Employment and unemployment among Vietnam-era veterans

Veterans whose tour of duty was in Southeast Asia, and those who incurred service-connected disabilities, continued to be at a disadvantage in the labor market; other veterans fared no worse than did nonveterans

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Most of the men and women who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era appear to have had the same degree of success in the labor market as their contemporaries who did not serve in the military. However, those who actually served in the Southeast Asian theater, and especially those with service-connected disabilities, continue to experience greater employment-related difficulties than their peers.

These findings are from a special supplement to the Current Population Survey (CPS), conducted in November 1987, in which men and women who served during the Vietnam era were asked about aspects of their prior military experience, including their disability status and location of service.[1] (Information was also obtained on the disability status of all other veterans.) The special survey was sponsored jointly by the Department of Veterans Affairs (formerly the Veterans Administration) and two Department of Labor agencies: the Veterans Employment and Training Service and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. A similar survey of veterans was conducted in April 1985.[2]

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Labor force status

As of November 1987, there were 7.9 million male veterans who had served during the Vietnam era, defined as the period from August 1964 to April 1975. Nearly all (93 percent) were between the ages of 30 and 54, with the highest concentration (67 percent) between the ages of 35 and 44. These individuals comprise a significant part of their generation: about 1 in 3 men in the 35- to 44-year age group is a veteran. About half of these veterans actually served in the Vietnam theater of operations—that is, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, and nearby waters and airspace.[3] (See table 1.) Information on the 250,000 female veterans of the era and on male veterans from other service periods is provided in separate sections at the end of the article.

While a few Vietnam-era veterans have only recently retired from military service, most made the transition to civilian life more than a decade ago. There is a strong expectation that these men will be in the labor force, because at their ages, they typically have significant financial responsibility for themselves and their families. Thus, one important measure of the economic performance of Vietnam-era veterans is their labor force participation rate, or the proportion of the total that are working or seeking work. The vast majority of both Vietnam-theater and nontheater veterans are, in fact, in the labor force—92 percent as of November 1987. Their participation rate was little different

Table 1. **Characteristics of male veterans and nonveterans age 18 and over, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted**

[Percent distribution]

Characteristic	Veterans[1]						Nonveterans
	Total	Vietnam-era veterans			Other war periods	Other service periods	
		Total	Vietnam theater	Outside Vietnam theater			
Total (thousands)	25,521	7,902	3,835	4,067	12,612	5,007	57,898
Race or ethnicity:							
White	90.1	88.8	88.8	88.8	91.8	87.6	85.2
Black	8.4	9.3	9.6	9.0	7.0	10.7	11.1
Hispanic	3.1	3.8	4.8	3.0	2.4	3.7	9.3
Age:							
18–24	1.1	(1)	(1)	(1)	(1)	5.9	21.3
25–34	9.6	11.1	6.4	15.5	(1)	31.4	31.7
25–29	4.1	.5	.2	.9	(1)	20.1	16.3
30–34	5.5	10.5	6.2	14.6	(1)	11.3	15.5
35–44	22.8	66.8	70.6	63.3	(1)	10.8	18.8
35–39	10.5	30.9	32.2	29.6	(1)	4.9	11.1
40–44	12.3	35.9	38.4	33.7	(1)	5.9	7.7
45–54	18.3	15.9	16.3	15.4	9.7	43.7	11.5
55–64	26.7	4.9	5.4	4.4	48.5	6.1	5.9
65 and over	21.5	1.4	1.4	1.4	41.8	2.2	10.8
Disability status:							
Not disabled	87.3	86.0	83.1	88.8	86.1	92.3	—
Disabled, total[2]	9.2	10.3	13.8	6.9	10.7	3.7	—
Less than 30 percent	5.2	5.9	7.9	4.1	5.9	2.3	—
30 to 50 percent	2.1	2.2	2.7	1.6	2.6	1.0	—
60 percent or greater	1.3	1.6	2.3	.9	1.5	.3	—
Presence of disability not reported	3.5	3.7	3.1	4.3	3.2	4.0	—

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age or any other war veterans under 45 years of age.

[2] Categories of disability ratings may not sum to totals, because specific ratings were not available for some disabled veterans.

NOTE: Details for the racial and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

Dashes indicate data not available.

from that of nonveterans of the same ages. (Because nearly all of the veterans were between the ages of 30 and 54, references to nonveterans will be based on this age group, except where noted.)

Race. Blacks constituted 9 percent of Vietnam-era veterans and Hispanics made up 4 percent. As is true for the general population, black Vietnam-era veterans lagged behind their white counterparts in the proportion who were labor force participants. Nonetheless, black veterans were somewhat *more* likely than other black men to be in the labor force. By contrast, there is no real difference in labor force participation rates according to veteran status for white and Hispanic men. As the following tabulation shows, the participation rate for black veterans was within 5 percentage points of the rate for their white counterparts. By contrast, the black-white participation gap for nonveterans was nearly 9 points.

	Labor force participation rates			
Men, 30–54 years	*Total*	*White*	*Black*	*Hispanic*
Vietnam-era veterans	94.6	95.0	90.4	93.7
Vietnam theater	93.6	94.1	88.6	93.5
Outside Vietnam theater	95.4	95.8	92.4	94.8
Nonveterans	93.5	94.5	86.0	92.5

While it is not possible to identify through this survey the specific reasons for the black veterans' relative advantage compared with other black men, the data confirm the military's role as a source of upward mobility for the less advantaged, who historically have benefited from the intensive job training and experience that the Armed Forces provide. It should be noted, however, that there may have been differences between the men who entered the military and those who did not, particularly in characteristics such as educational attainment and family history.[4]

Disability

Some 810,000 Vietnam-era veterans, about 10 percent of the total, reported a service-connected disability. Of those who served in Southeast Asia, 14 percent reported such a disability. Having a service-connected disability means that one's ability to work was affected by an injury or illness that was determined to have been caused or aggravated during military service.[5] Disability ratings range from 0 to 100 percent, depending on the severity of the disability. Three-fifths of Vietnam-era veterans had ratings of less than 30 percent, while 16 percent reported ratings of 60 percent or more.[6]

Not surprisingly, the effect of a disability on an individual's labor force status was closely related to the severity of the disability.[7] Veterans with disability ratings under 30 percent had a labor force participation rate virtually identical to that of the nondisabled—about 92 percent. However, among men with ratings between 30 and 50 percent, fewer than three-fourths were in the labor force, and among the most severely disabled (ratings of 60 percent or higher), only one-third were in the labor force. (See table 2.)

The relationship between disability and labor force attachment reflects several factors. One is the effect of the disability itself on the capability to work. The survey included questions for disabled veterans who were not working regarding whether they believed that their disability hindered them in finding or holding a job. As might be expected, the higher the disability rating, the more likely were the veterans to perceive their condition as an obstacle to employment success. At ratings of less than 30 percent, relatively few ascribed their employment difficulties to their medical condition; at ratings of 60 percent or more, nearly all reported such a link.

Another, related factor affecting the labor force participation of the disabled is the availability of other income, specifically federally issued compensation benefits, which are designed to adjust for reduced earnings capacity and which

Table 2. Employment status of male Vietnam-era veterans age 25 and over,[1] by period of service, presence of service-connected disability, and disability rating, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted

[Numbers in thousands]

Period of service, presence of disability, and disability rating	Civilian noninstitutional population	Civilian labor force					Not in labor force
		Total	Percent of population	Employed	Unemployed		
					Number	Percent of labor force	
Total, Vietnam era							
With service-connected disability	811	633	78.1	594	39	6.2	178
Less than 30-percent disability rating	469	432	92.1	404	27	6.3	38
30- to 50-percent disability rating	170	120	70.6	112	8	6.7	50
60-percent or higher disability rating	129	42	32.6	41	1	(2)	87
Disability rating not reported	43	39	(2)	36	3	(2)	4
Without service-connected disability	6,798	6,409	94.3	6,107	302	4.7	389
Presence of disability not reported	293	256	87.4	250	6	2.2	37
Vietnam theater							
With service-connected disability	529	420	79.4	395	25	5.9	109
Less than 30-percent disability rating	304	276	90.8	257	19	6.8	28
30- to 50-percent disability rating	103	80	77.7	79	2	2.5	21
60-percent or higher disability rating	90	36	40.0	34	1	(2)	55
Disability rating not reported	32	28	(2)	24	3	(2)	4
Without service-connected disability	3,188	2,986	93.7	2,829	156	5.2	202
Presence of disability not reported	118	108	91.5	106	2	1.6	10
Outside Vietnam theater							
With service-connected disability	282	213	75.5	198	14	6.8	69
Less than 30-percent disability rating	165	156	94.5	147	9	5.5	10
30- to 50-percent disability rating	67	40	(2)	34	6	(2)	28
60-percent or higher disability rating	38	7	(2)	7	(2)	(2)	32
Disability rating not reported	11	11	(2)	11	(2)	(2)	(2)
Without service-connected disability	3,610	3,424	94.8	3,278	146	4.3	186
Presence of disability not reported	175	148	84.6	144	4	2.7	27

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age.

[2] Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

Table 3. **Employment status of male Vietnam-era veterans and nonveterans age 25 and over,[1] by race and Hispanic origin, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted**

[Numbers in thousands]

Veteran status, race, and Hispanic origin	Civilian noninstitutional population	Civilian labor force					Not in labor force
		Total	Percent of population	Employed	Unemployed		
					Number	Percent of labor force	
Total							
Vietnam-era veterans	7,902	7,298	92.4	6,951	347	4.8	604
Vietnam theater	3,835	3,514	91.6	3,331	183	5.2	321
Outside Vietnam theater	4,067	3,784	93.0	3,620	165	4.3	283
Nonveterans	45,594	36,900	80.9	35,308	1,592	4.3	8,694
White							
Vietnam-era veterans	7,016	6,493	92.5	6,215	278	4.3	523
Vietnam theater	3,406	3,131	91.9	2,981	149	4.8	275
Outside Vietnam theater	3,611	3,362	93.1	3,234	128	3.8	248
Nonveterans	39,059	31,905	81.7	30,705	1,201	3.8	7,154
Black							
Vietnam-era veterans	737	667	90.5	608	60	8.9	70
Vietnam theater	370	328	88.6	301	27	8.3	42
Outside Vietnam theater	367	339	92.4	307	32	9.5	28
Nonveterans	4,838	3,602	74.5	3,275	327	9.1	1,236
Hispanic origin							
Vietnam-era veterans	302	285	94.4	259	27	9.3	17
Vietnam theater	183	172	94.0	152	19	11.2	11
Outside Vietnam theater	120	114	95.0	106	7	6.5	6
Nonveterans	4,096	3,533	86.3	3,266	267	7.5	563

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age.

NOTE: Details for racial and Hispanic-origin groups will not sum to totals because data for the "other races" group are not presented and Hispanics are included in both the white and black population groups.

are generally tied to the level of the disability rating. For example, a veteran with a 10-percent degree of disability would receive compensation of only $75 per month, while some totally disabled veterans are eligible for a monthly compensation of $1,500 or more.[8]

Unemployment

About 350,000 Vietnam-era veterans were actively seeking work in November 1987 and were thus classified as unemployed. The unemployment rate for this group was 4.8 percent, while the rate for nonveterans of the same age was 4.3 percent. Whereas, as mentioned earlier, black veterans seemed to gain some advantage relative to other black men in the extent to which they participated in the labor force, they were no more successful when it came to finding a job: the jobless rates of black veterans and nonveterans were both around 9 percent, more than twice that of white veterans (4.3 percent). For Hispanic veterans, the unemployment rate was also near 9 percent. (See table 3.)

The greater labor market difficulties of both disabled and war theater veterans were evident in their unemployment experiences. For instance, Vietnam-era veterans with disabilities had an unemployment rate of 6.2 percent, compared with 4.7 percent for those without disabilities. Those with lower disability ratings actually had higher unemployment rates than the more seriously disabled veterans, because relatively few of the latter were likely to seek work at all.

At 5.2 percent, jobless rates for those who actually served in Southeast Asia were higher than the rates for men who served elsewhere and for nonveterans—4.3 percent for both groups. However, it would be misleading to assume that this difference necessarily resulted from their varying military experiences. Previous studies have documented marked differences—especially in educational status—in these two groups of

Table 4. **Employed male Vietnam-era veterans age 25 and over,[1] by class of worker and disability status, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted**

[Percent distribution]

Period of service and disability status[2]	Total employed (thousands)	Wage and salary workers				Self-employed and unpaid family workers
		Private	Government			
			Total	Federal	State and local	
Vietnam era	6,951	68.6	21.5	9.0	12.5	9.9
Disabled, total	594	56.1	35.9	23.1	12.8	7.9
Less than 30 percent	404	58.7	34.4	21.0	13.6	6.9
30 percent or more	154	46.8	44.2	31.2	12.3	9.0
Not disabled	6,107	69.9	20.1	7.7	12.4	10.0
Vietnam theater	3,331	66.8	22.4	9.9	12.5	10.7
Disabled, total	395	57.5	33.9	21.3	12.4	8.6
Less than 30 percent	257	61.1	33.5	20.2	13.2	5.4
30 percent or more	113	46.9	40.7	26.5	14.2	12.4
Not disabled	2,829	68.2	21.0	8.4	12.6	10.8
Outside Vietnam theater	3,620	70.3	20.6	8.1	12.5	9.1
Disabled, total	198	53.0	39.9	26.8	13.1	6.6
Less than 30 percent	147	54.4	36.1	22.4	14.3	8.8
30 percent or more	40	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)	(3)
Not disabled	3,278	71.5	19.3	7.1	12.2	9.2
Nonveterans, 25 years and over	35,313	75.8	12.3	2.1	10.2	11.9

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age.

[2] Categories may not sum to totals, because information on presence and degree of disability was not reported for some veterans.

[3] Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

Table 5. **Employed male Vietnam-era veterans and nonveterans age 25 and over,[1] by occupation, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted**

[Percent distribution]

Occupation	Vietnam-era veterans			Nonveterans
	Total	Vietnam theater	Outside Vietnam theater	
Total, 25 years and over (in thousands)	6,951	3,331	3,620	35,313
Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Managerial and professional specialty	27.3	25.5	29.0	28.2
Executive, administrative, and managerial	16.8	16.4	17.2	14.3
Professional specialty	10.4	9.0	11.7	13.9
Technical, sales, and administrative support	21.3	21.6	21.0	19.0
Technicians and related support	3.8	3.4	4.3	2.8
Sales occupations	10.4	10.1	10.6	11.1
Administrative support, including clerical	7.1	8.1	6.1	5.1
Service occupations	8.4	8.3	8.5	7.7
Protective service	4.6	4.7	4.6	2.3
Other service occupations	3.8	3.6	3.9	5.5
Precision production, craft, and repair	22.1	21.6	22.7	20.4
Mechanics and repairers	8.3	8.0	8.6	—
Construction trades	7.9	7.5	8.2	—
Other precision production, craft, and repair	5.9	6.1	5.8	—
Operators, fabricators, and laborers	18.7	20.5	17.1	20.1
Machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors	6.9	7.4	6.5	7.9
Transportation and material moving occupations	8.0	9.1	6.9	7.1
Handlers, equipment cleaners, helpers, and laborers	3.9	4.0	3.7	5.1
Farming, forestry, and fishing	2.2	2.6	1.8	4.6

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age.

NOTE: Dashes indicate data not available.

Vietnam-era veterans prior to their military service. For instance, according to one study, inductees who had dropped out of high school were one and a half times more likely to serve in the war theater than were college graduates.[9] In general, high school dropouts, regardless of their veteran status, tend to have a higher incidence of unemployment than do workers with more education.

Employment

Service in the Armed Forces affords a variety of educational and training experiences that are widely applicable to civilian jobs. While on active duty, even during wartime, most members of the military perform jobs that are comparable to civilian positions.[10] And, following their military discharge, many veterans participate in educational and vocational programs that further aid them in adjusting to the civilian labor market.[11] Partly as a result of these efforts, and also reflecting the fact that most of the veterans have now been civilians for many years, veterans of the Vietnam era were as likely to be employed as other men their age; about 90 percent of both groups had a job in November 1987.

Industries. Among the programs aiding veterans' transitions to civilian jobs were several that emphasized job counseling, training, and placement in both the private and public sectors. Most of these programs were in place by 1970, when large numbers of military personnel began to be discharged and to reenter the civilian work force. By 1987, nearly two decades later, veterans were employed in much the same industries as nonveterans. About 1 in 4 employed men, regardless of veteran status, held a job in manufacturing, and one-fifth were in services. The remainder were found primarily in trade, transportation, and construction.

The industry distribution of the veterans was strikingly different from that of the nonveterans in one respect, however: the veterans were far more likely to be employed in the public sector—particularly at the Federal level—than were nonveterans. This was especially true for disabled veterans, 23 percent of whom were employed by the Federal Government alone. Among the more seriously disabled (with ratings of 30 percent or higher), the proportion holding Federal jobs was nearly one-third. Even among the nondisabled veterans, 8 percent were Federal employees. By contrast, the proportion of nonveterans in Federal jobs was only 2 percent. (See table 4.) Clearly, the Federal Government is a popular career choice for veterans of the Vietnam era, and the disabled in particular, due in part to special hiring preferences and an active recruitment program targeting these groups.[12]

Occupations. Vietnam-era veterans were found in a wide variety of occupations, as were nonveterans. However, the veterans were less likely to work as professionals and machine operators and more likely to be managers, protective service workers, and clerical workers. Among the veterans themselves, some differences were noted by theater of service and disability. For example, the men who had actually served in the war theater were less likely than the other veterans to be employed as managers and professionals. (See table 5.) Also, the veterans with some disability were more often found in clerical and laborer jobs compared with the nondisabled and less often working in managerial and precision craft positions.

Work schedules. The work schedules of most Vietnam-era veterans were very similar to those of nonveterans. All but about 5 percent of both groups usually worked full time (at least 35 hours per week). However, of the more seriously disabled veterans (30 percent rating or higher), a relatively high proportion—10 percent—were employed part time. Even among full-time workers, the disabled veterans worked fewer hours on average. For example, 29 percent of the nondisabled worked at least 49 hours per week, compared with 20 percent of the more seriously disabled. These differences contributed to a somewhat shorter workweek of 40 hours for those with more severe disabilities, compared with about 44 hours for other veterans.

Program participation

Traditionally, some of the most highly valued benefits of military service are those that provide postservice education and training. In the November 1987 survey, information was collected for the first time on veterans' participation in three such programs: the GI Bill, and Department of Veterans Affairs–sponsored on-the-job training and vocational rehabilitation. About one-half (4 million) of all male Vietnam-era veterans were reported as having taken advantage of at least one of these programs.[13] Program participation was higher among disabled than nondisabled veterans (59 percent versus 52 percent) and higher for veterans of the war theater than for those who served elsewhere (55 percent versus 47 percent).

By far, the most frequently named program was the GI Bill, which was designed to restore "lost educational opportunities to those service men and women whose careers have been inter-

rupted or impeded by reason of active duty."[14] The bill does this by providing a stipend to veterans attending educational institutions—mainly colleges and universities—and vocational training and apprenticeship programs. Use of the GI Bill was reported by nearly all of the veterans who had availed themselves of any of the programs, or almost half of all veterans from the period.

The survey also pointed up significant differences between veterans who participated in the educational and training programs and those who did not. For example, those who had participated in at least one program had lower unemployment rates on average than did nonparticipants (4.4 percent versus 5.5 percent). Veterans of the war theater who had not participated at all had a particularly high jobless rate of 7.2 percent. However, as is often the case with these data, it is not possible to distinguish the effects of a particular course of action—in this case, taking advantage of postdischarge educational programs—from preexisting differences between program participants and nonparticipants, such as one's educational attainment prior to the service and one's motivation.

Veterans of other service periods

About 12.6 million male veterans served in the military during wartime periods other than the Vietnam era—namely, World Wars I and II and the Korean conflict. Their relatively low labor force participation rate of 49 percent largely reflected their age. Most were older than 55 years, and more than 40 percent were at least 65 years old. Service-connected disabilities also kept some out of the labor force. Of the 1.3 million (11 percent) with disabilities, only one-third were in the labor force. As with Vietnam-era veterans, disabled veterans from earlier wars experienced higher joblessness than did those without disabilities—5.3 percent versus 2.9 percent.

Another 5 million men were peacetime veterans, mainly from two periods: that between World War II and the Korean conflict, and the post-Vietnam period. Although relatively few (4 percent) of the peacetime veterans had disabilities, those who did were less likely to be in the labor force than were the nondisabled (81 percent versus 91 percent).

Women

The Vietnam era saw a substantial increase in the participation of women in the military, which accelerated with the shift to an all-volunteer force beginning in 1973. By 1975, the number of women in the active-duty military had risen to about 100,000, a considerable increase over the 40,000 on active duty in the late 1960's.[15] Still, women's armed service roles throughout the era were limited to the traditional ones, namely, administrative occupations—such as clerical, supply, and procurement positions—and medical occupations.[16]

A total of about 250,000 women served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era, accounting for 3 percent of the veterans from the period. Roughly 10 percent were stationed in Southeast Asia, predominantly as nurses. The nature of the war was such that those in "support" positions were frequently exposed to high-risk, combatlike situations, and this is reflected in these women's disability status.[17] About 14 percent, or 35,000, of the women from the era had

Table 6. Employment status of women age 18 and over, by veteran status and period of service, November 1987, not seasonally adjusted

[Numbers in thousands]

Veteran status and period of service	Civilian noninstitutional population	Civilian labor force					Not in labor force
		Total	Percent of population	Employed	Unemployed		
					Number	Percent of labor force	
Total veterans[1]	1,052	576	54.8	530	46	8.0	476
War veterans	684	301	44.0	284	17	5.7	383
Vietnam era	247	188	76.1	177	11	5.8	59
Vietnam theater	33	19	(2)	17	1	(2)	15
Outside Vietnam theater	214	169	79.0	160	10	5.6	44
Other war veterans	437	113	25.9	106	6	5.6	324
Other service veterans	368	275	74.7	247	29	10.4	93
Nonveterans	91,500	52,311	57.2	49,521	2,790	5.3	39,190

[1] Because of the aging of the population, there were no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 25 years of age or any other war veterans under 45 years of age.

[2] Data not shown where base is less than 75,000.

service-connected disabilities.

Although a detailed analysis of the labor market difficulties of women veterans from the Vietnam era is not possible due to their relatively small numbers, the study did show that their labor force participation rate (76 percent) and unemployment rate (5.8 percent) were very similar to the rates for women of the same ages who did not serve in the military.

In addition to those who were veterans of the Vietnam era, another 440,000 women served during earlier wartime periods, especially World War II and the Korean conflict. Their low labor force participation rate (26 percent) reflects both their advanced age and the fact that they are part of a generation in which women—especially married women—had a relatively weak attachment to the labor force.[18] (See table 6.)

Another 370,000 women served during peacetime, mostly in the post-Vietnam period, and their participation rate (75 percent) is comparable to that of nonveterans of the same ages.[19] Their relatively high unemployment rate (10.4 percent) may reflect in part the recent discharge of some of them and the accompanying, and usually short-lived, difficulties experienced in undergoing the transition to civilian jobs. □

Footnotes

[1] Information from the November 1987 CPS supplement was released initially as news release USDL 88-489, "BLS Reports on Labor Market Situation among Disabled Veterans of the Vietnam Era," Sept. 30, 1988. Historical data on Vietnam-era veterans are found in *Employment and Earnings*, a monthly BLS publication, and *The Employment Situation*, a monthly BLS news release.

The CPS, a survey of about 60,000 households, is conducted monthly for the Bureau of Labor Statistics by the Bureau of the Census. The CPS provides information on the employment status of the civilian noninstitutional population, as well as the demographic, occupational, and other characteristics of the employed, the unemployed, and persons not in the labor force. The November 1987 survey was taken during the week of the 15th through the 21st and refers to the status of individuals during the preceding week (November 8 through 14).

As with any sample survey, the CPS is subject to both sampling and nonsampling errors. Several possible sources of nonsampling error are of particular interest with respect to the veterans' supplement. One such source is the use of proxy respondents. The CPS respondent ordinarily is any responsible member of the household age 14 or over. However, due to the subjective nature of some of the supplementary items, interviewers were instructed to make three attempts to contact the actual veteran before asking the questions of another household member. Proxy responses were obtained for approximately 25 percent of the veterans surveyed. Another potential source of nonsampling error is the long recall period, which may be 20 years or even more for some Vietnam-era veterans. For a further description of the survey and possible sampling and nonsampling errors, see the section "Explanatory Notes" of *Employment and Earnings*.

[2] See Sharon R. Cohany, "Labor force status of Vietnam-era veterans," *Monthly Labor Review*, February 1987, pp. 11–17.

[3] Note that service in the war theater does not necessarily imply exposure to combat. For a study that includes an analysis of the effects of combat, see *Myths and Realities: A Study of Attitudes toward Vietnam Era Veterans, Submitted by the Veterans Administration to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives, July 1980.*

[4] Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, *Blacks and the Military* (Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1982), chapter 4. Other researchers have found a premium in the earnings of black veterans compared with black nonveterans. See Joshua D. Angrist, "Lifetime Earnings and the Vietnam Era Draft Lottery: Evidence from Social Security Administration Records" (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Industrial Relations Section Working Paper No. 251, April 1989).

[5] *United States Code*, title 38, chapter 11, section 301.

[6] Disabilities were reported by a total of 810,000 Vietnam-era veterans. Some 6.8 million reported no disabilities, and for 290,000 the presence or absence of disability was not known. Specific disability ratings were not available for 43,000 of the disabled.

[7] For a general assessment of the physical and mental health of Vietnam-era veterans, see "Health Status of Vietnam Veterans," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, May 13, 1988, pp. 2701–20, which reports the findings of the Vietnam Experience Study, conducted by the Centers for Disease Control. For a study of work-related disabilities among the general population, see *Labor Force Status and Other Characteristics of Persons with a Work Disability: 1981 to 1988*, Series P-23, No. 160 (Bureau of the Census, 1989).

[8] *Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents* (Department of Veterans Affairs, 1989), pp. 3–4.

[9] *Myths and Realities*, p. 10.

[10] Carol Boyd Leon, "Working for Uncle Sam—a look at members of the Armed Forces," *Monthly Labor Review*, July 1984, pp. 3–9.

[11] For a discussion of these employment and training programs, see Elizabeth Waldman and Kathryn R. Gover, "Employment situation of Vietnam Era veterans," *Monthly Labor Review*, September 1971, pp. 3–11.

[12] For example, see "Vietnam Era and Disabled Veterans—a World of Federal Employment Opportunities!" ORSPP-3 (Office of Personnel Management, September 1987); and "Veterans' Preference in Federal Employment," WEE-2 (Office of Personnel Management, September 1985).

[13] For an explanation of the programs, see *Federal Benefits*, pp. 7–18.

[14] *United States Code*, title 38, chapter 34, section 1651.

[15] *Statistical Abstract of the United States* (Department of Commerce, 1975), p. 324.

[16] See June A. Willenz, *Women Veterans: America's Forgotten Heroes* (New York, Continuum, 1983).

[17] *Survey of Female Veterans—a Study of the Needs, Attitudes and Experiences of Women Veterans* (Veterans Administration, 1985).

[18] Susan E. Shank, "Women and the labor market: the link grows stronger," *Monthly Labor Review*, March 1988, pp. 3–8.

[19] For further information on data available from the CPS on women veterans, see Maria L. Roca, "Women veterans total 1 million in first half of 1986," *Monthly Labor Review*, December 1986, pp. 30–31.