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# The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation

*For many veterans, combat experiences strengthened them personally but also made the transition to civilian life difficult*

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# The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation

*For many combat veterans, their experiences strengthened them personally but also made the transition to civilian life difficult*

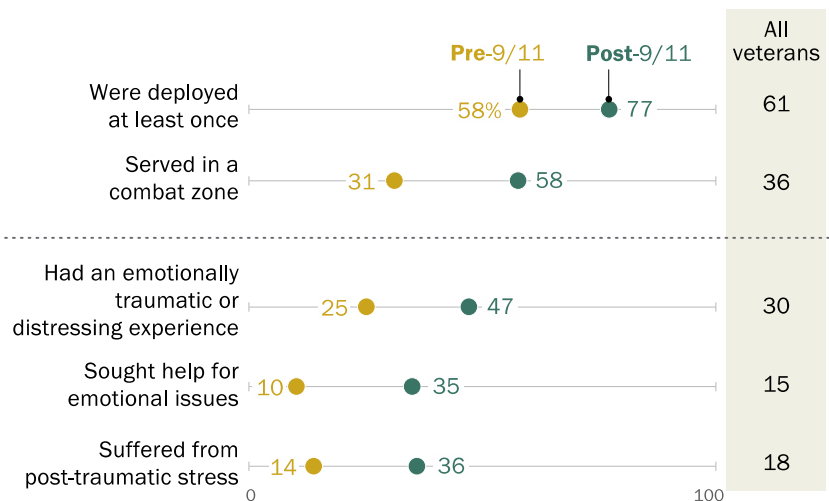
What it means to be a military veteran in the United States is being shaped by a new generation of service members. About one-in-five veterans today served on active duty after the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. Their collective experiences – from deployment to combat to the transition back to civilian life – are markedly different from those who served in previous eras.

Roughly three-quarters of post-9/11 veterans were deployed at least once, compared with 58% of those who served before them. And post-9/11 veterans are about twice as likely as their pre-9/11 counterparts to have served in a combat zone.

Because they are more likely to have been deployed and to have seen combat, post-9/11 veterans are also more likely to bear the scars of battle, whether physical or not. Roughly half say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences related to their military service, and about a third say they sought professional help to deal with those experiences. In addition, 36% say that – regardless of whether they have sought help – they think they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS), according to a new Pew Research Center survey of U.S. military veterans.<sup>1</sup>

## Post-9/11 veterans more likely to have been deployed, seen combat, experienced emotional trauma

*% of veterans from each era saying they ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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<sup>1</sup> The survey asked respondents if they thought they had ever suffered from post-traumatic stress as a result of their experiences in the military, regardless of whether they had sought help. The question did not use the term "post-traumatic stress disorder."

In thinking about their service, a majority of all veterans express pride. Still, those who served in the post-9/11 era are somewhat less likely than their predecessors to say they frequently felt proud after leaving the military (58% vs. 70%).

For many veterans, the imprint of war is felt beyond their tour of duty and carries over into the transition from military to civilian life. This is true regardless of era of service. When asked about their experiences in the first few years after leaving the military, combat veterans are less likely than those who didn't serve in combat to say they frequently felt optimistic about their future, and they are more likely to say they didn't get the respect they deserved, struggled with the lack of structure in civilian life, and felt disconnected from family or friends.

At the same time, those who served in combat report positive impacts from the experience. Majorities say their experiences in combat made them feel closer to those who served alongside them, showed them that they were stronger than they thought they were and changed their priorities about what was important in their life.

### **How we defined veterans**

For this study, veterans were defined as men and women who do not currently serve on active duty in the U.S. military but did so in the past. This includes anyone who reported previous full-time service in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines or Coast Guard.

Individuals were also considered to be veterans if they were mobilized or deployed while serving in the reserves for any of the five military branches. Reservists who participated in training but were not otherwise called to full-time duty were not included in the sample. Those with past service in the Army National Guard or Air National Guard were considered veterans if they were mobilized to full-time military service by their branch of service or the federal government.

National Guardsmen who were only activated by their state's governor (for example in response to natural disasters or other state emergencies) were not included in the sample.

## **Most veterans say their training prepared them for military life fewer say the military prepared them for what came next**

Veterans give the military high marks for preparing them to serve. Roughly nine-in-ten say the training they received when they first entered the military prepared them very or somewhat well for military life. Post-9/11 and pre-9/11 veterans offer similarly positive assessments of their training and readiness.

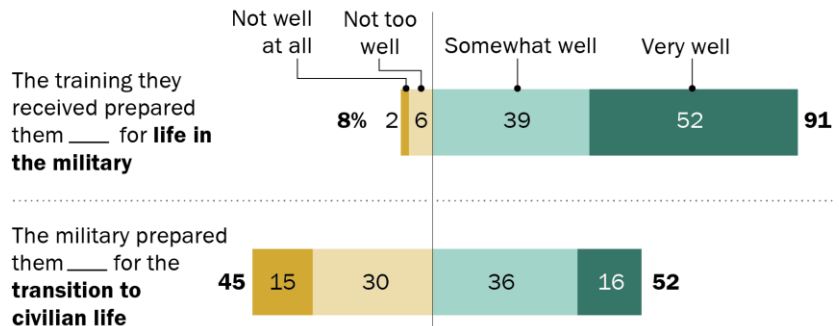
However, they are less affirmative about the job the military did preparing them for the transition to civilian life. About half of all veterans say the military prepared them very or somewhat well; a similar share says the military didn't prepare them too well or at all.

While veterans across eras offer similar evaluations of the job the military did preparing them for civilian life, post-9/11 veterans are much more likely than those who served before them to say their readjustment to civilian life was difficult. About half of post-9/11 veterans say it was somewhat or very difficult for them to readjust to civilian life after their military service; only about one-in-five pre-9/11 veterans say the same. Combat veterans are especially likely to say they struggled with the transition, and this is particularly true of those who had emotionally traumatic experiences.

The challenges some veterans face during the transition can be financial, emotional and professional. About a third of veterans say they had trouble paying their bills in their first few years after leaving the military, and roughly three-in-ten say they received unemployment compensation. One-in-five say they struggled with alcohol or substance abuse. Veterans who had emotionally traumatic experiences related to their military service are more likely than those who did not to report experiencing these things.

### About half of veterans say the military prepared them well for their transition to civilian life

*% of veterans saying ...*

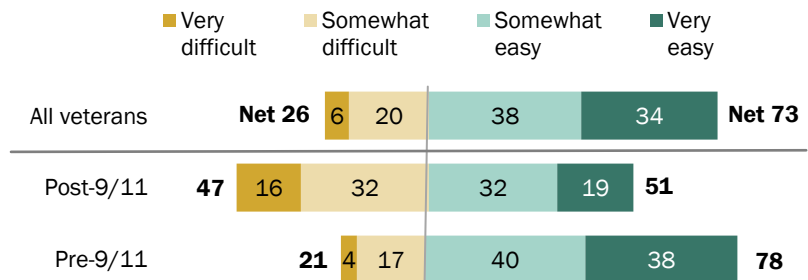


Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
 "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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### Post-9/11 veterans more likely than pre-9/11 veterans to say readjusting to civilian life was difficult

*% of veterans saying their readjustment to civilian life after military service was ...*



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
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When it comes to employment specifically, a majority of veterans say their military service was useful in giving them the skills and training they needed for a job outside the military. Veterans who served as commissioned officers in the military are significantly more likely than those who served as noncommissioned officers or enlisted personnel to say their military training was good preparation for a civilian job.

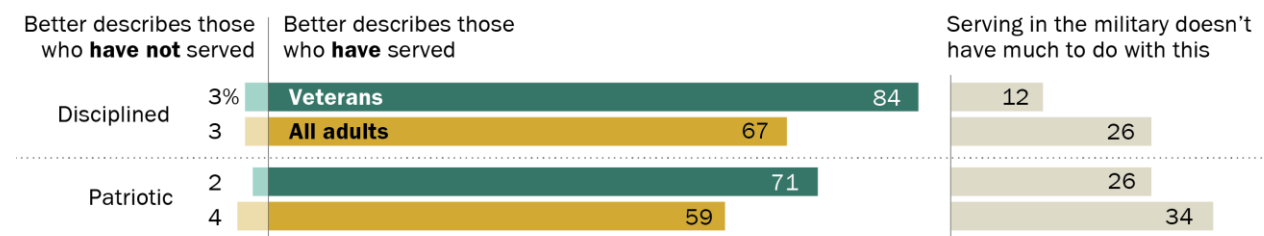
For most post-9/11 veterans, having served in the military was an advantage when it came to finding their first post-military job – 35% say this helped a lot and 26% say it helped a little. Only about one-in-ten say having served in the military hurt their ability to get a job.

## Veterans, public say most Americans look up to people who served in the military; majorities associate discipline and patriotism with veterans

Veterans view themselves as distinct from other Americans in some ways but not in others. Majorities among veterans (61%) and the general public (64%) say most Americans look up to people who have served in the military. Only about one-in-ten veterans (9%) and an even smaller share of all adults say most Americans look down on people who have served. Three-in-ten from each group say most Americans neither look up to nor down on veterans.

### Veterans and the public associate being disciplined and patriotic with those who have served in the military

*% of veterans/all adults saying each word or phrase ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019, and U.S. adults conducted May 14-24, 2019.

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Majorities of the public across gender, age groups and political parties say veterans are generally looked up to by most Americans. Among veterans, this sentiment is echoed across eras of service.

Veterans overwhelmingly see themselves as more disciplined than those who have not served in the military. Some 84% of all veterans say this characteristic better describes those who have

served in the military than those who have not. Most Americans (67%) agree with this assessment. About one-in-four among the public (26%) say being disciplined doesn't have much to do with whether one served in the military or not.

Similarly, a large majority of veterans (71%) say the term patriotic better describes those who served in the military than those who did not; 59% of the public shares this view. About a third of Americans say patriotism isn't related to whether one is a veteran or not.

Veterans and the public are less likely to associate certain negative traits with those who have served in the military. Some 13% of veterans and 25% of the public say being emotionally unstable better describes those who have served in the military than those who have not. Most in each group say this doesn't have much to do with having been in the military. The pattern is similar when it comes to being prone to violence.

A large majority of veterans endorse the military as a career choice. Roughly eight-in-ten say they would advise a young person close to them to join the military. This includes large majorities of post-9/11 veterans, combat veterans and those who say they had emotionally traumatic experiences in the military. The public is more evenly divided about this: 45% of all American adults say they would advise a young person close to them to join the military, 50% say they would not. In addition, veterans and the public have [differing views](#) on the current administration and its leadership of the military.

These findings are based on two surveys: one of 1,284 U.S. military veterans, conducted online May 14-June 3, 2019, and a parallel survey of 1,087 U.S. adults, conducted May 14-24, 2019.

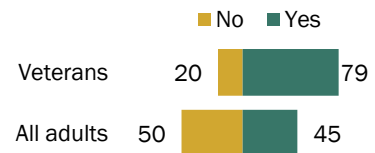
Other key findings:

### Deployment and combat

- Among veterans who were deployed at least once, post-9/11 veterans are much more likely than pre-9/11 veterans to report certain positive and negative consequences from deployment. Two-thirds of post-9/11 veterans say being deployed had a positive impact on their financial situation (compared with 30% of pre-9/11 veterans). At the same time, 42% of post-9/11

### Most veterans endorse joining the military

*% of veterans/all adults saying they would advise a young person close to them to join the military*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019, and U.S. adults conducted May 14-24, 2019.

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veterans – but only 17% of pre-9/11 veterans – say being deployed had a negative impact on their mental health.

- About a third of veterans (35%) say they knew and served with someone who was seriously injured in combat while performing their duties; 30% knew and served with someone who was killed in combat. Among combat veterans, 57% say they personally witnessed someone from their unit or an ally unit being seriously wounded or killed.
- Veterans who say they have suffered from PTS are much more likely than those who have not to report certain negative experiences in the first few years after they left the military. Roughly six-in-ten (61%) say they had trouble paying their bills, about four-in-ten (42%) say they had trouble getting medical care for themselves or their families, and a similar share (41%) say they struggled with alcohol or substance abuse.

### **Government assistance**

- A majority of veterans (64%) say the government has given them, as veterans, about as much help as it should have; 30% say the government has given them too little help. Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than those from previous eras to say the government has given them less help than it should have (43% vs. 27%).
- Most veterans (73%) say they have received benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs. When asked to assess the job the VA is doing meeting the needs of veterans, fewer than half (46%) of all veterans say the VA is doing an excellent or good job in this regard.

### **Post-military employment**

- One-in-four veterans say they had a job lined up when they left the military. Roughly half (48%) say they looked for a job right away, 21% say they looked for a job, but not right away, and 5% say they didn't look for a job after leaving the military. Among those who looked for a job, 57% had one in less than six months.
- About half of veterans say they enrolled in school after leaving the military. Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than others to say they enrolled full-time – 36% vs. 24% of those who served in previous eras.
- A significant share of post-9/11 veterans (42%) who worked in a civilian job after leaving the military say they believe, based on their experience skills and training, they were overqualified for their first post-military job; 56% say they stayed in their first job for more than a year.

# 1. Deployment, combat and their consequences

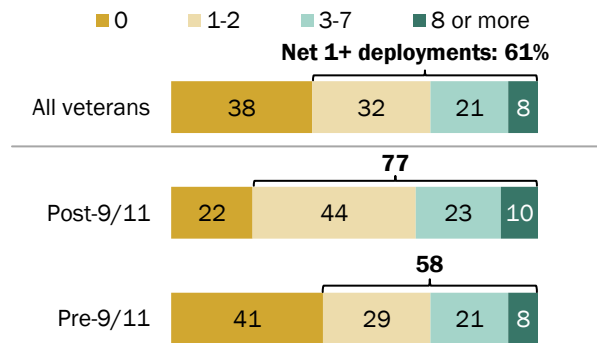
About six-in-ten veterans (61%) say they were deployed away from their permanent duty station at least once while they were on active duty, with roughly three-in-ten (29%) saying they were deployed three or more times. Roughly four-in-ten veterans (38%) were not deployed at all during their time in the military.

Post-9/11 veterans are much more likely to have been deployed than those who served in earlier eras. Roughly three-quarters of post-9/11 veterans (77%) were deployed at least once, compared with 58% of veterans who served only before 9/11.

Veterans who served as noncommissioned officers (NCOs) (74%) are more likely than those who were commissioned officers (58%) or enlisted servicemembers (54%) to have been deployed at least once. And, among those who were deployed, NCOs are more likely than enlisted personnel to have had multiple deployments: 60% saw three or more deployments, compared with 36% among those who were enlisted.

## Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than predecessors to have been deployed

% of veterans saying they were deployed away from their permanent duty station \_\_\_ times

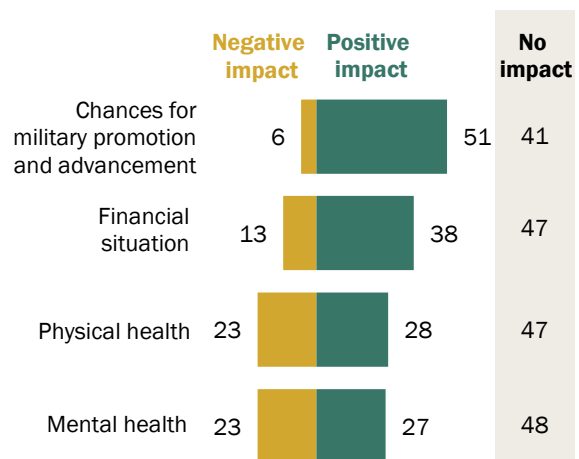


Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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## About one-in-four veterans who were deployed say this negatively impacted their physical, mental health

% of veterans who were ever deployed who say their deployment(s) had a \_\_\_ on their ...



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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Many veterans report that their deployments were beneficial to their careers but had a mixed impact on their physical and mental health. Roughly half (51%) say their deployments had a positive impact on their chances for promotion and advancement within the military, and 38% say the impact on their financial situation was positive. Sizable shares say their deployments had no impact on these aspects of their life (41% for promotion and advancement, 47% for financial situation), and relatively few say deployment had a negative impact.

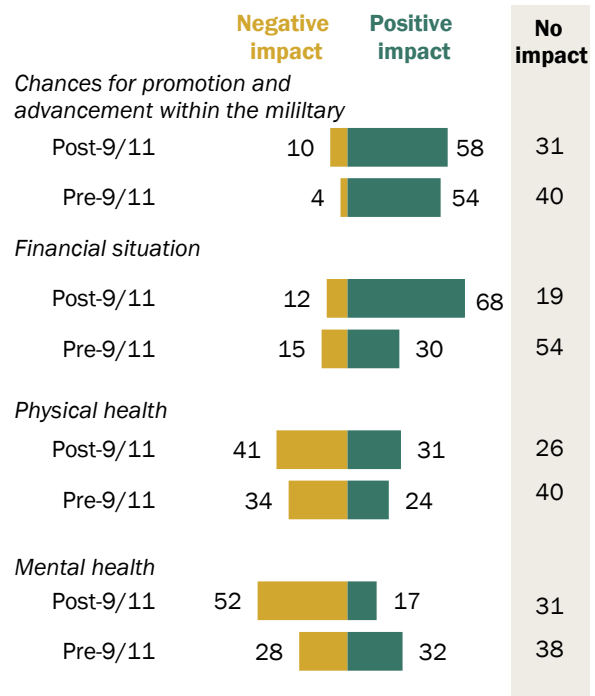
Among veterans who were deployed, 23% say their deployments had a negative impact on their physical health, and an identical share say being deployed impacted their mental health negatively. About three-in-ten say their deployments had a positive impact on their physical (28%) and mental (27%) health, while about half say they had no impact.

Veterans with combat experience are more likely to say there were financial benefits to being deployed: 44% of veterans with combat experience say their deployments had a positive impact on their financial situation, compared with 34% of veterans without combat experience. At the same time, combat veterans are more likely to say their deployments had a negative impact on their physical health: 37% say this, compared with 14% of veterans without combat experience. A similar pattern applies to their mental health.

Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than pre-9/11 veterans to say their deployments had a positive impact on their financial situation, and this is the case even after accounting for the fact that post-9/11 veterans are more likely to have combat experience. Fully 68% of post-9/11 veterans with

### About half of post-9/11 combat veterans say their deployment had a negative impact on their mental health

% of veterans with combat experience who say their deployment(s) had a \_\_\_ on their ...



Note: Combat experience is based on having served in a combat zone and had at least one key combat engagement. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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combat experience say their deployments helped them financially, compared with 30% of pre-9/11 combat veterans. But they are also more likely to say their deployments negatively impacted their mental health: About half of post-9/11 combat veterans (52%) say this, compared with 28% of pre-9/11 combat veterans.

There are differences by gender. Among all veterans, women are more likely than male veterans to say their deployments had a negative impact on their mental health (39% vs. 22%).

When it comes to promotion and advancement within the military, officers are more likely than enlisted members to say they saw a positive impact from their deployments. About six-in-ten commissioned officers (61%) and noncommissioned officers (57%) say their deployments positively impacted their chances of advancement in the military, compared with 46% of enlisted servicemembers.

### **Defining combat experience**

In exploring the attitudes and experiences of America's veterans, it was important to define what it means to have combat experience. In this report, to be considered a veteran with combat experience a respondent needed to have ever served in a combat or war zone, and answered yes to at least one of the following items:

- Did you ever go on combat patrols or missions?
- Were you ever exposed to hostile fire or did you ever come under attack?
- Did you ever fire your weapon at the enemy?
- Did you ever personally witness someone from your unit or an ally unit being seriously wounded or killed?

These questions are drawn from a longer list of items developed by the National Center for PTSD, a part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The Deployment Risk and Resilience Inventory-2 is a suite of scales that can be used to assess deployment-related risk and resilience factors among veterans. The four questions above are modified versions of items from the Combat Experiences Scale, which is used to measure a number of combat-related experiences that veterans encounter.

## About six-in-ten combat veterans say they witnessed someone in their unit or an ally unit being injured or killed

About three-in-ten veterans (29%) had combat experience at some point in their military career. The share is markedly higher among veterans who served after 9/11. Roughly half of post-9/11 veterans (49%) have had combat experience, compared with 24% of veterans who served only before 9/11.

About half of all veterans (51%) say someone they knew and served with was seriously injured while performing their military duties. This includes 35% who say they knew someone who was injured in combat and 16% who say the injury was not combat-related. Four-in-ten veterans say someone they knew and served with was killed while performing their duties (30% say this was combat-related, 10% say it was not).

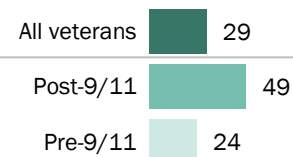
Veterans who have had combat experience are much more likely than those without it to know someone who was killed or injured. Roughly three-quarters of combat veterans (74%) say they know someone who was seriously injured while in the military, compared with 41% of veterans without combat experience.

In addition, combat veterans are about twice as likely as those without combat experience to say they knew and served with someone who was killed while performing their duties (62% vs. 31%).

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### Post-9/11 veterans are about twice as likely to have combat experience than earlier veterans

*% of veterans who served in a combat zone and had at least one combat experience*



Note: Combat experience is based on having served in a combat zone and had at least one key combat engagement.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.

"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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There are differences by rank in knowing someone who was injured or killed while performing their duties. Commissioned officers (54%) and noncommissioned officers (41%) are much more likely than enlisted servicemembers (28%) to say they know someone who was seriously injured in combat while performing their duties. Similarly, 43% of commissioned officers and 38% of noncommissioned officers say they knew someone who was killed in combat, compared with 22% of enlisted persons.

Many veterans saw these things first hand. Fully 57% of combat veterans say they personally witnessed someone from their unit or an ally unit being seriously wounded or killed. Veterans across rank and era of service are about equally likely to have had this experience.

One-in-five veterans say they, themselves, were seriously injured while performing their military duties: 5% say they were injured in combat and an additional 15% say their injury was not combat-related. Among veterans who have had combat experience, 16% say they were seriously injured in combat.

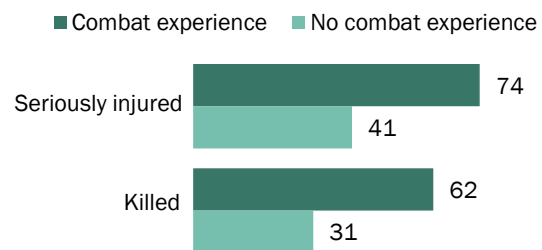
## About half of post-9/11 combat veterans say they think they have suffered from PTS

Given the wide reach of these experiences, it's not surprising that many veterans report that there was some emotional trauma associated with their military service. Three-in-ten veterans overall say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences related to their military service. Some 15% say they have sought help for emotional issues resulting from their military experience. And 18% say, regardless of whether they sought help, they believe they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS) as a result of their experiences in the military.

Across all three measures, there are significant gaps between veterans who served before 9/11 and those who served after. About half of post-9/11 veterans (47%) say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences, compared with one-quarter of pre-9/11 veterans. Similarly, about one-third of post-9/11 veterans (35%) say they sought help for emotional issues, compared with just

### About six-in-ten combat veterans know someone who was killed while performing their duties

*% of veterans from each group who say they know and served with someone who was \_\_\_ while performing their duties*



Note: Combat experience is based on having served in a combat zone and had at least one key combat engagement.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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one-in-ten pre-9/11 veterans. Post-9/11 veterans are also more likely than pre-9/11 veterans to say they have suffered from PTS (36% vs 14%).

Not surprisingly, veterans with combat experience are more likely to have had traumatic experiences. About half of all combat veterans (52%) say they had emotionally traumatic experiences related to their military service. Post-9/11 combat veterans are especially likely to say this (62%). About three-in-ten combat veterans (31%) say they sought help for emotional issues resulting from their service, compared with 8% of veterans without combat experience. Again, veterans who served in combat after 9/11 are particularly likely to have sought help – 48% say they sought help from a doctor or counselor for emotional issues resulting from their service.

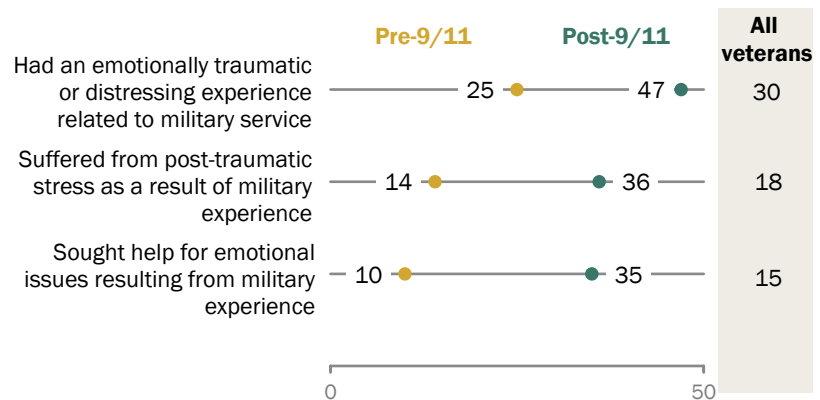
Combat veterans are also especially likely to report having PTS. Fully 44% of combat veterans say they believe they have suffered from PTS as a result of their military experience, compared with 8% of non-combat veterans. Among combat veterans, 55% of those who served after 9/11 say they have suffered from PTS, compared with 38% of those who served only before 9/11.

Traumatic experiences and PTS are closely correlated: Roughly half (51%) of veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences while in the military also say they have suffered from PTS. Only 4% of those who didn't have traumatic experiences say they have had PTS.

Relatedly, 31% of all veterans who know and served with someone who was killed while performing their duties say they have suffered from PTS, compared with 10% of those who don't know someone who was killed. That number jumps to 50% among post-9/11 veterans who know someone who was killed.

### About one-in-three post 9/11 veterans say they think they have suffered from post-traumatic stress

*% of veterans from each era who say they ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
 "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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## **About seven-in-ten combat veterans say their experiences made them feel closer to those who fought beside them**

For many veterans, the emotional burdens of combat have given them greater insight into themselves and taught them important lessons. Fully 56% of combat veterans say their experiences in combat changed their priorities about what is important in their lives. Some 16% say these experiences didn't change their priorities and 27% say they didn't make much of a difference. Similar shares of post-9/11 (58%) and pre-9/11 (55%) veterans say their combat experiences changed their priorities. Veterans who had emotionally traumatic experiences related to their military service are especially likely to report that their priorities changed: 69% say combat changed what was important in their life.

About seven-in-ten combat veterans (69%) say their combat experiences made them feel closer to those who fought alongside them. Just 4% say these experiences made them feel more distant from those they fought with, and one-quarter say they didn't make a difference. Veterans who served after 9/11 are more likely to say their combat experiences made them feel closer to those who they served with: 77% of post-9/11 combat veterans say this, compared with 65% of pre-9/11 combat veterans. Again, the nature of their combat experiences is linked to impact, as veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic experiences are among the most likely to say their combat experiences made them feel closer to those they served alongside (81% say this).

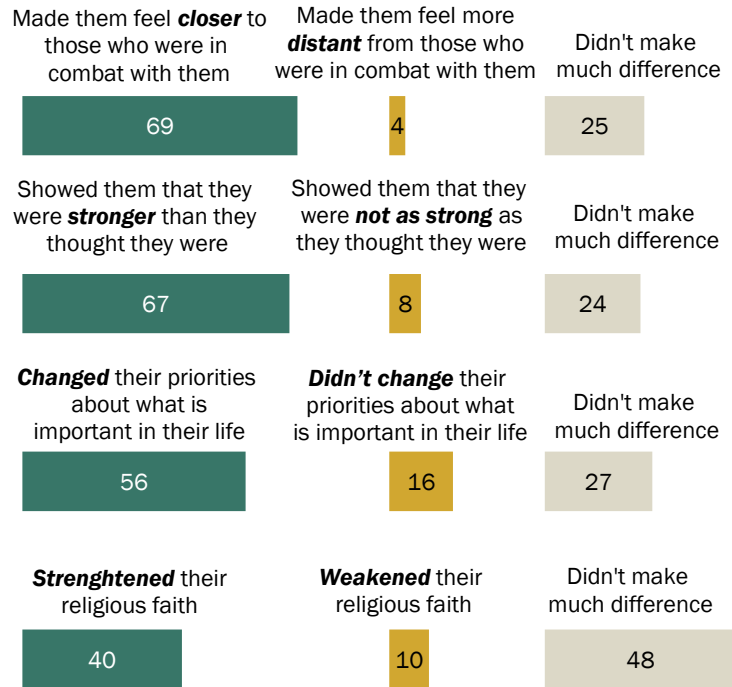


A majority of combat veterans also say their experiences in combat showed them that they were stronger than they thought, while only 8% of combat veterans say these experiences showed them they were not as strong as they thought. About one-quarter (24%) say their experiences didn't make much of a difference in this regard.

About half of combat veterans (48%) say their combat experiences didn't make much of a difference when it came to their religious faith. Still, four-in-ten say their combat experiences strengthened their religious faith and one-in-ten say they weakened their religious faith.

## Two-thirds of combat veterans say their combat experiences showed them they were stronger than they thought

*% of veterans with combat experience who say their experiences in combat ...*



Note: Combat experience is based on having served in a combat zone and had at least one key combat engagement. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
 Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
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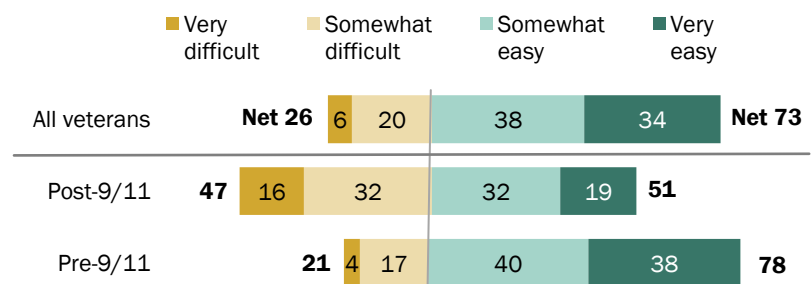
## 2. Readjusting to civilian life

The transition from military to civilian life can be challenging for some veterans. While most say readjusting to civilian life was very or somewhat easy, roughly one-in-four say it was at least somewhat difficult.

In their assessments of the ease or difficulty of the transition to civilian life, there is a significant gap between veterans who served before 9/11 and those who served more recently. About half of post-9/11 veterans say it was somewhat (32%) or very (16%) difficult for them to readjust to civilian life after their military service. By comparison, only about one-in-five veterans whose service ended before 9/11 say their transition was somewhat (17%) or very (4%) difficult. A large majority of pre-9/11 veterans (78%) say it was easy for them to make the transition.

### Post-9/11 veterans more likely than pre-9/11 veterans to say readjusting to civilian life was difficult

*% of veterans saying their readjustment to civilian life after military service was ...*



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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Veterans who served in combat are significantly more likely than those who did not to say their readjustment was difficult: 46% of those with some combat experience, compared with 18% of those without combat experience, describe their readjustment to civilian life as difficult.

Veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences related to military service and those who say they have suffered from post-traumatic stress (PTS) as a result of their experiences in the military are among the most likely to say their transition to civilian life was difficult. Roughly half of those who had traumatic experiences (53%) and an even higher share of those who say they have suffered from PTS (66%) say their readjustment was at least somewhat difficult. Among those with PTS, three-in-ten say it was very difficult.

While most veterans say the military prepared them for active duty, only about half say they were well prepared for the transition to civilian life. Some 16% say the military prepared them very well

for the transition and 36% say it prepared them somewhat well. At the same time, more than four-in-ten say the military did not prepare them too well (30%) or at all (15%).

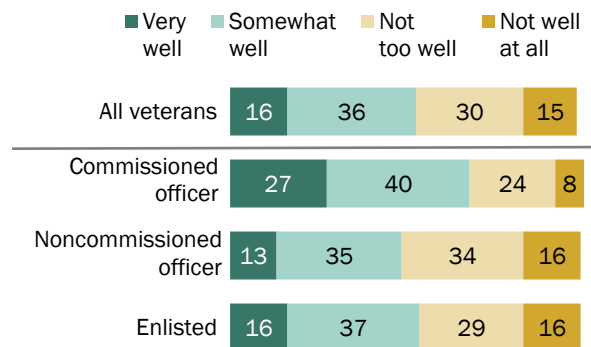
These ratings do not differ significantly by era of service: Pre- and post-9/11 veterans are equally likely to say the military prepared them well for the transition. Nor do these assessments differ according to combat experience. Those who served in combat are just as likely as those who did not to say they were well prepared for the transition.

However, veterans who report having had emotionally traumatic experiences while in the military are significantly less likely than those who didn't have these types of experiences to say they felt well prepared for the transition (39% vs. 59%).

In addition, there are differences by rank. Veterans who served as commissioned officers are more likely to say the military prepared them well for the transition to civilian life than are those who served as NCOs or as enlisted personnel (67% vs. 48% and 54%, respectively).

### Officers more likely than NCOs, enlisted personnel to say the military prepared them well for transition to civilian life

*% of veterans saying the military prepared them \_\_\_\_ for the transition to civilian life*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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## Post-9/11 veterans faced more challenges than their predecessors in transitioning to civilian life

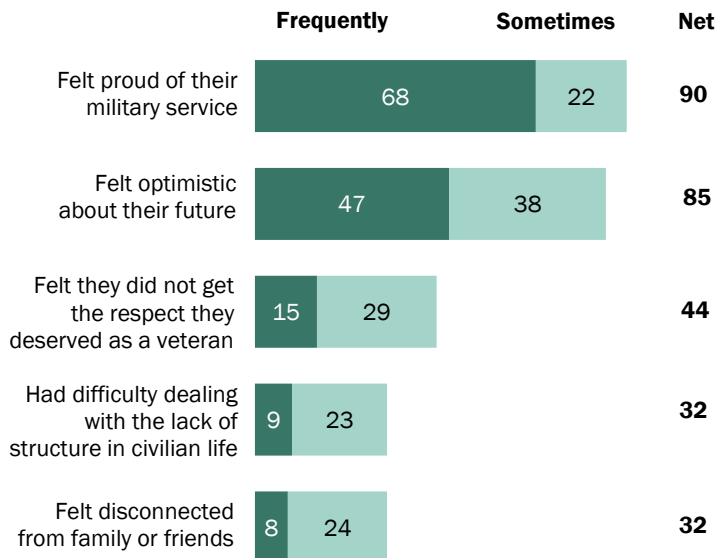
The survey asked about some emotional highs and lows veterans may have experienced in the first few years after they left the military. In general, veterans are more likely to say that they felt optimistic and proud than disconnected or disrespected. But there is a significant gap between veterans who served before 9/11 and those who served after, with veterans from the more recent era more likely to report having negative experiences.

Roughly two-thirds of all veterans (68%) say, in the first few years after leaving the military, they frequently felt proud of their military service. An additional 22% say they sometimes felt proud, and 9% say they seldom or never felt this way. Pre-9/11 veterans are more likely to say they frequently felt proud of their service than are post-9/11 veterans (70% vs. 58%).

About half of veterans (47%) say they frequently felt optimistic about their future after leaving the military, 38% say they sometimes felt optimistic and 15% say they seldom or never felt this way. Here again the findings differ by era of service: 50% of pre-9/11 veterans say they frequently felt optimistic, compared with only a third of post-9/11 veterans. And roughly a quarter of post-9/11 veterans (23%) say they seldom or never felt optimistic about their future in the first few years after leaving the military.

### About seven-in-ten veterans say they frequently felt proud of their service after leaving the military

*% of veterans saying, in the first few years after they left the military, they frequently/sometimes ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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Feelings of optimism differ significantly depending on the types of experiences veterans had while on active duty. Veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences are

less likely to say they felt optimistic about their future after leaving the military than are those who didn't have these types of experiences – 35% of those who had traumatic experiences say they frequently felt optimistic compared with 53% of those who did not.

In addition, officers are more likely than NCOs or enlisted personnel to say they frequently felt optimistic after leaving the military – 70% vs. 51% and 40%, respectively.

Relatively few veterans (15%) say they frequently felt they didn't get the respect they deserved after leaving the military; 29% say they sometimes felt this way. A majority say they seldom (23%) or never (32%) felt this way.

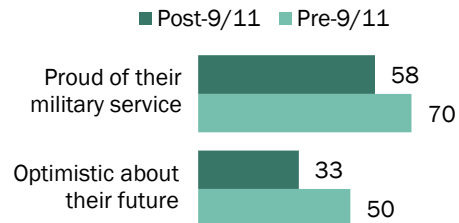
These feelings don't differ significantly by era of service, but they do differ according to experiences veterans had while on active duty. Veterans with combat experience are about twice as likely as those without to say they frequently felt they didn't get the respect they deserved (23% vs. 12%). Similarly, veterans who had emotionally traumatic experiences and those who have suffered from PTS are much more likely than those who haven't to say they frequently felt disrespected. Three-in-ten veterans who say they've experienced PTS say they frequently felt they didn't get the respect they deserved after leaving the military; only 12% of those who didn't have PTS say the same.

About one-in-ten veterans overall (9%) say they frequently had difficulty dealing with the lack of structure in civilian life after leaving the military, and an additional 23% say they sometimes felt this way. About two-thirds say they seldom (24%) or never (43%) had difficulty with this. Post-9/11 veterans are more likely than those who served in earlier eras to say they frequently had difficulty dealing with the lack of structure in civilian life (23% vs. 6%).

Here, again, those who had traumatic experiences while in the military and those who have suffered from PTS are more likely than those who didn't to have faced this challenge. About three-in-ten veterans who say they have suffered from PTS (29%) say they frequently had difficulty dealing with the lack of structure in civilian life, compared with 5% of those who haven't had PTS.

## Post-9/11 veterans less likely to feel proud, optimistic

*% of veterans saying, in the first few years after they left the military, they frequently felt ...*



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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The patterns are similar when it comes to feeling disconnected from family or friends. Overall, relatively few veterans (8%) say they frequently felt disconnected from others after leaving the military, while 24% say they sometimes felt this way. About two-thirds say they seldom (21%) or never (47%) felt this way. Post-9/11 veterans, combat veterans, those who had emotionally traumatic experiences and those who have suffered from PTSD are among the most likely to report having felt this way. For example, among veterans who say they had traumatic experiences related to their military service, 22% say they frequently felt this type of social isolation after leaving the military.

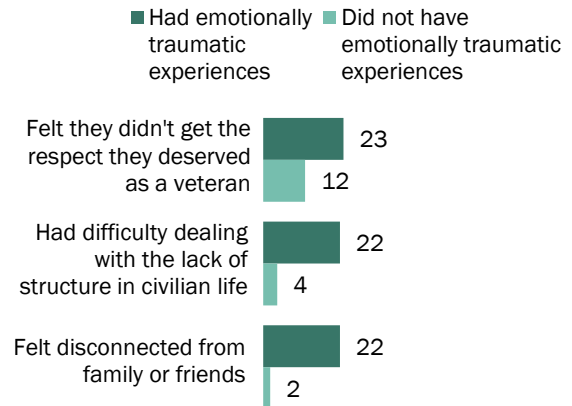
### One-in-five veterans say they struggled with substance abuse after leaving the military

In addition to the emotional strains that may accompany transitioning from the military to civilian life, some veterans have faced financial and health challenges. About a third of all veterans (35%) say they had trouble paying their bills in the first few years after leaving the military. Roughly three-in-ten (28%) say they received unemployment benefits, 16% say they had trouble getting access to medical care when they or their family needed it, and 12% say they received food benefits (such as WIC or SNAP) from the government.

Having trouble paying bills or accessing health care as well as receiving food support is more common among post-9/11 veterans than among those who served before 9/11. The share from

### Veterans who experienced emotional trauma related to military service are more likely to have faced certain emotional challenges during transition

Among veterans who had traumatic experiences/did not have traumatic experiences, % saying, in the first few years after they left the military, they frequently ...

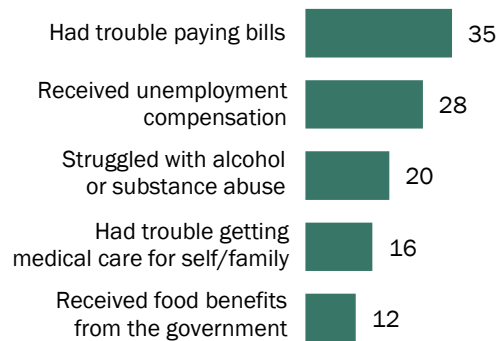


Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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### About a third of veterans say they had trouble paying bills after leaving military

% of veterans saying, in the first few years after they left the military, they ...



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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each era who say they received unemployment is identical.

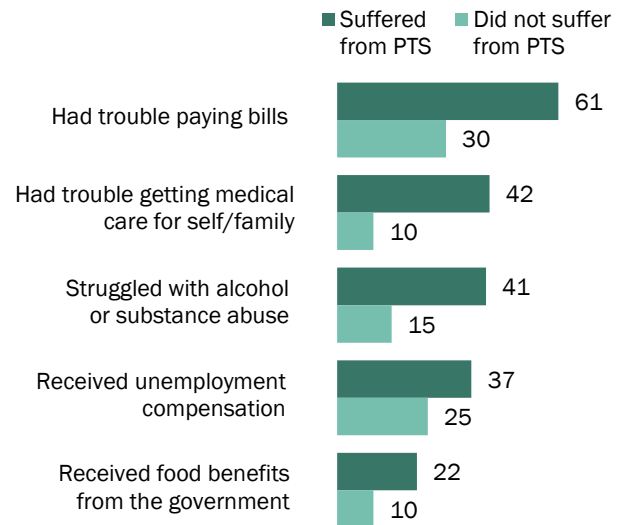
One-in-five veterans say they struggled with alcohol or substance abuse in the first few years after leaving the military. Similar shares of post-9/11 (24%) and pre-9/11 (19%) veterans say they dealt with this issue.

As is the case with some of the emotional challenges veterans face after leaving the military, experiences while on active duty are linked with financial difficulties during the transition. Veterans who say they had traumatic or distressing experiences while in the military and those who say they have suffered from PTS are more likely than those who did not have these types of experiences to say they faced financial troubles or struggled with substance abuse after transitioning to civilian life. For example, 61% of veterans who have suffered from PTS say they had trouble paying bills in the first few years after they left the military. By comparison, 30% of veterans who have not had PTS say they had this type of trouble. Similarly, while 42% of veterans who have dealt with PTS say they had trouble getting medical care for themselves or their family when they got out of the military, only 10% of veterans who have not had PTS say the same.

There are demographic differences as well. White veterans are much less likely than nonwhite veterans to report that, after leaving the military, they had trouble paying bills or accessing health care, or that they received unemployment or government food assistance.<sup>2</sup> About half of nonwhite veterans (49%) say they had trouble paying bills in the first few years after leaving the military, compared with 32% of white veterans. And nonwhite veterans are more likely than white veterans to say they had trouble getting medical care for themselves or their family (29% vs. 12%).

### Veterans who say they experienced post-traumatic stress much more likely to have faced financial challenges during transition

Among veterans who say they suffered from/did not suffer from PTS, % saying, in the first few years after they left the military, they ...



Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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<sup>2</sup> Due to sample size limitations, veterans from racial and ethnic minority groups cannot be reported on separately.

Male veterans are about twice as likely as female veterans to say they struggled with alcohol or substance abuse after leaving the military (21% vs. 10%). Female veterans are more likely to have received food assistance than their male counterparts – 24% of women vs. 11% of men say they received benefits such as WIC or SNAP from the government in the first few years after leaving the military.

## Veterans give the VA mixed ratings

Most veterans (73%) say they have received benefits from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) – whether it be educational or medical benefits, job training, a home loan or a pension. This includes 81% of post-9/11 veterans and 71% of those who served before 9/11.

Veterans who served in combat are more likely than those who did not to say they have received VA benefits (82% vs. 69%). In addition, veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic

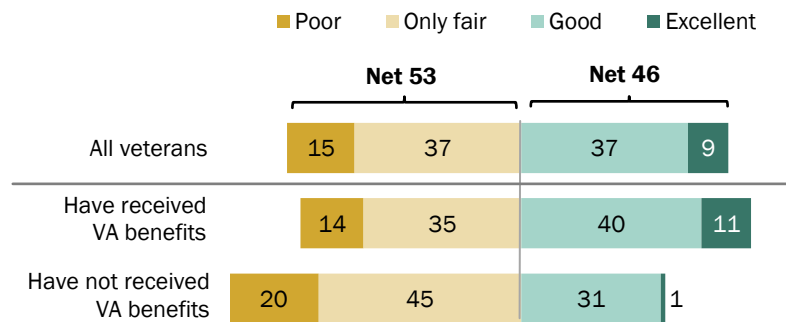
experiences related to their military service and those who say they've suffered from PTSD are more likely than veterans who have not had these types of experiences to say they've received VA benefits. Some 86% of veterans who say they've had PTSD say they have received VA benefits.

When it comes to their assessments of the job the VA is doing, 9% of veterans say the department is doing an excellent job meeting the needs of military veterans; an additional 37% say the VA is doing a good job. About half say it's doing only a fair (37%) or poor (15%) job.

Combat veterans are somewhat more likely than those who did not experience combat to say the VA is doing an excellent or good job meeting the needs of today's veterans (53% vs. 43%). In addition, veterans who say they have received benefits from the VA are significantly more likely to rate the department positively. About half (51%) of veterans who have received VA benefits say the

### Veterans are divided over the VA's job performance

*% of veterans saying the Dept. of Veterans Affairs is doing a \_\_\_\_ job meeting the needs of military veterans*



Note: Figures may not add to subtotals due to rounding. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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department is doing an excellent or good job. Among those who have not received these benefits, 32% say the same.

Thinking more generally about the help they've received from the government, veterans overall are largely satisfied: 64% say the government has given them about as much help as it should have, 30% say the government has given them less help than it should have and 3% say they've gotten too much help from the government.

There is a significant gap between pre- and post-9/11 veterans on this measure. While 68% of pre-9/11 veterans say they've gotten about as much help as they should from the government, only about half (49%) of post-9/11 veterans say the same. Some 43% of post-9/11 veterans say they've gotten less help from the government than they should have.

White veterans are more likely than nonwhite veterans to say the government has given them the right amount of help (67% vs. 55%). Four-in-ten nonwhite veterans – compared with 23% of white veterans – say the government hasn't given them as much help as it should have.

Veterans who had emotionally traumatic experiences related to their military service, as well as those who have suffered from PTS, are significantly more likely than other veterans to say the government hasn't done enough for them. Among those who had traumatic experiences, 43% say the government hasn't done enough for them; 25% of those who haven't had these types of experiences say the same. Veterans who have suffered from PTS are about twice as likely as those who have not to say the government hasn't done enough to help them (54% vs. 25%).

### About four-in-ten post-9/11 veterans say the government hasn't given them enough help

*% of veterans saying the government has given them, as a veteran, \_\_\_ as/than it should have*

	About as much help	Less help	More help
All veterans	64	30	3
Post-9/11	49	43	7
Pre-9/11	68	27	2

Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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### 3. The transition to post-military employment

For many veterans, finding a job after leaving the military is an important part of the transition to civilian life. A majority of veterans say their military service was useful in giving them the skills and training they needed for a job outside the military – 29% say it was very useful and another 29% say it was fairly useful.

Veterans who served as commissioned officers are much more likely than either noncommissioned officers (NCOs) or enlisted personnel to say that their military service was very or fairly useful in giving them the skills needed for a job outside the military (78% of commissioned officers say this compared with 59% of NCOs and 54% of enlisted personnel).

While there are not significant differences between veterans who served in combat and those who didn't in terms of how they assess the usefulness of their military service, there are differences by number of deployments.

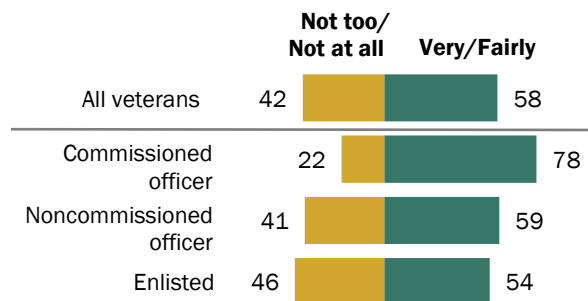
Veterans who were deployed three or more times are more likely to say their military service was very or fairly useful in giving them the skills and training needed for a civilian job compared with veterans who were deployed two or fewer times (71% vs. 53%). There is little difference between those veterans who have never been deployed (54%) and those who have been deployed one or two times (51%).

#### Most veterans either had a job lined up or looked for a job right away after leaving the military

One-in-four veterans say they had a civilian job lined up after they left the military. About half (48%) say they didn't have a job lined up but looked for one right away, 21% looked for a job but not right away, and 5% did not look for a job at all or retired from working.

#### Commissioned officers are largely positive on the usefulness of job skills gained in the military

*% of veterans saying their military service was \_\_\_ useful in giving them the skills and training they needed for a job outside the military*



Note: Based on those who had a job or looked for a job after they left the military. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

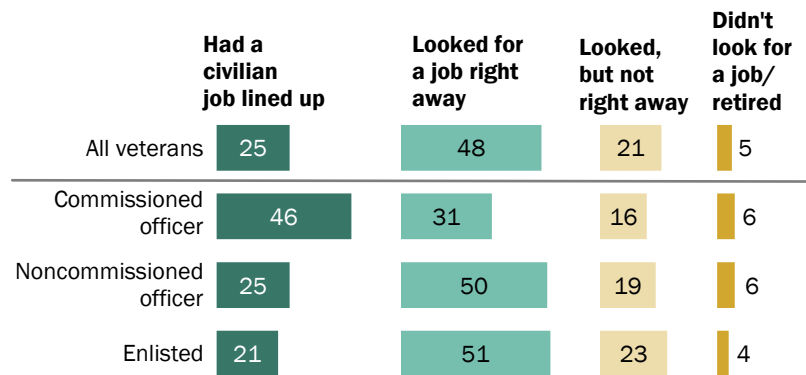
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Veterans who served as commissioned officers while on active duty are about twice as likely as those who were NCOs or enlisted personnel to say they had a civilian job lined up when they left the military (46% of commissioned officers vs. 25% of NCOs and 21% of enlisted). About half of NCOs (50%) and enlisted personnel (51%) say they looked for a civilian job directly after leaving the military.

The timing of the transition to employment for veterans does not differ significantly based on the types of experiences they had while on active duty. Veterans who say they had emotionally traumatic or distressing experiences related to their military service are just as likely as those who did not have these types of experiences to say they had a job lined up when they left the military (24% and 26%, respectively). And among those who didn't already have a job lined up, similar shares say they looked for a job right away after leaving the military (64% and 66%).

### Officers about twice as likely as enlisted and NCOs to have had a job lined up when they left the military

*% of veterans saying that, after they left the military, they ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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A closer look at post-9/11 veterans who did not have a job lined up directly after the completion of their military service shows that, regardless of when they started looking, 57% say it took them less than six months to find a job. An additional 21% say they had a job within a year of the start of their search. Some 16% say it took them more than a year to find a job, and 6% say they were not able to find one.

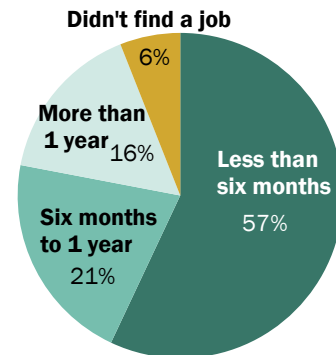
Overall, about half of veterans say they enrolled in school after they left the military, either full-time (26%) or part-time (21%), and post-9/11 veterans are more likely to have enrolled in school full-time after leaving the military than veterans who previously served (36% vs. 24%).

Female veterans are more likely than their male counterparts to say they enrolled in school after leaving the military (60% vs. 46%). And veterans who served as NCOs are more likely than either commissioned officers or enlisted personnel to say they enrolled in school (55% of NCOs vs. 40% of commissioned officers and 44% of enlisted).

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### About half of post-9/11 veterans found a job less than six months after starting their search

*Among those who looked for a job after leaving the military, % of post-9/11 veterans saying they found one in ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.

"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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## Most post-9/11 veterans say their military experience helped them get their first job after leaving the military

Among post-9/11 veterans who found a job after leaving the military, a majority (61%) say their military service helped their ability to get their first job following their time in service, including 35% of veterans who say it helped a lot. Only about one-in-ten of these veterans say their military service hurt their ability to find a job, while 30% say their military service neither helped nor hurt.

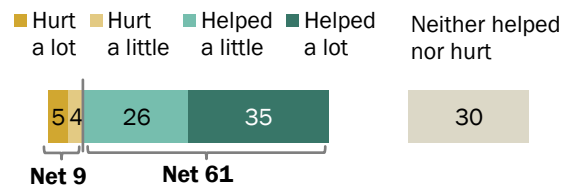
While most post-9/11 veterans say their military service was an advantage when it came to getting their post-military job, many say that job was not a perfect fit. About four-in-ten (42%) say they felt overqualified for their first job after leaving the military based on their skills, experience and training; 46% say their qualifications were about right, and 12% felt underqualified.

Fully 56% of these post-9/11 veterans say they stayed in their first post-military job for more than one year; 44% stayed in their first job for a year or less, including 20% who say they stayed for less than six months.

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### About six-in-ten post-9/11 veterans say serving in the military helped them get their first job after leaving the military

*% of post-9/11 veterans who say that serving in the military \_\_\_\_ their ability to get their first job after they left the military*



Note: Based on post-9/11 veterans who had or found a job after leaving the military. Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019. "The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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## Combat veterans more likely than others to say their coworkers know they served in the military

In their work life after the military, veterans report that their veteran status comes into play to varying degrees. Among all those who are currently employed, 28% of veterans say the people they interact with at work mostly don't know about their previous military service. This is more likely to be the case for pre-9/11 veterans than for those who served after 9/11: 32% and 18%, respectively, say people they work with mostly don't know they served in the military.

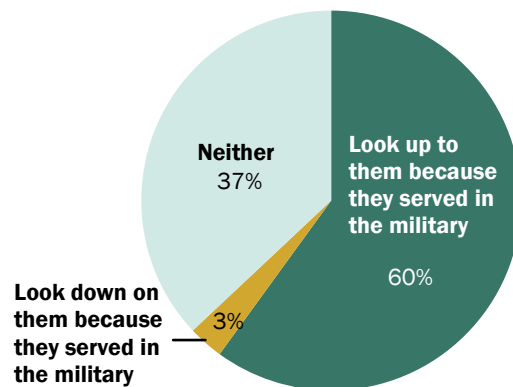
Veterans who were never deployed are more likely than those who were to say that, for the most part, the people they work with do not know they served in the military (41% vs. 21%). Similarly, those who did not serve in combat are more likely than those who did to say people at work don't know they are veterans (33% vs. 17%).

For those veterans whose veteran status is well known at work, this is largely a positive thing. Six-in-ten employed veterans whose coworkers are aware of their military service say people they interact with at work generally look up to them because of their military experience, only 3% say people look down on them because they served in the military, and 37% say people neither look up to nor down on them.

These responses are similar across eras. Among veterans who served prior to 9/11, 61% of those who say people they interact with at work know they are veterans say those people look up to them because they served in the military. Among post-9/11 veterans, that share is 58%.

### Many veterans say people at work look up to them because of their military service

*Among employed veterans who say the people they interact with at work know they are a veteran, % saying those people generally ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.  
Source: Survey of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019.  
"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

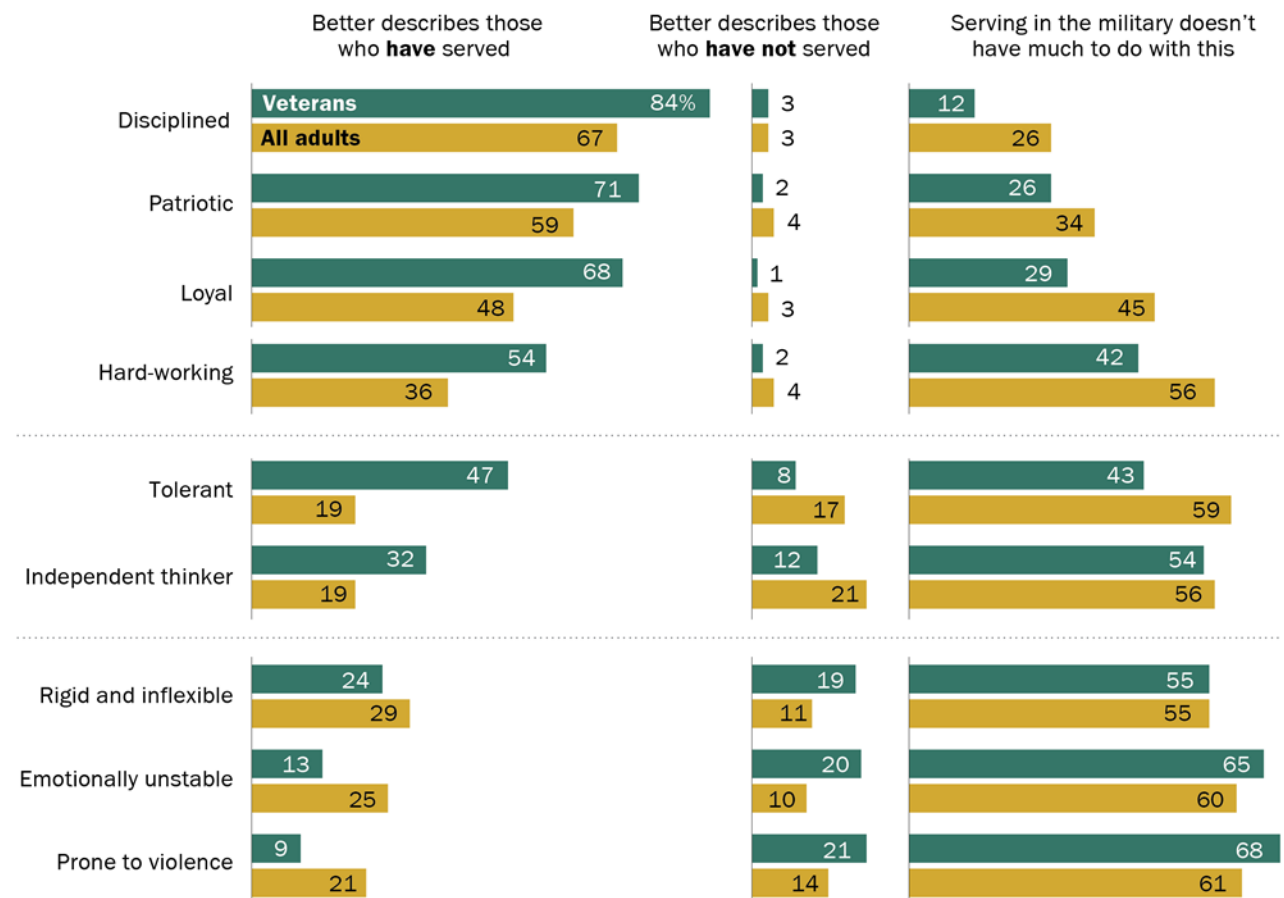
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## 4. How veterans and the public see each other and themselves

Large shares among veterans and the U.S. public say people who have served in the military are more disciplined, patriotic and loyal than those who have not served. And about a third or more in

### Majorities among veterans and the public say being disciplined and patriotic better describe those who have served in the military than those who have not

*% of veterans/all adults saying each word or phrase ...*



Note: Share of respondents who didn't offer an answer not shown.

Source: Surveys of U.S. veterans conducted May 14-June 3, 2019, and U.S. adults conducted May 14-24, 2019.

"The American Veteran Experience and the Post-9/11 Generation"

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both groups say veterans are more hard-working. Still, when it comes to things like being tolerant and open to all groups, the public is less likely to see this as a trait associated with military service than veterans are themselves.

Fully 84% of veterans and 67% of all adults say the term “disciplined” better describes people who have served in the military. Roughly one-quarter of all adults (26%) and 12% of veterans say that serving in the military does not have much to do with this trait. Just 3% of both groups say being disciplined better describes people who have not served in the military.

Similarly, about seven-in-ten veterans (71%) and 59% of adults say “patriotic” better describes people who have served in the military. About one-quarter of veterans (26%) and 34% of adults say being patriotic has little to do with military service. Here again, small shares say this trait better describes people who have not served in the military (2% of veterans and 4% of the public).

While a majority of veterans (54%) say the term “hard-working” better describes those who have served in the military, a majority of the public (56%) says this characteristic is not necessarily related to military background. About a third (36%) of all adults say this trait better describes those who served in the military. Small shares of veterans (2%) and the public (4%) say hard-working better describes those who have not been in the military.

The pattern is similar when it comes to loyalty. About seven-in-ten veterans (68%) say being “loyal” better describes those who have served in the military than those who haven’t. Among the public, 48% say this trait better describes military veterans, but roughly the same share (45%) says serving in the military doesn’t have much to do with being loyal. Again, very few veterans (1%) or members of the public (3%) say loyalty better describes those who have not served in the military.

Veterans and the public are especially divided in thinking about tolerance and openness. While 47% of veterans say being “tolerant and open to all groups of people” better describes those who have served in the military than those who have not, just 19% of all adults say the same – a 28 percentage point gap. Roughly six-in-ten adults (59%) say being in the military has nothing to do with tolerance, as do 43% of veterans. Among all adults, 17% say being tolerant better describes those who have not been in the military; 8% of veterans say the same.

There are several traits and characteristics that majorities of both veterans and the public say have little to do with having served in the military. One such trait is being an “independent thinker.” Some 54% of veterans and 56% of all adults say serving in the military doesn’t have much to do with this. Among those who do see a military-civilian difference on this trait, veterans are more



likely to say this better describes those who have served in the military, while the public is more evenly divided.

Similarly, when it comes to being “rigid and inflexible,” more than half of veterans and the public (55% each) say being in the military has nothing to do with this. About one-quarter of veterans (24%) say being rigid and inflexible better describes those who have served in the military; a similar share of all Americans say the same (29%). Still, roughly two-in-ten veterans (19%) say being inflexible better describes those who have not been in the military, compared with 11% of all Americans.

Most veterans and members of the public say that being “emotionally unstable” and being “prone to violence” are traits that are not related to having been in the military. In both cases, the public is more likely to associate these traits with those who have served in the military than veterans are. One-in-four adults say being emotionally unstable better describes those who have served in the military than those who haven’t, and 21% say the same about being prone to violence. Smaller shares of the public say these traits better describe those who haven’t served. Just the opposite is true of veterans – they are more likely to see these traits as associated with those who have not served in the military.

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This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at [pewresearch.org/socialtrends](https://www.pewresearch.org/socialtrends)

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In addition, the project benefited greatly from the guidance of the Pew Research Center methodology team: Courtney Kennedy, Andrew Mercer, Nick Bertoni, Nick Hatley and Arnold Lau.

## Methodology

### Overview

This study included both a general population sample of U.S. adults and a sample of U.S. military veterans. The sample of U.S. adults (n=1,087) was fielded using the KnowledgePanel, which is a probability-based online survey panel maintained by Ipsos. The target population for the general population sample was non-institutionalized adults ages 18 and older and living in the United States, including Alaska and Hawaii.

In order to achieve a reliable sample size of veterans, two online probability-based panels were used: KnowledgePanel and Pew Research Center's American Trends Panel (ATP). The subsample from the ATP was selected by sampling all active panelists who reported being a veteran in the annual profile survey. All active panelists from Ipsos' KnowledgePanel who reported being a veteran were sampled. KnowledgePanel veterans were screened and allowed to fully complete the survey if they confirmed they were a veteran who served after Sept. 11, 2001 (post-9/11). In total, 1,284 veterans responded to the survey.

The general population survey was conducted May 14 to May 24, 2019, and the veteran survey was conducted May 14 to June 3, 2019. Interviewing was conducted in both English and Spanish.

### About the Ipsos KnowledgePanel

KnowledgePanel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include those with internet access and those who did not have internet access at the time of their recruitment (KnowledgePanel provides internet access for those who do not have it, and if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel). A combination of random-digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members (in 2009 KnowledgePanel switched its sampling methodology for recruiting members from RDD to ABS). KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel.

### About the American Trends Panel

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence

File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 18,720 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 13,462 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.<sup>3</sup>

## Response rate

Out of 7,570 who were sampled, 3,758 were eligible to take the survey, out of which a total of 2,371 panelists responded, for a response rate of 63.1%. This included 971 ATP members and 1,400 respondents sampled from Ipsos' KnowledgePanel. This does not include seven respondents who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining and two who were removed after they were deemed ineligible based on an open-ended response given when asked which branch of the military they served in. The cumulative response rate accounting for

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### American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,504
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,465
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	801
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	8,692
	<b>Total</b>	<b>29,114</b>	<b>18,720</b>	<b>13,462</b>

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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<sup>3</sup> AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 1.6%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged onto the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the sample of 1,284 veteran respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points. The margin of sampling error for the sample of 1,087 general population respondents is plus or minus 3.1 percentage points.

## Weighting

The final survey dataset contains two sample weight variables: one for the total general population adult sample and one for the total combined ATP+KP veteran sample. Each weight was created with a base weight reflecting the probability of selection followed by calibration to known demographics of the target population.

### Veterans weight

For the veterans weight, Ipsos scaled the KP and ATP base weights proportional to effective sample size. Then they downweighted the combined ATP and KP post-9/11 veterans to be 19.42% of the combined sample (based on ACS benchmark). Finally, the weight was raked to benchmark veteran population demographic targets computed from the 2017 American Community Survey.

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### Raking dimensions and source for population estimates for veterans weight

Raking dimension <sup>^</sup>	Source
Era Served (2)	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS
Gender (2) x Era Served (2)	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS
Age (4,5) x Era Served (2)*	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS
Education (3) x Era Served (2)	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS
Race/Ethnicity (4) x Era Served (2)	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS
Region (4) x Era Served (2)	2017 American Community Survey 1-Year PUMS

<sup>^</sup> The numbers of categories (prior to any collapsing from small cell size) are shown in parentheses.

\*Age split differed by Era Served

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Weights were scaled to sum to the unweighted sample size of qualified veterans. Weights were then trimmed separately among post and pre-9/11 veterans.

## General population adult weight

For the general population weight, Ipsos started with the KnowledgePanel base weights and then raked to national demographic targets for the age 18+ population on the following variables computed from the Current Population Survey and the American Community Survey:

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### Raking dimensions and source for population estimates for general population adult weight

Raking dimension <sup>^</sup>	Source
Gender (2) x Age (4)	2018 March CPS
Race/Ethnicity (5)	2018 March CPS
Region (4) x MSA (2)	2018 March CPS
Education (4)	2018 March CPS
Income (6)	2018 March CPS
Language Proficiency (4)	2017 American Community Survey

<sup>^</sup> The numbers of categories (prior to any collapsing from small cell size) are shown in parentheses.

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Weights were scaled to sum to the unweighted sample size of the general population adult respondents.

## Precision of estimates

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

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Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Veteran sample	1,284	3.9 percentage points
Gen Pop sample	1,087	3.1 percentage points

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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