



# Postsecondary National Policy Institute

## Veteran Students in Higher Education

### CENSUS OVERVIEW

According to the U.S. Census' American Community Survey (ACS), in 2021 [6.4%](#) of the population aged 18 and over were veterans of the U.S. military. Of those veterans, 24.6% served September 2001 or later, 23.8% served between August 1990 and September 2001, 34.2% are veterans of the Vietnam War era, 4.9% were veterans of the Korean War era, and 1.1% were veterans of World War II. Ten percent of veterans were female. White non-Hispanic people were the most represented racial/ethnic group among veterans at 73%, compared to 12.3% Black or African American, 8.2% Hispanic or Latino of any race, 7.4% reporting two or more races, and 2.7% reporting a race/ethnicity not listed. For individuals aged 25 or over, 31.3% of veterans held a bachelor's degree or higher compared to 35.3% of nonveterans.

### ENROLLMENT

Unless otherwise noted, enrollment data in this section come from the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey (NPSAS), academic year 2015-16.

- [4.9%](#) of undergraduates were veterans.
  - 3.4% of public 4-year, 3.7% of private nonprofit 4-year, 5.3% of public 2-year, and 9.2% of for-profit institution enrollments were veterans.
- Veteran students were [twice as likely](#) to attend for-profit institutions and slightly more likely to attend public 2-year institutions than the national average.
  - 16.6% of veterans attended for-profit institutions, compared to 8.8% of all students
  - 38.3% attended public 2-year institutions, compared to 35.3% of all students
- [5.1%](#) of students enrolled at minority-serving institutions (MSIs) were veterans, while 4.7% of students enrolled at non-MSIs were veterans.
  - While [1%](#) of veteran students enrolled at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), a similar rate as nonveterans, 20.1% of veterans attended Black-serving non-HBCU institutions compared to 11.2% of nonveteran students.
- [57%](#) of veteran students were aged 30 or older, compared to 21% of non-veteran students.
- [7.4%](#) of Native American, 5.7% of students reporting more than one race, 5.6% of Black, 5.4% of white, 5.4% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 3.7% of Hispanic or Latino, and 1.8% of Asian students were veterans.

### FINANCIAL AID

- According to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), 484,406 students received Post-9/11 GI Bill Financial Benefits, while 223,959 students received Department of Defense (DOD) Tuition Assistance Program benefits in the 2020-21 academic year.<sup>1</sup>
  - The average Post-9/11 GI Bill benefit was \$10,358 and the average DOD Tuition Assistance was \$2,169.

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<sup>1</sup> Students may qualify for both programs, so there is likely overlap. These figures were calculated by the authors.

- According to the NPSAS, [46.9%](#) of veteran students received some form of federal Title IV financial aid in the 2015-16 academic year other than GI Bill or DOD benefits, compared to 54.9% of nonveteran students.
  - A [similar share](#) of veteran and nonveteran students received a Pell grant (61.2% vs. 60.8%).
  - [26.2%](#) of veteran students received a federal student loan, compared to 37.1% of nonveteran students.
- Among veteran students who received federal Title IV aid, the [average amount](#) of all federal aid received was \$7,646, compared to \$8,613 for nonveteran students.
  - The average Pell grant amount was the same for veteran and nonveteran students.
  - The average Federal student loan amount for veteran students was \$7,874, compared to \$8,361 for nonveteran students.

## COMPLETION/DEGREE ATTAINMENT

- According to the Beginning Postsecondary Students (BPS) study, among students who first enrolled in the 2011-12 academic year, [16.9%](#) of veteran students had attained a bachelor's degree by 2017, compared to 37.1% of nonveteran students.
  - 52% of veteran students had attained no degree or certificate, compared to 43.7% of nonveteran students
- Among all students who had attained a bachelor's degree by 2017, [less than 1%](#) were veteran students.

## EARNINGS AND WEALTH

- According to the Baccalaureate & Beyond study, ten years after receiving a bachelor's degree, veteran graduates who reported having an income averaged a gross income of [\\$79,371](#), compared to the average of \$76,293 for nonveteran students.
- Wealth accumulation can be [measured](#) differently from income. Ten years after graduating:
  - [73.7%](#) of veteran graduates reported owning a home, compared to 62.4% of nonveteran graduates
  - [87.3%](#) of veteran graduates had some form of a retirement account, similar to nonveteran graduates

## POPULATION-SPECIFIC CONSIDERATIONS

- In 2013, student veterans [reported](#) investing less time outside of the classroom on activities not essential to the completion of their coursework due to parenting responsibilities or work.

## DATA SOURCES

[American Community Survey](#). U.S. Census Bureau, November 2022.

[Baccalaureate & Beyond Survey](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2022.

[Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2022.

[Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System](#). National Center for Education Statistics. November 2022.

[National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey](#). National Center for Education Statistics, November 2022.

[American Council on Education](#). December 2013.