

MISSING PERSPECTIVES:

Asian American & Pacific Islander in the Military—From Service to Civilian Life



This infographic provides key highlights for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AAPI) service members, veterans, and their families. The information and statistics in this document are from various data collection efforts centered on military life, resource and financial needs, employment, entrepreneurship, and higher education. Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders are one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse racial groups in the U.S. (their heritage traces to over 30 different countries and ethnic groups and include over 100 languages and dialects).

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders have a long history of involvement with the U.S. military, possibly extending back to the American Revolutionary War, but there are few direct records of their service and presence in the U.S. military until the mid-19th century. Particularly in the 20th century, AAPI veterans have served honorably in all major U.S. military conflicts in Europe, Asia, and beyond.

- ▶ Asian and Pacific Islander served in U.S. military during early wars with the British. In the War of 1812, Filipinos fought in the Battle of New Orleans. Some Hawaiians enlisted in the U.S. Navy.
- ▶ Some of the earliest enlistment records of Asian American military service were from the American Civil War, where individuals served with varying types of units based on whether enlistee were classified as “white,” “mulatto,” or left blank during time of enlistment. At the time, there were still relatively few Asian immigrants to the U.S. From 1870 to 1880, Chinese immigrants comprised of 4.3 percent of total immigrants who came to the U.S. in the same timeframe.
- ▶ The slow growing number of Asian immigrants combined with economic challenges and the proliferation of nativist attitude in the U.S. gave way to a series of anti-Asian immigration policies, including the infamous Chinese Exclusion Act/Geary Act and the National Origins Act of 1924. By the end of World War I in 1918, there were nearly 180,000 Asian Americans living in the United States and the majority of those were Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Filipino Americans. However, during the same period, Asian Americans, Hawaiian, and Pacific Islanders continued to enlist to serve in the U.S. military.
- ▶ The onset of World War II was a crucial turning point in the history of Asian American community even though veterans of different Asian ethnicity had vastly different circumstances and experiences in military service. It is estimated that more than 33,000 Japanese Americans served in the military during World War II. In addition, many Filipino Americans, Korean Americans, and Chinese Americans also served in U.S. Armed Forces.
- *Japanese Americans were targeted for detainment after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The war, however, also saw the formulation of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, where most Japanese American soldiers served with distinction and honor.*
- *Many Chinese Americans also served during World War II. Unlike Japanese Americans, Chinese American soldiers served in a variety of units and different military specialties. Most Chinese Americans did not serve in segregated units but were usually one of the few Asians in their military units.*
- *Filipino Americans served in the U.S. military, such as the First Filipino Infantry Regiment, or through the conscription of the Philippines Army by President Roosevelt to merge with U.S. forces by executive power in 1941.*
- ▶ The Cold War years and conflict in Korea and Vietnam also brought many Asian Americans into the fold of military service during a period of great domestic change in the U.S., such as the Civil Rights Movement. Roughly 35,000 Asian Americans served in the Vietnam War and according to the 1990 U.S. Census, Asian or Pacific Islander comprised of less than one percent of all Korean War veterans at the time (39,300).

Current Population

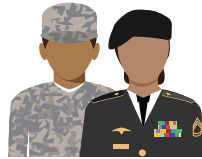
AAPI service members and veterans are often connected to the military in a multitude of ways. They are not only service members and veterans themselves, but also spouses and parents of service members.

ACTIVE DUTY, GUARD, & RESERVE



126,589+

Asian/Pacific Islander Active Duty and Selected Reserve Members to date



Total Military Force

81,000+ active duty service members

45,000+ selected reserve members

AAPI Active-Duty Family Spotlight

In our military today, there are many active-duty service members and/or active-duty spouses who are of AAPI descent. Here are some information about them from one of several recent data sources on military families.

MEAN AGE:
36 YEARS OLD

Presence of Children in AAPI Active Duty Households

AMONG AAPI SERVICE MEMBERS:
69% have children ages 20 years or younger

Citizenship

70% are a part of a multi-racial/multi-ethnic family



There is a higher proportion of foreign-born active duty family members in the AAPI active-duty community. The differences in nativity status may have implications for resource and program needs.

Unaddressed topics and issues:

"The unspoken needs and concerns of foreign-born military spouses that come to join the spouse/AD service member. Some programs or even employment opportunities are tone deaf to that aspect."



Resource Use:

TOP MILITARY RESOURCE USED: Social support resources

TOP CIVILIAN RESOURCE USED: Healthcare



- 54%** U.S. born citizens or U.S. nationals
- 26%** naturalized U.S. citizens
- 8%** U.S. permanent residents

VETERANS



324,000+

Asian veterans in the U.S.



293,000+

MALE VETERANS



31,000+

FEMALE VETERANS

139,000+ POST 9/11 VETERANS

TOP 10 AREAS WHERE ASIAN AMERICAN VETERANS RESIDE

California, Hawaii, Virginia, Washington, Texas, Florida, Nevada, New York, Illinois, and New Jersey

TOP 10 AREAS WHERE NATIVE HAWAIIAN AND OTHER PACIFIC ISLANDER VETERANS RESIDE

California, Hawaii, the Insular Areas, Texas, Washington, Florida, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, and Virginia

AAPI Veteran Family Spotlight

Much like the overall veteran population, there are still several gaps in understanding of how military service and military transition to civilian life impacts AAPI service members and veteran families. Here are some data points and reflections about military life from AAPI Service Members and veterans.

Marital Status of Asian Veterans

- 62%** married
- 9%** widowed, divorced, or separated
- 29%** never married

Presence of Children in Asian Veteran Households

- 71%** did not live in a household with their own children
- 29%** live in a household with their own children

AAPI Service Members and Veterans:

- ▶ **55%** agree that their local civilian community is aware the military and veterans have often had experiences that differ from their own.
- ▶ **60%** agree that civilians in their local community are supportive of local military and veteran families.

BUT

- ▶ only 36% agree that civilians in their local community truly understand the sacrifice made by local service members, veterans, and their families.

AAPI Veterans Reflecting on the Transition Process

FELT PREPARED FOR MILITARY TO CIVILIAN TRANSITION BECAUSE:

"Spouse has civilian employment"

"Had 12 months to prepare my family and I for this transition"

FELT UNPREPARED FOR MILITARY TO CIVILIAN TRANSITION BECAUSE:

"We were overseas at the time for 3.5 years and felt a disconnect with American civilian life and culture."

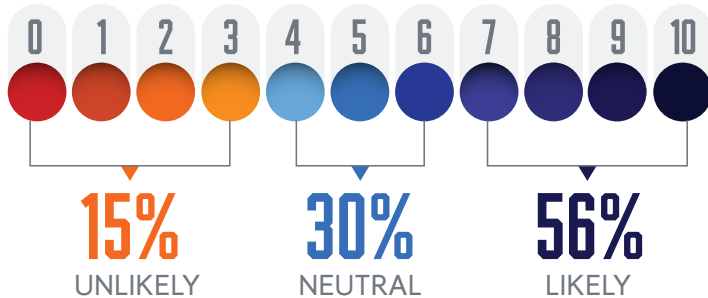
"When it was time for me to get out, everything happened so fast due to my separation and injury sustained. There really wasn't a transition period for me, none of the typical TAP, nobody helped me prepare for civilian life, nobody prepared me to seek health assistance from the VA or to file a disability claim. All I got was a check for unused leave, paperwork and a ride home. Not much more than that."

Views on Military Service

AAPI Service Members and Veterans

(ON A SCALE OF 0-10)

LIKELIHOOD TO RECOMMEND MILITARY SERVICE TO A YOUNG FAMILY MEMBER



“The military provides excellent resources and training to start [a] professional [career].”
- Active Duty Service Member (rating 10)

“I would recommend because of the benefits that the service provides. However, I would not recommend because the military is for everyone but not everyone is for the military. And depending on leadership, it can make or break someone.” - Active Duty Service Member (rating 7)

“There is a perception that young enlisted do not understand why they are not advancing for reasons other than test scores. The reality of going into combat is real. The multiple deployments and effects of PTSD are real. The suicide rate is high among veterans. There is a lack of (or perception- same thing) of people of color in leadership positions. There is not a proportionate representation of people of color in the officer positions as related to enlisted positions.” - Veteran/Retired Service Member (rating 6)

PRIMARY REASONS FOR LEAVING ARMED SERVICES

48%

Military Retirement

33%

Military lifestyle did not allow sufficient time with family

31%

Feel more valued and/or able to earn more money in the private sector

27%

Career change/ alternative job opportunities

25%

Lost faith or trust in unit/command leadership

25%

Lack of military career advancement opportunities

“As with any experience in life that takes place over a lengthy period of time, there were high points and low points. Some of my greatest friends and memories have come out of my military experience. It also helped make me financially independent, and opened up networking connections that would otherwise be closed. However, there are costs. Losing friends, long thankless hours, time away from home, friends, and family and very little support for those on their way out.” - Veteran/Retired Service Member

Resource and Financial Needs

AAPI Service Members and Veterans

(Since January 2020)

SERVICES OR PROGRAMS USED OR NEEDED

	Yes, used	Needed, but couldn't access	No, did not need
BENEFITS & CLAIMS ASSISTANCE (e.g., assistance with veteran education, disability, health, and loan programs)	33%	26%	40%
BEHAVIORAL & MENTAL HEALTH CARE (e.g., access to and availability of mental health services)	43%	18%	39%
MEDICAL CARE (e.g., access to and availability of medical care for military members, veterans, and their families)	69%	18%	13%
COMMUNITY SERVICE (e.g., finding volunteer opportunities, social support)	35%	19%	46%
EMPLOYMENT & CAREER DEVELOPMENT (e.g., job training, job placement services, resume writing, starting a business)	23%	27%	51%
FOOD & NUTRITION (e.g., food stamps)	21%	24%	56%
FOOD & NUTRITION FROM SCHOOL (e.g., meals from school, free lunch program)	28%	16%	56%
HOUSING SERVICES OR ASSISTANCE (e.g., locating affordable housing, housing subsidies or vouchers, transitional housing)	13%	34%	54%
LEGAL SERVICES (e.g., wills, power of attorney, VA benefit appeals, resolving landlord disputes, divorce, custody/child support)	28%	27%	45%
CAREGIVING RESOURCES (e.g., resources related to caregiving needs of day-to-day life in your community)	13%	22%	65%

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

was a top resource needed but couldn't access

TOP REASONS FOR NOT USING SERVICES

FOR NOT USING SERVICES

STIGMA

- Worried about what others (family, friends, coworkers/supervisor) think if used this service

NAVIGATION

- Didn't know how to access this service
- Didn't think was eligible for this service

AFFORDABILITY

- Didn't think they could afford the service

FINANCIAL SITUATION

Family Financial Situation and Employment Situation Compared to Friends and Family of Same Racial/Ethnic Background who are not Connected to the Military:

	WORSE	SAME	BETTER
My family's financial stability	22%	31%	46%
My employment situation	23%	40%	37%

FAMILY FINANCIAL SITUATION GROWING UP

43% reflected that their families had some financial difficulties



FINANCIAL CONFIDENCE

	NOT OR SOMEWHAT CONFIDENT	MODERATELY CONFIDENT	VERY OR COMPLETELY CONFIDENT
Investment Strategies	35%	37%	28%
Accumulating Savings	33%	25%	42%
Retirement Planning	29%	29%	43%
Managing Debt	30%	19%	51%

Employment

UNEMPLOYMENT

In 2022, Asian veteran unemployment was at

3.7%

This is **HIGHER** than total veteran unemployment which was at 2.8%

In 2022, Asian post 9/11 veteran unemployment was at

6.7%

This is **HIGHER** than total post 9/11 veteran unemployment which was at 3.1%



TOP FIVE INDUSTRIES

1. Professional & technical services
2. Health care & social assistance
3. Retail trade
4. Durable goods manufacturing
5. Accommodation & food services



TOP FIVE OCCUPATIONS

1. Management, business, & financial occupations
2. Professional & related occupations
3. Service occupations
4. Sales & related occupations
5. Office & administrative support occupations

Entrepreneurship



57% CONSIDER THEMSELVES AS A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR

Yet only 3% of AAPI veteran entrepreneurs have a nonprofit 501(c)(3)

Social entrepreneur = an entrepreneur who develops products and/or services that create solutions to social, cultural, or environmental issues

MILITARY SERVICE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

90% ARE PROUD TO BE A VETERAN

- 38% like it when people know they are a veteran
- 43% indicate that adjusting to civilian life was difficult
- 50% indicate that entrepreneurship helped them find a purpose after military



MOTIVATIONS TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Financial Independence

- The opportunity to be financially independent/increase personal income (44%)

Personal Independence

- Maintain personal freedom (34%)
- Make own decisions (25%)

Opportunity Recognition

- Opportunities to innovate (41%)
- Chance to implement own ideas/creating something (34%)

Work Life Balance and Flexibility

- Improving quality of life (28%)
- Having more free time/flexible hours (25%)

Top Barriers in Pursuing or Achieving Business Goals

FINANCIAL BARRIERS

- ▶ Lack of access to capital (49%)
- ▶ Lack of financing (36%)
- ▶ Current economic situation (32%)

SOCIAL & HUMAN CAPITAL BARRIERS

- ▶ Problems finding good employees/contracted personnel (26%)
- ▶ Lack of mentors for my business (19%)
- ▶ Lack of relationships with other entrepreneurs (15%)

REGULATION, BUSINESS CLIMATE, & POLICY BARRIERS

- ▶ Federal regulations and policies (28%)
- ▶ Lack of available assistance in assessing business viability (11%)

CULTURAL & KNOWLEDGE BARRIERS

- ▶ Lack of experience in entrepreneurship or business ownership (32%)
- ▶ Lack of knowledge or education on the business world and the market (15%)



SUPPORT AND NAVIGATION

AAPI veteran entrepreneurs indicated the following:

finding a local business incubator or nonprofit that helps business owners was difficult (39%)

asking for assistance was difficult (24%)

difficulty navigating the resources in their local community (32%)

Higher Education

AAPI Service Members and Veterans



81% indicated that the military experience left a lasting impression in their education success

Motivations for Pursuing Higher Education



Barriers that Hindered Pursuit of Higher Education



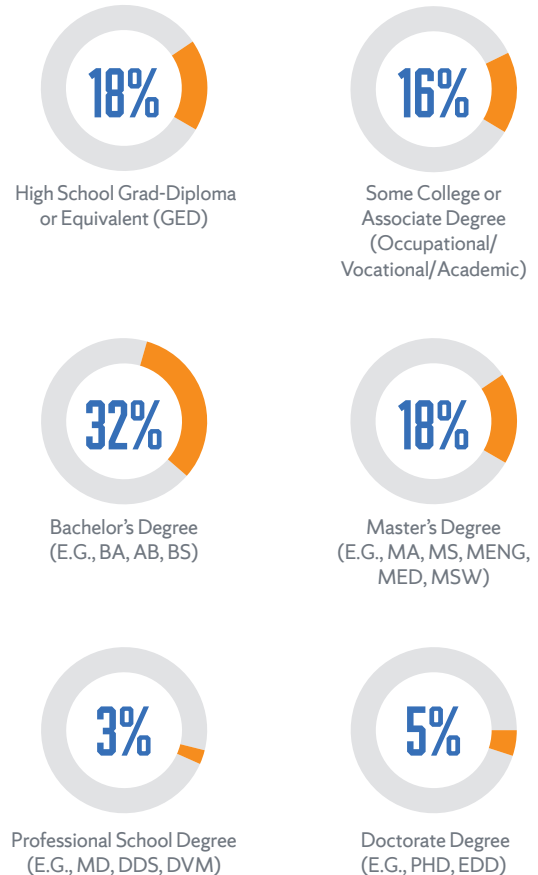
- ▶ Lack of financial resources/ Financial burden (51%)
- ▶ Personal/family obligations (27%)
- ▶ Difficult courses (22%)
- ▶ GI Bill benefits expire before complete degree (21%)
- ▶ Health/disability issues (21%)

Challenges while Pursuing Higher Education

- ▶ Age differences (36%)
- ▶ Family responsibilities (28%)
- ▶ Being a commuter student (27%)
- ▶ Transferring academic credits (26%)
- ▶ Few veterans resources on campus (26%)



Education Attainment Among Asian American veterans



Helpful Resources and Assets for Veteran Success

- Flexible class schedules (77%)
- Academic advising/counseling (71%)
- Military/veteran friendly campus (70%)
- Preferred classroom settings and instruction (70%)
- Dedicated veterans office and administrators on campus (65%)

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Some data reported in this section also used unpublished data for Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Active-Duty Service Members and veteran respondents. Two major data sources were from:

- Blue Star Families in collaboration with the D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Syracuse University. (2023). *Military Family Lifestyle Survey: 2022 Comprehensive Report*. Blue Star Families' Department of Applied Research. https://bluestarfam.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/BSF_MFLS_Spring23_Full_Report_Digital.pdf
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Service members of Vietnamese descent, including four flag and general officers, attend a wreath-laying ceremony at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, April 30, 2022. Photo Credit: Marine Corps Sgt. Nicholas Filca

VIEWS OF MILITARY SERVICE

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HIGHER EDUCATION





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