VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS.

Responding to the 2020 Census is Critical for Vets

Veterans can continue to shape the future of their communities by being counted in the 2020 Census

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Military veterans are a diverse and thriving group of people who contribute in many ways to communities across the United States. They are teachers, business owners, public servants, volunteers, civic leaders, and they serve in other ways. In the spring, veterans can continue to shape the future of their communities by being counted in the 2020 Census.

A count every decade of people who live in the nation is required by the U.S. Constitution. The data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau will inform how state, local, and federal lawmakers allocate billions of dollars in federal funds every year for the next 10 years for critical public services, including veterans' hospitals and medical programs, schools, emergency services, and critical infrastructure.

The 2020 Census questionnaire only asks a few simple questions about who lives in your household including age, sex, race, and ethnicity. Individual responses are confidential and protected by law. For the first time, people will be able to respond to the census online, by phone, or by mail.

Painting a Picture of Our Nation's Veterans
While the census only occurs once each decade, the Census Bureau plays an ongoing and vital role in producing statistics so that we have an informed understanding of today's veterans. With the information collected through Census Bureau surveys, we know that the demographic characteristics of our nation's veterans have changed dramatically since the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Veterans of the Vietnam War are still the largest group of living veterans, at 6.7 million. World War II and Korean War veterans are aging, and their numbers are declining. But the post-9/11 group that fought in the Gulf and Iraq Wars is the most diverse, highest-educated group, and has the highest percentage of service-related disabilities, according to 2017 data

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from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is an ongoing survey that goes to about 3 million homes a year and asks a wide variety of questions. It differs from the once-a-decade census that attempts to count every person once, only once, and in the right place.

Post-9/11 veterans are more diverse in gender, race, and ethnic origin than earlier generations, according to the Census Bureau. For instance:

- About 17% of post-9/11 veterans are women, more than five times the percentage of women among Vietnam War-era veterans.
- 15.3% are Black, compared to 9.1% of Vietnam War-era veterans.
- 12.1% are Hispanic, more than double the 5.2% of Hispanic Vietnam War-era veterans.

Census Bureau statistics from the ACS also show that half of all veterans today are younger than 65. That means there are about 9 million preretirement-age veterans studying, working, and helping to shape the future of their communities.

This younger, more-diverse population has specialized needs, from access to post-military job training and education to more female-centric health care services, as well as parks and schools for their young children.

Zoom out and consider the scale of these demographic shifts: Census Bureau statistics tell us that there are a total of 1.6 million female veterans, representing nearly 10% of the entire veteran population—and their numbers and impacts are growing.

Shape Your Future: How Veterans Should Participate

Responding to surveys and questionnaires from the Census Bureau helps ensure that we continue to have an accurate picture of our communities and responding to the 2020 Census will be particularly important.

In March 2020, households will receive a mailed invitation to participate in the 2020 Census. Most people will have the option to respond online from any computer device—such as a laptop, smartphone, or tablet—as well as by phone or by mail. If veterans are unclear as to how they should count themselves or the people in their home, they should visit Who to Count on 2020census.gov. Generally speaking, veterans need to complete a 2020 Census questionnaire unless they live in group housing, a hospital, or another "group quarters" facility. In that instance, a representative of the building will fill out the census questionnaire for everyone who lives in the facility.

To learn more about the 2020 Census and how it will shape the future for veterans, service members, and their families, visit 2020census.gov.