# Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders In the Military:

# From Service to Civilian Life

This infographic provides key highlights for Asian American and Pacific Islanders service members and veterans. The information and statistics in this document are from various data collection efforts centered on military life, transition, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education. Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse groups in the country (their heritage traces to over 30 different countries and ethnic groups and include over 100 languages and dialects).[[1]](#footnote-1)

## Population

### Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve

Currently over 118,000+ Asian/Pacific Islander Active Duty and Selected Reserve Members

*Total Military Force*

* Over 77,000 active duty service members
* Over 41,000 selected reserve members

### Veterans

Currently over 318,000+ Asian veterans in the U.S.

* Over 277,000 Asian male veterans
* Over 41,000 Asian female veterans
* Over 132,000 Post 9/11 Asian veterans

## Citizenship and Voting

### Citizenship

* 63% Native born US citizens (in the US or Puerto Rico/other US Island areas)
* 6% US citizens born abroad to American Parent(s)
* 31% Foreign born and US citizen by naturalization

### Voting

* 61% Voted in the November 2020 elections
  + 17% Voted in-person during the November 2020 elections
  + 44% Voted by mail during the November 2020 elections

# Views on Military Service

## Top Motivations for Military Service

* 71% Education benefits
* 53% New experiences/adventure/travel
* 45% A desire to serve your country
* 40% Sense of purpose
* 29% Career opportunities

## Top Skills & Attributes Strengthened by Military Service

## 87% Teamwork

## 87% Work ethic/discipline

## 83% Mental toughness

## 83% Adaptation to different challenges

## 80% Ability to get things done

## 80% Self-Discipline

## 80% Leadership and management skills

## 80% Professionalism

## 76% Perseverance

## 76% Confidence and self-esteem

## WAS MILITARY SERVICE WORTH IT?

* 85% reported that joining the military was a GOOD decision
* 87% served outside of the continental United States operating across different cultures, nations, and regions

## STEM

48% reported that their military specialization was STEM RELATED

# Transition

## Top Reasons for Leaving Armed Service

* 42% Lost faith or trust in military or political leadership
* 42% Pursue education and training opportunities
* 39% Career change/alternative job opportunities
* 32% Concerns & grievances about service experiences
* 28% Completion of military service obligation (less than 20 years)
* 26% Family reasons
* 22% Military retirement (20 years or more)

## Military Influence on Post Service Aspirations

* 70% reported that military service prepared them for their civilian career

### Post Service Career

* 49% indicated the desire to pursue a career DIFFERENT from their military specialty (MOS, AFSC, etc.)
* 30% indicated the desire to pursue a career SIMILAR to their military specialty
* 21% indicated they are UNSURE if they will pursue a career similar to their military specialty

## Top Transition Challenges

* 63% Navigating VA administration or benefits
* 61% Getting a job
* 48% Skills translation
* 45% Employment preparation
* 43% Depression
* 42% Getting socialized to civilian culture
* 40% Financial struggles
* 37% Disability
* 35% Understanding GI Bill benefits
* 34% Contradictory information from different sources

## AmericaServes NEtworks

Less than 1% of military members/veterans seeking services in AmericaServes networks identified as Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander. The top service categories for Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander clients were:

1. Employment

2. Housing & Shelter

3. Benefits Navigation

## Transition Difficulty

* 53% of Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander veteran respondents characterized their employment transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 49% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.
* 36% of Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander veteran respondents characterized their financial transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 48% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.
* 38% of Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander respondents characterized their overall transition as difficult or very difficult, compared with 43% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents.

## Time to Employment

37% of Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 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 2020 Asian veteran unemployment was at 5.1% (in 2019, the unemployment rate was 3.6%)
  + {this is LOWER than total veteran unemployment which was at 6.5%}
* In 2020 Asian post 9/11 veteran unemployment was at 6.7% (in 2019, the unemployment rate was 3.9%)
  + {this is LOWER than total post 9/11 veteran unemployment which was at 7.3%}

## Earnings

In 2019, average earning for Asian /Pacific Islander veterans was $83,516

{HIGHER compared to Asian /Pacific Islander nonveteran counterparts who earn about $75,875; HIGHER compared to non-minority veteran counterparts who earn about $82,608}

## TOP FIVE OCCUPATIONS In 2019

1. Office and Administrative
2. Business and Financial
3. Management
4. Installation, Maintenance, and Repair
5. Healthcare Practitioners and Technical

## TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES In 2019

1. Educational, Health and Social Services
2. Public Administration
3. Professional, Scientific, Management, Administrative, and Waste Management Services
4. Manufacturing
5. Transportation and Warehousing

# Stem Workforce

* Of those veterans in the STEM workforce, 3% are Asian
* $92,051 average earnings for Asian veterans in STEM
* $99,551 average earnings for Asian veterans in STEM with a college degree or higher
* $78,043 average earnings for Asian veterans in STEM with less than a college degree

# Entrepreneurship

* In 2019, 9% of Asian/Pacific Islander veterans were self-employed

## motivations for pursing entrepreneurship

* 39% Make own decisions
* 36% Maintain personal freedom
* 36% Acquire a comfortable living

## Current Barriers in 2020

* 44% Lack of initial capital
* 32% Current economic situation
* 28% Federal regulations and policies

## Top RESOURCES Asian /Pacific Islander ENTREPRENEURS FIND MOST HELPFUL

* 47% Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC)
* 31% SBA District Offices
* 31% Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
* 28% Other entrepreneurs
* 25% SCORE Business Mentors

# Higher Education

81% indicated that the military experience left a lasting impression in their education success

## Education Attainment

In 2019, Asian /Pacific Islander post 9/11 veterans have achieved:

* 47% bachelor’s degree or higher
* 35% some college or associate degree
* 12% high school degree
* 5% less than high school degree

## Motivations for PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

* 89% Career/job opportunities
* 72% Potential for making money/Improve economic status
* 71% Self-improvement and personal growth

## BARRIERS THAT HINDERED PURSUIT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

* 51% Lack of financial resources/ Financial burden
* 27% Personal/family obligations
* 22% Difficult courses

## CHALLENGES WHILE PURSUING HIGHER EDUCATION

* 32% Age differences
* 28% Family responsibilities
* 27% Being a commuter student

## HELPFUL RESOURCES AND ASSETS FOR VETERAN SUCCESS

* 77% Flexible class schedules
* 71% Academic advising/counseling
* 70% Military/veteran friendly campus

# References

*Population*

2019 Demographics DoD Profile of the Military Community (2019). 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. (2020). Current Population Survey. Washington, D.C.

*Views of Military Service*

Data of Asian and Pacific Islander service members/veteran (n=154) 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 Asian and Pacific Islander veteran (n=154) 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 difficulty and time to employment were analyzed from unpublished data collected for the 2018-2016 Blue Star Families’ annual Military Family Lifestyle Surveys. Please note these findings are limited due to small sample size (n < 100) for Asian and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 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/>

Data from AmericaServes is from the beginning of the AmericaServes to May 2021.

Citizenship and Voting is data analysis based on Current Population Survey, November 2020 Voter Supplement’s data of Asian and Pacific Islander veteran (n=137). Data can be downloaded at <https://www.census.gov/data/datasets/time-series/demo/cps/cps-supp_cps-repwgt/cps-voting.html>

*Employment/Entrepreneurship*

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020). Current Population Survey - Annual Averages for 2020. 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 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimate]. 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

Motivations, Barriers, and resources in entrepreneurship is data of Asian and Pacific Islander veteran (n=33) used from IVMF’s National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs Maury, R., Tihic, M., Sears, K., McKelvie, A., & Almissalati, N. (2020, Dec). 2020 National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs. Syracuse, NY: Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. More information can be found at <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsmae-series/>

*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 2019 American Community Survey 1-year estimates]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>.

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1. Taken from U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (webpage). Asian American & Pacific Islander Asian American and Pacific Islander Special Emphasis Program. Retrieved from <https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/DiversityInclusion/AAPI.asp> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)