

Student Loan Debt Among Veterans

A collection of statistics about veterans' student loan debt, use of the Post-9/11 GI Bill, and other potentially relevant factors

Supplemental report for The Pew Charitable Trusts' chartbook "Why Veterans Borrow Student Loans Despite Access to Robust Education Benefits"

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The following notes apply to all tables:

- Unless otherwise noted, all statistics are from the Veterans Engaging in Transition Studies (VETS) Survey of 3,180 post-9/11 veterans (abbreviated as "P911 veterans" in the tables below) conducted by Penn State's Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness during November 2020-January 2021 on behalf of The Pew Charitable Trusts. For more details, please refer to the "Toptines" available under "Downloads" in the margin of the chartbook.
- All sample members in the VETS Survey separated from active duty in 2016. Therefore, this survey data covers approximately four years of respondents' transitions from military to civilian lives and careers. For more details, please refer to the "Methodology" available under "Downloads" in the margin of the chartbook.
- The term "student veteran" refers to the subset of post-9/11 veterans who enrolled in any postsecondary education or training program after separation from active-duty military service.

- The term “bachelor’s and below” refers to postsecondary programs conferring a degree, certificate, or other nondegree credential at the bachelor's level or below, such as a BA, BS, AA, AS or vocational/technical training.
- The term “master’s and above” refers to postsecondary programs conferring a degree at the master’s level or higher, such as an MA, MBA, JD, MD, Ed.D., or Ph.D.
- The term “school” refers to any postsecondary education or training institution.
- The margin of error with design effect for the total VETS Survey sample is plus or minus 1.9 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.
- Percentages are weighted per the VETS Survey Methods Report, which is available as a downloadable supplement to the chartbook.
- All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number. Therefore, in some cases the percentages within a category do not add up to exactly 100%.
- Finally, it is noteworthy that there was no statistically significant correlation between veterans’ student loan borrowing status and the following demographics or characteristics:
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Race
 - Urbanicity
 - Post-9/11 GI Bill use
 - Employment while enrolled
 - Prior rank in the military
 - Family status while enrolled
 - Learning mode (e.g., online vs. in-person/hybrid)
 - Rate of pursuit (e.g., enrolled full time versus part time)

Section 1: Student Loan Debt During Lifetime Milestones and Related Stress

Table 1A

Percentages of Veterans With Student Loan Debt During Combinations of the Following Lifetime Milestones:

- **Pre-2016:** Entry into active-duty military service (various dates)
- **2016:** Separation from active-duty military service (all survey respondents separated during the 3rd quarter of calendar year 2016)
- **2020:** Approximately four years after separation (the online survey was open to respondents from Nov. 14, 2020-Jan. 5, 2021)

Percentage holding student loan debt:	Held debt upon entry into military (pre-2016)	Held debt upon separation (2016)	Borrowed new loans after separation (2016-20)	Held debt as of survey (2020)
6%	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
7%	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
1%	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
2%	Yes	Yes	No	No
0%	Yes	No	Yes	No
5%	Yes	No	No	No
1%	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
1%	No	Yes	No	Yes
0%	No	Yes	Yes	No
1%	No	Yes	No	No
3%	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7%	No	No	Yes	Yes
2%	No	No	Yes	No
Totals				
38%	Percentage of veterans who ever held student loan debt			
62%	Percentage of veterans who never held student loan debt			
100%	Total			

Note: This table shows all combinations of student loan debt accumulation across three lifetime milestones among the 38% of post-9/11 student veterans who ever held student loan debt, including both federal and private loans.

Table 1B

Cross-Tabulation of Percentages of Veterans' Student Loan Debt Amounts as of the Following Lifetime Milestones:

- **Pre-2016:** Entry into active-duty military service (various dates)
- **2016:** Separation from active-duty military service (all survey respondents separated during the 3rd quarter of calendar year 2016)
- **2020:** Approximately four years after separation (the online survey was open to respondents from Nov. 14, 2020-Jan. 5, 2021)

Student loan amount	Pre-2016		2016		2020	
	Among all vets with post-secondary education	Only among vets with student debt	Among all vets with post-secondary education	Only among vets with student debt	Among all vets with post-secondary education	Only among vets with student debt
None (\$0)	77%	NA	82%	NA	79%	NA
Less than \$10,000	7%	31%	6%	33%	6%	31%
\$10,000 - \$24,999	7%	30%	5%	26%	6%	29%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	5%	21%	4%	22%	4%	21%
\$50,000 - \$99,999	3%	13%	2%	12%	3%	13%
\$100,000 or more	1%	4%	1%	6%	1%	6%
Total	100%	99%	100%	99%	99%	100%

Notes: "Among all vets with post-secondary education" includes veterans who attended a post-secondary institution either before or after military service. Respondents who selected "I do not know" or "I do not recall" were coded as missing. Percentages do not add to 100% due to rounding.

Table 1C

Levels of Stress Because of Student Loan Debt Reported by Veterans Who Borrowed After Separation From Military Service

Stress level	Student veterans
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Not a source of financial stress	34%
An occasional source of financial stress	46%
A constant source of financial stress	11%
An overwhelming source of financial stress	9%
Total	100%

Note: This table shows perceived level of stress due to student debt among the 21% of borrowers who borrowed after discharge and still had debt approximately four years after separation (November 2020-January 2021).

Table 1D

Levels of Stress Because of Student Loan Debt Reported by Veterans Who Borrowed After Separation From Military Service by Student Loan Debt Level

Stress level	Student loan debt less than \$25,000	Student loan debt \$25,000 or more
Not a source of financial stress	40%	22%
An occasional source of financial stress	44%	49%
A constant source of financial stress	7%	19%
An overwhelming source of financial stress	9%	10%
Total	100%	100%

Note: This table shows perceived level of stress due to student debt among the 21% of borrowers who borrowed after discharge and still had debt approximately four years after separation (November 2020-January 2021).

Table 1E

Levels of Stress Because of Student Loan Debt Reported by Veterans Who Borrowed at Any Time by Student Loan Debt Level

Stress level	Student loan debt less than \$25,000	Student loan debt \$25,000 or more
Not a source of financial stress	45%	15%
An occasional source of financial stress	43%	46%
A constant source of financial stress	7%	22%

An overwhelming source of financial stress	4%	16%
Total	100%	100%

Section 2: Education Pursuit, Attainment, and Student Loan Debt

Table 2A

Highest Level of Education Attainment Among P911 Veterans and Student Veterans, 2020

Level of credential attained	P911 veterans	Student veterans
High school diploma or GED	10%	3%
Post-H.S. vocational / technical training	4%	4%
Some college, no degree	20%	22%
Associate's degree (AA or AS)	18%	22%
Bachelor's degree (BA or BS)	27%	31%
Master's degree (MA, MS, MBA, etc.)	18%	17%
Professional degree (JD, MD, DDS, etc.)	3%	2%
Doctoral degree (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)	1%	0%
Total	100%	100%

Table 2B

Number of Schools Attended After Separating From Military Service, 2016-20

Number of schools after military service	P911 veterans	Student veterans
None	31%	NA
1	39%	57%
2	23%	33%

3	6%	8%
4	1%	1%
5	1%	1%
Total	101%	100%

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. 69% of post-9/11 veterans became *student veterans* by enrolling in at least one postsecondary education program between their separation from the military in 2016 and the survey in 2020.

Table 2C

Levels of Study Pursued by Student Veterans, 2016-20

Level of study	Percentage enrolled
Bachelor's and below only	76%
Master's and above only	12%
Both	12%
Total	100%

Note: The "Both" category refers to the 12% of veterans who attended both a bachelor's and below program (such as a BA, BS, AA, AS, or vocational/technical training) and a master's and above program (such as an MA, MBA, JD, MD, Ed.D., or Ph.D.).

Table 2D

Degree/Certificate Completion Rates Among All Student Veterans, 2016-20

Completion status	All student veterans
Completed at least one degree/certificate during 2016-20	62%
Did not complete any degree/certificate, still enrolled as of 2020	21%

Did not complete any degree/certificate, no longer enrolled as of 2020	16%
Total	99%

Table 2E

Degree/Certificate Completion Rates Among Student Veterans by Level of Study, 2016-20

Completion status	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above
Completed at least one degree/certificate at the specified level during 2016-20	61%	76%
Did not complete a degree/certificate at the specified level, still enrolled as of 2020	22%	16%
Did not complete a degree/certificate at the specified level, no longer enrolled as of 2020	17%	8%
Total	100%	100%

Notes: Student veterans who pursued degrees at both levels of study are included in the completion percentages shown in both columns; e.g., a student veteran who completed a bachelor's degree in 2017 would be counted among those who completed a bachelor's or below. If that same student subsequently enrolled in a master's degree program, then his/her completion status *at that level of study* as of 2020 would also be included in the percentages shown in the right-hand column.

Table 2F

Completion Rates at the First School Student Veterans Attended by Post-9/11 GI Bill (PGIB) Use, 2016-20

Completion status	All student veterans	Used PGIB	No PGIB
Completed a degree or certificate	55%	57%	50%
Still enrolled in School 1 as of 2020	15%	14%	20%
Disenrolled without completing a degree/certificate	30%	30%	31%
Total	100%	101%	101%

Notes: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. 69% of P911 veterans attended at least one school after separation. 77% of student veterans used PGIB benefits at the first school they attended.

Table 2G

Reasons for Noncompletion at the First School Student Veterans Attended, 2016-20

Reasons for not completing	All student veterans
Transferred to another school	33%
Left school or training to pursue other activities	24%
Could not balance work and school	22%
Because of difficulties with grades/performance/fitting in	12%
Was undecided regarding my major, or changed my major, field, or program of study	10%
Generally dissatisfied with the school or training	9%
Financial reasons	7%
Needed to retake at least one course	7%
Needed prep courses/remedial courses	5%
Medical reasons	5%
Not all credits were accepted from previous school	1%

Notes: Respondents could select all of the response options that applied to their situation. 17% of respondents chose “other” and entered a written response either in addition to one of the provided response options or as a stand-alone response.

Table 2H

Completion Rates at the Second School Student Veterans Attended by Post-9/11 GI Bill (PGIB) Use, 2016-20

Completion status	All student veterans	Used PGIB	No PGIB
Completed a degree or certificate	42%	41%	47%
Still enrolled in School 2 as of 2020	33%	33%	35%
Disenrolled without completing a degree/certificate	25%	26%	19%
Total	100%	100%	101%

Notes: 33% of student veterans attended two schools after separation. 81% of student veterans used PGIB benefits at the second school they attended.

Table 2I

Reasons for Noncompletion at the Second School Student Veterans Attended, 2016-20

Reasons for not completing	All student veterans
Transferred to another school	28%
Could not balance work and school	26%
Left school or training to pursue other activities	25%
Because of difficulties with grades/performance/fitting in	14%
Generally dissatisfied with the school or training	12%
Was undecided regarding my major, or changed my major, field, or program of study	9%
Financial reasons	9%
Needed to retake at least one course	7%
Needed prep courses/remedial courses	4%
Not all credits were accepted from previous school	4%
Medical reasons	4%

Notes: Respondents could select all response options that applied to their situation. 15% of respondents chose “other” and entered a written response either in addition to one of the provided response options or as a stand-alone response.

Table 2J

Comparison of Student Loan Debt Borrowed After Separation From Military Service in Terms of Level of Study, 2016-20

Level of study	Borrowed after separation	Average amount	Median amount
All student veterans	21%	\$22,597	\$15,000
Bachelor's and below	19%	\$16,243	\$11,000
Master's and above	22%	\$34,697	\$20,500
Both	31%	*	*

* If a student veteran borrowed while enrolled in both a bachelor's and below program and a master's and above program, those individual loan amounts are included in the calculation of averages and medians for each study level. Therefore, dollar amounts do not appear in the final row of the table as they are already incorporated in the mean and median values in the preceding two rows.

Notes: This table provides veterans' student loan borrowing statistics after separation from active duty to focus on borrowing that occurred while respondents had access to PGIB benefits. Dollar amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Table 2K

Percentages of Student Veterans Who Ever Enrolled in a Given Sector, 2016-20

School sector	All student veterans	Bachelor's and below	Master's and above
4-year private for-profit	17%	16%	19%
4-year private nonprofit	25%	21%	43%
4-year public	43%	45%	38%
2-year public	32%	32%	Not Applicable
All other sectors	11%	11%	Not Applicable

Notes: The enrollment percentages total more than 100% because student veterans who attended more than one sector are included in the percentages of every sector that they ever attended (29% of student veterans enrolled in two or more sectors during 2016-2020). For instance, a veteran who attended a community college (public two-year) and subsequently enrolled in a public four-year university between 2016-20 is counted as having ever attended both sectors. The "All other sectors" row combines multiple sectors that were less frequently attended by undergraduate veterans: private nonprofit two-year, private for-profit two-year, public less-than-two-year, private for-profit less-than-two-year, Department of Defense-funded institutions, and other private and public institutions that offer shorter training and certification programs.

Table 2L

Percentages of Student Veterans Who Borrowed Student Loans in Terms of School Sector, 2016-20

School sector	Borrowed after separation (all)	Borrowed after separation (bachelor's and below)	Borrowed after separation (master's and above)
4-year private for-profit	19%	19%	16%
4-year private nonprofit	21%	17%	23%
4-year public	19%	18%	25%
2-year public	11%	11%	Not Applicable
All other sectors	16%	16%	Not Applicable

Notes: If a respondent borrowed student loans while enrolled in two or more different sectors, then each instance of borrowing combined with an enrollment was included in the calculation of the percentage of borrowers for each respective sector. For instance, if a veteran borrowed a student loan while enrolled at a public two-year college and then borrowed another student loan while enrolled at a public four-year university, then that student veteran would be counted among the percentage of borrowers for both the public two-year sector and the public four-year sector. The "All other sectors" row combines multiple sectors that were less frequently attended by undergraduate veterans: private nonprofit two-year, private for-profit two-year, public less-than-two-year, private for-profit less-than-two-year, Department of Defense-funded institutions, and other private and public institutions that offer shorter training and certification programs.

Section 3: Post-9/11 GI Bill (PGIB) Use

Table 3A

Veteran Use of Post-9/11 GI Bill (PGIB) by Program Level, 2016-20

PGIB use for self	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's and below	Master's and above	Both
Used PGIB	60%	82%	82%	78%	91%
Never used PGIB	40%	18%	18%	22%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 3B**Comparison of Student Loan Debt in Terms of PGIB Use, 2020**

	Borrowed after separation	Average amount	Median amount
Student veterans	21%	\$22,597	\$15,000
Student veterans who used PGIB	21%	\$22,173	\$14,500
Student veterans who did not use PGIB	*	*	*

* Insufficient sample size to provide a reliable estimate. Among the 356 survey respondents who borrowed student loans after separation, 293 used the PGIB and 63 did not.

Notes: This table provides veterans' student loan borrowing statistics after separation from active duty to focus on borrowing that occurred while respondents had access to PGIB benefits. Respondents in the "Student veterans who used PGIB benefits" category had indicated that they used their PGIB benefits at least part of the time they were enrolled in at least one post-secondary institution. Dollar amounts are rounded to the nearest dollar.

Table 3C**Reasons for Not Using the PGIB Among All Veterans and Student Veterans**

Reason for not using PGIB	All veterans	Student veterans
Elected to pass benefits to dependents	40%	32%
Saving for later	30%	24%
Received tuition assistance	15%	25%
Used an alternative GI Bill	8%	15%
Not eligible for PGIB benefits	7%	9%
Process of accessing benefits too difficult	6%	4%
Other education support from the VA	5%	14%
Other sources of financial aid	4%	10%

Notes: The percentages shown for "All veterans" are among respondents in the survey sample who had indicated that they had never used the PGIB for themselves, including those who did not enroll in any postsecondary institution after discharge. "Student veterans" are the subset of survey respondents who enrolled in at least one

postsecondary education/training program following discharge in 2016 and had not yet used the PGIB for themselves as of 2020. The percentages in each column sum to more than 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply. Four percent of all PGIB nonuser veterans and 4% of PGIB nonuser student veterans selected “elected to pass benefits to dependents” *and* “saving for later,” most likely indicating that they intended to pass their benefits to their dependents at a future time. “Tuition assistance” is administered by the U.S. Department of Defense. The Department of Veterans Affairs defines a “dependent” as a spouse, child, or parent who is in the care of the veteran. For a complete listing of applicable criteria, see <https://www.va.gov/manage-dependents>.”

Table 3D

Yellow Ribbon Coverage Among Student Veterans Whose PGIB Benefits Did Not Cover 100% of Tuition and Fees, 2016-20

Yellow Ribbon covered some or all of difference between PGIB and tuition/fees?	Among veterans whose PGIB fell short of tuition/fees
Yes	23%
No	77%
Total	100%

Notes: “The Yellow Ribbon Program can help you pay for higher out-of-state, private school, foreign school, or graduate school tuition and fees that the Post-9/11 GI Bill doesn’t cover.” U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Yellow Ribbon Program, <https://www.va.gov/education/about-gi-bill-benefits/post-9-11/yellow-ribbon-program/>, accessed July 7, 2025. This table is based on responses to the following survey question: “Did [school name] help pay for the remaining tuition and fees through the Yellow Ribbon program?” This question was only shown to respondents who indicated that the PGIB did not cover 100% of their tuition and fees at one or more schools (up to five schools) that they had attended after separation from active-duty military service.

Table 3E

Veterans’ Use of U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Education Programs in Addition to or Instead of the PGIB, 2016-20

VA education programs	PGIB users	PGIB non-users
Montgomery GI Bill Active Duty (MGIB-AD)	12%	17%
Veteran Readiness & Employment Program (VR&E)	7%	16%
Montgomery GI Bill Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR)	3%	3%
Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP)	2%	3%
Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP)	1%	1%
Veterans Work Study Program	2%	1%

Note: These percentages include respondents who did not enroll in any postsecondary institutions after discharge.

Section 4: PGIB Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA)

Table 4A

MHA Coverage of Housing Expenses in Terms of Having Dependents While Enrolled in School, 2016-20

MHA covered ...	Had dependents while enrolled	No dependents while enrolled	Changed status
More than half of housing expenses	69%	90%	76%
Half or less of housing expenses	31%	10%	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Notes: This table includes only veterans who met all of the following criteria to receive the full MHA: eligible for 100% of the PGIB, enrolled full time, and enrolled in courses that offered at least some portion of instruction in person. The “Changed Status” category includes veterans whose family status changed, either from having no dependents to having dependents or vice versa, due to events such as birth, death, divorce, or children reaching the age at which they are no longer considered dependents. The Department of Veterans Affairs defines a “dependent” as a spouse, child, or parent who is in the care of the veteran. For a complete listing of applicable criteria, see <https://www.va.gov/manage-dependents>.”

Table 4B

MHA Break-Pay – Responses to “During months when you received a partial MHA or no MHA, how did you cover your housing expenses?”, 2016-20

Response options	Percentage
Full-time or part-time employment	63%
Veterans VA service-connected disability compensation payments	30%
Spouse partners income	27%
Withdrew money from savings and/or investment accounts	13%
Credit cards	11%
MHA dollars saved from previous months	8%

Student loan	7%
Scholarships or grants	5%
Other	5%
Moved in with family or friends	4%
Financial support from family	3%
Other loan	1%
Graduate student stipend	0%

Notes: Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply. This question was presented only to respondents who indicated that they had used their PGIB at least part of the time.

Table 4C

MHA Coverage Gap – Responses to “How did you cover your housing expenses that were not covered by the MHA?”, 2016-20

Response options	Percentage
Full-time or part-time employment	66%
Spouse partners income	37%
Veterans VA Service-connected disability compensation payments	34%
Credit cards	12%
Withdrew money from savings and/or investment accounts	10%
Student loan	7%
Scholarships or grants	4%
Financial support from family	3%
Moved in with family or friends	3%
Other	3%
MHA dollars saved from previous months	2%
Graduate student stipend	0%
Other loan	0%

Notes: Percentages sum to more than 100% because respondents were asked to select all that apply. This question was presented only to respondents who indicated that the MHA did not fully cover their housing expenses.

Section 5: Use of Student Loan Funds for Educational and Living Expenses

Table 5A

Student Loan Funds Mainly Used for Living Expenses or Educational Expenses by Level of Study, 2016-20

Level of study	Living expenses	Educational expenses	Total
Bachelor's and below	69%	62%	66%
Master's and above	8%	19%	13%
Both	22%	19%	21%
Total	99%	100%	100%

Note: Percentages for the Living Expenses column do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Table 5B

Student Loan Funds Mainly Used for Living Expenses or Educational Expenses by Rate of Pursuit, 2016-20

Enrollment intensity	Living expenses	Educational expenses	Total
Always full time	75%	60%	69%
Not always full time	25%	40%	31%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 5C

Student Loan Funds Mainly Used for Living Expenses or Educational Expenses by Pell Grant Status, 2016-20

Pell Grant status	Living expenses	Educational expenses	Total
Pell Grant recipient	60%	47%	54%
Not Pell Grant recipient	40%	53%	46%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Table 5D

Student Loan Funds Mainly Used for Living Expenses or Educational Expenses by Prior Rank Category, 2016-20

Military rank	Living expenses	Educational expenses	Total
Prior enlisted	95%	85%	91%
Prior officer	5%	15%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%

Notes: The term “prior enlisted” refers to veterans who formerly served in the enlisted ranks, in contrast to veterans who had served as commissioned officers. With some rare exceptions, a college education is a prerequisite to serve as an officer, whereas one may enlist in the Armed Forces without having completed a postsecondary degree or certificate. The category “prior officer” includes officers from the most common commissioning sources (i.e., military academies, ROTC programs, or an officer candidate/training school), but also includes less common, specialized warrant officers and limited duty officers.

Table 5E

Student Loan Funds Mainly Used for Living Expenses or Educational Expenses by Race/Ethnicity, 2016-20

Race/Ethnicity	Living expenses	Direct educational expenses	Total
Hispanic	10%	19%	14%
Black/Non-Hispanic	6%	14%	9%
White/Non-Hispanic	69%	61%	65%
Other Races/Non-Hispanic	15%	7%	12%
Total	100%	101%	100%

Note: Percentages for the Direct Educational Expenses column add up to more than 100% due to rounding.

Section 6: Demographics

Table 6A

Gender Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2020

Gender	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor’s and below	Master’s and above	Both
Female	16%	18%	17%	23%	20%

Male	84%	82%	83%	77%	80%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 6B

Age Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2020

Age Group	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
18-24	27%	32%	38%	4%	24%
25-29	26%	30%	29%	37%	32%
30-34	15%	15%	12%	28%	22%
35-39	12%	10%	10%	14%	11%
40+	20%	12%	10%	19%	11%
Total	100%	99%	99%	102%	100%
Average Age	32.0	29.29	28.58	33.07	30.00

Note: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Table 6C

Dependents Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Dependents	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
At least one dependent	48%	55%	55%	64%	46%
No dependents	16%	24%	25%	17%	21%
Changed status during 2016-2020	36%	22%	21%	18%	32%
Total	100%	101%	101%	99%	99%

Notes: The column "P911 Veterans" provides the percentage breakdown among all P911 veterans, while the other columns provide percentages among student veterans while they were enrolled. The "Changed Status" category includes veterans whose family status changed, either from having no dependents to having dependents or vice versa, due to events such as birth, death, divorce, or children reaching the age at which they are no longer considered dependents. The Department of Veterans Affairs defines a "dependent" as a spouse, child, or parent who is in the care of the veteran. For a complete listing of applicable criteria, see <https://www.va.gov/manage-dependents>.

Table 6D**Family Responsibilities Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20**

Family responsibilities	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
Married with children	33%	34%	34%	42%	29%
Married without children	11%	15%	14%	17%	12%
Unmarried with children	3%	6%	6%	5%	5%
Unmarried without children	16%	24%	25%	17%	21%
Changed status	36%	22%	21%	18%	32%
Total	99%	101%	100%	99%	99%

Notes: Percentages may not sum to 100% due to rounding. The column "P911 Veterans" provides the percentage breakdown among all P911 veterans, while the other columns provide percentages among student veterans while they were enrolled. The "Changed Status" category includes veterans whose family status changed, either from having no dependents to having dependents or vice versa, due to events such as birth, death, divorce, or children reaching the age at which they are no longer considered dependents. The Department of Veterans Affairs defines a "dependent" as a spouse, child, or parent who is in the care of the veteran. For a complete listing of applicable criteria, see <https://www.va.gov/manage-dependents>.

Table 6E**Race/Ethnicity Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20**

Race/Ethnicity	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's and below	Master's and above	Both
Hispanic	14%	15%	17%	10%	11%
Black/Non-Hispanic	7%	8%	7%	11%	9%
White/Non-Hispanic	70%	67%	67%	71%	67%
Other Race/Ethnicity	9%	10%	9%	9%	13%

Total	100%	100%	100%	101%	100%
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Notes: Percentages don't add up to 100% in some cases due to rounding. This figure depicts the three largest racial/ethnic groups within the post-9/11 veteran population (Hispanic, Black Non-Hispanic, and White Non-Hispanic) along with all other racial/ethnic groups combined into a single category, depicted as "Other Race/Ethnicity."

Section 7: Selected Characteristics

Table 7A

Military Branch as of Discharge/Deactivation in 2016 Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Military branch	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
Air Force	14%	12%	11%	13%	17%
Army	32%	34%	33%	34%	36%
Marines	17%	19%	22%	8%	14%
Navy	19%	20%	20%	20%	21%
National Guard or Reserves	18%	15%	14%	25%	11%

Note: The U.S. Space Force is not shown because it did not exist in 2016 when the veterans who participated in the VETS Survey were discharged/deactivated from active duty.

Table 7B

Military Paygrade as of Discharge/Deactivation in 2016 Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Military paygrade	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
E1-E4	41%	47%	53%	18%	40%
E5-E6	30%	34%	35%	24%	39%
E7-E9	13%	10%	9%	13%	12%
W1-W5	1%	1%	1%	2%	1%
O1-O3	7%	5%	1%	30%	7%

O4-O7	8%	3%	1%	12%	2%
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Notes: “E” paygrades refer to enlisted servicemembers. “W” refers to warrant officers. “O” refers to commissioned officers (with rare exceptions, officers must hold at least a bachelor’s degree prior to being commissioned). Higher numbers next to the letter indicate higher paygrades and likewise higher levels of compensation and authority. See Defense Finance and Accounting Service, “Military Pay Tables & Information,” <https://www.dfas.mil/MilitaryMembers/payentitlements/Pay-Tables/>.

Table 7C

Housing Categories Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Housing category	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor’s & below	Master’s & above	Both
Rented	31%	43%	45%	40%	33%
Homeowner with mortgage	58%	34%	33%	47%	29%
No rent or mortgage	10%	9%	9%	6%	9%
Changed status	*	13%	11%	5%	28%
Other	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%
Total	100%	100%	99%	100%	99%

* Changed Status category includes veterans whose housing situation changed between 2016 and 2020. We are unable to calculate the percentage of P911 veterans whose housing situation changed because the question posed to all P911 veterans captured only a single point in time. In contrast, the percentage of student veterans who changed their housing status is available because the survey asked about their housing situation for each institution they attended between 2016 and 2020.

Note: 0.1% of survey respondents indicated that they were homeless.

Table 7D

Percentages of Student Veterans Who Borrowed Student Loans in Terms of Housing Category, 2016-20

Housing category	Borrowed after separation
Renter	56%
Homeowner with mortgage	22%
Homeowner without mortgage or lived with relatives or friends (no rent)	7%

Homeless	0%
Changed status	15%
Total	100%

Note: Changed status category includes student veterans whose housing situation changed between 2016 and 2020.

Table 7E

Community Categories Among Student Veterans and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Community category	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
Metro	89%	88%	92%	93%
Nonmetro	8%	9%	5%	5%
Changed status	3%	3%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: The Metro category includes all counties that had at least one urban area of 50,000 or more inhabitants. Nonmetro counties had no urban areas of 50,000 or more inhabitants. The changed status category includes veterans who moved between metro and nonmetro areas while enrolled in post-secondary institutions between 2016 and 2020.

Table 7F

Student Veteran Employment While Enrolled Among Student Veterans and by Level of Study, 2016-20

Ever employed while enrolled?	Student veterans	Bachelor's and below	Master's and above	Both
Yes	71%	71%	73%	76%
No	29%	29%	27%	24%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Table 7G

Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Disability Ratings Among P911 Veterans, Student Veterans, and by Level of Study, 2016-20

VA disability rating	P911 veterans	Student veterans	Bachelor's & below	Master's & above	Both
No disability rating	38%	37%	37%	41%	36%
0% disability rating	3%	3%	3%	2%	3%
10%-60% disability rating	27%	29%	29%	28%	27%
70%-100% disability rating	33%	31%	31%	29%	34%
Total	101%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Notes: The Department of Veterans Affairs assigns disability ratings in 10 percentage point increments to determine veterans' eligibility for monthly compensation and support services. See "About Disability Ratings," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Nov. 5, 2024, <https://www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings>. For veterans with multiple service-connected conditions, a Combined Ratings Table is used to calculate a total disability rating. See "Current Disability Compensation Rates," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, March 6, 2025, <https://www.va.gov/disability/compensation-rates>. In Figure 3, veterans are grouped based on whether their disability rating is 70% or higher, a widely accepted threshold indicating a serious injury or illness. This threshold also aligns with eligibility criteria for several VA programs, including the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers. See "VA Caregiver Support Program," U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, April 14, 2025, https://www.caregiver.va.gov/support/support_benefits.asp. The "No Disability Rating" category includes veterans who had not yet been assigned a disability rating or who had not applied for a disability rating with the Department of Veterans Affairs.