

# Veterans' Racial and Ethnic Composition and Place of Birth: 2011

## American Community Survey Briefs

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### INTRODUCTION

In 2011, about 21.5 million (9.1 percent) civilians 18 years and older in the United States were veterans of past and current conflicts or have served during periods of peace. The American Community Survey (ACS) collects data on veterans in order to help government agencies, such as the Department of Veterans Affairs, to establish programs for job counseling, training, and placement of veterans. The Department of Labor uses these data to set standards to determine if government contractors fulfill contractual obligations prohibiting employment discrimination. State and local governments, in addition to private organizations, use these data to provide valuable veteran services, such as medical services and nursing home care. This brief highlights civilian veterans 18 years and older who currently reside in the United States, focusing on racial, ethnic, and regional diversity.

### RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY

When analyzing the racial composition of civilian veterans in 2011, veterans as a whole were more likely to be non-Hispanic White compared to nonveterans.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Federal surveys now give respondents the option of reporting more than one race. Therefore, two basic ways of defining a race group are possible. A group such as African American may be defined as those who reported Black or African American and no other race (the race-alone or the single-race concept) or as those who reported Black regardless of whether they also reported another race (the race-alone-or-in-combination concept). Hispanics may be any race. The U.S. Census Bureau uses a variety of approaches when analyzing race. In this report, the term "non-Hispanic White" refers to individuals who are not Hispanic or Latino and reported White and no other race (White, not Hispanic or Latino). "Black or African American" refers to individuals who may be Hispanic or Latino and reported Black or African American and no other race. "All Other Races" refers to individuals who may be Hispanic or Latino and reported Asian alone, Pacific Islander alone, American Indian alone, Alaskan Native alone, or multiple races. Race and ethnicity are defined throughout the report in terms of the following categories: (1) White, not Hispanic or Latino; (2) Black or African American; (3) All Other Races; and (4) Hispanic or Latino.

### Reproduction of the Veteran Status Question From the 2011 American Community Survey.

- 26** Has this person ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, military Reserves, or National Guard? *Active duty does not include training for the Reserves or National Guard, but DOES include activation, for example, for the Persian Gulf War.*
- Yes, now on active duty
  - Yes, on active duty during the last 12 months, but not now
  - Yes, on active duty in the past, but not during the last 12 months
  - No, training for Reserves or National Guard only → *SKIP to question 28a*
  - No, never served in the military → *SKIP to question 29a*

The degree of racial and ethnic diversity among veterans decreased with age. Although older veterans were predominately non-Hispanic White, younger veterans reflect the increasing diversity in the military today.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 shows the racial and ethnic distribution of the veteran population compared with that of the nonveteran population stratified by five age groups.

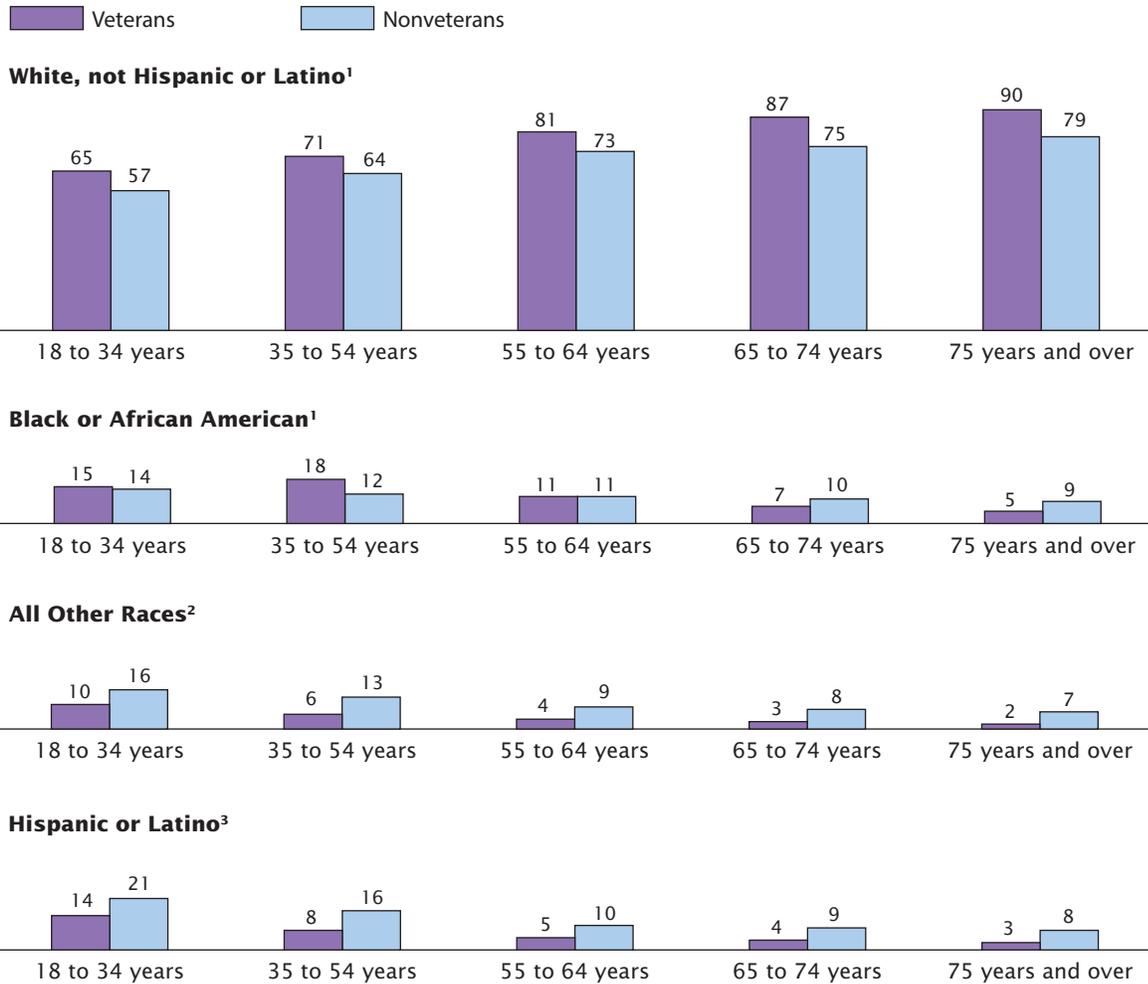
For the youngest age group, 18 to 34 years, 65.4 percent of veterans identified themselves as non-Hispanic White, compared with 56.9 percent of nonveterans. About 14.9 percent of veterans reported their race as Black or African American and 10.5 percent reported All Other Races. In addition, 13.6 percent of the veteran population between 18 and 34 years reported their ethnicity as Hispanic.<sup>3</sup> For each of the older age groups, the percentage of non-Hispanic White veterans and nonveterans increased significantly. The share of

<sup>2</sup> For more information on diversity in today's military, see <[http://prhome.defense.gov/RFM/MPP/ACCESSION%20POLICY/PopRep2010/summary/Sect\\_II.pdf](http://prhome.defense.gov/RFM/MPP/ACCESSION%20POLICY/PopRep2010/summary/Sect_II.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Adding race and Hispanic origin categories may not sum to 100 percent.

Figure 1.  
**Race and Hispanic Origin by Veteran Status and Age for the Civilian Population 18 Years and Older**

(In percent. Data based on sample. For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www/](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/))



<sup>1</sup> The ACS gives the respondent the option of choosing more than one race. These categories include individuals who chose only one race.

<sup>2</sup> Five categories make up this population: American Indian and Alaska Native alone, Asian alone, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, Some Other Race alone, and Two or More Races, where "alone" refers to respondents who chose only one race category.

<sup>3</sup> This includes individuals who reported a race other than "White." Adding race and Hispanic origin categories may not sum to 100 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

civilian veterans 75 years and older that was non-Hispanic White was 90.3 percent compared with 78.7 percent of nonveterans. For the remaining veteran population in the oldest age group, 5.1 percent reported their race as Black or African American, 2.5 percent as part of the All Other Races category, and 2.8 percent described their ethnicity as Hispanic.

### PLACE OF BIRTH

Figure 2 shows the geographical distribution of veterans born in the United States by their place of birth. In 2011, 95.5 percent of all veterans were born in 1 of the 50 states or in the District of Columbia. Just under one-third of the total U.S.-born veteran population came from six states: New

York (8.0 percent), California (6.8 percent), Pennsylvania (6.6 percent), Texas (5.7 percent), Ohio (5.2 percent), and Illinois (5.0 percent). A smaller percentage of native-born veterans were born abroad to American parents (0.9 percent), born in Puerto Rico (0.5

Figure 2.  
**Place of Birth Distribution of Veterans Born in the United States: 2011**

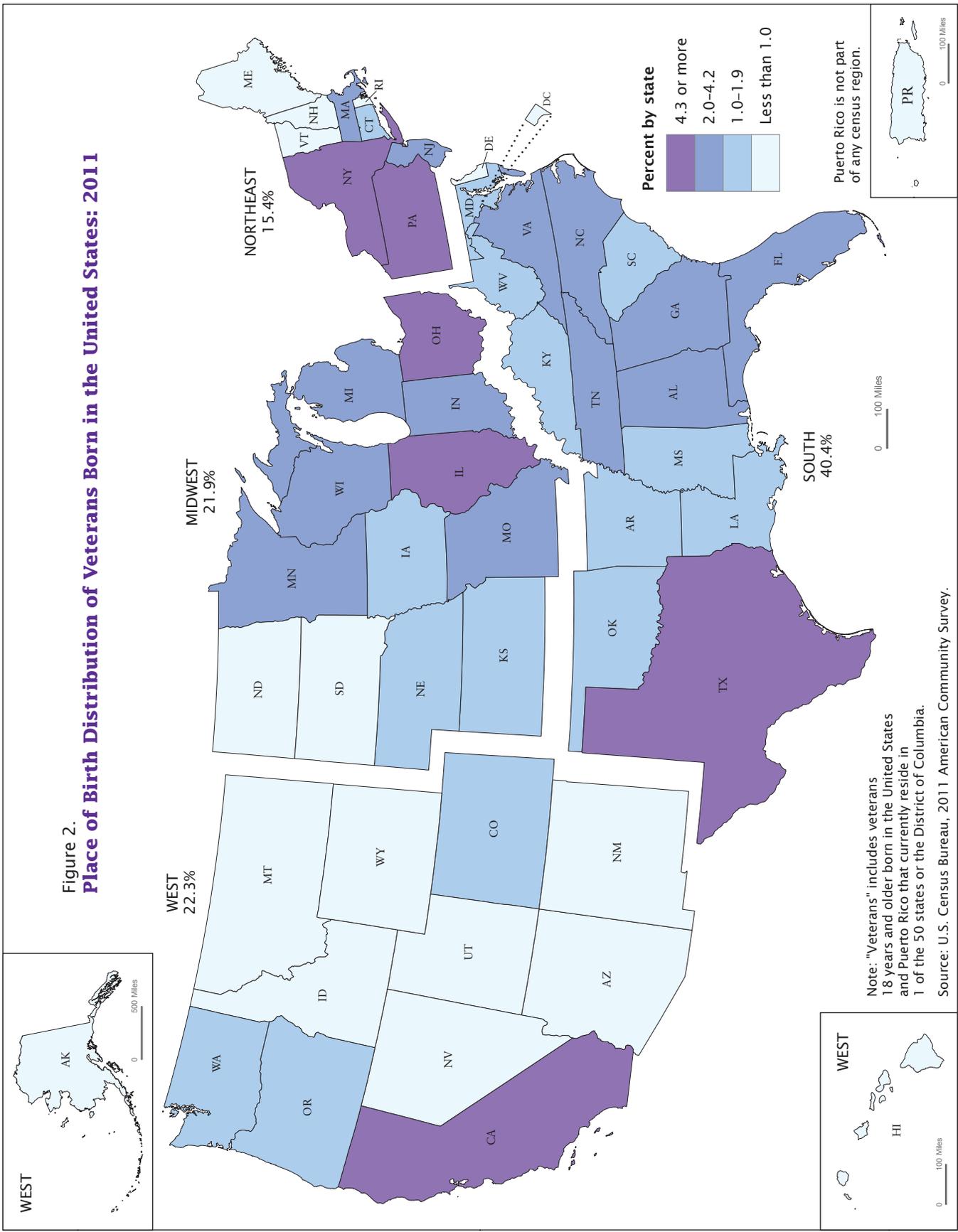


Table 1.

**Countries of Birth of Foreign-Born Veterans: 2011**(For information on confidentiality protection, sampling error, nonsampling error, and definitions, see [www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www))

Country	Naturalized and noncitizens	Margin of error <sup>1</sup>	Percent	Percent margin of error <sup>1</sup>
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>636,128</b>	<b>14,943</b>	<b>636,128</b>	<b>0.1</b>
Mexico*	82,394	5,948	13.0	0.2
Philippines*	73,638	4,548	11.6	0.2
Germany*	51,140	3,105	8.0	0.1
Canada*	36,600	3,078	5.8	0.1
Italy	20,766	2,193	3.3	0.1
Jamaica	19,871	2,642	3.1	0.1
Korea	18,873	2,805	3.0	0.1
England	17,261	2,383	2.7	0.1
China	17,044	2,236	2.7	0.1
Vietnam	16,116	2,225	2.5	0.1
Cuba	15,516	2,474	2.4	0.1
All other	266,909	8,309	42.0	0.7

\* The estimates for these countries are significantly different from the estimates for all other geographic areas at the 90 percent confidence level.

<sup>1</sup> Data are based on a sample and are subject to sampling variability. A margin of error is a measure of an estimate's variability. The larger the margin of error in relation to the size of the estimate, the less reliable the estimate. This number, when added to or subtracted from the estimate, forms the 90 percent confidence interval.

Note: Because of sampling variability, some of the estimates in this table may not be statistically different from estimates for other geographic areas both listed and not listed in the table.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey.

percent), or born in the remaining Island Areas (0.1 percent).<sup>4</sup>

There were distinct regional differences in the birthplaces of U.S.-born veterans. About 9.0 million veterans, or 40.4 percent of all veterans born in the United States, were born in the South. In comparison, 4.8 million (22.3 percent) came from the West, 4.7 million (21.9 percent) came from the Midwest, and 3.3 million (15.4 percent) came from the Northeast.

The remaining veteran population was born outside the United States and its territories without U.S. citizenship. Although the majority of individuals serving in the U.S. Armed Forces are U.S. citizens, citizenship is not a requirement to join the military. Lawful Permanent Residents (LPRs) of the United States have been eligible to enlist in the military since the

Revolutionary War.<sup>5</sup> Special provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) have made it possible for noncitizen members of the military to obtain U.S. citizenship.<sup>6</sup> In 2011, 2.9 percent of veterans were either naturalized citizens or noncitizens. Less than

<sup>5</sup> Approximately half of the Army enlistees in 1840 were immigrants, and between 1862 and 2000, more than 660,000 military veterans became citizens through naturalization. In 2005, roughly 35,000 noncitizens served in the military, and approximately 8,000 enlist each year. For more information, see Center for Naval Analyses: Non-Citizens in Today's Military: Final Report on the Internet at <<http://cna.org/sites/default/files/research/D0011092.A2.pdf>>.

<sup>6</sup> If the service occurred during peacetime, members qualify if they: (1) Served honorably in the U.S. Armed Forces for at least 1 year, (2) obtained lawful permanent resident status, and (3) filed an application while still in the service or within 6 months of separation. Noncitizens who served during periods of hostilities and whose service was honorable on or after September 11, 2001, and veterans of certain past wars and conflicts can immediately file for citizenship. Additionally, the Naturalization at Basic Training Initiative of August 2009 gives noncitizens the opportunity to naturalize when they graduate from basic training (Army and Navy). For more information, see "U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services—Naturalization through Military Service," on the Internet at <[www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=26d805a25c4c4210VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=ce613e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD](http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem.5af9bb95919f35e66f614176543f6d1a/?vgnextoid=26d805a25c4c4210VgnVCM10000082ca60aRCRD&vgnnextchannel=ce613e4d77d73210VgnVCM100000082ca60aRCRD)>.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Island Areas consist of American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

### What Is the American Community Survey?

The American Community Survey (ACS) is a nationwide survey designed to provide communities with reliable and timely demographic, social, economic, and housing data for the nation, states, congressional districts, counties, places, and other localities every year. It has an annual sample size of about 3.3 million addresses across the United States and Puerto Rico and includes both housing units and group quarters (e.g., nursing facilities and prisons). The ACS is conducted in every county throughout the nation, and every municipio in Puerto Rico, where it is called the Puerto Rico Community Survey. Beginning in 2006, ACS data for 2005 were released for geographic areas with populations of 65,000 and greater. For information on the ACS sample design and other topics, visit <[www.census.gov/acs/www](http://www.census.gov/acs/www)>.

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1.0 percent (0.4 percent) of the total veteran population remained noncitizens after their military service ended. Over half (58.5 percent) of the foreign-born veteran population came from 11 countries.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 shows these 11 countries and the number of veterans born in each. The largest share (12.9 percent) was born in Mexico, followed by the Philippines (11.6 percent), Germany (8.0 percent), and Canada (5.8 percent).

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<sup>7</sup> Foreign-born persons include all people who indicated they were either a U.S. citizen by naturalization or they were not a citizen of the United States. Persons born abroad of American parents or born in Puerto Rico or other U.S. Island Areas are not considered foreign born.

## **SOURCE AND ACCURACY**

The data presented in this report are based on the ACS sample interviewed in 2011. The estimates based on this sample approximate the actual values and represent the entire household and group quarters population. Sampling error is the difference between an estimate based on a sample and the corresponding value that would be obtained if the estimate were based on the entire population (as from a census). Measures of the sampling errors are provided in the form of margins of error for all estimates included in this report. All comparative statements in this report

have undergone statistical testing, and comparisons are significant at the 90 percent level unless otherwise noted. In addition to sampling error, nonsampling error may be introduced during any of the operations used to collect and process survey data such as editing, reviewing, or keying data from questionnaires. For more information on sampling and estimation methods, confidentiality protection, and sampling and nonsampling errors, please see the 2011 ACS Accuracy of the Data document located at [www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data\\_documentation/Accuracy/ACS\\_Accuracy\\_of\\_Data\\_2011.pdf](http://www.census.gov/acs/www/Downloads/data_documentation/Accuracy/ACS_Accuracy_of_Data_2011.pdf).