

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



DATA ON VETERANS OF THE KOREAN WAR

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June 2000

VETERANS OF THE KOREAN WAR

"When darkness threatened, you kept the torch of liberty alight. You kept the flame burning so that others all across the world could share it. You showed the truth inscribed on the wall, that freedom is not free."

President Bill Clinton, at the Dedication of the Korean War Memorial, July 25, 1995.

As we mark the 50th anniversary of the start of the Korean War, we present important facts about the veterans of that war period, June 27, 1950 to January 31, 1955.

Historical Facts

- Actual hostilities occurred from June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1953. However, the war period was extended to January 31, 1955 by Congress to define a period of benefit eligibility in the wake of uneasy peace negotiations after July 27, 1953.
- There were 6.8 million American men and women who served during the Korean War period, June 27, 1950 to January 31, 1955.
- There were 54,200 deaths to Americans in service during the period of hostilities, June 27, 1950 to July 27, 1953. Of these, 33,700 were actual battle deaths.
- There were 7,140 POW's during the Korean War. Of these, 4,418 returned to the United States, 2,701 died, and 21 refused repatriation.
- There have been 131 recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honor among Korean War veterans.

Demographic Characteristics

In mid-calendar year 2000:

- There are an estimated 3.9 million Korean War veterans in the U.S. and Puerto Rico, down about 21 percent from the nearly 5 million Korean War veterans in 1990.
- Korean War veterans make up nearly 16 percent of the 24.4 million total veterans.
- An estimated 848,000 Korean War veterans also served in other war periods: 171,000 in both WWII and Vietnam, 404,000 only in WWII, and 273,000 only in Vietnam.
- An estimated 86,300 Korean War veterans are women, making up 7 percent of the estimated number of all female veterans.
- The median age of Korean War veterans is estimated to be 69 years, with an estimated 336,500 under age 65, 3.25 million aged 65 to 74, and an estimated 363,600 aged 75 or older.
- The top five states with respect to the estimated number of Korean War veterans are: California (430,800); Florida (294,000); Texas (243,300); New York (220,100); and Pennsylvania (201,400), reflecting the geographic distribution of the veteran population in general. (See table for state veteran populations.)

According to the March 1999 Current Population Survey:

- Eighty percent of male Korean War veterans were married at the time of the survey, a proportion similar to non-veteran males of comparable age (65-74).

Between July 1999 and June 2000:

- There were an estimated 117,600 deaths among Korean War veterans.

According to the 1990 Census:

- The racial composition of the 4.9 million Korean War veterans in the U.S. was: 4.5 million white (92 percent); 339,400 African American (7 percent); 30,400 American Indian (less than 1 percent), Eskimo or Aleut; 39,300 Asian or Pacific Islander (less than 1 percent); and 35,000 of other races (less than 1 percent). There were an estimated 133,500 Hispanics (3 percent), who may be of any race, among Korean War veterans.

By 2010:

- The number of Korean War veterans is projected to be just under 2.5 million, down 37 percent from the number estimated for 2000.
- Korean War veterans are projected to make-up 12 percent of the 20.1 million projected veterans.
- The number of female Korean War veterans is projected to be 61,600, making up nearly 5 percent of the projected number of all female veterans.
- The median age of Korean War veterans is projected to be 78.5. No Korean War veteran is projected to be under the age of 70. Most Korean War veterans, 56 percent, are projected to be between the ages of 75 and 79. About one-third, however, are projected to be 80 or older.

Socioeconomic Characteristics

According to the March 1999 Current Population Survey:

- The median personal income of male Korean War veterans in calendar year 1998 was \$24,000, compared to \$17,900 for male non-veterans aged 65 to 74. Their respective median family incomes were \$38,000 and \$31,100.
- About 36 percent of male Korean War veterans had family incomes below \$30,000 in 1998, while 35 percent had family incomes of \$50,000 or more. Of non-veteran males aged 65 to 74, 48 percent had incomes under \$30,000 and 29 percent had incomes of \$50,000 or more.
- About 18 percent of male Korean War veterans had less than a high school education, while nearly half had at least some college. For male non-veterans aged 65 to 74, the comparable percentages were 33 percent and 37 percent, respectively.
- Nearly 30 percent of male Korean War veterans had jobs. The vast majority, however, 70 percent, were no longer in the labor force. Among male non-veterans aged 65 to 74, 20 percent had jobs, while nearly 80 percent were no longer in the labor force.

Health Care

Data from VA's Patient Treatment File and the Outpatient Census for FY 1999 show that:

- Of all the unique in-patients discharged from VA Medical Centers, 58,400, or 16 percent, were Korean War veterans, the same percentage of Korean War veterans among all veterans.
- Of all VA hospital in-patient discharges (a unique patient may have more than one discharge from a hospital during the fiscal year), 95,000 were among Korean War veterans.
- Of all unique patients treated in outpatient clinics, 466,700, or 15 percent, were Korean War veterans.
- There were about 34 million outpatient visits in VA in FY1999. Of these, 5.1 million, or 15 percent, were among Korean War veterans.

According to the March 1999 Current Population Survey:

- The overwhelming proportion of male Korean War veterans report having some type of health insurance. Only 3 percent report having no health insurance at all. Nearly three-quarters of male Korean War veterans report having some kind of private health insurance coverage, while 22 percent report having Medicare, Medicaid, or other government-provided insurance only.
- Nearly three-quarters of male Korean War veterans describe their health as "good," "very good," or "excellent," compared to 66 percent of male non-veterans aged 65 to 74. Only 9 percent describe their health as "poor," compared to 11 percent of their non-veteran counterparts.

Other VA Benefits

- Of the 2.3 million veterans receiving service-connected compensation at the end of March 2000, 172,600 were Korean War veterans.
- Of the 370,200 veterans receiving pension at the end of March 2000, 86,300 were Korean War veterans.
- Of the nearly 605,900 dependents of veterans receiving survivors' benefits at the end of March 2000, 71,000 were survivors of Korean War veterans. More than 90 percent were surviving spouses.

- At the end of March 2000, one-half of Korean War veterans receiving service-connected compensation were rated 20 percent or lower; about 8 percent were rated 100 percent disabled. These proportions are comparable to those for all veterans receiving compensation.
- In March 2000, the aggregate monthly value of disability compensation awards to Korean War veterans was nearly 100 million dollars, about 8 percent of the monthly value of all the awards made in that month. This proportion mirrors closely the proportion of all compensated veterans who are Korean War veterans.
- In March 2000, the aggregate monthly value of pension awards to Korean War veterans was nearly 38 million dollars, about 21 percent of the total monthly value of pension awards. This proportion is close to the proportion of all VA pensioners who are Korean War veterans.
- In FY 1999, 9,800 Korean War veterans were interred in VA national cemeteries, representing 18 percent of all interments of veterans that year.
- More than 60,000 Korean War veterans were provided headstones or grave markers by VA in FY 1999.

By the end of FY 1999, a cumulative total of:

- About 2.4 million Korean War veterans have received education and training under the Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1952 – the Korean War GI Bill. Of these, 1,213,000 received training in institutions of higher learning; 860,000 were trained in other schools; 223,000 received on-the-job training; and 95,000 received institutional on-farm training.
- More than 1.8 million Korean War veterans have used VA's Loan Guaranty program to purchase homes, for which VA guaranteed more than \$32 billion.
- Nearly 79,000 disabled Korean War veterans have received vocational rehabilitation training through VA which helped them obtain gainful employment because their disabilities prevented them from resuming their former jobs.
- Over 803,000 Korean War veterans have been issued Veterans' Special Life Insurance (VSLI) policies for Korean War veterans with a "face value" (death benefit) of \$7.3 billion. Currently there are some 234,000 VSLI policies in-force with a face value of \$2.7 billion. VA paid \$184 million to VSLI beneficiaries in 1999.

**Estimated Korean War (KW) and Total Veteran Population
For Each State, DC, and Puerto Rico, Mid-Year 2000**

States	Number * KW Veterans	Number * Total Veterans	KW Veterans As Percent of Total Veterans
Alabama	70,100	402,800	17.4
Alaska	6,800	62,100	11.0
Arizona	76,200	437,700	17.4
Arkansas	40,300	242,400	16.6
California	430,800	2,623,500	16.4
Colorado	57,700	357,600	16.1
Connecticut	49,100	306,200	16.0
Delaware	11,400	74,000	15.4
District of Columbia	8,800	44,500	19.8
Florida	294,000	1,632,400	18.0
Georgia	95,200	654,400	14.5
Hawaii	17,700	110,700	16.0
Idaho	16,000	105,200	15.2
Illinois	155,400	979,100	15.9
Indiana	84,900	555,400	15.3
Iowa	45,700	268,400	17.0
Kansas	39,600	241,300	16.4
Kentucky	54,700	345,400	15.8
Louisiana	54,900	341,900	16.1
Maine	21,900	146,300	15.0
Maryland	75,100	497,900	15.1
Massachusetts	89,400	536,100	16.7
Michigan	128,100	883,200	14.5
Minnesota	67,100	430,300	15.6
Mississippi	37,500	217,600	17.2
Missouri	91,400	547,700	16.7
Montana	14,200	87,800	16.2
Nebraska	27,800	154,800	18.0
Nevada	34,200	183,300	18.7
New Hampshire	19,600	128,200	15.3
New Jersey	113,900	666,100	17.1
New Mexico	25,700	162,700	15.8
New York	220,100	1,390,600	15.8
North Carolina	107,000	675,700	15.8
North Dakota	9,400	53,700	17.5
Ohio	176,700	1,105,300	16.0
Oklahoma	56,300	318,200	17.7
Oregon	52,500	351,500	14.9
Pennsylvania	201,400	1,259,200	16.0
Rhode Island	16,600	99,800	16.6
South Carolina	56,800	362,800	15.7
South Dakota	12,800	69,300	18.5
Tennessee	77,100	488,700	15.8
Texas	243,300	1,533,900	15.9
Utah	21,500	126,500	17.0
Vermont	8,900	59,300	15.0
Virginia	106,200	668,400	15.9
Washington	92,000	599,500	15.3
West Virginia	31,900	184,500	17.3
Wisconsin	72,900	473,300	15.4
Wyoming	6,900	42,200	16.4
U. S. TOTAL	3,925,500	24,289,400	16.2
Puerto Rico	29,500	122,000	24.2
GRAND TOTAL	3,955,000	24,411,400	16.2

*Rounded to nearest 100 veterans

Period of Service Definitions

The definition of Korean War veteran differs among the data sources cited with respect to those who served in more than one war period. Namely:

- For the veteran population, Korean War veterans include all who have served in the Korean War no matter in what other periods they served.
- For the Current Population Survey (CPS), Korean War veterans are those for whom the Korean War was the last war period in which they served. Therefore, veterans who have served, for example, in the Korean War and Vietnam would be classified as Vietnam veterans, NOT Korean War veterans.
- For Loan Guaranty, National Cemetery Administration, and health care data, Korean War veterans are those for whom the Korean War was the last war period in which they served. (Same as CPS)
- For Compensation and Vocational Rehabilitation data, Korean War veterans are those whose last compensable disability was incurred during the Korean War. For example, if someone served during both the Korean War period and the Vietnam war era, but incurred his or her only disability (or disabilities) during the Korean War period, then that person is coded as a Korean War veteran.
- For Pension data, Korean War veterans are those for whom the Korean War was the first wartime period in which they served.
- For education and veterans' life insurance data, Korean War veterans are those who have participated in the specific programs for Korean War veterans mentioned in the text.

For all of the data sources cited above, a Korean War veteran could have served in any venue, not just the Korean theater.

Data Sources (Not Noted in the Text)

- "Historical Facts" were by provided by VA's Office of Public Affairs from information gathered by that office and the Department of Defense.
- Data on "Demographic Characteristics" come from VA's official estimates and projections of the veteran population developed in the Office of Program and Data Analyses.
- Data on "Other VA Benefits" come from the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) and the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

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