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## **Veterans in the Workforce: Building a Bridge to Success**

Veterans Day, celebrated on November 11, is a day to recognize and pay tribute to the brave men and women who have selflessly served their country in times of peace and conflict. Beyond the parades and ceremonies, the month should also be used to acknowledge and advocate for veterans in the workplace.

In this Meeting in a Box, we will explore ways companies can build a supportive environment for veterans and the resources and programs that set Fair360's Top Companies for Veterans apart. We will examine how employee resource groups (ERGs) can give veterans a platform to connect, learn and grow. This Meeting in a Box also features facts, figures and a veterans/military timeline.

# 6 Ways Employers Can Support Veterans in the Workplace

By recognizing and addressing the specific needs of veterans, organizations can harness their talents, enhance their reputation and foster a culture of inclusivity, ultimately leading to a stronger and more successful workforce. Here are six ways employers can support veterans in the workplace:

- Foster a workplace culture that values equity and inclusivity, including veterans' unique perspectives and experiences.
- Create targeted hiring programs prioritizing veterans, including specialized recruitment efforts and partnerships with veteran job placement organizations.
- Offer resources such as career counseling, resume workshops and interview preparation to help veterans transition smoothly into civilian employment.
- Ensure your organization has policies to support employees called to active duty or have reservist obligations.
- Establish mentorship programs where veterans can receive guidance and support from experienced colleagues.
- Establish ERGs specifically for veterans where they can connect, share experiences and offer each other guidance.



# ERGs and Veterans: A Formula for Professional Fulfillment

Employee resource groups (ERGs) serve as a platform for employees to connect, network and collaborate based on shared attributes such as gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexual orientation. For veteran employees, ERGs provide a supportive community for individuals who have served in the military.

Southern Company (No. 24 on the Fair360 2023 Top 50 Companies list and No. 3 on the Top Companies for Veterans) has three veteran-specific ERGs that provide “a sense of familiarity with like-minded employees, a sense of belonging and an additional purpose within the organization,” said Chris Collier, Senior Director of Talent and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

“Our veteran-specific ERGs focus on integrating employee veterans into the company, providing encouragement, mentoring and career development workshops,” he said. “In addition, these ERGs support local and national military veteran organizations as well as their surrounding communities. Veteran employees can participate as much or as little as they like, providing flexibility in their commitment to the ERGs.”

## The Positive Outcomes of Forming ERGs for Veterans

ERGs can offer a wide range of benefits for veterans and the organizations that establish them.

### 1 Camaraderie and Peer Support

One of the most significant advantages of ERGs for veterans is the camaraderie and peer support they offer. Transitioning from military service to civilian life can be challenging, as veterans often face unique issues and uncertainties. ERGs provide a safe space for veterans to share their experiences, challenges and successes, which can be instrumental in easing this transition.

“Teamwork is ingrained in military veterans from the first day of their military service,” Collier said. “Military veterans spend their entire military careers supporting a team and relying on that team to safely complete assigned tasks. Veteran employees know that teamwork grows from a sense of shared responsibility for the betterment of the organization. Based on their unique experiences while serving in the military, veterans understand how diverse individuals can work together to accomplish a mission.”





## 2 Networking and Professional Development

ERGs create opportunities for veterans to network with their peers and build meaningful professional connections. These connections can lead to mentorship opportunities, career advice and even job referrals. Additionally, ERGs often organize events, workshops and training sessions to enhance the skills and knowledge of their members, contributing to their professional development.

## 3 Employee Engagement and Retention

Establishing ERGs demonstrates a commitment to fairness and inclusion, which can significantly improve employee engagement and retention. Employees who feel their organization values their unique backgrounds and experiences are more likely to be loyal and committed. For veterans, knowing that their employer supports them through an ERG can make them more likely to stay with the company long-term.

## 4 Enhanced Employee Well-Being

ERGs contribute to the overall well-being of veteran employees by addressing their specific needs. Whether it's offering resources for mental health support, facilitating discussions about post-military life challenges or organizing community service initiatives, ERGs help veterans feel supported in their personal and professional lives.

## 5 Recruitment and Branding

Companies with well-established ERGs for veterans often become more attractive to job seekers with military backgrounds. Veterans are more likely to consider employers who actively support their community. ERGs also positively impact a company's reputation as an inclusive and socially responsible organization, which can help attract top talent and customers.

# Serving Those Who Served: Top Companies for Veterans

Each year, in addition to Fair360's Top 50 Survey and list of Noteworthy Companies, we analyze data submitted from organizations to compile 21 specialty lists. One of which is the Top Companies for Veterans. In 2023, 16 companies made the ranking:

1. **The Boeing Company**
2. **RTX**
3. **Southern Company**
4. **Northrop Grumman**
5. **V2X**
6. **SAIC**
7. **The Hershey Company**
8. **Hilton**
9. **KPMG**
10. **KeyBank**
11. **ADP**
12. **Randstad**
13. **Humana**
14. **Cox Communications**
15. **Accenture**
16. **The Cigna Group**

Below, we highlight the top five companies on the list and the programs, policies and practices they have to support veterans and military families.

## The Boeing Company

***No. 1 on the 2023 Top Companies for Veterans list and No. 12 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.***

Veterans make up almost 15% of The Boeing Company's total workforce.

Boeing has 29 Veteran Engagement Team Chapters led by employees.

In 2022, Boeing's subcontracting with veteran-owned businesses totaled approximately \$400 million.

In September 2023, the company gave \$10 million to the George H.W. Bush Presidential Center to support programs that target veterans and military families.

Boeing partners with organizations like The Mission Continues, Adaptive Training Foundation and the National Ability Center to provide hundreds of veteran programs.

## RTX

***No. 2 on the 2023 Top Companies for Veterans list and No. 36 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.***

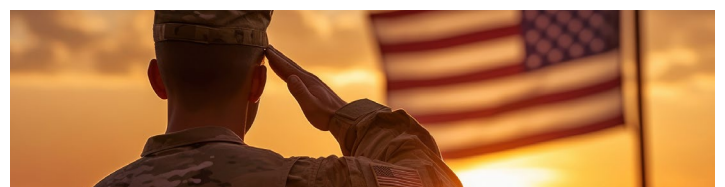
Approximately 15,000 veterans work for RTX.

The aerospace and defense company believes military veterans are "uniquely qualified" to work at RTX and provides military spouses and transitioning service members with a [Veteran Hiring Guide](#).

RTX is part of the Department of Defense's SkillBridge program. The program matches veterans with industry partners to help them transition to the workforce through industry-specific training and apprenticeships and internships during their last 180 days of service.

The company's RTX VETS ERG is an empowerment, awareness and engagement forum for service members, veterans and family supporters.

RTX supports agencies that help veterans and military families with food security, education, ongoing care, civilian careers and continued service.



## Southern Company

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### ***No. 3 on the 2023 Top Companies for Veterans list and No. 24 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.***

Southern Company has three veteran-specific ERGs and is a partner of the DoD SkillBridge program.

In 2022, Southern Company recruited veteran talent with intentional outreach at 46 military installations and partnerships with local Guard and Reserve units.

The company is focused on employing military spouses. Southern Company recognizes spouses are well-educated and highly qualified for a range of careers but face a 24% unemployment rate and a 25% wage gap compared to their civilian counterparts.

Southern Company partnered with two organizations, TradesFutures and Helmets to Hardhats, to create opportunities for underrepresented communities and veterans through \$100,000 in grants.

Reserve or Guard unit employees can continue to serve their country part-time while maintaining their full-time position with Southern Company. If these employees are called to duty, Southern Company holds their position, provides a pay differential to keep their monthly income whole and continues benefits coverage for their families.

## Northrop Grumman

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### ***No. 4 on the 2023 Top Companies for Veterans list and No. 27 on the Top 50 Companies for Diversity.***

Approximately a quarter of Northrop Grumman employees self-ID as veterans or active reservists.

The Northrop Grumman Military Internship Program helps transitioning service members gain civilian work experience through an internship during their last six months of service for up to 180 days.

Northrop Grumman is also a partner of the DoD SkillBridge program, designed to connect transitioning service members with positions at Northrop Grumman. Participants can gain real-world corporate experience with the potential for follow-on, full-time employment post-separation/retirement.

Operation IMPACT (Injured Military Pursuing Assisted Career Transition) is an award-winning program that assists severely wounded service members transitioning from the military to a private-sector career.

Northrop Grumman's [Military Transition Guide](#) provides veterans with tools to transition to civilian life, including resume preparation and interview tips.

## V2X

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### ***No. 5 on the Top Companies for Veterans.***

Forty-two percent of V2X employees and 50% of supervisors self-ID as veterans.

The Office of Federal Contract Compliance has recognized V2X for exceeding hiring benchmarks for protected veterans.

V2X's 2023 goals include 75% outreach to veterans and military.

V2X helps veterans transition to the civilian workforce through partnerships with organizations including Hiring Our Heroes, Soldier for Life Transition Assistance Program and Mt. Carmel Veterans Service Center.

V2X Veterans, the company's ERG, aims to recruit and transition veterans into the company and position them for long-term success.

# Veterans & Military Timeline

## 1775–1783

The American Revolutionary War

## 1812–1815

The War of 1812

## 1846–1848

The Mexican–American War

## 1861–1865

The American Civil War



## 1867

Emma Miller became the first woman employee in the VA's history, serving as the matron for the Central Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers in Dayton, Ohio.

## 1868

Originally known as Decoration Day, the first national celebration of Memorial Day took place May 30, 1868, at Arlington National Cemetery, where Confederate and Union soldiers were buried.

## 1877

Second Lt. Henry Flipper became the first Black person to graduate from a U.S. Military Academy.

## 1898

The Spanish–American War

## 1914–1918

World War I



## 1917

Loretta Walsh became the first woman to enlist in the Navy. She later became the first woman to become Chief Petty Officer.

## 1919

The history of Veterans Day began in 1919 when President Woodrow Wilson declared November 11 Armistice Day to remember “the heroism of those who died in the country’s service.”

## 1919

Lucy Minnigerode became the first Superintendent of Nursing and oversaw care for those afflicted by the 1918–1919 influenza pandemic and returning World War I Veterans.

## 1921

Congress established the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery.



Native Americans became eligible for full veteran benefits, including medical care.

The Veterans Bureau was established by merging the War Risk Bureau and the Federal Board for Vocational Education Rehabilitation Division.

## 1923

The first Black veteran's hospital was dedicated in Tuskegee, Alabama.

## 1924

Lt. Col. Joseph Henry Ward, M.D., became the first Black hospital director.

## 1938

Congress made November 11, Armistice Day, a federal holiday.

## 1940

Benjamin O. Davis Sr. was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first Black general in the Army.

## 1939–1945

World War II



## 1941

The Tuskegee Airmen, a group of African-American military pilots, was founded.

## 1944

Signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on June 22, 1944, the G.I. Bill provided World War II veterans with funds for college education, unemployment insurance and housing.

## 1950–1953

Korean War



## 1954

President Dwight D. Eisenhower issued the first Veterans Day Proclamation.

## 1955–1975

Vietnam War

## 1970

Anna Mae Hays, chief of the Army Nurse Corps, was promoted to brigadier general, becoming the first female general in U.S. military history.

## 1975

President Gerald R. Ford signed Public Law 94-97 (89 Stat. 479), which returned the annual observance of Veterans Day to its original date of November 11, beginning in 1978.

## 1976

West Point admitted the first female cadets.

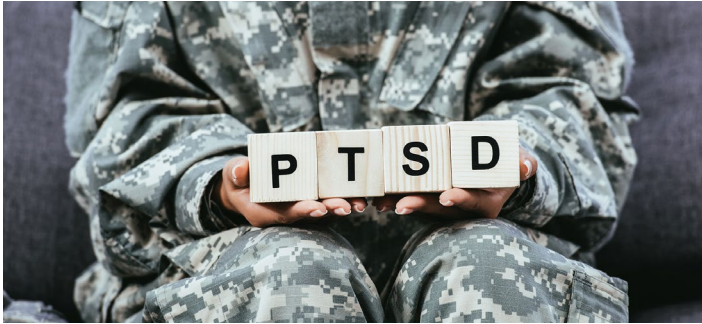
## 1979

The Army nominated Hazel Johnson to become the 16th chief of the Army Nurse Corps, along with a promotion to brigadier general. She was the first Black woman to achieve this rank.



## 1980

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was officially recognized by the American Psychiatric Association, validating the adverse effects combat soldiers had dealt with for years.

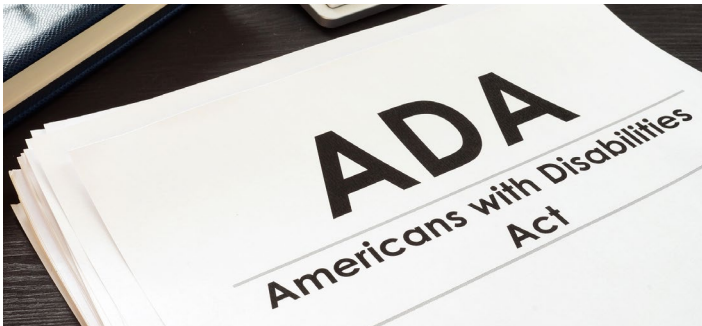


## 1990-91

Gulf War I  
(Operation Desert Shield/Operation Desert Storm)

## 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) became law. Title I of the act explicitly protects disabled veterans from discrimination.



## 1994

The military adopted the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy regarding service by LGBTQ people.

The Department of Defense prohibited women from serving in combat.

The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act required employers to put individuals back to work in their civilian jobs after returning from service.

## 2001

The September 11 attacks took place. President George W. Bush sent troops to Afghanistan and eventually Iraq in retaliation, although Al-Qaeda is not associated with either country.

## 2001-2021

War in Afghanistan

## 2003-2011

Gulf War II (Iraq War)



## 2010

Chelsea Manning, a transgender former U.S. Army intelligence analyst, released classified documents on the 9/11 attacks and Iraq War to WikiLeaks. She was charged with espionage and sentenced to prison from 2010 to 2017 but was touted by some people as an activist and whistle-blower.

## 2011

"Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ends.



The VA launched the Million Veteran Program (MVP). The MVP was one of the world's largest health and genetic information databases for future research to prevent and treat illness among veterans and all Americans.

## 2013

President Barack Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2013, significantly reforming Department of Defense sexual assault and harassment policies.

## 2014

The U.S. intervened in the Syrian Civil War.

## 2015

The U.S. military announced it was opening all combat positions to women.



## 2016

Lt. Gen. Nadja West became the first Black female lieutenant general and the highest-ranking woman to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy.

The U.S. Senate unanimously confirmed Eric Fanning as Secretary of the Army, making him the highest-ranking openly gay official at the Pentagon and the first openly gay man to lead a branch of the U.S. military.

## 2017

A judge blocked President Donald Trump's ban on transgender troops in the military.



## 2019

President Donald Trump partially withdrew U.S. troops from the Syrian-Turkish border.

## 2021

The U.S. completed a drawdown of troops in Iraq and Afghanistan.

## 2022

President Biden signed the Fiscal 2023 National Defense Authorization Act into law, allotting \$816.7 billion to the Defense Department. The act included a 4.6% pay raise for military and civilian department members.

## 2023

President Biden signed into law the Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2023. The law provides a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for veterans' disability compensation and dependency and indemnity compensation beneficiaries equal to the Social Security COLA.

President Biden signed an executive order promising to expand caregiver services for veterans.

# Veterans/Military Facts and Figures



In 2022, **18.4 million men and women were veterans**, accounting for about 7% of the civilian noninstitutional population aged 18 and over.



The unemployment rate for all veterans (2.8%) was lower than for non-veterans (3.6%). **Unemployment rates for white and Black veterans were also lower than for their non-veteran counterparts.**

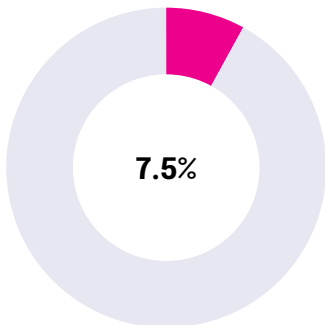


Veterans are much more likely to be men than non-veterans. **Of all veterans, about 1 in 10 were women.**

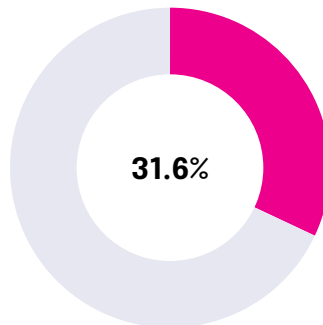


Among the **250,000 unemployed veterans**, 54% were 25 to 54, 39% were 55 and over and 7% were 18 to 24.

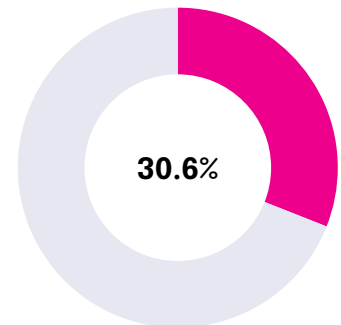
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022)



In 2022, the veteran population's poverty rate was **7.5%**, lower than the non-veteran population.



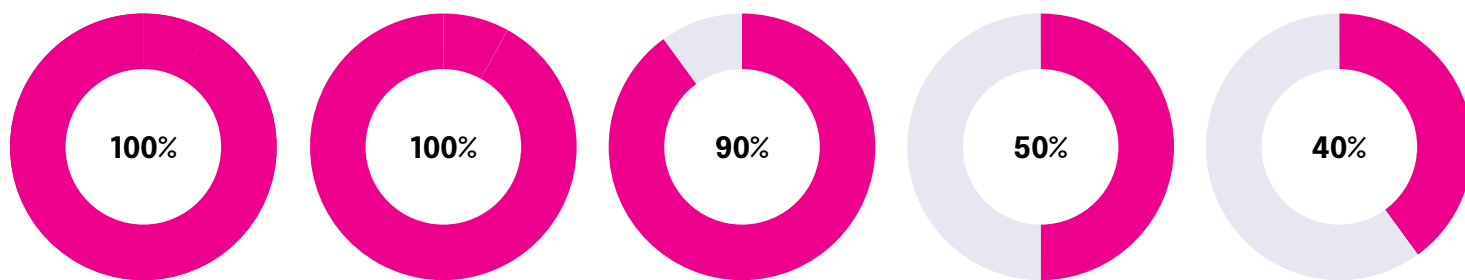
**31.6%** of veterans had at least a bachelor's degree.



**30.6%** of veterans had a disability.

Source: Census Bureau (2022)

## 5 Fair360 Facts and Figures



**100%** of Hall of Fame companies, Top 10 companies and Top Companies for Women Executives have unique recruiting practices that target veterans/military members.

**100%** of Top 10 companies have resource groups for people who identify as veterans.

**90%** of Top 10 companies have a formal internship or co-op program that targets veterans/military members.

**50%** of Hall of Fame companies require that interview panels have representation of veterans.

**40%** of Top 10 companies have a specific numerical representation target for veterans/military members in overall management.

## Employee Discussion Questions

- How can we create an environment where veterans feel comfortable sharing their military experiences and perspectives?
- What strategies can we implement to create a sense of belonging and camaraderie among veterans and non-veteran employees, fostering a supportive community within our organization?
- What role can awareness and education play in helping employees better understand veterans' challenges and how can we promote learning and awareness within the workplace?
- What role can cross-cultural training play in helping employees better understand and appreciate the backgrounds and experiences of their veteran colleagues?
- What individual commitments can each of us make to contribute to the success and well-being of our veteran colleagues?