



# WHAT WE NEED

*Identifying Needs and Challenges of Veterans in the Houston Metropolitan Statistical Area*



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# 1.0

## Executive Summary

In late 2016, months after the release of two veteran needs assessments - one a statewide look at Texas and the other with a focus on the Dallas-Fort Worth region - the Harris County Veteran Service Office contacted TexVet and the Military Affairs section of the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE with a desire to conduct a needs assessment of Veterans in the Houston metro area. The intent was to conduct a needs survey of veterans and veteran family members within the Houston metropolitan statistical area, inventory the resources available to those individuals, and consider ideas for the future support of the region's veteran community.

This assessment includes demographic information from the United States Census Bureau, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and Army OneSource reports. This product also contains information from 2-1-1 Texas records, an online needs assessment survey of veterans and their respective family members, in-person focus groups of veterans and veteran-serving organizations, and anonymized and limited data from service-connected disability compensation claims.

This report considers veterans in the following groups:

1. Post-9/11 era veterans
2. Pre-9/11 era veterans
3. Women veterans
4. Veteran-serving organizations

The areas with the greatest level of need among veterans include:

1. Mental health services
2. Assistance with finding employment or jobs
3. Short-term financial aid for housing and utilities

The areas with the greatest level of need among family members of veterans include:

1. Legal assistance
2. Transportation
3. Living expenses other than food or housing

Areas with the greatest opportunity for increased effectiveness of service include:

1. Outreach to and awareness among veterans and their family members about services and benefits available to the veteran community.
2. Knowledgeable navigators who provide guidance within and between social service delivery systems.
3. Coordinated transportation for veterans to and from veteran-serving organizations.
4. Childcare options for family members of veterans.

# Introduction & Background

TexVet staff conducted work for this report from October through December 2016; the Harris County Veteran Service Office (HCVSO) and Military Affairs section of the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE also provided input. Combined Arms and its affiliated veteran-serving organizations supported those endeavors.

The purpose of this report was to conduct a needs survey of veterans and veteran family members within the Houston metropolitan statistical area (Houston MSA), inventory the resources available to those individuals, and consider ideas for the future support of the region's veteran community. This study considers all of the counties - Austin, Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller - that comprise the Houston MSA. Harris County is home to the city of Houston. Houston is the most populous city in Texas and the fourth most populous city in the United States.

There are appreciable differences between and within counties of the Houston MSA. Those differences include population density, median household income, availability of public transportation, and resources devoted to social services. Relative to other counties within the Houston MSA, Harris County contains a plethora of services available to veterans and family members of veterans. Houston MSA residents who live outside of Harris County are sometimes unable to access the aforementioned services in Harris County because of certain obstacles, e.g., availability of transportation to or from veteran-serving organizations and eligibility requirements that include the zip code of one's primary residence.

TexVet staff conducted a literature review of several veteran needs assessments. Two veteran needs assessments - one produced by Texas State University's Center for Sociological Inquiry (Texas State CSI) and the other conducted by the Center for a New American Security (CNAS) - published in 2016 were particularly relevant. TexVet aggregated and reviewed questions from the needs surveys employed by authors of the aforementioned needs assessments. Some of those questions or variations of them were included in a needs assessment survey created for this report; that survey was targeted at and available to veterans and family members of veterans who reside within the Houston MSA.

TexVet facilitated four focus groups: Pre-9/11 veterans, Post-9/11 veterans, women veterans, and veteran-serving organizations in the Houston MSA. Focus groups met at the Combined Arms facility in Houston. This report includes input from those focus groups.

This product also includes information from the United States Census Bureau, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Army OneSource reports, and 2-1-1 Texas records.

# 3.0

## Demographics

According to the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates for 2013, the Houston MSA is home to approximately 282,000 veterans. That is almost one-fifth of the state's veteran population. If the Houston MSA were itself a state, it would rank 29th in terms of veteran population. Thus, addressing the needs of veterans and leveraging that group's strengths is important to the region's continued economic and civic development.

Texas is currently second to California in terms of veteran population. The size of the nation's veteran population is projected to reach its apex in 2020. From that point forward, Texas is expected to be the state with the largest number of veterans. A majority of those veterans will be more than 50 years of age. As a general trend, the median age of the veteran population will continue to increase.

*\*Unless otherwise noted, information included within this section is from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates for 2013. The five-year estimates list every county in Texas, unlike the three- and one-year estimates.*

### Veteran Population Size

#### Actual Populations

<u>Era of Service</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Gulf War (9/2001 or later)	2,826,221	287,082	47,379
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001)	3,617,933	350,577	58,148
Vietnam era veterans	7,133,597	528,485	94,900
Korean War veterans	2,114,860	131,338	22,730
World War II veterans	1,358,115	78,014	13,981

#### As a % of Total Population by Area

<u>Era of Service</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Gulf War (9/2001 or later) veterans	14.1%	18.6%	13.9%
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001) veterans	18.0%	22.8%	19.1%
Vietnam era veterans	35.5%	34.3%	36.1%
Korean War veterans	10.5%	8.5%	8.5%
World War II veterans	6.8%	5.1%	5.2%

*Vietnam era veterans are the single largest population by conflict. However, if all conflicts from 1990-present are grouped together, that population is larger.*

# 3.0 Demographics

## Veteran Population by Sex

Sex	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
Male Veterans	18,529,804	1,394,014	258,210
Female Veterans	1,578,528	145,641	24,301

Sex	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
Male Veterans	92.1%	90.5%	92.0%
Female Veterans	7.9%	9.5%	8.0%

*Distribution of biological sexes of veterans in the Houston MSA is similar to national and state rates. Distribution of gender identifications was not available.*

## Veteran Population by Age Range

Age Range	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
75 years+	4,597,274	282,249	49,632
65-74 years	4,760,174	330,406	63,068
55-64 years	4,137,171	315,677	55,356
35-54 years	4,903,001	428,442	79,897
18-34 years	1,710,712	182,881	34,558

Age Range	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
%75 years+	22.9%	18.3%	18.8%
%65-74 years	23.7%	21.5%	24.2%
%55-64 years	20.6%	20.5%	20.1%
%35-54 years	24.4%	27.8%	26.0%
%18-34 years	8.5%	11.9%	11.0%

*63% of veterans within the Houston MSA are 55 or older. As the overall size of the military continues to decrease, the veteran population will continue to age. Elder care for veterans in the state and the Houston MSA will become increasingly important.*

## Veteran vs. Civilian Income Comparison

Income	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
Veteran Median	\$37,469	\$40,226	\$42,947
Male Veteran Median	\$37,989	\$40,818	\$44,485
Female Veteran Median	\$31,965	\$34,360	\$33,139
Civilian Median	\$27,306	\$26,778	\$31,107

*Veterans within the Houston MSA earn more than do civilians. Female veterans earn less than their male counterparts.*

# 3.0

## Demographics

### Veteran Employment Status

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates, 2013

Veteran Status	Population	Percentage
Employed	135,952	74%
Unemployed	10,145	6%
Not In Labor Force	37,072	20%

*As in the rest of the nation, veterans in the Houston MSA tend to have lower rates of unemployment over time. Transitioning veterans have higher rates of unemployment for about the first two years after their separation from the military.*

### Veteran Educational Attainment – Actual Populations

For age 25 and Older

	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
Non-High School Graduates	1,408,403	95,803	16,862
High School Graduate	5,754,154	359,545	64,215
Some College or Associate's Degree	7,299,510	611,556	108,598
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	5,348,520	440,431	88,103

### Veteran & Civilian Education Attainment by Total Population %

For age 25 and Older

	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
<u>Non-High School Graduates</u>			
Civilian	13%	18%	17%
Veteran	7%	6%	7%
<u>High School Graduate</u>			
Civilian	28%	25%	27%
Veteran	29%	24%	26%
<u>Some College or Associates Degree</u>			
Civilian	29%	29%	30%
Veteran	37%	41%	40%
<u>Bachelor's Degree or Higher</u>			
Civilian	29.7%	27.5%	26%
Veteran	27.0%	29.2%	27%

*Veterans are better educated than their civilian counterparts.*

*More than 16,000 veterans in the Houston MSA have yet to obtain a high school equivalent degree. More than 80,000 might benefit from certificates or upper-level education.*

## Demographics

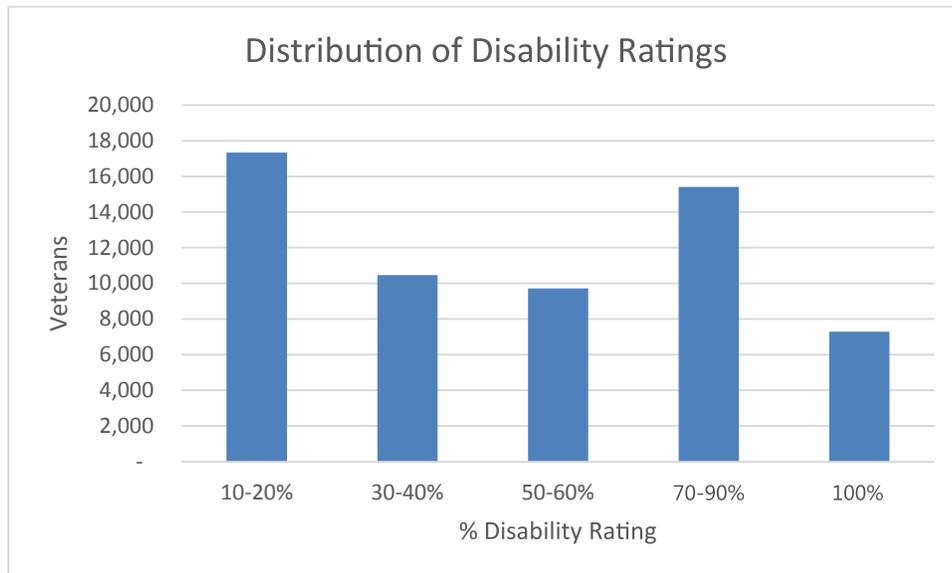
### Veteran & Civilian Poverty and Disability

Poverty Status	United States	Texas	Houston MSA
% of Veterans in Poverty	7%	7%	6%
% of Civilians in Poverty	14%	15%	12%
Population of Impoverished Veterans	1,401,837	102,727	19,110
Veteran vs. Civilian Disability Status			
% of Veterans with Disability	28%	28%	29%
% of Civilians with Disability	15%	15%	15%
Est. of Disabled Veteran Population	5,463,294	414,471	70,175

*Fewer veterans within the Houston MSA fall below the poverty line than their civilian counterparts. The difference might be due to the service connected disability payments, military retirement, and/or pensions some veterans receive.*

### VA Service-Connected Disability Compensation

Almost 60,000, or 20 percent, of veterans in the Houston MSA receive some amount of compensation or pension from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. More than half of those individuals receive service-connected disability compensation at the rate of at least 30 percent; thus, they might be eligible to receive additional benefits, e.g., property tax exemptions, discounted driver's licenses, and discounted vehicle registration fees.



Source: Compensation and Pension by County 2016, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

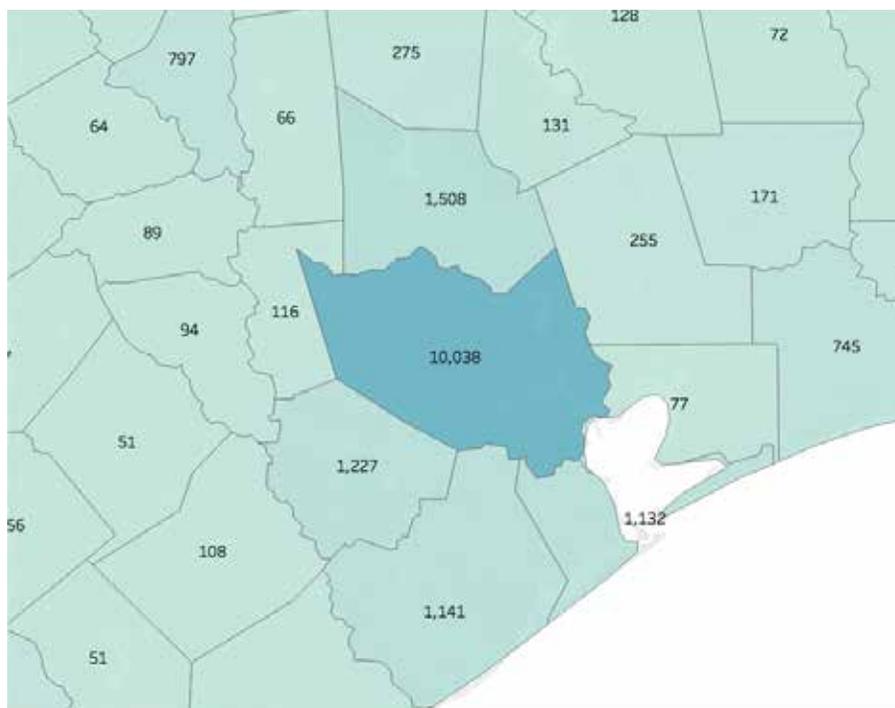
# 3.0

## Demographics

### Deployments

Although there is not a major active duty military base in this area, Texas National Guard and Reserve deployments have affected thousands of troops since 2001. The graphic below includes the number of residents within each county who deployed as members of the armed forces from 2001 until 2015.

#### Troops Deployed 2001-2015



Source: Department of Defense Manpower Data Center (2017), Army OneSource

According to the most recent Defense Manpower Management Center, there are over 2,000 troops on duty in this area and more than 10,000 family members of troops that have deployed. Other highlights of this data (tables in Appendix B):

- More than 2,500 of the veterans and troops in the area can be expected to have PTSD
- More than 3,000 veterans and troops can be expected to have traumatic brain injuries (TBI)
- Between 2001 and 2015, nearly 600 veterans and troops reported having suicidal ideation

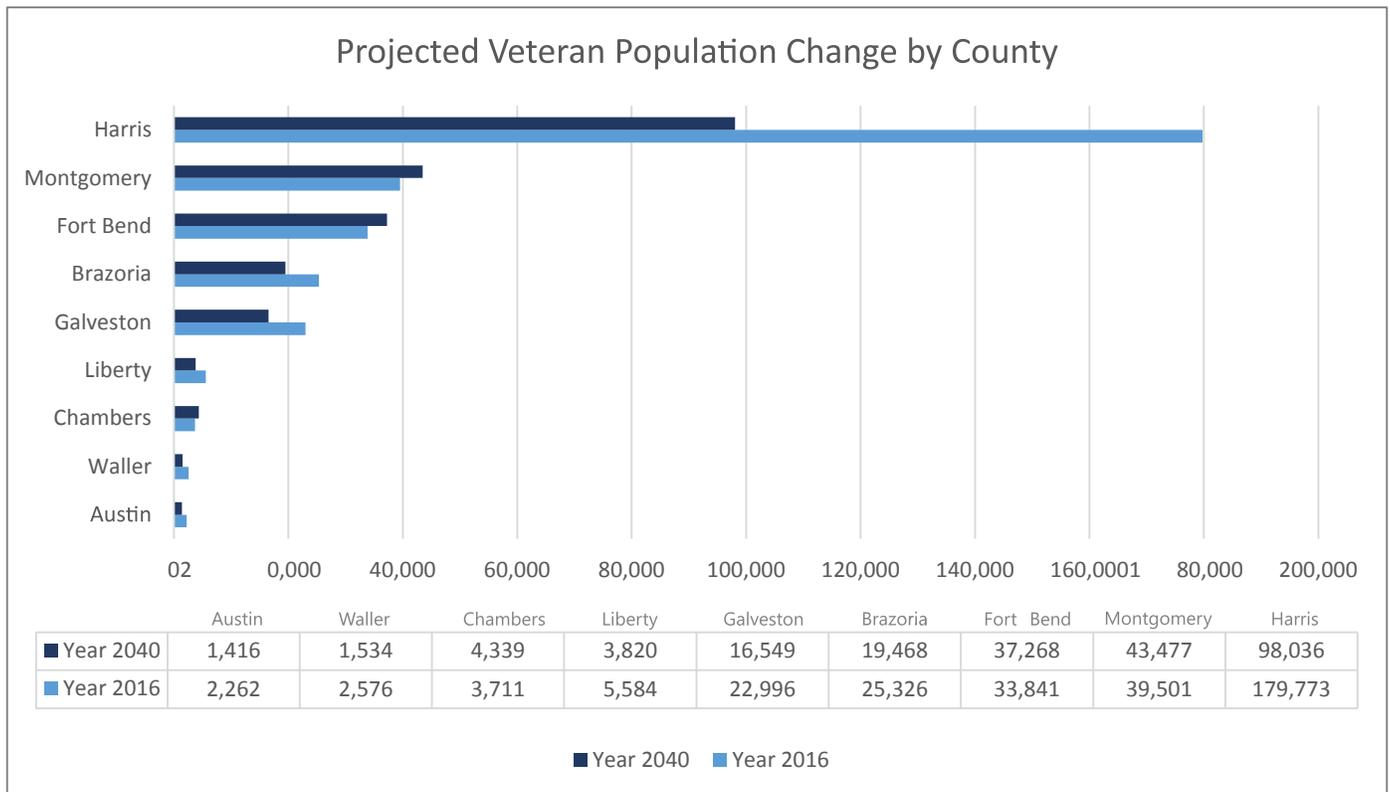
# 3.0 Demographics

## Overall Changes in Population Size

As previously mentioned, the nation's overall veteran population is projected to decrease during the next few decades. The same is true for the Houston MSA's veteran population. That change is, in part, attributed to the aging population of veterans from the World War II, Korea, and Vietnam eras. Additionally, the number of personnel within the nation's armed forces has decreased since World War II.

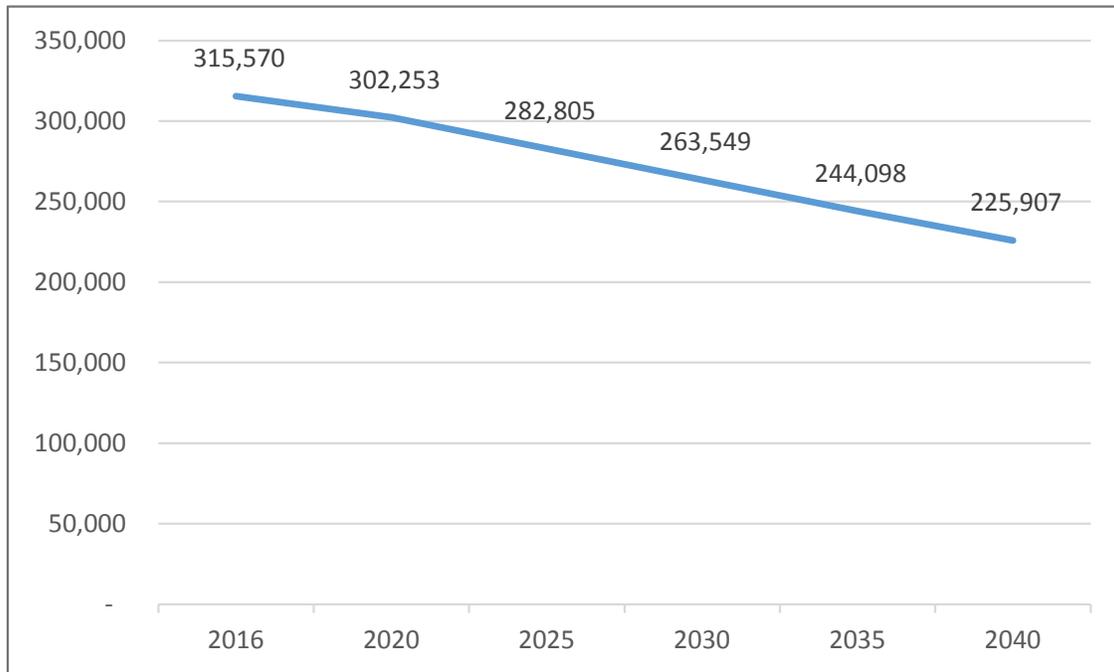
### Projected Veteran Population Changes from 2016-2040

*In the Houston Metropolitan Service Area*



# 3.0 Demographics

## Harris Metropolitan Service Area Glideslope



Source: VetPop 2014, County-Level Veteran Population by State 2013-2043, National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

### Summary

Veteran populations in the Harris County MSA parallel the populations at the state and national level. For the most part, they are better educated and have more access to money, healthcare, and other benefits than their civilian counterparts. The veteran population is rapidly aging and more veterans may turn to federal benefits and healthcare as that occurs.

There is opportunity to strengthen the civic and economic development of the Houston MSA by engaging the significant number of new veterans returning to this area and in improving the education of the existing population.

# Survey & Other Data

TexVet created a needs assessment survey for veterans and their families who reside in the Houston MSA. The survey's questions included some of those used by the Texas State CSI in its 2016 statewide veteran needs assessment. The survey created for this report consisted of roughly 25 questions, was available at a unique address on the internet, and included a tag that prevented search engines from indexing it. TexVet, the HCVSO, United Way of Greater Houston, Lone Star Veterans Association, and Easter Seals' Military Initiative distributed the survey via word-of-mouth, social media, email, and their respective websites. Respondents were anonymous and self-selecting.

This survey included questions about the same categories of services identified by the Texas State CSI in its statewide needs assessment.

The 10 types of services:

- Mental Health Services
- Food
- Transportation
- Child Care
- Mentoring
- Legal Assistance
- Assistance with finding employment or jobs
- Living Expenses
- Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities
- Home improvement or modifications due to disability

Respondents indicated the level of need for each type of service by selecting from one of four choices:

- no need
- low need
- moderate need
- high need

Three hundred and eighty-nine respondents began the survey. Three hundred and thirty of those individuals completed the survey; that number includes 307 veterans and 23 family members of veterans. The respondents represented veterans from various counties, eras of service, branches of service, and components of service. Length of service and combat experience also differ among veterans who completed the survey.

# 4.0

## Survey & Other Data

Tables 4.1 & 4.2 include the types and levels of need among veterans. Tables 4.3 & 4.4 include the types and levels of need among family members of veterans.

**Table 4.1 - Percentage of Level of Need by Type of Need Among Veterans**

A Veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces #	Question	No Need	Low Need	Moderate Need	High Need	Total
1	Mental Health Services (including addiction & substance abuse)	43.97% 135	14.66% 45	24.43% 75	16.94% 52	307
2	Food	61.89% 190	17.59% 54	11.40% 35	9.12% 28	307
3	Transportation (including assistance with transportation expenses)	65.80% 202	13.68% 42	12.05% 37	8.47% 26	307
4	Child Care	75.57% 232	8.47% 26	7.82% 24	8.14% 25	307
5	Child Mentoring	79.80% 245	8.79% 27	5.86% 18	5.54% 17	307
6	Legal Assistance	57.00% 175	21.82% 67	11.07% 34	10.10% 31	307
7	Assistance with finding employment or jobs	52.77% 162	13.68% 42	12.38% 38	21.17% 65	307
8	Living expenses other than housing or food	55.37% 170	15.64% 48	16.61% 51	12.38% 38	307
9	Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities	55.37% 170	14.01% 43	13.03% 40	17.59% 54	307
10	Home improvement or modifications	71.99% 221	11.40% 35	9.12% 28	7.49% 23	307

**Table 4.2 Mean Level of Need by Type of Need Among Veterans**

Field	Mean Level of Need
Mental Health Services (including addiction and substance abuse)	2.14
Assistance with finding employment or jobs	2.02
Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities	1.93
Living expenses other than housing or food	1.86
Legal Assistance	1.74
Food	1.68
Transportation (including assistance with transportation expenses)	1.63
Home improvement or modifications due to disability	1.52
Child Care	1.49
Child Mentoring	1.37

[No Need = 1, Low Need = 2, Moderate Need = 3, High Need = 4]  
 [Number of Veteran Respondents = 307]

Based on responses provided by veterans who completed the survey, the highest level of need exists for the following services:

1. Mental health services
2. Assistance with finding employment or jobs
3. Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities

# Survey & Other Data

**Table 4.3 - Percentage of Level of Need by Type of Need Among Family Members of Veterans**

Family Member - Spouse, Surviving Spouse, Adult Child, Minor Child/Ward - of a Veteran		No Need		Low Need		Moderate Need		High Need		Total
#	Question									
1	Mental Health Services (including addiction and substance abuse)	56.52%	13	13.04%	3	21.74%	5	8.70%	2	23
2	Food	65.22%	15	13.04%	3	4.35%	1	17.39%	4	23
3	Transportation (including assistance with transportation expenses)	56.52%	13	4.35%	1	17.39%	4	21.74%	5	23
4	Child Care	82.61%	19	0.00%	0	8.70%	2	8.70%	2	23
5	Child Mentoring	78.26%	18	0.00%	0	13.04%	3	8.70%	2	23
6	Legal Assistance	39.13%	9	21.74%	5	17.39%	4	21.74%	5	23
7	Assistance with finding employment or jobs	60.87%	14	4.35%	1	13.04%	3	21.74%	5	23
8	Living expenses other than housing or food	56.52%	13	8.70%	2	13.04%	3	21.74%	5	23
9	Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities	52.17%	12	21.74%	5	13.04%	3	13.04%	3	23
10	Home improvement or modifications	69.57%	16	4.35%	1	13.04%	3	13.04%	3	23

**Table 4.3 Mean Level of Need by Type of Need Among Family Members of Veterans**

Field	Mean Level of Need
Legal Assistance	2.22
Transportation (including assistance with transportation expenses)	2.04
Living expenses other than housing or food	2.00
Assistance with finding employment or jobs	1.96
Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities	1.87
Mental Health Services (including addiction and substance abuse)	1.83
Food	1.74
Home improvement or modifications due to disability	1.70
Child Mentoring	1.52
Child Care	1.43

[No Need = 1, Low Need = 2, Moderate Need = 3, High Need = 4]  
 [Number of Family Members of Veteran Respondents = 23]

Based on responses provided by veterans who completed the survey, the highest level of need exists for the following services:

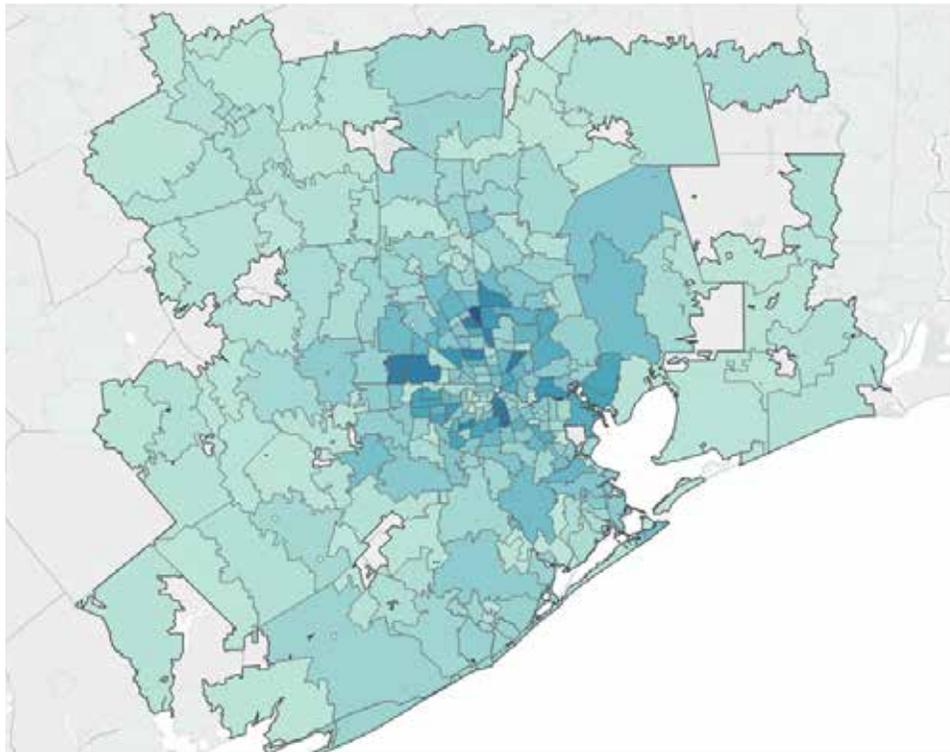
1. Legal assistance
2. Transportation
3. Living expenses other than food or housing

# 4.0

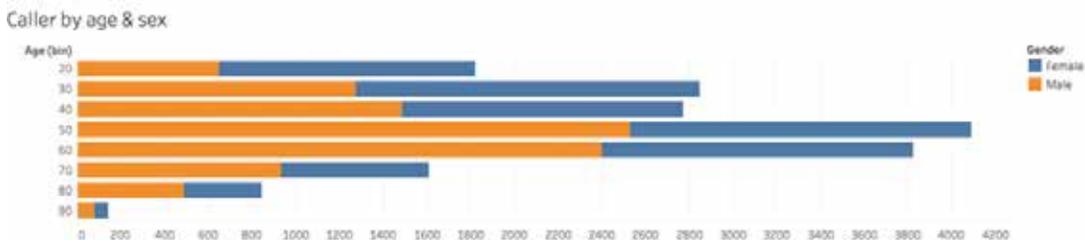
## Survey & Other Data

### 2-1-1 Texas Call Data

Data was analyzed from over 13,000 calls received by the Gulf Coast 2-1-1 system and recorded by the 2-1-1 Texas/United Way HELPLINE in the 2016 calendar year. Each of those calls was identified as related to a military member, veteran, and/or family member thereof.



2-1-1 Callers with military affiliation by zip code (darker = more calls) Calendar Year 2016



Callers to Gulf Coast 2-1-1 by decade of age, colored by sex (Calendar Year 2016).

Women veterans account for about eight percent of the overall veteran population. Yet, they account for almost half of of the calls for assistance that Gulf Coast 2-1-1 receives.

# Survey & Other Data

Among callers that identified as military or veteran, the top five needs were:

<u>Need Name (group)</u>	<u>Active Duty</u>	<u>Veteran</u>
Utility Assistance	40	2926
Housing payment assistance	34	2533
Benefits counseling and screening	12	1696
Food Assistance	20	1367
Transportation	7	446

## Inventory of Veteran-Serving Organizations in the Houston MSA

This section includes an overview of the analysis performed on the veteran-serving organizations that operate within the Houston MSA. The most comprehensive database of those entities exists on TexVet.org - TexVet's website. TexVet is a state-funded online information and referral service for the state's veteran community. Its database includes federal, state, local, private, and nonprofit veteran-serving organizations that operate within Texas. There are almost 150 such entities on the TexVet.org website that serve the Houston MSA.

### Individual organizations within 50 miles of 77002

*Includes state-wide resources, multiple programs within same organization*

<u>Program Type</u>	<u>Number of Programs</u>
VA Claims	24
Mental Health Counseling	47
Peer Mentoring	34
Emergency Funds	35
Food	20
Homelessness	36
Transportation	15
Legal	16
Jobs	15
Women Vets	18

*Number exceeds total of organizations as many organizations offer multiple services.*

The TexVet website organizes information per the 2-1-1 Los Angeles County Taxonomy of Human Services; it is the standard used by the Alliance of Information and Referral Services. Categories within that taxonomy are analogous to the types of need included in the veteran needs assessment survey conducted for this report. Given that consideration, the Houston MSA contains veteran-serving organizations that provide benefits and services that span the spectrum of need. However, not all those entities have the capacity to service all of those in need. Other constraints also sometimes disallow those in need from receiving assistance, e.g., eligibility requirements that include zip code of primary residence and lack of transportation options to or from a veteran-serving organization.

# 4.0

## Survey & Other Data

### Focus Groups

Four focus groups were held, concentrating on various populations. These focus groups were convened in December of 2016 for conversations that lasted as long as two hours. Mostly directed by the participants, they were groups of a) women veterans, b) veteran-serving organizations, c) younger veterans, and d) older veterans.

A consistent need expressed by participants in each of the aforementioned focus groups: awarenesses of and access to knowledgeable navigators. A Knowledgeable Navigator is defined as those who provides guidance within and between social service delivery systems. After an initial engagement with a knowledgeable navigator, veterans reported an increased willingness to consider and access resources available to the veteran community.

### Women Veterans

An important takeaway from the women veterans focus group: these veterans had difficulty making their concerns known. It is important that leaders of veteran-serving organizations believe and acknowledge the feedback they receive from women veterans. Feedback from women veterans must be acknowledged as valid before adequate steps to address their needs may proceed.

Accessing healthcare at certain VA healthcare facilities is sometimes a challenge for women, because of the behavior and attitudes of some of those who provide and receive care within those facilities. Women entering some facilities may be presented with a gauntlet of older male veterans that causes them discomfort. While parking, some women report being challenged by guards who assume the women in question are not veterans.

Women are more likely to have children and to be single parents. Childcare was an expressed concern. Some of the women veterans discussed placing childcare specialists who are military veterans at Houston's Neighborhood Centers.

Women veterans mentioned that knowledgeable navigators - individuals who provide guidance within and between social service delivery systems - are important. In one case, a woman veteran had been dissuaded from accessing all her benefits for some time because a friend provided inaccurate information. This was a theme throughout the groups.

# Survey & Other Data

## Veteran-Serving Organizations

The group was limited to a few organizations. Needs were identified by this group that did not arise in other groups: financial literacy, dental treatment, affordable family housing, and the development of emotional intelligence.

Areas that better matched the other groups were transportation, marketing, and outreach. A coordinator to connect veterans to transportation and utility assistance, especially for those in need who reside outside of Harris County, was proposed. The resources to allow organizations to follow up and not just address immediate emergencies was identified as a challenge for these groups.

## Pre-9/11 Era Veterans

Each member of the pre-9/11 era veteran focus group was a male Vietnam combat veteran. Several of them hold or have held leadership positions within veteran-serving organizations. Most of the group's members agreed that veteran-serving organizations need to do a better job of outreach. Veterans in the group acknowledged the challenges of conducting outreach to veterans who served during the World War II, Korea, and Vietnam eras. Yet, there was no consensus on what the most effective form that outreach should take. Instead, group members agreed that peer referrals are the most powerful tool for convincing veterans or their family members to engage with veteran-serving organizations.

This group of veterans surfaced the transportation issue discussed later in the document. They also discussed using one-stop or peer networking centers as important points of contact. Whether at a peer center, social event, or other activity, the ability to make in-person contact with others was listed as important. Veterans in this group expressed a need for knowledgeable navigators who are available via phone.

## Post-9/11 Era Veterans

Post-9/11 era veterans attended a focus group and were seeded in the women and VSO groups. Knowledgeable navigators, short-term financial aid, and mental healthcare were recognized as types of need. Group members endorsed the Military Veteran Peer Network and Combined Arms as effective veteran-serving organizations.

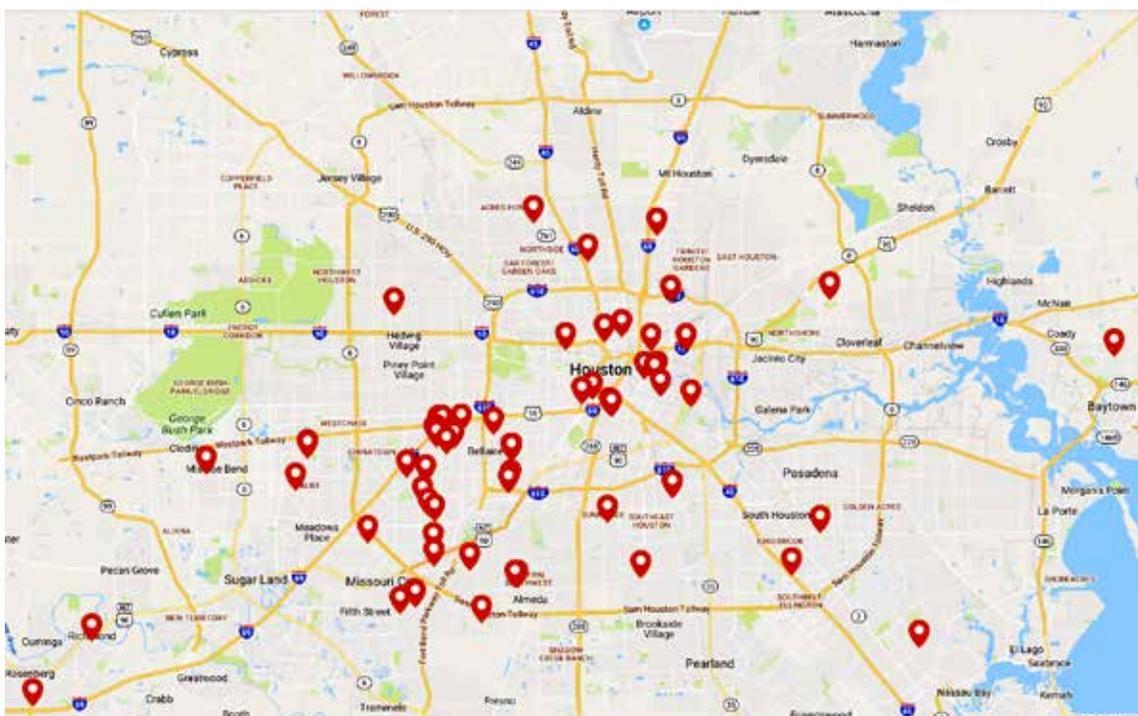
# 5.0

## Areas of Opportunity

There is potential to leverage two available resources - Neighborhood Centers and public transportation systems - to better serve the veteran population within the Houston MSA. An emphasis on those resources has the potential to multiply the positive impact of veteran-serving organizations that already exist within the region.

Neighborhood Centers is a non-profit organization in Houston that provides a place for people to meet and receive a variety of social services. Adding veteran services or a veteran who serves as a child-care monitor may be a way of connecting with women veterans in their neighborhoods.

### Neighborhood Center locations



*(www.neighborhood-centers.org)*

# Areas of Opportunity

## Transportation

The Houston MSA has a plethora of transportation options for veterans and others; the region would benefit by employing or designating a central authority to coordinate those transportation systems. The Veteran Transportation Office could report to the county, city, or a non-profit funded organization. A single web address, phone number, and shared database would improve the ability of veterans to access the many services available. Influential people and organizations in the area want to identify Houston as a contiguous metropolitan area; one transportation office would support that goal and help veterans throughout the Houston MSA.

The City of Houston's public transportation systems offers discounts to some veterans, e.g., veterans who receive service-connected disability compensation of at least 50 percent from the VA may ride the city's buses for free. According to the Texas Department of Motor Vehicles, there are more than 25,000 Disabled Veteran license plates in use by residents of the Houston MSA. Various organizations are responsible for the region's transportation and road systems. Thus, different rules and regulations determine whether those organizations may offer discounts to any group. The VA does not offer the Veteran Transportation Service in the area. The Southeast Texas Regional Healthcare District cooperates with the Texas Connector project to document routes for people to use when traveling to or from healthcare facilities. Many veteran-serving organizations offer some type of assistance with transportation, e.g., shuttle bus service and pre-paid metro cards. Most of these have varying ranges, purposes, hours, and even qualifications for riders. This can lead to frustration and confusion among veterans and their family members. A regional transportation coordinator would be able to record usage rates and gaps in service. That would benefit veterans, veteran-serving organizations, and other social service providers.

# 6.0

## Conclusion

The veteran population within the Houston area is as diverse as its needs. The Houston MSA includes many different veteran-serving organizations. The region faces an ongoing challenge of facilitating interaction between those two groups.

This assessment includes demographic information from the United States Census Bureau, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs, and Army OneSource reports. This product also contains information from 2-1-1 Texas records, an online needs assessment survey of veterans and their respective family members, in-person focus groups of veterans and veteran-serving organizations, and anonymized and limited data from service-connected disability compensation claims.

Within this report, two sources of information - the online needs assessment survey of veterans and their respective family members, and in-person focus groups of veterans and veteran-serving organizations - served primarily to help determine both the types and levels of needs among veterans and veteran family members within the Houston MSA. Likewise, topics discussed within the focus groups helped determine suggestions for ways to improve access to and efficiency of available services.

The areas with the greatest level of need among veterans are:

- Mental health services
- Assistance with finding employment or jobs
- Short-term financial aid for housing and utilities

Areas with the greatest level of need among family members of veterans are:

- Legal assistance
- Transportation
- Legal expenses other than food or housing

There are four areas with the greatest opportunity for increased effectiveness of service by veteran serving organizations:

- Outreach to and awareness among veterans and their family members about services and benefits available to the veteran community
- Knowledgeable navigators to provide guidance within and between social service delivery systems
- Coordinated transportation for veterans to and from veteran-serving organizations
- Childcare options for family members of veterans.

# Conclusion

Veteran one-stop resource centers, also known as peer networking centers, create service hubs and places for organizations to collaborate, connect with, and provide services to veterans and their families. Houston's Combined Arms is an excellent example of this type of facility. Given the size of Houston and the variety of area, culture, and access more of these centers would be useful. One solution would be to collaborate with the non-profit Neighborhood Centers.

Neighborhood Centers and transportation systems might each present heretofore unrealized opportunity for the delivery of services to the Houston MSA's veteran population. Neighborhood Centers is a non-profit organization with locations throughout the Houston MSA, which connects individuals with social services. Cities or counties might benefit from providing training to Neighborhood Centers' staff members to familiarize them with services available to veterans. Some Neighborhood Centers offer childcare and education services. Including veterans on their child care staffs might encourage veterans to enroll their children in those services and programs; veterans who participated in the in-person focus groups expressed that they are often reluctant to allow either non-family members or non-veterans to watch their children.

Transportation systems within the Houston MSA might benefit from creating veteran advisory councils. Those councils would serve to identify veteran-serving organizations in each area, compare them with already existing transportation options in said area, and then recommend changes to those transportation options.

In summary, enough veterans live in the Houston MSA to merit organizing services as if they are on the state level. Improvements to mental health services, employment assistance, short-term financial aid, legal assistance, and transportation offer the biggest areas of opportunity to support veterans within the region. Enhancing the existing network of knowledgeable navigators would increase the likelihood that the veteran community would access these services.

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# Appendix A- Example Survey

## Online Survey

Thank you for participating in the 2016-2017 Needs Survey for Harris and surrounding counties. Your responses will help shape policy and determine the application of resources for future Veterans' programs. The survey is short and anonymous. Please try to fill out all the questions you can or are comfortable with. Even if you answer just one question, please submit the survey so that other Veterans can benefit from your experience. Please share the link to the survey with your friends and family in the Houston area. The results will be presented in Houston in February 2017. Scroll down to begin. If you have any questions about this survey, feel free to contact TexVet at (512) 341-4924 or [contactus@texvet.org](mailto:contactus@texvet.org).

### Q1 Are you currently

- A veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces
- Family member - spouse, surviving spouse, adult child, minor child/ward - of a veteran
- Not a veteran or family member of a veteran

### Q2 Have you ever served on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard?

- Never served in the military
- Only on active duty for training in the Reserves or National Guard
- National Guard or Reserves member who served on active duty for a purpose other than training
- Now on active duty
- On active duty in the past, but not now

### Q3 In which component(s) did/do you serve? Select all that apply.

- Active Duty
- National Guard
- State Guard
- Reserve

### Q4 Do you currently live in Texas?

- Yes
- No

### Q5 In which county of the Houston metro area do you live?

- Harris
- Austin
- Brazoria
- Chambers
- Fort Bend
- Galveston
- Liberty
- Montgomery
- Waller
- I don't live in the Houston metro area
- I don't know the name of the county in which I live

### Q6 What is the city and zip code of your primary residence?

City \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix A- Example Survey

### Q7 Are you the

- Spouse of a veteran
- Surviving spouse of a veteran who died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or Guard
- Widow or widower of a veteran
- Adult dependent, someone 18 years of age or older, of a veteran
- Child dependent, someone younger than 18 years of age, of a veteran

### Q8 When did you serve in the United States military?

Select each period in which you served.

- September 2001 or later
- August 1990 to August 2001 (including Persian Gulf War)
- May 1975 to July 1990
- Vietnam era (August 1964 to April 1975)
- February 1955 to July 1964
- Korean War (June 1950 to January 1955)
- January 1947 to June 1950
- World War II (December 1941 to December 1946)
- November 1941 or earlier

### Q9 In what branch(es) of the military did you serve?

Select all that apply.

- Air Force
- Army
- Coast Guard
- Marine Corps
- Merchant Marine
- Navy

### Q10 During your service in the U.S. military, where were you deployed or stationed? Select all that apply.

- Iraq
- Afghanistan

- Kuwait
- Saudi Arabia
- Vietnam
- Korea
- Japan
- Germany
- England
- France
- Italy
- United States of America
- Other(s) \_\_\_\_\_

### Q11 Do you receive monthly compensation from the VA for a service-connected disability?

- Yes
- No

### Q12 What is your service-connected disability rating?

- 0 percent
- 10 or 20 percent
- 30 or 40 percent
- 50 or 60 percent
- 70 percent or higher

### Q13 Are you a combat veteran?

- Yes
- No

### Q14 Did you experience military sexual trauma?

- Yes
- No

### Q15 In what year did you begin military service

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### Q16 In what year did you end military service?

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix A- Example Survey

**Q17 Please rate your current need for assistance with each of the following types of needs and services. Please think about assistance that you currently receive as well as any assistance you need but do not receive.**

Types of Services	No Need	Low Need	Moderate Need	High Need
Mental Health Services (including addiction and substance abuse)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transportation including assistance with transportation expenses)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Child Mentoring	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Legal Assistance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assistance with finding employment or jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Living expenses other than housing or food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paying rent, mortgage, or utilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Home improvement or modifications due to disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q18 If you receive any of the types of services included above, how did you learn about these services? Select all that apply.**

- Texas 2-1-1
- VA
- County Service Officer
- Veteran Service Organization
- Social Worker
- Friend or Family member
- Internet search
- Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q19 If you need services in the future, where would you be most likely to look? Select all that apply.**

- Texas 2-1-1
- VA
- County Service Officer
- Veteran Service Organization
- Social Worker
- Friend or Family member
- Internet search
- Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q20 Are you a male or female?**

- Male
- Female

**Q20 What is your age?**

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q21 Including yourself, how many adults age 18 or over live in your household?**

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q22 How many children under the age of 18 live in your household?**

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q23 Including yourself, how many children under the age of 18 live in your household?**

- please specify \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix A- Example Survey

**Q24 What is your current housing status?**

- Own
- Rent
- Temporarily living with a non-family member
- Homeless
- Other - please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**Q25 What is your current employment status?**

- Employed full-time
- Employed part-time
- Disabled, not able to work
- Retired
- Student
- Unemployed and looking for work

**Q26 What is your current annual household income from all sources?**

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000 - \$19,999
- \$20,000 - \$29,999
- \$30,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 or more

# Appendix B- Data

## Tables provided by U.S. Census American Community Survey 2014 5-year estimates S2101

### Eras of Service

<u>Era</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Gulf War (9/2001 or later)	2,826,221	287,082	47,379
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001)	3,617,933	350,577	58,148
Vietnam era veterans	7,133,597	528,485	94,900
Korean War veterans	2,114,860	131,338	22,730
World War II veterans	1,358,115	78,014	13,981
<u>Percentages</u>			
Gulf War (9/2001 or later) veterans	14.10%	18.60%	13.90%
Gulf War (8/1990 to 8/2001) veterans	18.00%	22.80%	19.10%
Vietnam era veterans	35.50%	34.30%	36.20%
Korean War veterans	10.50%	8.50%	8.50%
World War II veterans	6.80%	5.10%	5.20%

### Sex

<u>Sex</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Veterans - Male	18,529,804	1,394,014	258,210
Veterans - Female	1,578,528	145,641	24,301
<u>Percentages</u>			
Veteran Male	92.10%	90.50%	92.00%
Veteran Female	7.90%	9.50%	8.00%

### Age

<u>Age Range</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Veterans - 18 to 34 years	1,710,712	182,881	34,558
Veterans - 35 to 54 years	4,903,001	428,442	79,897
Veterans - 55 to 64 years	4,137,171	315,677	55,356
Veterans - 65 to 74 years	4,760,174	330,406	63,068
Veterans - 75 years and over	4,597,274	282,249	49,632
<u>Percentages</u>			
Percent - 18 to 34 years	8.50%	11.90%	11.00%
Percent - 35 to 54 years	24.40%	27.80%	26.00%
Percent - 55 to 64 years	20.60%	20.50%	20.10%
Percent - 65 to 74 years	23.70%	21.50%	24.20%
Percent - 75 years and over	22.90%	18.30%	18.80%

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## Appendix B- Data

### Income

<u>Income</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Veteran Median	37,469.00	40,226.00	42,946.90
Male Veteran Median	37,989.00	40,818.00	44,485.60
Female Veteran Median	31,965.00	34,360.00	33,139.00
Civilian Median	27,306.00	26,778.00	31,107.20

### Employment Status

<u>Employment Status</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Employed	135,952	74.20%
Unemployed	10,145	5.50%
Not In Labor Force	37,072	20.20%

### Education

*Individuals 25 years and over*

<u>Education</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Civilian percent Less than high school graduate	13.40%	18.10%	16.70%
Veteran Percent; Less than high school graduate	7.10%	6.40%	7.40%
Veterans; Less than high school graduate	1,408,403	95,803	16,862
Civilian Percent; High school graduate (includes equivalency)	27.80%	25.20%	27.40%
Veteran Percent; High school graduate (includes equivalency)	29.00%	23.90%	26.10%
Veterans; High school graduate (includes equivalency)	5,754,154	359,545	64,215
Civilian Percent; Some college or associate's degree	29.10%	29.10%	30.30%
Veteran Percent; Some college or associate's degree	36.80%	40.60%	40.00%
Veterans; Some college or associate's degree	7,299,510	611,556	108,598
Civilian Percent; Bachelor's degree or higher	29.70%	27.50%	25.60%
Veteran Percent; Bachelor's degree or higher	27.00%	29.20%	26.50%
Veterans; Bachelor's degree or higher	5,348,520	440,431	88,103

### Poverty & Disability

<u>Poverty</u>	<u>United States</u>	<u>Texas</u>	<u>Houston MSA</u>
Veterans below poverty line	1,401,837	102,727	19,110
Veteran poverty status	7.10%	6.80%	5.60%
Civilian poverty status	13.60%	5.00%	11.80%
<u>Disability</u>			
Veterans; Estimate - With any disability	5,463,294	414,471	70,175
Veterans with disability	27.70%	27.50%	28.70%
Civilians with disability	15.10%	14.50%	15.20%

# Appendix B- Data

Tables provided by Army OneSource: Department of Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC)

## Number of Active, Guard and Reserve Component Service Members

where >50 per county are reported as of 8/31/2015

Territory	Army	Marine Corps	Navy	Air Force	Active	Guard	Reserve	Total
Brazoria	91	0	0	54	0	54	91	145
Fort Bend	57	0	0	0	0	57	0	57
Galveston	188	0	0	91	58	157	64	279
Harris	929	0	199	0	719	169	240	1,128
Hays	484	0	0	0	128	283	73	484
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,749</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>905</b>	<b>720</b>	<b>468</b>	<b>2,093</b>

## Dependents of Service Members

deployed to OIF/OEF/OND between 9/11/2001 and 5/31/2015

Territory	Army	Marine Corps	Navy	Air Force	Coast Guard	Active	Guard	Reserve	Total
Austin	51	0	0	3	0	23	20	11	54
Brazoria	708	43	45	179	0	431	341	203	975
Chambers	44	3	5	5	0	34	11	12	57
Fort Bend	776	38	48	97	0	417	291	251	959
Galveston	604	62	32	283	0	355	444	182	981
Harris	5,860	383	319	858	0	3,728	1,962	1,730	7,420
Liberty	115	8	5	22	0	96	31	23	150
Montgomery	886	77	60	186	0	460	318	431	1,209
Waller	77	5	3	0	0	59	11	15	85
<b>Total</b>	<b>69,429</b>	<b>3,662</b>	<b>4,187</b>	<b>23,929</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>57,173</b>	<b>21,620</b>	<b>22,420</b>	<b>101,213</b>

## Estimated Veterans with Probable Traumatic Brain Injury

Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Deployed between 9/11/2001 and 5/31/2015

Territory	Army	Marine Corps	Navy	Air Force	Coast Guard	Active	Guard	Reserve	Total
Austin	16	1	0	1	0	11	3	4	18
Brazoria	173	14	6	28	2	133	53	37	222
Chambers	13	1	1	1	0	10	3	3	15
Fort Bend	197	15	7	19	1	133	54	52	239
Galveston	151	15	5	40	10	116	64	41	221
Harris	1,610	139	49	153	6	1,167	384	406	1,957
Liberty	41	3	1	5	0	32	10	8	50
Montgomery	238	23	6	25	1	167	51	77	294
Waller	19	2	1	1	0	15	4	4	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,458</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1,784</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>632</b>	<b>3,039</b>

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## Appendix B- Data

### Estimated Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

*Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Deployed between 9/11/2001 and 5/31/2015*

Territory	Army	Marine Corps	Navy	Air Force	Coast Guard	Active	Guard	Reserve	Total
Austin	14	1	0	0	0	9	3	4	16
Brazoria	146	12	5	24	1	112	45	31	188
Chambers	11	1	0	1	0	8	2	2	13
Fort Bend	167	13	6	16	1	113	46	44	202
Galveston	128	13	4	34	8	98	54	35	187
Harris	1,362	118	41	130	5	988	325	344	1,656
Liberty	34	3	1	4	0	27	8	6	42
Montgomery	202	20	5	21	1	141	43	65	249
Waller	16	1	1	1	0	13	3	3	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>1,509</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>2,572</b>

### Estimated Veterans with Suicide Ideation

*Iraq/Afghanistan Veterans Deployed between 9/11/2001 and 5/31/2015*

Territory	Army	Marine Corps	Navy	Air Force	Coast Guard	Active	Guard	Reserve	Total
Austin	3	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	4
Brazoria	34	3	1	5	0	26	10	7	43
Chambers	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	3
Fort Bend	38	3	1	4	0	26	11	10	47
Galveston	29	3	1	8	2	23	12	8	43
Harris	314	27	9	30	1	228	75	79	381
Liberty	8	1	0	1	0	6	2	1	10
Montgomery	46	5	1	5	0	32	10	15	57
Waller	4	0	0	0	0	3	1	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>592</b>

*Tables provided by Army OneSource: Department of Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC)*