

United States Census Bureau

How Do We Know?

Memorial Day: Honoring America's Wartime Veterans

Memorial Day, originally called Decoration Day, is a day of remembrance for those who died in service to their country. The holiday was officially proclaimed in 1868 to honor Union and Confederate soldiers and was expanded after World War I to honor those who died in all wars. Today, Memorial Day honors over one million men and women who have died in military service since the Civil War.

This infographic compiles statistics from the U.S. Census Bureau and Department of Defense to honor our men and women who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The U.S. Census Bureau gathers detailed information on living veterans from the American Community Survey (ACS). Federal, state, and community leaders, private businesses, nonprofits, and community organizations use ACS statistics to determine the programs, services, and infrastructure that serve the needs of our veterans. The Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center provides statistics on the number of people who served and died in each of our nation's wars.

Wartime Veterans in 2011

Source: 2011 American Community Survey

16.1 million of the 21.6 million living veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces served worldwide during a period of war.

75 percent of all male veterans and 72 percent of all female veterans are wartime veterans.

25 percent of male veterans and 28 percent of all female veterans are peacetime only veterans.

Civil War

The Civil War began in 1861 and ended in 1865.

3.3 million people served during the conflict

Over 500,000 people died

There are no living veterans.

Note: For the Civil War, exact totals are not known.

Note: "In-theater" refers to the geographic areas in which wartime operations occurred. "Non-theater" refers to all other areas worldwide.

Spanish-American War

The Spanish-American War lasted from April 1898 to August 1898.

306,760 people served during the conflict

2,446 died

There are no living veterans.

World War I

World War I began in 1917 and ended in 1918.

4.7 million people served worldwide during World War I

116,516 died

There are no living veterans.

Note: The last living World War I veteran, Frank Buckles, died in 2011 at 110 years old.

World War II

World War II began in December 1941 and ended in December 1946.

16.1 million people served worldwide during World War II and 405,399 died

1.8 million living veterans served during the World War II period

Median age is 87

Percent women 4.4%

Percent with a service-connected disability 13.6%

Note: World War II was the first war to have more battle deaths than deaths from other causes, such as disease, infections, or accidents.

Korean War

The Korean War began in July 1950 and ended in January 1955.

5.7 million people served worldwide during the Korean War and 54,246 died

1.8 million servicemembers deployed to Korea and 36,574 died in-theater

2.5 million living veterans served during Korea War period

Median age is 80

Percent women 2.3%

Percent with a service-connected disability 12.2%

Vietnam Era

The Vietnam Era began in August 1964 and ended in April 1975.

8.7 million people served worldwide during the Vietnam Era and 90,220 died

3.4 million servicemembers deployed to Southeast Asia and 58,220 died in-theater

7.5 million living veterans served during the Vietnam Era

Median age is 64

Percent women 2.9%

Percent with a service-connected disability 20.2%

Gulf War Era

The Gulf War Era lasted 11 years, from August 1990 to August 2001.

5.6 million people served worldwide on active duty, Guard, and Reserves and 13,104 died while on active duty

694,550 servicemembers deployed to Southwest Asia and 383 died in-theater during the 1990 to 1991 Gulf War

3.5 million living veterans served during the Gulf War Era

Median age is 43

Percent women 14.7%

Percent with a service-connected disability 27.2%

Notes:

Service totals for Gulf War Era include active duty, Guard, and Reserves.

Total deaths include only active duty between 1990 and 2001.

Post 9/11 Era

The Post 9/11 Era began after the events of September 11, 2001 and continues to the present.

6 million people have served worldwide on active duty, Guard, and Reserves and over 14,501 have died while on active duty

2.5 million servicemembers have deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq and there have been 6,667 in-theater deaths, as of April 25, 2013

2.5 million living veterans served during the Post 9/11 Era

Median age is 32

Percent women 17.3%

Percent with a service-connected disability 26.7%

Notes:

Service totals for Post 9/11 Era include active duty, Guard, and Reserves.

Total worldwide deaths include active duty only and are current through 2010.

Total in-theater deaths are current as of April 25, 2013.

Total U.S. Population

Note: Population totals include the territories of Alaska and Hawaii from 1890 to 1950.

1860	31.4 million
1870	38.6 million
1880	50.2 million
1890	63.0 million
1900	76.2 million
1910	92.2 million
1920	106.0 million
1930	123.2 million
1940	132.2 million
1950	151.3 million
1960	179.3 million
1970	203.3 million
1980	226.5 million
1990	248.7 million
2000	281.4 million
2010	308.7 million

Congressional Medal of Honor

3,460 men and 1 woman have received the Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor in action against an enemy force.

Notes:

Deaths include battle deaths (for “in-theater” only), accidents, illness, injury, or other causes.

Wartime periods show official dates of U.S. involvement.

Data from the American Community Survey include the veteran population 18 years and older who live in the United States and Puerto Rico.

Periods of military service are not mutually exclusive. Veterans could have served in multiple periods. “Service-connected” means the disability was a result of disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service.

The percentages of Gulf War and Post 9/11 veterans with a service-connected disability are not statistically different.

For more information visit:

<http://www.census.gov/history/pdf/measuringamerica.pdf>
<http://factfinder2.census.gov/>
<http://www.va.gov/opa/publications/index.asp>
<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/>
<https://www.dmdc.osd.mil/dcas/pages/main.xhtml>
<http://www.cmo.hs.org/>

United States Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Commerce

Economics and Statistics Administration

U.S. Census Bureau

Sources:

U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey

Department of Defense, Defense Manpower Data Center and Defense Casualty Analysis System

Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Public Affairs

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