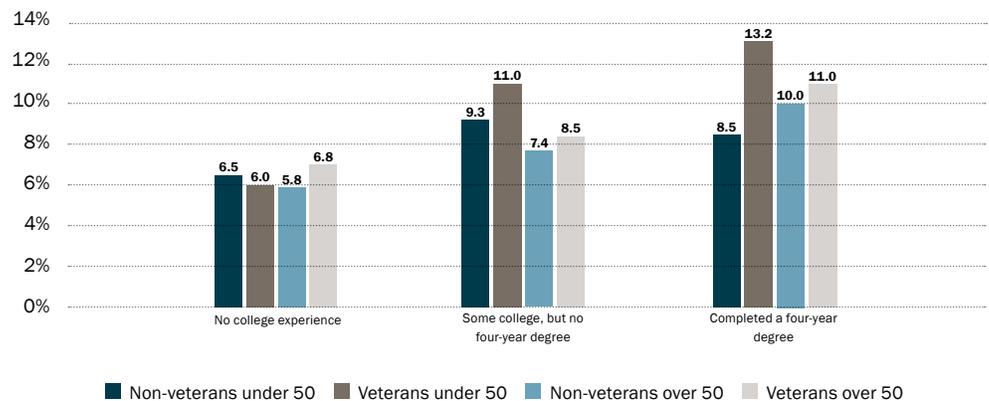
This is significant because educational attainment is often one of the strongest predictors of many forms of civic engagement. When we look at the civic engagement profile of veterans and non-veterans by educational attainment, it is clear that young veterans who have not gone to college are more civically active than otherwise expected in most aspects of engagement—their military service has indeed altered their civic health trajectory.

The graph below shows that young veterans with some college experience express public opinions at higher rates than older veterans with some college experience. The graph below shows that young veterans with some college experience express public opinions at higher rates than non-veterans with four-year college degrees.



Veterans are **critical assets to the nation**, and they are civic leaders in communities across the country. When they exit the military and return home, our country has an enormous opportunity to leverage their skills to strengthen communities.

**Chart 5. Frequently Using the Internet to Express Public Opinion by Educational Attainment**



Similarly, older veterans with no college experience talk about politics at higher rates than anyone with some college education, and at an equivalent rate to older non-veterans with a four-year degree. Additionally, young veterans with no college experience reported voting in local elections at a rate that is seen among young non-veterans with college experience, and veterans with some college experience vote like their non-veteran peers with four-year degrees.

In theory, college and the military both provide a structured environment that gives young people a chance to develop a strong identity. For veterans, service may help strengthen their civic identity in such a way that is similar to the boost college education can give to civic engagement of young people in general.



*"We're using the skills and experiences that we've learned through a decade of war to help people in need.... We are getting teams of highly skilled, highly trained, highly motivated [veterans] into communities, delivering aid where it's needed and helping people in their greatest time of need."*

**-Jake Wood, Co-Founder & CEO, Team Rubicon**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Veterans make communities stronger. As such, it is important to frame veteran reintegration as an opportunity for our country. If Americans perceive veterans as the civic resources they truly are, veterans will more likely transition home successfully, and communities will reap greater benefits from those transitions.

Non-veterans, veterans, and institutions must work together to change the cultural narrative around veterans from one of charity and pity to one of leadership and empowerment.

This includes a shift in veteran-focused “charity.” Americans should value organizations and foundations that encourage and enable civic engagement among veterans. Many nonprofit organizations exist to support veterans in times of need—which is extremely valuable and necessary work. But few organizations exist to support and empower the majority of veterans who wish to continue their service at home and engage in communities. In the coming years, since combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have ended, we will begin to see an even greater need to shift our focus from immediate needs to long-term solutions in the veteran community.

By working together to change the cultural narrative around veterans, we are taking strides to bridge the civilian-military divide. We can all take additional steps to bridge the divide by:

- **Challenging stereotypes, dispelling myths, and recognizing veterans’ civic leadership**
- **Learning about military history and the veteran experience: read books, watch movies, watch videos online, have conversations with veterans**
- **Understanding that intangible skills are gained in the military; military service and college experience should both be highly valued**
- **De-stigmatizing mental illness and understanding that conditions like PTSD are human conditions, not veteran conditions**

Non-veterans, veterans, and institutions must work together **to change the cultural narrative around veterans** from one of charity and pity to one of **leadership and empowerment**.



## Recommendations for Non-veterans

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- **Reconsider the way you think about veterans.** The veteran population is changing—it's becoming more diverse in age, gender, race, and sexual orientation. In 2015, Gulf War-era and Post-9/11 veterans will overtake Vietnam veterans as the largest segment of the population, and the majority of veterans will be members of the all-volunteer force.
- **Have a conversation with a veteran.** Veteran-civilian dialogue is key to bridging the civilian-military divide. Veterans have stories to tell and experiences to share. Next time you meet a veteran, go beyond saying “thank you for your service,” and have a conversation with him or her. Ask him where he served or ask her what she did in the military. Most importantly ask, “what’s next?” after the military.
- **Serve alongside veterans.** Strive to meet veterans’ levels of community participation—volunteer in your neighborhood and engage the veterans you know to serve with you.

## Recommendations for Veterans

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- **Do your part to help bridge the civilian-military divide.** Veterans are in the unique position of having experienced both being a civilian and being in the military. Therefore, you are uniquely suited to help bridge the divide. Share your experiences with non-veterans, start conversations about the military, and explain how civilians can show appreciation for your service in meaningful ways.
- **Engage in your community.** Volunteer, participate in government, help neighbors, and lead civilians by example. Utilize your skills to strengthen your community and lead others.
- **Seek out veteran empowerment organizations near you.** Organizations that empower veterans to continue to grow and serve as leaders—like The Mission Continues, Team Rubicon, Student Veterans of America, the Pat Tillman Foundation—have local affiliates across the country.

## Recommendations for Nonprofits

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- **Leverage the power of veteran volunteers** through tailored and active recruitment. All people, veterans included, are more likely to participate in their communities if they are asked, or offered the opportunity to do so. Also, recognize veteran volunteers for their exemplary work and dedication.
- **Veteran-focused nonprofit organizations** can leverage their resources to collaborate and reach veterans more effectively—especially young veterans who are less likely to join traditional civic groups without being asked directly.
- **Modernize Veteran Service Organizations to reach young veterans.** As the veteran population changes, so should your approach to engaging veterans. Consider converting underutilized legacy Veteran Service Organization outposts into gyms, libraries, daycares, mentor centers, or other such places that attract young volunteers in your community.

## Recommendations for Media

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- **Portray veterans reasonably and accurately on film and television**, avoiding the archetypal “heroic” and “broken” veteran characters. Instead, aim for more multi-dimensional, normalized depictions of veterans that represent the majority of veterans in America. Such depictions will positively contribute to the overall cultural narrative around veterans and foster understanding between the veteran and civilian populations.
- **Give voice to veterans by engaging the military and veteran community.** Cast veteran actors, hire veteran writers, portray veteran characters, tell veterans’ stories, and use veterans as resources on set or in writers’ rooms.
- **Promote responsible news media by instituting best practices for reporting veteran-related stories.** A working example of this type of action is The Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma (DART) at Columbia University. DART informs innovative and ethical news reporting on violence, conflict, and tragedy by providing resources to journalists from a global, interdisciplinary network of news professionals, mental health experts, educators, and researchers.<sup>29</sup>

## Recommendations for Policymakers

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- **Incentivize veterans to participate in national service programs like AmeriCorps, Teach for America, and City Year.** One way to do this is to amend the GI Bill to include a veterans civilian service option. This would provide veterans opportunities to use their leadership skills and continue serving their communities while transitioning back to civilian life.
- **Widely publicize the Department of Defense’s Call to Continued Service campaign.** In early 2015, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff released a letter urging all transitioning service members to continue serving the nation as civilians in their communities. The letter is part of a *Call to Continued Service* campaign that will include a coordinated outreach effort from across the services that reinforces the call to service in the Chairman’s letter.<sup>30</sup> The letter should be a source of inspiration to veterans and civilians alike.

## CONCLUSION

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Veterans are valuable civic assets. Those who are engaged in their communities are contributing to the strength and growth around them. Those who are not yet engaged have enormous potential to lead and serve in meaningful ways. We can strengthen our communities and our country by expecting and encouraging veterans to continue their service at home.

As a country, we should do all we can to support veterans during reintegration. At the same time, we should not assume that all veterans return home seeking charity. In fact, the majority of veterans report that they want to continue serving their communities and country as civilians.

It is important to be mindful that most veterans return home willing and able to seize new opportunities. Misconceptions and stereotypes can negatively affect veterans' transitions home and future plans. So, hold veterans to high expectations—they will rise to meet them.





## A WORD ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS

NCoC encourages our partners to consider how civic health data can inform dialogue and action in their communities, and to take an evidence-based approach to helping our communities and country thrive. While we encourage our partners to consider and offer specific recommendations and calls to action in our reports, we are not involved in shaping these recommendations. The opinions and recommendations expressed by our partners do not necessarily reflect those of NCoC.

This report should be a conversation-starter. The data and ideas presented here raise as many questions as they answer. We encourage government entities, community groups, business people, leaders of all kinds, and individual citizens to treat this report as a first step toward building more robust civic health for veterans.



## TECHNICAL NOTE

Unless otherwise noted, findings presented in this report are based on the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE)'s analysis of the Census Current Population Survey (CPS) data. Any and all errors are our own. Volunteering estimates are from the CPS September Volunteering Supplement, 2013; voting and registration data come from the CPS November Voting/Registration Supplement, 2012; and all data on other civic engagement indicators come from the CPS Civic Engagement Supplement, 2013. Using a probability-selected sample of about 60,000 occupied households drawn from geographically based sampling units, the CPS collects monthly data on employment and demographic characteristics of the nation. Depending on the CPS supplement, the single-year CPS sample sizes for veterans included in this report were 3,538 (Civic Engagement Supplement); 7,750 (Volunteering Supplement); and 9,383 (Voting Supplement).

In order to get the demographic estimates of the veterans' background, the sample data was weighted by the veteran weight, computed by the Census Bureau. The Veteran weight is designed in such a way that estimates will accurately track the official statistics reported by the Veterans Administration. The comparative non-veteran sample demographics are estimated using the final population weight, also computed by the Census Bureau. For all estimates of civic health indicators, we use the specific weights computed for each supplement. These civic engagement weights account for non-response bias.

In this report, we include all veterans for demographic reporting. For age-specific, group-based reporting, we include veterans and non-veterans who are 20 years old and older. We did this because there

are very few veterans who are 19 or younger. In this report, we made comparisons between veterans and non-veterans between ages 20 and 49, and comparisons between veterans and non-veterans aged 50 and older.

The Census CPS administers three different surveys from which civic indicators for this report are drawn. The September Volunteering Supplement—which is administered annually—includes questions about volunteering (e.g., frequency and types of volunteer work), community involvement, and charitable contribution. The Civic Engagement Supplement—which was administered annually between 2008 and 2011, and again in 2013—includes questions about political engagement (e.g., political discussion and voting in local elections), and social connection (e.g., favors for neighbors, seeing friends). Statistics about voter participation in national elections come from the Voting and Registration Supplement, which is administered in even years. The estimates are based on US citizens.

All surveys, including federal surveys, are subject to sampling error. Margin of error is influenced by multiple factors including sample size, estimate size, population size, and other parameters. Therefore, we do not report one margin of error across all indicators. With that said—due to the large sample sizes in this report (3,538 for the smallest supplement)—sampling error is quite small, within one to two percentage points. However, any analysis that breaks down the sample into smaller groups (e.g., gender, education) will have smaller samples, and therefore the margin of error will increase.

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# NOTES

# CIVIC HEALTH INDEX

## State and Local Partnerships

NCoC began America's Civic Health Index in 2006 to measure the level of civic engagement and health of our democracy. In 2009, NCoC was incorporated into the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and directed to expand this civic health assessment in partnership with the Corporation for National and Community Service and the US Census Bureau.

NCoC now works with partners in more than 30 communities nationwide to use civic data to lead and inspire a public dialogue about the future of citizenship in America and to drive sustainable civic strategies.

### STATES

#### Alabama

University of Alabama  
David Mathews Center for Civic Life  
Auburn University

#### Arizona

Center for the Future of Arizona

#### California

California Forward  
Center for Civic Education  
Center for Individual and Institutional Renewal  
Davenport Institute

#### Colorado

Metropolitan State University of Denver  
The Civic Canopy  
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership  
Campus Compact of Mountain West  
History Colorado  
Institute on Common Good

#### Connecticut

Everyday Democracy  
Secretary of the State of Connecticut

#### District of Columbia

ServeDC

#### Florida

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship  
Bob Graham Center for Public Service  
Lou Frey Institute of Politics and Government

#### Georgia

GeorgiaForward  
Carl Vinson Institute of Government,  
The University of Georgia  
Georgia Family Connection Partnership

#### Illinois

McCormick Foundation

#### Indiana

Center on Congress at Indiana University  
Indiana Bar Foundation  
Indiana Supreme Court  
Indiana University Northwest  
IU Center for Civic Literacy

#### Kentucky

Commonwealth of Kentucky,  
Secretary of State's Office  
Institute for Citizenship & Social Responsibility,  
Western Kentucky University  
Kentucky Advocates for Civic Education  
McConnell Center, University of Louisville

#### Maryland

Mannakee Circle Group  
Center for Civic Education  
Common Cause-Maryland  
Maryland Civic Literacy Commission

#### Massachusetts

Harvard Institute of Politics

#### Michigan

Michigan Nonprofit Association  
Michigan Campus Compact  
Michigan Community Service Commission  
Volunteer Centers of Michigan  
Council of Michigan Foundations

#### Minnesota

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

#### Missouri

Missouri State University  
Park University  
Saint Louis University  
University of Missouri Kansas City  
University of Missouri Saint Louis  
Washington University

#### Nebraska

Nebraskans for Civic Reform

#### New Hampshire

Carsey Institute  
Campus Compact of New Hampshire  
University System of New Hampshire  
New Hampshire College & University Council

#### New York

Siena College Research Institute  
New York State Commission on National and Community Service

#### North Carolina

Institute for Emerging Issues

#### Ohio

Miami University Hamilton Center for Civic Engagement

#### Oklahoma

University of Central Oklahoma  
Oklahoma Campus Compact

#### Pennsylvania

Center for Democratic Deliberation  
National Constitution Center

#### South Carolina

University of South Carolina Upstate

#### Texas

The Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life,  
University of Texas at Austin

#### Virginia

Center for the Constitution at James Madison's Montpelier  
Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

### ISSUE SPECIFIC

#### Latinos Civic Health Index

Carnegie Corporation

#### Veterans Civic Health Index

Got Your 6  
American Express  
Points of Light

#### Millennials Civic Health Index

Mobilize.org  
Harvard Institute of Politics  
CIRCLE

#### Economic Health

Knight Foundation  
Corporation for National & Community Service (CNCS)  
CIRCLE

## CITIES

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### **Atlanta**

Community Foundation of Greater Atlanta

### **Chicago**

McCormick Foundation

### **Kansas City & Saint Louis**

Missouri State University

Park University

Saint Louis University

University of Missouri Kansas City

University of Missouri Saint Louis

Washington University

### **Miami**

Florida Joint Center for Citizenship

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

Miami Foundation

### **Pittsburgh**

University of Pittsburgh

Carnegie Mellon University

### **Seattle**

Seattle City Club

Boeing Company

Seattle Foundation

### **Twin Cities**

Center for Democracy and Citizenship

Citizens League

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

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