

Native Americans in the Military: From Service to Civilian Life



Population

American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans in the Military

ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, & RESERVE

20,000+ American Indian/Alaska Native Active Duty & Selected Reserve Members

Total Military Force

- ▶ **14,000+** active duty service members
- ▶ **6,000+** selected reserve members

VETERANS

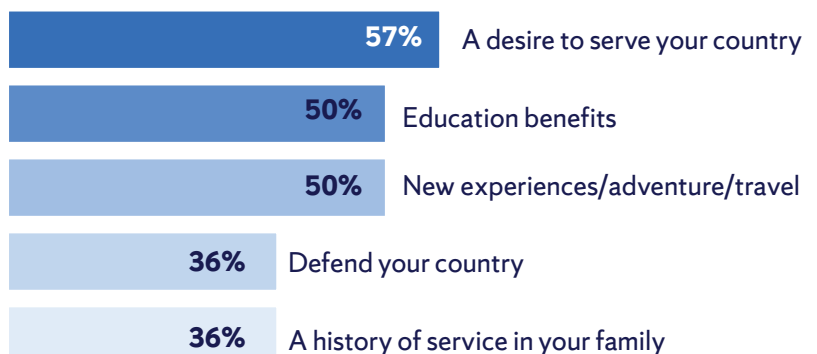
140,000+ American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans in the U.S.

- ▶ **11%** are female
- ▶ **39%** served during Vietnam era
- ▶ **18%** served during Gulf War Era II (Post 9/11)
- ▶ **22%** served during Gulf War Era I

25% of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans live outside of metropolitan areas

Views on Military Service

TOP MOTIVATIONS FOR MILITARY SERVICE



TOP SKILLS & ATTRIBUTES STRENGTHENED BY MILITARY SERVICE

- ▶ 88% Leadership and management skills
- ▶ 85% Work ethic/discipline
- ▶ 83% Teamwork
- ▶ 83% Adaptation to different challenges
- ▶ 79% Mental toughness
- ▶ 77% Professionalism
- ▶ 76% Ability to get things done
- ▶ 76% Training & teaching others
- ▶ 76% Coping with adversity
- ▶ 75% Perseverance



STEM

46% reported that their military specialization was **STEM RELATED**



POSITIVE IMPACTS OF SERVICE

- 95%** FELT PRIDE FROM THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING SERVICE
- 94%** REPORTED THEIR SERVICE HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON THEIR LIFE*
- 70%** REPORTED THEY WOULD BE HAPPY IF THEIR CHILD(REN) WERE TO JOIN THE MILITARY*

Transition

TOP REASONS FOR LEAVING ARMED SERVICES

43%

Lost faith or trust in military or political leadership

30%

Completion of military service obligation (less than 20 years)

30%

Family Reasons



29%

Medical Reasons

29%

Career change/alternative job opportunities



28%

Pursue education and training opportunities



18% live below poverty threshold
40% are enrolled for VA health care

TOP TRANSITIONAL CHALLENGES

62% Navigating VA administration or benefits

55% Getting a job

45% Getting socialized to civilian culture

45% Depression

44% Disability

43% Financial struggles



COMMUNITY SERVICES

LESS THAN 1%

of military members/veterans seeking services in **AmericaServes networks** identified as American Indian/Alaska Native.

TOP SERVICE CATEGORIES:

- ▶ 27% Housing & Shelter
- ▶ 12% Benefits Navigation
- ▶ 9% Employment

American Indian/Alaska Native veterans

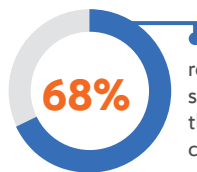
TIME TO EMPLOYMENT

44% REPORTED IT TOOK LESS THAN THREE MONTHS TO FIND EMPLOYMENT AFTER THEIR TRANSITION

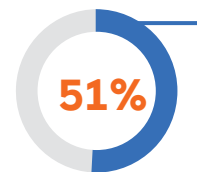
compared with 51% of White/Non-Hispanic veterans



MILITARY INFLUENCE ON POST SERVICE ASPIRATIONS



reported that military service **PREPARED** them for their civilian career



indicated the desire to pursue a career **DIFFERENT** from their military specialty (MOS, AFSC, etc.)

TRANSITION DIFFICULTY

62% OF AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA NATIVE VETERANS characterized their **overall transition** as difficult or very difficult (compared with 43% of White/Non-Hispanic veteran respondents)

Aspects of Transition Difficulty

Financial 64% characterized their financial transition as difficult or very difficult (compared with 48% of White/Non-Hispanic veterans)

Employment 65% characterized their employment transition as difficult or very difficult (compared with 49% of White/Non-Hispanic veterans)

Healthcare 59% characterized their healthcare transition as difficult or very difficult (compared with 40% of White/Non-Hispanic veterans)



DISABILITIES

29%

of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans have a service-connected disability

BARRIERS

OF THOSE WITH A DISABILITY

92% indicated their service-connected disability creates obstacles

- 33% in personal life
- 19% in holding a job
- 20% in getting a job
- 14% in completing their education

Is there anything you wish you could change about your transition?

“ The lack of realistic training ends up leaving veterans to face an uncomfortable lack of structure, miss the adrenaline of life-challenging situations, become annoyed at civilians with their less detail-orientation, and all compounded by worrying about finances. This all leaves the veterans and their families feeling isolated and alone as if no one understands the clear disconnect between veterans' expectations for post-military life and the reality they meet ”

- Air Force Post 9/11 Veteran

Employment

UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2019, American Indian/
Alaska Native veteran
unemployment was

8.0%

HIGHER compared to other veterans¹

but LOWER compared to American
Indian/Alaska Native nonveterans

The unemployment rate for male
American Indian/Alaska Native
veteran was 7.8%

The unemployment rate for female
American Indian/Alaska Native
veteran was 9.7%

¹ Using ACS 2019 the unemployment rates for veteran by race were: White, non-Hispanic = 4.37%; Black or African-American = 7.43%; Hispanic or Latino/a/x or of Spanish origin = 5.6%; Asian = 4.95%; American Indian or Alaska Native = 8.04%; Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander = 5.90%. The unemployment for American Indian or Alaska Native nonveteran = 11.49%

EARNINGS

IN 2019

\$50,000

median earnings for American
Indian/Alaska Native veterans



HIGHER compared to nonveterans who earn
about \$31,000

LOWER compared to non-minority veterans
who earn about \$61,000

IN 2019

TOP FIVE OCCUPATIONS

- 1 Transportation & Material Moving
- 2 Management
- 3 Production
- 4 Protective Service
- 5 Construction & Extraction

IN 2019

TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES

- 1 Educational, Health & Social Services
- 2 Public Administration
- 3 Professional, Scientific, & Management, & Administrative, & Waste Management Services
- 4 Manufacturing
- 5 Construction

In 2019, 55% of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans were in private sector and 35% were in public sector



STEM WORKFORCE

Of those veterans in the STEM
workforce, less than 1% are
American Indian/Alaska Native

\$82,025

AVERAGE EARNINGS FOR
AMERICAN INDIAN/ALASKA
NATIVE VETERANS IN STEM



WITH A COLLEGE DEGREE

\$ 96,491 average earnings
for American Indian/Alaska
Native veterans in STEM

LESS THAN A COLLEGE DEGREE

\$ 69,707 average earnings
for American Indian or Alaska
Native veterans in STEM



What are your career aspirations?

“ Open law firm catering to native americans
and start a law program for them in AK.”

- Army Gulf War Era I Veteran

Entrepreneurship



In 2019, 10% of American Indian/Alaska
Native veterans were self-employed

MOTIVATIONS FOR PURSUING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- 45% Opportunity to be financially independent/increase personal income
- 38% Maintain personal freedom
- 36% Improving quality of life



CURRENT BARRIERS

- 55% Lack of access to capital
- 45% Lack of financing
- 24% Federal regulations and policies
- 24% Personal health issues (disability, etc.)

60%



of American Indian/Alaska Native
veteran entrepreneurs indicated that
navigating the resources in their local
community was **NOT EASY**

TOP RESOURCES

- 32% SCORE Business Mentors
- 32% Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)
- 24% SBA District Offices
- 24% Veteran's Business Outreach Centers (VBOC)
- 24% Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (PTAC)

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.

ABOUT THIS DATA BRIEF:

Throughout American history, Native veterans have answered the call to serve in the Armed Services. Highly regarded within their tribal community for their dedication and commitment to serve in the Armed Services, Native American veterans represent 574 federally recognized tribes. We take this opportunity to honor all Native Americans and acknowledge their ongoing contributions to the success and growth of our nation. This infographic provides key highlights for American Indian and Alaska Native 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.

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Higher Education

How Can Higher Education Help?

“Have a support staff that works with not only mainstream veterans but diverse veterans such as Native American veterans.”
– Army Gulf War Era I Veteran

82%

of American Indian/Alaska Native veterans indicated that they **could not afford school without the GI Bill**

IN 2019

EDUCATION ATTAINMENT

American Indian/Alaska Native post 9/11 veterans have achieved:



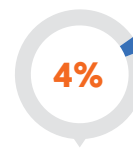
BACHELOR'S
OR HIGHER



SOME COLLEGE/
ASSOCIATE'S
DEGREE



HIGH
SCHOOL



LESS THAN HIGH
SCHOOL

BARRIERS

That Hindered Pursuit of Higher Education

- 64% Lack of financial resources/ Financial burden
- 33% Health/disability issues
- 26% Bureaucracy associated with VA paperwork and processing
- 26% GI Bill benefits expire before I complete my degree

HELPFUL RESOURCES

for Veteran Success

- 74% Military/veteran friendly campus
- 73% Academic advising/counseling
- 68% Flexible class schedules
- 62% Dedicated veterans office & administrators on campus



References

Population

Military population was analyzed from U.S. Department of Defense (2020). 2019 Demographics DoD Profile of the Military Community. Military Community and Family Policy

Veteran population and metro area were analyzed from 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 5-year estimate]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>

Views of Military Service

Motivations, top skills, and STEM were analyzed from unpublished data using 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. Only American Indian/Alaska Native service members/veteran were used in analysis (n=163)

Transition

Reasons for leaving, top transition challenges, disability barriers, post service aspirations were analyzed from unpublished data using 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. Only American Indian/Alaska Native service members/veteran were used in analysis (n=163)

Disability, poverty, and access to VA healthcare were analyzed from 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 5-year estimate]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>

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<150) for American Indian/Alaska Native 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 June 2021

Employment/Entrepreneurship

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

Self-employment is data 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 5-year estimate]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota. <https://doi.org/10.18128/D010.V7.0>

Motivations, Barriers, and resources in entrepreneurship is data of American Indian/Alaska Native veteran (n=50) who responded to IVMF's 2021 National Survey of Military-Affiliated Entrepreneurs. Sample is from cross sectional study only. More information can be found at <https://ivmf.syracuse.edu/nsma-series/>

Higher Education

Education attainment was analyzed from 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>

Barriers and helpful resources were analyzed from unpublished data using 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. Only American Indian/Alaska Native service members/veteran were used in analysis (n=163)

Quotes

Quotes are from unpublished data using 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. Only American Indian/Alaska Native service members/veteran were used in analysis (n=163)