



Postsecondary National Policy Institute

VETERANS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Since 1944, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act (also known as the G.I. Bill) has provided educational assistance to service members, veterans, and their dependents through stipends for tuition and other expenses for college or trade schools. This assistance has expanded access to higher education for veterans and their families. In 2018, over 650,000 veterans used military benefits to pursue higher education.

ENROLLMENT TRENDS

- In 2018, 75% of student veterans were enrolled as full-time students.
- In 2017, 52% of student veterans were enrolled in undergraduate programs compared to 24% enrolled in two-year programs.
 - 15% were enrolled in technical, vocational, or non-degree programs.
 - 9% were enrolled in a graduate program.
- In 2015, veterans using military benefits enrolled in a variety of institution types.
 - 56% enrolled in public institutions.
 - 17% enrolled in private institutions.
 - 27% enrolled in for-profit institutions.

DEMOGRAPHICS

- In 2018, the majority of student veterans were between the ages of 24 and 40.
 - Only 15% of student veterans were traditionally aged (ages 18 to 23).
- In 2018, 47% of student veterans were parents and 47% were married.
- In 2017, 73% of student veterans were male and 27% were female.
- In 2016, 60% of undergraduate students who received veterans' education benefits were White, 16% were Black, 14% were Hispanic, 3% were Asian, and 7% were "other" or multicultural.
- In 2018, 62% of student veterans were first-generation college students.

FIELDS OF STUDY AND ACADEMIC TRENDS

- Top fields of study for student veterans in 2015 were as follows:
 - 27% majored in business.
 - 14% majored in STEM programs.
 - 10% majored in health professions.
- In 2019, student veterans had an average GPA of 3.39.
- In 2015, veteran students had a 54% completion rate, which was similar to the overall national average of 53% and higher than the 39% completion rate of other adult learners.

CHALLENGES

- Student veterans were less likely than non-veteran students to invest time outside of the classroom on activities not essential to the completion of their course as a result of parenting responsibilities, work, or other factors.
- Student veterans reported difficulties transitioning from a military style of technical learning and a hierarchical organizational structure to a university learning environment.
- Military service members and veterans relocate often due to service, and these frequent moves made it challenging for veterans to establish residency in any one state for purposes of qualifying for in-state tuition rates at public institutions.
- Because of deployments while in school, some veterans experienced the loss of scholarships, tuition dollars, and academic credits during the academic school year.
- Student veterans often faced mental health challenges.
 - Between 7% and 8% of student service members and veterans reported a past suicide attempt and up to 35% reported having suicidal thoughts.

SOURCES

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["SVA Census: 2019 Takeaways."](#) *Student Veterans of America*, 2019.

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["Student Service Members/Veterans on Campus: Challenges for Reintegration."](#) *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, January 2017.

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