



SHORT SUBJECTS

WOMEN VETERANS SERIES

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California's Women Veterans and Employment: A 2012 Overview

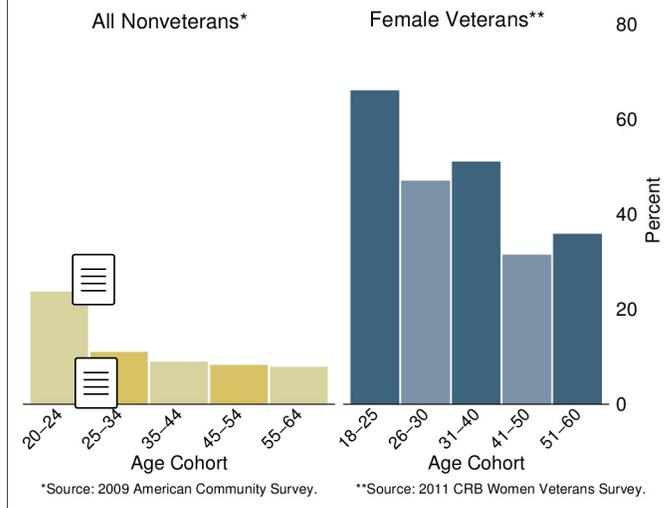
Since 2009, veterans have been generally more likely to hold a job than nonveterans. Because 90 percent of veterans are male, unique patterns for female veteran employment are obscured by this statistic. In the 2011 CRB Women Veterans Survey,* we found that women veterans were significantly more likely to be unemployed than either their male counterparts or women in general. As with veterans in general, the older a woman veteran is (until she reaches retirement age), the more likely she is to be employed. In the CRB Survey, 66 percent of women veterans 25 years old or younger reported being unemployed while only 31 percent of those 41-50 were unemployed. See Figure 1 for more detail.

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) and the Employment Development Department (EDD) report a higher employment rate for veterans, including women veterans, than the CRB survey sample found. In California, the 2010 unemployment rate among veterans was 9.8 percent and among nonveterans it was 12.2 percent.² DOL and EDD released information in 2012 showing that veterans had slightly higher employment rates than the general population (90.4 percent versus 88.9 percent, respectively).^{1,3} Nationally, veterans are generally more likely than nonveterans to participate in the workforce.¹ However, in California, only 49.0 percent of veterans participated in the workforce, compared to 66.5 percent of nonveterans.² The DOL/EDD data do not provide a breakout about women veterans.

The differences in findings between CRB and DOL/EDD may be due to methodological variance. The DOL/EDD statistics are drawn from the American Community Survey, which randomly samples thousands of Americans. CRB used a snowball sample of women veterans in California, so the sample is not completely random. However, the CRB sample is

*For full survey results, please see: Blanton, Rebecca E. and Lisa K. Foster. (2012). *California's Women Veterans: Responses to the 2011 Survey*. www.library.ca.gov/crb/12/12-004.pdf.

Figure 1. Women Veterans Have Higher Unemployment Rates than Nonveteran Women

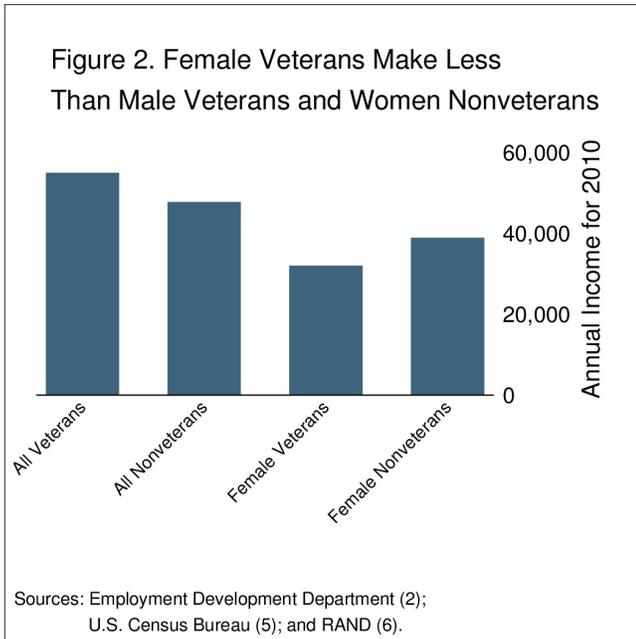


comprised of women veterans slightly more educated and who discharged as officers more frequently than a random sample of veterans would have. We would expect our sample to have a higher employment rate than a general sample of women veterans.

Additional considerations about the comparison include how the concept of "unemployed" is operationalized. In the CRB survey, we asked women if they were employed full-time, part-time, self-employed, or unemployed. All women responding "unemployed" were counted as unemployed. In the DOL/EDD samples, only women currently looking for work while unemployed are considered "unemployed." Women who choose to remain unemployed (e.g., full-time homemakers), are not counted in the DOL/EDD statistics for unemployed people. Regardless of methodology, the large discrepancy between employment rates for women veterans in CA and nonveterans should raise significant questions as to why the discrepancy exists.

EARNINGS

In general, veterans make more than nonveterans (\$54,900 versus \$47,683, respectively in CA in 2010).^{3,8} This difference is driven by the fact that veterans are older and more educated, on average, than people in the general population.^{5,10} However, even though the average woman veteran is older and more educated than her civilian counterparts (46 vs. 35 years old, respectively), women veterans earn substantially less per year (\$31,925) than either other veterans or civilian women.⁷



SPECIAL FINANCIAL BURDENS OF WOMEN VETERANS

While women veterans tend to earn less than their male counterparts, many have additional financial expenses they incur. Women veterans are nearly three times as likely as their male peers to be single parents (11.0 percent versus 4.0 percent),⁷ although this is lower than the general population (19.5 percent).⁹

Women veterans are also more likely than their male peers to have a significant service-related disability. Thirty-five percent of women veterans have a disability rating of at least 50 percent compared with 26 percent of men.⁴ In the CRB survey, 29 percent of women veterans had at least a 70 percent VA disability rating. The jobless rate for veterans with service-related disabilities in August 2011 was not statistically different than the rate of veterans without them (8.7 versus 7.9 percent, respectively).⁴

Most male veterans are currently married (74.9

percent) compared to only 38.9 percent of women veterans.¹⁰ Recent studies indicate that men in the Armed Services are more likely to remain married than their civilian counterparts while women in the Armed Services divorce more frequently.⁶ The increased divorce rate and number of households headed by a single women veteran increases the financial burden on this population.

CITATIONS

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