



AUGUST 2014

Women Veterans In The Labor Force

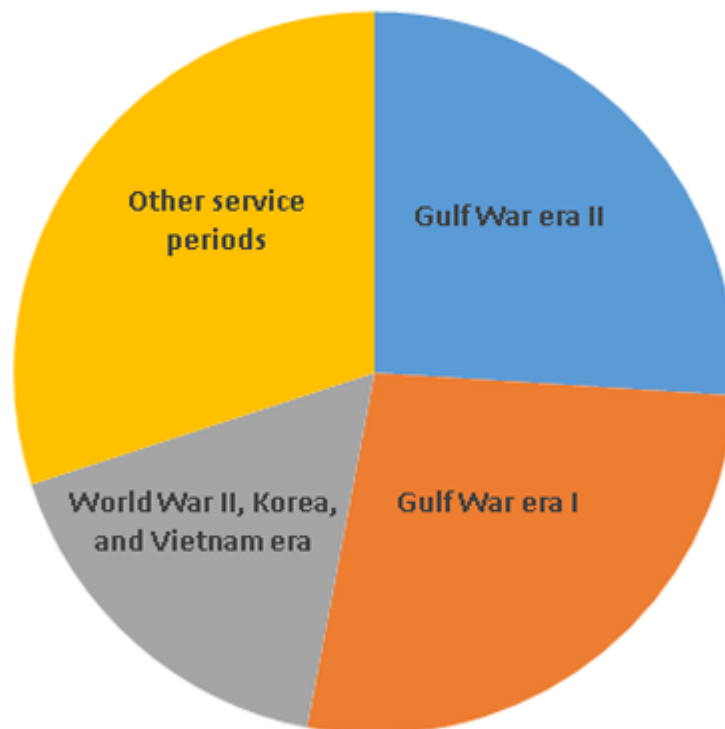
James A. Walker and James M. Borbely

In 2013, there were 21.4 million veterans in the civilian noninstitutional population, and 2.2 million of those veterans were women. A number of factors can affect the labor force status of women veterans, including age and educational attainment. This Spotlight on Statistics examines the demographic, employment, and unemployment characteristics of women veterans.

More than half of women veterans served in either Gulf War I or Gulf War II

Among all women veterans in 2013, over half had served in either Gulf War era I (August 1990 to August 2001) or Gulf War era II (September 2001 to the present). Seventeen percent of women veterans had served in World War II, the Korean War, or the Vietnam era, and 30 percent had served in other service periods, primarily between the Vietnam era and Gulf War era I.

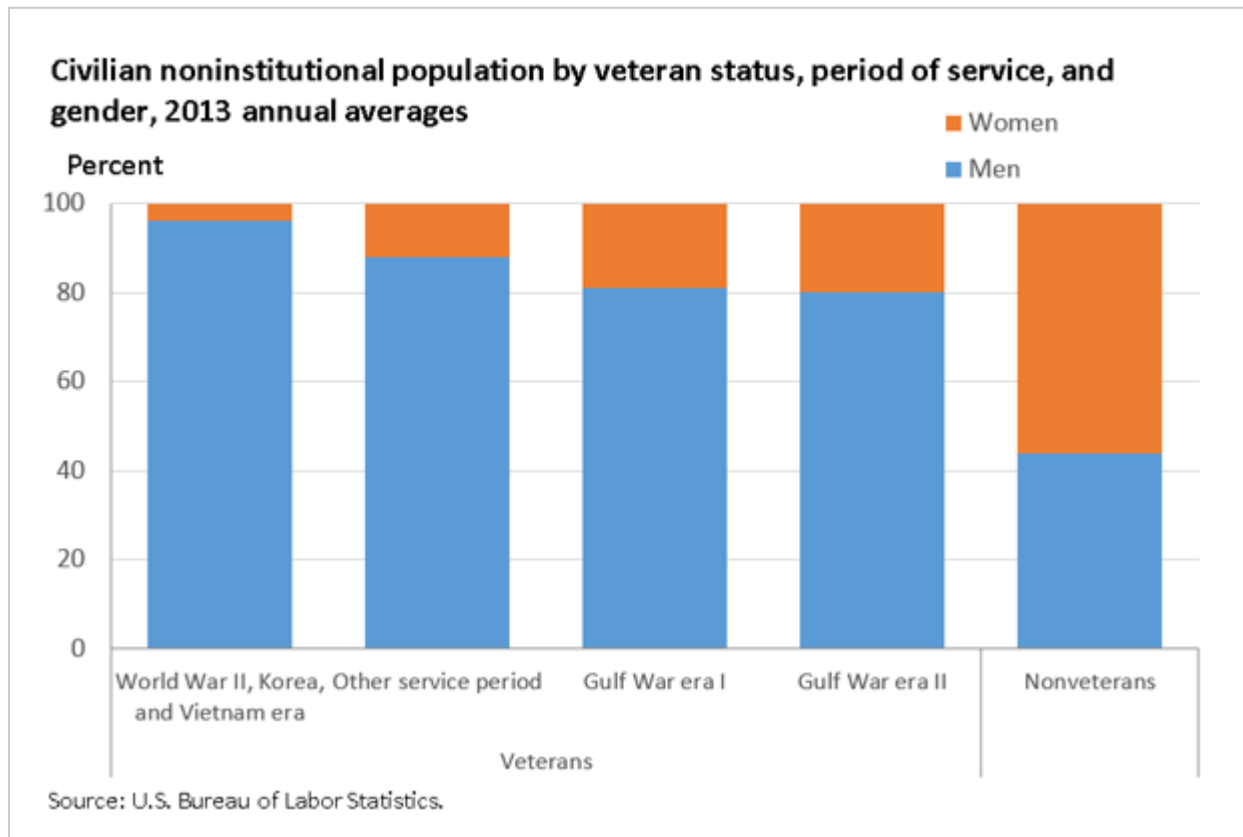
Women veterans by period of service, 2013 annual averages



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

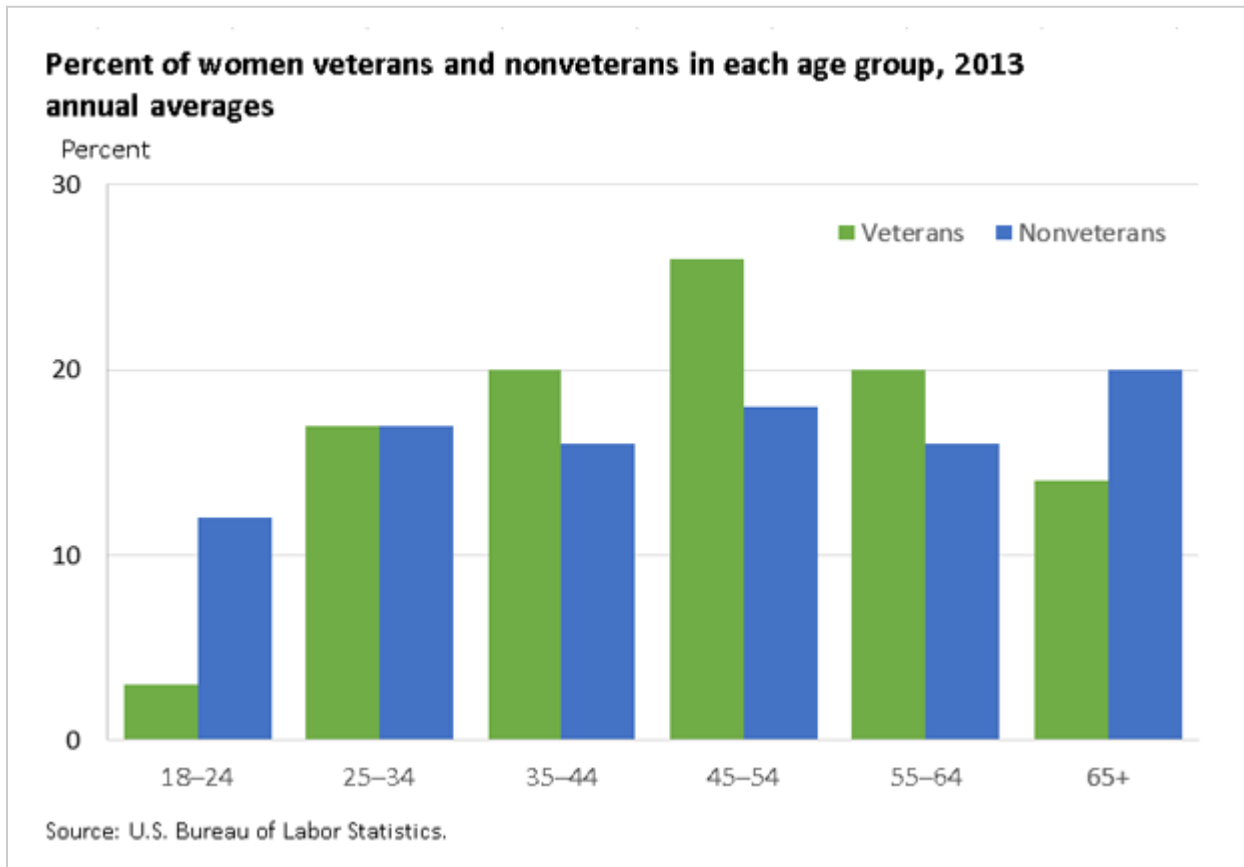
Veterans of Gulf War I and II were more likely to be women than veterans from other service periods

Among veterans of all service periods, there are fewer women than men, unlike among nonveterans. In 2013, women accounted for only 4 percent of the World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam-era veterans but 20 percent of Gulf War-era II veterans—those who served on active duty since September 2001. The larger proportion of women veterans among the Gulf War-era II population reflects the increasing number of women serving in the U.S. Armed Forces for the last several decades.



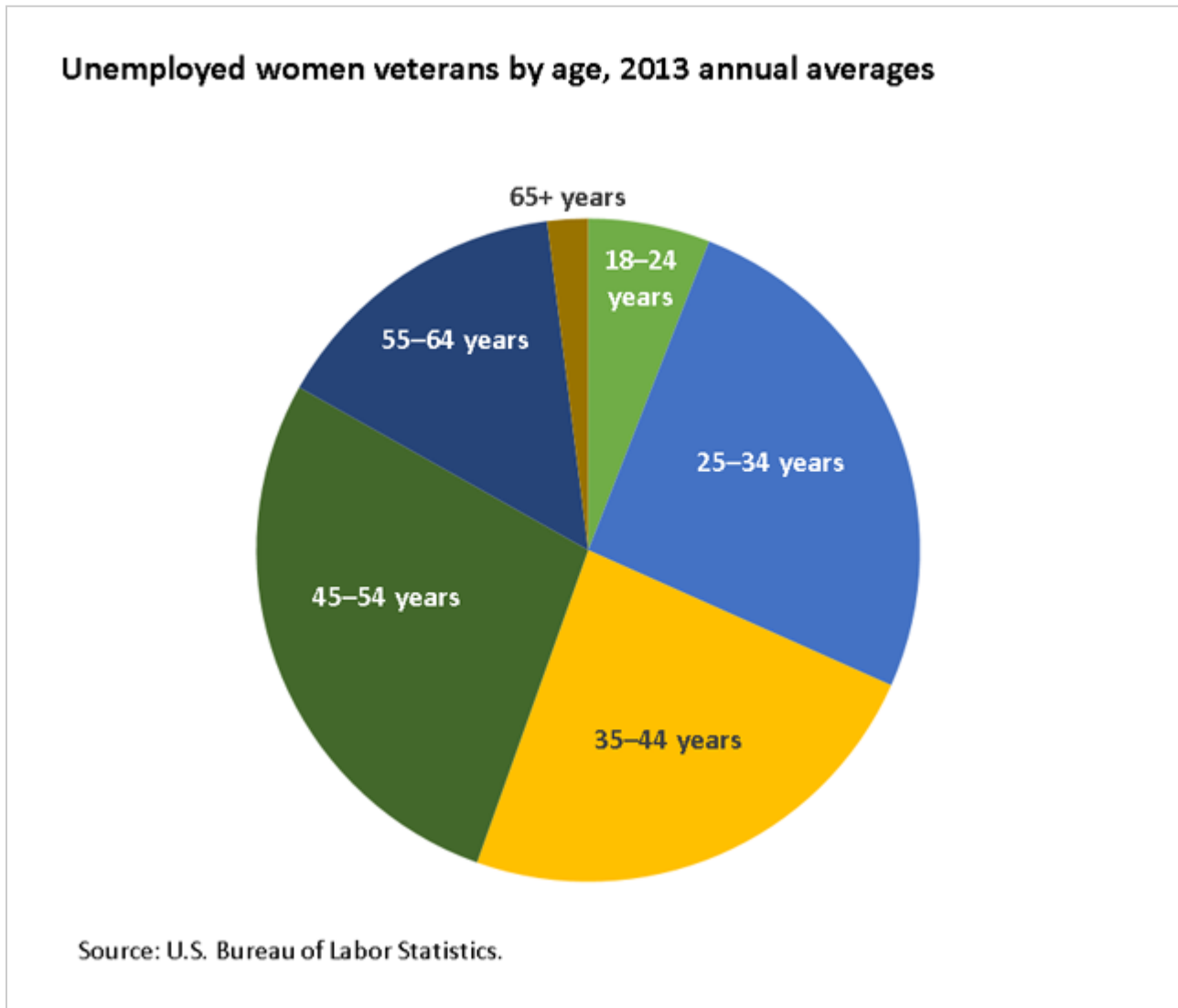
More than half a million women veterans were ages 45 to 54 in 2013

In 2013, 66 percent of women veterans were ages 35 to 64, compared with 51 percent of nonveteran women in the same age group. The largest group of women veterans were ages 45 to 54, at 26 percent of the population. Of the 578,000 women veterans who were ages 45 to 54, most served during Gulf War era I and other service periods. Seventeen percent of women veterans were ages 25 to 34, and just 3 percent were ages 18 to 24.



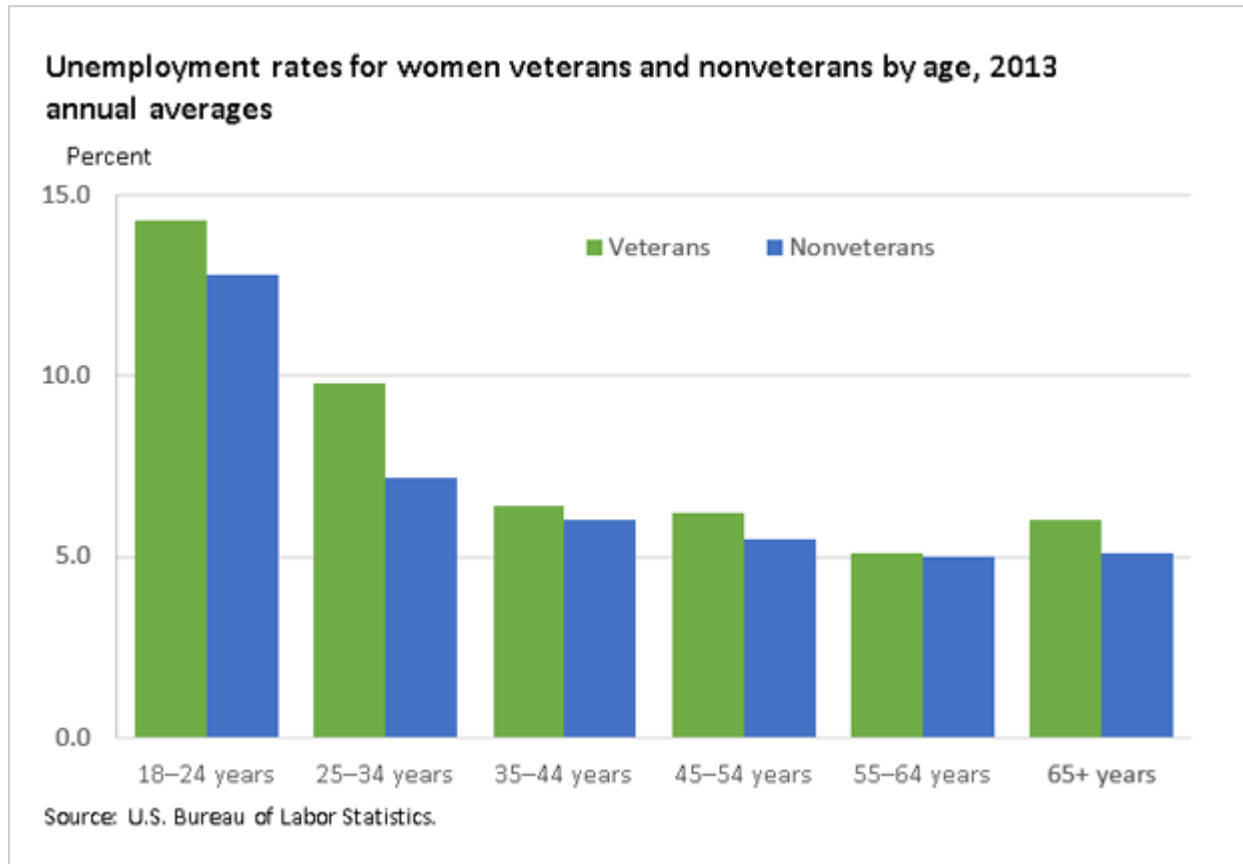
Nearly 100,000 women veterans were unemployed in 2013

Six percent of the 97,000 unemployed women veterans in 2013 were ages 18 to 24. There were about the same proportion of unemployed women veterans in the following groups: ages 25 to 34 (26 percent), ages 35-44 (24 percent), and ages 45 to 54 (28 percent). Women veterans ages 55 to 64 and 65 and older made up smaller shares of the unemployed than their share of the population of women veterans.



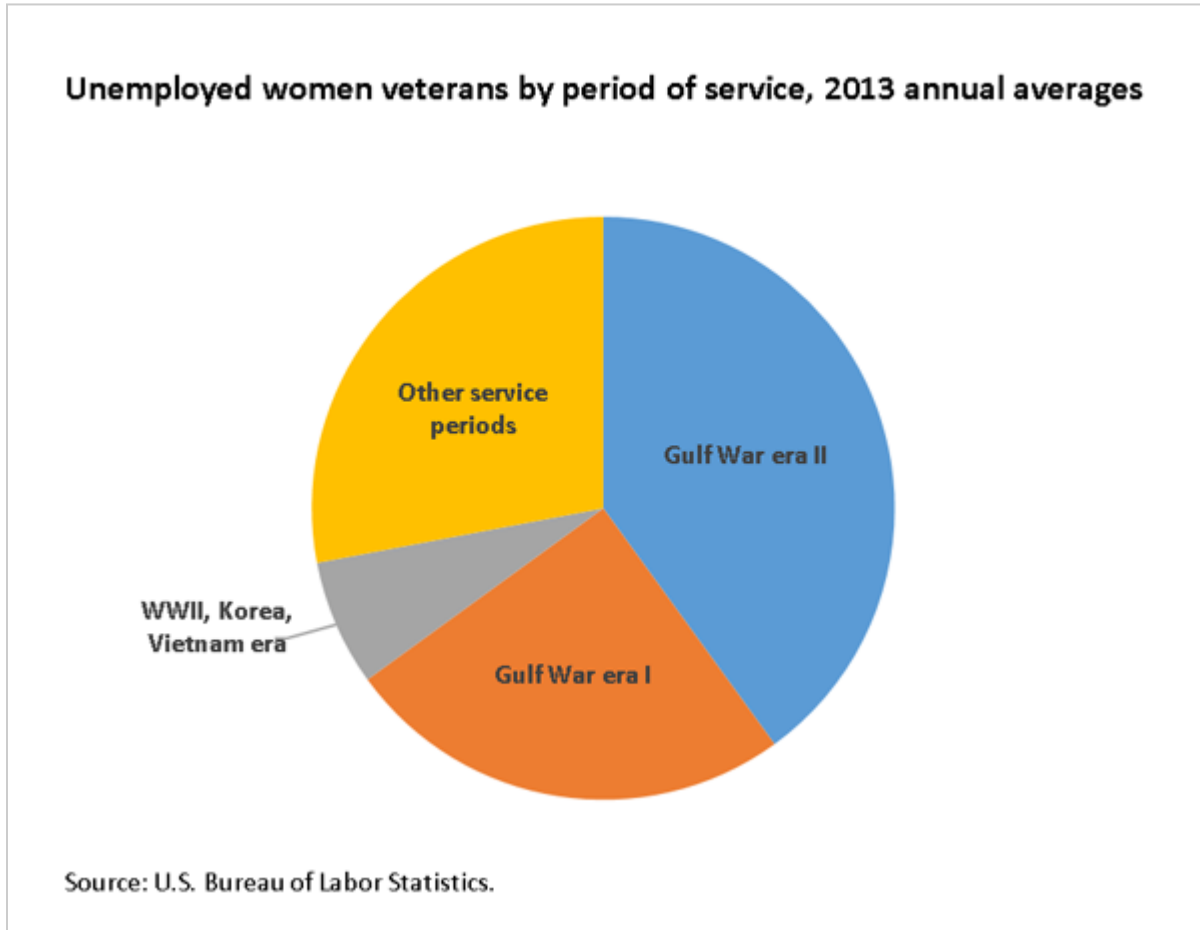
Unemployment rates higher for women veterans ages 25 to 34 than for nonveterans of that age

Unemployment rates for younger women, regardless of veteran status, tend to be higher than for women over age 35. In 2013, unemployment rates for women veterans and nonveterans were similar in most age groups, although the unemployment rate for 25- to 34-year-old women veterans was significantly higher than the rate for nonveteran women of the same ages.



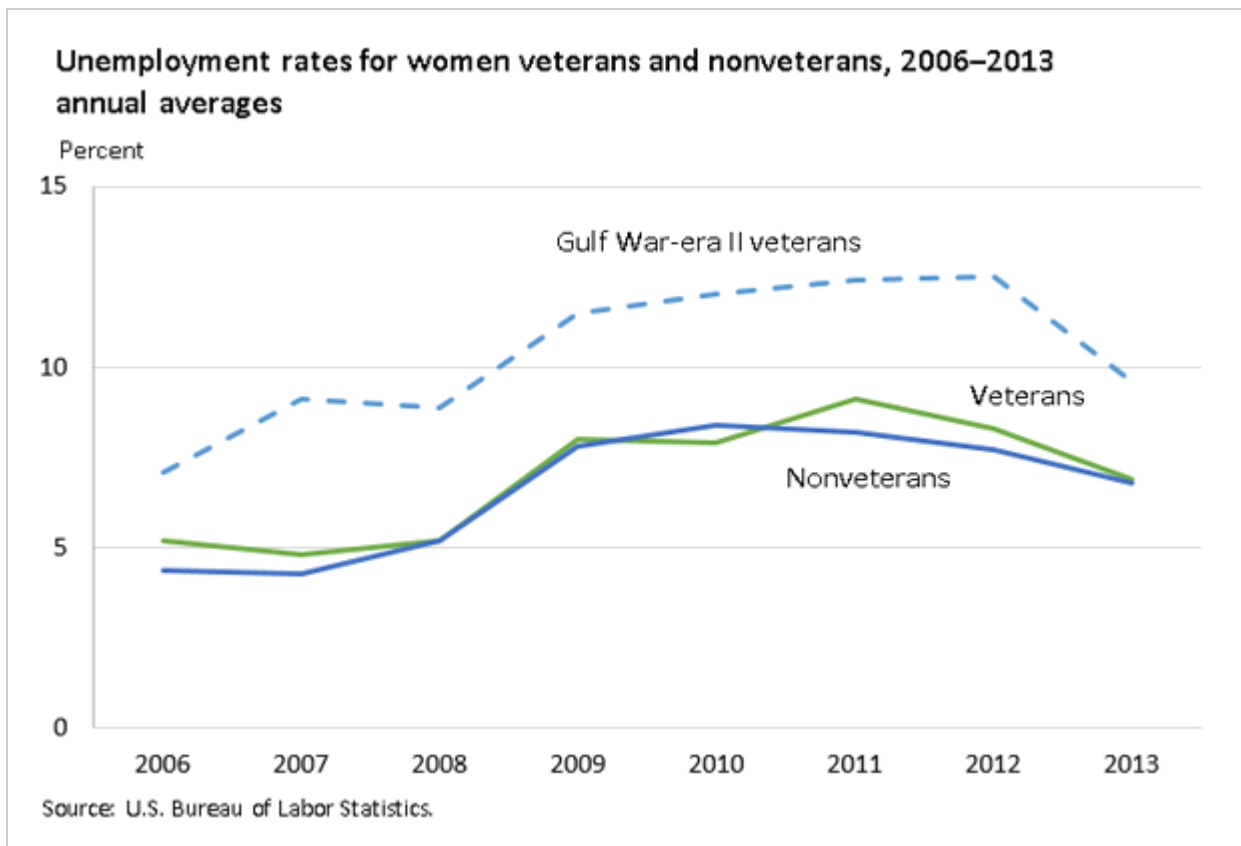
Gulf War-era II women veterans had the largest share of the unemployed

In 2013, 40 percent of all unemployed women veterans had served during Gulf War era II, although they made up only about a quarter of women veterans overall. Gulf War-era II women veterans tend to be younger, and younger people tend to have higher unemployment rates, regardless of their veteran status. The higher proportions of unemployed women veterans from other service periods, Gulf War era I, and Gulf War era II reflects, in part, the increasing number of women serving in the Armed Forces since the end of the Vietnam War.



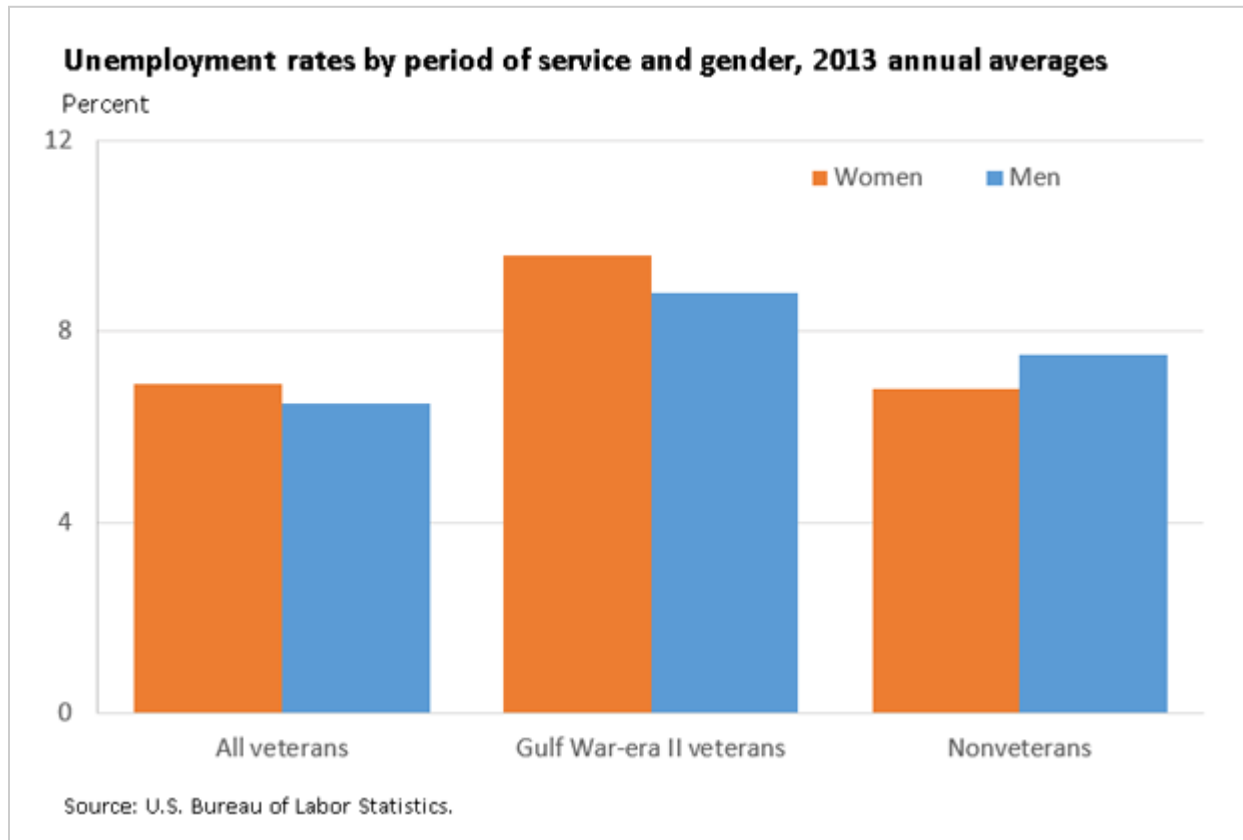
Unemployment rates for women veterans and nonveterans, 2006–2013

Unemployment rates for women veterans and nonveterans followed similar trends during the 2006–2013 period, rising and falling in a similar pattern. Rates for both groups rose during the 2007–2009 recession and have declined in recent years, but they have not returned to their prerecession rates. The unemployment rate for women Gulf War-era II veterans has always been higher than the rate for all women veterans and nonveterans—in part reflecting the younger age profile of Gulf War-era II veterans. The rate peaked at 12.5 percent in 2012 and declined to 9.6 percent in 2013.



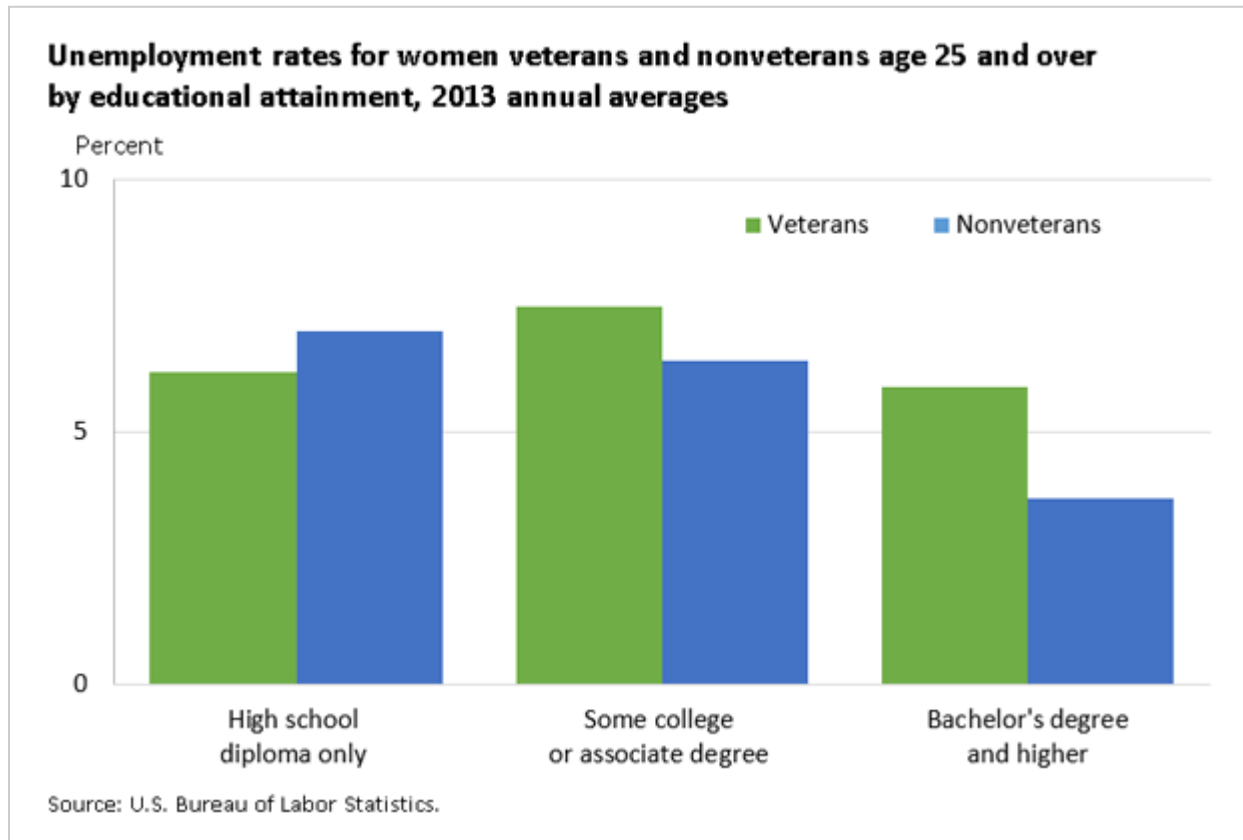
Gulf War-era II women’s unemployment rate similar to men’s for that era

In 2013, the unemployment rates for veterans were similar for men and women, at 6.5 percent and 6.9 percent, respectively. Among Gulf War-era II veterans, the unemployment rate for women (9.6 percent) was not statistically different from their male counterparts (8.8 percent). In contrast, among nonveterans, the unemployment rate for men (7.5 percent) was higher than the rate for women (6.8 percent).



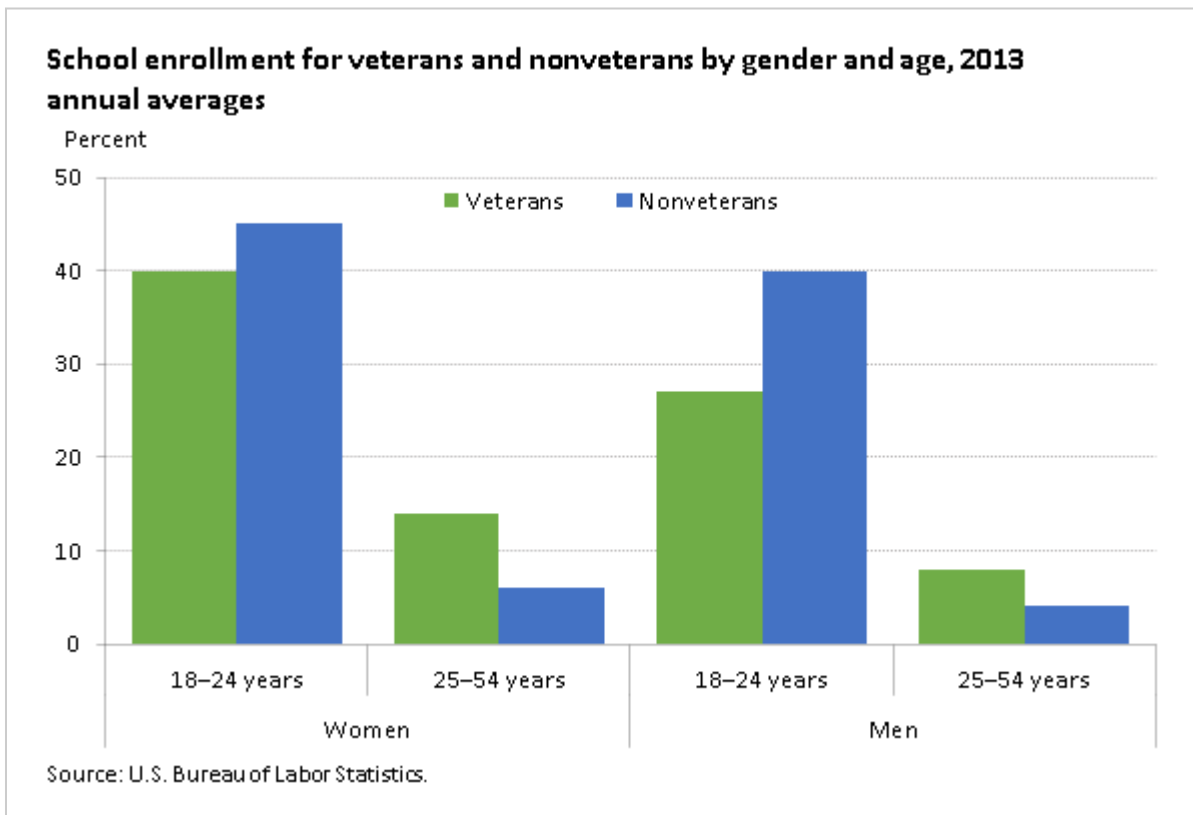
Among college-educated women, unemployment rates higher for veterans

In 2013, women veterans age 25 and over with at least a bachelor’s degree had a higher unemployment rate than women nonveterans with at least a bachelor’s degree—5.9 percent versus 3.7 percent. For women veterans and nonveterans, the unemployment rates were little different for those with a high school diploma or those with some college or an associate degree.



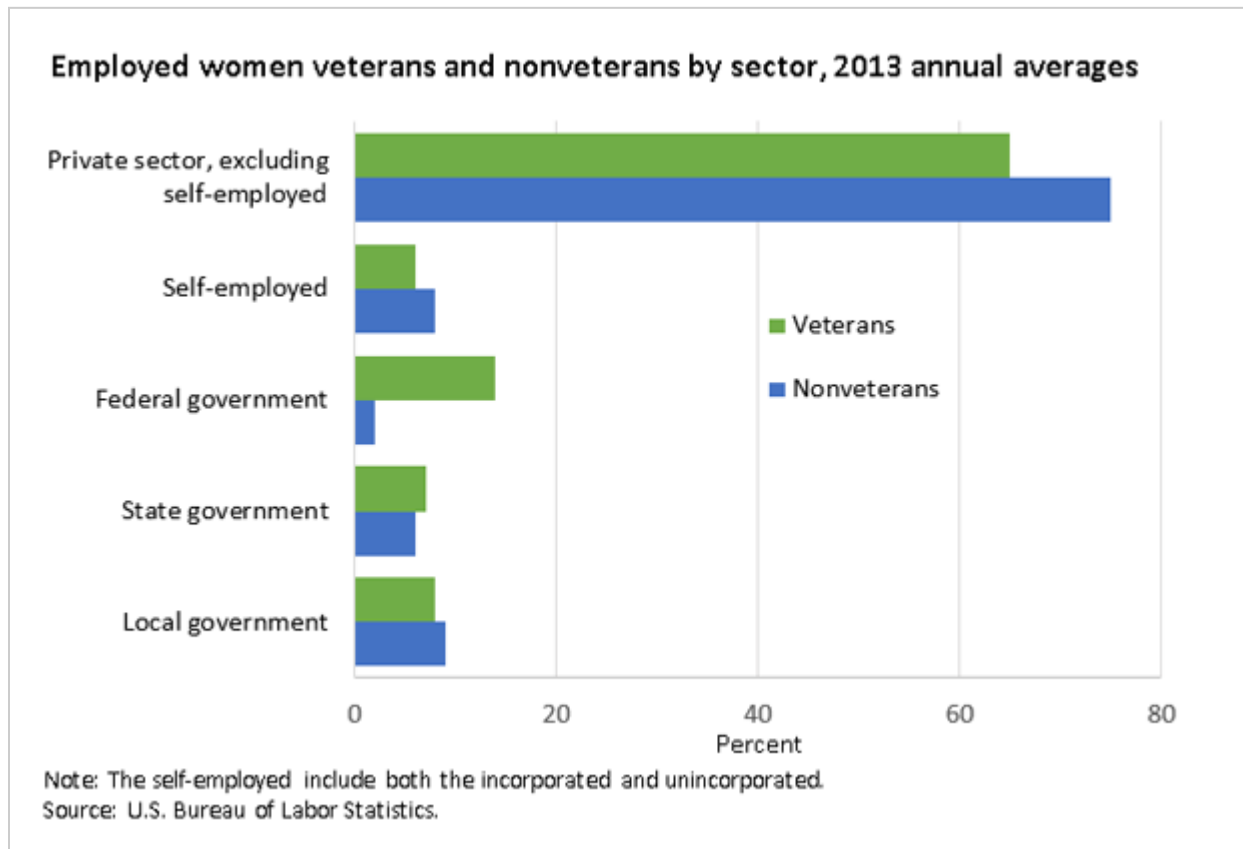
Women veterans enrolled in school at higher rates than their male counterparts

Young veterans age 18 to 24 were less likely to be enrolled in school in 2013 than their nonveteran counterparts. By contrast, veterans age 25 to 54 were more likely to be enrolled in school than nonveterans. This may be due to the fact that many veterans have deferred some of their education until the completion of their military service. Among veterans, women ages 18 to 24 had a higher school-enrollment rate (40 percent) than did men in that age group (27 percent). Similarly, for veterans ages 25 to 54, women had a slightly higher school-enrollment rate (14 percent) than did men (8 percent).



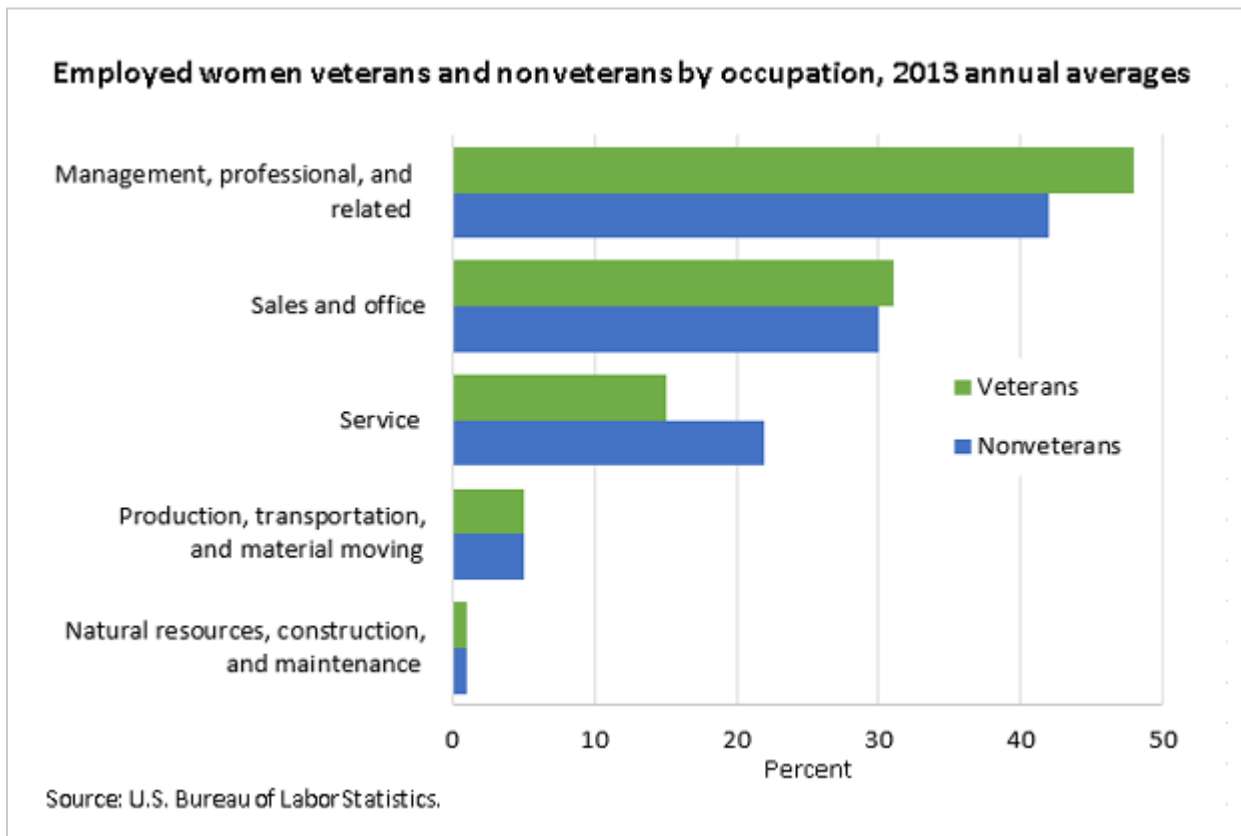
Women veterans more likely than nonveterans to work in federal government

In 2013, employed women veterans were much more likely to work for the federal government and less likely to work in the private sector than their nonveteran counterparts. For instance, 14 percent of employed women veterans worked for the federal government compared with 2 percent of employed women nonveterans, while 65 percent of women veterans worked in the private sector versus 75 percent of women nonveterans. Employed women veterans were about equally likely as employed nonveterans to work for state or local government or to be self-employed.



Women veterans were more likely than nonveterans to work in management and professional occupations

Employed women veterans were slightly more likely than employed nonveterans to work in management, professional, and related occupations in 2013 (48 percent and 42 percent, respectively), although this was the most common occupational group for veterans and nonveterans alike. Among employed women, veterans were less likely than nonveterans to work in service occupations (15 percent versus 22 percent). Similar shares of employed women veterans and nonveterans worked in sales and office occupations; production, transportation, and material moving occupations; and natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations.



More

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Information on women veterans—women who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and were civilians at the time the data were gathered—has been collected in the Current Population Survey since 1986. The CPS is a survey of about 60,000 households that provides data on employment and unemployment for the nation's civilian noninstitutional population ages 16 and older.

Additional data on veterans is available at <https://www.bls.gov/cps/demographics.htm#vets> or by contacting the Division of Labor Force Statistics by telephone at (202) 691-6378 or by email at CPSInfo@bls.gov. The most recent news release and releases from previous years are available at <https://www.bls.gov/bls/news-release/home.htm#VET>.