



Office of
Public Affairs

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VA Fact Sheet

WORLD WAR II VETERANS BY THE NUMBERS

Historic Perspective

- Approximately 16.5 million men and women served in the armed forces during the World War II (WW II) period, September 16, 1940 through July 25, 1947.
- These participants represented one-third of the then male population 15 years and older.
- Among the more than 16 million WW II service men and women, 70% served in the Army (including Army air forces), 26% in the Navy, and 4% in the Marines.
- Approximately 73% of WW II military personnel served overseas.
- Approximately 407,000 American service men and women died while in service during WW II, including 292,000 battle deaths and 115,000 other deaths. The total death number includes 79,000 who were lost in combat and never recovered. Another 672,000 suffered non-fatal wounds.
- Among males 15 years of age or older in each state and the District of Columbia, the percentage of WW II participants was highest in the District of Columbia and Nevada (43% each), followed by Utah (41%), New Mexico (39%), Arizona (38%), and California (37%).
- There were 464 WW II Congressional Medal of Honor recipients, of whom 50 were still living as of mid-April 2004. Their branches of service were 286 Army, 82 Marine Corps, 57 Navy, 38 Army Air Corps, and one Coast Guard.
- There were 130,201 WW II POWs, of whom 14,072 died while they were POWs. Approximately 33,050 were estimated to be living at the end of 2003.

World War II Veterans Today

- In 2003, there were 4,370,000 living WW II veterans.
- WWII veterans accounted for 17% of the total 2003 veteran population of 25,179,000.
- For 90 percent of WWII veterans, WWII was the only war in which they served.
- In 2003, the median age of WW II veterans was 80.1 years: there were 1,946,000 under age 80; 1,689,000 age 80 to 84; 607,000 age 85 to 89; 113,000 age 90 to 94; and 15,000 age 95 and over.
- There were 4,173,000 male and 197,000 female WW II veterans in 2003.
- WW II veterans are estimated to be dying at a rate of slightly more than 1,000 per day.

Tomorrow's World War II Veterans—Projections

- The WW II veteran population is projected to decline to less than 3.7 million by Mid-August 2005, the 60-year anniversary of Japanese acceptance of Allied peace terms.
- In 2005, WW II veterans are projected to make up 15 percent of the total veteran population and have a median age of 81.8 years. By 2020, WW II veterans are projected to make up one percent of all veterans and have a median age of 94.2.
- Among all males aged 75 or over in 2005, 50 percent will be WW II veterans, while 1.5 percent of all women of that age will be WW II veterans.

Where Do World War II Veterans Live?

- In 2003, the five states with the largest number of WW II veterans were California (434,600), Florida (405,000), New York (257,800), Pennsylvania (256,600) and Texas (244,200).

- In 2003, the five states with the smallest number of WW II veterans were Alaska (4,400), Wyoming (8,100), North Dakota (9,200), Vermont (9,600), and South Dakota (12,100).
- The state with the highest percentage of WW II veterans among all veterans in the state was New Jersey with 23 percent; the state with the lowest percentage of WW II veterans was Alaska, with 7 percent.

What are the Major Socio-Demographic Characteristics of World War II Veterans?

- According to the 2000 census, 93 percent of WW II veterans were white, five percent were black, and two percent were of other races.
- The 2000 census showed approximately 73 percent of WW II veterans were married at that time, 1 percent were separated, 3 percent had never married, 6 percent were divorced, and 17 percent were widowed.
- According to the 2000 census, 40 percent of WW II veterans had at least some college education. More than half the WW II veterans who attended college earned at least a bachelor's degree.

VA Benefits and World War II Veterans

Health Care

- According to the 2001 Survey of Veterans, about 42 percent of WW II veterans have used VA health care.
- In FY 2003, nearly 77,000 WW II veterans accounted for nearly 120,000 discharges from VA Medical Centers – more than 21 percent of all discharges.
- According to the 1987 Survey of Veterans, the percentage of WWII veterans age 65 or older who ever used VA hospital inpatient services was 32 percent for those with personal income of less than \$15,000; 21 percent for those at \$15,000-\$29,999; and 17 percent for those at \$30,000 or more.
- Among WW II veterans discharged from VA medical centers in FY 2003, circulatory conditions represented 28% and respiratory conditions 15% of major diagnostic categories.

Compensation/Pension, Education, and Home Loans

- As of September 30, 2003, there were 413,689 WW II veterans receiving service-connected compensation payments and 132,105 who were receiving nonservice-connected pension payments.
- The states with the highest percentages of WW II veterans receiving VA service-connected compensation are Massachusetts (15%) and Rhode Island (13%). The lowest percentages of service-compensated WW II veterans are found on the East Coast (north of Florida and south of New Jersey), the West Coast (including Alaska and Hawaii) and most of the lower and middle states of both the Midwest and Rocky Mountains.
- WW II veterans in the southern U.S. and in the Dakotas are far more likely than their peers elsewhere to be in receipt of nonservice-connected low income pension benefits. Mississippi has the highest percentage of WW II veterans receiving pension (10%) followed by neighboring Alabama and Louisiana (8% each).
- According to the 2001 Survey of Veterans, about 32 percent of WW II veterans have used VA to finance a home loan.
- About 7.8 million WW II veterans used the GI Bill for education or training purposes, about one-half of those eligible. These included 2.2 million college-level trainees and 3.5 million who trained in other schools. There were also 690,000 farm trainees and 1.4 million on-job trainees.

Interments

- From 1973 to September 30, 2003, nearly 790,000 WW II veterans were interred at a VA National Cemetery.

Data Sources

1. VetPop2001Adj, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of the Actuary.
2. Census 2000 Survey, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census.
3. Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census.
4. National Survey of Veterans 2001, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness.
5. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration.
6. VA Compensation and Pension Master Record, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Benefits Administration.
7. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration.
8. Congressional Medal of Honor Society.
9. The American Ex-Prisoners of War Association