

Special Surveillance Report Veterans Health Survey

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Contents

Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	3
Methods	3
Findings	4
Figure 1. How Did You Hear About This Survey?	4
Figure 2. In Which Branch of the Military Did You Serve?	5
Figure 3. Did You Serve During a Wartime Era?	5
Figure 4. Number of Wartime Eras Served.	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)?	7
Figure 7. Have You Been Diagnosed with a Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Presumptive Condition(s)?	7
Table 1. List of Service-Connected Disabilities or Diseases.	8
Figure 8. Have You Been Rated by the VA For a Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Any Presumptive Condition(s)?	9
Figure 9. What Is the Rating of the Service-Connected Disability or Disease, Including Any Presumptive Condition(s)?	9
Table 2. VA Benefits Received.	10
Conclusion	10
Data Sources	10

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Introduction

Nevada Revised Statutes 417.126 states that the Director of the Department of Veterans Services “prescribe a questionnaire for veterans concerning their experience in the military and any service-connected disabilities and diseases.” Nevada Revised Statutes 439.249 states that the Director “annually submits the 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

Section 5(1) 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, 2023. The Excel file was then uploaded into SAS (Statistical Analysis System) for data analysis.

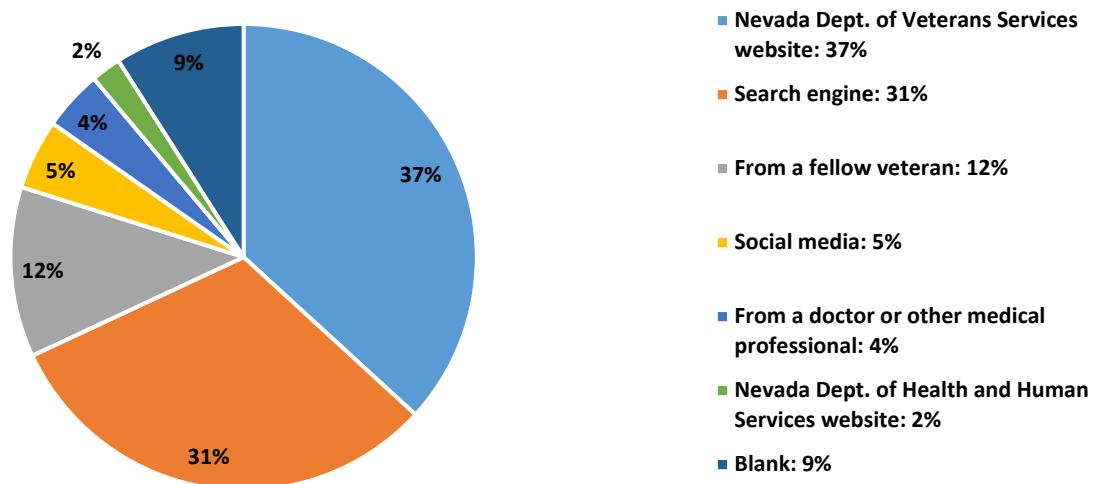
There were 144 responses to the questionnaire between February 1, 2022, and January 31, 2023. An individual may have started the survey, stopped, and re-started later. Qualtrics logged all responses, regardless of whether an individual completed the survey or not and regardless of how many times an individual took the survey before completing it. There is no way to eliminate an individual’s partial surveys and only keep their completed survey, so all responses were included in the analyses. Therefore, the 144 responses may consist of multiple responses from the same individual.

Findings

Of the 144 responses to the Nevada Veteran Health Survey, 62 were complete (43%) and 82 were incomplete (57%). 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 the 2021 survey had 147 responses, 74 were complete (50%). This year 2022 there were fewer surveys completed.

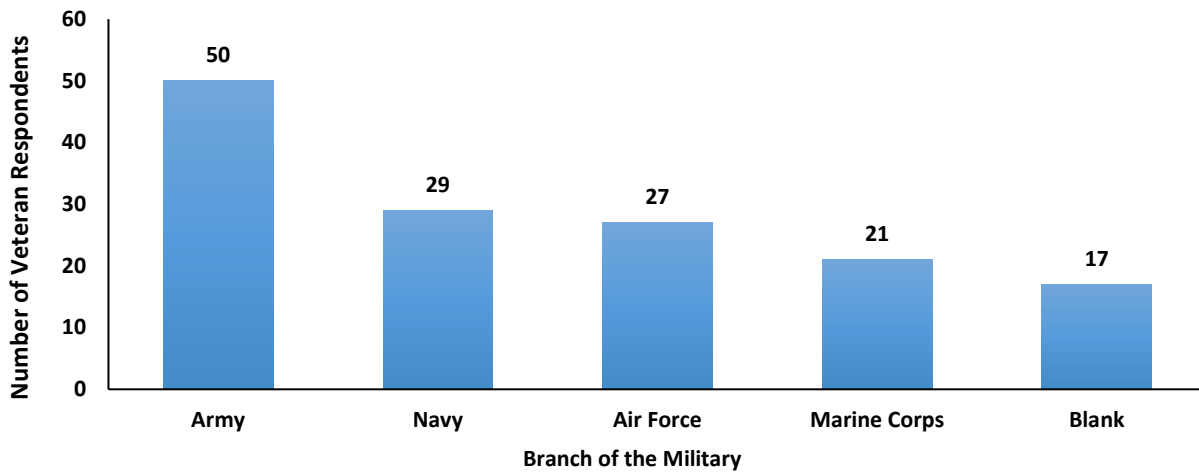
Most respondents heard about the survey directly from the Nevada Department of Veteran Services website (37%), followed by “Found on a Search Engine” (31%) [Figure 1].

Figure 1. How Did You Hear About This Survey?



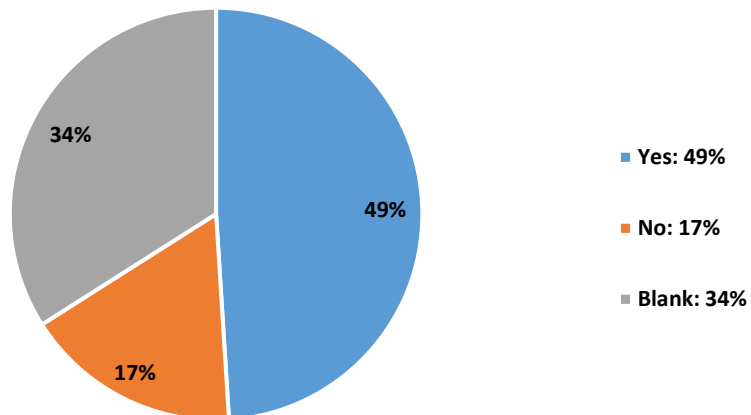
An individual may have served in more than one branch of the military, therefore the counts represented in Figure 2 below are not mutually exclusive. About 98% of respondents served in one branch of the military, and 2% served in two branches [Figure 2].

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



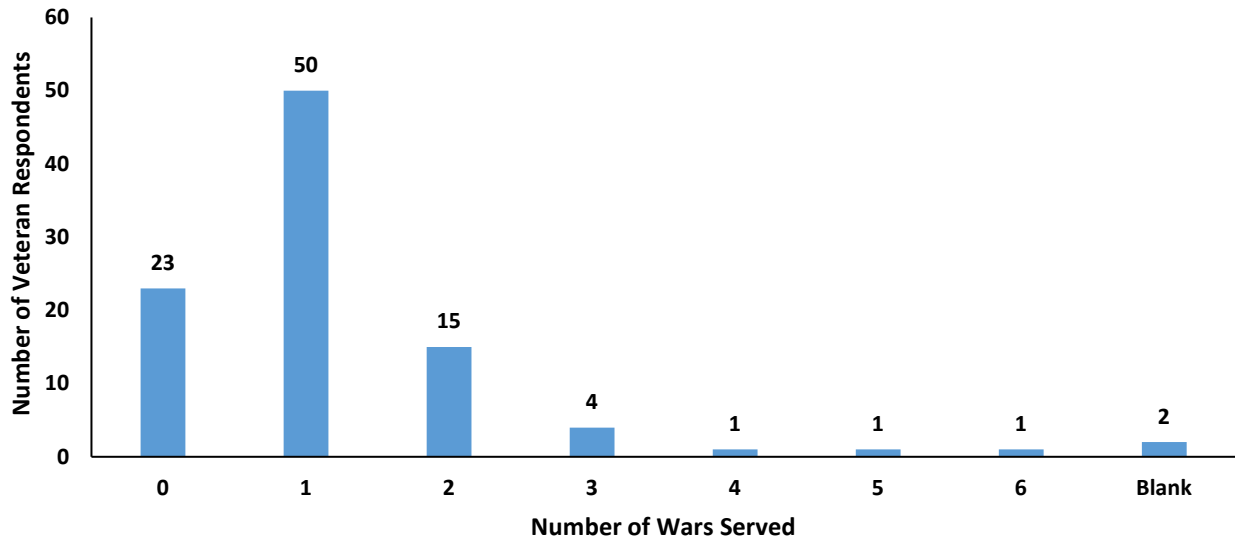
Most respondents had served during a wartime era (49%) [Figure 3].

Figure 3. Did You Serve During a Wartime Era?



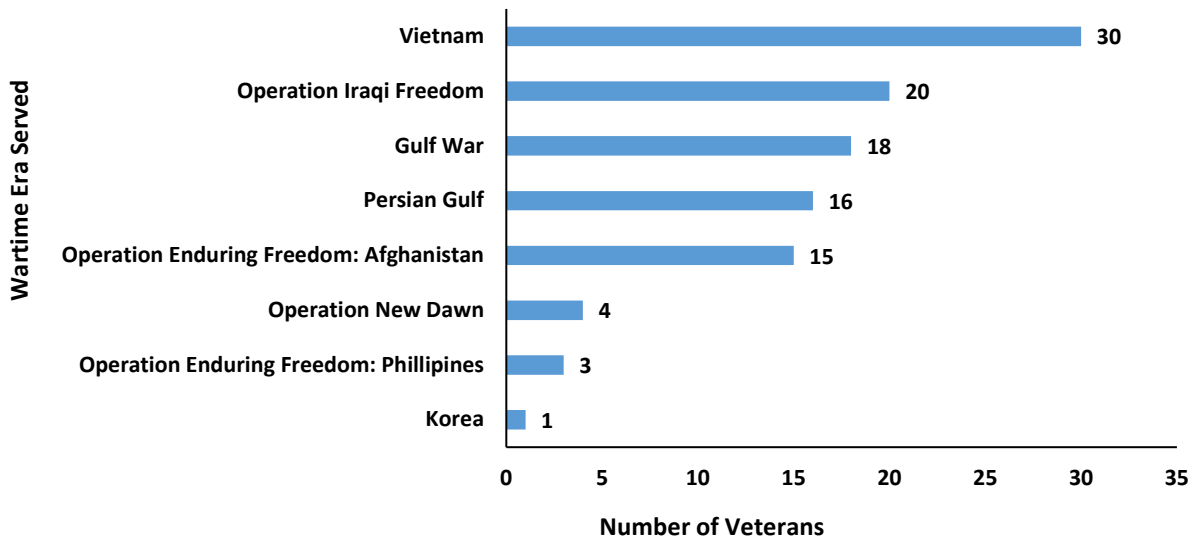
The respondents were asked to list the wartime eras served, and most had either served during zero or one wartime. One respondent listed six wartime eras served [Figure 4].

Figure 4. Number of Wartime Eras Served.



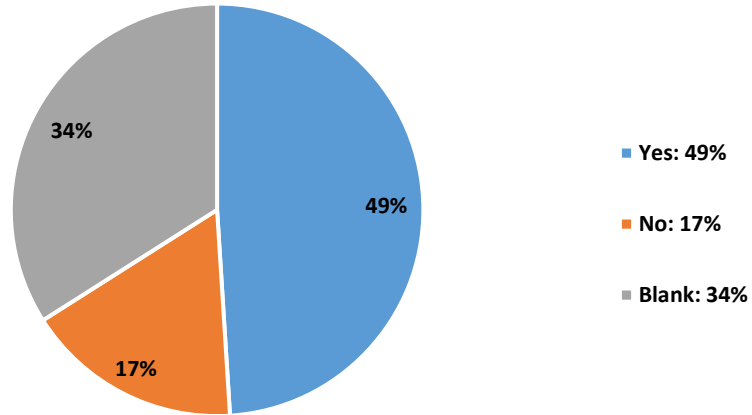
As illustrated in Figure 4, an individual may have served in more than one wartime era; therefore, the numbers reflected in Figure 5 above are not mutually exclusive. Of the wartime eras listed, most had served during the Vietnam era, followed by Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Gulf War [Figure 5].

Figure 5. Wartime Era Served.



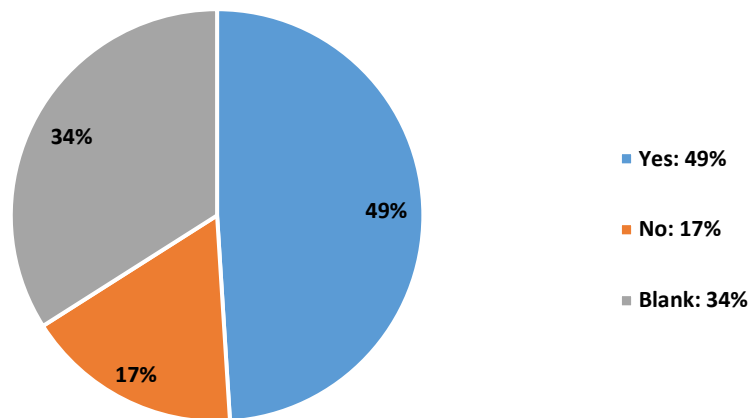
About 13% of the veteran respondents were rewarded a combat badge, ribbon, or medal, depending on the military branch in which they served [Figure 6].

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 49% 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)?



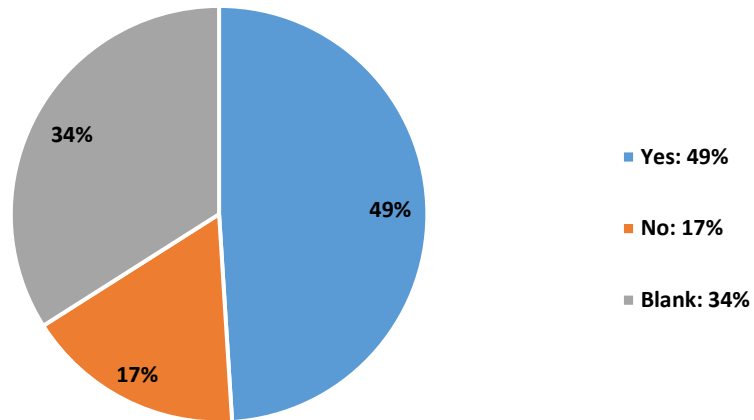
Respondents were asked to list their most recurring service-connected disability or disease from a dropdown list. Although 58% of responses were blank, the reported responses ranged from headaches to different types of cancers [Table 1].

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

Service-Connected Disability or Disease	Count
Sleep disturbances	9
Anxiety states	8
Joint pain	5
Prostate cancer	5
Atherosclerotic heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease and their complications	3
Irritable bowel syndrome	3
Lung cancer	3
Diabetes mellitus (Type 2)	2
Gastrointestinal signs or symptoms	2
Kidney cancer	2
Multiple myeloma	2
Peripheral neuropathy (early-onset)	2
Psychosis	2
AL amyloidosis	1
Abnormal weight loss and menstrual disorders	1
Bladder cancer	1
Dysthymic disorder	1
Female infertility	1
Fibromyalgia	1
Gulf War syndrome	1
Neurobehavioral effects	1
Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma	1
Parkinson's disease	1
Signs or symptoms involving the skin	1
Soft-tissue sarcoma	1

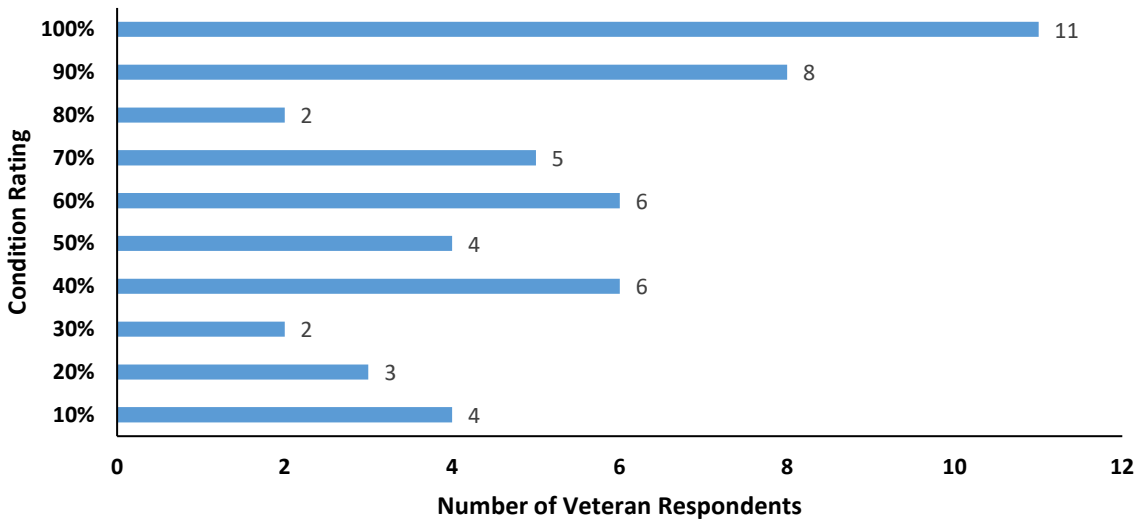
Nearly half of the respondents responded “yes” to having been rated by the VA for a service-connected disability or disease, including any presumptive condition(s) [Figure 8].

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 51 responses to this specific survey question, 22% 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, 38% reported receiving monthly monetary benefits from the VA, 47% receive health care from the VA, and 20% 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?	38%	24%	38%
Do you receive health care from the VA?	47%	15%	38%
Do you have a disability claim in process?	20%	40%	40%

Conclusion

This report was based on responses from the third annual Veterans Health Survey. As noted, this survey had 144 respondents, which is about 0.1% of the veteran population. Furthermore, only 62 survey responses (43%) were complete. According to the United States Census Bureau, there were 202,503 veterans living in Nevada in 2021.³ With a Nevada veteran population of 202,503, 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 385 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 four forms of cancer, sleep disturbances, anxiety, and various musculoskeletal pains. The responses were from veterans who served in eight different wartime eras, were stationed in nine different countries, and across four branches of the military.

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/>