



Research Brief

The Commonwealth's Official Source for Population and Economic Statistics

November 11, 2011

Veterans Day 2011: A Profile of Pennsylvania Veterans

PENN STATE HARRISBURG – From the 92nd annual Veterans Day parade in downtown Pittsburgh to the events at the Pennsylvania Veterans Museum in Media, communities across the commonwealth spare no effort to honor former servicemen and women on Veterans Day. Veterans Day originated as Armistice Day on November 11, 1919, the first anniversary of the end of World War I. Seven years later, Congress passed a resolution calling for an annual observance, and ultimately November 11th became a national holiday beginning in 1938. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed legislation in 1954 to change the name to Veterans Day as a way to thank and honor all those who served in the United States Armed Forces.

Defining “Veteran Status”

The Census Bureau defines a “civilian veteran” as a person 18 years old and over who, at the time of the enumeration, had served on active duty in the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard in the past (even for a short time), but was not then on active duty, or who had served in the Merchant Marine during World War II. People who served in the National Guard or Military Reserves were classified as veterans only if they had been called up or ordered to active duty, not counting the 4 to 6 months for initial training or yearly summer camps. All other civilians 18 years old and over were classified as nonveterans.

Military Service and the Commonwealth

From America's earliest wars to more recent conflicts across the globe, millions of Pennsylvanians have served our country in defense of the nation. Today, veterans make up 9.9 percent of Pennsylvania's adult population, according to 2010 American Community Survey. The commonwealth is home to 981,646 former service men and women, ranking it 4th among states in terms of total veterans. California (1,947,570) lead all states and the District of Columbia, followed by Florida (1,616,185) and Texas (1,609,732). An additional 6,518 Pennsylvanians served on active duty in 2010.

Pennsylvania Veterans by Age, Sex, Race, and Ethnicity

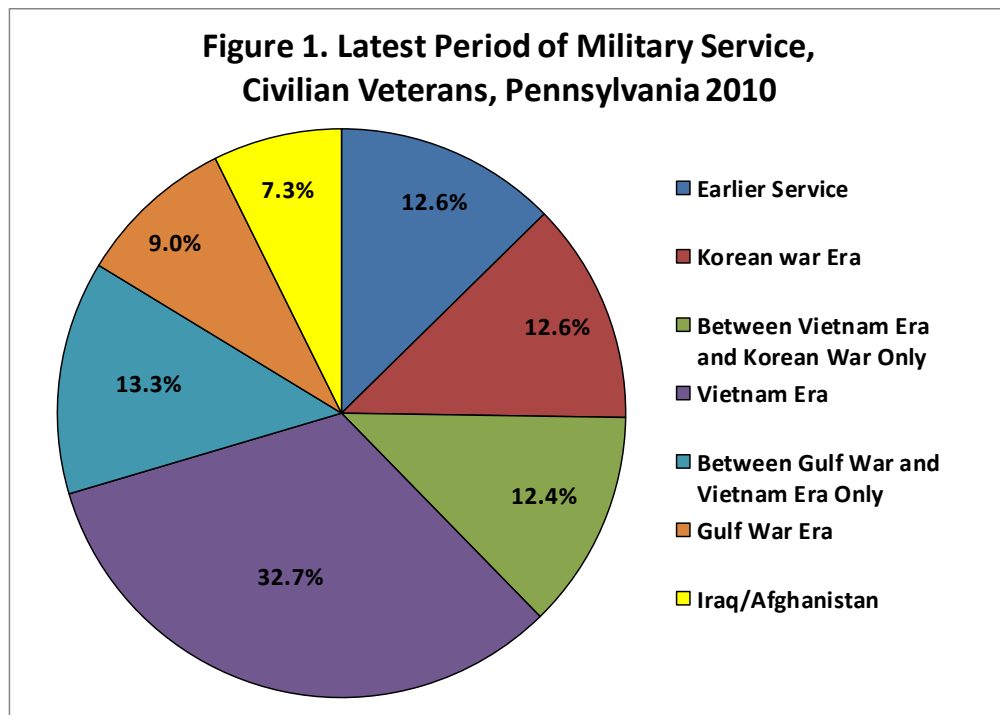
More than 70 percent (704,822) of all Pennsylvania veterans were 55 years or over in 2010. Veterans age 18-54 account for the remaining 28.2 percent (276,824). The veteran population was overwhelmingly male (925,468 or 94.3 percent) and White (885,382, 90.2 percent). African-Americans (78,869) accounted for 8.0 percent of the veteran population, and Hispanics (16,708) accounted for 1.7 percent of the total veteran population.

Other Veteran Characteristics

A larger proportion of veterans earned a high school diploma than non-veterans (90.2 percent compared to 88.2 percent for non-veterans). Fewer veterans went on to obtain a bachelor's or advance degree than non-veterans (21.0 percent versus 27.8 percent). However, former service men and women had higher median incomes (\$31,736 versus \$24,628), and lower rates of poverty (6.0 percent compared to 12.4 percent) in 2010. In Pennsylvania, 11.4 percent of veterans (111,652) have a service-connected disability rating: 19.3 percent of veterans who incurred a disability in the line of duty had a service-connected rating of 70 percent or higher. The Census Bureau defines a service-connected disability as a disability that was the result of disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. The ratings determine the compensation payment amounts made to the veterans. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 3.1 million veterans nationwide received compensation for service-connected disabilities in 2010.

Era of Service

Pennsylvania soldiers have served in various theaters all over the world. The Vietnam Era was the most recent period of service for 32.7 percent of veterans (see Figure 1.). Veterans who served prior to the Korea conflict (including World War II) accounted for 12.6 percent of the veteran population, followed by the more than 130,000 (13.3 percent) who served between the Vietnam Era and the Gulf War. Veterans who served between the Korea War Era and Vietnam Era made up 12.4 percent of veterans, while those who participated in the armed forces during Korean War Era accounted for 12.6 percent. The Gulf War Era included 88,091 Pennsylvania service members (9.0 percent), while the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have included 71,905 veterans (7.3 percent).



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates; U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs

Editors: For additional data, contact the Pennsylvania State Data Center's State Capital Office at 717.772.2710 or for faculty comment on this topic, contact Penn State Harrisburg's Public Information Office at 717.948.6029.

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