

Special Surveillance Report Veterans Health Survey

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Department of Health and Human Services*

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Introduction

Pursuant to Nevada Revised Statutes (NRS) 417.126, the Director of the Department of Veterans Services must develop a questionnaire for veterans concerning their experience in the military and any service-connected disabilities and diseases. The Director must then submit information obtained through the questionnaire to the Division of Public and Behavioral Health of the Department of Health and Human Services on or before January 31 of each year.¹

NRS 417.126 states that the questionnaire must include questions to obtain the following data:

- a. The veteran's experience in the military, including, without limitation, the branch of the military in which the veteran served, the veteran's job while in the military, any battle, conflict, or war in which the veteran served and the locations where the veteran was stationed.
- b. Any service-connected disabilities and diseases, including, without limitation, diseases presumed to be service-connected, from which the veteran may suffer.
- c. Whether the veteran is enrolled with and receiving benefits from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs.

The questionnaire was made available on the Nevada Department of Veteran Services website, <https://veterans.nv.gov/>. A direct link to the survey is located here: [Veterans Health Survey](#).

The Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Analytics annually publishes a special surveillance report on veteran health and suicide, which goes in-depth into veteran deaths. Please visit the [Office of Analytics – Data & Reports](#) web page for more information.

Methods

The questionnaire was designed and administered using the Qualtrics online survey platform. The raw data was outputted from Qualtrics into an Excel file on February 1, 2024. The Excel file was then uploaded into SAS (Statistical Analysis System) for data analysis.

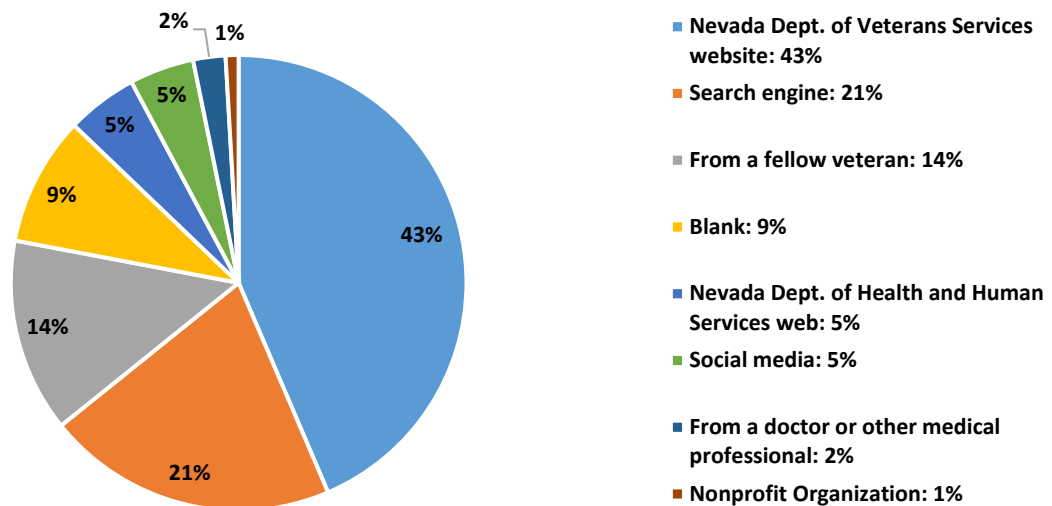
There were 218 responses to the questionnaire between February 1, 2023, and January 31, 2024. An individual may have started the survey, stopped, and re-started later. Qualtrics logged all responses, regardless of whether an individual completed the survey or not and regardless of how many times an individual took the survey before completing it. There is no way to eliminate an individual's partial survey and only keep their completed survey, so all responses were included in the analyses. Therefore, the 218 responses may consist of multiple responses from the same individual.

Findings

Of the 218 responses to the Nevada Veterans Health Survey, 101 were complete (46%) and 117 were incomplete (54%). The first year the survey was available was 2020. The 2020 survey yielded 200 responses; of those responses, 119 were complete (60%) and 81 were incomplete (40%). In 2021, the survey had 147 responses, and 74 were complete (50%). In 2022, the survey had 144 responses; 62 were complete (43%). The number of responses increased in the 2023 survey and had roughly the same rate of completed responses as previous years.

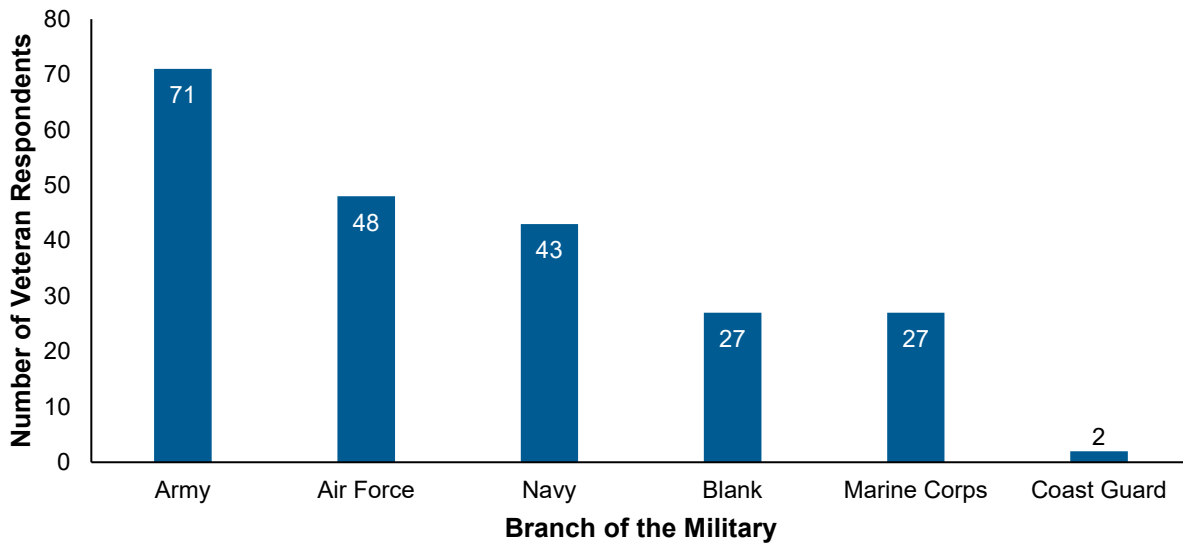
Most respondents heard about the survey directly from the Nevada Department of Veteran Services website (43%), followed by “Found on a Search Engine” (21%) [Figure 1].

Figure 1. How Did You Hear About This Survey?



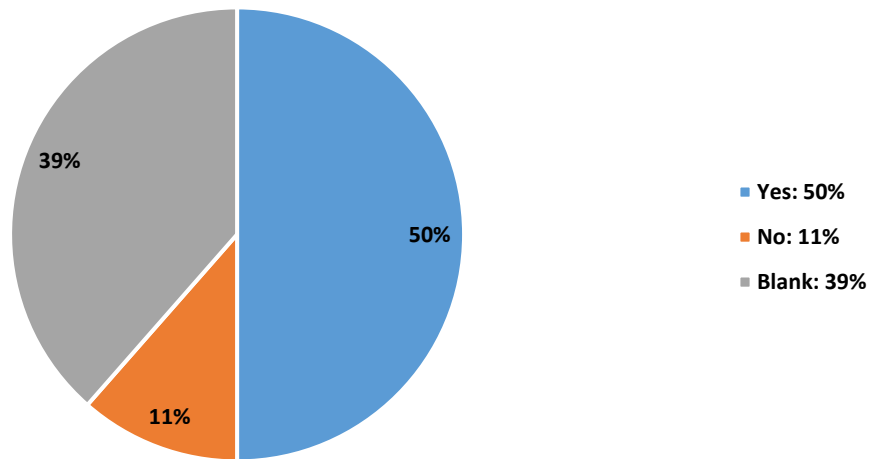
An individual may have served in more than one branch of the military; therefore, the counts represented in Figure 2 below are not mutually exclusive. About 95% of respondents served in one branch of the military, and 5% served in two branches [Figure 2].

Figure 2. In Which Branch of the Military Did You Serve?



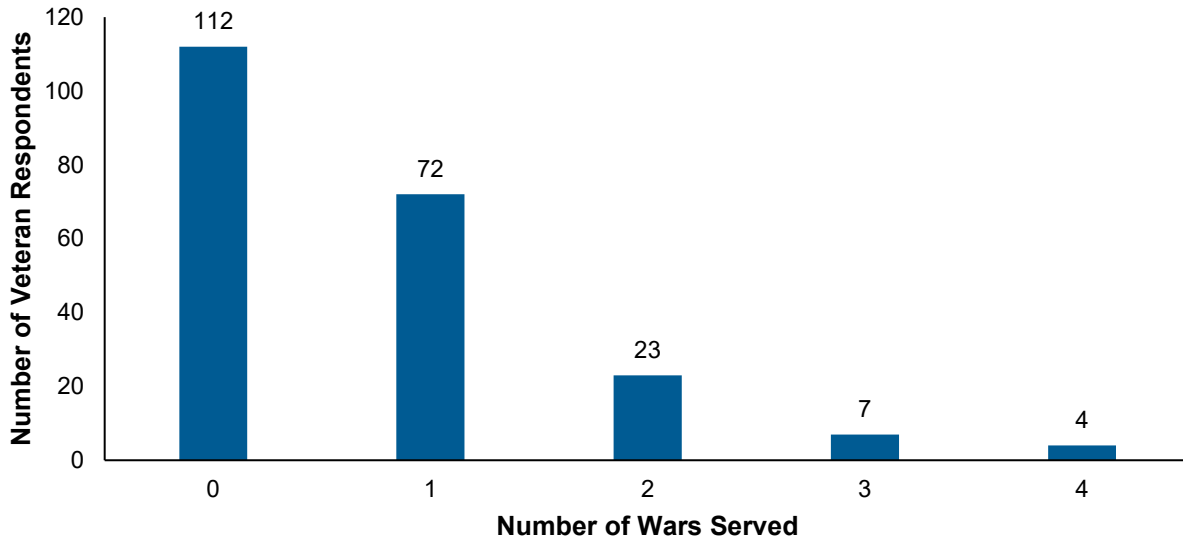
Most respondents served during a wartime era (50%) [Figure 3].

Figure 3. Did You Serve During a Wartime Era?



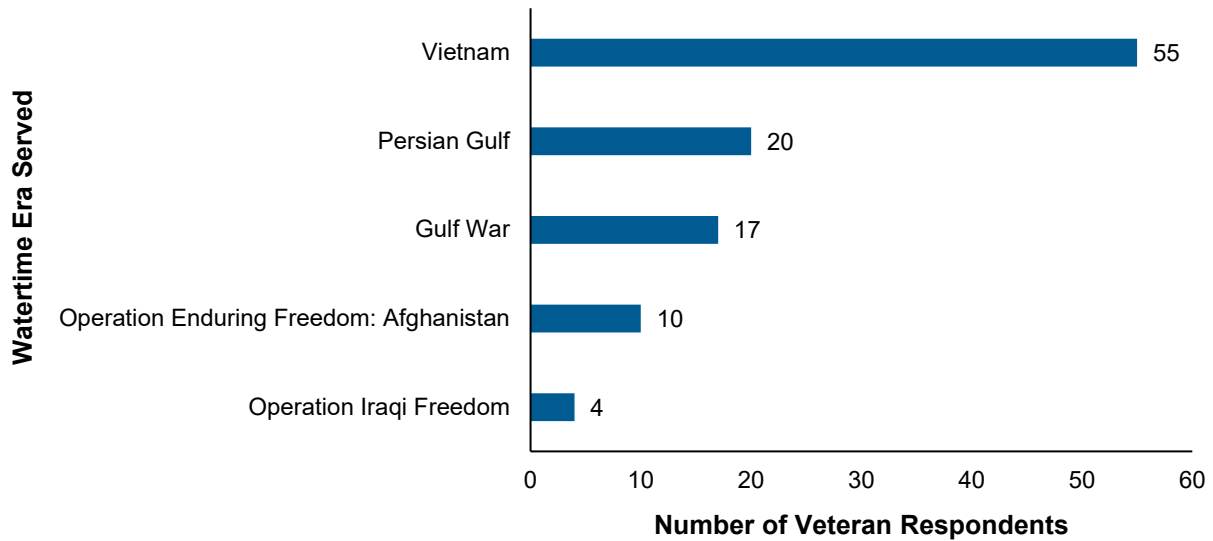
The respondents were asked to list the wartime eras served, and most had either served during zero or one wartime [Figure 4].

Figure 4. Number of Wartime Eras Served.



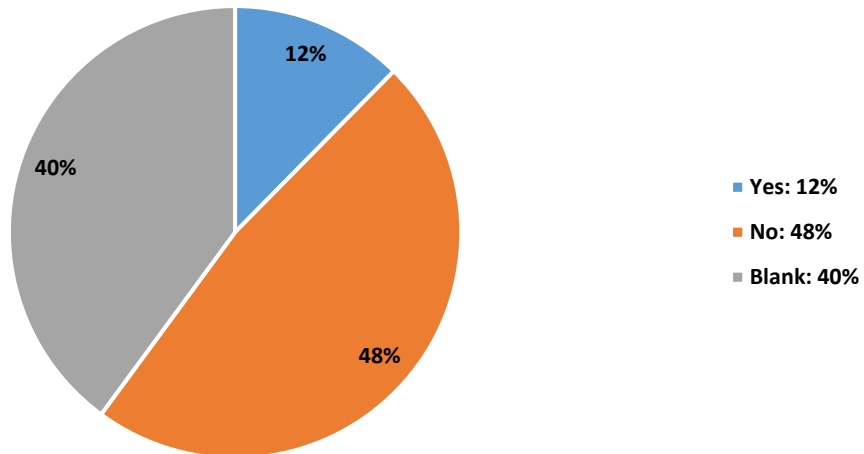
As illustrated in Figure 4, an individual may have served in more than one wartime era; therefore, the numbers reflected in Figure 5 above are not mutually exclusive. Of the wartime eras listed, most had served during the Vietnam era, followed by the Persian Gulf and Gulf War [Figure 5].

Figure 5. Wartime Era Served.



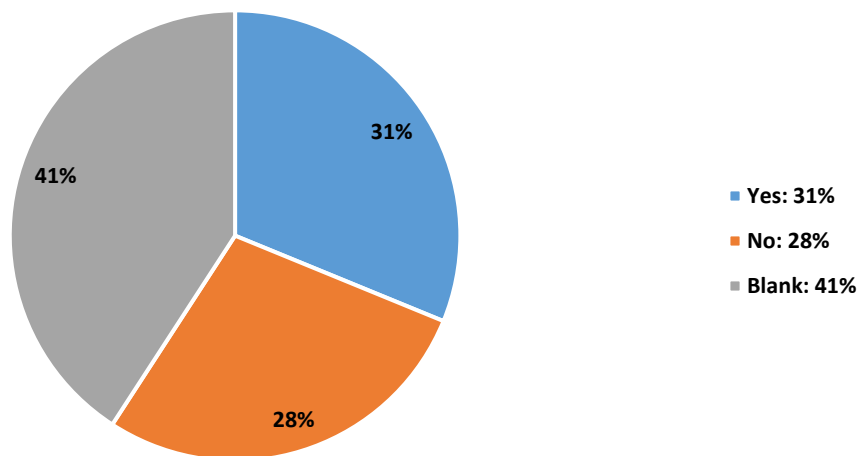
Of the veteran respondents, 12% were rewarded a combat badge, ribbon, or medal, depending on the military branch in which they served [Figure 6].

Figure 6. Were you Rewarded a Combat Action Badge/Combat Infantryman Badge (Army), Combat Action Ribbon (Navy, Marines, & Coast Guard), or Combat Action Medal (Air Force)?



Approximately 31% of respondents answered that they had been diagnosed with a service-connected disability or disease, including presumptive conditions. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), presumptive service connections are disabilities and conditions that the VA presumes were caused by military service, due to the “unique circumstances of a specific Veteran’s military service”² [Figure 7].

Figure 7. Have You Been Diagnosed with a Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Presumptive Condition(s)?



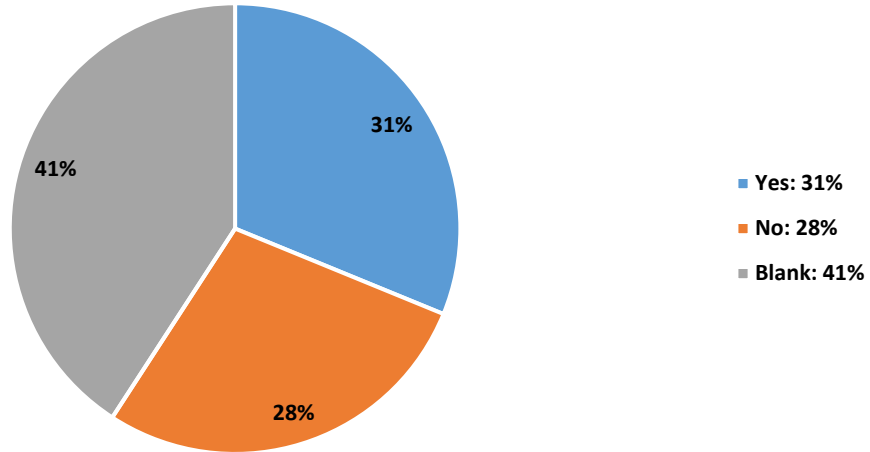
Respondents were asked to list their most recurring service-connected disability or disease from a dropdown list. Although 68% of responses were blank, the reported responses ranged from headaches to different types of cancers [Table 1].

Table 1. List of Service-Connected Disabilities or Diseases.

| Service-Connected Disability or Disease | Count |
|--|-------|
| Sleep disturbances | 10 |
| Anxiety states | 7 |
| Diabetes mellitus (Type 2) | 7 |
| Peripheral Neuropathy (Early-Onset) | 5 |
| Joint pain | 4 |
| Signs or symptoms involving the skin | 4 |
| Atherosclerotic heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease and their complications | 3 |
| Gulf War Syndrome | 3 |
| Neurological signs or respiratory system | 3 |
| Post-traumatic osteoarthritis | 3 |
| Prostate cancer | 3 |
| Cancer of the brain | 2 |
| Cardiovascular signs or symptoms | 2 |
| Lung cancer | 2 |
| Abnormal weight loss and menstrual disorders | 1 |
| Aplastic anemia | 1 |
| Chronic Fatigue Syndrome | 1 |
| Dysthymic disorder | 1 |
| Fatigue | 1 |
| Fibromyalgia | 1 |
| Functional gastrointestinal disorders | 1 |
| Irritable bowel syndrome | 1 |
| Neurobehavioral effects | 1 |
| Organic residuals of frostbite | 1 |
| Psychosis | 1 |

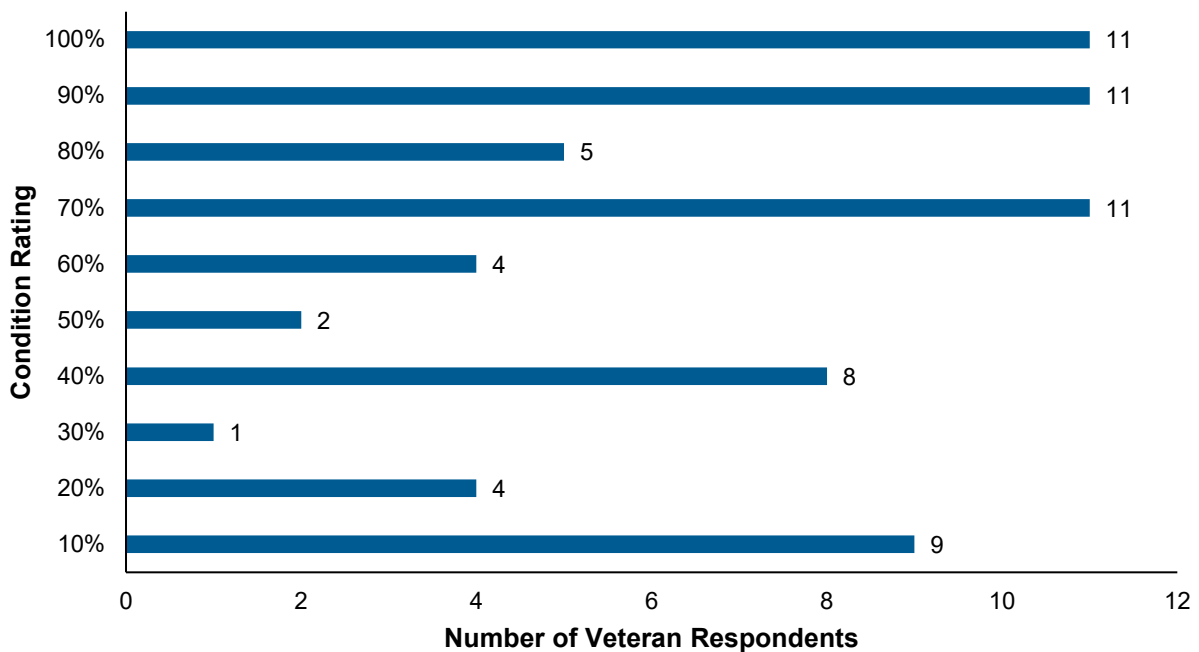
Thirty-one percent of respondents responded “yes” to having been rated by the VA for a service-connected disability or disease, including any presumptive condition(s) [Figure 8].

Figure 8. Have You Been Rated by the VA For a Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Any Presumptive Condition(s)?



According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the VA assigns a veteran a disability rating “based on the severity of your service-connected condition”.² The assigned rating is then used to determine disability compensation and other VA benefit eligibility. The rating is expressed as a percent. Of the 66 responses to this specific survey question, 17% of respondents (11) were rated at 100% [Figure 9].

Figure 9. What Is the Rating of the Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Any Presumptive Condition(s)?



Of the respondents, 34% reported receiving monthly monetary benefits from the VA, 41% receive health care from the VA, and 19% have a disability claim in process [Table 2].

Table 2. VA Benefits Received.

| Survey Question | Yes | No | Blank |
|--|-----|-----|-------|
| Are you receiving any monthly monetary benefits from the VA? | 34% | 24% | 41% |
| Do you receive health care from the VA? | 41% | 18% | 41% |
| Do you have a disability claim in process? | 19% | 39% | 43% |

The sum of the counts will not be equal to the total due to rounding.

Conclusion

This report was based on responses from the annual Veterans Health Survey. As noted, this survey had 218 respondents, which is about 0.1% of the veteran population. Furthermore, only 101 survey responses (46%) were completed. According to the United States Census Bureau, there were 203,118 veterans living in Nevada in 2022.³ With a Nevada veteran population of 203,118, a confidence level of 95%, and a margin of error of 5 (plus or minus accounting for miscalculations, represented as a percent; 5 is standard), the survey sample size should be at least 384 respondents to draw meaningful conclusions.

The survey will be available annually going forward. In future years, the survey will conceivably be completed by more veterans and therefore the results will become more meaningful over time. However, this report does highlight the diverse service-connected diseases and disabilities with which veterans have been diagnosed, including three forms of cancer, sleep disturbances, and anxiety. The responses were from veterans who served in five different wartime eras, and across four branches of the military and coast guard.

Data Sources

¹Nevada Legislature website <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/>

²U.S Department of Veterans Affairs website <https://www.va.gov/>

³United States Census Bureau website <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/NV>

³Nevada Department of Veterans Services website <https://veterans.nv.gov/>