



OCTOBER 2020

## Gulf War Era Veterans In The Labor Force

**Jamie Williams**

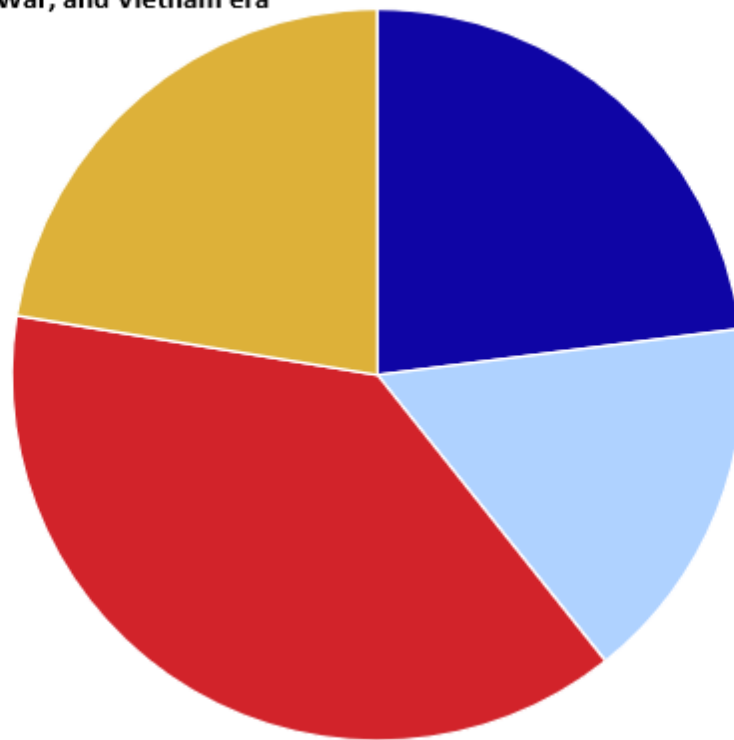
In 2019, there were 18.8 million veterans in the civilian population, and 7.4 million of those were veterans of the Gulf War era. The Gulf War era includes two periods – Gulf War I, from August 1990 to August 2001, and Gulf War II, from September 2001 to the present. This Spotlight on Statistics examines the demographic, employment, and unemployment characteristics of these veterans.

## Gulf War veterans make up nearly 40 percent of total veteran population

Among all veterans in 2019, 23 percent were veterans of the Gulf War II era and 16.3 percent served during the Gulf War I era. About 38 percent of veterans served during either World War II, Korea or Vietnam, and about 22 percent served at other times, mostly during the period between the Vietnam conflict and Gulf War I.

**Veterans by period of service, 2019 annual averages**

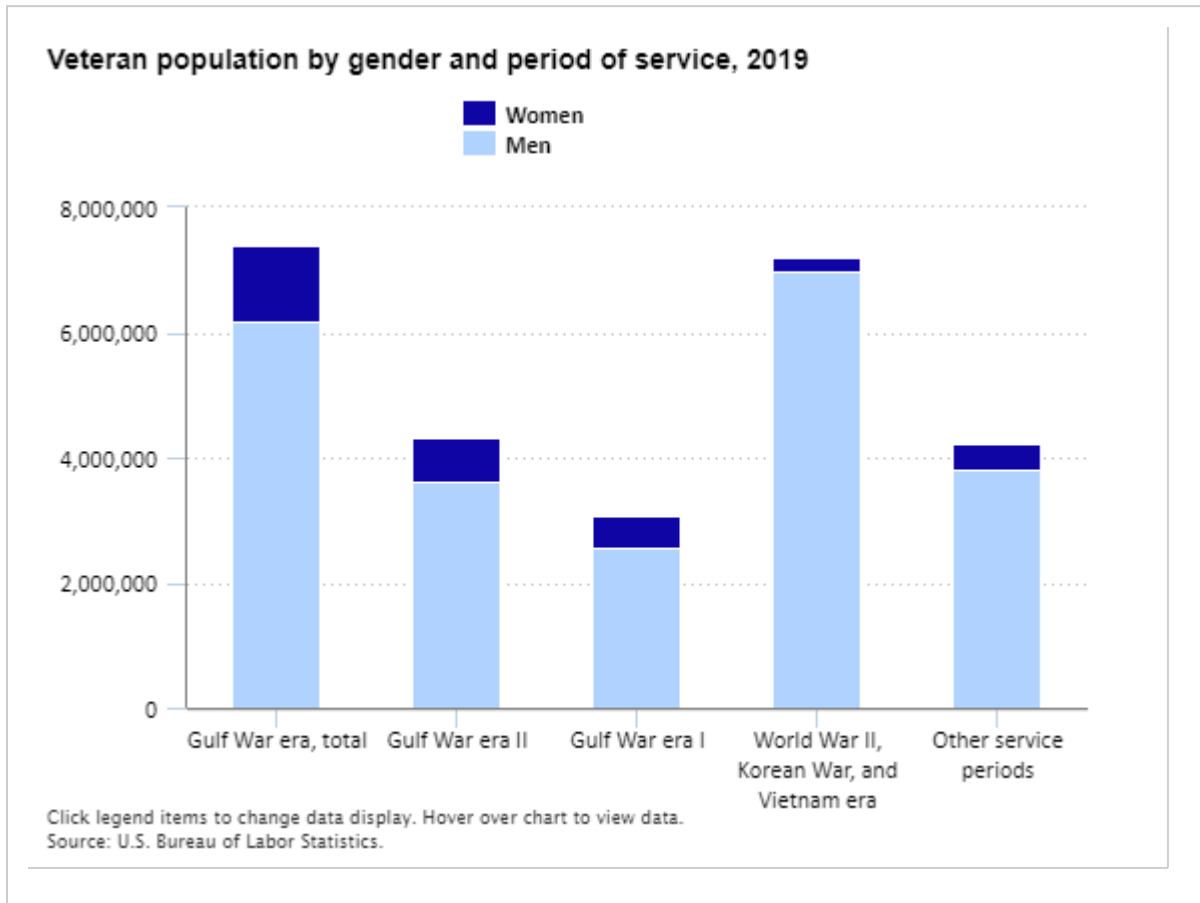
- Gulf War era II
- Gulf War era I
- World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam era
- Other service periods



Click legend items to change data display. Hover over chart to view data.  
Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

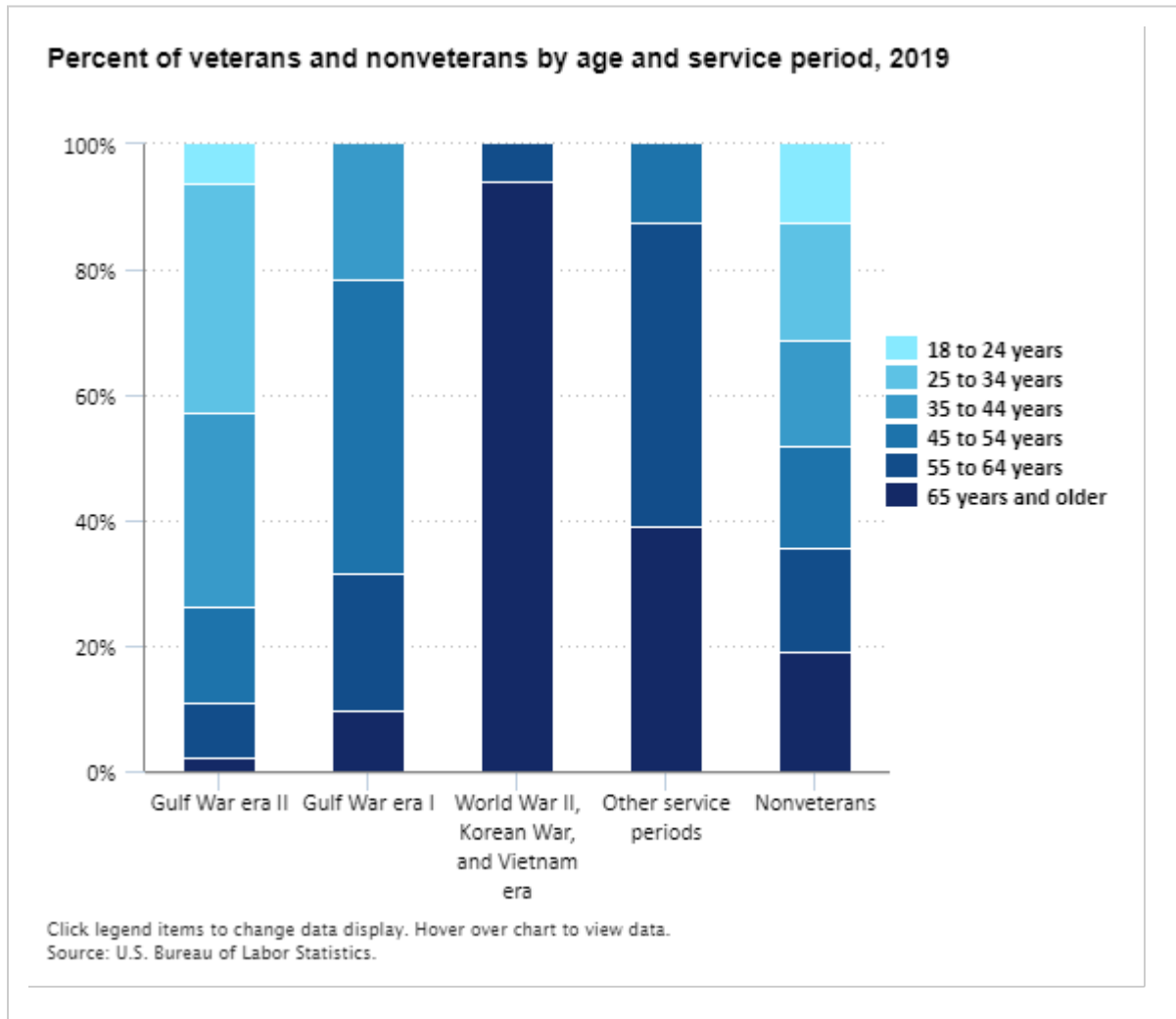
## Woman make larger share of Gulf War veterans than veterans of other eras

There is a higher prevalence of women veterans in more recent military conflicts. About 17 percent of Gulf War-era veterans are women, compared with slightly more than 3 percent in the World War II, Korean, and Vietnam wars combined. Women make up almost 10 percent of veterans from other service periods.



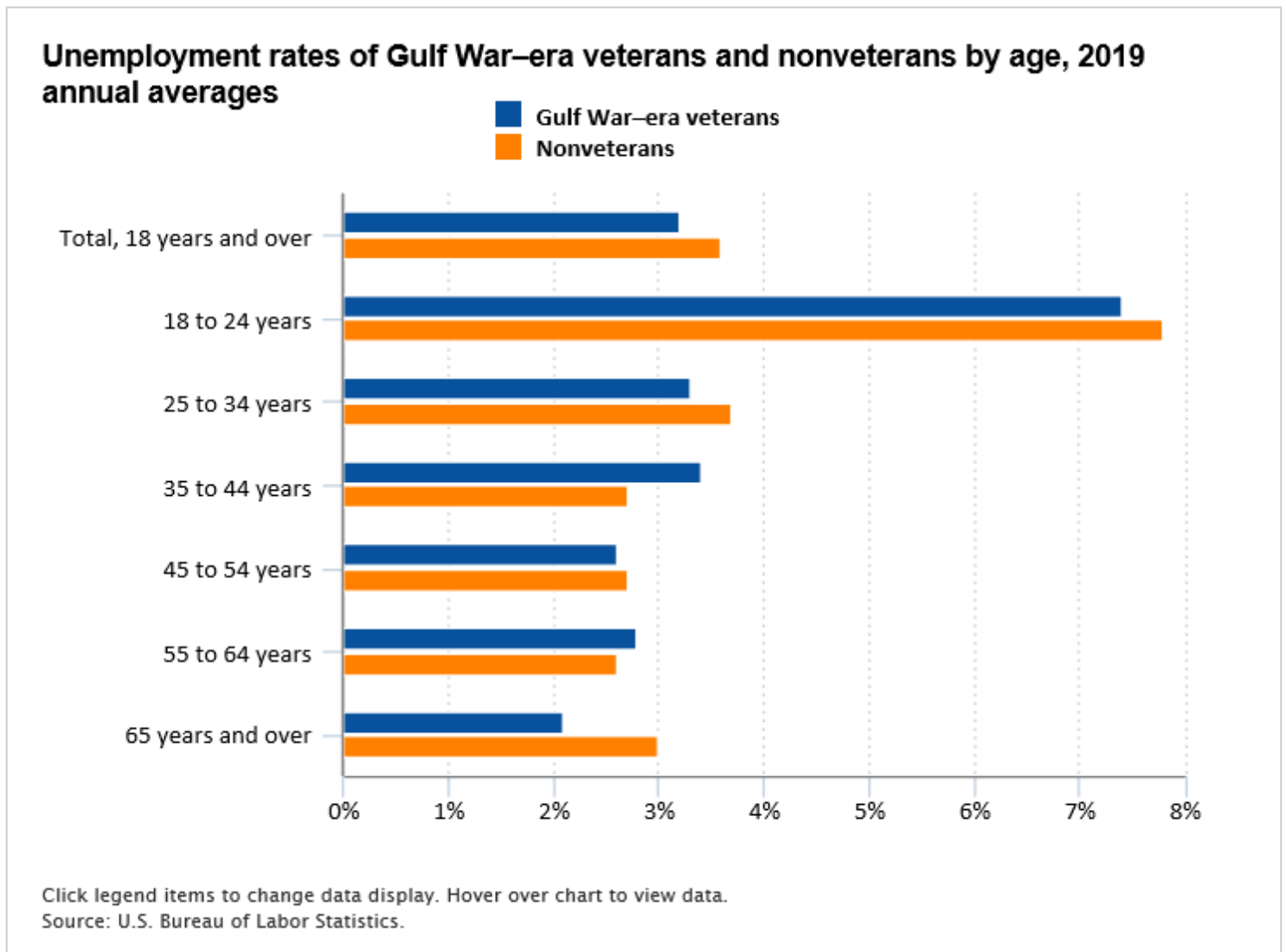
## Nearly half of Gulf War I veterans were ages 45 to 54 in 2019

This age group represents 15.2 percent of Gulf War era II veterans, 12.6 percent of veterans from other service periods, and 16.3 percent of nonveterans. Only 6.0 percent of Gulf War era II veterans were ages 18 to 24 in 2019. Veterans age 65 and older made up 9.6 percent of Gulf War era I veterans and 2.2 and percent of Gulf War era II veterans in 2019, but 39.2 percent of veterans from other service periods and 94.0 percent of World War II, Korean War, and Vietnam era veterans. Nonveterans were pretty evenly distributed across all six age groups.



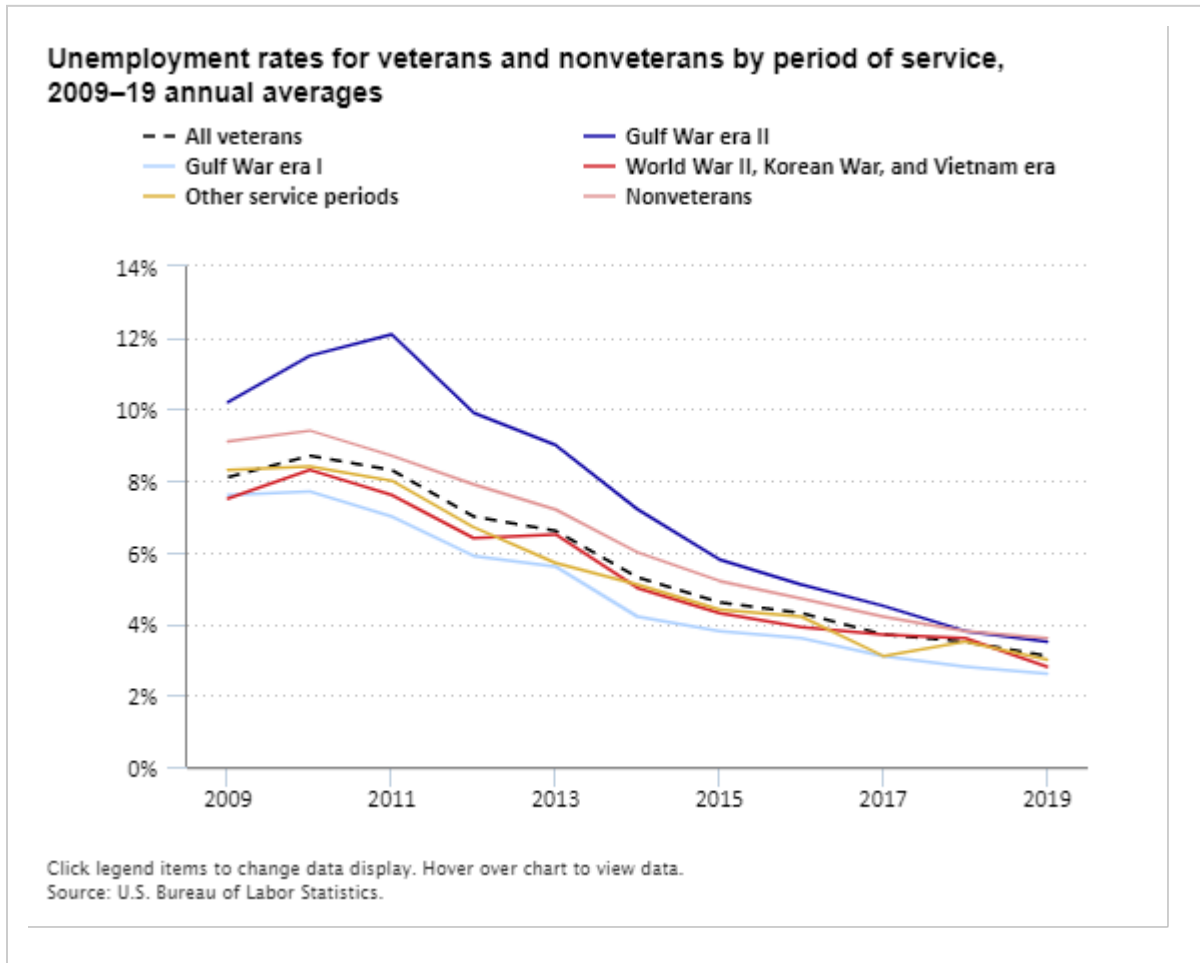
## 18- to 24-year-olds had highest unemployment rates among Gulf War era veterans and nonveterans

At 7.4 percent in 2019, the unemployment rate for young veterans from the Gulf War era was little different from the rate for nonveterans of the same ages (7.8 percent). In most other age groups, the unemployment rate for Gulf War era veterans was little different from that of nonveterans.



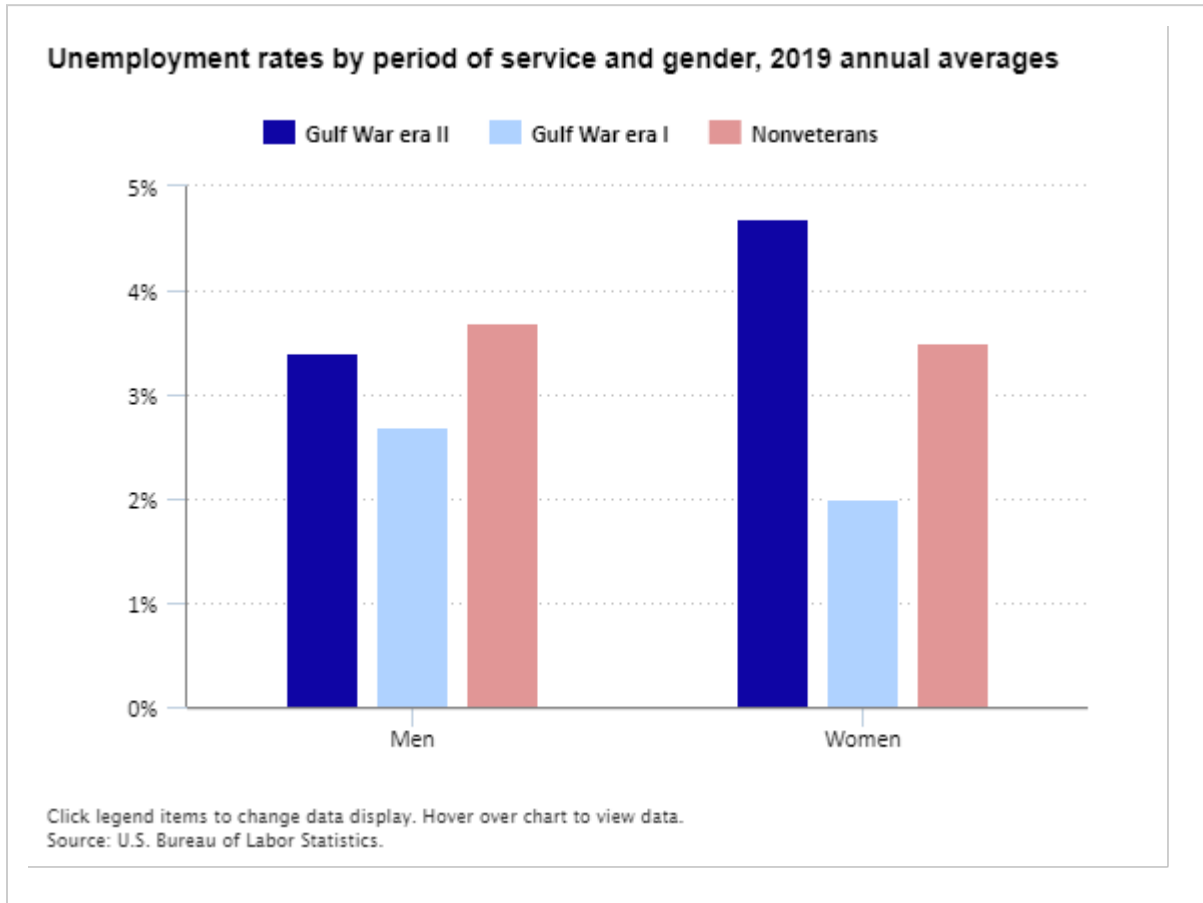
## Gulf War era II veterans had the highest unemployment rates from 2009 to 2015

All of the unemployment rates followed a general downward trend after peaking in 2011. Since 2016, the unemployment rate for Gulf War era II veterans was little different compared with other veterans and nonveterans.



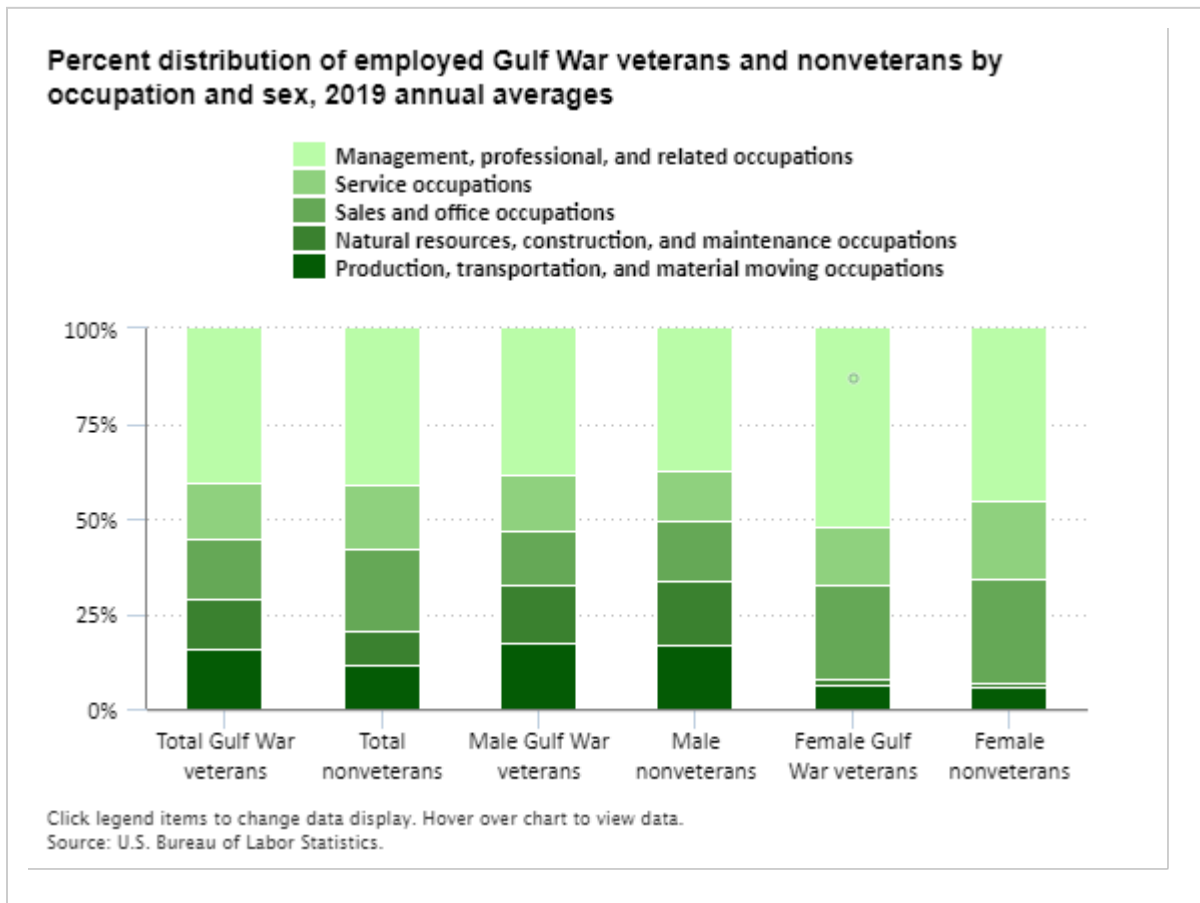
## Female veterans of Gulf War era II had a higher unemployment rate than nonveterans in 2019

Both male and female Gulf War era I veterans had unemployment rates lower than those for nonveterans.



## 5.6 million Gulf War era veterans were employed in 2019, about 6 percent of civilian U.S. workers

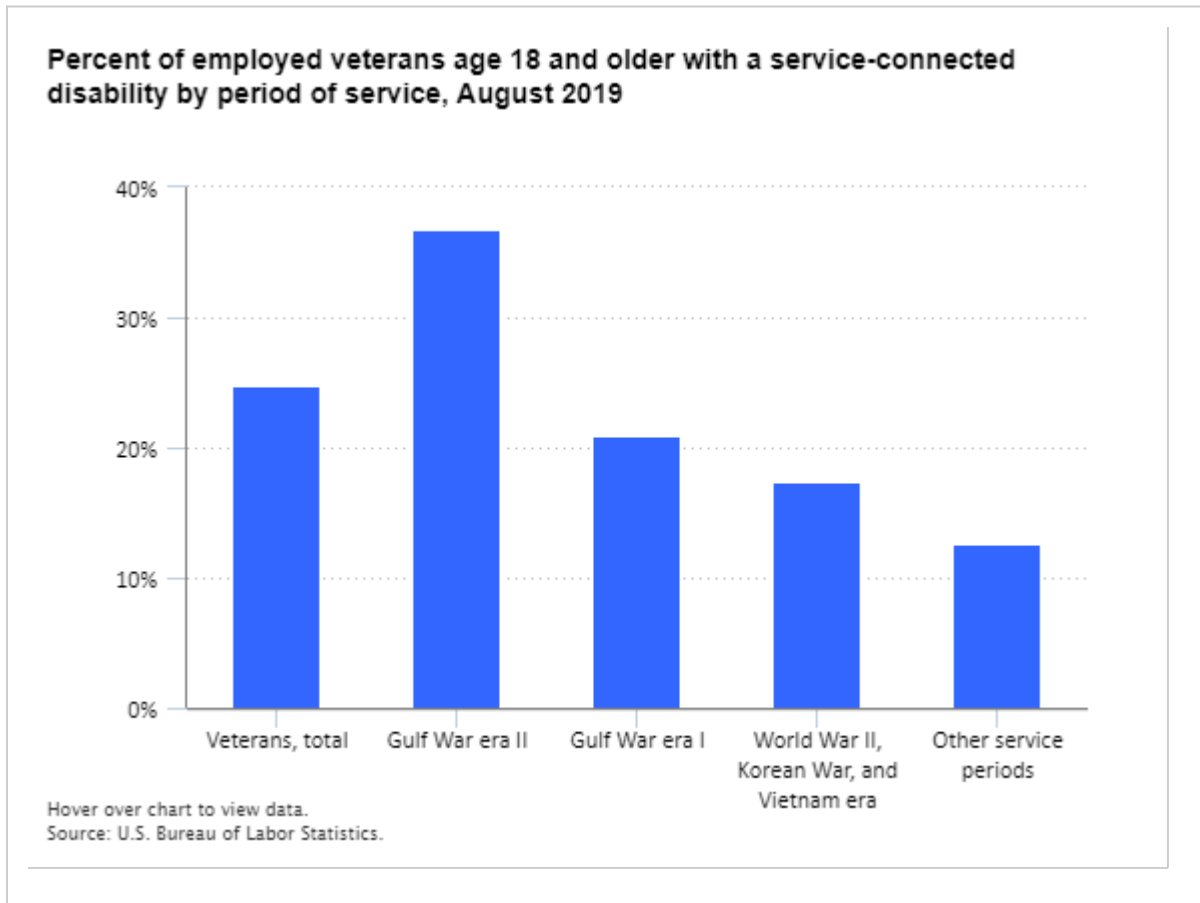
Regardless of veteran status, most men worked in management, professional, and related occupations. Male Gulf War veterans and nonveterans were about equally likely to be employed in this occupational group. Female Gulf War veterans and nonveterans were also most likely to work in management, professional, and related occupations. Female Gulf War veterans were less likely than female nonveterans to work in service occupations (15.6 percent versus 20.7 percent).





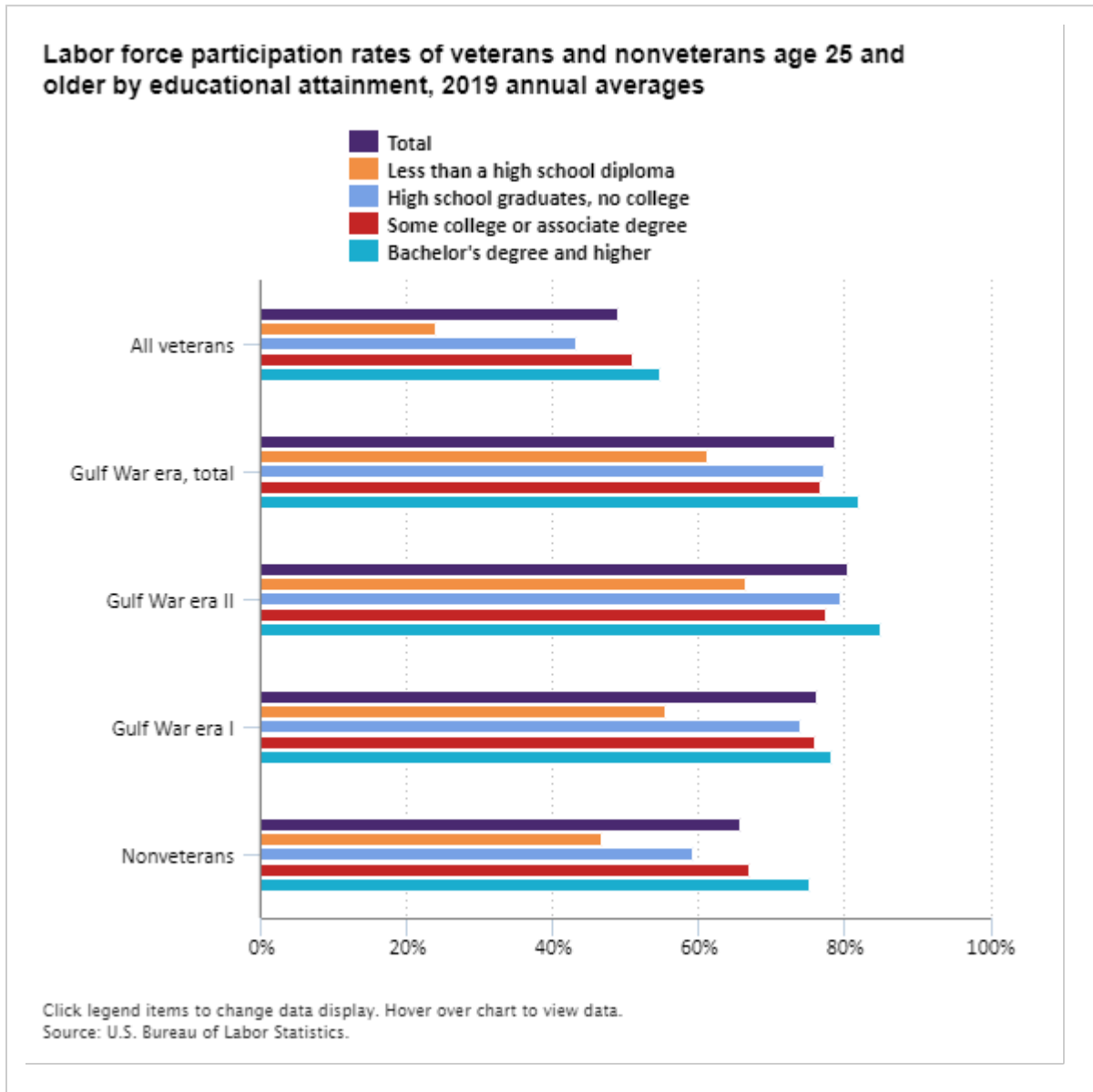
## More than 2.1 million employed veterans had a service-connected disability in August 2019

This figure represents a quarter of all employed veterans. Among employed veterans from Gulf War era II, 37 percent had a service-connected disability. Twenty-one percent of employed Gulf War era I veterans had a service-connected disability. The higher proportions of employed Gulf War era II veterans with a service-connected disability in part may reflect improvements in battlefield medicine; service members now survive many injuries that would have been fatal in an earlier conflict. Public policies that improve employment opportunities for veterans and others with a disability also may play a role.



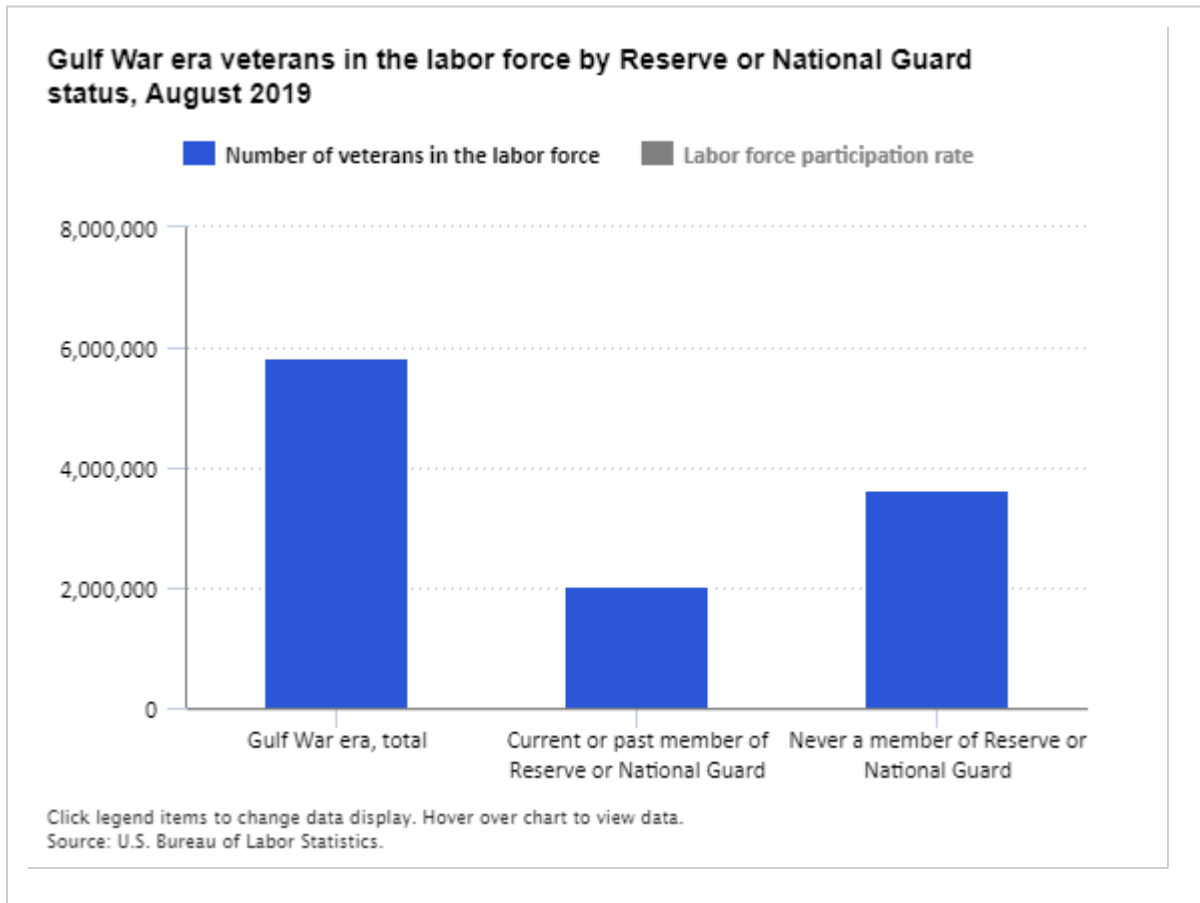
## Gulf War veterans at every educational level more likely than nonveterans to be in labor force

Among veterans and nonveterans age 25 and older, labor force participation rates were highest for people with a bachelor’s degree and higher. Labor force participation rates were lowest for people with less than a high school diploma. Gulf War veterans of both eras were more likely to participate in the labor force than were their nonveteran counterparts at every level of educational attainment.



## A third of Gulf War era veterans were current or past members of Reserve or National Guard in 2019

Nearly 2.5 million of the 7.4 million Gulf War era veterans had served in the Reserves or National Guard. In August 2019, 81.9 percent of Gulf War era veterans with Reserve or National Guard membership were part of the labor force, compared with 76.6 percent of those with no Reserve or National Guard membership.



## For more information

Jamie Williams is an economist in the Office of Publications and Special Studies, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. She also is a member of the U.S. Naval Reserve and a veteran of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Veterans are men and women who previously served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces and who were civilians at the time they were surveyed. Members of the Reserve and National Guard are counted as veterans if they had ever served on active duty. People who are on active duty at the time of the survey are outside the scope of the survey and thus not in the estimates shown here. People who reside in institutions, such as nursing homes and prisons, are also outside the scope of the survey.

Nonveterans are men and women who never served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces.

World War II, Korean War, Vietnam-era, and Gulf War-era veterans are men and women who served in the U.S. Armed Forces during these periods of service, regardless of where in the world they served. Veterans who served in more than one wartime period are classified in the most recent one.

Veterans of other service periods are men and women who served in the U.S. Armed Forces at any time other than World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam era, or the Gulf War era. Although U.S. Armed Forces were engaged in several armed conflicts during other service periods, these conflicts were more limited in scope and included a smaller proportion of the Armed Forces than the selected wartime periods. Veterans who served during one of the selected wartime periods and during another period are classified in the wartime period.

Veteran status is obtained from responses to the question, "Did you ever serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?"

Period of service identifies when a veteran served in the Armed Forces, but not the location of their service. It is obtained from answers to the question asked of veterans, "When did you serve on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces?"

The following service periods are identified:

Gulf War era II — September 2001 to present

Gulf War era I — August 1990 to August 2001

Vietnam era — August 1964 to April 1975

Korean War — July 1950 to January 1955

World War II — December 1941 to December 1946

Other service periods — All other periods