

Syracuse University

SURFACE at Syracuse University

Institute for Veterans and Military Families

Institutes, Research Centers, and Campus
Groups

2-2020

Black & African Americans in the Military: From Service to Civilian Life

Rosalinda V. Maury

Syracuse University (IVMF), rvmaury@syr.edu

Corrinne B. Zoli

Syracuse University

Daniel Fay

Nicholas Armstrong

Syracuse University (IVMF), narmstro@syr.edu

Nyasha Y. Boldon

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: <https://surface.syr.edu/ivmf>



Part of the [Human Resources Management Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Maury, Rosalinda V.; Zoli, Corrinne B.; Fay, Daniel; Armstrong, Nicholas; Boldon, Nyasha Y.; Linsner, Rachel; Sears, Kicia; Cantor, Gilly; and Keville, Mary Rachel, "Black & African Americans in the Military: From Service to Civilian Life" (2020). *Institute for Veterans and Military Families*. 126.

<https://surface.syr.edu/ivmf/126>

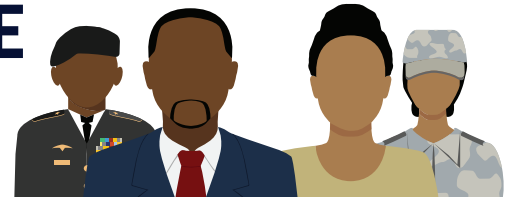
This Data Brief is brought to you for free and open access by the Institutes, Research Centers, and Campus Groups at SURFACE at Syracuse University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Institute for Veterans and Military Families by an authorized administrator of SURFACE at Syracuse University. For more information, please contact surface@syr.edu.

Author(s)/Creator(s)

Rosalinda V. Maury, Corrinne B. Zoli, Daniel Fay, Nicholas Armstrong, Nyasha Y. Boldon, Rachel Linsner, Kicia Sears, Gilly Cantor, and Mary Rachel Keville

BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THE MILITARY: FROM SERVICE TO CIVILIAN LIFE

This infographic provides key highlights of Black and African American service members and veterans. The information and statistics in this document are from our various data collection efforts centered on military life, transition, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education.



Service Members Population

ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, AND RESERVE

350,000+

Black & African American Active Duty and Selected Reserve members

Total Military Force

220,000+ Active Duty Service Members

130,000+ Select Reserve Members

VETERANS

2.3 MILLION+

Black & African American veterans in U.S.

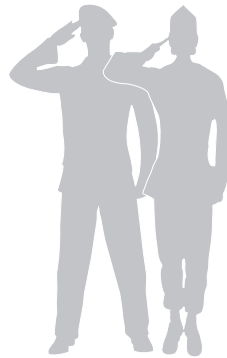
POST-9/11 VETERANS

- Of all Post-9/11 veterans, 16% are Black and African American (this is higher compared to the 13% of the nonveteran counterparts)

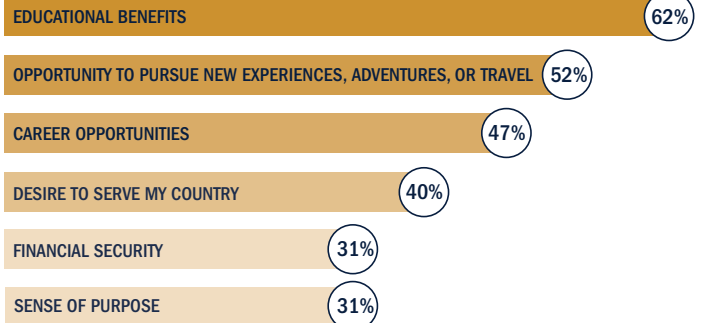
POST 9/11 VETERANS ARE MORE DIVERSE

- Of all female post 9/11 veterans, 23% are Black and African American

Views on Military Service ★★★★★



TOP MOTIVATIONS FOR MILITARY SERVICE



TOP SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES STRENGTHENED BY MILITARY SERVICE

- ▶ Teamwork (91%)
- ▶ Work ethic/discipline (89%)
- ▶ Leadership and management skills (83%)
- ▶ Mental toughness (81%)
- ▶ Professionalism (80%)
- ▶ Adaptation to different challenges (80%)
- ▶ Self-Discipline (80%)
- ▶ Ability to get things done (79%)
- ▶ Coping with adversity (78%)
- ▶ Social/Communication skills (78%)
- ▶ Working effectively with supervisors and other authorities (76%)

WAS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH IT?



89% of Black and African American service members reported that **JOINING THE MILITARY WAS A GOOD DECISION**

82% SERVED OUTSIDE OF THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES operating across different cultures, nations, and regions



STEM ★★★★★



41% reported that their military specialization is **STEM RELATED**

★ HISTORICAL NUMBERS OF BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN SOLDIERS ★

- ON THE EVE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, APPROXIMATELY 20% OF THE COLONIAL POPULATION WERE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN.
- OVER 200,000, MANY OF THEM FORMER SLAVES, SERVED IN THE U.S. MILITARY FORCES DURING THE CIVIL WAR
- OVER 400,000 SERVED IN UNIFORM DURING WORLD WAR I.
- OVER 900,000 SERVED IN UNIFORM DURING WORLD WAR II.

Transition



TOP REASONS FOR LEAVING ARMED SERVICES

34%

Lost faith or trust in military or political leadership

34%

Family Reasons



31%

Pursue education and training opportunities



30%

Military retirement (20 years or more)

28%

Career change/alternative job opportunities

27%

Completion of military service obligation (less than 20 years)

TOP TRANSITIONAL CHALLENGES

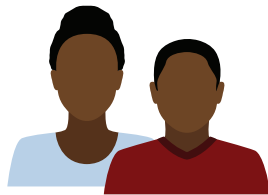
- 62% Getting a job
- 58% Navigating VA programs, benefits, and services
- 44% Financial struggles
- 40% Employment preparation
- 38% Depression
- 37% Skills translation
- 35% Getting socialized to civilian culture
- 34% Disability
- 32% Contradictory information from different sources
- 30% Understanding GI Bill benefits



Coordinating Care. Transforming Communities

In AmericaServes

21% of military members/veterans seeking services in AmericaServes networks identified as Black & African American



Top service categories for Black/African American clients



- ✓ Housing & Shelter
- ✓ Employment
- ✓ Benefits Navigation

MILITARY INFLUENCE ON POST-SERVICE ASPIRATIONS



reported that military service prepared them for their civilian career

Post Military Career

46% INDICATED THE DESIRE TO PURSUE A CAREER DIFFERENT FROM THEIR MILITARY SPECIALTY (MOS, AFSC, ETC.)

39% INDICATED THE DESIRE TO PURSUE A CAREER **SIMILAR** TO THEIR MILITARY SPECIALTY

15% INDICATE THEY ARE **UNSURE** IF THEY WILL PURSUE A CAREER SIMILAR TO THEIR MILITARY SPECIALTY



POSITIVE IMPACTS OF SERVICE



93% FELT PRIDE FROM THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING SERVICE

91% REPORTED THEIR SERVICE HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR LIFE*

90% INDICATED THEY MATURED AS A RESULT OF THEIR SERVICE



reported they would be happy if their child(ren) were to join the military*

TRANSITION DIFFICULTY

55% OF BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERAN RESPONDENTS characterized their financial transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 48% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

59% OF BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERAN RESPONDENTS characterized their employment transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 49% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

TIME TO EMPLOYMENT



30% of Black/African American veteran respondents reported it took less than three months to find employment after their transition, compared with 51% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

Employment

UNEMPLOYMENT

IN 2019 BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WAS AT

4.9%

THIS IS HIGHER THAN TOTAL VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WHICH WAS AT 3.1%



IN 2019 BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN POST 9/11 VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WAS AT

6.8%

THIS IS HIGHER THAN TOTAL POST 9/11 VETERAN UNEMPLOYMENT WHICH WAS AT 3.5%

EARNINGS



58,351

AVERAGE EARNINGS BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS

HIGHER compared to Black & African American nonveteran counterparts who earn about \$38,732

LOWER compared to non-minority veteran counterparts who earn about \$77,217 counterparts

TOP FIVE OCCUPATIONS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS

- 1 Service Occupations (security guards, police officers, correctional officers and jailers, firefighters)
- 2 Transportation and Material Moving Occupation
- 3 Management, Business, and Financial Occupation
- 4 Office and Administrative Support Occupation
- 5 Education, Legal, Community Service, Arts, and Media Occupation



TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS

- 1 Public Administration
- 2 Health Care and Social Assistance
- 3 Transportation and Warehousing
- 4 Manufacturing
- 5 Retail Trade



STEM WORKFORCE

OF THOSE VETERANS IN THE STEM WORKFORCE, 8% ARE BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN A DECLINE IN BLACK AND AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS PARTICIPATING IN STEM SINCE 2012 (↓0.844 % POINTS PER YEAR)



\$81,942



AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS IN STEM

\$94,241

AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS IN STEM WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE OR HIGHER



Entrepreneurship



IN 2018

7%

of Black and African American veterans were self-employed compared to 5% of their nonveteran counterparts.

THUS

Black & African American veterans are 1.275Xs more likely to be self-employed

COMPARED TO BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN NONVETERANS

OBSTACLES

82%

BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN VETERANS EXPERIENCE AT LEAST ONE OBSTACLE/BARRIER TO STARTING & OWNING THEIR BUSINESS

Top obstacles: ① Lack of necessary networks ② Lack of Capital

“ If I was a white male, it would be easier. ”



“ There are multiple financial options ...determining which services can be challenging. ”

REASONS FOR PURSUING ENTREPRENEURSHIP



DISSATISFACTION WITH THE CIVILIAN WORKFORCE

CREATIVITY & FLEXIBILITY

FINANCIAL & INDEPENDENCE

RECOGNIZE BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES



RESOURCES BLACK & AFRICAN AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS FIND MOST HELPFUL:

- ▶ Information on/from Conferences and Workshops
- ▶ Education
- ▶ Networking/Peer Network



SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY'S INSTITUTE FOR VETERANS AND MILITARY FAMILIES (IVMF)

is the first national institute in higher education singularly focused on advancing the lives of the nation's military, veterans and their families. Through its professional staff and experts, the IVMF delivers leading programs in career and entrepreneurship education and training, while also conducting actionable research, policy analysis, and program evaluations. The IVMF also supports veterans and their families, once they transition back into civilian life, as they navigate the maze of social services in their communities, enhancing access to this care working side-by-side with local providers across the country. The Institute is committed to advancing the postservice lives of those who have served in America's armed forces and their families. For more information, visit ivmf.syracuse.edu.

COPYRIGHT

© 2020, IVMF at Syracuse University. This content may be distributed freely for educational and research uses as long as this copyright notice is attached. No commercial use of this material may be made without express written permission.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Maury, R.V.; Zoli, C., Fay, D.; Armstrong, N.; Boldon, N.Y.; Linsner, R. K; Sears, K. Cantor, G.; & Keville, M.R. (2020, February). Black & African Americans in the Military: From Service to Civilian Life. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Higher Education



EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

In 2018, Black & African American post 9/11 veterans achieved:



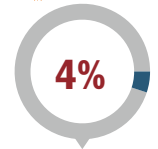
BACHELOR'S DEGREE OR HIGHER



SOME COLLEGE OR ASSOCIATE DEGREE



HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE

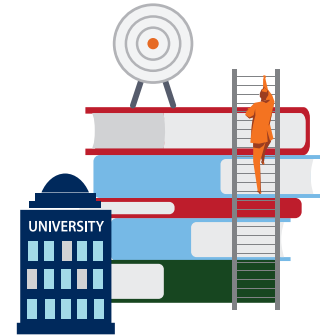


LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL DEGREE



BARRIERS THAT HINDERED PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- ▶ Lack of financial resources/ Financial burden (62%)
- ▶ GI Bill benefits expire before I complete my degree (30%)
- ▶ Personal/family obligations (24%)
- ▶ Health/disability issues (24%)
- ▶ Conflict between job and school (18%)
- ▶ Bureaucracy associated with VA paperwork and processing (18%)



HELPFUL RESOURCES AND ASSETS FOR VETERAN SUCCESS

- ▶ Military/veteran friendly campus (68%)
- ▶ Flexible class schedules (67%)
- ▶ Academic advising/counseling (65%)
- ▶ Preferred classroom settings & instruction (59%)
- ▶ Dedicated veterans office & administrators on campus (56%)
- ▶ Veterans supportive faculty (56%)
- ▶ Career services and counseling (54%)
- ▶ Academic preparation courses & remediation (53%)

CHALLENGES WHILE PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

- ▶ Lack of financial resources (37%)
- ▶ Age differences (29%)
- ▶ Few veterans resources on campus (26%)
- ▶ Working full time job (26%)
- ▶ Family responsibilities (22%)
- ▶ Transferring academic credits (20%)

REFERENCES

Service Member Population

2018 Demographics DoD Profile of the Military Community (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/data-research-and-statistics/military-community-demographics/2018-demographics-profile>

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Current Population Survey. Washington, D.C.

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (2017). Minority Veterans Report: Military Service History and VA Benefit Utilization Statistics. Data Governance and Analytics, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, DC. Retrieved from https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/Minority_Veterans_Report.pdf

Views on Military Service

Data of African American service members used from Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Transition

Data of African American veterans used from Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Positive impacts of service, transition difficulty, and time to employment were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2018-2016 Blue Star Families' annual Military Family Lifestyle Surveys (* is 2017 and 2018 only). Please note these findings are limited due to small sample size (n < 200) for African American veteran respondents. This effort is from Blue Star Families in collaboration with the IVMF. For more information, see Blue Star Families, 2018-2016 Military Family Lifestyle Survey Comprehensive Report. Blue Star Families. Retrieved from <https://bluestarfam.org/survey/>

Employment/Entrepreneurship

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2019). Current Population Survey. Washington, D.C.

Earnings, industry, occupation, and self-employment is data analyzed using Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimates]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>.

STEM is from Maury, R.; Stone, B.; Armstrong, N. (2018, December). Enhancing Veterans' Access to STEM Education and Careers: A Labor Market Analysis of Veterans in the STEM Workforce. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University

Data of African American veterans used from Boldon, N.Y. and Maury, R. V. (2017, November). Bridging the Gap: Motivations, Challenges, and Successes of Veteran Entrepreneurs (Operation Vetpreneurship Series, Interim Report). Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.

Higher Education

Steven Ruggles, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Josiah Grover, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 7.0 [U.S. Census Bureau 2018 American Community Survey 1-year estimates]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>.

Data of African American veterans used from Zoli, C., Maury, R., & Fay, D. (2015, November). Missing Perspectives: Servicemembers' Transition from Service to Civilian Life data-driven research to enact the promise of the Post-9/11 GI Bill. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University.