Post 9/11 Women Veterans

Kelly Ann Holder, Housing and Household Economic Statistics Division, Industry and Occupation Statistics Branch, U.S. Census Bureau

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Introduction

The role of women in the U.S. military has changed since the inception of the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) in 1973. On the eve of the AVF, women comprised 2 percent of the military. In 2008, 14 percent of servicemembers were women (DoD 2008).

Significant changes in legislation and policy in the early 1990s opened up occupational opportunities for active-duty women (GAO 1999). Today over 80 percent of the services' career positions are open for women (GAO 1999).

In addition to these policy changes, the nature of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has redefined the experience of women serving in the Armed Forces. Since 2002, an unprecedented 155,000 women have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan (PBS 2007).

Today's servicewomen represent a generational shift. They no longer face the same challenges as their predecessors. Not only is the representation of women in the AVF increasing, but the demographics of these women are also changing.

Research Questions

How do women who served in the military only after September 11, 2001 differ from their predecessors who served in the early part of the AVF and how do they differ from their present-day nonveteran counterparts?

How have 20 years of policy changes affected the post-military outcomes of women veterans?

Data and Methods

This analysis uses data from the 1990 decennial census and the 2008 American Community Survey (ACS).

The universe for this analysis is the population of women 18 to 34 years old from each data source.

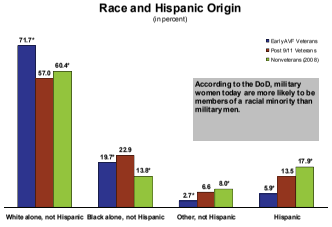
The 1990 decennial census data were used to facilitate the analysis of the two cohorts of veterans. The 1990 data provide information on women veterans from the early part of the AVF-period who are close in age and in the amount of time since their separation from the military to the most recent cohort of women veterans from the Post-9/11 era.

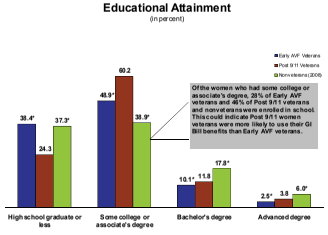
Multivariate analysis was used to compare the earnings of veterans and nonveterans in 1990 and 2008.

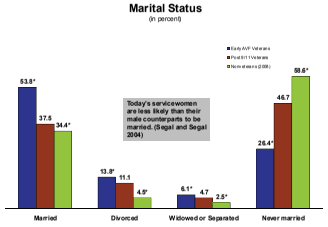
All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90 percent confidence level unless otherwise noted.

An asterisk (*) in a graph denotes an estimate that is statistically different from the estimate for the reference group, "Post 9/11 women veterans."

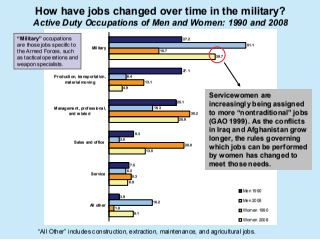
Demographic Changes 1990 to 2008

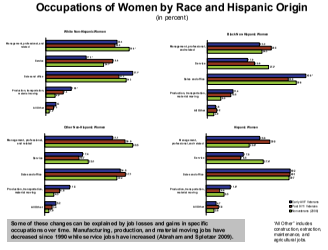


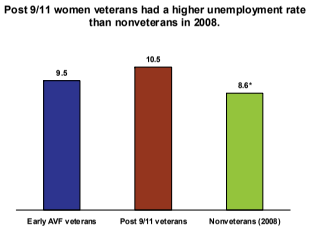


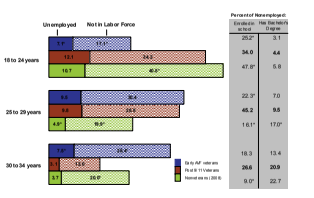


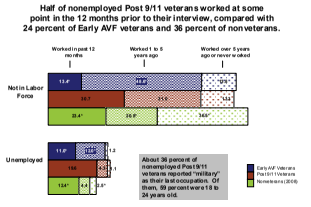
Post-Military Outcomes 1990 to 2008

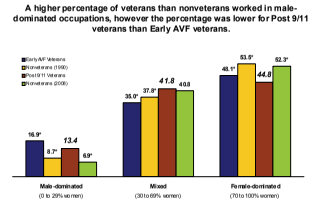












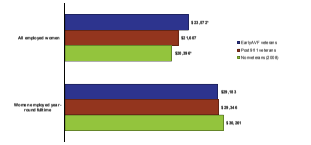
Note: The differences between veteran and nonveterans in 1990 are statistically different in each category.

Selected Detailed Occupations Classified by Percent Women

1990		2008	
Early AVF Veterans	Nonveterans	Post 9/11 Veterans	Nonveterans
secretary	secretary	customer service rep	cashier
registered nurse	cashier	cashier	waitress
nursing aide	waitress	waitress	secretary
cashier	elementary school teacher	secretary	elementary school teacher
manager, all other	bookkeeper	nursing aide	retail salesperson
waitress	registered nurse	registered nurse	nursing aide
general office clerk	manager, all other	security guard	customer service rep
bookkeeper	nursing aide	retail salesperson	registered nurse
sales supervisor	sales supervisor	manager, all other	child care worker
typist	general office clerk	first line supervisor	first line supervisor

Male-dominated = 0–29% women | Mixed = 30–69% women | Female-dominated = 70–100% women

Median Earnings in 2008 Inflation-Adjusted Dollars



Year-round fulltime is defined as 50 or more weeks per year and 35 or more hours per week.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 decennial census and 2008 American Community Survey

Multivariate Analysis of Earnings

Odds Ratios for Employment and Work Status		
Are veterans more likely to be in the labor force than nonveterans?		
Early AVF	1.3 ***	Yes
Post 9/11	1.1	No
Are veterans more likely to work fulltime hours than nonveterans?		
Early AVF	1.6 ***	Yes
Post 9/11	1.0 ***	Yes
Are veterans more likely to work year round than nonveterans?		
Early AVF	0.9 ***	No
Post 9/11	1.0	No

N = 9810

Controlling only for basic demographic characteristics, women veterans 18 to 34 years old earned more than similar nonveteran women in 1990 and 2008. When weeks and hours are included in the model, women veterans still earned more, however the longer hours they worked on average explains most of this earnings gap.

Past research has typically found an earning advantage for minority veterans. While this was the case in 1990, it did not hold true for the 2008 ACS sample. Whether this is a result of the policy changes regarding military occupations for women or the effects of the current economy cannot be determined with these data.

Summary

The demographics of women veterans are changing as the population of the women entering the military becomes more diverse.

Post 9/11 women veterans are more likely to be:

Racially diverse
Never married
More educated

Compared with Early AVF women veterans

Black
Divorced
Less educated

Compared with nonveteran women

Early AVF Women Veterans:
Were more likely to be in the labor force
Were more likely to work fulltime hours
Earned 20 percent more

Compared with **nonveteran** women

Post 9/11 Women Veterans:
Were more likely to work fulltime hours
Earned 7 percent more

Discussion

Research has suggested that military experience is a close substitute for civilian labor market experience in occupation groups where training is the most transferable (medical, equipment repair, etc.) while not so for occupations where training is least transferable (infantry, combat).

Veterans may face temporary employment problems as they first enter the labor market after their military enlistment ends due to imperfect knowledge of the civilian job market and difficulty translating military skills into civilian terms for employers.

Post 9/11 veterans are also entering into a difficult job market. Their high unemployment rate indicates that they are actively looking for work but are unable to find a job. Women who served in nontraditional military-related occupations may be at an increased disadvantage compared with Early AVF women veterans who were banned from such jobs.

Women serving in the military may be doing jobs similar to military men, as the policies change regarding occupations, but women veterans are doing jobs similar to all other women.

These findings may suggest difficulty transferring skills learned in male-dominated, and war-related, military occupations.

This report is released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress.
Any views expressed on methodological issues are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.