



ARIZONA VETERAN SURVEY

2017 - 2023
COMPARISON REPORT

Surveys Administered By:





ABOUT THE SURVEY

The biennial Arizona Veteran Survey, conducted by the Arizona State University College of Health Solutions, was first conducted statewide in 2017, with additional iterations in 2019, 2021, and 2023. Service members, veterans, family members, and community helpers were invited to take the online survey, with questions tailored to each group. A paper-based survey option was also provided. In total, over 33,000 responses have been received across the four surveys.

PURPOSE

This document serves as an overarching comparison to examine the changes that have occurred within the population between the first four iterations of the Arizona Veteran Survey. Throughout these iterations, there have been changes to the questions being asked to improve response rates, cover emerging issues, and identify the effect of recently implemented projects. The information gathered during these surveys helps to influence and tailor projects to the needs of the populations. Using this information, projects are implemented to improve the outcomes of the populations being served.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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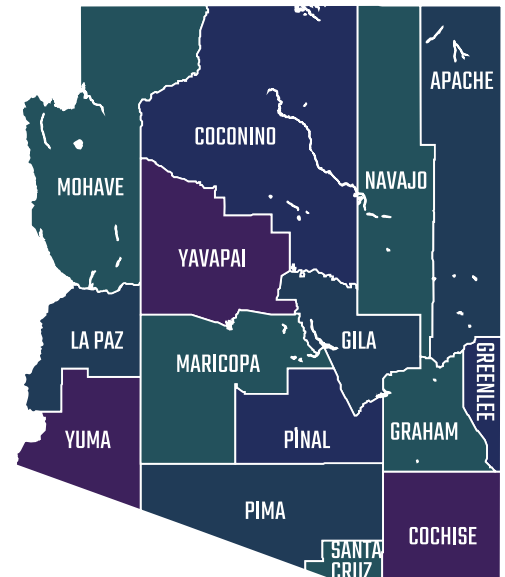
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SURVEY RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

RESPONDENT COUNTY

	2017	2019	2021	2023	Arizona Veteran Population
Apache	1%	0.70%	1.92%	1.15%	0.65%
Cochise	4%	5.53%	6.23%	6.34%	3.77%
Coconino	2%	1.83%	1.97%	2.77%	1.38%
Gila	1%	1.11%	1.21%	1.10%	1.10%
Graham	<1%	0.62%	0.81%	0.97%	0.36%
Greenlee	<1%	0.04%	0.39%	0.37%	0.11%
La Paz	<1%	0.53%	0.62%	0.96%	0.58%
Maricopa	52%	45.74%	43.91%	37.81%	51.61%
Mohave	6%	3.72%	2.68%	5.26%	5.10%
Navajo	2%	1.81%	1.74%	1.86%	1.48%
Pima	15%	19.94%	22.80%	20.49%	17.39%
Pinal	7%	7.42%	7.96%	7.81%	7.56%
Santa Cruz	<1%	0.69%	0.65%	0.84%	0.33%
Yavapai	6%	4.22%	3.00%	7.83%	5.43%
Yuma	3%	3.92%	3.06%	3.30%	3.17%
N/A	–	2.18%	1.03%	1.13%	–



RESPONDENT TYPE

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Veterans	72%	77.40%	73.28%	76.60%
Service Members	6%	2.81%	2.86%	2.13%
Family Members	15%	14.42%	17.50%	16.78%
Community Helpers	7%	5.38%	6.36%	4.48%



RACE

	2017	2019	2021	2023
American Indian or Alaska Native	4%	3.47%	4.78%	4.13%
Asian	3%	1.45%	1.92%	1.71%
Black or African American	6%	4.69%	6.27%	4.38%
White or Caucasian	81%	89.64%	86.11%	83.84%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	N/A	0.75%	0.92%	1.18%
Unknown (2017) or Prefer not to answer (2023)	6%	N/A	N/A	7.93%

ETHNICITY

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Hispanic or Latino	14%	9.74%	17.24%	15.30%
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino	79%	90.26%	82.76%	76.06%
Unknown (2017) or Prefer not to answer (2023)	7%	N/A	N/A	8.64%

AGE

	2017	2019	2021	2023
18-24	1%	0.62%	1.10%	0.70%
25-34	10%	4.56%	7.67%	6.02%
35-44	15%	8.23%	12.21%	11.50%
45-54	24%	13.29%	17.27%	15.16%
55-64	22%	19.67%	21.42%	19.10%
65+	25%	53.63%	40.33%	47.52%

GENDER

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Male	66%	83.60%	69.25%	71.61%
Female	30%	16.05%	30.03%	27.83%
Other	4%	0.35%	0.72%	0.56%



MENTAL HEALTH

STRESS

In 2017, 2019, and 2021, 5% of veteran respondents had experienced moderate to severe stress in the week prior to the survey. In 2023, that number decreased to 4.27%.



STRESS ZONE IN THE PAST MONTH PRIOR TO THE SURVEY

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Veterans				
Low	50%	58%	56%	57%
Mild	41%	35%	37%	37%
Moderate	7%	6%	6%	5%
Severe	1%	1%	<1%	<1%
Service Members				
Low	52%	48%	37%	37%
Mild	44%	43%	47%	49%
Moderate	4%	8%	12%	14%
Severe	1%	1%	5%	<1%
Family Members				
Low	47%	49%	53%	54%
Mild	46%	45%	41%	39%
Moderate	7%	6%	6%	6%
Severe	<1%	<1%	<1%	1%

SUICIDE

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Veterans				
Have had thoughts of suicide	41%	43%	14%	12%
Attempted Suicide	N/A	16%	3%	3%
Know of someone who has died by suicide	50%*	66%	62%	61%
Service Members				
Have had thoughts of suicide	N/A	22%	13%	12%
Attempted Suicide	N/A	7%	8%	4%
Know of someone who has died by suicide	N/A	75%	69%	74%
Family Members				
Have had thoughts of suicide	N/A	25%	12%	12%
Attempted Suicide	N/A	11%	3%	5%
Know of someone who has died by suicide	N/A	67%	56%	59%
*Responses from this year asked not just if they know someone who died by suicide but specifically if they knew a service member or veteran who died by suicide				

VETERAN SUICIDE RATE

Veteran suicide is a major concern in Arizona as the veteran suicide rate in 2017 was 44.9 per 100,000 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2019). The veteran suicide rate remained very steady at 44.7 per 100,000 in 2019 before increasing to 48.2 per 100,000 in 2021 and 51.2 in 2022 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2021a; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024). The Arizona veteran suicide rate is significantly higher than the veteran suicide national average which was 33.9 per 100,000 in 2021 which slightly increased to 34.7 in 2022 (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2023; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2024).

ARIZONA VETERAN SURVEY SUICIDALITY RESPONSES

Despite the increase in suicide rates, the results from the biennial Arizona Veteran Survey have shown another trend. The number of veterans with thoughts of suicide and attempts has significantly decreased. From 2017 to 2019 there was very little change in the percentage of Arizona veterans who reported thoughts of suicide and attempts. However, the rates significantly dropped from 2019 to 2021 and remained lower for the 2023 survey. The distribution of respondents' demographics has remained relatively similar and does not account for the significant drop in the number of veterans experiencing thoughts of suicide and suicide attempts.

CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH CARE CONCERNS

	2019	2021	2023
Veterans			
Have a current mental health concern	25%*	35%	42%
Are seeking mental health care	17%	18%	21%
Service Members			
Have a current mental health concern	25%*	32%	49%
Are seeking mental health care	14%	15%	31%
Family Members			
Have a current mental health concern	27%*	37%	40%
Are seeking mental health care	14%	15%	16%

*Those who have had someone close to them recommend they receive care for a mental health condition.

CURRENT MENTAL HEALTH CARE, CONCERNS, AND CONDITIONS

In 2017, 33% of veterans reported a mental health condition related to anxiety, depression, or PTSD. Additionally, 1 in 3 knew a service member or veteran who needed mental health care but was not receiving it.

MENTAL HEALTH RISK FACTORS

Mental health concerns are important to address as they contribute to many other factors. Military service is strongly associated with PTSD, depression, traumatic brain injury, substance use, and other risk factors (Inoue et al., 2023; National Alliance on Mental Illness, n.d.). These risk factors and others such as anxiety, social isolation, and stress, especially when transitioning out of the military, are all associated with suicide risk (Inoue et al., 2023; Owens, 2022; U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2021b).

ARIZONA VETERAN SURVEY MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN RESPONSES

In 2017, respondents were asked about mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and PTSD; in 2019, respondents were asked if anyone close to them had ever recommended they seek care for a mental health concern. From 2017 to 2019 there was a drop in the number of individuals who reported mental health concerns; however, this can be attributed to the change in the question's wording. In 2021, to ensure this question was fully encompassing the wording was changed to ask the respondents if they have a current mental health concern. This allowed respondents to

decide what they consider to be a concern and does not rely on what others have told them. From 2019 to 2021 there was a significant increase in the number of respondents who reported a mental health concern; this change could be attributed to the change in the question's wording. The same wording from 2021 was used again for the 2023 survey where there was another increase in the number of respondents who reported having a mental health concern. This increase from 2021 to 2023 could be due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the population.

MOST COMMONLY CITED BARRIERS TO RECEIVING MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT

2017	2019	2021	2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not understand options Cost of care Difficulty navigating the healthcare system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time and availability Concern about being diagnosed with a mental health condition Do not believe that mental health services would be helpful Difficulty accessing or finding a provider Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not think it would help Concern about being diagnosed with a mental health issue Time Access Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Cost Concern about being diagnosed Transportation I don't think it would help me



HOUSING & LIFESTYLE

CONCERNS ABOUT HOUSING

In 2017, 14% of veteran respondents reported concerns about losing their current housing. In 2019 that amount dropped to 6% but rose slightly to 7% in 2021 and 2023.

2017 BASIC NEEDS

In 2017, 18% of veterans reported struggling to meet the basic needs of their family and 28% of veterans reported struggling with finances.

2019 BASIC NEEDS

	Veterans	Service Members	Family Members
Meeting basic needs of family was Somewhat Hard or Very Hard	28%	22%	38%
Struggled with finances Sometimes, Usually, or Always	25%	20%	35%

VETERANS CONCERNS ABOUT HOUSING

2017	2019	2021	2023
14%	6%	7%	7%

STRUGGLED TO ACCESS OR PAY FOR IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS PRIOR TO THE SURVEY

	2021	2023*	2021	2023*	2021	2023*
	Veterans Members		Service Members		Family	
Utilities	47%	12%	35%	20%	45%	19%
Rent/mortgage	46%	10%	33%	20%	49%	20%
Food	43%	12%	29%	21%	41%	19%
Healthcare	23%	6%	33%	13%	27%	13%
Transportation	31%	8%	29%	14%	22%	12%
Childcare	7%	1%	21%	13%	10%	4%
Medication	21%	5%	17%	10%	22%	10%
Phone or internet	34%	8%	21%	15%	33%	13%
Other expenses for children/dependents	14%	3%	17%	6%	16%	6%
Credit Cards/debt	N/A	15%	N/A	19%	N/A	25%
Other	9%	2%	11%	1%	7%	2%

*The options N/A, does not apply, and preferred not to answer were added to this version.

ACCESSIBILITY OF ESSENTIAL NEEDS AND SERVICES

The inability to access or pay for essential services can significantly impact Veterans' timely utilization of services (Hussey et al., 2015). Accessibility can be a barrier for many reasons including: services are too far away, too busy to go, cannot take time off of work, and other common concerns. This can lead to individuals delaying care and other essential needs due to difficulty accessing the services. One of the most common reasons many people are unable to access the care or services they need is due to the financial burden. Medications, childcare, healthcare, healthy food, living expenses, and other necessities can be financially unattainable.

ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ARIZONA RESIDENTS

The COVID-19 pandemic had a major impact on those living in Arizona, 36% of households experienced job disruptions in the early months of the pandemic, causing food insecurity for many and disproportionately affecting low-income households (Driesen et al., 2020). In Arizona, median single-family house prices rose by 78.7% from 2017 to 2023 (Federal Housing Finance Agency, 2024). In addition, the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers (CPI-U) indicated that inflation has caused the cost of other necessities to soar; inflation reached a 4.4% yearly increase in June 2022 and peaked at 13.0% in August 2022 - both greater than the national averages for the same time period (3.0% and 9.1%, respectively) (Hammond, 2023a).

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS: 2019

Reported Being Kept From the Following in the 12 Months Prior to the Survey

	Veterans	Service Members	Family Members
Medical appointments or getting medications	65%	50%	69%
Non-medical appointments, meetings, or things they need	58%	75%	53%

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS: 2021 AND 2023

Reported Being Kept From the Following in
the 12 Months Prior to the Survey

	2021	2023	2021	2023	2021	2023
	Veterans		Service Members		Family Members	
Work	26%	15%	17%	35%	21%	23%
School	10%	8%	22%	31%	7%	6%
Medical Appointments	29%	38%	24%	49%	23%	46%
Stores	42%	31%	25%	37%	20%	28%
Leisure Activities	43%	34%	17%	41%	27%	27%
Family/Friends	35%	25%	12%	29%	21%	25%
Other	8%	9%	11%	4%	2%	6%

ADDRESSING TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

To address the significant number of veterans experiencing transportation barriers, the Arizona Coalition for Military Families conducted a transportation project. This project has helped many veterans overcome their transportation barriers by receiving fuel gift cards, car repairs, grocery deliveries, and more. The transportation project and the number of retired Arizona veterans could help explain the decrease in the number of veterans who reported experiencing transportation barriers from 2021 to 2023. During the same time frame, there was an increase in the number of service members and family members experiencing transportation barriers.

TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS

Rates of physical disability and social isolation create unique and complex transportation needs for many Veterans (DiPetrillo & Lubin, 2014). Respondents to every iteration of the Arizona Veterans Survey have reported that transportation barriers have kept them from accessing essential services to promote their health and well-being, maintaining employment, and keeping connected with friends and family. In 2019 nearly two-thirds of veteran respondents reported experiencing transportation barriers that kept them from necessities such as medical appointments and medications. Rural veterans are particularly at risk due to long travel times to access medical services (Peterson, 2019).

IMPORTANCE OF FIREARM SAFETY

Approximately 50% of veterans report owning guns compared to 20% of non-veterans (Everytown, 2024). In 2021, veterans were nearly three times more likely than non-veterans to die by gun suicide; the majority of veterans who died by suicide were using a firearm (Everytown, 2024). In 2019, 64% of service members who died by suicide used a firearm; in 2018, the majority of military spouse and dependents suicides involved firearms (U.S. Department of Defense, 2020). To prevent suicide there are multiple programs available to service members, veterans and their families to securely store their firearms for free as unsafe storage of firearms is associated with an increased risk of suicide (Nichter et al., 2024).

FIREARMS

	2019	2021	2023
Have Firearms in or Around the House			
Veterans	54%	57%	49% (18% preferred not to answer)
Service Members	66%	63%	61% (10% preferred not to answer)
Family Members	50%	51%	44% (11% preferred not to answer)
Those Firearms are Kept Loaded			
Veterans	28%	51%	47%
Service Members	30%	49%	55%
Family Members	20%	39%	36%
Loaded Firearms are Kept Unlocked			
Veterans	22%	75%	45%
Service Members	19%	82%	42%
Family Members	13%	70%	29%



SOCIAL SUPPORT

VETERANS WITH CHILDREN

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Minor children living in the home	39%	13%	17%	16%

LONELINESS AND SPIRITUALITY

	2019	2021	2023
Veterans			
Feel lonely or isolated from those around them*	34%	35%	38%
Spirituality is a source of strength and comfort**	73%	72%	71%
Service Members			
Feel lonely or isolated from those around them*	34%	36%	44%
Spirituality is a source of strength and comfort**	63%	73%	77%
Family Members			
Feel lonely or isolated from those around them*	37%	32%	38%
Spirituality is a source of strength and comfort**	81%	78%	76%
*The options were Always, Usually, or Sometimes in 2019, in 2021 and 2023 the options were Always, Most of the Time, or Sometimes.			
**The options were A little Bit or A Great Deal in 2019, in 2021 and 2023 the options were Somewhat or A Great Deal.			



CAREERS

VETERAN EMPLOYMENT

	2017	2019	2021	2023
Not employed but were looking for employment	3%	4%	2%	2%

OF THOSE VETERAN RESPONDENTS WHO ARE CURRENTLY EMPLOYED:

	2017	2019*	2021	2023
Do not feel their position is stable	33%	16%	37%	48%
Do not feel they have the training and education needed for their job and career interests	25%	14%	57%	63%
Do not feel they have the job search skills to find a new position if needed	34%	18%	52%	68%
Do not feel they have opportunities for position advancement with their current company	55%	29%	53%	57%
Do not feel they have opportunities for pay advancement	66%	31%	62%	69%
Do not feel their career path is clear	57%	23%	68%	76%

*Asked as a 5-point scale (Strongly Disagree-Strongly Agree). Percentages reflect Disagree or Strongly Disagree responses (some items reverse-coded).

IMPACT OF EMPLOYMENT

When employment is in jeopardy it can not only affect health outcomes and financial well-being, but it can also cause additional stressors such as social isolation, strained relationships, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and more (Tran et al., 2016). The job market in Arizona has been turbulent; the unemployment rate in Arizona is higher than the national average and consumer prices in Phoenix have risen faster than the national average despite the general reduction in the rate of inflation (Hammond, 2023b).

ARIZONA VETERANS SURVEY EMPLOYMENT RESPONSES

In 2019 respondents were asked on a Likert scale about their employment; for 2021, this changed to match the wording from the 2017 survey. This change in wording in 2019 could account for the change in responses. The number of veteran respondents who reported feeling like they have the training and education needed for their job and career interests has significantly increased. Additionally, the number of veteran respondents who felt their position is stable and that they have the job search skills to find a new position if needed has also significantly increased. However, nearly two-thirds of respondents reported they do not feel they have opportunities for pay or position advancement within their current company. These trends show that veterans are concerned about their employment, financial security, and future.





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