

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS**



***DATA ON  
ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER  
VETERANS***

**Office of Program and Data Analyses**  
March 3, 2000

**ASIAN/PACIFIC ISLANDER (API) VETERANS**

## Highlights

- **According to the 1990 Census:**
  - **API veterans numbered nearly one-quarter million, making up about one percent of the total veteran population.**
  - **API veterans had the highest education, income, and employment rate of all racial/ethnic groups of veterans.**
  - **The total number of API veterans in just two states, California and Hawaii, accounted for two-thirds of the entire API veteran population.**
- **Of all patients discharged from VA hospitals in FY 1999, less than one-half percent were API.**
- **Between 1998 and 1999, the number of API personnel in the armed forces increased while the number of armed forces personnel decreased in total.**

## Demographic Characteristics

- **According to the 1990 Census:**
  - **The 246,200 API veterans made up 0.9 percent of the total veteran population.** Among racial/ethnic groups, only the number of Native American Indian/Alaskan (NAIA) veterans was smaller. Nearly three percent of the total U.S. population was API.
  - **About 96 percent of all API veterans were male, a percentage similar to that for the total veteran population.**
  - **The number of API veterans in California and Hawaii, 104,400 and 62,700 API, respectively, accounted for two-thirds of all API veterans.**
  - **The median age of API veterans was 50 years.** In comparison, the median age was 55 for White, 47 for Black, 46 for NAIA, 45 for Hispanic, and 55 for all veterans.

## Demographic Characteristics (concluded)

- **About 70 percent of API veterans served in wartime, compared to nearly 80 percent of all veterans.** Of the wartime API veterans, 140 served during World War I; 58,800 during World War II; 33,300 during the Korean Conflict with no prior wartime service; and 81,400 during the Vietnam war with no prior wartime service.
- **Among API veterans, nearly 90 percent were of Asian descent and 10 percent Pacific Islander descent, proportions mirroring the general API population.**
- **Among API veterans, those of Japanese descent made up the largest ethnic subgroup (31 percent), followed by those of Filipino (29 percent), Chinese (15 percent), and Hawaiian (8 percent) descent.**
- **The most recent estimate of the number of male API veterans is 1.2 percent of all male veterans, from the March 1999 Current Population Survey (CPS). (See the “Notes on Data Sources” for information on CPS.)**

### **Socioeconomic Characteristics**

- **According to the 1990 Census:**
  - **The median income of \$26,600 for API veterans was the highest among all racial/ethnic groups of veterans, followed by \$24,900 for Whites, \$20,400 for Hispanics, \$16,800 for NAIAAs, and \$16,500 for Blacks.**
  - **API veterans had the highest percentage of college graduates among all racial/ ethnic groups, about 25 percent, and the lowest percentage who had less than a high school education, about 14 percent.**
  - **Nearly 75 percent of API veterans owned homes, compared to 81 percent for White, 62 percent for Black, 64 percent for NAIA, and 67 percent for Hispanic veterans.**
  - **The percent of API veterans in poverty was roughly the same as that for all veterans, between 5 and 6 percent.** However, poverty status varied greatly among subgroups of API veterans. Japanese-American veterans had the lowest poverty rate (2.3 percent), while Southeast Asian-American veterans the highest (27.0 percent).

### **Socioeconomic Characteristics (concluded)**

- **API veterans had both a higher labor force participation rate and lower unemployment rate than veterans of other racial/ethnic groups.** Three-quarters of API veterans were in the labor force, with an unemployment rate of 4 percent, compared to two-thirds of other racial/ethnic groups in the labor force, with an unemployment rate of 4.9 percent.

### **VA Health Care**

- **According to the Patient Treatment File (PTF) and the Out-Patient Clinic File (OPC) for FY 1999:**
  - **Of all the unique patients discharged from VA Medical Centers, API<sup>1</sup> patients (veterans and non-veterans) were less than 0.5 percent of all patients.** Among these API patients, 96 percent were veterans.
  - **Of all the unique patients treated in outpatient clinics, API patients (veterans and non-veterans) were less than 0.5 percent of all outpatients.** Among these API outpatients, 87 percent were veterans.

### **Armed Forces**

- **At the end of December 1999, API service personnel accounted for 1.1 percent of all active duty service personnel.**
- **Between 1998 and 1999, the number of API service personnel increased from 13,712 to 14,532, while the total number of service personnel decreased from 1,373,651 to 1,355,020.**

### **Notes on Data Sources**

---

<sup>1</sup> The race data collected in the VA PTF and OPC files are based on observations and/or identification of surname by the staff.

- Because the size of the API veteran population is relatively small, the decennial census is the only database large enough to provide statistically reliable information on API veterans in the general population.
- Census API categories include the following groups<sup>2</sup>: Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Asian Indian, Korean, Southeast Asian, Other Asians, Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian, and Other Pacific Islander.
- VA's Patient Treatment File (PTF) and Outpatient Clinic (OPC) File have been used to assess health care services provided by VA to API veterans.
- Data for the armed forces were obtained from the Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC), Department of Defense.
- *The World Almanac and Book of Facts* (1999) was used for data on the U.S. population.
- The March 1999 Current Population Survey data provided a current estimate of male veterans. Because of the small number of API veterans in the CPS sample, only the most basic information, such as their number, is within an acceptable level of statistical error.
- Except for data from VA health care files (PTF & OPC), all racial/ethnic data are self-reported.

---

<sup>2</sup> In the Race and Ethnic definitions adopted in 1977 for Federal statistics, the Asian or Pacific Islander is defined as a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands. This area includes, for example, China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippine Islands, and Samoa. The new Race and Ethnic categories outlined in the October 30, 1997, Federal Register separate Asian and Pacific Islanders into two categories.